

Moments:
An illustration of music's effect to elicit emotion in film
Honors Creative Thesis Project

By
J'darius Cameron

A thesis presented to the Honors College of Middle Tennessee State
University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation
from the University Honors College.

Spring 2020

Moments:

An illustration of music's effect to elicit emotion in film

Honors Creative Thesis Project

By J'darius Cameron

APPROVED:

Matt Foglia

Department of Recording Industry

John Merchant

Chair's Department of Recording Industry

Dr. John R. Vile, Dean

University Honors College

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	<i>iv</i>
Background	1
Project Goal	5
Early Development and Pre-Production	6
Moments Tagline	8
Production	9
Post-Production	11
<i>Video Editing</i>	11
<i>Sound Design/Music Editing</i>	12
Conclusion	16
Moments (Script)	19
<i>Act I</i>	20
<i>Act II</i>	36
<i>Act III</i>	51
Work Cited	64

Abstract

My Honors Creative Thesis is an interdisciplinary project that highlights the role of music in film and its impact of eliciting certain emotions through each scene. To achieve this, I completed a short film to delve deeper into the ways in which music can be used to elicit emotions. The written portion of the project provides a background on the history of film music, its evolution over time, and details my process through the completion of the film. The creative aspect of the thesis is comprised of two identical sequences that are edited with two differing soundtracks to highlight the effect that the music used has on the overall tone, genre, and emotion of the film. The following paper will identify the role that music has in film and deepen the audience's connection with the film.

I. Background

“If [society] step[s] back and think[s] about it, music is one of the most peculiar conventions in movies. No one questions that music should be a part of movies because [they have] grown used to the idea that, in a movie, when two people kiss, [they] should hear music in the background. Or when the platoon attacks the beach, a symphony should provide the inspiration behind their assault. Of course, no one has a soundtrack accompanying their real lives. But in movies [they] not only accept this convention, [they] demand it.” (Liz Schulze 2). The modern-day film has evolved from when a movie was just a moving picture, to the premier form of entertainment it is today. Even though it has come a long way, there is one thing that has remained an essential element in film production and that is the presence of music in film.

Over the years, music has become a staple in the film industry. Through this evolution, composers created music that has gone on to become a part of some of the most iconic soundtracks for popular films for almost a century. Anyone who has seen the movie *Jaws* during its premiere in 1975 can attest to the fact that the movie would not have been the same without the infamous theme music of that terrifying beast. The same could be said of Darth Vader’s “Imperial March” from *Star Wars*. Both of these scores became the signature sounds of their respective movie franchises. These songs allowed the film to be more memorable in the long-run, however, in the beginning, the purpose was to instill fear in and establish the power of the characters to the audience. Although John Williams’ scores – who wrote both of the above - were in a league of their own, there are other compositions that accentuate different themes across different genres. The

incorporation of music in film allows the audience to create an emotional tether to certain films due to the emotional response elicited by certain scenes and their accompanying musical score. When creating this emotional response, film composers will use a variety of musical styles to best capture the theme of a specific place, character or time in the plot. The soundtrack of a movie is so powerful that it can even transform the emotion of a horror movie into that of an outrageously funny comedy.

In order for the people to know how big of part music plays in the film industry, they would have to know how it all began. The director's biggest fear when it came to movie production would be the fear of silence on screen because, at the time, the silence added an unwanted element to the movie in the form of both being both boring and unprofessional (Russell). Due to this, they decided that the best way to solve their problem would be to add some sort of sound to the movie, and this need for sound led to the birth of film music. "Music in the film was first used simply as an accompaniment to the action or to enhance mood, as recalled in old silent comedies and melodramas. Music tried to make up for the absence of speech. Music filled the gaps of silence, breathed life into the infant medium of film." (Stuart Fischhoff 5).

At the beginning of the age of the movies, (before the 1930s) when movies were silent, it was thought that by adding music the sound could both add a sense of depth to the characters, storyline on the screen, and drown out the cacophony produced by film projector motors of the time. During this period, there was not any actual film music. However, the filmmakers would include with the film, a book of music or suggestion that an accompanist - whether it was a full orchestra or a single pianist - could play along with

certain scenes in the film to add depth. Therefore, it is easy to say that during this era of both film and film-music the movie-goers would rarely, if ever, see the same movie the same way. In the 1930s, movies began to have what is known as a “score,” the music written specifically for a piece of film. By using a score, movies were then able to create more specific and personalized pieces of music that best correlated with its intended film, potentially allowing for an overall greater impact of the music. The next evolution of film music would be the introduction of jazz music in the 1950s. Jazz music was the equivalent to this day’s rap; it was a contemporary style of music with controversial themes. Also, since jazz music uses a much smaller ensemble than a symphony or an orchestra, the orchestration costs were less expensive, so producers were then able to reallocate finances to different departments. This same idea is also what brought about the introduction of rock music into the film industry world in the 1960s.

Over the next thirty years, there was not any major change to film music, only people mastering what has already been established. However, in the late 80s and early 90s, film music got its latest upgrade through the use of the synthesizer. In using the synthesizer, it is theoretically possible to cut down on orchestration costs even more, to only a single person working a synthesizer that can produce the sound of many different instruments. Due to this evolution in film music, it is now able to capture the essence of a specific element in a movie and convey it to the audience. Harper Graeme described the effects of music best when he said that on one hand, “...sound works on [the audience] directly, physiologically (breathing noises in a film can directly affect [their] own respiration). On the other hand, the sound has an influence on perception: through the

phenomenon of added value, it interprets the meaning of the image, and make [them] see in the image what [they] would not otherwise see, or would see differently.” (Harper, Graeme 556).

The best films use music as only a hidden persuader guiding the emotions of the audience without them knowing it. This is what makes a good film a great film and a memorable one. It is not always about the song itself because, it is pretty much a given that no one in the audience is going to recognize or even remember every song that was played during the film, although it is not about what they know or saw or even heard. In the end, it is all about how it made them feel. Some would argue that *Jaws* without the iconic theme would not have been as big of a hit without the theme and Darth Vader would just have been that guy dressed in all black walking down the corridor. Film music is only an accentuation of the theme brought out in the film. Although powerful in its own right, it is used as a hidden persuader to help elicit an emotional response. If *Titanic*, *Halloween*, or any James Bond movie were produced without music, it would not be considered a romance or action film. However, it would not have the same effect on the audience and would possibly not leave them as emotionally captivated by the scenes. This proves how the need for the incorporation of music in film allows the audience to create an emotional tether to certain films due to the emotional response gathered by certain scenes and their accompanying songs in the film. This is why, through the four different musical aspects – pattern, tempo/rhythm, pitch, and melody – and their utilization, music has remained a staple in the filmmaking industry and will continue for many years to come.

II. Project Goal

In order to best convey the importance of music in film and how it's used in film to convey emotion, I planned to create a short film/extended scene lasting approximately 3-5 mins that will utilize different musical elements to convey different emotions. I would take the same footage and edit the film using two different musical styles making a total of three complete films. To accomplish this, I edited the film to fit into two of the three main film genres of action, romance, and horror. For each edit of the film, I compiled together a soundtrack that I felt best captured the essence of the genre, making it easy for the audience to be able to associate it and categorize it under that genre through the emotions that are stimulated by the music. By using the same footage and simply altering the musical element of the film as the independent variable, I would be able to highlight the role of music in film and capture its impact on the dependent variable of how it is used to guide the emotional response of an audience in a piece of media. With my major being in marketing, it is clear that I have ventured into a field that I don't have the strongest background in however, I wanted to make the most of this opportunity to expand my academic horizons. I wanted to familiarize myself with specific techniques in both music production and filming techniques. During this time, I found myself relying on my friends - who are on track in both the audio production major and the video and film production major – to fill in the gaps of my knowledge while going through the process of completing this project. I would also be incorporating sections of my own major by utilizing marketing research methods to assess the impact of music in the film.

III. Early Development and Pre-production

Before I could begin assessing the effects of music in film, I had to create a film. The film began just as an idea then slowly, over time, evolved into so much more. My original intention was to create a short film lasting roughly three to five minutes that I could then re-edit the audio of the footage to fit three different genres of films based on the variation of the music used between each separate film. In order to move forward, I had to complete the script.

When thinking about this story, I wanted to encompass a cohesive story that was not only engaging to the audience and was able to keep them entertained, but also effectively utilize and showcase the music that will be highlighted throughout the film to assess its impact. This ultimately resulted in a storyline that was much more complex than originally intended. My three short films ranging about three to five-minutes began to look to be about 50 or so minutes turning that short film into a feature-length project. As I wanted to keep the audience entertained, I developed a storyline that was able to traverse each of the three aforementioned genres in a singular film. In the creation of this new project, I took some liberties in adding additional scenes to flow with each of the “alternate endings” throughout the film. These additional elements serve to wrap up each of the storylines in the film. These scenes should not have a large impact on the effect of the music used as the plan is to utilize the music throughout each segment to create the illusion that the scene would end as it “should.”

That being said, the endings also had to flow with the rest of the film in a way that made sense to the audience and didn't seem forced. To best accomplish this, I chose a small cast that would fill multiple roles to keep the story consistent and add a sense of mystery to the film. In addition, I also made the decision to not have any of the characters named in the film. The element of mystery will aid in allowing the audience to view each segment of the film as its a portion of a much larger film. Having the smaller cast also aided in decreasing scheduling issues as there are much fewer schedules that needed to be worked around. With the script completed, I was then able to move on to the production.

IV. Moments Tagline

Subject #050920 finds themselves trapped within a simulation without their memory. Their only way out is to follow the story. Could it really be that easy? Join them as mysteries unfold and truths are revealed.

V. Production

Before we could begin shooting two things needed to happen: 1) I needed to select the cast and 2) I needed to find locations to film. In the film, there are four main characters; Doctor/Friend, Assistant, Partner, and Main Character. In order to fill these roles I looked both at the local talent at Middle Tennessee State University as well as in the community in Murfreesboro and my hometown of Chattanooga, TN. With the information spread both in physical copies throughout the campus in the city as well as on social media I was able to receive interest from many different actors in the area. After combing through interest messages and audition submissions, I had the cast for the film. The cast consisted of Taylor Duncan (Assistant), Andrew Harris (Partner), Abigail Stapler (Doctor/Friend), and Bria Rennick (Main Character). These four talented actors became an integral part of the completion of the project and a major resource that I would be remiss if I did not give them the appreciation that they deserve.

With the cast selected, I began scouting for locations. Seeing as how most of the film takes place in an outdoor environment, I needed a location where it seemed as though it was shot in an actual forest without being too removed from civilization making it a difficult journey for the cast to reach. In doing so, I was able to narrow it down to two locations: Cedars of Lebanon in Lebanon, TN and the Stones River National Battlefield in Murfreesboro, TN. Both locations had great potential in their own ways. However, I decided with the Stones River National Battlefield for the location as the walk to reach it was the difference between a 15-minute walk and a 2 ½-hour walk. For my location in the house, I was able to rent an Airbnb for one night for a small fee. Here, I was able to

shoot both of the scenes in the house at night as well as the scene in the house the next morning. The hosts were very accommodating and the Airbnb worked perfectly for the scenes that we were able to create. Lastly, my intention was to shoot the office scene at my local place of business; however, due to the recent COVID-19 outbreak that location was no longer available. As a result, I had to alter some of my scenes to work in a new environment in which I chose a parking garage on campus. With my locations and cast selected, I was now able to begin filming. After working through everyone's availability I was able to create a schedule for suiting that lasted over two days with a day left for reshoots for any additional footage that we would need over the spring break period.

The current Global pandemic resulted in my having a very truncated timeline for production with safety at the forefront of my mind. My goal was to ensure the safety of everyone involved in the Salem while completing the project. To accomplish this, I put my best efforts into minimizing the number of people we have filming; at no time did we have more than four people on set while filming. As more updates were released from the national response team and the university, we did our best to ensure that we were operating within guidelines that are in the best interest of our health and public safety. In doing so, caused production to be postponed as we began social distancing and the cast returned to their homes. With production delayed until further notice, I would have to complete the film with the footage that I had already captured. This would pose more of a challenge than anticipated in the post-production phase. As I did not have the opportunity to conduct the reshoots, some scenes had to be cut altogether as they were missing too much content to properly construct the scene.

VI. Post-Production

A. Video Editing

Already working against the clock, I began to work using Adobe Premiere Pro 2020 on my laptop to upload the footage that was captured. Before uploading the footage, I did my best to separate the footage into files by scenes as it would be much easier to browse in the Adobe Premiere Pro application. With the footage uploaded, I began to pour over hours and hours of footage that we were able to capture during production. I first began with the meeting between the friend and the main protagonist. Starting with the dialogue, I began to cut and slice footage together to make the dialogue and interactions appear natural even though most of the conversations were shot separately. This forced me to pay close attention to the natural rhythm of the conversation ensuring that there are no awkward gaps, major discrepancies in audio quality and that continuity remained throughout each scene. I continued this method with the following scenes making each one flow naturally.

Once each scene was cut to its appropriate length, I went back to the beginning and began color correcting each clip so that the film looked more uniform. This required me to adjust the saturation of the colors in the film, which helps in affecting the temperature of the film in how warm (emphasized red, orange, yellow, etc. saturation) or how cool (emphasized blue, green, purple, etc. saturation) the film should look. It also consisted of altering the exposure how much light that I was able to bring in or block out of the film. Through editing, I was able to create a uniform color grade that had a warmer tone as I emphasized the orange hues and contrast of the colors. I felt it best

complimented the simulation aspect of the plot to further immerse the audience in the simulation. With the film cut and the color grading complete, the film was near completion; however, there remained the important element of music that still needs to be added to the film.

B. Sound Design/Music Editing

The final process of the post-production phase included the focus of my thesis: sound design and editing. Before I could even begin to add music, I had to make sure that my dialog audio and ambient sounds were uniform or individually and cut together any post-production editing process in creating a uniform sound. This meant to make sure there were not any random peaks or troughs in the decibel level that were not consistent with the flow of the conversation including bringing down the decibel level of certain clips while bringing up the decibel levels of others. In more complex cases, the audio file would need to be directly edited in the clip itself through automation adjusting the decibel levels throughout an individual clip aiding in the continuity of the film allowing it to look, feel, and sound more cohesive. In addition, there were times where audio needed to be added to the film to fill dead spaces (clips missing audio) and create ambient sounds. This included adding sounds of birds chirping, gunshots, doors closing, feet crunching on leaves, etc. As small or as short as the sound may seem, it helps to set the atmosphere of the room to increase its natural feel. Instead of only hearing the dialogue, one hears the dialogue along with the other ambient sounds that one would hear in a normal room or by being outside. These are all important elements in sound design as the sound is another aspect of music.

Throughout the production and the writing process, I was constantly listening to music and assembling a wide array of songs that I thought best captured the essence of the scene and aided in emphasizing the emotions that I was hoping to elicit in each scene. I watched the film in its entirety – at the time - and made note of any segments where the music needed to be added to add another complex layer to the film. With my segments identified, I began to add the music. The goal of the first segment is to set the tone in the film so I had to select which song I would use to open the film.

The first set of footage includes a montage of clips in the forest into which the audience has been transported. For the first sequence, I chose this song *Bang Bang* by Nancy Sinatra as it is widely known for its use in the cult classic film *Kill Bill*. It has a simplistic melody and a sultry voice that aids in setting the tone for the film. This song is considered to be slower than a typical song used in an action film, however, I wanted it to match the pace of this specific film. There was a lot that needed to be established in the film before the pace could begin to accelerate. So, having a fast-paced song at the beginning was not the best option as it would be incongruent with the beginning pace in the film. For the second sequence, I chose *Remember Me* by Umi as it is also a slow song with the sultry voice of a woman who talks about wanting to be remembered by a past lover. It is a modern take on a classic love song including a combination of guitars and drums as the instrumentation.

The next major segment consisted of the main protagonist returning home and taking the time to have a self-evaluation and reflect on the current situation and to weigh future decisions. The tones of both segments are the same, which is why I chose similar

songs with slight differences to push the audience towards differing emotions. In the next segment, I selected *Berlin* by Ry X for the first sequence and *In Need* by Gert Taberner in the second sequence. Without much dialogue in this segment, I saw this an opportunity not so much to focus on the music itself, but the words used in the song. Both songs depict a yearning or need for something that they currently lack. The song *Berlin* illustrates a need for a reprieve from their current situation and a need for a way out which echoes the main protagonist's current thoughts. The song *In Need* talks about the lost connection between two people and this sense of emptiness that they feel without their presence due to the loss of that connection. Once again echoing similar sentiments to the first sequence however the subjects are different.

The next sequence involves another montage scene setting the tone for the final scene of the sequence. The song selected for the first sequence is *Heroes Never Die* by David Chappell. I chose this song for its classic action composition. With a full orchestra, they were able to utilize different pieces of the orchestra to develop a triumphant wall of sound that champions the journey of the main protagonist to the final showdown. An important element of the song is the tonal building which included more pieces of the orchestra joining in the melody as the song progressed beginning with a piano and ending with a full orchestra at max volume with heavy emphasis from the brass section providing a warm yet edgy sound that is synonymous with most classic action films.

In contrast, I chose *Waiting Game* by Banks for the second sequence. I chose this song due to the lyrics and pace of the song. The song added a faster pace that will keep the audience immersed in the film. In setting the tone for this montage, this song

illustrates the notion that while love is a waiting game it's one that they were going to win. The song does a great job of changing the pace of the film from the previous portion of the film as the songs used were rather slower. This aids in building the audience's anticipation of what's to come in the final scene of each sequence.

Due to postponing the filming, I was unable to complete the third segment of the film however, I still wanted to showcase the role of music in a thriller film. To accomplish this, I created a 1-minute teaser trailer to boost general awareness for the film and provide another element that I was not able to complete in the film itself. For the thriller-themed trailer, I took a bold approach in not using any music in the trailer. I chose this tactic because just as the presence of music is important, its absence is equally important. I took each clip from the film and cut all of the audio and added 2 sounds: a ticking clock, and a short rising synth note. I only chose 2 sounds as I wanted to minimize the music in the film to have the audience pay closer attention to the visuals. This is a common technique that thriller films use as it allows the audience to visually focus on the scene and even draw their attention away for a jump scare. Overall, the editing portion took the longest to complete as minor details needed to be constantly changed and added as the film progress. Even though editing the music and audio was the last portion to complete the project, I constantly saw myself changing other elements of the film to maintain its natural flow.

VII. Conclusion

Looking back on the project, I can say that the one aspect that exhibited the most growth was myself. In the early stages of this project, I was definitely well out of my comfort zone of being a marketing student with very little experience working in film. The opportunity to go through the filmmaker's process and produce a film was a challenge that I was excited for although, I did not underestimate it. With limited knowledge and resources, I set out to conduct additional research and confer with on-campus resources to learn more about the process.

As much as I wanted to educate the public, I needed to first educate myself by combing through hours upon hours of film, music, and research to instill the foundation to complete a worthwhile project. YouTube slowly became one of my largest resources as it is a platform abundant with resources to learn any topic one chooses. Through YouTube, I was able to incorporate complex techniques in my film in the editing and automation of sound and technical cinematic elements in capturing footage. One of the greatest aspects of this project is its hands-on approach. I'm a student who learns best by being directly involved with the subject. In conducting this project, I was able to learn many skills that will make me more marketable in possible future careers.

This project is actually a continuation of a similar, but smaller project that I conducted while I was in high school. With the use of on-campus resources in the knowledge, I was able to acquire being a student at Middle Tennessee State University, I wanted the opportunity to complete the true vision of my project that I did not quite achieve on my first attempt. In doing so, resulted in the final film, *Moments*. It was a long

journey to complete this project with many twists, turns, and detours along the way however, it is one I look back on with fond remembrance. Many of the detailed plans and schedules that I had constructed along the way ultimately needed to be thrown out forcing me to change plans quickly throughout the process. While this had a slightly negative effect on the structure of the project it allowed me to be more flexible when writing, editing, and filming doing this has allowed for many scenes to flow much more organically than they would have originally. It's one thing to write a script or a plan on paper and it's entirely different to translate what was on paper to a clip of footage. Remaining flexible and being open to many different perspectives allowed for the film to, essentially, develop a life of its own and have a more natural feel. This is an important concept for a filmmaker to have the capacity to be able to think outside of the box and not be restricted to the confines of the script.

Overall, films use music as only a hidden persuader guiding the emotions of the audience without them really realizing it and that is what makes a good film a great film and a memorable one. It is not always about the song itself because, it is pretty much a given that no one in the audience is going to recognize or even remember every song that was played during the film, although it isn't about what they know or saw or even heard. In the end, it is all about how it made them feel. It is this feeling after watching a film or even a television show that the audience most remembers. While audiences can watch a film without added music and still achieve the core feelings of the film, it is the music that truly elicits the rawest form of emotions in a film. This is why music has become

such a staple in the filmmaking industry, because music is the guide, or hidden persuader, of the emotional response of the audience.

MOMENTS

J'darius Cameron

ACT I

BLACK SCREEN

The screen is pitch black, all you can hear is the sound of a heart monitor, clicking on a keyboard, and the sound of breathing.

ASST: (V.O.)

Dr. Subject 050929 is prepped and ready to go. Stimulus algorithm is loaded, and the simulation is on standby.

DR: (V.O.)

Let's begin.

Typing is heard on a keyboard finalizing the initialization process and beginning the simulation.

ASST: (V.O.)

Commencing
simulation in
5..4..3..2..1.

The screen is flooded with lights as we are transported into a new world within the simulation.

EXTERIOR: OUTSIDE - WOODS

THE FILM BEGINS WITH A WIDE SHOT OF THE SKY AND THE TREES REACHING UP TO THE SKY. THE CAM FOLLOWS THE TREE DOWN TO SEE THAT WE ARE RIGHT ABOVE THE GROUND. THE CAM THEN LEADS US ON A MONTAGE OF SHOTS MOVING ALONG THE GROUND SIMILAR TO AN ANIMAL CRAWLING ON THE GROUND. HERE WE HAVE THE TITLE SEQUENCE AND THE OPENING CREDITS AS WE ESTABLISH THE MOOD OF THE SCENE WITH THE MUSIC TO SET THE TONE FOR THE FILM.

ONCE THE TONE IS EFFECTIVELY ESTABLISHED. THE CAMERA FINALLY ZEROS IN ON THE MC AS WALK INTO A CLEARING IN THE WOODS WHILE STARING AT THEIR PHONE. THEY WALK TO THE CENTER BEFORE TAKING A LOOK AROUND.

The program takes a minute to settle into the environment, and upon completion we see the MC walking into a clearing in the woods staring at their phone following a GPS. They walk into the center before taking a look around.

MC:

I guess this is it.

They take one last look at their phone to check the time

before putting it into their pocket. Stopping to truly admire the nature around them they take another look around. This time to examine their surroundings. They pull out a note that reads [Meet Galo Forest 7:19 I can help. - a friend] reading it again in their head, they look up before sighing deep while running their hands down their face.

MC:

I don't even know who I'm looking for. Or if they're even a person.
(*Breathing deeply.*) If I wasted my time over some prank.

First focused on the MC, the camera then slides over to reveal the mysterious figure dressed in a cloak that covers their face.

FRIEND:

I can assure you that this is not a prank.

The MC screams startled by the mysterious figure before turning around to face the arranger of their meeting.

MC:

(*winded*) So if this isn't a prank... what is this then? Why did you tell me to meet you here?

The Friend holds their hands up to mean no harm. As they can see the MC becoming heated.

FRIEND:

I called you here because I may
be the only one to help you.

MC:

Help me?!? How are you gonna help me?

FRIEND:

I have it.

MC:

Have what?

FRIEND:

It.

MC:

Quit playing games with me!

The Friend takes a step forward toward the MC as they
take a defensive step back. The Friend looks down with a
sigh before reaching in their cloak to pull out a vial
with a liquid in it. Seeing the vial, the MC looked at
it confused until they were hit with a sudden
realization making their eyes grow wide.

MC:

Is that -

FRIEND:

Yes, it is.

MC:

How did you find it?

FRIEND:

"Find it?" No, no, no. I made this.

MC:

So, you're telling me you made it?

FRIEND:

That is correct. and now, I'm giving it to you.

MC:

Bu- but why? Why are you giving this to me? You don't even know me.

FRIEND:

What I *know*, is that I can no longer sit idly by while everything around me crumbles. It's about time that I help to do the right thing instead of nothing. I've seen what situations like this have done to people and I'm DONE just letting it happen. This time I'm going to be a part of the solution. and that starts with you.

MC:

But why me?

FRIEND:

Not to sound cliché, but you're unlike anyone else I've met. No one is as determined or tenacious as you are. You may be the only one who can fix this.

MC:

Since you seem to be the expert on the matter, so why don't you do it?!?

The MC is becoming more and more frustrated as they can sense the impending weight of the pressure that is about to be put on their shoulders. Sensing that they will only add more fuel to the fire, the Friend takes a step back and pulls out a pocket watch rubbing their thumb across the face of the watch reliving all of the past memories they have with it.

FRIEND:

Someone once told me that life isn't measured in time, it is measured in moments. These moments make up our sweetest memories and the ones we choose to forget. They make up our past and therefore make up who we are. *(pausing to take another look at the watch.)* I have had enough moments for 2 lifetimes. This is your moment... not mine. You're the only one who can do this.

The MC stands there in a sort of disbelief as they are coming to terms with reality. The Friend tucks the watch back into their pocket.

FRIEND:

Here.

The Friend turns to walk away tossing the vial back over their shoulder to the MC. The MC steps forward to catch the vial giving it a good look over before looking back at the Friend. Their face turns to one of confusion and as they look up at the Friend.

FRIEND:

That's all that's left.

MC:

Who are you?

The Friend stops then looks over their shoulder with a smile that is face deep.

FRIEND:

I'm a friend.

With those last words, they turn to walk away, and we see that smile fade into a serious look of someone that may not be who they say they are. Leaving the MC to take one last look at the vial before clutching it into their fist. They turn to leave in the opposite direction.

Their face is the complete opposite of the Friend looking more hopeful than anything.

INTERIOR: HOUSE -FRONT DOOR

MC enters into their home. They shut the door (cue music) turning to lean back against the door. Lifting their head up they heave out a long sigh as they can feel the immense weight on their shoulders now. Running a hand down their face, they sink to the ground.

MC:

I need a break.

Heaving themselves off of the floor, they walk to the fridge to pour themselves a drink. They fill the cup before drinking it all and pouring another. Closing the fridge, they take off their jacket and hang it on the chair before lounging out on the couch. They lay on their back looking up at the ceiling.

FRIEND: (VO)

This is your moment. You're the only one who can do this.

The MC makes a light chuckle and smirk.

MC: (VO)

Yea right. I can name 5 people right now who are better suited for this than I am. Let someone else have their moment. I've given up and lost so much already... I don't know if I have anything left.

Reaching down to their chest. They grasp the ring around their neck and close their eyes in fond remembrance.

MC:

You'd know exactly what to do.

They get up and walk over to their jacket that's resting on the chair. They sit down ruffling through the jacket to pull out the vial. They sit the jacket back on the chair and as they're adjusting themselves to lean forward on the table, they fumble with the vial almost losing it before securing it and placing it firmly on the table while exhaling slowly.

MC:

Let me just put this down.

CAMERA PANS UP FROM EDGE OF TABLE FOCUSING FIRST ON THE VIAL BEFORE SWITCHING TO THE MC.

MC: (VO)

I can't even go 5 seconds without almost breaking it. I don't even know if I can do this. This little vial has the power to change the world... my world. This could set everything right. If I do this, I'll only have one chance to make it right. Don't fuck this up.

Black Screen

INTERIOR: BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

THE SCENE BEGINS WITH AN OVERHEAD SHOT OF THE ALARM (ON THE PHONE) THAT GOES OFF FIRST AT 7:00 IN THE MORNING.

The MC hits snooze on their phone before getting up and beginning their morning routine. They saunter into the bathroom and splash water in their face to jumpstart their body. stare at their reflection taking in their sight and looking for any signal of doubt still lingering in their mind. They return to the bedroom to put on their clothes and grab their essentials.

AS THEY ARE FINISHING UP, THEY CAMERA ZOOMS IN ON A FRAME SITTING ON THE NIGHTSTAND.

The frame holds a picture of the MC and another individual hugged together with the brightest grins on their faces.

Sitting in front of the frame was the ring and necklace that the MC is so fond of. They grab it before heading into the living room. They grab the vial, giving it one good shake before heading to the door. They open the door taking one step out but came to a stop. They looked over their shoulder one more time taking a look around as if they will never see the place again. Looking down briefly they head out of the door with a new resolve.

EXTERIOR: CAR

Getting into the car they rush down the streets before pulling to what seems to be a dead end before realizing that they have to continue the journey on foot. They take off into the woods running toward their destination. They are taking precautions as they are moving swiftly and stealthily to their goal. They come to a stop and begin to approach slowly.

EXTERIOR: FOREST - CLEARING

Moving into the clearing, the MC methodically moves through the clearing assessing their surroundings and inventory all possible blind spots and openings. As they're examining the area, they hear a twig snap and leaves crunch in the trees just beyond the clearing. Now on high alert, they point their weapon toward the direction of the noise. They slowly move toward the noise increasing their alert level each step of the way. They approach a large tree slowly and quickly whip around the tree pointing their weapon directly at the back of the head of the intruder as they are crouching still to look for who called out to them. Seeing that they are cornered, the Partner lowers their weapon and puts their hands up in a defensive position.

MC:

Don't move.

PARTNER:

Whoa there! Let's just take it easy and -

MC:

Wait.

The Partner's face screws up in confusion before a sudden realization washes over them.

PARTNER:

(To themselves) Fuck.

MC:

What the fuck are you doing here? I thought you were on assignment in Kaznia.

PARTNER:

I was until I got word that an agent needed immediate help here, so I left my mission and came here. Who would've thought you were the one needing help?

The MC lowers their gun, but still remains on alert as something is not adding up.

MC:

No one told me I was receiving backup. They told me it was best to only send in one operative.

PARTNER:

I guess they realized they were wrong.

The MC tilts their head in even more confusion as they become even more aware of something being off. Their Partner always trusted the Foundation.

The MC is now on high alert, yet still remains unsuspecting as they fix their face and play along.

MC:

Yea, I guess you're right. Let's just get this over with because we have a lot that we need to talk about.

PARTNER:

Sure thing. Fill me in
on the situation.

MC:

We have secured the serum -

PARTNER:

Wait how did you -

MC:

Nevermind that. We have the serum
to counteract the virus now we
just need to capture the
mastermind and destroy the virus,
before it becomes airborne. After
that, there is nothing we can do.

PARTNER:

Ok. So, who is "evil villain
of the week?"

MC:

We just have a codename. El Leon.

PARTNER:

(to themselves) The Lion.

MC:

And he's supposed to be
meeting someone here in
just a moment.

PARTNER:

I see.

MC:

Let's secure the perimeter and
find the best vantage point of
attack.

They both set out around to clear the perimeter of the clearing. The MC sets out toward the left toward their vantage point. They clear the surrounding area and move to the vantage point. Right before they reach it. They are caught frozen as a knife is suddenly placed on their neck. The slightest movement meaning that anything could happen.

PARTNER:

Don't move.

The Partner smirks recalling the time just moments ago where the same line was used against them. The MC just sighs as they realize that their suspicions were correct.

MC:

(To themselves) Damn it.

Begin Flashback

They are at home about to embark on a mission and heading out the door. Before they step out the Partner turns to look at them placing their hand on their shoulder and looking deep into their eyes.

PARTNER:

Don't worry. It'll be quick and easy just like the last one. The Foundation always knows what they're doing. When have they ever been wrong?

End Flashback

MC:

I knew something about this didn't seem right. You would never have said that the foundation was wrong. Why are you really here?

PARTNER:

Au contraire. The foundation has always been wrong.

The MC finds a brief opening flipping the Partner over their shoulder to the ground. The MC runs into the clearing to create distance and eliminate any more blind spots. The Partner recovers getting up and dusting themselves off. They

step into the clearing with a more serious and determined look on their face.

PARTNER:

"Protecting the world from the shadows. Being the foundation that no one sees but everyone relies on." That's what they taught us remember. Well... it's a bunch of bullshit! All those years of listening to those lies. Committing crime after the crime for the "greater good" I couldn't do that anymore. It's about time that we usher in a new era of peace. One void of lies and secret organizations. I want the world to know the true cost of their safety. And for that to happen, they must feel unsafe. Give me the vial.

MC:

Yea that's not gonna happen.

PARTNER:

I don't want to fight you; just give me the vial and you can help me expose the truths of the world.

MC:

The only thing I'm exposing is your double-crossing ass to the HQ and sending you back neatly wrapped with a bow.

The MC takes off first toward their Partner. The punches are thrown first by the MC that are easily dodged by

their Partner. They return with a punch of their own that lands directly in the stomach of the MC causing them to stumble back before attacking once again. They attack each other with a few of their strikes landing in between a fury of blows.

They fight for a while in strict hand to hand combat. Their Partner lands a swift kick to their stomach catching the MC off guard and causing them to fall back onto the ground where the vial also slides out of their pocket and rolls across the ground. Seeing it, they both lunge for it. Falling just short of it, they both reach for it with everything that they have to grab it. With this one tussle, the fate of the world hangs in the balance. The Partner finally emerges victorious grabbing the vial and springing up out of reach of the MC.

PARTNER:

I knew you would be such a big help.

They turn to walk away as the MC is struggling to get back to their feet.

MC:

You can't believe that's the right thing to do! This doesn't make sense!

The Partner stops and turns around fully to face the MC.

PARTNER:

What doesn't make SENSE are all of the innocent lives that are lost each and every day because it's for the greater good. "The Greater good" Who decides what that is anyways? An anonymous board that gives us orders as they sit behind their desks sipping tea while we're forced to carry out their crimes! I can't do it anymore! I am not some mindless soldier. I am sooo much more than a pawn in THEIR game. Today will be the start of a new game where all pieces are equal,

and I am the board. We just need
a total reset.

The MC gets up to their seeming defeated. They
straighten up and begin walking towards the Partner.

MC:

I get it now. The Foundation is a
far from perfect organization.
The organization is not the same
one that I was recruited into.
Each day I question the methods
of the foundation and am tossed
aside and told "It's for the
greater good." Maybe you're
right. Who are they to decide
what the greater good is? Let me
help you.

Beginning to believe that their plan is coming
together, the Partner smiles fondly at the MC and
allows them to come close as they extend their arms for
an embrace.

PARTNER:

I told you. I never wanted to
hurt you. I've always wanted you
by my side. That's why I gave you
that ring. Because from that
moment I knew you

were something special. Come,
let us watch the new world be
born today.
This here is our moment; we shall
bask in it and -

Their sentence is cut off as they look down between the
Mc and themselves before looking up again and spitting
blood out of their mouth. A brief smile comes across
their face as they drop the vial while falling to the
ground. The MC is there to catch them slowly bringing
them down to the ground. The Partner looks up at the MC
struggling to speak as blood is flooding into their
lungs.

PARTNER:

So, you really are just a pawn.

MC:

I'm a pawn in no one's game. I know what I've done, and I live with that every day. I also know that if I didn't do it, then so many more lives would've been lost, and families destroyed. I sleep at night knowing that I did everything I could to make it right. Not everything in life can be perfect, there must be a balance.

There's going to be some bad that comes with the good and we have to accept that.

PARTNER:

I only wanted to do what was right.

MC:

I know. I know you did. Here.

The reach up to take the necklace off to return it to their Partner when their Partner lifts their hands-on top of the MC making them pause,

PARTNER:

Stop. It's yours. What I said that day, I still believe. You were the best of us. *cough* When you look at it, I only want you to remember the good times. Don't let this moment ruin those memories. Goodbye.

Their hand drops down, eyes finally closing as they cease to move. Realizing that it's finally over, the MC gets up and wipes a tear away before putting on their glasses and walking

away with two vials in hand. One containing the serum and the other containing the virus. Stopping they look down at the virus and then up again.

MC:
I won't, and I won't
forget you either.

They continue walking forward where the camera pans up to look at the sky again. The screen pauses similarly to an old VCR tv.

ASST: (V.O.)
Data Extraction 33%
complete. Reprogramming a
new stimulus algorithm.
Preparing to Restart
simulation in
5..4..3..2..1.

The entire film plays in reverse speeding up until the initial title sequence where the simulation begins once again.

ACT II

EXTERIOR: OUTSIDE - FOREST

THE FILM BEGINS WITH A WIDE SHOT OF THE SKY AND THE TREES REACHING UP TO THE SKY. THE CAM FOLLOWS THE TREE DOWN TO SEE THAT WE ARE RIGHT ABOVE THE GROUND. THE CAM THEN LEADS US ON A MONTAGE OF SHOTS MOVING ALONG THE GROUND SIMILAR TO AN ANIMAL CRAWLING ON THE GROUND. HERE WE HAVE THE TITLE SEQUENCE AND THE OPENING CREDITS AS WE ESTABLISH THE MOOD OF THE SCENE WITH THE MUSIC TO SET THE TONE FOR THE FILM.

ONCE THE TONE IS EFFECTIVELY ESTABLISHED. THE CAMERA FINALLY ZEROS IN ON THE MC AS WALK INTO A CLEARING IN THE WOODS WHILE STARING AT THEIR PHONE. THEY WALK TO THE CENTER BEFORE TAKING A LOOK AROUND.

The program takes a minute to settle into the environment, and upon completion we see the MC walking into a clearing in the woods staring at their phone following a GPS. They walk into the center before taking a look around.

MC:

I guess this is it.

They take one last look at their phone to check the time before putting it into their pocket. Stopping to truly admire the nature around them they take another look around. This time to examine their surroundings. They pull out a note that reads [Meet Galo Forest 7:19 I can help. - a friend] reading it again in their head, they look up before sighing deep while running their hands down their face.

MC:

I don't even know who I'm looking for. Or if they're even a person.
(*Breathing deeply.*) If I wasted my time over some prank.

First focused on the MC, the camera then slides over to reveal the mysterious figure dressed in a cloak that covers their face.

FRIEND:

I can assure you that this is
not a prank.

The MC screams startled by the mysterious figure
before turning around to face the arranger of their
meeting.

MC:

(winded) So if this isn't a
prank... what is this then? Why
did you tell me to meet you here?

The Friend holds their hands up to mean no harm. As
they can see the MC becoming heated.

FRIEND:

I called you here because I may
be the only one to help you.

MC:

Help me?!? How are you gonna help me?

FRIEND:

I have it.

MC:

Have what?

FRIEND:

It.

MC:

Quit playing games with me!

The Friend takes a step forward toward the MC as they
take a defensive step back. The Friend looks down with a
sigh before reaching in their cloak to pull out a vial
with a liquid in it. Seeing the vial, the MC looked at
it confused until they were hit with a sudden
realization making their eyes grow wide.

MC:

Is that -

FRIEND:

Yes, it is.

MC:

How did you find it?

FRIEND:

"Find it?" No, no, no. I made this.

MC:

So, you're telling me you made it?

FRIEND:

That is correct. and now, I'm giving it to you.

MC:

Bu- but why? Why are you giving this to me? You don't even know me.

FRIEND:

What I know is that I can no longer sit idly by while everything around me crumbles. It's about time that I help to do the right thing instead of nothing. I've seen what situations like this have done to people and I'm DONE just letting it happen. This time I'm going to be a part of the solution. and that starts with you.

MC:

But why me?

FRIEND:

Not to sound cliché, but you're unlike anyone else I've met. No one is as determined or tenacious as you are.
You may be the only one who can fix this.

MC:

Since you seem to be the expert on the matter, so why don't you do it?!?

The MC is becoming more and more frustrated as they can sense the impending weight of the pressure that is about to be put on their shoulders. Sensing that they will only add more fuel to the fire, the Friend takes a step back and pulls out a pocket watch rubbing their thumb across the face of the watch reliving all of the past memories they have with it.

FRIEND:

Someone once told me that life isn't measured in time, it is measured in moments. These moments make up our sweetest memories and the ones we choose to forget. They make up our past and therefore make up who we are. (*pausing to take another look at the watch.*) I have had enough moments for 2 lifetimes. This is your moment... not mine. You're the only one who can do this.

The MC stands there in a sort of disbelief as they are coming to terms with reality. The Friend tucks the watch back into their pocket.

FRIEND:

Here.

The Friend turns to walk away tossing the vial back over their shoulder to the MC. The MC steps forward to catch the vial giving it a good look over before looking back

at the Friend. Their face turns to one of confusion and as they look up at the Friend.

FRIEND:

That's all that's left.

MC:

Who are you?

The Friend stops then looks over their shoulder with a smile that is face deep.

FRIEND:

I'm a friend.

With those last words, they turn to walk away, and we see that smile fade into a serious look of someone that may not be who they say they are. Leaving the MC to take one last look at the vial before clutching it into their fist. They turn to leave in the opposite direction. Their face is the complete opposite of the Friend looking more hopeful than anything.

INTERIOR: HOUSE -FRONT DOOR

MC enters into their home. They shut the door (cue music) turning to lean back against the door. Lifting their head up they heave out a long sigh as they can feel the immense weight on their shoulders now. Running a hand down their face, they sink to the ground.

MC:

I need a break.

Heaving themselves off of the floor, they walk to the fridge to pour themselves a drink. They fill the cup before drinking it all and pouring another. Closing the fridge, they take off their jacket and hang it on the chair before lounging out on the couch. They lay on their back looking up at the ceiling.

FRIEND: (VO)

This is your moment. You're the only

one who can do this.

The MC makes a light chuckle and smirk.

MC: (VO)

Yea right. I can name 5 people
right now who are better suited
for this than I am. Let someone
else have their moment. I've
given up and lost so much
already... I don't know if I have
anything left.

Reaching down to their chest. They grasp the ring
around their neck and close their eyes in fond
remembrance.

MC:

You'd know exactly what to do.

They get up and walk over to their jacket that's resting
on the chair. They sit down ruffling through the jacket
to pull out the vial. They sit the jacket back on the
chair and as they're adjusting themselves to lean
forward on the table, they fumble with the vial almost
losing it before securing it and placing it firmly on
the table while exhaling slowly.

MC:

Let me just put this down.

CAMERA PANS UP FROM EDGE OF TABLE FOCUSING FIRST ON THE
VIAL BEFORE SWITCHING TO THE MC.

MC: (VO)

I can't even go 5 seconds without
almost breaking it. I don't even
know if I can do this. This
little vial has the power to
change the world... my world.
This could set everything right.

If I do this, I'll only have one chance to make it right. Don't fuck this up.

Black Screen

INTERIOR: BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

THE SCENE BEGINS WITH AN OVERHEAD SHOT OF THE ALARM (ON THE PHONE) THAT GOES OFF FIRST AT 7:00 IN THE MORNING.

The MC hits snooze on their phone before getting up and beginning their morning routine. They saunter into the bathroom and splash water in their face to jumpstart their

body. stare at their reflection taking in their sight and looking for any signal of doubt still lingering in their mind. They return to the bedroom to put on their clothes and grab their essentials.

AS THEY ARE FINISHING UP, THE CAMERA ZOOMS IN ON A FRAME SITTING ON THE NIGHTSTAND.

The frame holds a picture of the MC and another individual hugged together with the brightest grins on their faces.

Sitting in front of the frame was the ring and necklace that the MC is so fond of. They grab it before heading into the living room. They grab the vial, giving it one good shake before heading to the door. They open the door taking one step out but came to a stop. They looked over their shoulder one more time taking a look around as if they will never see the place again. Looking down briefly they head out of the door with a new resolve.

EXTERIOR: CAR

Getting into the car they rush down the streets before pulling to what seems to be a dead end before realizing that they have to continue the journey on foot. They take off into the woods running toward their destination. They are taking precautions as they are moving swiftly and stealthily to their goal. They come to a stop and begin to approach slowly.

EXTERIOR: FOREST - CLEARING

They can see someone mulling about in a clearing. The person is deep in thought caught up in the music that they are listening to. The MC seems to want to move toward them yet hesitates. Closing their eyes, they take a deep breath in and exhale. They open their eyes now determined to walk over towards the guy. They approach the guy and their shadow causes the person to finally notice them. They take one of their headphones out to focus on the approaching stranger.

PARTNER:

Can I help you or something?

Caught off guard by lack of realization the MC looks down in contemplation before meeting the eyes of their SO.

MC:

So, it is true.

The Partner tilts their head in confusion making an inaudible huh?

MC:

You really don't remember who I am.

The question coming out more as a statement as they try to step toward them raising their hands to hold their face. A force of habit that goes unwarranted as the Partner takes a step away from them putting their hands up to create distance.

PARTNER:

Whoa there! Am I supposed to know who you are?

The Partner stares at them for a while to rack their memories to recollect who the stranger in front them is.

PARTNER:

Wait! You *DO* look familiar...hold
on.

The MC's eyes light up as hope spreads across their
face.

PARTNER

OH! (*realization hits them*) You're that author!
You wrote that one book called... Flirtation?
Formation?

That fleeting glimmer of hope was squashed down as
they realized their worst fears.

MC:

Foundation. And no, you always
said that we look alike.

PARTNER

What part of "I don't know you"
do you not understand?

MC:

You told me that after our third
date. You even got me the book as
a gag gift one Christmas.

Now even more creeped out, the Partner starts to
slowly back away from them and return to their music.

PARTNER:

Alright umm... it was nice
meeting you. I gotta go...
bye.

They turn to walk back to their date. The MC remains
still frozen by their own helplessness.

MC:

You still can't remember
anything before the
accident.

This causes the Partner to freeze and turn around.

PARTNER:

How do you know about my accident?

MC:

Because I was there when it happened.

The Partner is even more confused at this point.

PARTNER:

You couldn't have been? I was
jet skiing when I hit a rock
and didn't quite stick the
landing.

The MC barely lets out a pained chuckle, tears
pooling in their eyes.

MC:

Is that what they told you?

6 months ago, we had just
finished dinner at our favorite
restaurant Tony's. We walked
downtown and you stopped. I
wondered what you were doing and
until I saw you were down on one
knee. You said that you wouldn't
take another step in life unless
it was with me. I couldn't even
remember what you said. I was
swept away in tears and muttering
yes over and over again like an
idiot. You went to put the ring
on my finger, and it fell into
the road. The dumbass that I am
went into the street to get it.
The next thing I knew I saw

lights and then nothing. When I came to, you were unconscious just in the middle of the street. The car gone and I thought you were too. After going to the hospital, I was told that the impact resulted in severe amnesia and they had no clue what memories you still had if any.
You -

The Partner was beginning to contemplate whether or not what they were speaking of was the truth until they shook their

head and put their hand up in pause.

PARTNER:

Stop. Just stop. What are you gaining from this?

MC:

What?

PARTNER:

These lies! Who are you to tell me what happened to me. I don't know what this little crazy stalker thing you got going on is about, but it ends now. Just leave me alone. I don't know and you don't know me.

The MC is now desperate to save their life fueled by a new sense of passion they could see that they were finally getting through to them.

MC:

But I do know you! Better than I know myself. I know that your favorite color is green. You love going to the beach, but you hate how the sand gets in your toes. Your favorite Ninja Turtle is Michelangelo and is why you love

to say cowabunga. You have a
scratch on the back of your leg
where you fell down the steps
after trying to cheer me up
wearing a pair of my heels once.
And you like pineapple on pizza
even though it's disgusting but I
get you one every time because I
love to see your little pizza
dance you do no matter how stupid
you look doing it.

Tears roll down their face, yet there is still a
smile as they remember the time they spent together.

MC:
You still don't believe me.

The SO is looking around now as they can no longer
look at the MC. They are hearing the truth hidden in
their words despite the conflict between what they're
hearing and what they know.

PARTNER::
Listen to yourself. Would you
believe me if the roles were
reversed?

MC:
I guess you have a point.

They look down as they realize that they just might not
get through to them; they resort to their last chance
option and pull out their necklace. This causes the SO's
eyes to go wide.

PARTNER:
Where did you get that?

The MC holds the necklace firmly in their hand and
smiles at it before looking up at the Partner who has
now stepped closer.

MC:

You. Your father gave it to you to give to your child one day. The heart of the lion. It's all about being the best version of themselves. It's supposed to be passed down your family from generation to generation. As they are your future, your world. And until we have a child one day, you told me to keep it safe and near my heart as I was your world.

As they spoke looking down at the necklace, the Partner took careful steps toward them as they started to embrace their truth.

PARTNER:

You're telling the truth. I don't know how I know that, but I just do. For some reason I have this random urge to trust you.

MC:

If you trust me then drink this.

They pull out the vial and give it to the Partner. They look at it once over before looking at the MC.

PARTNER:

Please don't tell you did all of this just to poison me.

The MC chuckles softly through the tears.

MC:

No, it should help restore your memory.

looking at it once again the SO takes the top off to smell it before bringing it to their lips hesitating slightly.

PARTNER:

If I die...

MC:

Then so will I.

The Partner stares deeply into the eyes of the MC searching for any sign of a lie yet could find none. The brought the vial to their lips drinking the contents before sighing, bringing the vial back down.

PARTNER:

That wasn't that bad.

They are suddenly struck with a pain in their head as all of their lost memories come flooding back into their head making them stumble backwards almost bringing them to their knees.

The MC is struck with worry but is motioned to stay back by the SO. The Partner is hunched over breathing heavily.

PARTNER:

I will not. CANNOT take another step in life if you are not by my side. Every day, every night, every meal, every dance, every breath, every moment from here on out I want to be with you. I can't promise you much, but I can promise to make each moment better than the last and I hope this moment is first of many in this new chapter of our life. Will you do me the honor of marrying me?

So, overwhelmed with emotions and tears, the MC is left speechless, the brightest smile peeking through their tear stained face as they nod an unrelenting yes. They run to each other and embrace each other as only long-lost lovers could. Both are brought to tears as they bring their foreheads together and gaze into each other's eyes. No words need to be said as what they're reading is written on their heart for only them to read.

PARTNER:

I knew you liked my pizza dance.

A laugh is shared between the two breaking their stare yet leaving the connection untouched. They look into each other's eyes once again.

PARTNER:

I love you.

MC:

I love you too.

As they are leaning in to kiss, the camera pans up toward the sky giving them their privacy before pausing once again.

ASST: (V.O.)

Data Extraction 66%
complete. Reprogramming a
new stimulus algorithm.
Preparing to Restart
simulation in
5..4..3..2..1.

The entire film plays in reverse speeding up until the initial title sequence where the simulation begins one final time.

ACT III

EXTERIOR: OUTSIDE - FOREST

THE FILM BEGINS WITH A WIDE SHOT OF THE SKY AND THE TREES REACHING UP TO THE SKY. THE CAM FOLLOWS THE TREE DOWN TO SEE THAT WE ARE RIGHT ABOVE THE GROUND. THE CAM THEN LEADS US ON A MONTAGE OF SHOTS MOVING ALONG THE GROUND SIMILAR TO AN ANIMAL CRAWLING ON THE GROUND. HERE WE HAVE THE TITLE SEQUENCE AND THE OPENING CREDITS AS WE ESTABLISH THE MOOD OF THE SCENE WITH THE MUSIC TO SET THE TONE FOR THE FILM.

ONCE THE TONE IS EFFECTIVELY ESTABLISHED. THE CAMERA FINALLY ZEROS IN ON THE MC AS WALK INTO A CLEARING IN THE WOODS WHILE STARING AT THEIR PHONE. THEY WALK TO THE CENTER BEFORE TAKING A LOOK AROUND.

The program takes a minute to settle into the environment, and upon completion we see the MC walking into a clearing in the woods staring at their phone following a GPS. They walk into the center before taking a look around.

MC:

I guess this is it.

They take one last look at their phone to check the time before putting it into their pocket. Stopping to truly admire the nature around them they take another look around. This time to examine their surroundings. They pull out a note that reads [Meet Galo Forest 7:19 I can help. - a friend] reading it again in their head, they look up before sighing deep while running their hands down their face.

MC:

I don't even know who I'm looking for. Or if they're even a person.
(*Breathing deeply.*) If I wasted my time over some prank.

First focused on the MC, the camera then slides over to reveal the mysterious figure dressed in a cloak that covers their face.

FRIEND:

I can assure you that this is
not a prank.

The MC screams startled by the mysterious figure
before turning around to face the arranger of their
meeting.

MC:

(wind) So if this isn't a
prank... what is this then? Why
did you tell me to meet you here?

The Friend holds their hands up to mean no harm. As
they can see the MC becoming heated.

FRIEND:

I called you here because I may
be the only one to help you.

MC:

Help me?!? How are you gonna help me?

FRIEND:

I have it.

MC:

Have what?

FRIEND:

It.

MC:

Quit playing games with me!

The Friend takes a step forward toward the MC as they
take a defensive step back. The Friend looks down with a
sigh before reaching in their cloak to pull out a vial
with a liquid in it. Seeing the vial, the MC looked at
it confused until they were hit with a sudden
realization making their eyes grow wide.

MC:

Is that -

FRIEND:

Yes, it is.

MC:

How did you find it?

FRIEND:

"Find it?" No, no, no. I made this.

MC:

So, you're telling me you made it?

FRIEND:

That is correct. and now, I'm giving
it to you.

MC:

Bu- but why? Why are you giving
this to me? You don't even know
me.

FRIEND:

What I know is that I can no
longer sit idly by while
everything around me crumbles.
It's about time that I help to do
the right thing instead of
nothing. I've seen what
situations like this have done to
people and I'm DONE just letting
it happen. This time I'm going to
be a part of the solution. and
that starts with you.

MC:

But why me?

FRIEND:

Not to sound cliché, but you're
unlike anyone else I've met. No
one is as determined or tenacious
as you are.

You may be the only one who
can fix this.

MC:

Since you seem to be the expert
on the matter, so why don't you
do it?!?

The MC is becoming more and more frustrated as they can sense the impending weight of the pressure that is about to be put on their shoulders. Sensing that they will only add more fuel to the fire, the Friend takes a step back and pulls out a pocket watch rubbing their thumb across the face of the watch reliving all of the past memories they have with it.

FRIEND:

Someone once told me that life
isn't measured in time, it is
measured in moments. These
moments make up our sweetest
memories and the ones we choose
to forget. They make up our past
and therefore make up who we
are. (*pausing to take another
look at the watch.*) I have had
enough moments for 2 lifetimes.
This is your moment... not mine.
You're the only one who can do
this.

The MC stands there in a sort of disbelief as they are coming to terms with reality. The Friend tucks the watch back into their pocket.

FRIEND:

Here.

The Friend turns to walk away tossing the vial back over their shoulder to the MC. The MC steps forward to catch the vial giving it a good look over before looking back at the Friend. Their face turns to one of confusion and as they look up at the Friend.

FRIEND:

That's all that's left.

MC:

Who are you?

The Friend stops then looks over their shoulder with a smile that is face deep.

FRIEND:

I'm a friend.

With those last words, they turn to walk away, and we see that smile fade into a serious look of someone that may not be who they say they are. Leaving the MC to take one last look at the vial before clutching it into their fist. They turn to leave in the opposite direction. Their face is the complete opposite of the Friend looking more hopeful than anything.

INTERIOR: HOUSE -FRONT DOOR

MC enters into their home. They shut the door (cue music) turning to lean back against the door. Lifting their head up they heave out a long sigh as they can feel the immense weight on their shoulders now. Running a hand down their face, they sink to the ground.

MC:

I need a break.

Heaving themselves off of the floor, they walk to the fridge to pour themselves a drink. They fill the cup before drinking it all and pouring another. Closing the fridge, they take off their jacket and hang it on the chair before lounging out on the couch. They lay on their back looking up at the ceiling.

FRIEND: (VO)

This is your moment. You're the only

one who can do this.

The MC makes a light chuckle and smirk.

MC: (VO)

Yea right. I can name 5 people right now who are better suited for this than I am. Let someone else have their moment. I've given up and lost so much already... I don't know if I have anything left.

Reaching down to their chest. They grasp the ring around their neck and close their eyes in fond remembrance.

MC:

You'd know exactly what to do.

They get up and walk over to their jacket that's resting on the chair. They sit down ruffling through the jacket to pull out the vial. They sit the jacket back on the chair and as they're adjusting themselves to lean forward on the table, they fumble with the vial almost losing it before securing it and placing it firmly on the table while exhaling slowly.

MC:

Let me just put this down.

CAMERA PANS UP FROM EDGE OF TABLE FOCUSING FIRST ON THE VIAL BEFORE SWITCHING TO THE MC.

MC: (VO)

I can't even go 5 seconds without almost breaking it. I don't even know if I can do this. This little vial has the power to change the world... my world. This could set everything right. If I do this, I'll only have one chance to make it right. Don't fuck this up.

Black Screen

INTERIOR: BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

THE SCENE BEGINS WITH AN OVERHEAD SHOT OF THE ALARM (ON THE PHONE) THAT GOES OFF FIRST AT 7:00 IN THE MORNING.

The MC hits snooze on their phone before getting up and beginning their morning routine. They saunter into the bathroom and splash water in their face to jumpstart their

body. stare at their reflection taking in their sight and looking for any signal of doubt still lingering in their mind. They return to the bedroom to put on their clothes and grab their essentials.

AS THEY ARE FINISHING UP, THE CAMERA ZOOMS IN ON A FRAME SITTING ON THE NIGHTSTAND.

The frame holds a picture of the MC and another individual hugged together with the brightest grins on their faces.

Sitting in front of the frame was the ring and necklace that the MC is so fond of. They grab it before heading into the living room. They grab the vial, giving it one good shake before heading to the door. They open the door taking one step out but came to a stop. They looked over their shoulder one more time taking a look around as if they will never see the place again. Looking down briefly they head out of the door with a new resolve.

EXTERIOR: CAR

Getting into the car they rush down the streets before pulling to what seems to be a dead end before realizing that they have to continue the journey on foot. They take off into the woods running toward their destination. They are taking precautions as they are moving swiftly and stealthily to their goal. They come to a stop and begin to approach slowly.

EXTERIOR: FOREST - CLEARING

They hear a blood curdling scream as they move quickly toward the clearing. In a clearing they see a figure dressed in all black holding someone hostage by their shirt in their hand. The hostage looks like they've been through hell and back. their clothes are in

disarray with blood and bruises scattering their body. They are dragging their body toward the river to finish what they started.

KILLER:

If I were you, I wouldn't be here. This doesn't concern you.

With a closer look you can finally see that the hostage is the person from the photo, the MC's Partner.

PARTNER::

Why are you here?!? Run!

KILLER:

Shut up! (*kicking the Partner*)

MC:

I'm not going anywhere.

The killer sighs heavily as they realized that they were gonna have to do more work than intended.

KILLER:

I tried to leave you out of this. I really did. I didn't want to kill you, but you give me no other choice. You always seem to put your nose where it doesn't belong.

Seeing that they are outmatched and rushed in with a half- baked plan they start to look around sporadically for an exit or some kind of weapon as the killer starts to take menacing steps toward them. Seeing no other option, they plant their feet and look determinedly at the killer.

MC:

But here's the thing... I know who you are. I know about your niece.

This stops the killer to stop dead in their tracks. No emotion displaying on their face just a cool demeanor that is devoid of any humanity.

MC:

That's why you're doing this right... killing all of those people.

KILLER:

You don't know what you're talking about.

MC:

Your niece used to go to the daycare that was built by the construction company the Foundation. The building ended up collapsing due to an under the table deal skimming the money and using cheaper materials. The building ended up collapsing right on top of everyone inside... including your niece. She's on life support at Erlanger, a toxin is spreading through her body from the debris that got trapped in her lungs during the collapse. You're trying to find a cure while punishing those responsible.

The killer is almost stunned as the MC knows way more than they should. As quick as it came the emotion fled with the stoic look and a small smirk crawling across the killer's face.

KILLER:

Well well well, give the lucky contestant a prize! So, you already know what I have to do.

MC:

Or I can give you another option.

This causes the killer to burst in laughter.

KILLER:

Another option?!? And to think... you were doing so well There is only one way this is going to end. If my niece is going to die, then so will he.

The killer turns back towards the Partner who is still unconscious on the ground.

MC:

No one else has to die.

The killer stops.

MC:

You can stop this! I have the cure here in this vial.

They pull out the vial as proof.

MC:

This cure should help heal your niece and put her on the path to recovery. All you have to do is turn yourself in.

KILLER:

That's it? Turn myself in? Do you think I'm an idiot?!? I'm all she has left! If I go away, then she has no one and I cannot do that to her again! I promised I will protect her, and I will do that by any means necessary. I'm going to take your lives then the vials and I'll be on my way.

They throw out a needle that slices the leg of the MC bringing them to their knee. They try to get up and keep going only to realize that their leg is paralyzed.

KILLER:

Yea you can't get away now. That
needle was dipped in a rare toxin
that will render you immobile
within the next minute. You
thought you had me for a sec, but
like I said, I will do anything
to protect my niece.

The killer pulls out a knife and stalks toward the MC
who is succumbing to the toxin falling on the ground.
Laying on their side they are helpless as the killer
closes in slowly almost teasing the MC, relishing in
the terror plastered on their face.

MC: (VO)

(To themselves) Move, move move,
move, move, come on MOVE damnit!

Realizing that their hope has just run out the killer
steps over to pick up the vial and run the blade of
the knife across their face in a caressing manner.

KILLER:

Thank you for playing but I'm
afraid it's time for you to go.

The only emotion can be seen in the eyes of the MC as
their eyes have gone wide at the sight of their
impending death before shutting tight. The killer
brings up the knife and begins to bring the knife down
to kill the MC.

PARTNER:

Noooooo! (off camera)

A shot rings out and a few blood drops splatter across
the face of the MC. They open their eyes to look up to
see the killer is stopped dead in their tracks. The
knife falls to the ground, their body following suit.
The killer falls right in front of the MC now laying
face to face both immobilized.

Knowing that they are defeated they turn to look up
to get one last glimpse of the sky.

KILLER:
Save... her...

The MC, still unable to move agrees with their eyes and the killer's eyes finally close. The SO slinks over barely recovering from the toxin. They turn the MC over making sure that they are ok. Realizing that they are well besides the toxin. They fall beside the MC. The distant sounds of police sirens and the flashing blue lights come into scene and the lights flash on the face of the MC before the camera pans up at the sky one and pauses one final time.

ASST: (V.O.)
Data Extraction 100%
complete. terminating the
simulation in
5..4..3..2..1.

The entire screen goes black.

INTERIOR: OFFICE

We see a hand taking notes in a journal about the success of the experiment and the information that was gathered from the simulation. There is a knock on the door before someone enters with a lab coat on and clipboard in hand. They timidly enter the room.

ASST:
Dr., the next subject is
prepped and ready to go. Are
you ready for the next trial?

The camera zooms in on a large chair where the doctor sits. The writing stops and the chair turns around to reveal the friend from the simulation.

DR:
Give me a moment as I finish
recording our observations.

They turn back around to finish writing their notes. Finishing, they put their pen down and take their

glasses off before getting up. Hung on a hook on the desk is the stopwatch that sits open. In it, is a logo for the Foundation. The stopwatch is grabbed by the Dr. before they head out of the door. They walk out of the door but stopping to give the room one last look over before closing the door moving on to the next trial.

THE END.

Work Cited

Fischhoff, Stuart. *The Evolution of Music in Film and Its Psychological Impact on Audiences* (2005): 1-28. 4 June 2005. Web. 4 Dec. 2015.

Harper, Graeme. *Sound and Music in Film and Visual Media an Overview*. 2009. Print.

Horner, James. "James Horner's 'My Heart Will Go On' Nearly Ran Aground: Behind the Buoyant Titanic Hit That Almost Never Was." Interview by Alexis L. Loinaz. *People Magazine* 15 June 2015: Print.

"Music." *Merriam-Webster.com*. Merriam-Webster, Web. 2 Feb. 2016.

Paterson, Jim. "What Is Music?" *Mfiles*. Web. 25 Jan. 2106.

Russell, Daniel. Personal Interview. 22 Feb. 2016.

Schulze Liz, The On-Line Production Resource At Pacific Cinémathèque, "Sound in Filmmaking." *The On-line Production Resource at Pacific Cinémathèque Sound in Filmmaking*: Pacific Cinémathèque, 8 Aug. 2004. Web. 5 Dec. 2015.

Silvestri, Alan. Interview by Daniel Schweiger. *Film Music Magazine* 01 May 2012: Web. 25 Jan. 2016.

West, Kanye. "Power" *Power*. Roc-A-Fella, Def Jam, 2010. MP3