

DEVA
CASSEL

ROMAIN
DURIS

JULIEN
DE SAINT JEAN

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

A FILM BY
ALEXANDRE CASTAGNETTI



FULDAWA
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THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

A FILM BY ALEXANDRE CASTAGNETTI

based on the cult novel by Gaston Leroux

INTERNATIONAL SALES



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EXT. GARNIER OPERA HOUSE - NIGHT

Paris, 1875.

A bolt of lightning pierces the sky. An intense thunderstorm descends on the brand-new Garnier opera house as a few latecomers in evening attire rush inside. We can hear the dissonant sounds of the orchestra tuning their instruments.

INT. GARNIER OPERA HOUSE/MAIN STAGE - NIGHT

Inside, it's a packed house. The audience is dressed to the nines, waiting for the show to begin. There's a sense of restlessness and confusion. People are staring at the stage curtain. Many people glance at their watches. Some start clapping. A few even crack jokes.

In box number 5, French President MAC MAHON looks at the man seated beside him, the architect CHARLES GARNIER, and gives him a questioning look. Worried, Garnier turns to an elegant man, the VISCOUNT DE GLAUD, who stands up.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/HALLWAYS/BEHIND THE STAGE - NIGHT

The Viscount de Glaud walks briskly through the hallways. In the background, in addition to the increasingly impatient applause, we hear the muffled sound of feet stamping rhythmically on the

floor. The Viscount descends a staircase, emerges into a hallway, ascends another staircase, and finds himself behind the curtain, on stage, where a forest set is waiting. The noise of the audience has died down. Twenty or so YOUNG GIRLS in tutus are whispering as they wait. They look anxious. Seeing the Viscount, they fall silent. He walks past them without a word.

On his way to the dressing rooms, he passes COSTUME ASSISTANTS, STAGEHANDS, a whole world of people who are also waiting for the show to start. He comes to a dressing room and enters without knocking.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/PRIMA BALLERINA'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Inside, the large mirror reflects the terrified look of the PRIMA BALLERINA. Beside her, a man, the DIRECTOR, turns to the Viscount, looking distraught.

DIRECTOR
She refuses... I...

VISCOUNT
You start. I'll handle this.

The director hesitates.

VISCOUNT
Start the music! Now!

The man nods. He leaves, taking one last look at the cowering, fear-stricken ballerina. The Viscount stands behind her and puts his hands on her shoulders. He massages her, looking at her in the mirror.

VISCOUNT
All of Paris is here. This is your
big day.

The ballerina's body trembles. She shakes her head frantically, like a madwoman. In the distance, we hear the first notes of the Opera's overture. The music is powerful and tormented (in the style of Mussorgsky's "Night on Bald Mountain"). Suddenly...

PRIMA BALLERINA
SHUT UP!

VISCOUNT
(trying to remain calm)
Gabrielle, calm down. It's just stage
fright. But you're ready. You're
going to dazzle them.

He swivels her chair around to look into her eyes. She looks through him, as if she can't even see him.

PRIMA BALLERINA

NO! LEAVE ME ALONE! I'm begging you,
go away. I'll do what you want, but
leave me alone, please, leave me
alone...

The Viscount SLAPS her. Surprised, she looks like she's seeing him for the first time. With her hand on her cheek, she stares at him, dazed.

VISCOUNT

Stop acting like a child! There is no
phantom! There are no such things as
phantoms! Focus! You've got 10
minutes before you go on.

PRIMA BALLERINA

On stage? No... No... I don't want to...

In the distance, the overture continues.

VISCOUNT

Don't ruin my reputation with your
ridiculous superstitions!

She plugs her ears, her face tense with terror.

PRIMA BALLERINA

He's here! No! NO! LEAVE ME ALONE!

She suddenly runs out of the dressing room.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/HALLWAY - NIGHT

The music of the overture resounds loudly through the theater. The ballerina runs breathlessly through the hallways of the opera house. Terrorized by someone invisible, she races up the stairs. She runs, higher and higher, climbing step after step, casting panicked glances behind her. Metal staircases have replaced the stone steps. She climbs, slipping and causing a metallic clatter, then picks herself up and sets off again up the stairs.

EXT. OPERA HOUSE/ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Panting, she finally emerges onto the roof. There's THUNDER and lightning. The shadow of a SILHOUETTE spreads over her, and a hand grabs her wrist. As she pulls free, her foot slips on the

metal at the edge of the roof, and she falls into the void. In slow motion, she disappears into the darkness, under sheets of rain. Her SCREAM echoes through the darkness.

EXT. STREETS OF PARIS, 1875 - DAY

Several TOWN CRIERS are shouting out the news, brandishing the front page of their newspapers:

"Prima Ballerina dies on opening day of *Orpheus*! Fall from the roof? The Phantom strikes again?"

"Miss Gervaise refuses to take on the role of Eurydice!"

"Disaster at the Garnier opera house! Miss Sorelli refuses in turn! No dancer wants to perform *Orpheus*!"

"The Viscount de Glaud, patron of the Opera, committed to an asylum, he hears voices! The curse of the Phantom continues!"

A photo of the disheveled Viscount is on the front page.

"Orpheus: the cursed opera is cancelled!"

INT. OPERA HOUSE/DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The large office of the Garnier opera house, overlooking the Place de l'Opera. TWO MEN in dark suits watch as a THIRD MAN ceremoniously places the score of *Orpheus*, covered with handwritten notes, in an urn. He seals it.

SOMBER MAN

It would be easier to burn it...

DIRECTOR

Do you want to end up in an asylum
like the Viscount?

The somber man's eyes widen in terror.

DIRECTOR

Where we're going to put it, no one
will find it.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/UNDERGROUND LAKE - NIGHT

Followed by the two men, the Director carries the urn through the hallways of the opera house. They descend staircases, go through doorways, plunging ever deeper into the depths of the theater. As

they pass the artificial lake created by Garnier to stabilize the building, a breeze makes them shiver, and they quicken the pace. They cross a vast, richly decorated hall containing the legendary costumes of the great operas: Lohengrin's armor, the barbarians' shields, Salambo's perfume-atomizers... When they reach a wall, one of the men lights a lantern, while the second opens a grate that leads them into a dark vault, down narrow, silent hallways. Their FOOTSTEPS echo heavily off the vaulted ceilings. Strange pipes making odd WHISTLING noises run along the walls. They come to an iron door, which one of them opens.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/CELLAR - NIGHT

The lantern illuminates a cellar. A cavity has been dug into the ground. The men place the urn inside and cover it with dirt. The candle flickers, as if stirred by the wind.

DIRECTOR

We'll never hear of it again.

The candlelight fades, plunging the scene into darkness. We hear the sound of a metal door closing.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/CELLAR - DAY

... The DEAFENING sound of a jackhammer. By the light of a hurricane lamp, in the depths of the Opera House, PRESENT-DAY WORKERS in fluorescent vests, hard hats, and noise-reducing ear protection are drilling into the vault wall. Suddenly, one of the workers stops his drill in surprise. He has hit a metal wall behind the concrete... From inside the cellar, in the darkness, we see the metal door open and the light of a flashlight sweep across a space filled with dust particles. The beam of light falls on the cavity dug into the floor. The worker approaches and clears away the dirt. He discovers the urn buried there a century and a half earlier... The two workers look at each other.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

OPENING CREDITS (to the song "Dancing by Night", by London Grammar and Sebastian...)

INT. SHABBY BALLET STUDIO - DAY

Feet clad in toe shoes rehearse a series of classical exercises. We're in an old, bare rehearsal space, with only a few old photos of prima ballerinas on the wall. A YOUNG WOMAN tirelessly repeats the same exercises over and over again. In the mirror's

reflection, we discover the charming, romantic face of ANASTASIA (18). Her eyes are closed.

Focused on the music, she doesn't hear the voice calling her name. Suddenly, the music stops and a woman's voice calls out to Anastasia, but she continues dancing, as though she could still hear the music. An elegant old woman (her BALLET TEACHER) comes right up to her, phone in hand. Anastasia is startled.

ANASTASIA'S BALLET TEACHER
(*in Romanian*)
Ana, it's the Paris Opera!

Heart pounding, Anastasia reaches for the phone. The teacher waits anxiously.

ANASTASIA
Hello?

INT. ANASTASIA'S FATHER'S FARM - DAY

In a stable, a robust man with tired features is feeding his cows - ANASTASIA'S FATHER.

ANASTASIA (O.S.)
(*in Romanian*)
Dad!

The man turns and sees Anastasia standing in the doorway of the stable. She smiles, out of breath. The man stands up, overwhelmed with emotion. She runs into his arms. With tears in their eyes, they hold each other tight.

ANASTASIA'S FATHER
(*in Romanian*)
So this is it... you're in...

ANASTASIA
Just for a year...
(*in French*)
En supernuméraire...
(*explaining, in Romanian*)
It's just a trial.

ANASTASIA'S FATHER
You'll win them over! I have no doubt. They'd be crazy not to want you.

Anastasia nods, wanting to believe it. He pulls away from her and turns to his cows.

ANASTASIA'S FATHER
*(shouting at the cows, in
Romanian)*
You hear that, ladies? My daughter is
going to the Paris Opera! The Paris
Opera!

The cows MOO in response. Anastasia and her father laugh.

INT. BUS - DAY

Inside the bus, Anastasia looks out at her father, who is waving goodbye from the square. Suddenly, he yells something at her. Anastasia doesn't understand. The bus pulls away, and her father shouts again. She gets up and opens the window to hear him. He shouts as he runs alongside the bus, but the vehicle is picking up speed. Anastasia sticks her head out the window. Her father stops as the bus pulls away.

ANASTASIA'S FATHER
*(shouting as loudly as
possible, out of breath, in
French)*
LIVE, LOVE, AND DANCE!

With tears streaming down her cheeks, Anastasia smiles at him. She leans out to see him for as long as possible, until he disappears as the bus rounds a bend.

Emotional, she sits down again. She takes out her phone, looks for a photo of the Garnier opera house, then posts a message on her Instagram account: "On my way to the Paris Opera!" With a lump in her stomach, she watches the mountain ridges pass by, feeling a mix of excitement and melancholy.

EXT. SKY/MOUNTAIN - DAY

Snowstorm. A plane flies over snow-covered mountains.

INT. BUS/SUBURBS/PARIS - DAY

As the gray suburbs flash by outside the bus window, Anastasia makes a phone call. She gets an answering machine.

ANASTASIA
(on the phone)
Hi Georgina... I hope this is your
number... I... It's Anastasia. I'm on the
bus! I'm so happy! You didn't get

back to me. Where do we meet? ... Call
me back. Thanks.

She's bilingual and speaks French without an accent. She hangs
up, a bit worried. The bus crosses the center of Paris: the Place
de l'Etoile, the Grands Boulevards, the Bourse...

EXT. PARIS/PLACE DE L'OPERA - DAY

Anastasia gets off the bus at the Place de l'Opera. She grabs her
large suitcase amid the hubbub of other passengers. She turns
toward the Garnier opera house, regarding the facade she's seen
so many times in photos. Her dream is becoming a reality. She
can't believe it. She takes a deep breath.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/FRONT DESK- DAY

Dragging her suitcase along behind her, Anastasia checks her
phone: no missed calls, no texts. She passes the Opera's heavy
doors to find the stage door. Fascinated, she walks along, taking
in the sights. She's staring up at the ceilings, feeling as
though she's in a dream, when suddenly a voice calls out to her.

SECURITY GUARD (O.S.)
Hey! Miss!

Coming back to reality, Anastasia smiles shyly.

ANASTASIA
Sorry... Excuse me, I was lost in
thought... I'm sorry...

SECURITY GUARD
You can't come in with that.

He points to the sign indicating that suitcases and other bulky
items are not allowed.

ANASTASIA
But... I... I'm joining the ballet... as a
supernumerary... My "*petite mère**" [*an
older ballerina who mentors a younger
dancer within a ballet company]
hasn't called me back, and I don't
know where else to go... I...

Behind them, several people are waiting impatiently to pass
through the security gates. Among them, an elderly lady with
curly hair and red glasses, AMELIA, is overtaking everyone in
line to approach her.

AMELIA
What's your name?

Surprised, Anastasia pauses for a moment.

ANASTASIA
...Uh... Anastasia Marescu...

AMELIA
Ah, the little Romanian prodigy!
Welcome! Welcome!
(To the security guard)
It's okay, I've got this.

Anastasia, unsettled, follows her down a hallway dragging her heavy suitcase.

AMELIA
(while walking)
Who's your *petite mère*?

Anastasia struggles to keep up with Amelia, who is walking briskly.

ANASTASIA
...Georgina d'Angelo.

AMELIA
Oh, lucky you!

Not knowing how to interpret this, Anastasia furrows her brow. She follows Amelia as she makes her way through the opera house. Music, pianos, singing can be heard coming from everywhere... They pass dancers, and even an area where young people are playing ping-pong.

Wide-eyed, Anastasia takes everything in. At the intersection of two hallways, Amelia stops.

AMELIA
It may take me a while to get hold of Georgina. In the meantime, why don't you get your measurements taken in the costume department. Room 212, on the third floor.

Amelia points to a staircase. Anastasia, feeling lost, hesitates.

AMELIA
(amused)
You can't miss it.

Amelia walks away.

ANASTASIA

Hang on...

Amelia turns around and gives her an inquisitive look.

ANASTASIA

Sorry... But... who are you?

AMELIA

Oh, I'm sorry! I haven't even introduced myself. I'm so used to people knowing me... I apologize. My name is Amelia, I'm the Opera's historian.

She walks away, smiling. Surprised and confused, Anastasia watches her go.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/HALLWAYS - DAY

Still lugging her heavy suitcase, Anastasia struggles up a staircase. She emerges into a hallway, hesitates, turns right, and looks at the numbers on the doors. CHEERFUL MUSIC echoes everywhere. She passes two people in costumes, with top hats and period dresses, following them with her eyes. As she turns down a hallway, Fauré's "Pavane" can be heard from a half-open door. Anastasia glances in.

VICTOIRE (30) is dancing in front of a mirrored wall while her ASSISTANT films her with his phone. Impressed, Anastasia watches her. Victoire sees her in the mirror. She stops dancing and turns off the music with her phone.

VICTOIRE

Can I help you?

ANASTASIA

Sorry... Excuse me... I'm looking for room 212.

VICTOIRE

It's down the hall to the left.

Anastasia smiles shyly, but doesn't move. Victoire frowns.

ANASTASIA

I... I admire you very much. I've seen all your shows... You're so good.

VICTOIRE
Thank you. Are you... joining the
company?

ANASTASIA
Yes... well, as a supernumerary...

VICTOIRE
Ah.
*(slightly condescending
smile)*
Well, welcome! And good luck!

Victoire turns the music back on.

ANASTASIA
Thank you...

Anastasia's "thank you" is overshadowed by the music. She meets
the eyes of the assistant, who seems to be judging her. She
leaves again.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/MEASUREMENT ROOM - DAY

A room with mirrors on one wall. A TAILOR is taking Anastasia's
measurements.

TAILOR
Shoes size?

ANASTASIA
Five and a half.

THE TAILOR
Five and a half.

Next to her, his ASSISTANT notes the figure in a notebook. The
tailor measures Anastasia's shoulders.

TAILOR
And how are you liking Paris?

ANASTASIA
I arrived today... I haven't had a
chance to... But I come from a small
village in Romania, so Paris... This is
the biggest moment of my life!

TAILOR
(to his assistant)
17.

(to Anastasia)
But you speak perfect French.

ANASTASIA
My mother was French...

AMELIA (O.S.)
Georgina left these keys for you...

Anastasia turns to Amelia, who hands her a keyring.

AMELIA
She's "sick" this morning.

Amelia exchanges a knowing glance with the tailor before disappearing. Anastasia isn't sure what to make of it.

ESTABLISHING SHOT. PARIS/WORKING-CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Shoppers and vendors crowd the streets of Pigalle, near the sex shops and seedy bars. Passersby jostle Anastasia as she drags her suitcase through the indifferent crowd.

INT. GEORGINA'S BUILDING/HALLWAY - DAY

Pushing her heavy suitcase, Anastasia enters a gloomy lobby.

INT. GEORGINA'S APARTMENT/HALLWAY - DAY

In the building's dimly lit hallway, Anastasia has to gather herself before opening the door.

INT. GEORGINA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Anastasia enters the small living room/kitchen/dining room of a messy apartment. A piece of paper is taped to one of the doors. It says "KEEP OUT" with a skull and crossbones in messy handwriting. On the next door, there's no sign. Anastasia pushes open the second door. She discovers that her bed is unmade. There are a few things lying on the floor, including an ashtray. She sighs.

INT. GEORGINA'S APARTMENT/ANASTASIA'S ROOM - DAY

A little later, the room has been tidied up. The small window overlooks the Sacred Heart. Anastasia finishes carefully folding her clothes and putting them in the closet as she makes a phone

call. The conversation is in Romanian.

ANASTASIA

(on the phone)

It's so big... There are so many people... And they all seem to know exactly what they're supposed to be doing.

We can hear her father laughing.

ANASTASIA'S FATHER (O.S.)

Don't worry, soon you'll feel at home there too...

ANASTASIA

(on the phone)

I hope so...

She grabs her toiletries bag and walks out of the room.

ANASTASIA'S FATHER (O.S.)

And your roomie, what's she like?

INT. GEORGINA'S APARTMENT/BATHROOM - DAY

Anastasia crosses the living room to the bathroom.

ANASTASIA

(on the phone)

I don't know... I haven't met--

She opens the door to find... GEORGINA, a slim, mixed-race woman with an Afro, piercings, and a tomboyish punk look. She's sticking a syringe into her thigh! It's shocking.

ANASTASIA

(screaming)

Aaahh!

Shocked, Anastasia shuts the door.

ANASTASIA'S FATHER (O.S.)

(worried)

What's going on?

ANASTASIA

(on the phone)

Uh... N... nothing, nothing, I just met my roommate...

Her father laughs.

ANASTASIA'S FATHER (O.S.)

(amused)

Is she that scary?

ANASTASIA

No... Uh... It's not that... It's just that
she was in the bathroom...

Suddenly, the door behind her bursts open, startling Anastasia.
Georgina emerges from the bathroom.

GEORGINA

You didn't see anything, understand?
Keep your fucking mouth shut!

ANASTASIA

Uh, of course, of course...

Georgina goes into her room.

ANASTASIA'S FATHER (O.S.)

Hello? Hello? Ana?

Anastasia takes a deep breath to calm down.

ANASTASIA'S FATHER

So? What's she like?

ANASTASIA

(scowling, on the phone)

She seems nice...

ESTABLISHING SHOT. GARNIER OPERA HOUSE - DAY

INT. OPERA HOUSE/DANCE STUDIO - DAY

A large rehearsal room. Anastasia is working on her technique with fifteen other dancers. In the middle of the room, a TEACHER with a Russian accent gives them instructions in a loud voice while he executes the technical movements. An Asian pianist accompanies them, playing Tchaikovsky's "Waltz of the Flowers."

RUSSIAN TEACHER

... And left... left side... left... same...
One, two, and left... five, six, and
up! Nice!

Anastasia, focused, dances, scrutinized by the other dancers,

especially the second group waiting off to the side. They look impressed. We hear a few admiring murmurs.

DANCERS

Who is she?... She's amazing!... She's
from Romania...

RUSSIAN TEACHER

... Second group, let's get ready,
let's go...

Another group of dancers takes their place. Anastasia catches her breath and leans on the bar. She watches the others' expressions, hoping they approve of her. Suddenly, the door to the hall opens to reveal a YOUNG WOMAN from the Opera's administration office.

YOUNG WOMAN

Sorry to interrupt: all dancers are
invited to the main stage at 1 p.m.
for a presentation of *Orpheus* with
the dance director. Thank you!

INT. OPERA HOUSE/HALLWAYS - DAY

A throng of DANCERS walks down the hall, heckling each other, joking, and chatting animatedly. They enter the main Opera hall. Anastasia is among the last to go in. No one speaks to her. The troupe take their seats, chatting happily. Anastasia hesitates, not knowing where or with whom to sit.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/MAIN STAGE - DAY

The ballet company, the orchestra, conductors, and choreographer/dance director JAMES FIGUERAS (early 40s), a handsome, charismatic, dark-haired man, are gathered on the large main stage of the opera.

JAMES

(in English)

Is it okay with everyone if I speak
in French?... Okay.

(in French)

It's unusual for us to be all
together before starting to work on a
show, but we don't have any
recordings of *Orpheus* because it's
never been performed. Even though the
composer is world-famous...

He pauses to build suspense.

JAMES
Ernest Dupré...

The dancers look at each other in confusion. Nobody seems to be familiar with this "world-famous composer." Anastasia is sitting off to the side, surrounded by empty seats, waiting for him to go on.

JAMES
No? Doesn't ring a bell? How about
"The Phantom of the Opera"?

Murmurs of surprise. Anastasia listens attentively. James continues.

JAMES
That's right, folks. Gaston Leroux based his Phantom character on a real composer, Ernest Dupré, who wrote just one piece, *Orpheus*, in 1873. He composed it for his fiancée, a famous ballerina, but both of them died in a fire before the premiere. Yes, it's a sad story.

The dancers whisper to each other. James walks among the dancers to capture their attention.

JAMES
(playing up the mystery)
Legend has it that Ernest Dupré's phantom haunted the opera, threatening anyone who tried to stage the piece. *Orpheus* was thought to be cursed, and the score mysteriously disappeared!

He does a flourish, like a magician concealing an object.

JAMES
And then, while (finally) repairing the pipes, some workmen found a sealed urn buried in the depths of our beloved opera house... And what do you think it contained?

MARCO
The cursed score!

Everyone looks at box no. 5 (historically the Phantom of the Opera's box) where a group of slightly unruly dancers, including Georgina, have crowded in. Georgina is standing next to the

handsome MARCO (20s). Anastasia follows their eyes.

JAMES

Marco's paying attention for once...

Laughter.

JAMES

Are you ready to hear the Phantom's opera?

Murmurs of enthusiasm.

JAMES

Are you sure? There's still time to change your mind...

Anastasia watches as the company reacts loudly. Some pretend to stand up, others demonstrate their enthusiasm. "*No! We're not scared!... I'm freaked, I'm getting out of here...*". James smiles. He lets the dancers have some fun. When he gestures to them to quiet down, they quickly fall silent.

JAMES

Orpheus is an adaptation of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, which everyone, of course, knows by heart...

People are nodding half-heartedly.

JAMES

Yes, well, let me catch you up, then. It's a tragedy about true love.



He gestures to the CONDUCTOR. The lights dim, and a TECHNICIAN turns the spotlight on James. The choreographer has meticulously prepared his presentation. The conductor sets the tempo. In the technical booth, a SOUND ENGINEER presses play on a recording.

From the very first notes of the opening brass section, Anastasia is gripped by the dark romanticism of the music. It's powerful and tragic. Anastasia closes her eyes. Intrigued, Georgina watches her. Outside, thunder rumbles.

GEORGINA
(whispering)
This girl's trippin'.

Over the opening music, James speaks in his enchanting voice. He dances while recounting the plot. He's clearly a great dancer.

JAMES
(dancing)
Orpheus is a genius musician.
Eurydice is a nymph enchanted by his
music. They fall madly in love. But
Eurydice, pursued by a shepherd who
wants to rape her, is bitten by a
snake, and she dies.

He mimes Eurydice's death with grace and a sense of drama. The company is spellbound by James's dancing, his magnetic voice, and the somber music. No one's laughing now. Everyone looks serious.

JAMES
For love, Orpheus dares to do what no
other man has ever dared.

The music swells.

JAMES
He descends into the Underworld to
bring her back to the land of the
living..

INT. OPERA HOUSE/UNDERGROUND LAKE - DAY

In the basement, at the bottom of the artificial lake, the sediment is set in motion, floating to the sound of music...

EXT. OPERA HOUSE - DAY

Black clouds gather over the opera house.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/MAIN STAGE - DAY

James continues recounting the plot over the music.

JAMES

With his song and his lyre, he
convinces Hades, the God of the
Underworld, to let her go. Although
there's one condition: Orpheus must
not look at Eurydice until they
return to the land of the living. But
as soon as he steps out into the
light, he can't resist looking back:
unfortunately, Eurydice is still in
the cave. He loses her, and he is
cursed to mourn her for eternity.

The dancers are focused. Anastasia seems to be sensitive to the music. The TENOR steps forward and begins to sing Orpheus's first recitative:

TENOR (O.S.)

Then weave again for sweet Eurydice /
life's pattern that was taken from
the loom too quickly / See, I ask for
so little /

Suddenly, a gust of wind causes a door to SLAM, startling Anastasia. The tenor pauses. The conductor stops his musicians.

JAMES

*(annoyed, in English, to
the tenor)*

There's only one person here who can
interrupt the music, and that's me.

James looks irritated. He's suddenly a different man from the fun showman at the beginning of the scene.

TENOR

(in English)

I can't sing under these conditions.

JAMES

(in English)

You're not at the Met Gala. This is a
small listening session between
friends. We'll sort out the problem
with the draft later.

Wind rushes into the theater.

TENOR
(*in English*)
And fix the pipes. I felt a drop on
my nose!

JAMES
The Phantom awakes!

Everyone chuckles. Anastasia watches them.

JAMES
Let's get back to it!

Immediate silence. James's authority is unquestioned. The
conductor counts the time, and...

CUT TO

The final chord rings out. Applause. Georgina is still observing
Anastasia, intrigued. Outside, THUNDER is still rumbling. James
steps to the center of the stage.

JAMES
For the first time on stage in Paris,
the work of the Phantom of the Opera
himself!

APPLAUSE and CRIES from the enthusiastic dancers.

JAMES
You know me, just because it's a
nineteenth-century opera-ballet
doesn't mean it's going to be all
leaps and tutus. I'm here to shake
things up! *Orpheus* will make history!

MARCO
Nureyev's *Swan Lake* is a thing of the
past!

Laughter.

JAMES
(*smiling at the joke*)
Why not? I'm sick of seeing nothing
but white hair in the audience!
(*laughs*)
And I'm sick and tired of watching
you dancing the same steps! The
premiere is in three weeks. I'll be
auditioning for the lead roles with
the scene where Eurydice and Orpheus

meet. It's an open audition. Surprise me! Wow me! Be daring! Show me what you've got!

The dancers look at each other. Anastasia notices that James seems to be shooting a pointed glance at Victoire, the prima ballerina. Everyone gets up. Commotion.

JAMES
Wait!
(to Anastasia)
Miss, stand up.

Surprised and intimidated, Anastasia stands up.

JAMES
(to the dancers)
Silence! Sit down!

Everyone falls silent and sits down. Anastasia too.

JAMES
(to Anastasia)
No, not you, miss, stand up.

Anastasia stands up. All eyes are on her. She's extremely uncomfortable.

JAMES
(to the company)
Look at her. What do you see?

The dancers whisper, smile...

JAMES
Yes, she's a young woman, so save your stupid comments! No? You don't notice anything strange? She's all alone! No one's sitting with her. Were you all raised in a barn?!
(to Anastasia)
I take it you're Anastasia Marescu?

Anastasia nods.

JAMES
(to the company)
Miss Marescu has come from Romania to join our merry company as a supernumerary. Everyone see her?

The dancers nod.

JAMES

All right, then. So no one can say they didn't know. Thank you for welcoming her properly and not leaving her alone in the hell that is Paris! It's very hard to join a group where everyone knows everyone else. I'm counting on you!

Everyone stares at Anastasia, who is horribly uncomfortable. She makes eye contact with James, who smiles at her. He's very charismatic.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/HALLWAYS - EVENING

Anastasia is walking through the hallways of the opera house. She's deep in thought, humming the main theme of Orpheus. She's looking for a room to rehearse in. She opens a door: it's occupied. Then another... All the rooms are taken. She goes to the end of the hallway and finds a door that is slightly recessed. She listens and hears a piano playing, something like Dvorak's *Slavonic Dance*... She opens the door.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/OLD REHEARSAL HALL - EVENING

The room is empty except for a PIANIST, dressed in a tailcoat as if for a concert and facing away from us. His playing is inspired. She listens to his romantic interpretation. He finishes. He takes a deep breath, then suspends his hands over the keys before starting a new piece.

ANASTASIA

(from the door)

Excuse me...

The man in the tailcoat jumps up and turns towards her abruptly. He's a very handsome young man with deep, tormented eyes. His face is pale, with burn marks on the lower part of his cheek. He stares at her intently.

ANASTASIA

Sorry, I didn't mean to disturb you.

He remains silent. His dark eyes and strange attitude are unsettling to Anastasia.

ANASTASIA

It's very beautiful... what you were playing... Who's it by?

He doesn't take his eyes off her. He doesn't answer.

ANASTASIA

(confused)

I... I'm looking for a rehearsal room
and... everything's taken... Do you mind
if I dance in a corner...

He stands up.

ANASTASIA

No... But... stay... I... I can dance to
whatever you're playing...

She struggles to maintain eye contact. There's a sense of danger
and attraction.

MAN IN TAILCOAT

I was about to leave...

He has a beautiful voice. He heads for the door. As he passes
Anastasia, they exchange a long, intense look. Time slows down.
Anastasia's heart races. She watches him disappear into the
hallway. She takes a deep breath. It's love at first sight.



CUT TO:

Anastasia is practicing. She does the same movements over and
over again. When she looks in the mirror, she suddenly sees
Georgina behind her, doing the same exercises as her, as if she
were her shadow. She's startled.

GEORGINA

I apologize for my shitty welcome.
That asshole James is right. It's
hard to make friends. I know that.

ANASTASIA
Why "that asshole James"?

GEORGINA
Did I say that?
(looks surprised)
It's weird, I love James, everyone
loves James.

Anastasia isn't sure if she's being sincere or not. Georgina
laughs at her puzzlement.

GEORGINA
(acting)
Naive Anastasia of the Carpathians,
you don't know how the dance goes
anymore?
*(She dances from one foot
to the other and talks as
though she were telling a
story)*
A word of advice from your fairy
godmother: if someone offers you a
hand here, it's only so they can
better take advantage of you, kid.
(She holds out her hand)
Truce?

Anastasia puts her hands behind her back.

ANASTASIA
Truce.

GEORGINA
(amused)
Don't worry, as long as you're a
supernumerary, you've got nothing to
worry about. But I wouldn't recommend
auditioning for any lead roles...

Anastasia looks uncomfortable. Georgina laughs.

GEORGINA
You want to be a prima ballerina?

ANASTASIA
(sarcastic)
Me? Never. I just want to do nice
little leaps in the back.

Georgina laughs. They've broken the ice.

GEORGINA

That's how we like our little
supernumeraries!

Anastasia smiles. Beat.

ANASTASIA

Are you going to audition?

GEORGINA

Yeah... Even though it's rigged.

ANASTASIA

Rigged?

GEORGINA

It's already decided. Victoire will
get it.

ANASTASIA

Because she's the prima ballerina?

GEORGINA

No, because she's got the most
followers.

Anastasia doesn't understand.

GEORGINA

It's the only thing that matters to
James. How popular you are on social
media.

Anastasia looks crestfallen; Georgia bursts out laughing.

GEORGINA

And Okay, I admit, she's a rather
good dancer.

ANASTASIA

Why are you auditioning if it's
"rigged"?

GEORGINA

My money's on jury fatigue. Maybe
they'll end up feeling sorry for us.

Anastasia smiles.

ANASTASIA

What if you come up with something
that really surprises James?

GEORGINA

Do you really think he wants to be surprised? I know his taste, he always wants the same thing.

Georgina does an imitation of a very arty, contemporary dance routine. Anastasia laughs.

GEORGINA

But you're right. I've got nothing to lose.

(she pretends to think)

The meeting of Eurydice and Orpheus...
by the Phantom of the Opera himself...

She does a few classic, conventional dance figures. Then she stops.

GEORGINA

Ohhhh, I have an idea! This is great!

*(Looking at the clock on
the wall)*

Come with me!

INT. OPERA HOUSE/COSTUME STOREROOM - NIGHT

The costume and accessories storeroom. Anastasia and Georgina are hiding, waiting in the half-light, among dozens of mannequin heads wearing wigs.

ANASTASIA

(whispering)

What are we doing here?

Georgina excitedly gestures to her to be quiet. We hear a strange noise and see a diffuse light. Anastasia's heart beats faster. Someone's coming.

Georgina brandishes a dagger and gestures with her thumb along her neck that she will cut off the head of the man if he comes their way. Surprised, Anastasia opens her eyes wide.

The silhouette passes without seeing them. It's the NIGHT WATCHMAN making his rounds. Once he's gone, Georgina gives the dagger to Anastasia.

GEORGINA

(whispering)

The dagger from Romeo and Juliet from
the Nureyev production! Careful, it's
really sharp.

Anastasia nervously looks at the dagger. The opera house creaks, yawns, makes strange noises.

GEORGINA
(rummaging around the
furniture)
Look in the accessories there, there
must be candles.

Anastasia tries to set the dagger down, but it slips out of her hand and lands point-down right next to her foot. She lets out a YELP. Georgina comes back, proudly holding up a small pedestal table.

GEORGINA
(whispering)
Let's ask the Phantom how he wanted
his opera to be danced!

INT. OPERA HOUSE/MAIN STAGE - NIGHT

The Opera's main stage is plunged in darkness. THUNDER rumbles outside. Georgina and Anastasia, lit by a few candles from a candelabrum, are sitting at the pedestal table. It feels like they're in a fantasy story. They set their hands flat on the small table. A drop of water falls from the ceiling and lands near them. They look at each other. Georgina makes a funny face.

GEORGINA
(in a booming voice)
Ernest Dupré, if you are within these
walls, knock one time!

They wait. Nothing happens.

GEORGINA
Ernest Dupré, what are you waiting
for? We don't have all night!

ANASTASIA
Don't scare him away.

GEORGINA
(smiling)
Scare away a ghost?

ANASTASIA
With spirits, you have to be kind...
and polite.

GEORGINA

Sorry, I didn't mean to be rude... Why
don't you try, if you know so much?

Anastasia closes her eyes. She's concentrating. Georgina looks at
her curiously.

ANASTASIA

Hello, we are Georgina and Anastasia,
two dancers from the Opera. We mean
you no harm. We'd like to talk to you
about your music... I... We... would like
to interpret it as well as possible.
We want to respect your artistic
vision...

*(Georgina holds back a
laugh.)*

You can give us a sign...

A beat. Suddenly, three drops land one after the other at the
girls' feet.

GEORGINA

Is that an answer? Dupré isn't a
musician, he's a plumber!

ANASTASIA

(smiling)

Spirits travel through water. It's
possible it's him.

GEORGINA

How do you know all this?

ANASTASIA

In my family, we believe in spirits,
and my grandmother was a clairvoyant.

Anastasia stands up and picks up the candlestick.

GEORGINA

Where are you going?

Anastasia doesn't answer, but she follows the water marks on the
floor, lighting the way with the candlestick. Georgina follows
excitedly.

Anastasia arrives at the edge of the backstage area, where a
trapdoor leads to the lower bridge via a small staircase. The
little drops of water appear to continue down the steps.
Anastasia walks down the stairs, followed by Georgina.

GEORGINA

I love this horror movie vibe!

INT. OPERA HOUSE/LOWER BRIDGE - NIGHT

Anastasia and Georgina walk across the metal catwalks beneath the Opera stage. It's an intricate series of metal bridges. It's as if they're descending into the bottom of a city in an abyss.

GEORGINA
(*amused, imitating a ghost*)
Ouuuuhhhhhhhh...

They reach the final underground level, lit by candlelight. Water trails run along the huge wooden cogwheels used to raise and lower the sets. They emerge at the entrance to the underground lake. Anastasia sings the aria from Verdi's "*Lacrimosa*".

GEORGINA
No way! I had the same tune in my head!

ANASTASIA
It's because he's here...

GEORGINA
Who? The Phantom?

ANASTASIA
When a tune suddenly pops into your head, it's because a ghost sings it nearby.

Georgina scans the darkness, shivering.

GEORGINA
Phantom? Hey phantom? Are you there?
Show yourself... Or sing us something more fun!

A ladder leads down into the water through an opening in the floor. Anastasia is increasingly caught up in their little game. We can hear a MELODY floating in the air. As if being pulled in, she climbs down the ladder and enters the water, fully clothed.

GEORGINA
What are you doing? You don't know how deep it is! You're even crazier than me!

Georgina joins her. They're up to their chests in water.

GEORGINA
Shit, it's freezing!

The atmosphere is phantasmagorical. The lake is contained within a large room with a vaulted ceiling of ancient stone. It's hard to make out where the room ends. A light mist floats on the surface of the water.

Anastasia advances, candlestick in hand, attracted by a small grate she thinks she glimpses at the other end of the lake, hidden in the half-light and level with the surface of the water. Georgina is feeling like all this is getting too weird. A draft makes them shiver and blows out the flame of the candles. It's nearly dark now. Anastasia thinks she sees two tiny lights at the back of the room, behind the grate. Just as Anastasia is about to open the grate, Georgina stops her.

GEORGINA
Wait! This is too freaky. Let's get
out of here!

Anastasia sees that Georgina is truly frightened. She looks back into the vault. The lights have disappeared. Georgina grabs her hand and turns back. Anastasia takes one last look behind her and then follows.

EXT. BEHIND THE OPERA HOUSE - NIGHT

Drenched and shivering, the two girls sneak out through the back of the opera house. Georgina lets out a big sigh, then laughs. Anastasia laughs too, with relief.

GEORGINA
(laughing)
You really had me fooled! Are you
totally wacko or what?

ANASTASIA
Wacko?

GEORGINA
Crazy, insane, nuts!

Anastasia laughs. Georgina leaps onto the opera house gate, which she climbs with dexterity. Anastasia hesitates.

GEORGINA
Come on! It's nothing for you. You're
a wacko, like I said.

Anastasia leaps onto the gate exactly like Georgina did. She

climbs up.

Perched up high, Anastasia stares pensively at the dark facade of the opera house. There's a strange sparkle in her eyes.

INT. GEORGINA'S APARTMENT/ANASTASIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Full moon over Paris. In her cramped bedroom, to the music of "*Solveig's Song*" from Grieg's *Peer Gynt*, Anastasia is sleeping restlessly. She wakes to find the window open. Suddenly, she sits up with a start: in her room, the man in the tailcoat is staring at her with the same intensity as in the rehearsal room! She SCREAMS.

Then she wakes up again. It was a dream. She catches her breath.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/MAIN STAGE/BOX NUMBER 5 - DAY

The Eurydice theme plays (*Click here to listen to the demo*) as Georgina auditions on the main stage. She looks strong, daring, fearless. She's breathtaking.

From box no. 5, Anastasia watches in admiration. She's discreetly filming her with her phone.

Georgina walks off the stage. Victoire enters. The pianist starts playing Eurydice's aria, and Victoire launches into her performance.

Georgina, still out of breath, joins Anastasia, who is filming Victoire. Victoire's technique is impressive. She blends a classical style with contemporary movements.

GEORGINA
(*whispering, out of breath*)
Fuck! She's good!

ANASTASIA
(*whisper*)
You're better than her.

Georgina stares at her.

GEORGINA
(*whispers*)
Do you mean it? Thanks, Ana, you're so sweet. I don't know if I'm better, but at least I dance from my heart.

ANASTASIA

I hope you get the part.

Georgina is moved and embraces her. Victoire finishes. James, sitting in one of the front rows, responds enthusiastically.

JAMES

Thank you, Victoire, that was excellent!

Anastasia exchanges a pissed-off look with Georgina, who shrugs. She knew she had no chance. Suddenly...

GHOSTLY VOICE

(muffled)

Anastasia...

Anastasia is startled and turns to look for the source of the voice.

GHOSTLY VOICE

(muffled)

Anastasia...

ANASTASIA

Did you hear that?

GEORGINA

What?

ANASTASIA

That voice...

GHOSTLY VOICE

Anastasia... undress!

ANASTASIA

There! You didn't hear?

GEORGINA

What are you talking about? What voice?

Anastasia panics a little.

GHOSTLY VOICE

Undress immediately!... I'm coming...

Anastasia, shocked, stares at Georgina, who suddenly bursts out laughing. Georgina points to the column in box 5.

GEORGINA

(whispering)

The columns are hollow, and there's a toilet vent that runs right through here.

GHOSTLY VOICE
If you don't get undressed right away, a great misfortune...

GEORGINA
(playing along)
Should I... take it all off?

GHOSTLY VOICE
Yes... everything... From the other world, I'm coming to you... Prepare yourself... I'm going to make love to you... You're going to experience something no mortal woman ever has...

Georgina laughs.

GEORGINA
You're pretty sure of yourself, Marco!

Silence.

GHOSTLY VOICE (O.S.)
Undress each other... and kiss. I'm coming for you...

Georgina shakes her head in annoyance.

GEORGINA
He's such a child.

Anastasia smiles. Out of breath, Marco pokes his head in.

MARCO
Come on, girls! We're going to Gisèle's! LET'S GO!

MARCO AND GEORGINA
LET'S GO!

Marco takes Georgina and Anastasia by the hand. They leave the box and join the other dancers, who are leaving the theater. Anastasia lets go of Marco's hand.

MARCO
Come on! Let's grab drinks.

ANASTASIA

Uh... another time. Thanks.

GEORGINA

What's wrong with you? The audition's over! It's time to party!

ANASTASIA

It's just that... I wanted to practice...

GEORGINA

Ana, there's more to life than work!

ANASTASIA

I don't have a contract like you... I have to earn my spot...

Marco laughs.

MARCO

Ah, the innocence and discipline of the supernumerary! It's fantastic!

He puts his arm around Georgina's shoulders and leads her away. Georgina turns to Anastasia and blows her a kiss. Anastasia smiles at her. She watches them walk away.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/HALLWAYS - DAY

The joyous cacophony of pianos and rehearsals. Anastasia is walking down the hall when she spots Victoire, in a tracksuit. She's talking to her Assistant's camera.

VICTOIRE

Hey, everyone, the countdown is on!
It's a crazy cool role... written by the Phantom of the Opera himself! And it's never been performed. I hope I'm up to it, if I don't want the Phantom's curse to get me! I'll keep you posted on the results! Ciao for now!

James and lead male dancer GUILLAUME join Victoire.

JAMES

(to Victoire)

We're going out for dinner, wanna join?

Anastasia shyly locks eyes with Victoire and then looks down.

Anastasia continues on her way.

She wanders the hallways of the opera house, passing rehearsal rooms, some of which are free now. But Anastasia doesn't stop. She makes her way to the end of the long hallway. She apprehensively enters the dark rehearsal room she was in yesterday.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/OLD REHEARSAL HALL - EVENING

Anastasia looks around the room. Her heart beats faster. No one's there. Disappointed, she goes to the piano, plays a few notes, then puts down her bag and puts on her ballet slippers. She closes her eyes, remembering Victoire's movements. She hums Eurydice's aria and tries to imitate Victoire's dance.

She's not as flexible as Victoire. Annoyed, she shakes her head, picks up her phone and watches the video she took of Victoire's audition. Suddenly, she looks up and sees the man in the tailcoat in the mirror! She gasps. Her heart races...

MAN IN TAILCOAT

Why are you trying to imitate another dancer?

There's a fiery, disquieting magnetism about him.

ANASTASIA

You scared me!

MAN IN TAILCOAT

I'm sorry, it's a bad habit... I always come in without knocking...

ANASTASIA

Do you need the piano?

They look at each other intensely, as if drawn to each other.

MAN IN TAILCOAT

You haven't answered my question...

ANASTASIA

Because Victoire is a prima ballerina and I want to be one.

MAN IN TAILCOAT

And you think you'll succeed by copying her?

Intimidated, Anastasia blushes.

ANASTASIA

Uh... no, of course not... but...

MAN IN TAILCOAT

(wry smile)

But what?

She smiles.

ANASTASIA

But... I don't know! I want to at least
be as good as her...

(changing the subject)

Do you work here?

MAN IN TAILCOAT

You were humming a tune when I came
in... What was it?

ANASTASIA

(imitating him)

You haven't answered my question...

A slight smile appears on the man's face.

MAN IN TAILCOAT

I'm a rehearsal pianist. So?

Anastasia hums the Eurydice theme. The man's face tenses up for a second. She keeps looking at him. His eyes shine with an intense glimmer. The moment is strange, almost magical. Anastasia looks down first.

ANASTASIA

It's from *Orpheus*, the opera-ballet
that James Figueras is putting on.

The man seems to shake off his fugue state.

MAN IN TAILCOAT

I've never heard of it...

ANASTASIA

It's because it's never been
performed. It's a strange story, the
score was buried... I think back then,
in the 19th century, people were
afraid of it... It's supposed to have
been composed by the Phantom of the
Opera...

The man in the tailcoat smiles.

MAN IN TAILCOAT
Are you afraid of it?

Anastasia smiles shyly.

ANASTASIA
No, it's just a legend.

He stares at her for a while.

ANASTASIA
Okay, yeah... a little.

MAN IN TAILCOAT
And the music? Do you like it?

ANASTASIA
It's very beautiful... very intimate... A
bit like when the sun sets over the
mountains... On the outside there's
nothing more beautiful, and on the
inside you feel sad...

The man in the tailcoat looks at her again with intensity.
There's an intimidating silence. He starts humming the tune she
was singing earlier on in the scene. Suddenly, he stops.

MAN IN TAILCOAT
I can only remember the beginning.

She starts singing again. Focused, she closes her eyes. Overcome
by the music, she starts moving her arms. Then, as though she
suddenly remembers where she is, she opens her eyes.

ANASTASIA
Sorry... sometimes, I disconnect from
the real world, I let myself...

But he's no longer in front of her. She turns around: he's gone.
Anastasia is intrigued.

INT. GEORGINA'S APARTMENT/BATHROOM - NIGHT

Alone in the bathroom, Anastasia takes a bath. She stares at the
dripping tap. She lowers herself completely underwater, closes
her eyes, and thinks of the man in the tailcoat. When she
resurfaces, she stares into the mirror and in the mist, she sees
him at the door. He's wearing a black mask over his eyes, and his
shirt is half-open over his chest. He's looking at her... She feels
cradled by the water, as if arms were lovingly holding her. He
approaches her, and the atmosphere is charged with eroticism. Her

reverie is interrupted by the sound of the front door opening. Georgina and Marco walk in, obviously drunk. She hears them kissing, bumping into the furniture, sighing...

INT. GEORGINA'S APARTMENT/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Morning. Anastasia enters the kitchen.

MARCO
Coffee's ready.

Startled, she turns toward the couch, where Marco and Georgina are sitting under a blanket, with their arms around each other, drinking coffee. Anastasia pours herself a cup. Georgina scoots closer to Marco to make room for Anastasia.

GEORGINA
Come.

Anastasia hesitates.

MARCO
The boss told us to make you feel
welcome!

Anastasia joins them on the couch. The three of them look cute, sipping their coffee, snuggled up together.

MARCO
So, who's your target?

Surprised, Anastasia furrows her brow.

MARCO
Don't pretend you don't have one,
with all the options there are in our
dear, world-famous Paris Opera
National Ballet!

Anastasia smiles mysteriously. Marco sings a silly jingle and then imitates someone from the reality show "Les Marseillais":

MARCO
(to Anastasia)
Not José! Dude, like, for real
though, why? José has slept with
everyone and their mother...

Georgina laughs at Marco's silly imitation. Anastasia smiles.

MARCO

It's not José? Then who? Wait... Wait...
I know! Damn! Maeva!?

Anastasia shakes her head..

MARCO

Tell me who the fuck he is so I can
shoot him! Ana, with the feelings I
have for you! You're breaking my
heart.

ANASTASIA

I don't know who he is... I don't even
know what his name is. I just know
that he's one of the rehearsal
pianists. He's tall, dark... and super
handsome... mysterious... and he wears a
tailcoat.

GEORGINA

A tailcoat? What's a tailcoat? Is
that those hobo pants?

Anastasia smiles.

ANASTASIA

No, it's the opposite: it's like a
really nice suit, like a tuxedo.

MARCO

But... But...

Anastasia and Georgina turn to him. His face lights up.

MARCO

I know who it is!

Anastasia looks at him hopefully.

MARCO

Super handsome... mysterious... classy...
That's me! Georgina, sorry... but...

Georgina throws a pillow at his head.

ANASTASIA

(to Georgina)

You don't know who it might be?

Georgina shakes her head.

GEORGINA

There are so many rehearsal pianists.

Anastasia is disappointed.

MARCO

We're looking for a guy in a
tailcoat... That's our first clue!
(like a fellow conspirator)
We'll keep an eye out!

GEORGINA

If you see something, say something!

Anastasia smiles.

ESTABLISHING SHOT. PARIS/PLACE DE L'OPERA - DAY

The hustle and bustle of Paris.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/GRAND FOYER - DAY

The Grand Foyer of the Garnier opera house. The first rehearsals for *Orpheus* are taking place. The sets are amazing, complete with huge damask wall-hangings and enormous chandeliers. Stage hands are setting up gigantic tables covered with fake food. Anastasia, dressed for rehearsal, hurries to the set. She finds herself behind James, who is walking with the Director, explaining the staging.

JAMES

(passionately)

...The scenes will take place all
throughout the building: the grand
staircase, the foyer, the stage. Some
scenes will even be filmed live in
the basement, the Inferno where
Eurydice is being held, and will be
projected onto a large screen.
Eurydice, after being stabbed by
Hades, will fall into the underground
lake, which will represent the River
Styx. It's going to be fantastic!
Audiences are in for a real treat.
It's a really disruptive, modern
style of staging. We're going to
revitalize the Opera!

DIRECTOR

Indeed... It's so disruptive that pre-
orders are at an all-time low!

Subscribers are used to the James classics, so they're not buying your amusement-park marketing. I'm warning you -- you've already failed once. A second time, and I won't be able to save you...

James's expression changes in a fraction of a second.

JAMES
(*pained, whispering*)
That won't happen.

The Director looks him in the eye for a moment, then walks away. Looking glum, James turns and sees Anastasia behind them.

ANASTASIA
(*uncomfortable*)
Sorry...

James tries to mask his dismay.

JAMES
Oops!

He watches her join the rest of the company, who are waiting off to the side, dressed for rehearsal.

JAMES
(*to the company*)
Is everyone here? Let's dig into the masked-ball scene. Hades, a famous producer, is hosting a society party at his villa. Orpheus has shown up, uninvited, to try to meet him. Eurydice is one of the guests. She dances among a crowd of self-centered society types who are all ignoring her. Only Orpheus has eyes for her. It's their first meeting, and it's love at first sight. All right, let's get to it.

James signals to the pianist, who starts to play the Eurydice aria. The company moves into the center of the foyer. Anastasia follows suit.

Victoire, the lead female dancer (who has thus been given the lead role), starts dancing. Guillaume, the principal male dancer, playing Orpheus, turns around. Anastasia sees that Victoire doesn't look comfortable with her part. She's shaking her head oddly as she dances.

JAMES

Stop! Stop...

Anastasia looks at James as he approaches her.

JAMES

(to Anastasia)

Anastasia, what are you doing? Did you listen to the instructions? The guests don't notice Eurydice. Only Orpheus is watching her! And where's your flexibility? You're as stiff as a board!

Everyone's looking at Anastasia, who's masking her humiliation as best she can, when suddenly a drop of water falls on James's nose from the high ceiling. Then another. James looks up... Suddenly a long stream of water hits him in the face. The dancers chuckle under their breath.

JAMES

(irritated)

These damn pipes need to be fixed!

(annoyed, to the pianist)

Take it from the top!

The pianist starts over. Once again, the guests, including Anastasia, come forward. Victoire leaps into their midst. She looks as weird as ever, as if she's looking for someone among the dancers. Suddenly, she stops dancing.

VICTOIRE

Leave me alone!

Everyone freezes. Murmurs among the dancers. Guillaume takes the remark personally.

GUILLAUME

What's the matter with you?

Victoire looks completely out of it.

VICTOIRE

I'm not talking to you!

Guillaume looks around. Anastasia watches them.

GUILLAUME

Who are you talking to, then?

Victoire shakes her head. She looks feverish and disturbed. James rubs his temples in irritation and approaches her.

JAMES
Victoire, what's going on?

VICTOIRE
Nothing, sorry, I was distracted...

JAMES
Do you want to take a little break?
Why don't you go to your dressing
room, get a glass of water, and we'll
start over?

Victoire nods.

JAMES
Okay everyone, Victoire's going to
take five minutes. Let's stay
focused.

Victoire walks away with her assistant. The dancers whisper to each other. Anastasia watches James walk toward Victoire's dressing room.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/DRESSING ROOMS - EVENING

In the ladies' dressing room, the ballerinas are changing and talking about the strange vibe during rehearsal. Anastasia listens. She's still upset about what James said to her.

BALLERINA 1
What was up with Victoire?

BALLERINA 2
I don't know, I've never seen her
like that... She's usually super in
control...

BALLERINA 3
Maybe it's the Phantom haunting her?

BALLERINA 1
Stop, it's freaking me out!

A few laughs.

BALLERINA 1
Seriously, though, haven't you felt a
weird vibe in the room since
rehearsals started?

Some of them laugh, others pause to reflect.

DANCER 4

There have been a ton of drafts and
leaky pipes... It's weird...

Georgina is dressed. She walks past the other girls on her way to
Anastasia.

GEORGINA

(to the ballerinas talking)

More like the opera house is just
falling into disrepair.

(to Anastasia)

Don't listen to James. You're a great
dancer, everyone here says so.

ANASTASIA

Thanks, Georgina.

GEORGINA

I'm going out tonight. I'll be back
late, okay?

Anastasia nods.

GEORGINA

Are you going to be okay?

ANASTASIA

Yeah, yeah... don't worry. Have fun!

Georgina leaves. The others follow, continuing their discussion:
I'm not walking down the hallways alone anymore!" They laugh as
they leave. Anastasia is left alone. Lost in thought, she puts on
her shoes.

She's all alone in the big dressing room.

ANASTASIA

(to herself, in Romanian)

I'll be fine, I just need to
practice...

She shivers, as if she's felt a draft. Uneasy, she looks towards
the back of the changing room. Nobody there. Suddenly, someone's
hands are on her shoulders! Anastasia gasps and SHRIEKS! She
turns around... It's James!

JAMES

You know what drives me crazy?

Intimidated, Anastasia shakes her head.

JAMES

When I see so much potential, but
it's been mangled by years of bad
training!

In the mirror, he gazes into Anastasia's eyes.

JAMES

I'm sorry if I was harsh earlier. I
was distracted by what the director
said to me.

Anastasia nods.

JAMES

*(returning to his previous
comment)*

We're going to have to deconstruct...
everything. Are you prepared for
that?

Anastasia nods.

JAMES

It's going to be difficult and
confusing. And scary, too. But you'll
see: it's like being reborn.

He leaves. He turns around before walking out the door.

JAMES

Focus on your flexibility.

ANASTASIA

Okay... Thanks...

He leaves. Anastasia takes a deep breath and lets out a little
cry of rage. She's determined to succeed.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/REHEARSAL ROOM - EVENING

The rehearsal room at the end of the hallway. Anastasia is
practicing the same sequence over and over again. She's pushing
her limits. She winces in pain and starts over. Suddenly, she
makes a face, screams, and collapses onto the floor, clutching
her back. Breathless, aching, she catches her breath. She looks
at the clock in the room: 11:00 p.m.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/HALLWAYS - EVENING

Anastasia hobbles down an empty Opera hallway, still clutching her back. She shakes her head, as if chasing away negative thoughts.

MAN IN TAILCOAT (O.S.)
Shhh... Listen...

Anastasia freezes. In the half-light, she glimpses a FIGURE at the end of the hallway. She squints, but can't see who it is. We hear SQUEAKS, CREAKS, THUDS...

MAN IN TAILCOAT
You hear how it creaks, how it
cracks... This is my favorite time...
When everyone is gone, when the
bodies and the music have fallen
silent...

The figure takes a step toward Anastasia and appears in the light of a small neon sign. It's the man in the tailcoat. He's very handsome in the halo of light. Seized by emotion, she doesn't know what to say.

MAN IN TAILCOAT
I love the intimate silence that
Garnier created. It's just begging to
be heard.

He turns around and disappears again into the darkness.

MAN IN TAILCOAT
Come...

Anastasia hesitates.

MAN IN TAILCOAT
I'd like to show you another secret
of this old ship...

INT. OPERA HOUSE/UNDER THE ROOFTOP - EVENING

Anastasia climbs the metal staircase to the top of the opera house. They're just under the roof, among the wooden structures. She hesitates, looking back at the man in the tailcoat.

MAN IN TAILCOAT
The small skylight over there...

The pain in her back causes her to wince from time to time, but she's enjoying this stroll among the flying buttresses, rafters, and struts. The man is right behind her. They're not strangers

anymore. They're enjoying each other's company. She reaches the skylight, hesitates, then opens it.

EXT. OPERA HOUSE/ROOFTOPS - EVENING

She pokes her head out of the skylight and discovers the roof of the Garnier opera house. She pulls herself up and out onto the roof. She reaches out to the man in the tailcoat to help him, but he waves her away.

With agility, he slips onto the roof as she gazes in wonderment at the lit-up Parisian skyline. The Eiffel Tower, the Vendôme column, Notre Dame, the Pantheon...

The man in the tailcoat stands a few steps away from her, as if to avoid any physical contact. They sit on the edge of the roof and admire the sunset.

ANASTASIA

It's beautiful...

MAN IN TAILCOAT

Like your mountain, don't you think?
Beautiful and melancholy...

They stare at the crowd of people bustling around, down below.

ANASTASIA

Where are they all going...?

MAN IN TAILCOAT

*(in a mock-solemn voice, as
if giving a grand speech)*

They're all crossing... to the other
side... all crossing... and not
looking!

She laughs.

ANASTASIA

And you look?

MAN IN TAILCOAT

(with a smile)

Certainly not! Do you?

ANASTASIA

Why do you speak so formally?
Usually, only old people address me
so formally.

MAN IN TAILCOAT
Perhaps that's because I am a very
old man...

She smiles.

ANASTASIA
A very old *young* man, then.

Anastasia looks at him with curiosity, she's very attracted by
this mysterious young man.

MAN IN TAILCOAT
The body doesn't forget the suffering
one puts it through. Sooner or later,
it takes its revenge... You... You
shouldn't force yourself like that.

Anastasia freezes.

ANASTASIA
You were watching me dance?

He stares at her but doesn't respond. Then:

MAN IN TAILCOAT
Why do you dance?

ANASTASIA
Do you ever answer questions?

He smiles.

MAN IN TAILCOAT
Sorry, I don't get asked a lot of
questions, so I'm not used to it
anymore. No, I wasn't watching you
dance, but you're limping.

ANASTASIA
Well yes, I twisted my ankle coming
down the stairs.

MAN IN TAILCOAT
I don't believe you.

They stare at each other.

MAN IN TAILCOAT
So, why do you dance?

ANASTASIA

I... I don't know... I've always loved dancing, ever since I was a child.

MAN IN TAILCOAT

That's it?

She hesitates. We can sense she's troubled by a memory.

ANASTASIA

My mother said I was already dancing in her belly. At least, that's what my father told me.

MAN IN TAILCOAT

Did you lose your mother?

She becomes emotional. He looks at her with compassion.

ANASTASIA

She died when I was six. I have almost no memory of her... She was a dancer... My father tells me I'm a lot like her... So maybe that's why I dance... so I can remember her... so I can bring her back to life...

*(her eyes well with tears,
she curbs her emotions)*

What about you? Why do you play the piano?

He ponders this.

MAN IN TAILCOAT

Same as you... to bring the dead back to life...

(a beat)

To stop being afraid...

She stares at him, feeling close to him.

ANASTASIA

So that you will look when crossing to the other side?

He smiles.

MAN IN TAILCOAT

To stop time... and celebrate life.

He looks at her mischievously. She smiles without knowing why. He jumps onto the ledge, almost into the void.

ANASTASIA

Be careful!

MAN IN TAILCOAT

To feel my heart beat! To cling to
the stars! To forget that we're
walking on the edge of the abyss!

Anastasia is afraid he'll fall, so she reaches out to grab his hand. He avoids touching her and jumps onto the dome of the opera house.

MAN IN TAILCOAT

Good night, Anastasia!

Charmed, Anastasia watches him walk away on the roof like a tightrope walker.

ANASTASIA

(shouting)

How do you know my name?

He shrugs mischievously.

ANASTASIA

(shouting)

What's your name?

He waves goodbye. In love, Anastasia watches him disappear into the night.

INT. GEORGINA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Anastasia opens the door to the apartment. She enters. Georgina's bedroom light is on behind the closed door. She knocks softly - no answer.

ANASTASIA

I saw him again...

GEORGINA (O.S.)

(choked up)

Come in...

Anastasia enters to find Georgina prostrate on her bed, staring at her through her tears. An open bottle of vodka is sitting beside her.

GEORGINA

I just got dumped for some bitch...
(*she corrects herself, so*
Anastasia understands)
Broken up with.

Anastasia sits down beside her. Georgina cries harder. Anastasia hesitates, uncertain what to do. Finally, she wraps her arms around her. Georgina lets herself go.

ANASTASIA
You know what they say where I come
from? "A woman isn't a wall. She can
be moved..."

Georgina takes a while to understand. Then she laughs through her tears.

GEORGINA
(*crying*)
No! She can have him!

She looks up and lets out a huge ROAR. Surprised, Anastasia watches her.

GEORGINA
Thanks to that little prick, I've
added a new string to my broken
heart, a little shade of black... I'm
going to dance better than before.

She takes a sip of vodka.

ANASTASIA
Heartbreak helps you dance?

Georgina laughs.

GEORGINA
I just love you! You're amazing! Love
gives you wings! But so does
heartbreak. "For the rest of my life,
I'll be the richer for this
heartbreak." An American writer said
that.

She takes a huge swig of vodka. Some drips on her sweater. She hands the bottle to Anastasia, who takes a sip.

ANASTASIA
(*mischievous*)
Tonight, I didn't add black -- it was
more like hot pink...

Georgina laughs.

GEORGINA

Ah... the mysterious pianist in the
tailcoat...

Anastasia nods.

ANASTASIA

Want to go out?

Georgina freezes in shock.

GEORGINA

If Anastasia of the Carpathians wants
to go out, does it mean that a spirit
has been drinking near her?

Anastasia smiles. Georgina gets up, grabs a pair of pants from
the foot of her bed, and hurriedly puts them on while drinking
more vodka.

GEORGINA

Quick, quick, before you change your
mind!

Anastasia laughs.

INT. "CHEZ GISELE" BAR - NIGHT

On the improvised dance floor at Chez Gisèle, a cocktail bar,
Georgina and Anastasia are dancing, hip-hop-style, to Doja Cat's
"Woman." The rest of the people there look fairly well-to-do.

GEORGINA

(singing)

Woman, woma, woma, woman, let me be a
woman...

Georgina is letting loose. Anastasia seems to come alive for the
first time: she's emerging from her chrysalis. The two girls are
setting the dance floor on fire. They take a selfie. Anastasia
posts it on her Instagram.

INT. GEORGINA'S APARTMENT/GEORGINA'S ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Early the next morning, Anastasia and Georgina are lying side by
side in Georgina's bed. Georgina shuts her eyes. Anastasia looks
at her.

ANASTASIA

You want to be a prima ballerina, a
star of the ballet?

GEORGINA

(half-asleep)

A star among the stars... Don't you?

ANASTASIA

Yes, of course... It's my dream... But
you...

Anastasia pauses. Georgina opens her eyes and turns to her.

GEORGINA

Me what?

ANASTASIA

You... I... I don't know... You... You
shouldn't drink and smoke so much...
Or... do drugs...

GEORGINA

What drugs?

ANASTASIA

Well... you know... the syringe...

GEORGINA

How is that any of your business?

ANASTASIA

I'm worried about you.

Georgina smiles tenderly.

GEORGINA

Is that true?

Anastasia nods tenderly. Georgina hesitates, then stands up and
takes off her sweater. Underneath, she's wearing a medical
corset. Anastasia opens her eyes wide.

GEORGINA

You can't dance with double
scoliosis. It's too painful... Your
body just refuses. So I take a
morphine derivative. I get it sent
from the US, because you can't get
anything strong enough in France.
It's not ideal, but at least I can
dance this way.

Anastasia is blown away.

ANASTASIA

But... when you're in a tutu, you can't wear that...

GEORGINA

Anastasia of the Carpathians! Do you think the Opera would let me dance if they knew? I'm supposed to wear it 20 hours a day. But when we have a lot of rehearsals... or when I have a boyfriend... I can't always manage...

A beat.

ANASTASIA

Does it hurt a lot?

Georgina shrugs.

GEORGINA

As long as I can dance...

A beat. Anastasia looks at her and hesitates. Georgina expects some token of trust in return.

ANASTASIA

When my mother died I was six, and I invented an imaginary friend. But playing with her made me believe she really existed. We talked a lot, played lots of games... I shared everything with her, even my meals...

Georgina listens attentively.

ANASTASIA

But everyone else just saw a little girl talking to herself... gesturing to herself, asking for a plate to share her food... They laughed at me... And the more the other kids laughed at me, the more I withdrew, with Sonia. It was a vicious cycle. My father freaked out. He didn't know how to get me to stop. It took I don't know how many doctors for me to accept that she didn't exist... I was 13 by then.

Georgina is stunned, her eyes wide. Then she smiles.

GEORGINA
Wow... You were like that kid in *The Shining*!

ANASTASIA
Kind of, yeah.

Georgina looks at her in silence, smiling tenderly.

GEORGINA
You're really something..

INT. OPERA HOUSE/MAIN STAGE - DAY

About thirty JOURNALISTS and other PATRONS and friends of the Opera are gathered for press conference to announce the year's program.

Giant, vertical LED screens are broadcasting footage of the urn being opened by SCIENTISTS in protective suits. There's an atmosphere of mystery. CLOSE-UPS of the *Orpheus* scores. Dark, ominous music.

JAMES (O.S.)
... Why did they bury this opera? Why did it have the reputation of being cursed? Perhaps to keep such a disturbed, intense work out of reach?

We're on the Opera stage. The scenery is an ultra-luxurious, futuristic living room: Hades' palace, full of geometric sculptures and furniture made from futuristic materials. A huge chandelier, with thousands of aluminum facets, hangs overhead. On the giant screens, which are now black, golden writing appears: "ORPHEUS: THE PHANTOM'S OPERA".

Backstage, Anastasia, Georgina, and a few dancers, including Marco, are watching James's presentation.

JAMES
A work composed by the man who inspired Gaston Leroux to write his masterpiece, *The Phantom of the Opera*: Ernest Dupré...

Suddenly, a portrait of Ernest Dupré appears on the LED screens: it's the face of the man in the tailcoat!

Anastasia is breathless. Her heart races. She feels sick.

JAMES

An ambitious young composer, an
unsung genius, a phantom who haunts
the opera house to watch over his
work? Remember this face, for it will
haunt you for a long time!

Anastasia tries to catch her breath. The room is spinning around her. She sees a few journalists pull an Ernest Dupré mask out of a bag of marketing goodies they've been offered. Some of them put the mask on for fun. Anastasia is living in a nightmare. Georgina notices that Anastasia looks ill.

GEORGINA

Ana, are you okay?

Anastasia can't hear her. Her head is buzzing.

JAMES

In ten days' time, on October 28th,
the curse of *Orpheus* will finally be
lifted! And tonight, for the first
time in its history, the principal
dancers of the opera will perform a
short excerpt from Ernest Dupré's
Orpheus -- the Phantom's opera!

James retreats backstage to thunderous APPLAUSE. The lights in the auditorium go out.

Backstage, Anastasia tries to catch her breath. Georgina approaches her, worried. The orchestra can be heard playing the theme from *Orpheus*. Strange drafts can be heard, the wind WHISTLES. The atmosphere is eerie. Anastasia shakes her head.

ANASTASIA

(to herself)

Get a grip, Ana...

She turns and sees Victoire enter the stage. Victoire is dancing, but she seems increasingly disturbed. Her movements are hesitant. Anastasia hears the other dancers whispering to each other.

DANCERS

What's she doing? What's wrong with
her?

Victoire spins around, her face tense, her expression haggard. Her partner is confused.

Suddenly, Anastasia sees the man in the tailcoat, in the shadows box no. 5, above her. His fists are clenched. He's grimacing with rage. He looks frightening, unlike anything we've seen. Anastasia

quickly escapes backstage. Surprised, Georgina and some of her fellow dancers watch her go.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/MAIN STAIRCASE - DAY

Anastasia runs up the stairs four at a time to box no. 5. When she opens the door, there's no one there. Suddenly, she sees the large chandelier in the set above the stage swaying dangerously. It's about to fall down.

TECHNICIAN

Watch out!

A STAGE TECHNICIAN throws himself onto the stage to push Victoire and her partner out of the way. The chandelier CRASHES onto the technician. Pieces of the chandelier are thrown onto the audience. A moment of stunned silence, before people start SCREAMING and SHOUTING. Anastasia is frozen to the spot, looking out at the scene.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/DRESSING ROOMS - DAY

Anastasia struggles through the crowd as it panics and backs away. She elbows her way through as best she can. Two journalists are still wearing their Ernest masks.

On stage, surrounded by a few people, the technician is unconscious. There's blood on the floor. Shocked, Anastasia looks away. She makes her way to the dressing room. Here too, confusion reigns.

VICTOIRE

(hysterical)

It's over! I'll never dance this part! I don't want to die!

James and the staff try to calm her.

JAMES

Calm down Victoire, breathe, breathe, it's nothing serious... It was an accident.

Victoire stares at him.

VICTOIRE

An accident?

She bursts into a creepy laugh.

VICTOIRE

An accident! Of course! Just a little accident.

James approaches her to calm her down, but she pushes him away. Her eyes bulging, she stares at everyone, yet doesn't seem to see anyone.

VICTOIRE

Stop talking! SHUT UP! I said SHUT UP!

She meets Anastasia's gaze. For a brief moment, her eyes seem to regain their lucidity before fading again. Shocked, Anastasia struggles to breathe.

INT. GEORGINA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Anastasia is prostrate in front of the TV in Georgina's apartment. She's watching a 24-hour news channel. Footage shot by the journalists present at the press conference is played while the on-set PRESENTER speaks.

TV PRESENTER

... The technician is seriously injured, and prima ballerina Victoire Bellanger, who is in shock, has chosen not to dance the lead role in Orpheus, the Garnier opera house's latest production. This isn't the first time that a dancer who was preparing to perform this role has suffered a serious accident. We spoke with Amelia Perez, the librarian and historian of the Garnier opera house.

Amelia is being interviewed by a JOURNALIST at the Opéra. On the screen, a chyron reads: "Amelia Perez, Paris Opera librarian".

AMELIA

Well, in 1875, on the evening of the Orpheus premiere, principal dancer Gabrielle Morteau, who was supposed to perform the role of Eurydice, threw herself off the roof of the opera house. Legend has it that she was haunted by the ghost of Ernest Dupré, who ordered her to kill herself. She wasn't the only one to hear a voice. The Viscount de Glaud, who had commissioned the piece, was

committed to an asylum. He claimed that the Phantom was stalking him. After that, no dancer wanted to dance the role of Eurydice. As for the falling of the Opera's chandelier, the same thing happened in 1896, killing the audience member in seat 13... At the time, these events were attributed to the Phantom of the Opera...

Georgina comes in the front door. She sees Anastasia on the couch and sits next to her.

TV PRESENTER (O.S.)

... It's easy to see why this afternoon's chandelier accident is causing such a stir. What if it wasn't a coincidence? What if the Phantom has returned to haunt the opera? James Figueras, Director of Dance and choreographer of Orpheus, has reassured...

GEORGINA

How are you?

Anastasia turns to Georgina, anxious. Georgina takes her in her arms.

JAMES (O.S.)

It's an incredible coincidence with Gaston Leroux's novel...

Anastasia looks at the screen: James is speaking to the camera. A chyron reads: "James Figueras, director of dance at the Paris Opera."

JAMES

... and unfortunate, yes, but there are obviously no phantoms at the Garnier opera house. The police investigation will shed light on what caused the chandelier to fall. The show remains scheduled as planned. Opening night is October 28th. None of the performances have been cancelled.

Georgina scrolls on her phone while listening to James.

TV PRESENTER

Now it's up to James Figueras to meet

*the challenge of finding a dancer who
will accept the lead role in Orpheus,
the cursed opera!*

Anastasia clicks on the remote to turn the TV off.

ANASTASIA
Georgina, the man in the tailcoat...

GEORGINA
Yes?

ANASTASIA
It's the ghost of Ernest Dupré.

GEORGINA
(shocked)
What??

ANASTASIA
That's why he was so mysterious... why
he always stayed away from me...
because he's a ghost!

GEORGINA
Hang on... Are you serious right now?

Anastasia nods.

ANASTASIA
Where I come from, we say that when a
phantom haunts a place or a person,
it's because he's been prevented from
leaving. In his past, there's a
mistake or an injustice that he needs
to put right. That's what's keeping
him in our present... I'm sure that's
why the Phantom of the Opera is here...
We need to--

GEORGINA
(interrupting)
Hey, there's no such thing as ghosts!
If you see him again, you get the
hell out of there and call me
immediately, okay?

ANASTASIA
He's nice to me... I don't think he
means me any harm.

Georgina can't believe what she's hearing.

GEORGINA
Ana, this guy's a nutcase who's
pretending to be a phantom! He's a
psychopath! A killer! Stay away from
him!

ANASTASIA
Are you going to audition for the
part?

GEORGINA
(surprised)
What?... Yeah, of course, why?

ANASTASIA
Don't do it. It's dangerous! You'll
end up like Victoire!

GEORGINA
Cut it out, you're freaking me out!

Irritated, Anastasia gets up, goes into her room, and SLAMS the
door. Georgina is stunned.

INT ANASTASIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Anastasia's eyes glimmer in the dark. She's still awake.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/ENTRANCE - EARLY MORNING

Anastasia determinedly enters the opera house through the stage
door. It's early. No one around.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/LOBBY - EARLY MORNING

She passes through the security gates and nods to the security
guard.

SECURITY GUARD
Good morning, Miss Marescu. You're
here early!

She nods and continues on her way.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/REHEARSAL ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Anastasia walks briskly down the Opera's long hallway. She enters
the small, empty rehearsal room.

INT./EXT. OPERA HOUSE/ROOFTOPS - EARLY MORNING

Anastasia lifts the skylight and climbs onto the roof: Ernest isn't there. Down below, Paris is slowly waking up. Rush hour hasn't started yet.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/BASEMENT STAIRS - EARLY MORNING

Anastasia descends the stairs that lead into the lower depths of the opera house.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/BASEMENT - EARLY MORNING

In the basement, Anastasia walks past the large cogwheels to the entrance to the underground lake. She takes off her sweater and gets into the lake.

Anastasia swims to the grate set into the wall. This time, without hesitation, she pushes it open, revealing a narrow, dark vault. She pulls herself out of the water and heads down into the vault, lighting her way with her phone. Dripping, she makes her way to a metal door, which she pulls open.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/PHANTOM'S CELL - EARLY MORNING

Anastasia enters a small cell. She spots Ernest sitting in the half-light. They look at each other for a moment. Anastasia is a bit scared, but she gathers her courage.

ANASTASIA
I know who you are.

He says nothing. She moves towards him, and he moves back against the wall. She stops.

ANASTASIA
I... I think I can help you...

ERNEST
Go away! Go away, please.

Anastasia sits down against the wall, facing Ernest, indicating that she has no intention of leaving. They're standing on opposite sides of the small cell.

ANASTASIA
Why did you come and talk to me?

Ernest pauses.

ERNEST

I'm sorry... I shouldn't have. But... no one can see me normally... I... When I realized that you could see me, that you could hear me... I... I haven't spoken to anyone for so long...

ANASTASIA

But now... I see you... Why? You only appear if you want to, don't you?

He nods.

ANASTASIA

Ernest...

He shivers when he hears his name.

ANASTASIA

If I can see you... there's a reason... I... Maybe I'm here to help you...

Ernest stares at her.

ANASTASIA

Why don't you want *Orpheus* to be performed?

He hesitates, so she takes her chance:

ANASTASIA

Because you wrote it for the woman you loved... And you don't want anyone else--

ERNEST

Shut up! Shut up! You know nothing!

Anastasia is surprised by this sudden burst of anger. She pauses for a moment and pulls herself together.

ANASTASIA

(*gently*)

You're right, I don't know anything.

He stares at her, surprised by her kindness.

ANASTASIA

Tell me.

He shakes his head.

ERNEST

Go away, Anastasia. Please go now...
before...

ANASTASIA

Before what?

His eyes are boring into her.

ANASTASIA

Before a chandelier falls on my head?
Before I go mad?

They stare at each other for a moment.

ANASTASIA

Or before I throw myself off the
roof?

(he doesn't answer)

Why do you pick on innocent people?
What's your deal?

He still doesn't answer.

ANASTASIA

I don't think it makes any
difference. You're still stuck here!...
This has gone on long enough, don't
you think?

Still seated, she moves a bit closer to him. She gazes into his
eyes.

ANASTASIA

I... I can see that... that something's
making you mean, but it's not you...

ERNEST

(aggressive)

You don't know anything about me! You
have no idea who I am! You're nothing
but a fool!

He gets to his feet. Ernest's shouting has caused Anastasia to
freeze. His face is transformed; his eyes have grown darker. He's
frightening.

ERNEST

You want to help me? Leave me alone!
Beat it!

Anastasia grits her teeth. She stands up.

ANASTASIA
If you hurt Georgina...

Ernest sneers.

ERNEST
You'll do what? What will you do to
me? What will *you* do to *me*?

Anastasia stares at him. There's a malicious glint in his eyes. A strong wind SLAMS the cell door shut. Anastasia looks in the direction of the noise. When she turns back to Ernest, he's gone.

ANASTASIA
*(shouting at the empty
room)*
I'm not afraid of you!

ESTABLISHING SHOT. EXT. OPERA HOUSE/SKY - MORNING

LIGHTNING rips through the sky above the opera house.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/REHEARSAL ROOM - DAY

In one of the Opera's rehearsal rooms, Georgina dances to the Eurydice theme in front of James, his assistant, and TWO DIRECTORS. DRAFTS sweep through the room. We hear strange WHISTLING noises.

Behind James, the dancers watching the audition exchange worried looks. Strange atmosphere.

On stage, Georgina finishes her dazzling performance.

JAMES
Okay. Next.

Georgina joins TWO OTHER DANCERS, seated in the front row, who have obviously just auditioned. The stage remains empty. Surprised that no one else has come forward, James turns to the rows behind him. The dancers avoid his eyes. He stands up, approaches a ballerina, and plants himself in front of her.

BALLERINA 1
(uncomfortable)
My... My ankle hasn't quite healed... I...
I won't be able... In a week... A role
like this...

James turns to the other dancers, who look away, uncomfortable.

JAMES
What's going on?

BALLERINA 2
James, I'm sorry, but... the role is
amazing... I know we're lucky...
especially to have you as our
choreographer...

JAMES
(interrupting)
Cut the crap.

DANCER 2
I... I don't want to end up like
Victoire.

James's eyes light up.

JAMES
Victoire wasn't up to it! End of
story!

BALLERINA 3
(timid)
You've got to admit, there's a weird
vibe...

JAMES
What are you saying? That you're
afraid of a ghost? Are you kidding m-
-

ANASTASIA (O.S.)
(interrupting)
Excuse me...

Surprised and annoyed, James turns to Anastasia as she walks on
to the stage.

JAMES
WHAT?

ANASTASIA
I... I'd like to audition...

The room is in shock.

JAMES
(to the dancers)

Reduced to auditioning
supernumeraries for the title role
because you divas are scared of a
ghost! Great!

(to Anastasia)

Okay. Go for it.

Surprised, Georgina looks at Anastasia. Anastasia focuses. She looks around the room, fearing an intervention by Ernest, but sees no one.

She beckons the pianist to play the melody and starts dancing, giving it all she's got. She's impressive. Everyone in the room stares at her, bewildered. Georgina frowns. James's face is expressionless. Anastasia finishes, out of breath and dripping with sweat.

JAMES

Come and see me in my office at
three. I'd like to ask you a few
questions.

Anastasia nods.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/DRESSING ROOMS - DAY

Anastasia is changing. Around her, people whisper and shoot her sidelong glances. Georgina joins her.

GEORGINA

Well done!

Anastasia looks up at her.

GEORGINA

You blew me away..

ANASTASIA

Thank you.

A beat.

GEORGINA

Why didn't you tell me you were
auditioning?

ANASTASIA

I only decided just now.

GEORGINA

(incredulous)

Oh... Okay.

ANASTASIA

I swear, until an hour ago, I had no intention of trying out.

GEORGINA

If you say so...

She walks away.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/LIBRARY - DAY

Anastasia enters the opera house library, amazed by the towering wooden bookcases filled with old scores and books. Amelia is bent over a score.

ANASTASIA

What else do you know about Ernest Dupré?

Amelia looks up from her papers.

AMELIA

Hello Anastasia, how are you? It's good to see you. Are you settling in well?

Surprised, Anastasia pauses for a moment, then realizes that Amelia is reminding her of the basic rules of politeness.

ANASTASIA

Yes. Thank you. How are you?

Amelia smiles.

AMELIA

Take a look...

Impatient, Anastasia looks down at the score Amelia is showing her. She furrows her brow, humming the tune she is deciphering.

ANASTASIA

Is it *Orpheus*?

Amelia nods.

AMELIA

Ernest Dupré's manuscript. I was asked to restore it to present to the

public.

With emotion, Anastasia looks at the handwritten score, with Ernest's annotations. She caresses the aged paper. She turns a page. She thinks she sees a charcoal drawing, but Amelia holds her back.

AMELIA

Careful! The pages are glued together, so it's very fragile... I know what the newspapers of the time said about Ernest Dupré, which wasn't much... Or rather, it was always the same. On October 28th, 1875, on his way home from a masked ball where he was being introduced to high society, Ernest Dupré arrived too late to save his fiancée, the dancer Catherine Dupuy, from the fire at the Le Peletier opera house, where they were living. It's said that he died trying to save her. Except that his body was never found. You know the rest.

ANASTASIA

(nodding)

He's said to haunt the ballerina who gets the role because he doesn't want anyone else to dance the part he wrote for the girl he loved...

AMELIA

Yes, that's the rumor. But... I was never totally convinced...

ANASTASIA

Why?

AMELIA

A few things. Why wasn't his fiancée Catherine at the masked ball on October 28th?

ANASTASIA

Maybe she was ill...

AMELIA

Yes, maybe... But it's strange all the same. Everyone in the Parisian salons of the era were dying to know who this young, unknown composer was who had written the music for the

inaugural show at the Garnier Opera House? What would *Orpheus* sound like? The Viscount de Glaud had organized this ball to introduce Dupré to Parisian society. Catherine was a star. She was going to dance the lead in *Orpheus*. Even if she was ill, she should have been there.

Anastasia thinks.

ANASTASIA

What were the other things that made you question the story?

AMELIA

The Viscount de Glaud... He's the one who recruited Ernest for *Orpheus*. He made Ernest a star. Why would the Phantom go after him?

INT. OPERA HOUSE/JAMES'S OFFICE - DAY

In one of the nicer hallways of the opera house, Anastasia knocks timidly on a door.

JAMES (O.S.)

Come in!

Anastasia enters. Sitting behind his handsome desk with its splendid view of Paris, James is filling out paperwork. There are tons of files piled on his desk.

JAMES

(without looking at her)

What do you have that the others don't?

Anastasia stares at him, confused. He looks up and his eyes meet Anastasia's.

JAMES

What's your thing?

ANASTASIA

Uh... I dance with all my--

JAMES

Victoire was an it-girl, a social media star. If she changed her lipstick, the whole world knew about

it. Georgina is punk, she's got style, character, tons of fans, and whenever she opens her mouth, she generates buzz. But you? How do I sell you?

Surprised, Anastasia doesn't know what to say.

JAMES
Stop looking at me with those dead-fish eyes! You want the part?

ANASTASIA
Yes.

JAMES
What?

ANASTASIA
(louder)
YES.

JAMES
Then make yourself unique! Tell me a story!

ANASTASIA
But... I tell the story through dancing...

He looks down.

JAMES
You still have a lot to learn. You're not ready for a lead role.

A beat. Angrily, Anastasia fixes her gaze on him, her eyes shining.

ANASTASIA
I don't do buzz, but I'm ready to dance Eurydice, and I'll dance it better than anyone.

James smiles slightly but continues working. A beat. Anastasia doesn't move. He finally looks up, stares at her. She's immediately self-conscious.

JAMES
(really asking)
Do you think I like inventing stupid tricks so jaded and bitter

journalists get their little hit of dopamine?

She shrugs.

JAMES

No. It's just that these days, if you don't get into people's heads twenty times a day, you don't exist. So if I have to humiliate myself on social media or throw myself at the feet of the first asshole who comes along, I'll do it. I'll do anything to get people to the Opera. Anything. And you know why? Because I think it's essential that they see something other than the ugliness that surrounds them. We have to fight the stupidity, mediocrity, and darkness that's pervading everything! We have to be a beacon! Our work is vital for society!

Anastasia looks at him blankly.

JAMES

Is it or is it not vital for you to dance Eurydice?

ANASTASIA

It's vital.

JAMES

Then make yourself stand out!

James takes out his phone to film her.

JAMES

You've got fifteen seconds. Sell me your Eurydice!

Anastasia is taken aback.

JAMES

Come on!

ANASTASIA

(uncomfortable)

I... well... I think Eurydice deserves a new image, something more current, and that Ernest Dupré's writing--

JAMES

Boring! Why would I want to watch you?

An idea flashes across Anastasia's mind.

ANASTASIA

Because I have a special connection with--

She stops.

JAMES

Go on! Finish your sentence.

She hesitates.

ANASTASIA

No, it's private.

JAMES

Too bad.

He plunges back into his paperwork. Anastasia hesitates, then leaves.

EXT. OPERA HOUSE/ROOFTOP - DAY

On the roof of the Opera House, where she was with Ernest, under the Apollo statue, Anastasia is thinking. Down below, the hustle and bustle of the city. She takes her phone out and starts filming herself.

ANASTASIA

(copying Victoire)

Hi, everyone... My name is Anastasia Marescu, I'm a supernumerary...

She stops filming and exhales in anger. She starts again.

ANASTASIA

(resuming)

Hi, I'm a dancer at the Garnier Opera House, and I just auditioned for the role of Eurydice in...

(she shakes her head and pulls herself together)

Hey, the countdown has begun... I hope I'm chosen... Pffff...

She sighs, deletes her video, and goes back to thinking.

EXT. OPERA HOUSE/ROOFTOP - DAY

ANASTASIA

Talent without publicity is worthless. That's what I've just realized. My name is Anastasia Marescu, I'm from Romania, I'm a dancer at the Paris Opera, and I have one dream, just one: I want to dance the role of Eurydice. But I can't do it without you. I'm not an it-girl, I've never been interested in clothes, make-up, or hair. I've always been sincere, shy, and introverted. I don't discuss my feelings on social media. But today, I'm going to do something I've never done before, in the hope of convincing you to like and share my post. I'm going to share my most intimate secret, my most private thoughts.

She takes a moment, gathering her strength.

ANASTASIA

I met the man the press calls the Phantom of the Opera...

EXT. OPERA HOUSE - EVENING

Night is falling as Anastasia leaves the Opera. As she walks, she checks her social media profile. There are a few likes. A few comments appear under her post "This chick is freaky!" "The Phantom's bride!"... Her phone RINGS. It's a blocked number. She picks up.

JAMES (O.S.)

The Phantom's bride...

ANASTASIA

James?

JAMES (O.S.)

Not bad.

ANASTASIA

I wouldn't exactly call it "buzz"...

JAMES (O.S.)

No, but you've come up with a great

story to sell yourself. There are people whose job it is to handle the rest. Meet me at Le Bonnie Club...

He hangs up. Anastasia looks back at the Opera. She senses that her destiny is about to take a turn.

EXT. BONNIE CLUB - NIGHT

On a street in the 4th arrondissement, a smartly dressed Anastasia arrives outside Paris's Bonnie Club. A BOUNCER is watching the entrance. The crowd heading inside is trendy. Think fashion week. Intimidated, she hesitates, then steps forward, as the bouncer watches her.

ANASTASIA
I have an appointment with James Figueras.

That's obviously the secret password, and he lets her through. She enters.

INT. BONNIE CLUB - NIGHT

Anastasia enters the selective rooftop club. A gigantic bay window offers a view of all of Paris. People are talking. The Marquis de Sade's "*Glor Pa Vinduer*" is playing. She looks for James in the crowd. She sees him chatting with Georgina at the bar. Surprised, the two girls lock eyes. James smiles.

JAMES
(to the bartender)
A Liberian Calypso.

He waits for the BARTENDER to serve him. The silence between Georgina, Anastasia, and James is uncomfortable. Only James looks relaxed. He picks up the cocktail and hands it to Anastasia. She takes it. He raises his glass, forcing Anastasia and Georgina to clink glasses.

JAMES
(loud, over the music)
I've got good news and bad news.
Which should I start with?

He continues, not giving them time to respond.

JAMES
The good news is that there are only

two of you left in the running for
the role. The bad news is that I
don't know how to decide between the
two of you.

He smiles at them, then dances onto the makeshift dance floor.
Shocked, Georgina and Anastasia watch him.

Georgina moves closer to Anastasia. She puts her hand around her
shoulders and speaks in her ear.

GEORGINA

I also have good news and bad news.
The good news is that I feel
reassured about your sanity, you
don't have a new imaginary friend;
the bad news is that you've lost your
only girlfriend. You've made a fool
of me! "The Phantom's Bride"? Nice
strategy! You're a real bitch,
Anastasia!

ANASTASIA

It's not a stra--

GEORGINA

Shut up! I don't believe you anymore.

ANASTASIA

I'm sorry, but I have to do it, or--

Georgina cuts her off with a mocking laugh.

ANASTASIA

You have to believe me... The Phantom
really does exist, Georgina. If you
dance Eurydice, he'll drive you
crazy! Like Victoire!

GEORGINA

Does it say "moron" on my forehead?
(pointing to her forehead)
You want the truth? Okay, you're a
good dancer, but you don't have it in
you to dance Eurydice. You're
soulless!

Georgina goes to the dance floor, leaving Anastasia stunned.

Angry and offended, Anastasia downs her glass. Seeing that
Georgina's glass is still full, she downs it too. She watches
James and Georgina dancing closely. She sees James leave the

dance floor and head for the bathroom. She seizes the opportunity and approaches him. He smiles as he sees her approach. Georgina can barely see them from the dance floor. They're standing in front of the bathroom door. The bass is THUMPING and they have to speak loudly as people walk in and out of the bathroom...

ANASTASIA

She...

(Anastasia takes a breath)

Georgina has double scoliosis. She takes drugs...

Anastasia lets someone pass by on their way into the bathroom.

ANASTASIA

She takes morphine for the pain...

James is stunned.

JAMES

So?

Anastasia is surprised.

JAMES

You think I care? As long as she dances like she dances...

Mortified, Anastasia looks down. A beat. He laughs.

JAMES

Forget Georgina! The important thing is that you'll do anything to get the part.

He smiles at her and walks off. Anastasia feels sick and evil.

EXT. OPERA HOUSE - NIGHT

It's late in the evening. Drunk, Anastasia, still in her evening dress, walks alone past the opera house. She stops and stares at it. Then she decides to climb the gate, just like she did with Georgina. She scrapes her thigh on the way down and starts bleeding a bit. She wipes the blood with some spit.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/LIBRARY - NIGHT

"Rex Tremendae" from Mozart's Requiem echoes. Anastasia walks into the Opera's empty library, lit by one dreary light. She searches the shelves for old scores and finds the one Amelia

showed her, the original score of Ernest Dupré's *Orpheus*. She opens it, turns the pages, and finds the drawing she'd glimpsed: it's a charcoal drawing of a Nymph. Her face bears an uncanny resemblance to Georgina. At the bottom of the drawing, one words: "Eurydice." Shocked, Anastasia drops the score, which scatters on the floor.

She looks up to find Ernest staring at her, his eyes shining, from the other end of the bookshelf. A beat.

ANASTASIA

(emotional)

I was afraid I'd never see you again...

He looks sad, turns on his heels, and heads back down the aisle. Anastasia runs after him, but he gradually disappears. She almost catches up with him... but there's no one there. Suddenly, she spots him farther down another aisle.

ANASTASIA

Ernest? What's going on?

He leaves, turning his back on her. She pursues him.

ANASTASIA

Where are you going? Talk to me!

Anastasia loses sight of him again... When she reaches the end of the aisle, she sees a door ajar. The light is on, and a hushed conversation can be heard inside. She approaches, opening the door wide...

INT. OPERA HOUSE/DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

... It's the office that used to be used by the opera directors: a wood-paneled office lit by a dim light. James and the Opera Director pause when they see Anastasia.

DIRECTOR

(to Anastasia)

We've been expecting you...

Anastasia is panic-stricken.

JAMES

You should have told us about your problem.

ANASTASIA

What problem?

JAMES

Your imaginary friend... You're
inventing characters; they're all in
your head!

DIRECTOR

We're going to have to treat you.
Otherwise, you will end up like your
mother!

TWO NURSES approach her, and one grabs her arms while the other
tries to inject her with a sedative. As she struggles, Anastasia
meets James's contrite gaze.

JAMES

I'm very sorry.

ANASTASIA

No, no, stop! Noooo!

INT. GEORGINA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Anastasia startles awake in her bed. She's drenched in sweat. She
looks down at her wounded thigh. It's skinned and bruised. She's
hungover.

INT. GEORGINA'S APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING

The first rays of sunlight bathe the room in a cold light. The
door to Anastasia's bedroom opens. She emerges, her face pale and
her eyes rimmed, exhausted by her restless night. Georgina's door
is closed. Relieved, Anastasia walks silently into the kitchen.
She winces, every movement seeming to cause pain. She opens the
fridge and takes out some water.

GEORGINA

Guess with who...

Anastasia is startled. She looks around to find Georgina, who is
coming out of her room and heading for the door.

GEORGINA

...I have an appointment in...
(looks at her watch)
53 minutes? With James!

Georgina smiles. Anastasia's face tenses up. Georgina's words are
distorted when they reach her. Georgina opens the front door.

GEORGINA

Don't try to play with the grown-ups
when you're just a little girl...

The front door SLAMS, startling Anastasia. Georgina's laughter echoes, strangely amplified. Anastasia feels sick. She runs to the bathroom.

INT. GEORGINA'S APARTMENT/BATHROOM - DAY

Anastasia splashes water on her face and tries to pull herself together. In the medicine cabinet, she sees a case with a syringe.

EXT. OPERA HOUSE/FORECOURT - DAY

Anastasia races up the steps of the opera house.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/ENTRANCE - DAY

Anastasia enters the opera house, it's strangely busy. She stops for a moment. Through the bay window of the reception area, she can see a man in a dark jacket, MARTINI (40s), and a slightly YOUNGER WOMAN talking with James and the other directors. Anastasia seeks James's gaze, which slides over her as if he can't see her. She approaches the security guard.

ANASTASIA
What's going on?

SECURITY GUARD
It's the police... they've come about
the chandelier accident...

Anastasia watches Martini turn her head and meet her gaze through the bay window. She quickens her pace. Martini follows her with his eyes.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/MAIN STAGE - DAY

Anastasia arrives on stage. The corps de ballet dancers turn to her. She takes her place, avoiding their stares. We hear a few scoffs, "You okay? You didn't sleep much, did you?" Marco can't help himself:

MARCO
Was the night a success? How's James?

Anastasia looks down when suddenly:

GEORGINA

Whore!

Anastasia is startled and turns around. Georgina is facing her, furious. Everyone is watching them.

GEORGINA

I can't believe you ratted me out...

ANASTASIA

(in a low voice)

I... I had to do it... for you... to protect you... otherwise...

GEORGINA

Shut the fuck up! I trusted you! You want war...

JAMES (O.S.)

Attention everyone!

Everyone turns to James, who has just walked in. Silence.

GEORGINA

(whispering in Anastasia's ear)

...You're gonna get it!

A feeling of apprehension settles over the group. It's clear that this is going to be an important announcement.

JAMES

I have made my choice for the role of Eurydice.

A beat. Georgina and Anastasia stare at each other.

JAMES

It will be Anastasia.

A wave of astonishment ripples through the group. Georgina shoves Anastasia.

JAMES

Georgina will be her understudy.

Anastasia is cheerlessly congratulated by the other dancers.

DANCERS

Bravo... Congratulations... That's great...

But it's mostly Georgina they're discussing. Anastasia hears the

whispers.

DANCERS

(whispers)

That's so messed up... You deserved it...
She just got here... All because...

James observes Anastasia's isolation and the dancers aligning themselves with Georgina.

JAMES

Let's get on with the first encounter
scene. Everyone in place, please!

Anastasia takes a deep breath. She looks around, as if searching for Ernest. The pianist begins Orpheus's aria. Guillaume, the dancer playing Orpheus, begins his solo. Anastasia takes off. She dances beautifully. After a moment, James stops the pianist with a gesture. Anastasia freezes.

JAMES

(to Anastasia)

Hey! Anybody home?

Vulnerable, Anastasia looks over at him.

ANASTASIA

(pulling herself together)

Okay.

He starts dancing Eurydice's part to show her.

JAMES

Your upper body should be fluid... You
must float above the ground, above
the others, you're a nymph... Orpheus
only has eyes for you!

Anastasia and the corps de ballet watch him attentively.

JAMES

If you don't feel up to it, save me
some time and say so now, because the
premiere is in six days!

Anastasia tries her best to hide her dismay.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/VICTOIRE'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY

In her dressing room, Anastasia, her head cupped in her hands, tries to compose herself. She lets out a deep sigh of despair.

Then she lifts her head, opens her eyes, and scrutinizes her image in the mirror.

ANASTASIA
(in the mirror)
Why didn't you come? Why didn't you
try to stop me from dancing?...

A beat. She seems panicked. She looks all around for Ernest.

ANASTASIA
I made it all up, didn't I?... To have
an excuse... To get the lead... Ernest!
Ernest!... I didn't make you up... I know
I didn't make you up... Show yourself!

Suddenly, she's startled: in the back of the mirror, a figure appears. It's James.

JAMES
Don't change. We're going to rehearse
a bit longer...

INT. OPERA HOUSE/REHEARSAL ROOM - NIGHT

Stressed out, Anastasia dances as James watches, focused. She's sweating; they've been here a while.

JAMES
Am I an asshole?

Anastasia freezes in surprise.

JAMES
Keep dancing... That's what Georgina
told you, isn't it?

She dances while watching him.

JAMES
She resents me for not giving her the
roles she feels she deserves. But I'm
not an asshole. Anyway, I try... You
know, it's not easy to achieve
excellence without pushing you.

Anastasia keeps dancing, a bit unsettled.

JAMES
That's it, that's good Anastasia,
that's good.

Surprised, she looks at him, not daring to believe it.

ANASTASIA
Really? That's better?

He nods.

ANASTASIA
But this movement,
(she shows him)
I can tell that... I...

JAMES
Yes, there's still a bit of rigidity,
but I'm not worried.

ANASTASIA
Ah... You think I'll get it?

JAMES
I won't let you give up.

ANASTASIA
Thank you... Thank you very much...

James heads for the exit as Anastasia looks on in surprise.

JAMES
See you tomorrow at a quarter to
seven. Practice hard until then.

He opens the door.

ANASTASIA
I... I promise I'll be up to the
challenge.

Did he even hear that? He's gone. Sweating, Anastasia looks at the clock. It's already 10 p.m. She sighs and starts the music on her phone. She takes a deep breath and begins again, exhausted.

ESTABLISHING SHOT. GEORGINA'S BUILDING - NIGHT

It's raining.

INT. GEORGINA'S APARTMENT/LANDING - NIGHT

Anastasia's body is aching. She climbs the stairs with difficulty. When she arrives at her landing, she finds her belongings piled up in front of the door. She tears up,

exhausted. Then she takes out her phone and looks for James's number, thinks about calling him... but decides against it.

EXT. PARIS/ALEXANDRE III BRIDGE/GRANDS BOULEVARDS - NIGHT

Downpour over the city. Her suitcase in hand, like when she first arrived in Paris, and completely soaked, Anastasia walks down the streets. She crosses the Seine via the empty Alexandre III bridge. Shortly thereafter, she walks past the big department stores and their illuminated puppet displays. Sheltered from the rain, she looks at the puppets wearing Halloween masks. Startled, she thinks she sees Ernest's mask among them. Heart pounding, she looks intently at the masks. No, no Ernest. It was an illusion. Dejected, she sighs. The city is soaked with rain.

INT. PARIS/HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Anastasia enters a hotel, its lobby lit by fluorescent lights. The SECURITY GUARD at the front desk immediately addresses her:

GUARDIAN
We're fully booked, Miss. At this
hour, you'll have a hard time finding
a room...

Dejected, Anastasia takes out her phone and looks at the time: 11:45 p.m. She looks for James's number again.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/JAMES'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The door to James's office opens and a ray of light illuminates the dark, empty room. James turns on the light and crosses the room.

JAMES
I've installed a cot in the next
room, so I can rest when I can't work
anymore...

Anastasia, her hair soaked through, enters the office. Pulling her suitcase, she follows him to a small annex with a cot and a washbasin.

JAMES
It's not much, but it'll suffice for
the night. Tomorrow I'll ask the
administration to find you a new
roommate.

Anastasia puts her suitcase down. Her hair is dripping on the wooden floor. The room is small, and they're close to each other. James looks at her. Uneasy silence. He walks past her to open a small closet.

JAMES

There must be a towel here... Ah, here we go!

He grabs a towel and hands it to her.

ANASTASIA

Thank you.

She dries her hair.

JAMES

At the end of each year, at dance school, there was a show. The teacher would cast the roles. But once, when I was about 10, she asked me and my best friend Pietro which of us wanted to dance the only male solo. I was dying to do it, but I didn't want to hurt Pietro's feelings. Pietro raised his hand without hesitation, without even looking at me. The night of the show, in the audience with all the parents, was the director of the Opera School. He spotted Pietro, who entered the school a year early. The teacher told me I should have taken the solo because I was better than him, but Pietro knew what he wanted more than I did... At first I felt bad, but then I realized that he was right, and I learned my lesson. I know it hurts, Anastasia... But you did what you had to do. Don't worry about Georgina. It'll all be forgotten...

(she nods)

I'll come get you tomorrow at 6:45.
Have a good night!

He leaves. Anastasia sees him close the office door behind him. Silence. Anastasia sits on the bed, staring into space.

In the distance, we hear the building CREAKING mournfully. Anastasia looks around the room and notices an old poster of Rupert Julian's film *The Phantom of the Opera* on the wall. She sighs, feeling lost.

After a moment, she takes out her phone and types a message. Then she gets up and walks to the office. She looks at a photo of James on stage, when he was a star. She looks at his desk. A survey book on "The Phantom of the Opera", other books on the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. There are even copies of the original score of *Orpheus* with underlined comments. James is doing a lot of work on the show.

Her PHONE rings. It's a FaceTime call. We recognize Victoire's face on the screen. Anastasia picks up.

ANASTASIA/FACETIME

Hi, Victoire. Thank you for getting back to me so late.

VICTOIRE/FACETIME

The nights are endless.

ANASTASIA/FACETIME

Do you have insomnia?

VICTOIRE/FACETIME

I don't sleep much. I heard about you getting the role. congratulations. How's it going with James? He can be tough, but he's just being demanding.

Anastasia shrugs.

ANASTASIA/FACETIME

That's not why I'm calling... I was wondering... Were... were you haunted by the Phantom? Is that what happened to you?

A beat.

VICTOIRE/FACETIME

I don't know. I heard a voice. Was it a ghost? Was it just me? I don't know. What I do know is that I was haunted by my job. Here, they tell me: "You're still young, find yourself a boyfriend, enjoy life, have fun..." But how? I don't know how. Do you?

Anastasia doesn't know what to say.

VICTOIRE/FACETIME

I... I have nothing to say... I'm alone, I have no one in my life, no

boyfriend, no friends, nothing. I've
given everything to the Opera, to
networking, to work. I'm empty.

CUT TO:

Lying in bed, Anastasia, exhausted as she is, can't get to sleep.
Her eyes are wide open. She seems lost.

ESTABLISHING SHOT. OPERA HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Dawn is just barely coming up over the opera house. All around,
Paris is waking up.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/JAMES'S OFFICE - EARLY MORNING

Anastasia splashes cold water on her face in the room's small
sink. She slaps her cheeks to wake herself up. She finishes
putting on her dance outfit. The office door opens. Anastasia is
startled. She's nervous. FOOTSTEPS, then a KNOCK on the door.
It's James, holding two cups of coffee.

JAMES

Are you ready? Coffee?

He hands her a cup.

ANASTASIA

Thanks, James.

She follows him.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/REHEARSAL ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Anastasia follows James down the empty hallways. They enter a
darkened rehearsal room. He closes the door. Uneasy, Anastasia
reaches for the light switch. The light comes on, and James is
right in front of her. He stares at her. She tries not to look
down.

JAMES

Let's practice Hell. Go ahead!

Anastasia is surprised.

ANASTASIA

Without music?

JAMES

Don't you have it in your head?

ANASTASIA

Yes, sure...

He waits. Time stops, then she realizes he's waiting for her to start dancing. She takes position on the floor, and dances the part representing Eurydice's awakening after she was raped by Hadès, her panic at finding herself in limbo. James moves around her to study her as she dances. Suddenly, he CLAPS his hands. She stops.

JAMES

Where's Eurydice right now?

ANASTASIA

In limbo.

JAMES

Why?

ANASTASIA

Because Hadès raped her.

JAMES

What is she feeling?

ANASTASIA

She's ashamed?

JAMES

What else?

ANASTASIA

She feels soiled.

JAMES

And...?

ANASTASIA

She's hurting. She's lost her only love.

JAMES

Exactly. I can see you understand her.

ANASTASIA

I do.

James looks at her with a faint smile.

ANASTASIA

I feel as though... this part was written for me.

JAMES

Ah yeah?

(suddenly harsh)

And what about the filth, the despair, the insanity? Where are they? I don't see anything when you dance, nothing at all! There's a difference between describing feelings and experiencing them, you know? There's a difference between describing a movement and inhabiting it!

She nods. He looks at her severely.

JAMES

So stop thinking and dance! Let's continue.

She starts dancing again.

JAMES

The expression in your eyes!

She stops.

JAMES

Did I tell you to stop?

She continues.

JAMES

Insanity is what we must see in your eyes. There are damned souls all around you, they're calling out to you, and you have no idea where you are!

She complies, looks around wildly, lets herself go a bit more. Her movements turn jerkier and more violent.

JAMES

I want to see vulnerability!

She tries something else.

JAMES

Suffering!

She dances.

JAMES

Fear!

She dances.

JAMES

Madness!

She dances. He CLAPS his hands. She stops, out of breath, drenched in sweat.

JAMES

Go back to your last position.

She's lost, she can't remember, she hesitates.

JAMES

Your last position.

She takes a position. He moves closer and corrects her stance, as though she were a rag doll. He grabs her left hand.

JAMES

What does this hand tell us?

(she doesn't respond)

Nothing! It's an empty movement, it's pointless! You must use your entire body! You've lost the one being that mattered THE MOST to you, can you understand that?

Anastasia closes her eyes and nods.

JAMES

Then let's do it again! Show me your
FUCKING PAIN!

Anastasia complies. He CLAPS. She stops.

JAMES

Your left hand!

Uneasy, Anastasia stares at her hand.

JAMES

What is it doing? Who, or what, is it reaching for? You don't know? Is it looking for your lost love?

ANASTASIA

(lost)

Yes.

JAMES

No! It's protecting you from the damned! Your body betrays your pain, but your hand betrays your fear! Do you have any idea what you're doing?

Anastasia nods.

JAMES

Let's go.

She starts dancing again. He CLAPS.

JAMES

It looks like you're flapping your hand! You're supposed to be using it to defend yourself. Again.

Anastasia tries again.

JAMES

AGAIN!

(she tries one more time)

AGAIN! ... AGAIN! It's empty! AGAIN!

Why is he so violent? She's about to break down, she tears up.

JAMES

I can't fucking believe it! A goddam crybaby! Go ahead, cry, maybe you'll piss less.

She tries to focus and dances, although the tears keep coming.

JAMES

YOUR HAND!!!

Anastasia is shaken by the violence in his voice. She repeats the same movement.

JAMES

AGAIN! ... AGAIN!

She starts over. James's anger reaches its climax; he grabs her hand and YANKS it towards him, as though he's trying to STRETCH it. It hurts, and Anastasia SCREAMS. Suddenly:

...the bulb in the main ceiling fixture light BURSTS, plunging the room into darkness... Anastasia freezes. Feeling a draft behind

her, she whips around. When she turns back to face James, he's leaving the room.

JAMES
(without turning around)
Either you understand what I'm asking
of you...

He SLAMS the door, startling her.

JAMES
Or we stop right here.

She finds herself alone in the half-light. The tears she was holding back return. Distraught, she crumples to the floor. She's out of breath and having a hard time recovering.

Suddenly she hears a beautiful and melancholy MELODY, the same one Ernest played when they first met. Surprised, she looks up. No one there, yet she can hear the melody.

She turns to see Ernest standing in the back of the room. His eyes glow in the dark, he's looking at her. She's overwhelmed. They stare at each other for a while, and then she slowly approaches him. This time, he doesn't flinch. She brings her hand close to his body. He waits. Her hand goes to touch his chest and passes through him! He really is a ghost.

Overwhelmed, Anastasia bursts into tears again. Ernest takes her in his arms, but since he's a spirit, his body merely superimposes over hers. Anastasia cries endlessly, snuggled up against Ernest. Gradually, she calms down.

ANASTASIA
The light bulb, did you do that?

He looks at her, not sure what to say.

ANASTASIA
Why do you do this for me?

A beat. The atmosphere is charged with emotion.

ERNEST
When you dance Eurydice's part, I do
not feel your anger...

It's an emotional moment for both of them. She recovers some courage:

ANASTASIA
So maybe I was right, maybe I can

help you...

A beat. Ernest remains silent; he's thinking the same thing.

ANASTASIA

Why don't you want Orpheus to be performed?

After a moment:

ERNEST

I wanted to be a composer. Music... There was never anything else in my life. My parents were peasants, I was poor, but I came to Paris anyway.

In the distance, we hear someone HUMMING a melody. The lights have gone out completely, and the room now seems a black, empty space.

ERNEST

The Garnier opera house was under construction at the time. A competition was organized to choose the show that would open the opera. I wanted to win. I was sure all it would take was talent. To earn enough to eat, I worked as an apprentice at the Le Peletier Opéra. Between classes, I composed *Orpheus*...

In the mirror behind them, the reflection changes, everything brightens and becomes the set for a rehearsal room at the OPERA PELETIER.

ERNEST

Orpheus was the only thing that mattered...

Anastasia and Ernest turn and become spectators of the scene.

INT. LE PELETIER OPERA HOUSE/SET - DAY/NIGHT

... The set of a rehearsal studio at the Le Peletier Opera House in 1872. Through the glass roof, a *trompe l'oeil* painting depicts the construction site of the Garnier opera house.

Behind the piano, Ernest, a bit younger, is searching for a melody. He's not classy like his ghost is. He's poorly dressed and looks like he just arrived from the countryside. Once he's found his melody, he plays it on the piano.

Anastasia recognizes the melody (an aria from *Orpheus*) and hums it. Emotional, she's watching Ernest play when...

A young woman in a ballerina's outfit, her eyes bright, comes on stage. This is CATHERINE. Ernest can't see her, his back is to her. She stands still, spellbound by the music. Inspired, he finishes his magnificent melody.

CATHERINE
Who wrote that piece?

Startled, Ernest turns around - and sees Catherine. Transfixed, he can't take his eyes off her. Amused, she smiles.

ERNEST
(*intimidated*)
I... I did.

Anastasia glances at the Phantom. Moved, he seems to only have eyes for Catherine. He whispers Catherine's dialogue as she speaks.

ERNEST/PHANTOM & CATHERINE
You play the piano...

Anastasia looks at Catherine.

CATHERINE
...like Orpheus with his lyre.

The stage lights go out and another set is illuminated next to it.

This time, we're on a BRIDGE in Paris at night. The view of the city is painted in an Impressionist style. Ernest crosses the Seine with his head down, his eyes dark, at Catherine's side.

The Phantom explains to Anastasia:

ERNEST/PHANTOM
I had put everything into this opera.
But the jury humiliated me...

CATHERINE
(*to Ernest*)
Stop, darling! *Orpheus* is amazing.
That's not the problem...
(*he looks at her*)
The problem is that you're a peasant,
you don't know anyone, and Parisians
hate outsiders.

Ernest is lost in thought for a while.

ERNEST
I'll never be a success then?
(she doesn't reply)
What's the point?

His jaw tightens, his fists clench.

ERNEST
(darkly)
I might as well throw myself in the
Seine.

Anastasia glances at the Phantom, who grits his teeth.

ANASTASIA
You... you killed yourself?... Because of
the opera?

The Phantom looks at her sadly. The wall behind them is actually a canvas, hiding another scene that is suddenly illuminated. It's a MAID'S ROOM under the roof. Anastasia turns to watch the rest of the story.

... Ernest, transfigured, holding a paper bag containing a bottle in his hand, enters the room where Catherine is dancing.

ERNEST
(breathless)
Darling! A miracle! A miracle!

He uncorks the bottle of champagne he's brought along.

ERNEST
They've reconsidered my application!
The Viscount de Glaud came to tell me
in person! I won! Life is beautiful!
We're going to be so happy!

He takes her in his arms.

ERNEST
What angel intervened to change their
minds?

He hands Catherine a glass and grabs the other. The scene fades. The Phantom leans to whisper in Anastasia's ear.

ERNEST/PHANTOM
(to Anastasia)
The angel was Catherine.

Anastasia is surprised.

ERNEST/PHANTOM

(to Anastasia)

The Viscount had put us up in a small studio in the Le Pelletier Opera. He came by regularly...

Another room lights up to their right, a STUDIO APARTMENT. Ernest is hard at work at his piano. Next to him, Catherine lies on the bed, her eyes vacant and her expression sad. A KNOCK, the door opens. It's the Viscount de Glaud (seen in the opening scenes).

VISCOUNT DE GLAUD

Hello, lovebirds! I was thinking of taking Catherine for a walk...

Anastasia watches Catherine's face tense up. Catherine slowly stands up.

Anastasia looks at the Phantom. He bows his head, distressed, finding it hard to revisit these memories.

ERNEST/PHANTOM

I should have understood. I should have understood her sacrifice. It was all happening before my very eyes. But no. I didn't want to see. I was obsessed with the glory that was reaching out to me...

Through the skylight, we see Ernest watching Catherine and the Viscount leave. He returns to the piano. The aria he plays is darker, more dramatic (we recognize the finale of *Orpheus*).

The light dims. A night passes, and it's light again. Ernest has left his piano. He's well dressed now, nothing like the peasant we saw in the beginning. He's gazing worriedly at Catherine, who is lying in bed, a shadow of her former self. She looks absent. Suddenly, he undoes his bow tie and sits down on the bed.

ERNEST

You know what? They can all go--
(collecting himself,
looking mischievous)
They can go to hell! If you ain't coming, I'm not either!

CATHERINE

(correcting him)
"If you're NOT coming...
(changing the subject)

The party is in your honor. They're waiting for you.

ERNEST
It's you they want to see...

CATHERINE
I have a terrible headache...

He takes the time to look at her.

ERNEST
I know I haven't been taking care of you, but as soon as *Orpheus* is finished, we'll go away! Where do you want to go?
(imitating the local accent each time)
Roma? Napoli? London? Berlin?
Barcelona? New York?

She forces a smile.

CATHERINE
Wherever you like.

She fixes his bow tie and hands him a mask.

CATHERINE
Go on. You're going to be late!

He hesitates, then kisses her and stands up.

Upset, Anastasia watches the Phantom's suffering. He looks so helpless and vulnerable.

Ernest leaves. Anastasia watches as the tears Catherine had been holding back roll down her face. The light goes out...

It's dark. Ernest opens the door again, back from the party.

ERNEST
Catherine! They loved it!

Anastasia realizes that the Phantom is no longer with her. Surprised, she looks for him, when suddenly she hears:

ERNEST
My love? Why do I smell gas?

Anxious, Anastasia sees Ernest rush to the bed... It's empty. Suddenly, Ernest sees a body lying on the floor.

ERNEST
(panicked)
Catherine! What's wrong?

He opens the window wide, lifts her up. She's lifeless. He carries her to the bed.

ERNEST
No, no, no... What have you done?

Anastasia puts her hand to her mouth. Ernest SCREAMS.

ERNEST
CATHERINE! MY LOVE! NO!

He's embracing her lifeless body when all of a sudden, there's an EXPLOSION!

He's thrown to the floor, and his head hits a chest of drawers. Ernest's body lies at the feet of Anastasia, who is covered in debris from the explosion.

By the time Ernest comes to his senses, black smoke has descended on the scene. He COUGHS. He sees flames licking the curtains, the ceiling, the blankets (special effects mixing pyrotechnics and film projections).

Ernest jumps to his feet, realizing the urgency of the situation. He races through the blaze to collect Catherine. He carries her towards the exit, coughing and staggering through the flames. He exits the studio and finds himself...

...in another set: a PARISIAN STREET. He emerges, SCREAMING, his suit still smoking, carrying Catherine in his arms. The bottom part of his face is burned. So are his hands.

ERNEST
Aaaaaaah... Help!... Help!

He looks left and right for help. No one around. At his back is the *trompe-l'oeil* of the Garnier opera house construction site at the end of the street. Gathering the last of his strength, limping, with Catherine in his arms, he heads for the building site. The lights flicker on and over the last set:

The OPERA HOUSE CONSTRUCTION SITE. Surrounded by wooden palisades, a large hole in the heart of the city. In the middle, there is an immense artificial pool. Ernest reaches the edge of the basin and throws himself and Catherine into it. Catherine's body floats. Standing with water up to his chest, Ernest gently pours water over her forehead.

ERNEST

Catherine come back... Catherine
please... I'm here...

But it's too late. She's dead. He SCREAMS in despair.

ERNEST

Ahhhh!

Anastasia is overcome by sadness.

Grief-stricken, Ernest pulls Catherine's body out of the water. On the wall of the foundation under construction, he spots a small metal door opening onto a cell. There's a pile of stones and an old red scarf. On the wall, someone has painted "The Cry of the People". It must have served as a dungeon for prisoners who took part in the Paris Commune...

He steps forward and enters the cell. He lays Catherine's body gently on the floor. He closes the metal door and lies down beside her, exhausted, devastated, burned by the flames... He looks at her... And closes his eyes. When he opens them again, he wants to caress Catherine, but his hands pass through her. He's a ghost.

He then raises his tear-filled eyes to Anastasia. The Phantom and Ernest have become one. The timelines have merged. Anastasia looks at him with compassion.

ANASTASIA

Catherine sacrificed herself to the
Viscount so that the Orpheus would
exist. Her sacrifice must not be in
vain.

He stares at her.

ANASTASIA

Maybe you're not imprisoned here to
prevent your opera from being
performed... Maybe, on the contrary,
it's because you want to prevent it
from being performed that you remain
a prisoner...

Ernest is thinking. For the first time, he seems distraught.

ERNEST

I don't know... I think I've been
condemned to do evil...

ANASTASIA

Wait...

(her face lights up)

You can't touch people, can you?

ERNEST

(shaking his head)

I don't think so...

ANASTASIA

That means the dancer... it wasn't you...

Ernest remembers.

ERNEST

No. It was the Viscount. But I'm the one who drove her crazy.

ANASTASIA

And the chandelier... You didn't want to hurt the technician... You wanted to scare Victoire... that's all.

ERNEST

I don't know... I don't think it was me... When I'm overwhelmed by feelings... I can't help it... I... I lose control, everything gets cloudy, dark... I don't really know what I'm doing...

ANASTASIA

Earlier... The lightbulb... was that you?

He looks at her, uncertain. Moved, she smiles.

ANASTASIA

Why didn't you stop me from dancing?

A beat. He's distressed.

ERNEST

When you dance Eurydice, I feel no anger...

Anastasia is moved. Ernest is too. They look at each other. Suddenly, CHURCH BELLS can be heard in the distance. Anastasia glances at her watch. Her face shows panic.

ANASTASIA

I... I'm going to be late...

She runs to the door. She turns around.

ANASTASIA
Will you help me dance Eurydice?

He hesitates.

ANASTASIA
I'm stuck. I can't figure it out.

He nods. A smile lights up Anastasia's face.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/DRESSING ROOMS - DAY

Anastasia enters the dressing room. The male and female dancers are unusually agitated. Georgina is with them.

DANCERS
... They're saying it wasn't an
accident... Is that possible?...

Georgina is shocked.

GEORGINA
What do you mean it wasn't an
accident?

DANCERS
... But who could have done it? It's
horrible!... But why?... It was the
Phantom!

MARCO
(conspiratorial voice)
I'm not sure... Who benefits from the
crime?

The dancers suddenly see Anastasia. Silence. Anastasia crosses the dressing room as the others look at her accusingly. She meets Georgina's somber face. Georgina seems to be considering the news. Anastasia can sense that the others suspect her. A particularly upset YOUNG BALLERINA calls out to her.

YOUNG BALLERINA
Tell your fucking fiancé to leave us
alone!

Anastasia stares at her.

YOUNG BALLERINA
What? You think we didn't see your
video?

Anastasia grits her teeth. Suddenly James enters the dressing room with by DETECTIVE MARTINI. Anastasia and the dancers turn around.

JAMES

Your attention, please! Detective Martini is investigating the chandelier accident and will be questioning all the company's dancers.

A wave of concern spreads through the crowd. Anastasia meets James's neutral gaze. Uneasy, she looks away.

MARTINI

Try to remember what you saw that day. Even seemingly insignificant details could be important.

JAMES

So you'll each be receiving a summons in the next few days. Please keep an eye on your texts.

Martini leaves.

JAMES

You have...
(looks at his watch)
...four minutes to be in place.

He walks away. Everyone hurries to get dressed.

GEORGINA

James... Wait!

Anastasia frowns as Georgina hurries after James. She sees her slip a word to James through the closing door. James blanches. WHISPERS can be heard from behind Anastasia: "What did she tell him?" "Do you think she knows something?" Distressed, Anastasia watches them walk out, all chatting together.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/LARGE REHEARSAL ROOM - DAY

A large rehearsal studio. Dressed as Eurydice, Anastasia dances with Guillaume, as Orpheus. Behind them, Hades and the corps de ballet slowly approach, looking like the living dead. This is the final scene, in which Orpheus and Eurydice emerge from the Underworld. Still distressed, Anastasia lets go of Orpheus's arm, only to find herself in the clutches of Hades.

James is focused and more irritable than usual. He keeps his eyes on Anastasia. He signals to the pianist to stop playing.

All the dancers stop and turn to James. Their bodies are tired, their faces anxious. The sun is going down outside. They've been rehearsing for a while. We can hear them expressing their fatigue, looking at the clock.

JAMES

(annoyed)

What's the matter? Are you tired? The premiere's tomorrow, you can sleep when you're dead!

(he approaches Anastasia)

Ana, I don't see fear. All I see is weariness and softness. You're in the arms of the King of the Underworld, for fuck's sake!

Anastasia feels all the eyes on her. James' proximity makes her tremble. He stands in for Hades.

JAMES

Show me your terror! Your despair!
You're going to lose everything!

He dances the role of Hades. He's totally invested in the character, and his gaze is frightening. Anastasia dances, containing her emotions, rigid and cold. James stops.

ANASTASIA

You tell me to be free, but all you do is give me orders.

James glares at her.

JAMES

That's exactly the difference between a good pupil and a performer: the pupil does what she's told, and the performer? She... ? ...

(she doesn't answer)

She PERFORMS!... You're not ready!

She doesn't dare look him in the eye.

JAMES

(shouting)

But Georgina, she's ready!

WHISPERS through the corps de ballet: "What's wrong with him today? He's freaking out." Anastasia exchanges glances with

Georgina, who smiles defiantly. Anastasia looks down.

JAMES

Let's get back to work!

A murmur of discontent.

MARCO

James, I think I speak for the group
when I say, we can't take it anymore!
We could get hur--

JAMES

(furiously interrupting)

What do you think this is, the Post
Office? You come to collect your
little paycheck, you get in your
hours, and you're satisfied? Tell me
something. Are you satisfied now?
That's the problem, everyone gets
used to being SHIT! I'm here to seek
out the beautiful, the exceptional,
the sublime! And to offer it to the
public tomorrow night! Anyone who's
content being just okay can walk out
right now!

The dancers exchange worried glances. James's sudden fury throws
them off balance.

JAMES

Again! Anastasia, get a grip. This is
now, not in a month!

Anastasia watches as Georgina and James exchange a tense look.
The corps de ballet sighs. Isolated, Anastasia is on the verge of
tears.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/MAIN STAGE - NIGHT

Anastasia is reunited with Ernest on the Opera's empty stage. She
dances while he plays the piano. She finishes her choreography by
miming a fall. She straightens up and looks at Ernest.

ANASTASIA

Well? It should be much more
powerful, right? I feel like I'm
absent from the scene, like I'm
enduring it...

ERNEST

What would you do?

She stares at him.

ANASTASIA

You mean, me?

ERNEST

Yes, you, Anastasia. Go for it, don't
be self-conscious!

She ponders this. Ernest plays the melody again. She closes her eyes. She is overcome by emotion. She tries something. It's strange. She stops, uncertain.

ANASTASIA

Wait...

(to herself)

This is the moment when, guided by
Orpheus' lyre, Eurydice rises from
the Underworld... This is just before
he turns around...

ERNEST

Because he's afraid she won't follow
him, because he doesn't have enough
faith in their love, and in her. He
disappoints her tragically, and she
disappears in infinite bitterness.

Anastasia reflects.

ANASTASIA

Start again...

He starts again. She listens. She begins to walk through the set, letting herself be carried away by her emotion. He plays, watching her. She tries, searches, gradually changing the choreography. He feels something coming, the emotion rising.

ERNEST

(to himself)

That's it...

Suddenly, Anastasia stops and comes back to him, transfigured.

Ernest stars the finale again. Absorbed, Anastasia invents new movements. She seems much less fragile than the initial Eurydice, less plaintive. More dignified, she pretends to push Orpheus away. Confident, she moves to the back of the stage. Ernest emotionally strikes the final chord. Anastasia's face appears on the giant screens on the stage.

Ernest looks tiny in front of Anastasia's huge face. She plunges her eyes into his.

ERNEST
(as if having a revelation)
She's the one who decides not to
follow him.

Anastasia comes up behind him, full of emotion.

ANASTASIA
After what she's been through, she
knows they won't be able to love each
other like before.

ERNEST
And she chooses to leave Orpheus with
the memory of their love.

Ernest looks at her expectantly. They smile at each other,
content with the shared creative act they've just experienced.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/HALLWAYS - NIGHT

Anastasia walks happily through the hallways, taking a few joyful
dance steps as she goes. She has fun moving through Ernest, who
also finds it amusing.

ANASTASIA
Have you ever left this place?

ERNEST
I confess, I'm a bit of a homebody...

ANASTASIA
So you've never seen the Paris of the
21st century?

ERNEST
I have, from the roof...

ANASTASIA
What?

ERNEST
I can't leave the opera house,
Anastasia. I'm chained to this place,
this...

Suddenly, his face twitches and contorts horribly. The hallway
lights flicker. He collapses against the wall, sliding to the

floor.

ANASTASIA
(panicked)
What's wrong?

ERNEST
The music... Someone else is dancing
Eurydice...

Anastasia hears the music of the Orpheus coming from a rehearsal studio. She heads towards the music...

INT. OPERA HOUSE/REHEARSAL STUDIO - NIGHT

Anastasia opens the door: Georgina, looking focused, is dancing the role of Eurydice. Anastasia watches her in awe. She sees that Georgina is wincing with pain.

Georgina sees her. She shoots Anastasia a challenging look.

ANASTASIA
Stop it, Georgina. You're hurting
yourself.

Georgina advances towards her, threatening.

GEORGINA
Who's hurting whom?

ANASTASIA
This part... I'm the one who has to
dance it... I know. But it's only one
part, you'll get many others. You're
the best dancer in...

Georgina forces her to step back.

GEORGINA
It's Eurydice I want. And I will get
her.

Anastasia shakes her head.

GEORGINA
(menacing)
I know things that you don't know...

Distressed, Anastasia turns on her heels and goes out into the hallway. She finds Ernest, looking tense, as if he's been paralyzed.

ANASTASIA

Let's go...

They move away, walking down a hallway. Suddenly Ernest stops.

ERNEST

Hear that?

Anastasia listens.

ERNEST

It's like the opera house is
grumbling.

Indeed, they can hear a muffled BOOMING sound. Anastasia smiles.

ANASTASIA

Come on...

INT. OPERA HOUSE/BASEMENT - NIGHT

Anastasia and Ernest descend the stairs. The muffled BOOM they heard has turned into a remix of Daft Punk's "*Giorgio By Moroder*". They reach a small party improvised by the design team in the Opera's basement. The place has been transformed into a phantasmagorical, baroque underground club. The lake resembles a submerged cemetery, adorned with crosses, old tombstones, and a footbridge eaten away by silt to allow the dancers to dance on the water. Technicians have lit the place with neon lights, giving it the feel of a nightclub. It's surprising, strange, and flamboyant. Ernest seems to be regaining his composure.

Anastasia dances down the last steps.

ANASTASIA

I love this song!

But Ernest is gone. She looks up. She sees him frozen on a step of the staircase, distraught by the energy, the sound, the lights. She laughs. He meets her gaze. He hesitates between amazement and laughter.

She rushes onto the improvised dance floor. As she dances, she beckons Ernest to join her. He hesitates, but she insists. She dances for him. A YOUNG MAN, seeing her dance for no one, approaches her and thinks he's got a chance, but she doesn't seem to see him. Her gaze is fixed on Ernest.

Ernest slowly descends the last steps. Once on the dance floor, he plays as he moves between the other revelers to get to Anastasia. At first, he has trouble understanding the rhythm and

the style. Stiffly, he tries a few moves. Anastasia laughs at his clumsiness. Gradually, he lets himself go and starts gesticulating strangely. Anastasia bursts out laughing. A bit worried by her strange behavior, the dancers stand back and watch her. Anastasia and Ernest dance as if the world around them doesn't exist.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/MAIN STAGE - NIGHT

Lying among the *Orpheus* sets, Anastasia is nestled in Ernest's "ghostly arms". They're silent for a moment. They're happy. The music echoes in the distance.

ERNEST
I'm happy with you.

They look in each other's eyes.

ERNEST
I... I didn't think I could still...

She looks at him questioningly.

ERNEST
Fall in love.

The revelation shakes Anastasia. Her heart races. She brings her face close to his. Their lips reach for each other, but Ernest is a phantom... Sadness descends on Ernest's face.

ANASTASIA
Ernest?

He looks at her.

ANASTASIA
I love you. That's all that matters.

He nods, half-convinced. Anastasia's eyes close.

INT. PARISIAN APARTMENT/DREAM - DAWN

...Anastasia wakes up in rumpled sheets, in the bed of an unfamiliar, attic apartment with a spectacular view over the rooftops of Paris and the Sacré Coeur. She is alone. In the next room, she hears a piano playing the theme from "Giorgio By Moroder."

Day breaks... A warm, nearly supernatural light floods the room. Anastasia gets up and moves into a small lounge next door.

Sitting at a piano, Ernest is playing the melody. She smiles and comes to sit beside him on his stool. He squeezes to make room for her. Everything seems natural, routine. She runs her hand through his hair. He stops playing and strokes her cheek. She takes him in her arms. They close their eyes, happy to be able to hold each other, touch each other, feel each other.

They are intoxicated by the moment. Their lips come together... they kiss slowly, for a long time, tasting each other's lips, overwhelmed by desire... Suddenly, smoke wraps around them. A sudden CRACKING sound causes them to stop... A FIRE has broken out in the room... Anastasia CRIES OUT...

INT. OPERA HOUSE/HALLWAY/MAIN STAIRCASE - DAWN

... She wakes up next to Ernest, hearing a DISTURBING NOISE. They look at each other, worried.

ANASTASIA
What is it?

She gets up, Ernest follows. They walk through the dark changing rooms towards the hall.

She reaches the main balcony and suddenly... She SCREAMS! Georgina is lying, lifeless, on the steps of the grand staircase.

ANASTASIA
Georgina!

Anastasia rushes to Georgina and tries to revive her.

ANASTASIA
(screaming)
GEORGINA!

Georgina isn't moving, her eyes are rolled back in her head. She's dead. Anastasia takes her in her arms. Her body is limp. Anastasia SCREAMS and cries at the same time. Ernest approaches, overwhelmed, not knowing what to do.

ANASTASIA
Noooo... Not this... please no! Georgina!

EXT. OPERA HOUSE/CAFETERIA - NIGHT

Standing in front of the cafeteria's bay window, Anastasia watches the hustle and bustle behind the gate: the lights of the ambulance and police cars, a red fire engine.... Ernest stands beside her.

In front of the opera house, a fire engine. Illuminated by the lights of the ambulance and police cars, Anastasia, her eyes red, watches as TWO PARAMEDICS take the body away. Once the ambulance has left, Martini approaches her.

MARTINI
Does it happen a lot? (O.S.)

Anastasia is startled. Martini and his colleague approach her.

MARTINI
Dancers sleeping in their dressing
rooms?

ANASTASIA
Uh... No... not really... But the premiere
is tomorrow night... I... I train a lot...
I lose less time if I sleep here...

Martini nods. Behind the policemen, Ernest steps aside. Anastasia exchanges a glance with him. Martini sees that she is troubled. She feels guilty. Overwhelmed by emotion, she bursts into tears.

ANASTASIA
If I hadn't wanted this role, she
wouldn't have died...

She sobs.

MARTINI
(*intrigued*)
Why do you say that?

ANASTASIA
She... She took morphine to dance... She
had double scoliosis... She wanted the
part so badly... She must have taken
too much...

MARTINI
You think it was an overdose?

Concerned, Anastasia looks at him.

ANASTASIA
Yes.
(*a beat*)

Why...
 (suddenly terrified)
It wasn't an overdose?

Silence. Martini looks straight into Anastasia's eyes.

MARTINI
An opera is being staged. Competition
for the lead role is fierce. The
chandelier falls, and prima ballerina
Victoire Bellanger is out. Next is
Georgina d'Angelo...

ANASTASIA
I... I don't understand...

MARTINI
A few minutes before the chandelier
fell on the stage, some dancers saw
you leaving the backstage area in a
hurry... Where were you going?

Anastasia is unsettled by the question. She exchanges another
glance with Ernest. Martini turns around: no one there.

MARTINI
Is there a problem?

ANASTASIA
No, not at all...

MARTINI
So?

ANASTASIA
 (lying poorly)
I... I felt sick... I had pains... in my
stomach...

Martini looks at her closely, as if sizing her up.

ANASTASIA
 (shocked)
But... I would never... I would never...

MARTINI'S COLLEAGUE
Calm down, miss, we still don't know
the circumstances of her death, it's
just one hypothesis among several.

MARTINI
You may also be next one on the list...

Flabbergasted, Anastasia looks at them.

MARTINI

Maybe your "phantom" doesn't want you
to dance either.

She opens her eyes wide.

MARTINI

I looked at your posts.

MARTINI'S COLLEAGUE

*(to Martini, mocking
Anastasia)*

No way, the Phantom agrees that it
should be her dancing the part.
That's why he talks to her.

MARTINI

Of course! Silly me.

Anastasia walks off, down the hallway, accompanied by Ernest...
She looks at him, confused. Martini and his colleague see her
staring off to the side, and exchange a knowing glance.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/REHEARSAL ROOM - NIGHT

Doja Cat's "Woman" plays as Anastasia, dripping with sweat,
dances with that special blend of hip hop and classical that was
Georgina's style. She's in pain, and clearly hurting herself. Yet
she persists. Again and again. Ernest watches her unhappily.

After a while, spent and in tears, she collapses on the floor.
The music stops.

ANASTASIA

It's all my fault.

Ernest comes and sit on the floor next to her.

ERNEST

No, Anastasia. It's mine. And it
needs to stop.

ANASTASIA

If I have to lose you too... I don't
think I can... I don't want you to
leave...

Tears roll down her cheeks.

ERNEST

(emotional)

I have nothing to offer you... I'm just
a phantom...

ANASTASIA

So what?

ERNEST

What would we do, Anastasia? Where
would we live? And how?

ANASTASIA

Like this. I'll live here, at the
Opera, and we'll see each other all
the time...

Ernest shakes his head, emotional.

ERNEST

You need to love the living, to dance
with people who can really embrace
you, have a family... I don't want to
stop you from living...

ANASTASIA

You're not stopping me from living,
Ernest... On the contrary... We'll find a
solution. There are always solutions.

Ernest is about to respond, but she stops him.

ANASTASIA

Some people search for what we have
all their lives. Some never find it.

ERNEST

Today maybe... But then what? I can't
bear to see you looking at those who
can kiss, I can't bear to see you
unhappy. We won't be happy... Let me
go, Anastasia. Dance Eurydice to the
end. Please let me go. I've caused
too much sorrow...

She looks at him, upset, understanding that he's right.

ANASTASIA

I can join you...

Frightened, realizing what she's implying, Ernest freezes.

ERNEST

No, Anastasia. Don't ever say that.
You have your life to live. But one
day... A long time from now... I'll be
here. Waiting for you.

EXT. OPERA HOUSE/FORECOURT - NIGHT

A JOURNALIST is speaking on camera in front of the Garnier opera house. Behind her, a small group of YOUNG PEOPLE in masks and disguises are clowning around. The facade of the Opera is lit up by a video that has transformed it into the gigantic entrance of a phantasmagorical cave. Police trucks can be seen all around.

TV JOURNALIST

... As you can see, quite a few police officers have been deployed. Nothing has been left to chance for this premiere of *Orpheus*. Indeed, after a series of accidents at the opera, rumors are circulating that we could be dealing with a copycat killer. Someone is replicating the crimes of the notorious Phantom of the Opera! When you consider that in Gaston Leroux's novel, the Phantom attempts to blow up the building at the end, you can understand the organizers' caution. On this October 28th, just days before Halloween, the famous Phantom of the Opera has once again descended on Paris. We're in for a high-voltage performance!

The people in masks are chanting in unison: "Phantom, Phantom!"

INT. OPERA HOUSE/VICTOIRE'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Anastasia, in costume, is doing her hair in her dressing room while Ernest looks on. She looks very focused.

ERNEST

You're so beautiful...

ANASTASIA

I'm scared, Ernest.

ERNEST

Tonight, the world will see you
emerge from your cocoon!

They lock eyes in the mirror, feeling emotional. A KNOCK at the door. Anastasia turns around. It's James. He approaches her. Ernest has disappeared. James's eyes shine with feverish intensity. He puts his hand on her shoulders, as he has done before. He looks at her in the mirror.

JAMES

Ana... Georgina's death has shaken us all. Believe me, I bitterly regret pitting the two of you against each other. What happened was a tragedy. But we both know that she had been pushing her limits for years. It was her choice to take those risks. You mustn't feel guilty, you understand? Tonight's your night, you've earned it. Forget everything else, nothing else matters! Tonight will be an exceptional night, Anastasia... This is the chance of a lifetime, so seize it! We're going to achieve something great together. I need you.

ANASTASIA

I... I've been thinking...

JAMES

Don't worry about the finale. I know you'll be perfect.

He smiles and looks into her eyes. We can feel his excitement. Anastasia represses a shiver.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/LOBBY - NIGHT

In the opera house lobby, the AUDIENCE, many of whom are masked and costumed, advance to the foot of the grand staircase for the opening of *Orpheus* and the scene with the masked ball. Ernest is among them.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/VICTOIRE'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Alone in her dressing room, Anastasia looks at herself in the mirror. Suddenly, she hears the BELL announcing the start of the show.

Panic on Anastasia's face. She feels sick to her stomach. She

gets up and rushes out of her dressing room.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/LAVATORIES/BOX NO. 5 - NIGHT

Anastasia, in costume, enters the sumptuously decorated lavatories. She passes an OLD LADY in an evening gown, who seems astonished to come across the prima ballerina in her costume. Anastasia rushes to one of the many sinks and vomits. The old lady disappears, a bit shocked... Alone in the vast room, Anastasia catches her breath... Then, in the silence that has fallen, she perceives a distant conversation that seems to be coming from behind the tiled wall. She puts her ear to it.

Through the air duct, she hears the voices of Detective Martini, the Opera Director, and James, in box number 5. The sound of the BELL that signals the start of the performance has resumed, softer this time.

MARTINI (O.S.)
...the drug found in Georgina's blood
wasn't the same as the one she was
taking. Someone injected her with it...
Her death was not an accident, but a
homicide. And we have every reason to
believe that Miss Marescu is
involved.

Anastasia opens her eyes wide in panic.

The conversation continues in front of box no.5:

JAMES
Anastasia?! No, no what are you
saying... Okay, she's a bit strange...
But she wouldn't hurt a fly...

MARTINI
Dissociation doesn't just happen in
the movies. I've seen cases of
dangerous lunatics who have no memory
of stabbing people... She's from
another country, she's alone in
Paris, she claims to be talking to
the Phantom... And she has a motive.

JAMES
My God... It's true that she'd do
anything to get the part...

In the bathroom, Anastasia can't believe that James is going along with the police.

MARTINI

Who else knew that Georgina was
taking morphine?

A beat. James looks like he's having a revelation.

JAMES

To my knowledge, no one other than
Anastasia... You...

ANASTASIA (O.S.)

Hey!

Anastasia SHRIEKS in horror. James has just lied and accused her.
Back in box no. 5, James pauses.

MARTINI

Did you hear that?

JAMES

Sorry, excuse me. I'll be right back.

He leaves the box.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/LAVATORIES - NIGHT

In a state of panic, Anastasia is about to leave the bathroom
when she catches her frightened reflection in the mirror. She
notices a small vomit stain on her costume. She hurriedly rinses
the stain, splashes some water on her face, and steps outside.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/HALLWAYS - NIGHT

Anastasia bursts out of the bathroom. She glances left and right,
but there's no one there. She sighs with relief. Suddenly, she
spots James! She can't suppress a flash of panic. He acts
surprised.

JAMES

Anastasia? What are you doing here?
You're due on stage in two minutes.
Are you okay?

ANASTASIA

(breathless)

Yes, yes, everything's fine, I'm
going...

The BELL stops. Anastasia tries to mask her panic, without
success. James stares at her.

JAMES

Where exactly are you coming from?

Short of breath, she hesitates. Suddenly, a THUD. It's the revolving bathroom door closing. James notices. Their eyes meet. Anastasia realizes: James knows she was the one who screamed. He knows that she knows. His eyes suddenly take on a terrifying glint.

He grabs Anastasia, but she quickly frees herself. She takes off running. James runs in pursuit, seemingly overtaken by rage and panic. Anastasia runs as fast as she can, as the opening notes of the Orpheus ring out.

She runs down a long, empty hallway without looking back, then across the huge hallway that leads to the Grand Foyer.

She hears James's breath behind her. We are reliving the scene from the beginning when the dancer escapes from the Viscount's grasp. Finally, she emerges into the Grand Foyer, which is the set for Hades' palace, where the entire corps de ballet stands ready in their costumes for the masked ball.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/GRAND FOYER - NIGHT

Anastasia mingles with the other dancers, who are surprised to see her there. In total panic, she gasps for air while hiding among a group of dancers who look at her with questioning eyes. Anastasia finally looks behind her and sees James, still standing at the entrance of the large room, his expression cold and hard. He can't do anything, the spectators are arriving. He seethes. Anastasia turns her head and discovers Ernest beside her, staring at her, surprised to see her in such a strange state.

ERNEST

Anastasia... are you okay?

She's about to say something, but she stops herself. She just nods.

ERNEST

I'll stay with you...

The corps de ballet dancers step aside. It's Anastasia's turn to go on stage:

She dances with all her soul. Never far from her, Ernest encourages her with his eyes. It's no longer her body that dances, but her whole being. She dances her love, she dances her emotions, she dances her pain.

Then, suddenly, she meets James's icy stare - he has slipped in with the other spectators. Anastasia's face shows fear, but she contains herself. She disappears into the background, accompanied by Ernest.

THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE! In the audience, one of the costumed youngsters seen behind the journalist whispers to his group.

COSTUMED YOUTH

Did you see her? She's possessed, all right!

Anastasia follows the rest of the corps de ballet as it moves briskly toward the main stage. The next piece begins to play, and Ernest and Anastasia can't take their eyes off each other.

ERNEST

You were perfect!

Anastasia smiles at him, hiding her distress. She has no time to talk to him. The opera continues...

INT. OPERA HOUSE/UNDERGROUND LAKE - NIGHT

Artificial mist floats over the water of the underwater cemetery, lit only by a few lanterns. At the end of the wooden walkway stretching over the cemetery, a large cave-like opening leads into darkness.

Dark, stormy MUSIC fills the space. At the same time, images are projected onto screens on the main stage. The audience is about to witness the opera's finale.

Emerging from the darkness of the Underworld, the dancer playing Orpheus steps forward, holding Anastasia by the hand without looking at her. Anastasia glances behind her towards the abyss, as if she were being followed. A CLOSE-UP on her eyes impresses the audience.

Anastasia stops dancing in the middle of the walkway. She lets go of Orpheus's hand. The music stops. Her face expresses deep anguish. Suddenly, behind her, dancers emerge from the dark cave, wearing rags and carrying masks displaying Ernest Dupré's tortured face. The "damned" are followed by Hades, King of the Underworld.

Orpheus turns back to Anastasia. She exchanges a tearful glance with him. In reality, it's not the dancer Anastasia is looking at, but Ernest, who is standing in front of her.

Orpheus is nearly over, which means Ernest is about to disappear

forever. Anastasia looks at him with infinite sadness. His ghostly body is fading away: the end is near.

A tear rolls down Anastasia's cheek, and Ernest is also overcome with emotion. They bid each other farewell with their eyes. Emotional murmurs in the audience. Grief-stricken, Ernest nods to Anastasia, encouraging her to go on. She's devastated.

ANASTASIA

Farewell, my love...

The finale begins. Anastasia starts dancing the choreography that she's been rehearsing with Ernest. He's with her every step of the way. Anastasia bids farewell to Orpheus in the way she conceived: she is the one who decides to leave. She dances, joining the group of "damned souls". Suddenly, Hades STABS her theatrically. A stain of red blood spreads across Anastasia's costume as she performs her agony. She moves from person to person, the various masks of Ernest Dupré's face bending over her in turn.

Tossed about by the "damned souls", Anastasia dances her death when suddenly, she sees a FLASH of light among the dancers' costumes... It's a blade glinting in the hands of one of the dancers. She recognizes the dagger from *Romeo and Juliet* (first seen in the costume room with Georgina). She looks up and sees a look she recognizes behind the dancer's mask. It's James! Too late... He's just stabbed her without anyone noticing. It happened too fast. She SCREAMS!

Everyone thinks she's dancing her part. In the fog that begins to roll in, Anastasia can make out James's silhouette, hidden by his mask and costume, disappearing into the half-light. Only Ernest realizes what just happened. He rushes over to her.

ERNEST

Anastasia!

Her face a mask of pain, she tries to open her eyes. She attempts a smile, but it dies on her lips as she passes from one dancer's hands to another.

ERNEST

Stop dancing!

ANASTASIA

(in a murmur)

I'm going to set you free.

ERNEST

No! Anastasia, I beg you. No! Stop!

Anastasia continues her dance. Powerless, Ernest tries to communicate with the living.

ERNEST
(to the dancers)
Stop it! She's dying! Let go of her!

No one sees or hears Ernest. The Phantom's face contorts in pain. His anger triggers monstrous, deafening RUMBLINGS and waves that spread across the lake. Lantern bulbs EXPLODE. The dancers are thrown off balance, but continue with the choreography.

Amid the chaos of the water and the fog, Anastasia gathers all her strength to finish her dance. She's in pain. She's dying. The "damned souls" carry her to the railing overlooking the artificial lake. Anastasia smiles for Ernest.

ANASTASIA
(to Ernest)
I'll go with you.

ERNEST
Nooooo!

She manages to lean against the railing, which opens. Anastasia falls into the lake.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/MAIN STAGE - NIGHT

In the main hall, the spectators are admiring the realism of Anastasia's performance. The giant screen shows Anastasia's fall.

She disappears into the dark water. Blood spreads in the lake water. The MUSIC reaches its final climax... Her body doesn't come back up... The audience suddenly seems confused.

Martini and his colleague exchange worried glances. Then Martini leaps to his feet and exits the box.



INT. OPERA HOUSE/UNDERWATER LAKE - NIGHT

Underwater, Anastasia sinks, a stream of blood flowing from her chest, a few bubbles from her mouth. She's drowning. The lake becomes immense and dark. Soft, romantic music washes over her, the music Ernest played when they first met. She sees Ernest swimming towards her. She talks to him underwater, as if in a dream.

ANASTASIA

I'm happy...

He takes her in his arms. She no longer passes through him. Their bodies are pressed together. Slowly, they sink.

INT. OPERA HOUSE/HALLWAYS - NIGHT

Martini runs backstage and comes across James, out of breath and acting like he's panicking.

JAMES

Something's not right. She should
have come up a long time ago.

Martini follows James into the basement.

JAMES

She may have tried to commit suicide...
like the ballerina in the first
performance...

Martini glares at him.

MARTINI
I shouldn't have listened to you!
This opera should never have been
performed!

INT. OPERA HOUSE/UNDERWATER LAKE - NIGHT

Anastasia and Ernest are floating in the middle of the vast lake.

He kisses her, and she kisses him back. The moment lasts. Then Ernest puffs out his cheeks and breathes air into her. It's his last breath... He pulls away from her.

ERNEST
My darling... You must live.

He disappears into the deep.

ANASTASIA
Ernest! ERNEST! No!

Powerless, she watches as he disappears.



INT. OPERA HOUSE/BETWEEN FLOORS - NIGHT

James and Martini race down the stairs. They emerge in front of the lake, where the dancers are gathered, looking worried.

A body is rising to the surface. Everyone freezes. It's the

dancer who has dived in to look for Anastasia, he's catching his breath and signals that he hasn't found her. Shock. The moment lingers... when suddenly a body emerges from the water further away.

Anastasia's lifeless body floats to the surface. Several dancers jump into the water to save her.

Anastasia opens her eyes, COUGHING and expelling blood. Then her gaze lands on James's face. Martini sees her fright and turns to James. Time stops. Martini notices, in James's hair, a red thread from the mask of the Damned. The feverish glint in James's eyes betrays him.

ESTABLISHING SHOT. JOURNALISTS: TV INSTAGRAM LIVE, TIKTOK, ETC.

A series of JOURNALISTS' faces mixed with images of Anastasia on a stretcher being loaded into an ambulance -- and James being handcuffed.

JOURNALISTS/INFLUENCERS VOICES

James Figueras, the inflammatory choreographer, would do anything to create buzz and revive his career... James Figueras orchestrated the chandelier's fall, hoping to create a sensation by recreating the Phantom of the Opera... James Figueras's macabre staging went awry... Dancer Georgina d'Angelo had uncovered the choreographer's role in the chandelier accident... Georgina d'Angelo would still be alive if she hadn't tried to blackmail him into giving her the role... James Figueras claims they had an argument and that the dancer fell and broke her neck. Panic-stricken, he made the accident look like a suicide... Manipulator, megalomaniac, murderer... Who is James Figueras really?... The excesses of our scandal-obsessed society...

Martini and TWO POLICEMAN escort James to a police car. Before he gets into the car, James takes one last look at the Garnier opera house. We sense that he's losing the thing he cherished. Curtain!

INT. OPERA HOUSE/MAIN STAGE - NIGHT

A few months later, at the opera house. The curtain opens on a

set depicting Eden at sunrise.

Anastasia, in her Eurydice costume, appears, rising from the earth, reborn from the Underworld. Her costume has been transformed into a new, sparkling one. She begins a masterful performance of the opera's finale. She expresses her return to life, to the light. She is liberated. Orpheus lets her go. She disappears into the sunlight and collapses behind the curtain, breathless and sweaty. We hear the ORCHESTRA's final chord. THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE follows.

Backstage, Orpheus and the other dancers, including Marco, come to lift Anastasia up and congratulate her. She smiles. She returns to the front of the stage, to the spotlight, for a standing ovation from a packed house. It's a TRIUMPH!

In the audience, Anastasia's father weeps with joy. There's something less naive in her eyes; she's no longer the young girl she was at the beginning. Over the APPLAUSE, she hears a TUNE wafting through the air: it's the melody Ernest was playing when she first met him in the rehearsal studio.

With an enigmatic smile, she looks up towards the Phantom's box.

BLACK