

ARTiFACTS
by
Dhakeria Little

Spring Lake, NC 28390
803.724.4823
Legoddessofwords@gmail.com

FADE IN:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Several easels, each holding a finished painting, are lined up at the front of the room. One blank canvas sits in the center of them.

ASSATA, 28, a beautiful, brown woman with delicate features and a petite frame, dressed in loose-fitting clothing of an artistic flair, stands in front of the blank canvas with her back to a class of students.

A drop of red paint dramatically hits the floor, with a THUD only Assata can hear. She reacts to the sound with a grimace. Frozen in fear, only she hears the voice of a little girl.

LITTLE GIRL (V.O.)
(screaming)
Please, help me.

The hand holding the brush trembles and a look of fear sweeps across her face.

She puts the brush down and moves to an easel with a finished painting.

ASSATA
For time's sake, I will take you through this technique by showing you the finished outcome. This is what it should look like.

She demonstrates the stroke of the brush using her fingers.

ASSATA (CONT'D)
Make a fluid motion and allow the brush to glide along the paper gracefully. Don't force it. Let the brush become an extension of you.

JACOB, 34, a handsome, clean-cut, muscular man, wearing a graphic tee, lightly distressed jeans and polo boots, glares at the painting and raises his hand to speak.

JACOB
Would you do the same for a mural?

ASSATA

The approach is the same. The story and how you tell it changes. I'm sorry, I didn't get your name.

JACOB

Jacob Lassiter. Does it always have to be graceful? I mean, what if the subject isn't graceful?

ASSATA

Jacob, thank you for observing the class today. To answer your question, there's a transference of energy that happens. When I say grace, I mean beauty of form or movement. You can, gracefully, tell an ugly story.

JACOB

Actually, I'm just a fan. How would you all like to see your teacher take this class off-road; painting a series of murals for the National Museum of African American Culture and History.

The students whistle, clap, and cheer. Assata looks at her watch.

ASSATA

And that's all we have time for today, folks. Read over chapter three for next class.

The students all clear out of the room, all except Jacob.

Assata takes a prescription pill and packs her things.

Her back is turned as Jacob walks up to her. She drops her brushes.

ASSATA (CONT'D)

Oh, my God. You scared the crap out of me. And I'm sorry, I can't take the job.

Jacob holds his hands up in surrender.

JACOB

Not my intention. And you're not getting off that easily.

Jacob picks up her brushes and places them back on the table.

ASSATA

Thank you.

She checks her iPhone. A series of three messages from MOM appear consecutively.

SUPER:

"Been up all morning in prayer."
 "Don't let fear block you from your
 purpose baby girl."
 "Love you."

BACK TO SCENE

JACOB

Let me help.

She takes down the blank canvas. Jacob helps her take down the other paintings. Her vision blurs.

The classroom fades away.

ASSATA'S VISION

In a hazy vision, a faceless person holds a gun and points it at Assata's mother, MRS. DEVEAUX, 50s, a woman with large hips and a salt and pepper bob haircut.

Assata is bound in a straitjacket, being pulled away by orderlies.

The hand holding the gun pulls the trigger and the GUN SHOT pulls her back into reality.

BACK TO SCENE

Assata passes out.

INT. APARTMENT, ASSATA'S LOFT - MOMENTS LATER

Assata lays on a couch in a loft area, which is being used as an art studio.

ASSATA

How did I...? Wait. How did you...? My paintings.

She searches the room, gets up and stumbles a bit.

JACOB

Whoa, whoa, slow down. You fainted in the classroom and your roommate came so I helped her bring you and your paintings home. Try to relax. I just stayed to make sure you were alright.

INT. APARTMENT, KITCHEN - DAY

HAMIRA, 31, a woman of an ordinary, girl-next-door look, a peculiar femininity that flirts with masculinity, in elegant, professional attire, empties a labeled prescription bottle and switches pills from a non-labeled pill bottle to the emptied prescription bottle.

INT. APARTMENT, ASSATA'S LOFT - DAY

Hamira enters with a glass of water and a labeled prescription medicine bottle.

ASSATA

Mira, it happened again. I wasn't even painting. Mom. She...

HAMIRA

(interrupting
compassionately)

Shh. Look, it's just a daydream. Not real, remember? Take your meds and get some rest, honey. I need to get to work. I'll check in on you a little later.

Assata takes the meds.

Hamira Nods toward Jacob, who stands by a painting with his back to them. She uses discretion as she fans her face while mouthing the word "hot."

ASSATA

Thanks, Mira.

Hamira glides downstairs.

Jacob looks at the pill bottle.

JACOB

Everything okay?

ASSATA

Yeah. I take them for anxiety. It's a long story.

JACOB

Well, I have some time.

ASSATA

Two years ago I was painting and I got a vision of a little girl screaming for help. I ignored the vision and the next week on the news, that same little girl was found murdered. Today, I saw my mother being murdered while I was in a straitjacket in the looney bin. I can't let what happened to that little girl happen to my mom.

Jacob stares at her intensely.

ASSATA (CONT'D)

You think I'm crazy.

JACOB

I think you have a gift; a gift you need to use if it means saving someone's life.

ASSATA

I'll take the job.

JACOB

Good. Let's get started.

ASSATA

Now?

Jacob sets up an easel, puts the blank canvas up, and pulls out some paint.

He extends his hand to her. She grabs it and he leads her to the canvas.

He stands behind her and strokes her arm with a paintbrush. He places it in her hand. Her hand trembles. He steadies her hand with his.

JACOB

Let the brush be an extension of you. Whatever it is, paint it out. Don't doubt yourself. Don't suppress it. Transfer that energy into this empty space.

ASSATA

I see someone was paying attention.

JACOB

I told you, I'm a fan.

They become the canvas in a seductive dance of intimacy. Her vision blurs. The brush falls in SLOW MOTION. The room mutes. The brush hits the floor with a THUD.

Assata, wild-eyed and rigid, searches the room with her eyes, drops to her knees and lays on the floor in the fetal position.

Vision still blurred, she hears Jacob's muffled voice as TWO blurred FIGURES carry her out of the apartment.

EXT. CHAPEN PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - ESTABLISHING - DAY

A massive, old, creepy building sits on 2,000 acres. The grounds look like that of a plantation. The name, CHAPEN PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL is engraved on an iron post.

INT. CHAPEN PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - DAY

An ORDERLY removes Assata's straitjacket, gives her medicine, and escorts her to a common area.

Facility-provided activities sit on a table. Among them are a pad of paper, a cheap set of brushes, and watercolor paints fit for a Kindergarten schoolroom.

The orderly gives her a small paper cup like the one they put the pills in for the patients to take.

She fills it with water from the fountain and paints.

ASSATA'S VISION

Assata, in a straightjacket, violently resists her restraints, and moves unsuccessfully toward her mother. The person holding the gun is Hamira.

BACK TO SCENE

ORDERLY

Assata Deveaux. You have a visitor.
Assata?

The orderly taps her on the shoulder, breaking her trance.

ORDERLY (CONT'D)

You have a visitor.

Jacob walks over to where she is sitting alone.

ASSATA

I know this makes me look crazy, but I promise you what I saw was real. I know who is behind this. I just have to get out of here before... Wait, why are you making that face?

JACOB

I had a friend of mine do some digging and according to the paperwork on file, you signed yourself in here.

ASSATA

What? No. I didn't. I would never...

JACOB

(overlapping)

Since it's a voluntary admittance, you have to stay until you are evaluated again and approved for release.

ASSATA

Well, how long will that take?

JACOB

I don't know. At least three days, I think.

ASSATA

I can't be in here that long. I can't stay in here another day. My mom needs me.

JACOB

You might want to play it cool. This isn't the sort of place you want to air your grievances. And "visions" doesn't exactly scream sanity. I'll call a friend and see what he can do.

EXT. CHAPEN PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL - DAY

Assata and Jacob race from the hospital, get into a car and speed off.

INT. APARTMENT, ASSATA'S LOFT - NIGHT

Assata paces the floor with her phone to her ear. The PHONE RINGS several times.

MRS. DEVEAUX (V.O.)

Hello.

ASSATA

Mom. Oh my God. Are you okay?

MRS. DEVEAUX

I'm fine. Assata, what's wrong? I was a little worried when you didn't call me back yesterday.

ASSATA

Mom, I know this doesn't make sense right now, but I need for you and dad to go over to Aunt Carrie's right now. I'll explain everything later. Just trust me. Please. I love you.

She goes to her medicine cabinet and pulls a prescription pill bottle from behind another bottle. She compares the pills to those in the bottle inside her purse.

ASSATA (CONT'D)

These are the pills from a new bottle I had refilled. These are the ones I have been taking recently. They aren't the same.

She runs downstairs to Hamira's room with Jacob following behind.

INT. APARTMENT, HAMIRA'S ROOM - NIGHT

They rummage through the room. Assata finds a prescription bottle without a label full of the same pills she's been taking.

She picks up a brochure from Chapens and copies of the admittance paperwork.

Suddenly, Hamira is standing in the doorway of her room. Assata holds up the papers.

HAMIRA

(dangerously calm)

This isn't your room, now is it?

ASSATA

Forgery and murder, you can pay for with your life; but this ass whooping is on me.

Assata runs toward Hamira and punches her in the face. Hamira pushes Assata, pins her to the bed, and chokes her.

Jacob runs toward them. Hamira picks up a candle holder. Clocks him in the head. He falls to the ground.

Assata gets free. Pushes Hamira to the ground. Begins stomping her. Hamira grabs Assata's foot in mid-stomp, throwing off her balance.

Hamira gets up, grabs her by the hair and drags her to the kitchen.

INT. APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Hamira reaches for a knife.

Assata gets up. She uses the weight of her body to knock Hamira into the wall.

The knife slides across the floor. They both lunge for it. Hamira gets the knife and thrusts it toward Assata. Assata dodges the knife and backs into the living room.

INT. APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Assata grabs a pillow. Blocks a stab. Knife falls to the floor. Assata grabs it this time. In a tug of war, Hamira is stabbed in the stomach and falls to the floor.

Breathing heavily, Assata leaves Hamira laying motionless and crawls into Hamira's room where Jacob is still laying.

INT. APARTMENT, HAMIRA'S ROOM - NIGHT

She places Jacob's bleeding head in her lap. She sobs. He slowly opens his eyes. They kiss.

JACOB

Ready to paint those murals?

They laugh.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Just promise me you'll keep using your gift. People need you.

ASSATA

I promise.

They kiss. POLICE LIGHTS flash through the window.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Assata paints on a blank canvas. She looks back at the entrance where Jacob is leaning in the doorway smiling. She smiles and paints.

FADE TO BLACK.