

PRIMA

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1 INT. ANNE VICTORIA THEATRE - NIGHT**1**

SONG: ALLEGRO NON MOLTO by ANTONIO VIVALDI

A black screen. Heavy breathing, running feet, crunching gravel, a door opening, and slamming shut.

CHOREOGRAPHER (V.O.)
one, two, three, four, five, six,
seven, eight...

A door can be made out in the darkness. The steady thump of feet padding across the floor above. A cacophony of voices chiming in, rising music from the orchestra.

VICTOR (11) emerges from the darkness. Bursting through the door, trying his best to look well put together. In his hand is a bag of oranges as he races behind the stage, pouring them into his basket. He runs up the stairs, towards the front.

He passes through the dressing rooms, there's protest from the women and he mumbles apologies while closing his eyes.

Victor goes up to the main theatre and walks into the crowd, plastering on a big smile and showcasing an orange.

VICTOR
Orange? Would you like an orange,
miss? Only one shilling! Oranges,
oranges!

We see the drawn red velvet curtain of the stage, empty for the time.

CUT TO:

2 INT. DRESSING ROOMS - NIGHT**2**

Chaos of Ballerinas getting dressed, stretching and doing their makeup.

In the background of it all is PRUDENCE GRAY, a creature forsaken by the world, working tirelessly to prepare things. The music rises and all the Ballerinas run to their places.

She begins her work as a stagehand. Her calloused palms pull rope and redirect lights as she kicks sandbags and adjusts the stage props.

PRUDENCE (V.O.)

When I was a girl, my mother told me the story of Icarus. I remember being fascinated, wondering what it must have felt like to fall towards Earth with nothing to catch you. Did he laugh as the wax stung his skin? Did he welcome death with a smile? I suppose I could understand such foolishness. Some days I envy Icarus. For he knew the sun, and maybe, for a moment in time, the sun knew him too.

A rise of applause out steps a young woman. The company parts for her appearance as she glides forward.

Prudence watches, face half caught in the light.

JUMP CUT TO:

Images flash: The Ballerina's, Victor handing out oranges, the crowd watching.

A hush falls, the music intensifies. Margeaux begins her movement into the light. She moves with grace and precision. She begins to turn.

She begins to falter. A look of pain on her face. She stops, falls. All we hear is a thump. Silence before a scream rings out.

Juliet looks down as she backs away in shock. Prudence, light slicing into her face watches on in interest.

PRUDENCE (V.O.)

Don't allow yourself to get too close, my mother used to say. The sun is also a star, and stars burn.

BLACK.

3 INT. PRUDENCE'S QUARTERS - SUNRISE

3

Prudence prays, harsh whispers beneath her breath as she squeezes her rosary. She looks up, a sliver of light cutting into her face. We see the scaring on her back and face.

The room is small, dingy and as clean as it can manage to be. Old books stack in the corner, charcoal pencils and a sketchbook. A series of saint figures line a small shelf.

Prudence opens her eyes.

A knock is heard on her door, and she looks up, a tired expression on her face.

PRUDENCE (V.O.)

What was it that Shakespeare said?
Hell is empty and all the devils
are here? Maybe so, but if that was
to be taken as gospel, what sort of
devil was she?

Prudence opens the door and standing, Margeaux. Illuminated by the warm glow of candles.

PRUDENCE

I told everyone to leave ripped
costumes hang--

MARGEAUX

Are you Prudence? I'm sorry, I know
it's terribly late, but the other
girls said if I needed repairs on
my costume, you've got the
steadiest hand in the city.

MARGEAUX, the Prima Ballerina with a smile of pure sunshine, holds her costume softly. She's in evening attire.

PRUDENCE

And I do it for free.

Prudence motions for the costume, Margeaux hands it over. Hands graze against Prudence's, and it catches her attention. Prudence meets Margeaux's eyes as they trail to the room.

PRUDENCE (V.O.)

Of course, I knew who she was,
introductions were hardly needed.
Everyone in London knew Margeaux
DeWinter, she had caused quite the
stir when she became Prima. Not due
to her talents, but due to the fact
that she was American.

Prudence hangs the costume on a rack with others, her eyes flickering to Margeaux. She finds herself trailing over to the charcoal drawings on the desk.

Ballerinas are sketched out in beautiful forms, a drawing of a little boy. And then something more haunting, a figure in red reaching out.

MARGEAUX

These are lovely...are they yours?

Prudence is quick to gather them up and hide them. Margeaux's eyes widen.

PRUDENCE

Please don't...

SLOW MOTION cuts in and Margeaux stares at Prudence as the light shines on her scars, Margeaux studies them.

PRUDENCE

Your costume will be ready by the show.

MARGEAUX

Right, yes, have a good night, Prudence.

Margeaux smiles softly and leaves the room. Prudence flips through her drawings. She sighs, laying them back down neatly on her desk.

Prudence stares at the door, some mixture of confusion and apprehension on her face.

CUT TO:

4 EXT. ANNE VICTORIA THEATRE - DAY

4

Prudence lights a cigarette and smokes, leaning against the outside of the theatre. She rubs her face in exhaustion.

Flashes of images of her dreams: A red cloaked figure. A cross. Crying statue. A gold headpiece.

She shakes her head and looks down at her cracked watch and rolls her eyes. She's waiting for someone.

Dashing across the corner, with a sense of urgency and wild-eyed charm, is Victor.

PRUDENCE

And just where have you been?

VICTOR

Sorry, miss I w--

PRUDENCE

Ah, ah, ah I don't want to hear it.
Big day, stage repairs before the
big show!

Prudence scratches his head and tucks him into a side hug.
He reaches up for her cigarette and she lifts it out of
reach.

PRUDENCE

Absolutely not, I won't enable your
habits.

Prudence and Victor walk into the theatre.

CUT TO:

5 INT. ANNA VICTORIA THEATRE - MORNING

5

We hear the Choreographer continue her counts.

CHOREOGRAPHER (V.O.)

one, two, three, four, five, six,
seven, eight...one...

Prudence begins her tasks of the day.

MONTAGE: Sewing repairs, lighting repairs, and stage
repairs. Painting planks, eating lunch with Victor.
Cleaning the theatre and lamps

6 INT. DRESSING ROOMS - AFTERNOON

6

PRUDENCE

Go to my room and get washed up.
Eyes closed!

Prudence shouts to Victor as he stumbles blindly through
the dressing room.

Prudence walks through the dressing rooms, giving everyone
their repaired items. Most ballerinas regard her with a
head nod and continue their task.

PRUDENCE

Margeaux, here's yours. Fixed the
stitching on the tulle as well.

Prudence holds the costume, bringing it over to Margeaux.
More scars are visible. She stands out from the pristine
crowd.

JULIET (20's), a company dancer who represents the high standing of the ballerina, looks at Prudence with disgust.

MARGEAUX

Oh! Thank you, darling, I do appreciate it so much.

Prudence hums in reply. Turning to leave

PRUDENCE

S'what I'm good for.

MARGEAUX

Oh, I'm sure your good for a great deal many things other than repairing old costumes and creaky stages.

Margeaux fixes her makeup in the mirror, glancing to Prudence. Prudence frowns and looks at her.

JULIET

(cold, sinister)

Prudence, darling, I think that runt is calling you.

PRUDENCE

His name is Victor, you know that.

She gives Margeaux one final look. Cuts of light hit Prudence's face as she backs into the shadows.

CUT TO:

7 INT. PRUDENCE'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

7

Victor is passed out in Prudence's bed; she rolls her eyes adoringly. Prudence pulls out her drawing tools.

PRUDENCE (V.O.)

I had decided many years ago, that despite the grotesque nature of my own life, that the beauty of things around me would continue to demand worship. And that worship, for better or worse, came with a marriage to bleeding hands.

Charcoal crosses the paper in intense lines as the drawing is finished. Prudence looks at it in scrutiny.

PRUDENCE (V.O.)

As Lord Basil said, I will show no one this painting, for I have put too much of myself within it.

Prudence picks up a sewing needle. Red drops onto the page. Her eyes scan the page in curiosity at the shade.

8 EXT. ANNE VICTORIA- NIGHT

8

Margeaux stands outside, putting on her gloves and Juliet walks up beside her, smoking a cigarette. She buttons her coat.

JULIET

Her mother was a whore, you know, her father no better. I believe you can still find him at the pub in a pool of his own vomit.

MARGEAUX

Pardon?

JULIET

Prudence. She's a ghastly creature, wretched in all the worst ways. You would be smart to keep a distance.

MARGEAUX

I'm sure I can come upon my own judgements all on my own.

Margeaux creases her brows and turns to walk. An iron grip catches her wrist.

JULIET

You are Prima, whether the rest of us like it or not, you now set the standard. If you allow the standing of this theatre to lower with your poor judgement, I will not hesitate to grip the title from your delicate little hands. I came into this world covered in blood, my dear, I do not fear to leave it in the same fashion.

Margeaux swallows thickly.

MARGEAUX

Y-you can't speak to me like that.

JULIET

I will have you on the next train
back to the scum filled hole you
came from if you continue down this
road. Do you understand?

This threat hits a nerve. Margeaux's eyes widen, she gulps.

MARGEAUX (V.O.)

I had made myself many promises in
my lifetime, most of which I would
come to break. But the promise of
never again finding myself back at
that cell I called home, that
remained indestructible. Death
would be preferable.

Margeaux nods. Juliet lets go.

9 INT. STAGE - DAY

9

The ballerinas congregate to gossip as they stand around,
awaiting direction. Some stretch, others drink water.

Prudence hauls heavy buckets in the background, attempting
it alone. She is shouting something to Victor who is off
screen.

Prudence runs into Margeaux, spilling a substance all over
her. The rest of the company gasps as Margeaux stands
there. Margeaux looks to Juliet who sends her a warning
look.

Prudence goes to apologize when she is cut off by a cool
slap to her cheek. Prudence falls to the ground in SLOW
MOTION, her eyes looking up to Margeaux. Margeaux looks
down at her with a cold, dead look. The rest of the
ballerinas begin laughing in a chorus.

MATCH CUT TO:

10 INT/EXT. ANNE VICTORIA - AFTERNOON

10

Prudence sits in the seats with Victor, watching the
ballerina's dance. Her leg bounces, she has a sinister look
in her eyes. Red still stains her cheek from Margeaux
nails.

VICTOR

I woke up screamin' but then I thought, frogs don't wear hats and they surely don't got the money to own a whole army. And that's how I knew for sure that it was a dream.

Victor eats his lunch, rambling on. Prudence looks lost in thought.

A replay of the events montage. Before images of a figure cut in between.

A shadow cuts the light behind Prudence, red gloved hands catch her throat, running to the front of her chest. Prudence hitches her breath, standing abruptly.

PRUDENCE

Hurry and finish your lunch, if I'm not back soon get started on the bulbs, will you?

Prudence practically barks out and abruptly leaves. Victor, thinking little of it, goes back to eating his sandwich.

CUT TO:

11 INT. PRUDENCE'S QUARTERS - SUNSET 11

Prudence changes out of her stained overalls and into one of her night dresses. She grabs her drawings, rosary and coat. She leaves the room.

12 INT/EXT. CHURCH - AFTERNOON 12

Prudence walks into the church, shaken by her earlier interaction. It's dark, illuminated by only candles.

PRUDENCE (V.O.)

Time and time again I had looked for the kindness in the world, only to come back with grotesque blood-stained carnage.

Prudence walks down the aisle of candles.

PRUDENCE (V.O.)

How does one remain holy in a world of devils? How does one keep their hands clean of that sticky red substance?

Prudence is on her knees; She looks up at her own drawing, the saint-like figure looking down upon her.

PRUDENCE (V.O.)

My mother told me when times get
hard that prayer is what I should
lean on...but to whom do I pray?
When the saints stop singing, what
remains?

Prudence is on her knees; she pulls something from her pocket, cutting her hand. As she speaks, she seems to be making something on the ground in front of her.

Prudence pulls out a rosary and looks up to the cross, a tear falling down her cheek. She bows her head and begins to pray.

PRUDENCE (V.O.)

I knew now, what I was, what I
needed to be. In a world such as
this, the only thing left to do is
indulge. To give in to those that
have protected me, haunted me.

ENYO, the personified bloodlust of Prudence, begins to walk towards her, having crawled out of the painting.

Prudence's eyes snap open. She whispers a prayer aggressively, nails biting into her flesh as her rosary shakes. Blood draws.

Prudence looks up and sees Enyo, a saint-like figure above her.

Enyo kneels before her, unveils herself. Enyo is Prudence, save the scars.

PRUDENCE

All the women in me are tired,
please, I cannot bear it.

Pearl colored tears sticking to her rosy cheeks, bright eyes. Enyo takes the dagger and draws blood pouring it into a goblet. Enyo hands it to Prudence, mirroring a religious painting.

Enyo touches Prudence's cheek. Prudence, crying, takes the communion.

Cut to:

13 INT. DRESSING ROOMS - NIGHT**13**

Prudence inhales sharply, standing in the middle of the chaos of Ballerinas. Someone runs into her. Prudence looks about in confusion, her dress covered in dirt and mud.

JULIET

Where have you been?

PRUDENCE

W-what?

JULIET

If you're going to make disappearing two days before the biggest show of the season a habit, do let us know.

PRUDENCE

Disappearing?

Juliet takes Prudence's chin and grabs her attention.

JULIET

(muffled)

Don't mess this up or I'll have your head on a stick. And for god's sake, make yourself presentable.

A ringing sounds. Juliet shoves the pointe shoes in Prudence's hands.

JUMP CUT TO:

Prudence hands the fixed shoes to Margeaux who looks at her with a cold indifference. She grips the shoes and leaves in SLOW MOTION.

CUT TO:

14 INT. STAGE - NIGHT**14**

BEGIN MONTAGE:

The flash of a light turns on, the crowd settles. A hush falls over as the ballerina's go on stage.

Images flash: The Ballerina's, Victor handing out oranges, the crowd watching.

Margeaux begins her movement into the light. She begins to turn, each push of pressure on her foot injecting more poison into her.

She begins to falter. A look of pain on her face. She stops, her eyes meeting Prudences for a moment. She is met with the same cold look. Then she falls.

Blood begins to seep from Margeaux's mouth. Juliet looks down as she backs away in shock. She screams. Chaos rings out in the crowd.

Prudence watches, her eyes widen and looks down at her own hands.

Flashes of memory come back to her: Poison thorns from plants. Enyo guiding Prudence's hands as she sews.

Prudence hears a noise beside her, and she looks over in SLOW MOTION a ballerina falls, her friend catching her in confusion.

Another flash of memory: oils being injected in makeup. Lip gloss, blush, everything.

Prudence opens her mouth to scream, a choir of screams. The red hands grab her by the mouth and pull her back.

CUT TO:

START: HYMNE A L'AMOUR by EDITH PIAF

Fantasy Sequence: Prudence doing her makeup. all the company sits in the crowd, paralleled with their death.

Prudence walks on stage and the music picks up. The glowing lights and an adoring crowd.

Prudence begins to spin, imagining herself as the center of all the adoration. Roses get thrown to her.

We see Victor, all dressed up, bringing her a bouquet.

She takes it and bows, looks directly at the camera before flashing a pained smile on her face.

BLACK.