

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. SOREN MEDICAL CLINIC - HAITI - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Superimposed Title: 1990 Port Au Prince, Haiti

A visibly distressed and very pregnant Black woman, DOMINIQUE BERNARD (30), screams at a person just out of sight in the parking lot of the clinic.

DOMINIQUE

What did you do to me?

We here the soft steady voice of the MAN she is speaking to try to comfort her.

MAN

You're going into labor. Come in, Dominique dear. We will help you.

DOMINIQUE

NO! Don't you come near me. You devil.

Dominique doubles over. We ZOOM OUT to reveal DR. SOREN (40s), a white male with flecks of grey in his perfectly quaffed hair, walking towards her. His white coat billowing behind him as he walks.

DOMINIQUE (CONT'D)

What did you do to us. What happened to them? Tell me. AHH.

Dominique screams in pain. Dr. Soren places his hands around Dominique's shoulders. He tries to urge her towards the clinic doors. He has a hungry look in his eyes.

DR. SOREN

You're a miracle. You're the only one who's made it this far.

DOMINIQUE

Get off of me.

Dominique pulls out a black powder from a small pouch and throws it in Dr. Soren's face. He lets her go.

DR. SOREN

(shouts)

Agh. What is it?!

Dominique thrusts out her left hand which holds in it a string of bones. She shakes them furiously at Dr. Soren.

DOMINIQUE

Here at the crossroads you are
bound in blood and bone. Spirits of
the stolen feed up your rotten
soul. I am the storm.

Dr. Soren yells towards the open door.

DR. SOREN

Tammy! A little help.

TAMILA (20), one of Dr. Soren's Haitian nurses runs to the door. She surveys the chaos, Dr. Soren now covered in soot seizing Dominique who drops the bones, struggling to get out of his grip.

TAMILA

I'll get a wheelchair.

Tamila runs back inside.

DOMINIQUE

I am the storm.

Dr. Soren ignores his mounting dread. He pulls Dominique towards the door as she screams once again with labor pains.

DR. SOREN

Please, Dominique. Let me help you.

At that moment a car turns into the parking lot on two wheels and barrels straight for Dr. Soren and Dominique. Terrified, thinking the car will hit them, Dr. Soren leaves Dominique and runs to the door.

But the car doesn't hit them, it stops inches away from Dominique. A handsome Black man, JACQUES BERNARD, Dominique's husband, leaps out and grabs hold of Dominique.

JACQUES

Baby, I told you not to come.

DOMINIQUE

Do it!

Dr. Soren looks on trying to figure out what's going on. Jacques helps Dominique into the car.

DOMINIQUE (CONT'D)

Do it!

DR. SOREN
She's in labor. Let us help her.

Jacques ignores Dr. Soren and opens the door to the back seat of his car. He pulls out a Molotov cocktail. He sets it alight.

DR. SOREN (CONT'D)
Holy shit.

As Tamila returns with the wheelchair, Dr. Soren pushes her out of the way trying to escape the coming blast. She looks just in time to see Jacques throw the Molotov cocktail through the open door. BOOM! She screams and turns her face.

The fire rages rapidly. Horror fills Jacques eyes as he sees flames lick up Tamila's uniform as she fights to get out.

In the car, Dominique screams in labor. She reaches down and feels a tiny head between her legs.

DOMINIQUE
Jacques!

Jacques runs towards the fire. He pulls Tamila out of the fire and rolls her on the ground patting out the flames. But the damage has been done. She lays there unconscious, half dead. Half of her face burned to a crisp.

DOMINIQUE (CONT'D)
Jacques! Aghh!

Jacques turns to see his wife screaming in agony. He hesitates to leave the woman, but he has to go. He runs back to the car and gets in.

INT. CAR - DAY

Jacques looks over to Dominique. He looks stunned at her fluid covered arms where a small baby now wails.

They stare at the baby who opens it's eyes, dark grey like a storm. Dominique and Jacques look at each other. What are they going to do?

Jacques starts the car and drives off as the building behind them burns.

CUT TO:

INT. BANQUET HALL - DOWNTOWN MAIMI - NIGHT (PRESENT)

In the large banquet hall a sea of finely dressed lawyers, politicians, invited guests, and that B-list celebrity we all recognize, all sit at white clothed tables sipping champagne and staring up at LENA BERNARD (33), mid-speech, her dark grey eyes pan over the crowd.

On a large screen big bold letters spell out REFUGEE RELIEF CENTER FUNDRAISER 2024. Below the letters a series of pictures rotate: asylum seeker families united, community outreach projects, office picnics, etc.

LENA

And we are standing on the shores
of a New America, where the
foundation of our great Lady
Liberty is crumbling all around us:
failing "the tired, the poor,
refusing the huddled masses
yearning to breathe free." I
remember visiting Ellis Island as a
girl and how the words of The New
Colossus poem lifted my spirit.
But today it's no longer a
proclamation of who we are, but a
mission statement pushing us to who
we should be. When...uh...

Lena loses her place as her eyes catch those of a WOMAN with harsh burn marks on her face sitting in front. The Woman stares intensely up at Lena, as if she can see into her soul. She diverts her gaze, clearing her throat. Unconsciously, she begins scratching her hand.

LENA (CONT'D)

Uh, sorry. When my father was
deported, I vowed to help fix this
broken system that tears families
apart. I wanted to be the "mighty
woman with a torch", that beacon of
hope that all of you represent
tonight. Your support of The
Refugee Relief Center gives us the
tools to provide resources to the
immigrant communities of South
Florida. Here at The Center it is
our mission to keep families
together, help dreamers find
purchase in the land of
opportunity, and provide as many
legal and social services as
possible.

(MORE)

LENA (CONT'D)

And that is all thanks to you, so please give yourselves a round of applause. And now I'll turn things over to the man of the hour, the backbone of this organization, my boss, Ronald Erwin.

Lena lifts her champagne glass.

RONALD ERWIN (50s), a large teddy bear in a tux, comes to the podium. He kisses Lena on the cheek and whispers in her ear.

RONALD

You did good, honey.

Lena smiles. The dining hall erupts with applause as Ronald takes the podium.

RONALD (CONT'D)

Another applause for the lovely Attorney Lena Bernard! She's a rising star. Truly.

Lena scurries off the stage. She doesn't want to be there for what happens next.

On cue: the faces of the two young female clients grow larger on the screen as if we are watching a FEED THE CHILDREN infomercial.

RONALD (CONT'D)

We wanted to just briefly draw your attention to two of our clients. Two young women from very different backgrounds, but unfortunately with very similar stories Mariska Lopez and Anielka Rugama have been victims of violence...

FLASH: CLOSE ON a scalpel as it slices into a woman's abdomen. Surgical retractors open the crevice.

Lena can't stand this part of the evenings program. She beelines for the bar.

RONALD (CONT'D)

They are here seeking refuge and your contributions to the silent auction will go directly to funding their legal and medical needs. So don't forget to put in those last bids. I know I have my eye on that trip to Bali.

Ronald's voice fades into the background as we follow Lena to the bar. People shake her hand and thank her as she passes.

She allows herself to get swallowed by the crowd. She weaves through the throng towards the bar. She really needs that drink and her head is pounding. She opens her clutch and pulls out a small white pill from the bottom of her purse. She looks around to see if anyone is watching and then pops the pill.

She finally makes it to the bar.

LENA

Martini with a twist. Water first, please.

The bartender nods and hands Lena a water and then starts in on making her drink. She swallows the pill with the water and sighs. A MAN slides up to the bar right behind her and whispers in her ear.

MAN

I saw that.

Lena jumps and then turns to see her ex, JUSTUS SALAZAR,

LENA

Saw what?

JUSTUS

You getting choked up in your speech. You almost had me fooled for someone with real emotions.

LENA

Haha. And you almost had me fooled for my plus one, but I'm pretty sure I had you removed from the list a month ago.

JUSTUS

Huh. You know I wouldn't have missed this. Congrats. You pulled off another year. Cheers?

Justus raises his almost empty glass. The bartender sets down Lena's martini in front of her. She picks it up and reluctantly clinks glasses with Justus. She takes a sip. Justus downs his glass and sets it on the bar.

BARTENDER

Another, sir?

JUSTUS

I'll do the same as her but with an olive.

A slender young woman, ANDREA (23), in a low cut red dress comes over to Justus and places her hand on his chest.

ANDREA

I've been looking everywhere for you. Get me a drink.

Disgusted, Lena shakes her head and walks away. She can't deal with Justus's nonsense right now. That he would bring that.

JUSTUS

Leen, wait.

Annoyed, Justus removes Andrea's hand from his chest.

JUSTUS (CONT'D)

Where's your father, Andrea.

ANDREA

Why?

JUSTUS

Because your drunk and he should take you home.

ANDREA

Why don't you take me home?

JUSTUS

Your father would fire me.

ANDREA

Your boring.

Andrea pushes away from him.

BARTENDER

Here you go, sir.

Andrea snatches his drink and darts into the sea of people. Justus takes out of fifty dollar bill.

JUSTUS

Do me a favor, don't serve her anymore tonight.

Justus points at Andrea. The bartender nods.

BARTENDER

You got it. Here.

The bartender hands Justus another martini. Justus nods his thanks. Justus joins the throngs of people milling around. He finally spots Lena exiting onto the terrace.

He goes to follow her out but is stopped by Lena's mother, DOMINIQUE (now 50s), her face almost identical to it's younger self, if it weren't for the specs of grey in her hair and the lines around her eyes. She holds up a hand while she finishes a call.

DOMINIQUE

Jacques, call me back. This is getting ridiculous.

(hangs up)

Justus, dear, I wasn't expecting to see you here. I think I took over your seat.

JUSTUS

It should have been yours the whole time. You look radiant tonight Mrs. Bernard.

DOMINIQUE

There's that charm, I love. Why you two can't work it out, is beyond me. But don't tell her I said that. I'm supposed to be on her side tonight.

JUSTUS

My lips are sealed.

DOMINIQUE

Blessings on you.

Justus heads out onto the terrace and notices Dominique following him. They are both heading over to Lena.

EXT. TERRACE - NIGHT

Lena leans on the edge of the railing staring at the cars whizzing by, shining whites and reds. But as shiny as the cars are, Lena's face lacks a glow. She sucks back a tear and turns just in time to see her mother and Justus walking towards her.

LENA

You two conspiring?

DOMINIQUE

Tell her.

JUSTUS

She's on your side tonight.

LENA

Mm hm.

Dominique hugs Lena.

DOMINIQUE

I'm so proud of you. And your dad would be too. Have you heard from him?

LENA

No. And thanks. I think this one was way better organized than last year.

DOMINIQUE

Maybe next the thing you organize can be a dum dum dadum.

LENA

Mom.

DOMINIQUE

I'm just saying times a ticking and I want grand babies.

JUSTUS

She's joking.

LENA

No she isn't.

Lena rubs her neck in frustration. Dominique notices Lena's bare chest and frowns.

DOMINIQUE

Where's your necklace?

LENA

Don't.

DOMINIQUE

You know how I feel/

LENA

It didn't match the dress.

DOMINIQUE

I have a rabbit's foot in my bag.
I'll go get it.

LENA

No mom, don't.

Dominique rushes away into the banquet hall.

JUSTUS

Your mother and that hoodoo shit.

LENA

Honestly she's worse than ever. My dad doesn't call for two days and she's lighting candles. I can't pull her out of it. If it's not a tincture for a cough, it's a blessing over my front porch, and God forbid I not wear my mojo for one night.

JUSTUS

It's just her way of keeping you safe.

LENA

It's not my safety I'm concerned about. You know those girls whose faces we plastered up there, one of them was gang raped in front of her father, before they killed him. She can't go back.

JUSTUS

Shit.

Lena sees she's brought down the mood. She tries to lighten it.

LENA

I also once had a baby alligator thrown at me by my client's neighbor who said:

(Southern accent)

If he has to live next to "gator bait", he's gonna feed 'em.

JUSTUS

No!

Lena holds up her arm where there's several teeth mark scars.

JUSTUS (CONT'D)
When did this happen?

LENA
Don't worry about it.

JUSTUS
Maybe you should come work for the
governor office. Avoid the crazies.
I could find you a spot.

LENA
And miss all the drama of
Floridians in their natural
habitat?

JUSTUS
Probably a good call. We're
actually all a bunch of
certifiabiles in suits.

Lena chuckles as she rummages through her purse, searching for more pills. Her headache is back. She finds two and pops them in her mouth.

JUSTUS (CONT'D)
Hey! Wasn't one enough?

LENA
So you were spying on me.

JUSTUS
No. I just think maybe you want to
take it easy.

She ignores him, sees her martini is empty, takes his glass and washes the pills with his drink.

JUSTUS (CONT'D)
And your mother wonders why we
didn't work out.

LENA
Maybe if you didn't police my every
move.

JUSTUS
Maybe if you could admit you have a
problem.

LENA
My only problem is your Lolita
syndrome.

JUSTUS

That's gross. And completely unjustified.

LENA

Sorry, I'm...I hate these things. A bunch of rich people parading around, patting themselves on the back for "caring".

JUSTUS

The ruthless part of the job.

LENA

I hate the pandering. I hate having to parade those girls like they were prized dogs on a fucking auction block!

JUSTUS

Okay, lets take it down a notch.

LENA

Their werewolves.

JUSTUS

(joking)

They seem more like vampires to me.

LENA

(ignores him)

What is this for? We can get all the money we want, but if the laws keep changing we're just Sisyphus rolling up that damn rock that's just gonna fall tomorrow. I can't, I can't...I'm exhausted. I'm tired. My head hurts all the time. It's never enough.

A tear falls down Lena's face. Justus goes to give her a hug. She steps back. Justus pulls out his hotel room key card and tries to slip it to her.

JUSTUS

Here.

LENA

Eww. Why do I suddenly feel cheap.

JUSTUS

No. Go up to my room. You can clean yourself up. Take a nap. Sleep it off. Whatever you need.

LENA

You're not trying to take advantage
of me?

JUSTUS

Not unless you want me to.

Lena rolls her eyes. This is why she loves him, but she can't go there with him now. She needs to pull herself together on her own, or she'll slip back into old habits.

LENA

I'm fine. I just, uh, one too many
martinis.

Lena turns on her heels and heads inside. Justus watches her go concerned. She beelines for the Women's bathroom.

INT. WOMEN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Lena enters and goes over to the large mirror vanity in the lounge section of the bathroom. She looks in the mirror and goes to fix her makeup and hair when LISA LEE, a dyed redhead in a sequin dress steps up beside her.

LISA

Nice speech.

Lena looks up at the woman through the mirror and smiles.

LENA

Thank you.

Lena turns to go towards the stalls.

LISA

That whole bit about your father,
that was a quite a slant.

LENA

Excuse me?

LISA

He wasn't just deported, right?
There was an extradition order.

LENA

Who are you?

LISA

Lisa Lee, The Daily Sun. I'm here
to cover the event. I was wondering
if you'd sit down for an interview.

LENA

Are you covering the event, or
digging for dirt?

LISA

I'm interested in understanding
what motivated you and each of your
colleagues to work in immigration.
For you, was it really wanting to
fix a broken system that keeps so
many in need out or was it a path
to figuring out how to get a known
criminal, like your father, back
in.

LENA

My father's not a criminal.

LISA

Are you sure, cause my research
shows that your father was wanted
for blowing up an abortion clinic.
Do you share his pro-life views?

Lena steps back. Who is this woman? The door swings open and
the Mayor enters. She immediately clocks the situation.

MAYOR BURNS

Lisa Lee. Are you harassing one of
tonight's hosts?

LISA

Just asking for an interview,
Mayor.

MAYOR BURNS

Last time you interviewed me, you
told the world I was a pothead.

LISA

Only Miami-Dade county, and it
obviously didn't hurt your chances
on getting reelected.

MAYOR BURNS

Why don't you go cover the canapés?
I heard they're to die for.

Lisa whips out her card and thrusts it in Lena's direction.

LISA

If you change your mind.

Lena doesn't take it. Lisa shrugs and walks past them both, out of the bathroom.

MAYOR BURNS

She's a small town fly wanting to be a big city rat. Don't let her ruffle you.

LISA

Thanks, Mayor Burns.

MAYOR BURNS

Keisha. And if you ever need anything my office is always open to you. Keep fighting the good fight!

Lena smiles and nods. The Mayor goes over to the vanity and reapplies a bright red shade of lipstick.

LENA

I love that color.

Mayor Burns looks down at the bottom of her lipstick and reads.

MAYOR BURNS

Busted Lip! I should have given this to Lisa. She could have used it.

Lena snorts. Mayor Burns laughs. Lena enters the stall.

Inside, the stall Lena lays out the toilet cover. Sits and pees. She can't help the tears. They flow uncontrollably. She grabs a wad of toilet tissues and pats her face dry. She gets up and flushes.

Lena comes out of the stall and goes to wash her hands next to a woman already lathering on soap at one of the sinks. Lena looks in the mirror to find that the woman next to her is, TAMILA MONDER, the burn victim she spotted earlier that evening during her speech. Lena smiles and then diverts her eyes, self-conscious, she greets the woman.

LENA

Hi. How's your evening going?

TAMILA

(in Haitian Creole)

You must be wondering about the scars on my face. You want the story?

Lena catches every other word. Her creole is rusty.

LENA
I'm sorry I didn't catch that.

TAMILA
My story is your story.9

LENA
Do I know you?

TAMILA
He's looking for you.

LENA
Someone's looking for me? Is it
Justus Salazar cuz/

TAMILA
They call him the Womb Collector.

LENA
Who?

TAMILA
Dr. Soren.

Tamila takes out a knife.

LENA
What are you doing?

TAMILA
You shouldn't be here.

Before Lena can stop her, Tamila stabs Lena in the stomach.
Lena gasps.

INT. HOSPITAL - OPERATING ROOM - NIGHT

Gloved hands insert themselves into the gapping wound on the
woman's abdomen and pull out a blood soaked uterus.

INT. WOMEN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

The knife slides out of Lena's stomach. Horror on her face,
Lena grips her abdomen and falls backwards into an alternate
dimension with a WHOOSH.

INT. THE DIMENSION - NOR DAY OR NIGHT

Bioluminescence glows in spurts all around Lena. Is she waist deep in water. She looks down and sees she's surrounded by deep black still waters. Where is she?

When she looks up she sees an OLD WOMAN in African garb, smiling. She sits on top of the water. Lena wades through to her.

LENA

Hello? Excuse me.

The old woman plunges her hand into the water and pulls up a new born baby umbilical chord still attached. Lena stops and watches as the woman rips apart the chord and then tosses the baby over her shoulder. Lena shouts, but the rest of the scream gets caught in her throat as the child is swallowed by a bioluminescent pod of light and then disappears into the darkness.

Lena inches closer to the woman.

LENA (CONT'D)

Excuse me.

The woman finally looks up at Lena. She gasps as she stares into the woman's eyes which are pure white.

OLD WOMAN

RUN!

Lena jumps back as the old woman reaches down. Lena tries to get away but the woman grabs Lena's leg. She yanks Lena up and throws her into a pod just as she did the baby. Lena is swallowed whole by the dark.

INT. WOMEN'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Lena gasps for air as she returns to consciousness in the bathroom. Tamila is nowhere in sight, but several other women crowd around her concerned. She looks down to see blood spreading, staining her dress. Someone screams to call an ambulance.

Justus and her mother rush to her side. Their faces blur as she loses consciousness again. Blackout.

END OF ACT ONE