

FADE IN:

TITLE CARD: THE ISLAND OF DOMINICA 1864

EXT. DOMINICA - NIGHT

CAMERA ZOOMS along the green, mountainous island, which boasts a 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 toward a wooden cottage, perched atop a large cliff.

EXT. SORCERER'S COTTAGE - SAME

An **OLD MAN (75, Afro-Caribbean with a slightly bent back)** scuttles along, his legs moving uphill where the cottage lies--

He guides his **GRANDSON (10, Afro-Caribbean)** towards the DILAPIDATED structure. The boy stumbles as they reach the front door of cottage.

INT. SORCERER'S COTTAGE - SAME

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

Grandfather and grandson stand rigidly in the center of the empty room. SOUND of CREAKING as the young boy shifts his steps. Immediately, there's a flickering of a LIT CANDLE, suspended in the darkness, making its way toward the face of the Grandfather and then the boy. 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 STIRS. Soon a raspy, female voice:

FEMALE SORCERER (O.C.)
I have just the potion for him. But
first, it will require a token.

The candle moves toward 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 to the face of the boy, the PUPILS of his eyes magically returning --

EXT. DOMINICA - EARLY MORNING

SOUND OF A PIANO PLAYING a nice, classical tune.

MONTAGE SHOTS of the still beautiful island -- the mighty 'green' mountains -- the dense forest carved by an opaque, serene river -- more rivers branching out like veins -- vast cotton fields -- luscious banana groves --

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

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 --

INT. VICTORIAN MANSION - SAME - FOYER

CAMERA ZOOMS through the luxurious mansion -- Victorian-styled furnishings --

PARLOR

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

INT. VICTORIAN MANSION - SAME - BEDROOM

A WHITE MAID fixes the white sheets on a canopy, queen-sized bed while ANOTHER polishes a candle holder --

INT. VICTORIAN MANSION - SAME - 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 parlor.

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-framed)** and **DANDY WATERS (65, robust)** walk over to WOODEN CHICKEN PENS rooted in the ground. There are about five identical pens, secured with metal wires.

Dandy, holding a cutlass, picks a chicken from the enclosure and hands it to Martha. The chicken ruffles its feathers, 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 YOUNG MAID dusts off the bookshelf while another, **SYLVIA GALL (33, white, 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 (35, square shoulders)**, **CAMBRIDGE (38)**, and **WHITNEY WOODS (22, beautiful, carefree)** 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. She breaks the stem of the flower and smells it.

EXT. VICTORIAN MANSION - DAY

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

Three women, **AGATHA MCGILL (55, refined)**, **ANNA MCGILL (28, outspoken)**, and **CLARICE MCGILL (24, beautiful, classy)** walk toward the front door --

INT. VICTORIAN MANSION - SAME - FOYER

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

VICTOR MCGILL (60, black-hair, debonair) descends the rolling staircase as AGATHA MCGILL enters.

VICTOR
Welcome, my dear Agatha. Oh, how I've missed you.

AGATHA
Victor, it's been too long.

Victor approaches and kisses her.

AGATHA (CONT'D)
The place isn't as classy as our old manor, 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.

AGATHA
It's been a long trip and I'm due for a bath.

GIANNA
Yes, my lady. This way.

Gianna guides Agatha up the stairs while Anna and Clarice finally 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.

VICTOR (CONT'D)
Anna?

ANNA
(coldly)
Father.

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

VICTOR

I'm so sorry that it has come to this
and 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, my dear.

CLARICE

It's lovely place, Father. Better than
I imagined it to be.

Victor touches her face, soon hugging her.

VICTOR

Wait until you see the gardens.
(a beat)
I knew that out of any, you would
understand.

EXT. COTTAGES - SAME

Annassa, Cambridge, Dandy and Whitney hang clothes and sheets on
a make-shift clothes lines while Martha 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 UNDERGARMENT, pulling at the waist while Whitney pours more water in a huge washing tub.

CAMBRIDGE

Well, well, well, look at this.

Cambridge and Annassa exchange a smirk.

CAMBRIDGE (CONT'D)

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

DANDY

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

ANNASSA

Dandy, she only looks at you cause she's curious.

DANDY

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

Dandy and Cambridge laugh while Annassa walks over to the line, inspecting a corset and loosening the strings.

ANNASSA

I wonder what it's like to wear one of these.

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, the island is 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, frilly evening dress.

SYLVIA

It's 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 - CONTINUOUS - FOREST BOUNDARIES

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

EXT. FOREST - SAME

CLOSE ON BLACK FEMININE LEGS running through the COPSES --

The legs belong to Whitney. She weaves through the trees, running and laughing along with an Afro-Caribbean man, **DANIEL EDGECOMBE (23, 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 - CONTINUOUS - OASIS

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

Standing waist deep in the oasis, the two softly kiss each other. Whitney releases from the kiss, soon SPLASHING WATER onto Daniel's face.

DANIEL

Whitney?!

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 slowly SPLASHING herself.

Daniel slowly moves toward her but 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 sets his eyes on the nearby trees.

DANIEL
It's the larks.

Whitney begins 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, his eyes glued to her beauty.

DANIEL
Whitney, they are singing for you.

EXT. COTTAGES - CONTINUOUS

Martha tends to a large VEGETABLE GARDEN that stretches towards the forest while Daniel passes her, carrying a GROUP OF STRINGED JACK FISH over to the servant women - Dandy, Cambridge, and Annassa --

DANDY
(inspecting the biggest)
It's a king fish.

Daniel's eyes soon fix on Whitney who stands by a tree, stroking his horse, Silver. Her hair is still wet, pulled back in a bun.

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

DANDY
Annassa, call the head House Maid.

Annassa walks toward the back of the mansion --

Daniel stands next to Whitney and Silver, the two of them stroking the horse while looking at each other --

After Gianna pays Daniel a PENCE, he jumps on his horse and rides off. As Whitney moves closer to the women, she and Martha exchange a look.

INT. VICTORIAN MANSION - EVENING - DINING ROOM

Victor, Agatha, Anna, and Clarice sit in a large room at a long mahogany dinner table filled with fine food: fish, beef slices, cooked turkey, vegetables, fruits. Gianna and a few lady servants carry the water pitchers and food platters away from the table. Agatha sips on some wine while Victor cuts into a slab of meat, soon breaking the awkward silence.

VICTOR

I'm looking for land in order to partake in the crop industries here. There's still a lot of profit to be made and a lot ex-slaves who are willing to do the job.

Anna begins to dig into the vegetables on her plate while Clarice pulls the platter of fish toward her.

ANNA

Ex-slaves?

VICTOR

(cutting his meat)
That's right.

ANNA

Oh God, what are they like?

AGATHA

Anna, don't ask such forward questions.

CLARICE

I'm sure they're not as bad as one would expect.

AGATHA

You shall not vouch for any Negro, my dear daughter, and you shall do your best to stay clear of them.

VICTOR

You make them sound completely depraved, Agatha.

AGATHA

I don't want their kind given the slightest occasion to take part in our company and find themselves gawking.

ANNA

Well, not if you don't gawk at them first, Mother.