

INT. DENTIST OFFICE - DAY

Christmas decor cheers up the sterile room.

Twenty-three year old KEITH FIGEIRA reclines in the dentist chair. Dark features hint at his Portuguese heritage, but it's his soulful, sweet eyes that draw attention.

THE DENTAL HYGIENIST hovers over him, hands in his mouth.

HYGIENIST

Yeah, my son Dexter is still just a boy, a freshman you know. He wants to take your class next semester. He told me all the kids love it.

She reaches for an instrument, then prods him further.

HYGIENIST

I detested music class. It's the teacher that makes all the difference. Who knows, if I had a teacher like you, I might be wielding an entirely different set of instruments.

She laughs at her own joke.

HYGIENIST

I say if you got a gift, share it. Know what I mean?

Keith assents with his eyes.

HYGIENIST

Do you think you'll ever leave Sacramento? I mean, I know it's home and all...

Keith responds unintelligibly.

HYGIENIST

Oh that's right, that hoity toity school on the east coast! What's it called again? Furlong? Singsong?

Keith mumbles again.

HYGIENIST

Oh yeah, Armstrong Academy.

A dental assistant, ELSIE, walks in with a set of x-rays.

ELSIE
X-rays are done.

HYGIENIST
Thank you Elsie.

She posts them on the viewing boards, then hands Keith fluoride rinse.

HYGIENIST
Swish one minute, then spit.

She returns to the images. A white-coated man walks in, DR. TANG, and views the images with her.

DR. TANG
How's our young maestro doing?

HYGIENIST
Looks good. No cavities, no missing fillings. You get an "A" once again.

Keith spits into the funnel hose.

DR. TANG
Yes, very nice.

HYGIENIST
Just make sure you pass that on to my son and we're even.

Keith wipes his mouth and smiles as Dr. Tang turns to him.

DR. TANG
Okay let me take a look in there.

INT. DENTIST OFFICE - RECEPTION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A WOMAN enters with her hand on her left jaw and approaches the RECEPTIONIST. She is MRS. CHANG and in obvious pain.

DENTAL RECEPTIONIST
Oh yes, Mrs. Chang. The doctor is expecting you. Please take a seat.

She exits with a file in hand. Mrs. Chang sits gingerly.

DENTIST'S EXAM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Tang leans over Keith. The receptionist interrupts.

DENTAL RECEPTIONIST

Dr. Tang, your emergency patient is here.

DR. TANG

Well young man, I will see you in six months. Keep up the good work.

KEITH

Okay, thanks doc.

Dr. Tang exits. The hygienist rummages in the cupboard.

HYGIENIST

So, what color toothbrush?

RECEPTION ROOM

Mrs. Chang GROANS.

DENTIST'S EXAM ROOM

The hygienist shows assorted toothbrushes to Keith. His hand reaches for a purple one... when he suddenly grabs his left jaw and lets out a small GROAN.

HYGIENIST

You all right?

He winces for a second, then returns to the toothbrushes.

RECEPTION ROOM

The receptionist leads Mrs. Chang to the back hall.

DENTAL RECEPTIONIST

Right this way, Mrs. Chang.

EXAM ROOM

Keith has grabbed a purple toothbrush. Suddenly he GROANS again, grabbing his jaw.

HYGIENIST

What's wrong?

KEITH

My tooth!

HYGIENIST

What on earth!

IN THE HALLWAY

Mrs. Chang is escorted past Keith's room. Keith drops his toothbrush. They both GROAN.

KEITH
Oh my God, it hurts!

HYGIENIST
Hold on, let me get the doctor.

She scurries out.

IN ANOTHER EXAM ROOM

Dr. Tang settles Mrs. Chang into the reclining chair. The hygienist breezes in.

HYGIENIST
Dr. Tang, it's Keith Figeira!
Something is wrong!

He follows her back to

KEITH

who clutches his jaw, eyes closed in agony.

DR. TANG
Open wide, please.

The dentist probes his mouth. Keith flinches madly when he touches the rear left.

KEITH
AAAHH!

DR. TANG
This doesn't make sense.
Everything looks fine.

Mrs. Chang MOANS loudly from her chair. Dr. Tang strides to the rescue.

DR. TANG
Elsie! Lidocaine in Room One!

He prepares a shot.

DR. TANG
Now just relax, everything will be
better in a minute.

He administers the injection. Within seconds Mrs. Chang visibly relaxes.

HYGIENIST
Merry Christmas.

A SERIES OF SHOTS:

Keith walks past a sign that reads "El Dorado High School"
Down hallways, past the glances of admiring schoolgirls
Past a basketball court where the players stop to wave
Into the school cafeteria where teachers smile at him

INT. MUSIC CLASSROOM - DAY

The room has theatre seating, with an ensemble of instruments in the "round" at the bottom of the cascading rows. Stairs divide the room in half, leading up to a glass-partitioned office at the top.

Keith stands in the "round" near the lectern, baton in hand, looking up at his students. They are spread throughout the tiered rows according to musical instrument. He points to the brass section.

KEITH
Okay brass, your turn. One, two,
three...

He swings his baton through the air. The students play their trumpets, saxophones, and trombones with trepidation. FLAT NOTES abound, but Keith smiles nonetheless. Their part played, he turns to the string section.

KEITH
Not bad, not bad. Lighten up on
those fingers, have fun with it.

He turns to the youths with bows poised on their violins and cellos. At his cue, they begin to pull SOUR NOTES from their instruments. Keith winces. The SCHOOL BELL RINGS, he signals to stop.

KEITH
We'll get there, not too shabby.

The students gather their things.

KEITH
Auditions are tomorrow at five p.m
for the Christmas Program. I hope
to see most of you there. For the
rest of you, have a great weekend.

The youths file down the stairs and exit. A sad girl with dowdy attire ambles over to Keith and hands him a neatly stapled term paper.

AMY

Thanks for the extension on my paper, Mister Fig.

KEITH

Amy, Amy, Amy. Good to see you back in class. How's things?

AMY

Kinda tough. Never lost a sister before. Hannah was only nineteen. Just a bit hard right now.

His eyes glisten with compassion.

KEITH

I know, and I'm sorry.

AMY

We're gonna wait on the funeral, until the Holidays are over. Like we can really make it normal.

She gathers her books.

KEITH

I want you to try out for the Christmas Play.

AMY

Uhh, I don't think so.

KEITH

It's just what you need. The camaraderie, the music. It can only help the healing.

He puts the term paper in his brief case.

KEITH

I'll see you tomorrow.

She smiles at his charm as he scales the stairs to

HIS OFFICE

Where he goes to a large calendar showing the month of November. He flips it over to December.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

Keith breezes through the buzz and chatter of students. A spirited man in his 50s with a spring in his step notices him and approaches. This is LLOYD HOOGS, the principal.

HOOGS
Yo, Keith!

Keith can't subdue an amused smile as he turns to his boss.

KEITH
Principal Hoogs!

HOOGS
Just wanted to catch you before the weekend and all. You got a minute?

Keith nods.

HOOGS
Cool. I know this is last minute and all, but I've decided we need to sell Christmas cookies as a fundraiser. You know, so we can afford some props and costumes? I was hoping you'd kinda get the ball rolling on that.

KEITH
Uhhh...

The painfully hip principal whips out a deer-shaped cookie.

HOOGS
Here, try one.

Keith subdues laughter this time.

KEITH
I'll see what I can do!

Hoogs raises his fist, cuing Keith to bang knuckles with him.

HOOGS
Excellent, dude. We only have three weeks, so get to it.

He turns to leave, then remembers something.

HOOGS
Oh, uhhh, Keith. About next semester. You will be here, right?

Keith gently toys with the cookie.

KEITH

I wish I knew what to tell you,
sir. My interview is January
sixth...

Hoogs summons a practiced grin, pats him on the shoulder.

HOOGS

I suppose the good news is, no
matter what happens, there's only
good news!

He leaves Keith with the green and red cookie in hand. Keith glances and notices a STRANGE WOMAN, 30s, with a shock of white hair and dark shades standing among the busy teens. She abruptly looks away.

A BLIP SOUND alerts him to check his cell phone. It's a text message. The sender "JJ" writes: "It's Friday night! Let's hit the town!" He looks up; she is gone.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR/ICU UNIT - NIGHT

Keith approaches the nurses' desk. A cute BLONDE looks up.

KEITH

Hey Marisa. Same room?

NURSE MARISA

Same room.

He heads down the hall.

KEITH

How's she doing?

NURSE MARISA

Hanging in there.

He reaches Room 6. A patient chart hangs on the open door. He grabs the clipboard and scans it. The name at the top: "ELEANOR WETTELAND. Diagnosis: cerebral aneurysm."

INSIDE

A WOMAN of 70 with a bandaged skull lies attached to tubes, electrodes, and monitors. A photo of her as a young woman with 2 boys and a girl sits bedside next to a CD player. He gazes at her swollen, sleeping face, then kisses it.

KEITH

Hi Nana.

He pulls a CD from his jacket and loads it in the player.

KEITH

One of my latest. I think you'll like it.

THE MUSIC begins, a serene composition of synthesized sounds. He settles into a chair next to his grandmother and listens.

INT. FIGEIRA HOME - NIGHT

Keith comes through the front door, work bag in hand, and quietly enters the kitchen. A NIGHT LIGHT illuminates a note on the counter: "Pasta in the Fridge, MOM".

He goes down the hall and scans the empty dining room, living room, the sleeping man on the makeshift bed in the den. This is Keith's father ED, 50, who lightly SNORES beneath a soft reading light, magazine over his chest.

Reversing towards the kitchen, he turns up some stairs to his

BEDROOM

A mini-studio lies off to one side, with an electric guitar, keyboards, recording equipment and trumpet. Sitting at his desk, he pulls a pile of term papers from his bag.

He flips on a reading light and pulls out a paper titled "Mysticism of Music Through the Ages," by KK.

KEITH

Who the heck is KK?

KEITH (V.O.)

The word "music" comes from Greek "muse", any one of nine virginal daughters of Zeus who held the power to inspire the liberal arts.

He is drawn into the subject matter right away.

KEITH (V.O.)

The Bible refers to Lucifer as a fallen archangel, of which there were originally three. Michael was the Warrior, Gabriel the Messenger, Lucifer in charge of Praise and Worship; in other words, the Heavenly Choir Director.

(MORE)

KEITH (V.O.) (cont'd)
He is still considered to be the original pure artist, a created being with the ability to understand the power of music, including healing.

He walks to his bed and reclines with the paper.

KEITH (V.O.)
Now that he's fallen, the same can be said of him, only as a dark, corrupt being, knowing how to twist its true purpose.

He flips the page.

KEITH
Historians believe many have tapped into the good and evil sources of music. Whether in truth or merely myth, the stories of these people remain. Monks and priests in hidden monasteries all across the world purportedly guard a divine secret to the origins of music.

INT. KEITH'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Keith is sprawled on his bed, papers at his side, asleep. A woman of 45 walks in and gently knocks on the door. This is ANITA FIGEIRA, part mother, part firecracker, and the benefactor of his soulful brown eyes. Keith stirs.

ANITA
Breakfast?

He opens his eyes and zones a few moments, then sits up and looks at his mother. His groggy eyes take focus, and his look confers meaning.

ANITA
Oh no, you're not gonna practice your thing on me now, are you?

KEITH
You're not that hard to read, Mom. And besides, it's not something I practice. You know that.

Silent looks.

KEITH

When are you going to let him back
in the bedroom?

ANITA

When he decides to see things my
way.

KEITH

He can see things your way, Mom.
He just doesn't have to agree.

ANITA

How can you say that? Don't you
want Nana in a safe place?

KEITH

Of course I do. But Dad's idea
provides for a safe place with
professional care.

ANITA

And it'll cost her every last dime
she's got.

He rises to examine his dried up potted plant on the window
sill.

KEITH

His tax attorney said there's a
way, something about transferring
her assets--

ANITA

Family should be with family.
We're talking about my mother.

He waters the thirsty soil from a nearby bottle, then turns
and kisses his mother on the cheek.

KEITH

Then take care of Dad, he's family.

He goes to his bathroom and shuts the door.

ANITA

Would you put Karen in the system
and just see what happens?

Keith looks at his morning face in the mirror.

ANITA
When will you see it my way?
Where's that wonderful gift of
yours?

He cradles his left jaw, still in the mirror.

KEITH
(to himself)
Yeah, some gift.

INT. FIGEIRA HOME - LATER

ED FIGEIRA sits on the couch, watching a football game. As phlegmatic as Anita is vivacious, he smiles warmly when Keith enters the living room.

ED
Another late night, son?

Keith YAWNS an affirmation, then stops beside sister KAREN, 17, blonde and autistic. He kisses her on the forehead. She rolls her head with excitement, tongue wagging, squeezing two oven mitts.

KEITH
Good morning, sunshine.

Keith plops onto the sofa next to his dad.

ED
You visit Nana last night?

KEITH
Yep, still a vegetable.

Ed ponders a reply.

ED
Would you be willing to share your
room with your brother?

Keith sighs.

KEITH
I can be flexible I guess.

A young athletic male springs from behind the sofa and pins Keith to the ground. Bigger than his prey, he wears a football jersey with a radio device and earphones strapped to his waist. This is brother BRANDON, 19, pure frat boy with a geek streak.

BRANDON

No way I'm sharing a crib with you,
Liberace.

With surprising agility, Keith rolls Brandon beneath him.

KEITH

I remember your endless flatulence
when we had bunk beds. I'm not
crazy about the idea either.

BRANDON

Let Karen share with Nana. All
girls club.

KEITH

Do you ever think of anyone but
yourself?

ED

Karen still has her moments.
Probably not a good idea.

Brandon shoves an earphone in Keith's ear.

BRANDON

I'll tell you who I've been
thinking about. Listen to this
bro! I'm picking up cell phones
now.

Keith's jaw drops, listening.

KEITH

Phone sex? Dude!

He gives the ear piece back.

BRANDON

This thing catches analogue and
digital, satcom frequencies, and
now your friendly one-nine hundred
call. Must be someone in the
'hood.

Anita enters with a mug of coffee.

ANITA

Brandon, quit wrestling with your
brother. He just woke up.

Still pinned, he gapes at her favoritism. She puts the mug
on the coffee table.

ANITA
Here sweetie.

Keith rises and takes the coffee.

KEITH
Thanks Mom.

ANITA
You all have less than a week to figure it out. The doctors say Nana should get better soon, and I want her settled in here before the Christmas party.

Ed fidgets and throws her a displeased look. She glares back.

BRANDON
You still gonna have that?

KEITH
She's in Intensive Care, Mom.

ANITA
She knows it's coming up. I remind her every day. Everybody will be here, even Uncle Pat.

BRANDON
And his whacky new wife he met in Vegas?

ANITA
It's a tradition and something Nana looks forward to every year.

They all pause, deferring to the bossy woman of the house.

ANITA
She's pulled through every operation so far. She's strong... and will get through this one too.

She turns to leave.

ANITA
And she's not a vegetable.

MOMENTS LATER

Keith descends from his room, grabs his jacket and keys and heads for the door.

ANITA
(from the kitchen)
Be sure to invite your friends,
sweetie! The more the merrier!

He gives the thumbs up.

EXT. SHOPPING MALL - DAY

Keith parks his car and heads for the mall doors.

INT. THE MALL/BOVA MUSIC STORE - CONTINUOUS

Keith is instantly recognized by 2 young adults, twins JEFF and JULIE BOVA, 23. Preppy Jeff assists a customer, but waves. Teasing her long blonde hair, Julie approaches Keith from behind the counter. Her pretty face radiates her attraction to him. A quick hug.

JULIE
Let me guess, cello strings?

Keith extracts a paper from his pocket.

KEITH
Actually I have a list.

She examines it, then looks up flirtatiously.

JULIE
You know, you can make a social
call now and then. You're more
like a school teacher every day.

KEITH
I guess that happens when you are
one.

Jeff ambles over to the twosome.

JEFF
But the teacher might become a
student.

Keith smiles an assent.

JULIE
Seriously?

JEFF
Armstrong Academy.

She searches his face.

JULIE
Wow. La di da.

JEFF
It's the best damn music school in the country. You can go anywhere from there: recording artist, tenured professor, you could start your own record label.

JULIE
I know what Armstrong is, Jeff. It just seems so... unattainable. Think I could get in?

KEITH
You been practicing?

Julie pulls a violin off the wall, grabs a bow and begins a SONATA with exquisite touch. Jeff and Keith watch with measured reverence. Just as the music sets a somber tone, she kicks it up a notch, a real toe tapper. Keith grabs a violin and joins in, playing like hillbillies on fiddles.

KEITH
Not bad at all.

She puts the instrument down.

JEFF
But not good enough. You've got the best shot at it dude.

KEITH
Or JJ.

The twins recoil with amused looks.

JULIE
That fool? Never.

KEITH
Don't underestimate him. He's got an artist's soul.

JULIE
And not much else.

KEITH
He's just different from you, Julie. That doesn't make him a bad person.

JULIE

He's different from most everybody.
That makes him a strange person.

JEFF

We just think he can hold you back,
you know, if you hang with him too
much.

KEITH

We go back to First Grade. If we
were exactly alike, I probably
wouldn't even know his name.

He hands over his credit card. She swipes it.

JULIE

Whatever.

KEITH

You'll be lucky to find someone who
amuses you like that. Your
marriage will never be dull.

She takes the voucher and places it before him.

JULIE

Then maybe someday--

JEFF

He'll pop the question!

Keith chuckles as he signs, hands the pen back and takes his
purchase.

KEITH

Whatever!

He stops near the door and turns back to the twins.

KEITH

You're invited to our Christmas
Party, the ninth.

JULIE

Sounds nice!

JEFF

Don't be a stranger, dude. Bring
the wife!

Keith leaves, shaking his head. Through the display window he catches a glimpse of the WHITE HAIREW WOMAN with shades, watching him. He hurries outside: she is gone. He looks around, perplexed.

His eyes fall on another curious sight: a YOUNG MAN, pierced and tattooed, Goth clothes and short black dreadlocks. This is JJ, a real piece of modern art. Keith smiles.

JJ

What, you can't return a phone call?

Keith touches knuckles with him in greeting.

KEITH

Been busy, sorry.

JJ gestures to the store as they head to the exit doors.

JJ

They talking shit about me again?

KEITH

Course not.

JJ

They're a bunch of losers. They'll be tending shop in their sixties.

KEITH

Okay, y'all just need to shut up for awhile. Everyone is just a bit too menstrual today.

JJ

Who's "y'all"?

KEITH

You and everybody else who's got a problem just getting along.

JJ

And just who are you calling "menstrual"?

IN THE PARKING LOT

JJ

Whatcha got in the bag?

KEITH

Just a few th--

A WOMAN SCREAMS.

DISTRESSED WOMAN
Help! Someone help me, please!

A scuffle between 2 cars catches Keith's eye. The DISTRESSED WOMAN tries to hold her purse while 2 YOUNG THUGS try to take it. Keith drops his bags and runs to the struggle.

BURLY THUG swings wildly at Keith. Keith ducks, then returns the favor: CLONK! They trade blows while SKINNY THUG clutches the woman, a distressed look on his face.

JJ arrives cautiously at the scene.

BURLY THUG runs off empty handed. Keith sets his sights on SKINNY THUG. The woman wriggles free and runs to JJ. The ill-looking thief remains propped up against a car, sweat streaming down his face.

Keith approaches the wiry youth who tries to posture fiercely, one arm clutching his abdomen. The thug finally lunges and throws a punch. Keith blocks the blow, then suddenly winces in pain.

They are both doubled over in agony, clutching their stomachs. Their eyes meet, a silent, wild connection.

KEITH
You need... to get... to a
hospital. Your appendix...

The felonious youth rallies and pushes Keith into JJ and the clamoring woman. They tumble to the ground while the sick thug runs off.

LATER

Keith sits on a Security Guard cart. A POLICE OFFICER interviews the assaulted woman. A SECURITY GUARD applies a bandage to Keith's face.

Julie approaches the scene, flustered. She notices JJ at his side. They exchange glares.

JULIE
Oh my God, what happened?

She inspects his cuts. He starts to speak, but she touches a cut on his mouth.

JULIE
You're hurt.

KEITH

I'm fine. I was just in the right place at the right time.

JULIE

What would happen if a musician's hands got injured?

JJ

He'd go into retail.

She smirks. The officer approaches Keith.

POLICE OFFICER JONES

You well enough to give a statement now, sir?

He hands Keith a clipboard and pen.

KEITH

I'm good, but one of your thugs isn't.

POLICE OFFICER JONES

You get a few good licks in?

KEITH

He's ill, like hospital ill. Soon is my guess.

Julie and the cop look at him curiously. He begins to write.

POLICE OFFICER JONES

Okay we'll check into that.

Keith looks up. Julie is still staring with admiration.

JULIE

You... you could feel his pain?

Keith searches her face for skepticism. She's sincere.

JULIE

You did, didn't you? There's more than just the music, something else there. You're doubly blessed.

Keith scribbles on the clipboard.

KEITH

It's nothing, really.

JULIE

It's okay, I get it. I do.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - EVENING

Keith sits in the front row, scribbling notes. On stage, a nervous Amy SINGS the last few notes of "Joy to the World."

KEITH

Thank you Amy. Okay everybody
gather 'round. Up front please!

Dozens of teenagers fill the stage, attentive to Keith.

KEITH

I want to thank you all for coming
today, and for all your courageous
efforts at this audition. I just
want to say something before we
wrap this up.

They listen intently.

KEITH

Nerves and anxiety can be part of
the performing process, I
understand that. But so can
excitement, joy, wonder, all the
things we're singing about should
be real experiences for you, if you
let it happen.

Even the attending parents hang on his words. Their voices murmur in respectful assent.

KEITH

The results will be posted on
Monday morning. Have a great
weekend and thanks for giving me
your Saturday.

The youths disperse. Keith grabs his bag and heads for the door.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - EVENING

Keith strolls the empty corridors to his classroom. He unlocks it and enters, then goes up the stairs to his office.

IN HIS OFFICE

He drops his bag and begins to sort through his audition notes. From somewhere in the classroom, a NOISE. He looks through the glass at the empty seats. Nothing astir. He resumes reading.

ANOTHER NOISE

He looks again, still nothing. Senses at full alert, he steps to the door and scans the terraced rows. He descends to the lectern, baffled.

Suddenly he is struck from behind. He reels backward to the piano: KWONG! His eyes widen to see his assailants, yet no one is there.

An INVISIBLE HAND lifts him by his shirt collar and pulls him across the piano, then tosses him to the floor. Like a cat, he flips to all fours, panicked and breathless.

KEITH

Who's there?

An UNSEEN FOOT kicks him in the ribs. He winces and SCREAMS. His supine form levitates into the air and hovers... then is thrown over the tiers of chairs. The invisible tormentors continue to pummel him.

BLOOD streams down the stairs.

EXT. COUNTY HOSPITAL - DAY

An ambulance pulls into the ER unit.

INT. HOSPITAL ER UNIT - CONTINUOUS

A disfigured, bruised Keith is wheeled down a hall by a team of medical personnel. ER physician DR. CORTEZ leads.

DOCTOR CORTEZ

Lacerations and bruises to the face, possible concussion. Swelling in the ribcage, possible fractures. Compound fractured tibia...

A curtain is drawn, the team descends upon him with diagnostics.

DOCTOR CORTEZ

Blood pressure?

NURSE 1

Fifty-five over thirty-five.

DOCTOR CORTEZ

We're going to need blood.

IN THE HOSPITAL HALLWAY

Ed and Anita scurry towards the ER bay. They converge upon a nurse at the reception, pushing a pencil.

ANITA

My son, Keith Figeira, where is he?

The nurse looks up, unsure.

ED

El Dorado High, he just arrived!

She opens her mouth to reply, but Anita doesn't wait. She makes a break for the treatment area. Cortez emerges and they collide.

DOCTOR CORTEZ

Please ma'am, you can't go back there.

ANITA

Let me see my son!

DOCTOR CORTEZ

Keith Figeira's family?

ED

Yes, that's us. We're his parents!

DOCTOR CORTEZ

He's badly hurt, took a severe beating some time last night. We're trying to stabilize him now. The best thing you can do is let us do our job.

ANITA

You mean he's been laying somewhere all night? Oh my God!

ED

But who?

A VOICE from behind them answers:

POLICE OFFICER JONES

I think I can answer that.

They turn and see the stoic officer in uniform.

POLICE OFFICER JONES
I'm Officer Jones. Your son had an
altercation yesterday afternoon
with two thugs at Valley Fair Mall.

Anita gasps.

POLICE OFFICER JONES
Mighty heroic if you ask me. Seems
he stopped a robbery in progress.

ED
So that was in the afternoon, but
he was attacked last night.

POLICE OFFICER JONES
The robbers got away. I'm betting
it's retaliation.

ANITA
Oh God!

POLICE OFFICER JONES
The janitor found him this morning.

DOCTOR CORTEZ
He's lucky to be alive.

INT. ICU UNIT/ROOM 2 - LATER

Keith is bandaged and unconscious. A cardiac monitor BLIPS
his weak vital signs.

IN THE HALLWAY

Ed sits on a couch. Anita enters Room 6.

IN ROOM 6

She stands over her comatose mother, Eleanor, and strokes her
wrinkled hand.

ANITA
If you can see him, Mom, wherever
you are... the kids call it 'the
vegetable garden'... tell him to
come back. And when he does, you
come with him.

INT. ROOM 2 - LATER

Keith seems to sleep, but his vital signs FLATLINE. Nurse Marisa rushes in, checks his pulse, then runs out.

NURSE MARISA
Doctor Cortez!

A DREAMLIKE SEQUENCE:

Keith is a GLOWING embodiment of his naked self. He ascends through astral tunnels of stars, darkness, and GLOWING cloud patches.

Faster and faster he travels past ANGRY, MENACING VOICES, SOBS, TRANSLUCENT ANGELS with SWORDS DRAWN, ORANGE GLOWING DEMONS...

... finally arriving in a SOFT BLUE CLOUD.

TWO FIGURES in GLOWING WHITE-BLUE robes stand before him. One is female, the other male. They are MIRANDA and HANANIAH.

MIRANDA
Welcome, Elkanah.

Keith is speechless.

HANANIAH
At last we meet.

They seem to float quietly in this serene aeroscape.

KEITH
What is it you called me?

MIRANDA
You are "Elkanah".

KEITH
That's not my name.

Mutual stares.

KEITH
Did I die?

HANANIAH
Fear not, Minstrel. We are
stewards over your spirit to ensure
its safe return.

MIRANDA
I am Miranda.

HANANIAH
And I am Hananiah.

MIRANDA
Guardians of the new Minstrel.

HANANIAH
Messengers of Heaven.

Keith ponders their words.

KEITH
So am I dead?

The angels take him by the arms and turn towards a BRIGHT LIGHT.

MIRANDA
For you there is Light and Life and
a destiny transcendent.

They walk into the LIGHT.

KEITH
My name is Keith. I'm just a music
teacher. I'm only twenty-three
years ol--

The LIGHT envelops them.

INT. ICU UNIT/ROOM 2 - NIGHT

A BLINDING FLASH of BLUE LIGHT in the room. Keith GLOWS BLUE. His eyes open, purposeful and calm. The IV tubes hang from their sacs, the heart sensors fallen to the floor.

TWO NURSES burst into the room. Keith sits up and swings his legs off the bed. His wounds heal as his GLOW fills the room with the blue light. The nurses stop and gasp, then gently crumble to the floor, asleep.

A SOFT MELODY follows him as he approaches the door.

IN THE HALLWAY

He strides trancelike towards the nurses' station. His GLOW fills the hall. Doctor Cortez and Marisa lie asleep on the floor. He passes Room 3.

IN ROOM 3

An OLD MAN with tubes in his mouth labors to breathe. The GLOW and MELODY infiltrate his room. He suddenly breathes without a rasp.

Keith passes Room 4.

IN ROOM 4

A YOUNG WOMAN with a battered face is restored to pristine form as the same presence passes her.

IN ROOM 5

An ELDERLY WOMAN lies swollen with fluids. Tubes connect her body to a dialysis machine. As the BLUE healing presence passes, her body drains of excess instantly.

AT THE NURSES' STATION

A nurse sits peacefully asleep, bathed in a blue glow.

IN ROOM 6

Eleanor lies motionless, eyes swollen shut by her cranial bandages. The MELODY and GLOW enter; her swelling subsides.

Keith stops at her door, and turns to the clipboard. His eyes fall on the name "Eleanor Wetteland." He snaps out of his daze. The MELODY and GLOW wane.

KEITH

Nana.

The 2 nurses emerge from Keith's room and spy him as he teeters in place. They race to assist him.

NURSE 2

You shouldn't be out of bed, young man.

NURSE 3

How did he get out of bed?

They scan his form, perplexed, as they escort him into

ROOM 2

Where they put him back in bed. He is dazed as the nurses examine his bandages; no trace of wounds.

NURSE 2

Keith, how do you feel?

He stares ahead.

NURSE 2
Keith, are you okay?

KEITH
Blue light... so beautiful.

Confused looks from the nurses.

NURSE 3
You see blue lights?

NURSE 2
Can you hear me, Keith?

KEITH
I... I hear music.

He finally turns to Nurse 2 and meets her eye to eye, his face a look of smiling serenity.

AT THE NURSES' STATION

Nurses 2, 3, and 4 gather to talk.

NURSE 2
He looks good.

NURSE 3
No, he looks amazing.

NURSE 4
There must've been a gas leak.
We'll have to do a full sweep of
each room.

NURSE 3
It was like a case of mass
narcolepsy.

NURSE 2
Yes but it was... more than sleep.
It was like--

NURSE 3
A warm bath.

NURSE 2
Like a big soft pillow.

Marisa bursts upon them.

NURSE MARISA
It just gets weirder.

NURSE 4

What?

NURSE MARISA

Room one, Charmaine Tribali,
gangrenous foot. No gangrene.

They all gape, incredulous.

NURSE MARISA

Doctor is in there now. In room
three, Andrew Caldwell, late stage
lung cancer: now off the
ventilator, breathing on his own.

NURSE 4

No!

NURSE MARISA

Debbie Lansing, room four,
fractured skull, concussion, broken
nose: completely healed.

Doctor Cortez emerges from Room 6, clipboard in hand. He and
the nurses exchange perplexed looks.

DOCTOR CORTEZ

What's happening here?

EXT. COUNTY HOSPITAL - DAY

A television news crew stands outside. The reporter stands
poised for the camera.

REPORTER

Hi, I'm Babette Sigler here at
County Hospital to report what can
only be described by some of the
staff as Sacramento's Christmas
miracle: a whole floor, in fact
the Intensive Care unit full of
patients with life threatening
conditions, all healed of their
various maladies.

Nurses watch the news team from the 2nd floor.

REPORTER

Yes, you heard me right,
completely healed in the middle of
the night.

(MORE)

REPORTER (cont'd)

There is talk of a gas leak of some sort that induced a deep sleep, perhaps with remedial results. Physicians here have been pretty tight-lipped about the details and circumstances of this surprise turn of events.

Pedestrians stop to gawk at the film TV crew.

REPORTER

But one can only wonder if science was upstaged this year by a little bit of something supernatural. After all, according to the Bible, this wouldn't be the first time.

INT. COUNTY HOSPITAL/ICU ROOM 2 - DAY

Keith sits upright in bed, calm and pleased. He is attended by Ed, Anita, Brandon, Karen and Dr. Cortez. Eleanor is wheeled in to the delight of all. Ed looks out the window.

ELEANOR

I just can't believe I've been in a hospital for so long. I feel like a million bucks!

KEITH

Looking pretty good too, speedy.

ED

There's a news crew out there. How about that?

Anita sits on the bed, one hand on her son, the other on her mother.

DOCTOR CORTEZ

Until we really know what happened here, I advise you not to feed the frenzy. It can only complicate matters.

ANITA

We'll do whatever you tell us to, Dr. Cortez. After all you've done.

The doctor fidgets.

DOCTOR CORTEZ

Well I'm not so sure exactly what I've done.

(MORE)

DOCTOR CORTEZ (cont'd)
I want both of you to stay here for
a few more days while we do some
more tests.

KEITH
Doc, I have a million things on
hold until I can get out of here.

ELEANOR
You're young, you've got plenty of
time.

KEITH
No, I don't.

ANITA
You've got a million years.

Brandon pounces on Keith, pinning him to the bed.

BRANDON
Let him come home. I'll take care
of him.

REBUKES from everyone. Ed peels Brandon off his brother.

ED
Give it a break son, jeez.

During the commotion, Karen has fumbled her way over to Keith
and lays her head on his chest. With a big smile, her wild
eyes closed, she murmurs:

KAREN
Pretty.

EXT. COUNTY HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

Brandon, Karen, Ed and Anita stroll in silence, except for
Karen's soft murmurings.

KAREN
Pretty... pretty.

Anita squeezes her shoulder.

ANITA
What is it, honey? You happy to
see your brother, huh?

ED
It's just nice to see her happy.

ANITA

We're going to have to go right home, start preparing Mom's room.

ED

And where will that be?

ANITA

With Karen, for now.

Ed looks tested by her stubbornness.

ANITA

She can always sleep with me. There's room there now.

Ed and Brandon exchange wary looks.

BRANDON

Better yet, let's just set up a big old padded room and quarantine all the women.

Ed unlocks the car door. Anita playfully pushes Brandon in.

INT. COUNTY HOSPITAL/ICU ROOM 2 - NIGHT

Keith reclines in his bed. The room is lit by the glow of machinery. The door is ajar.

A CANDYSTRIPER walks past... then scuttles back to peer in. Her hair is pulled up under her hat, but a shock of WHITE BANGS and tinted glasses jolts Keith's attention.

KEITH

Hey!

She checks the corridor nervously, then darts in the room. She is edgy, and speaks with a light European accent.

KATARINA

It is good you are safe.

KEITH

Do I know you?

KATARINA

No, Elkanah. But I know you. My name is Katarina.

Keith is stunned.

KATARINA

But you may call me Katya.

KEITH

That name, what did you say?

KATARINA

It's not that hard to pronounce.
Just take it slow: Ka-ta-ree--

KEITH

No, no, no, the other name. What
did you call me?

KATARINA

Elkanah. That is what they called
you, yes?

He goes fuzzy, as though daydreaming.

KEITH

Yes I think they did. I heard that
before, but I... hey, how did you
know that? It was only a dream!

KATARINA

No, Elkanah, it was more than a
dream.

They stare at each other and then:

KEITH

My name is Keith. You have
mistaken me for someone else.

KATARINA

It is the name given to the
Minstrel.

KEITH

The what?

KATARINA

Ah, poor child. You were not
indoctrinated before your
transformation. I tried to educate
you.

KEITH

You wrote that paper.

KATARINA

Most are prepared well in advance.
A Minstrel-designate always knows
of his calling. Unless of course,
he is recognized by the enemy.

KEITH

What 'minstrel designate'? I don't
know what you're talking about? My
name is Keith Figeira. I'm a music
teacher at El Dorado High School.
Not much of a minstrel or designate
or--

She grabs his hand and places it over her right temple.
Keith immediately winces with apparent discomfort, shaking
his head in pain.

KEITH

Aaarrgghh!

She removes his hand. They gawk at each other.

KATARINA

Only a Minstrel-designate can
perceive such things.

KEITH

Such noise, so much loud noise...

She removes her glasses. The skin around her right eye is
scarred and mottled. The eye itself is bloodshot, the left
eye looks normal.

KATARINA

The same ones that did this to me
got to you too.

Keith recoils in disbelief.

KEITH

I know who my attackers were. The
police told me they were--

KATARINA

Did you see them?

He hesitates.

KATARINA

Did you see your attackers,
Elkanah?

KEITH
I... I'm not sure.

KATARINA
They had no earthly body, my young friend. You were marked by the enemy as the Minstrel-designate, and attacked.

He is speechless.

KATARINA
Had you been transformed first, you would not have been so defenseless. You can thank the Lord above that you are still alive. Your quickened spirit made the journey to the Inner Sanctum, and now here you are.

His face is a wash of mixed emotions.

KEITH
I think I need to rest now.

KATARINA
I understand.

She again looks about nervously.

KATARINA
Only know this, young Minstrel. You still have enemies, and they do not rest.

Keith tugs on his bedsheet.

KATARINA
I will be in touch with you, Elkanah.

With a quick step she departs. He sinks into his pillow.

INT. FIGEIRA HOME - DAY

Anita pulls laundry from the dryer. Passing the window she sees 2 adults and 2 teens walking to the front door. These are her brother RICH, 43, his wife SHELLEY 41, African-American and full of soul, and their daughters LOLA and MOLLY, 15 and 16.

She greets them at the door, all hugs.

ANITA

Come in! I'm just getting some things done around the house.

Karen runs to greet the visitors, arms flailing, head thrown back with sloppy glee, and leans hard against each of them. They embrace her one by one.

SHELLEY

Karen, it's so nice to see you.

Lola and Molly take Karen by the hand and whisk her off to the living room. The adults proceed to Karen's bedroom. Anita drops the laundry on one of 2 twin beds.

ANITA

Can you stay for dinner?

Rich and Shelley survey the modest room, the plethora of stuffed animals.

RICH

You know we can take her, sis.

SHELLEY

We can make room for her. Rich and I talked about it.

ANITA

Tahoe is so far away. It's a three hour drive just to see her doctors.

RICH

We just saw her, Anita. She looks great.

SHELLEY

Like I've never seen her look so good.

ANITA

She's seventy years old. She shouldn't have to uproot and go through that kind of stress. I just think she'll do better here.

RICH

Well the offer is there. I don't like seeing you carry too much of a burden. She has three children, all of us can help.

Anita fluffs the pillows and HUFFS.

ANITA

Ha! Pat doesn't count.

Rich shrugs. The conversation follows Anita into

THE LIVING ROOM

Where the girls brush and braid Karen's hair.

ANITA

Icy roads, blizzards, subzero
temperatures...

RICH

Gorgeous summers, a placid mountain
lake, fresh air...

Anita straightens up the sofa pillows.

ANITA

Okay I tell you what. Let's wait
'til Pat gets here. We'll let him
weigh in on this and then decide.

SHELLEY

Maybe we should just let Mom
decide.

Their pondering is interrupted by THE DOORBELL.

AT THE FRONT DOOR

Anita opens to greet Julie Bova.

ANITA

Julie, right?

JULIE

Yes, Mrs. Figeira. I just came by
to see if Keith is home.

Julie lifts the mandolin in her hand.

JULIE

I was hoping he could tune my
mandolin. He has such a good ear.

ANITA

Oh Julie, I'm sorry. Keith is...
not at home right now. But I'll
tell him you dropped by.

Julie looks embarrassed.

JULIE
That would be great.

ANITA
Keith did invite you to our party
next weekend, right?

JULIE
Oh yes, he did. My brother and I
will both be there.

ANITA
Fantastic. Well I'll see you then?

JULIE
Okay, sure. Bye.

ANITA
Bye bye.

Anita closes the door. Shelley stands by with a smile.

SHELLEY
Five to one she wanted more than
her mandolin tuned.

INT. COUNTY HOSPITAL/ICU ROOM 2 - DAY

Keith reclines in bed with a laptop and types into a search engine: "Minstrel/Elkanah". He scrolls down the results to the entry: "Ancient Healer, Steward of Sacred Hymns".

He clicks on the link and connects to a descriptive paragraph with illustrations of a robed man with a harp. The text reads: "Elkanah is the name given to a long line of divine healers, human in origin, but transformed into a pure being of holy light called a Minstrel. Supernaturally imbued with power, he carries with him the "vocus imago", i.e. the echo of Heaven's music. His duty is to restore harmony out of disorder brought into the world from the Fall of Man."

Keith reaches his hand toward the illustration and touches the monitor.

A SERIES OF FLASHBACKS:

Peasants line up at a Jewish Temple. A YOUNG MAN within, arms open wide, releases a BLUE LIGHT from his chest.

Green canyons and icy hilltops of a pristine mountain range ECHO an array of beautiful melodic sounds. Atop a peak, a SMALL ROBED FIGURE GLOWS BLUE.

A raging sea tosses a 15th century ship at night. From a high tower on the rocky coastline, a TINY HUMAN FORM raises her arms. BLUE VAPORS sweep from the tower like a mighty wind, calming the waters and stilling the storm.

Keith removes his hand from the computer screen and blinks hard from the vision.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - AFTERNOON

Students mill around, waiting. Principal Hoogs tries to organize the youths.

HOOGS

If you could all pull out your scripts and take a seat.

Keith enters and they all applaud.

HOOGS

Well look who's here lookin' fly!

AMY

I thought he got all beat up?

Keith raises his fists like Rocky.

KEITH

I'm baaaaack!

A SERIES OF SHOTS (over a period of days):

Dancers practicing both ballet and hip-hop moves...

An actor tripping over a prop entering stage left...

A musician squinting to read the sheet music...

Keith buries his face in his hands from the dissonance...

FINISH ON:

A group of singers finish a stunning 4-PART HARMONY, resulting in a round of hearty applause from everyone. Keith gathers the youths together.

KEITH

Excellent work, people. We're back on track. It's been a good four days, we have ten more to go. I think we're gonna blow them away!

Cheers all around. The group disperses. Keith turns to go and runs right into JJ.

JJ
Dude, remember me?

They touch fists.

KEITH
What's up buddy?

JJ
I've been here most of the night actually. Up there.

He points to the mezzanine.

JJ
Was that last number one of yours?

KEITH
Yeah I put that together last summer.

JJ
Christmas songs in July? Dawg!

KEITH
Hey, whenever inspiration hits.

They head for the double doors of the lobby.

KEITH
What are you doing here? It's Friday night.

JJ
No gigs tonight, man. That means you and me, on the town.

Keith stops at the entrance to consider the idea.

JJ
Come on man, it's been ages!
When's the last time we went out?

Keith seems to relent a little.

JJ
I'll take you to some of my spots, man, you know, where the frequency is right. Dawg!

Keith's resolve melts.

A SERIES OF CUTS:

Keith and JJ step off a motorcycle. JJ in leather, Keith in a turtleneck.

The twosome entering various dance clubs.

JJ and Keith grooving with the CLUB DJ in his booth.

JJ imbibing colored shots in test tubes.

FINAL SHOT:

INT. DANCE CLUB - NIGHT

Keith and JJ are surrounded by some CLUBBERS. JJ holds their attention above the DIN of the disco.

JJ

Keith and I go way back. When we worked at Bubbie's Coffee House and we wanted to close up early, we'd take--

KEITH

Garlic pills--

JJ

That gave us deadly gas. The fumes were so toxic, no one would linger.

KEITH

We'd just clean up and chill.

JJ's friends laugh at the story.

JJ

Wanna see something?

Eyebrows rise in assent. Keith and JJ exchange a look and put their drinks down.

JJ

Spin us around.

JJ and Keith close their eyes as JJ's friends take them by the shoulders and spin them a few wobbly turns. They stop, eyes still closed, and seem to home in on each other.

Finally facing each other, they take small steps and stop an arm's length away. They cross their arms over their chests like mummies, then slowly extend their hands out.

With amazing precision, fingertips home in on the other's fingertips. Their eyes open. Their friends CHEER in awe.

JJ
Another drink?

KEITH
Another cranberry.

JJ
And?

KEITH
Just cranberry. But hey, I'll get
this one.

He heads to the bar across the crowded room. With each step, he slows down slightly, a look of consternation on his face.

AT THE BAR

A DRUNK MAN sits, beer in hand. He is clearly distraught.

Keith pushes past some dancers, the bar is in sight.

The drunk man now weeps.

Keith perceives with each step... something.

The drunk man is slumped over the bar. His hand reaches into his pocket: a vial of pills.

Keith emerges from the pack, his eyes search the area.

The drunk man fumbles with the vial and pours the pills onto his cocktail napkin.

Keith is like a homing device, as he instinctively sets his sights upon this obscure man. Keith gulps, his face a mask of torment and emotion; a reflection of the drunken man.

CLOSE on the club speakers: THROBBING MUSIC pulses from the massive audio boxes around the room.

Keith stands rooted in place as (FX) the MUSIC from all corners of the room STREAMS toward him. The AUDIO WAVES blend with the CLUB LIGHTS and ZOOM to Keith, who absorbs them.

The drunk man has the pills in hand now. His head lifts and turns.

HIS POV: Keith is like a BLURRED ANGEL, silhouetted by DAZZLING LIGHT. A serene, yet powerful MELODY emanates from this apparition, and rises above the noise.

The LIGHTS and MUSIC channel through Keith like a filter and with a sudden rush, target the distraught man, who briefly convulses... and then appears to relax.

His demeanor softens, still holding the pills. The clubbers groove on, unaware of this event.

Keith goes to the man and stands before him. The man looks up at him, weeping tears of relief and joy. The pills fall to the floor. He leans against Keith, who embraces him.

JJ comes through the throng with 2 friends and sees the embrace.

EXT. CLUB PARKING LOT - NIGHT

JJ and Keith walk briskly amongst the cars.

JJ

Dude, that was not a gay bar.

KEITH

I know that, JJ. It's not what you think. That man was falling apart in there. He needed help.

JJ

What kind of help?

KEITH

You trying to tell me you've never felt desperate? Never felt ignored or on the outside?

JJ

Look, all I know is that I bring you out on the town for once, and introduce you to everyone as my best friend, and you embarrass me.

Keith stops and stares hard at JJ.

KEITH

Well for that matter I know exactly how you feel.

JJ processes the comment as Keith strides off.

JJ
Dude, c'mon man! I don't mean
anything by it. Hey... hey!

Keith reaches JJ's motorcycle, turns to face him.

JJ
Let's just forget it, all right?
Look, I'm glad you came out
tonight. It means a lot to me.

KEITH
Just take me home.

EXT. FIGEIRA HOME - LATER

The motorcycle pulls up to the front. Keith hops off.

KEITH
Tomorrow night's the party. You
coming?

JJ
I got an early gig downtown, but
I'll make it.

They touch fists.

KEITH
Later.

JJ zooms off.

INT. FIGEIRA HOME - CONTINUOUS

Keith enters and ventures towards the den. A reading light
illuminates Ed and his book in his makeshift bed.

ED
Late night for you, son.

KEITH
Got kidnapped by James Junior.

ED
Aaah.

KEITH
He's still a nut.

Ed listens with fatherly affection.

KEITH

I'm gonna go work on my Armstrong thing for a bit. Don't worry, I'll do it with headphones.

ED

Anything you want to talk about?

Keith pauses, and then:

KEITH

I just feel a bit behind, you know? Like I got a lot on my plate.

ED

I know you can handle anything thrown at you. If there's anyone I can say that about, it's you.

Keith takes comfort in his words.

KEITH

Thanks, Dad. Good night.

ED

G'nite son.

INT. KEITH'S BEDROOM - LATER

Keith emerges from the bathroom, bathrobe on and drying his wet hair. He probes the dried up flower in the window pot.

He settles in behind his keyboard and flips a switch. The keyboards illuminate as he dons headphones, then inserts a disc into the recorder. He SIGHS as he places his hands on the keys, eyes closed.

He meditates... his eyes slowly open as a gently rising MELODY emanates throughout the room. His fingers don't move.

SOFT BLUE WAVES undulate from him and the keyboard. The room is filled with a beautiful ORCHESTRA OF SOUND.

A PREMONITION jolts him:

EXT. HIGHRISE BUILDING - NIGHT

Eleanor freefalls from the roof, terror on her face.

Keith snaps out of his trance. The MUSIC stops. Disoriented, he blinks hard. His eyes fall upon the flower pot: the plant is in FULL BLOOM.

EXT. FIGEIRA HOME - DAY

Keith slings his bag as he walks down the driveway. From behind his car, KATARINA emerges.

KATARINA
Elkanah, we need to talk.

Keith looks around for onlookers.

KEITH
The name is Keith.

KATARINA
Is there somewhere we can go?

Keith assesses the strange woman, then unlocks his car.

KEITH
Get in.

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - LATER

Keith parks his car. Katarina scans the lot.

KATARINA
The hospital?

KEITH
Visiting my grandmother.

KATARINA
She has already been healed,
Minstrel. There are many others
who need you.

KEITH
There you go calling me strange
names again.

KATARINA
Surely you have experienced your
new powers?

KEITH
Powers? I don't know what to say.

She gazes at him, undaunted.

KEITH
If I think I've had some weird
things happen, it's just from lack
of sleep and stress, I assure you.

KATARINA

No, I assure *you*: you must embrace your calling *now*, Elkanah. Because like it or not, there are those around us who have you marked for destruction, and the sooner you learn to master your abilities, the safer we all will be.

KEITH

Wait a minute, destruction?

KATARINA

Yes, Elkanah. Death.

He stares hard at her.

KATARINA

You are a divine healer now. Do you understand that... Keith?

He swallows hard.

KATARINA

You alone have been in the sacred place of the Most High God, immersed in His light, bathed in the divine music of his Holy Temple. You now carry His music within you. It comes through you.

He blinks with wide eyes.

KATARINA

You are the link to Heaven and Earth, the healing touch from our loving Father. Your gift is of comfort, and light, and compassion.

KEITH

Why do you say this? How do you know all this? Who are you?

KATARINA

I am Katarina Kantonnes, a remnant from the previous regime, the daughter of the last Minstrel, Sonya Kantonnes of Finland. I was born at the height of her powers, and a portion of it still runs in me.

KEITH

Was she... is she... dead?

She looks down.

KATARINA

There was a terrible battle. It took place thirteen years ago. I was but a young woman, yet in the full service of my mother. I was her Conduit, and stood by her side. We confronted forces of darkness so wicked, I am loathe to tell you.

She pauses to choke back emotion.

KATARINA

She was betrayed. Her demise came at the hands of someone she trusted.

He hangs on every word.

KATARINA

My father.

His mouth pops open.

KATARINA

She didn't think to scrutinize her own loved ones, her husband. He seemed weak and vulnerable like the rest of us, but he made a pact with our enemy and he killed her. I alone remain to tell the story.

Keith is enraptured by the story.

KEITH

What did you say you were, a Conduit?

KATARINA

Yes, Elkanah. Every Minstrel may create apostles, emissaries of their power who may tap into it and do good on the Minstrel's behalf. I was a Conduit. I channeled my mother's power, and fought many noble battles as a force of Light.

She looks at him with her glasses on.

KATARINA

That is how I found you: I sensed your imminent power.

He points to her scarred face.

KEITH

Is this the price of such work?

KATARINA

The enemy laid his cruel hands on me and purposed to kill me too. But I escaped by the last efforts of my mother. I am left with the echoes of chaos and darkness in recesses of my soul... and it was too late for her to heal me.

KEITH

So how does one become this Conduit?

KATARINA

I am unique. I am her daughter. But anyone healed by the Minstrel may become one.

Her eyes implore him a silent request.

KEITH

You want me to heal you?

She nods and reaches for his hand.

KEITH

We're going to have to continue this later. I don't--

She squeezes his hand.

KATARINA

No, now Minstrel. Look around you. We are in a place of healing. This is a good a place as any. Do this for me, and I will help you. You are the only one...

KEITH

But I don't even know how. I'm not sure I can do that.

KATARINA

Then let me teach you something. All who are open and defenseless can be blessed by your touch. Inside of you is a melody. It is the music of Heaven. Close your eyes and you will hear it.

He SIGHS, then closes his eyes. MOMENTS pass, his demeanor softens.

KATARINA
Can you hear it?

He smiles in response.

KATARINA
Now, think of someone dear to you,
someone you love. Imagine them
calling your name.

Keith sits upright at this and begins to GLOW a SOFT BLUE. Katarina places his hand upon her scarred temple.

KATARINA
That's it, Elkanah. Release your
feelings, channel the power, listen
to the music!

His hand GLOWS a BRIGHT BLUE. A strange HUM envelops the car. Katarina throws her head back in ecstasy.

The HUM builds to a CRESCENDO; a FLASH of BLINDING LIGHT.

He removes his hand. The scar is gone. The eye is a beautiful blue with a teardrop at the corner.

KATARINA
Where once was suffering is now
tranquility. Just an echo of a
beautiful song remains.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR/ICU UNIT - LATER

Keith looks stunned, walking down the hall. He approaches the nurses's station. Dr. Cortez greets him.

DOCTOR CORTEZ
Keith, I was hoping you'd come in.
You got a minute to talk?

KEITH
Sure, what's up?

He is led into an empty exam room. Cortez flips on some illuminated panels and places x-rays over them. He points with his pen.

DOCTOR CORTEZ
These are your x-rays the day after
you were attacked. See here?
(MORE)

DOCTOR CORTEZ (cont'd)
This is a fractured collarbone, and
that is where your head trauma was,
the cause of your concussion.

He points to numerous shady areas on the images.

DOCTOR CORTEZ
These are your fractured ribs, here
is your ruptured spleen, your
tibial fracture, and this is a
damaged spinal disk.

Keith blinks silently at the display. The doctor replaces
the x-rays with a new set of injury-free images.

DOCTOR CORTEZ
And this is you two days later.

The doctor looks mystically now at Keith.

DOCTOR CORTEZ
This is you now.

Keith remains silent.

DOCTOR CORTEZ
In my entire career, I've never
seen such a thing. That alone is a
physical impossibility. At this
stage in medical science, complete
recovery from massive injuries
within eighteen hours just doesn't
happen.

He paces across the room, then stops.

DOCTOR CORTEZ
But an entire ward of patients, all
of them Intensive Care, each and
every one of them totally and
simultaneously healed.

Keith blinks back.

DOCTOR CORTEZ
Not just them! Nurse Linda had an
ovarian cyst: gone. Marisa was on
painkillers for an impacted molar.
It's better now. She cancelled the
dentist appointment the next day.
The janitor--

KEITH
I get the picture, doctor.

DOCTOR CORTEZ

You do? Because if so, could you fill me in? I'm completely without answers here.

KEITH

I guess that is what you call a miracle?

DOCTOR CORTEZ

I'm not trained to believe in miracles. I'm not supposed to believe in them. I'm a doctor, I'm supposed to encourage the semi-miraculous. But after your grandmother leaves today, I have a near-empty ICU unit. I honestly don't know what to think.

KEITH

Maybe it's time to believe, doc.

Cortez looks long and hard at the young man.

DOCTOR CORTEZ

There's someone here I want you to talk to, a clergyman from a local church: Pastor Aaron. He's been spending time, talking to all the patients before they're discharged, helping them sort out the recent events. Your grandmother's with him right now.

KEITH

All right.

They head for the door.

DOCTOR CORTEZ

At least someone around here has no problem with the miraculous.

KEITH

Perhaps you should have a talk with him, Dr. Cortez.

INT. ICU UNIT/ROOM 6 - CONTINUOUS

A pleasant looking man, 40ish, sits bedside with Eleanor. He is PASTOR AARON, having a lively chat with the laughing lady.

Dr. Cortez and Keith enter.

ELEANOR
 (to Keith)
 Darling, you're here!

They kiss.

KEITH
 Hi Nana.

DOCTOR CORTEZ
 Pastor Aaron, this is Eleanor's
 grandson, Keith.

They shake hands.

PASTOR AARON
 A pleasure to meet you, Keith.

DOCTOR CORTEZ
 He also was discharged from ICU
 earlier this week.

PASTOR AARON
 Ah, so you were here that night?

KEITH
 Yeah.

DOCTOR CORTEZ
 Now if you'll excuse me, I have to
 make my rounds. Keith, Eleanor,
 Pastor, Merry Christmas.

ELEANOR
 And a Merry Christmas to you,
 doctor! Thank you for everything.

KEITH
 Thanks doc.

He exits. Pastor Aaron gestures towards the door.

PASTOR AARON
 Let's go have a chat outside.
 Eleanor, I hope to see you in
 service very soon.

ELEANOR
 I would love to.

As the two men exit, Keith turns to Eleanor.

KEITH
I'm taking you home.

IN THE HALLWAY

They settle into stuffed chairs.

PASTOR AARON
So tell me, what is your take on
Sunday night?

KEITH
Well, I'm not afraid to consider
the supernatural if that's where
we're going.

PASTOR AARON
That was mighty direct.

KEITH
This sorta made me a believer.

The clergyman is taken aback.

PASTOR AARON
I guess I just don't hear that
often enough.

KEITH
Sometimes there's just no other
explanation.

PASTOR AARON
So you grant the possibility of
this being the work of the
Almighty?

Keith thinks on this.

KEITH
I'm getting a clarity on it day by
day. Maybe ask me in a week.

PASTOR AARON
But what was your first impression?

Again, Keith searches for words.

KEITH

Hard to say. It was like a dream. There was magnificent light, and music, and such a wonderful calm, a comforting of all tension and sadness.

PASTOR AARON

Do you think it was real?

KEITH

If you consider dreams as made from a substance, albeit an intangible one, but nonetheless real... I would have to say yeah, I think what I felt was real.

PASTOR AARON

Your impressions are just as important as anything caught on a camera, or read on a chart. Our minds often don't comprehend the divine, but in our spirit we know exactly what is going on.

A nurse walks by, the pastor waits.

PASTOR AARON

Basically we know that it's either very good, or very bad. That is a type of comprehension that we can embrace, or refuse. If we embrace it, we become that much closer to God.

Keith listens intently.

PASTOR AARON

His Presence is always there. It's our eagerness to experience Him that draws us near.

They sit in silence a few seconds.

PASTOR AARON

I think that night, you drew very, very near.

KEITH

I would agree to that.

The pastor scans Keith's physique.

PASTOR AARON
So you have no scars, no bumps,
bruises, anything?

Keith turns fully around for his inspection.

KEITH
None.

PASTOR AARON
And this is the first time this has
happened to you?

KEITH
Yes.

The pastor stands and paces in a circle.

PASTOR AARON
I'd love to stay in touch with you.

He hands Keith his card.

KEITH
I have a question for you.

The pastor's eyebrows rise.

KEITH
How did Jesus do it? If he healed
so many people, as the Bible says,
didn't it take its toll on him?
Was he like some rechargeable
battery from Bethlehem, or do you
think he eventually ran out of gas?

PASTOR AARON
He was a man. We're told Jesus
often removed himself from the
masses and crowds to pray and
refuel his divine power cells, so
to speak. The Bible says he took
our sufferings upon himself. No
small task in my book.

Keith digests his words soberly.

INT. FIGEIRA HOME - AFTERNOON

Anita is busy decorating the dining room. Karen draws with
magic markers on a large spread of paper on the living room
floor. The front door opens; Keith and Eleanor enter.

Anita radiates nuclear level joy.

ANITA
Oh, look who's home!

She hugs her mother. Karen flings herself at the trio with drooling glee.

ELEANOR
Well hello, Karen darling! Nana's
so happy to see you!

KAREN
Nana, Nana, Nana!

They escort Eleanor into the house. She takes in all the Christmas decor with a smile.

KEITH
I'll take your bag into your room.

ELEANOR
Okay, darling.

Keith leaves them. Mothers and daughters stand arm in arm.

ELEANOR
Well I'm here and we have a party
tonight. Go get my apron.

A SERIES OF SHOTS IN THE HOUSE:

Eleanor and Anita cook up a storm...

Decorate the living room...

Set the dining room table...

Eleanor greets Ed, who arrives home, with a kiss...

Anita greets him with a jumble of Christmas lights and points outside...

Karen makes a mess of the appetizers. Brandon picks her up and carries her away.

INT. FIGEIRA HOME/KITCHEN - LATER

Keith enters as Anita pulls a pie from the oven. Eleanor stirs a stew.

KEITH
I'm gonna go work on my composition
for a little while.

ELEANOR
Want some company?

Keith looks at his Mom. She shrugs. Eleanor removes her apron and takes Keith by the arm.

IN HIS BEDROOM

Eleanor smiles as Keith plays the violin, keyboards, guitar. She paces the room, elated by the sounds. The room seems to sigh as it finishes.

ELEANOR
I think pianissimo and andante on
the bridge, and you have a winner.

KEITH
I could try to pizzicato the intro--

Keith's cell phone RINGS.

ELEANOR
You've already surpassed your
teacher.

She kisses him and gently leaves the room. He reaches for the phone: a "private number." He flips it open.

KEITH
Hello?

Nothing.

KEITH
Hello?

Silence. He hangs up. He settles into his chair, closes his eyes. He begins to sing a melody.

KEITH
Ba-da-da-ba-da-da...

The cell phone RINGS again. Another "private number." He answers.

KEITH
Hello!

An OMINOUS VOICE comes through:

CALLER
Ba-da-da-ba-da-daa...

KEITH
Who is this?

The caller falls silent. Keith hangs up and powers the phone OFF. He goes to the window: no one in sight. He opens his door: nobody there. He tosses his phone onto the bed and settles in once again. His eyes close... then snap open.

THE CELL PHONE RINGS

His eyes look like saucers. He reaches for the phone, it stops ringing. He removes the battery and throws it back on the bed, then backs against the window, staring at the cell. He flinches when IT RINGS AGAIN.

He remains frozen for many RINGS, and then he creeps toward the phone. He reaches out, grabs the phone, flips it open and pulls it towards his ear.

FX: A BLACK CLOUD streams from the phone and swirls around him as he convulses and twitches. An accompanying CHAOS NOISE fills the room. He appears light-headed and dizzy. He drops the phone first, then crumbles to the floor.

LATER

Anita KNOCKS at the door.

ANITA
Sweetie? Can I come in?

She KNOCKS again, then slowly opens the door.

ANITA
Keith?

Keith rises to his feet, looking disheveled and groggy.

ANITA
Honey, people are arriving. Get yourself ready. One of your friends is already here.

He looks disoriented.

KEITH
Who?

ANITA

I don't know, some woman. She said she works with you, something about being your mentor.

He snaps to life at the news.

KEITH

Okay, I'll be right down.

MOMENTS LATER

Keith descends the stairs. Karen awaits him at the bottom.

KAREN

Kiki, Kiki, Kiki!

Keith hugs her. Anita steps out of the kitchen.

ANITA

She had a tantrum over an hour ago. She was calling your name and just not a happy girl.

Keith strokes her straight blonde hair.

KEITH

I'm right here, bugs. Everything's okay.

Anita points to the dining room.

ANITA

Your friend is over there.

IN THE DINING ROOM

Katarina surveys the family photos on the walls. Keith approaches.

KEITH

Hi there.

Katarina turns.

KATARINA

Elkanah...

He gives her a look.

KATARINA

Keith, I'm so glad you invited me.

She draws closer.

KATARINA

You have not been well.

KEITH

Just a bit overwhelmed.

A sound of EXULTANT VOICES at the door. Rich, Shelley, Lola and Molly are greeted by Anita and Brandon. Shelley carries a pie. Anita leads her to the dining room to set it down.

Shelley leans over to Keith and gives him a kiss.

SHELLEY

Hello baby.

KEITH

Aunt Shelley, I want you to meet my friend Katarina. She's Finnish.

Shelley turns on a fraction of her trademark drama.

SHELLEY

Try me again? That last part...

KEITH

She's Finnish.

SHELLEY

Sorry but, finished with what?

KEITH

Aunt Shelley, she's Finnish, from Finland.

She flashes a toothy grin and reaches over to shake Katarina's hand.

SHELLEY

Oh well for Heaven's sake, so nice to meet you. There's just got to be a better way to say that.

She gives Katarina a hug now, then turns to the kitchen, still talking.

SHELLEY

Goodness sakes, Finnish. Who woulda thought? I had all kinds of crazy things in my head.

Katarina allows a half-smile to surface, Keith a big grin. Lola runs up to Keith and tugs on his arm.

LOLA
Can we sing Christmas songs
tonight?

Molly runs up and grabs his other arm.

MOLLY
And can we take turns? Look, I did
my hair all nice for a solo.

Molly bends her neck to show her ironed hair. Keith chews on
a carrot stick.

KEITH
It's not a karaoke contest, girls.

His cousins wince and whine, then run off to the living room.

MOLLY
Uncle Ed! Where is the microphone?

A FLURRY OF VOICES at the front door.

A parade of people enter, Julie and Jeff among them. Her arm
is in a sling. They carry tins of cookies, and spy Keith
across the room.

KEITH
Heyy!

They exchange hugs.

JEFF
Merry Christmas, bro.

Julie offers her cookies to Keith.

JULIE
Merry Christmas Keith. I made them
last night.

He gawks at her arm.

KEITH
With one arm? What happened?

JULIE
Ice skating and I fell.

KEITH
Then you got back up and baked
cookies?

JULIE
 Hey, just following your example.
 You know you're my hero, right?

Jeff rolls his eyes.

JEFF
 I tried to put her in the oven but
 she wouldn't fit.

They laugh. Julie's eyes harden as she takes notice of Katarina at Keith's side.

KEITH
 Julie, Jeff, I want you to meet
 Katarina from Finland. Her mother
 was a great composer.

JEFF
 Oh really? What is her name?

Katarina fidgets.

KATARINA
 Sonya Kantonnes.

The twins ponder the name.

JEFF
 Can't say I've heard of her. In
 any case, nice to meet you.

KATARINA
 It's a pleasure.

Julie manages a fake smile.

INT. FIGEIRA HOME - LATER

Katarina pets Karen, who plays with a stuffed bear. All guests mingle joyfully. Keith circulates with a tray of drinks, and offers one to Katarina.

KEITH
 Egg nog?

She accepts.

KATARINA
 Thank you.

He starts to circulate again, when another JOYFUL GREETING is heard at the door.

Keith freezes upright and swallows hard. His eyes widen with terror and stay pinned to the entry hall. He turns to Katarina, who has her eyes on him, questioning.

He swallows hard again. A bead of sweat appears on his brow. Into the living room comes a MIDDLE-AGED MAN with a shocking overly-hairsprayed coif and an auburn-red dye job, a loud red and green clothing ensemble, and platform shoes. This is Anita's brother, PAT, 47.

At his side is a young WOMAN. Pretty and sweet-faced, she is bedecked with jewelry, including a half-dozen piercings. Her look cries out "gypsy." This is WANDA.

The couple are surrounded by Rich, Anita, Shelley and Eleanor. Anita drags the couple to Brandon.

ANITA

And this is my youngest son,
Brandon. This is your Aunt Wanda.

Brandon awkwardly kisses the friendly woman on the cheek.

WANDA

What a handsome gene pool!

Eleanor blushes with pride.

The lump of nausea in Keith's throat rises as Anita turns her attention to him. He flashes one more terror-filled glance at Katarina before he visibly tries to quell the impending.

ANITA

Oh, over here Wanda. This is my
eldest. Come and meet Keith.

Pat and Wanda are all smiles as they behold him standing there, tray in hand. Pat's arms open wide for a hug. Wanda's jewels gleam blindingly. Keith covers his mouth with his free hand as his nausea blooms forth. He shoves the tray towards his mother and runs off to the bathroom.

ANITA

Keith! What on earth? Keith?

The group watch him flee, befuddled.

IN THE BATHROOM

Keith is hunched over the toilet, retching his last. He wipes his mouth, fumbles his way to the sink. Leaning on the counter, he looks in the mirror.

AN APPARITION:

Miranda and Hananiah look back at him.

MIRANDA
Elkanah, we are here.

HANANIAH
There is a war in the heavenlies.
With much effort, we find you.

MIRANDA
Elkanah, do not trust the familiar.
Your strengths are overwhelmed by
your frailties. You must lean to
your quickened spirit.

HANANIAH
And not to your human senses. Draw
near to the music, it is the voice
of God.

The vision disappears. Keith stares at his own reflection.

A KNOCK at the door. Julie and Anita stand outside.

ANITA
Keith honey, are you all right?

The door opens. Keith looks less green around the gills now.

KEITH
I'm better. Too much egg nog.

He kisses his mom and proceeds to the party. Anita murmurs
to him as he walks by:

ANITA
It wasn't the egg nog, was it?

Anita and Julie look at each other.

JULIE
Artists have such delicate
constitutions.

IN THE LIVING ROOM

Keith joins Katarina at Karen's side. Karen is agitated and
pulls on the ears of the teddy bear. Across the room, Wanda
and Pat socialize. Katarina's eyes are fixed on them.

KATARINA
She's so young.

KEITH
Probably half his age.

Keith strokes Karen's shoulders.

KEITH
My uncles have always liked the
more interesting women.

Katarina turns her gaze to Keith.

KATARINA
What did they tell you?

He raises his eyebrows.

KATARINA
Your Guardians, what did they say?

He waxes serious.

KEITH
Something about not trusting the
familiar.

KATARINA
They are right. You are an
instrument of Heaven. You of all
people must pray. Only then will
you perceive what is really there.

KEITH
I will try to get up early and--

KATARINA
No, always pray. This is what they
tell you. Listen, perceive, and
follow. There will come a time
when you hear a dark voice: a
seductive, angry sound, contrary to
what you have within.

Her laser look drives her point home.

KATARINA
It has touched me, you saw what it
did. If you do not learn how to
choose rightly what you hear, you
will be in for a big surprise.

Julie appears at their side.

JULIE
Sorry to interrupt you, but guess
who's arrived.

JJ enters from the hall wearing a Santa hat, greeted merrily
by Anita, Ed, Brandon and even Jeff. He makes his way to
Keith. Julie looks disgusted.

JULIE
JJ.

JJ opens his arms for a hug, in jest.

JJ
Julio!

She storms off.

JJ
(to Julie)
You've never looked so good!

He turns to Keith. They knock fists and hug.

JJ
Let the party begin!

KEITH
You're just in time. We're about
to gather around the piano.

JJ
Christmas carols, not my flavor.
But hey, I'll bend now and then.

KEITH
So noble of you!

JJ
And hey, let me hear what you got
on the Armstrong gig. I need some
motivation.

Keith nods as he sips water. JJ notices Wanda across the
room.

JJ
Who's the hot chick?

KEITH
That's my aunt. New member to the
family.

JJ
Dawg, she's a ten!

KEITH
And she's taken, but I would like you to meet someone else. JJ, this is Katarina. She's a colleague of mine.

He gives her the once over and is unimpressed.

JJ
Wassup baby.

KATARINA
Pleased to meet you.

JJ
I'm gonna go get me a snack, aight?

He saunters off.

KEITH
Yeah well my aunt is not on the menu.

JJ ambles around the dining table, ogling Wanda. She turns and notices him. They engage in an almost open flirtation.

IN THE LIVING ROOM- LATER

Keith sits at the piano, leading the throng of 30-plus people in song. They wrap up "Angels We Have Heard on High" to cheerful applause. Keith then eases into a haunting rendition of "Oh Holy Night." His HANDS GLOW BLUE, and as the group sings, the lights flicker off, leaving only the Christmas lights to cast a beautiful illumination.

As they ease into the 3rd verse, JJ and Wanda separately leave the room.

The BLUE from Keith's hands and mouth creates a slow comet's trail around the room, finally descending upon Karen who sits quietly on the couch.

No one notices this phenomenon, but as the SONG escalates towards the dramatic finale, KAREN'S beautiful MEZZO-SOPRANO VOICE rises above the rest. One by one, eyes turn and voices drop in awe to this clear, pitch-perfect songstress.

She finishes the song alone, a cappella, eyes closed. As she inhales from the last note, her eyes open. A lucid Karen gazes back at the gaping crowd, then blushes.

ANITA

Karen? Sweetie was that really you? Oh my God, my baby!

Anita and Ed rush to her, engulfing her in their arms. Anita takes her face in her hands, eyes watering.

ANITA

Karen?

Karen's eyes are clear with intelligence.

ANITA

That was beautiful!

ED

My God, it's a miracle! A miracle!

Keith and Katarina are both stunned and pleased.

EXT. FIGEIRA HOME - LATER

Small crowds pass through the front door. The guests are leaving. Lola and Molly have iPod headphones on Karen, watching her enjoy their music.

Keith escorts Julie and Jeff out the door.

JEFF

Dude.

KEITH

Yeah, dude.

JEFF

Stuff seems to happen around you.

Julie cradles her injured arm.

JULIE

I didn't even know she could speak.

KEITH

Neither did we. She never has, not in sentences anyway.

They look up at the starry sky.

JEFF

You're a July baby, that's Cancer. We'll look up your chart, maybe find some clues to what's going on with you.

JULIE
(to Keith)
I do his chart all the time.

JEFF
Hasn't helped much. I'm still
working for my dad.

KEITH
You're a star.

Jeff smiles at this.

JEFF
We need to hang out more often,
man.

JULIE
Come over for dinner or something.

Jeff rolls his eyes at this.

KEITH
I'd love it.

They amble down the driveway.

KEITH
Where on earth is JJ?

Near the garage, Anita, Shelley, Rich and Pat gather to talk.

RICH
First Mom, then Keith, now Karen.
What's next?

SHELLEY
I'm serious, girl. There is some
real deal somethin' goin' on 'round
here. You know what I'm talkin'
about.

PAT
What happened to Keith?

ANITA
He got in a fight and was laid up
in the hospital.

PAT
You're kidding! When was this?

ANITA
Same time as Mom.

PAT
He seems perfectly fine.

SHELLEY
That's what I'm talkin' 'bout.

A motorcycle stops in the street, TOOTS its horn. JJ straddles the bike.

JJ
Sorry I had to bail, something came up.

JULIE
No problem!

JJ laughs.

KEITH
You're a freak, you know that?

He touches his shoulders and extends his hands. JJ does the same.

ANITA
Nice to see you, James.

He gives the thumbs up and zooms off.

PAT
Has anyone seen my wife?

At that moment, Wanda strolls across the front lawn.

WANDA
Here I am, baby.

She joins the group of elders.

WANDA
I went for a stroll, saw the Christmas lights. The neighborhood is beautiful tonight.

She kisses Pat on the lips.

PAT
Always following your own drum.

WANDA
That's why you married me.

The front door opens. Katarina is escorted by Ed, Brandon, and Eleanor. She shakes their hands then turns to leave. As she passes Anita's group, she addresses them.

KATARINA

Thank you for a wonderful evening.

All but Wanda wave to her.

SHELLEY

G'nite.

RICH

Nice meeting you.

ANITA

So glad you could join us.

Keith intercepts her.

KATARINA

Despite what happened tonight, the darkness is closing in. I know it. You can feel it. It is time to turn the lights on, Minstrel.

A DREAM SEQUENCE:

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Keith strolls the sunny paths amidst the grass. Across the busy street, Eleanor and Brandon watch for traffic to clear. Keith sees them and waves; they wave back.

INTERCUT:

A large truck ambles through traffic.

Keith stops to watch a CHILD play with a kite.

Anita and Brandon still wait for traffic to clear.

The truck hauls ass down the street.

Keith helps the child to run. The kite ascends.

Eleanor and Brandon start to cross the street.

The truck screeches around a corner.

Keith turns to watch the truck close in on them. He runs to them, mouth open to yell when suddenly ALL SOUND is MUTED.

The truck, children playing, Keith yelling, city traffic:
ALL COMPLETELY SOUNDLESS.

In horror, Keith runs to warn his loved ones, but too late. The truck strikes Brandon and Eleanor. As the vehicle passes, a fleeting glimpse of A CLOAKED STRANGER in an alley catches Keith's attention. From this ominous silhouette, only a glimmer of two evil eyes.

INT. KEITH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Keith bolts upright in bed, YELLING. The sound of his voice reorients him; it was a dream. He scans the room, panting.

He goes to the window and opens it. A breeze wafts in and he visibly relaxes. Breathing deeply, he closes his eyes.

CLOSE on Keith's face: he subtly cocks an ear, then another. He now seems focused.

A MULTITUDE OF SOUNDS:

A baby cries, a loud television blares, a revving car engine, a man and woman argue, a cat meows, a dog barks.

Overlapping and looping, these jumbled noises INCREASE IN VOLUME until Keith's eyes snap open. He opens his door; Karen is asleep, curled up on the floor like a guard dog.

EXT. FIGEIRA HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Keith descends the gutter pipe outside his window. He briskly walks across the lawn... down the street... and another street... into a low rent district.

He stops outside a ramshackle building, then takes the stairs to the 2nd floor and homes in on an apartment down the hall.

AT THE DOOR

Keith hears a BABY CRY, and a MAN and WOMAN ARGUING. The woman, JESSIE, sounds terrified.

JESSIE (O.S.)
Get away from me, Rodney!

RODNEY (O.S.)
You ruined my life, Jessie! You
took away my goddam life!

INSIDE

An inebriated man, 30 and a mess, menaces a disheveled woman, 30. In a shaky crib, a BABY.

JESSIE

Rodney, get away from me! You're drunk. Get away from me or I'll scream for help!

Keith steps forward and KNOCKS on the door.

RODNEY

You gave me a child I didn't want. I live in a bloody rat's nest! I want out! Do you hear me, Jessie? I want out!

KEITH

Excuse me, do you need any help?

The couple hear it. Rodney's face turns even redder.

RODNEY

Oh, and who's that, huh Jessie? You got a boyfriend on the side? You goddam slut!

KEITH

Hey just open the door, okay? Everybody calm down.

Rodney yanks a lamp cord from the wall and creeps toward Jessie.

JESSIE

Oh God, Rodney, put that down! Rodney no, oh God Rodney, nooo!

KEITH

Just open the door!

Jessie SCREAMS!

Keith steps back from the door and with a SUPERNATURAL VOLUME, yells:

KEITH

I said, OPEN THE DOOR!

The door blows off its hinges and flies into the room, catching the crazed man square on the back. Their flight continues to the opposite wall. He slumps to the floor, unconscious.

Jessie clutches her calm baby, wide-eyed at what she saw.

UNDULATING WAVES of SOUND and BLUE LIGHT surround Keith, who appears almost angelic.

KEITH
You are safe now.

EXT. RAMSHACKLE BUILDING - LATER

Keith watches from across the street, in the shadows. The POLICE are on the scene. One cop escorts the dazed, handcuffed Rodney to the patrol car. Another cop stands at the door, nodding to a calm Jessie.

Keith turns and walks down the street, unnoticed.

INT. DOWNTOWN CAFE - DAY

Keith and Katarina sip coffee.

KEITH
I felt so empowered. It felt so right.

KATARINA
That's a Minstrel's calling, to stand in the gap between good and evil. You must move as the Voice within tells you.

KEITH
But, what am I supposed to do with my plans now, just throw them away? I have responsibilities, things to do, plans for my future.

KATARINA
Your destiny unfolds. You will understand the motives of Man, and comprehend the ways of the Spirit. Mysteries will be revealed, layer by layer, as you follow its urging.

He listens intently to her quiet words.

KATARINA
You have been called for a reason, Elkanah. Your capacity to love and heal have been held in the balance and measured. You are chosen.

KEITH
But why me?

KATARINA

Your gifts are not by chance. You
can feel things, yes? You
understand music, yes?

His eyes silently agree.

KATARINA

Traits of a Minstrel. For
thousands of years, Man descends
deeper into darkness. A Minstrel's
presence in the world keeps evil at
bay, protecting God's design until
the Final Days, and the last
battle, when all things shall be
restored.

KEITH

No battles! Okay? No last days. I
just want to go to Music School,
have a career. Does everything
have to change?

She hesitates as though assessing his readiness.

KATARINA

You are as human as anyone, so in
that sense, nothing changes. There
will come a time when you must make
a choice.

KEITH

How will I know what to choose?

KATARINA

Choose greatness. Look at your
predecessors.

KEITH

I saw what you wrote. I don't know
if I can buy all that. Joan of Arc?

KATARINA

The Maid of Orleans said she gained
her strength, purpose, and courage
from being in the presence of God
Himself, and hearing his marvelous
voice.

KEITH

I'm a musician.

KATARINA

In seventeen forty-one George Frideric Handel secluded himself for twenty-four days under a frenzy of spiritual conviction, and emerged with the classical masterpiece "The Messiah". He is quoted as saying, "I did think I saw all Heaven before me and the great God himself".

KEITH

And they were all Minstrels?

KATARINA

Some more developed than others. All obedient to their calling.

They both look out the window stoically.

KATARINA

There's another thing. There's one just like you, only dark. Very, very dark. When one is struck down, another rises. He comes to undo all that you do. He brings chaos, death, and discord. He may try to confuse you, tempt you, torment or seduce you, like the Sirens' destructive call at sea. You must never listen to his song, Elkanah! Never.

He contemplates her words.

KATARINA

The devil himself picks him, just as you had been chosen by God. He is elusive, sly, and grows strong in a faithless world. He is here to mock God, and stop you.

KEITH

How can I take on such a thing? Who am I to take on the forces of darkness? I'm kinda freaked here!

KATARINA

You are not so easily killed, Elkanah. God has armed you.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

Keith and Katarina stroll into the woods on a beautiful afternoon. He smiles as he hears the sounds of nature: BIRDS SING, BUTTERFLY WINGS FLAP, the BREEZE RUSTLES LEAVES.

They find a grassy knoll deep in the forest. Keith sits, meditative. Katarina paces around him.

KATARINA

The world was shaped by his Voice.
Even now, all things exist because
of that first Song. But Nature goes
wild, untamed. The Soul of Man
darkens. Find the music within
you. Listen and shape it to your
will. It can heal, it can protect,
it can even destroy.

Keith breathes deeply. She picks up a stick.

KATARINA

You are under attack. Call the
music into a form for protection...
NOW!

She hurls the stick. It strikes him on the arm.

KEITH

Oww!

KATARINA

You must listen!

KEITH

I am listening, but all I hear is
you!

KATARINA

Oh please! What is it you
Americans call it? Multitask!

She picks up a small rock. He meditates again.

KATARINA

Now focus. Draw on the Voice
within you, let it feel your
surroundings. You need not see to
know. Hear the music. Feel the
music.

He begins to GLOW BLUE. She hurls the rock. Just before impact, he SHIMMERS, creating a small BLUE FORCE FIELD. The rock bounces off. Her serious lips turn up for a smile.

KATARINA

That's a start, but you cannot survive on the defensive. You must take command of the situation. You alone can harness the Song in all things. The birds, the trees, the air, they all work for you.

She circles him with silent footsteps.

KATARINA

Now close your eyes and perceive.

Katarina ceases her stealthy walk and stretches forth her arms. A host of rocks and branches levitates from the surrounding flora.

THROUGH KEITH'S CLOSED EYELIDS, an infrared perception of shapes comes into view. With a wave of her hand, the objects become projectiles zooming in at their epicenter: Keith.

Almost simultaneously, Keith raises his hands: the projectiles glow BLUE and freeze in midair.

P.O.V. OUTSIDE THE WOODS: TIME ELAPSES, DAY INTO NIGHT. As the twilight darkens into night, a BLUE GLOW emanates from within the forest.

INT. FIGEIRA HOME - NIGHT

Keith enters. Anita and Karen sit on the living room floor with various boxes and wrapping paper. Karen's 10 fingers have scotch tape for Anita, who wraps.

Karen lights up and rises to greet him with a kiss and hug, but no words from her perceptive face.

ANITA

She'll sing, but she won't talk.

KEITH

If only more of us did the same.

Anita smiles.

ANITA

You can't come in here right now. Santa's workshop.

KEITH

It's okay, I got some work to do.

ANITA
All right then sweetie. Good
night.

KEITH
Night.

Karen watches him head to his room.

ANITA
Tape!

INT. KEITH'S BEDROOM - LATER

A SERIES OF SHOTS: Keith masters and records keyboards,
guitar, drums, cello, and harmonica. The SONG is heavenly.

LAST SHOT: Keith pops the disc out from the recorder, blows
on it and reinserts it, a contented look on his face. He
opens his laptop and gazes at the Minstrel with the harp.

Then, a NOISE at the window. Keith looks out to see JJ
standing below.

JJ
Dude, I'm so glad you're up.

KEITH
What's going on?

JJ
Can I come in?

AT THE FRONT DOOR

Keith lets JJ in.

JJ
My parents kicked me out. Just for
tonight.

KEITH
What did you do now?

JJ
They're just bent out of shape. I
do my best work at night. They
don't get it.

They head upstairs.

IN KEITH'S ROOM

JJ
They said I need to pay them rent
if I want to do stuff like that.
We exchanged some words.

KEITH
So practice during the day.

JJ
Dude, when am I gonna sleep?

Keith throws pillows and a blanket on the floor. JJ notices
the computer screen.

JJ
What's this?

Keith deftly deletes the page.

KEITH
Just school stuff. Research.

JJ picks up a guitar and fingers the strings nimbly.

JJ
So show me what you got.

Keith reclines in bed.

KEITH
When I'm not so tired.

The guitar play sets a relaxing tone for the duo.

KEITH
You still believe in God, JJ?

JJ
There has to be a God. Just look
at me!

Keith rolls his tired eyes.

KEITH
Does He inspire you, when you play?

JJ
Not sure if that's what it is.
Possibly. You?

KEITH
Lately I feel like I'm the
instrument, and He's playing me.

He drifts off to sleep as JJ sings a sweet ACOUSTIC LULLABY.

INT. FIGEIRA HOME - MORNING

Anita, Pat, Eleanor and Wanda have coffee in the dining room.

ANITA
Keith says Mom's his muse.

WANDA
That's sweet.

Eleanor blushes.

ANITA
She got him started when he was
four. By ten he was composing.

They all look fondly at Eleanor. Heads turn and smile when
Keith descends from the stairs, day pack slung over his
shoulder.

PAT
Well there he is!

ANITA
Good morning, sweetie.

KEITH
Hey!

Keith looks guarded, but smiles and rushes a fast kiss for
Anita and Eleanor.

ANITA
Wanda here was saying how much
she'd like to hear some of your
original songs.

PAT
Uncle Pat too.

KEITH
Oh, uhh...

ELEANOR
Like maybe your audition piece.

KEITH
Well that's not really ready yet.

ANITA

Oh come on, honey. We're all family here.

He scans their eager faces.

WANDA

I'm such a music fan, and I hear you're a genius.

KEITH

I tell you what: as soon as it's polished, I'll give you an earful.

PAT

You can't push an artist, you know.

WANDA

Tell me about it!

Keith heads for the door.

KEITH

Don't forget about tonight.

The door shuts.

WANDA

They're so temperamental.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The place is standing room only. Anita, Eleanor, Ed, Pat and Wanda sit in the middle section. Up in a back row, JJ reclines with his feet propped up. Principal Hoogs stands off stage, script in hand, all smiles.

Keith is in the orchestra pit, directing the musicians who accompany the 4-part choir on stage. Dancers flutter about as the song approaches a crescendo.

Suddenly, a saxophone hits a FLAT NOTE. Keith gives the sax player a look.

A few singers hit SOUR NOTES. Keith looks perplexed.

A drummer accelerates the BEAT, with repeated MISCOUNTS. The audience stirs.

A singer and a dancer stop and wince, putting their hands over their ears. Principal Hoogs vomits.

A violin player holds her long hair out by one hand, her other hand strokes it with the bow. Keith gawks with alarm.

A singer SCREAMS. Another one faints. A dancer hits the floor hard. Every performer is in complete disarray, as though insane.

PANDEMONIUM breaks out. Keith searches the audience and sees the distressed looks. His baton GLOWS BLUE.

With a wave of his hand, the WHOLE ROOM FREEZES: everyone has come to a standstill under a BLUE HAZE, some in mid-air.

He scans the room, then closes his eyes, concentrating. His head turns toward a corner of the room: A NOISE.

He looks. The double doors up the aisle swing in and out. He jumps from the pit and races up the aisle, through the doors, out the foyer to

OUTSIDE THE AUDITORIUM

He scans the parking lot for movement. From a distance, a MOTORCYCLE REVS. He runs in the direction of the sound, but too late. He stops, burning BRIGHT BLUE and SHIMMERS in place several times.

FROM WITHIN THE AUDITORIUM

The room freeze ends, as the sounds of PANDEMONIUM resume.

INT. FIGEIRA HOME - DAY

Anita and Ed are squared off across the dining room table.

ANITA

There are no safety concerns anymore, Ed. Karen is better now. She's different.

ED

And so is your mother for that matter.

ANITA

Oh and so now we just kick her out? 'Bye Mom, see you later?'

ED

She has her own home, Anita. We're not kicking her out. Why do you always put such a negative spin on things?

Keith enters the front door, lugging his work bag. He slowly passes down the entry hall, wary of the arguing voices.

ANITA

Me, negative? You're the one who makes it sound like it's a drudgery to have her here!

Keith spies Eleanor, whose head peeps out from her bedroom. She waves for him to come.

ED

That's not my word for it. Not drudgery. But it is a burden since you quit work, another responsibility I shoulder. And that's something you take for granted.

IN KAREN'S BEDROOM

Karen has iPod headphones on, and happily hums to a song. Eleanor looks unfazed by the ruckus outside.

KEITH

I'm sorry you have to hear all that.

ELEANOR

It's nothing to worry about, dear. Your father loves me. He and I are great friends. This is not about me. This is about respect, or should I say, the lack of it. Your mother needs to rediscover the joy of being a mother *and* wife, but not such an empress. He feels left out, not included in any of the decisions in the house, and that's just not right.

She rubs Keith on the back.

ELEANOR

Trust me, honey. This is about them, not me.

IN THE DINING ROOM

ANITA

Keith works.

ED
And every dime goes towards
furthering his education. You know
that.

ANITA
We could ask him to postpone his
plans, just for a year or so.

ED
How could you even consider that--
Keith pokes his head out and clears his throat.

KEITH
Ahem.
His parents visibly lose intensity.

ED
Son!

ANITA
Oh, hi sweetie.
He ambles over to the table.

ED
You okay?

KEITH
Yeah.

ANITA
Are the kids all right now?

KEITH
Still pretty shaken. Some of them
don't remember much. I can't
believe what a disaster it was.

ANITA
It was a huge undertaking. They're
young kids, very inexperienced.
Even seasoned performers would be
challenged to do all you asked of
them.

ED
It was just a massive case of stage
fright. We've all felt it. It's
nothing you should take to heart,
son.

ANITA

It was just a really bad night.

KEITH

Perhaps. I'm taking them all out caroling Christmas Eve. Maybe they'll recapture the magic and forget about what happened.

Eleanor steps out from the bedroom, bags packed.

ELEANOR

Okay I'm ready.

ANITA

Ready for what?

ELEANOR

Why, to go home of course.

ANITA

Mother--

ED

Mom, you don't have to go. We want you to stay.

KEITH

Christmas is in three days, Nana.

ELEANOR

Oh I'll be back. But I have house guests too, and I'd like to enjoy some time with Wanda and Pat, make them feel comfortable.

ANITA

Mom I insist you unpack your bags right this minute. You're going no-

Eleanor kisses her on the head.

ELEANOR

You were always so demanding, always pushing your brothers out of the way. But you're not my only child, Anita. I want to spend some time with my son and new daughter-in-law. That's all.

Anita squirms in her seat, frustrated, and glares at Ed.

INT. HIS HIGHEST PRAISE CHURCH - DAY

Keith enters the main chapel and sits. He gazes up at the Cross, reflecting. Pastor Aaron enters and smiles.

PASTOR AARON
What a pleasant surprise.

KEITH
Good morning, Pastor.

PASTOR AARON
How's everything?

Keith's face tells the answer: he's burdened.

PASTOR AARON
Hmmm...

KEITH
I'm beginning to feel like a
linchpin, you know? Like if I step
aside, a whole house built upon me
will crumble.

PASTOR AARON
I can assure you, no man except for
one was meant to carry the weight
of the world upon him. Perhaps you
need to lighten your load, be a
little more realistic about what
you can handle.

KEITH
I guess that's why I'm here. I
need to figure out just what my
load should be.

PASTOR AARON
I have always said that if you
can't do something well, you
shouldn't do it at all. Choose
those things that are dear to your
heart.

Keith smiles.

KEITH
Funny, I've given that same advice
before.

The room inspires deep thinking.

KEITH

Okay let's say I'm at a fork in the road, and I'm torn between things that are all close to my heart. How do I know?

PASTOR AARON

One choice almost always requires sacrifice. An exercise in selflessness.

KEITH

So choosing the other will make me selfish?

The pastor smiles.

PASTOR AARON

Let me put it this way. If you had to choose between loving just one person, or loving many, as a leader would love his people, what would it be?

Keith thinks hard.

KEITH

I don't know.

PASTOR AARON

Only you can make your choice ultimately become the noble one.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT

Keith parks his car across the street from a well-kept dwelling. He gathers several wrapped gifts and prepares to open the car door.

Wanda emerges from the side entrance of the house and walks briskly down the street, straightening her clothes. Keith leaves his car and goes to the same side entry and knocks.

JJ opens the door, and a strange sly smile crosses his face.

JJ

Yo, Santa! Wasn't expecting you yet.

Keith barely conceals a disgusted look.

KEITH

I bet.

JJ

Come in.

He follows JJ down a flight of stairs to

INT. JJ'S BASEMENT BEDROOM

A dark, Gothic dungeon with blacklights. They walk through a beaded curtain and JJ turns on a lava lamp. Keith places the gifts on a table amongst scattered sheet music and an electric guitar.

KEITH

I guess this night is just full of surprises.

JJ looks a bit edgy as he attempts to organize his clutter.

JJ

What do you mean?

KEITH

My aunt was just here. You know, the new one.

JJ

Oh, uhh... yeah, she's a nice lady.

KEITH

And a married one.

JJ turns to face his stoic visitor.

JJ

She expressed interest in my music, so I invited her over. She's just as interested in yours, but she doesn't feel like you care.

KEITH

I care, I'm just a bit busy lately. And do you think inviting her over here is such a good idea?

JJ

Why not? It's nice to be admired from time to time. It's next to impossible to get you over here, much less bounce some ideas off of you. She's a bit lonely, and so am I.

KEITH

You're not just lonely. You're up to something.

JJ

Oh spare me the lecture, man. What I'm up to is connecting with interesting people, especially those that encourage what I do.

KEITH

I'm always here for you, JJ. You know that. This just isn't right--

JJ

Man, like you said, you're just too busy. Too busy for your best friend, for the one who admires you the most. But you feel you're just too good for me. I'm right up there with doing your laundry or wiping your butt. Yeah I feel real important to you, dude.

KEITH

This is ridiculous! How can you question our friendship? We go back almost fifteen years.

JJ

No, I'll tell you what's ridiculous bro. The fact that you look through me almost as though I wasn't there when you...

JJ steps forward and holds Keith's face with his hands.

JJ

... you're the only one I've ever wanted.

Keith recoils in shock.

KEITH

JJ...

They behold each other in profound silence, and then:

KEITH

You don't have to *have* me. That's not what I want. I love you dude, you should know that.

JJ pulls away and turns aside, angry. He paces and then:

JJ

Then don't come over here and tell me who I can and cannot see. You've enjoyed my friendship because I've always made you feel just a little bit superior. You dig that, I know. Well that part is over, dude! You hear me? Over. I am no longer your pawn or your biggest fan.

KEITH

Come on, that's not true at all.

JJ

It is true, dude.

JJ grabs the gifts from the table and shoves them at Keith.

JJ

And you know what else? I don't need you. At all. I'll do just fine without you.

Now Keith looks hurt.

KEITH

JJ--

JJ

Go!

Keith reluctantly ascends the stairs. The CLICK of the door leaves JJ alone in the dim room. His enraged eyes GLOW a SPOOKY ORANGE.

OUTSIDE JJ'S HOUSE

Keith pants with emotion as he storms down the driveway, his face a torment of confusion. He stops to stare at the house.

INT. A MODEST APARTMENT - NIGHT

Eleanor and Pat sit on a quilt-covered couch. Framed photos of family adorn the walls, the tables, the piano. The abode has Eleanor's grandmotherly touch.

Wanda is in the middle of the room, wearing several scarves and a sarong. EGYPTIAN MUSIC plays while Wanda bellydances for her small audience. Pat can barely sit still from the excitement, completely under her thrall. He finally rises to join her in a lusty dance.

Eleanor smiles, but doesn't look so good. She repeatedly covers her mouth, as though stifling a gag reflex.

The MUSIC stops. Pat grabs Wanda and dips her, kissing her on the lips. Eleanor politely claps, then pats her brow with a handkerchief.

ELEANOR

Whew! Is it getting warm in here?

PAT

Sorry, Mom. It's my hot wife.

Wanda pushes him off, blushing.

ELEANOR

I don't doubt you for a minute.

She pulls on her collar for a cooling effect.

WANDA

You okay, Mom? You don't look well.

ELEANOR

I suppose I am feeling a bit feverish. Perhaps I'll just turn in early tonight.

PAT

Want me to make you some hot tea? Wanda and I have some fantastic Navajo stuff.

ELEANOR

No, no dear. I'm fine. I think I'll just get some rest. Don't mind me, I can sleep through anything. You two lovebirds carry on. I'll see you in the morning.

WANDA

I'll go turn down your bed.

She kisses Pat then heads into the bedroom. Eleanor shuffles into the bathroom. Pat continues to bellydance solo.

IN ELEANOR'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Wanda fluffs the pillows. Eleanor enters in her night gown, looking ashen.

WANDA

I hate to see you not feeling well.

ELEANOR
I'll be like new in the morning.

Wanda kisses her head.

WANDA
Sweet dreams, then.

ELEANOR
Good night, dear.

Wanda turns out the light.

WANDA
Save your strength.

Her eyes flash a brief BRIGHT ORANGE.

EXT. FIGEIRA HOME - NIGHT

It is Christmas Eve. The mood is festive as Keith and his 30-plus students gather in the driveway, bundled up for warmth. A car pulls up and Amy emerges, eager to meet the gang.

AMY
Merry Christmas everybody!

The front door opens. Anita and Brandon walk out carrying trays of hot drinks. Brandon wears his broadband radio gear.

ANITA
Hot cider, everybody! Keep those
tonsils warm!

BRANDON
Come and get it! Only a dollar a
drink until ten o'clock! Tips are
welcome!

Ed joins the group, rubbing his hands together.

ED
Okay kid. I'm ready to roll.

KEITH
We're just waiting for Nana.

ANITA
Pat said she's moving kind of slow.
Karen will stay and wait for her,
and then catch up with the group.

Keith sips on a cider, unsure.

KEITH

Okay.

EXT. CITY MORGUE - NIGHT

The building looks lifeless. A gloved hand reaches for the door. It's locked. A sharp BUZZ and ORANGE GLOW and the door yields. Two darkened figures enter.

INT. CITY MORGUE - CONTINUOUS

Cadavers lay on examination tables.

A DARK FIGURE stands in a doorway. An OMINOUS MELODY permeates the air. An ORANGE VAPOR streams from the stranger's mouth, flowing to the corpses throughout the room.

They stir.

IN ANOTHER ROOM

A SLIM FIGURE stands in the doorway. He steps forward: it is JJ. He surveys the room and opens his mouth. An ORANGE VAPOR trails from his lips and into the closed cadaver drawers. From within each sliding compartment, NOISES.

A corpse sits upright. We see the morbid face of SKINNY THUG.

EXT. FIGEIRA HOME - NIGHT

A car pulls up and parks. Jeff and Julie get out and join the gang. Julie goes up to Keith looking cheerful and pretty and hooks her arm in his. She plants a quick peck on his cheek.

KEITH

I guess your arm is better.

JULIE

Yep.

KEITH

Glad you could make it.

JULIE

I love stuff like this!

Jeff bear hugs Keith from behind.

JEFF
Merry Christmas, dude!

Keith raises his voice to address the crowd.

KEITH
Okay listen up, El Dorado Chorus!
Song books ready! Voices clear!
It's time to spread some holiday
cheer!

A loud CHEER of approval in response.

INT. CITY MORGUE - NIGHT

A small army of ORANGE-EYED ZOMBIES shuffle the halls,
heading towards the entrance doors.

EXT. FIGEIRA HOME - NIGHT

The carolers amble down the street, SINGING "Oh Come All Ye
Faithful."

INT./EXT. OLDSMOBILE - NIGHT

Eleanor is at the wheel. Wanda and Pat sit in the back, arm
in arm. He is dressed as an elf. They pass down
neighborhood streets, looking at the festive lights. Wanda
points to one colorful lawn arrangement.

WANDA
Oh, look honey! Isn't that
beautiful!

Eleanor points down the road. The carolers are convened in
front of a house.

ELEANOR
Look, there they are!

She stops the car behind them. Wanda nudges Pat.

WANDA
Why don't you go ahead and join
them, baby?

PAT
Don't be silly. I want to--

WANDA
We'll be right along.

Pat reluctantly emerges from the car and poses for the amused youths.

EXT. FIGEIRA HOME - NIGHT

JJ walks up the driveway, looking shady. The Oldsmobile pulls up behind him.

ELEANOR
That's Keith's friend.

JJ goes to the front door and raises his hand to knock. It opens. A defiant, glowering Karen stands in the doorway.

Eleanor parks the car and reaches for her seat belt. Wanda leans over, and with an ORANGE VAPOR murmurs:

WANDA
Sleep mother, sleep.

Eleanor conks out.

JJ and Karen face off in an awkward silence. Karen stretches forth her arm and waves it across the threshold. A BLUE FORCE FIELD BUZZES across the entrance.

JJ
Now, now Karen. That's not very nice.

He reaches his ORANGE-GLOWING hand and touches the force field. ORANGE and BLUE SPARKS fly, but the barrier remains. Karen stands, unmoved.

JJ looks over his shoulder. Wanda strides over to him and puts her hand on his shoulder.

EXT. CITY MORGUE - NIGHT

A BANG at the doors, and then they open. A slow parade of zombies shuffle into the barren streets.

EXT. A NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - NIGHT

The carolers amble past appreciative families. A LITTLE GIRL runs down her driveway with a platter full of candy canes and offers it to the singers. Keith reaches for one and is jolted by

A VISION: Karen soaring backwards down the entry hall.

KEITH

Karen!

JULIE

What is it?

KEITH

Listen, can you lead them for a little while? I gotta run home.

She looks perplexed.

JULIE

Are you ever going to tell me what's going on?

KEITH

You know what, I will. I promise.

JULIE

Okay, call me if you need me.

She flashes her cell from her pocket.

KEITH

Okay, thanks!

He breaks into a run, retracing their path. As he runs, he intermittently SHIMMERS in BLUE and BUZZES. The 3rd time it happens, he finds that he has STREAKED forward about 100 yards. He stops, completely surprised.

KEITH

Holy Christmas!

He breaks into a run again, peppered with SHIMMER STREAKS.

THE CAROLERS

Continue down the road, singing "Jingle Bell Rock." Amy peers ahead and notices a distant crowd ambling towards them.

AMY

I don't believe it, more carolers.

JEFF

Ha! We'll put them to shame!

PAT

(John Wayne impression)
This town ain't big enough for all of us!

Julie squints at the far-off group.

JULIE
The more, the merrier!

EXT. FIGEIRA HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Keith arrives at his open front door as a STREAK of BUZZING BLUE LIGHT. He surveys the outside: nothing peculiar. He steps

INSIDE

And sees the slumped figure of Karen at the end of the hall.

KEITH
Oh no!

He runs to her. She is barely conscious as he holds her tightly. She animates slightly, but as her former autistic self: her eyes roll about in their sockets, tongue wagging wildly as she murmurs.

KAREN
Kiki, Kiki.

He dials on his cell phone

EXT. A NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - CONTINUOUS

Anita strolls along with Pat, singing. Her cell phone RINGS. She answers it.

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION

ANITA
Hello?

KEITH
Mom, I need you back at home ASAP!

ANITA
What's wrong? I thought you were here.

KEITH
I need you and Dad to come home and look after Karen.

ANITA
Oh no! Is she all right?

KEITH
More or less, just hurry okay?

ANITA
Where's Nana?

KEITH
I don't know. I'm gonna look for
her now.

ANITA
We're on our way.

END ON ANITA

She finds Ed in the crowd and grabs him.

ANITA
We need to get home!

They scurry back down the street.

INT. FIGEIRA HOME - CONTINUOUS

Keith gently lays Karen down, then prowls the house. He
heads up his stairs and enters

HIS BEDROOM

It is in shambles. The disc drive is open and empty.

KEITH
Son of a bitch!

He scurries back to

THE DRIVEWAY

And looks about, his face like chiseled steel.

EXT. A NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - CONTINUOUS

The carolers all notice the oncoming group, now 20 yards
away. Nervously, they continue their approach. Jeff hails
them cheerfully.

JEFF
Merry Christmas!

The shadowed zombies move forward in silence. Amy sniffs the
air and winces.

AMY

Eeww, what is that smell?

From the sidelines, families gawk at the zombies and retreat behind closed doors. Pat moves Amy out of the way and steps forward, John Wayne again.

PAT

Move out of the way, sister.
There's a posse comin' through,
hwa, hwa, hwa!

He brandishes thumb and finger for guns, smiling and awaiting laughter. His grin falls as the zombies step into the light.

PAT

What the hell?

Amy's eyes zero in on a scowling brunette zombie.

AMY

Hannah?

The zombies lunge forward and attack the hapless carolers. Song books and candy canes fly about as gnashing teeth in ORANGE-EYED faces find their human targets. HANNAH takes Amy to the ground.

EXT. FIGEIRA HOME - CONTINUOUS

Keith paces about the yard and driveway, but then snaps to attention: the SOUND of PANIC-STRICKEN VOICES. His face pinches into focus, and then he SHIMMERS BLUE... in a BUZZING STREAK he is gone.

DOWN THE ROAD

Ed and Anita huff and puff as they jog. The BLUE STREAK BUZZES by them.

ED

What was that?

ANITA

I spiked the cider.

THE ZOMBIE CARNAGE

Continues. Each caroler is pinned down, flailing with weaker efforts to stop the carnivorous assault. A horrified WOMAN gawks through a house window and dials 3 digits on a phone.

A HAUNTINGLY BEAUTIFUL MELODY permeates the scene. The VOICE is Keith's.

KEITH (O.S.)
Silent Night, holy night. All is
calm, all is bright...

The zombies stop and put hands to their ears in agony. They thrash and GROWL in protest. The SONG gently continues as a spooky BLUE FOG envelops the scene. One by one, the zombies DISINTEGRATE into dust. The wounded and bloody carolers remain, moaning on the ground. The FOG swirls about each felled caroler, and their MOANS subside as their wounds heal.

Keith permeates the FOG to find SKINNY THUG still there, hands on ears, glaring defiantly at his tormenter. Keith's SONG finishes, and he addresses the zombie.

KEITH
Stubborn to the very end.

He inhales deeply and blows. The zombie DISINTEGRATES in the exhaled wind. Pat stirs a few yards away. Keith goes to him and cradles his head.

KEITH
Uncle Pat, are you okay?

His eyes open and behold the dissipating BLUE FOG, then his nephew.

PAT
What happened?

He rises to his feet.

KEITH
We got attacked. Some unfriendly
types from out of nowhere.

Pat looks about, bewildered.

KEITH
Don't worry, they're gone.

PAT
I'm going to look back on this
Christmas one day and miss the
adventure, but right now it's all
too weird.

KEITH

It might get weirder. I think we're on some gang's turf and I need to get these kids to safety.

He pulls out Pastor Aaron's business card.

KEITH

Get them to this church. Here's the address.

PAT

Well, okay.

He looks at the youths as they start to stir.

PAT

But hey, please find Wanda and my Mom. This is not a night for two ladies to be alone out here.

KEITH

Deal.

Pat turns to survey the scene of waking carolers, then turns back to Keith.

PAT

Call me as soon as...

Keith is gone.

He is a BLUE STREAK, zipping past a blur of houses and trees.

ELEANOR (O.S.)

Oh God, help me! Someone help me!

EXT. HIGHRISE BUILDING - NIGHT

Eleanor is held from behind by an unseen form atop a 20-story building.

INTERCUT

KEITH

(still a blue streak)
I'm coming, Nana!

A crowd assembles outside the building. All eyes are on the frantic elderly woman on the edge of the roof. Katarina stands in the midst of this crowd, her face a steely resolve.

Keith spies her and pushes through the crowd.

KATARINA
Elkanah, you are here!

KEITH
Who's up there with her?

She grabs his arm, and turns him square to her.

KATARINA
I think it's the Dark One.

His eyes widen, questioning.

He looks up at his terrified grandmother, his jaw clenched.

KATARINA
You know you can change the future,
what you've seen?

KEITH
My visions. So they weren't just
dreams?

KATARINA
No Elkanah, they were a glimpse of
what may come. Just as our Enemy
can see glimpses of your destiny.
That is why he is so determined to--

KEITH
(wincing in pain)
Unnngh!

KATARINA
What is it?

He doubles over, groaning louder.

KATARINA
It is the Dark Minstrel. You must
tune him out! Do not listen!

He stands up, disoriented and wobbly. She slaps his face.

KATARINA
He can disarm you if you let him.
You must concentrate, focus on your
source, *focus*--

ELEANOR
Aaaahh!

Eleanor's SCREAM draws Katarina's eyes upward. Eleanor
plummets earthward.

KATARINA

Minstrel!

He is groggy and in a fog. She places one hand on him, and the other to the sky. SONIC WAVES pulse upward from her hand, catching Eleanor's descent and cushioning her fall.

The CROWD'S SCREAMS become sounds of wonder as she lands. Katarina looks upward and sees a furious Wanda glaring back. She turns to Keith, angry.

KATARINA

You must get it together, Minstrel!

Their eyes finally meet.

KEITH

Huh?

KATARINA

You are no Minstrel if you cannot choose the Voice you hear! Relinquish your mantle or do something! Do you want the Enemy to destroy all that you hold dear?

Her words sink in, his gaze sharpens. He sees Eleanor rise to her feet across the street. He touches Katarina.

KEITH

Thank you.

He pushes through the crowd to Eleanor.

ELEANOR

Oh Keith! Oh my God, I almost died! Oh Keith!

She holds him tightly.

KEITH

You're okay now, Nana.

ELEANOR

That is Wanda up there! She tried to kill me!

He looks up and sees Wanda CACKLE, then points to Katarina.

KEITH

Go to Katarina, Nana. I'll be back.

She obeys.

INT. BUILDING LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Keith enters. A SECURITY GUARD stops him.

GUARD

I'm sorry sir. There's a security situation right now in the building. You'll have to wait outside.

KEITH

But I'm here to help.

GUARD

We have the police here, sir. It would be best if you step outside for now. I'm sorry.

Keith turns away. The guard's attention drifts. Keith SHIMMERS BLUE and STREAKS up the stairwell.

ON THE ROOFTOP

Keith emerges from the stairwell. Wanda turns, mildly startled.

WANDA

A bit late, don't you think?

KEITH

What is it you want?

WANDA

Are you that stupid? Boy, I heard you were a novice.

KEITH

You don't love my uncle, do you?
It was all a front.

She laughs wildly.

WANDA

Oh he's adorable! I love him, just looove him!

KEITH

I guess the well runs dry for mothers-in-law?

She cackles again.

WANDA

Just following orders, dear. It wasn't my idea.

KEITH

Whose orders?

WANDA

Oh now now, we all have our assignments, don't we? You have yours, I have mine. Busy busy busy, we all keep busy!

KEITH

Again, what do you WANT?

WANDA

Why, to rule the Aether, of course! You're not as smart as you look, you know that?

ACROSS THE STREET

Brandon arrives and pushes through the gawking crowd.

ELEANOR

Brandon! What are you doing here?

He points to his broadband radio.

BRANDON

Bit of eavesdropping on the cops.

ELEANOR

It's truly awful, just awful! Your Aunt Wanda is up there. She tried to kill me!

BRANDON

I heard there was a hostage. I didn't know it was you!

ELEANOR

She's dangerous. Tell the family to stay away. She'll try to hurt them too.

BRANDON

Where's Keith?

Katarina and Eleanor gesture upward.

KATARINA
Up there with her.

ON THE ROOFTOP

Two guns poke out of the stairwell. From the dark door, a
MALE VOICE yells.

COP
Hold it right there, this is the
police!

Wanda's eyes FLASH ORANGE: the door slams shut.

WANDA
So you're the Minstrel.

She circles Keith like a feline.

WANDA
You're outclassed here, kid. I'd
throw in the towel if I were you.
You'll only die trying.

KEITH
I'm a teacher. I know all about
class.

WANDA
Ha! A play on words! I like that.
But let's see what you really got.

She tips her chin and inhales deeply, then opens her mouth
with a ROAR: a huge orange FIREBALL soars from her lips at
Keith. Just before impact, he SHIMMERS in place; a BLUE
FORCE FIELD surrounds him, dispersing the projectile.

ACROSS THE STREET

The onlookers see BLUE and ORANGE SPARKS on the roof.

BRANDON
I'm going up there.

ELEANOR
Oh no you're not.

ON THE ROOF

Keith SHIMMERS and STREAKS away from yet another FIREBALL.

WANDA

Is that the best you can do? Hell,
we'll be up here all night making
fireworks if that's what you want.

Wanda SHIMMERS ORANGE, and STREAKS over to him, face to face.
She places her hand around his throat.

WANDA

I'm not impressed, dear nephew.

He GLOWS BLUE with a BUZZ, repelling her across the roof.
She rises to her feet, angry.

WANDA

How well do you protect others, the
ones you love?

She looks down at the street.

WANDA

They're down there, you know. All
alone and vulnerable.

THE RUMBLE OF A DELIVERY TRUCK catches Keith's attention. He
runs to the precipice and looks down. A truck roars around a
street corner. Further down the street, Brandon tries to
cross, Eleanor tugging at his arm.

IN THE TRUCK

JJ helms the wheel, gloved and disguised.

WANDA

You can't be everywhere at once,
Minstrel! What are you gonna do?

Keith screams down at Brandon.

KEITH

Brandon, don't move! Stay right
there! I'm coming down!

WANDA

It's just too bad, you don't even
know what you have inside of you.

ON THE SIDEWALK

BRANDON

I see him! I'm going up there!

ON THE ROOF

Wanda tilts her head as though listening, then reaches her hand out and makes a grab at the air with her fist. Keith glances at the oncoming truck again, and opens his mouth to shout a warning... ALL SOUND GOES MUTE.

A complete VACUUM OF NOISE. Keith's voiceless shout goes unheeded. The silent moving truck careens down the road. Eleanor and Brandon venture into the street, oblivious.

Keith waves and silent-screams frantically. The truck and its intended victims are mere seconds apart. Keith's eyes widen in horror at the impending...

Katarina lunges into the street, pushing the pair out of harm's way. The truck hits her hard.

Keith leans over, tears filling his eyes. He turns. Wanda watches him, leering. She breaks the vacuum with a CACKLE.

WANDA

Lesson number one, Minstrel. If you're not in the driver's seat, someone else will drive. What a loser.

Keith runs to the stairwell, opens the door and pushes past the perplexed cops. Wanda waves her hand: the door slams.

ON THE STREET

Keith emerges from the building and pushes through the crowd to the ailing Katarina. He gently crouches beside her. She opens her eyes weakly, her breath a rasp.

KEITH

Katarina, I'm so sorry. I don't know what happened. I--

KATARINA

Elkanah.

He leans in to hear her breathy words.

KATARINA

On this day, you have listened to the wrong voice, the voice of your enemy.

Keith lightly strokes her hair with trembling hands.

KEITH

I'm going to heal you, Katarina. Don't you worry, I'm going to make you better.

KATARINA

You have not yet met the Dark one,
Elkanah... only his Conduit.

He shakes his head in tearful disbelief.

KATARINA

And she has taken your voice.

She spasms briefly, then dies. Keith moves his hands over her, around her, as though desperately shaping the air.

KEITH

No, Katya! I'm going to heal you!
Damn it, wake up! Why aren't you
getting up?

The crowd watches him attempt a resurrection.

KEITH

Damn it, what's wrong! Why can't I
heal you?

Eleanor and Brandon crouch beside him.

EXT. A DARK ALLEY - NIGHT

The truck pulls in and stops. The loading door opens and JJ drives out on his motorcycle.

INT. KEITH'S BEDROOM - DAY

Keith lies motionless on the bed, eyes gazing at the ceiling. A LIGHT KNOCK at the open door. Anita stands politely with a wrapped gift in her hands.

ANITA

A late Christmas gift for you,
sweetie. Brandon mail ordered it;
just arrived.

Keith gives her a silent look.

ANITA

Wanna open it?

KEITH

(listless)
No, not really.

She sits beside him.

ANITA

Oh come on. He was so excited when he picked it out for you.

He props himself up and gently tears into the package.

KEITH

If it makes you happy.

She watches him with maternal eyes. The gift is a GPS-satellite radio receiver.

KEITH

Satellite radio. Very cool.

He chuckles lazily.

KEITH

So now I can hear the unheard, out there in the great Aether.

ANITA

When will you cheer up? It's almost New Years and you've been like this since Christmas.

KEITH

No reason to celebrate.

ANITA

Of course there is! You can't take the blame for that woman's death, son. It's not your fault.

KEITH

Yeah it was. I saw it coming. I could've saved her... she was my friend.

She studies his downcast face.

ANITA

You're not Superman, you're just a supremely talented, wonderful human being who cares a bit too much. You can't expect to save the world.

He goes to the window and examines his green plant leaves.

KEITH

Don't you think we should all try?

ANITA

I'm a mother, I know the guilt of not being there at every turn. But perhaps this has been your problem all along. It comes with being an artist, the burden-for-the-whole-world thing.

A melancholy look crosses her face.

ANITA

I suppose it is good that someone mourns for her. Apparently she had no family.

They both reflect in silence.

ANITA

Did you know we've made the tabloids? 'Sacramento has a thing against dead people.' First the Critical Care Ward took all those people from the Grim Reaper's hit list, and then last week the City Morgue was robbed of all its corpses; the very one your lady friend is at right now. I got a couple of calls yesterday, reporters wanting to talk to us.

KEITH

I like that headline: "No More Death."

ANITA

Well the story went on, talked about the rise of gang-related crime, even on Christmas Eve.

Keith stares out the window. A bird alights on the sill.

ANITA

Why don't you come downstairs and be seen for awhile? Karen's been driving me nuts looking for you, and Uncle Pat could use some fresh company. If you think you've been down...

He gathers himself to accompany her. The bird sings.

KEITH

I guess a renegade, psychopathic,
murderous and adulterous wife
trumps the loss of a best friend
and the death of another.

A MONTAGE:

Keith speed-dialing JJ; no response.

Keith walking the lonely path near the woods.

Keith knocking on JJ's door.

Keith talking to bouncers at nightclubs.

Keith standing at the place of Katarina's death.

INT. FIGEIRA HOME - MORNING

Keith, Karen, Ed, Anita, and Brandon prepare to leave. Keith has a bag slung over his body. He opens the front door. Julie stands there with a big, new candle.

KEITH

Julie!

JULIE

I just wanted to wish you luck
today. I know you've been feeling
out of sorts, so I brought you
this.

She offers him the candle. He accepts it.

JULIE

It's lavender, should clear your
mind and calm you if you have
nerves or just feel kind of flat.

Anita peers from behind her son.

ANITA

That's awfully kind of you, Julie.

KEITH

Thank you very much.

BRANDON

He needs all the help he can get.

ANITA

You'll just shut up young man or
you're not going with us.

They file out of the house and get in the car.

JULIE

Call me later, tell me how it goes.

Keith nods as they slowly pull away. He holds up the candle.

KEITH

Next year, it's your turn.

EXT. PARKING LOT/DOWNTOWN - LATER

The Figeiras pull up outside a building labeled "Sacramento Public Access Radio." JJ exits the building, guitar case in hand, dark shades on.

KEITH

(to Ed, at the wheel)

Let me out!

The car stops, Keith jumps out and Ed pulls away. The two young men stand awkwardly.

KEITH

Where ya been?

JJ

Around.

KEITH

Can't return a phone call?

JJ

Naw man, can't return a phone call.

Keith struggles for words.

KEITH

You're still my best friend. I
promise not to judge you if you--

JJ

Save it!

Keith flinches.

JJ

You're boring, man. Like
yesterday's oatmeal.

(MORE)

JJ (cont'd)
 Know what I mean? You're beneath
 me, and quite frankly...

JJ leans in.

JJ
 ... you make me sick.

Keith is completely wounded. JJ strides off down the street. The Figeiras approach as he blends into the urban crowd. All except Karen can see Keith is rattled. Anita rubs his arm.

ANITA
 Come on, sweetie. Let's go inside.

ED
 This is your turn to shine, son.

INT. STUDIO WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They all file in. A cheerful receptionist greets them.

RECEPTIONIST
 Hello.

Keith steps forward.

KEITH
 I'm Keith Figeira.

She smiles and looks at her appointment book.

RECEPTIONIST
 Right on time. Please follow me.

She leads him to a glass door, the entry to the recording studio. At the far end, 3 stuffy academic types sit at a long table with paperwork before them. In the center of the room, all manner of musical instruments.

RECEPTIONIST
 This is Keith Figeira.

She smiles and leaves. Keith stands there, a mix of somber nerves. The first gentleman sports a bow tie and looks up with a half-smile. His name is WELLINGTON.

WELLINGTON
 Please come closer, young man.
 It's a pleasure to meet you. I am
 Philip Wellington. My associates
 are Jean Hannum and Austin Graham.

At the mention of their names, the other two stoic adults look up from their scribbling. JEAN HANNUM, a haughty woman with her gray hair in a bun, peers at Keith over her glasses.

HANNUM

Hello, Mr. Figeira.

The last person at the table blows a runny nose. Bloodshot eyes in a chubby face gaze wearily at Keith. GRAHAM is sick as a dog and merely raises a kleenexed hand.

HANNUM

Pardon Mr. Graham. He's a bit under the weather, I'm afraid. He insists his hearing is just fine, however, so you have no need to worry about an inattentive audience. Isn't that right, Mr. Graham?

Graham seems focused on delivering a sneeze, and ignores her.

HANNUM

Mr. Graham!

The fat man snaps to attention.

GRAHAM

Oh yes, wonderful, all's wonderful!

WELLINGTON

The three of us make up the Selection Committee for Armstrong Academy. We received your original compositions last summer, and as you know, were suitably impressed to invite you to this audition.

Keith fidgets before the granite trio.

WELLINGTON

You have at your disposal here an array of instrumentation. To your left is a disc drive if you choose to perform over a backing track. It must be an original of yours. Have you brought any such thing with you today?

KEITH

Uh, no sir, I haven't.

The panelists glance at each other with mild surprise.

HANNUM

Well then Mr. Figeira, please
settle in and begin when you're
ready.

Graham finally SNEEZES. His associates glare at him. Keith approaches the keyboards, then turns to examine the electric guitar. His eyes catch a violin, then a ukulele, a banjo, and a harp. He seems flustered.

The panelists peer at him arrogantly. Keith steps up to the keyboard, takes a deep breath, and tries to get centered... seconds pass. He steps away from the keyboard, confused.

KEITH

Please, if you don't mind, I just
need a moment to gather myself,
calm my nerves. I... I'm gonna
step outside for just a minute.

The formidable committee glares at him with no mercy.

WELLINGTON

The time is yours, young man. You
have until nine thirty to deliver
your best performance. Go and do
what you must. We'll wait for you.

Keith heads for the door, subduing a panicked run. He bolts through the waiting room and past his family.

EXT. RADIO BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Keith rushes out into the open air and tips his face up to the sun, blinking in its brilliance. His bewildered family converges upon him.

ED

Son, what's wrong?

ANITA

Are you okay?

KEITH

I just need a few minutes alone.
I'm okay, I promise. Go back
inside.

No one budges.

KEITH

Don't worry about me, please.

Anita and Ed reluctantly escort the clumsy Karen back in. Brandon remains at his side.

KEITH

I don't know if I can go through with this.

BRANDON

I know you can get through with this. You are the *man*. Don't let no mind games mess with you, bro.

KEITH

I know, I know. I just feel like... like I've lost it. My so-called talent, my fabled gift. I can't find it.

Keith looks at his brother, truly scared. Unperturbed, Brandon removes his satellite radio belt and earpiece and straps it onto Keith.

BRANDON

This is the Christmas gift I got you that you kept in a box. It's satellite dude, better than broadband. Here, maybe you can tap into something truly cosmic, you know? If you need it...

He pats Keith on the back.

BRANDON

I believe in you.

He leaves Keith alone. Removing the earpiece, he looks out over the city streets, the park trees in the distance, the sunny skies.

A small BIRD lands nearby. Keith notices it. The bird TWITTERS a TUNE: the melody of his recording. At first Keith looks frightened, statue-like in the sun. ANOTHER BIRD joins the first, their melody continues. From every direction, an ESCALATING CHORUS OF BIRDS sing hauntingly.

A MONTAGE OF SHOTS: mountainous ranges, lush forests, suburban streets and yards, sandy shores, pet shops, bird cages, all generating this voluminous choir of singing birds.

Keith's demeanor melts to a relaxed, wise smile. He looks up to the skies in wonder, then closes his eyes, meditating in the midst of this supernatural phenomenon. When he opens his eyes, they GLOW BLUE.

INT. WAITING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Keith strides in and without stopping says:

KEITH
I'm ready to roll.

IN THE STUDIO

The trio look up from their conference. Another fake smile from Wellington.

WELLINGTON
We were just discussing your situation.

Keith raises his eyebrows.

HANNUM
There is no shortage of talent here in your fine city, some of which have demonstrated Armstrong qualities. In fact, just before you was an amazing candidate of whom we feel very strongly.

WELLINGTON
In other words Mr. Figeira, if you don't feel like this is your time, please understand that there is always the next year.

GRAHAM
Perhaps you'll feel better groomed for the audition process after some months of preparation.

Keith smiles despite their haughtiness, and steps up to the keyboard.

KEITH
It's okay. I just took a grooming break.

His hands on the keys, eyes calm, he PLAYS THE MELODY with a haunting quality so powerful, his hands GLOW BLUE.

MOMENTS LATER... the song has captivated the panelists. Graham's symptoms subside. Keith opens his mouth to VOCALIZE the song with beautiful vibrato. The lyrics are in Russian, English, Latin, Hawaiian, Italian, Dutch, an endless array of languages.

The BLUE LIGHT emanates from the keyboards and mesmerizes the Armstrong Committee. It flows out of the studio and into the waiting room. Karen becomes lucid and devoid of her autism. Anita is overwhelmed with emotion, and turns to Ed, eyes full of tears.

ANITA

Could you ever forgive me?

His eyes say yes as she leans into his arms. They both weep. Their moment is disrupted by a soft, girlish voice.

KAREN

I love you too.

Ed and Anita look at her in shock, then swallow her up in their embraces.

IN THE STUDIO

The blue lights swirl about and into the satellite radio on his waist, then

THROUGH THE CEILING, then

THROUGH THE ROOF as a beam, up into the sky where it finds an orbiting satellite. From there, it is retransmitted back to Earth as a multitude of beams.

INT. HOSPITAL/CHINA - NIGHT

Chinese nurses bustle about the hallways. A radio on the wall GLOWS BLUE. A MALE CHINESE INVALID is pushed down the hall in a wheelchair. He suddenly puts his hands on the wheel. The CHINESE NURSE looks at him curiously. He rises to his feet in exultation.

INT. THATCHED HUT/INDIA - NIGHT

A TEEN BOY afflicted with muscular dystrophy lies on a cot. HIS FATHER watches an old TV set. It GLOWS BLUE, the MELODY fills the room, and the youth miraculously untwists.

EXT. NIGERIAN DRYLANDS - AFTERNOON

Two dozen gaunt villagers toil in barren fields under the harsh sun. An airplane soars high over them. It GLOWS BLUE. A light rain begins to fall; green sprouts emerge from the soil at the feet of the surprised Africans.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND/CHILE - DAY

Fifth graders play dodgeball. A young girl clutches her chest and drops to her knees, wheezing with asthma. The loudspeakers under the eaves of the school building GLOW BLUE, the MELODY filters through them, her labored breathing subsides.

EXT. SACRAMENTO STREETS - MORNING

JJ zooms on his motorcycle, guitar case strapped to his back. He has earphones on, attached to an MP3 player. The earphones GLOW BLUE. He screams in torment, veering wildly on his bike. The MUSIC and LIGHT envelop his head as he continues to scream.

Thin ORANGE VAPORS seep from his eyes, his mouth, ears. The vapors rise and then rush from him like a spectral steam leak until only a BLUE GLOW remains. He skids his bike and falls to the road, barely conscious.

INT. KEITH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Anita and Ed sit on the bed amidst several "Congratulations" flower arrangements and balloons. They both read a letter in silence.

EXT. A MOUNTAINOUS RANGE/PYRENEES - MORNING

A thin road winds its way towards beautiful snow-capped peaks.

KEITH (V.O.)

To all my loved ones, I cannot express with words how fortunate and grateful I am to be surrounded by so much encouragement and support. God truly blessed me with the family he plunked me into, and I am not blind to that. Where would I be today if it were not for your constant love?

EXT. STATUE OF LIBERTY TORCH/NEW YORK - NIGHT

A shrouded figure stands near the edge, looking out over the city lights reflecting on the water.

INT. KEITH'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

A semi-deflated party balloon slowly drops from the ceiling onto the bed. Anita and Ed continue to read.

EXT. MOUNTAINOUS ROAD/PYRENEES - CONTINUOUS

A single figure of a man, laden with a backpack, hikes the ascent through the serene ravines.

EXT. STATUE OF LIBERTY TORCH/NEW YORK - CONTINUOUS

The dark figure still gazes out over the expanse of ocean. A breeze blows long hair from the cloaked head.

KEITH (V.O.)

I have decided to continue my education, only not where you might think. I'm going someplace where old knowledge and ancient secrets can be found; a place off the beaten path, and for now, not in a prestigious East Coast Academy. Armstrong will be there for me later perhaps, but I am stepping out of time, off the road to supposed success, and to where I hope wisdom lies wrapped in layers of satisfying revelation.

EXT. MOUNTAINOUS ROAD/PYRENEES - CONTINUOUS

Up the road from the hiker, a SMALL GROUP OF MEN in burgundy robes stands quietly. Behind them, a magnificent monastery in the mysterious crags.

EXT. STATUE OF LIBERTY TORCH/NEW YORK - CONTINUOUS

Wanda emerges from the stairwell onto the platform, and stops to look upon the silent shrouded stranger.

KEITH (V.O.)

Please don't fret or freak out. I am going to be just fine. There's just something I need to figure out, and for that I need to remove myself from the glare of high expectations. I am not abandoning you, nor your hopes for me. So please don't abandon me either.

(MORE)

KEITH (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Keep me in your prayers because
 believe me, real love transcends
 physical boundaries, and it will be
 felt right here in this chest
 cavity called my heart.

EXT. MOUNTAINOUS ROAD/PYRENEES - CONTINUOUS

The lone figure is Keith. The monks step forward to greet him warmly.

EXT. STATUE OF LIBERTY TORCH/NEW YORK - CONTINUOUS

WANDA
 Master?

KEITH (V.O.)
 I love you, all of you, a thousand
 times more than I thought possible.

WANDA
 Master, I am here.

KEITH (V.O.)
 Until our eyes behold each other
 and I hear the magic of your voices
 in my ears, I remain your brother,
 son, friend, your beloved... Keith.

INT. KEITH'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ed comforts Anita as they put the letter down.

EXT. STATUE OF LIBERTY TORCH/NEW YORK - CONTINUOUS

Wanda steps carefully towards the silhouetted stranger.

WANDA
 What now?

The stranger responds in a DIABOLICAL VOICE, but as we slowly view the dark one from the front, we see it is a menacing Julie with FIERY ORANGE eyes.

JULIE
 He has gone into hiding. He thinks
 he is safe. We will build our
 forces, and then... we will find
 him.

