

Madame Laveau

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. NEW ORLEANS MANSION - NIGHT

Live oaks loom over the mansion's gas-lit porch. Mardi Gras beads hang from the branches.

SUPER: New Orleans

INT. NEW ORLEANS MANSION LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Money lives here. And hires a regular maid.

PARIS (20), a biracial beauty, sits cross-legged on the floor in a black sequin dress. COLLIN (23), an athletic prep, sits behind her, pulls bobby pins from her up-do.

COLLIN
It's not coming down.

PARIS
It will.

COLLIN
I'm almost done.

PARIS
It'll fall.

Collin smirks, doubtful, and continues.

He pulls one long pin free and her hair cascades across her shoulders. Collin smiles.

COLLIN
Damn, you're beautiful.

She turns back with a devilish grin.

PARIS
Beautiful?

COLLIN
Bewitching.

Paris smile falls and she leaves the room.

PARIS
Don't say that.

He frowns, bites at his fingernails.

Dishes clink in another room.

PARIS (OS)
I'm gonna eat something, okay?

Collin looks in her direction.

COLLIN
Paris, why are we here?

She appears in the doorway with a hopeful expression and a half-eaten slice of bread.

PARIS
We can go out again if you want.

COLLIN
You live in the Quarter.

PARIS
(tentative)
Yes...

COLLIN
The bars that we go to are in the
Quarter.

Paris stares a blank look.

COLLIN
I want to see your place.

PARIS
I live with my family.

He looks at her pointedly.

PARIS
You're not meeting them.

COLLIN
Well not right now, but -

PARIS
Not ever.

Collin stands and walks towards her, toys with a strand of her hair.

PARIS
It's not gonna happen.

He grins.

EXT. FRENCH QUARTER STREETS - DAY

The streets are all but empty, the sky overcast.

Paris glowers beside Collin as they walk along.

A POLICEMAN (25), burly but handsome, questions a DEALER across the street. They look up, see Paris and avert their eyes.

The Policeman catches her gaze and scrambles off. The dealer nods in her direction and sneaks down an alley.

Paris sighs and leads Collin past a corner store.

They turn the corner and she spins on him.

PARIS

Just promise me something.

(off his look)

Don't freak out, okay? I mean,
don't run away.

He chuckles.

COLLIN

It's never that bad.

He kisses her forehead and walks on as Paris looks after him.

PARIS

(mumbling)

You didn't promise.

INT. NEW ORLEANS TOWNHOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A musty room with foil across the windows. Trinkets sit on every surface and beads TINKLE in the breeze from a fan.

RUSTY (50), a grimy white man, sits in a crooked recliner and watches TV.

The front door CREAKS open and Paris enters, followed by Collin.

PARIS

(awkward)

Hey, Dad. This is Collin.

Rusty looks up and takes note of Collin's appearance. He clicks the TV remote and the screen goes blank.

RUSTY
Know what you're buying into, kid?

PARIS
Dad, stop.

RUSTY
'Cause I didn't.

COLLIN
(to Paris)
It's okay.

RUSTY
Damn right it is. What is it they
say? Someday, son, this'll all be
yours.

Rusty sweeps his arm back towards the kitchen and knocks
over an empty bourbon bottle and an overflowing ash tray.

PARIS
(to Collin)
Come on.

She leads him into...

INT. NEW ORLEANS TOWNHOME - BEDROOM - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Paris' bedroom is a contrast to the rest of the place -
luxurious pillows, black accents on hot pink walls.

She looks back at Collin's wide eyes and shrugs.

PARIS
I overcompensate.

Collin chuckles and settles into the bed.

COLLIN
Nice.

He fluffs a cushion and tests it.

COLLIN
I don't know what you were so
worried about - your dad's
harmless.

PARIS
It's not that. I just -

THOMAS (15), Paris' wiry brother, steps into the room.

THOMAS
What's that?

PARIS
Who, Thomas. Collin.

Thomas sizes him up.

THOMAS
Not good enough.

COLLIN
Whatever you say, kid.

THOMAS
(to Paris)
He doesn't know, does he?

PARIS
I'm getting to it.

He grins.

THOMAS
She's waiting for you.

Thomas leaves and Paris kicks the door closed behind him.

Collin sits upright, attentive.

Paris hesitates.

PARIS
Do you believe in God?

He blinks, caught off guard.

COLLIN
I...I don't know.

She grimaces.

COLLIN
Babe, what's this about?

Paris reaches for his hand and leads him out of the room.

INT. NEW ORLEANS TOWNHOME - HALLWAY - DAY

Paris and Collin stand in the darkness at the end of the narrow corridor at a closed door.

Collin's glance darts around. They whisper:

PARIS

You have to decide now what you believe and hold on to it tight.

COLLIN

We can do this another time.

She sighs, purses her lips.

PARIS

Please don't leave me.

COLLIN

Why would I -

The door flies open and a cackle erupts around them.

PARIS

Never mind.

She tugs him into...

INT. NEW ORLEANS TOWNHOME - CHAMBER - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Collins eyes widen as he enters.

Black curtains drape across the walls and window. Incense burns in a dozen holders and gris gris bags hang everywhere.

MADAME LAVEAU (50), a frail Voodoo queen, lies on a chaise, bedecked in scarves and charms. She raises her arms towards them.

MADAME LAVEAU

Welcome to the house of Laveau.

Thomas speaks from his spot in the corner.

THOMAS

What's left of it.

MADAME LAVEAU

You hush! We got all we need right here.

She pats a gris gris bag on her chest.

MADAME LAVEAU
 (to Collin)
 You look like you seen a ghost.
 Probably have, too.

She laughs, sputters to a hoarse cough.

PARIS
 Collin, this is...my mom.

Collin turns to her in a daze.

COLLIN
 Laveau?

PARIS
 I told you this was a bad idea.

COLLIN
 You're a Laveau?

THOMAS
 Now he gets it.

MADAME LAVEAU
 Nah, nah. Not yet he don't.

PARIS
 Shut up, Mom!

Collin steps back.

COLLIN
 Don't tell her that!

PARIS
 So you do believe.

MADAME LAVEAU
 Well yeah, he believes. Look at
 him. His face about the color of a
 cotton ball.

COLLIN
 (to Paris)
 What's going on?

She grabs at his arm as if to pull him from the room.

PARIS
 I'll explain later. Let's just go.

He yanks his arm free.

COLLIN
No, you tell me now!

MADAME LAVEAU
(to Thomas)
Here it comes.

Paris hesitates, steels herself.

PARIS
My mother is dying. And I'm...

Collin waits. Paris' eyes are pleading.

Realization lights his eyes and he shakes his head. A tear escapes his eye.

COLLIN
I'm out.

Collin barges from the room. Paris jumps when the front door SLAMS.

MADAME LAVEAU
Reminds me of James, but this one lasted longer. In the end you get Rusty. Haha, you get it?

Paris scowls back at her mother, fights back her tears.

PARIS
You leave him alone.

Her mother winks and Paris storms from the room.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS TOWNHOME - DAY

The Policeman pulls his cruiser up to the curb, eyes the red stucco, the black door. Hesitates.

He goes to the door and knocks softly, knocks again a little louder.

Rusty opens the door wearing nothing but once-white briefs, stares at the officer.

POLICEMAN
I need to see Paris La... Is Paris here?

Rusty shoves off the doorframe, saunters deeper into the house as:

RUSTY
Paris! Door!

The Policeman gazes into the house, notices clusters of tied hairs hanging from the ceiling.

He leans in for a closer look, startles at a voice behind him--

PARIS
Sorry about him. He likes to force his self-esteem issues on the rest of us.

POLICEMAN
No, that's...that's all right. I need to ask you some questions...if that's okay?

Paris tilts her head.

The Policeman wipes sweat from his forehead, fans himself.

POLICEMAN
Man, it's hotter than a witch's -

Paris smirks.

POLICEMAN
I'm sorry. I mean, I didn't -

PARIS
Can I help you?

He takes a deep breath and calms himself.

POLICEMAN
Do you know a Mr Collin Guidry?

PARIS
Yes, sir.

POLICEMAN
When was the last time you saw him?

PARIS
Why? Is he okay?

POLICEMAN
I'm sorry, ma'am, can you answer the question? ... Please?

Paris steps forward and he winces. Her voice comes as a threat.

PARIS

You don't have to be scared of me.

He nods feverishly.

POLICEMAN

Yes, ma'am.

She waits.

POLICEMAN

Something's wrong with Collin, but the doctors don't know what it is. And his momma, she thinks he's... possessed.

A heavy moment.

PARIS

And I'm the logical explanation.

POLICEMAN

I'm sorry, ma'am. Please believe that. I'm just doing my job here.

PARIS

I believe you.

He sighs relief.

PARIS

But that doesn't mean I like the implication.

POLICEMAN

Please don't hurt my family.

Paris rolls her eyes and walks away.

PARIS

Go home, Johnny.

JOHNNY

Yes, ma'am.

He makes to leave, but first calls out.

JOHNNY

I know you can save that boy.

Paris turns back, watches him scuttle into his car and drive off.

TITLE SUPER: MADAME LAVEAU