

VOY LU

A TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY PORTRAIT

WRITTEN BY BRADY CORBET



in 65mm

'-it is difficult enough to acquire fame. It is impossible to change its nature once you've acquired it.'

- Ayn Rand

'I'm perpetually lonely -- I'm half living my life between reality and fantasy at all times.'

- Lady Gaga

'Any society based on domination supports and condones violence.'

- bell hooks

'What's missing from pop music is danger.'

- Prince

INT. LIVING ROOM - HOLIDAY MORNING - 1990

VIDEO FOOTAGE -

Open in a dark hallway. Someone off-camera fusses with the video settings as they walk down a corridor towards a family gathering.

At the center of everyone's attention we find a girl at four years old. She wears a set of cowboy boots and a red cowboy hat. She stretches, practices aerobics. Her hair is teased and wild.

Another young girl who looks nearly identical sits off to the side.

Despite the verbose nature of the text, a **NARRATOR** speaks over the image in an unaffected tone.

NARRATOR

Celeste was born in America in 1986. Considering her parent's background, education, and socioeconomic status - being on the losing side of "Reaganomics" - the name of Latin origin seemed an especially poetic choice. It carved her out some pre-determined destination; a route which to travel by.

She performs a sort of clumsy square dance in front of where her grandfather and uncle play a duet and sing at a Casio keyboard.

OFF-CAMERA VOICE

Celeste, look at me. Look at the camera.

She ignores the request.

NARRATOR

-and many years before CE-LE-STE rolled off the cultural tongue like a principled anecdote one senses they were born knowing; she might not have been described as all that special or conspicuously talented, however, she did possess that proverbial "something" which on occasion captured the attention of her teachers and young peers.

A few other family members cheer her on, laughing and gay, but CELESTE is lost, staring at her feet trying not to trip in her stiff new boots.

OFF-CAMERA VOICE
Darling, look at me. Look up.

NARRATOR
Despite what naysayers or haters later perceived of her ingenuity, she was actually a very savvy businesswoman. In the beginning, she was kind and full of grace, and at least she wrote her own lyrics; no one could take that away from her.

The YOUNG GIRL finally acknowledge's the OFF-CAMERA VOICE. Her eyes are blue and piercing. Her expression is possessed.

OFF-CAMERA VOICE
Can you sing us the song you sang to me in the car?

She doesn't reply but her gaze remains locked on the lens.

FADE TO BLACK:

A BEAT OF SILENCE, THEN...

A booming orchestral score chugs, building towards a grand swooning movement...

BLACK fades and gives way to a **rush of color**, shades of violet and cyan.

The NARRATOR's voice now fights to be heard over the increasingly cacophonous sound. The shape of the recording evolves into something like a bad radio transmission.

NARRATOR
She would be 13 going on 14 years old in the year 2000, the dawn of the new millennium.

INSERT TITLE:

VOX LUX

Finally, the symphony begins to mimic the simpler chord progressions of a contemporary pop song.

INSERT TITLE:

ACT I

Pop music overtakes the soundtrack.

INT. FAMILY ROOM BASEMENT - EVENING - 1999

WIDE ON -

A music video glows off a television box hinged to the ceiling.

An empty treadmill is on at full-speed.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - EVENING

A SERIES OF TABLEAUS -

WIDE ON -

A row of middle-class residences line a quiet neighborhood street.

The mood is relentlessly sombre. An ominous dark blue hue tints at dusk.

A few street lamps turn on with their timers and light pours out living room windows from the television sets nestled inside.

EXT. TOWN MALL - EVENING

MEDIUM ON -

Street lamps buzz and after some time turn on in staggered sets illuminating the mall lot. A few kids hang out smoking by the entrance

EXT. FAST FOOD CHAINS - EVENING

CLOSE ON -

One of the restaurant's rotating signs.

NEW ANGLE ON -

Two different food chains compete for attention situated just across from one another.

A black SUV pulls away from the drive-thru.

EXT. FOOTHILLS - LATER

A SERIES OF ANGLES -

The SUV speeds fast across the landscape, a bad omen.

It's darker out with every new angle.

EXT. SCHOOL - NIGHT

SUPER WIDE ON -

A high school campus at night. Heaps of kids step out of their parents' cars. There's an event on.

The SUV enters frame and the composition adjusts slightly to the left compensating for the vehicle's movement.

The distance, the quality of light - it's sci-fi.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - NIGHT

It's New Year's eve.

LONG LENS ON -

The camera meticulously pans the room. A middle school cafeteria's been set up as a makeshift dance hall.

Teens dance a bit provocatively with one another. A few grind up and down each other's thighs. They are having a great time. The energy is infectious, intoxicating.

After some time, a fight seems to break out for no apparent reason. The music is too loud to make out anything specific of the conflict.

An adult supervisor, **MS. DWYER**, steps in to break up the fight.

One **YOUNG MAN** is left in tears. He seems deeply ashamed.

MS. DWYER leans to him, putting an affectionate hand on his shoulder. The kid brushes it off and we pan with him as he exits by himself.

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

PAN RIGHT -

The **YOUNG MAN** steps out and walks across the lot.

EXT. HIGHWAY - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON -

We track with the boy for an extended period of time. He quivers and heaves deep visible breaths into the cold night air.

He hums a tune. After a while **some light orchestra joins in** but before it can develop into much of anything, a hard cut to-

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - LATER

The students chant!

STUDENTS

10! 9! 8! 7! 6! 5! 4! 3! 2--

Before the midnight kiss --

INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING 2000

MEDIUM ON -

MS. DWYER stands near the front door of her classroom welcoming students.

STUDENT
Good morning, Ms. Dwyer.

MS. DWYER
Welcome back. How was *break*?

STUDENT
Fine, thanks.

Kids file in pulling off winter jackets and taking their seats off-screen. CELESTE walks by unnoticed.

Another student, THERESE, stops to chat with MS. DWYER.

THERESE
Morning.

SFX: The bell rings.

MS. DWYER
Happy New Year. Did you change your hair, Therese?

THERESE
My sister cut it. She's a hairdresser.

MS. DWYER
Does she work in town? I've been wanting a cut like that.

THERESE
(flattered)
Really? She lives out of state. She was visiting us for the holidays but I can let you know when she's back.

MS. DWYER
Would you mind?

THERESE
Sure, I can.

MS. DWYER walks over to her desk and sorts through a few papers.

MS. DWYER
 (enthusiastic)
 Welcome back, everyone. Did you
 have a good break?

A few reply "yes."

MS. DWYER (CONT'D)
 I got some news yesterday about our
 computer appeal.

EVAN
 What is it?

MS. DWYER regards her watch.

MS. DWYER
 I want to wait and share once
 everyone is here. We are just
 waiting on Adam and Elyse.

EVAN
 Probably be awhile.

MS. DWYER
 Why?

EVAN murmurs something to the kid next to him.

MS. DWYER (CONT'D)
 Evan, whatever you're saying to
 him, save it for after class. Let's
 please not start the year at odds.

THERESE speaks up.

THERESE
 I saw Adam 15 minutes ago.

MS. DWYER
 Okay, then we'll wait.

STUDENT 2
 Are they giving us desktops?

MS. DWYER
 I said we'll wait --

The YOUNG MAN from the school dance opens the door
 interrupting the flow of conversation. MS. DWYER turns to
 address him...

YOUNG MAN
 Excuse me.

MS. DWYER

Yes?

He asserts himself.

YOUNG MAN

My name is Cullen Active.

MS. DWYER

What?

YOUNG MAN

My name is Cullen Active.

MS. DWYER

Yes, Cullen, I know.

The YOUNG MAN nimbly moves a handgun from the inner part of his jacket and **shoots MS. DWYER in the stomach** in a single shot.

The class shrieks and rush in a panic towards the back of the class.

One girl sits frozen in her seat.

CLOSE ON -

A light smatter of blood adorns **CELESTE's** face. Her mouth slacks agape.

YOUNG MAN (O.S.)

Celeste?

Extended beat.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

Celeste, go stand with the others.

CELESTE doesn't move a muscle.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

Please, Celeste.

She blinks.

CELESTE

Is she breathing-

YOUNG MAN (O.S.)

(deliberate)

No.

(MORE)

YOUNG MAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Celeste, I need you to step away
 from the windows because in a few
 minutes there will be an explosion.

There's an audible gasp from the other students. One girl
 begs off-camera.

GIRL
 (completely distressed)
*What are you doing?! (beat) Why
 are you doing this?*

BACK TO -

CULLEN, the YOUNG MAN, steps further inside revealing a
 machine gun.

Everyone screams.

CULLEN struggles lifting the heavy firearm but after a few
 moments manages to fire it off at the ceiling. Debris falls
 into the room.

CELESTE (O.S.)
 Stop!

BACK TO CLOSE-UP ON CELESTE -

CELESTE (CONT'D)
 Please. Please stop. I am
 standing, I'll stand.

CELESTE stands and camera booms up with her, accommodating
 her movement.

Focus is shallow as she decides to turn her back on CULLEN
 and approach the group. Finally she reaches the others and
 turns around.

INT. AXIS OF SCHOOL HALLWAYS - MOMENTS LATER

Kids flood the hallways in terror. Adults hover over them
 trying their best to coordinate a safe exit.

EXT. SCHOOL - MOMENTS LATER

Several kids hang from the second story of the school
 lowering themselves to safety.

EXT. FOOTHILLS - MOMENTS LATER

SUPER WIDE ON -

From a distance, among the foothills, the campus is peaceful.

After some time, **a car explodes** in the parking lot.

INT. CLASSROOM - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON -

CELESTE's expression falls between a state of shock and grace... MS. DWYER's class is evermore hysterical.

CELESTE

Cullen.

CULLEN sounds as if he might be crying now.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Cullen, please let us go.

YOUNG MAN (O.S.)

I killed plenty of people. I can't now.

CELESTE

Please.

CELESTE blinks a tear.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Please at least let everyone else out of here and I'll stay here with you.

YOUNG MAN (O.S.)

What are we going to do?

A moment passes before some words fall from Celeste's mouth...

CELESTE

We'll pray together.

She turns to comfort the girl next to her.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Shh... It's going to be okay,--

A round of shots light up the screen and CELESTE is shot through the side of her neck. She drops out of frame with all of her weight in a loud thud.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - MOMENTS LATER

Officers cautiously file in according to a well-coordinated protocol.

OFFICER

Clear.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAYS - MOMENTS LATER

STEADICAM ON -

A SWAT team who seem to have entered the building from another entrance make their way down the corridor.

SFX: We hear each voice as if over a police radio. It's disorienting and does not always correspond with the image as there are additional officers coming over the feed.

They splinter off and check room after room for survivors. The sequence is relentless, unsettling, redundant.

SWAT 1

Clear.

They push down further.

SWAT 1 (CONT'D)

Clear.

A new voice interjects over the radio.

OFF-CAMERA OFFICER

Request for immediate medical assistance. We have seven kids here, four in critical condition, not responding, three dead in the south-facing corridor's girl's bathroom, 1st floor.

Further, into the next room.

SWAT 1

Clear.

Further again, into the next room.

SWAT 2
Clear on the left.

SWAT 1 enters the next door.

SWAT 1
Christ. I have three bodies,
fatally-wounded, adults, 1 female,
2 male, room 111.

SWAT 2
We'll come back. Keep pushing.

SWAT 3
Shooter and hostages are last
reported in the wing overhead...
Stairs are coming up on the right.

We follow the team to the right and all the way up the stairs.

On the second floor now, the team checks room 211.

SWAT 1
Clear.

They move on to room 212 and open the door.

SWAT 3
(voice cracks in agony)
Oh no. Oh, no no no no.

MS. DWYER's class appears dead. They lie piled on top of each other in the back of the class.

CULLEN is also dead where he previously stood. There's blood absolutely everywhere.

Several students moan at the sound of the SWAT team. Several members of the team rush to their aid.

SWAT 3 (CONT'D)
(to the students)
We're going to get you out of here.
We're here to help.

SWAT 2 speaks into his radio.

SWAT 2
Room 212, second floor, east-facing
corridor, suspect is deceased.
Several hostages are still alive,
critically injured.

EXT. AERIAL VIEW OF THE SCHOOL - LATER

SFX: Berlioz's choral piece "La Damnation de Faust" rings out...

The rich orchestral score swells over the view of the school from a helicopter.

Bold FRONT CREDITS in primary hues roll up over the image in a scroll.

INT. AMBULANCE - LATER

CREDITS SCROLL continues over the following...

SUPER WIDE ANGLE, HANDHELD ON -

CELESTE is partially wrapped in foil, upside down on the gurney. An oxygen mask covers her face.

The scene is frantic. Paramedics hover over her body.

PARAMEDIC

Celeste, you're doing so good. You just keep breathing, honey. You're gonna feel a pinch at the base of your spine.

The piece of music Cullen hummed as he walked home alone before reprises over a NEW ANGLE ON CELESTE.

ULTRA SLOW MOTION -

She seems to hum along underneath the mask.

INT. REHABILITATION CENTER - DAY

AN EXTENDED SERIES OF VÉRITÉ STYLE CLOSE-UPS -

Victims of the massacre exercise in pained, deliberate movements. A few weeks have passed.

Some victims seem more adapted to their new circumstances than others.

ANGLE ON -

CELESTE's neck is heavily bandaged. She slowly limps across the space with her **MOTHER** and **PHYSICAL THERAPIST** at her side.

CELESTE'S MOTHER looks like she hasn't slept in weeks. CELESTE suddenly stops.

CELESTE'S MOTHER

Tell us if you're going to be sick again.

CELESTE

I'm sorry...

CELESTE'S MOTHER

Don't be sorry.

PHYSICAL THERAPIST

I've seen much worse. What are you feeling now?

CELESTE

I feel like I'm on a boat.

PHYSICAL THERAPIST

Nausea won't subside?

CELESTE

It's not just that. I just feel like I'm spinning. You think it's in my head?

PHYSICAL THERAPIST

I don't think it's in your head at all. I just don't think this has to do with the spinal injury. Are your ears ringing?

CELESTE

I need to sit.

CELESTE'S MOTHER

I'll get your chair.

CELESTE's MOTHER leaves CELESTE who breathes hard.

PHYSICAL THERAPIST

Take another step with me while we wait for your mom.

CELESTE takes another pained step.

Moments later she returns with a wheelchair.

CELESTE'S MOTHER

Sit, my love.

CELESTE sits sluggishly.

CELESTE
Where's dad and Eleanor?

CELESTE'S MOTHER
They went to get us some food.

PHYSICAL THERAPIST
Some of the other kids have
complained about ringing in their
ears from the gun blasts. I'll
talk to your doctor.

INT. LAB ROOM - NIGHT

CELESTE's body glides into a CAT scan. Her skin appears translucent underneath the violet lamp. Here, she looks like a cyborg.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

CELESTE's older sister, **ELEANOR** (16), lies entangled in CELESTE's embrace. She cries for a long time holding onto her sister tight.

The image is a kind of modern *chiaroscuro*; so dark that it resembles something like a Bill Henson photograph.

ELEANOR
I'm so sorry I was sick. I should
have been there for you. I'm so
grateful you're alive. I think I
would have died - or just killed
myself. I don't think I could have
standed it. I'm here now and I am
never going to leave you - ever.

CELESTE cries now too, smiles, and then breaks into a fit of laughter.

CELESTE
Oh, God, Ellie. I think I've done
something terrible.

ELEANOR's face wrinkles in anguish.

ELEANOR
It's not your fault. What more
could you have done? You're safe
with me.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - AFTERNOON

CELESTE lies in bed with a travel CASIO keyboard on her lap. She plays with various settings and sound FX - future sounds, rainforest reverb.

NEW ANGLE ON -

ELEANOR reads a magazine at the end of the hospital bed. Her FATHER reads a book in a chair. Magazine clippings are taped all around CELESTE'S bed. Take-out containers and fast food bags additionally litter the scene.

A nurse enters...

NURSE

Some news people are here and are requesting an interview.

CELESTE'S FATHER

Don't look at me. It's up to her.

CELESTE stops playing her keyboard...

CELESTE

I don't want anyone to see me like this.

ELEANOR

You look fine.

CELESTE looks at ELEANOR...

CELESTE

Can you talk to them?

ELEANOR

Me? What am I supposed to say? I wasn't there.

CELESTE

Just tell them how sorry we are for everyone that died.

ELEANOR looks at their dad.

CELESTE'S FATHER

(shrugs)
Call mom.

ELEANOR

Are you sure, Celeste?

CELESTE nods...

NURSE

I can take you to a telephone.

ELEANOR gets off the bed and exits the room with the NURSE.

CELESTE looks at her FATHER.

CELESTE

I think I want to try and sleep for
awhile.

He immediately stands, taking the hint.

CELESTE'S FATHER

Yeah, I was going to try and take
your mom out and get her mind off
things... You need anything more
than the piano? I got a guitar in
the basement. I can teach you to
play it.

CELESTE

Thanks but it's hard for me to tilt
my head down.

CELESTE'S FATHER

All right, I'll see you in the
morning. I love you to the moon
and back.

CELESTE

I know. Me too. Please don't be
sad.

CELESTE'S FATHER

I'm not sad. I'm relieved.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

ELEANOR lies with her head on CELESTE who plays a melody on
her keyboard. Celeste seems to have something in mind but
struggles to find the right note.

They begin to hum...

SLOW FRONTAL PUSH IN ON CELESTE -

The light from the hospital television set illuminates the
darkness of her concerned expression.

For a flash, she suddenly appears quite *iconic*.

INT. PARK - NIGHT

One hundred persons walk in silence carrying candles beneath their chins.

LOUDSPEAKER VOICE (O.S.)

Two sophomore students, Vanessa Cooke and Elyse Hanlin, remain in critical condition. Hold them especially in your prayers and please join me in a moment of silence.

ANGLE ON -

CELESTE'S MOTHER and FATHER who push CELESTE in a wheelchair. ELEANOR walks to the side.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

THREE QUARTER PROFILE ON -

FATHER CLIFF preaches in front of his congregation. He stops to cry occasionally without affectation. His tone is direct and sincere. He breathes evenly trying to gather himself.

FATHER CLIFF

You'll have to excuse me. These are not *only* tears of profound sorrow but of *profound joy*, as well, because I see so many young faces here before me whom we helplessly feared for many hours forever lost.

The audience is audibly moved by his frankness.

FATHER CLIFF (CONT'D)

We are here to honor your heroism and mourn the loss of your loved ones and peers. First, I have a difficult request to put forth but as I see it, it's the only way we might begin to move forward...

Heaving sobs ring out off-screen.

FATHER CLIFF (CONT'D)

Ferocious anger and hatred caused this and we can't have any more anger around us this minute so I must ask you to include the perpetrator of these vicious attacks and his parents in our prayers tonight, as they too lost their child in January.

ANGLE ON -

Photographers stand at the side aisles. Bulbs flash again and again.

FATHER CLIFF (CONT'D)

By this way of healing prayer, victims of the tragedy will be released from their own grief and rage in the afterlife, and they shall live forever in our hearts. Lives lost too young here on earth but with whom we all anxiously wait to be reunited. They walk with God now...

A SERIES OF PORTRAITS -

VARIOUS PARISHIONERS weep... The crowd largely dons their school colors and team jerseys.

ANGLE ON -

We finally reach ELEANOR and CELESTE who sit quietly like a couple of nuns with their eyes reverently closed.

FATHER CLIFF (CONT'D)

We'll be inviting Ridgewood students to take my place - share their thoughts, memories, feelings with all of you. To begin, please join me in welcoming a very brave young woman to the piano. She has prepared a piece of music for us all tonight. Celeste?

CELESTE uses a set of crutches to get herself to a piano that's been set up with a microphone. She slides onto the bench and clears her throat... She really looks very beautiful. A necklace covers her bandaged neck.

Everyone claps for her in support.

CELESTE

(into the mic)

Uh, I tried to prepare something to say but I couldn't really put my feelings into words exactly so I thought I'd try and do this instead. My sister, Ellie, helped me.

She starts meekly but after the first verse, her voice begins to rise up emotively.

CLOSE ON -

CELESTE....

CELESTE (CONT'D)

(sings)

*Don't be afraid father, you raised us well.
I heard your voice cry out with the day's first bell.
And the bells tolled and the sirens rang o-ut
I can feel my chest tightening,
squeezing on-to my he-art*

The music moves through her. Whatever of it's clumsiness, the performance is undeniably moving.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

(shouts, sings)

*So, if fear is like fire then I'm burning
AND if it's fear you desire to locate **in me**, then I'm turning right back around and **RUNNING INTO THE TWENT-I-ETH CENTURY**
So now I'm asking you, am I allowed to ever sleep again?
Am I allowed to ever dream again?
How may I care-less-ly ever live care-free again?*

SLOW PUSH IN ON -

A news crew adjusts their lens for a close-up.

NARRATOR

At the advice of her first ever producer, Celeste would change the lyric from "I" to "we," and shortly thereafter, the entire country fell into step with her sentiment.

(MORE)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

It was not her grief anymore, it was their grief; no longer merely her experience, they reclaimed it as their own.

We push towards them, they push towards us.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The song would become an anthem for the nation. Simply put, it was a hit.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DAY

A SERIES OF BOLD, ICONIC SHOTS OF THE CITY. The score swells and pulses.

LONG LENS ON -

Bright-eyed CELESTE is walking again. She and ELEANOR traverse the avenue next to an **unkempt rock and roll MANAGER**.

Focus favors CELESTE as they walk amongst pedestrians. She looks like a star.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - LATER

VÉRITÉ HANDHELD ON -

CELESTE stands in the mic room next to a SESSION BASSIST.

CELESTE

(sings)

*Don't be afraid father, you raised us well.
I heard your voice cry out with the day's first bell.
And the bells tolled and the sirens rang o-ut
I can feel my chest tightening,
squeezing on-to my he-art*

CELESTE stops and swallows.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Sorry. I'm getting thrown off from hearing my own voice.

ANGLE ON -

MUSIC PRODUCER in the control room.

MUSIC PRODUCER
You want me to pull that out?

CELESTE
If you can do that, thanks.

MUSIC PRODUCER
(mutters)
No problem.

BACK TO -

CELESTE & the SESSION BASSIST

SESSION BASSIST
You like when I come down to a G
for the refrain?

CELESTE
No, not that. I thought that was
D, sorry.

SESSION BASSIST
That is the D, just next to it.

CELESTE
Oh! Then yes, I like the G.

ANGLE ON -

A team of Scandinavian producers, ELEANOR, several Heads of
Department, and CELESTE's new MANAGER stand at the control
board.

THE MANAGER hits a button so she can hear him.

THE MANAGER
you wanna step out for a moment,
get some fresh air?

INT. RECORDING STUDIO HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

HANDHELD ON-

THE MANAGER paces around CELESTE with ferocious, anxious
energy.

He stammers, stutters, hammers through the language...

THE MANAGER
you okay in there, you in over your
head?

CELESTE

No, I'm good.

THE MANAGER

remember what I told you at your
parent's place, the first time i
saw you?

CELESTE blinks, not sure where he's going with this.

THE MANAGER (CONT'D)

you just gotta shut your eyes and
pretend like you're in your
bedroom. you're just dancing in
your bedroom and no one is looking
at you. you don't have a care in
the world

CELESTE

Yeah.

THE MANAGER

(smiles)

you gotta tell me if i'm not making
sense, okay? you got your head on
so straight that half the time i
forget you're a kid. it's okay if
you don't understand something and
you need me to explain, okay?

CELESTE

That's okay.

THE MANAGER

you gotta tune all these people out
and just sing from your gut cause i
know you're trying to help out in
there but we only got 45 minutes
left or this all gets very
expensive. don't worry yourself too
much with the technical stuff
anyway because I'll tell you, those
people in there aren't coming to
listen to that fuckin' bass player
riff like he's Jaco Pastorius. this
is your show. remember that and run
it, okay?

CELESTE blinks.

CELESTE

Okay.

THE MANAGER
you ready to head back in?

CELESTE
Yes, but can you do me a favor?

THE MANAGER
anything.

CELESTE
Can you watch your language around,
Eleanor? It really bothers her
when people swear.

THE MANAGER
yeah, i'm sorry. i wasn't thinking.
i didn't mean to swear at you.
forgive me.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON -

CELESTE's face who stands at the mic. A pair of headphones
crown her head.

MUSIC PRODUCER (O.S.)
I've just cut together something
for the first and last verse and it
actually seems like it's working
really well. We might be over-
thinking it. In the bridge though,
there's a little crack or hiccup or
something on the delivery of "*So
now I'm asking...*" so maybe let's
just take it from there?

CELESTE has assumed a new confidence.

CELESTE
Great. I'll nail it and then can
we get started on *Please Remember*?

MUSIC PRODUCER (O.S.)
Sorry but which section is that?

CELESTE
It's the next track.

ANGLE ON -

The MUSIC PRODUCER behind the glass.

MUSIC PRODUCER

Ah! Yes. Let's get a head start
on tomorrow.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - AFTERNOON

The girls sit reading a magazine next to THE MANAGER.

NEW ANGLE ON -

Camera pans with a young woman, MARKETING PR, as she enters
and sits at a dark conference table across CELESTE, ELEANOR,
and THE MANAGER.

MARKETING PR

Sorry, I'm late. Thanks for
waiting.

THE MANAGER nods.

MARKETING PR (CONT'D)

(to CELESTE and ELEANOR)

Have you girls been enjoying your
stay?

ELEANOR

Yes, the hotel's very nice.

CELESTE is focused, intuitively professional somehow.

CELESTE

Yes, it's great. So, what's next?

THE MANAGER

she beat me to the punch.

MARKETING PR clears her throat.

MARKETING PR

Well, a few things. First, I've
been meaning to ask you if you have
any background in dance or if your
injury prevents you from...

CELESTE

I used to take ballet.

BEAT.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

And no, I just have to be careful.

MARKETING PR

That's great. Internally, we've been discussing a few upcoming appearances we'd like to pitch you for and we'd love to set you up with a choreographer.

CELESTE

Okay. What kind of appearances?

MARKETING PR

In-store performances, things like that. It's a great way to introduce your live experience to the public and a great way for you to get your feet wet, in turn.

Beat. Something heavy hangs in the air.

MARKETING PR (CONT'D)

Celeste, we really love what you do here-

CELESTE

Thanks.

MARKETING PR

-but after everything you've been through, I just think it's necessary to be straight with you and let you know that there's no guarantee these new tracks will work-

THE MANAGER

hey, hey, hey, she's 14 years old. you don't need to talk that way to the kid. talk to me that way, not her.

MARKETING PR is very firm with THE MANAGER.

MARKETING PR

Let me finish please. (back to Celeste) Before we go ahead making a lot of plans together, it would be unconscionable for me to not make a young person like yourself fully cognizant of the reality of the situation. You've given us a great demo to work with and we are going to pitch it hard but the rest is out of our hands.

CELESTE

It's fine. If it works, great, if not, that's okay too.

MARKETING PR smiles. She removes some mock-ups from a file.

MARKETING PR

Onto the fun stuff then, this is what we had in mind in terms of artwork for the EP we'll be sending to the stations. What do you think?

CELESTE

Yeah, it's good, I like it.

THE MANAGER is unimpressed, a bit like a petulant kid.

THE MANAGER

less beige.

MARKETING PR

We can change the color. Right now, try and focus more on the feeling of the layout.

CELESTE looks at him.

CELESTE

I like it.

ELEANOR

I like it too.

THE MANAGER

great, they know what they like.

MARKETING PR

(simple)

That's great, we love it. The lyric inside of the font gives it precedence - the sentiment of a new voice being announced - but the most important thing to us is that you feel well-represented.

CELESTE

I feel well-represented.

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

DOLLY ON -

We urgently follow THE MANAGER, CELESTE, and ELEANOR.

THE MANAGER

as your representative, i'd like to express how highly unusual and inappropriate that woman's conduct was. i had no idea she was going to sit down and give you a list of reasons she's not to be held accountable if she fails at her job. these sales people; five minutes into a meeting you know they couldn't sell a life-jacket to natalie wood.

CELESTE

She was just telling me not to get my hopes up.

THE MANAGER

of course you should get your hopes up.

INT. HOTEL GYM - DAY

FOUR ANGLES ON -

CELESTE walks on a treadmill.

After some time, she begins to adjust the settings to something more challenging.

She sets her pace to a jog.

Her breathing rises in intensity.

INT. BALLET STUDIO - DUSK

Quiet... The light is beautiful in the studio. Particle Mist falls around.

VÉRITÉ HANDHELD ON -

CELESTE and a CHOREOGRAPHER work on a series of moves for her upcoming performances.

CHOREOGRAPHER

Keep your abdominal muscles as stiff as you can.

She does as she's asked, leaps into his arms. She bites her lip.

CHOREOGRAPHER (CONT'D)
Okay, almost, and again.

She repeats the steps and leaps into his arms.

CHOREOGRAPHER (CONT'D)
Better. Try again.

The CHOREOGRAPHER puts her down. She winces in pain.

CHOREOGRAPHER (CONT'D)
Are you all right? We can take a
break.

CELESTE
I'm fine, but can we turn the music
on?

CHOREOGRAPHER
Yeah, let me put the disc on.

The choreographer steps over to a CD player as CELESTE walks around for a moment trying to shake the pain off.

CHOREOGRAPHER (CONT'D)
You ready?

CELESTE
Yes, I'm ready

The CHOREOGRAPHER presses play...

SFX: A NEW SONG OF CELESTE'S BLARES LOUD IN THE STUDIO SPACE. ALREADY FROM THE FIRST FEW BARS, IT'S EXTREMELY EFFECTIVE, CATCHY.

CELESTE and her CHOREOGRAPHER begin again working on a series of steps. She's doing quite well.

CHOREOGRAPHER
Good!

She looks at him and takes a few more impressive steps.

CHOREOGRAPHER (CONT'D)
That's great. Hold on..

He runs over and stops the disc, restarts.

CHOREOGRAPHER (CONT'D)

(shouts over music)

Let's do it again but this time try
and sing a little as we go and see
how it feels. Focus on your
breathing, otherwise, you won't
have enough air to get through the
track.

She retraces the same steps and sings.

CELESTE

(sings along with the
recording of her own
voice)

*Remember how things used to be?!
How good it felt in the back of
your car with your arms aro-und me?
Remember when you used to you loved
me?
Well, you can forget all that now
because I'm moving to the big
ci-ty.*

CHOREOGRAPHER

Use your body to give your voice
emphasis when it needs it!

She takes four steps, turns.

CELESTE

(sings)

*Remember! When you used to have me?
Well, hold on tight to that baby
cause now it's just a memory.*

INT. HOTEL ROOM - BATHROOM - NIGHT

MEDIUM ON -

CELESTE and ELEANOR do their make up in the mirror. They look
straight out of a William Eggleston picture.

CELESTE

Did you call mom?

ELEANOR

Yeah. I told her you were busy.

CELESTE

How'd she sound?

ELEANOR

I don't know. Kind of sad. She misses us.

CELESTE

We are going to be home so soon though.

ELEANOR

What if you get really big?

CELESTE

First of all, I don't think that's even happening and second, even if it did, it's not like I wouldn't come back home all the time.

CELESTE turns to look at ELEANOR.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Are you sure I'm gonna be able to get in anywhere?

CELESTE keeps her face straight trying to present her "new look" to ELEANOR.

ELEANOR

Totally. You look like you're 22.

CELESTE

No way.

ELEANOR

You do.

ELEANOR does a playful voice.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

"Excuse me, sir, have you met my baby sister? She's so sexy isn't she?"

CELESTE

Shut up.

ELEANOR

It's true.

SFX: A knock comes at the front door.

CELESTE exits.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CELESTE enters frame and cracks open the door...

THE MANAGER
i got a call from that-

He whispers the next word.

THE MANAGER (CONT'D)
(whispers)
-bitch-

He continues in a normal voice.

THE MANAGER (CONT'D)
-we met with that you'll want to
know about.

CELESTE
Is it bad?

THE MANAGER
are you gonna let me in?

CELESTE
Ellie's getting dressed.

THE MANAGER stays in the doorframe.

THE MANAGER
they shopped it around to radio-

CELESTE
And what?!

THE MANAGER
(calm, collected)
-and we did it. *Please Remember is*
testing in the mid-nineties.

CELESTE
What about the other ones?

THE MANAGER furrows his brow.

THE MANAGER
they did fine i think but we only
needed one to work.

Beat.

THE MANAGER (CONT'D)
you don't seem very excited.

CELESTE

I am, I'm just overwhelmed, I guess.

THE MANAGER

A & R is gonna send through a list of their acts they think you can open for in the spring.

CELESTE

I can't believe this. Oh my god.

THE MANAGER

listen, i'm gonna send you home for a week or two and i want you to rest up cause guess what? i'm taking you to stockholm after the break.

CELESTE

What?!

THE MANAGER

they want enough tracks for an album and i want you working with this guy. the best. you'd know his stuff if you knew he wrote it. he's written everything - hits - and i told him to make space for you. he said okay if we come to him.

CELESTE

In Sweden?

THE MANAGER

whatever you got that's half-written, ideas, whatever you got. let's go lay it down.

ELEANOR steps out of the bathroom, having washed all her make-up off.

ELEANOR

See, I told you you would get really big.

ELEANOR smiles a half moon.

HARD CUT TO:

SUPER FAST MOTION (8 FPS) DIGITAL VIDEO MONTAGE OF CELESTE AND ELEANOR'S TRIP TO SWEDEN SET TO THE SCANDINAVIAN CHILDREN'S SONG, "DYRENE I AFRIKA."

- The girls systematically test perfumes next to THE MANAGER at duty free in an airport.
- Various shots of rain on the European motorway.
- Eleanor and Celeste sleep inside the van.

NARRATOR

Following a short visit home with their parents, Celeste's manager had the girls' passports expedited and the three of them set flight for an unfamiliar, if not particularly exotic, foreign city where they would go on to have many uniquely first experiences...

- The girls arrive at Tor Erik's studio, THE MANAGER makes introductions.
- A series of various recording sessions...
- THE MANAGER sleeps on a couch.
- The sun rises and sets and rises and sets.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Producer, Tor Erik Romstad, was initially skeptical but grew increasingly infatuated with the inseparable sisters; and though he considered himself a beat up old atheist that had been "phoning it in" for some time in the pop music game", he found the girls' kind-hearted devotion to God, music, and most importantly, one another, to be altogether inspiring. Over the course of seven weeks, he would turn out some of his career's most addictive hooks and melodies.

- The girls pray before bed in their hotel room.
- The girls eat room service.
- The girls enter a bar.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

So far oblivious to the impending deluge of notoriety these tracks would soon afford her, Celeste primarily enjoyed getting all this one-on-one time with Ellie. She never could have dreamed they would one day casually travel to Europe together, unsupervised and unattended. On weekends, Eleanor enjoyed playing the role of the big sister by taking Celeste around to the nearby bars and local dance clubs. Before the massacre at Ridgewood, Eleanor might never have dared to share these more disgraceful aspects of her recreational appetites with her young sibling, but considering all the suffering Celeste had endured, she was surely old enough now to take part in the more pleasurable parts of adulthood, also.

- The girls dance at a club.
- The girls ride on the back of two speeding motorbikes. They clutch on to the helmeted young men who drive them.
- City lights streak the frame.
- The girls fuck two slightly older boys side-by-side on a snow mound near a street lamp.
- A new angle on CELESTE's expression under the light

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Celeste felt alive, creative, and autonomous - in command of her own destiny.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

(Back to 65mm)

CELESTE vomits in the toilet.

SFX: A phone rings incessantly.

ELEANOR

He's calling again. Baby, we're gonna miss our flight.

CELESTE
Tell him I don't think I can get on
it.

ELEANOR
Yes, you can. I'll take care of
you.

CELESTE rolls her body off the toilet and collapses into her
sister's arms.

CELESTE
I feel so sick.

ELEANOR
You shouldn't drink that much with
your medication. You'll be all
right. Sometimes you just gotta
push it so far that it scares you
straight. It won't happen again.

INT. TAXI - LATER

CELESTE and ELEANOR are a mess next to THE MANAGER scrunched
in the back of a taxi.

THE MANAGER
i can't believe this shit.

CELESTE
I'm sorry. I'm really sorry.

ELEANOR
No, I'm sorry. It's my fault.

THE MANAGER
don't tell me you're sorry just
don't. do. it. it's the same shit
with you kids over and over again.
your parents trusted me and i take
that seriously.

ELEANOR smiles.

THE MANAGER (CONT'D)
are you smiling? don't smile at me.

ELEANOR
It's just that you're funny. Don't
yell at me.

THE MANAGER

i'll stop yelling when you wipe that condescending beam off your face. and guess what? since you both have decided to completely fuck off and do whatever you please with zero consideration for what a terrible position you have put me in - morally, ethically, legally - from now on i veto your request and will swear and curse as much as i please cause i'm not buying this innocent little girl shit you two are selling.

CELESTE

Fine, it's a deal. Just stop yelling.

He looks at his watch.

THE MANAGER

you have roughly 13 hours to get your act together.

CELESTE

What happens in 13 hours?

THE MANAGER

i called the room ten times this morning. you're going to la to make a video.

CELESTE shoots up in her seat.

CELESTE

What?!

EXT. LAX AIRPORT - NIGHT

WIDE ON -

Planes land like satellites falling from the stars.

Lights blink across the landing strip's intersections.

HOLD ON THIS... HOLD, HOLD.

INT. ROCK VENUE BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

SFX: Hardcore punk music blares in the room downstairs.

Backstage area is packed with 20 or so people in a room fit for 5. CELESTE, ELEANOR, and the MANAGER are all among them.

LONG LENS ON -

A lanky, British MUSICIAN, older than CELESTE, excuses himself and walks over to talk to her. They shout to be heard over the volume.

MUSICIAN

(shouts)

Did you like the show?

CELESTE is caught off-guard.

CELESTE

Oh, I'm sorry but we actually just got off a plane and we missed it. I'm with my manager

She points.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

He's over there. He wanted to come and say hi to someone.

MUSICIAN

That's a shame. I think it went well tonight.

CELESTE

What's your band called?

MUSICIAN

We were called Apex but my brother left the band so now we're called Boy Friend.

CELESTE

Boy Friend? Really?

MUSICIAN

You don't like it?

CELESTE

No, I do.

MUSICIAN

We don't know if we like it. Sounds kind of quaint instead of subversive or something. We just picked it arbitrarily before coming to a gig one night.

There's an awkward beat where young CELESTE doesn't know how to advance the conversation.

MUSICIAN (CONT'D)

Where are you coming from?

CELESTE

Oh, my sister and I are visiting from back east. We are only here a few days to make a video.

MUSICIAN

Are you in it?

CELESTE

I guess but I don't really know yet. They haven't told me but it's a video for a song I made.

MUSICIAN

What kind of music do you make?!

CELESTE

I'm embarrassed to say.

MUSICIAN

Why?

CELESTE

Because I don't want you to make fun of me.

MUSICIAN

I'm not going to make fun of you!

CELESTE

Pop music.

MUSICIAN

I love pop music.

CELESTE

No you don't!

MUSICIAN

Of course I do. Who doesn't love pop music?

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - LATER

MUSICIAN leans heavy against CELESTE. She tries to open the door with her key but it doesn't work.

MUSICIAN

Do you have any drugs in the room?

CELESTE

Only pain killers.

MUSICIAN

(laughs)

Okay.

CELESTE

I have to go downstairs and get a new card. I think I grabbed my sister's key.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

HANDHELD ON -

It's very dark. The faintest moonlight and city lights shine off CELESTE's skin. Nude, she performs the same choreography we saw briefly earlier with her choreographer for the MUSICIAN who cheers her on. The moment is warm and human. She looks softer and more fragile here than previously.

MUSICIAN

This is brilliant!

CELESTE

Shut up!

MUSICIAN

You left out a drop and crawl.

CELESTE

(extremely bashful)

I'm not doing that.

Beat.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

You do it.

MUSICIAN

Fine, I will. Get off my stage.

MUSICIAN hops off the bed, also nude, and playfully drops, crawls, and sloppily turns himself upside down.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER

SFX: Shostakovich mournfully underscores the scene.

CELESTE lies next to MUSICIAN. The necklace which covers the scar on her throat gives her appearance a sci-fi quality: *The Woman Who Fell to Earth*.

MUSICIAN is almost asleep in a dope haze. It gives a casual air to the proceedings.

CELESTE

You make the same sort of music the boy who attacked me used to listen to.

MUSICIAN

Does that remind you of him?

CELESTE

It did just this moment.

MUSICIAN

I hope that doesn't upset you too much.

CELESTE

It doesn't. I think that when you meet someone who is going to become important to you that it forces us to look back at the past so we can get on with the future is all.

MUSICIAN opens his eyes, thinks.

MUSICIAN

In our defense, maybe it was the thing that pushed that kid over the edge or maybe it was the only thing that could have saved him and all those other poor kids.

CELESTE's expression darkens.

MUSICIAN (CONT'D)

Anyhow, I'm glad you think I'll be important to you.

CELESTE

I try not to think about it or talk about it.

MUSICIAN

Why would you? I mean, what is there to talk about?

CELESTE smiles.

CELESTE

That's what I love about pop music, I think. I don't want anyone to have to think too hard. I just want them to feel good.... Put your hand between my legs.

MUSICIAN responds.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Inside.

He nods.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

(whispers)

Since last January, I have the same dream every night.

MUSICIAN

Tell me.

CELESTE

In my dream, I am speeding through a tunnel that won't end.

MUSICIAN

You're in a car?

CELESTE

No, it's a motorbike - or maybe it's not but I am wearing a helmet or something because my view is through some sort of a mask - and every time I turn these wide bends in the road, I drive past a body but I don't stop for it.

MUSICIAN

A dead body?

CELESTE

Not exactly but, lifeless - after some time I realize that they are these doubles of me, like clones, that I've tried to send down the tunnel in my place but they've never made it to the end. They're not ever the same age and they're always laid out in a different configuration.

MUSICIAN

That makes sense.

CELESTE

Does it?

He wakes up a bit.

MUSICIAN

Sure - you almost died so now it's easy to imagine yourself dead at any age.

CELESTE

But in the dream I know that I will never die.

MUSICIAN pushes into her deeper and makes a crude joke.

MUSICIAN

What's at the *end of the tunnel*.

She laughs.

CELESTE

I always wake up before I get there but I'm so frightened because I'm going somewhere where no one can find me and no one knows my name.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - EARLY THE NEXT MORNING

CELESTE exits an elevator and tiptoes down the hallway. As she comes close to us, we see that tears stream down her face. She looks pretty strung out.

CAMERA pans and follows her to the end of the hall.

She reaches her sister's room and slips a key into the door.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

She opens the door and freezes upon the sight of THE MANAGER, naked, sleeping next to ELEANOR.

CELESTE stands a long beat looking at them then...

CELESTE
Guys, wake up.

They don't respond.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
Please, you gotta wake up.

ELEANOR suddenly shoots up in bed.

ELEANOR
What are you doing in here?

CELESTE
I had your key. Where's the remote?

CELESTE searches the room feverishly for a remote control.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
You gotta turn on the news.

ELEANOR is completely out of it. She shouts...

ELEANOR
GET OUT OF HERE!

CELESTE
Where's. the. remote? A plane just crashed into a building in New York.

EXT. TUNNEL - DAY

A motorcycle speeds through a tunnel.

After some time...

LOUDPSEAKER VOICE
Now, slow to 40-

NEW ANGLE -

A camera crew in a follow car tries to keep a steady pace behind the motorcycle.

CELESTE clutches a man on a motorcycle and she wears a very **distinctive mask**.

CLOSE ON -

CELESTE's face. She lip syncs through the open hole for the mouth.

CELESTE

(sings)

*Take me by the hand to where no one
knows my name.*

*Make me feel different tonight or
make me feel the same (as I used
to...)*

*But when I'm out on stage, it's all
for you*

*When I can't make the grade
I know who's out there to pull me
through (through)*

*I'm sick and I'm tired of this
party (party)*

*All I can think is you and your
body (body)*

INT. TUNNEL - LATER

For a new set-up, CELESTE now has her face revealed to camera while a group of back-up dancers now wearing different variations of the mask from the previous shot lunge towards the center of the lens.

CELESTE

(lip syncs to playback)

(I keep singing)

One for the money!

two for the show!

on three we get ready and -

on four we go!

(I keep hearing)

One for the money!

two for the show!

on three we get ready and -

on four we go!

NEW ANGLE ON -

In profile, we TRACK LEFT with the camera crew and dance troupe as they perform, lunging over and over again at the camera and track set up in front of them. They each take turns vying for the front position.

From this angle each gesture seems lightly absurd.

FADE TO BLACK:

INSERT TITLE:

ACT II

EXT. BRAC BEACH RESORT - DAY

ULTRA WIDE PANORAMA ON -

Due to the uniform aesthetic of the striped umbrellas it resembles the 1950's but the beachwear suggests that actually some years have passed.

After some time, **a row of men dressed in masks** enter the frame and begin shooting at civilians.

It takes a moment for the crowd to react and understand. People begin running for their lives. Most run directly into the sea. Dozens are shot in the back and fall into the water.

The scene is horrific, brutal.

INT. ATLANTIC CITY HOTEL - MORNING

STEADICAM ON -

THE MANAGER, older now, even more disheveled, walks briskly down the hall of an upscale hotel.

A stylist and a few PA's exit a room and nod at him as they pass. He turns to look at them keeping up his pace.

THE MANAGER
where are you going?

STYLIST
For a cigarette. She's with make-up.

THE MANAGER
is she dressed?

STYLIST
Hair wanted her before we start.

THE MANAGER
round tables are at 1.

STYLIST
That's not on me. We started 40
minutes late.

THE MANAGER bites his lip.

THE MANAGER
how does she look?

STYLIST
Tired.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A MAKE-UP ARTIST works on CELESTE who looks a bit worse for wear. It's clear from her matured features that at least **15 years have passed**. She's dressed in nude spunks with her hair plastered down for a wig.

PROFILE ON -

CELESTE regards herself in the mirror.

CELESTE
What do you think?

MAKE-UP ARTIST
You look beautiful. I think it's
enough of a statement with the
brows. I don't want to keep fussing
with it too much.

CELESTE
(despondent)
Okay.

CELESTE lights up a cigarette. A knock comes at the door.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
Come in.

NEW ANGLE ON -

THE MANAGER enters...

THE MANAGER
how's it going in here?

MAKE-UP ARTIST
20 minutes away.

THE MANAGER
great. (Beat) celeste, i need to
speak with you before we start
today.

CELESTE
What is it?

THE MANAGER
it's better in private.

CELESTE
Toni doesn't care. What is it?

THE MANAGER gathers himself and speaks.

THE MANAGER
there's a- shooting, they think
it's terrorism, in a beach town
called *brac* in croatia.

CELESTE turns around in her chair.

CELESTE
We know someone who got hurt?

THE MANAGER
no, of course not. don't worry. i
guess there's not really a lot of
information yet but so far twenty
people are dead and-

CELESTE
Hey, we finally got our act
together; can't cancel a show every
time something terrible happens
somewhere.

THE MANAGER opens his mouth to interrupt but fails to get a
word in.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
No, listen, whatever it is, no one
is going to think we are
insensitive for playing a gig
halfway around the world.

THE MANAGER
it's not that.

CELESTE
Who did it?

THE MANAGER
far as i know, nobody's claimed
responsibility yet but let me
finish.

CELESTE braces herself.

CELESTE
Okay.

THE MANAGER
the attackers were all wearing
masks from our *One For the Money*
video.

CELESTE furrows her brow.

CELESTE
What?

THE MANAGER
these guys all came out in masks
and started shooting people at a
beach resort.

CELESTE
How similar?

THE MANAGER
what?

CELESTE
The masks.

THE MANAGER
i don't know, the same ones, i
guess.

THE MANAGER runs his hands through his hair and shakes it
out.

CELESTE
Okay. (beat) Why?

He shrugs.

THE MANAGER

that's as much as I know. you're going to get a lot of questions about it today and i want you to be prepared.

CELESTE

Fuck me. I can't believe this is happening today.

BEAT. CELESTE thinks.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Can we call off the press?

THE MANAGER

we can - but probably not without calling off tonight, as well.

CELESTE

What a mess.

THE MANAGER

josie thinks it looks bad to avoid it anyway. people are going to be on your side. we just need to face it head-on and be, ya know, astute in our response. we're making arrangements now to hold a press conference downstairs at 4.

CELESTE

A press conference!? Are you kidding me?

THE MANAGER

it'll be 5 minutes. i called josie and told her i need her here with us to prepare a statement. now.

INT. STAIRWELL/ CASINO / HOTEL LOBBY - LATER

STEADICAM ON -

CELESTE and her entourage walk briskly down a flight of stairs and then through a casino.

CELESTE

Has anyone heard about Albertine?
My phone's dead.

THE MANAGER

albertine is in the restaurant
having lunch. i'm walking you to
see them *right now*.

CELESTE

Is she mad at me?

THE MANAGER

why would she be mad at you? she's
excited to be here.

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST

I pushed roundtables until after
press assembly so that hopefully
allows us time for a few more
details to pour in.

THE MANAGER

do I dare to ask if you've heard
anything else yet?

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST

Not really. The gist I have so far
is that it might all be a
coincidence-

CELESTE

A coincidence, how?

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST

(exhales)

I don't know, they stopped at a
costume shop and picked up the
first disguise, or whatever you
want to call it, that they saw; but
now the article SRK sent over
speculates that it's more likely
that the group-

THE MANAGER

the gunmen.

JOSIE nods.

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST

-are exploiting your image and body
of work as a symbol of moral
corruption in the west or something
lunatic.

THE MANAGER

given her history, i think we really gotta try and view this as an opportunity to address a few important issues to celeste.

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST

In all likelihood, "her history" is half the reason they decided to target her.

Then to CELESTE...

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST (CONT'D)

You need to make it clear from the outset that you're not canceling the show tonight or any upcoming dates because there's not enough information yet to justify canceling.

CELESTE is totally strung out, distracted by all the commotion from the casino games and slot machines.

CELESTE

Which important issues to me? What did you mean?

THE MANAGER

gun violence

CELESTE

In *Brac*? Come on, let's not try and see this as an "opportunity," man.

THE MANAGER

don't be nasty and sarcastic. i'm not trying to gloss over what's happened, celeste. we're here to protect you from getting hurt by this in any way.

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST

Keep it focused on your outpour of love and mourning for the victims, and victims of violence all over the world.

CELESTE

Can I tell these guys to go fuck themselves?

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST
 Nobody'd blame you but don't say
 anything rash. I don't want to
 leave anyone in that room a way to
 misconstrue what you're really
 trying to say.

They turn a corner.

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST (CONT'D)
 It's terrible that you've gotten
 dragged into this. Everyone out
 there will feel for you. Just speak
 from the heart.

CELESTE
 I feel like I'm gonna throw up.

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST
 You want us to get you something?

CELESTE
 No, it's just my meds.

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST
 I'm gonna greet everyone and get us
 set up in the banquet hall. I'll
 meet you back here in an hour.

THE MANAGER's phone rings. They continue walking to the end
 of the hall and make a left into the lobby.

THE MANAGER
 hello.(beat) i know, i didn't
 forget but tell him I have to call
 them back in the morning, my time.

She furiously searches for any sign of ALBERTINE.

CELESTE
 Are they in the restaurant?

THE MANAGER
 i don't know, let me call them.
 eleanor just said they were
 "downstairs."

CELESTE spots them off-screen.

CELESTE
 Why didn't you guys come up to the
 green room?

CAMERA WHIPS to reveal ELEANOR, a woman now, and **ALBERTINE, CELESTE'S 13 year-old DAUGHTER...**

CELESTE (CONT'D)
 Baby, you look so tired. Do you
 want to come up to my room and take
 a nap?

CELESTE reaches out to her daughter in a warm embrace.

ALBERTINE
 No, I'm really hungry.

Closer now, ALBERTINE looks strikingly like CELESTE when she was younger.

ELEANOR interjects...

ELEANOR
 She wouldn't eat anything I ordered
 for her down here.

CELESTE
 (to Albertine)
 I don't blame you. I had some room
 service upstairs earlier. It's
 awful.

ALBERTINE
 It's not that. There was a lot of
 turbulence. It made me feel sick.

CELESTE
 Did you have fun with Aunt Ellie?

ELEANOR speaks to THE MANAGER. It's awkward.

ELEANOR
 I showed her around our hometown.

THE MANAGER
 (to Albertine)
 hey, nice seeing you, ladies.

CELESTE
 Did you have a good time with
 Grandma and Grandpa?

ALBERTINE
 Yeah.

ELEANOR
 How'd it go?

CELESTE

What?

ELEANOR

The conference.

CELESTE seems like she's almost already forgotten.

CELESTE

Haven't done it yet. Today's a sick kind of joke.

ELEANOR

(protective of Albertine)

I know but let's not talk about it now.

ALBERTINE

What's wrong?

ELEANOR

None of your business. Grown up problems. Don't worry about it.

CELESTE

Do you want to have lunch with me, honey?

CELESTE looks at ELEANOR and THE MANAGER.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Can I take Albertine for a quick solo girl's lunch?

ELEANOR seems like the decision-maker.

ELEANOR

(to Albertine)

Of course, but I need you back by 4 so we can get dressed for mom's show.

(to CELESTE)

We bought outfits for tonight.

He says to ELEANOR...

THE MANAGER

she'll have her back by 3.30.

Then to CELESTE...

THE MANAGER (CONT'D)
 celeste, can you stick around the
 hotel please? i have to go upstairs
 and meet josie.

CELESTE
 I need to get out of this place for
 a bit, clear my head.

THE MANAGER looks like he's about to explode.

THE MANAGER
 fine. let me call the hotel's head
 of security and see if they can
 pick you up.

CELESTE
 We don't need a babysitter. I'm
 gonna walk Alby across the street
 for some food. Relax.

THE MANAGER
 across the street? please be back
 before 3:30.

CELESTE throws a friendly arm around Albertine and starts
 walking her away from ELEANOR and THE MANAGER.

NOTE: The following is in one uninterrupted sequence shot
 until otherwise noted.

CELESTE
 (To ELEANOR) Go take a nap. I'll
 bring her back to the room when
 we're done.

CELESTE and ALBERTINE walk side-by-side through the lobby.
 From this angle, they look they could be friends, the same
 age.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
 What do you want to eat?

ALBERTINE
 I don't know.

CELESTE
 (messily)
 What do you mean? Of course you
 know. I hate talking to kids your
 age now and they always say they
 "don't know" about everything. Are
 you feeling depressed or what?

ALBERTINE

No.

Some hotel guests seem to recognize CELESTE as she walks by.

CELESTE

I'm only teasing. Don't listen to me. Trying to get you to relax around me.

ALBERTINE

I am relaxed. I'm just uncomfortable because so many people are looking at us.

CELESTE hasn't noticed.

CELESTE

That's why I want us to get out of here. There's gonna be cameras outside cause everyone knows we're here. You wanna go around the back.

ALBERTINE

No, I'll just walk ahead of you.

ALBERTINE speeds up her pace and puts her head down as she steps through the Hotel's Front entrance.

CELESTE steps outside...

EXT. HOTEL / ATLANTIC CITY STRIP - CONTINUOUS

A team of photographers stand behind a barrier. CELESTE walks by as quickly as she can.

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Celeste! Can you take a minute to talk with us? Celeste!

CELESTE waves as she walks by and continues.

We follow her around the bend and she turns around to speak to someone off-screen.

CELESTE

Hey man! Please don't follow me. I'm going to have lunch. I'll be back here in 45 minutes and you can take as many pictures as you want. Can you leave me alone?

Suddenly an outburst...

CELESTE (CONT'D)
I'm serious, man, get away from me.

Beat. She looks back again.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
Thank YOU. Jeez.

The camera pans up to the stretch of Atlantic City skyline as we follow CELESTE for the length of the block until she finally catches up with ALBERTINE.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
Hey, slow down.

ALBERTINE
I hate those people.

CELESTE
Everybody hates those people. Don't think about it. You should have let 'em take your picture back there cause you look so beautiful today.

ALBERTINE
No, I don't. I just got off a plane. I don't have any make-up on.

CELESTE
Can I give ya some of mine? I looked like a pterodactyl when I woke up this morning.

ALBERTINE sort of laughs at the joke.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
That's the thanks you get for giving the gift of life. No good deed, unpunished. Little babies suck the life blood right out of ya.

ALBERTINE
Shut up, you look great, mom.

CELESTE
Thank christ for that. I'm better off than some of these other girls I meet.

ALBERTINE
Like who?

CELESTE
I'm not *telling!*

ALBERTINE
Why, what's wrong with them?

CELESTE
Nothing really, I just mean when I flip through magazines I see all these girls I know and half the time, I've seen them naked in a dressing room or whatever so I know where they have an ugly birthmark or they got a tail cut off.

ALBERTINE shoots her a look.

ALBERTINE
Who had a tail?

CELESTE
Don't look so excited cause I'm not telling you. I mean, come on, I wouldn't want anyone spreading that kind of personal stuff about me around.

They arrive at the restaurant and enter but **camera stays positioned outside and views much of the rest of the scene through a window...**

INT./ EXT. DINER - AFTERNOON

CELESTE and ALBERTINE sit down at an empty cafe table opposite one another.

Heavy traffic reflects off the glass in front of us throughout the shot.

CELESTE
It's nice to sit with someone who doesn't have their face buried in their phone.

ALBERTINE
Ellie took my phone away.

CELESTE
Well, she was probably right to take your phone away. That's cool, you should listen to her.

ALBERTINE

If she's so cool then why do you hate having her around?

CELESTE

I don't hate having her around. I just wanted some alone time with you.

ALBERTINE

You act like you hate her.

CELESTE

Don't say ugly things like that. That's not true.

ALBERTINE

I'm not saying that you actually hate her, I'm just saying you act like it.

CELESTE

Well, sometimes I've got a short fuse, you know, cause I don't sleep a lot and I've got a lot of stuff on my plate. There's no money in music anymore. It's all branded content and Virtual Reality. I do voices for a video game character now for Christ's sake, and I make more money in an afternoon than all year on tour.

ALBERTINE

Then why do you leave us and go on tour for so long?

CELESTE blows a gasket but tries to keep a lid on it.

CELESTE

It's a lot more complicated than that. If I don't keep up with the times, the times leave without me, you know, and I got a lot of people to pay. More people than you can imagine. It's a full-time job. It's like I'm connected to the whole world all the time. I can hear everyone in my head.

ALBERTINE

I thought we were talking about Aunt Ellie.

CELESTE

What do you want to talk about? Is she okay?

ALBERTINE

She's upset you don't ever try and see her.

CELESTE

She told you this? That really pisses me off that she's bringing our problems into my relationship with you cause that has nothing to do with you. You got that?
Nothing.

ALBERTINE

What problems do you have *with* her? You have everything she ever wanted.

CELESTE throws her hands up.

CELESTE

That's ridiculous.

ALBERTINE

I'm serious. When we visited Grandpa he even showed us this video of her singing when you guys were little and he kept calling her Celeste. He was joking about it but I could tell it just made her feel bad.

CELESTE's energy turns increasingly manic.

CELESTE

Hey, what can I say, your aunt has too many scruples and sometimes life just isn't that fair.
Especiallly not nowadays.

CELESTE tries to come at her point from a different angle.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

People now will try and sell ya a TV monitor that plain as day looks like shit, but they call it "ultra," "mega," "triple hi-def," whatever, and their business model relies on their customer's unshakable stupidity.

(MORE)

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Deep down maybe we probably all sense this - their intimate knowledge of our commitment to the lowest common denominator - but we go along with it anyway.

CELESTE laughs.

ALBERTINE

Okay-

CELESTE

I mean, I'm pretty sure that every year my videos look worse and worse but they're doing better and better. For example, they showed me this perfume thing we shot last year where I'm unfurling from a digital rose petal like Thumbelina and I thought it would ruin me! But here I am opening for 70,000.

ALBERTINE

Mom, what are you even talking about-

CELESTE lays down the law.

CELESTE

I'm letting you in on a secret cause I love you, that's what. It doesn't matter anymore if you're Michelangelo or *Michael & Angelo* from Ridgewood, you just need an angle. And Aunt Ellie never found an angle. She had her head in the clouds and then she decided to be jealous of my good fortune. She made her own choices and let me tell you, she could never do what I do, day in and day out. Luckily, she gets to go home to you every night and she doesn't have any real life responsibilities because I finance her entire life.

ALBERTINE

Be quiet.

CELESTE

Don't tell me to be quiet.

ALBERTINE rolls her eyes.

ALBERTINE

No, shh, I don't mean it like that... Isn't that your song?

They stop and listen.

CELESTE

I'm sorry. Let me go ask them to turn it off.

CELESTE stands and walks over to the bar. Camera pans with her...

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Hey, can you turn that off please? We're about to order some lunch and I'm trying to talk with my kid but all I can hear is my voice inside of my head.

BARTENDER

Yeah, sorry, my manager told me to put it on.

CELESTE

It's fine, listen, can you send me over a drink and maybe a soda for her?

BARTENDER

What would you like?

CELESTE

I don't know, a glass of white wine or something, whatever you have that isn't gross. And can you put it in a plastic cup or something?

BARTENDER

Sure.

NOTE: End of sequence shot.

NEW ANGLE ON -

CAMERA inside the restaurant; CELESTE walks into CLOSE-UP and sits down.

CELESTE

Hey, I'm sorry to rag so much on Ellie. I know she's doing her best. I'm having a shit day and I'm taking it out on her.

ALBERTINE
Better her than me.

CELESTE
I never take it out on you.

ALBERTINE
Okay.

CELESTE
I don't, do I?

Beat.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
Well, if I do, I don't mean to.

CELESTE suddenly has tears in her eyes.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
Sometimes when you think it can't
get any worse, you get diagnosed
with some freakin' disease, you
know what I mean?

ALBERTINE shifts in her chair.

ALBERTINE
Are you sick, mom?

CELESTE wipes her face.

CELESTE
No, I don't mean literally, I just
mean sometimes you get kicked when
you're down.

CELESTE can't stop crying.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. I shouldn't do this in
front of you.

ALBERTINE
It's fine.

CELESTE
(forces a smile)
No, it's not. I'd slap me in the
face if I was sitting across from
me right now.

ALBERTINE
Really, it's fine.

CELESTE exhales and dramatically delivers.

CELESTE
Dan left me.

ALBERTINE
I know. I read about it.

CELESTE furrows her brow.

CELESTE
You read about it?! Aunt Ellie's not supposed to let you read all that gossip shit.

ALBERTINE
She can't control everything I do like a watchdog.

CELESTE
Yeah, but I just wanted to be the one to tell you. I feel like big moments keep getting stolen away from me.

ALBERTINE
Mom. It's fine. I don't care. I don't care about that guy.

CELESTE looks shocked.

CELESTE
I thought you loved Dan.

ALBERTINE
He was fine. I was just nice to him because he was nice to you.

A SERVER enters with CELESTE and ALBERTINE's drinks.

SERVER
Here you are. Have you decided on something to eat?

CELESTE tries not to look up and let him see she's crying.

CELESTE
I think we need another second with the menu. Thanks.

ALBERTINE
I just want the pasta with marinara.

SERVER

You want me to put that in now or
want me to wait?

CELESTE

It's fine, I don't need anything.
Just bring her some pasta.

The server walks away.

ALBERTINE

Why did he leave you?

CELESTE

Who said *he left me*?

ALBERTINE

You did.

CELESTE

Well, he didn't. We left each other
because if you love something you
give it away.

ALBERTINE

Was he seeing someone else?

CELESTE

Is that what you read?

ALBERTINE

Yeah, it said he started dating
some rich girl.

CELESTE

I don't know. If he is, he didn't
tell me about it. I'm sure it's
just a fling. I've had flings too
that I don't want anyone to define
my character by.

The RESTAURANT MANAGER suddenly interrupts the flow of
conversation.

CELESTE keeps her face down.

RESTAURANT MANAGER

Drinks okay?

CELESTE

Yes, thank you.

RESTAURANT MANAGER

I'm the manager here so let me know personally if you need anything.

CELESTE

Will do, thanks.

BEAT. He doesn't go away.

RESTAURANT MANAGER

You mind if I get a quick picture with you?

CELESTE

I'm sorry but now's not a great time.

RESTAURANT MANAGER

It's not for public use or anything. Just for me. It will only take a minute.

CELESTE finally looks up at him defiantly revealing the smeared make-up from her tears.

CELESTE

Is this really what you want a picture with? I'm trying to talk with my daughter.

RESTAURANT MANAGER

I'm sorry but you really don't have to use that tone with me. I think I asked you very nicely.

ALBERTINE

Let's just go.

Without warning, CELESTE suddenly slams her hands on the table.

RESTAURANT MANAGER

Alright, m'am. I was trying to be friendly with you but now I'm going to have to ask you to leave the restaurant.

CELESTE

Are you fucking serious, man?

RESTAURANT MANAGER

Please don't use that language with me.

CELESTE stands and gets in his face.

CELESTE
How dare you, motherfucker.

The RESTAURANT MANAGER calls over to the SERVER.

RESTAURANT MANAGER
Ally, can you call the cops please.

CELESTE
Who the fuck do you think you are.

RESTAURANT MANAGER
I was about to ask you the same thing. I can smell that you have alcohol on your breath, miss, so I won't take this personally.

CELESTE
Are you trying to embarrass me in front of my daughter.

RESTAURANT MANAGER
I didn't even know you had a daughter. I just came over to be friendly and then you started shouting at me and now I'm telling you to leave my restaurant or I'm calling the cops.

ALBERTINE
Please, let's go!

CELESTE considers her options and then turns exits the restaurant with ALBERTINE.

CELESTE
(on the way out)
You should be ashamed of yourself, prick.

The door shuts.

RESTAURANT MANAGER
No, you should be ashamed, miss.

The RESTAURANT MANAGER turns to his staff members.

RESTAURANT MANAGER (CONT'D)
Can you believe that crazy bitch?
Mike, did you get that on camera?

EXT. ATLANTIC CITY STRIP - MOMENTS LATER

SFX: Richard Wagner's Rienzhi Cverture underscores the scene. It violently fights the wind, conversation, and traffic outside.

STEADICAM ON -

We follow CELESTE who has her arms wrapped ALBERTINE's shoulders.

CELESTE

Let's make a right here and go around the back so we don't have to deal with all those shitheads out front.

They turn right and walk... Beat.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

I'm really sorry I lost my cool with that guy.

ALBERTINE

He was asking for it but I don't want to talk about it.

CELESTE

You seem shook up. That kind of thing doesn't happen all the time, you know, but sometimes it does and I gotta protect myself.

ALBERTINE

I said I don't want to talk about it.

CELESTE

But baby, we gotta talk about it, otherwise, it's just gonna hang in the air. Why don't you want to talk to me?

ALBERTINE sulks.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

You got tears in your eyes. Come on, what is it?

ALBERTINE's voice cracks with heartbreak but they never stop walking.

ALBERTINE
(shattered)
I'm worried about you!

CELESTE
Worried about me?! Come on, you
don't need to worry about ME. I'm
solid. I worry about YOU. That's
my job, to worry about you.

ALBERTINE shakes her head.

ALBERTINE
You're skinnier than I am.

CELESTE
That's cause I'm in great shape
from going out and dancing my ass
off every night.

CELESTE squeezes her close. ALBERTINE wipes some tears off
her face.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
Come on, baby. You're breaking my
heart. Listen up, what that guy
said about me having alcohol on my
breath; that was a terrible thing
to imply in front of you and
instead of just ignoring the
elephant in the room, we need to
talk about it, head-on.

CELESTE finds the words...

CELESTE (CONT'D)
I ordered a glass of wine from them
in a plastic cup cause I needed to
let go of some tension I'm having
about tonight and I didn't want you
to think there was anything to
worry about. I swear on your life I
wasn't drinking before that today.
You don't need to worry about stuff
like that, okay?

The girls continue their walk and talk down the boulevard as
diegetic sound fades out and the NARRATOR takes over.

NARRATOR (O.S.)

In 2011, Celeste had drunk herself blind, or more precisely, blind in one eye, but had waited to tell a physician about the trouble she'd been having, too embarrassed to explain that while touring the less inhabited, and therefore less inhibited, parts of the southern United States, she had managed to damage the optic nerve in her left eye by ingesting various forms of methanol during a stint of binge drinking household cleaning products across three state lines. Shortly thereafter, when back at home, she found herself at the center of a very public dispute over a traffic collision and one pedestrian's crushed left leg and pelvis.

The girls continue to walk and comfort each other.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The victim of this short-lived episode in her life saw an opportunity and seized it. That golden ticket came in the form of a nearly seventeen million dollar settlement which was to remain for all intents and purposes, under the table. All just another flame in the crowd of what Celeste perceived a decade-long witch hunt. Whatever it was, Celeste needed something big to pull her out of this mess, a show that could put Ellie, Albertine, and herself back on track.

ALBERTINE looks like she's starting to let CELESTE cheer her up.

Diegetic sound resumes for a moment...

CELESTE

What is it? You got something else on your mind?

ALBERTINE

It's nothing.

CELESTE
Stop it. What is it?

Diegetic sound fades out and the narrator resumes...

NARRATOR
Albertine had lost her virginity the weekend prior to leaving for this first unveiling of Celeste's 6th studio recording, Vox Lux, in Atlantic City, and yearned to share the galvanizing details with her mother. She had made herself sick with anticipation every day since and looked forward to the initial shock or sense of failure it might inspire in Celeste whom, albeit, no stranger to crimes of passion in her youth, had always spoken severely of young men; even warning of them more than mixing uppers with downers, for example.

The girls turn a corner into the backlot of the hotel where security stands already anticipating CELESTE's re-entrance.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
If all went according to plan, the news might just strike up a long-misplaced maternal instinct and Celeste would be forced to act as her confidant.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - LATER

ELEANOR answers the door to CELESTE.

ELEANOR
That was a fast-

ELEANOR sees that ALBERTINE isn't with CELESTE.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
Where's Albertine?

CELESTE pushes past ELEANOR into the room.

INT. ELEANOR'S HOTEL ROOM - LATER

CELESTE paces circles around ELEANOR. She occasionally slurs and stutters through her rant.

CELESTE

I have her upstairs in my room taking a pregnancy test cause apparently you're so fucking incompetent that you let my daughter get fucked by some hick from town.

ELEANOR

She's pregnant?

CELESTE throws her hands up.

CELESTE

Unless she's as unlucky as me then probably not but I want her to feel the unease of waiting for the results to come in because a parent, or *legal guardian*, disciplines the kid, doesn't just hang out with them.

ELEANOR

I'm sorry. I had no idea.

CELESTE

You fucked up.

CELESTE holds up two fingers.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Twice.

ELEANOR

I know you're mad but-

CELESTE

How could I be so stupid?! If you did so badly with me how could I ever expect you to do right by her.

ELEANOR stammers...

ELEANOR

I knew she was seeing a guy but it didn't seem physical, I swear.

CELESTE

Are you a retard?

ELEANOR

No.

CELESTE

(slowly)

Ya know, Ellie, sometimes your jaw
slacks in this certain way like
your life is just happening to you
and you just look like a retard.

ELEANOR blinks, not sure how to respond. Tears stream down
her face.

ELEANOR

Don't say that about me.

CELESTE

Only crazy people get aggravated
when you call them crazy so you
must really be retarded.

ELEANOR

After everything I've done for you,
how can you hate me so much?

CELESTE

Is that the kind of garbage you've
been filling her head with? She
told me all the shit you've been
putting on her shoulders.

CELESTE uses two fingers to press the middle of ELEANOR's
skull.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

You have that hapless look like
dad.

ELEANOR sits down in a chair and sobs.

HOLD ON THIS...

CELESTE (CONT'D)

I have a press conference then two
hours of round tables but I swear
to God, Ellie, if my daughter comes
back to me with that cross-eyed
Guido's kitten litter or Hepatitis
Z, I'll throw you off that balcony.

ELEANOR wipes the tears from her face.

ELEANOR

If you threaten me ever again, I'll
tell everyone I write your songs.

CELESTE chews her jaw.

CELESTE

Today I'd say that's a stock you
don't want to buy into.

INT. HOTEL ROOM / MAKE-UP - LATER

A team of make- and hairstylists reset CELESTE's face.

The STYLIST walks over with a new blouse for her to change
into...

STYLIST

Here you go, dear. That's better.

THE MANAGER hovers around her, checking her out.

THE MANAGER

you look amazing. keep it simple.
you're gonna do great.

He squeezes her shoulders.

INT. PRESS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON -

CELESTE is on-stage in front of a packed press room.

Flashbulbs are blinding.

CELESTE

First I'd like to say that I have..
an outpour of love for victims of
this tragedy and victims of
violence all over the world and I
am deeply saddened to be associated
with such an obscene and
unnecessary tragedy... It's a weird
time we live in, and I guess, no
matter how much we try and ignore
these things that are really
happening around us, they always
find a way to creep in.

PRESS 1 (O.S.)

Jennifer Durst, WYNN NY, why do you
think they targeted you? Do you
assume there's a connection to
Ridgewood?

CELESTE

No idea. I pretty much know as much as you so far, and since nobody's coming out and saying "we did this" yet, I'd really prefer not to speculate too much - but if they did pick that "disguise" on purpose I guess it's cause they don't like that I'm a woman or that I'm a successful woman. Maybe they don't like that I had a kid when I was a kid. Maybe they think I'm a floozy. But I guess some of you think that too.

CELESTE shrugs and smiles.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

The way I have chosen to live my life goes against some people's views about things.

PRESS 1 (O.S.)

Are there any links between you and central Europe?

CELESTE

I mean, not really. Not that I know of. I've never played there so I really don't know.

MODERATOR chimes in.

MODERATOR (O.S.)

Next question... There, at the back.

PRESS 1

Sorry, I just have one more. Are you and the band still going forward with the show tonight?

CELESTE

There's really not enough information yet for us to justify canceling and my dad always says, "never postpone joy," so yeah, I'll play if they let me.

CELESTE smiles and shrugs.

PRESS 2 (O.S.)
 Afternoon, Meredith Desh, Atlantic
 City, Greater NorthEast, do you
 have anything you wish to
 communicate to the perpetrators of
 today's attack?

There's a LONG BEAT...

Hold on CELESTE. Bulbs flash over and over again.

CELESTE
 (especially nonchalant)
 Yeah, I'd like to tell them that
 when I was a *little girl* I used to
 believe in God too...

The statement hangs in the air.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
 -and if they ever come to their
 senses and they'd like something
 new to believe in, they can start
 believing in *me* cause I'm the new
 faith and I'm not afraid of them.
 Hell, I'd even like to extend an
 invite to my show tonight. I'll be
 sure to put "cowards in masks" on
 the guest list.

PRESS 2
 I'm sorry but can you clarify what
 you mean exactly?

ANGLE ON -

JOSIE and THE MANAGER bury their faces in their hands as arms
 shoot up for further questioning.

BACK TO -

CELESTE.

CELESTE
 I don't know. I'm just making a
 quip.

INT. ELEVATOR / HOTEL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

CELESTE and her team are packed into an elevator.

THE MANAGER
are you out of your fucking mind?

CELESTE
I don't want to talk about it.

THE MANAGER
we coached you on what to say and you said... the opposite. why the *fuck* would you start spewing all that *weird* shit out of your mouth?

CELESTE
You give it a try sometime. I was nervous.

THE MANAGER
i'm pretty certain if i follow, and correct me if i'm wrong, you compared yourself to some sort of a demigod and invited a group of terrorists to your fucking concert tonight.

CELESTE
Don't give them so much credit, anyway, it was a joke.

THE MANAGER
not exactly how I think our sponsors are going to see it. do you actually believe that weird shit you said up there?

CELESTE
They wanted a show, I gave 'em a show.

They arrive at their floor and step out.

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST
Alright, this place is swarming with press. Can I kindly ask you both to keep your mouths shut until we are finished?

CELESTE winks at JOSIE.

CELESTE
Fine by me.

JOSIE says to THE MANAGER.

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST
Let me handle it. Go smoke a
cigarette or something.

INT. HOTEL ROOM / ROUND TABLES - LATER

JOSIE enters with CELESTE and tells the group...

CELESTE
(tongue in cheek)
hello everybody.

CELESTE seems even more strung out than before.

She sits down in front of four journalists and various
recording devices set up in front of her chair.

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST
You have ten minutes, and as we
currently have no more information
regarding what's happening across
the Atlantic right now, I'd kindly
like to ask everyone to keep the
questions to tonight's performance
and the new album now as much as
possible.

JOSIE turns and exits.

One journalist leads the charge.

JOURNALIST
Well, on that note then, can you
tell us what audiences can expect
from the new album?

CELESTE
Sci-fi anthems. The concept with
this one was to create an
experience as relentless and
addictive as possible.

A second JOURNALIST joins in...

JOURNALIST 2
I know we've just been asked to not
talk about today's attack but I
guess I can't help but let it
contextualize my next question.

CELESTE
Okay...

CELESTE bites her lip.

JOURNALIST 2

It just got me thinking, do you feel that there's been a shift in the culture where nihilist radical groups like this are increasingly keen on being perceived as superstars themselves?

CELESTE is suddenly lucid and precise in her language.

CELESTE

I mean, who cares? I was hesitant to even give a statement today because all these ultra-violent thugs want is to make headlines. If everyone paid them no attention, they'd cease to exist - and so would people like me. That's the only link I see between them and superstars.

The group looks a little baffled by her digression.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

-but I couldn't just ignore the casualties, ya know. Makes me sick.

JOURNALIST 2 writes down her statement.

JOURNALIST 2

Thanks for your answer, appreciate your candidness.

JOURNALIST

From the public's perspective, this has been an-

The JOURNALIST chooses his words.

JOURNALIST (CONT'D)

-emotional few years for you, bizarre events today very much included. Can you shed light on the significance of these upcoming arena performances for you personally?

CELESTE

This is the culmination of my life's work so far. You know, we worked on it for two years before bringing it to the public.

JOURNALIST

Why two years?

CELESTE

Year before that I was under a lot of stress after my accident-

CELESTE smiles a bashful grin.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

-and it's an expensive event to put on, and we also waited on all the best people to become available to help us make it happen. I wanted all my best dancers back.

JOURNALIST

So, you consider these events a resurgence since the accident and arrest for "causing serious injury by dangerous driving?"

CELESTE blinks.

CELESTE

Injury, not *serious injury*. I never stopped making music so I don't consider it a "resurgence." I just wanted to channel all that anxiety and suffering into something tangible, something positive.

JOURNALIST

Can you shed any light on why the case was abruptly dropped-

LONG BEAT.

CELESTE

I see what you're doing.

JOURNALIST

You brought it up.

CELESTE

Don't try and have me say "abruptly" anything.

CELESTE laughs and lights a cigarette.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

There are three classifications of gunshot wounds to the spine.

(MORE)

CELESTE (CONT'D)

I'm type three which is when the bullet is actually *inside* the intervertebral disc space. Now, type three injuries are subdivided into (A) spinal lesion *not associated* with perforation of abdominal viscera or (B) injury *with* perforation of abdominal organs. Thankfully, I'm type A., but it's no secret to *anybody* that I take meds for my injury and that I never shoulda been behind the wheel of a car that night.

CELESTE exhales and calls out for JOSIE.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Josie!

JOURNALIST

I didn't mean to upset you.

CELESTE

People used to talk about me like I was a hero and then all the sudden, I was lower than trailer trash. That's what this show's about; a rebirth.

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST enters the room to stop the interview.

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST

Time's up.

JOURNALIST

Have you been at all in contact with the victim, Mr. Joel Hedlund?

CELESTE furrows her brow, suspicious.

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST

Okay, that's enough.

CELESTE

I said I can't talk about it.

JOURNALIST

I thought we were talking about it just now.

JOSIE grabs CELESTE.

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST
Does it not seem like an
insensitive time to be bringing
this up? I've had it. You and I are
through, Tommy. I'm sick of this
kinda shit from you.

JOURNALIST
I'm doing my job, Josie.

CELESTE
This guy's trying to kick me while
I'm down.

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST
Celeste, stop, this is over.

JOURNALIST
That's not what I'm trying to do.
I'm sorry you've misunderstood.

CELESTE
Why don't you go and write about
what happened to those innocent
people today instead of trying to
tear me down.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

STEADICAM ON -

We follow JOSIE and CELESTE as they walk briskly down the
hall towards the stairwell. They pass several journalists
sitting in folding chairs who are patiently waiting their
turn for 10 minutes with CELESTE.

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST
I'm standing everything down until
after the show. I want you to go to
your room and get some rest. SOME
REST, okay? I'm serious. I'll come
get you at 6.30. What floor are you
on?

CELESTE
One floor up. 1823.

INT. CELESTE'S SUITE - MOMENTS LATER

CELESTE enters to find THE MANAGER and ALBERTINE posed
against her suite's beachfront view in the middle of an
embrace.

CELESTE
Get your hands off her.

THE MANAGER squints his brow and lifts his hands from ALBERTINE.

THE MANAGER
i came in here and she was crying
by herself. she needed a hug.

CELESTE speaks only to ALBERTINE.

CELESTE
Go downstairs and get ready for the
show.

ALBERTINE starts to rush past CELESTE but CELESTE catches her.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
Come on, don't do that.

She whispers...

CELESTE (CONT'D)
I hope you didn't take that thing I
gave you. I over-reacted.

ALBERTINE doesn't respond.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
What? You want me to shout it from
the rooftops?

She pinches her daughter's side.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
I'm just not ready for you to grow
up is all. You're my little girl.
Forgive me?

ALBERTINE sort of smiles and nods her head.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
Hold on a minute.

CELESTE grabs a bouquet of flowers from a vase in her room and sets them next to some hotel stationary where she jots down a crudely written "***I'm sorry I was a bitch***" and sets it on a rose.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
Give these to Ellie.

She shoves the bouquet at ALBERTINE.

ALBERTINE
What's this for?

CELESTE
For everything. Take them down and
I'll meet you guys in the lobby.
We'll head over together. I love
you.

ALBERTINE
Yeah, me too.

ALBERTINE kisses her mom and exits...

THE MANAGER (O.S.)
why aren't you with Josie?

CELESTE is almost startled.

CELESTE
Jesus. I almost forgot you were
standing there.

CAMERA pans over to THE MANAGER.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
Josie called off the rest of the
day. Some guy was coming after me
about Joel Hedlund and I just
didn't have the mental capacity or
balls to take him on.

THE MANAGER
christ. i'll go talk her off her a
ledge.

CELESTE
No. Stay with me.

CELESTE sits down with her legs spread across from THE
MANAGER.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
You got any stuff left from last
night?

THE MANAGER
you think that's a good idea right
now?

CELESTE
 (frank, matter-of-fact)
 I'm done yammering for the day.

THE MANAGER raises his eyebrows.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
 What? Tonight's second nature. I
 gotta get out of my head, you know
 that. I'm getting myself all worked
 up from over-thinking everything. I
 keep picturing all those people
 screaming and running all over the
 sand.

THE MANAGER exhales, unsure.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
 Come on, let's just take what you
 have left. We won't call for more
 until after the show and you can
 fuck me for a little while we're
 high.

CELESTE comically holds her hand up for a high five. THE
 MANAGER laughs, give her a high-five, then holds onto her
 hand. In a way, they really love each other.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

THE MANAGER exits holding the door open for CELESTE who is in
 some fancy new wardrobe but looks obliterated.

THE MANAGER
 Come on, everyone's downstairs.

CELESTE trips out of the door, falls straight on her face.

THE MANAGER (CONT'D)
 (deadpan)
 You alright?

INT. VAN - EVENING

CELESTE seems almost dead in the backseat. ELEANOR,
 ALBERTINE, JOSIE, and THE MANAGER are all there, as well.

Suddenly, CELESTE pops up to exclaim...

CELESTE
 Stop the car!

THE MANAGER
We're running late.

CELESTE
Just pull over for 2 minutes.

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST
What is it?

CELESTE
I just need to do something for 2
minutes. Stop the fucking car!

EXT. VAN / BEACH - CONTINUOUS

The van pulls over and CELESTE jumps out.

CELESTE
Honey, come with me for a sec.

EXT. BEACH - MOMENTS LATER

ALBERTINE and CELESTE run up to the water and CELESTE kneels
down.

CELESTE
(to Albertine)
Get down with me.

ALBERTINE is concerned.

ALBERTINE
What are you doing

CELESTE
Let's just have a moment of silence
together.

ALBERTINE cautiously kneels down.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
Let's shut our eyes and hold
everyone who's suffering right now
in our hearts.

ALBERTINE shuts her eyes...

NEW ANGLE ON -

The water.

EXT. ATLANTIC CITY STRIP - EVENING

A sign rotates advertising Celeste's residence. The advertisement boasts-

"CELESTE & THE DIRTY THIRTY PRESENTS VOX LUX: LIVE"

EXT. BACKSTAGE LOT - CONTINUOUS

SFX: Constant percussion rises and falls in the mix. Occasionally blending with the pre-show recordings inside the auditorium.

A security team awaits CELESTE'S arrival. After some time, a van pulls up and CELESTE and her entourage exit the vehicle. JOSIE has to help CELESTE out of the sliding door.

FRANTIC HANDHELD ON -

A PA speaks up...

PA

Can I help you Ms. Montgomery?

CELESTE

No one calls me that.

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST

Give her some space. Are there cameras back there?

PA

Not that I know of.

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST

Tell your team if anyone is caught taking a picture of her, they're fucking fired.

JOSIE turns her attention to CELESTE

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST (CONT'D)

What can we get you?

CELESTE

I'm so thirsty.

JOSIE turns to the PA.

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST
Get her some sparkling water and
something to eat.

PA
Oh, sure, like what?

JOSIE, ELEANOR, and THE MANAGER are nearly dragging her into
the back entrance of the auditorium.

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST
Something with sugar.

CELESTE
Where's Albertine?

ELEANOR
She's behind you.

CELESTE
Take her to get something to drink.

ALBERTINE
We're not leaving you. I'm right
here.

CELESTE looks behind her to see ALBERTINE.

CELESTE
There you are. Don't look so upset.
Just go and get something to drink
and get your seat.

INT. AUDITORIUM HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

CELESTE's LASER DIRECTOR greets her at the door.

LASER DIRECTOR
I just needed to quickly introduce
myself. I'm stepping in for
O'Malley tonight.

CELESTE looks at him but doesn't respond.

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST
Now's not a great time.

The LASER DIRECTOR suddenly sees what terrible shape she's
in.

LASER DIRECTOR
Oh, sorry.

CELESTE's eyes focus...

CELESTE
Who's O'Malley?

LASER DIRECTOR
Your laser director.

CELESTE
I've never met him. What happened
to him?

LASER DIRECTOR
He's got a throat infection

CELESTE
-but this is the first show.

JOSIE cuts him off..

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST
I said now isn't a good time!

They keep walking. JOSIE looks across to THE MANAGER who has
yet to say a word.

JOSIE, THE PUBLICIST (CONT'D)
I need you to call this RIGHT NOW
if she can't go on.

THE MANAGER
she's fine. (to Celeste) stop with
the histrionics, baby.

The PA walks ahead trying to make way for them.

PA
There's a room prepared just here
on the left.

The PA dictates a door on the left.

CELESTE
(shouts)
I KNOW! We've been here every day
for a week.

CELESTE shakes everyone loose.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
Let go of me.

She braces herself against the doorframe. They enter the
room.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
Everyone thinks I'm an idiot.

ELEANOR
No one thinks you're an idiot.

CELESTE
(slurs)
Just, shut up-

THE MANAGER
don't be a spoiled brat. you're
embarrassing yourself.

CELESTE
(shouts)
Don't call me *brat!*

ELEANOR says to JOSIE.

ELEANOR
Get her out of here.

Then to ALBERTINE. CELESTE shouts and rants behind her.

CELESTE
(belligerent shouting)
I'm sick of everyone talking about
me like I'm not a person! *I'm not
just a thing you can put on and
wear!*

ELEANOR
Baby, your mom needs me right now
and *I need* you to go with Josie.
I'll come out to you as soon as I
can. Can you do that for me? I
promise you everything is going to
be all right, okay?

ALBERTINE
Okay.

ELEANOR
Okay.

ELEANOR shuts the door on the gang, leaving only CELESTE and
THE MANAGER with her in the room.

THE MANAGER
don't feed into this unhealthy
behavior, ellie.

Then to Celeste, suddenly belligerent...

THE MANAGER (CONT'D)
 i'm sick and i'm tired of *you*
 treating us like *we're* not a
 person. how about that? at least
 everyone is out there talking and
 worrying about you, *spoiled* brat.
 no one will ever drum up a thing to
 say about the rest of us, *spoiled*
brat, and i don't sit around
 whining about it.

ELEANOR
 You too. GET OUT OF HERE!

CELESTE is an outright mess, sobbing and dazed.

THE MANAGER
 seriously, she'll be fine. she's
 riding a bad wave that she'll
 eventually come off of. we just
 need to snap some sense into her

Then back to Celeste, he says...

THE MANAGER (CONT'D)
 you're in a hole, isn't that right,
 cel?

CELESTE has ceased to make much sense.

CELESTE
 You can't just press a button and
 take out your dishes!

THE MANAGER
 okay, i think you're really scaring
 everyone so you gotta just shut
 your eyes and pretend you're the
 only one in the room. can you do
 that for me?

ELEANOR
 I said get out.

THE MANAGER doesn't budge.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
 Do you want me to call this off?

He exhales, kisses CELESTE on the forehead and exits.

CELESTE

Everyone is talking about me like
I'm not a person right in front of
them! They're right in front of me
when they do it!

ELEANOR holds CELESTE to her chest. CELESTE is an outright
mess, sobbing and dazed.

ELEANOR

He's a car salesman. Forget about
him.

CELESTE

Ellie, they showed me these promos
we shot and I looked so bad.

ELEANOR

What are you talking about?

CELESTE

No, don't look at me like that,
listen to me. They shot me with
this new camera everyone told me is
great but I looked so ugly. It made
me want to die, Ellie.

ELEANOR seems possessed.

ELEANOR

You're not gonna die.

CELESTE

I just want to be queen for them
and sometimes I don't feel like a
queen at all, ya know? I'm so ugly
underneath all this and if they
only knew-

CELESTE cries with her eyes rolled back in her skull.

ELEANOR

I'm so grateful you're alive and
I'm here and I'm not going
anywhere. Ever.

CELESTE has her face buried in her sister's neck.

CELESTE

But the journalists can be so mean,
Ellie.

They begin breathing in unison.

ELEANOR

That's because they've never made anything they're proud of, honey. You're not here for them. You're here for your fans. Tonight will be the greatest night of their lives and the public will be at your feet again. In just a few minutes, this nightmare you've been living will all be over, and it will have all been worth it... Let me help you get dressed.

INT. HALLWAY / UNDER THE STAGE - LATER

HANDHELD ON -

We follow CELESTE, the PA, and a few others down a long corridor. She is now dressed in a surreal costume of white feathers and structured shoulder pads that make her look like a piece of Corbusier furniture.

SFX: An ambient drone. Percussion continues to amass. The tension builds.

They finally reach Celeste's TOUR MANAGER and a few others who stand waiting for her.

PA

Here she is.

THE TOUR MANAGER

You look amazing!

CELESTE smiles, seems focused, less fucked up than before.

THE TOUR MANAGER (CONT'D)

Are you ready?

CELESTE

My daughter's out there. Gotta make this amazing for her.

THE TOUR MANAGER

Let's get started. (calls out)
Everyone gather round me and Cel,
will ya?

The band hold hands in a huddle. Her TOUR MANAGER leads a pre-show ritual.

THE TOUR MANAGER (CONT'D)

I just want wanna say thank you for this beautiful group of talented people. I'd like to take a moment to reflect on the last year and this crew who are like family. None of this would be possible without you. Now, are you psyched for tonight?

GROUP

Yeah!

THE TOUR MANAGER

Let's give our girl some love!

They start to chant and rap.

CELESTE jumps around in the middle of the crew, she playfully lunges at them like a prize-fighter.

The group chants a melodic mantra, singing "phenomenal" over and over again. After a moment...

CELESTE

Who's the badd-est bitch in the room!?

GROUP

You a-re!

CELESTE

Who's the sickest b-and on the planet?

GROUP

We a-re.

THE TOUR MANAGER

Who makes this possible?

GROUP

We do!

THE TOUR MANAGER

Are we be gonna be good?!

GROUP

No!

THE TOUR MANAGER

Are we gonna be great?!

CELESTE is like a new person, completely in her element.

GROUP

NO!

THE TOUR MANAGER

Are we gonna be a-m-a-zing!?

GROUP

NO!

THE TOUR MANAGER

What are we gonna be then?!

GROUP

Phenomenal!

THE TOUR MANAGER

*So, let us go higher and higher -
and higher - and higher - and
higher - and higher - and higher -
and higher - and higher - and
higher, break!*

She high fives the group breathes heavy, and steps to a platform where stylists put on a few finishing touches to hair and make up.

PA

10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2...

Following the countdown from 10 Celeste is finally elevated to the stage on a lift.

CAMERA stays tight on her on her rise up.

INT. STAGE - CONTINUOUS

CELESTE stands in silhouette against a set of massive monitors that flash **PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE** over and over again behind her.

The crowd of thousands is only occasionally illuminated in brief flashes of light.

SFX: An ambient warble floods the space with sound. Percussion occasionally rises and falls in the mix.

She speaks into a mic saturated with vocal fx.

CELESTE

(heavy reverb)

TONIGHT.

(MORE)

CELESTE (CONT'D)
*WE ARE GONNA BRING IT BACK TO WHERE
 IT ALL BEGAN (began, began, began).
 You want to travel back in time
 with me?*

The crowd cheers wildly.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
 I can't hear YOU!

The crowd cheers louder now.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
*That's right, bitches... As some of
 you might have heard, Celeste is
 Latin for... "heavenly." Do you
 find me heavenly?*

She suddenly strikes a new pose. Excessive cheering...

CELESTE (CONT'D)
*Ha ha, I hear all you angels.
 70,000 of my little angels.*

She breathes heavy.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
*So, tell me, how many of you out
 there have ever had a boy break
 your heart (heart, heart, heart)?*

The crowd responds more and more to the playful tease.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
*That's what I thought - and how
 many of my little angels cry
 themselves to sleep at night
 because somebody called you an ugly
 name? Fat, hideous, slut. Well,
 guess what? People have been trying
 to take me down for years but I
 won't STAY DOWN.*

A wave of applause.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
*Listen close cause tonight is for
 you, angels. I hear your prayers.
 This is the new New Testament and
 tonight is ALL FOR YOU (you, you,
 you, you, you).*

A screen displaying a close-up of CELESTE'S face lights up behind her.

The monitors on the right and left flash **VOICE, OF, LIGHT** over and over again.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

(no reverb)

Welcome to the VOX LUX tour, a
night you're not soon to forget.
EXALT ME ALL THE WAY UP PAST THE
STARS. HIT IT!

THE BEAT DROPS and light shoots up in wide beams all around Celeste.

A new shift in the light reveals a backdrop of massive white squares, something unusually architectural like graph paper.

Then suddenly 60 DANCERS DRESSED EXACTLY AS CELESTE enter from the right and left and she is lost in the crowd of them. They occasionally strike unique poses.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

(sings in autotune)

VOX, LUX, RADIANT FLUX, FUTURE,
POWER, NEVER, BETTER, VOX, LUX,
RADIANT FLUX, FUTURE, CAN'T, COME
SOONER, LOVE, SEX, PROMISE, DESIRE

CELESTE breaks into a regular singing voice, suddenly alone on stage.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

(sings)

*Reading the papers making up
stories (stories)
I got 50 to life but who's on the
jury (jury)
Ya never met me but you already
know me (know me)
The same old shit, the same old
story (story)*

CELESTE shifts her vocal style for the bridge...

CELESTE (CONT'D)

*I'm made of stone, not bone
Made up of steel, nothing re-al.
But I'm looking at you looking at
me
And I can feel my heart begin to
take a be-at*

BACK to the CHORUS.

CELESTE (CONT'D)
 VOX, LUX, RADIANT FLUX, FUTURE,
 POWER, NEVER, BETTER,
 VOX, LUX, RADIANT FLUX, FUTURE,
 CAN'T, COME SOONER

EVERYONE SINGS ALONG TO THE LYRICS.

The dancers return to the stage and lift CELESTE high above them.

SFX: Berlioz's choral piece "La Damnation de Faust" starts to drown out all diegetic audio.

A SERIES OF CLOSE-UPS -

- Drummer, triumphant
- Keyboards, triumphant
- Violins, triumphant
- THE MANAGER watches from the wings, triumphant

SUPER SLOW MOTION ON -

CELESTE's face being carried and passed over by the dancers underneath her.

HOLD ON THIS... HOLD.

NARRATOR

Late one night at the hospital, following that fateful morning at Ridgewood, Celeste made a maddening claim that only her sister had ever sensed to be true. She recounted a story to Eleanor that went like this... Shortly after her classmate pulled the trigger and sent her to the place between life and death, a place that she could only really ever describe to Eleanor as a "rush of color;" she had met the devil and made a deal with him in exchange for her life. He whispered her melodies and she returned with a mission to bring great change to the next century.

BEAT.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
He said, "shut your eyes and repeat
after me."

CELESTE begins to shut her eyes...

The NARRATOR speaks now at a very deliberate pace.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
One for the money.
Two for the show.
On three we get ready.
And on four - come with me.

CELESTE's expression conveys that though her spirit is exhausted at the peak of its achievement, it really has all been an achievement, nonetheless.

NEW ANGLE ON -

ALBERTINE watches her mother from the from the front row.

CUT TO BLACK.

LOU REED'S "SWORD OF DAMOCLES" PLAYS LOUD, REDEMPTIVE,
TRIUMPHANT OVER **FINAL CREDITS**