

Senses

an original screenplay by

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FADE IN:

CELLO MUSIC accompanies opening credits, with swirls of color in the background.

INT. CHRIS' HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

CHRIS is a middle-aged woman, blind. She plays the cello in the dusty living room of this small suburban home, curtains closed. She wears pajamas, looks unkempt.

The music becomes increasingly discordant. Swirls of yellow 'air' emanate from the doorway, infect the room around her. LARRY enters through the front door. He is greasy, overweight, wears uniform for a garage. The yellow swirls surround him.

Chris keeps playing, mezzo forte, Larry scowls.

LARRY

Give it a rest, will 'ya Chris? I had a long day.

Chris stops playing, but the cello music continues in the background (she still hears it in her head).

KITCHEN - LATER

They sit at a table in the messy kitchen. Larry gets up, gets a glass of water, sets it down for Chris. He talks continually.

While Larry talks, we watch Chris change from originally paying attention to Larry, to spacing out, enjoying the food, feeling the sun from the window. As Chris changes, the cello music in the background goes from very faint, to louder.

LARRY (CONT'D)

(while eating)

He's got no sense, Fred. He bought that oil furnace two years ago and I told him he should get it serviced every year. There's little intake tubes that get junked up and just need a little cleaning every year, but of course he didn't do it and then he tried to fix it himself, and Jesus Christ, he fucked himself then because of course he couldn't fix it, then sensors kept going off and he...

We no longer hear Larry, as the cello music has taken over. The entire scene darkens, until we see only Chris, and see the swirls of color in the darkness that attend the music.

Larry SLAMS his hand on the table, the scene returns to normal, no more music in the background. Chris is very subservient and weak in her body language & tone.

LARRY (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ, Chris. Didn't you hear me? I asked the same question four times!

CHRIS

I'm sorry. Wh, what did you ask?

LARRY

Forget it!

CHRIS

No, I'm sorry. Please tell me.

Larry gets up, throws dishes in the sink. Chris winces.

HALLWAY OUTSIDE BEDROOM - LATER

The cello music is disturbing. We hear Larry PANTING (sex).

LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Larry exits through the front door. The room is full of his yellow swirls. Chris enters from the hallway, looks disheveled, bad sleep. The cello is a single low note, slow, back & forth. Chris runs her hand over the cello case.

EXT. OUTSIDE CHRIS' HOUSE - DAY

Dressed modestly, cello case in one hand, cane in the other, Chris slowly walks away from her house. The yellow swirls diminish, stay attached to the house as she moves away.

The music changes from the monotone note to happier. Chris breathes deeply through her nose, smiles.

INT. SUBWAY - DAY

The cello music in the background is bright and playful. A group of young children play nearby Chris's seat. She 'looks' at them, we see rainbow colored swirls around them.

Later, Chris gets off with a throng of people. The music changes as different people (with an attendant style/colour of swirl) pass Chris, gain her attention, move on.

INT. SUBWAY CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Cello case in hand, Chris walks with the crowd. She hears the VIOLIN BUSKER ahead. She deflates, turns back.

INT. SUBWAY - LATER

Commuter crowd. A HANDSOME MAN moves his way closer to Chris. She perks up, breaths in deeply through her nose.

His swirls are a deep blue, the cello music is full, multi-toned, sweeping with romanticism.

INT. SUBWAY CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Handsome Man disembarks, Chris tries hard to keep up to him.

As he pulls ahead, she seems more frantic, his blue swirls trail back to her, she takes a right turn, follows them. His romantic theme fills the background.

A doorway opens at a crossroads, many people from different directions surround her, and she loses the swirls. The cello music crescendos in panic.

Later, Chris shuffles back toward the subway. Her cane hits a bench, she sits heavily.

Sitting, Chris plays the cello. A WOMAN passes, pauses. The pink swirls from her interplay with Chris and the music. She drops money in Chris' case (amongst coins and bills).

INT. SUBWAY - DAY

MORRIS, a middle-aged Asian man, rides the subway, disembarks.

INT. DIFFERENT SUBWAY CORRIDOR - DAY

Morris hears the cello music. He sees Chris.

Chris is visibly thinner, as though she hasn't eaten or slept well in days. Morris is moved by Chris' intense music.

Morris watches an OLDER MAN pause, affected by the music, drop in coins, shake his head, move on.

Morris sits on a bench opposite Chris.

Time lapse shows hours of people passing between them, many stooping to drop money in Chris' case.

Later, there is less traffic. Chris stops playing, smiles at Morris. The music in the background continues, gentle.

MORRIS

How do you do it? How do you know
what to play for one person, to affect
them that way? How do you see them?

CHRIS

I smell them.

MORRIS

What do you mean? You smell their, their body odor?

CHRIS

I...I've smelt your cologne before, but I knew you weren't the same man.

MORRIS

How?

CHRIS

(shrugs)

I don't know how. I saw you, though. You've been there for hours, all day.

(beat)

You're very kind. You're a musician, aren't you? And you're not white. You're from somewhere else.

MORRIS

Astounding. I'm born American, but I am Asian. My father was Chinese, and my mother is Malaysian.

(beat)

I...I can help you.

CHRIS

I suppose I could use some help.

EXT. OUTSIDE SUBWAY STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Morris guides Chris' by the arm, she carries her case.

MORRIS

We can get you a case with wheels, you know?

Chris turns her head, sharp. Morris hails a taxi as he talks.

MORRIS (CONT'D)

Oh yes. There's one at the conservatory. Once my colleagues hear you play, there'll be no holds barred. Don't worry, Chris. You'll be taken care of.

INT. CONSERVATORY, HALLWAY OUTSIDE PLAYING ROOM - DAY

Morris shakes hands with a TEST WOMAN, 50's, pink power suit.

Test Woman enters the playing room.

PLAYING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Chris sits, well-dressed and well-fed, with her cello.

Chris plays for Test Woman. Test Woman's dark red swirls emanate, swirl, with the classical music. Test Woman's hand goes to her heart, her mouth opens slightly.

HALLWAY OUTSIDE PLAYING ROOM - LATER

Test Woman closes the door behind her. Morris rises off a chair, surprised to see Test Woman has been crying.

TEST WOMAN

That woman...is dangerous. God,
Morris. What is she?

(cries)

I would have slit my wrists if she...
played me to do it.

(beat)

She could have, Morris. She saw
right into my soul.

(frightened)

She had complete control.

INT. CHRIS APARTMENT - DAY

Chris sits at her table, entertains Morris and MORRIS' WIFE.

The LAUGH.

MORRIS

Let me ask you something serious,
Chris. If you could do anything,
play anywhere, do any thing with
your music, what would it be?

Chris pauses. We hear the theme from Handsome Man.

CHRIS

(quietly)

I would find him...my soul mate.

Morris and Morris' Wife frown at each other.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

I had him, once, once on the subway.
A few days before I met you, Morris,
just after I left my husband. But
he was walking away from me. If I
only could have played for him, he
would have seen me.

Wife, astounded, stares at Chris, one eyebrow raised. Morris sits back, appraises Chris with compassion, thinking.

INT. CONCERT HALL - NIGHT

Chris plays solo for a sold-out audience, ????.

The audience stands, applauds, random cheers.

BACKSTAGE

Chris pants, shiny-eyed, grabs at Morris.

CHRIS

He's here! Morris, I can sense him.
I know it's him. He's in the upper
right, a ways back, but I could sense
him.

Morris is instantly worried.

MORRIS

Chris, you, there's no way...

The CLAPPING and HOLLERING from the audience continues.

A STAGE HAND approaches them.

STAGE HAND

Miss, they won't stop. You have an
encore, Miss.

Chris smiles radiantly at Morris, heads back out on stage.

AUDIENCE - MOMENTS LATER

Sitting in the audience, Handsome Man is spell-bound as he listens to his theme. He grasps the hand of his WIFE so hard she winces at him. She looks at him like he's crazy.

Later, as the audience finishes clapping, Chris beams out at the audience, Handsome Man drags his Wife by the hand.

FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

Chris practically drags Morris through the crowd, his arm crooked in hers. Morris smiles at people awkwardly.

Handsome Man sees them, beams, rushes up.

Handsome Man is awash with passion, his theme music, in the background, fills the space. He takes Chris' hand.

HANDSOME MAN

That was so beautiful. I...I've never heard anything like it.

Slowly, Chris's smile turns plastic. The music gains a minor note, the pale blue swirls from Handsome Man's wife swirl into the space between them.

HANDSOME MAN (CONT'D)

This is my wife. Darling, wasn't she just, so, so amazing.

He's back to being captivated by Chris. Morris and Handsome Man's Wife are awkward, not sure how to take this extremism.

Chris's face becomes sad, resigned.

CHRIS

You have children.

WIFE

Yes, three little girls. They are a handful. Honey, we really should be getting home.

Handsome Man still beams exuberantly at Chris, but his arms are around Wife.

HANDSOME MAN

Our youngest, Jenine. She shows real talent as a musician. I think I'll get her a cello some day. I..I'll buy your CD!

Arm still around Wife, he reaches out, takes Chris's hand.

HANDSOME MAN (CONT'D)

She'll love it. We'll be your biggest fans. She'll love you just as much as I do.

As Handsome Man and Wife walk away, we pull away, Chris stands alone in a thinning crowd, Morris behind her. The cello music, still on Handsome Man's theme, is a melancholy, heart-wrenching sadness, but thins, quiets, fades.

FADE OUT\FADE OUT: