

FADE IN:

EXT. LOUISIANA SWAMPLAND - BAYOU - DAY

Drops of rain fall on trees dripping with Spanish moss.

A sign, GRACIE'S BAYOU, hangs near an old cabin caving under a rose with dead buds.

In the yard, GRACIE BATISTE, 65, a mulatto voodoo priestess, removes baby clothes from a line and rushes inside the cabin.

GASTON, a pet alligator, opens one eye.

GASTON(V.O.)

When voodoo was strong and gators  
spoke in their dreams, Gracie lost  
her daughter Savannah and brought  
back a baby grand-daughter.

Rain stops, the sun comes out.

At some distance, ROCK DUBOIS, 22, clad in motorcycle gear, gives an unfriendly shove to LEWIS "LA FLAMME," 20, reddish mustache, Stetson hat, long alligator-skin coat and boots.

ROCK

Move, you're the girl's pa, for  
Chrissake.

LA FLAMME

Gracie better give me no grief.

La Flamme makes a fist and shows Rock a skull with cross bones carved on his ring.

ROCK

This won't protect you none. Your  
Gris-Gris's nothing but a snake oil  
peddler.

Gaston stirs, La Flamme shoots at him with two fingers, and kicks the cabin door open.

INT. GRACIES'S CABIN - DAY

La Flamme's silhouette casts a shadow on a cradle.

He pulls out a cigarette. Rock snatches it out of his hand and crushes it between his fingers.

Gaston slithers close by.

GRACIE (O.S.)  
 Pay your respects to your flesh and  
 blood, La Flamme.

La Flamme flips a vintage Mardi Gras coin that rolls and  
 stands on its edge at Gracie's feet.

LA FLAMME  
 How do I know this dark shrimp's  
 mine? Savannah slept around.

ROCK  
 You forced yourself on her, creep.

Rock holds La Flamme in a chokehold. La Flamme spits.

Rock loosens his grip and shouts.

ROCK  
 She was to be my bride.

Gracie's eyes turn white. She places a pentagram book on the  
 alligator tooth amulet on her chest.

GRACIE  
 On her deathbed, she begged me to  
 curse you, Lewis. From now on, may  
 you live as half-a-man.

A wind gust crashes a window open. A flash of light strikes  
 La Flamme to his knees. Livid, he holds his crotch and picks  
 up his coin. Gaston's tail twitches. Baby Faith HOWLS.

LA FLAMME  
 What's the kid's name?

GRACIE  
 Faith.

LA FLAMME  
 If you love her, reverse your  
 curse, witch, or else.

A hand on her chest, Gracie steps forward but falters.

Rock helps her to a chair.

GRACIE  
 What I done, only my kin can undo  
 within weeks of her twenty second  
 birthday, provided you stay clear  
 of her before that.

ROCK  
On my dead body.

La Flamme tips his hat and hobbles out. Gaston HISSES.

INT. GRACIE'S CABIN - SEVEN YEARS LATER - NIGHT

FAITH, 7, bare-footed, afro, bronze face, finishes flossing Gaston's teeth with a twig, under Rock's indulgent eyes.

Gaston crawls under the iron bed where a sick Gracie catches her breath.

FAITH  
Gaston, you ain't letting anything  
happen to grand-mère, promise?

Gracie lays a dried rosebud on Faith's open palm. It barely hovers and rolls to the ground.

Faith swallows her tears and puts her arms around Gracie.

Rock lights a candle.

GRACIE  
Dance for me, girl, one last time.

Faith bravely, stands up, performs splits, back flips, and drops at the foot of Gracie's bed, eyes full of tears.

FAITH  
Will magic make me the best dancer  
in New Orleans?

GRACIE  
Magic ain't self-serving, child. If  
it was, none of this would happen.

FAITH  
What's magic good for, then?

GRACIE  
It obeys a higher purpose.

Faith squints hard and lifts her eyes until they turn white.

FAITH  
I see my ma. She looks pretty.

Faith smiles. A wind gust RATTLES window shutters.

Gracie and Rock exchange worried glances.

FAITH  
Who dat Gator-Man hurting her?

GRACIE  
One day you may be called to  
forgive the unforgivable. Always  
let your heart be your guide, girl.

Faith shakes. Gracie holds her tight.

GRACIE  
Dat Gator-Man's your pa. I cursed  
him good and one day he'll ask you  
to reverse it.

FAITH  
Ain't gonna forgive him ever.

Gracie pulls the pentagram book from under her mattress,  
unties the alligator tooth amulet from her neck, and drops  
them in Faith's hand.

GRACIE  
Trust your power.

Gracie falls back on her pillows. The candle flame quivers  
and dies. Gracie expires.

FAITH  
Gaston, do something.

Gaston doesn't budge. Eyes dry with grief and anger, Faith  
flings Gracie's amulet and the pentagram book at Gaston.

FAITH  
What use are those and what use are  
you? Some protector.

A photograph slips out of the book; the image of a young  
Gracie comes to life, shimmies, and twirls.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - THE SACRED HEART ACADEMY - NIGHT

A Harley Davidson with Rock and Faith hanging on tight rides  
to iron gates. A SISTER holds up a hurricane lamp.

FAITH  
Don't leave me, Rock.

Rock fishes a plush alligator toy from his bag. Faith hugs it  
and bravely follows the sister inside.

GASTON (V.O.)  
 In time Rock became Faith's  
 guardian, Faith improved her  
 dancing, and more years passed.

MONTAGE - FAITH'S AUDITION

-- NEW ORLEANS - Gaston gazes up a stone building at the  
 floating banner of a dance studio.

-- BOUGE DE LÀ DANCE HALL - Mirrors on the walls and a  
 poster of a fierce werewolf: ROUGAROU PARIS TRYOUTS.

-- In the center, three YOUNG WOMEN dance in front of a  
 severe JUDGE.

-- FAITH BATISTE, 22, recognizable by her afro, limbs  
 bursting with energy, makes a daring flip and stops on a  
 classic warrior pose, one bent knee, the other outstretched.

-- The judge's face lights up. He dismisses two of the  
 dancers and gives Faith an accolade.

-- STUDIO'S REVOLVING DOORS - Faith exits and sends a text.

-- FRENCH QUARTER - STREET MUSICIANS play hypnotic DIXIELAND  
 tunes and lead colorful followers to a bustling street.

-- Signboard of a restaurant: Chez Croco.

INT. NEW ORLEANS - CHEZ CROCO - KITCHEN - DAY

A cramped kitchen. Faith, net covering her hair, white apron  
 wrapped around her waist, darts from stove to counter.

FAITH  
 Creole appetizers coming up!

She pirouettes and tosses fritters into a bowl.

A smartphone BUZZES on a shelf. The name ROCK DUBOIS appears.

EXT. CHEZ CROCO - BACK DOOR - DAY

Faith does a somersault.

She lands smack in front of Rock, now 44, grey temples, black  
 leather jacket flung over a shoulder, foot on a bench.

She catches her breath. Rock APPLAUDS.

FAITH  
I nailed it. Paris, here I come!

Rock opens his arms and gives Faith a bear hug.

FAITH  
What did you want to show me, Rock?

ROCK  
Well, if you're going to Paris,  
there's no point. Is there?

FAITH  
Stop teasing.

Rock browses through his smartphone and presses play.

BEAU (O.S.)  
I live in a remote plantation with  
a fierce dad, obsessed with a rose  
that refuses to bloom.

FAITH  
Like the one in the bayou, Rock?

ROCK  
Could be.

ON SCREEN

BEAU MCIVER, 9, preppy, longish fair hair neatly combed, the saddest grey eyes, speaks in earnest.

BEAU (V.O.)  
If you are brave and bold, if you  
can cook, apply for a summer job in  
White Oaks.

The image fades, replaced by one bearing an address with an engraving of a thick thorny vine, hugging a balcony.

BACK TO SCENE

Faith can't keep her eyes off the smartphone screen.

FAITH  
Send me the link anyway. I'm  
curious.

Rock helps Faith settle on the bench and solemnly takes a box out of his jacket.

FAITH  
An early birthday present, right?

Faith opens the box and gazes at Gracie's old amulet and pentagram book with mixed emotions.

FAITH  
Oh, Rock. If I succeed it has to be on my own merit. Magic's overrated anyway. Even Gracie died.

ROCK  
I know, but soon you may need protection.

Rock fastens the amulet around the neck of a tense Faith.

FAITH  
You aren't planning to leave?

The shadow of a Gator passes below the bench. Rocks speaks inaudibly. Faith blocks her ears and shakes her head.

FAITH  
All I want right now, is to dance at your club, Rock.

EXT. FLAMINGO CLUB - NIGHT

In front of a Rococo entrance, a DOORMAN the size of a house waves in a long line of PATRONS.

Lewis La Flamme, now 42, wearing his signature hat, alligator-skin boots, long coat, and gloves, lowers his dark shades and weasels inside.

INT. FLAMINGO CLUB - NIGHT

Spirit of New Orleans, baroque mirrors, Gothic chandeliers, and vintage posters of Josephine Baker.

La Flamme sidles up to Rock, near a brass bar and shows off his police badge. Rock scoffs.

LA FLAMME  
Where's Faith?

ROCK  
Stay away from her, creep.

LA FLAMME

Know what it's like to live like a frigging monk for years? A monk!

ROCK

I know. Savannah was my one and only.

LA FLAMME

Moron.

Rock glances at a gilded framed picture.

INSERT

Beside La Flamme, a young Rock in motorcycle gear, stands his arms around Savannah, a striking girl resembling Faith.

INT. FLAMINGO CLUB - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Rock paces up and down a dim corridor with velvet drapes in front of dressing rooms. La Flamme keeps still in a dark corner, away from a surveillance camera.

Faith, frighteningly sexy in Josephine Baker garb, fringed handbag hanging from a bare shoulder, opens a door.

FAITH

Do I look okay, Rock?

Rock, overcome with emotion, averts his eyes. La Flamme takes a couple of steps forward.

LA FLAMME

Holy crap! You're the spitting image of your ma, Baby-Girl. She was the best dancer this side of the Mississippi.

Faith takes stock of La Flamme's long coat and boots, shudders, and stares into his eyes with disbelief.

FAITH

You were dat Gator-Man.

La Flamme clicks his boots.

LA FLAMME

Gator-Man, I like. You can also call me "Pa", Baby-Girl.

FAITH

You're the one who hurt my mother.  
Rock's my only Pa.

La Flamme approaches Faith with fatherly intent.

ROCK

Don't you touch her.

LA FLAMME

That day you forced me go to  
Gracie, she hexed me, Rocky-boy.  
You recall what she said?

La Flamme's eyes narrow.

LA FLAMME

"What I done, only my kin can undo  
within weeks of her twenty second  
birthday..."

ROCK

Gracie was sick when she said that.

Faith's gaze goes frantically from Rock to La Flamme.

LA FLAMME

Don't play dumb with me, Sugar-  
Plum. You're her kin.

Faith steps back. Rock edges between Faith and La Flamme.

La Flamme brushes dust from Rock's tux.

LA FLAMME

Reverse the curse, or else.

FAITH

Or else what?

Sound of FEET STAMPING and HANDS CLAPPING from inside.

ROCK

Faith, you're on. Go and dance.

LA FLAMME

I waited twenty-two years for this  
moment. It's not you who's gonna  
stop me.

Faith grasps the pans of her cape, lifts her dress, climbs  
the narrow steps to the stage, and flips her head round.

FAITH  
I'll be back.

Sound of WHISTLES, total silence, then a SLOW JAZZY NUMBER.

La Flamme spits at Rocks feet, flips his Mardi Gras coin, pushes his hat down, and pulls out a cigarette under a no-smoking sign.

Rock opens the exit door.

ROCK  
Let's go outside and settle this  
like men.

INT. FLAMINGO CLUB - BACK STAGE - NIGHT

Sound of THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE.

Faith, all flushed, the gold cape over her shoulders, walks bare-footed down the steep back steps and reaches the exit door wide open onto the darkly lit --

PARKING LOT

Garbage blows around a small red car.

Rock disheveled and La Flamme with blood-shot eyes, threateningly circle each other.

LA FLAMME  
It's all because of you, traitor.  
And she'll pay for that.

ROCK  
Alive or dead I'll make sure she  
never reverses the curse for a lout  
like you.

Rock turns around and blows a kiss towards Faith standing at the Flamingo exit door.

La Flamme pulls a flip knife from his boot and throws it in Rock's direction.

Rock collapses to the ground without a sound.

EXT. BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Faith kneels beside Rock's dead body hopelessly sobbing, mascara running down her checks.

La Flamme drops the knife in a nearby storm drain and stares at Faith with a sarcastic grin.

LA FLAMME

You look like a frigging coon, Baby girl. No use crying now. Think about it, your precious Rock's on his way to his sweet Savannah.

Faith swallows back her tears and closes Rock's eyes.

She pulls out a handkerchief from her handbag, wipes blood from Rock's cheeks, and utters a silent prayer.

LA FLAMME

He brought it upon himself. "Alive, or dead", he said.

La Flamme, out of his mind, paces around Faith.

LA FLAMME

Now, you reverse the curse.

Faith lifts her head high.

FAITH

Why should I?

La Flamme looks pathetic.

LA FLAMME

'Cause I'm your pa. 'Cause I made a deal with Gracie. 'Cause I did my part, I got outa your face for twenty two years. Now you do yours, reverse the curse.

La Flamme bends down, reaches for Faith's amulet, and recoils as if burnt.

FAITH

I can't forgive the unforgivable.

LA FLAMME

Remember, I've had all these years to plan my revenge.

Faith slowly rises and composes herself.

LA FLAMME

If you don't, I'll pin the murder on you. You'll never dance again.

FAITH  
Rot in Hell for all I care.

La Flamme lunges forward. Faith jumps back.

FAITH  
Gaston!

Before La Flamme can reach Faith, the shadow of a gator bites one of the tails of his coat.

LA FLAMME  
You again, dratted reptile? If Gris-  
Gris don't skin you, I will.

Gaston HISSES.

La Flamme draws a gun and aims it at Gaston.

Faith instinctively reaches for her amulet.

FAITH  
Stop!

Balls of fire hit randomly with a deafening SOUND around La Flamme. Propelled backwards, his gun flies out of his hand.

Gaston's shadow ambles away dragging a piece of La Flamme's long coat.

Faith jumps into her small red car, revs up the engine, and drives away.

La Flamme HOLLERS.

LA FLAMME  
From now on, I'll be on you like  
flies on shit, witch.

INT. NOPD STATION - RECEPTION - NIGHT

A black female CLERK on the phone, lifts her glasses, stares at Faith's costume, and shows her a seat.

FAITH  
I'd like to report a crime.

Faith sits down and glances at the wall; a framed picture of La Flamme, in uniform, shaking the hand of a high-ranking official.

The clerk hangs up and opens the door of a glassed-in office.

CLERK

Looks like you seen a ghost on wheels, hon.

Faith steps back, and bumps into Detective DANNY "BROWN", 27, an eager rookie with a Bronx accent, rushing in from outside.

BROWN

Detective Brown. May I help you, miss?

Faith stands frozen. Brown's cellphone RINGS. He answers.

BROWN

The Flamingo's owner whacked? Right away, boss.

When he hangs up, the front doors swing shut. Faith is gone.

INT. FAITH'S CAR - NIGHT

Faith parks on a side street. She removes feathers from her hair, stares at her bare feet, grabs her toy alligator, and hugs it tight.

Tears roll freely down her cheeks. She draws out the stained handkerchief from her handbag.

Her smartphone BEEPS.

INSERT:

The link to the White Oaks video.

FAITH (O.S)

Oh, Rock! The rose that never blooms.

Sound of a distant POLICE SIREN.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

The moon illuminates swamplands in the distance. Faith's car zooms along a bumpy road.

FAITH (V.O.)

I won't let him get away. I return to the station, talk to the police... Darn, he's the police.

The car reaches a fork in the road.

It makes a sharp U-turn, and abruptly stops.

The shadow of a gator swiftly moves across the road.

Faith gets out, kicks the front wheel with her bare feet, lifts the hood, and fiddles with wires. Smoke comes out.

FAITH

Now where's that gator when I need  
him?

She coughs, squashes the plush alligator down her handbag, and trudges down a deserted dirt road.

Sound of an EXPLOSION. Faith's car goes up in flames.

GASTON (V.O.)

Geez, girl, you expect me to clean  
up that mess?

EXT. OONA'S SOUL KITCHEN - NIGHT

Faith reaches a closed diner. She curls up inside the doorway and sobs herself to sleep.

The early sun peeks through foliage. A furtive field mouse sniffs around. Faith startles and walks down to a water hole.

She rubs the mascara off her cheeks and talks to her reflection.

FAITH

Hi, I need a place to hide until I  
figure out what to do... No way,  
that won't do.

Faith forces a smile, puts a hand on her hip, and tries a fetching dance step.

FAITH

My name's Josephine Baker, I'm a  
dancer on the lam.

The door of the diner opens.

OFFICER "TINY KEV" PETITPAS, 50, a huge, African American, in white undershirt and State police blues, squints towards the water hole.

Faith hides behind a tree. Her smartphone falls off her handbag into the water.

INT. NEW ORLEANS - VODOO LAIR - NIGHT

Gator skins, grimoires, jars full of skulls, bones and feathers, give a creepy feel to a poorly-lit shop.

Sound of a JINGLE. La Flamme enters, tosses his carnival coin and looks around.

GRIS-GRIS, 85, a thin androgynous figure, slanted eyes, emerges from the middle of junk. La Flamme jumps.

GRIS-GRIS

Whatever happened to the coat I gave you, Lewis?

LA FLAMME

Gracie's varmint had a go at it.

GRIS-GRIS

You played right into Rock's hands. She'll never reverse the curse.

LA FLAMME

She has to.

GRIS-GRIS

Think about it, you hurt her ma, you rejected her as a baby, and you killed the only pa she knew.

LA FLAMME

Which side you're on? All I want is the life of a real man.

Gris-Gris scratches his bald head, picks up a green vial embossed with a fig tree.

GRIS-GRIS

You could use figuier maudit. Faith dead, the curse will reverse automatically.

Gris-Gris seductively lifts the vial's glass top and passes it under La Flamme's nose. La Flamme pushes it away.

LA FLAMME

I must find her. Tell me where she hides.

Gris-Gris closes the vial and puts it in La Flamme's hand with a CACKLE.

## GRIS-GRIS

Gracie insulted me for decades.  
High and mighty she was. If her  
descendant is anything like her,  
she deserves a good lesson.

EXT. BATON ROUGE OUTSKIRTS - WHITE OAKS - FRONT GATE - DAY

Faith presses the intercom button on a wrought iron gate.

A tunnel of white oaks leads to a plantation out of Gone With  
The Wind. The limbs of a twisted vine reach up to a wrap-  
around balcony.

The gate slowly CREAKS open.

The gravel hurts Faith's bare feet as she walks a couple of  
steps inside the driveway.

The gate CLICKS shut behind her.

She smooths wrinkles off her cape, pats her plush alligator,  
and treads on bordering grass.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

BEAU, all legs, white pants, a comb in the front pocket of  
his polo shirt, an old-fashioned camcorder in hand, steps  
down to meet Faith.

FAITH

I expected you to be younger.

BEAU

I'll soon be ten. Why are you bare-  
feet?

FAITH

It's good for the posture.

Faith instinctively executes a ballet move and extends a hand  
that Beau shakes.

FAITH

My name's Jo Baker. I'm here for  
the job.

BEAU

My name's Beauregard. Call me Beau.  
What job?

FAITH

You do need a cook, don't you?

Beau checks Faith in his camcorder and begins filming.

Faith steps aside, pulls her hood over her face, and folds her cape around her body.

BEAU

You look like a golden scarab, Jo.  
Wanna become famous?

FAITH

Perhaps later.

Beau puts his camera away and squints at the alligator poking out of her handbag.

BEAU

Are you a cook, or a dragon-slayer?

FAITH

I did cross path with a big rat and  
a field mouse, but both got away.

Beau represses his first smile.

ANGUS CAMERON, ageless, wearing a tartan tam and a kilt, a bagpipe under one arm, opens the front door.

FAITH

You can't be the dad obsessed with  
a no bloom rose?

BEAU

Father's away. Angus is our butler,  
gardener, driver, and interim cook.

Beau pretends to gag. Angus takes a dignified pose and speaks with a refined Scot's accent

ANGUS

Y'are in the home of Lady Maude,  
widow to the late Bruce from the  
McIver clan, returned to her  
forefathers' place, ten years ago.

Faith takes a deep breath, holds her amulet, and lifts her head up. Dark clouds move swiftly overhead.

FAITH

I am descendant of Gracie, voodoo  
queen of the bayou, protégée of  
Gaston the Gator. I can cook too.

The sky darkens and there is a downpour. They all rush in.

INT. WHITE OAKS - GROUND FLOOR - DAY

Faith, at odds with the grandiose proportions of the entrance, rubs the sole of her feet with her hands.

Beau looks at Faith in awe.

BEAU

Does it always pour when you  
introduce yourself?

She shakes water off her mane.

FAITH

Ever heard of global warming?

Beau looks disappointed.

ANGUS

Brought any luggage, Miss?

BEAU

Baker, you can call her Jo.

ANGUS

Like Joan of Arc?

FAITH

No, Josephine.

Angus looks at her sideways.

FAITH

I may look odd to you, but if you  
give me half a chance, I'll show  
you what I can do in the kitchen.

BEAU

No sweat, odd's our middle name.

ANGUS

I'll show you the kitchen. Beau  
will help you to suitable clothes.

Angus turn around with a swing of his kilt.

FAITH

Aren't kilts hot for the season?

ANGUS

Plenty of circulation. If you get my drift. But I'd like not to cross paths with your gator.

Faith stands mesmerized by the painting of newlyweds that dominates a wall separating two wings.

The groom, charismatic in a naval officer's outfit and a clerical collar, has an arm around his delicate bride.

BEAU

My father, Reverend McIver with my mom, Rose, when she was alive.

Faith clears her throat.

FAITH

Sorry about your ma. Your pa looks intense.

BEAU

Intensely absent, yes. He's been grieving forever.

FAITH

I can relate to that.

Beau raises an eyebrow, Angus holds his tam close to his chest, eyes far away.

ANGUS

Joy is a stranger/ To him who secretly ...

Faith clears her throat.

FAITH

Grieves a loved one/.

Beau and Angus exchange glances.

FAITH

At the Sacred Heart, an old Scottish nun taught us poetry.

INT. ROSE'S BOUDOIR - DAY

Faded wall-paper, dusty furnishings. Beau opens a wardrobe with a long mirror inside.

BEAU

My mom never got to wear any of them. She died giving birth.

FAITH

So did mine.

BEAU

Strange coincidence. You believe in fate?

FAITH

I'm not sure, why?

BEAU

Some people seem to be under a spell and nothing they can do will change the course of their lives.

FAITH

I believe what we do shapes our lives.

Faith looks at rows of neatly folded garments under plastic wrap and moves towards the door.

FAITH

I'd like to see the kitchen first.

Beau pulls out a couple of colorful skirts with pockets.

Faith shakes her head.

When she catches the reflection of her own outfit in the mirror, she grabs black slacks and tops, and hurries out.

BEAU

I know you're in mourning, but...

Faith picks a T-shirt with a bright French motif.

EXT. SWAMPLANDS - GRACIE'S BAYOU - DAY

The weather-beaten cabin is barely visible under thick boughs of the thorny rose.

Gaston the Gator dozes near a puddle.

ROBERT MCIVER, 45, worn-out safari clothes, piercing blue eyes, unkempt shoulder-length hair, cooler and shovel in hand, trudges down a muddy path.

He goes through a swarm of mosquitoes, puts his cooler and shovel down, loosens his dog collar, and carefully assesses tightly closed rosebuds.

GASTON (V.O.)

According to legend, the spell that killed Robert McIver's wife and threatens his son's future bride, will be lifted when the doomed rose blooms.

Robert scratches his beard, looks around the yard covered in weeds, wild brambles, and all kinds of trash.

ROBERT

(lilting Scotch accent)

Who knows, if I set up camp here, it just might bloom by the week's end.

A wind lifts dust from the ground, obscuring the sun.

INT. NEW ORLEANS - NOPD STATION - DAY

A CEILING FAN blows papers around the glassed-in office.

La Flamme swats a BUZZING mosquito and sits at the edge of a desk. Brown is glued to his computer.

BROWN

Rock Dubois was under surveillance, for years, you know why?

La Flamme CRACKS his knuckles.

LA FLAMME

Once a biker, always a biker.

BROWN

He belonged to the Nola Moto Sports Club.

LA FLAMME

Don't go Serpico on me, for Chrissake, Brown.

Brown browses on screen through photos of Rock and Faith at different ages, parties, and graduation.

BROWN

To think he wasn't even her dad. Wish mine had been there for me.

LA FLAMME

Don't we all, Brown. In this case,  
it was all show. Believe me.

BROWN

You knew him, personally, boss?

La Flamme flicks the dead mosquito off his desk.

LA FLAMME

He was under surveillance. I knew  
his game.

Brown turns away from his screen.

LA FLAMME

More to the point, did you find the  
Batiste girl's car?

Brown opens and closes his hands as if to say, vanished.

BROWN

But everyone I spoke to, said Rock  
was her hero. Why disappear?

La Flamme stands up.

BROWN

Could the one who killed him, be  
after her too?

LA FLAMME

Stick to facts, Brown. Find her  
car. A red car can't vanish.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF BATON ROUGE - COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Brown, sits on the hood of his car, checks a map on a  
smartphone, and looks around, talking to himself.

BROWN

Swampland on my right, tracks on  
the dirt. Looks like a car could  
have exploded right about here.

Gaston the Gator casually ambles out of nowhere and blocks  
the road.

GASTON (V.O.)

Looking for something, dude?

Brown jumps down, picks up a stick, and madly shakes it at  
Gaston, while edging backwards into his car.

GASTON (V.O.)  
 Seriously.

His phone RINGS. Brown, spooked out of his wits, answers.

BROWN  
 Boss... No, no sign whatsoever.

INT. NEW ORLEANS - NOPD STATION - DAY

La Flamme, wearing white gloves, unzips a plastic pouch, pulls out an envelope, and puts it under Brown's nose.

LA FLAMME  
 We may have the motive.

Brown reads the handwriting on the envelope.

BROWN  
 Rock Dubois last will and  
 testament. Does it mean he knew his  
 life was in danger?

LA FLAMME  
 Bingo. And guess who inherits the  
 Flamingo?

BROWN  
 His ward, boss? The Batiste girl.

Brown fiddles with the envelope.

BROWN  
 She was in the local paper. The  
 entertainment section. Looks like  
 she was runner up for a French  
 show.

La Flamme gets agitated.

LA FLAMME  
 Anything else you've been hiding,  
 Brown?

BROWN  
 Final tryouts, next Saturday, at  
 noon, I think.

LA FLAMME  
 Five days from now! She'd have to  
 show up, then. Unless of course  
 she's guilty of the crime.

BROWN

Would this explain why she's  
hiding? Was there anything else,  
boss besides the will?

La Flamme brandishes Rock's cellphone.

INT. BATON ROUGE - WHITE OAKS - KITCHEN - DAY

A cuckoo-clock TICKS on the wall. A pot bubbles on an old-fashioned stove top.

Faith, bare-footed, wearing Rose's clothes, sets a basket of French toast on a tartan tablecloth.

Beau takes a bite and licks the dripping honey.

Faith sings words from a CAJUN LULLABY as she serves him a platter.

FAITH

Papa li pa la/ L'alé pècher  
l'carbe/ Si vlé pa dodo crabe la va  
manger.

BEAU

Where did you hear that?

FAITH

Just popped into my head.

BEAU

So the voodoo stuff's no joke?

Faith shakes her head.

BEAU

If I were you, I'd put away all  
tell-tales. Father's weary of  
magic.

FAITH

He must have his reasons.

Beau lifts a shoulder and digs into his French toast.

Angus comes in with a towel and ballet-type slippers.

ANGUS

You'll get callouses, lass. Try  
these, Rose loved to dance.

BEAU  
Wish I'd seen her.

Faith slips into Rose's slippers. Beau turns away.

Faith serves Angus. He sits down and takes a bite.

ANGUS  
Och, lassie. This is divine.

Faith rubs her eyes, stretches, sits down at the table, and leans her head into the crook of her elbow.

FAITH  
I prepared crab creole and corn  
chowder for tonight.

BEAU  
Father loves anything creole.

EXT. SWAMPLANDS - GRACIE'S BAYOU - NIGHT

A tent is up in the half-cleared yard.

A can of beans bubbles on a crude campfire. Robert rubs dirt off his hands and softly sobs.

GASTON (V.O.)  
We'll never know if McIver cried  
for loneliness or frustration dat  
night, but all he ate were beans  
and tears.

A gust of wind blows Robert's safari hat into the bayou.

INT. BATON ROUGE - WHITE OAKS - COOK'S ROOM - NIGHT

A sparsely furnished room.

Faith straightens a wall calendar. Beau, on a rocking chair, rubs his face against her plush alligator.

BEAU  
Aren't you a bit old to carry  
around plush toys?

Faith's voice cracks.

FAITH  
Someone I loved gave it to me a  
long time ago. Now he's gone.

Beau slumps back into the rocking chair, hugging his knees.

FAITH

He was like a pa to me.

BEAU

I'm just a nuisance to my pa. Every year he wants to send me to camp.

Faith empties her handbag, retrieves a lipstick, and slips Gracie's pentagram book under a pillow.

FAITH

Sorry, Beau, I need to make a call.

Faith picks up the phone on the other side of the bed, dials a number, and waits.

BEAU

Where's your real pa?

Taken by surprise, Faith's eyes water.

BEAU

I said something wrong?

Before Faith can answer, a VOICE at the other end of the receiver interrupts her.

Beau gets up, leaves the plush toy on the chair, and hands a Kleenex to Faith.

She gestures Beau to leave while talking on the phone.

FAITH

Hello, I'm calling about the tryouts for the Rougarou... Faith Batiste, yes.

Beau pockets the pentagram book and quietly leaves.

FAITH

Detective La Flamme is my pa.

Faith hangs up, counts four days, and circles a date in lipstick on the wall calendar.

She lies on top of her bed, and closes her eyes.

NIGHTMARE: EXT. BAYOU - NIGHT

In a moonlit bayou, Gaston sleeps near a cradle with baby Faith in it.

La Flamme, looking like a werewolf, pulls his hat over his hairy face, lifts it, and bares his sharp teeth.

LA FLAMME

Peek-a-boo. I'll break your legs,  
Baby-Girl. Never will you dance,  
unless.

BACK TO SCENE

Faith sits up with a look of terror. She moves her legs, looks under her pillow.

FAITH

I was sure I put it there.

She clasps her amulet and falls back to sleep.

The morning sun floods the room.

The sound of BAGPIPES shatters the silence.

Faith jumps out of bed.

EXT. BALCONY - DAY

Down below, between two flagpoles, Angus plays an UPBEAT TUNE on his bagpipes.

Faith tiptoes to the end of the balcony and stops short beside a wrought iron bench under the dried limbs of the thorny vine.

She pinches a mummified rosebud off and holds it above her hand.

To her surprise, it hovers for a second.

Faith looks around and up at the sky.

FAITH

Grand-mère, are you around?

INT. BEAU'S ROOM - DAY

The sound of BAGPIPES SUBSIDES.

Beau, cross-legged on his unmade bed, is intensely absorbed in Gracie's pentagram book.

BEAU  
 When the rock cries/ The gator  
 looms/ When the orphan smiles the  
 rose blooms.

Faith KNOCKS on the balcony glass doors.

Beau jumps up and shoves everything out of sight.

He pretends to be focused in front of his laptop.

BEAU  
 Come on in.

Faith steps in.

FAITH  
 Morning, Beau. Is it customary to  
 scare people out of their wits?

BEAU  
 Father believes sleeping late dulls  
 the mind. Angus agrees.

Faith stretches down to pick pajamas off the floor, rotates  
 on her heels, and ends up facing Beau.

FAITH  
 My spell book's missing.

BEAU  
 Are you sure you came here with no  
 ulterior motive?

FAITH  
 Meaning?

Beau fishes Gracie's book from under the bedclothes and opens  
 it with a grave expression.

INSERT: CRUDE CHARCOAL DRAWINGS ON YELLOWED PAPER.

-- A fair-haired girl and a willowy black slave embrace below  
 a climbing rose in bloom, reaching up to a balcony, at night.

BEAU (O.S.)  
 This looks like White Oaks, right?

-- The black slave hangs from a tree branch.

-- On a pillar supporting the balcony, an angry matriarch  
 slave scratches a pentagram.

FAITH (O.S.)  
Oh my God, you're right.

-- Scattered white crosses behind a church with a double steeple.

BEAU  
You think our ancestors knew each other?

BACK TO SCENE

Faith closes the pentagram book and holds Beau's hands.

FAITH  
It's possible, but why focus on the past?

BEAU  
A spell's been hounding our family for generations and Father's still obsessed with the darn rose.

Faith makes a gesture of the hand as if to chase a fly.

FAITH  
I wish we could all forget about spells.

Beau stares at Faith from under his brows, unconvinced.

BEAU  
I know you could undo our spell. Father thinks Mother didn't die of natural causes.

FAITH  
I chose to forget all about voodoo when my grannie died and the nuns taught me it was the devil's work.

BEAU  
The grand-daughter of a voodoo priestess raised by nuns, that's frigging weird.

FAITH  
Almost as weird as the son of a reverend who believes in spells.

BEAU  
Ex-reverend.

FAITH  
Looking forward to meet him.

EXT. SWAMPLANDS - GRACIE'S BAYOU - DAY

The sun is down.

All around Gracie's cabin, the brush is cleared. The sign freshly painted.

Robert holds his back and paces the yard like a bear in pain.

ROBERT  
Wish I could have done more.

Gaston hides behind the gigantic climbing rose with tightly closed buds.

GASTON (V.O.)  
Dat man's plum crazy. He cleaned up  
all my fun hiding spots.

Robert trudges back to his campsite and starts packing.

INT. BATON ROUGE- WHITE OAKS - BEAU'S ROOM - NIGHT

Faith is bent over Beau's laptop. Beau tries to get a peep at the screen. She turns around.

Beau manages to scan a message on the laptop.

FAITH  
So, I have business with Nola PD.

Faith closes the lid of the laptop.

BEAU  
I gather you committed some  
unmentionable crime to blackmail  
judges in the hope of being chosen  
at the Rougarou tryouts.

Taken aback, Faith reopens the laptop.

BEAU  
Who's Faith Batiste, Jo?

FAITH  
Someone I knew, before I met you.

BEAU  
Where is she now?

FAITH

Gone.

BEAU

Father has some morbid ideas. He says people we love most go first and then we miss them forever.

FAITH

Who do you love most?

Faith messes up Beau's hair. He smooths it back with a sober expression.

BEAU

My mother. Maybe coz I only saw her in pictures.

Sound of BAGPIPES outdoors.

EXT. ROSE GARDEN - NIGHT

Angus plays a HAUNTING BALLAD.

Faith guides Beau to a stone bench. He sits down.

Faith touches her amulet, it glistens. A gust of wind gently fluffs her skirt.

She seems to take flight.

Beau looks up.

In a cloud above his head, an indistinct face smiles and dissolves.

Beau half-smiles back.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The cuckoo-clock CHIMES nine strokes.

Beau wipes his plate clean. Faith cleans the counter.

The phone RINGS. She picks up the receiver.

FAITH

McIver residence... Cook? I'm replacing her. Who am I speaking to? I will.

Angus opens the door. Faith hangs up and gestures him in.

FAITH

Lady Maude Grant-McIver said she'd  
be on her way.

Angus gets flustered. Beau winks at him.

Faith is none the wiser. She opens and scans the fridge.

FAITH

Jumbo shrimps, peppers, lemons and  
limes, great, I can put together a  
down home shrimp creole for her.

Faith closes the fridge door.

FAITH

We'll also need black tea, corn  
syrup, spiced rum.

ANGUS

Spices, herbs we have plenty. No  
haggis, lass?

FAITH

Have I ever told you how I love  
your accent, Angus?

BEAU

Wait till you hear Father's.

Tires SCREECH in the driveway. A honk BLARES.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

A dusty Land Rover, driven by Robert, comes to a stop.

Angus walks up to it and speaks with contained affection.

ANGUS

Shall I run a bath for you, me lad?

ROBERT

Haven't slept a wink last night.

ANGUS

Did you get any closer?

Robert makes a thumbs down gesture, nails caked with mud.

ROBERT

Not by a long shot. Stubborn as a  
mule that rose too.

Angus opens the trunk.

ROBERT  
Anything new, Ang?

ANGUS  
Cook left.

ROBERT  
What kind of prank did our  
scoundrel play on her this time?

ANGUS  
He told her about the White Oaks  
spell.

Robert makes a resigned gesture. Angus troops back up the driveway with a cooler.

INT. LAND ROVER - DAY

Beau hops into the passenger seat.

BEAU  
Did you get bitten to death by  
mosquitoes this time?

ROBERT  
I'm immune by now.

BEAU  
Maybe because you stink.

ROBERT  
I have a mind to give you a good  
thrashing my boy, for that, and for  
the rest of it.

BEAU  
We're not living in stone-age  
Scotland, Father.

Robert swerves dangerously into an empty garage.

Beau absentmindedly combs his hair.

ROBERT  
When on earth will you get a proper  
haircut?

BEAU  
Look who's talking.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

Beau reaches the bottom of wide steps and stands beside an anxious Faith. Angus rearranges rocking chairs on the deck.

Robert stares at Faith in disbelief. She stares back and extends a hand that shakes in spite of herself.

Robert takes it firmly into his.

ROBERT  
Reverend McIver. Has my frightful  
reputation preceded me?

FAITH  
Frightful? No, sir. Should I call  
you Reverend, Rev?

Robert lets go of her hand.

FAITH  
I'm your new cook for the summer.

Beau edges up to Faith.

Robert grabs his ear. After an uneven tug of war, Beau escapes. Angus and Faith keep still.

ROBERT  
I'll not stand more mischief from  
you, Beauregard McIver.

BEAU  
Father, please, listen. She, I  
mean, I.

ROBERT  
Get a grip, lad. At this point what  
difference does it make? You're  
going to camp. End of story.

Faith and Angus send sympathetic glances towards Beau.

ROBERT  
Mutiny, Angus?

Angus assumes an inscrutable expression. Faith swallows hard.

FAITH  
With Cook gone, surely you'll need  
help regardless.

ROBERT

One thing you seem good at is  
making assumptions, Miss...

BEAU

We call her Jo and you missed her  
fabulous crab creole.

Robert can't help a smile.

ROBERT

In this case, join me in the study,  
Jo.

INT. NEW ORLEANS - NOPD STATION - DAY

La Flamme, stares at his computer screen, in front of two  
empty plastic coffee cups.

BROWN fiddles with Rock's cellphone.

BROWN

What time did Dubois die?

LA FLAMME

Isn't it in the report?

BROWN

Humor me, boss, please.

La Flamme looks through the report.

LA FLAMME

Around midnight.

BROWN

Weird! Dubois sent an email to  
Faith after midnight.

LA FLAMME

Email, what email?

BROWN

The tech guys are still working on  
it. Something about a place called  
White Oaks.

INT. BATON ROUGE - WHITE OAKS - STUDY - DAY

On an oak desk, vases of fading roses surround the framed  
picture of a fair young woman in a garden.

At the door, Faith slips her amulet under her T-shirt.

Robert emerges from a dark corner. In appearance a little more tame, but still an impressive figure.

ROBERT  
The Eiffel Tower on your T-shirt  
brings back memories. Come on in.

Faith, reassured, collects petals from around the vases.

FAITH  
Roses mean a lot to you, sir.

Robert stands up, glances at Faith from under his brow, and gestures her to sit down.

ROBERT  
I bet that scoundrel of a son  
gabbed about me and my obsessions.

Faith sinks into a deep wing chair, hands on her lap.

FAITH  
He didn't say much.

ROBERT  
He has nothing but contempt for me.

Robert lowers his head.

FAITH  
How do you feel about him?

ROBERT  
A father can't help but want the  
best for his child. Why you ask?

Faith heaves a heavy sigh. Robert absent-mindedly caresses the edge of the framed picture on the desk.

Gaston's snout appears at the window, behind Robert and disappears. Faith stands up and sits back, destabilized.

FAITH  
It's hot in here.

ROBERT  
I keep the room as cool as possible  
for the roses. Why are you dressed  
in black on a hot day?

FAITH  
I'm in mourning, sir.

ROBERT

Aren't we all. Sorry... They musta told you I'm something of a crank.

FAITH

I heard you've been grieving for a long, long time, sir.

ROBERT

You know what they say there's a time to weep and a time to laugh.

Faith gives a little releasing laughter.

FAITH

A time to mourn and a time to dance. Ecclesiastes 3:4. That was Sister Fiona's favorite verse.

Robert passes a large hand over his face.

Gaston reappears behind another window.

GASTON (V.O.)

Faith then asked Robert about the dead rose up front. He musta felt safe in her presence, for he confided.

ROBERT

I know it looks dead, but deep down, it's alive.

Robert stops abruptly. His face closes.

Gaston pops up once more at another window.

Faith does her best to keep her cool.

FAITH

What brought you to Louisiana from Scotland, sir?

ROBERT

Didn't Beau fill you in? My mother owned this plantation. My wife was ailing, she needed sun.

Robert eyes mist over, he sighs and seems to talk to himself.

ROBERT

We chose to ignore the White Oaks' legend.

Faith gestures Gaston away.

ROBERT

You know, the pure nonsense  
superstitious people believe in.  
More to the point, where do "you"  
come from?

FAITH

Me? I graduated from the Sacred  
Heart in Grand Coteau, sir. I  
worked as a cook in Nola and...

Gaston makes another appearance. Robert looms over Faith,  
turns around, and glances outside.

ROBERT

As I said, it's all academic, since  
Beau will be away for the summer.

FAITH

This camp thingy sounds like a  
punishment. Has he done something  
unforgivable?

ROBERT

He knows what he's done.

Robert gets to the door, opens it with a wry expression, and  
speaks more formally.

ROBERT

Didn't mean to keep you so long.  
Please forgive me.

A phone RINGS. Faith picks up the receiver and hands it to  
Robert, who answers.

ROBERT

Yes, White Oaks -- Faith Batiste?

Faith turns pale.

ROBERT

Sorry, mate. Wrong number

Robert hangs up with a cryptical expression.

ROBERT

On second thought, I'd love to  
taste your creole dish, Jo.

INT. NEW ORLEANS - NOPD STATION - DAY

La Flamme slams his fist on his messy desk, furiously dials a number, and toys with Rock's cellphone.

LA FLAMME

White Oaks Resort and Spa?  
Detective La Flamme enquiring about  
a Faith Batiste -- She may have  
changed her name. You can't miss  
her, dark skin, afro, loose limbs.

Brown stares at the screen of Rock's cellphone.

INSERT: A picture of Faith in pigtails graduating in front of  
The Sacred Heart Academy.

BROWN

I'd swear I've seen that face  
before.

LA FLAMME

The car, Brown?

BROWN

Like I said, vanished.

LA FLAMME

Unbelievable incompetence.

BROWN

Found anything else of interest on  
his cellphone, boss?

La Flamme gives a patronizing shrug and puts away the cell.

BROWN

I have a gut feeling we should keep  
up with the Stetson dude from the  
security video at the Flamingo.

La Flamme nervously crushes one of the plastic cups.

LA FLAMME

Barking up the wrong tree, Brown.  
Can't you see nothing adds up?

INT. BATON ROUGE - WHITE OAKS - KITCHEN - DAY

Faith, visibly hyper, puts a lid over steamed rice, draws  
shrimps from sizzling oil, almost burns herself.

Beau, bare-footed, aims his camcorder at Faith from some distance.

She shoos him off and drops fritters in a bowl.

BEAU  
Is it Father who makes you jumpy?

Beau keeps filming and steals fritters.

FAITH  
I'm not jumpy and you shouldn't  
talk about your pa this way.

Beau gets closer.

BEAU  
Whose side are you on?

FAITH  
Stop, you make me nervous. Please  
go outside with that thing.

BEAU  
Without shoes?

Robert pops into the kitchen.

ROBERT  
Beau, what on earth are you doing  
bare-feet?

BEAU  
Jo said it's good for the posture.

Robert shrugs and leaves.

FAITH  
Not much love lost between you two,  
is there?

BEAU  
You already noticed. He doesn't  
care if I live or die.

Beau swipes another fritter.

FAITH  
That's not what he said to me.

BEAU  
Ya, right. Did you tell him about  
Faith Batiste?

FAITH  
She died when her rock stumbled.

BEAU  
Now you speak in riddles.

Faith mops sweat off her brow, fiddles with her amulet's chain, and glances at a date crossed on the wall calendar.

BEAU  
My birthday's next week. Only time  
Father and I do something  
worthwhile together.

FAITH  
Like what?

Faith puts lime slices into pitcher of tea and pours rum.

BEAU  
We go to the cemetery.

Rum spills over. Faith wipes it.

Beau stuffs himself with fritters.

SOUND of a car in the driveway.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

LADY "MAUDE" GRANT-MCIVER, a vital woman in her seventies, wearing a trim outfit, trendy sunglasses, and a wide brim hat, walks up the steps.

She speaks with a classy Southern accent.

MAUDE  
My luggage's in the car, Ang, dear.

Angus, who stands by the front door, all spruced-up, bows.

MAUDE  
Also bring the mystery novel I left  
on the front seat, will you?

ANGUS  
Yes, Lady McIver.

MAUDE  
Maude, please.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Maude hangs her hat behind the door and pecks Beau's cheek. He SNEEZES.

MAUDE  
Bless your heart, child.

BEAU  
Thanks, Grannie.

MAUDE  
Grannie. How I detest the word.  
Where's Robert? Not with his  
wretched rose, I hope.

Faith smiles, dries her hands, and steps forward.

Maude takes her sunglasses off, surveys Faith's clothes, and lifts one of her well-defined eyebrow.

MAUDE  
Join me in the parlor, will you?

Faith picks up the pitcher.

INT. PARLOR - DAY

An elegantly furnished room with a baby grand filling a corner.

A crystal chandelier hangs from the ceiling.

On a velvet sofa, near a table covered with travel brochures, Faith clinks her tall glass of spiked tea with Maude's.

FAITH  
To Scotland! Your next escapade.

Angus comes in, silently hands the mystery novel to Maude, and leaves.

MAUDE  
No, child, to Paris!

Faith lifts her glass. They both drink.

MAUDE  
You make a mean drink and I like  
your kick-ass hairstyle, but I  
don't know your name.

FAITH

Jo. Short for Josephine, Lady...

MAUDE

Call me Maude. While touring Scotland, I fell for a laird and married him. Tell me, Jo, what's a girl like you doing in a sinister place like this?

FAITH

I feel at home, here. I'm also an orphan.

Maude pours more tea into their glasses.

MAUDE

I do fear for our Beauregard.

Robert opens the door, hair askew.

ROBERT

Good to see you finally take an interest in your grandson, Mother.

MAUDE

For goodness sake, Rob, when will you get yourself groomed? Jo, what do you honestly think?

Faith scans Robert. He stands to attention.

FAITH

Oh, I don't know. Wild men are all the rage nowadays.

Robert isn't sure how to take Faith's comment, neither is Maude.

MAUDE

Regardless, Jo will help me plan an awesome birthday party for Beauregard this year.

Robert SLAMS the door behind him. Faith stares dreamily ahead.

MAUDE

Believe it or not, that was one of his best moods.

FAITH

I don't mind. There's something endearing about him.

MAUDE

Endearing? What's endearing about  
man obsessed with a damned rose? A  
man who neglects all, including his  
only son?

FAITH

I don't know, I just feel drawn to  
him.

Maude leans over Faith.

MAUDE

Has Rob hired you to reverse the  
White Oaks spell?

Faith takes a deep breath and stutters.

FAITH

Spell, what spell are you talking  
about?

Maude gently pulls on Faith silver chain, reveals the  
alligator tooth amulet, and let it slip back.

MAUDE

Being a blonde Southern belle  
doesn't make me dumb you know.

Faith nods uncomfortably.

FAITH

Actually, I'm on the run from my  
own...

(clears her voice)

I mean from a corrupt cop.

Maude lays her mystery novel on top of the brochures.

MAUDE

I wouldn't joke about such things.  
Fugitives are infinitely more  
boring than voodoo priestesses.

FAITH

I'm not --

Beau bursts in.

BEAU

Father banished me from the dining  
room for acting behind his back.

Maude sniggers.

MAUDE

One wonders who is the biggest child.

FAITH

A simple apology may settle the matter of who is mature, or not.

Robert stomps back in. Beau braces himself and edges up to him.

BEAU

Father, I owe you an apology.

Faith silently applauds. Robert looks as if he might pick a fight.

BEAU

I so regret putting you in such an awkward position.

Disarmed, Robert ruffles Beau's hair. Surprised by the unusual show of affection, Beau stands frozen.

ROBERT

Go on, let's all get dressed for Jo's celebratory supper.

BEAU

What are we celebrating?

Beau winks at Faith and dashes out. Robert, at a loss for words, turns to Faith.

ROBERT

Don't think I don't know this was your doing.

INT. COOK'S ROOM - NIGHT

The shadow of a gator crosses the threshold.

Beau, smart kilt and shirt, stands in front of an open wardrobe.

Faith finishes to braid her hair. She stops to admire Beau's outfit.

FAITH

I understand why Maude likes men in kilts.

BEAU

Yes, but she says she doesn't want  
to be a widow twice over.

FAITH

Meaning?

Beau ignores the question.

GASTON (V.O.)

The boy's alluding to some obscure  
White Oaks folklore.

Faith checks under her bed and whispers.

FAITH

Where are you hiding, Gaston?

Beau dangles Faith's purple silk gown.

BEAU

Is this what you're looking for?

Faith shakes her head.

FAITH

I'd like to make a good impression.

BEAU

Don't worry, you will and I believe  
you already have, with Father. You  
like him, don't you?

FAITH

What is there not to like?

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Candles, silverware, wine in crystal glasses.

Robert, in jacket and kilt, trimmed hair and beard, rosebud  
at his buttonhole, sits across from Beau and Maude in a sober  
evening dress.

Faith, in her costume, gold cape floating behind, lays two  
dishes on the table beside a bowl of rice.

Maude represses a smile. Robert gulps some air and undoes the  
top button of his shirt.

ROBERT

Is this what lasses wear for dinner  
at The Sacred Heart?

FAITH  
Only after they graduate, sir.

ROBERT  
Let's drink to that.

Robert and Faith clink glasses.

He downs his wine. Maude stares at Robert, then at Faith who also drinks her wine to the last drop.

FAITH  
Is Angus not dining with us?

ROBERT  
Ang's the solitary type.

FAITH  
I'll serve Beau and join Ang in the kitchen, then.

Robert studies Faith as she dishes rice in Beau's plate and covers it with shrimp sauce. Beau looks pale.

BEAU  
Sorry, Jo, I'm not very hungry. May I be excused, Father?

Robert shrugs. Beau gets up and leaves.

Faith, a little giddy, goes after Beau.

ROBERT  
Come on lass. He's a big boy, he can tuck himself in.

Faith returns and sits down at the table.

FAITH  
Is one ever too old for a little affection?

Robert, a little startled, clears his throat.

ROBERT  
You may have a point, there, lass.

Robert gets up, puts a white napkin across his forearm, bows his head down, and lifts a ladle full of golden rice.

ROBERT  
Mesdames, allow me to serve both of you. Advance your plates.

Faith gazes up at Robert.

FAITH  
I need to see about Beau, sir.

Robert can't help a smile and serves Maude.

INT. BEAU'S ROOM - NIGHT

Faith turns Beau's bedside lamp on. Beau curls up into a fetal position and whines.

BEAU  
I had too many corn fritters. Sorry  
to ruin your supper.

Faith tucks Beau in.

FAITH  
There, there. You'll feel good as  
rain by morning.

She sits down at the edge of the bed and holds her head.

BEAU  
Thanks for checking in, Jo. I  
already feel better.

Faith ruffles Beau's hair, and blows him a kiss.

FAITH  
I'm not used to drink like that.

BEAU  
It seems it's me who should be  
checking up on you.

FAITH  
No need. I'll stay here a bit  
longer.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Angus gathers empty plates and glasses on a trolley, serves liquor, and discreetly waits by the door.

Robert daydreams, nursing his liquor.

ROBERT  
What the dickens did she mean by  
never too old for a little  
affection?

MAUDE

I take it you didn't dislike her  
outré dress.

ROBERT

Quite the contrary, I found it  
refreshing.

MAUDE

Refreshing in what way?

Agitated, Robert gets up and leans over Maude.

ROBERT

Oh Mother, not the third degree,  
please.

MAUDE

No, son. Just praying she doesn't  
make a fool of you.

He fiddles with the rose on his button hole and walks to the  
door, talking to himself.

ROBERT

She's such a good soul, that lass.

MAUDE

Stop roaming like a bear in cage.  
She'll soon be back.

Robert sits back down. Maude puts her hand on his arm.

MAUDE

By the way, Irene's having one of  
her intimate dinners next week.

ROBERT

She gives me the creeps.

MAUDE

You're a fool and a bore, Robert  
McIver. Nobody's asking you for a  
date, let alone remarry.

ROBERT

You never showed me the way,  
Mother.

MAUDE

And be responsible for another  
death?

Robert looks in Angus's direction. Angus averts his eyes and promptly leaves the room.

MAUDE

To get back to Jo, I think she's had a bit too much to drink.

ROBERT

She may have been a wee bit nervous, but gracious about Beau.

Maude gives a mocking laughter,

MAUDE

Did you actually fall under her charm, or are you in earnest?

ROBERT

I'm just a fool and a bore, Mother.

Robert sips his liquor with an expression of defeat, but when Faith returns, holding a bowl of water and rose petals, he regains confidence.

ROBERT

We underestimated your talents, Jo. I hope you told the lad, he missed a supper fit for a king.

Maude finishes her drink.

FAITH

He had too many corn fritters.

ROBERT

Who knows, that boy may turn up a true connoisseur of haute cuisine.

Faith dips the tips of her fingers into the bowl. Maude and Robert follow suit.

Robert's pinky touches Faith's.

He withdraws his hands as if hit by lightning.

Faith's cheeks are flushed.

FAITH

I think I need some air.

Faith leaves without her cape.

EXT. ROSE GARDEN - NIGHT

Faith walks alone under rose arches.

Sound of RUSTLING. Gaston crawls out of a bush.

FAITH

Gaston, you're a nuisance. What do you want?

GASTON (V.O.)

Eww! Your breath stinks.

Faith HICCUPS and shivers.

GASTON (V.O.)

I'm tired of running after you. I'm a gator, not a flying dragon.

FAITH

Hush. Go keep an eye on Beau.

Gaston slithers away.

Robert comes out. He awkwardly wraps the cape around Faith's shoulders. They walk a few steps in silence.

Robert stops by the stone bench, under a rose bow.

Faith walks ahead.

Robert catches up to her, holding a white rose.

ROBERT

A peace offering.

FAITH

For what, sir?

ROBERT

For being a bit of an oaf.

Faith cups the rose with her hands, and leans on Robert. He braces himself.

They both laugh; the tension breaks momentarily.

INT. BEAU'S ROOM - NIGHT

Beau edits a video of two scarab beetles wrestling on a window sill.

The window RATTLES. Beau looks up and is spooked.

The shadow of a large creature appears. Beau grabs his camcorder and manages a strangled cry.

BEAU  
Faith, help! A werewolf. A Rougarou.

GASTON (V.O.)  
Don't flatter me, kid. Faith asked me to check in on you. Everything must go according to plan.

Beau, puts the camcorder beside him and rubs his eyes. The shadow disappears.

BEAU  
I must be dreaming... What plan?

INT. STAIRWAY - NIGHT

At the bottom of the stairs, Faith holds onto the railing. Robert offers his arm.

The sexual tension between them is visible as they stagger up the stairs and reach the landing.

Faith does her best to stand firmly, holding the rose.

ROBERT  
Jo, you're most welcome to stay as long as you want in our home.

FAITH  
You're hiring me for real?

ROBERT  
To cook and keep an eye on the boy.

Faith stands on her toes, her gold cape slips off. She impulsively kisses Robert.

Robert puts his arm around her and can't seem to let her go.

The white rose falls from her hand slowly turning red.

GASTON (V.O.)  
Faith didn't know love at first sight existed, nor that her innocent kiss would complicate her life.

INT. ROBERT'S BEDROOM - DAY

The pale morning sun lights up an austere room.

A jumble of clothes litter the floor by the large bed where Faith is blissfully asleep, one arm over Robert.

Sound of bagpipes playing a MARCHING TUNE, comes through French windows.

Faith's eyes snap open. She sits up, realizes where she is, and mutters.

FAITH

My audition's today, or is it tomorrow. Oh Dear God.

Robert stirs.

ROBERT

Don't flatter me lass.

Faith grabs her gold cape.

Robert jumps out of bed, kisses her lightly, and rushes towards an adjacent bathroom.

The sound of the BAGPIPE subsides. Sound of RUNNING WATER.

ROBERT (O.S.)

Care to join me?

Sound of Robert SINGING in the shower.

FAITH

This isn't what I came here for.

INT. COOK'S ROOM - DAY

Faith, dressed as the night before, rushes in.

Her eyes zoom on the date surrounded in red on the calendar.

Beau sits up on top of her bed, holding the pentagram book.

FAITH

What you're doing in my room at this hour, young man?

BEAU

You slept in your party clothes. More to the point, where did you sleep?

FAITH  
Is this an inquisition?

BEAU  
I saw your gator. I heard him  
speak. At least I thought I did.

FAITH  
In a dream, no doubt.

BEAU  
He said he was here to make sure  
all goes according to some plan.

Beau hands the pentagram book to Faith.

FAITH  
I make my own plans.

She grabs black slacks and a top and moves behind a wardrobe  
to change.

BEAU  
What if your plans hurt someone?

Faith steps forward, squeezes her silk gown into the fringed  
bag, and throws her gold cape around her shoulders.

FAITH  
Truth is, at this point, all I want  
is to dance. I need focus.  
Everything else is diversion.

EXT. SIDE ROAD - BUS STOP - DAY

Faith, Maude's wide brim hat covering her head and part of  
her face, waits in line to board a bus to New Orleans.

Robert's Land Rover stops on the curb behind her.

ROBERT  
Haven't we met before?

Faith lifts up her eyes, partly annoyed, partly delighted.

FAITH  
No time to chat; I'll be late.

Robert opens the door of the Land Rover. Faith jumps in.

FAITH  
Got your dog collar on, Rev?

INT. LAND ROVER (MOVING) - DAY

Robert passes a hand over his wet hair and pulls his collar down to reveal a couple of fresh bruise marks on his neck.

ROBERT  
Last night you acted like a beast  
and today I look like one.

FAITH  
Lucky you.

Robert adjusts his collar.

ROBERT  
Anything wrong?

FAITH  
Yes. No. I need to stay focused on  
my tryouts.

ROBERT  
Tryouts?

FAITH  
For the Rougarou gig in Paris.

ROBERT  
A cooking gig?

FAITH  
No, dancing.

SOUND of a SIREN.

Robert comes to a stop. Faith cowers.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

A Louisiana State Trooper patrol car pulls up beside the Land Rover.

ROBERT  
Good morning Officer Petitpas.

Tiny Kev eases out and gives Robert a friendly hand salute.

TINY KEV  
Hiya, Rev.

Tiny Kev peers at Faith. She shrinks into her seat.

TINY KEV

Hallelujah. Been prayin you find a lady friend since Rose, bless her soul, passed. How's our boy?

Robert's features tense. Faith relaxes.

FAITH

Beau's in great shape, Officer.

TINY KEV

Come to the diner, my wife makes a crawfish étouffée to make your eyes roll and your socks fly.

ROBERT

Tiny!

Tiny Kev ignores Robert and continues talking excitedly to Faith.

TINY KEV

You see, Missy, it's all about depth of flavor.

He stares at Faith's cape.

TINY KEV

I get this strong feeling of déjà-vu. Ain't I seen you somewhere?

FAITH

Church?

Tiny Kev and Robert exchange glances. Faith squeezes Robert's arm.

TINY KEV

Anyhoo, Rev, your license plate got mud all over.

FAITH

We're in a hurry. Can we take care of it later?

TINY KEV

Only if you promise to bring the Rev back for supper.

Faith flashes her brightest smile at Tiny Kev. He gives her a thumbs up.

INT. LAND ROVER (MOVING) - DAY

Robert looks for a parking spot on a busy street. Faith glances at the --

REAR-VIEW-MIRROR

La Flamme wearing dark shades inside his parked car, hides behind a newspaper.

BACK TO SCENE

Faith lowers her hat over her face.

                    FAITH (O.S.)  
            Let's go through the stage door.

Robert backs up.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS - BACK ALLEY - DAY

The Land Rover slowly moves down a horse carriage entrance.

                    FAITH  
            In front of the yellow door.

Robert stops. Faith hops out and rushes inside the building.

Brown parks at some distance behind the Land Rover.

INT. BOUGE DE LÀ BUILDING - DAY

Faith cautiously moves up a dark corridor.

The revolving doors up front SQUEAK.

Faith holds her breath.

La Flamme struts in, moves up a flight of stairs, two by two, and disappears.

His footsteps and voice ECHO down the stairwell.

                    LA FLAMME (O.S.)  
            Show time, Baby-Girl.

EXT. BACK ALLEY - DAY

Faith peeks out of the yellow door. The Land Rover eases as close as possible. She jumps in.

FAITH  
Let's go, quick. Someone's on my  
tail.

Robert puts his car into gear, makes a U turn, and speeds away, under Brown's nose.

EXT. HIGH WAY RAMP - DAY

Robert swerves into a car wash.

Brown follows.

INT. CAR WASH RAMP - LAND ROVER (MOVING) - DAY

Faith shivers as soapy water pours all over the windows.

ROBERT  
Will you level with me, Jo?

The windows are covered in foam. Faith remains silent.

ROBERT  
I thought the first step in being a  
couple was honesty.

FAITH  
We only slept together once.

ROBERT  
We made love twice.

FAITH  
No need to brag.

ROBERT  
Maybe I'm old fashioned. But since  
Rose died, this was a first for me.

Clear water cascades followed by large rubber blades.

FAITH  
We were drunk.

ROBERT  
I'm a Scotsman. It takes more than  
a wee dram to cloud my judgement.

FAITH  
"I" was drunk.

ROBERT  
Are you sure, you're not a Scot?  
You're as pig-headed as they come.

Outside wipers dry the car.

FAITH  
Don't be fooled by my clothes. They  
belonged to Rose.

ROBERT  
Don't think I didn't know.

Faith heaves a sigh.

ROBERT  
Did Beau ever talk about the evil  
charm that bears on White Oaks?

FAITH  
He did mention a legend.

The Land Rover moves out of the car ramp into the open.

Brown's car gets stuck behind.

EXT. CARWASH - DAY

A frustrated Brown gets out of his newly washed car.

A Robichaux Gator Farm's van crosses a muddy puddle and  
splatters all over Brown and his car.

BROWN (V.O.)  
Ha! The gator road.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

In the distance, the swamplands.

Sound of CRICKETS CHIRPING.

The Land Rover bumps along a road crossing a field of dried  
weeds and wild flowers.

In front of wooden huts, buckets of crayfish dry in the sun.

ROBERT (V.O.)  
 To think those used to be cotton  
 fields with all the indignities  
 that followed.

On the other side, an old church with a double steeple stands  
 amongst graves and crosses.

FAITH (V.O.)  
 Tell me about your wife.

ROBERT (V.O.)  
 Rose was a head-strong woman. The  
 doctor advised her not to have  
 children to save her fragile  
 health. I never wanted any.

FAITH (V.O.)  
 She was brave. Now it's up to Beau  
 and you.

ROBERT (V.O.)  
 Beau loved you from the word go.

FAITH (V.O.)  
 Did he say so?

ROBERT (V.O.)  
 Not in so many words.

The Land Rover makes a right turn into a dirt road bordered  
 by abandoned shacks, rusted vehicles, and lush nature.

INT. BROWN'S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Brown drives cautiously on the dirt road, his eyes peeled.  
 His phone RINGS. La Flamme's name appears. Brown hesitates.  
 At a widening of the road ahead, Robert's clean Land Rover  
 overtakes Brown.

Brown recognizes Faith. Faith instinctively reaches for her  
 amulet.

BROWN  
 Now, I'll show you incompetence,  
 boss.

INT. LAND ROVER (MOVING) - DAY

Robert listens with great attention to Faith.

FAITH

I'd be lying if I said last night meant nothing to me, I never felt so at peace, but there are too many things against us.

ROBERT

Like the fact that you made fools of all of us?

In the rear-view mirror Brown's car speeds up and puts on his SIREN. Faith flips her head back and mutters.

FAITH

Where's that Gaston when I need him?

Gaston rambles in the middle of the road and blocks Brown.

FAITH

Don't look back!

ROBERT

Bossy as well.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - BROWN'S CAR (MOVING)

Brown slams on his brakes.

BROWN

Damn gator again.

Brown presses the HORN.

Gaston ignores it. Brown takes out a revolver, puts his hand out to shoot at Gaston.

BROWN

Move it, or I'll shoot.

Gaston ROARS, clambers onto the hood of his car and over the roof, swishing its tail.

BROWN

Holy Mother of God. Jesus, Mary, Moses, Voodoo Sprites, save me.

GASTON (V.O.)

'Nough praying dude. Leave ma girl alone. Go after Gator-Man, you incompetent fool.

Gaston slithers back down. The windshield cracks. Brown covers his face.

Gaston slips into the brush and disappears.

Dazed, Brown jumps out of the car and foolishly waves his gun. Tiny Kev's patrol car comes to a stop beside him.

Tiny Kev aims a gun at Brown.

TINY KEV  
Put that gun away.

Brown whips out his badge.

BROWN  
Detective Brown, NOPD on classified duty, sir.

TINY KEV  
Look at the mess your car's in, Detective. What in the name of Jesus did you do to deserve that?

BROWN  
I couldn't begin to tell you.

Brown gets back in his car. Gaston's tail moves between brambles.

BROWN  
Oh, God how do I miss the Bronx.

INT. NEW ORLEANS - NOPD STATION - DAY

Brown and La Flamme, looking exhausted, go through files.

LA FLAMME  
Still nothing conclusive. What happened to your car, Brown?

BROWN  
My car. Oh the cracked windshield. A tree, boss, what else?

LA FLAMME  
Where?

Brown pulls his cell phone and follows the route he took with his index finger on the map.

La Flamme tenses, wipes his brow, and bends over Brown.

LA FLAMME

You need to take a vacation. Maybe we both need a vacation.

BROWN

In the midst of a case, boss?

LA FLAMME

File it. The Batiste girl was a no-show at her tryouts, today.

Brown looks falsely surprised.

INT. WHITE OAKS - PARLOR - DAY

Angus speaks agitatedly into a phone. Beau hangs on to his every word. Maude pretends to read her mystery novel.

ANGUS

Am I speaking to Bouge de là Studio? -- Did a Jo Baker attend the French tryouts? Yes Josephine. No, Madame, I am no prankster.

He puts the phone down.

ANGUS

She said Josephine Baker died a long time ago and hung up on me.

Maude closes her novel.

MAUDE

Sounds like a case of mistaken identity.

Beau has trouble keeping a straight face.

MAUDE

With Robert, I understand. He's so secretive about everything, but, Jo. Come to think of it...

BEAU

Should we call the police?

ANGUS

I'm sure there's a perfectly simple explanation.

Beau stares through the open back door and bolts out. Angus and Maude exchange glances.

MAUDE

Come and sit by me, Ang.

Angus brings his heels together, and recites.

ANGUS

We two have paddled in the same  
stream/ from morning sun till dine/  
But seas between us have roared too  
long/

Maude pulls Angus down beside her. They tenderly gaze at each other.

MAUDE

You are a sentimental fool. What  
would I do without you?

ANGUS

The day will come, my Lady Maude.

BEAU (O.S.)

Maude, Ang. Quick!

EXT. BALCONY - DAY

Right by the thorny vine, Beau, on his knees, cups his hands around an unseen marvel.

BEAU

It's alive, come and see.

Maude approaches with caution. Her eyes widen. She feels faint. Angus helps her to the wrought-iron bench.

INT. LAND ROVER (MOVING)- DAY

Faith hums her CAJUN LULLABY. Robert smiles.

ROBERT

I love our conversations. Specially  
when they stop in mid-air.

FAITH

They must be worried at home.

ROBERT

I'm sure, no one noticed.

Robert parks in front of the Soul Kitchen Diner.

INT. SOUL KITCHEN DINER - NIGHT

Ethnic memorabilia adorn the walls in colorful patterns around a cuckoo-clock.

OONA PETITPAS, a petite woman of mixed heritage, clears up Faith's and Robert's plates and looks at the clock.

OONA

Tiny should have been here by now.

Unnoticed, the snout of a gator peeks at one of the windows.

Faith leans her sleepy head on Robert's shoulder. Oona winks at them.

OONA

You couldn't have chosen better, either of you.

FAITH

I really enjoyed your jambalaya. Reminded me of my grandma's.

Oona leaves with a huge grin.

FAITH

We must tell them the truth.

ROBERT

Why not start with me. Tell me about your grandma.

FAITH

The truth is my name's not Jo.

Faith clears her throat.

GASTON (V.O.)

And Faith told Robert the whole shebang. Well almost.

ROBERT

What about the gator? The one that crashed the cop's car.

GASTON (V.O.)

I'm starting to like this Rev.

Faith takes a deep breath.

FAITH

He's my protector.

ROBERT

A voodoo priestess grannie, a rogue  
cop dad, I can buy. A magical  
gator, that's a bit of a stretch.

Tiny Kev comes in, hangs up his hat and jacket, hugs Oona.

TINY KEV

I'm pooped.

Oona lovingly unbuckles his duty belt.

Faith turns to Robert.

FAITH

Ready to hand me over?

Robert whispers in her ear.

ROBERT

Not before you lift the White Oaks  
spell.

Faith puts her arms around Robert, gives her a fierce kiss,  
and whispers back.

FAITH

I thought only superstitious  
people believed in spells.

Tiny Kev rolls his eyes, fetches a bottle of whisky from a  
high shelf at the other end of a bar and dusts it.

TINY KEV

Are our love birds interested in a  
single malt night-cap?

ROBERT

I'll be driving, Officer Petitpas.  
Are you testing me?

TINY KEV

We got plenty room up above, if the  
fancy takes you. I'll be up early.

Robert and Faith gaze at each other. She shakes her head ever  
so slightly.

ROBERT

Thanks Tiny. We'll take a  
raincheck.

The cuckoo-clock CHIMES TWELVE STROKES.

Oona comes back with a small jar of home-made cookies.

OONA

For the boy, coco-pumpkin treats.

TINY KEV

I wonder what happened to the Brown  
dude I met on the road earlier on?

Faith sits up in alert, holding her amulet.

TINY KEV

I don't even know your name, Missy,  
but you got a mighty fine lucky  
charm.

OONA

Tiny, the girl's exhausted keep  
your tall tales for another while.

INT. LAND ROVER (MOVING) - NIGHT

Robert lost in thought drives HUMMING the Cajun lullaby.  
Faith closes her eyes and smiles.

FAITH

I don't know what more to say.  
Maybe I should return to Nola to  
straighten things out.

ROBERT

Talk to Tiny. He's a good man.

FAITH

Drat, I forgot Oona cookies.

Faith pulls on Robert's dog collar.

FAITH

Whatever motivated you to become a  
preacher?

ROBERT

All the wrong reasons. I figured it  
would protect me from the spell  
that killed my father and my wife.  
Now, I fear for Beau and for you.

FAITH

Fear for me, why?

ROBERT

Anyone loved by a descendant of a Grant is doomed to die, that's why.

FAITH

Loved by a Grant?

ROBERT

My maternal line. The calamity started with my great-great ancestor, William Jefferson Grant.

FAITH

Oh, I see. But it only works if you marry me, right?

Robert pauses, stops the car, and puts a hand over his chest.

ROBERT

If this is a proposal, I accept.

Overwhelmed, Faith shakes her head.

FAITH

You didn't say loved. Did you?

ROBERT

I did.

FAITH

So soon?

ROBERT

Are you calling ten years, soon?

Robert takes Faith's hand into his.

ROBERT

It would be too soon only if you don't feel the same way. Do you?

Faith puts her other hand on Robert's lips.

FAITH

How can I know how I feel, when I'm not even free?

Overcome with conflicted emotions, Robert gets out of the Land Rover and begins to pace in front of it.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

A light mist surrounds Faith and Robert as they face each other in the Land Rover's headlights.

FAITH

What I know is that when you told me the dead rose was alive deep inside, something in me moved.

ROBERT

The last thing I want is to put pressure on you.

FAITH

Maybe I don't know what I'm talking about. Maybe I'm trying to make sense of something that escapes me.

ROBERT

What you're afraid of, lass?

INT. BATON ROUGE - WHITE OAKS - ROBERT'S BEDROOM - DAY

Early morning light filters through blinds. Faith's handbag is on a chair.

Faith and Robert are sleeping in their clothes, entwined on top of the bed, the dog collar on the floor.

Sound of BAGPIPES.

Robert jumps up. Faith stretches and YAWNS.

ROBERT

I specifically told Angus not to play bagpipes this morning.

FAITH

Wasn't he suspicious?

ROBERT

Aye, but a true Scot keeps his thoughts to himself.

FAITH

I should have left.

ROBERT

I wouldn't blame you. The spell frightens off the bravest.

Faith holds her head high and seizes her amulet.

FAITH

I mean't leave your bedroom. I'm afraid of no spell.

ROBERT

Maybe, but I'm not ready to bet your life on it. Why wouldn't you want to reverse it anyway?

Faith as if taken by an ancient force recites.

FAITH

Because your ancestors enslaved mine. You deserve to suffer.

Robert blinks but takes it like a man.

ROBERT

Aye. I deserve that. But do you deserve to die just to make me suffer? Why not strike me down right now, instead.

Faith holds her amulet as if to steady herself. There's a soft whoosh and the windows rattle.

Sound of a SIGH and SOB.

Faith as if waken from a bad dream, blinks.

FAITH

What happened?

A glint of mischief in his eye, Robert caresses Faith's afro.

ROBERT

I believe you reversed the White Oaks spell.

URGENT KNOCKS on the door.

BEAU (O.S.)

Father, are you and Jo back, or shall we call the cops?

Faith dives behind the bed. The door slightly opens.

ROBERT

Beau, wait.

The door closes. Robert jumps up, grabs Faith's handbag, shoves it under the bed and opens the door.

Beau walks in. Robert sits at the foot of the bed.

BEAU  
You realize how worried we were?

ROBERT  
Since when you worry about me?

BEAU  
I worried about Jo. She was a no  
show at her tryouts.

ROBERT  
She kinda chickened out.

BEAU  
She's the bravest person I know.

Beau stares at Robert's bruises.

BEAU  
Your neck, Father.

ROBERT  
Oh that? Mosquito bites.

Unseen by Beau, Faith pinches Robert.

ROBERT  
Ouch.

BEAU  
I thought you were immune.

Robert responds with an impatient gesture.

BEAU  
Where's Jo? You two haven't...

ROBERT  
What are you insinuating?

BEAU  
Nothing. I simply do the math.

ROBERT  
Son, I must tell you something.

Beau spots the fringes of Faith's handbag under the bed. He gulps some air, acts formal, a tad provocative.

BEAU  
I'm all ears, Father.

Robert is suddenly at a loss for words.

Beau steps back, knocks a chair down, stumbles out, and slams the door behind him.

ROBERT

Darn. I missed a hell of a chance to speak to the boy as a man, I mean as a dad.

Faith picks up the phone, and dials a number.

FAITH

Bouge de là? Faith Batiste -- Yes, a family emergency -- Would you accept a demo video?

Faith hangs up with a triumphant look and blows a kiss in Robert's direction.

FAITH

I'm suddenly starving. Don't worry, you'll get a second chance.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Beau holds Oona's cookie jar in one hand and drags Tiny with his other hand.

TINY KEV

Ain't got time right now.

Beau tightens his grip.

BEAU

Won't let you go until you taste her French toast, Uncle Kev.

A door opens.

FAITH (O.S)

Beau, I know how fussy y'are with your French toast. Come quick, before it cools down.

TINY KEV

Smells mighty good, but duty calls.

BEAU

A depth of flavor to make your socks roll back and your eyes fly.

TINY KEV

Making fun of me?

BEAU  
 If you call candied orange peels,  
 honey, and pistachios, a joke, yep.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

Tiny ambles down the stairs.

FAITH (O.S.)  
 Breakfast ready. Second call.

From the balcony, near the old vine now covered with lush new growth, Robert waves.

ROBERT  
 Tiny! Seen the old rose?

Tiny turns around, squints up the balcony, and stops short.  
 He makes the sign of the cross.

TINY KEV  
 Never thought I'd see such miracle  
 in all my born days, Rev.

INT. BEAU'S ROOM - DAY

Faith, looking preoccupied, sits beside Beau in front of his laptop. Beau wipes honey from the corner of his mouth.

BEAU  
 What you think of Uncle Kev?

FAITH  
 Ain't crazy about cops in general,  
 but your pa trusts him.

BEAU  
 Wanna see what you missed?

Beau fiddles with his keyboard. Faith looks distracted.

ON SCREEN

A video of the time-lapse of mummified roses unfolding petal by petal and of new sprouting shoots on the dried up vine.

BEAU (O.S.)  
 So, what really happens at tryouts?

BACK TO SCENE

Beau closes the lid of his laptop. Faith makes a dismissive gesture.

BEAU  
Couldn't you use your mojo?

FAITH  
Magic can't be self-serving, Beau.

BEAU  
That sucks!

Faith reopens the laptop and rewinds the video.

FAITH  
Sorry I wasn't really paying attention.

BEAU  
You better be, it's pure magic.

Beau pushes the play button. Faith stares at the screen.

FAITH  
Those are awesome effects. You think you could make a demo for the tryouts I missed?

BEAU  
Hey, those are no special effects.

INT. PARLOR - NIGHT

Furniture line one of the walls. Beau's camcorder sits on a tripod. He fixes lamps at different heights.

Faith, dripping with sweat, wearing her gold cape, a black top and tights, takes a break.

BEAU  
We need to do one more.

Faith pours herself a glass of water.

FAITH  
I'm pooped and I don't know why you need to do so many takes.

Robert stands on the doorstep.

ROBERT

You can trust him. He won several shorts video competitions.

Beau, tongue tied, focuses a light to create deep contrast on Faith and jumps behind the camcorder.

FAITH

Okay, one last take.

Robert is about to leave.

BEAU

Can Father stay?

Faith nods and coils up in a tight ball. Beau aims the camcorder towards her.

BEAU

Take twelve. Five, four, three, two, one, Action!

Faith slowly unfurls her limbs, one at a time, as if releasing from a frozen sleep.

Her entire body shivers, her cape undulates.

Beau changes focus and angles to follow her rhythm. Robert holds his breath.

BEAU

Cut.

Faith takes a deep breath, gets up, and begins to tidy up.

BEAU

Get your beauty rest. Father and I will take it from there.

She picks up her cape, blows a kiss, and leaves.

BEAU

Was my mom anything like Faith?

ROBERT

Rose was much more, I mean less. To be honest, I don't remember.

Beau stares at Robert who looks emotionally shaken.

ROBERT

So what happens now?

BEAU  
Wanna pull an all nighter?

Robert lays a hand on Beau's shoulder. They awkwardly hug.

ROBERT  
Your mum and Faith had one thing in  
common, unwavering devotion to  
whatever they set their minds on.

Beau rubs his eyes and smiles.

BEAU  
Can we just go to the cemetery as  
usual for my birthday? No party.

ROBERT  
I was also getting cold feet.

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

Faith stands by the old rose, hardly believing her eyes. She  
passes a hand over leaves and petals, barely touching.

Gaston's shadow furtively passes down below.

GASTON (V.O.)  
The White Oaks spell lifted, what  
now, Miss-I-write-my-own-plan?

Faith looks around in total amazement.

FAITH  
Gaston, is this your doing?

GASTON (V.O.)  
You give me much too much credit,  
girl. Isn't it your bedtime?

FAITH  
I have to think of how to get in  
touch with Brown and straighten  
things up.

INT. NEW ORLEANS NOPD STATION - DAY

Brown holds a report in his hands. His desk is clear of  
clutter.

La Flamme stands by the door.

BROWN

Boss, You were right about the  
Batiste girl. She was on the scene  
of the crime. They found her DNA on  
Dubois's face.

La Flamme rubs his hands.

EXT. BATON ROUGE - WHITE OAKS - BALCONY - DAY

Faith, all nervous, tries new steps, mumbling to herself.

FAITH

Detective Brown, my name...

Beau and Robert walk out of balcony doors, blinking. She  
stops and stutters.

FAITH

You've seen the rose. The spell,  
does that mean...

ROBERT

That you got the power? You tell  
me, lass.

Faith turns away. Robert suppresses his emotion and speaks as  
naturally as he can.

ROBERT

Besides, Beau spent the night  
editing and sent the demo early  
this morning.

FAITH

That's what you both have been up  
to? What about Brown?

ROBERT

We thought the audition was more  
important than anything for you.

FAITH

Oh, so you both did.

BEAU

Father told me about Brown, I think  
I can help.

INT. NEW ORLEANS - VODOO'S LAIR - DAY

Gris-Gris drops a worn-out alligator long coat on La Flamme's shoulders and GROWLS with evil pleasure.

GRIS-GRIS

That Gracie Batiste thought the world belonged to her and her kin. My time has come.

LA FLAMME

How?

Gris-Gris scratches his bald head with the long yellow nail of his index finger.

GRIS-GRIS

Make the girl want to kill you, her force will be redirected onto her.

LA FLAMME

But she's my flesh and blood.

GRIS-GRIS

I thought you wanted to be a man again. She has this frenzy about dancing. Should be a cinch to taunt her.

INT. FLAMINGO CLUB - DAY

Brown strides to the bar where a seasoned BARTENDER checks bottles behind the bar.

BARTENDER

Sorry, sir, we're closed.

Brown shows his badge.

BROWN

Detective Brown.

Bartender pours Bourbon in two glasses and downs his shot.

BARTENDER

To Rock Dubois. May he rest in peace and to his Faith, God bless her, wherever she is.

Brown lifts his glass but doesn't drink.

BROWN

I'm on duty. Did you see the man wearing a Stetson hat, the night Dubois died?

BARTENDER

Gator-Man was here, as I see you.

The Bartender slowly unhooks the picture of Rock, Savannah, and La Flamme and slides it on the bar.

Brown stares at it, takes a swig, and chokes.

BROWN

Holy smoke.

INT. BATON ROUGE - WHITE OAKS - BEAU'S ROOM - DAY

Beau and Robert are intensely focused on the laptop screen. Faith nervously hovers around them.

ROBERT

You sure it'll work, son?

BEAU

Who's the geek, here, Father?  
(to Faith)

You're safe. Now, you can email your Brown guy without a trace.

INT. NEW ORLEANS - NOPD STATION - DAY

La Flamme, feet on his desk, cracks his knuckles with frustration.

SOUND of an email BEEP on Brown's computer.

La Flamme leans on Brown's desk and checks the email.

ON SCREEN

If you want information on the Dubois case, come to Gracie's Bayou tomorrow at sunrise. A map follows.

INT. BATON ROUGE - WHITE OAKS - PARLOR - NIGHT

Sitting at the baby grand, Faith and Maude play a BIRTHDAY MEDLEY and GIGGLE like two school girls.

MAUDE

White Oaks hadn't seen much  
laughter until you came.

Faith stops and swallows a lump in her throat.

MAUDE

People are still weary of us. So  
tell me, Jo, you came here for a  
definite purpose, didn't you?

Maude finishes with a musical flourish.

FAITH

No sure what you mean.

MAUDE

Of course not. Mystery's part of  
it, right?

Faith lifts a shoulder with an enigmatic smile.

FAITH

Does it really matter? One thing's  
sure, tomorrow, I'll make Beau's  
birthday cake.

MAUDE

We'll be a smallish group.

Maude ties a red ribbon in Faith's hair and fusses over her.

MAUDE

I always wanted a daughter.

FAITH

Why not remarry?

MAUDE

Call me superstitious.

Angus, stylishly handsome, makes a noticeable entry.

MAUDE

I may yet surprise you.

INT. BEAU'S ROOM - NIGHT

Faith bends over Beau and neatly folds his sheet over.

BEAU

I like it when you tuck me in.

Beau fiddles with her red ribbon.

BEAU

In spite of everything, do you like  
my dad as much as he loves you?

Faith gets back on her feet. Her voice wavers.

FAITH

What do you think?

BEAU

I hope you do.

Faith opens the balcony doors, takes in some air, and returns  
to Beau's bed.

BEAU

When I grow up, I hope to find  
someone just like you.

Beau grabs her hand.

BEAU

If we don't hear about the gig,  
does it mean you won't go?

Faith gets to the door and blows a kiss.

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

At one end of the balcony, Maude, in a bathrobe, a beauty  
mask on her face, opens her doors and draws the curtains.

There is a pink glow at the other end. Faith walks past the  
revived climbing rose, a bloom falls at her feet.

She picks it up and holds it in the hollow of her palm. The  
bloom swirls, lifts, and returns to stillness.

Faith peers through a glass pane into --

ROSE'S BOUDOIR

Robert caresses the soft bristles of a hair brush and turns  
the photograph of his wife face down on a dresser.

He switches a pink lamp off, heaves a sigh, and steps onto --

## THE BALCONY

Faith treads backwards. Robert passes a hand over his face.

ROBERT

I am ready to let go of the past,  
are you?

FAITH

I am. Will the past let go of me.

She makes a flip in the air, Robert catches her.

Maude peeks through her curtains with a knowing smile.

## EXT. SWAMPLANDS - GRACIE'S BAYOU - DAY

There is great stillness.

The sun is not up yet. Faith and Robert walk hand in hand around the place.

Robert points to the sign hanging by a frayed rope.

ROBERT

To think I repainted this sign,  
cleaned up the yard, waited and  
waited for this rose to bloom. You  
would think I was raving mad.

A wind lifts dust. Faith dreamily walks up to the climbing rose covered in blooms.

FAITH

Grand-mère was stubborn as a mule;  
she never wanted to cut it down.  
Look at it now.

Faith pushes the cabin door open.

The first sun rays illuminate a crumbling, cobwebby, and dusty interior.

Faith takes Robert's hand and puts it on her chest.

FAITH

I ain't afraid to face Brown.

ROBERT

Sure, but let me speak to him,  
first. You may think it's old  
school, but...

Faith interrupts Robert with a hug.

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

Not far from the parked Land Rover, in the shadow of a tree dripping with Spanish moss, Faith, nestles in the hollow of a trunk.

At some distance, Robert gets in a lively, but inaudible conversation with Brown, their backs to the swamp.

Faith closes her eyes in prayer, hands on her amulet.

Sound of a soft CAJUN LULLABY.

Faith opens her eyes. Gracie's ghost bends over, holding a small rosebud.

GRACIE'S GHOST  
You've grown, child.

FAITH  
Grand-mère.

Faith holds her hand out. Gracie drops the rosebud on her palm. The rose bud stops in mid-air, twirls, and opens.

Faith turns her head in Robert's direction.

GRACIE'S GHOST  
You're ready.

Tears of joy roll freely on Faith's cheeks. Her eyes blur.

Gracie's ghost fades away.

Sound of a GUNSHOT and a SPLASH. Faith blinks.

Brown's body is carried away by the water current.

La Flamme, wearing Gris-Gris's long coat, closes in on Robert, ready to shoot him.

Faith holds her amulet. Her hair looks electrified. The sky turns black. She SHOUTS.

FAITH  
Freeze.

La Flamme stays petrified in a crooked pose for one second and returns to normal, gun pointed at Robert.

LA FLAMME

Say bye-bye to the preacher.

Faith tries to move, but her legs are petrified in a crouching position.

LA FLAMME

Gris-Gris's trick is working. You know what to do, if you want to dance again, Baby-Girl.

FAITH

Gaston, now's the time.

Gaston emerges from the swamp behind La Flamme, bumps him into the bayou, swims towards Brown, and drags his body up the bank.

Lighting hits, wind gusts and hail follow.

Robert lifts Faith into the Land Rover and drives on.

INT. LAND ROVER (MOVING) DAY

Robert slams on the steering wheel, catches his breath, and stops the car at a fork in the road.

He looks at Faith in awe. She tries to move her partially frozen limbs.

FAITH

Robert, if I can't move, how will I ever dance?

Robert holds Faith and rubs her body.

FAITH

Here, I am, I caused an innocent man's death and all I can think about is dancing.

ROBERT

You saved me.

Sound of SIRENS.

EXT. SWAMPLANDS - GRACIE'S BAYOU - DAY

Divers and rescue boats are busy on the site.

Tiny Kev walks up to La Flamme trying to unkink his limbs.

TINY KEV  
Freak storm again, darn global  
warming.

LA FLAMME  
You found the body, Petitpas?

TINY KEV  
Not yet, Detective. Beats me why  
Brown or anyone else would come  
here. This place's haunted.

Tiny Kev nods towards the cabin, caving under the giant  
climbing rose, and makes the sign of the cross.

TINY KEV  
For the Rev it's different.

LA FLAMME  
As I told you, the preacher killed  
Brown. I was sole witness.

Tiny Kev peers more closely at La Flamme's long coat.

TINY KEV  
Is this what you wear on duty,  
Detective?

La Flamme's leg jerks. His arm goes up.

TINY KEV  
Something the matter?

LA FLAMME  
Darn mosquitoes.

TINY KEV  
You do look pale. My Oona, she got  
special ointment for all kinda  
ills. You drop on by after this  
thing concludes.

La Flamme shows Tiny Kev a picture of Faith.

TINY KEV  
That's the Rev's girl.

LA FLAMME  
(bluffs)  
I have a warrant for her. She's a  
dangerous witch, masquerading as a  
dancer.

TINY KEV  
I'll be darned. Granted we're in  
voodoo country.

La Flamme fumes.

LA FLAMME  
She's a cold-blooded criminal.

TINY KEV  
If anything all she can be guilty  
of is stealing the Rev's heart.

LA FLAMME  
Her DNA was found on her boss.

Tiny Kev, suddenly serious, rubs his chin.

LA FLAMME  
Will you be an obstruction to my  
investigation, Officer Petitpas?

Tiny Kev takes a step back.

LA FLAMME  
That Oona of yours is she properly  
registered?

TINY KEV  
You already dragged our county's  
resources for a deputy lost in the  
bayou, you've got a warrant for a  
witch, and now you insult my wife?  
Have some respect, Detective. This  
is my turf.

LA FLAMME  
Just sayin'.

TINY KEV  
Ain't gonna lift a finger until the  
kid's birthday's well over.

LA FLAMME  
When's the darned birthday?

EXT. BATON ROUGE - WHITE OAKS - FRONT GATE - NIGHT

Under Gaston's vigilant eye, La Flamme, unaware, long coat  
over his shoulder, scans the upper balconies with binoculars.

He throws a rope on top of the wrought iron gate and starts  
to shimmy up.

GASTON (V.O.)  
Goin' somewhere, Lewis?

Gaston opens its jaws right under La Flamme's butt. La Flamme drops his phone and swings precariously in mid air.

LA FLAMME  
Holy mother of God, the witch's  
gator.

He flicks a knife open.

LA FLAMME  
I don't know why Gris-Gris hasn't  
caught you yet. He's the best  
poacher this side of Mississippi.

GASTON (V.O.)  
No match for Gracie's mojo.

Gaston slides away into darkness. La Flamme jumps down and picks up his broken phone.

LA FLAMME  
It's not a freakin' vacation I  
need. It's my head examined.

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

Faith and Robert sit on the bench under boughs of the revived rose. Faith flexes her wrists with ease.

FAITH  
I managed to make Beau's cake.

ROBERT  
Beau seems to have grown out of  
celebrating his birthday.

FAITH  
How can you grow out of something  
you never experienced?

Robert lowers his head in silence. A lone tear rolls down his cheek.

ROBERT  
When Rose died, I stupidly resented  
Beau. I withheld all affection. Now  
he probably thinks less of himself.

Robert casually pulls out a long envelope from his jacket. Faith checks what's inside.

FAITH  
A return ticket to Paris?

ROBERT  
Beau will be upset to see you go.

Robert caresses Faith's hair. She kisses him. He doesn't hold back.

She abruptly gets up and hands the ticket back to Robert.

FAITH  
I'm probably on a no fly list by now. What's the use?

ROBERT  
You're innocent, Faith.

FAITH  
He'll never give up.

INT. NEW ORLEANS - NOPD STATION - DAY

La Flamme, feet on his desk, speaks on the phone.

LA FLAMME  
Yes, Officer Petitpas, I'm sending you all the documents regarding Faith Batiste... DNA report as well... See you there.

EXT. BATON ROUGE - WHITE OAKS - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Faith and Maude, sitting on rocking chairs, check a to-do list. The iron gates open to a party van.

FAITH  
Beau's getting cold feet.

Maude shakes her head.

GUYS in overalls set up an outdoors tent on the lawn. Faith oversees the unloading of Mardi Gras paraphernalia.

ANGUS (O.S.)  
The phone, Faith. Overseas!

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Angus arranges candles on an alligator-shaped birthday cake.

Faith holds the receiver close to her ear and speaks soberly.

FAITH

I got the Rougarou part? Oh, that soon? Rain or high water, I'll be there... Wait. Darn, they hang up.

Faith hugs Angus, who turns red. There is an awkward silence.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Robert and Beau stand in front of a mausoleum with an angel guarding a wrought iron door.

Sound of a MOURNFUL BAGPIPE.

Robert puts a bouquet of blush roses in Beau's hands. Beau brings the flowers to his lips and lays them at the door.

He reaches up and wipes a tear from his father's cheek.

INT. WHITE OAKS - PARTY TENT - DAY

An outrageously decorated doorway.

Beau enters, Robert follows. Yellow, green and gold helium balloons rise from behind a makeshift podium.

GUEST VOICES

Surprise!

Beau beams at Robert, who squeezes his hand.

BEAU

I knew you had something up your sleeve, Father.

Robert proudly grins.

Faith, in high priestess garb, Gracie's amulet round her neck, opens her arms wide.

FAITH

Happy birthday, young man.

Maude, in Scottish tartan and sash, snaps photographs with her iPhone.

ROBERT

Thanks, Mother, for organizing such a fun party.

Oona, along with her teenage TWINS, wearing carnival masks, hand Beau colorfully wrapped presents on a raised stage.

Tiny Kev, wearing State Trooper dress uniform and a sad clown mask, brings La Flamme forward, wearing a skeleton half-mask and the worn out long coat.

TINY KEV

Meet a colleague, Faith, magician  
in his spare time.

Faith swallows a lump in her throat.

Meanwhile, Maude takes Robert aside.

MAUDE

Ang needs you in the kitchen.

TINY KEV

I'll go and help too, Rev.

Both men leave. Faith bravely faces La Flamme.

FAITH

What are you doing here?

LA FLAMME

What does it look like?

La Flamme glances in Beau's direction and passes a finger across his throat.

FAITH

What kind of a man are you? You  
can't be that sick.

LA FLAMME

Reverse Gracie's curse, you'll be  
free to dance your heart out and  
stop to play frigging happy family.

La Flamme strokes his mustache and bares his teeth. Faith is clearly revulsed.

LA FLAMME

You got the same blood in your  
veins, Baby-Girl. For you it's  
dancing for me, it's... well you  
know.

Faith holds her amulet.

Clouds above the tent move fast. The sky changes color. The sun sets.

NIGHT FALLS. Lanterns glow inside the tent.

Beau sits at the edge of the podium, arms around his knees.

A gator's shadow slips under.

GASTON (V.O.)  
Happy birthday kiddo. It's getting  
late. Brought you a frog, but heck,  
I got hungry.

Beau rubs his eyes, pinches his arm, and peers between the planks.

BEAU  
Did I fall asleep? Am I dreaming?

Gaston winks at Beau and slithers out of the tent.

GASTON (V.O.)  
Keep safe, young man.

Angus enters, playing the BAGPIPES. Maude, visibly moved, brings a hand to her throat.

Robert brings the birthday cake with ten lit candles.

As Beau blows his candles, time stretches, then accelerates.  
SOUNDS ARE MUTED.

Guests applaud, rain pitter-patters on the tent's roof. Maude murmurs Angus's name.

Outside one of the tent's windows, a gator's shadow leaps after La Flamme's silhouette.

EXT. PARTY TENT - NIGHT

The party is over. Faith and Robert, lost in thought, are busy cleaning up.

Maude's sports car driven by Angus stops in front of the tent. Maude wears Angus's Balmoral bonnet.

Robert glances at the two suitcases in the back seat. Maude and Faith exchange winks.

ROBERT  
Mother, you're not eloping?

MAUDE  
Just showing you the way. Faith  
knew it all along.

ANGUS  
Cheerio lad!

INT. BEAU'S ROOM - NIGHT

On the bed, covered with torn wrapping papers, Beau, wearing new red pajamas, fiddles with a state-of-the-arts camera.

Robert, regal in his bathrobe, looks in.

ROBERT  
Still up, lad?

BEAU  
I'm all wound up. Birthdays are more demanding than I thought.

ROBERT  
I bought Faith a plane ticket for her Paris gig.

BEAU  
You can't be serious, Father?

Robert straightens, and strokes his chin. Beau aims his brand new camera at him.

BEAU  
Hold it. Let me immortalize a man who made the worst mistake of his life.

Robert moves away from Beau's aim.

BEAU  
I thought you loved her.

ROBERT  
That's why, son. That's why.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Faith speaks on the phone, defeated. Robert stands in the doorway.

FAITH  
I regret it more than I can say.  
Yes, urgent family matters.

Faith hangs up and sobs. Robert puts a hand over her shoulder.

The cuckoo-clock CHIME twelve strokes.

FAITH  
It's sunrise in Paris.

Robert dries the tears on Faith's cheeks, picks up the phone, and dials a number.

ROBERT  
Talk to Tiny, lass. All will be well.

Tiny walks in, all official, phone BEEPING in his hand.

Robert hangs up the phone. Faith stands up.

FAITH  
Tiny?

TINY KEV  
That's the part of my job I most hate. Sorry, Rev. I came to arrest her. Got no choice.

ROBERT  
This is insane, Faith, tell him.

Faith calmly moves between Robert and Tiny Kev.

TINY KEV  
Faith Batiste, you're wanted for the murder of Rock Dubois. You have the right to remain silent.

Tiny unsuccessfully searches his duty belt.

FAITH  
Lost your handcuffs, Officer?

TINY KEV  
Oona! Wait till I get to that wife of mine.

Robert moves between Faith and Tiny Kev.

TINY KEV  
Stay out of it, Rev. I beg you. This is a serious matter. I gotta take her to the precinct.

ROBERT  
I'll go with her.

FAITH  
In your bathrobe?

EXT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Faith leads the way out of the kitchen, followed by Tiny Kev and Robert. She turns around.

FAITH  
I saw La Flamme kill Rock.

TINY KEV  
Why didn't you go to the police?

FAITH  
I went. He was the police.

ROBERT  
La Flamme shot Deputy Brown in the bayou. He would have shot me. She saved me.

Tiny Kev looks seriously pissed.

TINY KEV  
Why wait all this time to level with me? Faith, who saved Brown?

FAITH  
My pet gator.

TINY KEV  
A pet gator. What next?

Sound of KNOCKS at the front door.

Tiny takes out his gun and opens the door a crack.

Gaston's snout pushes his way in.

TINY KEV  
Holy shit! I give up.

FAITH  
Gaston, what did you do to Brown?

Gaston YAWNS.

TINY KEV  
Damn it girl, Gaston. Why not Gareth, or Gregory?

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Brown slumps in one of the rocking chairs, Gaston settles at his feet.

Robert and Tiny Kev prop him up. Faith kneels beside him.

BROWN

La Flamme shot me in the back. The  
gator saved me.

TINY KEV

You're delirious, dude.

Brown leans forward; the back of his shirt caked with blood.  
Tiny Kev SHOUTS in his radio.

TINY KEV

An ambulance to White Oaks, asap.

Faith holds her amulet in one hand and puts the other over  
the wound.

Brown straightens up, A bullet falls clean out of his back.

TINY KEV

Holy Mackerel.

FAITH

Gaston, keep an eye on Brown till  
the ambulance comes.

GASTON (V.O.)

I'm no nanny. Ask the fat cop.

Gaston slithers away. Tiny Kev scratches his head.

TINY KEV

Did someone call me fat?

Sound of GUNSHOTS from inside.

FAITH

La Flamme!

Robert and Faith bolt to the front door.

Tiny Kev gets there first and blocks the entrance.

TINY KEV

No one's allowed in.

ROBERT

My son's in.

TINY KEV

You want Beau alive, Rev? Stay put.  
Faith, get some sense into his  
stubborn Scot's head.

FAITH

Must talk to my pa. Tiny.

TINY KEV

I'd have to arrest you for  
obstructing the law. Your Pa?

Tiny gets on his radio.

TINY KEV

East Baton Rouge, Parish Officer  
Petitpas, reporting a suspected  
kidnapping in White Oaks. Gun shot  
fired. Over.

Sound of STATIC.

Unseen, Faith slips round the back.

INT. PARLOR - NIGHT

Heavy curtains are closed, a chair jams the door. Two bullet  
holes in the lid of the baby grand.

La Flamme tightens curtain ties on Beau's hands and feet and  
secures a bandana around his eyes.

BEAU

Faith will make you pay for that.

LA FLAMME

If you want the witch to be safe.  
Shut your trap.

La Flamme slaps Beau with the back of his hand.

BEAU

She'll have you burn in hell.

LA FLAMME

She killed her guardian for money.

BEAU

Liar.

La Flamme gags Beau with the bandana. Faith stands at the  
French doors, between the curtains.

FAITH  
This is between you and me "Pa".

LA FLAMME  
One step, I'll kill the brat.

FAITH  
Give me the gun, Pa.

LA FLAMME  
Only if you reverse the curse.

FAITH  
You killed Rock.

La Flamme aims his gun at Beau.

LA FLAMME  
See if the brat's more important  
than your principles.

Faith steps inside. La Flamme shoots above Faith. The curtain crashes down. She jumps forward.

La Flamme returns the gun to Beau's neck.

Faith's eyes turn white. She's mad. She's pissed. She's a voodoo priestess in fury.

INT. PATROL CAR - NIGHT

In the front seat, Tiny Kev and Brown, armed with guns are on the alert. Tiny Kev tries his radio again.

More STATIC.

TINY KEV  
Somethings terribly wrong.

Sound of deafening THUNDER. Lightning makes everything turn white, then silence.

BROWN  
The porch's been hit.

Trapped in the back of the car, Robert gesticulates.

ROBERT  
It's Faith, I tell you.

BROWN  
One hell of a girlfriend Rev. One  
false move, your balls are toast.

Lightening strikes again. A tree bursts into flames.

INT. PARLOR - NIGHT

The ties around Beau slip to the ground. He removes the bandana.

Outside the French doors, the flaming tree makes frightening shadows on the inside walls.

FAITH

Tiny Kev and Brown are outside, Pa.

LA FLAMME

Brown's alive?

La Flamme walks around like a caged animal.

LA FLAMME

If you won't reverse the curse,  
kill me. You don't wanna see me on  
death-row, do you?

BEAU

Kill him. He's asking for it.

FAITH

I'll not kill my pa, Beau, I want  
him to make amends.

La Flamme bursts into a sardonic LAUGHTER.

Faith opens her arms.

Her priestess cape undulates around her.

The house RUMBLES.

La Flamme, in a daze, loses his gun, holds his crotch, and falls to the floor.

LA FLAMME

Holy smoke! You reversed the curse.

He quickly retrieves the gun and springs towards the French doors.

FAITH

Hand me your gun, Pa. It's over.

La Flamme points the gun to his head.

The sound of wind dies down, replaced by a huge downpour.

LA FLAMME

Go! Go quick, if you don't want the kid to see my brain splattered all over the place.

Beau kicks the chair.

Faith grabs his hand.

They runs out of the door.

Sound of a single GUNSHOT.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

The patrol car's headlights cut through the haze surrounding the partly burned plantation.

Faith and Beau hurry through debris and down the steps, Robert and Tiny Kev rush to meet them.

They fall into each other's arms. The rain stops.

TINY KEV

La Flamme?

BEAU

Shot himself.

FAITH

Sorry Robert, I put your family in danger and practically burnt your house.

ROBERT

Will you help me redecorate, lass?

Tiny Kev takes a step back.

TINY KEV

Ain't that the most cheesy proposal you've ever heard?

Faith and Robert exchange a passionate kiss.

BEAU

My camera! Gotta immortalize the moment.

Beau sprints back, up the steps.

La Flamme emerges from the haze, coat's tails flapping behind him, both hands above his head.

Stupefied, Beau stops in his tracks.

La Flamme's eyes search for Faith.

LA FLAMME  
Take my gun, Baby-Girl.

Overcome with emotion, Faith reaches La Flamme, takes the gun from his holster, turns around, and hands it to Tiny Kev.

A half-burnt beam detaches from the porch over Beau's head.

In a flash, La Flamme lunges and pushes Beau out of the way.

The beam crushes with a thud, lifting a cloud of dust and ashes.

Robert holds a shaken Beau tight.

Tiny Kev escorts La Flamme to the patrol car.

When the dust settles, Faith lies unconscious on the ground, the beam across her leg.

Robert and Beau hurry to her side.

Gaston lifts the beam off in its jaws.

Robert holds Faith's pulse as the ambulance rushes in.

Beau sobs.

EXT. LAND ROVER (MOVING) - DAY

Robert and Beau closely follow the ambulance.

ROBERT  
Thank goodness, she's alive.

BEAU  
But will she ever dance?

EXT. NEW ORLEANS - MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON - DAY

SUPER: TWO YEARS LATER.

Cars fill the parking lot near the heavily guarded entrance of a foreboding building.

Gaston's snout pokes out of Robert's Land Rover.

GASTON (V.O.)  
Now you may wonder...

INT. AUDITORIUM - PODIUM - DAY

Concealed behind thick curtains, Faith, ethereal as a white dove, tightens a brace around her ankle.

Three male dancers, wearing costumes mimicking black prison bars do warm ups.

Sound of DRUM BEAT.

Robert hands Faith the carnival coin from La Flamme's and whispers into her ear.

She smiles, flips it, and takes several deep breaths.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Under glaring lights, the place is packed to capacity.

Armed guards stand in the back at the ready.

Amid, rowdy INMATES, orange uniforms and shackled ankles, La Flamme, gray temples, sits in a quiet meditative stance.

The lights dim. Every one HUSHES.

The curtains slowly open.

A CLEAR VOICE speaks over jazzy DRUMBEATS.

Faith dances her heart out behind the three male dancers.

BEAU (O.S.)  
I know why the caged bird sings, ah  
me/ When his wing's bruised/ When  
he beats his bars and he would be  
free/

FADE OUT

THE END