

BLACK SCREEN

LENA (V.O.)  
Whoever said happiness is free, is  
a fucking liar.

CUT TO:

INT. JAZZ CLUB (H) - NIGHT

There is a five person Jazz band working the crowd. There are yells from the excited crowd as the leader LENA: (late 20s, mixed background, very attractive) is working through her solo playing many scales of sounds, searching for a place to make the notes fit.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

There are loud bangs as plates are prepared to be sent outside from a very well-appointed kitchen filled with natural sun light by: JEZEBEL BARBEAU MCCAN (ZOE); tall, elegant, dark skinned African American woman. The sound of music can be heard outside as you see LENA; 15 years old. She exits the kitchen through the door leading to the backyard garden with a plate of fruit.

EXT. GARDEN OF MCCANE HOME - CONTINUOUS

Jezebel comes outside through the kitchen door with a big smile on her face carrying a pitcher of ice-tea. The garden is equally as beautiful as the kitchen with flowers well placed and manicured around a table. Trees lining the yard create inviting shade over the eating area. Her father ANDREW MCCANE: white man, tall, distinguished. He is sitting at the outside table watching the Sunday brunch ritual unfold.

CUT TO:

INT. JAZZ CLUB (H) - CONTINUOUS

Lena is moving through her piece. The sounds of her horn are following the patterns of her mother's off-beat sounds. The crowd drives Lena through the solo. The band sets a steady rhythm to underscore this didactic exploration of her own personal musical journey.

BACK TO:

## EXT GARDEN OF THE MCCANE HOME - CONTINUOUS

ZOE is twirling around, humming her songs very off key but no one seems to mind. She approaches her husband and strokes his face as she passes by. He looks up at her through the sun as if he was seeing heaven. Lena giggles at the romantic moment. There is a symphony of sounds from nature filling the backyard. Zoe gets close to the door and pauses to take her big note before exiting into the kitchen. With a deep breath she lets out a loud sound... not a pretty one but loud. Lena and Andrew look at her and clap as she goes inside. They look back to each other, laughing at the horrid sound as Zoe's voice can be heard again from the kitchen still singing... Off key. Andrew goes back to his paper and Lena fixes the plates. The sound from the kitchen are far from perfect, but they are happy and they do make Andrew and Lena smile.

## INT. KITCHCEN - CONTINUOUS

Zoe is moving around the kitchen looking towards the backyard. As she goes through scaling her off beat sounds, she's getting more plates and food to bring out to the table.

## EXT. GARDEN OF MCCANE HOME - MOMENTS LATER

The moments of happiness and the sounds coming from the kitchen are broken by silence cutting through the air.

BACK TO:

## INT. JAZZ CLUB (H) - CONTINUOUS

Lena's trip grows into a structured sound running up and down the scales. Every loop seems to develop the sound into a musical affair between herself and the song, the notes and something deep inside she is trying to get to. Lena glances at an attractive white male. ALEX 30s average build. He almost blushes under her looks. Lena breaks the stare, closes her eyes and lets the music lead her home.

CUT TO:

## INT. MCCAN FAMILY CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Andrew speeds down the street with Lena in the front seat and Zoe laid across the back seat. The reflection of the trees that line the street can be seen in the side window.

(CONTINUED)

They are both trying to be calm but Lena is overcome with the sight of her mother and begs her to open her eyes and sing to her. Andrew does his best to calm her down and get them all to the hospital as soon as possible. Lena's pleas are becoming desperate, as are the sound of his daughter's cries and sight of his wife without life, without sound.

ANDREW

Lena be quiet!

The outburst shocks Lena into silence. Andrew pulls his daughter into his chest, constantly looking into the back seat at his wife and at the road. All we can hear is the undertone of a jazz performance. The car comes to a sudden halt as they arrive at the hospital.

INT. HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

There are several images: Flash of Zoe's body being placed onto a hospital gurney, doctors running back and forth putting in tubes, Andrew frantically filling out paper work and yelling orders at the people attending his wife. Lena stands in the middle of the chaos watching everything, unable to move or speak. The doctors raise the guards on the cart and speed Zoe down the hallway past Lena. They rush through the crash bars and Lena sees the doors shut in front of her. This is the last time she will see her mother alive.

FADE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - MOMENTS LATER

Lena is still standing in the same place, staring at the door. The hospital has a strange silence about it as if there were no people in it. (Sound) Just as in the garden, a sound breaks the silence. But instead of the off key flat sounds of her mother's voice, there is a wave, one perfect note that fills all the spaces of the hospital, pushing, stretching the walls as if God were whispering into the room. Lena is standing, listening to the sounds coming from behind those locked doors.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JAZZ CLUB (H)

The sound transfers to the sound coming out of Lena's horn as she reaches the end of her solo. She pulls the horn away from her lips and bows as the band comes back together. The small crowd is clapping loudly, almost drowning out the sound of the full band.

(CONTINUED)

Lena puts the horn back to her lips and the band finishes out the movement. They all break on a downbeat and the crowd jumps to their feet. Alex stands and catches her eyes. She smiles at him, holds her horn with both hands in front of her and uses it to blow a kiss to him.

FADE TO:

INT. MCCAN FAMILY CAR

OPENING CREDITS begin. 5 years before the death of Zoe. Zoe is driving down a winding street singing/humming, off key as usual. Lena is laying on her side in the back of the car. She's looking up at the trees as they move down the street. She counts the branches and takes in the bright green of the trees. Lena marvels at the colors and warmth of the light coming through the window. There is a very distinct sound of the wind rushing through the windows and the car passing by them... It is the perfect back-up band for her mother's voice. The car comes to a stop in their driveway.

EXT. OUTSIDE MCCANE HOME - CONTINUOUS

Zoe gets out of the car. Zoe opens the back door for Lena, grabbing a bag of groceries. Lena slides out of the seat, pulling her long, curly hair out of her face.

ZOE

Lena... don't forget to put your father's law magazine in his office.

Lena brushes the wrinkles from her dress and tries to make a be line for the back yard.

ZOE

And make sure you read the page he asked you to. He's going to ask you about it.

Lena stops in her tracks and spins on dime.

LENA

Yes, mom... Dad does know I can't go to law school for another 13 years...

(LUCILLE); Larger black woman and Zoe's best friend from Chicago. She exits the house and takes the groceries from Zoe.

(CONTINUED)

ZOE

You are not the maid.

Zoe gives her a playful look, rolling her eyes. With a wink and a smile, she follows Lucille back into the house. Zoe is humming her off key song. Lena runs to the back yard to collect an assortment of toys to play on the manicured front lawn.

EXT. FRONT YARD OF THE MCCANE HOUSE - LATER

Lena's toys are placed in a very neat line in alphabetical color order. She glances up and sees another little girl riding on the sidewalk. Lena regains focus and gets back to her toys.

LENA

Jump rope... blue. Bike... green.  
Roller skates... purple.

Lena takes a perspective look at her grouping and decides most definitively on her bike. She gets on but her forward progress is halted by a strange voice.

MADY

Do you have butterfly power on your  
bike.

Madeleine Constance Despres, (Mady); is a young girl about the same age as Lena. She is full of spirit unrestrained. She is standing next to her bike between the sidewalk and Lena's driveway. Lena looks up at this strange little girl, confused by the question.

MADY

Like on my bike, but you have to  
wear butterfly panties for it to  
really work... See?

Mady hikes up the side of her dress and stretches the material of her underwear to show how they are covered with butterflies.

MADY'S MOTHER

(In french)

Madeleine Constance Despres. Qu'est-  
ce que j'ai a propos de la culotte  
aux papillons?

MADY

Elle est trop belle maman. And it's  
OK... she's my best friend.

(CONTINUED)

Mady looks at Lena with approving face.

MADY  
You're my best friend, right?

LENA  
OK.

MADY  
See, Mom!

Mady looks at her mother with a big smile.

MADY'S MOTHER  
(In french)  
Fine... But you have to come in for  
dinner.

MADY  
My name is Mady.

LENA  
My name is Lena.

Mady rides away, leaving Lena standing next to her bike, very confused by what just happened. But more importantly, she feels like she's found a friend for life... as much as any 9 year old knows about life.

Andrew McCane pulls into the driveway, closely followed by Lena going to greet her father. The car comes to a stop and he exits the car as Lena approaches with her arms open. Andrew bends to give her a hug. He breaks the embrace quickly with his daughter, looking up at her.

ANDREW  
Did you get your rea-

LENA  
(very excited)  
Daddy, daddy! I just met my best  
friend. She wears-

ANDREW  
Did you do your reading today?

LENA  
Yes, I-

Andrew smiles to himself and goes past Lena into the house.

ANDREW  
Now pick up your things and come in  
for dinner... Where is your mother?

Andrew passes by his daughter and enters the house, leaving Lena alone outside staring at her father disappear into the house.

INT. MCCAN FAMILY HOME - EVENING

The family is sitting at the dining table. Andrew and Zoe stare across the table at each other like secret lovers. Lena, now 15, sits at the table with her nose buried in a law journal, looking up every once in a while to try to have a conversation with her father.

ANDREW

I would like to make an  
announcement. You, too, Lena, I  
would like your undivided  
attention.

Lena looks at her father with protest but drops her book with a stern look from him.

ANDREW

Everyone, I would like to share a  
bit of good news. We are having  
another baby.

Lena and Lucille rush over to congratulate Zoe, asking the usual questions: how far are you along and where's it going to sleep?

ZOE

Now my good news... It's a boy!

Andrew jumps to his feet, almost pushing everyone else out of the way to get to his wife.

FADE TO:

INT. KITCHCEN - LATE MORNING

Lena's mother, very pregnant, is standing in front of the sink singing a song. She takes a deep breath to continue her song and a stream of blood runs down her leg and pools at her feet. The plate in her hand crashes on the floor. Then, there is silence.

INT. HOSPITAL - LATER

The sound of Zoe making her last sound is heard by Lena behind the closed door.

EXT. CEMETERY - MORNING

Andrew and Lena are standing at the headstone.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. MCCANE FAMILY HOUSE - DAY

Lena is sitting in the living room across from her father. She is 15. Her head is buried in a book. Her father sits with a law journal thumbing through the pages.

LENA

I want to sound like mommy.

Andrew looks up at her and sees all the law books stacked next to her. They are in perfect order, stacked as if they were one block instead of a group of books. He closes the album and moves across the room to Lena. He picks up the stack of books next to her.

ANDREW

Fine.

He takes the books into his study and closes the door behind him.

INT. MCCANE FAMILY HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Lena is sitting in the kitchen with Lucille. She is listening to music with another stack of books next to her, perfectly lined up as if they were one large book instead of individuals. As Lucille changes the station, Lena carefully takes a book out of the stack and replaces it with the one she has in front of her making sure that the stack stays perfect. There is a coronet case at her feet.

LUCILLE

I can see all the practice you've done has paid off.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MCCANE FAMILY HOUSE - MORNING

Lena is standing in her room, which looks more like a hotel room than the room of a teenaged girl. She stands in the middle of the room and puts her lips to the horn. When she begins to play, there is a visible difference in her body.

(CONTINUED)

She is no longer stiff. Her shoulders relax and her fingers lightly dance over the keys.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MCCANE FAMILY HOUSE - AT THE SAME TIME

Andrew sits in his study and hears the beautiful sounds echoing through the house. He looks at a photo of Zoe and Lena on his desk and closes the door. As the door closes shut, Andrew holds a picture of Zoe and Lena and sobs. Lucille sees and hears the door close and walks to the living room. She shakes her head and walks towards the stairs.

BACK TO:

INT. MCCANE FAMILY HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Lena is still playing when Lucille stands at the door, watching how graceful she is while she plays. Lena turns around to the presence of someone else in the room. She stops playing and takes a good look at the scarf around her neck.

LENA

Is that my mother's?

LUCILLE

Whenever you play, I put it on. It reminds me of when we were back in Chicago.

Lena turns the music over on the music stand. She arranges her music and begins to play again.

LUCILLE

Come on, Lena. You play 15 minutes of every hour from the time you wake up to the time you go to bed. You need to-

MADY (O.C.)

Can you stop so we can leave.

LUCILLE

She's right... Go, and tonight We can talk later.

Lena places everything into a case and takes off out of the house, yelling at her fathers closed door.

(CONTINUED)

LENA  
Be home later.

INT. STUDIO SPACE - MORNING

Lena is playing in a room by herself. We see many images of Lena moving through her life. Scenes of time passing are laid over the constant image of Lena playing alone in her solitary space, images over her getting older, and playing with Mady, all the time listening for her mother's voice in her head. She has just graduated from high school.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MCCANE FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

Andrew sits at the dining room table with a picture of his dead wife in his hands. He looks deeply at every detail of her face, wishing that as he picked his head up, she would be sitting across from him in her seat.

FADE TO:

I/E. MONTAGE LENA GOING TO COLLEGE

- Andrew dropping Lena and Mady off at college.
- Lena taking music theory classes.
- Mady pulling Lena out of a rehearsal room.
- Lena writing music in her dorm room and Mady sleeping.
- Lena and Mady dancing with two guys at a jazz club.

INT. MCCANE FAMILY HOUSE

Lucille is placing a Thanksgiving turkey in the middle of the table. Andrew is arranging the place setting in front of where Zoe used to sit.

LUCILLE  
Come eat that's enough for today.

- Lena walking across campus with the base player.
- Lena playing music with children outside of her dorm.
- Lena, Mady and the band playing at a recital.

(CONTINUED)

- Andrew dropping off a care package for Lena.
- 29 - Lena and the band playing outside for graduation week.
- Andrew and Lucille congratulating Lena on her graduation.

ANDREW (V.O.)

Congratulations on completing your higher education. What are your plans?

- Lena moving into her own apartment.
- Lena working on sheet music, Mady standing at the door with tickets and their coats in her hand.

LENA

32 No. I'm OK.

- 33 - Lena is standing in front of an orchestra of young trumpet players.
- Lucille showing pictures of Zoe from an old photo album.

LUCILLE

34 Your father wanted to get married. Zoe needed a family over here, so I came with her.

- The band headlining at the Jazz club with a full audience.
- Lena on a date looking board.
- Lena starting to play her mothers solo.

FADE TO BLACK.

END MONTAGE

INT. LENA'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Lena and Mady sit in her kitchen, drinking tea. Mady puts a few pours of brandy into her cup.

MADY

So what is going on with what's his name?

LENA

Didn't work out too well.

MADY

They never do. Put down the music for a while and have a life.

(CONTINUED)

LENA  
The music, is for my mother.

MADY  
And sex is for you! Now let's go  
have some fun.

LENA  
Not tonight.

INT. JAZZ CLUB (H) - NIGHT

The band is just finishing up their set and have seated themselves around the bar for some drinks.

MADY  
We're all going out for more  
drinks.

LENA  
I'll pass.

The whole band raises their arms in protest.

BASE PLAYER  
You always pass. Like Green Bay's  
offence.

LENA  
I have to go over this new song.

They all exit the club, Lena follows behind but turns right at the end of the street and walks down the steps of the 23rd street subway.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL IN NYC - MORNING

The room is quiet. Lena is laying on the bed. Mady is standing close to the door. Andrew is sitting in a chair near the bed with his head on the railing. Sounds of monitors are echoing in the sparse room. A doctor enters with a chart.

DOCTOR  
We gave her something for her to  
rest. There will be a social  
worker here in the morning...

The doctor turns to leave after he looks at the cart.

(CONTINUED)

DOCTOR

She'll be unconscious for a while.  
Maybe you should all get some rest.

Andrew takes his daughter's hand and squeezes tight as the doctor leaves the room.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL IN NYC - NIGHT

Lena opens her eyes very slowly, still in shock from what has happened. She looks around the room and sees Andrew at her bedside, before the medication forces her back to sleep.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. 24TH STREET SUBWAY PLATFORM - NIGHT

Lena walks into the station and sits on a bench half way down the platform. She places her horn case down next to her. The air is hot and heavy, the kind of air that can only be found in the NYC train system, dead air that pulsates with the energy of the city. Lena zones out, recounting the gig she just played.

INT. 24TH STREET SUBWAY PLATFORM - LATER

Lena is still waiting for the train, not paying attention to what is going on... Lena begins to hum the song that her mother sang when she was younger. She leans over her left side to the other side of the bench to look for some music. With a sudden rush of air like a train is approaching the station her face is pressed down onto the bench from behind. She can feel his strength, his weight and his intentions. He quickly pulls down the long, wrinkled skirt to the floor around her ankles, keeping her off balance and spreading her knees wide with his legs.

INT. HOSPITAL IN NYC - CONTINUOUS

Lena lays asleep in her hospital bed, tossing and turning, mouthing something but no words are coming out.

INT. 24TH STREET SUBWAY PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

His free hand opens his pants and spreads her open. With an almost gentle touch, he pulls her panties to the side and thrusts himself inside of her. Her closed eyes flash open with a cold, dead stare.

There is a strange feeling of quiet in the subway. To an outside observer, the obvious violation looked very planned and everyone knew their part. Lena lost awareness of her own body and mind, like an injection to numb part of the body... You can feel the pressure but as for feeling, there was nothing. There was the knocking of his legs on the wooden bench and the smell of the wood. The natural lines of the wood grain pressed into her face leaving a fingerprint of the wood on her. He felt his hips heave forward with greater intensity. Then one deep thrust and the pounding sound of silence filled her ears.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. 24TH STREET SUBWAY PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

A second thrust that knocks her case onto the subway floor.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL - LATER

Zoe is on a hospital crash cart with chaos all around her. She is crying and very confused as to what is going on. With a sudden jolt she sits up and lets out the sound that defines Lena's solo, the perfect note.

INT. HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

Lena stands on the other side of the emergency doors looking through them as if she could see her mother.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. 24TH STREET SUBWAY PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

The note is the only thing flowing through Lena's ears as the man drives himself into her one last time. He makes some inaudible sound that sounds like he's saying something. As quickly as it had began, it is now over. As his running footsteps exit the area, Lena becomes human again and collapses on her knees.

(CONTINUED)

Trying to pull her skirt back around her waist, she lays there on the floor, sobbing quietly and everything goes black.

FADE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL IN NYC

Lena's crying is now audible and very loud. Lucille enters her room and strokes her forehead, whispering over and over.

LUCILLE

It's gonna be alright... I'll take care of you, just like I took care of your momma.

Lena wraps one arm around her and keeps sobbing and rocking back and fourth. Her father lays asleep in a chair next to the bed with Lena's hand locked in his.

LENA

I want my daddy. I want my daddy.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. HOSPITAL IN NYC - MORNING

One months later. Lena is sitting in the OBGYN examination room after her examination. Mady is standing next to the door. Lena has completely redressed and is looking a lot better than the last time she was in that building. The doctor walks in with a clipboard and a hand full of pamphlets.

OBGYN

Before I tell you the results of the report... Could you excuse us?

Mady Looks at Lena and begins to exit. Lena shakes her head no. The doctor closes the door and moves in closer to Lena to have a more intimate conversation with her, more woman to woman than doctor to patient.

OBGYN

No one would fault for terminating now.

Lena looks back at her, unmoved by what she has said to her. Mady moves in closer to comfort her.

OBGYN

It's a boy.

(CONTINUED)

Mady looks up from the floor at Lena.

LENA

Thank you.

Lena immediately gets off the examination table and gets her coat which is laying in the chair.

OBGYN

We can set up an appointment as soon as possible.

MADY

Is there anyone she can talk-

LENA

No, I'm fine.

Lena takes the pamphlets from the doctor, opens the door and throws them away as she walks down the hallway and exits.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. HOSPITAL IN NYC - AFTERNOON

8 months later. Lena is being wheeled out of the hospital with a brand new baby in her arms. Mady, her father, and Lucille are all with her. Everyone's spirit is high on a warm spring day.

A car pulls up with Mady's boyfriend in the car. Marshal is tall with light brown skin.

INT. MCCANE FAMILY HOUSE - MORNING

Lena sits alone in a room. She has her horn to her lips and begins to play. The sound coming out is flat and doesn't have the whimsical element to her music it had. The notes are correct but the music sounds dead. Lena takes the horn away from her lips and locks the horn in its case. She walks over to a picture of her mother and places it face down. The sound of her son in his stroller can be heard across the room. Lena takes the stroller and exits the room leaving her horn behind.

EXT. MCCANE FAMILY HOUSE - MORNING

6 months later. Lena is saying her good-byes to her father and Lucille, her son in her arms.

(CONTINUED)