

nocturnal Babylon *Treatment and Script sample.*

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nocturnal Babylon is a film about a revolution.

Specifically, it's a film about the women who keep the revolution alive. The dreamers, the code switchers, the visionaries, the seers.

If you took #MeToo, Black Lives Matter and The Indigenous People's Movement and they rose together to take their space in the city – they might call it nocturnal Babylon. It's salvage. It's community. It's pre-war vegetables and herbs. It's Fems. It's women in positions of power. It's cactus for the thorn fence. It's alternate realities, parallel universes, and ancestral herstories. Like the Lakota say: "If there is one thing you can learn from Indigenous people, it's what it's like to live in a post-apocalyptic society".

AVA

Over there the day-name says Poor Street,
but we call it Taytu, she was a warrior
Queen. Like the proverb: The night teaches
us 'I think therefore I am' and the dawn
poet whispers in our dreams, "I feel
therefore I can be free". See,

Ava points to a sign: 'Ethic hooks: A woman's freedom and equality determines the freedom and equality of all society'.

AVA

The neighbourhoods send to the fems and so
on right on up to the top circle. They
make the final decisions.

JESSICA

Is that also an ethic? That system?

AVA

Yep. Ethic Octavia. Membership is
voluntary. But every lead position is
female. Look.

Ava points at a tall rooftop full of trees.

AVA

From up there we like to say that on a
clear night you can see the revolution.

But what makes nocturnal Babylon very different is *'when'* it is.

In our cities we divide people by space. In this film – it's by time. Day and night. 'Them' and 'Us'. The corporations live the daylight. The night hours are for the revolution. A 2-city system held by a countdown on every billboard and street corner. Day hours clocking down minutes, and seconds - until 00.00.00.

ROSALIE

Time zero. If you live in daylight the nightCity is easy to find. Just buzz out your door in the zeros. But most won't. For daysiders it's like stepping into their own fear. Except that they already live there.

Jessica stares out at the street whose clocks all say
00.00.00.

Daytime *is* different. The dayCity is all PolitiCorps, deports and economic hitmen. Daysiders don't have elections; they have 13 competing corporate governments, all with different rules. *Senscorp. Shopko, China Pacific, Drax ...* They have private police and they're expensive. They have borders and checkpoints and skyscrapers where the high ups work. They have sweatshops, and surveillance. They teach a version of history where naturally they are the winners. Zombie down, promo up, stand for the flag, kneel for the cross. Even moving house means new government papers. And if you put a foot wrong, you're deported to the night hours. In the dayCity the game is power - it's the only game worth playing.

LEAD POLICE

05.43.12. These are protest-related charges. Unlawful assembly, criminal mischief and rioting. You have also sought to block legislation so you face charge without bail.

PRIYA

What is this?

ROSALIE

It is exactly what it looks like.

LEAD POLICE

Once charged you will pledge an oath of loyalty to Broadfield Property Ltd and be deported to the zeroes. This is a first and final notification. Proceed.

The family are picked up roughly and put into a van. Priya looks at the people walking by.

PRIYA
Won't they help?

ROSALIE
All these people live in captivity.

PRIYA
The Corps?

Rosalie nods as she notices Jessica returning to her car.

ROSALIE
Survivors learn what to remember and what to forget. But not me. I still recall every mistake we ever made.

So why are daysiders so afraid of the night?

Some don't want to lose what they have. Some are afraid of difference. Some believe the night is full of horror. It's hardly unrealistic. In cinema the night has always been portrayed as a place of fear. From vampires to slasher movies to psychotic killers to violence. For the people of nocturnal Babylon then, this film is the opposite story. The night is a space of safety and possibility. For those who step in to see it.

But how does the divide stay in place? What stops the Corps from expanding as they do in our own world?

The biggest and most important difference between this film and our own cities are *the dreamers*.

Let's call it ancient wisdom. If Charles Xavier ever stopped to ask where his telepathy really came from, he might just thank his ancestors. If Sue Storm, Wolverine and NightCrawler were to track the history of teleportation, animal whispering or invisibility – they would discover songlines, spirit animals and dreaming pathways.

In nocturnal Babylon dreamers keep the balance. They have 'abilities' but that doesn't make them superhuman. It makes them even *more* human. Because dreamers and their corporate opposites - *the dreamcatchers* understand more than anyone that

actions have consequences. Dreamers and dreamcatchers know that any shift of the reality timeline will come at a cost. A small shift might mean a pain maybe, or a fever. But the big dreams. That's a whole different level.

ROSALIE

No two dreamers are the same Priya. But the outside dreams, the one's that change the world, they're at the edge of what we know. Did you ever psych the Tarot? The Fool is zero. She's on a cliff edge. A free spirit. Just her and her dog. And then, without looking, without a moment's hesitation ... she leaps. And no one knows what happens next. Not me, not our people. Like this black and white. Blind sight.

PRIYA

It came from an outside dream?

ROSALIE

By a Daysider.

Priya looks at Jessica getting in her car.

PRIYA

So, do daysiders know they aren't seeing color?

ROSALIE

The cruel part is they think they are.

Priya blows out her cheeks.

PRIYA

And you're saying I'm the fool?

ROSALIE

I'm saying you are on the fool's journey, but what we believe is .. You never really leap alone.

Rosalie waits, Priya looks around.

PRIYA

Jessica.

Priya.

In this story, a young girl Priya is the fire that changes the world. If it were *Stranger Things* she would be Eleven, if it were *The Hunger games* she would be Katniss. She is a dreamer. She is the fool. She is a once in a generation talent. With steel grey eyes and

a long dark braid, she is more youthful than Katniss, but just as courageous - or rather she would be if she could remember who she is. At the start of this film, she awakens with no memory. Through the film Priya must piece together her life and where she belongs. She's like the dream world itself, Alice down the rabbit hole opening doors within doors to find her family, her true friends and the mysteries of the 2-city system that one day *she will break apart*.

Of course, when there's a fire then there's always people to fan the flames.

In this case the ill-winds are **Synchronisers**. They're headed by a man who wears three watches on one wrist. He's tall, a little thick in places, not necessarily handsome - but commanding. Turns out his real name is Kern. First name E for Ego. He was a high-up Corp where he headed a whole psych division. Then he was given his papers. Turns out he was too radical even for those psychos. And now he's reborn as 'The Senator' or 'Senator K'. Head of the synchronisers. Thing is, his cult run 'aura tests', hard to get past, hard to infiltrate. But that's not all. He has 8 dreamcatchers, and one of them is next gen. Untrackable. She's the one who's after Priya.

That puts Priya on the run, but fortunately she's not alone. She has an unlikely friend in daysider Professor **Jessica Jeong**. Jessica is a dream analyst in a dayside school. She listens in on students dreams and reports on any illegals. But doing so has led to her having doubts. She's too smart not to question the system and too unlucky not to get caught doing so. Her curiosity is what leads her to the nightCity, her wounded heart is what opens her to Priya. Jessica is still in mourning over the loss of her own daughter, and she's not about to lose someone again. If Priya jumps, then she will too. Which is just as well, as Priya is about to dream the end of the clocks that divide the city. And for everyone the world is about to change.

So, we have the fire, we have the synchronisers fanning the flames, and a friend who will never give up. The final pieces are the nocturnal revolutionary dreamers.

Rosalie is an original. It means she's seen *a lot* – maybe too much she might say. If Toni Morrison and Octavia Butler were to walk into nocturnal Babylon, they would find kindred in Rosalie. She's a storyteller and the stories she loves are written from within, for her people. Now in her twilight she's the walking memory of what was.

She's the handprint of history. To those who know her she is heroic and flawed. To those who have only heard of her she is a mythical force. For those who need her help - like Priya, she remembers what she can – even when remembering seems unwise. But inside it all, in her private space, she is still a curious girl born in a labour camp who can still recall the first time she saw the moon.

Ellis and Ava are sisters. You can see the resemblance, but Ava is the punky one who stayed nightside. She is lighter, more carefree, some would say a free spirit. She is a beautiful black trans woman in her early 20's living in a city that doesn't prejudice on race, sex or class. For her the categories don't exist. They are barely in her vocabulary. It's what makes her hard to defend against. How can you prepare for someone when you never know what to expect?

Ellis is the *code switcher*. She works at Senscorp where she targets daysiders who could be sisters in the revolution. It isn't easy. Living dayside for a nocturnal is like seeing the world inside out. It's deep stealth. Like having to have two souls. What a code-switcher fears isn't being found out. It's making friends that drag you deeper *in*. Getting a promotion, a mortgage, starting a family on the dayside. Having friends over for dinner. Then before you know it, you're puzzling over which rug matches the curtains. Fear of becoming 'a straight' is what keeps Ellis on edge.

The rest is gravy. Of course, we're going to end with a face-off between Rosalie and the dreamcatcher. But to get there we must travel through the storm that is coming. Rosalie is our eyes and ears to the culture of the dreamers, and Jessica's curiosity is our ride from the dayhours to the nightCity. The Senator is pulling the strings from the shadows. Twice his plans force Ellis and Ava into rescue missions. At the centre of it all is Priya, a girl trying to put her pieces together. But Priya must also learn that her memory was taken from her for a reason. Because whatever Priya dreams – happens. And when Priya dreams the end of the countdown clocks that divide night and day, neither city can be the same again. Instead, thrust together, nightsiders and daysiders must either prepare for battle, or find peace by reckoning with how the city came to be divided in the first place. Because as we know history is written by the winners. Unless perhaps the history is a herstory.

Nocturnal Babylon 5-page script sample.

Over black, TEXT on screen:

In the year zero, the AI system collapsed without warning. London fell into a period of chaos known as 'The Panics' until a group of 13 rival corporations (Corps) stepped in to maintain order.

But not everyone was willing to accept the Corp regime. Led by diviners or seers known as dreamers, revolutionaries took up the curfew hours and declared their independence. The daysiders called it 'The nightCity'.

The nightCity dreamers called it nocturnal Babylon.

INT. UNDERGROUND LABOR CAMP, COLOUR

The sound of a fan turning. A claustrophobic underground dormitory. The walls are made of concrete. A 10-year-old black girl (ROSALIE) sits watching the red light on her wrist tracker bracelet pulsing.

Her older BROTHER (Black male 18 years old) enters the doorway. He tries to appear calm for her sake, for his too.

BROTHER

Rosalie?

He looks back down the hall

BROTHER

Come on let's go.

ROSALIE

Has it worked?

BROTHER

I don't know, maybe, we think so.

ROSALIE

But my trackers still on?

She holds it up.

BROTHER

I know, me too.

INT. LABOR CAMP COMMON AREA. COLOUR

They step into the cramped common area of Cell Block 5. The digital countdown reads 2ND SHIFT IN: 01.15.04.

They catch glimpses as they pass doors. Guards with hands tied. A handful of prisoners keep watch, a few prisoners lie unconscious, one appears to have lost his sight.

ROSALIE
Can't I help him?

BROTHER
We don't have time.

Rosalie's brother glances at the air vents. The lights go out. The emergency neon kicks in. People of all ages walk past in the standard pink of Block Ducane.

BROTHER
The door.

INT. LABOR CAMP DOORWAY, COLOUR

A purple wall of violent energy crackles. Above it a sign: Danger High Voltage. A.W.A.K.E. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE. Facing it 12 prisoners sit with eyes closed in the lotus position.

ROSALIE
(Using sign language to stay silent)
The Dreamers.

Her Brother nods. He looks up at the auto-guns. The crowd are silent and anxious. Then a slight breeze.

ROSALIE
(Using sign language to stay silent)
Clean air?

A thin gap in the energy field appears. Rosalie steps forward then reads her brother's hesitation.

ROSALIE
(Sign language)
You're not coming?

BROTHER
(Sign language)
I will, but not yet.

Before she can change his mind, he kisses her on the forehead and motions her to the crowd queuing out the escape door.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE LABOR CAMP - NIGHT. COLOUR

Outside. Stars, and a moon. A clock counts down: AI Internment. Re-education through labor. 2nd shift in 00.37.48.

The prisoners stumbling out are stupefied by the open space. City lights flicker to the horizon. Rosalie's hand is shaking. She inhales unrecycled air. Then deep in the earth, a sonic boom.

The gate flickers. The digital countdown blinks 00.00.00. Rosalie's wristband tracker light turns green.

From inside the facility, the unmistakable sound of auto-gun fire. Rosalie, in shock, runs back towards the sound as behind her in the distance, district by district, the lights of the city blink out.

Blackness.

Rosalie's voice (now ELDERLY) READS:

ROSALIE (V.O.)

(Reading)

The Panics. 5.59 it was all routine,
6am - the city crashes. The straights
woke to an all-time horror that day.

No electrics, hospitals, water.

(a beat)

No AI.

Title on screen:

96 years later

INT. THE ONCE LABOR CAMP NOW A HOSPITAL WARD. COLOUR

A calendar: YEAR ZERO + 96

A room with no windows.

A sign on the wall:

A dream you dream alone is only a dream.

A dream you dream together is reality.

PRIYA a 14-year-old south Asian girl is unconscious in a hospital bed. Priya with steel grey eyes and a long dark braid

might normally be called a fighter, but right now she is frail and sickly, robbed of her little girl years already.

ROSALIE (now ELDERLY) has grown into a woman with a kind face. She radiates wisdom. A natural healer.

ROSALIE

(Reading)

Now winter's here. Everyone's so cold. Most daysiders want to forget what was and learn what is. I hope they know they can't trust those up above. You couldn't think up the hate they have for each other.

Rosalie turns a few pages. The journal is full of handwriting and notes. She picks another part to read.

ROSALIE (CONT'D)

At night we're on the rooftops and between the cracks. And there are so many of those. My hands are so bruised I can hardly write, my arms are so long my knuckles scrape the floor. But when the early risers ask what we're building. I always say the same thing - Hope..

Rosalie pauses at that, looks at Priya, then closes the journal (labelled 0) and returns it to a gap alongside others (1-96)

She reaches for her TAROT. Spreads the cards and turns one. She looks thoughtful as she takes it in.

ROSALIE

I honour you with the roughness of my skin. I honour you with my breath. I honour you with my quiet, so I might hear you. And the time in me might hush.

The camera pans to the card. It is THE FOOL and it depicts a YOUNG GIRL stepping off a cliff. A girl just like Priya.

TITLE SEQUENCE

Modern and ancient symbols of feminine power intercut against video archive of female oppression. MUSIC.

INT. SENSCORP LOCKER ROOM. BLACK AND WHITE

Priya opens her eyes and finds she is in a SENSCORP locker room. Looping branding, Sencorp First. A digital clock on the wall counts down from 00.19.23.

Priya is disorientated. Around her mostly male corps get changed. Rosalie stands nearby. The scene is BLACK AND WHITE.

PRIYA

Where am I?

ROSALIE

You're with me. You're a dreamer.

Rosalie glances at the clock. 00.19.17

ROSALIE

Can you find me? Your senses are adjusting.

PRIYA

(Lost for words)

ROSALIE

Hold out your hands.

Priya holds them out. Rosalie takes them in her own.

ROSALIE

Look closely. Right into my eyes. What comes to your mind?

PRIYA

I'm a dreamer?

ROSALIE

A dreamer drifting memories of people who knew you.

PRIYA

But ...

ROSALIE

To put yourself back together. That's your journey. We call it a drift.