

HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN

A TV PILOT

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TEASER

SUPER - EARLY 1861 - NEW ORLEANS

INT. MAISON BLANCHE COTTAGE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Candles flicker in a dark room.

A pair of mixed-race female hands work furiously over a wooden table.

They caress a crude Voodoo doll, fashion it into a male-like tiny figure.

Next to the right hand on the table lies ZOMBI, a huge royal Ball python snake, asleep. He stirs, nudges the hand, then slithers across the table, wraps himself around one of the candlesticks.

INT. DOWN-TRODDEN BROTHEL - MAIN ROOM - EARLY EVENING

A shabby, run down building. Threadbare curtains hang at the cracked windows. Broken tables and chairs litter the room.

Seedy WHORES wear gowns that have seen better days. The clientele are roughneck, vulgar DRUNKEN MEN.

MARIANNE LESOLEIL LEVANT, 38, sits a table in the middle of the room. She looks as worn down as the furniture but her once famous beauty refuses to give up. A hint of a French accent, she still holds herself with an air of royalty.

Opposite her, WADE BUCHANAN, rough whorehouse owner, 45. His meanness runs deeper than any of his customers' pockets.

Loyal friend CORA KELLY, a fiery red-headed Irish hooker, 32, stands behind Marianne. A lapsed Catholic, she still crosses herself, closes her eyes, says a prayer under her breath.

The dealer, FLYNN RUCKER, 60, presides over the table. Usually gruff, no-nonsense, he smiles now with the same ease and skill with which he shuffles the cards. *He's gonna enjoy this.*

FLYNN

You both know the rules. Top hand wins. Or the closest hand to 21 is the winner.

Marianne and Wade both nod as everyone crowds closer.

FLYNN

Wade, if you win, Marianne owes you ten years to do as you bid. And Marianne if you win, the House will be yours.

WADE

Oh yeah, she's mine.

Cora leans in to Marianne's ear

CORA

Are you sure you want to do this? If he wins we'll never be free.

MARIANNE

Yes. It will be fine. Just have a little faith. I know what I am doing.

CORA

God, I hope so.

INT. MAISON BLANCHE COTTAGE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The right hand gently strokes Zombi. The snake rubs against the fingers. If he was a cat he'd purr.

The hand picks up the voodoo doll, now a mini cowboy, twists its arms and legs, lays it face down on the table, next to a pile of pins.

INT. BROTHEL - MAIN ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Flynn pulls a card from the pack, puts it in front of Wade. He turns it over. A King.

The next card is placed front of Marianne. A ten.

Wade grins at everyone, makes eye contact with Marianne.

WADE

In ten minutes you're going to be upstairs flat on your back getting the hardest fuck of your life.

MARIANNE

We'll see.

Wade's next card. A nine.

WADE

You're all mine, bitch.

Flynn takes the final card from the pack. Everyone in the room holds their breath.

INT. MAISON BLANCHE COTTAGE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A mulatto - mixed Creole/white woman - stands. Her features illuminated by candlelight give her an other-worldly look.

MARIE LAVEAU, 60, Voodoo Priestess, majestic Queen of New Orleans. Her looks belie her age and complement her magic.

Her hands hover over the voodoo doll.

MARIE LAVEAU

Great Goddess of Chance I would ask for your favour. I would ask for luck from your hand. When I pray to you with the cards in my hand, you do not smile on my enemy. You put into my hands the card which will undo my opponent and put into my hands the high cards which will make me the master.

She pushes the voodoo doll across the table as Zombi rises up, hisses.

MARIE LAVEAU

Are you sure you want to do this?

Across from her, Marianne picks up the doll from the table.

MARIANNE

Absolument.

MARIE LAVEAU

Beware the power. The hex will be as strong as your feelings. And I feel your hate from here.

MARIANNE

I can control my feelings.

MARIE LAVEAU

Be sure you do.

MARIANNE

Merci.

Marie Laveau holds out a small purple bag.

MARIE LAVEAU

Take the gris-gris. It will protect
you from the curse rebounding.

Marianne snatches the bag. Tries not to look scared.

INT. BROTHEL - MAIN ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Flynn turns over the card in front of Marianne. A QUEEN.

Pandemonium breaks out. Most of the men CHEER but some look
disgusted. A few SLAM down their drinks, walk out.

Marianne smiles. Wade is stunned. She leans across the table.

MARIANNE

Who's the bitch now?

Wade lunges across table at her but ALEXANDER GRANT, 30,
clean cut but with a tough swagger, grabs him.

WADE

It's a fix, it was fixed. That
bitch fixed it.

ALEXANDER

You'd better watch your mouth.

WADE

You know it was a fix. How the hell
could she beat ME?

No-one listens to him. Everyone CHEERS as several men hoist
Marianne onto their shoulders like a throne.

As she's put back on her feet, the crowd surges around her
but her eyes search for Cora.

She spots her in the crowd, pushes through the throng, gives
her a huge hug.

CORA

You lucky, lucky bitch!

MARIANNE

Luck had nothing to do with it.

Over Marianne's shoulder Cora sees Flynn. He nods with a
knowing smile.

Marianne reaches into her pocket, half pulls out the voodoo
doll, a knowing smile, jams it back in her dress.

CORA

Oh my God, this is unreal.

MARIANNE

Dieu merci! I'm going to turn this
into the most lavish whorehouse
this side of the Atlantic.

Marianne hugs Cora again as Wade breaks free of Alexander's grasp. He pulls his gun, points it at Marianne. BANG.

Marianne staggers backwards, clasps her side as Alexander leaps into action, PUNCHES Wade in the face.

Wade hits the floor, the gun CLATTERS to a stop by Marianne's feet. She straightens up, Cora grabs her hands. NO BLOOD.

CORA

Where'd he hit you?

Marianne reaches into her pocket, pulls out the doll, the bullet lodged in it's crude face.

Wade lies on the floor as Alexander LOOMS over him, repeatedly punches him in the face.

Wade's face swells, blood GUSHES from his nose. Alexander pulls back for one last hit before Marianne touches his arm.

MARIANNE

Enough.

Alexander steps backwards as Wade rolls on his side. GROANS.

MARIANNE

Get him out of here.

Alexander grabs Wade, drags him to the front door.

Marianne nods as Wade FLIES face first out the door. Alexander turns, tips his hat at Marianne

EXT. BROTHEL - CONTINUOUS

Wade lands face down in the muddy street, narrowly misses a horse and buggy. He struggles to sit up, slowly turns to look at the House.

WADE

You fucking whore.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE**SUPER - LATE 1861****INT. HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN BROTHEL - NEW ORLEANS - NIGHT**

The brothel, renamed The House of the Rising Sun, now looks like the inside of a palace.

Rich red velvet drapes hang at the windows, the walls covered with wallpaper imported from Paris, hardwood covers the floor instead of sawdust.

A dozen or so tables and chairs decorate the center of the main room as crystal chandeliers hang overhead to add to the opulence and grandeur.

Beyond the main room, through open French doors, is a private dining room, currently empty.

A better class of MEN - lawyers, doctors, politicians - gamble at the tables.

Even the MAYOR, JOHN T. MONROE, a staunch Southern patriot, father of nine, enjoys the view of WHORES in fancy silk gowns as they stroll between the tables.

Some sit in laps, laugh as they whisper in attentive ears. Some pour drinks, while others stroll up the stairs arm in arm with eager men.

FIVE CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS sit at the bar that runs the length of the right side of the room.

FIRST SOLDIER

It will be chaos. Who's going to work the lands? Pick the cotton? Industry in the south will fail and then those northern bastards will really have something to be happy about.

SECOND SOLDIER

Lincoln doesn't know what the fuck he's doing. Most slaves don't even wanna be free. I don't know why we're fighting this war. I'd much rather be fucking one of these whores than face a goddamn Yankee right now.

THIRD SOLDIER

Yeah but we can't afford 'em. I shouldn't worry too much, Thomas Moore wants to make this a neutral city.

SECOND SOLDIER

It's a fuckin' joke. Even if they ever abolish slavery those Uncle Toms will be begging to come back and work...you wait and see.

INT. HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN - MARIANNE'S ROOM

Marianne lies naked in bed with Alexander Grant. The couple reach their climax. As they finish, Alexander goes for the cuddle but Marianne pulls away.

Her hand reaches for a silver locket around her neck - a piece of jewelry she never takes off. As she distractedly fiddles with the locket, Alexander sighs.

ALEXANDER

What's wrong?

MARIANNE

Nothing.

ALEXANDER

You're even more distant than usual.

MARIANNE

Distant? You were just inside me.

Alexander gets off the bed, starts to get dressed.

ALEXANDER

I know something's going on but you never open up. Not to me, not to anyone.

He grabs for the locket, Marianne whips it out of his reach.

ALEXANDER

Enough with that damn locket.

MARIANNE

You're starting sound like a husband. Get out.

He makes no move to leave.

MARIANNE

Out. I'm expected downstairs.

ALEXANDER

This conversation isn't over.

Alexander pulls on his boots, walks to the door, turns, looks at Marianne as she stares at the locket.

He leaves, SLAMS the door behind him. Marianne opens the locket. On one side a lock of blonde hair, on the other a faded photo of a baby.

INT. HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN - MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Marianne wanders through crowded tables. The House is packed. She nods now and again to WELL DRESSED MEN, who either nod back or tip their hat to her.

She stands by the bar, surveys her kingdom. She takes a drink, knocks it back. She turns to barman BILL REEVES, 58, who struggles more than anyone in the room with sobriety.

MARIANNE

Give me a bottle of our best whiskey.

BILL

Who's the lucky sonofabitch?

MARIANNE

The Brigadier.

BILL

I guess you gotta spend money to make money!

MARIANNE

You know me so well Bill!

Bill laughs, puts a bottle on the bar. Marianne grabs it, makes her way over to a card table with a group of HIGH RANKING SOLDIERS.

She stands behind BRIGADIER GENERAL FRANCIS PRESTON, 55, his white bushy beard and moustache make him look like Santa, if Santa had a gambling problem. But he's the most distinguished, respected man in the room.

Marianne leans down whispers in his ear. He ROARS with laughter, turns to face her. She offers him the whiskey. He takes it, pours some in his glass, drinks.

BRIGADIER
That's damn good.

MARIANNE
Only the best for the best,
Brigadier.

BRIGADIER
What is the best tonight?

MARIANNE
I have a new girl. Chinese. You'd
be the first.

BRIGADIER
I've heard about those Asian girls.
Is she very exotic?

MARIANNE
But of course.

BRIGADIER
Excellent.

The Brigadier throws in his cards. Stands up.

BRIGADIER
Gentlemen. Excuse me.

He nods to the soldiers. A few nod back as they continue
their game. Marianne walks him to the foot of the staircase.

MARIANNE
Room three.

BRIGADIER
You'll add her to my bill?

MARIANNE
This one's on the House.

BRIGADIER
Madame, you're the only woman I
know who can please a man without
taking off any clothes.

Marianne smiles, gestures, watches as the Brigadier takes the
stairs. She turns, walks towards her office.

INT. HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN - MARIANNE'S OFFICE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Marianne sits at her desk. Several piles of money sit in front of her, she leans back in her chair, looks satisfied.

Cora enters. Eyeballs the money.

CORA
Good night?

MARIANNE
The best so far.

CORA
I never dreamed we'd be here.

MARIANNE
Yes, you did.

CORA
Those silly plans we made on the ship?

MARIANNE
You should have more faith.

CORA
I've always believed in you.

MARIANNE
In yourself. I wouldn't be here without you.

CORA
Yes, you would.

Marianne stands up, walks around desk, hugs Cora.

CORA
So what are we going to do with this money?

MARIANNE
Buy some land, a house on St Charles Street.

CORA
That much?

MARIANNE
Soon, *ma belle*. Very soon.

Marianne picks up the money, throws it in the air. As it floats over the women, they grab hands, spin round and round.

INT. HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN - TOP OF STAIRCASE - SEVERAL NIGHTS LATER

Marianne views the House from the top of the sweeping staircase. She looks down on all that is hers now, smiles to herself.

She has one foot on the stair when she spies a man standing near the bar, dressed in a Confederate uniform.

The sight of him stops her in her tracks. Marianne hurries down the stairs.

MARIANNE

What the fuck are YOU doing in MY house?

Wade Buchanan turns slowly, faces Marianne, grins.

WADE

I'm here on business.

MARIANNE

You have no business here. Leave. Now.

WADE

Oh but I do.

The Brigadier gently lays his hand on Marianne's arm.

BRIGADIER

Marianne my dear. I asked Wade here tonight. I know things have not been great between you in the past but he's got some vital information about the war effort. I thought we could use your back room for a meeting.

Marianne hesitates for a few seconds.

MARIANNE

Wade has been banished from these premises. He knows that.

BRIGADIER

I need this. You would be doing me a favour.

MARIANNE

I'm sorry Brigadier. I can't let him stay.

BRIGADIER

I'll make it worth your while.

MARIANNE

It's not about money. He made threats.

BRIGADIER

I promise to keep him on a short leash.

MARIANNE

You couldn't meet anywhere else?

BRIGADIER

Marianne, you know this is the safest place in town. I trust you and your discretion. For me? Please?

MARIANNE

Brigadier.

The two men head towards the back room. Wade looks over his shoulder, smirks. Marianne walks over to the bar where Bill pours drinks.

MARIANNE

Keep an eye on those two. The first time sign of any trouble, I want him out of here.

Bill nods as Marianne takes one last look around the busy room, stalks towards her office.

EXT. MAISON BLANCHE COTTAGE, NIGHT

Marianne BANGS on the door of the cottage relentlessly. Marie Laveau opens the door, steps aside, invites Marianne inside.

INT. MAISON BLANCHE COTTAGE, NIGHT

Marie sits down in a rocking chair near the fire, waits for Marianne to speak.

MARIANNE

The fucking hex doll. It didn't work.

MARIE LAVEAU

It worked. It did its job, it gave Wade bad luck, you won the House.

MARIANNE

But he's back. After all these months that bastard is back.

MARIE LAVEAU

That's not the doll's fault. There's a reason he's back. You need to work out why.

MARIANNE

What I need is stronger doll. One that will make sure he doesn't come back ever again.

MARIE LAVEAU

I can make you a stronger hex. But I want you to do something for me in return.

MARIANNE

Anything to get him out of my life.

MARIE LAVEAU

War is coming. It needs to be stopped. The South cannot win.

MARIANNE

What do you mean? The South is going to win, there's no way the Confederacy will lose.

MARIE LAVEAU

I need someone who has access to information and who also thinks like me.

MARIANNE

What do you mean?

MARIE LAVEAU

I want to end slavery.

Marianne laughs.

MARIANNE

Good luck. Not even a war is going to change that. We can't stop that.

MARIE LAVEAU

Yes we can. You already changed it.

MARIANNE

What?

MARIE LAVEAU

You were born into slavery, a courtesan. It's no different than a negro picking cotton in the field. Or serving some rich white family dinner. Neither of you had free will. You were enslaved as a whore for years. But you changed the cycle, you broke free.

MARIANNE

You can't compare me to a slave girl on a plantation. It's completely different.

MARIE LAVEAU

You think you weren't a slave? Think again. You clearly want Wade dead because of the way he treated you, enslaved you.

MARIANNE

It's not the same.

MARIE LAVEAU

Any person being held against their will is a slave, no matter if they're in cotton field or a whorehouse. You've been bought and sold all your life.

MARIANNE

How do you know?

MARIE LAVEAU

I can smell it on you. Like fear. It never leaves you. Be careful Marianne that it doesn't leave you cold and bitter.

MARIANNE

I've never felt like a slave or a whore. I was adored, worshipped.

MARIE LAVEAU

Until you weren't.

MARIANNE

It won't change how I feel.

MARIE LAVEAU
You'd be surprised.

Marianne wearily sinks down in a chair opposite Marie. Her hand automatically goes to the locket.

MARIE LAVEAU
What happened to your child?

MARIANNE
How?

Marie simply raises her eyebrows.

MARIANNE
I gave her away. How could I bring her into this life? I only wanted what was best for her.

MARIE LAVEAU
Of course.

MARIANNE
So what are you proposing?

MARIE LAVEAU
I want someone I can trust, someone who is as powerful as I am with the men in this town. I want someone who can help me control and shape this war.

MARIANNE
You think you can control these men?

MARIE LAVEAU
I think if we put our minds and our talents to it we can do anything.

MARIANNE
That's one big challenge.

MARIE LAVEAU
I have every faith we'll succeed. I'm the Queen of New Orleans and you've got the ear of every important man in the city.

MARIANNE
I'll help you. (beat) If you help me.

MARIE LAVEAU

What do you want Marianne?

MARIANNE

I want you to help me find my daughter.

MARIE LAVEAU

Why now?

MARIANNE

I need to know. Know that she is happy. That her life turned out better than mine.

MARIE LAVEAU

And if it is? Will you be content to leave her be?

MARIANNE

I made a decision 16 years ago. I've got to live with that.

MARIE LAVEAU

Isn't it time you forgave yourself and put it behind you?.

Marianne opens the locket.

MARIANNE

I'll help you.

They reach across the fire and shake hands.

MARIANNE

The hex?

Marie laughs.

MARIE LAVEAU

I knew you were the right woman for the job.

INT. HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Wade sits at a table with the Brigadier and several other HIGH RANKING OFFICIALS.

BRIGADIER

Are you sure this information is correct?

WADE

The messenger arrived from Ohio
last night.

BRIGADIER

And he really is Clement
Vallandigham's man?

WADE

Yes. He had this letter on him. It
says the Copperheads are in favour
of seceding.

Wade hands over a letter to the Brigadier, who scans it.

BRIGADIER

Then we have the support we need to
move forward. I'll let the Governor
know we're ready to secede from the
Union.

Wade doubles over in pain.

BRIGADIER

Are you OK?

Wade clutches his stomach, the pain cripples him. He
struggles to breathe. The pain disappears as soon as it
started.

WADE

I'm fine.

Wade waves away their concern.

BRIGADIER

Gentlemen, I'll let you all know
what our next move is. In the
meantime, enjoy yourselves.

The Brigadier grins as he flings open the French doors to the
bustling main room of the House. He makes a beeline for a
sexy blonde, who guides him to the bar.

Wade stands in the doorway, surveys the room, spots who he is
looking for. He approaches PRUDENCE, a petite but tough as
nails brunette girl.

PRUDENCE

What the hell are you doing here?

WADE

Looking for you.

PRUDENCE
You're not supposed...

WADE
Marianne knows I'm here.

Wade GRABS Prudence by the arm, steers her towards the stairs.

PRUDENCE
I don't want to...

WADE
I don't care what you want.

He pushes her up the stairs in front of him. Before he reaches the top he doubles over in pain again.

INT. MAISON BLANCHE COTTAGE, NIGHT

Marianne holds a crude looking doll in her hands. She bends it in half.

MARIANNE
So when I do this, he feels pain?

MARIE LAVEAU
Yes.

MARIANNE
Enough to kill him?

MARIE LAVEAU
If you stab the doll, he'll bleed.
If you strangle the doll, he'll
choke.

Marianne smiles.

MARIE LAVEAU
But think very carefully before you
take any action. Wade could be a
valuable source for us.

MARIANNE
He's never going to trust me.

MARIE LAVEAU
No. But he's good for other things.

MARIANNE
Like?

MARIE LAVEAU
We feed him misinformation.

MARIANNE
I'm not making any promises.

Marianne pulls on the leg of the doll then pinches it in the groin as she walks to the door.

INT. HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN - ROOM 5

Wade lies on the bed writhing in agony. Prudence steps away from the bed, doesn't try to help him. The pain subsides.

WADE
Get over here.

Prudence hesitates. Wade gets off the bed, SLAPS her, pushes her onto the bed. Wade grabs her, holds her wrists so she can hardly move.

WADE
Quit struggling. For fuck's sake
bitch keep still.

Prudence struggles. Wade SLAPS a hand over her mouth. His hand is so large it nearly covers her whole, dainty face.

WADE
Don't you dare scream, you whore.

Prudence tries to shake her head and mouth free of his hand, tries to bite him. Wade puts a gun to her head. Prudence stops struggling.

WADE
There, are you going to keep quiet?
If you make one little noise, I
will shoot you.

Prudence nods. He leans her back on the bed. He stands up, looms over her.

WADE
I want revenge on that French bitch
and you're going to help me get it.
One game of cards and my life is
over.

PRUDENCE
I won't do it.

WADE

You'll do as I tell you. You were my whore before you were hers.

PRUDENCE

I'll pay you back.

WADE

I don't want money. I want this whorehouse back. That bitch needs her comeuppance. She trusts you.

PRUDENCE

I'll never hurt Madame.

WADE

Did I say hurt? I don't want you to hurt her. I want you to kill her.

PRUDENCE

Never!

Wade strikes Prudence across the face, throws her back on the bed. They struggle but Wade pins her down.

He throws the gun on the side table, then hits her several times.

His anger turns to lust as he roughly pulls at her dress, fondles her breasts. He reaches downwards, starts to push her dress up. Prudence struggles, fights back as much as she can.

INT. HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN - MAIN ROOM

Marianne arrives back at the house. She heads for the bar.

MARIANNE

Is he still here?

FLYNN

He took Prudence upstairs about half an hour ago.

MARIANNE

What?

FLYNN

He was drunk on Old Red Eye and in no mood to take no for an answer.

MARIANNE

Dammit. Will that girl never learn? Are all the soldiers gone?

FLYNN
Most of them left after the
meetin'.

Marianne heads for her office.

FLYNN
I'm pretty sure he was carrying a
shootin' iron.

Marianne pulls the doll from her pocket, sharply twists its
arm backwards.

MARIANNE (WHISPERS)
Let's see how you shoot with a
broken arm.

INT. HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN - ROOM 5

Wade screams in pain, clutches his arm.

WADE
What did you do?

PRUDENCE
Nothing.

Wade sits up on the bed, his arm hangs limp. Prudence grabs
his damaged arm, twists it backwards. He SCREAMS, punches her
in the face with his other fist.

Prudence hits the floor as he grabs the gun from the night
stand with his uninjured arm.

WADE
What the hell is going on?

PRUDENCE
Ju ju.

She backs away from Wade.

WADE
What the fuck?

PRUDENCE
You've got ju ju.

WADE
Bullshit.

Prudence stares at him. He moves his arm, tries to hold his
gun in that hand, fails.

WADE

It's your fault. Now are you going
to do what I want?

PRUDENCE

I already told you.

WADE

And I told you.

Wade cocks the pistol. Points it at Prudence.

WADE

So what's it going to be? You or
her?

Prudence shakes her head. Wade steps forward, presses the
pistol against her head.

PRUDENCE

Her.

Wade smiles through the pain.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWOINT. HAIR PARLOUR, ROYAL STREET, FRENCH QUARTER, NEW ORLEANS, DAY

Marie Laveau presides over the parlour, filled with RICH WHITE WOMEN, all there on the pretense of getting their hair styled.

Instead they wait patiently for charms and advice from Marie herself.

She takes orders from several women, walks towards a door at the back of the room.

INT. HAIR PARLOUR, BACK ROOM, ROYAL STREET, FRENCH QUARTER, NEW ORLEANS - CONTINUOUS

Marie walks over to an altar. On the altar are the four elements: a bowl of water to represent water; incense to represent air; a bowl of graveyard dirt to represent earth; a candle flame to represent fire.

She takes several small leather bags from a pile next to the altar. She begins to stuff special herbs into the bags.

A KNOCK at the door. Marie ties one of the bag up, walks over to the door, opens it.

Her daughter and protege MARIE II, a stunning younger version of Marie, waits on the other side.

MARIE II

Sorry to disturb you Mama but there's a message from Lavinia Steele. She wants to see you.

MARIE LAVEAU

Did she say why?

MARIE II

Does she ever?

Marie laughs.

MARIE LAVEAU

For the amount of money I charge her, she can demand all she likes.

MARIE II

She sent her carriage for you.

MARIE LAVEAU

The gris-gris are on the altar. You know the spells now. Finish tying them and give them to the ladies waiting.

Marie leaves the parlour, nods to several women who still wait for their charms.

EXT. ROYAL STREET, NEW ORLEANS, DAY - CONTINUOUS

Marie Laveau exits the parlour, climbs into an opulent carriage, which then travels just four short blocks.

EXT. BOURBON STREET, NEW ORLEANS, DAY - CONTINUOUS

The carriage stops outside a palatial home that takes up most of the block.

Marie gets out of the carriage, walks up to the front door. Before she can knock, the door is opened by a HOUSE SLAVE.

INT. STEELE HOME, BOURBON STREET, NEW ORLEANS - CONTINUOUS

The house slave ushers Marie through a grand entrance into a parlour where LAVINIA STEELE, 33, wealthy Queen Bee of New Orleans society, married to esteemed Brigadier George Steele, waits for her.

Standing directly behind Lavinia's chair is her 'MAMMY', probably in her 50s but looks older from years of servitude, on hand for anything she needs.

LAVINIA

Marie.

MARIE LAVEAU

Mrs Steele. What do you need today?
A love charm? A gris-gris?

LAVINIA

Something for my husband, actually.

MARIE LAVEAU

Is he sick?

LAVINIA

Oh goodness no! He'shalthy as a horse.

MARIE LAVEAU

A love potion perhaps?

LAVINIA

Definitely not. The opposite.

MARIE LAVEAU

But why would you need that?

LAVINIA

I need to stop him desiring other women.

MARIE LAVEAU

You think he's finding pleasure with other women?

LAVINIA

I know he is. And not just the house slaves. He's been going out every night, claiming he's doing army business but I know he's been visiting that brothel on St Louis Street.

MARIE LAVEAU

Are you sure?

LAVINIA

Yes, I waited outside in the carriage.

MARIE LAVEAU

Why does that anger you?

LAVINIA

He owns the slaves. I can't do anything about he treats them. But want I him to stop him going to that whorehouse.

MARIE LAVEAU

If I give you something he may also stop desiring you.

LAVINIA

Ha! He'd have to be in love first to fall out of love with me.

MARIE LAVEAU

How do you know he wasn't just there on army business?

LAVINIA

Because he was still there three hours after the other officers left.

MARIE LAVEAU

I see... I can give you a potion to put into his drink that will curb his desire. And it will also make him tell the truth.

LAVINIA

I already know the truth.

MARIE LAVEAU

But this way you can be completely sure.

Lavinia CLAPS her hands like an excited schoolgirl.

LAVINIA

Oh, I love it! And he won't suspect a thing?

MARIE LAVEAU

Not a thing. Just have a drink ready for him when he gets home. You'll soon find out exactly what he's been up to while his desires will quickly wane.

LAVINIA

Oh Marie, what would I do without you?

Marie smiles, lets Lavinia escort her to the door, where she presses money discreetly into Marie's hand.

MARIE LAVEAU

Always at your service, Mrs Steele.

Marie leaves the house

INT. HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN - MARIANNE'S OFFICE

KNOCK at the door. Marianne seated at a desk, looks up from the paperwork she's hunched over.

MARIANNE

Enter.

Prudence opens the doors, walks in looking nervous.

PRUDENCE

I need to talk to you.

Marianne puts her pen down. She walks around the desk, takes Prudence's hands in her own.

MARIANNE

You know you can tell me anything.

PRUDENCE

It's Wade.

MARIANNE

Salud! What's he done now?

Prudence flinches at Marianne's anger.

MARIANNE

Just tell me what he's done.

PRUDENCE

He wants me to..to....

MARIANNE

It's OK *ma cherie*. I won't get mad at you.

PRUDENCE

Kill you.

MARIANNE

He wants what?

PRUDENCE

He threatened to kill me, if I didn't kill you. My life or yours, that's how he put it. He's crazy mad that you run the House now. He can't let it go.

MARIANNE

What did you tell him?

Prudence begins to cry. Marianne enfolds her in a hug.

MARIANNE

It's OK. You did the right thing coming to me. I'll take care of Wade.

PRUDENCE

He's coming back tonight.

MARIANNE

I want you off the floor for now.
Stay upstairs in one of the other
girls' rooms until I tell you
otherwise.

PRUDENCE

What are you going to do?

MARIANNE

Give Wade what he wants. *Moi*.

PRUDENCE

I can never repay you.

MARIANNE

Nonsense. There's nothing to repay.
We're a family here. We take care
of each other.

Prudence heads out of the office. Marianne goes over to her desk, pulls out the hex doll from a drawer, strokes it gently, puts it in her pocket.

INT. HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN - KITCHEN

Marianne enters the kitchen.

The COOK makes soda biscuits and pumpkin bread while TWO MINDERS enjoy some stew seated at a table at the far end, while ISABELLA, a pretty young kitchen girl of just 15, tries to flirt with them.

Isabella pulls up the hem of her gown, shows off her shapely ankles.

ISABELLA

Do you think this dress is pretty?

MINDER ONE

You wanna be careful who you go
flashing your pretty things at,
Miss Isabella.

ISABELLA

But I thought I was being
careful... careful to flash the
right man.

Cora prepares a tray for some of cook's dishes. She looks up, sees Marianne enter the kitchen but also sees Isabella pull her skirt up even further.

CORA

Isabella! Stop that. The kitchen is not the place for that, you shameless little tramp.

As the minders laugh, Isabella pulls down her skirt, sits next to cook, sulks while Marianne pulls Cora to one side.

CORA

I was just preparing a tray for the Brigadier..

Cora trails off as she see Marianne's face.

CORA

What's wrong?

MARIANNE

We have a problem.

CORA

Has one of the johns got too energetic and keeled over?

MARIANNE

It's nothing that simple, I only wish it were. It's Wade.

CORA

I knew he wouldn't let it go.

MARIANNE

He threatened Prudence.

CORA

That sonofabitch!

MARIANNE

Can you keep an eye on the floor tonight? I need you to just make sure things run smoothly down here.

CORA

Anything you need.

Marianne leans in, kisses Cora on the cheek.

MARIANNE

Thank you.

Marianne turns on her heels, heads to the back stairs as Cora picks up the tray, now laden with food, heads out of the front of the kitchen.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS

Marianne stops in front of Room 5, takes a deep breath, enters.

INT. ROOM 5 - CONTINUOUS

Marianne looks around,, sits on the edge of the bed. She takes the doll out of her pocket, turns it over and over in her hands.

She sits, waits.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Cora walks along the hallway. She stops in front of Room 9 but before she can knock on the door she is gripped with a pain in her stomach, almost drops the tray.

She doubles over in pain. She waits a few seconds for the pain to pass before she straightens up, KNOCKS on the door.

She pushes open the door. Steps into--

INT. ROOM 9 - CONTINUOUS

-- Where Brigadier GEORGE STEELE, 42, waits. Richest man in the state with a penchant for his house slaves.

He sits on the bed in a state of undress, watches as Cora walks over, puts the tray of food on a dresser.

CORA

I got your favorite. Lamb and sweet potatoes.

George grabs Cora by the waist, pulls her down onto the bed.

GEORGE STEELE

I think you know what my favorite is.

CORA

Oh I do!

The pair giggle as they kiss, their lovemaking becomes hotter, more frantic.

INT. ROOM 5 - CONTINUOUS

A KNOCK at the door. Marianne gets up, stands behind the door. She reaches, turns the doorknob, opens the door.

Wade strides into the room, looks surprised when it appears the room is empty. Marianne shuts the door behind him. He spins round, sees Marianne.

WADE
What the fuck?

MARIANNE
Expecting someone else?

WADE
That bitch Prudence.

Wade pulls out his gun, points it at Marianne.

WADE
Any last words, whore?

MARIANNE
T'as pas de couilles!

She holds up the hex doll, squeezes its neck, tighter and tighter.

Wade's face turns red. He struggles to breathe. He tries to aim the gun at Marianne. Just as Wade is about to breathe his last breath, Marianne stops squeezing the doll.

Wade catches his breath.

WADE
You spineless bitch!

Marianne holds up the doll in front of him. She puts her hand around its neck.

MARIANNE
I will do it. Now listen to me. You will leave here and never come back.

WADE
Fuck you!

She presses on the dolls neck. Wade lunges, tries to grab the doll. Marianne jumps back out of his reach as he falls to his knees, gasps for breath.

Wade shakily points the gun at her. Marianne loosens her grip on the doll.

WADE

You can't do it. You women are all the fucking same.

MARIANNE

Don't make the mistake of thinking I'm like other women.

Wade laughs.

WADE

Thinking you're better than us.

MARIANNE

Oh but we are.

Marianne squeezes the doll again. Wade gasps. He pulls the trigger, FIRES, misses Marianne by an inch.

MARIANNE

Va te faire enculer! Get out of my House before I snap your neck.

She lets go of the doll again.

WADE

You're going to regret this.

MARIANNE

Probably. But not as much as you.

Alexander Grant suddenly bursts through the door, two other men behind him.

ALEXANDER

Are you alright?

MARIANNE

I'm fine.

Alexander and the two men grapple Wade. He tries to resist but they drag him out of the room.

Marianne hastily stuffs the doll in her pocket, follows them out.

INT. HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN - TOP OF THE STAIRS

Alexander PUSHES Wade down the stairs. He falls head first, lands in a heap at the bottom. He still has hold of his gun.

Everyone stops, watches the commotion.

Alexander runs down the stairs. Before Wade can get up, he grabs him by the collar, DRAGS him across the room to the front door.

ALEXANDER

This is becoming a habit.

Wade struggles to free himself but can't.

WADE

Get your fucking hands off me.

Wade faces Marianne.

WADE

You're a dead woman walking.

MARIANNE

Don't come back.

Wade gets free of Alexander's grip, points his gun at Marianne, pulls the trigger. NOTHING.

He looks around the room, sees the Brigadier shake his head. Defeated, Wade pushes open the front door, leaves.

The Brigadier approaches Marianne.

BRIGADIER

Madame...

MARIANNE

Don't even say it Brigadier. I warned you before. I won't tolerate his kind of behaviour in here.

BRIGADIER

I understand. My apologies...

He takes Marianne's arm, together they walk toward the private back room.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE**INT. HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN - MARIANNE'S OFFICE**

Marianne sits at her desk. She stares at the hex doll on the desk in front of her. Cora bursts into the office.

CORA
Did he hurt you?

MARIANNE
He tried.

CORA
Did you use the doll?

MARIANNE
I couldn't go through with it.

CORA
You're not a killer.

MARIANNE
I almost did.

Cora steps forward, sees the doll on the desk, picks it up.

CORA
Was it scary?

MARIANNE
Not in that way. The scary part was
I felt his life in my hands and for
a moment I really wanted to do it.

CORA
But you didn't. You're not him.

Cora walks around the desk, hugs Marianne from behind.

CORA
We'll fix this.

MARIANNE
I don't want you involved in this.

CORA
Are you really so stubborn that
after all this time you won't
accept we're in this together?

MARIANNE

Cora, I don't want you being put in danger. Wade is too unpredictable.

CORA

I'm here for you. Always.

They hug again. Cora turns to head out of the office but is hit by a wave of pain.

MARIANNE

What's wrong?

CORA

I've been getting these pains.

MARIANNE

How long have you had them?

CORA

A couple of days. I think I might be pregnant.

MARIANNE

Are you sure?

CORA

No. But I'm late. I've never been late before.

MARIANNE

What do you want to do?

CORA

I don't want a baby.

MARIANNE

Slow down. Let's find out if you are actually pregnant first.

CORA

Getting pregnant wasn't part of the plan. A whorehouse is no place for a baby.

MARIANNE

If you want to leave, I could get you a little house out of the city.

CORA

This is my life now, our life. A baby wasn't part of those plans.

MARIANNE

Take more time and think about it.
You're not me.

CORA

I don't even know for sure that I'm
pregnant.

MARIANNE

I just think...

CORA

If it turns out I am, Marie Laveau
treats women for this kind of
thing. She has a potion that works
without hardly any pain. One of the
girls over at Pearl's place told me
about it.

MARIANNE

Is that really what you want?

CORA

It is.

MARIANNE

Please just take a couple of days
to think about it. That's all I
ask. Then I'll get the potion for
you.

INT. HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN - MAIN PARLOUR - LATE NIGHT

The House is empty. Marianne walks through the parlor, stops, surveys the room. She walks over to the bar, grabs a glass and a bottle.

She sits down at a table, pours herself a drink, downs it in one. She pours another.

INT. RUN DOWN CABIN ON OUTSKIRTS OF NEW ORLEANS - LATE NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

A drink is being poured. Wade sits back in a chair, downs the drink in one go. Pours another one.

Sitting opposite Wade is GABE STANTON, 48. Rough is too good a word for him.

GABE

So whatcha gonna do about her?

WADE

Hmmmmph.

GABE

How you gonna get back in there?
And what about that doll thing you
said she had?

WADE

Look, there's only one place she
coulda got that hex doll. They're
both gonna pay. No-one makes a fool
outta me twice.

Wade pours more drinks.

INT. STEELE HOME, BOURBON STREET, NEW ORLEANS, NIGHT

George Steele stumbles into his home. He throws his hat on
the stairs, makes a beeline for the parlor.

Clearing up is a young house slave girl, TULA, no older than
13.

George drunkenly grabs her, tries to kiss her. She struggles
to get away.

GEORGE

Hold still, you little nigger.

He grabs her by the arm, she pulls away from him. He SLAPS
her hard. Tula begins to CRY.

GEORGE

Shut up.

This time he strikes her so hard, she falls to the floor.
George stands over her, about to hit her again when he looks
up.

He starts back in surprise to see Lavinia standing in the
doorway.

She smiles, offers him the glass of whiskey she holds. He
hesitates, then takes it.

GEORGE

Lavinia, my dear. You didn't have
to wait up for me.

LAVINIA

I know. But I haven't seen you all day and I wanted to know how your meeting went.

Lavinia walks over to Tula, picks her up. Pushes her towards the doorway.

LAVINIA

Get yourself cleaned up.

Tula runs out of the room.

LAVINIA

George, you really need to be more careful with the house negros.

GEORGE

How dare you?

LAVINIA

All I meant was they still need to be able to work. This house doesn't clean itself.

GEORGE

Right, right.

He takes a swig of the whiskey.

GEORGE

Mmmmm. This is good.

He finishes the drink, hands the glass back to Lavinia. She watches as he slumps down on the chaise lounge.

Lavinia joins him, sits next to him but he grabs her, pulls her onto his lap.

LAVINIA

George!

GEORGE

Yes dear?

LAVINIA

Tell me about your evening.

GEORGE

It was a boring meeting about the city seceding from the Union. You wouldn't understand.

LAVINIA
Of course I would.

GEORGE
Why the sudden interest?

LAVINIA
I'm just trying to be a good wife.

GEORGE
Why?

LAVINIA
Can't a wife show an interest in
her husband's business? We never
talk any more.

GEORGE
You've never asked me about the
business before.

LAVINIA
Well if you really want to know I
was at the Pitot Plantation earlier
today and Clara was boasting about
how she knew all about the plans
for New Orleans to leave the Union.

GEORGE
That damned woman doesn't know
anything.

LAVINIA
Do you want your wife to look
stupid in company? You know how I
hate to feel or look inferior.

GEORGE
Alright, alright.

George gets sleepier, his words begin to slur.

GEORGE
It was nothing really. Just a
message that the South is getting
support from a group in the North.
They're called the Copperheads.

LAVINIA
Funny name!

GEORGE

There's nothing funny about them.
They're serious and so is their
money.

LAVINIA

Who else was at the meeting?

GEORGE

I can't tell you that!

Lavinia squirms on his lap, starts to undo the buttons on his shirt.

LAVINIA

But I want to know who was there.
They'll be telling their wives.

GEORGE

Mmmmmmm.....

George struggles to stay awake. Lavinia SLAPS him lightly across the face.

LAVINIA

George. George! Who else was there?

GEORGE

Brigadier General Preston. He's the
lead on this. A few other
Brigadiers. And the Governor.

LAVINIA

And what did you do after your
meeting?

GEORGE

I don't know what you mean?

LAVINIA

Do you go upstairs?

George GIGGLES.

LAVINIA

George!

GEORGE

I've been a naughty boy.

Lavinia pushes him away, he doesn't try to stop her. Lavinia pulls down her skirts, makes herself look presentable, like a lady again.

She looks at George, he's asleep, snores loudly. Lavinia throws him a look of disgust, storms out of the parlour.

INT. STEELE HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Lavinia stalks into the kitchen. Tula sits on a stool as the head house slave BELLE, 46, tends to her split lip and black eye.

LAVINIA
What was that little pickaninny
doing in the parlor?

BELLE
Sorry Ma'am. I sent her in there to
polish the table.

LAVINIA
I told you to keep her out of the
way.

BELLE
Yes, sorry ma'am. It won't happen
again.

LAVINIA
See that it doesn't. Or I'll beat
her myself next time.

BELLE
Yes ma'am.

Lavinia turns, abruptly leaves the kitchen.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Lavinia stop, leans against the wall at the bottom of the stairs. She takes a deep breath, chokes back tears, pulls herself together, ascends the sweeping staircase.

**EXT. BUSY STREET IN RUN DOWN QUARTER OF NEW ORLEANS - THE
NEXT DAY**

Cora stands in a doorway, watches a building opposite - a rival bordello called Pearl's. SALLY, 22, pretty but looks worn out, walks out of the alleyway next to Pearl's, crosses the street.

CORA

Sally!

Sally stops, turns in the direction of the voice. Runs over to Cora.

CORA

That potion you mentioned before.

SALLY

You mean the one I got from Marie Laveau?

CORA

Yes. Do you have any left?

SALLY

No, I used it all but she'll sell you some. Go to the parlour, she's usually there seeing those uptight rich bitches that want to spend their money on silly love charms.

CORA

Does it really work?

SALLY

I was only out of action for a day. Pearl swears by it as she doesn't want any of her girls not working.

CORA

Thanks Sally.

SALLY

I hope it works. Take care Cora.

CORA

I can't tell you how much this means to me. If there's anything I can do for you.

SALLY

Just get me a meeting with Marianne. That's all I want.

The girls briefly embrace, then walk off in different directions.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR**INT. HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN, MAIN ROOM - EARLY EVENING**

Marianne laughs, jokes with VARIOUS MEN, encourages everyone to have a good time.

She flits from table to table, takes care not to spend too long with any one man.

MARIANNE

Brigadier, you seem to be having a good night. How many hands of cards have you won already?

BRIGADIER

Five! Will you join us. I hear you are practiced in cards yourself.

MARIANNE

You know the rules of the house. Beside, I'd rather you spend your money in other ways!

BRIGADIER

Your honesty is refreshing, Madame. If only our wives could be as straightforward and candid as you, our lives would be a lot easier!

MARIANNE

I'll take that as a compliment. And the room is ready whenever you are for your meeting.

BRIGADIER

You are an angel.

Brigadier Preston takes Marianne's hand, kisses it. She smiles at him, then walks over to the barman Bill.

MARIANNE

How's Cora doing? Do you know if she's upstairs.

BILL

Yes, she came down earlier looking for you but then Charlie Miller came in. He threw \$10 down on the bar, so Cora went upstairs with him.

MARIANNE

When she comes back down, tell her
I'm in my office.

As Marianne begins to walk away, THREE MEN burst through the front door with their guns drawn.

1ST GUNMAN

Madame Levant. Where is she?

MARIANNE

I am here. What do you want?

Marianne walks forward towards the man, as several men in the House jump up from their seats, drawing their guns including Alexander. It becomes a standoff.

Marianne stands inbetween the two groups of men, who face each other.

MARIANNE

I asked you what you want.

2ND GUNMAN

We're looking for Wade Buchanan. We know he came here.

MARIANNE

Wade knows he's not welcome here.

2ND GUNMAN

He told us he was coming here. Now he's missing.

MARIANNE

He was here but now he's probably lying drunk somewhere. Have you tried Pearl's across town? I hear he likes it a little more vulgar these days.

As the 1st Gunman steps towards Marianne, a gun is put to the back of his head.

Confederate soldier CAL WILKERSON, 38, handsome in a rugged way, holds the gun.

CAL

You heard the lady. I think it's best you leave now.

1ST GUNMAN

We want to know what happened.

CAL

If Madame says she doesn't know, I believe her and so do about 50 other men in here. You want to take your chances with them too?

The 1st Gunman waves his gun at Marianne.

1ST GUNMAN

This isn't over.

The three gunmen walk backwards, keep their guns up until they back out of the door. The room bursts back into life.

Marianne walks over to Cal, holds out her hand.

MARIANNE

Thank you so much. Please have a drink on the house, Mr.... ?

Cal ignores her outstretched hand.

CAL

Major Cal Wilkerson. I've just been garrisoned here with my regiment. I don't want a drink but I'll take an explanation.

MARIANNE

An explanation? For what?

CAL

Putting my life on the line for you.

MARIANNE

I didn't ask you to.

CAL

No, you didn't. So you know this Wade guy?

MARIANNE

Not here. My office.

Marianne escorts Cal through the main room towards her office.

Alexander watches them from the other side of the room.

INT. HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN, MARIANNE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Marianne stands at a bureau, pours two drinks. She turns, offers one to Cal, he shakes his head while she sips hers.

CAL

So what was that all about?

MARIANNE

It's really none of your concern. I can take care of myself.

CAL

What if they come back?

MARIANNE

I know their type, they won't. And Wade won't set foot in here again.

CAL

Why?

MARIANNE

Because he was left completely humiliated.

CAL

How?

MARIANNE

He lost something he valued. That's all you need to know.

Marianne turns away, pours herself another drink, downs it, turns back to him.

CAL

You still need to be careful.

MARIANNE

I know what I'm doing.

CAL

I can see from tonight you know how to handle yourself.

MARIANNE

I want to thank you for stepping in. Maybe you'd like to spend some time with one of the girls?

CAL

Not really.

MARIANNE

We have something for everyone.

CAL

What about you?

MARIANNE
I don't do that anymore.

CAL
You need some attention.

MARIANNE
I get all the attention I need.

CAL
I'm sure you do. So what's your story?

Marianne laughs.

MARIANNE
Si vous saviez!

CAL
Pardon?

MARIANNE
Something to tell another time.

Cal puts a hand on her arm, pulls her towards him. He's just put his lips on hers when KATY, 19, bursts through the door without knocking.

Marianne moves out of Cal's reach.

KATY
Madame!

MARIANNE
Mon dieu! You know the rules. No-one enters my office without knocking.

KATY
I'm so sorry Madame but it's Cora.

MARIANNE
What's wrong?

KATY
She needs you.

MARIANNE
Maybe we can continue this another evening?

Marianne dashes out, leaves Cal standing in the middle of the room. He shakes his head but has a smile on his face.

INT. HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN - CORA'S ROOM

Cora writhes on the bed in agony. Marianne enters the room, touches Cora's forehead. Katy enters the room, stands by the doorway.

MARIANNE

Katy, go and get me some hot water
and towels. Use the back stairs.

Katy leaves the room. Marianne pulls back the covers, checks Cora over, who just groans.

MARIANNE

Cora?

There's no response. Marianne lifts the bedsheets, checks there's no blood, then grabs a glass of brandy on the night stand. She gently sits on the edge of the bed.

MARIANNE

Cora. It's Marianne. I'm here. It's
going to be alright.

Another wave of pain grips Cora, Marianne leans over, pulls her up into a half sitting position. She gently puts the glass to Cora's lips, tips it up.

Cora finally comes around, the pain briefly subsides. She opens her eyes, looks at Marianne.

MARIANNE

Cora, did you take anything without
telling me? Why didn't you wait?

CORA

I didn't take anything.

Cora grabs Marianne's hands.

CORA

Help me.

MARIANNE

Let me fetch the doctor.

CORA

No! He will just give me that damn
opium he gives to everyone for
pain. I need Marie Laveau.

Cora tries to sit up, swing her legs out of the bed but she's hit with another wave of pain, tries not to cry out. Marianne gently pushes her back against the pillows.

Katy returns with a bowl of water and towels. Marianne wets one of the clothes, gently wipes Cora's face.

MARIANNE

You're no in condition to go anywhere. Katy, stay with her, get her anything she wants.

Marianne squeezes Cora's hand, leaves the room.

INT. HOUSE OF THE RISING SUN - MARIANNE'S OFFICE

Marianne gathers her things, Isabella walks in.

MARIANNE

What is it Isabella?

ISABELLA

I want to work upstairs

MARIANNE

I don't have time for this right now.

Isabella pouts like the teenager she is.

MARIANNE

We've been over this so many times before, you're too young. You're only 15.

ISABELLA

I know what goes on, and you were only 14 when you became a courtesan. Everyone says how I remind them of you.

MARIANNE

When I started it was a different time and a different place. I know you want to feel like you fit in and you do. Your time will come. I will teach you everything I know, just not yet.

ISABELLA

When?

MARIANNE

Isabella I don't have time for this.

ISABELLA

But when?

MARIANNE

You turn 16 in a few weeks, so
we'll start with some basics but no
sex!

Marianne sweeps past Isabella, leaves the girl with a grin on her face.

EXT. MAISON BLANCHE COTTAGE - NIGHT

Marianne steps out her buggy in front of the house, takes a minute to look around, walks up to the front door. Before she can knock the door opens.

Marie Laveau steps aside to let Marianne in.

INT. MAISON BLANCHE COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Marianne walks into Marie's house. Next to a table are Tula, Belle and Marie II. Marie II tends to Tula's injuries. The young girl flinches now and then.

MARIANNE

What happened?

MARIE LAVEAU

She was simply in the wrong place
at the wrong time.

MARIANNE

Why?

MARIE LAVEAU

It's the cost all slaves encounter
at some point. It don't matter if
they're field niggers or house
niggers.

MARIANNE

Will she be ok?

MARIE LAVEAU

This time, yes.

Marie goes over to Tula, takes her face in her hands. Smiles kindly at her. She looks at Marie II.

MARIE LAVEAU

Marie, take her into the kitchen.

BELLE

I don't know how to thank you.

MARIE LAVEAU

Just look after her.

Marie II ushers Belle and Tula through a doorway into another room. Marie gestures for Marianne to sit. She hesitates, then sits down.

MARIE LAVEAU

Now you see why we have to act.

MARIANNE

I had no idea.

MARIE LAVEAU

These women are beaten every day, sometimes for just looking the wrong way. But you didn't come here for a lesson in slavery.

MARIANNE

I'm sorry to trouble you at this hour. One of my girls is very sick.

MARIE LAVEAU

She will be sick before she is better. Her body is purging what she doesn't want.

MARIANNE

I need you to make it better.

MARIE LAVEAU

Your girl or the situation?

MARIANNE

What do you mean?

MARIE LAVEAU

You know better than that.

MARIANNE

If she wanted this baby I would support her. But she doesn't want it and that's her choice.

MARIE LAVEAU

I'm not judging anyone. Why me and not the doctor?

MARIANNE

Cora believes your healing potion will help her.

MARIE LAVEAU

And what do you believe?

MARIANNE

That you're a formidable woman. And that Cora knows what she's doing.

MARIE LAVEAU

Your loyalty and treatment of your girls is your most admirable quality. Be careful, it may also be your downfall.

MARIANNE

What do you mean?

MARIE LAVEAU

Your loyalty runs deep. Just be careful you trust the right people.

MARIANNE

Like you?

MARIE LAVEAU

We can trust each other. Remember what you promised?

Marie goes over to a chest in the corner on the room. Her snake Zombi lies on top.

Out of the chest she gets a bag, begins to drop several ingredients into it.

MARIE LAVEAU

Have you thought any more about our deal?

MARIANNE

Yes. I said I would help you and I will. Brigadier Preston has started holding meetings at the House.

MARIE LAVEAU

You're sure you can do this?

MARIANNE

Yes. They owe me for Wade.

MARIE LAVEAU

I know.

MARIANNE

It was me or him.

MARIE LAVEAU

You did what you had to do to keep your girls safe. No-one can blame you for that.

Marie walks over, lays her hand on Marianne's shoulder then hands over a small bag.

MARIE LAVEAU

Now, you must add all of these ingredients to a cup of hot water. Let them brew for a good ten minutes, then get the girl to drink all of it. If she's pregnant, it will do what she wishes. If she's not, it won't do her any other harm.

MARIANNE

That's it?

MARIE LAVEAU

Yes, it's just plain old herbs. She will have a little pain a few hours after drinking the remedy but by this time tomorrow, she will be back on her feet.

MARIANNE

Thank you.

MARIE LAVEAU

Now, are you going to tell me why else you are here?

MARIANNE

How...?

Marie just looks at her.

MARIANNE

The feelings both scared and excited me.

MARIE LAVEAU

And?

MARIANNE

Holding his life in my hands. The power it gave me. I've not felt power over a man like that since the French court.

MARIE LAVEAU

And you enjoyed it?

MARIANNE

Yes. That's what scares me. How much I want it.

MARIE LAVEAU

You can have that power again.

MARIANNE

How?

MARIE LAVEAU

By taking control of your life. By doing the right thing. Together we can use our power to...

BANG, BANG, BANG.

VOICE (OS)

Open this fucking door.

Marie shakes her head at Marianne, gestures for her to get behind her.

EXT. MAISON BLANCHE COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Wade and Gabe stand at the front door, guns drawn. Wade throws open the door. They both try to step over the threshold but something stops them.

Red brick dust forms a line across the doorway.

Wade FIRES his gun. The bullet appears to hit an invisible wall in the doorway, drops to the floor by his feet.

WADE

What the fuck?

He fires again, again. The same thing happens.

INT. MAISON BLANCHE COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Marie steps forward, her arms raised, her snake Zombi now wrapped around her left arm.

MARIE LAVEAU

Spirit guides, connect my ethereal cord with Wade Buchanan. May we be one and the same in thought and spirit.

Marie steps forward.

EXT. MAISON BLANCHE COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Wade tries to flee but appears stuck to the spot.

INT. MAISON BLANCHE COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Marie moves towards the door.

MARIE LAVEAU

When I walk, he will walk with me.
When I move, he will move with me.
I thank you, spirit guides, for helping me. May you make the cord between me and Wade strong like the chains of a prisoner.

Marie stands in front of Wade, just the doorway separates them. She raises her left arm, flings it to the side.

EXT. MAISON BLANCHE COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Wade's gun flies out of his hand, lands at his feet. Gabe turns, flees into the night. Wade is still rooted to the spot.

INT. MAISON BLANCHE COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Marie reaches forward with her left hand, Zombi hisses right in Wade's face. He looks petrified but can do nothing.

MARIE LAVEAU

Oh dear Mother, I come to you from the pains I have suffered through the work of my enemies. Oh dear Mother, I come to you to render them helpless to hurt me and others that fall victim to their evil spirits.

Marie CLAPS her hands.

EXT. MAISON BLANCHE COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Wade's eyes go blank, he's in a zombie-like state.

INT. MAISON BLANCHE COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Marie takes one step back. Throws her arms in the air.

MARIE LAVEAU

You are full of selfishness and
mean of mind. Go forth and suffer
the pains of the body and the mind.

Marie CLAPS her hands again.

EXT. MAISON BLANCHE COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

Wade bends, picks up the gun. He turns it towards himself.

INT. MAISON BLANCHE COTTAGE - CONTINUOUS

BANG. The sound of gunfire. Marianne flinches while Marie takes a step backwards.

MARIANNE

What the hell was that?

MARIE LAVEAU

The first step.

END OF ACT FOUR