

Paris Blue

by

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FADE IN:

Haunting jazz piano bleeds into a montage of stark, grainy 1950s black and white photographs - each frame capturing raw, unfiltered human emotion frozen in time.

A SERIES OF 1950S BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS

-- EXT. NEW YORK - BIRDLAND - MARQUEE: Charlie Parker.

-- INT. NEW YORK - BIRDLAND - Charlie Parker playing.

-- EXT. NEW YORK JAZZ CLUB - MARQUEE: *Miles Davis*.

-- INT. NEW YORK JAZZ CLUB - Miles Davis playing.

-- EXT. NEW YORK JAZZ CLUB - MARQUEE: Miles Davis and newcomer Coleman Evans.

-- INT. NEW YORK JAZZ CLUB - Miles Davis plays with Coleman Evans on the piano.

-- INT. NEW YORK JAZZ CLUB - John Coltrane playing with Coleman Evans on the piano.

-- EXT. VILLAGE VANGUARD - MARQUEE: *Coleman Evans SOLD OUT*.

-- INT. VILLAGE VANGUARD - Coleman Evans playing with a quartet to a sold out crowd.

-- INT. VILLAGE VANGUARD - Coleman with his wife posing after the concert.

-- HEADLINE: NEW YORK TIMES - *"Wife of jazz great, Coleman Evans found dead of drug overdose."*

-- EXT. HARLEM APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT - Shirtless Coleman arrested by NYC Police.

-- POLICE BOOKING PHOTO OF COLEMAN

-- NY POST FRONT PAGE - *"Coleman Evans arrested with underage girl in Harlem apartment."*

-- EXT. CLUB DOWNBEAT - MARQUEE: *Coleman Evans CANCELED*.

-- EXT. ONYX CLUB - MARQUEE: *Coleman Evans CANCELED*.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. BROOKLYN - EAST RIVER - NIGHT

Coleman stands alone at the East River's edge, Manhattan's skyline a distant, accusatory silhouette.

His shoulders slump with the weight of a life unraveled, the city's lights reflecting his shattered dreams.

EXT. CLUB LE CAVE - NIGHT

Club Le Cave's neon sign flickers against rain-slicked cobblestones. Wisps of steam curl from a vendor's cart, the city's heartbeat pulsing beneath the night's quiet tension.

SUPER: PARIS - FIVE YEARS LATER

INT. CLUB LE CAVE - NIGHT

A dimly lit jazz club in the heart of Montmartre, packed with fans eager for the music to begin. The air is heavy with cigarette smoke and the low hum of conversation.

Coleman, mid-thirties, sits at the piano. A single spotlight carves him from darkness like a sculpture of sound. Sweat beads on his mahogany skin. His hand hovers - suspended - then strikes. A note pierces the silence. Another follows.

ANDRÉ (tenor sax), FELIX (upright bass), DAMON (drums) join. The quartet erupts in controlled chaos, their improvisation a living, breathing entity that pulls the audience into its gravitational pulse.

Coleman's hands move with precision, a controlled but frenetic pace. The musician he once was.

EXT. PARIS - 13TH ARRONDISSEMENT - NIGHT

The 13th Arrondissement; narrow streets lined with ethnic shops, cafés, and street vendors. A zone of marginalization, corruption, and silent tension.

INT. 13TH BAR - NIGHT

A mostly North African clientele. Rough patrons, laughter, and smoke.

BAZA, a strong Algerian in his thirties, sits alone at the end of the long bar, his men close but at a distance, respecting his authority.

The door creaks. OLIVIER, a young Frenchman of twenty-two, enters. Eyes follow him. He's clearly out of place. A few men step forward.

BAZA
(in Arabic)
Let him pass.

Olivier moves to the bar. Baza motions for him to sit. He motions to the BARMAN.

BAZA (CONT'D)
(in Arabic)
Bring him some pastis.

The Barman approaches carrying a bottle and a glass. He sets down the glass and pours the liqueur. Olivier sips nervously.

BAZA (CONT'D)
(accented English)
You have what I want?

Olivier hands him a folded piece of paper. Baza reads it.

BAZA (CONT'D)
You're sure about this?

OLIVIER
Yeah.

BAZA
Okay.

Baza pockets it. He slides an envelope across the bar toward Olivier, covering it with a firm, intimidating hand.

A small wrapped package sits beside the envelope. Baza pushes it toward Olivier and inclines his head toward the toilet door.

BAZA (CONT'D)
Go in there. No one will bother you.

Olivier hesitates, takes the package, and moves toward the toilet.

INT. 13TH BAR - TOILET - NIGHT

The stall is small, oppressive. Olivier sits on the closed commode, syringe in hand, arm tied off above the elbow. He pierces his skin. Tilts his head back as the drug takes hold.

Outside, the faint murmur of the bar continues, but Olivier is oblivious to the dangerous threads about to unravel.

INT. CLUB LE CAVE - NIGHT

Coleman and his trio continue playing, the audience soaking up the experience. They finish and the crowd erupts in applause. Coleman trades looks of satisfaction with his band.

EXT. CLUB LE CAVE - NIGHT

Coleman exits alone. Montmartre is alive, the streets crowded with stoned youths, couples making out, drunks arguing. He crosses the street and passes several small shop windows.

As he passes one of the windows, we see the faint reflection of a young woman, SOPHIE, brief and unnoticed, watching Coleman from across the narrow street.

Coleman's gaze sweeps the streets, absorbing the pulse of the city, as he walks toward a cafe.

INT. MONTMARTRE CAFÉ - NIGHT

Coleman sits alone at a small corner table under a dim lamp. His coat drapes over the chair back, scarf hanging loosely around his neck. A half-eaten omelet and espresso sit before him.

Sophie, mid-twenties, pretty but with an edge, enters. Her eyes scan the room briefly. She catches a glimpse of Coleman and walks to the counter and orders a coffee.

Sophie takes her coffee and sits at a nearby table across from Coleman. Coleman glances up at her, smiling.

SOPHIE

Longue nuit?

Coleman's French is not very good.

COLEMAN

Long night? Yeah, very long. Sorry, my French is not very good.

SOPHIE

That's all right. My English is not so good either.

(beat)

I saw you play tonight.

COLEMAN

You were at Le Cave?

SOPHIE

You play -- differently. Not just the notes. How do I say?... The spaces in between.

COLEMAN

You know music?

SOPHIE

I run a small record shop.

COLEMAN

Do you usually approach strangers in cafés to talk about music?

SOPHIE

Not usually. But sometimes the music makes it inevitable.

Coleman smiles. Silence falls. The café hums softly, the faint scrape of a chair, the hiss of the espresso machine.

COLEMAN

Maybe I need to come by your store sometime.

SOPHIE

Maybe. Depends on what you're looking for.

She finishes her coffee, places a few francs on the table and stands.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

It's not far from here. Two blocks, just up the street.

COLEMAN

What's it called?

Sophie takes a napkin and writes on it. She stands and hands it Coleman. She begins to leave, then stops and turns back.

SOPHIE

I liked your music.

And she leaves. Coleman watches her go, a mix of curiosity and something unspoken stirring within.

EXT. MONTMARTRE CAFÉ - NIGHT

Sophie exits onto the street. Through the window, Coleman sits at his table, watching.

INT. SOPHIE'S FLAT - NIGHT

A key turns in the lock. Sophie enters her small flat, immediately hearing desperate sounds from the back. She moves toward the bathroom, tension coiling in her shoulders.

Olivier is on the floor next to the toilet, throwing up.

In French, SUBTITLED:

SOPHIE

What the fuck!

Olivier tries to speak.

OLIVIER

I'm sorry.

He continues to throw up. Sophie grabs a towel and kneels down next to him.

SOPHIE

You are so stupid.

OLIVIER

I know. I know.

Sophie holds his head while he continues to throw up. She wipes what vomit she can from his face.

SOPHIE

(to herself)

Fuck.

END SUBTITLES.

INT. SOPHIE'S FLAT - NIGHT (LATER)

IN THE BEDROOM

Olivier is passed out in the bed.

IN THE BATHROOM

Sophie is on her hands and knees, cleaning the floor.

INT. METRO CAR - NIGHT (MOVING)

Coleman sits alone, riding the metro. The few other passengers ignore him. Coleman takes out the napkin Sophie gave him and looks at it, smiling slightly.

In Sophie's handwriting: *Le Disque Noir*

EXT. PARIS STREET - MORNING

Sophie walks, carrying a small grocery bag. A fresh baguette sticks out of the top. The city hums around her - shutters clanging, bicycles, distant voices. The streets are waking, alive but not yet busy.

INT. GRANDFATHER'S APARTMENT - MORNING

The door creaks as Sophie enters, bag in hand.

In French, SUBTITLED:

SOPHIE

Grandfather!

GRANDFATHER (O.S.)

In here, Sophie!

Sophie moves to the kitchen, begins unpacking groceries: fresh croissants, fruit, a small carton of milk.

Her GRANDFATHER, eighties, sharp-eyed but frail, enters slowly with his cane. He sees the croissants.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)

Ah! Croissants!

SOPHIE

And a baguette for later.

He sets two plates and two croissants on the small table, sits, and watches her with a soft smile.

Sophie finishes putting the groceries away, then sits across from him. They begin to eat.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

How are you today?

GRANDFATHER

Same as yesterday. How's the store?

SOPHIE

Same as yesterday.

He nods approvingly.

GRANDFATHER

That's good.

SOPHIE

It is.

END SUBTITLES.

They eat in comfortable silence, their ritual. Sophie sneaks a glance at her grandfather, who is quietly savoring his coffee. A faint smile crosses her face.

EXT. LE DISQUE NOIR - NIGHT

The storefront of Sophie's record store glows softly in the quiet Paris street. A small group of youths loiter, cigarette smoke curling into the night air. From inside, muffled jazz riffs spill out.

INT. LE DISQUE NOIR - NIGHT

The shop is snug and warmly lit. Rows of bins full of vinyl records create narrow aisles.

A few young people browse, fingers flipping through albums, whispering to friends. A vinyl jazz track spins, filling the room with low, smoky notes.

Sophie stands behind the counter, ringing up a customer. Sophie's employee, INÉS, comes behind the counter to retrieve a small package and takes it out on the floor.

SOPHIE
(to the customer)
Cinq francs.

The customer slides the coins across.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)
Merci.

The customer leaves. The bell above the door jingles as it opens. Sophie looks up.

Coleman and Damon, his drummer, stand in the doorway. Coleman pauses, taking in the store.

Inés looks at Coleman then back at Sophie. Handsome.

Sophie cocks her head to one side. Very French.

Coleman crosses the store, each step deliberate. Gravity follows him - a musician carrying unspoken stories in his movements. Sophie studies him as he approaches. Damon wanders through the store.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)
Bonsoir.

COLEMAN
Bonsoir.

SOPHIE
You decided to come.

COLEMAN
I was in the neighborhood. And I heard your music. Thought I'd see where it was coming from.

Sophie arches an eyebrow, a small, knowing smile.

SOPHIE
A happy accident then?

COLEMAN
Something like that.

SOPHIE
Who's your friend?

COLEMAN
Damon. He's our drummer.

SOPHIE
Ah.

Sophie looks to Inès who is watching Damon. Also handsome.
Inès smiles.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)
So... Does it meet your expectations?

Coleman shrugs, looks around.

COLEMAN
I haven't decided yet.

SOPHIE
Look around. You may find something
you like.

Smiling, he moves slowly down an aisle, fingers brushing
over record spines. Sophie watches, curious. She trades looks
with Inés who also watches but is more interested in Damon.

INÈS
I like his friend.

SOPHIE
Pfft.

Inés smiles knowingly, shaking her head.

Coleman stops at a jazz bin and begins flipping through some
record sleeves. Sophie approaches from behind.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)
Those are special.

COLEMAN
Really?

SOPHIE
Here. I'll show you.

She reaches to the back of the bin, pulling out a particular
record.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)
You might like this one.

Sophie hands him an album titled: *Coleman Turner - Live at*

The Village Vanguard. The cover shows a young Coleman mid-performance. Coleman takes it from her, studying it.

COLEMAN

Not very popular, I guess. No one's bought it.

Sophie smiles faintly, intrigued, sensing something deeper behind his measured tone.

SOPHIE

Well, I don't really want to sell it.

(beat)

You're not working tonight?

COLEMAN

Night off.

SOPHIE

Hmm.

A beat passes. He turns the record over, reading the liner notes. The connection between them hangs, subtle but palpable.

Sophie turns to see Inès at the counter. Damon is chatting her up and she seems to be enjoying it. Sophie smiles.

The jazz track continues, soft, looping around their quiet interaction as Sophie watches Coleman.

EXT. BAPTISTE'S BAR - NIGHT

A narrow corner of Paris, cobblestones slick from evening mist. Neon letters glow faintly: *Le Charbon Bleu*. A few blue-collar patrons linger at the many outside tables, smoking, laughing, beer and wine in hand.

A young Frenchman, GABRIEL, enters the bar. We follow him.

INT. BAPTISTE'S BAR - NIGHT

Warm light spills over polished wood. Locals drink, gossip, and play cards at the front tables. The hum of conversation, the clink of glasses.

Gabriel glides through the room and reaches a closed door. He knocks. The door opens. He enters.

INT. BAPTISTE'S BAR - BACKROOM - NIGHT

The backroom tells a different story. Weapons, ledgers, and small packages cover a long table.

BAPTISTE, French, lean, dangerous, eyes sharp as knives, sits at a table in the corner. Baptiste is the boss and everyone knows it. As he watches the room, he slowly taps a five Franc coin on the table, a habit he has.

His crew, a mix of wiry young thugs, are scattered around, cleaning weapons, nursing cheap beers. Gabriel acknowledges the crew as he approaches Baptiste. He leans down so only Baptiste hears.

In French, SUBTITLED:

BAPTISTE
How much this time?

GABRIEL
Twenty kilos. You meet with the Algerian -- give him his money. Then, we pick up the stuff and pay the balance to the driver.

BAPTISTE
Okay.

The door opens. Olivier stumbles in, unsteady on his feet, pale, eyes rimmed with exhaustion. Gabriel and Baptiste clock Olivier as he enters.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)
(annoyed)
Look at you -- still alive. A miracle.

Olivier offers a weak grin. It fades under Baptiste's sharp gaze. Baptiste gestures to a chair next to him. Olivier slides in.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)
Where have you been?

OLIVIER
At my sister's.

BAPTISTE
Your sister's? Are you sure?

Olivier is confused, not knowing what Baptiste means. Baptiste continues to tap the five Franc coin on the table, pointedly making Olivier nervous.

OLIVIER
I was sick.

BAPTISTE
How many times I tell you? You don't do your own shit.

OLIVIER

I know.

BAPTISTE

No, you don't know.

Baptiste turns to OBERT, one of his men.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

(to Obert)

You said you saw him with people in
the same business as us?

OBERT

Yeah.

BAPTISTE

(to Olivier)

You see? I know everything. Who were
these people?

OLIVIER

I don't know. I just had a drink at
a bar.

BAPTISTE

You're pathetic. I should throw you
back on the street where I found
you.

Baptiste continues to tap his coin, then stops.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

We'll deal with that later. Tonight,
we have business.

Baptiste stands and motions for another of his crew, an older, more bookish-looking man who sits at a nearby table, to hand him a ledger. He gets up and hands it to Baptiste then backs away. Baptiste flips through a few pages then stops. He drops the ledger on the long table in front of the crew and points his finger at an entry so the others can see it.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

This fucking rodent hasn't paid me
what he owes. He's a small-time piece
of shit who thinks he can skate.

Baptiste picks up an automatic from his table and stands, waving it menacingly.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

Nobody fucking skates!

The crew nods in grim agreement. Baptiste's gaze snaps to Olivier. He shifts nervously in the chair.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

I want you to find this rodent. Remind him who he owes. And don't fuck it up, or I won't be so nice next time.

Olivier swallows. His hungover haze makes him slow to respond. Baptiste steps close, the barrel of the automatic inches from Olivier's temple.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

Okay?

OLIVIER

(shaking)

Okay.

BAPTISTE

Make sure when you leave, he's as scared as you.

Baptiste slaps Olivier hard on the back.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

You got a gun?

OLIVIER

No.

He turns to another of his crew.

BAPTISTE

Give me your gun.

The thug pulls an automatic from his waistband and hands it to Baptiste.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

Is it loaded?

The thug nods his head.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

Good.

He hands it to Olivier who shakily takes it and puts it in his waistband.

Baptiste turns to FABRICE, a large, muscular man in the crew.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

Go with him. Don't come back without my money.

Fabrice nods, grabs Olivier by the jacket, pulling him from the chair.

FABRICE

Let's go.

END SUBTITLES.

Olivier follows Fabrice out of the room. The remaining crew watches – tense, uneasy. Baptiste sits and begins tapping his coin on the table... again.

EXT. SAINT-GERMAIN-DES-PRÉS - NIGHT

Saint-Germain-des-Prés pulses with nocturnal energy. Gaslight and neon paint the cobblestone streets in liquid gold. Jazz notes drift like smoke from doorways, drawing wandering souls into the night's intimate embrace and the pulse of music that defines the quarter.

In the distance, the neon marquee of Club Saint-Germain glows faintly, a beacon for those seeking jazz, smoke, and the city's secret rhythms.

EXT. CLUB SAINT-GERMAIN - NIGHT

The club's marquee glows against the Paris night announcing the evening's performance:

ART BLAKEY AND THE JAZZ MESSENGERS

As smoke curls from the street below, the muffled thrum of drums and brass leaks out into the night.

INT. CLUB SAINT-GERMAIN - NIGHT

Amber light bleeds through thick cigarette smoke. The quintet erupts on stage - Blakey's drums thunder, brass wails, bass walking a razor's edge, somewhere between chaos and perfect synchronization. The music pulses like a living heartbeat.

In the shadowed back, Coleman and Sophie occupy a small, flickering candlelit table. Intimate. Isolated.

Coleman leans back, letting the music wash over him, his eyes never leaving Sophie. She tucks a stray hair behind her ear, studying him with quiet, guarded intensity.

INT. CLUB SAINT-GERMAIN - NIGHT (LATER)

The band is between sets. It's quieter now. Bartenders mix drinks for patrons. Servers glide between the small tables.

Sophie and Coleman sit close, mid conversation.

SOPHIE
He's amazing. Did you know him before?

COLEMAN
I met him once.

SOPHIE
Did he ever hear you play?

COLEMAN
Possible. New York was a small world
for me back then.

SOPHIE
Do you miss it?

COLEMAN
Sometimes.
(beat)
Not always.

SOPHIE
I know about you. What happened --
to your wife. And, the other... I'm
sorry.

COLEMAN
That was another life. I'm here now.

SOPHIE
And how is your life here?

COLEMAN
Quiet.

SOPHIE
Quiet can be good. Will you make
more records?

COLEMAN
That, I don't know.

SOPHIE
I think you should. People love your
music. And Paris is not a bad place
to put down another mark.

COLEMAN
I like the guys I play with. They
sort of took me in when I got here.

SOPHIE
I think Inès, the girl who works for
me, likes your drummer.

COLEMAN

Damon's a good man. You can tell her
I said so.

SOPHIE

I will.

Bobby Timmons' piano solo cuts through the room like a knife - delicate, then suddenly fierce. Sophie's fingers tap a subtle rhythm against the table. Coleman watches her, transfixed.

COLEMAN

You like that?

SOPHIE

I like the piano.

COLEMAN

What do you like about it?

SOPHIE

Hmm... I think the piano can be anything -- quiet, soulful, intense, passionate. All the things that make life worth living.

(beat)

It can take me away, I think. To some other place.

(beat)

It makes me feel -- sexy.

Coleman smiles at Sophie. She locks into his eyes as the music washes over the room.

INT. COLEMAN'S FLAT - NIGHT

Coleman and Sophie move together in the dim light. Passionate, urgent, bodies tangled, sweating. Incredible sex.

INT. COLEMAN'S FLAT - NIGHT (LATER)

Sophie is curled on her side under the sheets. Coleman stands at the open window, naked, his muscular body silhouetted against the city lights.

SOPHIE

Your neighbors must like you very much.

Coleman turns, a slow smile, then slides back under the covers. Sophie laughs softly.

Sophie traces her finger along his stomach. A long scar is there. Old.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)
Where did you get this?

COLEMAN
Korea.

SOPHIE
You fought in the war?

COLEMAN
Yeah.

SOPHIE
And the scar?

COLEMAN
I don't think Koreans liked jazz.

Sophie knows he's trying to protect her from a bad story. She starts to tickle him.

COLEMAN (CONT'D)
Hey!

They both laugh.

INT. FIAT - NIGHT (MOVING)

Olivier grips the steering wheel, pale, sweat beading on his forehead. Fabrice sits beside him, cool, deliberate.

In French, SUBTITLED:

FABRICE
(looking around)
Is this your car?

OLIVIER
My sister's.

FABRICE
Nice.

A long silence as the streets slide by. Fabrice points ahead.

FABRICE (CONT'D)
Pull over here.

EXT. PARIS STREET - NIGHT

They stop on a dark street, the neighborhood rough. On the corner, a small, dilapidated restaurant: Tunis. Its worn sign faded above the entrance. Lights dim inside. Shadows creep along the walls.

Fabrice and Olivier exit the car, eyes scanning. Fabrice approaches the door first, checks the window, then nods.

FABRICE

Come on.

They enter.

END SUBTITLES.

INT. TUNIS RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The room is empty except for four North African men at the back. Lean, taut, watching. HAMZA, the leader, sits calmly. His men stand behind him.

They all speak in accented English.

HAMZA

Restaurant's closed.

FABRICE

Not here for the food.

Hamza narrows his eyes.

HAMZA

What then?

Olivier swallows, unsteady.

OLIVIER

You owe money. You haven't paid.

Hamza glances at his crew, then smiles.

HAMZA

I haven't sold it yet.

The crew smirks. A lie everyone knows.

FABRICE

Fine. We take it back.

HAMZA

No. Not today.

One of Hamza's men subtly drops his hand toward a gun at his hip. Fabrice and Olivier notice.

FABRICE

You don't want to do that. This is business.

HAMZA
Yes. My business.

FABRICE
Not yours. Ours.

HAMZA
How much do you want?

OLIVIER
All of it.

Hamza laughs, mockingly. His men stay stoic.

HAMZA
All of it?

OLIVIER
Yeah.

HAMZA
Tell Baptiste, I'll pay him what I
owe... When I want to.

A tense stand-off. Eyes dart. Fingers twitch near triggers.

Fabrice moves first. Gun drawn from behind his back – a single shot, and the man with the gun drops dead.

Chaos erupts. Guns flash. Screams pierce the smoke. Olivier fires wildly, hitting Hamza in the chest. He falls but keeps shooting. Fabrice kills another. Hamza is bleeding, screaming.

HAMZA (CONT'D)
KILL HIM!

The last man fires, Olivier returns fire, dropping him. Fabrice empties his gun, wounded. Hamza lifts his weapon one last time – grazes Olivier in side. Olivier fires back, Hamza dies.

Silence, broken only by Olivier's heavy breathing. Bodies and blood litter the floor. Fabrice is dead beside Olivier. Olivier begins to panic.

EXT. TUNIS RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Olivier staggers out, holding his side, blood soaking his shirt. Locals watch, frozen. He makes it to the Fiat.

INT. FIAT - NIGHT

Olivier struggles to start the car, grunting in pain. The engine fires up.

EXT. FIAT - NIGHT

The Fiat weaves through traffic haphazardly, narrowly missing other cars. Honking. Cursing.

INT. FIAT - NIGHT (MOVING)

Olivier drives through narrow streets, the world spinning, clutching his bleeding side. Intense pain. Frightened.

EXT. MONTMARTRE STREET - NIGHT

The Fiat is parked on the street. Sophie's street.

INT. SOPHIE'S FLAT - NIGHT

Olivier is in the bathroom, the door open. He removes his shirt revealing the wound. Not fatal but a lot of blood. He tries to clean the wound and bind it, not very well.

The flat is silent. Then, the sound of the door creaking open. Olivier freezes. Scared.

INT. METRO CAR - NIGHT (MOVING)

Sophie leans her head on Coleman's shoulder. The subway car rocks gently, muffled sounds hum beneath the low conversation of late-night passengers.

Coleman glances down at her, a faint smile, then returns his gaze to the passing tunnel outside.

EXT. MONTMARTRE STREET - METRO STOP - NIGHT

Sophie and Coleman climb the stairs from the Metro, emerging into the quiet Montmartre night. Street lamps cast long shadows.

They walk side by side. Sophie holds Coleman's arm lightly. The city feels softer here. Narrow streets, cobblestones slick from recent rain, but distant sirens pierce the calm.

Ahead, flashing blue and red lights flicker against the buildings. Sophie senses something.

COLEMAN

What is it?

SOPHIE

That's my building.

She releases his arm. Her pace quickens.

COLEMAN

Sophie?

Sophie breaks into a run.

INT. SOPHIE'S BUILDING - NIGHT

Sophie runs up the stairs. Police are at the top of the stairs and stop her.

Coleman arrives behind her. Sophie sees her apartment door open. More police.

POLICEMAN
(in French, subtitled)
You can't enter.

SOPHIE
(panicked)
Let me through!

Frantic, she pushes the policeman aside and runs to her door. Coleman follows.

COLEMAN
Sophie!

INT. SOPHIE'S FLAT - CONTINUOUS

Sophie pushes her way through the door and sees Olivier's body on the floor of the living room, blood surrounding his body, his throat slit viciously from ear to ear. Dead.

SOPHIE
NOOOOO!

The detective in charge turns, sees her, grabs and holds her as she tries to get to Olivier. She collapses in his arms, sobbing and screaming. The detective sees Coleman standing at the door.

The forensic team continues to process the body; photos, swabs, etc.

EXT. SOPHIE'S BUILDING - NIGHT (LATER)

Later, Sophie sits on the back of an open police van, wrapped in a blanket. Coleman stands next to her. The Detective in charge, VAILLANT, stands by. A POLICEMAN approaches with a bottle of water and hands it to Vaillant.

He hands it to Sophie. She takes it, her eyes swollen from crying. She nods.

VAILLANT
(in French, subtitled)
I am Commissaire Vaillant.
(MORE)

VAILLANT (CONT'D)

I am in charge of the investigation.
This man was your -- boyfriend?

SOPHIE

(eying Coleman)
In English, please.

VAILLANT

Of course.
(to Coleman)
I was just asking her if the man was --
related?

SOPHIE

Olivier is my brother.

VAILLANT

Ah. Apologies. And your name?

SOPHIE

Sophie Ardent.

VAILLANT

Your brother's name?

SOPHIE

Olivier.

VAILLANT

Did he live with you?

SOPHIE

No. He stayed here when he needed
to.

VAILLANT

Hmm.

(pointing)

The car there. The Fiat. That is
registered to you?

SOPHIE

Yes.

VAILLANT

We'll have to take it. There was a
lot of blood inside.

SOPHIE

I don't understand.

VAILLANT

Your brother was wounded when he got here. He was shot -- in the side. It wasn't bad. Uh... That's not why he died.

Sophie closes her eyes, crying quietly, understanding.

VAILLANT (CONT'D)

You'll get your car back when we've finished.

(to Coleman)

You are the boyfriend?

Sophie looks to Coleman.

COLEMAN

I'm a friend.

VAILLANT

Your name?

COLEMAN

Coleman Evans.

VAILLANT

Can you add anything, Monsieur Evans?

COLEMAN

I didn't know him.

A UNIFORMED OFFICER comes up to Vaillant, pulls him aside and speaks to him quietly. After a bit, Vaillant comes back to them.

VAILLANT

There was a shooting earlier tonight. A restaurant. Not a nice area. Several people were killed. Your car was seen leaving the restaurant. A man, fitting your brother's description was seen leaving the restaurant and driving away. He was uh -- il saignait... He was bleeding. According to a witness.

(beat)

I'm sorry.

COLEMAN

Who were these people?

VAILLANT

Drug dealers. Tunisian.

(to Sophie)

Do you know about these people?

SOPHIE

I don't know what my brother did. He wasn't very strong.

VAILLANT

Hmm. Okay.

Vaillant signals for his assistant to leave.

VAILLANT (CONT'D)

(in French, subtitled)

Again... I'm sorry for your loss. Someone will be in touch about your car.

SOPHIE

Merci.

The detective starts to leave and turns back.

VAILLANT

I will need you both to come to the station tomorrow to make a formal statement. If that would be all right.

Coleman looks to Sophie.

COLEMAN

Of course.

VAILLANT

(to Sophie)

Do you have a place to stay tonight?

Sophie looks to Coleman.

COLEMAN

She does.

VAILLANT

I will have one of my men drive you.

Vaillant motions for an OFFICER to come over. Vaillant tells the officer to drive them to wherever they are going. The officer nods and offers his hand to Sophie. She takes it.

She and Coleman start to follow him to his car when the coroners wheel out a gurney from the building, draped in a sheet. Olivier. They roll it to the ambulance.

Sophie and Coleman stop at the officer's car and watch as the gurney is loaded into the ambulance.

COLEMAN
(quietly)
Are you all right?

SOPHIE
I have to tell my grandfather.

EXT. SEINE RIVER WALK - MORNING

Sophie sits with her grandfather on a bench overlooking the Seine. She has just told him about Olivier. His eyes are moist with tears.

He takes Sophie's hand in his. Deep breath. He stands and begins to walk with his cane. Sophie stands and follows silently. She takes his free hand in her's and they continue in silence.

EXT. 13TH BAR - MORNING

Merchants are piling trash outside their shops. A trash collection truck moves slowly down the street, collecting bins.

Baza exits the bar and walks to a dark sedan parked across the street. He checks then opens the back door and gets in.

INT. ABREO'S CAR - MORNING

ABREO, an Algerian smuggler and a brick of a man with an unfriendly face sits in the back seat. His DRIVER sits in front.

Baza hands him the paper given to him by Olivier.

In Arabic, SUBTITLED:

ABREO
This is from your snitch?

BAZA
He works for Baptiste.

Abreo reads the paper.

ABREO
You believe this is true?

BAZA
Baptiste has always wanted more.

ABREO

It seems he's starting to forget his loyalties and who is allowing him to profit.

(beat)

Baptiste is greedy. And he's getting sloppy. The police are not as stupid as he thinks. He's acting more like a pimp every day.

BAZA

What do you want me to do?

ABREO

You trust this boy?

BAZA

He's an addict.

ABREO

You're taking care of him?

BAZA

As long as he keeps bringing us information. I give him a bit. Just enough.

ABREO

Good. Keep him watching Baptiste. He still makes us money.

BAZA

Okay.

Baza exits the car.

END SUBTITLES.

EXT. ABREO'S CAR - MORNING

Baza crosses back to the bar and Abreo's car takes off down the street.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Establishing the Prefecture de Police.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY

Sophie and Coleman sit side by side at a metal table. A recording device is there.

Vaillant enters with a subordinate, Inspector PICHARD, trailing him.

VAILLANT
(in French, subtitled)
Thank you for coming.

SOPHIE
(quietly)
Yes.

VAILLANT
English. Sorry.

They sit opposite.

VAILLANT (CONT'D)
This is Inspector Pichard. He is
assisting me in this investigation.

Pichard nods to Sophie and Coleman. Pichard starts the recorder. Vaillant opens a folder in front of him.

VAILLANT (CONT'D)
I want to understand Olivier's life,
if I can.
(beat)
He was your younger brother. Yes?

Sophie takes a deep breath, trying to steady herself.

SOPHIE
Yes. He was three years younger.

VAILLANT
And your parents?

SOPHIE
They died in the war.

VAILLANT
You were both very young. Who raised
you?

SOPHIE
Our grandfather.

VAILLANT
Ah. Who were Olivier's friends? Did
you know any of them?

SOPHIE
When he was younger, yes. But, the
last few years, no. He got into some
trouble.

Vaillant flips through the folder and stops at a page.

VAILLANT
 He was arrested. Twice.
 (reading)
 Petty theft. Assault. Did he use
 drugs?

SOPHIE
 (hesitates)
 I think so.

The detective holds up a booking photo of Fabrice.

VAILLANT
 Do you know this man?

Sophie looks.

SOPHIE
 No. I don't recognize him.

VAILLANT
 He was killed at the restaurant last
 night. His blood was in your car.
 Along with your brother's.

He lays out another photo. This one of Baptiste.

VAILLANT (CONT'D)
 How about this one?

SOPHIE
 He came by the store a few times
 with my brother. I didn't like him.

VAILLANT
 Your record store...

SOPHIE
 Yes.

Vaillant points to the photo on the table of Baptiste.

VAILLANT
 This man's name is Baptiste Gauthier.
 He's a drug dealer. Very dangerous.

He points to the photo of Fabrice.

VAILLANT (CONT'D)
 This man is Fabrice Payet. He worked
 for Gauthier. Your brother was with
 him when he was killed. We found a
 gun at the restaurant that was used
 in the shootings.
 (MORE)

VAILLANT (CONT'D)

Your brother's blood was on it.
Everyone else had their guns. This
gun...? This gun had no owner.

SOPHIE

Who murdered my brother, Commissaire?

Vaillant leans back in his chair. Coleman reaches for Sophie's hand under the table. A long moment passes.

EXT. TUNIS RESTAURANT - DAY

The restaurant is surrounded by yellow police tape and officers. A dark sedan is parked on the street opposite.

INT. DARK SEDAN - DAY

Baptiste is in the back seat. Two of his crew, Obert and RENARD are in front. Renard is the driver. They watch the restaurant.

In French, SUBTITLED:

BAPTISTE

That north African still owes me
money.

RENARD

Well, he's dead now.

BAPTISTE

I don't care. Find out who in his
crew is still alive. We'll get it
from them.

Renard and Obert exchange looks.

RENARD

What about Fabrice?

BAPTISTE

What about him? He's dead. Those
monkeys in there killed him. Nothing
we can do about that.

RENARD

Olivier?

BAPTISTE

Yeah. Olivier.

(beat)

Well... I don't know what we can do
about him. I should have left him on
the street.

OBERT
He has a sister.

A long beat...

BAPTISTE
I know.
(beat)
Let's go.

END SUBTITLES.

Renard pulls the car away from the curb.

INT. CLUB LE CAVE - NIGHT

Spotlights slice through smoky darkness. Coleman's quartet plays with razor-sharp precision, each note cutting through the packed club's charged atmosphere.

At the bar's edge, Sophie sits alone - a solitary figure, her untouched wine glass a silent testament to her grief.

INT. CLUB LE CAVE - NIGHT (LATER)

Between sets, Coleman is sitting next to Sophie at the bar. He drinks water.

COLEMAN
(softly)
You didn't need to come tonight.

SOPHIE
I couldn't be alone. The silence...
it's unbearable.

Coleman's hand covers hers - a gentle anchor in her storm of pain.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)
How do I carry this pain?

Coleman could answer but he doesn't.

COLEMAN
Tell me about Olivier. The good
things.

Sophie is heartbroken but she thinks back...

SOPHIE
When my parents died, I didn't think
he would get over it. He was so young.
(MORE)

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

I knew I had to be strong for him, but I was the one who cried. All the time. Nothing could take that emptiness away.

(beat)

We were at my grandparent's house. They lived in the country then. I locked myself in a room and wept. It seemed like hours. Olivier came in and put his arms around me. He didn't say anything at first. Then, he leaned down and whispered in my ear... It's just you and me now. This is what we have.

(beat)

He was only six years old.

COLEMAN

What made him get involved with Baptiste?

SOPHIE

He was lost. Growing up without parents was harder for him, I think. After my grandmother died, we moved here. It was too much for him. A young boy in Paris, trying to become a man... with no one there to guide him. He loved my grandfather but...

(beat)

Baptiste looks for boys like Olivier. For him, they're just more bullets for his gun. Once they're spent, he just puts new ones in.

Sophie looks to Coleman, her eyes glistening.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

Will you go to the funeral with me?

COLEMAN

If you want me to. Of course.

SOPHIE

I do.

EXT. PARIS CEMETERY - DAY

Rows of weathered, above-ground tombs rise against a grey and darkening sky. A small cluster of mourners stand quietly.

Sophie stands before a modest family tomb. Her grandfather, cane in hand, is beside her. Coleman stays slightly behind. A PRIEST stands before them.

In French, SUBTITLED:

PRIEST

Let us pray. Eternal rest grant unto
Olivier, O Lord, and let perpetual
light shine upon him. May he rest in
peace.

MOURNERS

Amen.

PRIEST

Go in peace, and may the Lord console
your hearts.

Sophie looks at the stone with Olivier's name and dates.
Next to it, those of her Grandmother and her parents.

GRANDFATHER

(softly, to Sophie)

They would have wanted it this way.
Quiet.

Sophie squeezes her grandfather's arm just a little more.

Coleman's gaze drifts. A dark silhouette lurks at the
cemetery's edge - Baptiste, watching like a predator, flanked
by Renard and Obert.

He leans down and whispers in Sophie's ear. She turns her
head and sees Baptiste.

SOPHIE

(whispered, cold)

Baptiste.

The grandfather looks over.

GRANDFATHER

Who is that?

Sophie turns back to the tomb.

SOPHIE

No one.

The service continues. Flowers are laid. Words whispered.
Tears wiped. Sophie's grandfather moves to some other mourners
to say thank you.

Sophie steps back from the tomb, Baptiste moves forward,
almost casually, blending with the mourners. He stops a few
feet away, hands loosely folded. Sophie stiffens.

BAPTISTE
Bonjour, Sophie.

He tilts his head, eyes scanning her face like a predator.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)
It's tragic what happened to your brother.

SOPHIE
Why are you here?

BAPTISTE
(with calculated softness)
To pay my respects. To what's left of your family.

SOPHIE
You're the reason Olivier is dead.

BAPTISTE
Why would you say such a terrible thing?

SOPHIE
My brother was weak. And you took advantage of him.

Baptiste moves a little closer to Sophie, quieter, menacing.

BAPTISTE
I took your brother in because he needed help. He would have died a lot sooner if I hadn't given him a home.

SOPHIE
He had a home.

BAPTISTE
No. You were -- a service station. He went to you to have his ass wiped.
(beat)
I gave him dignity. I gave him a reason to live. Something you could not do.

Sophie gets right into his face, defiant.

SOPHIE
I know who you are, Baptiste. You take boys and make them believe they're men. But, you destroy them.
(MORE)

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

You kill people with your drugs. You
kill children with your drugs.

BAPTISTE

I force no one to do my drugs. I
just take advantage of it.

Sophie spits directly into Baptiste's face. His men tense,
but Baptiste's hand stops them. Coleman grips Sophie's arm,
sensing the volcanic rage beneath her grief.

Baptiste wipes the spit away, his smile never wavering.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

Be careful, Sophie. My patience has
limits.

END SUBTITLES.

Baptiste eyes Coleman.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

(in English)

You're the American from New York. I
know all about you. I read your wife
liked drugs. And you like young girls.

Coleman moves forward. Renard and Obert step toward Coleman,
menacingly. Baptiste smirks knowing he pressed the button he
wanted to, then turns to Sophie.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

You should be careful of this one,
Sophie. He is a man with no country.
And that makes him desperate.

Without waiting for a response, Baptiste turns with his men
and walks away, drifting down the row of tombs.

Sophie and Coleman stand together in silence, watching
Baptiste and his men walk away.

EXT. TUNIS RESTAURANT - DAY

The restaurant is dark, empty. Yellow police tape flutters
in the breeze. A light Paris rain falls on the cobblestones.

A POLICE OFFICER stands guard outside of the restaurant. A
car pulls to the curb. Vaillant and Pichard get out of the
car, acknowledge the officer, and enter the restaurant.

INT. TUNIS RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Vaillant moves through the empty, blood-streaked room with Pichard. Tables and chairs lie overturned. Bullet holes scar the walls. Faint light glints off spent shell casings on the floor.

Technicians work silently in the corners, bagging evidence, taking photos.

In French, SUBTITLED:

VAILLANT

What a mess.

Pichard refers to a folder he's holding.

PICHARD

We've identified two of the North Africans. One of them, Hamza Nasri, was in prison until six months ago.

VAILLANT

For what?

PICHARD

Assault, firearm possession, drugs. He was in for two years.

VAILLANT

The others?

PICHARD

One was picked up for solicitation. Released. The other two had no record. Could have just arrived.

VAILLANT

Seems like Hamza tried to take a step up. Didn't work out well for him.

Vaillant goes to a wall with dozens of pock marked bullet holes.

VAILLANT (CONT'D)

There were no drugs here?

PICHARD

No.

VAILLANT

Money?

PICHARD

Not much. Nothing to cause all of this.

Vaillant turns.

VAILLANT

Maybe someone didn't pay.

PICHARD

What about Baptiste?

VAILLANT

Bring him in. He wasn't here, but he lost a man. Maybe he wants to talk.

PICHARD

His business is growing, I think.

VAILLANT

I know.

PICHARD

You think he knows something about that kid who had his throat cut?

VAILLANT

I don't know... Maybe.

END SUBTITLES.

Vaillant stands silent, surveying the chaos. Pichard scribbles notes.

INT. BISTRO - DAY

A small bistro in the 18th. A few customers are eating at tables in the front. A BARTENDER is cleaning the bar. Pichard and two UNIFORMED OFFICERS enter.

The bartender looks up, continuing to clean. Pichard goes to the bar and leans over to speak to the bartender quietly. We don't hear what the bartender says but he inclines his head toward the back.

Pichard and the officers walk to the back of the restaurant. Baptiste sits at a table eating with Renard and Obert. The men begin to move and Baptiste puts his hand on the table letting them know not to. Baptiste doesn't react.

In French, SUBTITLED:

PICHARD

Enjoying your day?

Baptiste calmly places his silverware on the table.

BAPTISTE
 Pichard... Are you here for lunch? I
 think there are tables in the front.

PICHARD
 We have questions for you.

BAPTISTE
 Go ahead.

PICHARD
 Not here.

BAPTISTE
 Ahh. I would like to finish my meal.
 The food here is very good.

Pichard is stone-faced. As are the officers. Baptiste looks
 them over.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)
 Hmm.

Pichard motions to the door. Lunch is over.

END SUBTITLES.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

The door to the station opens. Pichard leads the two officers
 and Baptiste, hands cuffed behind him, through the lobby and
 down a hallway.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Baptiste is sitting in a chair, still handcuffed. Two empty
 chairs sit across from him.

The door opens and Pichard and Vaillant enter. They cross
 the room and sit. Both place folders on the table in front
 of them. Baptiste stares at the men, unflinching. Emotionless.

Vaillant opens his folder, reading briefly.

In French, SUBTITLED:

VAILLANT
 Baptiste Gauthier.

BAPTISTE
 (re: Pichard)
 At least he picked up the correct
 man.

VAILLANT

You know why you're here?

BAPTISTE

You have no one else to talk to?

VAILLANT

I have a lot of people I can talk to. Of course, some of them are dead now. So...

BAPTISTE

That's too bad.

VAILLANT

Not really. I don't like to waste my time. Might as well talk to the main man, right?

BAPTISTE

I suppose.

VAILLANT

Where were you Tuesday night?

BAPTISTE

I don't remember.

VAILLANT

Really?

Pichard lays out photos of the Tunis Restaurant murders. Graphic in detail. One is close up of Fabrice. Dead.

VAILLANT (CONT'D)

You lost a man that night. You don't remember what you were doing.

BAPTISTE

Oh, that's right. I was with friends at a bar. All night.

VAILLANT

How is business these days?

BAPTISTE

What business would that be? I have family money. I own a bar. I don't really need a job. Unlike you.

VAILLANT

Tell me about Olivier Ardent.

BAPTISTE

A tragedy.

VAILLANT

You knew him?

BAPTISTE

I helped him when no one else would.
He probably thought of me as his...
older brother.

VAILLANT

I doubt his sister would agree.

BAPTISTE

Ah, Sophie... Probably not.

Pichard lays out the crime scene photos of Olivier's murder.
Throat slit. Blood everywhere. Baptiste looks, unmoved.

VAILLANT

His throat was slit.

BAPTISTE

That would seem a very brutal way to
die. But, accidents happen. People
make the wrong decisions.

VAILLANT

They do.

He takes out a plastic evidence bag with a folded knife
inside.

VAILLANT (CONT'D)

This was taken from you earlier. You
mind if we check it?

BAPTISTE

No.

VAILLANT

You're sure? We won't find any blood?

BAPTISTE

Well... I killed a rat with it
recently. Maybe, I didn't get all
the blood off.

Vaillant shoves the desk forward violently, sending Baptiste
sprawling across the floor.

VAILLANT

(to Pichard)

Pick him up.

Pichard roughly picks up Baptiste and pins him against the
wall. Valiant calmly comes over, inches from Baptiste.

VAILLANT (CONT'D)

I'll take that as your acknowledgment.

BAPTISTE

If you had anything, you would arrest me. We both know that.

Vaillant grabs Baptiste by the throat viciously and braces him against the wall. With his free hand, Vaillant pulls out his automatic and puts it against Baptiste's temple.

VAILLANT

I don't need to arrest you, Baptiste. Not really. I know where you live. I know where you eat, drink, fuck, shit. Doesn't matter.

BAPTISTE

You think I tell anything to a man who has a gun to my head?

VAILLANT

You don't understand. I don't negotiate with people like you. I'm just a janitor who takes out the trash. Every day. And that's all you are to me.

Vaillant throws Baptiste aside, sending him to the ground. He holsters his weapon.

VAILLANT (CONT'D)

(to Pichard)

Put this garbage back on the street.

Vaillant turns to leave.

BAPTISTE

Vaillant.

Vaillant stops and turns.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

You think I'm scared of you?

VAILLANT

You should be.

Vaillant leaves the room. Baptiste on the ground, looks back at Pichard.

END SUBTITLES.

INT. POLICE STATION - VAILLANT'S OFFICE - DAY

Vaillant is at his desk when Pichard enters.

In French, SUBTITLED:

PICHARD

That should make him look over his shoulder.

VAILLANT

Put two men on him. Not too close. I want to see what he does.

PICHARD

You think he was involved with killing that boy?

VAILLANT

I do. But, this wasn't just about the boy.

PICHARD

The drugs.

VAILLANT

We need to talk to Lambert. I want to see what Narcotics knows about his supplier.

PICHARD

Right. What about the boy's sister? And the musician? Baptiste is not someone to leave loose ends.

VAILLANT

No. You're right there. Was anything found at the girl's apartment?

PICHARD

Nothing yet.

VAILLANT

Keep looking. That boy was killed for a reason. I want to know what it was.

Pichard turns and exits the office.

END SUBTITLES.

INT. POLICE STATION - NARCOTICS DIVISION - DAY

Vaillant and Pichard enter a cramped, paper-strewn office.

LAMBERT, 50s, grizzled, cigarette permanently hanging from his lip, sits behind a desk stacked with files and ledger books.

In French, SUBTITLED:

VAILLANT

Lambert.

LAMBERT

Ah, Commissaire. Pichard. I thought I'd be seeing you here at some point.

VAILLANT

We have multiple murders.

LAMBERT

Who doesn't?

VAILLANT

These are people you know, I think. We need a read on Baptiste Gauthier. His operation. Where the shipments are coming from.

Lambert flicks ash into an overused tray.

LAMBERT

He used to be small-time a few years ago. Now, with more men. More guns. A little luck. He's bigger. He's also crazy. His temper is causing him to get sloppy. Probably why we have bodies piling up.

VAILLANT

His source?

LAMBERT

North African, mostly small batches from Marseilles. He's got good connections.

VAILLANT

With who?

Lambert takes a file from a wire rack on his desk and opens it. He flips it open to a booking photo and some surveillance photos.

LAMBERT

Probably this man. His name is Abreo. Algerian.

(MORE)

LAMBERT (CONT'D)

Became a big fish after the riots a few years ago when most of his competition was killed off. Has a disdain for the police. For obvious reasons. Moves large loads. Smooth. Uses intermediaries.

VAILLANT

And you can't arrest him?

LAMBERT

Our new prosecutor is scared to bring any cases forward unless they're air tight. And no mistakes. We send them in -- he denies them. Simple as that. So, we keep trying.

He flips a page and shows surveillance photos of Baza.

LAMBERT (CONT'D)

One of Abreo's men is named Baza. Handles pickups, distributions, money. Very loyal. Since the killings in '62, French Algerians have taken advantage of the government's lack of courage, shall we say. With Baza's help, Abreo is becoming nearly untouchable. It's like a fucking cult.

VAILLANT

So, Baza sets up Baptiste's product. Collects and then gets it to Abreo.

LAMBERT

Exactly. We keep waiting for them to slip. But, so far, we don't have enough to put a case together. No paper, no witnesses willing to talk.

VAILLANT

And the crews? Like Baptiste's?

LAMBERT

Well, you already know what happened at Tunis. That was a small time buyer who thought it was smart to not pay. You saw what happened to him. Baptiste lost a man.

VAILLANT

What do you know about a young man named Olivier Ardent?

LAMBERT

That's the kid who got his throat cut?

VAILLANT

Yeah. He was at Tunis. He's the only one who lived. At least for a few hours.

LAMBERT

He showed up on some surveillance we had on Baza. He was just a kid.

VAILLANT

We think it's possible Baptiste had something to do with his murder.

LAMBERT

Abreo. Baza. Baptiste. All connected. But this man, Baza? He has a talent for recruitment.

PICHARD

What do you mean?

LAMBERT

Word is, he's been able to put ears into the crews he's selling to. Every one of them. They report back. Smart really. Abreo always knows what's going on when he's not there.

(beat)

That kid? Your victim? Unlikely to be random. Someone wanted to send a message - probably to Abreo, if he was truly working for him.

VAILLANT

Anything else?

LAMBERT

My sources believe that a large shipment is due very soon. If that's the case, Baptiste will be getting his share.

Vaillant closes his notebook, leans back.

LAMBERT (CONT'D)

Commissaire. Baptiste is ruthless. Remember that. He won't hesitate to kill anyone who crosses him. The Algerians? It's hard to read them.

(MORE)

LAMBERT (CONT'D)

But, I think they're getting tired of Baptiste as well. And, if it starts to damage their business, they have enough rats in the walls to take care of the problem. Without our help.

Vaillant trades looks with Pichard.

VAILLANT

All right. Keep me informed if anything develops.

Lambert returns to his ledgers, cigarette smoke twisting like pale serpents around the harsh fluorescent light. Vaillant and Pichard exit the office.

INT. CLUB LE CAVE - NIGHT

Coleman's quartet finishes a tense, electrifying set. The audience claps, some whistle. Coleman leans back on the bench, wiping sweat from his forehead.

INT. CLUB LE CAVE - NIGHT (LATER)

Coleman sits at the bar, towel pressed against his damp skin. Eager fans cluster around, seeking autographs.

FAN #1

You were amazing.

COLEMAN

Thanks.

FAN #2

I love your playing.

Coleman's gaze drifts past his fans, landing on Baptiste seated at the far end of the bar. Renard and Obert flank him like silent predators.

Two plainclothes police officers watch from across the room.

BAPTISTE

May I buy you a drink?

COLEMAN

I don't drink.

BAPTISTE

Ah. Too bad. I like to drink.

Baptiste motions for the BARTENDER to bring him another.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)
I never heard you play before. You're good.

The bartender brings over Baptiste's drink and places it on the bar.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)
Merci.

The bartender nods and walks away. Baptiste sips slowly. Coleman watches him closely.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)
You know... Sophie is important to me.

COLEMAN
I don't think so.

BAPTISTE
Oh, no. It's true. Her brother was important to me. That makes her important to me. You understand?

COLEMAN
What do you want?

BAPTISTE
I want to know who did this terrible thing to her brother. I mean... He wasn't very smart. But, he was a good kid.

COLEMAN
So, he worked for you?

BAPTISTE
Yeah. He cleaned the bar. Ran errands. Small things, you know?

COLEMAN
Why do you think someone would kill him? Who would take a knife and cut his throat from ear to ear? And then leave him to die -- on the floor -- like he was nothing? Like he meant nothing to anyone? Not to his sister. Not to his grandfather... Not to you.

This unnerves Baptiste but he covers.

COLEMAN (CONT'D)

I knew people like you in New York.
There was always somebody stronger.
Somebody with more money. More people.
They never lasted long. They usually
ended up like Olivier. No one ever
saw them again.

Baptiste leans in closer to Coleman so only he can hear.

BAPTISTE

You know... You're a very good
musician. I know you've had your
troubles in the past. I understand.
And I know you like Sophie. That,
I'm not so comfortable with. Just
saying...

(beat)

I'll tell you a secret...

(almost whispering)

I don't like niggers. And, I don't
like you.

Coleman doesn't react which throws Baptiste. He turns to his
men. Smirks.

COLEMAN

You may think I don't know what pain
is. What death means. You would be
wrong. I've been there.

(beat)

And I've killed a lot more men than
you have.

Coleman stands up. Obert takes a step forward to Coleman,
reaching for his gun.

In a lightning movement, Coleman disarms Obert - two sharp
punches sending him crashing to the floor. Renard starts
forward, but Baptiste's raised hand freezes him.

The cops watch, tense.

COLEMAN (CONT'D)

I don't like to be threatened.
Especially by people like you.

BAPTISTE

I'm impressed.

COLEMAN

Don't be.

Coleman leans in close to Baptiste, so only he can hear.

COLEMAN (CONT'D)
 (in French, subtitled)
 If I see you near Sophie again, it
 won't be these idiots I go after.
 It'll be you.

Baptiste smirks, then turns to Renard.

BAPTISTE
 (in French, subtitled)
 Pick him up.

Baptiste turns and walks to the door. Renard picks up Obert,
 and walks him to the door past the two cops.

EXT. CLUB LE CAVE - NIGHT

Baptiste and his two men exit the club. The street is alive
 with people. Baptiste is angry.

BAPTISTE
 (in French, subtitled)
 That nigger needs to be taught a
 lesson. And his fucking girlfriend.

Renard and Obert nod in acknowledgment as they continue to
 their car.

INT. POLICE STATION - VAILLANT'S OFFICE - DAY

Vaillant is at his desk sipping espresso. The two undercover
 detectives at Club le Cave, MOREAU and GARNIER, sit across
 from him. Pichard stands in the doorway.

In French, SUBTITLED:

VAILLANT
 You're joking?

MOREAU
 No, sir.

GARNIER
 He took out Baptiste's man so fast,
 I couldn't believe it.

MOREAU
 Baptiste just stood there. I don't
 think he could believe it either.

Vaillant looks to Pichard who just shrugs.

VAILLANT
 Well, it seems this American is more
 than just a piano player.

Vaillant sips his coffee, thinking.

VAILLANT (CONT'D)
One of you stay on Baptiste. The other, keep an eye on the girl.

PICHARD
What about the musician?

VAILLANT
I think our musician can take care of himself. But, he'll be close to the girl. So...

MOREAU
Yes, sir.

The detectives leave.

PICHARD
Well?

VAILLANT
Find out who this musician really is.

END SUBTITLES.

INT. COLEMAN'S FLAT - DAY

Coleman is making coffee in the kitchen. Sophie, still in bed, turns sleepily to him.

SOPHIE
Is that for me?

COLEMAN
Of course.

SOPHIE
Mmmm.

Coleman brings over the coffee. She sits up, he hands it to her and sits on the edge of the bed.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)
Thank you.

She sips the coffee.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)
This is good. How was the show last night?

COLEMAN

It was okay.

Sophie senses something is off.

SOPHIE

That's not very convincing. What is it?

COLEMAN

Baptiste showed up.

SOPHIE

You talked to him?

COLEMAN

Yeah.

SOPHIE

That's it? Nothing else?

COLEMAN

That's it.

Sophie eyes Coleman. She knows that's not it...

SOPHIE

I don't believe you. Baptiste is not a man who just stops by to have a chat.

(beat)

What happened?

COLEMAN

Nothing important. But he's dangerous.

(beat)

And, I think he killed your brother.

This hits Sophie hard.

SOPHIE

Why?

COLEMAN

Just a feeling. He reminded me of people I knew a long time ago.

SOPHIE

In New York...

COLEMAN

Yes.

SOPHIE

We should tell that detective.

COLEMAN

I think he suspects the same thing.
He had two men at the club.

SOPHIE

I hate Baptiste. But I never thought
he would kill Olivier.

COLEMAN

I could be wrong. But, I don't think
I am.

SOPHIE

What can we do?

COLEMAN

The police know who Baptiste is and
what he does.

SOPHIE

And still they can do nothing.

COLEMAN

I'm worried about you.

Sophie puts her coffee down and wraps her arms around Coleman.

SOPHIE

Tell me we'll be safe.

Coleman holds her, but he can't say that. Sophie knows it.

EXT. RUN-DOWN APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

A miserable looking building in the worst part of Paris. The street is empty save for a few parked cars. Baptiste's car pulls up across from the building and parks.

After a moment, Obert and Renard exit from the front doors. Baptiste exits from the back. He stands, scans the street, then starts to walk toward the building. Obert and Renard follow.

They stand at the front door to the building. Baptiste looks up and down the street again. A SEDAN turns onto the street. Baptiste clocks it. Baptiste and his men move inside.

INT. RUN-DOWN APARTMENT - NIGHT

The room is cramped, dimly lit by a single swinging bulb. Walls are cracked, peeling paint. Cardboard boxes are stacked haphazardly, some taped shut, others still open.

Three young NORTH AFRICANS sit huddled at a table, eating Tunisian food, drinking beer and speaking quietly to each other.

EXT. RUN-DOWN APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

The sedan that turned the corner is now parked on the street, on the same side as the apartment building. Detective Garnier, from the meeting with Vaillant, sits inside, smoking a cigarette. He watches the front of the apartment building.

INT. RUN-DOWN APARTMENT - NIGHT

The door flies open. Obert and Renard burst in, guns raised, boots thudding on the worn wooden floor.

The North Africans freeze, wide-eyed, terror etched across their faces.

They speak in accented English.

RENARD
Hands on the table!

The North Africans comply, shaking.

From the shadows at the doorway, Baptiste enters slowly, calmly, his eyes cold and calculating. He scans the room, then rests on the North Africans.

He walks to the table. Looks it over. Picks up a fork and stabs at the food.

BAPTISTE
How do you eat this shit?

He drops the fork into the food. He pulls an empty chair to the table and sits. The North Africans are even more scared now. Baptiste's men have their guns trained on the North Africans.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)
You know who I am?

They all shake their heads "no." Baptiste looks at the oldest of the three. He's maybe twenty or twenty-one.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)
You know why I'm here?

OLDER NORTH AFRICAN
No.

BAPTISTE

That surprises me.

(beat)

Your boss? Hamza? You know he's dead, right? And all the rest of your friends?

OLDER NORTH AFRICAN

Yes.

BAPTISTE

Hamza owes me money. A lot of it. And, now that he's dead... You owe me money.

A tense silence. The North Africans shift uneasily, too afraid to speak. Baptiste adjusts his chair closer.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

Where is my money?

OLDER NORTH AFRICAN

I don't know.

Silence. Then, in a flash, Baptiste shoots the youngest man. He collapses. Eyes wide. Silence. Baptiste never moves, locking eyes with the older boy.

BAPTISTE

Now you know I'm a serious man.

The older North African shakily points a finger toward the kitchen. Baptiste follows his finger then nods to one of his men who goes to the cabinets, opens several then finds the money in one of them.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

(smiling to the boy)

You see?... Easy.

Baptiste stands, then shoots the remaining two men in the head. Their bodies collapse but remain in the chairs.

He walks to the door, expressionless. The apartment falls into deadly quiet. A CREAK of floor boards outside the apartment.

Baptiste holds up his hand and motions his men to move to the wall by the door. Baptiste moves to the side of the door, automatic at his side.

The knob turns. Detective Garnier enters, weapon raised.

He freezes at the sight of the bodies.

Baptiste raises his gun. A single shot echoes. Garnier falls. Dead.

Baptiste closes the door. He goes to the table, picks up a napkin, and returns to the detective.

Using the napkin, Baptiste picks up Garnier's pistol and puts it back into his hand. He lifts his arm and fires two shots, one into each of the dead Tunisians. He lets the arm with the weapon drop to the floor, the weapon still in the dead detective's hand.

He looks to his men.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

(in French)

Let's go.

They exit the apartment.

EXT. PARIS STREET - NIGHT

A line of police cars races through the slick streets, sirens blaring, lights slicing the darkness.

INT. VAILLANT'S CAR - NIGHT (MOVING)

Vaillant drives, Pichard beside him.

In French, SUBTITLED:

VAILLANT

Who reported it?

PICHARD

A neighbor. Heard gunshots, then running on the stairs.

VAILLANT

And Garnier's location?

PICHARD

The same. He called it in after following Baptiste to the building.

VAILLANT

And nothing since?

PICHARD

No.

VAILLANT

Fuck!

END SUBTITLES.

Vaillant slams the accelerator. Sirens scream through the streets.

EXT. RUN-DOWN APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Police cars screech to a halt. Officers pile out, weapons raised, racing toward the entrance. Vaillant and Pichard exit, following.

INT. RUN-DOWN APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Officers charge up the stairs, doors slamming behind them. At the top, they reach the apartment door. Vaillant signals, and they kick it in.

INT. RUN-DOWN APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The officers freeze. Blood stains the floor, bullet holes pock the walls. Bodies lie motionless.

In French, SUBTITLED:

VAILLANT (O.S.)

Move!

Officers clear a path. Vaillant and Pichard step through. Vaillant's gaze falls on Detective Garnier, lifeless, blood pooling around his head.

PICHARD

Jesus.

VAILLANT

Call the forensic team.

He scans the room once more, then turns to the officers.

VAILLANT (CONT'D)

Seal the building. Close off the street. No one in or out. Start interviewing neighbors.

(beat)

Now!

END SUBTITLES.

Officers snap to action, still stunned. Vaillant pushes past them, frustration visible in every movement.

EXT. RUN-DOWN APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Vaillant and Pichard step onto the street. Officers string police tape, redirect traffic, and survey the scene.

Pichard moves to their car to radio forensics.

Vaillant stands alone in the street as he surveys the chaos, his frustration growing.

EXT. COLEMAN'S FLAT - DAY

Coleman walks along the street toward his building. As he approaches, he sees Vaillant standing by his door. He's not happy.

VAILLANT

May I buy you breakfast?

INT. CAFE - DAY

Coleman and Vaillant sit at an outside table at a cafe, coffee, croissants and fruit between them.

VAILLANT

Tell me what happened between you and Baptiste.

COLEMAN

He said some things I found -- objectionable.

VAILLANT

I heard you put one of his men on the ground.

COLEMAN

Yeah. I don't think he liked that very much.

VAILLANT

Baptiste is dangerous. But you already know that.

COLEMAN

He threatened Sophie.

VAILLANT

And you're going to protect her?

COLEMAN

If I have to.

VAILLANT

I had two of my men follow him to Le Cave.

COLEMAN

I saw them.

VAILLANT

One of them was killed last night. A bullet. Right through his head.

COLEMAN

(stunned)

I'm sorry.

VAILLANT

In some piss hole apartment along with three North Africans boys. Two of them were teenagers, for Christ sake.

(beat)

My officer had a wife and two young children. I have to tell them today what happened.

COLEMAN

Was it Baptiste?

VAILLANT

I don't know yet. What we believe is that they worked for a man who sold drugs for Baptiste. He's dead too. Along with three of his men. But, you already know that.

COLEMAN

The men killed at the restaurant -- where Sophie's brother was?

VAILLANT

Yes. I'm sharing this with you because... You are now in the middle of something you probably didn't expect.

COLEMAN

A lot of people are dying because of this man.

VAILLANT

And, if you get in the way? Or piss him off? You could end up dead. Sophie too.

COLEMAN

I won't let that happen.

Vaillant is frustrated. Coleman knows it.

VAILLANT

I had Pichard dig into your past.

(MORE)

VAILLANT (CONT'D)

I apologize. But, I wanted to find out who you are. Or, more importantly, who you were.

COLEMAN

And what did he find?

VAILLANT

That you are not only an extremely talented musician. You also fought in Korea. Part of the Army Special Forces. That was surprising.

COLEMAN

I knew I was going to get drafted so I decided to join and have some say in what happened to me.

VAILLANT

I can understand that. You were awarded the Silver Cross. For bravery.

Coleman doesn't respond. He sips his coffee.

VAILLANT (CONT'D)

And, I'm sorry to bring this up but... this business with your wife?

COLEMAN

She died of a drug overdose.

VAILLANT

The police report I read said she had no needle marks on her arm. No trace of drug use in the past.

COLEMAN

She didn't use drugs.

VAILLANT

Okay.

COLEMAN

My wife was raped by a drug dealer. And, to keep her quiet, he pumped that shit into her body... It killed her. The police did nothing. To them, she was just another black woman who probably deserved what she got.

VAILLANT

And what of the arrest with the young girl?

COLEMAN

When the police stopped investigating what happened to my wife, I caused problems for them. That was their way of telling me to back off.

VAILLANT

This drug dealer -- and rapist? He was found dead in the East River a month later. That's quite a coincidence, wouldn't you say?

COLEMAN

I think some would say that's justice.

VAILLANT

And, the police?

COLEMAN

They destroyed my career. Everything I worked for. I lost my wife. My work. My reputation.

VAILLANT

And now you're here.

COLEMAN

Would you stay in a country that did that to you?

Vaillant sits back in his chair.

VAILLANT

I understand why you hate Baptiste. The drug problem in Paris will only get worse if people like him are not stopped. That's my job.

(beat)

My concern is for the safety of Sophie and you. Even though I think you can probably take care of yourself. But listen to me... I can't protect you if you do something on your own.

Coleman hesitates.

COLEMAN

And you've found nothing in Sophie's apartment to connect Baptiste?

VAILLANT

Unfortunately, no.

COLEMAN

Where does he get his drugs?

Vaillant doesn't want to go down this road with Coleman but he relents.

VAILLANT

Marseilles. It's coming there from East Africa, Turkey, the Middle East. This problem is growing. Hashish -- opium. We're starting to see more heroin.

(beat)

Again, that's my problem, not yours. I'm sorry if I sound...

COLEMAN

Pissed off?

VAILLANT

Yeah. I'm pissed off. My officer was killed. Young people in Paris are dying because of this. They're drug dealers, I know. But they didn't have to be. We let that happen.

COLEMAN

What's your given name, Commissaire?

VAILLANT

Theo.

COLEMAN

Well, Theo... I've seen the worst people can do to each other. In war. In the streets. It doesn't matter. There will always be someone stronger that takes advantage of someone weaker. No matter how hard we fight, it won't change.

VAILLANT

So... you play your music to drown out all that noise?

COLEMAN

That's a good way of putting it, yeah.

VAILLANT

I haven't heard you play yet. I think I would like that.

Vaillant gets up, puts money on the table.

VAILLANT (CONT'D)
Oh, we've finished in Sophie's
apartment, by the way. She can go
back when she wants to.

Vaillant begins to turn to leave.

COLEMAN
I won't let people I care about be
hurt -- ever again.

VAILLANT
I know.

They trade looks then Vaillant walks away.

INT. SOPHIE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Soft afternoon light filters through dusty windows. Sophie stands motionless in the center of her apartment, her gaze tracing invisible memories. Blood-scrubbed floors reflect a clinical erasure of violence.

She moves toward the bookshelves, fingers brushing over worn spines. Old photographs catch her attention: Olivier as a child, family portraits, her grandfather smiling in black-and-white frames. She pauses, tracing a face in one photo with her fingertips.

Her gaze drifts upward. A framed photograph on the wall hangs slightly crooked above the old steam heater. She steps closer.

Sophie tilts the frame to straighten it. A glint catches the dim light behind the heater.

She kneels on the floor, looking under the heater. Behind the heater coil, something metallic reflects the lamplight.

She gets up, goes to the kitchen and retrieves a knife. She returns to the heater.

Carefully, she slides a kitchen knife between the coil and the wall. A five Franc coin emerges, wedged and slick. She freezes, staring at it.

The coin is smeared with dark stains - dried blood. Sophie doesn't touch it. She simply stares.

INT. POLICE STATION - VAILLANT'S OFFICE - DAY

The coin sits on Vaillant's desk in a handkerchief. Vaillant sits behind the desk. Pichard stands. Sophie sits across from Vaillant.

VAILLANT

This was on the floor of your apartment?

SOPHIE

It was behind the heater.

VAILLANT

And you didn't touch it?

SOPHIE

No.

Vaillant glances at Pichard. He shrugs, almost embarrassed.

VAILLANT

(to Pichard)

Take this to Forensics.

Pichard picks up the handkerchief and coin then leaves the office.

VAILLANT (CONT'D)

We shouldn't have missed this. I'm sorry.

Sophie's anger builds.

SOPHIE

(raw with grief)

My brother is dead! I know who killed him and so do you!

VAILLANT

Sophie, I need proof. And so far, I don't have it.

Sophie stands.

SOPHIE

Then, I'll find it!

She turns and leaves the office. He calls after her but she ignores him.

VAILLANT

Sophie!

Vaillant watches her go. Frustrated.

EXT. PARIS CEMETERY - DAY

Sophie stands in front of the family tomb, a small bouquet of flowers held down at her side. She walks closer and touches her hand to Olivier's carved name and dates. Sad. Angry.

After a moment, she bends down and places the flowers next to the tomb. She stands, turns and walks away down the rows.

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

The hotel bar breathes decadence - velvet shadows, cigarette smoke, and predatory glances. Wealthy men and calculated women dance an old, dangerous waltz.

Baptiste sits at a table, his usual, in the back of the room. Obert and Gabriel sit with him along with three extremely sexy women.

A WAITER approaches with a bottle of champagne and glasses. He serves the table.

In French, SUBTITLED:

BAPTISTE

Another bottle. This one won't last long.

The women squeal with delight. Obert and Gabriel fondle their respective dates. The woman with Baptiste is quietly affectionate, sliding her hand under the table to his crotch.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

Not now.

She draws her hand back, pouting.

Some loose change is on the table. Gabriel spots a five Franc coin. He reaches for it and holds it in his hand, turning it over a few times. Then, closes his fist around it. Gabriel notices.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

Where is he?

Gabriel checks his watch.

GABRIEL

He should be here.

Obert spots him.

OBERT

There.

END SUBTITLES.

Baza approaches and stops short of the table. Baza speaks accented English.

BAZA
 (re: the women)
 I won't talk with them here.

Baptiste looks at the women.

BAPTISTE
 (to Obert in French,
 Subtitled)
 Take them to the bar.

Obert stands and motions for the women to follow him. They do, begrudgingly. Baza sits. Baptiste and Gabriel wait.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)
 So?

BAZA
 You have the money?

Baptiste motions to Gabriel. He pulls an envelope from his jacket pocket and slides it across the table to Baza.

Baza opens the envelope, confirms it and places it in his pocket.

BAZA (CONT'D)
 A week from Sunday. It will be more
 this time.

BAPTISTE
 It should be.

BAZA
 You don't determine that.

BAPTISTE
 I sell everything I get. I should be
 getting more. A lot more.
 (beat)
 I could find someone else you know.
 Or, I could start bringing it in
 myself.

BAZA
 Well. That could be a problem.

Baptiste and Baza stare at each other, dead serious. Then, Baptiste bursts into laughter. Weirdly.

BAPTISTE
 Ha! I'm just joking. I had you didn't
 I? Ha!

Baza doesn't appreciate the humor.

BAZA
Don't fuck this up.

BAPTISTE
Pfft. Drink some wine. It's good for you.

Baptiste picks up the wine to pour. Baza waves it away. He won't drink. Baptiste pours more for himself, near to the top, and downs the entire glass.

BAZA
I hear you're having some problems.

BAPTISTE
Where would you hear that?

BAZA
Paris may seem large, but it's not really. Not for us. The man I work for is asking questions.

BAPTISTE
What questions would that be?

BAZA
He wonders if you have control of your people.

BAPTISTE
My people do what I tell them to. If they don't? Well... then, they don't work for me anymore.

BAZA
You're leaving bodies on the street. A lot of blood. It's not good for business... Anyone's.

Baptiste leans in.

BAPTISTE
I do what I do. I pay you. I sell your product. We do it again. How I take care of my problems is no one's business. Not you. Not Abreo.

BAZA
Not sure that's the answer he's looking for.

Baptiste stands, leaning down toward Baza, his temper rising but contained. Baza remains calm throughout.

BAPTISTE

You come here to explain my business to me? You don't lecture me. This is MY city -- you fucking immigrant!

(beat)

Tell Abreo, I'll keep making him money. My way.

BAZA

(still calm)

I'll pass that on.

Bazo stands and begins to walk away.

BAPTISTE

Bazo.

Bazo stops and turns back.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

Don't ever threaten me again... Or it will be the last thing you ever do.

Bazo smirks, turns and leaves. Baptiste and Gabriel watch him go.

INT. POLICE STATION - FORENSICS - DAY

HUGO, mid-40s, meticulous, sits at a cluttered lab table. The bloody five franc coin rests under a bright lamp. He adjusts his magnifying loupe, leaning close.

He picks up a fine brush, dipping it into magnetic powder. Slowly, he dusts the coin, careful not to smear the dried blood.

The powder settles. A partial fingerprint emerges on the coin's worn edge--ridges visible through the crimson stain.

He reaches for a strip of clear cellophane tape, pressing it carefully over the print. He lifts it, revealing the ridges, then places it on a backing card.

Hugo flips through a set of police fingerprint records. He compares the partial print to a record labeled Baptiste Gauthier. He nervously looks around to see if anyone is near. There isn't.

He picks up the telephone and dials a number.

HUGO
 (quietly in French,
 Subtitled)
 It's Hugo. Tell him they have evidence
 now.

Hugo replaces the phone receiver carefully, eyes darting at the evidence again.

He leans back, fingers hovering over the coin. The weight of what he just found presses down. The ridges are unmistakable – Baptiste's fingerprint, smudged but telling.

He carefully seals the coin and print in an envelope. He glances at the lab door one last time, then slips the envelope into his coat pocket, eyes wary, aware that he's now carrying proof that could endanger him.

INT. BAPTISTE'S BAR - BACKROOM - DAY

Gabriel hangs up the phone, pauses at what he now knows, and looks across the room at Baptiste who sits at his table hunched over a ledger.

Baptiste's crew is scattered around the room as usual.

Gabriel walks over, leans down and speaks to Baptiste quietly so no one hears but him.

Baptiste calmly listens. Gabriel finishes and stands up. Baptiste thinks, then...

In French, SUBTITLED:

BAPTISTE
 (calling to one of
 his crew)
 Laval.

LAVAL, a menacing-looking man with a scarred face, walks over.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)
 Go with him. I need something taken
 care of.

LAVAL
 Sure.

END SUBTITLES.

Baptiste motions for them to go. They do. Baptiste sits at his desk, thinking.

EXT. SMALL CAFE - DAY

Coleman sits alone at a sidewalk table sipping espresso. He sees Sophie come out of the ground floor apartment entrance with her grandfather. They lock eyes and smile. She walks her grandfather over to the table as Coleman stands.

The grandfather's English is accented but remarkably good.

GRANDFATHER

This is your friend? The musician?

SOPHIE

Yes.

COLEMAN

Good morning, sir.

GRANDFATHER

Hello. I'm sorry, my English is not very good.

COLEMAN

I think it's fine.

Sophie smiles as they all sit.

GRANDFATHER

Sophie says you're quite a piano player. She would know.

COLEMAN

I appreciate that.

The WAITER comes to the table.

WAITER

Pour toi?

SOPHIE

What would you like, grandfather?

GRANDFATHER

Espresso. And a biscuit.

WAITER

(to Sophie)

Et pour toi?

SOPHIE

Le même.

The waiter moves off.

GRANDFATHER

Sophie tells me you've had trouble with these... delinquents.

SOPHIE

They're drug dealers.

GRANDFATHER

Hmm. They took my grandson's life?

COLEMAN

I believe they did.

GRANDFATHER

And the police? Will they arrest them?

COLEMAN

I don't know.

The waiter brings the coffee and biscuits. Sophie's frustration begins to show.

SOPHIE

The police are doing nothing.

The grandfather lovingly holds out his hand to stop Sophie from continuing.

GRANDFATHER

My granddaughter tells me you fought in a war.

COLEMAN

Korea.

GRANDFATHER

Ah... I fought in what they called "The Great War." It wasn't that great. We thought that's all there would ever be. That men would learn and understand what war does to people.

(beat)

Then, I saw the Nazis march into Paris. They killed so many people. Lives meant nothing to them. My son? His wife?... Sophie's parents? They were murdered because they stepped in front of a soldier to buy bread.

(beat)

I watched them die on the street in front of me. In front of their neighbors... In front of their children. No one did anything.

(MORE)

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)

They were too frightened. They thought if they protested this atrocity, they would be next. And, they were probably right. But, I'll tell you something. People like that? Like these -- drug dealers? They must be stopped. If not by the police, then by those they intend to harm.

Coleman trades knowing looks with Sophie. The grandfather sips his espresso.

INT. POLICE STATION - HALLWAY - DAY

Pichard walks down a hallway and opens the door to the Forensics section.

INT. POLICE STATION - FORENSICS - DAY

Pichard enters the room and looks around. A few ANALYSTS are working at their individual tables.

In French, SUBTITLED:

PICHARD

Hey!

ANALYST #1

Sir?

PICHARD

The evidence I brought down yesterday... Where is it?

The Analysts trade looks.

ANALYST #1

It went to Hugo. He's not here.

PICHARD

Let me see it.

ANALYST #1

Yes, sir.

The Analyst goes to Hugo's table and looks through the current files. He can't find it.

ANALYST #1 (CONT'D)

It's not here?

PICHARD

What do you mean?

ANALYST #1
It's not here, sir. The evidence is gone.

PICHARD
What about the notes? The file?

The Analyst looks through the files on the desk.

ANALYST #1
Nothing.

PICHARD
And where is Hugo?

The Analysts trade unknowing looks. Another Analyst chimes in.

ANALYST #2
He left this morning. Said he didn't feel well.

PICHARD
Shit.

END SUBTITLES.

Pichard turns on his heels and exits the office, leaving the Analysts nervous.

INT. POLICE STATION - VAILLANT'S OFFICE - DAY

Vaillant sits at his desk. He has just been told the news by Pichard, who stands in front of him.

In French, SUBTITLED:

VAILLANT
Gone?

PICHARD
Everything. The coin. The file. His notes. And him.

VAILLANT
FUCK!
(beat)
REMY!?

The door opens quickly and one of Vaillant's detectives, REMY, enters.

REMY
Commissaire?

VAILLANT

Go with Pichard and FIND THIS FUCKING
ANALYST!

REMY

Sir.

END SUBTITLES.

Remy looks to Pichard who grabs Remy by the arm and leads him out of Vaillant's office.

INT. ESTUARY TUNNEL - NIGHT

A shadowed tributary of the Seine winds beneath the city like a forgotten artery. Water laps against ancient stone walls. A small motorboat glides silently, its single light casting spectral reflections on the rippling darkness.

On a narrow dock to the side, Hugo stands clutching a small case. The dim overhead light casts long, trembling shadows across his face.

Gabriel docks the boat, secures it to a cleat. He steps out first, Laval close behind.

In French, SUBTITLED:

GABRIEL

You have it?

HUGO

I'll need something for this?

GABRIEL

Of course.

Gabriel reaches into his coat, producing a plain envelope. Hugo takes it without noticing the subtle signal Laval gives.

Moonlight glints off a metal case. Gabriel's fingers carefully extract an evidence bag. The coin gleams like a warning, its surface catching harsh tunnel light. Fingerprint records spill across his trembling hands.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

This is everything?

HUGO

Yes. Including Baptiste's prints.

Gabriel nods. Without warning, Laval's arm snakes around Hugo's neck. A knife plunges into his chest. Hugo's muffled scream dies against Laval's palm. His body goes limp, crumpling onto the dock.

Gabriel snatches the envelope, sliding it into his jacket with mechanical precision.

GABRIEL
Put him in the boat.

END SUBTITLES.

Laval lifts Hugo's body effortlessly, laying him in the boat's hull and draping a tarp over the corpse.

EXT. SEINE RIVER - NIGHT

The motorboat drifts quietly down the river, Laval steering, Gabriel sitting. Only the sound of water against the hull breaks the heavy silence.

EXT. SEINE RIVER WALK - NIGHT

Sophie and Coleman walk, silently.

SOPHIE
Do you think my grandfather was right?

COLEMAN
I do.

SOPHIE
So do I. What do we do?

Coleman stops at a bench. They sit.

COLEMAN
You can't go back to your flat.
Baptiste will have it watched.
Especially if he knows you found
something the police didn't.

SOPHIE
All right. What will you do?

COLEMAN
I need to talk to someone about
Baptiste.

SOPHIE
Who?

COLEMAN
It's better if you don't know.

Sophie doesn't like being left out but she understands.

INT. CLUB LE CAVE - NIGHT

It's late and Coleman's quartet is done for night. Damon, the handsome drummer from Casablanca, is packing up his kit.

COLEMAN
Can we talk?

DAMON
Sure.

Coleman and Damon walk to the empty bar and sit.

COLEMAN
I need to find someone who knows about Baptiste Gauthier.

DAMON
The drug dealer?

COLEMAN
Yeah.

DAMON
Why? That's not your thing, man.

COLEMAN
I'm not buying. I want to find out who his source is. That's who I want to meet.

DAMON
You're kidding.

COLEMAN
No.

DAMON
Those are dangerous people, man. You don't want to fuck around with those guys. They're Algerian. They would just as soon slit your throat as look at you.

COLEMAN
I just want to talk.

DAMON
It's hard to find a good piano player, you know.

COLEMAN
Will you do it?

DAMON

I shouldn't... But, if you just want to talk to them, okay.

Damon gets up from the bar stool and leans in.

DAMON (CONT'D)

You're a crazy fucker, man.

Damon returns to the bandstand leaving Coleman at the bar.

EXT. SEINE RIVER - EARLY MORNING

A VENDOR pushes his cart along the walkway in the early morning as the sun just begins to come up. The water in the river is calm. As he continues, he sees something in the river. He stops the cart and walks closer to the edge to see what it is...

The dead body of Hugo is face down and floating near the embankment. The vendor's eyes are wide with shock.

EXT. SEINE RIVER - DAY (LATER)

The police have cordoned off the scene. Detectives, medics, forensics are all working the scene. Onlookers surround the area to get a better look. Uniformed officers keep them back.

Vaillant and Pichard stand near as the body is brought up to the walkway. The knife wound is evident in his chest and the body has bloated from being in the water all night.

A FORENSIC TECHNICIAN kneels beside the body, examining it.

Vaillant crouches beside the body, eyes scanning for any clue. Pichard takes notes.

In French, SUBTITLED:

VAILLANT

Anything?

TECHNICIAN

Outside of the obvious? Not really.

VAILLANT

Any idea on time of death?

TECHNICIAN

Not yet. Sometime last night. Probably late. Considering the bloating, the body has been in the water about six hours.

VAILLANT
 (to himself mostly)
 One knife wound in the chest.
 (to Pichard)
 He left yesterday mid morning?

PICHARD
 Yeah.

VAILLANT
 Whoever did this, waited. So did he.

Vaillant stands up.

VAILLANT (CONT'D)
 Baptiste got what he wanted and
 couldn't risk him talking.

PICHARD
 Should we bring him in?

VAILLANT
 With what? The Prosecutor wants hard
 evidence. This is all circumstantial.
 (beat)
 Canvas the area to see if anyone saw
 anything last night.

PICHARD
 Understood.

END SUBTITLES.

Pichard walks off. Vaillant stays, staring at the body.

VAILLANT
 (to himself)
 Fuck.

EXT. COLEMAN'S FLAT - DAY

Coleman exits his building, tightens his scarf and begins to walk.

A small delivery van approaches him from behind. Suddenly, it veers in front of him onto the sidewalk and THREE MEN leap from the van and grab Coleman before he knows what's happened. They put a hood over him and throw him inside, slam the doors and speed away.

INT. UNKNOWN WAREHOUSE - DAY

Dark, cold and damp, the old warehouse is just what you'd expect. What natural light there is filters through cracks in the wooden walls.

In the center of the room, Coleman, bound and still hooded, sits quietly on a chair.

Abreo walks quietly into the space, stands facing Coleman and motions for one of his men to remove the hood. Baza stands to the side.

Coleman adjusts his eyes to the room. Abreo watches, assessing, before he speaks.

ABREO
(accented English)
You know who I am?

COLEMAN
No.

ABREO
And yet, you wanted to meet with me.

COLEMAN
I did.

ABREO
You must be very brave or very stupid.

Coleman doesn't react.

ABREO (CONT'D)
My name is Abreo. And you are the piano player.

Again, Coleman doesn't respond.

ABREO (CONT'D)
It's nice to meet you.

COLEMAN
Coleman.

ABREO
Coleman. What do you want?

COLEMAN
I think you and I have a similar problem.

ABREO
Really? And what is that?

COLEMAN
Baptiste Gauthier.

Abreo smirks but stays measured in his tone.

ABREO

And what makes you think I would have a problem with Baptiste Gauthier?

COLEMAN

He's hurting your business.

Abreo trades looks with Baza.

ABREO

Hmm. And what is your problem with him?

COLEMAN

He killed the brother of a friend.

Abreo thinks about this then turns to Baza.

BAZA

The kid. Olivier was his name.

ABREO

Ahh. The boy with his throat slit.

Baza nods. Abreo turns back to Coleman.

ABREO (CONT'D)

That's too bad. He worked for me, you know. Kept an eye on things. Baza there took care of him.

COLEMAN

I wasn't aware.

ABREO

How do you know Baptiste killed him?

COLEMAN

His sister found a five franc coin in the apartment where her brother was killed. Covered in dried blood. The police missed it. I asked around. People said Baptiste always had a coin like that he would keep. A habit.

(beat)

When he came to see me, he didn't have that coin.

ABREO

You're an observant man. Baptiste had bad habits, that's for sure. But, you can't trust the police. You know that, right?

Abreo pulls a second chair up to Coleman and sits opposite.

ABREO (CONT'D)

(in Arabic)

Untie him.

Abreo's man unties Coleman releasing his hands.

ABREO (CONT'D)

(in Arabic)

Get him some water.

The man brings Coleman some water. He drinks.

ABREO (CONT'D)

I'm from Bejaia. It's a beautiful city. The sea to the north and mountains to the south. It's small. The people are good. But, not too smart.

(beat)

You were here in '61?

COLEMAN

No. But I know what happened.

ABREO

Hmm. The head of the police, a man named Papon, ordered his men to attack Algerians. There were a lot of us. They were probably scared. They killed maybe two or three hundred of my countrymen. Shot -- beaten -- drowned. Bodies were floating in the river like garbage. And this man, Papon? Nothing happened to him.

COLEMAN

You know your history.

ABREO

History needs to be remembered. For a lot of reasons. Me? I don't like the police. They don't like me much either, I think. So, I stay out of their way. I don't let them see me.

COLEMAN

And Baptiste? He doesn't seem to care who sees him.

ABREO

You know, some people don't like what we do. But, fortunately for me, a lot of people do. I think you don't like what I do. I understand that.

(MORE)

ABREO (CONT'D)

But... it is what it is. And I won't apologize.

(beat)

But you're right. You and I share a problem. So, what is it you'd like me to do about it?

COLEMAN

Nothing.

ABREO

Nothing? I don't understand.

COLEMAN

I need to protect Sophie.

ABREO

The boy's sister.

COLEMAN

Yeah. If something happens to her, I'll take care of it. I just wanted you to know so there was no misunderstanding.

Abreo trades surprised looks with Baza.

ABREO

That shows a great deal of respect for tradition. That's also a very interesting way of telling me you want to kill a man who makes me money. A lot of money.

Coleman doesn't react.

ABREO (CONT'D)

I heard you were a soldier. Do you have any weapons?

COLEMAN

Not yet.

Abreo stands and walks to a field box on a table in the corner of the room. He opens it and takes out an automatic pistol. He checks the clip and replaces it. Then walks to Coleman and hands it to him. Coleman holds the weapon, feeling its weight.

ABREO

If it comes to it, do what you have to do. You won't offend me. Remember, Baptiste is also a rat who likes the sewers. That's where he'll be.

Abreo takes a set of keys from his pocket and hands them to Coleman.

ABREO (CONT'D)

There is a locker at the old freight terminal on Quai de la Gare. Number twenty-seven. You'll find a few things you might need.

COLEMAN

What's your price?

ABREO

As you said, you and I have a similar problem. If something goes wrong and this comes back to me? You and your little Paris life will be a simple problem for me to solve.

Coleman studies Abreo's face, sees the mercantile clarity there.

ABREO (CONT'D)

Good luck, piano player.

(to his men)

Take him back.

Abreo's men approach with the hood. They offer it to Coleman who dutifully puts it over his head. They lead him toward the door and exit the building as Abreo and Baza watch.

ABREO (CONT'D)

It's time to send Baptiste a message.

Baza doesn't respond, knowing what needs to be done.

INT. GRANDFATHER'S APARTMENT - DAY

Sophie lets herself into the apartment.

In French, SUBTITLED:

SOPHIE

Grandfather?

GRANDFATHER (O.S.)

In here, Sophie.

Sophie goes to the kitchen and her grandfather comes in, holding a small journal.

She fixes him a coffee as he takes a seat at the table.

SOPHIE

How are you feeling, today?

GRANDFATHER

Good. Maybe we can take a walk later.

SOPHIE

I'd like that.

She brings the coffee over and sets it on the table. She sees the journal.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

What's this?

He slides it over to her.

GRANDFATHER

Olivier left it here, I think.
Before... You know?

SOPHIE

Well, it's not mine.

She thumbs through it, her face becoming more and more concerned.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

Did you read this?

GRANDFATHER

No. I just found it this morning.
What does it say?

She doesn't want to answer him.

GRANDFATHER (CONT'D)

Sophie? Was Olivier in trouble?

SOPHIE

I have to go. I'm sorry. I'll be
back later.

She gets up and hurries out the door leaving her grandfather at the table, wondering.

END SUBTITLES.

INT. CLUB LE CAVE - DAY

Sophie comes into the club. Coleman and his quartet are rehearsing. She goes to a table and sits. Coleman sees her, smiles, continuing to play.

After a bit, they finish the song. Coleman gets up, grabs his music bag and goes to Sophie and sits.

COLEMAN

Hey.

Sophie pulls out the journal and puts it in front of Coleman.

COLEMAN (CONT'D)

What's this?

SOPHIE

It was Olivier's. Look at the last page.

Coleman thumbs through it to find the last entry. He tries to read it.

COLEMAN

Something about Baptiste and... guns?

Sophie takes the journal and reads.

SOPHIE

(reading)

Baptiste's men will bring guns to the next pick up. They will take as much of the drugs as they can. Baptiste said, fuck Abreo.

Sophie looks up at Coleman.

COLEMAN

Where did you get this?

SOPHIE

My grandfather found it. Olivier must have been hiding it. He wrote this the day before he died. He saw my grandfather that day.

Coleman leans back, taking it in.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

What?

COLEMAN

Your brother was working for Abreo -- without Baptiste knowing.

SOPHIE

How do you know this?

COLEMAN

He told me.

SOPHIE

Abreo? When did you see him?

COLEMAN

This morning.

Coleman takes his music bag from the floor, lifts out the pistol given to him by Abreo, and puts it on the table.

SOPHIE

You got that from him?

COLEMAN

I had to start somewhere.

SOPHIE

I can't lose you too.

Coleman takes her hand.

COLEMAN

I promise... I will let nothing happen to you.

(beat)

And nothing will happen to me.

Sophie's eyes begin to glisten with tears.

INT. BAPTISTE'S BAR - NIGHT

It's late and the bar is quieter than usual. The front room hums faintly with chatter. Baptiste enters with Obert and walks across the floor to the door which leads to the backroom.

Baptiste unlocks the door and enters.

INT. BAPTISTE'S BAR - BACKROOM - CONTINUOUS

The lights are off, but a wash of moonlight cuts through the slats and onto the floor.

Baptiste freezes just inside the door. Something feels wrong.

In the half-light, a shape turns slowly in the air, catching the moonlight as it moves.

In French, SUBTITLED:

BAPTISTE

What is that?

OBERT

I don't know.

BAPTISTE

Turn on the light.

Obert goes to the wall and flips the light switch on. Hanging upside down from a ceiling beam, Reynard's body turns slowly in the air, his throat slit from ear to ear. Blood runs down his face, dripping into a crimson pool below.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

Fuck!

Obert moves around to the side of Reynard's body.

OBERT

What's on the floor?

Baptiste steps forward. Dozens of Five Franc coins litter the ground – some gleaming, most dark with blood. He stares, his fury tightening like wire beneath his skin.

A few of his men enter behind him, freeze at the sight.

BAPTISTE

Close the door.

The door slams shut. Silence. Baptiste crosses the floor, coins crunching underfoot. He stops beneath Reynard's body, looking into the dead man's face.

He kneels, picks up a coin, rubs the blood between his fingers. His voice drops – quiet, deliberate, terrifying.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

Find the girl. Bring her to me.
Make sure the piano player knows.

He stands, eyes wild, voice cracking into English:

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

(in English)
BRING HER TO ME!

His men scatter. Baptiste stands alone beneath the swinging body, blood dripping onto the cement floor – the light flickering across his face, his power bleeding away with every drop.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

(to Obert)
Cut him down.

Baptiste storms out.

END SUBTITLES.

EXT. BAPTISTE'S BAR - NIGHT

Baptiste exits the building. A couple of his men are standing by a car.

INT. BACKROOM - CONTINUOUS

Obert climbs a tall ladder. With a knife, he saws through the rope - stops when he sees a thin wire coiled around Reynard's leg.

His eyes trace it upward, into the rafters, to an explosive charge lashed to a beam.

OBERT
(shocked whisper)
Oh, shit...

The rope gives way. Reynard's body drops.

EXT. BAPTISTE'S BAR - NIGHT

The EXPLOSION is deafening. Windows shatter outward in a storm of fire and glass. Baptiste's men are hurled to the pavement.

Baptiste, behind a car, shields himself from the blast - but shards slice his cheek.

He rises slowly, smoke curling around him, eyes burning through the haze. He looks at what's left of his bar and the devastation before him.

INT. CLUB LE CAVE - NIGHT

Coleman sits at the piano. The set has begun - slow, brooding jazz that gradually builds. Damon's brushes whisper against the snare; the bass thrums a steady, heartbeat-like line.

Close on Coleman's hands - precise, deliberate, as if willing back control over a world spinning out of it.

The melody becomes the emotional underscore for the scenes that follow.

EXT. LE DISQUE NOIR - NIGHT

Streetlights flicker like dying fireflies. Rain silvers the glass storefront of Le Disque Noir, transforming the street into a liquid canvas.

Sophie locks up while Inès waits with her under the awning. They share a laugh - fragile relief after a long day.

MONTAGE - COLEMAN'S QUARTET AND SOPHIE WITH INÈS

-- Coleman leans into the piano keys, shadows carving harsh angles across his face. Cigarette smoke spirals through amber stage lights, each twist matching the rising musical tension.

-- Sophie and Inès walk down a narrow street. A car engine hums faintly somewhere behind them.

-- Damon's drum fill syncs with headlights flaring, spilling across the women.

-- A black sedan rolling to the curb, doors opening.

-- Coleman takes the tune to a pitch peak of vibrancy.

-- Two of Baptiste's men emerge from the black sedan - predators moving with calculated precision. Inès catches their movement, her body tensing.

INÈS

Sophie!

Sophie turns as one man grabs her. The other hits Inès hard across the face. She crashes to the ground, stunned.

-- Coleman's solo burns—discordant, furious, beautiful.

-- Sophie struggles; a muffled cry. A hand clamps over her mouth. The men drag her toward the car.

-- Inès crawls up, bloody lip, reaching out.

INÈS (CONT'D)

Stop!

One man turns, grabs her by the hair, yanking her upright.

BAPTISTE'S MAN

(in French, subtitled)

Tell the piano player—she's gone.

He shoves her down again. The car peels away, tires hissing over wet cobblestones.

END MONTAGE.

INT. CLUB LE CAVE - NIGHT

The final crescendo hits. Coleman slams the last chord and lets it ring. He stands, breathing heavily, sweat gleaming on his skin as the crowd erupts with applause.

We catch someone getting Damon's attention. He looks anxious and hurries off the back of the stage.

After a moment, Damon comes to Coleman, still standing taking in the applause. He's nearly frantic.

DAMON

You've got to come with me, man.

Coleman follows him off the back of the stage.

INT. CLUB LE CAVE - BACK OFFICE - NIGHT

Damon and Coleman burst through the door. Inès crumples in a chair, her torn dress stained crimson, tears cutting tracks through blood on her cheeks. A WAITRESS hovers nearby, tending to Inès.

WAITRESS

She'll be okay. She's just scared.

Coleman kneels down to her.

COLEMAN

What happened, Inès?

INÈS

They took her! Baptiste's men took Sophie!

Coleman looks to Damon, his eyes dead calm now, soldier calm.

INT. POLICE STATION - VAILLANT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Vaillant sits at his desk, eyes on a report. The door opens. Detective Moreau enters, pale, hesitant.

In French, SUBTITLED:

VAILLANT

What is it?

MOREAU

Sophie Ardent has been taken.

VAILLANT

What do you mean, taken?

MOREAU

Last night. Outside her record store. She was with the girl who works for her. They hit the girl, badly, but left her there. They took Sophie.

VAILLANT

Who?

MOREAU
 Baptiste's men.
 (beat)
 I'm sorry, Commissaire.

Vaillant's face darkens. He stands slowly, voice quiet but dangerous.

VAILLANT
 Where were you?

MOREAU
 I... went for food. Only a few minutes.

Vaillant slams his fist down on the desk.

VAILLANT
 You left her alone!?
 (beat)
 Jesus Christ, Moreau.

He storms to the door, throws it open.

VAILLANT (CONT'D)
 Pichard!
 (to Moreau)
 Find Lambert in Narcotics. I want him now. Go!

Moreau bolts. Pichard rounds the corner.

PICHARD
 What's going on?

VAILLANT
 Baptiste took Sophie. That idiot Moreau left her alone.

PICHARD
 Shit.

VAILLANT
 Come on.

END SUBTITLES.

They move fast down the corridor, fury and purpose propelling them.

INT. ABANDONED FREIGHT TERMINAL - NIGHT

A cavernous, echoing space beneath the skeletal girders of the old Quai de la Gare terminal. Rusted freight signs.

The terminal is silent except for the faint drip of water somewhere in the dark. Rows of steel lockers stretch the length of the cracked concrete wall, numbered in fading paint.

Coleman moves through the shadows – purposeful, alert. His footsteps echo softly. He carries the small key Abreo gave him, turning it in his hand like a talisman.

He reaches Locker 27 – paint peeling, dented, the number barely visible beneath years of grime.

He slips the key into the lock. It sticks for a moment, then turns with a click.

Coleman opens the door and finds two military-styled metal ammo boxes. He takes them out and places them on the floor, then opens them.

Inside the first box: an automatic pistol, a silencer, extra clips and ammunition, a tactical knife and sheath. In the second, two military grenades, two smoke grenades and a folded piece of paper. Coleman takes the paper and looks at it. A map of a portion of Paris with a section circled in red ink along the Seine -- an estuary tunnel.

He unwraps the pistol, checks the magazine – full. The weapon fits his hand perfectly, almost too naturally. The soldier has returned.

He folds the paper and looks at what's in front of him, his mind made up.

EXT. BAPTISTE'S BAR - NIGHT

Flames lick from shattered windows as firemen battle the blaze.

The street is chaos – hoses snaking across cobblestones, paramedics crouched beside the wounded, uniformed officers shouting over the roar of the fire.

Vaillant stands beside his car, face lit orange by the flames. Lambert is next to him, cigarette trembling between his fingers. Pichard watches the scene, jaw tight.

In French, SUBTITLED:

VAILLANT

Where is he now?

LAMBERT

If I knew that, well...

Vaillant looks at him – frustrated, exhausted, furious at being too late again.

PICHARD

What do you want to do, Theo?

Vaillant stares at the burning building, sirens wailing in the background.

VAILLANT

Find the piano player.

END SUBTITLES.

Vaillant turns back toward the fire - smoke and light reflecting off his car window.

EXT. SEINE RIVER - NIGHT

A small boat, three dark figures aboard, motors close to the bank until reaching a dark opening - an estuary tunnel. The boat maneuvers inside.

INT. ESTUARY TUNNEL - NIGHT

A low mechanical hum echoes under the vaulted ceiling. The small boat glides along the inky water, Baptiste at the bow, two of his men behind him. Their silhouettes cut against the glimmer of a single headlamp slicing through mist.

The sound of the motor amplifies in the confined space, metallic and unnerving.

The boat slows. Baptiste's man steers toward a narrow dock along the stone wall. One of his men jumps out, ties the line.

Baptiste steps ashore, the soles of his shoes slapping against damp stone. He moves forward, the beam of his flashlight bobbing across old pipes and dripping rivulets of water.

They reach a corroded metal door. Baptiste pauses, hand on the handle. He opens it.

INT. UTILITY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bare bulbs hum overhead, casting dull, yellow cones of light. Along the walls, pallets stacked with kilo drug sacks. Dozens.

A table with scales, drug testing equipment and paraphernalia, is in the middle of the room. This is Baptiste's real hideout. The heart of his drug business.

Sophie hangs against rusted pipes, wrists bound overhead, her mouth gagged. Her dress torn, face bruised, she looks like a defiant bird caught in a steel trap. Blood traces her cheekbone, but her eyes burn with unbroken spirit.

Baptiste walks to her slowly. He looks at her for a long moment.

He speaks in accented English.

BAPTISTE
You've caused me a great deal of
trouble, Sophie.

Sophie glares hard at him, saying nothing through the gag.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)
You could have stayed quiet. But, I
understand. Seeing your brother. All
that blood. Must have been difficult.

He brings his face closer to hers.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)
He wasn't too smart. He ended up
liking the drugs more for himself
than to sell. It happens.
(beat)
He betrayed me, though. And that, I
do not forgive. I said something to
him -- just before. I told him that
when I took him off the street, he
was a frightened boy. Too scared all
the time -- of everything.
(beat)
He didn't even know how to fuck. Did
you know that? First time I bought
him a woman, he pissed himself. How
about that. That little boy. I wasn't
sure he'd ever be a man. But, I took
pity. Taught him things. How to make
money. How to make people fear him.
I even let him watch me fuck a woman
once. Just so he knew what to do the
next time.
(beat)
I thought he understood. But... when
I took my knife and dragged it across
his throat, he looked surprised. I
didn't understand that. I thought he
would know what he did to me, I could
never forgive.

Sophie's anger and rage erupts and she screams through the
gag in her mouth, her eyes burning with hate.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)
You're brave. I'll give you that.
But so stupid.
(MORE)

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

Your friend -- that nigger musician?
He doesn't like me very much. I think
he'll come to find you. At least I
hope he does. I want you to watch
while I cut his throat. Then, I'll
kill you. Of course, your grandfather
will have no one then. That's sad. I
suppose I'll have to visit him as
well.

Sophie screams again through her gag, sobbing with hate and fear.

Baptiste strikes her with brute force across her face, knocking her unconscious. He turns to his men.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

Make sure when he shows up, he sees
her like this.

INT. COLEMAN'S FLAT - NIGHT

Coleman stands in the middle of the room. He wears dark jeans, field boots, a black tee shirt -- two automatics holstered close to his body. He checks both pistols, racks the slides, then pockets extra clips. He straps the tactical knife sheath to his calf and covers it with the jeans. On the bed, a bomber jacket, worn but clean. He slips it on. Zips it up. Checks the mirror. He looks -- normal. Sort of.

CLOSE ON HIS FACE as his memory flickers to the past...

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. NEW YORK JAZZ CLUB - NIGHT

A younger Coleman celebrates with his beautiful WIFE and other musicians. Music, champagne, toasting -- a great night.

INT. SLEAZY NEW YORK MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

(The images are split-second, fragmented, strobe-like, never fully visible)

- A hand slams against a wall. A muffled scream.
- Clothes are torn. Quick, indistinct movements.
- A woman's nude body falls across a bed.
- A man mounts her from behind. Assaults her. She screams.
- Her arm is tied off. A syringe punctures her vein.

- Convulsions. Breath rattles. The room spins in broken fragments of sound and motion.

- A door opens. Footsteps recede. A slam. Then, silence.

- Blood. A lot of it. The lifeless woman's face, eyes open but empty, fills the frame... Coleman's wife.

EXT. NEW YORK CEMETERY - MORNING

Coleman stands graveside. A dozen mourners behind him. Rain falls. His world already gone. CLOSE ON Coleman's face, the grief immeasurable.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. COLEMAN'S FLAT - NIGHT

CLOSE ON Coleman's face as he stands at the window, city lights flickering against the glass. His reflection - older, harder, unbroken. The ghosts of his past still whisper, but the man who listens now is forged from resolve, not pain.

He exhales, slowly. Turns. A shoulder bag on the bed. He opens it to check. The silencer, four grenades - compact, lethal reminders of what he once was. He closes it and shoulders it across his body. Now, he's ready. Opens the door and exits, the door closing quietly behind him.

INT. POLICE STATION - INCIDENT ROOM - NIGHT

Stacks of folders, a map of the Seine and its tributaries spread across a long table. Cigarette smoke drifts beneath the flickering fluorescent lights. The room hums with controlled chaos - typewriters, phones ringing, boots moving on tile.

Vaillant stands at the table with Pichard and Lambert. A uniformed OFFICER marks locations of tributaries connected to the river with red pins.

In French, SUBTITLED:

VAILLANT

We know Baptiste used the tunnels before - the analyst's body was probably dumped from one of them.

LAMBERT

There are dozens of feeder tunnels. Some are sealed, others still connect to the old sewer mains. It's a maze that's been there for centuries. We need a miracle to find the right one.

VAILLANT

Where was the analyst's body found?

The officer examines the map, then places a pin on a spot along the river.

OFFICER

Here. At Port de Javel.

They look closer at the map. The door opens behind them. A man enters. DUBOIS (40), studious, boring. Vaillant turns.

VAILLANT

Good. You're here.

LAMBERT

Who's this?

DUBOIS

I'm Dubois.

VAILLANT

He's a hydrographer with the
Brigade Fluvial.

Dubois is already moving toward the table. He puts his reading glasses on and examines the map.

DUBOIS

Where was the body found?

The officer points to the red pin he placed at Port de Javel.

OFFICER

Here.

Dubois continues his questioning without looking up.

DUBOIS

What time did the body enter the
water?

VAILLANT

Approximately midnight.

DUBOIS

And what time was it discovered?

VAILLANT

Six am.

Dubois continues looking at the map. Then, he stands upright, pulls a small note pad from his pocket and begins his calculations. He says nothing. The others trade looks as if to say, 'What is he doing?'

Dubois continues with his math. Then, he abruptly puts the note pad back into his pocket, takes out a grease pencil and draws a precise box around a spot on the river closer to central Paris.

DUBOIS

That's your search area.

The men all look at the map again, unconvinced.

LAMBERT

Are you sure?

Dubois almost takes this as an affront to his intelligence. He explains...

DUBOIS

(gesturing to the map)

At midnight, the current along this stretch moves roughly two kilometers per hour. The Seine is fed here by the Bièvre, and the flow pattern creates a circular eddy near the Pont de l'Alma. If the body entered around this point—say, from one of the maintenance tunnels near the Gare d'Austerlitz—it would drift with the main current, then catch the backflow from the weir gates.

He marks with the grease pencil as he speaks, his voice matter-of-fact.

DUBOIS (CONT'D)

Six hours later, that places the body roughly here — Port de Javel. The timing, the water temperature, the density shift — they all check.

He underlines his boxed-in area.

DUBOIS (CONT'D)

You'll find your entry point within five hundred meters of this mark. I'd start with the old storm drains — the ones decommissioned after the flood of '53. No one monitors them anymore.

Dubois steps back from the map, wiping the grease pencil from his fingers.

DUBOIS (CONT'D)

If your man was dumped, that's where
it began. Somewhere dark. Somewhere
no one goes.

The room falls silent. Vaillant and Lambert exchange a look
- the weight of the revelation clear.

VAILLANT

(to Pichard)

Get me everything we have on those
tunnels.

PICHARD

Sir.

Pichard leaves the room quickly.

VAILLANT

(to the officer)

You can go.

(to Dubois - sincere)

Thank you.

DUBOIS

You're welcome, sir.

Dubois turns and leaves. Lambert steps closer to Vaillant.

LAMBERT

Commissaire... Theo. This will not
end well. For anyone. People will
die.

VAILLANT

I'm tired of losing to these fucking
animals, Lambert. We stand like
cowards and let them do what they
want -- with no consequence. And
only because the politicians don't
want to risk their careers. They
think doing nothing will solve the
problem. People deserve better from
us.

Vaillant is laser focused and determined.

VAILLANT

I want your team ready. Now.

LAMBERT

Sir.

Lambert leaves the room.

END SUBTITLES.

The officer leaves. Vaillant stands over the map, determined.

EXT. SEINE RIVER WALK - NIGHT

A single streetlamp pools light around Coleman. The city's distant murmur fades as he studies Abreo's map, then tucks it away. His silhouette approaches a narrow stone staircase descending into the river's dark mouth.

Two of Baptiste's sentries stand at the stairs' base, facing the river. Cigarette embers glow and fade. Their casual posture betrays practiced boredom. Coleman melts into the shadows, cataloging their weapons with a predator's precision.

A dog's bark shatters the night. The guards glance up, then quickly look away. Coleman decides: this entry point is compromised.

He slips into a nearby stairwell, ascending to street level.

EXT. PARIS STREET - NIGHT

At street level, Coleman surveys the tunnel entrance. The guards below look exposed. His eyes sweep the block, hunting for alternatives.

A municipal green service door recedes into the building's flank. A rusted padlock hangs from a heavy hasp - the kind overlooked in darkness. A faded sign reads: *ENTRETIEN - QUAI DE LA GARE*.

A faint square of light seeps from a ventilation grate at ankle height.

Coleman crouches, tracing the door's edges with his fingers. He retrieves a small, leather sleeve containing a lockpick, working with the precise, patient movements of a professional.

The lock gives with a soft, muted click. Coleman breathes once, controlled. He slips the hasp and eases the door inward. He pauses at the threshold, listening.

INT. ESTUARY TUNNEL - NIGHT

Coleman steps through. A narrow concrete corridor runs under the building, lit by a single, swinging bulb. Pipes and valves run the length of the passage. He moves like a shadow, feet sure on the cold floor, the city's heartbeat above him.

At the corridor's end a heavy hatch leads down. Coleman presses his palm to the cold metal, lifts and the black below breathes up at him. A ladder leads down. He pulls the hatch wide, and begins to descend into the tunnel.

Reaching the bottom, at the river level, he can see the backs of the two men guarding the entrance. Coleman moves silently closer and crouches in the shadows of the stone wall. He screws on the silencer to his automatic and readies himself. He looks at the ground and sees several small rocks.

EXT. SEINE RIVER WALK - NIGHT

The sound of stones plunking into the water behind them, cause the two men to turn. They trade looks and move inside to investigate.

PHFFT... PHFFT. Two silenced bullets pierce the air.

INT. ESTUARY TUNNEL - NIGHT

The two men lie dead just inside the entrance to the tunnel. Coleman drags the bodies deeper inside, out of view. He turns and quietly walks further into the tunnel.

INT. UTILITY ROOM - NIGHT

Silence. Then - a drop of water echoes.

Sophie stirs. Her head lifts weakly. Blood dried at the corner of her mouth.

The dim bulbs hum overhead. The pipes rattle softly - a sound like breathing.

She tries to move, wrists straining against the cords binding her arms. A small, pained sound escapes the gag.

Her eyes scan the room - pallets of drugs, shadowed men moving in the distance. Baptiste's empire, humming quietly beneath Paris.

INT. ESTUARY TUNNEL - NIGHT

Ancient gas lamps cast flickering shadows along stone walls. Coleman glides through the tunnel's damp corridor, reaching a waterway split. A cigarette's ember disturbs the darkness - Baptiste's guard illuminated briefly. Coleman moves toward him.

ON BAPTISTE'S MAN

The guard stands near the water's edge, rifle propped carelessly against the wall. He takes a long, satisfied drag, exhaling smoke into the dank tunnel air.

COLEMAN

(whispering)

Hey.

The guard turns, his eyes open wide in surprise as Coleman's knife is buried in his chest. Coleman puts his hand over the man's mouth as the life runs out of him. Coleman eases the body to the cement floor.

Coleman wipes the blade off on the man's jacket and re-sheathes the knife. Emotionless. He stands and continues on.

EXT. EMBANKMENT STREET - NIGHT

A line of police cars race along the embankment.

We can see a mirror image of police cars on the other side of the river moving the same direction.

We PUSH IN on the lead car. Unmarked. Vaillant's

INT. VAILLANT'S CAR - NIGHT

Pichard drives the lead car, Vaillant sits in the passenger seat, tense, map open on his lap.

In French, SUBTITLED:

PICHARD

This is the start of the grid.
Dockyards from Austerlitz to Saint-Michel.

VAILLANT

We don't even know what fucking side
of the river to look.

Vaillant grabs the mic from the dash and speaks into it.

VAILLANT (CONT'D)

Lambert! Where are you?

INTERCUT:

INT. LAMBERT'S CAR - NIGHT

Lambert is stopped. He uses the mic in his car as well. He looks across the the river at the line of police cars.

LAMBERT

Even with you. We're at the edge of
the grid. We'll start here.

VAILLANT

All right. Have your men sweep each
tunnel.

LAMBERT

We have units on the river as well
in position upstream and down --
just outside of the grid. They'll
move in when the tunnels are cleared.

VAILLANT

(to Pichard)

Stop here. Get the teams out and
have them begin the search.

PICHARD

Yes, sir.

END SUBTITLES.

Pichard parks. Gets out and rushes to the units behind.

Vaillant checks his watch. He knows they're running out of
time.

EXT. SEINE RIVER - NIGHT

Police boats drift slowly downriver - searchlights sweeping
the water near Pont de l'Alma, cutting pale cones through
fog.

Lambert's narcotics team checks tunnel grates, sewer access
points, and old drainage covers.

INT. ESTUARY TUNNEL - NIGHT

Coleman advances, breath shallow, pistol raised. The tunnel
walls glisten with moisture, his footsteps drowned in the
low hum of flowing water.

Two guards flank the utility room door, rifles loose, bored.
Coleman crouches behind a rusted valve. The silencer twists
into place.

PHFFT. PHFFT.

Both men drop soundlessly. Coleman moves in, efficient, drags
their bodies into the shadows. He checks their pockets -
extra clips, a knife. He unscrews the silencer, pockets it,
then kneels at the reinforced door.

He pulls a grenade from his jacket, wires the pin to the
latch - a crude booby trap. His hands steady, eyes cold.

A smoke grenade next. He exhales once, grounding himself in
the calm before violence.

INT. UTILITY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Baptiste's men shift uneasily. The hum of pipes.

INT. ESTUARY TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

Coleman raises his automatic and fires multiple times into the air.

INT. UTILITY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The gunshots echo through the walls. Everyone is startled. Weapons raise. Baptiste steps forward, pistol drawn, grabbing Sophie's hands, releasing her from the pipes above. Her hands still bound, she's trembling but defiant.

BAPTISTE
(in French, subtitled)
Check it.

Two men approach the door – one ready at the lever, the other aiming down sights.

A nod. The lever turns. BOOM!

The grenade detonates with a deafening shockwave that tears through the room. The two men vanish in a red mist. Plaster rains from the ceiling.

Before the echo fades—another BOOM. Coleman's smoke grenade rolls in, bursting open, flooding the space with billowing crimson fog. Then he's inside.

Coleman moves like a phantom through the smoke – firing in controlled bursts. Shadows fall. Bullets spark off metal. Sophie screams through her gag, muffled, desperate.

A figure lunges from the haze – Coleman spins, shoots twice. The man drops.

Coleman moves with surgical precision – clearing corners, reloading without looking. Years of muscle memory. Controlled chaos.

A shot CRACKS. Coleman jerks – leg hit. He collapses against the wall, pain flaring hot. Blood slicks his thigh.

Baptiste emerges from the haze, face contorted with rage, pistol leveled.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)
You should've stayed at your piano!

He fires again – the round grazes Coleman's shoulder, shattering a pipe.

Steam bursts out, wrapping the room in a screaming hiss.

Coleman can't see. His chest heaves. His fingers tighten on the pistol.

SOPHIE
(muffled)
Coleman!

Coleman rolls from cover and fires blind. One bullet finds Baptiste's shoulder. Baptiste roars, stumbles, grabs Sophie and bolts toward the back exit.

INT. ESTUARY TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

Coleman limps after him, blood trailing. The tunnel splits in two - one dark, one faintly lit. Footsteps echo ahead, dragging, uneven. Sophie's muffled cry.

Coleman rounds the bend - Baptiste, half-dragging Sophie, heading toward a waiting boat.

Coleman steadies his aim—no clean shot. Sophie's in front of him.

BAPTISTE
Come on, piano man!

He fires. Bullets ricochet. Coleman ducks behind a column. Steam pours from ruptured pipes, blinding fog filling the space.

Sophie tears the gag from her mouth.

SOPHIE
Coleman!

Coleman limps through the fog, gun ready. Fires—hits Baptiste in the shoulder again. Baptiste grunts, drops Sophie, rushes Coleman. They collide. Baptiste's gun skitters away.

A brutal fight—raw, close. Baptiste slams Coleman's wounded leg. Coleman goes down. Baptiste grabs a chain, swings it hard—metal cracks across Coleman's back. He falls, stunned.

Baptiste staggers backward. His fingers scramble for the fallen gun.

In one violent motion, he seizes Sophie, yanking her close as a human shield. Nearby, Coleman lies crumpled, blood pooling around a ragged leg wound, his shoulder a crimson canvas of pain.

Baptiste aims his pistol. Click. Empty.

Baptiste snarls, grabs Sophie, his knife to her throat.

BAPTISTE

I was going to cut your throat in
front of her! This will have to do!

He starts to cut...

BANG! The bullet rips through his shoulder. The knife clatters to the floor. Baptiste screams.

Coleman, down but not out, holds his second pistol. Sophie runs to him, shaking, pulls him up.

Baptiste staggers to the boat, slams the throttle. The engine sputters, roars to life.

The boat heads toward the open tunnel mouth and the Seine beyond. Baptiste slumps at the wheel, blood soaking his shirt.

As the boat nears the tunnel entrance, a dark figure stands at the estuary edge – Abreo. His arm outstretched and holding an automatic.

ABREO

Baptiste!

Baptiste turns, eyes wide. He sees Abreo. He starts to lift his gun... Too late.

Two thunderous BANGS rip through Baptiste's chest. He collapses into the boat's bottom, the engine sputtering to a slow hum as the boat drifts toward the river's mouth.

Coleman and Sophie appear in the tunnel mouth, silhouetted by the glow of the Seine. Coleman leans on her, bloodied but alive.

ABREO (CONT'D)

Will you live?

COLEMAN

I will.

ABREO

Good. I still haven't heard you play.

He glances at the drifting boat.

ABREO (CONT'D)

You didn't need that hanging around
your neck. Better I take care of it
than you.

(to Sophie)

He's a good man. Take care of him.

Sophie holds Coleman close. Abreo disappears into the mist – silent, spectral – leaving them alone with the echo of the river.

EXT. SEINE RIVER - NIGHT

Baptiste's boat drifts like a blood-stained coffin through the Seine's black current. Emergency lights strobe across oily water, sirens building to a crescendo.

Inside the boat, Baptiste lies dead – his chest soaked in blood.

Police boats cut through the river from both ends, converging.

Atop the embankment, cars screech to a halt. Officers spill out, spotlights slicing through the mist.

Vaillant rushes down the stairs to the tunnel entrance.

At the bottom, Coleman sits propped against the stone wall, pale but alive. Sophie holds him close, her face streaked with blood, tears and grime.

Vaillant stops, breathless, taking in the scene.

VAILLANT

(to himself)

Oh, my God.

He kneels beside them.

SOPHIE

He's all right. But he needs a doctor.

Coleman looks up, a faint smile cutting through his pain – defiant, weary, but alive.

COLEMAN

If you don't mind.

Vaillant shakes his head – part relief, part disbelief.

EXT. SEINE RIVER - NIGHT (LATER)

Police haul Baptiste's lifeless body from the boat. The river's surface ripples with the blue glow of emergency lights.

Pichard and Lambert watch from the bank, smoke curling from Lambert's cigarette.

In French, SUBTITLED:

LAMBERT

I know I probably shouldn't, but I
feel very good right now.

PICHARD

So do I.

A beat as they watch the body being laid out on the bank.
Lambert takes a long, satisfying drag on his cigarette.

LAMBERT

I could eat. You?

PICHARD

Yes. Paperwork in the morning?

LAMBERT

Agreed.

END SUBTITLES.

They share a quiet look – two weary men momentarily content
– and walk off toward the lights.

EXT. PARIS STREET - NIGHT

Medics wheel Coleman on a gurney toward a waiting ambulance.
Sophie and Vaillant walk alongside.

They load him in gently. Coleman winces but manages a small
nod to Vaillant.

VAILLANT

(to Sophie)

Are you all right?

SOPHIE

I will be.

VAILLANT

Good. He'll need you.

Sophie offers a tired, grateful smile. She climbs into the
back of the ambulance.

The doors close. The siren starts, low, fading as it drives
off.

Vaillant stands at the curb, watching it go.

The night quiets again – the city exhaling after the storm.

He lights a cigarette, exhales smoke into the damp Paris
air.

Vaillant's eyes lift toward the river – where dawn is beginning to break.

EXT. CLUB LE CAVE – NIGHT

A clear Spring night. The stars shimmer over Paris – serene, untroubled.

SUPER: THREE MONTHS LATER

INT. CLUB LE CAVE – NIGHT

The club is alive again. Crowded tables, warm lights, the low hum of conversation. Smoke drifts lazily through the air, curling toward the ceiling.

On stage – COLEMAN and his quartet.

The music transforms – sharp as broken glass, soulful as a whispered confession. Coleman's hands dance across the keys, no longer haunted but reborn. Each note is a declaration of survival, of reclaimed joy.

At a front table, Sophie, her grandfather, Inès, and Vaillant sit together. They laugh, talk quietly, eyes never far from the stage. Sophie's hand rests gently on her grandfather's. The old man taps his foot to the beat, radiant, proud. Damon and Inès trade smiling looks.

Coleman plays with newfound peace. The ghosts hover at the edges, but no longer control him. Their eyes meet – Sophie and Coleman – a silent understanding passing between them. The music swells, triumphant.

The crowd sways to the rhythm, caught in the glow of something rare. Joy reclaimed.

EXT. CLUB LE CAVE – NIGHT

The melody continues over the quiet streets. The doors open. Warm light spills onto the sidewalk as patrons drift out, laughing.

The camera rises – above the street, above the rooftops – until Paris unfolds below in a constellation of gold and blue. The city glitters in the moonlight. The music echoes faintly through the night air.

TITLES:

In the 1950s and 1960s, hundreds of Black American jazz musicians left the United States. Exiled by racism and segregation in their own country, they were drawn to Paris, where jazz was art, not rebellion.

In the cafés and cellars of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, they found the freedom their own country denied them, and their music reshaped the sound of the century.

For many, Paris was not escape – it was redemption.

FADE OUT.