

DOMINICA

Written by

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FADE IN:

TITLE CARD: THE ISLAND OF DOMINICA 1864

EXT. DOMINICA - NIGHT

CAMERA ZOOMS along the green, mountainous island and white sandy coast -- a HARSH wind creates a path of movement from the sea to the dense banana groves --

CAMERA ZOOMS below the WISPY CLOUDS towards a wooden cottage, perched atop a large cliff.

EXT. SORCERER'S COTTAGE - SAME

An old BLACK MAN, 75, (with a slightly bent back) scuttles along, guiding his BLACK GRANDSON, 12, towards a RICKETY cottage. The boy stumbles as they reach the front door of a wooden cottage.

INT. SORCERER'S COTTAGE - SAME

MOONLIGHT streaks though the BROKEN windows, setting a soft glow amidst the darkness.

The grandfather and boy stand rigidly in the center of the empty room. The SOUND of CREAKING as the young boy shifts his steps. Soon a flickering, LIT CANDLE makes its way towards the face of the Grandfather and then the boy's. The LIGHT reveals the boy's UNCANNY EYES - all-white with no pupils.

GRANDFATHER

(with Dominican accent)

The child's been blind since birth.

The wind STIRRING. Soon a raspy, female voice:

FEMALE SORCERER (O.C.)

I have just the 'fix' for him. But first, it will require a token.

A CANDLE MOVES towards a GLASS JAR filled with golden coins.

The Young Boy, as if could see, turns to face the Old Man, who has a GOLD COIN in hand, nervously extending it to the Figure in the dark. CAMERA PANS on the face of the boy, the PUPILS of his eyes magically returning --

EXT. DOMINICA - EARLY MORNING

SOUND OF A PIANO PLAYING - a nice, simple harmony. The still beautiful island with 'green' mountains -- dense forest carved by an opaque, serene rivers -- more rivers -- vast cotton fields -- luscious banana groves --

BIRD'S EYE: A BROWN CARRIAGE TRUNDLES towards a huge Victorian mansion, which sits on a land of about forty acres, helmed by a nearby forest.

INT. VICTORIAN MANSION - SAME - FOYER

CAMERA ZOOMS through the elaborate mansion --

PARLOUR - WHITE FEMALE MAIDS uncloak various furniture - sofas, stands, tables, and a GRAND PIANO.

INT. VICTORIAN MANSION - SAME - BEDROOM

A WHITE MAID fixes a canopy queen-sized bed while ANOTHER polishes a candle holder --

KITCHEN

A large and rustic kitchen with POTS and KITCHEN UTENSILS organized around a wooden island. A rotund, white maid, GIANNA, (50)ushers WHITE SERVANTS, carrying trays of food, through the door leading to the parlour.

EXT. VICTORIAN MANSION - SAME - BACKYARD

A BLACK GROUNDS-KEEPER kneels on the ground, edging the grass with a cutlass.

EXT. VICTORIAN MANSION - SAME - EX-SLAVE COTTAGES

Two Afro-Caribbean women, MARTHA WOODS (52, thin-frame) and DANDY WATERS (65 and robust) walk over to WOODEN TRIANGLE CHICKEN PENS rooted in the ground. There are about five pens, secured with string.

Dandy, holding a cutlass, picks a chicken from the enclosure and hands it to Martha. The chicken ruffles its feather, CHEEPING --

There's a visible class difference between the black Dominican maids and the white British born maids.

INT. VICTORIAN MANSION - SAME - OFFICE

A WHITE BRITISH YOUNG MAID dusts off the bookshelf while another, SYLVIA GALL (33, reserved) sets a TEA TRAY on the table, shifting a SINGLE GLASS to achieve PERFECT SYMMETRY.

EXT. VICTORIAN MANSION - SAME - FRUIT GARDEN

A group of Afro-Caribbean women, ANNASSA, 32, CAMBRIDGE, 38, and WHITNEY WOODS (22, beautiful) DIG UP POTATOES in the vegetable farm. ROWS of CARROTS, PEAS, and CABBAGE are nearby-

Whitney rubs her sweaty forehead, soon admiring a tall WHITE HIBISCUS bush.

Whitney breaks the stem of the flower and smells it.

EXT. VICTORIAN MANSION - DAY

A huge Victorian mansion with tall white columns.

FRAME WIDENS to reveal a beautiful, manicured yard with a large ornamental water fountain in the middle. The area is surrounded by forest --

PIECES OF LUGGAGE stacked next to the mansion. A BLACK FOOTMAN unloads another piece of LUGGAGE from the brown carriage --

Three women, AGATHA MCGILL (pretentious, 55), ANNA MCGILL (outspoken, 28), and CLARICE MCGILL (beautiful, classy, 24) walk into the foyer --

INT. VICTORIAN MANSION - SAME - FOYER

WHITE SERVANTS (a few familiar faces) stand in perfect unison near the entrance.

VICTOR MCGILL (60 and debonair) descends the rolling stairs as AGATHA MCGILL enters.

VICTOR

Welcome, my dear Agatha. I've missed you.

AGATHA

It's been too long, Victor.

Victor kisses her. Agatha moves pass him, inspecting a nearby room.

AGATHA (CONT'D)

The place isn't as classed as our manor in England, but it will have to do for now.

VICTOR

(smiling)

I'm sure it'll do just fine dear.

She turns to Gianna, who is in line with the other servants.

AGATHA

Gianna.

GIANNA

(curtseying)

My lady.

AGATHA

It's been a long trip and I'm due for a bath, my dear.

GIANNA

Yes, my lady. This way.

Anna and Clarice enter the house. Victor walks over and passionately hugs Clarice.

CLARICE

Father.

VICTOR

Clarice, so good to see you.

Clarice exhales, smiling. Victor shifts to Anna.

ANNA

(coldly)

Father.

Victor touches Anna's hands, but she's still quite austere.

VICTOR

Anna... I'm so sorry that the world you once knew is now a long ways off.

ANNA

And the memory of it, so utterly tarnished. Thanks to you.

Anna moves away from him.

VICTOR
Gianna, why don't you show Anna to
her room?

ANNA
(ascending the stairs)
Don't bother. I figure the one with
the noose will do.

Victor disappointingly nods to Gianna who soon follows after
Anna.

Victor shifts his attention to Clarice who has made her way
to a showcase table, where she admires a LONE WHITE HIBISCUS
in a vase. She turns, faintly smiling at him.

VICTOR
Welcome to Dominica, Clarice.

CLARICE
It's lovely place, Father. Better
than I could imagine it to be.

Victor touches her face.

VICTOR
I knew that out of any, you would
understand, dear.

The two hug again.

EXT. COTTAGES - SAME

Annassa, Cambridge, Dandy and Martha hang clothes and sheets
on a make-shift clothes lines while Whitney approaches,
lugging a water bucket.

ANNASSA
I heard the Lord was accused of
property fraud. That's why they
fled England.

WHITNEY
And who told you that?

ANNASSA
One of the Brits said.

MARTHA
It's not your business to listen to
their affairs, Annassa.

ANNASSA

But they're so chattery, they often make it our business, don't they? Besides, if we are to work for a frauder then we ought to be privy of it.

Cambridge holds up a LARGE OPEN DRAWERS, pulling at the waist while Whitney pours more water in a huge washing tub.

CAMBRIDGE

Well, well, well, look at this.

Whitney and Annassa exchange a smile.

CAMBRIDGE (CONT'D)

I think we both can fit in it, Annassa. What do you think?

DANDY

Has to belong to that big round one that always stares at me.

ANNASSA

She's only curious, Dandy.

DANDY

Of course, they are. I'm just a Negro for God's sake. Black, round, and purrrrttty.

Dandy and Cambridge laugh while Whitney walks over to the make-shift line. She inspects a corset, soon loosening the strings.

INT. VICTORIAN MANSION - AFTERNOON - CLARICE'S ROOM

Sylvia, a maid, tightens the strings on clarice's corset, which is visibly fastened around her half naked body.

SYLVIA

Lady Clarice, I hope you find the island as suitable as we have.

CLARICE

I'm sure I will, Sylvia.

SYLVIA

(hesitating)

It's not England for sure. In fact, Dominica seems a bit strange in my opinion. There's so little we know of what's out there.

CLARICE
 (with deep resignation)
 And we would hope to keep it that
 way, wouldn't we?

SYLVIA
 Shall I go tighter?

CLARICE
 No, that's fine.

Sylvia hands Clarice a rust-colored, overly frilly DAY DRESS
 lies on the bed.

SYLVIA
 Such a beautiful gown.

CLARICE
 Thank you.

Clarice turns to the mirror, placing the dress against her
 collar line.

CLARICE (CONT'D)
 A quintessential, Victorian dress,
 isn't it?

SYLVIA
 (half-smiling)
 Of course.

EXT. VICTORIAN MANSION - SAME - FOREST BOUNDARIES

Clear skies. The horse SILVER stands tied to a tree. We hear
 MUFFLED SOUNDS of LAUGHTER --

EXT. FOREST - SAME

Whitney weaves through the tree, racing and laughing with an
 Afro-Caribbean DANIEL EDGECOMBE (25, handsome). The two run
 toward an oasis - a Paradisiacal enclave - trees surround a
 clear pool of water naturally framed by a cave-like structure--

EXT. FOREST - SAME - OASIS

Daniel leads Whitney into the water. She is stripped down to
 her undergarments --

The two softly kiss each other. Whitney releases from the
 kiss, soon SPLASH WATER onto Daniel --

They gleefully SPLASH WATER onto each other, though soon his waves over-power hers.

WHITNEY

Daniel! Stop.

Daniel ceases, a big smile emerging on his face.

DANIEL

Okay.

WHITNEY

I don't want to get wet by you. I want to get wet by my own doing.

DANIEL

Well, go ahead then.

Whitney wipes the water from her eyes, soon smiling and SPLASHING herself.

Daniel slowly moves towards her and she splashes him in the face, laughing --

SOFT CHIRPING surrounds the two as they float in the water.

WHITNEY

Do you hear that?

Standing upright, Daniel both set their eyes upon the trees.

DANIEL

It's the larks.

Whitney rises, beginning to MIMIC the CHIRPS as the LARKS begin to DART OUT from among the TREE BOUGHS, filling the sky with music.

The two stand in awe.

WHITNEY

Look, even the heavens sing for us.

Daniel holds her hand.

DANIEL

Whitney, they sing for you.

A beat.

EXT. COTTAGES - MORNING

Daniel carries a large GROUPER over to the servant women - Dandy, Cambridge and Annassa - who sit on wooden chairs.

DANDY
(inspecting)
It's a king fish.

Daniel's eyes soon fixes on Whitney who stands by a tree, stroking his horse, Silver. Her hair is still wet.

DANIEL
Yes, Ma'am. Took me three lines to catch that one.

DANDY
Annassa, call the Lady in Charge.
Let her know that the McGill's are having grouper for dinner.

Annassa walks over towards the back of the mansion while Dandy holds the fish--

INT. VICTORIAN MANSION - EVENING - DINING ROOM

Clarice, wearing the elaborate rust-colored gown, walks into the large eating area meeting Agatha and Anna who are already seated at a long mahogany dinner table while Victor stands.

VICTOR
There you are, Clarice. You look beautiful dear.

The dinner table is filled with fine food: beef slices, cooked turkey, vegetables, fruits. The large GROUPER from earlier rests as the center piece --

Gianna and a few lady servants carry the water pitchers and food platters away from the table. Victor breaks the awkward silence as the others slowly eat their food. Clarice forks up some vegetables, taking a bite.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
I've been recently looking for land with intent to develop a few crop industries here. There is still a lot of profit to be made in the agriculture sector and there are many ex-slaves who are willing to do the job.

AGATHA

Ex-slaves? Can we even trust their pedigree?

ANNA

Are you so sure you want to take on another land venture, Father?

VICTOR

(on guard)

Anna, if I don't find livelihood here, your life of fortune may be even more threatened.

(with more anger)

Then all of a sudden, you might find yourself living just like any commoner... except, only difference is, you'll be dressed in a fancy frock.

AGATHA

(sternly)

Victor, please.

ANNA

May I be excused?

A beat.

VICTOR

You barely touched your dinner.

ANNA

It doesn't matter.

VICTOR

Go on, then.

Anna gets up to leave. Upon exit:

VICTOR (CONT'D)

Why can't Anna be like Clarice? And filled with the proper propriety?

CLARICE

Father.

AGATHA

Victor.

VICTOR

I'm sorry. It's been a long journey, Agatha. I thought you would understand that.