

INT. DECAYING CHAMBER - NIGHT

The boarded up doorway allows slithers of light rays to struggle through. Resting on a pristine grand piano, a submission form to Julliard.

SANDY YOUNG, 18, runs her agile fingers across the piano keys, making beautiful music.

Tears drip from her bloodshot eyes onto her nude breasts and some splat on the keys.

An ominous DARK FIGURE with a high collar towers behind her, holding a recording device in one hand and a whip drooping in the other. A drop of blood falls from the end of the whip.

WHIP! Sandy stops playing and jerks away in pain from the whip lashing at her exposed back.

Dark Figure raises the whip again.

DARK FIGURE

When the music hits you, you'll
feel no more pain.

Sandy plays more passionately with each lash. Lethal slashes grow deep and dense as the whip lands on her young back. Dazzling. Death-dealing.

The music grows faint. Sandy flops forward and hits her head onto the keys. A cluster of a discord brings the music lesson to an abrupt end.

Dark Figure presses stop on the recording device and overlooks Sandy splayed over the piano. Lifeless.

Dark Figure's mobile vibrates, receiving a text notification.

INSERT - MOBILE SCREEN, which reads: "BANK OF AMERICA (BoA):
MONEY IN +\$5000.00"

EXT. BEAUFORT, STREET - DAY

Trees shed their leaves on lonely benches. Pigeons peck the adjacent sidewalks.

EarPods in his ears and arms stretched out to the side, CASEY BURTON, 18, a teen with autism, feels the sun on his face while pedalling his bicycle towards a crossing. Wildly and arms banging, he plays an air-piano.

There's a quote printed on his shirt, it reads, 'KEEP CALM AND HUG AN ASPIE'

On the far end, an old and rusty vehicle approaches, carelessly drifts onto the sidewalk then back to the road.

Casey has no care in the world, takes in the breeze.

Vehicle reaches the crossing, slows down and speeds up again when...

Casey swooshes through the intersection.

The vehicle swerves, coming at Casey. HONK!

Casey's eyes snap open, grabs the handlebars and hops the back wheel onto the hood of the vehicle. With a twist of the handle bars, Casey steers the bicycle over the windscreen, top and off the trunk... free as a bird and on his way.

The vehicle grinds to a halt, HONK! HONK!

MONTAGE - CASEY OUT ON A MUSIC TEACHER-HUNT

-- EXT. MANSION, PORCH - DAY -- Through an ajar front door, Casey stares at a GIRL playing piano. An old MAN frowns, shakes his head at Casey and pushes him back, slams the door shut. A notice on the door reads, 'Piano Lessons'

-- INT. BEAUFORT MUSIC COLLEGE, CLASSROOM - DAY -- Casey holds a piece of paper, trots through the entrance. Music STUDENTS sit at their desks - no teacher. Casey spots a news clipping pinned to the noticeboard, it reads, 'Autism narcotics - a deadly consequence.' The students laugh and point at him. Casey runs away...

-- EXT. BEAUFORT PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - DAY -- Across the street, Casey stands at his bicycle, snacks on a sandwich and soda. Chewing, he glares at the entrance. He pulls a cell phone from his pocket, hands it to a TEENAGER in exchange for cash. An OFFICER saunters closer, waves at Casey. Refusing to make eye contact, Casey tosses his sandwich, jumps onto his bicycle and speeds off.

-- INT. PIANO TEACHING STUDIO - DAY -- Wandering, Casey flips through some sheet music. Wanders some more, searches a few drawers. Pausing and flicking his fingers, Casey looks over his shoulder and reaches down, retrieves a sachet with white powder. He hides it in his pocket, sneaks out.

-- INT. BEAUFORT THEATER, ORCHESTRA PIT - DAY -- Casey stands in the dark backstage area, makes way as the babbling MUSICIANS exit with their instruments. They don't even see him. Courting a WOMAN, the CONDUCTOR walks by. Casey steps out of the dark, tugs on Conductor's coat sleeve to talk with him. Conductor jerks away. Casey follows him and tugs again but Conductor shakes his head, pushes Casey back.

Alone, Casey retrieves the sachet of white powder, plays with it. Scoops his pinkie-finger into it, snorts it up.

INT. CASEY'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Biting his fingernails, Casey leans into his elbow at the kitchen table and sighs. He stares at a submission form to Julliard while tapping his finger at a large empty jug.

The label on the jug reads, 'Mila's Julliard Fund'

Perfectly stacked and grouped on the table are coins and dollar bills.

Another heavy sigh, Casey claws at the money and stuffs it back into the jug. Screws back the lid, kisses his thumb and slowly wipes it over the label.

Casey carefully places it back on top of the cupboard.

INT. CHINESE ELECTRONIC STORE, COUNTER - NIGHT

Near the exit, endless rows of crowded digital gadgets tower over a caution cone for a wet area. CUSTOMERS with baskets line up to pay and block the narrow aisles.

Casey, sways his head to the beat of the EarPods pounding music into his ears. Hawk-eyeing around.

He eyes a cell phone bulging from the PERSON's pocket standing in front of him. Nervously flicks his fingers.

With a swift flick of his wrist, the bulging cell phone is his. Everybody unaware.

He gets to the front and places a phone charger onto the counter, followed by cash.

Casey eyes the perfect display of electronic accessories in front of the counter, then hawks the aisle.

CASHIER (O.S.)
You're holding up the line!

Casey plucks at an EarPod. He stretches his neck forward at the CASHIER, 45, a fat Asian, stain-collector with yellow teeth and a big wart on his lip behind the check out counter.

CASEY
You're holding up the line.

Cashier tilts his head - WTF?

Casey cannot keep his eyes off the wart, mesmerised. He flicks his fingers, showing the EarPod.

CASEY (CONT'D)
Ed Sheehan.

He slips something from the display into his pocket.

CASEY (CONT'D)
Awesome composer. Listen. And teacher too.

The cashier grunts at Casey, and pushes his hand holding the EarPod back against his chest.

CASEY (CONT'D)
He could be Mila's ticket to Juilliard. If only he'll come to Beaufort. Guess again. He is just so good, he makes people's careers.

CASHIER
Makes? He sounds weird. Yet again, your sister obsesses over exotic boys. Can't say no to them.

Casey stares at Cashier's wart, making him uncomfortable. He then sneaks another product from the shelf in front of the counter into his pocket. Another one. Cashier unaware.

CASEY
Yeah. It's a thing.

CASHIER
Your sister, she still cracks that whip? Man, she can crack my whip anytime. You know what I mean?

Casey glares at Cashier's wart.

CASEY
Don't touch it or it'll spread.

Cashier becomes hot under the collar.

Casey turns towards the entrance.

CASEY (CONT'D)
You definitely don't want to look like bubble wrap. Crack your whip my ass. I'll pop you like a --

Out of nowhere, Cashier pulls at Casey's backpack.

Casey jerks back but Cashier's brute strength rips it open, spills many electronic accessories onto the floor.

Their eyes meet. Cashier clenches his teeth and grunts.

Casey jolts to the exit.

CASHIER

Stop him!

A SECURITY GUARD takes a football stance, pounces at Casey but slips on the wet area, tackles a DVD rack instead.

Casey side-steps, slipping and sliding through the aisles and out the back. Phew, that was close.

EXT. BEAUFORT, SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Casey exits the store weaving through the tree-lined sidewalk and bumps into PEDESTRIANS strolling along.

His hands move swiftly in and out their pockets. Cheeky. One, two, three mobile devices snapped from their pockets.

With a smile that reaches his ears, Casey plugs in his EarPods and thumbs through the selection of tracks on his iPod. Juggles the ones he pick-pocketed in his hand.

He trips on the grate, bumps into a TALL GUY which knocks the hot goods to the ground. It slips through the grate and disappears into the underground.

CASEY

Well done! Gravity check much?

Casey falls to his knees. Pressing his eyes against the street, he peeps through the gaps.

CASEY (CONT'D)

You just lost me my cash!

TALL GUY

Just an accident, asshole. Next time watch where you're going.

Tall Guy throws his hands in the air. He doesn't see MILA BURTON, 18, a gorgeous blue eyed girl behind him, and knocks her to the ground.

Casey notices Mila on the ground and Tall Guy over her. Within a split second Casey thrusts him to the curb.

MILA

I'm okay.

Mila grabs Casey's hand, pulls herself to her feet.

Casey's gaze locks on Tall Guy who's legging it.

Mila holds out a wallet. Smirks.

MILA (CONT'D)

I told you I can help.

Casey spots an athletically built DUDE, 20's, approaching, earphones in his ears. Dude is unrecognizable under the funky face paint pattern.

Next to him, a young FEMALE carrying a violin case. Her face painted like Dude's.

Dude types on his mobile.

INSERT - MOBILE SCREEN, which reads: "LESSON AT 10AM?"

BACK TO SCENE

Dude retrieves an iPod from his pocket, swiping his fingers across the display.

Casey glides forward, targeted at the iPod in Dude's hand.

Seizing the moment, Casey distracts him with a sudden bump. His swift hands snatch the iPod which plucks the earphones from Dude's ears.

DUDE

Hey! You shit! Wait!

Casey dogs it.

Dude leaves Female behind, and chases Casey down the street. He is faster, catches up.

Mila and Female lock eyes. Mila scampers away.

EXT. BEAUFORT MUSIC STORE, PARKING LOT

Casey cuts through the parked cars.

Dude on the verge of plunging onto him, Casey pushes over a trolley filled with hobo junk. Dude trips through it, face plants onto the curb.

INT. BEAUFORT MUSIC STORE, AISLES - NIGHT

Casey paces up and down. Heavy breathing. He hides behind the racks of instruments, keeping his eyes on the street outside and flicks his fingers.

In short, jerky movements, he tip-toes to the piano and snakes his arm under the lid to retrieve a black velvet pouch. It holds other gadgets. Casey adds the new iPod to the collection.

A sudden movement catches Casey's eye.

He hides the pouch again.

Outside, Dude presses his face against the window. Casey can see his breath and the remains of make up residue against the glass.

Dude bashes violently at the front of the locked store. Glass shatters, setting off the alarm. He rushes into the store.

Casey makes a run for it, but a steady grip at his collar pulls him over the counter, brochures and papers flying.

They both land on the floor with a loud thud. The cash register dunks onto Casey's shin.

CASEY

Aah! Ah!

Like lightning, Dude straddles Casey and begins to land punches. Casey covers his face.

Police SIRENS grow louder. Tires screeching outside, car doors slamming.

Dude grabs papers lying close, shoves them down Casey's throat, choking him. Hissing.

Casey's lips turn blue, his eyes roll back into his head.

All of a sudden out of the dark, LARKIN, 25, a spicy handsome guy tackles Dude to the ground.

Casey rolls out of the way, claws at his own face. He hooks the paper from his throat with his finger. Choking up, he catches his breath.

Larkin and Dude wrestle and an iPod pops from his pocket.

Casey spots it, snatches the iPod.

The police sirens flicker blue-red onto the walls.

Larkin takes a kick in the gut.

Dude runs off with the police in pursuit.

Pretending, Casey curls up in a fetus position, holds his shin then reaches for the counter top.

Larkin grabs Casey's hand, pulls him to his feet. Long hair hides half of his face.

LARKIN
What a hellion, huh?

CASEY
Uhm... Uh.

LARKIN
I'm Larkin.

Casey nods. He focuses on a brochure lying on the counter.

INSERT - BROCHURE, which reads: "BEAUFORT'S NEW UNORTHODOX MUSIC TEACHER"

BACK TO SCENE

LARKIN (CONT'D)
Aren't you gonna tell me your name?

Casey takes a brochure, limps out.

LARKIN (CONT'D)
Don't mention it!

A flash light blinds them when a large silhouette of a uniform meets them at the entrance.

Casey squints, blocks the light blinding him.

EXT. BEAUFORT, RIVER - NIGHT

Thousands of city lights reflect off the brook.

A Dark Figure kneels on the bank and stares out over the water. He pushes Sandy's bloodied body into the water, but it gets stuck on a wet, decomposing carcass of a dog. He wangles it loose.

Sandy's corpse drifts deeper into the night.

EXT. CASEY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A typical Gothic revival home with a steeply pitched roof and windows with arched panels. The porch looks out over the rural neighbourhood.

INT. CASEY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Casey sneaks through the front door. He throws out a 'thumbs-up' before quietly shutting the door on the flashing red and blue lights from the police vehicles outside.

Casey leans his back against the door, exhales and unfolds a piece of paper. The heading in big bold letters, reads:

"SUBPOENA IN A CIVIL CASE"

Casey slaps the document closed, hides it in his pocket. Feels at his bruised eye and licks the gash on his lip.

MILA (O.S.)
Casey! Kitchen... Now!

Casey sighs, drags his feet past the ragged books on the shelf to the

KITCHEN

Mila paces around like a distressed tiger in a cage. She sees Casey's face for the first time and slams a document onto the table, it reads, 'Juilliard bursary application.'

MILA (CONT'D)
What the fuck, Casey. Again?
Stealing is not a respectable
career.

CASEY
Oh? And for you it is?

MILA
We live together and --

CASEY
-- Exactly! Who made you kingpin
over me?

MILA
When will you stop blaming yourself
for what happened to Eddy?

CASEY

Well, you never should've dated
that asshole in the first place.

MILA

Are you joking?

CASEY

Just focus on your music.

Casey slides a chair closer, places himself at the far end of the kitchen table, staring at Mila over the pots and pans and one tissue box on the edge.

MILA

Like you can tell the difference
between an F sharp and an F art.

CASEY

I want you to succeed! Okay! You
take care of us. I want to return
the favor.

Casey swipes the pots and silverware from the counter top.

Mila jumps in, restrains Casey from his outburst. They roll around, wrestling.

She pins him to the floor between the pots and utensils.

MILA

Don't, please! Stop!

With Mila lying on top of him, Casey fights back hard.

CASEY

I hate you!

With a high pitch squeal, Casey plunges his teeth into Mila's shoulder. Locking his jaws together.

MILA

Aah! Aah!

Mila rolls off Casey. Face blood red, she brushes the loose strands of hair from her face.

Casey crawls away, panting, drooling, flicking his fingers. Eyes locked on the floor.

MILA (CONT'D)

You want to help?

CASEY

Yeah!

MILA

CASEY (CONT'D)

You really want to help? Yes. I really want to...

Mila snatches the submission form from the table. Tears it into pieces. Junks it in the trash.

MILA (CONT'D)

I'm not going to end up like dad.
Look where it got him. Six feet
under in a fucking casket. That's
where you got him.

Mila's face drops.

Casey quiet.

Mila's eyes well up. She feels over her bite wound. She sits down against the cupboard with her head in her hands.

MILA (CONT'D)

Dad was ten times the musician I
am. I'm simply not good enough.

Casey burns to Mila.

MILA (CONT'D)

The dream's too big. It's too big
of a commitment.

Casey picks up the pots and pans, packs them away.

CASEY

So, the moment you feel the chill
wind, you flake?

Mila sniffs back her tears.

Casey sits down next to her, hands Mila the tissue box.

CASEY (CONT'D)

Dad believed in the dream. He
always believed in you.

Mila wipes her face, stares at Casey.

CASEY (CONT'D)

I get it. You think I'll fuck it up
for you.

MILA

Casey --

CASEY

-- It's true. Accidents and death
have surrounded me my whole life.
First Mom and Dad, and then Eddy.

Mila cups Casey's face in her palms. Smiles gently.

MILA

Sometimes dreams need to stay
exactly that... dreams.

CASEY

And sometimes they need a little
adventure to find their breath.