

"Night Music"

Three dozen Chinese immigrants are discovered in a cargo container at Los Angeles Seaport. Sergeant Thomas, a veteran cop, is undone by a young boy with a bamboo flute.

"NIGHT MUSIC"

FADE IN:

EXT. LOS ANGELES SEAPORT - NIGHT

A city of cargo containers stretches beyond imagining.

The silence of the night is broken by a song.

A lone SECURITY GUARD, flashlight in hand, wanders through the alleys of metal crates, whistling a makeshift tune.

Out of the darkness, a haunting flute echoes his song.

The Guard freezes, listening, his flashlight searching the black. His light comes to rest on a container as the music abruptly ends.

Slowly, he approaches the massive metal crate. He unlocks and swings open the steel door. He shines his light inside.

SECURITY GUARD
(sotto voce)
Holy Mary, Mother of God.

INSIDE THE CARGO CONTAINER

three dozen Chinese immigrants huddle in the dark, shielding their eyes from the light.

A BOY, with curious eyes, clutches a small bamboo flute.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOS ANGELES SEAPORT - LATER THAT NIGHT

A phalanx of emergency vehicles have cordoned off the area. Red and blue lights reflect off everything.

The immigrants, scared and weak, sit on the pavement as a MEDIC attends to them. The Boy sits amongst them and yet, alone.

A TRANSLATOR listens to their story.

Surveying the scene with a hardened eye and weathered face is SERGEANT THOMAS.

SERGEANT THOMAS
Fucking Chinks.

OFFICER COOPER, the Sergeant's beefy protégé, approaches.

OFFICER COOPER
Is this a grade A cluster fuck or
what?

SERGEANT THOMAS
What about the shipping manifest?

OFFICER COOPER
It's like you said. It's a fake.

SERGEANT THOMAS
The media is going to have a field
day with this.

OFFICER COOPER
The boys are saying the Chief is on
the way down and the Mayor is
coming with him.

SERGEANT THOMAS
Goddamn immigrants. This whole
country is going to hell.

The Medic heads over to the Sergeant.

SERGEANT THOMAS
What do you got for me?

The Medic snaps off his rubber gloves.

MEDIC
I got some head lice, some
dysentery; they're all malnourished
and could use a hot bath, but it
could of been a lot worse.

OFFICER COOPER
So, what's next?

SERGEANT THOMAS
Immigration has a bus on the way.
They'll process them and send them
all back to whatever shithole they
crawled out of.

Back with the immigrants, the Translator is talking to the
Boy. The Boy smiles and begins to play his flute.

It is beautiful, like birds singing.

Sergeant Thomas watches them, curious.

SERGEANT THOMAS
What the hell is he doing? Go get
the Translator.

Officer Cooper leaves to fetch the Translator.

MEDIC
So, what's this I hear about the
Mayor coming down here?

SERGEANT THOMAS
Standard bureaucratic bullshit.

Officer Cooper returns with the Translator in tow.

SERGEANT THOMAS
Talk to me.

TRANSLATOR
I got good news and bad news.

SERGEANT THOMAS
Lay it on me.

TRANSLATOR
It's classic. Poor immigrants gave
everything they had to some thief
back in China for the promise of a
new life in America. It's nothing
but a scam. They were beginning to
think they were going to die in
that box. They're all just happy
to be alive.

SERGEANT THOMAS
So what's the good news?

TRANSLATOR
That was the good news.

SERGEANT THOMAS
Jesus, you're a fucking optimist.
What's the bad news?

TRANSLATOR
You see the boy with the flute?

MEDIC
It's a dizi.

TRANSLATOR
A what?

MEDIC

A dizi. It's a Chinese flute made from bamboo.

SERGEANT THOMAS

How in the hell do you know that?

MEDIC

It's worth 14 points in Scrabble. D I Z I, it pays to know your "Z" words.

SERGEANT THOMAS

You need to get out more.

TRANSLATOR

Well, anyway, the boy with the dizi won't talk.

SERGEANT THOMAS

And?

TRANSLATOR

No one knows who he is.

OFFICER COOPER

I don't understand.

TRANSLATOR

I've spoken to them all. They all have the same story. They all know each other, except for the boy. Nobody knows a thing about him. They don't even know his name. They haven't heard him make a sound, except for the flute.

Sergeant Thomas looks over at the Boy. His eyes are closed as he continues to play his song.

SERGEANT THOMAS

You're saying somebody just tossed that kid in there all alone?

TRANSLATOR

I don't know what I'm saying. I can't get him to say a thing to me. I think he might be mute.

MEDIC

The kid sure can play though.

OFFICER COOPER
Well, it's making me crazy. I'll
get him to talk.

Officer Cooper marches over to the Boy.

The Sergeant has a faraway look.

MEDIC
What is it?

SERGEANT THOMAS
Nothing. My daughter, she used to
play the flute, when she was
little. She wasn't any good,
but...

The music is hypnotic. The Boy is gifted.

Sergeant Thomas listens to the music. He shuts his eyes.
For a moment the world is silent except for this one song.

Suddenly, Officer Cooper snatches the flute out of the Boy's
hands and the music is gone.

Sergeant Thomas opens his eyes and the cacophony of the world
rushes back in.

The Boy stands up and reaches for his flute, but Officer
Cooper holds him at arm's length.

OFFICER COOPER
What do you want? You want the
flute? Tell me. Say, "I want the
flute."

The Boy struggles silently.

SERGEANT THOMAS
Take your hands off the boy.

Officer Cooper ignores him and holds the flute higher.

OFFICER COOPER
Talk to me.

TRANSLATOR
He doesn't understand you.

SERGEANT THOMAS
Give him the flute.

The Boy is jumping, trying vainly to reach his flute.

SERGEANT THOMAS
Give the boy the goddamn flute
back!

The Boy kicks Officer Cooper in the shins.

OFFICER COOPER
Son of a bitch!

Officer Cooper grabs the flute with both hands and snaps it like a twig.

OFFICER COOPER
Here is your fucking flute, kid.

He tosses the broken instrument at him.

The Boy picks up the two pieces off the ground and tries to put them together. It's hopeless. For the first time all night, he looks scared.

Sergeant Thomas rushes over to Officer Cooper.

OFFICER COOPER
Did you see what that little freak
did to me?

Sergeant Thomas unleashes a powerful punch sending Officer Cooper to the ground.

Officer Cooper is up quickly and charges Sergeant Thomas. They both go hurtling to the ground. They tumble in an angry scrum full of curses and a flurry of fists.

Finally, some other officers pull them apart, both men fuming.

OFFICER COOPER
What the fuck is wrong with you?
It's just a fucking flute.

Sergeant Thomas wipes at his face.

OFFICER COOPER
Are you crying? Oh my God, you
are. What are you doing, crying
over some fucking kid?

Sergeant Thomas shakes himself free from the men holding him. He briefly looks at Officer Cooper, sorrow in his eyes, and then turns away.

Officer Cooper calls after him.

OFFICER COOPER
What the fuck happened to you?
Come on back here, you big pussy.
You fucking faggot.

Sergeant Thomas walks off into the night, tears streaming down his face.

FADE OUT.