

The Curse

*Life's truths presented with a flair for Mysticism.
All through the Universal Language of Music.*

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Genre: Drama: Mystical Realism

Format: 1-Hour Episodic mini-series for Network TV, Cable TV, or Streaming TV

Logline: A young Jazz protege struggles to harness the mystical power of an ancient curse, unwittingly passed down to him by his old mentor. "The curse can take you on a never-ending Journey across Time and Space . . . but only at the right time, in the right place, for the right reason, with the right people." The old man dies minutes later, leaving the protege to unravel the ages-old Ritual of Travel.

Synopsis: All things happen for a reason. Though we may never know that reason. So it seems for a 10-year-old saxophone protege under the mentoring wing of a 60-year-old trumpeter in a universal story about destiny, love, compassion, yearning, uncertainty, growth, loss, and the realization of one of life's greatest treasures.

Concept:

Music: Each Episode in this dramatic 1-hour TV mini-series features (at least) one **contemporary Jazz performance** and (at least) one selection from **The American Songbook**, either recorded live, or licensed from commercial recording rights holders, matching the on-screen video action to the recorded music. The on-screen action is written to "fit the music" presented in timing and mood. Approximately 15-20 minutes of each 1-hour Episode are devoted to appropriate music selections, allowing flexibility in timing to fit program format and length.

Target Audience:

Primary: 50+

Secondary: 25-54

Marketing: It's not '*The Curse is similar to,*' but '*The Curse is different from.*'

Ingredients: 1/2-cup musical ferocity of the feature film **Whiplash**.

1-cup emotional grace of the documentary **Keep On Keepin' On**.

1/4-cup **Mysticism**.

3/4-cup **Realism**.

Instructions: Stir well.

Heat in a deep pot for 1-hour.

Strain out Violence, Hate, Racism, Profanity, and Pornography.

Savor the taste of Reality and the fragrance of Imagination.

Style: Written in a style much discussed in the media: *Spirituality without Religion*. The on-screen dialog and action are well paced, giving necessary attention to long-term character development. The story regularly shifts forward and backward in time. Past, present, and future are of no importance. An underlying implied question is whether communication with the spiritual essence of those no longer physically alive is not only possible, but achievable. **Note:** this is not a “ghost hunt” series. Rather, the fictional story carefully and compassionately addresses a question all people ask themselves in the privacy of their minds.

Continuity: Naturally, the Pilot lays out the “Big Picture” that will entice the audience to watch every episode. The Old Storyteller’s closing monologue in every episode becomes the opening monologue for the next episode, reminding viewers where the saga had left off.

Major Character Bios:

The Old Storyteller, the voice of the series. He introduces and concludes each Episode with a flair for the mysterious, setting the stage for viewers. He never appears on camera, but in voice-over format only.

Woodrow W. Reed, (white) protagonist. A 10-year-old Jazz protege taken under the wing of a 60-year-old trumpet master. We follow Woodrow’s search for meaning in life, realized through his performances and consideration of an important question: *‘Is this all there is?’* Woodrow is on a journey of destiny to find Violetta, a mysterious young woman whom Woodrow first saw at his mentor’s funeral, then again five years later at Woodrow’s breakout concert performance.

Terrance Clarke, (black) antagonist. The trumpet master leads Woodrow through 20-years of growth and learning. Moments before his physical death during an on-stage performance together, Terrance explains *‘The Curse’* to Woodrow, establishing the basis for the series. Terrance issues Woodrow solemn instructions that will dictate Woodrow’s life journey from that moment on. Terrance remains a recurring character not only through flashbacks of his life, but also through his spiritual delivery of telepathic advice from beyond the physical world.

Hiram, (black) Woodrow’s chauffeur and confidant. Financially well-off after selling his trucking business, Hiram promises Terrance that he will take care of Woodrow, *‘a good boy,’* in the event of Terrance’s death. Hiram, 15-years younger than Terrance, proves a stalwart and compassionate companion, able to help Woodrow find and achieve his mission in life.

Mona, (black) Terrance’s wife, Hiram’s older sister. Mona is the matriarch, the rock and salvation of Terrance’s life and the big sister that Hiram cherishes. She has endured unbearable tragedy in her life, including the death of her 15-year-old pregnant daughter and unborn grandchild. Mona remains a strong woman throughout, counseling both Hiram and Woodrow.

Violetta, (white) a *‘lovely young woman’* who has captivated Woodrow’s heart and soul. Violetta travels to the US after growing up in Italy. She is a marvelously gifted musician, enthralled by Woodrow’s immense talent. Woodrow and Violetta’s intertwined destiny provides the underlying Love essence of the series. They find each other. They lose each other. Will they end up together after all? Violetta remains the weekly focus of Woodrow’s episodic search for meaning. And the love-reason for the audience to watch every Episode.

Lenny Dee, (white) the *'Impresario of The Ellicott Room.'* At first glance, Lenny appears to be the buffoon of the series. But it soon becomes clear that he is much underestimated in business acumen and human compassion. As the owner of The Ellicott Room, an exclusive private dinner and concert club, Lenny gives Terrance the big break that launches his music career. Lenny is Violetta's grand-uncle, and he takes her into his home to nurture her musical career. In the end, he sacrifices his life to save hers.

Minor Character Bios:

The Bride, (white) Woodrow's older sister, calls upon him to perform a song at her wedding, thereby introducing him to his mentor, Terrance.

Joshua, (black) the pianist who performs with Terrance for the duration. In old age, he lives in the same community as Mona, where they enjoy each other's company and memories.

Josiah, (black) Joshua's grandson who befriends young Violetta at the university and invites her to join his band for a special concert at The Ellicott Room.

Violet, (black) the 15-year-old daughter of Terrance and Mona.

Thomas, (white) a restaurant waiter who plays an important role in reuniting Woodrow and Violetta.

Brianna, (black) a mysterious woman who helps Violetta through a rough time.

Armstrong, (white) a bald giant of a man and a musician who helps Woodrow reach a momentous decision in his search for Violetta.

Musicians, performers who appear and disappear through the series.

Staff, cooks, maitre d's, and bartenders, who appear and disappear.

Pilot Episodic Content:

Teaser:

The Old Storyteller begins the saga: *"All things happen for a reason. Though we may never know that reason. This thing happened long ago. And I alone know the reason. You see, I was there... At the very beginning... In another time... A different place... Indeed, I was the first to harness the power of the curse."*

Act One: 2015.

Woodrow and Hiram arrive in Hiram's white limousine at Woodrow's breakout concert performance. Woodrow confides his confusion in an uncharacteristic display of anger. *"Is this all there is?"* Although he has built a reasonably successful career over the past few years, he experiences a crisis of confidence, feeling lost on stage, berating himself for his inability to focus his musical energies beyond a mere career.

Act Two:

1995: 10-year-old saxophone protege Woodrow performs at his sister's wedding, and is taken under the musical wing of trumpet master Terrance, 50 years his senior.

2015: Back on stage at his breakout performance, Woodrow struggles to gain his focus and control his creative mind.

1955: Terrance tells the story of his own youth and family, of giving up his own dream of the Big Break when Mona confides that she is pregnant with their first child.

2015: Woodrow is concluding his performance at his breakout concert.

Act Three:

2010: Terrance and Woodrow are performing at a nightclub. During a break between sets, they retreat to the alleyway behind the club. There, Terrance explains to Woodrow the tragic duality of the ancient curse, describing its mystical power. Moments after returning to the stage, Terrance collapses and dies during Woodrow's improvisation. His dying words to Woodrow are "The Journey Begins." Two days later, Woodrow performs at Terrance's wake at the request of his wife, Mona. It is Mona who introduces Woodrow to Hiram, her younger brother, who was instructed by Terrance after his premonition of impending death to take care of Woodrow, "a good boy." At the wake, Woodrow first experiences the soft amber glow surrounding his face during his eyes-closed performance. Opening his eyes, he sees a lovely young woman (Violetta) sitting alone in the corner of the room, crying. They lock eyes.

Act Four:

2015: Concluding his breakout performance, Woodrow allow his emotions to roam free during an emotional and unbridled improvisation. Taking his bows to a standing ovation, in the first row he sees Violetta for the first time since his inspirational performance at Terrance's wake. Woodrow is finally beginning to feel the duality of the mystical power of the ancient curse. After the concert ends, he rushes back into the concert hall searching for Violetta. But the hall has already emptied, and Violetta has vanished. Uplifted by his performance but devastated by her disappearance, Woodrow leaves the concert hall the same way he had arrived, in the white limousine driven by Hiram. Woodrow senses that Hiram knows more than he is telling about Violetta. Woodrow pleads with Hiram to help him find her. The Pilot concludes when The Old Storyteller asks questions that seem beyond our grasp. *"Is Woodrow capable of harnessing the mystical power of The Curse? Has he taken the first small step in unraveling the ages-old Ritual of Travel? It has been said that all things happen for a reason. Has Violetta suddenly appeared at the right time? In the right place? With the right people? Is Woodrow destined to find her? And if so, can we ever know the reason?"*

Music Selections by Episode (either full or partial tracks):

Pilot:

MUSIC: by or in the style of "SHADOW SELF" by Chris Potter & Underground Orchestra, from Imaginary Cities, 2015

MUSIC: by or in the style of "SERENADE IN BLUE" by Scott Hamilton, from Nocturnes and Serenades, 2006

MUSIC: by or in the style of "LAMENT" by Chris Potter & Underground Orchestra, from Imaginary Cities, 2015

MUSIC: by or in the style of "IN THE MOOD" by Doc Severinsen, from The Tonight Show Band, Vol. II, 1987

MUSIC: by or in the style of "AUTUMN LEAVES" by Miles Davis, from Ballads & Blues, 1996

MUSIC: by or in the style of "LUSH LIFE" by Joe Henderson, from LUSH LIFE, THE MUSIC OF BILLY STRAYHORN, 1992