



A Short Film Written By Chuck Lightning

(with some additional funky sunshine by director Wendy Morgan)

We open on a polished luxury automobile pulling into the driveway of a prim and proper suburban home. We see on the back of the vehicle an insignia reading: HEART-HAT HEAVEN. Out the car emerges Ms. Clark, dressed somewhat like an Avon lady—she is middle aged, prim and proper. Ms. Clark very carefully pulls a large covered birdcage out of the back of the car and hurries up to the door.

The door slowly opens and our eyes settle on a very striking image. Smiling squarely at Ms. Clark is JANELLE MONÁE, dressed as LISA CAGE. (Throughout this dream-like video, JANELLE MONÁE plays several characters, including herself as a nationwide performing sensation.)

Lisa Cage's hair is pressed straight, and her makeup and fashionable middle-class wardrobe is impeccable. But there is one thing strikingly different about her otherwise stately appearance: in place of a nice colorful summer hat she wears a HEART-HAT, a large wicker birdcage on her head, complete with small birds that chirp, coo and flick back and forth in front of her big brown eyes. Lisa does not seem to notice the birds, or the surreal presence of the cage perched over her head and shoulders (see the title page photo). If anything, it seems that the birds and the cage are making her summer day more pleasant.

We cut from Ms. Clark's frontal view of Lisa Cage to a POV shot of Ms. Clark as seen by Lisa. The birds twitter and flap so close to Lisa's eyes, the image we see is unnerving and disorienting. But when we cut back to a non POV shot of Lisa we find that she is the picture of poise, as if she's used to living her entire life with flapping wings and chirping birds inches away from her face.

With a sweet smile, Lisa invites Ms. Clark to come sit in the living room.

Ms. Clark bustles in, saying, "Mrs. Cage, the model you've been looking for has finally arrived! Can you believe it? Just got in! And I thought it'd bring it right over because it's the hottest thing in town!"

Lisa answers, "Oh how exciting, please have a seat? Would you like some coffee?"

The birds in Lisa's heart-hat and the still covered cage chirp and chatter pleasantly, filling the house with the sounds of the aviary. Lisa Cage rushes into the kitchen to prepare the coffee as Ms. Clark impatiently sits waiting to show her wares.

Lisa Cage returns with the coffee and the second she sits down, Ms. Clark quickly and dramatically unveils the birdcage.

"Here you have it Mrs. Cage, the store's new crown jewel—the Golden Heart-Hat, the grandest Heart-Hat ever made, just like you ordered."

Lisa Cage gasps at the heart-hat's beauty, saying, "This is it? The one I wanted?" Ms. Clark nods and says, "Yep, isn't it gorgeous? All the way from Paris. The only one

we've gotten all season. I wish I could afford it myself." Lisa Cage looks back over at Ms. Clark, who is elegantly dressed but without a heart-hat, and titters, "I don't know...I'd have to take out a huge loan just to afford it..." Ms. Clark shrugs and says, "Well, a lot of people are doing that nowadays."

Lisa frowns and says, "But it looks so different than that picture. That's real gold?" Ms. Clark is clearly insulted and snips, "You know it is. As real as King Tut's tomb." Lisa shakes her head. "I don't know. Well, I'll have to ask Henry. He's been wanting a new car. And the kids need new heart-hats of their own." Ms. Clark leans forward and looks deep into her eyes, saying, "This is how you move up in the world. Just remember when you talk to Henry or your friends or your banker or anybody else, just tell them that in this day and age, this isn't a purchase...it's an **investment**..."

(During this opening sequence, we hear another instrumental song from *The Electric Lady* playing in the house, possibly an instrumental version of "Look Into My Eyes.")

Here we take a pause and perhaps CUT TO daydream, a Hitchcockian title sequence of Lisa Cage driving a luxury automobile wearing the GOLDEN EAGLE Heart Hat with the birds in the Heart-hat flitting back and forth absurdly in front of her eyes. Lisa Cage smiles sweetly, as if she doesn't notice the birds at all...The Heart-Hat feels just like heaven...

We CUT TO a television performance, where an all-girl rock band is standing with their guitars at the ready.

We see Janelle Monáe stepping onto the stage and waving as "And now the award-winning sensation...The Electric Lady... Janelle Monáe!!" rings through the air. The voice booms: "Here to sing the song burning up the charts 'Dance Apocalyptic!'"

THE SONG DANCE APOCALYPTIC BEGINS...

Janelle smiles and shimmies across the stage like James Brown having a heart attack and sings the first frantic lines of the song, "Going crazy, the hitmen always find you/Do that dance, smoking in the girls room/Kiss in France, it's over like a comic book exploding in a bathroom stall..."

The spinning girls in the band are all dressed in white, Clockwork Orange style...

While on risers on either side of the stage are the W.O.W. Girls (the Women of Wondaland) acting like pin-up funkateers, a funky army of blues women in leather rockabilly jackets and striped swimsuits, acting a fool, singing background vocals, stomping and carrying on...

And at the center of it all is Janelle Monáe, their general, the Queen of madness with her eyes bulging out of her head...

We CUT TO a shot of Janelle Monáe's performance being broadcast on a television set. We pan over from the television to see that we are back in the Cage family room, and in this room, on the couch across from the TV, are two young children with heart-hat's on their heads: Dexter Cage (age 10) and Becky Cage (age 7).

When Janelle sings, "But if life just comes to break you...Keep dancing to the end—you gotta fight and breakout," Dexter changes the channel, to a weather channel, frowning. On the channel is Janelle Monáe dressed as WEATHER JANE, a concerned weather woman with apocalyptic storms and fires flickering on the satellite map behind her. As she continues to sing the lines, we see a Flashing news ticker on the bottom of the screen: STORMS!! RAGING ZOMBIES!! STORMS!!

We cut back to Dexter, who laughs. Becky glares at him. She was clearly enjoying watching Janelle Monáe's live performance. She grabs the remote control and turns back to the performance just as we reach the chorus: "Dance! Dance! Bang! Bang! Don't stop! Chalang-alang-alang"" Dexter lunges at Becky and they begin bickering and fighting over the remote control. We pan over to see the front door of the house open: it is Lisa Cage, with groceries in each arm. She glares at her son Dexter and says, "It's her day today, Dexter, you know that. Now you can watch something after dinner if you eat all your peas."

We pan over and see William Cage, the patriarch of the family, engrossed in the newspaper at the kitchen table. We ZOOM IN on the newspaper in his hand, which reads: ANDROIDS WANT YOUR JOB! Mr. Cage's heart-hat is ornate—the hat of a professional, with several colorful chattering birds. He pounds his fist and says, "If these damn droids think they can come in here and take my job without a lawsuit, they got another thing coming. I've been working all my life for this..." He waves his arm to indicate the house, the furniture, the TV, their entire lives. Lisa sets the groceries on the counter and sighs, saying, "I know, baby, I know."

She looks across the street at the new car in the driveway of their neighborly rivals, The Trampp family—a white, All-American family that lives next door. Lisa frowns, "Did the Trampps get a new car?" William looks around, then frowns, saying, "Probably. Bastard. He owns Heart-Hat Heaven, the finest place in town, what do you expect?"

Lisa spins and sees a zombie couple—a man and his wife, standing in a pose eerily reminiscent of the painting *American Gothic*—on the front yard. Lisa just shakes her head and begins chopping an onion. Tentatively, she looks over her shoulder again to see that the zombie couple is gone.

Lisa shrugs, then sings, "You gotta laugh at the zombie in the front yard" and then looks back over to the family room where Dexter and Becky are now jumping up and down and dancing wildly to the second verse of the song: "Take a bath but nothing gets the funk off/ You're on TV rocking and a-rolling cause the dead just love the rock n' roll..."

We jump back into the frantic footage on the TV set where Janelle is the crazed pied piper, kicking the jam higher and higher.

After the second chorus, we CUT TO a slightly tense family dinner scene. William and Dexter have the doors to their heart-hats open, so they are shoveling in food and enjoying their meals. Meanwhile, Lisa and her daughter Becky are struggling to eat because their heart-hats are closed. Lisa is turning her fork sideways and eating her food one green bean at a time. But Becky is turning her fork different angles, but clearly unable to eat at all.

Becky throws her fork down, in frustration. Becky looks over at her brother to see that he is grinning at her and shoving food into his mouth, with his heart-hat door open. Becky says, "Mom, can I open my door?" Lisa smiles back at her, and shakes her head in disbelief, saying, "Now Becky, you know good girls don't open their doors while they eat. It isn't *civilized*. We're Bird-people, remember? And you're a proper young lady. Sit up. Turn your fork sideways. The food tastes better, mommy promises, okay?"

Becky stands and says, "Then I'm not hungry!" and then runs upstairs. Her brother Dexter laughs. Lisa frowns and snaps at him: "Dexter, one more word from you and you'll eat nothing but spinach and butter for three weeks!" Dexter looks down, scowling. Lisa looks back at the stairs where her daughter has disappeared, clearly concerned.

As we move into the psychedelic call and response section of the song, we see the sun going down, the world and the neighborhood getting dark. We CUT TO the inside of the Cage home where Lisa Cage is standing in her bathrobe, still wearing her heart-hat. A breaking news report is on the screen and in it a bunch of young rockabilly kids are ripping off their heart-hats and throwing them in a bonfire. We see a flash of WEATHER JANE holding a microphone, now acting as a brave field reporter. She shakes her head and says, "These kids say it's the end of the world, and they have nothing to lose. Young bird-people everywhere are literally ripping off their heart-hats and dancing in the street." Behind her two teenyboppers are dancing on the hood of a police car.

Disgusted, Lisa changes the channel only to find Janelle Monáe performing again, a madwoman whispering the third verse into a microphone, like a frantic preacher on her knees.

After watching the third verse and the chorus, Lisa gets disgusted and changes the channel to GIRL TALK, a nighttime talk show. GLORIA GIRL, the host, is asking Janelle questions about her decision to stop wearing a heart-hat. Janelle is dressed in her tuxedo, with her hair in a Monáe. Gloria Girl says, "So you're from South Sweet Falls, but about three years ago you stopped wearing a heart-hat. Could you talk about that?"

Janelle says, “Yes, Yes, Well, I’m a bird-person. In fact, some folks call me Little Wing. But I don’t know...I believe it’s important to live every day like your last...and one day I realized that if you take the dash from between the words heart-hat, it clearly becomes two new words: HEAR THAT. So I like to say I began to hear a different frequency and live my life a different way.”

The crowd applauds.

Jane continues: “I truly believe the word heart-hat is the problem. It’s so pretty and nice, and it makes it seem okay. I couldn’t wait when I was a little girl to grow up and wear one. Then I realized it’s really just a cage. A cage with birds in it. That’s all it is. Heart-Hats have been around for hundreds of years, but I have so many questions: For one, why does the government only require some people to wear them? I don’t get it. It used to be just black people-- we were the original bird people-- whether rich or poor. Now it’s everybody born in certain districts, who have been taught to believe that the heart-hat is the ultimate luxury item, the thing that makes life worth living. It’s been proven that heart-hats cause study problems, occupational hazards, traffic accidents, chronic pain of all kinds, injuries-- even lost eyes— from these crazy hungry birds and yet people keep talking about beauty, tradition and what’s proper and I just don’t get it. I know bird-women who have never kissed their husbands, and yet they have three kids. They wouldn’t dare take their hats off, even when they go to bed.”

Lisa Cage frowns at the television, turns it off. As Lisa heads upstairs, we head into a quiet gospel rockabilly section of the song, and an acoustic guitar strums while Janelle ad-libs soulfully.

Lisa looks into the master bedroom to see that her husband William is softly snoring in his pajamas, lying on his back—and still wearing his heart-hat. She goes into the bathroom, takes off her robe to reveal the sleek, sexy black nightgown underneath. She smiles at her sexy figure, spins and smiles, saying, “Uh, uh, uh, still got it, girl, still got it.”

We CUT TO Becky, who is crying, and looking at herself in the bathroom mirror down the hall. The door to her heart-hat is open, and the birds are gone. As we watch, she begins to flail her arms and struggle with the hat, bash at it, pull and yank and break it violently, doing everything she can to free her head and shoulders...

We cut back down the hall where Lisa is standing in front of their Bird Altar, a place where their birds rest at night. She takes the birds from her hat and gently places them inside the bird altar. “Bye Zora, Bye Octavia, Bye Billie.” Then she stands, and sighs, as if a big weight has been lifted from her shoulders. Her heart-hat is finally empty.

Suddenly, she hears a crash: something violent down the hall. She puts on her bathrobe and slowly moves down the hall to the bathroom to find: the bathroom

torn apart, and in the midst of everything: Becky's broken heart-hat. But the room is empty. Lisa touches her chest, in shock. She heads down the hall to Becky's room and opens the door.

Becky is standing there, next to the open window, like a young bird about to take flight. The moonlight lights her face, and she looks over and smiles. We don't see Lisa's response: we pan back out of the room over Lisa's shoulder, slowly, and the last thing we see is the closing bedroom door.

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