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Lavanda: Connecting Film with the Five Senses

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LAVANDA: CONNECTING FILM WITH THE FIVE SENSES

An Honor Thesis

Presented to

The Department of Film

Of the University of New Orleans

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Bachelor of Arts, with University Honors

And Honors in Film

by

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Abstract

In this paper, I will cover the process of connecting my honors thesis film, *Lavanda*, with the five senses. I will mainly focus on how the sense of smell can be represented in film along with visual and aural elements. Also, I will present the challenges that arouse while trying to represent taste and touch. Ultimately, I will evaluate the representation of each sense in *Lavanda* and how a film has the potential to encourage the use of other senses besides seeing and hearing while watching a film.

Keywords: five senses, film, smell, Lavanda, lavender.

Chapter 1

Introduction

I always wondered what it would be like to go to the movies and be able to smell what the characters smelled in the movie; to eat what they eat; to touch what they touch. While screens and speakers allow audiences to see and hear aspects of a story, there are no tools that allow moviegoers to smell, taste or touch an element from a movie while watching it. Or at least, that is what I thought. I remember watching *The Chronicles of Narnia* (Adamson, 2005) and wondering what Turkish Delight tasted like, or *Like Water for Chocolate* (Arau, 1992) and trying to picture what it would be like to taste one of Tita's magical dishes. I even wondered what would happen if I could smell a scene of any given film or feel the pain some characters experience in some scenes. When the opportunity to explore an aspect of film through my thesis showed up, I decided to make a film in which I could evoke other senses besides seeing and hearing; I wanted my audience to have the chance to experience scents, taste and touch. The first thing I needed to do, was to come up with a story in which I could incorporate those senses I considered "unexplored."

I knew my film had to revolve around the senses, but I did not know how to come up with a story that could invite the audience to use their senses to immerse in the story. Part of the difficulty of making a film for the senses is that film started as an art that was focused on visuals. Filmmakers have always strived for outstanding visuals and when sound was possible, they focused on presenting clean sound. Before I started this thesis, I never heard of a person trying to present the best smell, taste or

touch in a movie. The focus was always in picture and sound, so I did not know how to create a story that could invite other senses.

Once I met with Henry Griffin, my thesis advisor, he recommended a list of films for me to watch and along with the name of the films, he told me the sense they evoked. The list included:

- *Like Water for Chocolate* (Arau, 1992) –Taste
- *The Five Senses* (Podeswa, 1999) – The Five Senses
- *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (Stuart, 1971) –Taste
- *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* (Schnabel, 2007) - Sight
- *Polyester* (Waters,1981) –Smell
- *The Tingler* (Castle, 1959) –Touch
- *Eat, Drink, Man, Woman* (Lee, 1994) –Taste
- *Blow Out* (De Palma, 1981) – Hearing

Also, Mr. Griffin encouraged me to watch his short film, *The Flavor of Plaid* (2012), which follows the story of a woman who has synesthesia, a condition in which the five senses are reordered. Along with the list of films, Mr. Griffin told me of some films that actually used some tools in order to boost the audience's experience with the sense the film represented. Those tools are detailed in the upcoming chapters of this work.

With the references that Mr. Griffin gave me, I started to take some inspiration for a script in which I could invite my audiences to experience the senses. I started with an idea entitled *The Smell of Thorns*, a script in which a young female international student gets caught in a relationship with a guy who is trying to put her

into the sex-trafficking business, but she does not know it. The script included sequences in which Andrea, the protagonist, would interact with the senses. For example, I included a scene in which she would cut strawberries and then accidentally cut her hands and her blood would mix with the juice of the strawberries in order to evoke the sense of taste and touch at the same time. However, I later realized through a conversation with Mr. Griffin that my idea was not pointing in the right direction. I realized that I was forcing the senses into my story instead of naturally let them come to life as Mr. Griffin and I had agreed in the earlier stages of this project.

I knew I wanted my protagonist to be someone with strong Hispanic roots. I wanted to highlight my cultural background since not too many characters in the student films at UNO were of Hispanic descent. Also, I wanted the lead character to be female since the protagonist of *The Song of Grace* (2012), my previous short film, was a male character. Lastly, I wanted my main character to struggle with conflicts in an American setting. Overall, I have basic ideas about my protagonist, but I still did not know how to connect her to the five senses.

One day, I saw my friend Myrinda and I remembered how I used to drink a soda called Myrinda when I was in Guatemala, my hometown. The word “Myrinda” reminded me of oranges and freshness and all sorts of good feelings that I experienced whenever I had that drink. Then I thought about the possibility of giving my character an unusual name that naturally evoked the senses. Flowers were my first thought; flowers could represent smells and colors, but at the same time I realized that the first couple of flower-inspired names that popped into my mind, were very common names. Therefore, the names did not stand out in my mind. I knew that I

needed to find something that stood out just like the word “Myrinda.” While thinking of flowers, I finally thought of the flower of lavender. The flower stands out among the rest because of its smell, its color, its shape and above all, because it has healing and relaxing properties that have been long used in different cultures around the world. In that moment I knew that my main character needed to be named “Lavanda,” which means lavender in Spanish. I knew that if my audience were familiar with the flower of lavender, they would immediately associate it with the light purple tone that carries the same name as the flower. Also, since lavender is used for relaxation purposes, I immediately associated its name with relaxation music. I also remember people using lavender products in their babies to relax them before putting them to sleep, which can be associated with the sense of touch. I saw some recipes online that used lavender infusions, which made me connect lavender with taste. Last but not least, the flower of lavender has a smell that makes it stand out among other flowers. I wanted my character to release that smell, I wanted my character to be the walking lavender: someone who was relaxed, without worries, helping people around her. I wanted these good attributes to be excessive in my character to the point in which they become her flaw. I wanted those good things to affect someone important in her life. With those aspects in mind, I came up with the premise of *Lavanda*. After overcoming the stages of development and planning, production and post-production, I present this honor thesis in which I explain how I attempted to connect my film to the five senses. I will start off by stating how I approached vision and hearing with strong cinematography and sound mixing techniques. Then I will present my approach to the sense of smell and the limitations that taste and touch presented. I will

also present the feedback I have gotten from first time viewers and how I would make them experience the sense of smell while watching the film if I only had the space and resources to do so.

Chapter 2

The Premise

Lavanda follows the story of two sisters. One of them is called Lavanda. She is a young and beautiful Latin girl who goes out to help people with the healing tears that roll down her eyes. Lavanda is really relaxed and independent. She gives purple scented ribbons to people who she cares about. On the other hand, Rocio is a year younger than Lavanda. She has a hard time making friends at school and finds comfort in her older sister. This story follows the sisters as they go through a night in which Lavanda decides to leave Rocio alone with some of her high school peers while she goes out to help a lady. Rocio then blows up and kicks out all of her guests as she realizes that none of them care about her. However, one of the guests stays around and sexually abuses Rocio. Rocio takes her ribbon off while Lavanda is out somewhere else, putting a ribbon on a lady's hair. She is able to heal the lady and the lady's son offers her a ride back home. Once the two sisters meet again, they found out that the comfort and the sweetness that come from Lavanda's personality are not pleasing to Rocio anymore and Lavanda must make a choice in regards to her identity.

Chapter 3

Sight

Film's primary focus has always been on addressing the sense of vision. The phenakoscope, one of the first devices that inspired the art of film, is described "as the first pre-cinematic device to create the illusion of moving pictures" (Leskosky, 176: 1993). Those moving pictures were designed to please the vision of the audience. Knowing that visuals are the main focus of a film, I knew I had to do the best I could to give my film a beautiful look pleasing to my audience's eyes.

From black and white, to color, to 3D movies, filmmakers have always looked for ways to improve the way they portray the images on the big screen. Some filmmakers even go deeper into the exploration of the sense of vision and create movies that engage viewers as if they were looking through the characters' eyes. For example, the movie *The Diving Bell and The Butterfly* (Schnabel, 2007) follows the life of Jean-Dominique Bauby who has suffered an accident and whose whole body is paralyzed, except for his left eye. More than a third part of the movie is experienced through subjective shots that represent Bauby's left eye. In one way or another, vision has always been the most explored sense in the history of cinema. As I started to prepare to shoot *Lavanda* I knew I wanted to present a visual style I had not presented before.

Ever since I started film school at UNO, I had always used cameras with settings that limited my creative control. These cameras did not capture a significant amount of detail of the images I was trying to show. I actually went into my advanced

production project class and used one of the Panasonic HVX 200 that the film department had available in their equipment room. I did not know that the department had better cameras available for me. I decided that I wanted to use a camera I had not used before. The first options that popped into my head were to get either a Canon 7D or a 5D. However, in one of the meetings with my producers, producer Lizzie Guitreau suggested to use a RED Scarlet. She said she knew a group of UNO students who owned one and who could rent me their camera for a decent amount of money. Also, Lizzie said that one of them could be the director of photography, since at that point we still did not have someone to take care of that important part of our production. I played with the idea in my head and I realized that using the Scarlet was the best option for this film that intended to connect with the audience's senses. I watched Youtube camera tests for both DSLR and RED cameras and the difference was evident. They both looked good, but using a Scarlet meant a visual delight for my audience. Using the Scarlet opened up the possibility for me to play my film in a 4K format.

I told Lizzie to contact this group of students and see if we could rent the camera and if we could have one of them as our DP. A couple of weeks later we welcomed Matt Guidry and the RED Scarlet into our production team. Matt became our Director of Photography and the first thing we did was to get together and find references that could help us to elaborate a tangible vision for *Lavanda*. Surprisingly, Matt mentioned the film *Biutiful* (Gonzalez Iñarritu, 2010), which is one of the films that I also had as a visual reference in my mind. Since we were covering a sad subject matter, we thought that the dark and melancholic look of *Biutiful* would be a good

starting point. Over the course of pre-production I watched some films and I ran across *Rust and Bone* (Audiard, 2012), which had two contrasting characters with parallel stories that would eventually connect, just like Lavanda and Rocio in *Lavanda*. *Rust and Bone* presented desaturated scenes for a tough and rude character while the scenes for the nicest character were warm. Matt and I decided that we wanted Rocio's scenes to be darker and cold while Lavanda would be presented with warmer lighting.

While Matt and I discussed what the lighting for the film should be, we also knew we needed a strong art department that could help us to put together good looking sets that would be pleasing to the eyes of our audience. It would not make sense to have a good camera and lights if the art of our film was not well handled. I gathered an art team formed by a production designer, an art director and four production assistants. The first important decision that we needed to make as a creative team was to pick the color for Rocio's room. The location manager, who also happened to be the owner of the place that we used as Rocio's room, decided to let us paint her room the way we wanted. Therefore, we had the opportunity to paint the room in the way that pleased us the most. After looking for colors, I narrowed the options down to two: a light gray tone and a fresh light teal. I passed the options around to Matt, Lilian Cevallos (Creative Producer) and Rachelle Ross (Production Designer) and we all together decided that the light teal was the best option. Rocio's room was the most important among the rest of the sets, because it is in that room that Jason rapes her and as a consequence, all of her sensorial memories are transformed.

The light teal tone of the walls was contrasted by light purple objects that reference the color of lavender and also, the art department put different sets of lavender flowers around the sets to bring the attention of the audience towards these flowers that carry the same name of one of the main characters. As a result, *Lavanda* accomplished a beautiful look. One person said they were engaged in the movie just because of the quality of the shots.

Hearing

Just like picture, sound has been present in most of the films I have watched ever since I was born. Although my goal was to connect film with the senses, I did not attempt anything extraordinary in terms of sound. My most ambitious plan was to have black filler between frames in which there would not be any picture, just sound. That plan became useful at the time of editing the aftermath of the rape scene. I put filler in between the rape scene and Rocio having a hard time trying to go to sleep afterwards. The rape scene cuts when Jason is kissing Rocio's back and then the audience is just able to hear the sound of Jason unbuckling his belt and Rocio asking Jason to stop.

I could have tried to make a film more focused on sound such as *Blow Out*, in which a sound recordist finds evidence of a crime through sounds he records. However, I wanted to focus more on trying to incorporate scent, taste and touch, the three senses that are not automatically shown in any film. Still, I wanted my sound to be clean, so I asked Lee Garcia to become my sound mixer. I have known Lee ever since I was a freshman and he is known around the film department for being an

excellent mixer. I knew my sound was in good hands when he agreed to join my team.

While working in post-production sound, I found out that there were certain sounds that were presented off screen. Some of them are:

- The sound of Jason peeing at the bathroom while Rocio is in her room.
- The sound of Rocio sobbing when Lavanda enters the house after she's dropped off.
- Different sounds of doors opening and closing throughout the movie.

The sounds play an important role in engaging the audience with the story.

Taste

“Alright Rocio, the tamales for the party are ready,” are Lavanda’s first lines as Rocio is getting ready for her birthday party. Although the tamales and other food elements are not shown in the first scene of the movie, the “party attendees” interact with different plates and drinks during the party sequences. At first, the food in the movie seems to be just a product of the art department. However, the audience gets to interact more with some elements as the story unfolds.

One of Matt’s ideas that worked in favor of the sense of taste is “the cup sequence.” This is the sequence I used to open the second half of Rocio’s party right before she kicks the guests out. It consists of starting with the camera inside a cup of one of the extras and then moves inside a different cup. We did this process with three different groups of extras. Once the sequence was put together, we can cut to different parts of the party and ultimately, it leads us into the shot where Rocio enters.

The way this sequence connects with the sense of taste is that by entering and exiting the cups, audiences get to see a drink in front of their faces. This offers an opportunity for audiences to experience the party scene as if they were in it.

Also, I wrote an element in the story specifically intended to connect with the sense of taste: Rocio's birthday cake. In the midst of pain and reconciliation, I wanted to open up a space for Lavanda to try to redeem herself by baking something for her sister. I created a montage in which Lavanda cleans up the table, cracks some eggs, mixes eggs with cake mix and then she puts everything in the oven. I wanted the audience to experience Lavanda's effort to amend problems with her sister.

Of all the senses, the sense of taste has been known in literature for connecting two or more people together. In 2012 I did research on food in literature and I found this line from *Reading Like a Professor: A Lively and Entertaining Guide to Reading Between the Lines*: "eating with another is a way of saying, 'I'm with you, I like you, we form a community together'" (Foster,8). I wanted Lavanda to try to reconnect with Rocio through sharing a cake together. However, Rocio rejects the cake and throws it in the ground, which makes Lavanda angry. After watching the first cut of this film, some peers gave me comments such as, "I felt bad for her; that cake looked so delicious." Those sort of comments served as a proof that I was able to present a cake that looked "delicious" even to the eyes of an audience, who are watching it on screen. Perhaps the results would be even more impactful if I give the audience a piece of "Rocio's cake" while watching the film.

In our first meetings, Mr. Griffin mentioned that someone had given people some Wonka candies to eat during a screening of *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate*

Factory. However, the results of this event are still unknown to me. The most successful ways for filmmakers to connect their audiences with the food in their films is by putting emphasis in the time the characters spend in cooking and delighting (or disgusting) themselves with the food they try. Ang Lee accomplishes emphasis on food with *Eat, Drink, Man, Woman* and Alfonso Arau does it in *Like Water for Chocolate*. Both movies have many scenes devoted to showing food. As long as the food elements look real, they have the potential to make the audience want to try or reject certain dishes. It all depends on the filmmaker and how much emphasis he or she puts in working on the look of the prop food. I put emphasis in the cake, and people felt attracted to it.

Touch

Touch is the sense that I focused on the least. During my research, I found out that a filmmaker was able to successfully connect his film with the audience's sense of touch. The filmmaker is William Castle and the movie is *The Tingler*. This film follows the story of a scientist who discovers a parasite called "the tingler", which resides in every human's spine and feeds from people's fear. According to *Time*, "Castle installed vibrating devices in the seats of unwitting film goers, triggering them at random during the scene" (Fletcher, 2011). Castle became popular for this kind of "gimmicks", but putting Castle's movies in theaters became too complicated for them and they stopped showing his films.

Topping *The Tingler* was already a challenge. I did not have the means to accomplish something bigger than vibrating devices or other sort of "gimmick" in a

movie theater. However, there are scenes in *Lavanda* that allow viewers to perceive the sense of touch. In fact, the sense of touch might be the one that viewers would not want to experience while watching this film. The only two characters who experience physical touch are Rocio and Jason. They start by grabbing hands while dancing and they stop at the rape scene. From the grabbing of hands to Jason kissing Rocio's back, the sense of touch is brought up in the interaction they have. Getting these kind of interactions out of the screen is something that audiences might not want to experience. Unlike the rest of the senses, touch is a very personal sense that interacts with one's whole body. What I was able to prove through my exploration of the sense of touch is that it might not be worth it unless you have an entertaining idea such as William Castle's.

Smell

After vision and hearing, scent seems to be the other sense that filmmakers have tried to incorporate in movies in the past. When Mr. Griffin suggested films for me to watch, he recommended the movie *Polyester*, a film that incorporated Odorama, a gimmick that consisted on special cards that had spots for the audience to scratch and sniff while watching the movie.

While doing research, I found a book called *What The Nose Knows*, in which author Avery Gilbert covers a chapter on "Scent and cinema." In this book, the author describes how other systems called Aromarama and Smell-O-Vision appeared during the 50s in order to incorporate scents as part of a film experience. Nonetheless, it is evident that none of these systems succeeded, as they were not used after that era.

While the smells from Smell-O-Vision were considered erratic, Aromarama was considered stinky and loud to the nose of the audiences (164).

Having Lavanda and the theme of lavender as part of the core elements of my story, I found room for the scent of smell to be brought up. Even during production the smell of lavender was felt throughout the set; the dry flowers used by the art department had a strong smell. Then I wondered what it would be like to have my audience experience that smell as they watch the movie. As opposed to erratic and stinky smells, I only had to work with one smell, and it was the smell of lavender. The first thing I needed to do, was to make the smell evident in my story.

Since smell is an abstract, I decided to use a visual cue to represent it: Lavanda's purple ribbons. The movie opens with a short sequence in which Lavanda's voice is heard off screen as she says, "I brought this ribbon for your hair. I hope you like its smell." Based on the fact that Lavanda is the one giving the ribbons to people, it can be implied that the ribbons smell like lavender. Throughout the movie, Lavanda, Rocio and Mrs. Myers are seen with ribbons in their hair. Based on the first statement of the movie, it is evident that these three women are experiencing the smell of Lavanda as they carry the ribbon in their hair. In fact, Rocio starts taking that ribbon off after she is raped, while Lavanda is on her way back home. Later in the movie Rocio states, "He said he liked my smell...your smell!" Rocio's line expresses how the smell that makes other characters feel comfortable and good, makes her feel disgusted since the guy who raped her delighted himself with the smell of lavender.

Some lines of dialogue and Lavanda's purple ribbons make it clear that the girl has a characteristic smell. My attempt to connect the sense of smell with film ended up being successful as my audience was able to identify the presence of the smell throughout the movie. Perhaps the experience could be even more successful if I were to offer a ribbon to anyone watching the film.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

It is certainly possible to connect film with more senses besides sight and hearing. Looking at the past, I can see that other filmmakers have been able to make their audiences interact with film through taste, touch and scent. Even if they failed, they were able to at least make their audience experience the movie with their senses for a while. Although systems such as Smell-o-rama and Aromarama failed because they were “stinky” and “erratic,” they at least accomplished connecting their audiences with smells. Perhaps Castle’s ideas were too complicated for theaters to handle, but he was able to send vibrations to people watching *The Tingler*. Regardless of the results from having people watching *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* and eating candy at the same time, the reality is that there were people watching a movie and eating candy from the movie at the same time; they watched and tasted the film.

Through *Lavanda*, I proved that it is possible to tell an impactful story while inviting the audiences to feel what the characters feel. The level of interaction between the film and the audience’s senses can go as high as the filmmaker wants it to be. It all starts with a solid and convincing portrayal of elements on the screen and then it is up to the filmmakers’ creativity to come up with ideas to enhance the audience’s sensorial experience.

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Appendix A: Shooting Script

LAVANDA (THE SHOOTING SCRIPT)

By

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1 INT. MRS. MYERS BEDROOM - NIGHT 1
LAVENDER TEARS roll down the eyes of a female face.

2 INT. ROCIO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 2
Tears roll down the eyes of a different female face.

3 INT. MRS. MYERS BEDROOM - NIGHT 3
LAVANDA, 18, a beautiful and elegant Latin girl, with a LAVENDER RIBBON on her hair, is wiping her tears off. She gets a LAVENDER RIBBON out of her purse. She smiles.

4 INT. ROCIO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 4
ROCIO, 17, a perturbed young Latin girl having trouble at sleeping in her bed. She unties a LAVENDER RIBBON off her hair.

FADE OUT

TITLE CARD: LAVANDA

FADE IN

5 INT. ROCIO'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON 5
Rocio checks herself in the mirror, insecure of her look. She turns her head and checks her SINGLE BRAID interlocked with a LAVENDER RIBBON. She smells her hair.

6 INT. LAVANDA'S KITCHEN - AFTERNOON 6
Lavanda lifts the lid of a small pot. She smells it; smiles.

LAVANDA

Alright Rocio, the tamales for the party are ready. I gotta head out before it gets late.

7 INT. ROCIO'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON 7
Rocio's face shows that something bothers her. Lavanda enters the room.

(CONTINUED)

LAVANDA

Rocio?

ROCIO (IN SPANISH)

Do you really have to go? I mean, it's my birthday and it's getting late. Something could happen to you.

LAVANDA (IN SPANGLISH)

Oh come on, it's just for a while. I'll be safe. Besides, your actual birthday is tomorrow y la señora me necesita, but I'm sure you'll have a good time with your friends.

ROCIO (IN SPANISH)

They're not my friends. I don't even talk to them.

LAVANDA

Oh come on! Don't be so negative. We already talked about this. You gotta give them a chance.

Lavanda gives Rocio a hug and kisses her on the cheek.

LAVANDA

Now smile and get ready for a sweet birthday party.

Lavanda leaves. Rocio stares at a FAMILY PICTURE of an early birthday party.

8 INT. LAVANDA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

8

Some boys are having a good time at the kitchen finishing the food. A group of students by the door seem disgusted by the party. The girls in the couch seem bored. All of these seem to make Rocio uncomfortable. Rocio stares at them, they give her a look of disapproval. Rocio is upset.

A group of boys walks in with SIX-PACKS in their hands. The people cheer up.

JASON, early 20s, a self-confident mature high school student is among the boys; the only one who is not flirting with the girls in the couch or devouring the food at the kitchen. He sees Rocio. He walks to the kitchen and grabs two cups. He goes to where Rocio is.

(CONTINUED)

JASON
Here, you want some?

ROCIO
Uh, no thanks. I don't drink.

JASON
It's just soda.

Rocio smiles; shyly she takes the cup from him.

ROCIO
Ok. Thanks. I'm Rocio.

Jason smiles; he knows who she is.

JASON
I know. I'm Jason.

ROCIO
You're a senior, right?

JASON
(Smiling)
Yeah.

ROCIO
I wish I was a senior, too. I still
have one year left and it feels
like forever. I hate school.

PATRICE, gets near Jason. She clinks her cup with Jason's.

PATRICE
Cheer?

JASON
Oh, yeah, yeah.

Patrice sits between Jason and Rocio; she starts whispering to his ear. Jason is annoyed by what the girl is telling him. Rocio seems uncomfortable. Whatever the girl tells him, makes him leave the house.

JASON
(to Rocio)
Excuse me.

Rocio is upset.

9 EXT. ROAD - EARLY EVENING

9

Lavanda walks down the road. TWO GIRLS AND ONE BOY walk the opposite direction to where Lavanda is going. They wave their hands. The girls have LAVENDER RIBBONS in their hair.

Lavanda shyly smiles and greets them. Happily, Lavanda continues her way.

10 INT. LAVANDA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

10

The girls in the couch are laughing.

GIRL #1

Call Patrick and see if he can come
pick us up.

A boy in the kitchen tries to finish a bottle of alcohol; his friends encourage him. The boys by the door have conversations while flirting with the girls in the couch. The girls flirt back to all of the guys. Rocio follows the signs between the boys and the girls with her eyes. One of the girls stares at her, annoyed. Jason walks back into the house and tries to make eye contact with Rocio. Rocio deliberately ignores him. Patrice walks in again, now with another girl and introduces her to Jason; he seems quite annoyed, but politely he greets her. The girls in the couch share secrets. A couple awkwardly dances. Nobody pays attention to Rocio.

A boy in the kitchen THROWS UP in the sink. Rocio has enough.

ROCIO

GET OUT!

Everyone is quiet. A girl laughs.

ROCIO

I SAY GET OUT OF MY HOUSE! NOW.

The people start leaving. Rocio goes towards the rooms of the house. Rocio comes back carrying a roll of paper towel.

Jason stops at the door. Rocio heads to the sink. She passes a towel on the vomit.

JASON

You need help with that?

(CONTINUED)

ROCIO
I got it, thanks.

Rocio keeps cleaning; Jason contemplates her.

ROCIO
You can go with them, I don't need
your pity.

JASON
Okay! chill. I just hate that they
did this to you. I didn't mean to
offend you or anything.

Rocio turns, she empties bowls of chips on the trashcan. She
stops.

ROCIO
I'm sorry, that was rude. It's just
that I don't get why my sister
invited so many people I don't
know. I mean, look at this mess.

JASON
Yeah but, you gotta relax, you
know. Take things easy. Why are you
so worried?

ROCIO
I'm just not used to these things.

JASON
That makes sense. Here, let me help
you.

Jason reaches for the bowls. Rocio doesn't let him.

ROCIO
That's fine, thanks. I'll clean up
later; don't worry about that. You
can go now if you want.

JASON
Are you sure?

Rocio heads to the hallway.

ROCIO
Yeah.

JASON
Well, okay. Can I use your
bathroom, though?

ROCIO
Sure, it's right there to the
right.

Jason walks towards the bathroom. Rocio walks into her room.

11 INT. ROCIO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 11

Rocio walks into her bedroom. She removes her earrings and checks herself in the mirror. She's upset.

JASON (O.S.)
So, where's your sister?

The sound of Jason peeing.

ROCIO
Working, I think. Hey, can you at
least close the door?

JASON (O.S.)
Oh, Sorry. So, I thought she was
gonna be here, you know?

ROCIO
Let's just not talk about that.

Rocio plays with her hair. She smells it. She gets sad.
Jason walks in and admires the bedroom.

JASON
Nice room.

ROCIO
Thanks.

JASON
So, what plans you have for tonight
besides cleaning up? You're going
out?

ROCIO
I'm only sixteen. I mean,
seventeen!

JASON
Right! I forgot you can't do
anything, yet. We could dance or
something in here, you know?

ROCIO
Dance? I'm sure you don't dance.

JASON
Oh, let me show you.

Jason awkwardly starts moving his feet.

ROCIO
(laughing)
Is that how you dance?

JASON
Are you judging me? Come and teach me, then.

Rocio shakes her head, smiling.

ROCIO
I don't think I can teach you, I haven't danced in a long time.

JASON
Oh come on; here, let's dance to that song.

Jason grabs Rocio's hands and start dancing to a SALSA SONG. As the song goes on Rocio starts feeling more comfortable. Rocio looks at her hands grabbing Jason's. She stops, a little bit surprised.

JASON
Come on, keep it going. You're good at this.

Rocio leads Jason into the dance, until they reach a moment in which their faces are really close. Rocio leans close to his mouth; she fails to kiss him.

ROCIO
I'm sorry. I don't know what I was thinking.

JASON
Don't be sorry. You're just scared.

Rocio is sweating; blushing. She's extremely nervous.

ROCIO
I'm sorry, really sorry.

JASON
Shh...just try.

Jason goes for a kiss. Rocio steps back.

ROCIO
Let's just go back to the living
room.

Jason closes the door and slowly approaches Rocio while unfasting his belt.

JASON
Nuh, come on.

ROCIO
What are you doing?

Jason pushes Rocio on her bed.

ROCIO
No, please don't do that.

JASON
You know you'll like it.

Jason breaths heavily on top of Rocio, who at this point is crying.

ROCIO
No, please no...

CUT TO

12 INT. ROCIO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 12

Rocio cries on her bed; she is desperate.

13 INT. MRS. MYERS LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 13

Tears roll down the eyes of a female face. It's the face of Lavanda who wipes her tears off with a small towel next to Mrs. Myers who sits on her couch. The lady's hand is covered in SORES.

Lavanda passes the towel on the sores and they heal.

MRS. MYERS
You have such a beautiful gift,
young lady.

Lavanda gets a LIGHT PURPLE RIBBON out of her purse.

(CONTINUED)

LAVANDA

Now, let me put this ribbon on your hair. I hope you like its smell.

Lavanda ties the ribbon on Mrs. Myers hair.

MRS. MYERS

Oh, that's so cute. You are full of surprises.

14 INT. ROCIO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 14

Rocio is having a hard time at getting to sleep.

Rocio unties the LAVENDER RIBBON off her hair. She puts it aside.

15 INT. MRS. MYERS BEDROOM - NIGHT 15

Lavanda modestly smiles as she finishes tying the ribbon.

LAVANDA

Now, if you don't need anything else, I'm ready to go back home. I need to start walking before it gets too late...

MRS. MYERS

You walked...?

SAM (O.S.)

It smells nice in here.

SAM, a young man in his early twenties walks in. Sam is surprised to find Lavanda. Lavanda smiles. Mrs. Myers' face shines.

MRS. MYERS

Sam, meet..how do you say your name, again?

LAVANDA

Lavanda...it's like Lavender, but in Spanish.

MRS. MYERS

Oh! Lavanda. So beautiful.

SAM

Lavanda, huh? Is that why it smells so good in here?

(CONTINUED)

They all laugh, but Mrs. Myers and Lavanda know the truth.

MRS. MYERS
Lavanda, this is my son Sam.

LAVANDA
Nice to meet you, Sam.

SAM
Nice to meet you, too.

MRS. MYERS
Honey, would you mind giving her a ride back home? This young lady wanted to walk, but I think it's too dark outside for her to do that.

LAVANDA
Oh, it's not a problem. It's not that far.

SAM
Are you kidding? I'm not gonna let you walk.

LAVANDA
Oh please, it's not a big deal.

SAM
Hey, don't worry. I'll be happy to drive you home when you're ready.

Lavanda smiles. She shares a smile with Sam. She's happy to get a ride from him.

16 INT. SAM'S CAR - NIGHT

16

The road outside looks empty, it's really late at night.

SAM
So, you walked all the way to our house?

LAVANDA
Yeah, I really love walking.

SAM
Wow, but still, it's a long walk.

(CONTINUED)

LAVANDA

Oh you can turn left in the next stop.

SAM

Do you wanna get something to eat?

LAVANDA

I'm good, thanks. I think my sister will still have some food at home. She had a party today.

SAM

Oh really? what kind of party?

LAVANDA

Well, I invited some of her high school friends to our house for her birthday.

SAM

Her birthday? How come you're out? You should be there with her.

LAVANDA

Well, her actual birthday is tomorrow. I just want her to interact with more people, you know? I feel like she depends too much on me. I don't know..ever since we moved here she's always been so distant from people. She always says she misses home.

SAM

So, it's not like she has friends then. And your parents don't mind having a lot of teenagers at their house?

LAVANDA

We don't have parents anymore.

SAM

Oh, I'm sorry. I'm really sorry about that, I didn't mean to be...

LAVANDA

It's okay. We're here by the way. You can pull over.

Sam stops the car. Lavanda opens the door.

(CONTINUED)

SAM

Hey I'm really sorry.

LAVANDA

Oh Sam, don't. It's been over a year now, I'm good.

SAM

Well, if you ever need to talk, you should let me know. I think you're a really interesting girl. Besides, you smell really good.

Lavanda smiles trying to figure out the meaning of Sam's words.

SAM

Yeah, I mean, your smell has something that makes me feel comfortable and good.

LAVANDA

I'm glad. Are you gonna be home tomorrow? I'm bringing some flowers for your mom, we could hang out for a while if you want.

SAM

Yeah but...didn't you say tomorrow is your sister's birthday?

LAVANDA

You're right! How could I forget about that? Please explain that to your mother, I thought...

SAM

Don't worry. I'm sure she'll understand.

Sam forcedly smiles at Lavanda, then looks at the house. He's surprised.

SAM

Is the party over? Your house looks pretty empty.

LAVANDA

I guess I'm about to find out.

Lavanda opens the door.

SAM

Lavanda, maybe your sister relies a lot on you because you're the only person she has. Even though you have good intentions, I think you should spend more time with her.

Lavanda nods.

17 EXT. LAVANDA'S HOUSE - NIGHT 17

Lavanda gets out of the car and walks towards the house. Lavanda is upset; still processing the words she just heard.

18 INT. LAVANDA'S HOUSE - NIGHT 18

The sound of somebody sobbing. Lavanda walks in.

LAVANDA

Rocio?

Lavanda rushes inside her house towards the bedrooms.

19 INT. ROCIO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 19

Rocio is on her bed, sobbing. Lavanda sadly approaches.

LAVANDA

Rocio, what happened?

ROCIO (IN SPANISH)

Get out of here, please.

LAVANDA

What happened? Did those kids mess up your party?

Rocio remains in her bed, sobbing, with her face turned to the opposite side to where Lavanda is.

LAVANDA (IN SPANGLISH)

Come on, it's your birthday. Can I sing for you? Make you some tea? anything? Come on, let me sing you something.

Lavanda starts humming.

ROCIO (IN SPANISH)
Get out, now!

Lavanda exits the room.

20 INT. LAVANDA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT 20

Lavanda walks into the kitchen. She looks around. She seems determined. She gathers ingredients from around the kitchen. She sets them up on a table and pours a mix on a bowl.

21 INT. ROCIO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 21

Rocio rolls to both sides of her bed.

FADE OUT

22 INT. ROCIO'S BEDROOM - DAY 22

Rays of light come into the bedroom windows. Rocio is sleeping until she wakes up to the sound of...

LAVANDA (O.S.)
Good morning!

Lavanda walks in with a LIGHT PURPLE CAKE in her hands, she starts singing happy birthday.

Rocio sits on her bed and Lavanda sits next to her.

LAVANDA
Okay, make a wish.

ROCIO (IN SPANISH)
Nah. I'm fine. Thanks.

LAVANDA
Come on, it's your birthday!

ROCIO (IN SPANISH)
Can you please speak in Spanish?
There's no need to speak in
English.

LAVANDA (IN SPANISH)
Okay, okay, but calm down. Gosh.
What's wrong with you? I'm trying
to cheer you up and you don't help
at all.

(CONTINUED)

LAVANDA

No wonder you say people don't
wanna hang out with you.

Rocio PUSHES THE CAKE off Lavanda's hands and starts crying.
Lavanda looks at her with concern.

LAVANDA

Do you feel better now?

ROCIO (IN SPANISH)

Sorry.

LAVANDA (IN SPANGLISH)

You know what? I'm tired.
Seriously, look at this: I'm making
an effort for you to have a nice
day and you reply with this!

Rocio keeps crying.

ROCIO (IN SPANISH)

Get out please, leave me alone.

LAVANDA

Yeah, but first I wanna...

ROCIO (IN SPANISH)

STOP WITH THE ENGLISH! I'm tired.

LAVANDA

Rocio STOP! I speak whatever
language I want. Seriously, I'm
sick of your attitude. I know
things have changed but we gotta
keep moving forward. I'm sorry mom
and dad are gone, I'm sorry your
friends from school are stupid, but
you gotta get over those things and
suck it up, You think this is easy
for me? I mean, look at me, I quit
school so I can pay for yours, I
make sure you have food to eat, I
even take care of you when you get
sick and ...

ROCIO (IN SPANISH)

ME VIOLARON, LAVANDA! ME VIOLARON.

Lavanda stops, she didn't see that coming.

Rocio breaks into tears. She stands up and rushes out of her
room.

(CONTINUED)

LAVANDA

Oh my God.

Lavanda stands still, she's thinking. She runs after Rocio.

23

EXT. LAVANDA'S HOUSE - DAY

23

Rocio comes out of her house. Lavanda joins. Both of them with tears in their eyes. Rocio is broken; Lavanda has been impacted by her sister's words.

Lavanda gets closer to Rocio.

LAVANDA (IN SPANGLISH)

Rocio, I'm so sorry. I mean, lo siento. Rocio, perdon ah...

Rocio cries desperately. Lavanda hugs her.

ROCIO (IN SPANISH)

I'm scared. I don't even wanna go to the police or do anything else. I feel dirty and..what I hate the most is that stupid smell of lavender all over the house. He said he liked my smell...YOUR smell.

Rocio pushes her sister aside.

ROCIO (IN SPANISH)

Lavanda, I feel like I can't be around you anymore.

LAVANDA (IN SPANISH)

Rocio; Rocio; Rocio, look at me.

Lavanda approaches her sister and tries to grab her hands. Rocio reluctantly agrees.

LAVANDA (IN SPANISH)

I know I haven't been the best sister. I mean, why did I think it was a good idea to leave you alone with people you barely know? But Rocio, I want things to change. I wanna help you out.

The sisters get closer to each other. Rocio feels the smell of Lavanda's hair.

24 BACK TO EXT. LAVANDA'S HOUSE

24

Rocio subtly pushes her sister back.

ROCIO (IN SPANISH)
But how? Your smell is all over the house.

LAVANDA (IN SPANISH)
Rocio, I'm more than ribbons, smells and things of that sort.

Rocio doesn't wanna accept that. With an effort, she looks her sister in the eyes.

LAVANDA (IN SPANISH)
Do you remember the song I used to sing to you right after mom and dad passed away?

ROCIO (IN SPANISH)
Yeah?

LAVANDA (IN SPANISH)
I used to hate that song. It reminded me of mom; she is the one who taught it to me. But I didn't know what to do when you couldn't sleep and for some reason I started singing that song and you felt better. After that I didn't think about how much I missed mom, but about how the song helped you to sleep.

ROCIO (IN SPANISH)
Really?

LAVANDA (IN SPANISH)
Rocio, as your sister I don't want you to go through this alone. I wanna be with you, even if it's hard.

Rocio gets closer to her sister. TEARDROPS fall down Lavanda's eyes on Rocio's hair.

25 FLASHBACK-INT. LAVANDA'S HOUSE - NIGHT 25

Lavanda and Rocio talk to an OLD LADY at the door. She gives them bad news. The girls cry. They hold hands.

26 FLASHBACK-INT. LAVANDA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT 26

Rocio is upset at the table. Lavanda serves her food. She joins the table. Rocio smiles.

27 FLASHBACK-INT. ROCIO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 27

Rocio cries on her bed. Lavanda walks in, she hums the lullaby. Rocio calms down.

28 BACK TO EXT. LAVANDA'S HOUSE 28

Lavanda is humming the lullaby. She's hugging her sister. Rocio smiles, she's feeling better. She hugs Lavanda back. Lavanda does a little sound on Rocio's cheek and gets a smile out of her.

LAVANDA (IN SPANISH)

You wanna go out for a walk?

Rocio smiles. She nods.

LAVANDA (IN SPANISH)

Ok, go get dressed.

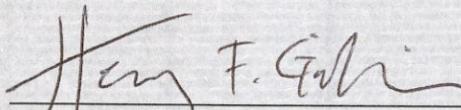
Rocio smiles, she walks inside her house.

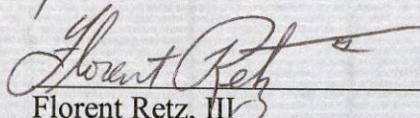
Lavanda unties her ribbon off her hair; she lets it go; she gets lost in thought as she sees her ribbon fly away. A CLEAR TEAR falls down her cheek. She forces herself to smile, as if trying to convince herself of something.

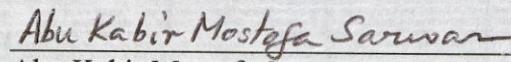
APPROVAL SHEET

This is to certify that Josue Alejandro Martinez has successfully completed his Senior Honors Thesis, entitled:

La Vanda: Connecting Film with the Five Senses


Henry F. Griffin Director of Thesis


Florent Retz, III for the Department


Abu Kabir Mostofa Sarwar for the University Honors Program

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