

The Velvet Song
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"THE VELVET SONG"

FADE IN:

EXT. WOODLAND-DUSK

The rain pours down mercilessly under the stormy sky.

Drenched in dirty slacks and a long-sleeve hood, LEILA (late teens) treks through the woodland, carrying a full sack and a sheathed kali sword and staff. She's a petite girl with her brown skin smeared in dirt and dark hair hidden under a hood.

Following closely beside her wagging his tail is a Labrador Retriever named CY.

She spots an opening in a tree trunk.

LEILA

Cy, lets get inside.

Cy heads inside first, our protagonist following behind.

Inside the tree trunk...

Leila takes out a blanket from the sack, Cy snuggling against her underneath the sheet as they listen to the downpour outside.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Good night, Cy.

CUT TO:

The chirping of birds permeate outside the tree trunk, a fragment of sunlight caressing Leila's face.

Her eyes flicker open. Beside her Cy sleeps like a log. She crawls out the tree trunk, stirring Cy who follows behind.

CUT TO:

Droplets of rain glide off the leaves above Leila, who stretches under the clear sky, not a cloud in sight.

For a moment, she feels at peace. That's until she realizes something. Though we don't know her tale, we know that something has happened as we watch her eyes brim with tears.

CUT TO:



The two continue on with their journey.

In the distance Leila hears rushing water.

LEILA (CONT'D)
Cy, do you hear that?

Cy barks, tail wagging away.

The two reach a crystal blue stream surrounded by lush trees with leaves the shade of pine green.

Cy jumps into the stream excited for the fresh water.

LEILA (CONT'D)
Be careful, Cy!

Leila tosses her sack down and joins him, drinking from the stream before splashing water on her face...

WHEN...

...Cy starts barking toward the direction of the trees.

We can hear the voices of TWO MEN closing in.

Leila throws on her hood, facing the stream.

The two men enter dressed in dingy trousers, attached to their hips a lanky sword. Over their shoulder they carry a sack.

LANKY TRAVELER
That miss wasn't lookin' at ya!

SHORT TRAVELER
And she was lookin' at you, Mista
Beanstalk?

LANKY TRAVELER
She couldn't 've been lookin' at ya ya
undasized pocket book!

Leila drinks from the stream attentive to how near they are. In the corner of her eye, she sees the two take out steel jugs from their sacks and collect water.

The two bicker as they glance over at Leila.

Cy growls.



The travelers rush to fill their jugs nearly tripping over their own two feet as they rush off.

Leila sighs in relief.

CUT TO:

The moon hovers over the sky like a lit bulb.

Leila and Cy sit around a campfire, Leila toasting a fresh fish on a stick over an open fire.

Cy watches in anticipation.

It's cooked, she tosses it to Cy.

LEILA

Eat up.

Cy gladly does just that.

She sticks another fish onto the stick and over the fire it goes.

CUT TO:

Inside a cramped tree trunk.

Cy is asleep, though stirs hearing faint sobbing. He lays his head on Leila's lap.

Leila caresses his head, welcoming the comfort.

EXT. TOWN-DAY

CIVILIANS roam about dressed in traditional tunics and cotton slacks. Surrounding them are buildings that look like something from the *Fable* video games; cabin-like if you will.

Near the entrance is a welcome sign that reads "WELCOME TO LEVINSWORTH".

Leila and Cy enter.

CUT TO:

...the town square.

The market stalls are bustling with people practically throwing their money away.



At a FLOWER STAND in a wheelchair selling to PATRONS is ANNETTA (mid 40s) dressed in a short sleeve dress with a flower patterned scarf around her neck.

LEILA

We need work, Cy. Maybe we can saddle you up with doing tricks, yeah?

Cy happily barks in agreement.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Riiigght. Lets get to it.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE

INT. SHOP/TOWN SQUARE-DAY

Leila visits various shops only to be turned away from the OWNERS.

CUT TO:

Leila exits a shop, disappointment written on her face.

LEILA

(to Cy)

No luck. Come on.

They pass the flower shop when one particular flower catches Leila's eye.

Annetta speaks to PATRON.

Patron makes a purchase then walks off.

Annetta notices Leila and turns her wheelchair to face her.

ANNETTA

(southern accent)

You lookin' for anythin' in particular?

LEILA

No, ma'am. I'm just admiring your flowers. They're very beautiful. Especially the Stars of Bethlehem.

ANNETTA

Well, thank you. You must know a
(MORE)



ANNETTA (CONT'D)

little to know what type of flower these are.

LEILA

I used to have my own garden.

ANNETTA

'Used to'? What happened to it?

LEILA

I move around a lot.

ANNETTA

And you didn't start a new one?

LEILA

I haven't had the chance. Life, right?

ANNETTA

I see. What flowers did you grow?

LEILA

All kinds! My favorite type is the peony. A stunning bloomed peony is a feast for the eyes, and it's fragrance is one of a kind, but what I really love about them is their longevity. They'll bloom for a hundred years with little to no attention. They can even survive winter in the right conditions!

As Leila rambles on, Annetta is impressed.

ANNETTA

I've neva heard anyone speak about flowers with such enthusiasm. Are you in town just visitin'?

LEILA

Hopefully not. I'm looking for work.

ANNETTA

Is that so? Any luck?

LEILA

No, ma'am.

ANNETTA

Hm...What's ya name?

LEILA

Leila, ma'am.

ANNETTA

Well, I can offer you work.

LEILA

R-Really?

ANNETTA

I close my shop toward the end of fall, but maybe that'll give you enough time to find otha work. Whadaya say?

LEILA

Yes!

ANNETTA

Good. Can you start tomorrow?

LEILA

Yes! Thank you very much!

CUT TO:

EXT. FLOWER SHOP/TOWN SQUARE/TOWN-DAY

Leila walks around town dressed in a cute dress meant just for her, carrying a bouquet of flowers, including CARNATIONS.

Cy strolls beside her, in his mouth a carnation.

A FEW ELEMENTARY-AGED KIDS surround Cy petting him.

A couple approaches Leila.

GENTLEMAN (GENTLEMAN)

Do you have any carnations?

LEILA

Yes, sir!

Leila hands him one.

The gentleman exchanges coins for the carnation, handing it to his BLUSHING LADY.

GENTLEMAN

Thank you.



The couple walks off hand in hand.

LEILA
It's almost fall, and I still haven't
found work.

Cy whines understanding the dilemma.

LEILA (CONT'D)
We can't go back to the cabin until I
find work or we won't make it through
winter.

A CUSTOMER approaches Leila.

CUSTOMER
Are you selling flowers? May I buy two
carnations?

Leila, putting her big girl pants on, says:

LEILA
Certainly.

EXT. WOODLAND-DUSK

The chilly wind is relentless, The leaves tinged with orange.

Leila and Cy trek through the woodland, our protagonist
wearing a shabby hanten-like jacket probably the only one she
could afford.

They reach the opening of their tree trunk. Cy climbs in
first then Leila.

CUT TO:

...Leila and Cy huddling together. It'll be a rough night for
these two.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE/TOWN-DAY

Leila sells several flowers to LADY.

LADY
Thank you.

Lady walks off.

Leila's bouquet has less flowers than usual. She and Cy amble
back to the flower stall.

Annetta is putting away the remaining few flowers into a wooden basket.

Annetta, taking Leila's remaining flowers, says:

ANNETTA

Thank you. I can't believe it's almost winter. Were ya able to find work?

LEILA

Not yet, but someone's bound to need me.

ANNETTA

That's the spirit! Once spring is here, ya more than welcome to come back to the shop.

LEILA

I might take you up on that.

Annetta, petting Cy, says:

ANNETTA

(to Cy)

And you too, Cy. Ya more than welcome to come back.

Cy happily barks.

Leila starts to ponder something-something that will end up breaking her heart.

LEILA

Miss Annetta, are you able to take in Cy?

ANNETTA

W-What? Why? Is everythin' okay?

LEILA

Y-Yes! My family is planning to travel across the land to-to Kankil, and with the weather, I don't want to put Cy through that.

Cy begins whining as if he's understanding the conversation.

Annetta, not believing a word, says:



ANNETTA

Leila, I'll be more than happy to take him in, but-

LEILA

You will then? Thank you!

She is relieved, though when she looks down at Cy, her heart starts to crumble.

Leila, caressing Cy's head, says:

LEILA (CONT'D)

Cy, you'll be staying with Ms. Annetta from now on. I can't take you with me. You understand? Be good, okay? Don't give her a hard time...Thank you, Ms. Annetta.

ANNETTA

He'll be here waitin' for ya.

LEILA

Stay, Cy.

Leila is hesitant.

Cy barks frantically.

Leila walks off, looking over her shoulder seeing an abandoned, fidgeting Cy. She jogs off not able to hold the tears any longer.

CUT TO:

Leila strides toward the exit of town. Just as she reaches it she hears Cy barking from behind.

LEILA (CONT'D)

No, Cy! Go back!

Cy barks indignantly.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Cy, please! You have to go back. You can't come with me! So-So just-Just go!

Cy whines, stepping toward her.



LEILA (CONT'D)

Just go!

Leila, heart in pieces, dashes out of town leaving Cy behind.

He sits there, limp...whimpering as he watches her go.

EXT. WOODLAND-DAY

Leila scampers through the woods, face stained in tears until she reaches...

...a cliff. Leila comes to a halt, gazing down at the terrain. How can something so beautiful be so tempting. She closes her eyes, and just as she's about to step off...

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Please! Someone help!

Leila looks over her shoulder, taking off in the direction of the voice without a second thought.

CUT TO:

Surrounded by a GROUP OF BANDITS with blades out is...

ANTONY (early 20s), a tall, slender and pleasing to the eye man with creamy skin. He's dressed in a straight-sleeve, v-neck coat, in his hand a black LEATHER BAG made for a doctor.

One of the bandits holds a POUCH.

ANTONY

That is all I have.

BANDIT

We wan' the bag too.

ANTONY

Please. I need this. It has no worth to you.

BANDIT

I'll be the judge of that. Give it here!

ANTONY

No...

BANDIT

Ya asked for it!



The bandit closes in on Antony, raising his blade...

WHEN...

...Leila dashes in, striking down the bandit with her blade.

Before the other bandits know what's happening, Leila starts the battle smoothly even with the sack on her back until each bandit lies on the terrain motionless.

Antony, in awe, rushes to Leila grasping both hands.

ANTONY

Young, miss. Thank you!

LEILA

Are you okay?

ANTONY

Yes. Quite. My name is Antony Stroud. I was on my way to Frolin when I was ambushed.

LEILA

Why didn't you give them the bag? You could've been killed.

ANTONY

This bag contains a medicine for a child. If I don't hurry and get it to her, she will die. At the time, I wasn't worried about my life.

LEILA

How admirable, but couldn't you buy more?

ANTONY

'Buy more?'

He scoffs.

ANTONY (CONT'D)

I am a doctor, and I cannot just 'buy more'. After weeks of reading material, I was finally able to come up with this. Besides, she can't wait another few weeks. She needs it now.

LEILA

Okay. Well be careful. There's been a
(MORE)



LEILA (CONT'D)
lot of bandits around lately.

Leila turns to walk off.

ANTONY
Wait! You're right. I see-uh-you're quite skilled. Is there any possibility you can accompany me? When bandits see I am a physician, they assume I have valuables. I've had quite a few close calls. I could pay you, of course.

LEILA
I doubt I could be of service.

ANTONY
I have to disagree! You saved me...I need to get this medicine to that little girl. Please. I shall pay you whatever you want.

LEILA
It's not about money. I-I just think you could hire someone better...

ANTONY
And I disagree...

Leila considers the arrangement. How can she say no?

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODLAND-DUSK

Leila and Antony make their way to the town of Frolin. The ground is decorated in red yellowish leaves that will soon be covered in a sheet of snow.

ANTONY
So Leila. May I ask why a cute girl like you is traveling alone in the wilderness? Certainly you can take of yourself, but it's still dangerous for a young woman to travel alone.

LEILA
I'm not the one who was almost killed by bandits.

ANTONY

You have me there! Sometimes I take a boat, but crossing the forest can be much quicker. And cheaper.

LEILA

Are you a traveling doctor?

ANTONY

Yes. From Levinsworth, but you didn't answer my question. Why are you out here alone?

LEILA

...I'm traveling. To see family.

ANTONY

Oh-I apologize. I should've known you had your own commitments.

LEILA

It's okay. It's important you get that medicine to that little girl, right?

ANTONY

Yes...it is. Thank you...

EXT. HOUSE-DAY

Antony and Leila head up to a wooden, shabby house in the corner of town.

He knocks on the door.

A moment passes. It opens.

Standing there is a middle-aged woman named AMIRA.

AMIRA

Dr. Stroud? You're here!

ANTONY

Amira. Hello. It's been too long.

AMIRA

It has. Please-Come in!

INT. FRONT ROOM/HOUSE/FROLIN-CONTINUOUS

Antony enters followed by Leila.



Amira closes the door behind them.

THREE SMALL CHILDREN, racing down the stairs, shout:

CHILDREN

Dr. Stroud!

ANTONY

Here are my three favorite racers. How have you all been?

CHILDREN

Good!

ANTONY

Taking care of your sister?

CHILDREN

Yes!

Antony, patting all three on the head, says:

ANTONY

You lot haven't been giving your mother any trouble either, right?

CHILDREN

No!

AMIRA

Hmph.

AN ELDERLY MAN using a cane enters the room.

ELDERLY MAN

If it isn't Dr. Stroud.

ANTONY

Good to see you're walking about again. Have you had any swelling in your legs since I last saw you?

ELDERLY MAN

Not at all! Your medicine did the trick!

ANTONY

Good! Just make sure to keep using that cane.

AMIRA
I keep telling him!

ELDERLY MAN
Yeah-Yeah-And is this your wife?

AMIRA
Father!

ANTONY
If only. No. This is Leila. She's my
assistant. Long story, but is it okay
if I see Amani?

AMIRA
Of course.

Amira leads Antony and Leila up the stairs.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM/HOUSE/FROLIN-DAY

The door creaks opens, and Amira enters followed by Antony
and Leila.

The bedroom walls are painted in a pale blue color with teddy
bear stickers decorated on all four corners, giving off the
very definition of serenity.

A PRESCHOOLER lies under a comforter asleep, her face a
ghastly pale even with the rays of the sun radiating it. On
her forehead is a wet cloth.

Amira rushes to her side.

AMIRA
Amani. Amani. Dr. Stroud is here.

AMANI opens her eyes and smiles when she sees Antony.

Antony bends down to her eye level.

ANTONY
Amani. How are you feeling?

AMANI
Okay.

ANTONY
Good. I have something for you.



Antony takes out a small vial from his bag and holds it up for Amani. Inside is a bluish tint liquid.

ANTONY (CONT'D)

It's candy. It's a little bitter, but it is actually quite good.

Amani, giggling, says:

AMANI

It's medicine.

ANTONY

You're just too smart for me. I'm going to sit you up, okay?

Amira helps the doctor sit Amani up.

Antony opens the vial.

ANTONY (CONT'D)

Okay, Amani. Try to get this all down for me.

He puts the vial to her lips.

Amani drinks all the contents and coughs a little.

Antony and Amira help her lie back down.

Leila watches Antony in awe. This romantic doctor is actually quite serious when it comes to his patients.

INT. HALL/HOUSE/FROLIN-DUSK

Leila waits outside Amani's door, eyeing at the various PHOTOS of the family hanging on the wall across from her. Such happiness. Such love. How nostalgic for Leila.

The door creaks opens and out walks Antony.

LEILA

How is she?

ANTONY

Much better. Her fever's gone, and her complexion is returning.

They peek inside the room to see...

...Amani's family gathered around her. Her complexion is



indeed better. Amira cries tears of joy embracing her as her siblings jump up and down on her bed.

Amani, sitting up, is enjoying the company.

Amira appears outside Amani's door.

AMIRA

Dr. Stroud, I don't know how I can repay you. I have a family heirloom I can-

ANTONY

No-No. Please. Enjoy your time with your daughter.

AMIRA

Dr. Stroud. Thank you.

Amira goes back inside.

ANTONY

(to Leila)

Lets get going.

EXT. FROLIN-DUSK

Leila and Antony tread toward the entrance of town.

ANTONY

(to Leila)

Thank you for accompanying me. It was a blessing that you were there when you were. I would not be alive if you weren't.

LEILA

You shouldn't travel alone on foot. Even if it is cheaper.

ANTONY

That's true...I know you're planning to travel to see your family, but is it possible to make you reconsider?

LEILA

What do you mean?

ANTONY

Would you consider being my escort?



LEILA
'Escort'? As in putting your life in
my hands? Bad idea.

ANTONY
I do not think so. In fact I would
feel much safer having a sightly,
young woman such as yourself escorting
me.

LEILA
I-I can't. I already moved out of my
house, and-

ANTONY
Even better! You can stay with me. You
can also help me around the clinic. So
what do you say?

What a tempting offer.

EXT. TOWN-DAY

Leila and Antony enter Levinsworth.

The town is just the way she left it: bustling with town
folk.

ANTONY
It is good to be back! Lets head home
right away.

LEILA
Wait! I need to do something first!

ANTONY
Can it not wait?

LEILA
No!

Leila is ready to bolt through the crowd when something
catches her eye.

Cy lies on his stomach, eyes so somber. The crowd walks past
him use to him being there.

LEILA (CONT'D)
Cy?

His ears perk up, he sees Leila, and he breaks into a furious

gallop.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Cy!

Cy leaps into Leila's arms knocking her off her feet.

Antony stands away not wanting to intrude.

ANTONY

Is he yours?

LEILA

Yeah...I'm sorry. Is it okay for him to come too? Because I can't if he can't.

ANTONY

I cannot have that. Of course.

LEILA

Thank you! Thank you so much!

ANTONY

I do not deserve thanks for something so minor. Also I could not bear it if you chose him over me.

Leila, ignoring him, says:

LEILA

There's just one more thing I have to do.

ANTONY

Lead the way.

EXT. FLOWER SHOP/TOWN SQUARE/TOWN-DAY

At her shop, Annetta in her wheelchair sweeps away the debris. She looks up to find Leila and Cy reunited.

ANNETTA

Leila! What are you doin' here?

LEILA

It's a long story, but it seems I'm staying.

ANNETTA

Really? So good to hear!



(noticing Antony)
 Dr. Stroud? You're back. How was your
 journey?

ANTONY
 Eventful.

ANNETTA
 When isn't it?

ANTONY
 You have me there.

ANNETTA
 So Leila, you're staying...

LEILA
 Yes! And I was able to find work. I'll
 be working for Doctor Stroud.

ANNETTA
 That's good news! I'm so happy you and
 Cy can be together again. Ya know, he
 waited for ya at the entrance of town
 every day since ya left. I had to go
 get him every evenin', but every
 mornin', he'd just trot himself back.

LEILA
 Thank you for taking care of him.

Annetta, petting him, says:

ANNETTA
 It was my pleasure. He's such a good
 watch dog!

ANTONY
 (to Leila)
 Well, if it is all right with you, I'd
 like to head home. A bath and a warm
 bed are calling for me.

EXT. ANTONY'S HOME-DAY

The traditional one-story, wooden home is in an isolated part
 of town encircled by a gate.

Antony opens the gate and leads Leila and Cy toward the
 house. She looks at it, this being a special moment for her.



She and Cy finally have a place they can call home.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM/ANTONY'S HOME-DAY

Tick tock. Tick tock.

Antony leads Leila inside a simple room.

In the center of the wooden floor is a futon similar to a traditional Japanese bedding. On a nightstand is a lamp and clock.

There's a room divider similar to a shoji, though it simply looks like it's just a part of the room.

ANTONY

This is your room. It is a snippet of unexciting.

LEILA

It's perfect.

ANTONY

You are welcome to decorate it as you please.

Antony walks to the room divider and opens it.

LEILA

What's that room?

ANTONY

Hm? My room.

LEILA

These-These rooms are connected?

ANTONY

Yes. Don't worry. I am a gentlemen.

Antony walks into the second room and closes the room divider.

Cy walks in wagging his tail just oblivious to it all.

INT. WAITING ROOM/ANTONY'S HOME-DAY

The morning sunlight pours into the room, giving off a calming effect with the help of the nature paintings hanging



on the blue, smokey walls.

Leila enters in scrubs.

There are at least fifteen PATIENTS in waiting-one being the elderly MRS. CUMMINS.

Cy is being petted all around as if a therapy dog.

LEILA
(calling out)
Mrs. Cummins?

Mrs. Cummins stands up using her cane, coughing into a cloth.

INT. PATIENT ROOM/ANTONY'S HOME-DAY

Mrs. Cummins sits at the end of the hospital bed with the help of Leila.

Leila listens to Mrs. Cummins heartbeat, using a STETHOSCOPE.

LEILA
One hundred and ten beats per minute.

MRS. CUMMINS
That's good, right?

LEILA
Um-No. That's pretty fast actually.

MRS. CUMMINS
Honestly, I think it's just a cold.
The weather is nippy these days.

LEILA
Which is why you should make sure
you're staying warm. May I check your
temperature?

MRS. CUMMINS
Of course.

Leila places her hand on Mrs. Cummins's forehead.

MRS. CUMMINS (CONT'D)
I can't believe Dr. Stroud has such a
cute assistant. You know, my grandson
is around your age.

LEILA

R-Really?

Antony enters dressed in a white overcoat.

ANTONY

Mrs. Cummins. You're looking as beautiful as ever.

MRS. CUMMINS

(blushing)

Doctor Stroud, I was just telling your assistant that I think she'd be perfect for my grandson.

ANTONY

Now, Mrs. Cummins. I cannot have you taking my Leila away from me.

MRS. CUMMINS

Oh my! Are you saving her for yourself?

ANTONY

I would be crazy to let her get away. Now how are you feeling?

MRS. CUMMINS

I just have a little cough.

LEILA

And a fever.

ANTONY

That is not good. What is her heart rate?

LEILA

One hundred and ten beats.

MRS. CUMMINS

That's not too bad, I don't think.

Antony checks her forehead.

ANTONY

And coughing?

MRS. CUMMINS

Only a little.

ANTONY

Any mucous when you cough?

MRS. CUMMINS

Yes, but it's just the cold coming up.

ANTONY

What about chest pain?

MRS. CUMMINS

Only when I cough.

ANTONY

Any other symptoms?

MRS. CUMMINS

Hm-diarrhea.

ANTONY

Mrs. Cummins, you have pneumonia.

MRS. CUMMINS

'Pneumonia'?

ANTONY

Leila, can you bring me a jar with the seeds that's on the top shelf?

LEILA

Yes, sir.

CUT TO:

INT. MED ROOM/ANTONY'S HOME-DAY

Inside is a shelf you'd see at a pharmacy holding VIALS filled with colorful liquids and JARS full of herbs. On the top shelf are the JARS WITH SEEDS.

Leila grabs one and an empty vial, pouring seeds into it.

CUT TO:

INT. CORRIDOR/ANTONY'S HOME-DAY

Leila passes the waiting room, getting a glimpse of Cy surrounded by patients, his head and ears fondled. She gives him a "Poor, Cy" look.

CUT TO:



INT. PATIENT ROOM/ANTONY'S HOME-DAY

Leila enters and gives the doctor the vial.

Antony hands it to Mrs. Cummins.

ANTONY

It is very important to take this.
This is Fenugreek. It is simple to
take. Boil a teaspoon of it, and add
it to your tea. You can add a few
drops of lemon too-help with the
taste.

MRS. CUMMINS

Thank you, Doctor. I can always count
on you.

ANTONY

Let me walk you to the door.

MRS. CUMMINS

Oh, you don't have to.

ANTONY

I do. It is a gentlemen's job to
escort such a lovely woman.

MRS. CUMMINS

Oh, Dr. Stroud!

As he opens the door, Mrs. Cummins whispers into his ear
giggling like a school girl.

CUT TO:

INT. WAITING ROOM/ANTONY'S HOME-DUSK

A group of middle-aged FEMALE PATIENTS are gathered at the
front door.

Seeing them off is Leila and Cy.

FEMALE PATIENTS

(to Leila)

You're so cute.

(to each other)

Isn't she cute? I can't believe Dr.
Stroud has such a cute assistant.



LEILA
Thank you. Good night, ladies.

The patients depart chatting away.

With the waiting room empty, Leila sighs in relief, shoulders slumped. Long day.

Antony walks in.

ANTONY
Was that the last of the patients?

LEILA
Yeah. I had to turn a few away.

ANTONY
Yeah? They will be back tomorrow.

LEILA
Do you usually see this many in a day?

ANTONY
Goodness no. More.

LEILA
Uh-

ANTONY
I am famished. Are you?

LEILA
Yesssss. I can start dinner.

ANTONY
Cooking your second day here? I cannot have that.

LEILA
I don't mind. I can't stay here if I don't contribute even a little.

ANTONY
But you are. You are my cute, little assistant.

Antony leaves with those words lingering in the air, Leila's face red as a beet.

INT. BEDROOM/ANTONY'S HOME-NIGHT

Moonlight filters through the drapes of the window, giving what little light it can.

Leila lies on the futon with her eyes on the ceiling.

Beside her is Cy sleeping as if he's had a long day himself.

ANTONY (O.S.)
(behind the room divider)
Leila, are you asleep?

LEILA
Not yet.

ANTONY (O.S.)
Tomorrow morning I'd like to take you shopping for clothes.

LEILA
What? I can't let you do that. I'll save up.

ANTONY (O.S.)
No-No. It will be my treat. I know you were traveling to see your family so it is the least I can do.

LEILA
Really, it's okay.

ANTONY (O.S.)
The only clothes you have are the ones you carry in your bag, right? I wouldn't be a proper employer if I continued to allow that.

LEILA
But-

ANTONY (O.S.)
So tomorrow morning, we will go shopping, and I will not take no for an answer.

LEILA
Well-if you insist.

ANTONY (O.S.)
I do...Good night.



LEILA

Night...

Leila's eyes brim with tears. She tries to muffle the cries. Nearly losing Cy. It broke her. Antony's genuine concern, his invitation into his home. What more can she wish for?

Cy lays his head on her chest, comforting her the best way he knows how.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE-DAY

Leila, Antony, and Cy stroll through town. For a chilly morning, it's bustling with activity.

CUT TO:

INT. CLOTHING STORE/TOWN SQUARE-DAY

Leila and Antony enter a small shop with spring and winter clothing hanging on the walls and around the store. Whatever you need for the incoming winter, it's here.

Behind the counter is a middle-aged shopkeeper named BEATRICE in a tie-dye gown reading a magazine.

BEATRICE

If it isn't Antony. I heard ya were back. What brings ya here? And with a girl?

ANTONY

Don't sound too jealous.

BEATRICE

Hmph.

ANTONY

This is Leila, my new assistant. I need you to help me pick out clothes for her.

BEATRICE

Why didn't ya say so?

Beatrice brushes past Antony embracing Leila like a mom meeting her son's girlfriend for the first time, catching Leila off guard.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)

I am Beatrice. Welcome to my shop.



LEILA
N-Nice to meet you.

BEATRICE
(to Antony)
I heard ya had an assistant from the girls. They really like her.
(to Leila)
Sorry if I sounded rude. Antony enjoys giving me rush orders.

ANTONY
This-This is different.

BEATRICE
Yeah. Yeah.
(to Leila)
Lets see what I can do.

CUT TO:

INT. DRESSING ROOM/CLOTHING STORE/TOWN SQUARE-DAY

Leila stands in front of the full-length mirror adorned in a mid length dress that's as crimson as a flame, looking herself over. From what she can see, maybe slacks and hoods are her thing, though we disagree.

Beatrice enters with more garbs.

BEATRICE
See what ya like.

LEILA
Do you have anything that's not a dress?

BEATRICE
What? Leila, you're a young woman. Ya have to wear dresses. Ya never know who's looking at ya.

LEILA
I doubt anyone.

BEATRICE
Don't say that. Besides, Antony chose these.

LEILA
What?



From the dresses Beatrice picks out an ankle length skirt with a flowery print.

BEATRICE

Try this.

CUT TO:

INT. CLOTHING STORE/TOWN SQUARE-DAY

Antony waits near the counter when he hears footsteps.

Beatrice, entering, says:

BEATRICE

Here she is.

Leila enters, wearing a skirt with a crimson blouse that fits her petite body perfectly. Though sheepish it suits her.

ANTONY

Wow. You look radiant, Leila.

LEILA

T-Thank you.

BEATRICE

She does. Make sure ya keep her in clothes like this. She is a young lady, after all.

ANTONY

Which is why I brought her to you, Beatrice.

BEATRICE

Hmph.

Outside they start to hear a dog barking hysterically.

Leila, forgetting she's wearing a skirt, dashes out the store.

Antony and Beatrice follow behind.

CUT TO:

Outside the shop...

A crowd has gathered.



CROWD

Dirty refugees...Go back to your
country!

Cy continues to bark hysterically across the road at TWO MILITANTS both dressed in midnight blue uniforms, harassing a FATHER of color with a SMALL BOY quivering behind him. Both men carry a GREAT SWORD met only for the militia.

FATHER

I-I'm sorry. Please accept my apology.

MILITANTS

Your 'apology'? Tell yer kid to watch
where 'is going.

FATHER

He didn't mean to bump into you. He
just wasn't lookin' where he was
goin'.

MILITANT

'Eh sure wasnt! Maybe I'll teach 'im
a lesson for yer!

The militant snatches up the boy...

The father hurls himself forward, taking a blow to the chest
by the second soldier.

The soldier raises a hand to the boy.

LEILA

Hey!

Leila moves to step in.

Antony, grabbing her arm, whispers:

ANTONY

Leila...

WHEN...

...Another UNIFORM (early 40s) seizes the militia's hand just
in time.

MILITANT

Commander Sable!

Leila recognizes this man; the deep scar he dons on his eye,

the gold embroidery on his uniform signifying his rank. Her face goes a ghostly white; both hands ball into quivering fists.

ANTONY

Leila, are you all right?

SABLE releases the soldier.

The boy rushes to his father.

MILITANT

Commander, I don't believe these here people have their papers.

FATHER

P-Papers?

SABLE

(to militants)

You're making a scene.

Sable treads off. As he passes Leila, for a split second that seems like a lifetime, their eyes meet.

The two militants follow behind.

Antony still having hold of Leila, she yanks away unable to hold her composure as she dashes off.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM/ANTONY'S HOME-DAY

Leila slams the door, the bottle of emotions she's held in for so long pouring out.

INT. BEDROOM/ANTONY'S HOME-NIGHT

Leila is asleep in bed, face stained with tears.

Cy sleeps beside her. Antony must've let him inside.

There is a knock on the other side of the room divider.

Leila, eyes flickering open, says:

LEILA

Yeah?



ANTONY (O.S.)
Only checking on you. Do you want to talk about what happened today?

LEILA
Not really.

ANTONY (O.S.)
If there is anything you want to talk about-

LEILA
There's not...

Leila turns over, ending that conversation.

INT. CORRIDOR/ANTONY'S HOME-DAY

Antony treads the corridor with one long yawn drawing out dressed ready for the work day. As he passes the medicine room, he sees...

...Leila inside organizing the medicinals.

This is a surprise.

INT. PATIENT ROOM/ANTONY'S HOME-DAY

A MIDDLE-AGED, fidgety man sits on the edge of the hospital bed. If he can't sit, he can't stand. If he can't stand, he can't sit.

Today Leila stands on the sidelines, observing the doctor work.

ANTONY
So you're experiencing inflammation?

MIDDLE-AGED MAN
Yeah! It's jus' been burnin'! I don' know how I got this rash!

ANTONY
Let me take a look. Where is it?

The man stands up and faces away from the doctor.

The patient, yanking his pants down, says:

MIDDLE-AGED MAN
On my bum!

Not what Leila was expecting.

CUT TO:

INT. PATIENT ROOM/ANTONY'S HOME-DAY

This time on the hospital bed is a MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN.

ANTONY

What seems to be the problem?

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

(with swollen tongue)

My tongue is swollen.

ANTONY

Did you eat anything that could have caused this?

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

(with swollen tongue)

I don't think so.

ANTONY

May I ask what your meals have consisted of? It could very well be just an allergic reaction.

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

(with swollen tongue)

Well, I want my husband to start eatin' healthy so I started makin' different dishes. Berries, fruits, dumb cane-

ANTONY

Dumb Cane is poisonous...

MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN

Are you sure?

Leila is dumbfounded.

CUT TO:

INT. PATIENT ROOM/ANTONY'S HOME-DAY

A YOUNG WOMAN sits on the hospital bed, a YOUNG MAN standing beside her.



ANTONY

What are your other symptoms?

YOUNG WOMAN

Nausea, fatigue, I've been urinating more than usual.

YOUNG MAN

Tell him how you hate your favorite foods now.

YOUNG WOMAN

And that!

ANTONY

Sounds like you could be pregnant.

Same time:

YOUNG WOMAN

What?

YOUNG MAN

Huh?

ANTONY

These sound like symptoms of a pregnancy.

YOUNG MAN

...But we've never had relations...

Leila mouths 'Yikes'.

CUT TO:

INT. PATIENT ROOM/ANTONY'S HOME-DUSK

An elderly woman named MRS. DRUMMOND sits in a wheelchair.

MRS. DRUMMOND

My leg's been hurtin', and I don' know why.

ANTONY

How long has it-

MRS. DRUMMOND

(hard of hearing)

What?



Antony moves in closer.

ANTONY

(louder)

How long has your leg hurt?

MRS. DRUMMOND

I don' know. Since it's been cold.

ANTONY

Do you think-

MRS. DRUMMOND

Say that egen!

ANTONY

(louder)

Do you think it's because of your arthritis?

MRS. DRUMMOND

Why would I think that?

ANTONY

You have arthritis, and the cold can make it worse.

MRS. DRUMMOND

What? I didn't hear you!

ANTONY

Mrs. Drummond, is your hearing going bad?

MRS. DRUMMOND

(hard of hearing)

What?!

INT. WAITING ROOM/ANTONY'S HOME-NIGHT

Mrs. Drummond's TEEN GRANDSON helps her to the door as Leila opens it.

LEILA

Good night, Mrs. Drummond.

MRS. DRUMMOND

(hard of hearing)

What?!

The teen escorts his grandmother out.



Leila closes the door, stepping away...

WHEN...

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK!

Leila opens the door to find...

...a FAMILY OF SIX in the pouring rain: A MOTHER and her TWO YOUNG KIDS, and a WOUNDED MAN held up by TWO MEN, his eye swollen, his shirt bloodied. The mother's skirt is torn, the two men's faces bruised.

MOTHER
(with Spanish accent)
Please help us!

Leila freezes like water below freezing temperatures seeing brown people hearing their accents: refugees.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Please! We need help!

Antony, dashing out, asks:

ANTONY
What is it-

Antony, seeing the family and an injured man, says:

ANTONY (CONT'D)
Come in!

Leila steps aside, the two men struggling to get the wounded man inside as he cries out.

ANTONY (CONT'D)
Get him to the room!

CUT TO:

Leila in her room, hurriedly packing whatever belongings.

Cy tilts his head.

ANTONY (O.S.)
Leila? Leila?

Antony enters her room just as confused as Cy.



ANTONY
What-What are you doing?

LEILA
Leaving.

ANTONY
Why?

LEILA
You have immigrants in your waiting
room.

ANTONY
I know, but that doesn't answer-

Antony puts it together.

ANTONY (CONT'D)
Leila, are you an immigrant?

Leila looks back at him as if she's seen a ghost, though
continues packing.

ANTONY (CONT'D)
Leila, I need your help.

LEILA
I can't be here.

ANTONY
There is a man dying in the other
room.

LEILA
I have to leave.

ANTONY
I need you here.

LEILA
I have to go.

ANTONY
Leila-

LEILA
I can't be here!

Leila, turning to Antony, says:

LEILA (CONT'D)

When Hugo told me what happened to my mother because of what we were, I fell to my knees, dug my nails into the gravel until they bled and screamed until I lost my voice. I wanted the devil in me to wake up. I stopped feeling. Pain. Happiness. Empathy. Nothing. Just emptiness. I didn't have to say anything. Hugo knew. He would look into my eyes and say the flame in my soul was no longer lit. The devil in me was awake. That's when Hugo started to teach me martial arts and when I found Cy. Then I lost Hugo. Now you want me to lose the last piece of string holding me together?

ANTONY

Leila, I would never let anything happen to Cy.

LEILA

It's not up to you! It's not up to me!

ANTONY

What you have been through is trauma. Trauma. And instead of giving up, you are here. You survived. You are a survivor.

Leila isn't able to hold back the tears as she drops to the floor cradling herself.

ANTONY (CONT'D)

And it's time to come back to life.

Antony drops down beside her and wraps his arms around her as she lets out everything she's held in for far too long...

CUT TO:

Leila enters the waiting room seeing the other two men comforting the children-both sniveling, rubbing their puffy eyes.

LEILA

(to the kids)

What are your names?

The kids too shaken to speak up, one of the others says:



MAN

(in Spanish accent)
The lil one is Rosita. The boy Miguel,
and María their mother.

LEILA

And you are?

PEDRO (PEDRO)

Pedro, and my brother here is Juan.

Juan stands in the corner brooding, arms crossed.

LEILA

(to Pedro)

What happened?

Pedro lips become airtight.

LEILA (CONT'D)

You're immigrants, aren't you?

Pedro and Juan glance at one another, both on edge.

LEILA (CONT'D)

It's okay. Doctor Stroud won't say a
word.

Juan goes for his pocket, Leila noticing, though doesn't
flinch. Pedro puts a hand on Juan's.

PEDRO

She wants to help.

Juan takes his hand away.

PEDRO (CONT'D)

We crossed over the river on our way
to a sanctuary when we were attacked.

LEILA

By militants?

PEDRO

No. People on the road.

JUAN

They wanted to kill us! They almost
killed him.

LEILA

Doctor Stroud is going to save him...

JUAN

...He's a brother. A father...He don't deserve this.

(referring to kids)

They don't deserve this.

LEILA

He's going to be okay. I promise.

CUT TO:

Leila hands the children a cup of water and treats on a tray as Cy embraces their comforting strokes.

Antony walks in.

Pedro and Juan rise to their feet, expecting the worse.

ANTONY

He has a few broken ribs and a punctured lung, but he will be all right.

The two men sigh in relief and embrace, a weight lifted off their shoulders. Their eyes brim with tears, though it didn't matter. Not in this moment.

ANTONY (CONT'D)

Um-Leila, may I have a word?

Leila follows Antony toward the medicinal room.

In the medicinal room:

ANTONY (CONT'D)

They're refugees.

LEILA

I know. They're lucky to be alive.

ANTONY

What are we going to do?

Leila raises a brow.

ANTONY (CONT'D)

They can't stay here.

LEILA

You're kicking them out? You helped them now you're done with them? You can't just throw an injured man and his kids into the street.

ANTONY

But if the militia finds them here-

LEILA

What? What do you think will happen to you? A fine! If the militia finds us, they will fine you and do whatever they want with us.

ANTONY

You were just ready to pack up and leave!

LEILA

They find them, they find me...

ANTONY

That's your excuse? Because I did my part!

LEILA

You have a man with a collapsing lung and a fractured rib that's pointing out like a compass!

ANTONY

I did my part!

LEILA

What about those two babies?

ANTONY

You were just about to leave those babies! Suddenly you have morals? You are finding strength somewhere to help them now with a packed bag? An hour ago you didn't care what happened to that family!

Leila is taken aback.

ANTONY (CONT'D)

What do you want me to do? What do you want me to do? Because if it is not them, then it is us!

LEILA

"Us"? You mean them...Me...

Leila is disconcerted. The doctor she looked up to-the man that saved her life. Is this him?

ANTONY

We do not choose the world we live in.

LEILA

Yeah, but you can choose to do something about it...

JUAN (O.S.)

Rosita?!

Rosita barges into the medicinal room, puppy eyes looking up at Leila, holding her cup up.

Behind her Juan rushes inside, noticing you can cut the tension in the room with a blade.

JUAN

We got a safe house. If we can just move our brother, we can be gone.

LEILA

Where is it?

JUAN

Couple towns over.

LEILA

You can't carry him that far.

Leila looks to Antony. What a stare down.

Antony gives in.

ANTONY

Beatrice-She can help.

LEILA

How?

ANTONY

She can help.

EXT. BACKWOODS-NIGHT

Though the moon hovers high, the forest shields any light



from reaching the surface.

Leila, Antony, and the refugees stand idly. The air is so nippy, we can see their breath.

Pedro carries his brother, who's unconscious perhaps due to the pain medication.

Hearing the crackling of leaves, Leila puts a hand to the hilt of her sword as...

...Beatrice enters, arms wrapped around her for warmth.

BEATRICE

Se'le down. It's me.

ANTONY

(to Beatrice)

Why are you alone?

BEATRICE

There're too many of them. It's better this way.

LEILA

Will you be okay?

BEATRICE

This isn't my first rodeo, but we should move. We'll use the trees to hide our tracks 'til we reach my shop. I reached out to my contacts, and they'll meet us when they can to get you to the sanctuary. Your husband will have time to recover enough for you to get there.

MARÍA

Thank you. Thank you so much, Ms. Beatrice.

BEATRICE

Don't thank me yet.

ANTONY

(to Beatrice)

Be careful.

BEATRICE

Like I said, it's not my first rodeo. Follow me and stay low. Shouldn't be

(MORE)



BEATRICE (CONT'D)
 much militants out, but I know their
 patrols. We'll be okay.

LEILA
 Should I come with you?

BEATRICE
 No, dear. You get Antony back home.
 Looks like he'll drop over the minute
 I finish this sentence.

Dark circles have formed around Antony's eyes, and his legs
 are ready to give out. Surgery must've taken a toll on him.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)
 Don't worry about us. Worry about
 getting him home.
 (to family)
 Okay. Follow me. Keep the kids quiet.

Beatrice with the family behind her vanishes into the forest,
 the crackling of leaves vanishing with them.

INT. BEDROOM/ANTONY'S HOME-NIGHT

There is a soft melody of cicadas outside the window.

Leila enters wearing a robe, her hair damped. She strides
 toward the bed, putting aside her blade.

Cy follows right beside her.

Antony, behind the divider, says:

ANTONY (O.S.)
 Leila, are you awake?

LEILA
 Yeah.

ANTONY (O.S.)
 May I speak to you about today?

LEILA
 Beatrice was able to get them back to
 her shop, right?

ANTONY (O.S.)
 Not that.

LEILA

Then...

There is a thump against the room divider, taking that as Antony sitting against it.

ANTONY (O.S.)

About the refugees-

LEILA

They're people.

ANTONY (O.S.)

I know, but it's illegal to harbor them.

LEILA

'Illegal to harbor them'. You're harboring one right now...People are running from a country that's at war, there is nowhere to go, no food to eat, no water to drink, and 'it's illegal to harbor them'. We try to get away from that, come here, and are terrorized by people like you, and that's how you see us. As illegals. What a funny time we're in...

A tinge of stillness fills the air.

ANTONY (O.S.)

Leila, are you from Syra?

It's as though a looming shadow hovers over her; a secret that overshadows her own presence. Leila walks over to the divider and sits against it.

LEILA

...I wasn't going to visit family. I wasn't planning to travel across country with family. My only family is Cy now.

Antony, afraid to ask, says:

ANTONY (O.S.)

'Now'?

LEILA

Hugo, he was my mentor. No, he was...

FLASHBACK-EXT. TOWN-DAY

The militia stands in the center of town with a lingering, menacing presence.

The TOWNSFOLKS watch with bated breath, remorseful for what's to come.

LEILA (V.O.)

I didn't meet Hugo in the best of circumstances. In fact it was the worst day of my life.

REFUGEES sit huddled together, some clutching their quivering children, some with their brown skin caked with dirt.

Sable stands beside a man dressed in a suit, perhaps the MAYOR. It's Sable all right. He dons the same scar under the same eye.

To the side is HUGO (mid 30s), a tall, fit man dressed in a similar uniform to Sable. Even as he gazes at the petrified refugees, he's nonchalant, arms are crossed.

SABLE

(to Mayor)

Where are the other illegal immigrants?

MAYOR

T-This is it.

SABLE

Hm...

(to militants)

Look around.

The mayor opens his mouth to object. Then again it's best not to.

CUT TO:

The militants disperse into homes, tossing over any and every piece of furniture in their way. Glass is shattering, chairs are knocked over, bed frames are tossed over. You name it.

CUT TO:

SABLE (CONT'D)

(to townsfolk)

If any of you are hiding illegal
(MORE)



SABLE (CONT'D)
immigrants, speak up now!

Sable, pointing to REMORSEFUL TOWNPEOPLE, says:

SABLE (CONT'D)
Like these good town folks here.

Those townspeople look away from the disgusted eyes of their fellow neighbors.

CUT TO:

INT. BELOW A FLOORBOARD/HOUSE/TOWN-CONTINUOUS

A MOTHER holds her ELEMENTARY-AGED CHILD, a brown skin girl, both shaking uncontrollably, the girl's face stained with tears.

They hear above them the creaking of the floorboards.

The mother covers the child's mouth with bated breath.

WHEN...

...The floorboard opens, light pours in, and the mother is pulled up by her hair as she cries out.

CHILD
(with accent)
Mummy!

MOTHER
(with accent)
Leila!

The militants jerk a YOUNG LEILA up from the floorboard.

The mother sobs as she tries to get to her daughter as the militants drag her up from the floorboard.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
Let her go! You hear me? Let her go!

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWN-CONTINUOUS

Sable and Hugo turn toward the direction of the screaming.

CUT TO:

Sable entering the room.

MILITANT
 (to Sable)
 Captain!

MOTHER
 Please! Please give her to me!

YOUNG LEILA
 Mummy!

The captain yanks Leila from the militants like a sack of trash and drags her outside the house as her mother cries for her.

CUT TO:

Sable dragging a kicking and screaming Leila to the huddle of refugees.

The mother breaks free from the militants and dashes to Leila, snatching her up.

Hugo looks at Leila, who is the youngest among the refugees, watching her clutch onto her mother.

SABLE
 (to Mayor)
 I would think twice about harboring
 illegal immigrants.

MAYOR
 Y-Yes, sir.

SABLE
 (to militia)
 Move out.

MILITANTS
 (to refugees)
 Up!

The soldiers force the refugees up and lead them out of the town.

MOTHER
 (Sable)
 You cannot make us go back! Please! At
 least let my daughter stay!



A SOLDIER shoves the mother forward.

SOLDIER

Move!

MOTHER

(to Sable)

Please!

SOLDIER

I said move!

EXT. WOODLAND-DAY

One behind the other, the refugees are led by soldiers, who surround them from all four corners.

Though leaves crackle beneath their feet, the silence is deafening.

Young Leila, clutching her mother's hand, whimpers:

YOUNG LEILA

Mummy...

MOTHER

It will be okay, baby.

(to Sable)

What are you going to do with us?

Sable doesn't acknowledge her.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

(to Sable)

I do not care what you do to me, but she is a child!

SOLDIER

Do not speak to the Captain, peasant!

Mother, clutching onto Hugo's arm, pleads:

MOTHER

Please! She is a baby!

Hugo is taken aback. It's something about her eyes; they're full of fear. Emotion. Not for herself, but for her child.

A soldier shoves the mother to the ground.



YOUNG LEILA

Mummy!

Another soldier holds Leila back.

MOTHER

There are innocent people in this war!
My daughter is innocent in this war!

SOLDIER

Get up!

MOTHER

We are people! We are humans! We
bleed!

SOLDIER

Get up!

The soldier pulls her up.

MOTHER

If you make us go back, we will be
dead by the end of the week...

SOLDIER

Move!

The soldier pushes her forward.

The young mother takes Leila's hand, and they push on.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)

(to Hugo)

End of the week. They won't make it to
the end of the night.

The soldier chuckles and off he goes.

This leaves a bitter taste in Hugo's mouth. He's used to this
by now, but the eyes of that mother. That child.

The militia and refugees reach a shore that borders a river
with tempestuous waves. Not even little Leila can get across
it safely.

SABLE

This is sovereign land. I suggest you
remain here until the waves calm.



ELDERLY REFUGEE (ELDERLY REFUGEE)

(to Sable)

You-You can't expect us to cross this?

A soldier jabs the elderly refugee, who collapses to the surface nearly unconscious. The other refugees flock around the immigrant.

Sable and his men leave the refugees stranded as the cool breeze brushes against their skin.

Hugo glances back at Leila, who looks right back at him...

CUT TO:

The sky is tinged with a reddish orange. The chirping from the birds has nearly vanished.

Some soldiers rest on tree stumps polishing their blades, others stand idly around.

Hugo, walking up to Sable, says:

HUGO

Captain, the girl-

Sable, polishing his own sword, replies:

SABLE

What about her?

HUGO

I think we should take her back.

SABLE

...We have orders...

HUGO

Yes, sir, but she's a kid.

SABLE

You would go against orders, Commander?

HUGO

...No, sir.

SABLE

Good. Anything else?



HUGO

No, sir.

SABLE

Dismissed.

Hugo turns and walks off with a boulder weighing down on his chest.

CUT TO:

The moon hovers in the black sky, though luminous specks are imbedded in it.

The young mother gazes at the tumultuous river, listening to the roaring waves. She hears the crackling of leaves behind her and turns toward it to find...

...Hugo.

MOTHER

You are alone.

HUGO

Yes, but not for long. The militia-
they never planned to let you all
cross...

This isn't surprising to her, though it doesn't make it any easier to hear it.

MOTHER

In my country, we are taught that the
highest aim in life is happiness
through pleasure. Not luxury, not
sensuality but through moderate
pleasure whether it is wanting a home,
friendship, or...

Mother looks over at Leila, who sleeps next to the campfire near the other refugees.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I want her to live. To grow old. To
live a fulfilled life with no regrets.
Please, take her. She doesn't deserved
this. No one does, but my daughter-my
daughter doesn't deserve this.

Hugo looks over at the young child, her face at ease, though stained with tears. He's no longer conflicted. That's not the

problem here. What he's about to do goes against every principle he was taught. What he's about to do goes against his very own country.

CUT TO:

The young mother stands in front of Leila, her eyes brimming with tears. Leila has no idea what's happening.

Hugo just watches in silence at a distance. This is heartbreaking even for him.

YOUNG LEILA

W-What?

MOTHER

It is okay. This kind man is going to take you to a nice town. Like the one we were in.

YOUNG LEILA

Aren't you coming?

MOTHER

I will be there shortly. I'm going to help the others get back home.

LEILA

But-

MOTHER

It will be okay! Just wait for me.

Hugo looks over his shoulder.

HUGO

We must go.

MOTHER

Go, okay? I am right behind you, baby.

In the distance they hear the crackling of leaves.

HUGO

We need to move.

MOTHER

(to Leila)

Take all my love, my love. I shall see you soon.



Mother gently kisses Leila's forehead, knowing this is goodbye.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Now go with Mr. Hugo.

He walks up to Leila, takes her hand, and gives her mother a reassuring nod. They flee into the wilderness, a young Leila looking over her shoulder one last time.

SEVERAL SOLDIERS enter from the opposite direction, stepping into the faint moonlight, swords in hand.

The refugees stir, waking up to the familiar presence.

The young mother faces them with such resolve.

In the background, the waves continue to roar.

CUT TO:

Hugo leading Leila through the forest.

Leila yanks her hand from his and stops.

HUGO

What are you doing?

YOUNG LEILA

I want my mummy.

Hugo doesn't know what to say. He can command an army, but to comfort a child?

HUGO

We need to keep moving.

YOUNG LEILA

I want my mummy!

Hugo looks down at the young child with a menacing look-like a predator observing his prey.

HUGO

As of today, you're no longer a child.
You're not a Syran, and until you rid
of that accent, you do not speak.
Understand?

They stand there in total silence, Leila's defiant eyes brimming with tears.



MONTAGE:

Hugo leads little Leila through the lands as quickly as he can, considerate of her twig-like legs. He now dons casual clothing like her, blending in as a simple traveler.

LEILA (V.O.)

We were nomads. We didn't stay in one place for too long. Me being an undocumented immigrant, Hugo branded a traitor by his country. We were on the run, and at times, they caught up. What's worse, they would send Hugo's comrades.

CUT TO:

Hugo stands ready to defend himself, blade extended out.

Young Leila is hidden behind a tree, gazing at him anxiously.

A distance away is an OFFICER dressed in a similar military uniform Hugo once wore. He too has his blade extended out. The way it trembles, we can tell this isn't what he wants.

HUGO

You don't have to do this.

OFFICER

I'm sorry, Commander. They have my family...

HUGO

I'm sorry, Luke.

LUKE (LUKE)

Me too...

Luke bolts toward Hugo.

The two exchange swift blows...

WHEN...

...Hugo plunges his sword deep into him.

HUGO

I'm so sorry.

Leila just watches from a distance, her heart broken for Hugo.



CUT TO:

In the woodland...

Hugo teaches a TEEN LEILA martial arts, specifically Wing Chun mixed with Self Defense.

He then picks up two kali staffs, tosses her one, and gives her a lesson in kali, or simply sword techniques.

LEILA (V.O.)

We were always on the move, but eventually we were able to just breathe.

Hugo, seeing Leila out of breath, says:

HUGO

Rest.

Leila trots to her water jug and takes a swig.

In a bush she hears the rustling of leaves. She takes a look inside and finds a frightened PUPPY, a husky no more than six months old.

HUGO (CONT'D)

What do we have here?

Leila, with Hugo's accent, says:

LEILA

Someone abandoned him?

HUGO

Looks like it.

LEILA

How can someone do that?

(to the puppy)

It's okay, little guy. I'm here.

Leila picks him up tenderly, his fur stained in dirt, his ribs protruding through his skin. She takes a piece of bread from her sack and feeds it to him.

He happily nibbles on it.

LEILA (CONT'D)

There you go. It's okay.

(to Hugo)



We're keeping him.

HUGO

I didn't say a word, but you are fully responsible for him. He will be depending on you.

Leila doesn't respond. The comfort of his warmth within her arms-she's misses this feeling.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM-DAWN

Leila sleeps under her comforter as cozy as can be, Cy asleep with an arm over her face.

LEILA (V.O.)

Years passed, and it seemed the militia had given up on us.

Hugo, hovering over Leila, says:

HUGO

Are you asleep?

Leila stirs, pushes Cy's arm off her, and opens an eye.

LEILA

What do you think?

HUGO

It's a good day to train.

LEILA

I don't think tomorrow will be any different.

HUGO

I will see you in one hour.

Hugo exits.

Leila side eyes Cy, who hasn't moved a muscle.

EXT. PORCH-DAY

Leila and Cy dash out the chestnut cabin, a flourishing forest surrounding it, no civilization in sight.



LEILA

Come on, Cy! Hopefully he forgets
about us!

They reach a garden, which includes PEONIES that she waters
with a water can.

LEILA (CONT'D)

I know you hate it when we have to get
up early, but we have to water the
flowers in the mornings. Diseases are
more likely to begin during the night
on wet leaf surfaces.

Cy falls to his side uninterested.

Leila takes out garden gloves from her back pocket as she
says:

LEILA (CONT'D)

I need to pull up these new weeds
today. They're tender and young now.
The mature weeds extract a lot of
nutrients and moisture from the soil.
Goodness, I hope he forgets about us.

Before she knows it, a shadow looms over her. She doesn't
need to turn around to know who it is.

HUGO

Did you think I would forget about
you?

LEILA

A girl can hope, can't she?

EXT. FOREST-DAY

Hugo practices sword fighting dressed in a uniform similar to
Wing Chun. It's the sword Leila carries in the present. His
strikes are swift-his footwork smooth.

Leila enters dressed in the same uniform carrying her staff.

Cy trots beside her.

HUGO

No sword?

LEILA

No thank you.



HUGO

If you can use a staff, you can use a blade.

LEILA

I'd rather not.

Hugo, trading in his blade for a staff, says:

HUGO

Leila, I teach you everything I know in order for you to use what you can. If I teach you five hundred techniques and you use five, so be it.

LEILA

Fine, Hugo. Should I go get my sword then?

HUGO

No, no. Gives a chance to spar now.

LEILA

Wha-

Hugo dashes toward Leila deflecting her staff, exchanging prompt blows in Largo Mano long range, the space between them shrinking.

HUGO

Watch the distance!

Leila scatters back, the sparring continuing until Hugo lands a blow on her sparring hand. He drops his staff, the two engaging in hand-to-hand combat until he tosses her onto the grassy surface.

LEILA

Ow...

HUGO

What did I tell you about falling? Slap the ground, tuck your chin in, spread your legs, and breathe out.

LEILA

You caught me off guard!

Hugo, extending his hand to her and grinning, says:



HUGO

Then should we go again?

Leila is not too pleased.

EXT. PORCH-DUSK

The sky is tinged with a reddish orange, the chirping of cicadas are all around.

Leila and Hugo sit on the top step, drinking soup and eating bread while enjoying the scenery. Cy is at the bottom, eating from his own bowl.

HUGO

You know, you did good today.

LEILA

I took a beating.

HUGO

Fall down seven times. Stand up eight.
You're still learning, and you're
going against me.

Hugo playfully shoves his shoulder into her.

She shakes her head in disapproval, though grinning.

HUGO (CONT'D)

You were discomposd today.

LEILA

You threw me around all day!

HUGO

Are you saying I upset you because I
cannot upset you. Only you can upset
yourself.

LEILA

Here we go.

HUGO

It is true. People can try to hurt
you. Try to break you, but you control
how you feel. Stoicism teaches us that
our lives are brief and how we must be
strong and in control of ourselves. It
teaches us that we cannot control
external forces, though we can control

(MORE)



HUGO (CONT'D)

our responses. It doesn't help us to seek an understanding of the world, but to overcome destructive emotions.

LEILA

I'm trying.

HUGO

What have I always taught you?

LEILA

'Always be yourself, express yourself, have faith in yourself.'

HUGO

You are you. That is good enough.

LEILA

Does that mean I'll beat you one day?

HUGO

No, it doesn't.

This tickles Leila.

EXT. WOODLAND-DAY

Leila and Hugo walk on a dirt path, Hugo carrying a fishing creel basket, Cy running ahead after squirrels.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER/WOODLAND-DAY

Cy enjoys himself in the calm river as Leila and Hugo stand in the center of it, slacks folded up, bare hands ready to catch some fish.

HUGO

Now watch again.

Hugo like an eagle after its prey dives his hand into the water, whipping out a colossal fish.

LEILA

Impressive. Now you watch.

HUGO

Oh, I'm watching.



Leila dives her hand in, brings it back up...empty.

Hugo falls over laughing.

LEILA

Now hold on! That was a warm up!

Leila tries again, and again, and again until she raises her hand, a slender fish slipping from her fingers.

LEILA (CONT'D)

What am I doing wrong?

Cy ambles toward them, fish in mouth.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Really, Cy?

HUGO

Put it in the basket, Cy.

Cy trots over to the basket on shore and drops it in.

HUGO (CONT'D)

(to Leila)

Come here. Now be still.

The two stand still like statues, observing the current of the water below them as the wind howls in a whisper. A school of fish start to swim around their ankles...

WHEN...

...Hugo's hand dives into the water, Leila following his lead, both bringing back up fish in tow.

Hugo looks at her like a proud papa.

HUGO (CONT'D)

You did well, Leila. I'm proud of you.

Hugo pats her head.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM-DAY

Hugo lies in bed under a sheet, his face a sickly white. He's lost weight. Though through it all, he smiles.

Leila and Cy sit beside him, watching over him.



She wrings out a wet towel and places it on his forehead.

Cy whimpers, climbing in bed with him.

LEILA (V.O.)

I lived a good life. I can't say I didn't. Hugo made sure of that, but he- he didn't get that. He lived his life for me, risking it, choosing me over the men and women he fought beside everyday.

PRESENT-INT. BEDROOM/ANTONY'S HOME-DAY

This is a lot for Antony to process, more so because of what this all means. Not just for her. Not just for him.

ANTONY

Is he...still with us?

CUT TO:

Leila's side of the divider...

Leila shakes her head 'no'.

LEILA

No. I always thought nothing could hurt him. Like he was made of brick or something.

Leila, swallowing herself in self-pity with a chuckle, says:

LEILA (CONT'D)

But I guess not even the strongest man can defeat pneumonia while on the run, huh?

ANTONY (O.S.)

Leila, I'm so sorry...Hearing this is difficult to believe. We never heard anything about this.

The audacity of this man of privilege.

LEILA

Your Prime Minister didn't tell you? Your men slaughtered my people. My mother! What? Does that not fit into your patriotic narrative?!

ANTONY (O.S.)

I did not mean it like that. I-

LEILA

Your country pretends to be this great nation yet you turn your backs on the people who need you the most!

ANTONY (O.S.)

I am so very sorry...

Although the divider separates the two, Leila can feel Antony's genuine remorse. Of course he didn't know about this. No one did.

Leila just sits there, allowing the tears to fall as Cy puts his head on her lap.

INT. BEDROOM/ANTONY'S HOME-DAY

Outside the window there is the sweet tune of birds.

Leila yawns looking over at the clock. It reads "TEN A.M." She shoots out of bed evidently late for the day.

INT. WAITING ROOM/ANTONY'S HOME-DAY

Antony sweeps the floor dressed in casual wear.

Leila scurries in, flattening the creases in her uniform, and says:

LEILA

Why didn't you wake me? Why don't we have any patients?

ANTONY

I placed a closed sign outside!

LEILA

Wha-

ANTONY

We are going to use the day for ourselves. We can do anything you'd like. I was thinking herb picking.

LEILA

'Herb picking'? That sounds...wonderful...



MONTAGE

EXT. WOODLAND-DAY

Leila and Antony in lightweight jackets under the pale blue sky pick herbs, Antony more elated than Leila, though she's content with the doctor teaching her about herb medicine.

He points out herbs describing them enthusiastically, Leila hanging on to every word.

CUT TO:

INT. MED ROOM-DAY

Leila and Antony grind the herbs into powder in ceramic mortars, Leila learning as Antony teaches, the two seemingly growing closer as they joke, laugh and enjoy each other's company.

INT. BEDROOM/ANTONY'S HOME-NIGHT

Leila and Antony sip on a hot beverage, a cloud of steam rising from their coffee mugs.

Cy's beside Leila devouring his dinner.

LEILA

It's true! You were meant for this.

ANTONY

You think so? My parents taught me everything I know. When I told them I was opening my very own clinic outside of town, you would think they would have heard the words "sailing" and "around the world".

LEILA

Your parents are doctors?

ANTONY

My mother is. My father tries to stay out of her way.

Leila fights back a smile, Antony giving in.

ANTONY (CONT'D)

I want to help those that needed it. The wealthy, they are well taken care of. The poor-they are barely looked

(MORE)



ANTONY (CONT'D)

at. They at least deserve their basic needs met. Basic healthcare.

LEILA

And you moved to one of the poorest towns.

ANTONY

There are plenty of physicians in the bigger towns, do you not think?

LEILA

Indeed, Doctor. Seems like your parents did well with you.

ANTONY

Ha-Yes...H-Hugo and your mother did well with you too.

Leila looks over at Antony, taken aback by such words, though overwhelmed by the heartfelt meaning behind them.

Antony glances away, his warm cheeks flushing red.

Those were words our heroine needed. More than anything he could have given her.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE-DAY

A flurry of snow falls, giving the terrain a lustrous flicker. It's finally winter! Civilians move about leisurely not allowing a little flurry to put an end to their day.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST-DAY

Leila practices her kali against Cy, in her hand a kali stick.

Leila, swinging at Cy, shouts playfully:

LEILA

You're open, Cy!

Cy dodges Leila, barking vehemently, the two sparring, more so just enjoying the moment.

Antony enters with an amused expression on his face.



Leila, without pausing her sparring, says:

LEILA (CONT'D)
Ah, Doctor Stroud, how may I help you?

ANTONY
Watching you dance with that little
stick of yours is enough for now.

LEILA
...It's called kali-

ANTONY
Wonderful-When you're finished, let us
go see Beatrice.

LEILA
Beatrice?

Antony raises a brow, Leila taking the hint.

LEILA (CONT'D)
Is everyone okay?

ANTONY
I don't know, but we should find out.

Leila nods, yes.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE/TOWN-DAY

Leila, Cy, and Antony stroll into the town square only to
find something's off. No boisterous movement, only civilians
lined up in front of stores, hands fidgeting. All of their
focus seems to be...

...Down the street on the militia.

Leila pushes her way toward the front of the crowd only to
find...

...Sable following Beatrice into her shop.

LEILA
Antony...

ANTONY
I know. Stay here.

Antony zig-zags through the crowd only to be stopped by it.

CITIZENS

I don't believe it...Why are they here?...What's happened?

Leila watches with bated breath...

WHEN...

...Sable exits the shop alone.

SABLE

(to militia)

Move out!

The militia marches out of town, their gloomy presence still lingering in the air.

The civilians don't know what to make of this, though their eyes fall on Beatrice's shop.

Antony and Leila, and Cy beside her, enter the shop.

CUT TO:

Inside Beatrice's shop...

Antony, Leila, and Cy stop at the door.

Beatrice leans over the counter, taking in a well-deserved deep breath.

BEATRICE

Close the door.

Leila closes the door just as nosey neighbors give courage to pry.

LEILA

Beatrice...Are they-

BEATRICE

Safe.

Leila heaves a sigh as if a boulder has been slung off her chest.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)

This wasn't the first shop those bastards stopped in.



LEILA

Why were they here?

BEATRICE

Lookin' for refugees like they ain't got nothin' better to do.

LEILA

Beatrice...

BEATRICE

Hey, it's me. This comes with it.

ANTONY

She tries to help as many undocumented immigrants as she can. Get them to where they need to be.

LEILA

That's admirable.

ANTONY

And dangerous.

BEATRICE

They're people, Antony. What would you do different?

Seeing as how it was Antony who saved their lives, nothing.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)

Need to be more careful. 'at's all. We need to take care of our people, whether they are from a different country or not. What kind of world have we made?

Antony isn't convinced, though Leila is. She has admiration for the shop owner. Hugo comes to mind. Yes...admiration.

Antony looks over at Leila, feeling the impact of those words now; they hit home for her.

LEILA

Pedro and his family-where are they?

BEATRICE

In another shop. In the basement.

LEILA

We need to move them.

BEATRICE

Why? They're safe. The militia's gone.

LEILA

They don't come into town unless they have a reason to.

BEATRICE

Oh, they come anytime the birds chirp.

LEILA

Not him...

Beatrice is perplexed, but the man in the embroidery uniform comes to mind. *Him*. Her facial expression goes grim.

BEATRICE

In the store behind me. In the basement.

LEILA

We need to move them to the sanctuary.

BEATRICE

How did this happen?

LEILA

It doesn't matter now. We need to move them tonight.

ANTONY

That's-that's not possible. Do you hear yourself?

LEILA

Yes I do. And I'm also hearing that you don't want to help. So stay put.

ANTONY

I didn't-

LEILA

(to Beatrice)

I'll be back at sun down.

Leila, walking to the door, says:

LEILA (CONT'D)

Beatrice?

BEATRICE

Yes, dear?

LEILA

Thank you.

Leila exits, Cy behind her.

INT. BEDROOM/ANTONY'S HOME-DUSK

Leila sits on the floor sipping her bowl of soup, Cy beside her chowing down his own meal. She's dressed ready for the night, her blade laying horizontally in front of her.

The lights are low. The little sunlight there is filters through the drapes.

Behind the room divider...

ANTONY (O.S.)

Leila?

Leila hears him, though doesn't let that take her away from her soup.

ANTONY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I never met to insinuate that I would allow you to go alone.

LEILA

This isn't your fight.

ANTONY (O.S.)

Neither is it yours.

LEILA

Antony-

ANTONY (O.S.)

I know...which is why I will not talk you out of it. I will go with you.

LEILA

Ha-and what is your reason for that, Doctor?

ANTONY (O.S.)

I cannot have my blooming rose going off on her own, can I?

Leila looks over at the room divider astounded by his

flirtatious yet heartfelt words. Though he is the traveling, romantic doctor, his words seem sincere.

LEILA

You're needed here.

Behind the room divider on Antony's side...

Antony sits against the divider. He takes in everything he's learned of Leila-her story, their travels, her love for helping his patients.

ANTONY

Maybe, but I need to be by your side this time. Heh-it is only fair, right?

CUT TO:

Leila's side of the divider...

LEILA

Thank you, Antony, but you don't owe me anything. You've done more for me than I can ask.

Silence surrounds the two even with such a divider separating the couple.

ANTONY (O.S.)

Leila, may I open the divider?

This catches Leila off guard. Is he coming to her side of the room? Is she supposed to go to his? Why is she on edge?

LEILA

Y-Yeah.

Leila crawls to the divider, and it opens.

She has never seen Antony's room. Not even a glimpse. It's simple. Though it's cloaked in darkness, she can make out a twin sized bed in the corner and a nightstand. Not much else.

Perhaps there's more, though Leila is preoccupied with Antony just a feet away from her face. His dark eyes pierce her.

Antony, breaking the silence, says:

ANTONY

Hi.



LEILA

Hi.

A moment goes by until...

ANTONY

I know I cannot change your mind, and I won't try, but I want you to know that I stand with you with whatever decision you make.

LEILA

Antony, please don't risk your life for me. I'm no one.

ANTONY

You saved my life. You saved Pedro and his family. If you were not here, I-I do not think I would have done...

LEILA

Yes you would have. Don't cut yourself short. You saved a life too. More than one...

A moment of silence seems like a lifetime between the two as neither can turn away from the other.

ANTONY

I hope I am not being too forward or impolite, but...

Leila raises a brow ready for his following words...

WHEN...

...Antony leans in, more than likely awaiting her reaction, and his lips press against hers.

Leila doesn't back way. In fact she accepts them, though comes to her senses, leans back, her cheeks flushing as crimson as the sky at sunset.

Antony, grinning, says:

ANTONY (CONT'D)

Shall we go accompany the family to the sanctuary?

LEILA

Y-Yeah.

EXT. BACK OF A SHOP-NIGHT

Leila and Antony stand under the moonless, pale sky behind a faltering old shop. Though she usually carries her kali stick, today she carries her sword.

The door creaks open. The family exits the shop, Pedro carrying his unconscious, bandaged brother on his back.

Cy recognizing the kids snuggles up to them, seemingly making them less afraid.

Beatrice and TWO, MALE SHOP KEEPERS enter, one holding a full brown paper bag.

BEATRICE

Antony, Leila-this is Jason and his husband, David.

The portly man extends his hand to Antony then Leila.

JASON (JASON)

Jason.

DAVID too extends his hand to Antony then Leila.

DAVID

(to Beatrice)

They can stay, ya know?

BEATRICE

I know, David, but with militants in the city...

JASON

Is there anything we can do?

María, softly taking Jason's hand, says:

MARÍA

You have done more than enough for me and my family. Thank you.

DAVID

(to the kids)

I-uh-have goodies in here. Nothin' special. Just cookies, and some cake, and some pie...some candy...



David hands the bag to Rosita.

MARÍA
What do you say, children?

ROSITA AND MIGUEL
Thank you, Mr. David!

LEILA
We should go.

BEATRICE
I'll be waitin' for ya two to get
back.

Antony, confidently grinning, says:

ANTONY
You'll miss me, won't you?

BEATRICE
Ya mean Leila.

ANTONY
Ouch.

LEILA
Off we go.

Leila makes the first move, and the rest follow, Beatrice watching like a mother sending her children off to war.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODLAND-NIGHT

Leila leads Antony, Pedro, and his family deep into the dim forest, Cy following beside her. In the air is the chirping of insects and the crackling of leaves.

We can tell our wounded friend is awake from his distressing moans.

Pedro himself breathes heavily, though not slowing his pace.

MARÍA
Do you need to rest, Pedro?

PEDRO
No, but I think Alfonso does.



MARÍA

Can we take a break?

LEILA

We can't.

ANTONY

Leila, maybe we should. I need to at least check his bandages.

Leila turns to the weary group: the children breathing heavily, Pedro slumped over.

LEILA

A few minutes.

ANTONY

That's all we need.

Pedro lays Alfonso on the grassy surface, Antony opening his shirt and checking his bandages, which seem to be in good condition. He checks his pouch for pain meds.

ANTONY (CONT'D)

Take these.

Antony feeds Alfonso the meds.

Leila looks over at María, who holds her two shivering kids against her for warmth.

MARÍA

Can we start a campfire?

LEILA

No-too dangerous. The faster we get you to the sanctuary, the better.

María nods, fully understanding the danger they're in and the risk Leila's taking for them.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Are we ready, Antony?

ANTONY

A few more moments.

LEILA

How far is the sanctuary?

Pedro, pointing to a grassland, says:



PEDRO

The border is just beyond the
grassland.

Not far. Maybe a twenty minute walk.

Leila stands watch. She then notices the chirping-it's
stopped. Leila looks over her shoulder, the others
preoccupied with our wounded friend.

The silence is deafening, though no one else notices...

WHEN...

...There are rapid footsteps approaching the group. The
militia-at least TWELVE SOLDIERS, blades out.

PEDRO (CONT'D)

The militia!

Antony looks up, his face gone a pasty white.

Leila unsheathes her blade.

LEILA

(calmly)

Antony, get them to the border.

If Antony heard her, we can't tell.

A SGT, or whatever his title is, steps forward.

SERGEANT

You are under arrest for the harboring
of illegal immigrants. So put the
sword down...

LEILA

Antony...

SERGEANT

Doctor Stroud, if you and your
assistant come quietly with us, we
will escort the immigrants back to
Syra...

LEILA

Antony!

Antony looks over at Leila, senses returning.

ANTONY
Pedro...Alfonso...

Pedro nearly snatches his brother up, tossing him over his shoulder as he shouts:

PEDRO
María!

María takes hold of both of her children's hand.

SERGEANT
I'm warning you not to move.

ANTONY
Leila?

LEILA
Go!

Antony is conflicted, though only for a moment.

ANTONY
(to the refugees)
Lets go!

Antony and the refugees start to flee, Leila staying behind- the only thing standing between them and the militia.

SERGEANT
You defy your country?

Leila raises her blade for the fight of her life, Cy ready to pounce with her.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)
(to militants)
Go after them.

The militants charge toward the direction Antony and the family went, Leila in between them, raising her blade and initiating combat.

Leila exchanges blows with the militants, only three getting past her.

Cy pounces on a militant, driving his jaw into his arm.

As Leila strikes militants down, more manifest.

CUT TO:



Antony and the family.

Both children are nearly out of stamina, Pedro heavy breaths give away he could collapse at any moment.

ROSITA
Mommy! I'm tired!

MARÍA
Keep running, baby!

Juan swoops both children into his arms.

PEDRO
The border!

In the distance there is a border wall, beyond that a gated community. It's close, yet seems so far.

CUT TO:

Leila exchanges blades with militants, one by one until they fall. That's until...

...Sable walks through the flock of militants right before her eyes like a ghost from her past. Though he doesn't recognize her, she does him.

Cy growls, ready to pounce given the order.

SABLE
(to Leila)
You've betrayed your country.

LEILA
I think you did that for the both of us, Captain Sable.

Sable raises a brow.

CUT TO:

Antony and the refugee family fleeing for their lives, the distance between them and the soldiers being cut short.

The border gets closer...

The soldiers get even closer...

CUT TO:



SEVERAL GUARDS stand at the border, eyes discerning the figures bolting toward them.

ANTONY
Open the gates!

The guards scatter.

One of the militants raises his blade, aims it, and hurls it into...

...the leg of María.

She cries out, falling to the ground.

Everyone looks back.

MIGUEL
Mommy!

JUAN
María!

María shrieks in pain, trying to rip the blade from her calf.

Juan puts the kids down-

MARÍA
Leave me! Save my babies!

JUAN
(to kids)
Keep running!

ROSITA
I won't leave mommy!

MARÍA
Rosita-baby, go!

Antony hurries back to María and says rather quickly:

ANTONY
We need to leave the sword in. You
could bleed out. Juan, get the
children.

Antony as lightly, though as quickly as he can, helps María climb onto his back as...

...Juan swoops both babies back into his arms...

GUARD
Open the gates!

The double wooden doors screech open slowly, though surely, the distance between our companions and the militia shrinking before our eyes.

MARÍA
Please just save my babies! Leave me!
Help Juan with my babies!

Antony hasn't heard a single word she's said more determined than ever to save every single one of them.

A second militia soldier raises his blade, aims, and fires...

...caressing Antony's cheek. A droplet of red liquid glides to his jaw as...

...the sword lands tip first into the grassland.

The companions are closing in on the distance of the border and just as they are...

MILITANT
Do not let them in! They are convicts
and illegals!

As the group dashes through the border...

...the last militant with a blade hurls it toward the group only for the border doors to close in time.

CLANK.

MILITANT (CONT'D)
You are now harboring illegals!

A BORDER GUARD steps forward with a stern facial expression.

BORDER SOLDIER
This is a sanctuary territory! The
government has issued it as such.

MILITIA SOLDIER
Then hand over the traitor!

The border soldiers look over at Antony.

ANTONY
Please allow me to clean and bandage
(MORE)



ANTONY (CONT'D)
 Ms. María's wound, and I will
 accompany them back.

BORDER GUARD
 You are no traitor to us. Do what you
 want.

ANTONY
 Tell them I will be out in a moment's
 notice.

The border guard nods and walks over to the wall.

María moans, her leg covered in red.

ANTONY (CONT'D)
 (to María)
 This will hurt.

MARÍA
 Just do-

Antony pulls out the blade.

María shrieks, blood pouring from the cavity.

Antony takes out his kit, his sterile bottle, cloth and
 gauze. He soaks the sterile liquid into the cloth and cleans
 her leg slowly reaching the cavity.

María shrieks nearly fainting.

MIGUEL
 Mommy...

MARÍA
 I'm fine, baby.

Pedro has laid his brother down, whose eyes are flickering
 open finding his wounded wife.

ALFONSO
 M-María? María?

As he tries to stand...

Pedro, pushing him back down, shouts:

PEDRO
 Don't get up, buffoon! You want your
 (MORE)

PEDRO (CONT'D)
chest to bleed out?!

ALFONSO
But María!

PEDRO
She's fine! Doctor Stroud is here.

Alfonso glances over at Antony.

ALFONSO
Dr. Stroud-I-I have no words.

Antony, stitching María up, says:

ANTONY
No words needed, Mr. Alfonso.

María winces, though she forces a smile at her loving husband, the man who hasn't spoken a word since injured.

ANTONY (CONT'D)
Finished. Is anyone else injured?
Alfonso, how are you? Do you need pain medication?

ALFONSO
Dr. Stroud, you've done more for my family and myself than anyone on this earth would have. Though we look different, come from two different countries, you took us in. We are strangers, but you saved my life. You saved the life of my family.

JUAN
And Leila...

Hearing her name Antony gathers his things, his face gone pallid at the sickening thought that he left Leila alone.

ANTONY
(to border control)
I am ready.

The border guard nods, opens the double doors, and Antony walks out seized by the militants.

The Alfonso family watches Antony moving across the grassland, eyes quivering as they feel grateful, though

anxious for Antony and his fate.

CUT TO:

Leila and Sable stand across from one another, her eyes piercing into his own.

SABLE

You are under arrest for treason.

LEILA

That's fine.

Leila aims her blade toward him.

The audacity of this girl. Sable unbothered takes out his blade, his soldiers stepping back gaping.

Cy once again is ready to pounce as he growls.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Cy, stay back.

Cy whimpers, though steps back.

SABLE

You dare to take your blade out and point it at me?

LEILA

I've waited years for this moment.

Sable has no idea what she's talking about. Doesn't matter.

Leila darts toward Sable, blade raised, blows exchanged. Though our heroine only knows what Hugo taught her, Sable is astounded by her talent.

Blades clash...

WHEN...

...SABLE repels her back, Leila being knocked to the ground. Sable closes in the distance, raising his blade...

WHEN...

...Cy bolts toward Sable, jaw open.

Sable is aware of the incoming attack, raises his blade and before Leila's eyes, cuts Cy down.



Silence. Not even the soldiers dare to breathe.

LEILA (CONT'D)

C-Cy?

Leila just sits there. She can't move, she can't breathe. It feels like something is clenching her heart.

Cy whimpers, a red liquid pouring from the gash, the white snow being stained in crimson.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Cy?

Her eyes brim with tears, the blood racing to the surface of her face. If her heart wasn't black before, it is now.

Leila shoots up raising her blade, screaming at Sable, swinging her blade at him.

Sable finds her anger unsettling.

Leila, swinging her blade, screams:

LEILA (CONT'D)

I'll kill you! I'll kill you!

Sable has no idea where this anger is coming from; she's overpowering him.

Leila evades every attack, repelling him back.

The militia can only watch as their Captain struggles to keep up.

Heavy, violent blows are exchanged until...

...Leila catches Sable off guard and she defangs him.

His blade drops to the ground and...

...Leila thrusts her blade into his chest.

Gasps hover over the forest. Then silence.

Sable glances down at the blade still plunged in his chest, steps back, and falls over.

Leila steps toward Sable, eyes burning with such hatred we've never seen in her. She pulls her blade out.

LEILA (CONT'D)
Hugo was right about you.

Sable's eyes widen at hearing that name.

LEILA (CONT'D)
You're not only a stain on humanity,
you're a representation of that stain.

Sable, chuckling, says:

SABLE
Hugo was a coward, who ran from his
duty.

LEILA
Hugo didn't run from his duty. Hugo
ran to save me.

Sable, coughing up blood, raises a brow.

LEILA (CONT'D)
You don't remember me. Of course you
don't. You've killed so many refugees
over the years. That night Hugo
disappeared, there was an eight year
old girl with her mother.

This rings a bell for Sable.

LEILA (CONT'D)
That was me.

The blood vanishes from Sable's face.

LEILA (CONT'D)
You killed my people! You killed my
mother! You defiled Hugo's name! And
for that, you cannot be forgiven!

Leila falls to her knees, raises her sword...

WHEN...

ANTONY (O.S.)
Stop!

Leila looks up to find Antony, and behind him TWENTY
MILITANTS with loaded bows aimed at her.

Leila, eyes on Sable, says:



LEILA
Stay out of this, Antony!

ANTONY
They will kill you!

LEILA
I'm ready to die!

ANTONY
No!

Antony steps toward Cy, a soldier grasping him.

ANTONY (CONT'D)
I am Doctor Stroud! You will let me
treat this dog!

The soldier hesitantly lets him go.

Antony rushes to Cy's side, hearing him whimpering.

LEILA
Is he alive?

ANTONY
He is. I can stitch him up right here
and now, Leila, but you need to put
down the sword.

LEILA
Save him, Antony. And take care of
him.

ANTONY
No! Cy would never survive without
you!

LEILA
He has you.

ANTONY
This isn't what your mother would
want!

LEILA
You don't know what my mother would
have wanted!

ANTONY
Did she or did she not give up her
(MORE)



ANTONY (CONT'D)

life to save her daughter?! What about Hugo? Is this what he would want? For you to die? Like this? They lived and died for you, Leila!

Leila can't hold back anymore tears.

ANTONY (CONT'D)

You saved those refugees. They made it to the sanctuary.

LEILA

They made it?

ANTONY

Yes. Because of you. Because of what Hugo taught you. Because of the morals your mother instilled in you. They made it.

Leila looks over at Cy, badly injured, though still with us. She tosses her blade to the side and rises.

LEILA

(to Antony)

Save Cy.

Antony nods, determined to not let Leila lose another.

The militants rush in and seize her, putting her arms behind her back and cuffs on her wrists.

CUT TO:

INT. JAIL CELL-DAY

Leila sits in the corner of a cell expressionless. She's ready for her fate.

A door from afar creaks open. Footsteps move toward her cell.

A MILITANT GUARD appears before her.

GUARD

Get up.

Leila stands up as the guard takes out a janitor key ring that holds countless keys, unlocks the door, and opens it.



INT. CONFERENCE ROOM-DAY

Leila enters the room, TWO GUARDS accompanying her.

Inside the room is an ADMINISTRATION of sorts sitting around a table. We assume because some wear formal military uniforms, others in business attire.

At the head of said table, a GENERAL (late 60s), sits.

GENERAL

Ms. Leila, please sit.

Leila glances around the room, clearly uneasy, though sits at the nearest chair.

GENERAL (CONT'D)

My name is General Matisa. I have brought you here to hear your accounts of what happened.

LEILA

Why do you care what I have to say? Sable's still alive. Ask him.

GENERAL MATISA

Yes, but I want to hear your account. I want you to start from the beginning.

LEILA

Um-okay. Well, a family appeared at Dr. Stroud's door needing help. One of them was injured-

GENERAL MATISA

I apologize. I meant I want you to start at the very beginning. The moment you encountered Captain Sable.

Leila glances around the room, the silence overwhelming. They can't tell, but her heart is racing, her hands are clammy. All attention is on her.

LEILA

I first encountered Sable when I was eight years old. There were refugees hiding out in a town that graciously took us in, but we were found. They rounded us up and told us they were taking us back to our country.



GENERAL MATISA
Which is protocol.

LEILA
Except they dropped us off at a river
and demanded we cross it.

General Matisa leans back in his seat. News to him.

LEILA (CONT'D)
The river was...we couldn't cross it.
They knew this. We'd be swept away,
but that wasn't Sable's plan anyway.

GENERAL MATISA
What was his plan?

LEILA
To kill us.

GASPS.

GENERAL MATISA
But you're here. So what makes you
believe that?

LEILA
Because my mother is dead.

The general tries his best to keep his composure, though
there is a twitch.

GENERAL MATISA
Your mother?

LEILA
She was one of the refugees Sable
rounded up.

GENERAL MATISA
Then how are you here?

LEILA
Because of Commander Hugo.

Whispers permeate throughout the room. Heads turn in all
directions. It's like Leila is no longer in the room.

GENERAL MATISA
Quiet!...Commander Hugo? The soldier
who abandoned his post?

LEILA

As I said to Sable, Hugo did not abandon his post nor his duty. He saved me. He raised me. Because you all defiled his name, he had to be on the run to keep me safe. You sent his own companions to kill him when the only thing Hugo did was save the life of an eight year old girl.

GENERAL MATISA

And where is Commander Hugo now?

LEILA

He died.

For the first time, General Matisa glances down, his eyes full of sorrow, though only for a moment.

GENERAL MATISA

And the refugees who went to Doctor Stroud?

LEILA

They are safe...

A MAN IN UNIFORM, shaking his head, says:

MAN IN UNIFORM

How did something like this happen right under our noses?

LEILA

Like you didn't know what he was doing.

GENERAL MATISA

We didn't.

Leila doesn't believe a word of that.

LEILA

You refuse to let in refugees from a war-torn country that you helped start and you're appalled your soldiers slaughter us? What's the difference? We're dead either way.

There is a moment of silence to take this in.

GENERAL MATISA

From the bottom of my heart, I am
sorry, Ms. Leila.

Leila scoffs at the very audacity of this man. She doesn't believe the apology is sincere and shows it.

GENERAL MATISA (CONT'D)

I am sorry for what happened to your
mother, and I am sorry for Commander
Hugo.

LEILA

Your apology means nothing if things
do not change. We are human beings
just like you.

MAN IN SUIT (MAN IN SUIT)

We only wanted to keep our country
safe.

LEILA

Maybe start with the violence in your
own country. Your civilians are the
ones who attacked the man Doctor
Stroud treated and saved.

GENERAL MATISA

We had no idea, but that doesn't
excuse this. You're absolutely right.
There needs to be changes.

Leila does not want to show them how she feels about that statement. Then again, only she can control her emotions. Her face is indifferent, though her mind is content with it.

GENERAL MATISA (CONT'D)

Starting with Captain Sable. He will
be stripped from his title and
tried for treason. He has betrayed
his country. He has betrayed its
people. He will pay for his crimes.
And Commander Hugo. His title will be
reinstated, and the country will
forever know that he was a hero.

Leila can't control her emotions anymore. Her eyes brim with tears as she tries to cover them.

GENERAL MATISA (CONT'D)

And as for refugees, I will speak to
(MORE)



GENERAL MATISA (CONT'D)
 the Prime Minister. We need change.
 Your bravery has shown us that.
 Commander Hugo would be very proud of
 you.

Leila nods not able to look up.

GENERAL MATISA (CONT'D)
 We'll be in touch, Ms. Leila.

LEILA
 Does-Does that mean I'm free to go?

GENERAL MATISA
 That means you are free to go.

Leila can't comprehend any of what just happened.

EXT. MILITARY QUARTERS-DAY

The sun is radiant today. So radiant Leila covers her eyes as she exits the military quarters. Perhaps it's bright from being in a cell. Perhaps it's just a beautiful day.

Leila looks ahead and finds Antony and Cy, his abdomen stitched up, though wagging his tail like a newborn puppy.

Cy bolts toward her.

She bends down, embracing him, tears streaming down her flushed face.

LEILA
 (to Antony)
 Thank you.

ANTONY
 I tried to keep him in your room.

LEILA
 Ha...I can never repay you for this.

ANTONY
 You are still my cute, little
 assistant, yeah? You may repay me with
 that.

Leila can't help but laugh at the typical reply.



LEILA

Yes, I'm still your assistant.

ANTONY

And-

Antony takes out her sword from the scabbard on his back. We hadn't noticed it before.

ANTONY (CONT'D)

My bodyguard.

Leila's face radiates when she sees that sword-the sword Hugo presented to her as a gift on his deathbed. The sword he trained her with.

ANTONY (CONT'D)

I do not think Hugo would forgive me
if I did not give this back.

Antony hands it to Leila.

It's as if she's just seen a glimpse of Hugo in the blade. Maybe it was just the sunlight bouncing off of it.

ANTONY (CONT'D)

Now, shall we be off?

Cy wags his tail, gleefully.

LEILA

Yes!

BLACK.

CREDITS.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE-DAY

A pair of legs stride toward the town square, headed toward a statue. She holds the hand of a BIRACIAL THREE YEAR OLD.

The boy, looking up at the statue says:

THREE YEAR OLD

Mommy! Who's this?

Anaileia looks up with admiration at the majestic statue embroidered in gold; it's Hugo. He stands proud, fierce, strong like a lion, his sword held high.



A memo is engraved below it. It reads "COMMANDER HUGO, A MAN THAT GAVE HIS LIFE TO SAVE OTHERS. HE WILL ALWAYS BE A HERO IN THE EYES OF OUR COUNTRY."

THREE YEAR OLD (CONT'D)
Mommy, did you know him?

LEILA
Yeah...he saved my life.

THREE YEAR OLD
Whoa! He did?!

LEILA
I don't think I've known a better man.

THREE YEAR OLD
What about daddy?

LEILA
Him too. Speaking of your dad, we better get his supplies and get back to the clinic-Where is Cy?

The three year old, pointing, says:

THREE YEAR OLD
Over there.

Leila sees Cy lounging under the shade of a tree.

LEILA
Go get him please.

THREE YEAR OLD
Okay!

The boy scurries to Cy, leaving Leila to take in the statue alone. She glances over at Cy and the boy, who are battling it out to get Cy up.

Such a comical view for Leila. Once more she looks up at the statue of Hugo then at the deep blue sky. Such a pretty day.

FADE OUT.

THE END.



