

BLOW FLY

Written by

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EXT. NORTHERN WASHINGTON - NIGHT

A barrage of winter storm clouds buries a BEAUTIFUL MOUNTAIN VISTA in a thick blanket of snow.

Cutting a difficult path through frosted mountainside, a PERE MARQUETTE 1225 TRAIN comes into view.

INT. TRAIN - BAR CAR - NIGHT

Glass ornaments RATTLE from a chandelier in the locomotive's Bar Car. Behind the bar, a Korean-American BARTENDER wipes down a glass. Just for something to do.

Seated across him, a handsome drunk laughs -- CHANCE HOLYWELL (47.) His heeled cheekbones are accentuated by a malnourished gaunt. Patchwork stubble peppers his face.

CHANCE

Let me ask you a question --
Can you recall on one hand the
number of years since you last
replaced your edition of the Holy
Bible?

BARTENDER

If I had to guess, I'd say before
the start of the war.

CHANCE

You were a soldier?

BARTENDER

That I was.

CHANCE

Whose side?

BARTENDER

On the side of Louisville,
Kentucky, chief.

CHANCE

Bet you haven't seen any snow like
this in Louisville.

BARTENDER

It comes down more sleet than snow
these days.

CHANCE

Sleet or snow it all falls like
shit on the rest of us.

BARTENDER

I heard some fella on the radio
talking about how the bomb's to
blame for the weather.

CHANCE

Oh, the bomb's to blame for the
sleet? Maybe the bomb's to blame
for my drunk. Bombs away then.

He downs his drink. Laughs again --

CHANCE

Another, another.

A small CHIME announces itself from across the train car.

Chance notices a cloaked STRANGER seated alone at a window
table. A moth-eaten striped scarf wrapped around his face.

The Stranger stares out of the window. His thoughts far off,
elsewhere.

In his hands is the INNER CYLINDER of a child's music box
toy. It winds down... singing a LULLABY.

Chance stumbles over from the bar with bottle in hand.

CHANCE

Say, what's that tune?

The Stranger pays him no mind.

The music winds to a stop. Still no response from the man.

CHANCE

Here -- let's have us a drink.

He pours two drinks -

CHANCE

The name's Chance Holywell, World
Publishing Company. Third highest
ranked Bible salesman in the
Northeast market.

- lights a cigarette.

CHANCE

Let me ask you a question: Can you
recall on one hand the amount of
years since you last replaced your
edition of the Holy Bible?

THE STRANGER

...

CHANCE

Thought so. How about a leather bound King James with gold trimming on the pages? You strike me as a King James kind o' man.

The Stranger doesn't respond.

CHANCE

Fine. I get it. You want me to shut my trap. Let's make a deal: you take a drink and I'll leave you be.

He raises his glass. The man doesn't.

CHANCE

Go on, take it.

The man does so, reluctant.

CHANCE

Here's to surviving the war. And to being the last two able-bodied man in the country.

He laughs again, drinks. His expression turns sour..

The Stranger has yet to drink.

CHANCE

Drink, goddamn, have a drink with me.

The Stranger upturns his glass -- pouring the liquor to the floor.

CHANCE

Say, what's the big idea? I'm only trying to share a goddamn drink with you. Drink with me!

He fumbles with the liquor bottle --

The Stranger CLEARS the tabletop with a swipe of his hand.

Chance falls back, soaked with liquor.

CHANCE

You miserable old bastard --

He raises a fist – the Bartender CATCHES him from behind. He twists his arm behind his back.

BARTENDER

Alright, bomb boy. Time for you to go.

Chance flails in protest as he's carted out of the bar and pushed into the gangway.

The Bartender returns to clean the corner table. Only to find it EMPTY.

INT. TRAIN – CABINS – NIGHT

Chance stumbles through a gangway between cabin cars.

INT. TRAIN – GANGWAY – NIGHT

Obscured by shadow, the haggard Stranger stares at the stammering drunk through a gangway door window.

Without a sound, he maneuvers the door open. Follows the drunk inside.

INT. TRAIN CARS – NIGHT

Chance makes his way down a rattling hallway.

TRAIN – FURTHER

Chance crosses through another gangway, finds a set of cabin doors.

He fumbles with a key, stumbles inside.

Very carefully, the Stranger takes an ARMY GREEN MEDICAL CASE from his coat pocket. With nimble fingers he opens the case, revealing an UNASSEMBLED HYPODERMIC NEEDLE.

He assembles the hypodermic, inserts the needle into a small, glass bottle labelled "SUXAMETHONIUM CHLORIDE."

He preps the plunger. A classic flick of the needle. It's all set.

The Stranger steps back into shadow, disappears down the cabins.

Without a breath, he moves to Chance's cabin door. It clicks open --

A small sliver of light hits the still darkened room.

The Stranger waits... then POUNCES.

INT. CHANCE'S CABIN - NIGHT

The inky shadow of a man rushes into the EMPTY cabin.

Behind him. He hears a stumble --

Chance trips out of a water closet. Through his drunken stupor he sees

THE STRANGER RUSH AT HIM. SYRINGE HELD HIGH.

Chance grabs him around the collar --

They wrestle around the small room in a silent, brutal struggle. The mechanic CHURNING of the train's engines drown out all sounds.

The two men grapple for control of the syringe.

A sharp knee buckles the Bible salesman. The Stranger wraps a foot around his leg and trips him back -- they both crash to the floor.

The syringe is RAISED. The Stranger STABS DOWN.

Chance catches him by the wrist. But his grip is weak, VERY weak.

The needle TREMBLES, mere CENTIMETERS from his eyeball.

The Stranger presses down. Chance STRUGGLES to hold him by the wrist.

His grip GIVES -- the needle PIERCES HIS EYE.

Chance's face contorts into a SCREAM just as...

The train FLIES into a tunnel with a DEAFENING HOWL.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - TOYS - NIGHT

A toy train CHOO CHOOS out of a paper mache model tunnel. It COLLIDES with several other toy trains.

A group of excited children CHEER. They crowd around a Candy-Striped Toy Salesman piloting the toy trains through an F.A.O. Schwarz display.

HIGBEE'S DEPARTMENT STORE

Business at the height of holiday mania. Shoppers shove passed one another elbow-to-elbow, arms loaded with gifts. Panicked men wearing fedoras try to keep up with their children. Women in winter coats peruse the latest perfumes.

BACK IN THE TOY DEPARTMENT

A freckle-faced child snakes her way through the dazzled crowd of kids, uninterested in toy trains. She thumbs a pair of coke bottle glasses up her nose. Meet PHILLY WALKER (12,) a precocious child clearly in pursuit of something.

VOICE (O.S.)
Philly! Philly!

Or maybe she's hiding from someone.

Philly weaves between the legs of tall adult shoppers. She sneaks over to the

APPLIANCES

Philly peruses aisles stocked with new model toasters and mixers.

VOICE (O.S.)
Philly!

The little girl ducks around a shelf, errantly collides with the MANAGER.

MANAGER
Are you lost little girl?

PHILLY
Hardly. I'm looking for something.

MANAGER
A gift?

PHILLY
This -- this is what I'm looking for.

She unfolds a newspaper advertisement.

PHILLY

Revere Home Movie Projector. Plays
eight millimeter film. Brand new
model 1948.

MANAGER

Right this way --

He leads her over to a gleaming MOVIE PROJECTOR display.

MANAGER

Here's what you're after, miss. I
think you'll be satisfied.

Philly stares at the beautiful piece of machinery, entranced.

Her look moves from the projector to the price tag... **\$300.**

VOICE (O.S.)

Philly! There you are --

The Voice is right on top of her. A hand grabs her by the
shoulder --

VOICE (O.S.)

Philly! Thank goodness.

Philly's exasperated older sister, LORRAINE (18,) fumbles
with a high stack of presents. With her free hand she fights
to keep Philly in her grip.

WITH PHILLY & LORRAINE

Lorraine pulls her sister down the store's Main Aisle.

PHILLY

Let go! Let go of me! Someone help!

LORRAINE

Oh hush, you're making a scene.
We've got to get back home.

PHILLY

You're hurting me.

LORRAINE

Take some of these boxes and quit
acting like a child.

PHILLY

You forget I am a child.

LORRAINE

Last time you said you wanted to be treated like an adult.

PHILLY

There's things I want to look at too, y'know.

LORRAINE

And with what money do you plan on buying anything?

PHILLY

I don't need money. It's all going on my list for Santa.

LORRAINE

Santa's list has been double checked and finalized. We're doing Mama's shopping.

PHILLY

I don't get it. Every Christmas Hazel spends and spends on her bar drunks.

LORRAINE

They're not drunks, they're regulars.

From an adjacent aisle, a handsome pompadour, DEWEY DELLAGATTI (23,) spots the bickering sisters. He ducks away to quickly adjust his bow tie in a jewelry mirror.

PHILLY

They sure smell like drunks.

LORRAINE

They keep a roof over our heads. And the sooner you understand that the better.

PHILLY

Doesn't it upset you? We're her daughters. We should get priority.

LORRAINE

What you're really saying is "I should get what I want all the time."

PHILLY

Is that so wrong?

LORRAINE

You know what, Philly? You're right. You are a child.

PHILLY

Lorraine, wait --

LORRAINE

Enough. Kathleen in Shoes told me Mama phoned to say Uncle Guy is on his way to the Blow Fly. We need to get home.

Dewey ducks into the conversation --

DEWEY

What's this I hear about Uncle Guy?

Lorraine rolls her eyes, walks away with her sister. Dewey follows.

LORRAINE

Dewey Delligatti, how is it you always turn up where you're least expected?

DEWEY

It's my magic trick. Let's make a date and I'll teach you how I do it.

PHILLY

What does Uncle Guy want with Hazel?

DEWEY

Last I heard your Uncle's got a row to cause.

LORRAINE

A row? What kind of row?

DEWEY

Something to do with a letter from your father.

PHILLY

Papa's letter? We got that years ago.

DEWEY

I only know what I overheard.

LORRAINE

Well you should know better than most. You're in his office all day.

DEWEY

I don't normally listen to the man's business. I take minutes mostly.

PHILLY

Wow Lorraine. You sure know how to pick them.

LORRAINE

Philly -- don't shoot the messenger.

DEWEY

Take minutes today, run the office tomorrow. All in the long game, Little Grinch.

PHILLY

I hate it when you call me that.

DEWEY

And that's exactly why I do it, Little Grinch.

He wiggles her nose. She grimaces, annoyed.

DEWEY

Can I drive the two of you home?

LORRAINE

Fine. But only this once. And only a drive home.

Dewey motions "right this way." They walk off together, giggling.

Philly mimes them with ugly faces.

EXT. DEPARTMENT STORE - NIGHT

The three of them huddle close against the cutting winter breeze. Snow flurries drift around them.

They make their way down the sidewalk to Dewey's car.

A train whistle SOUNDS...

EXT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

A train pulls to a stop at an elevated platform. Officers whistle, clear the train passengers to disembark.

EXT. PLATFORM - NIGHT

Travelers step off the train, proceed down the platform.

A freshly-shaven CHANCE HOLYWELL takes a good look at his new surroundings before stepping down off the train. A moth-eaten striped scarf is worn tightly around his neck.

Clean-faced and considerably sober, Holywell follows a series of station signs along the wall until meeting one that reads:

"WELCOME TO CHRISTMAS. POPULATION 1,102"

He's swept along in the flow of foot traffic...

EXT. CHRISTMAS STREETS - NIGHT

Chance crosses a cobblestone street lined with iron gas lamps. The streets bristle with cars and carolers alike.

Christmas time in small town America.

Chance stands still on the sidewalk. He looks to the sky, watching the snow flurries dance against the multicolored lights of a 75 FOOT SPRUCE TREE strung up in TOWN SQUARE.

EXT. BLOW FLY INN - NIGHT

Snowflakes drift here and there against the black night sky, landing atop the shoddy roof of the

BLOW FLY INN

A humble, four-room establishment clinging to life near the heart of town. Less of an inn and more a ramshackle collection of boards with windows.

Two shivering winos stumble inside... unleashing a RAUCOUS NOISE.

INT. BLOW FLY INN - NIGHT

The inside of the Blow Fly resembles more of a "traditional" pub with a DOUBLE BARREL SHOTGUN HANGING BEHIND THE BAR. Densely populated by pale townies packed in winter garb. Old men sport thick mustaches, puff smoke. Several drinkers play darts. Conversations are BOISTEROUS.

HAZEL WALKER (52,) works the room, slinging drinks and collecting trays as she weaves through the crowd. Her friendly manner and narrow frame betray a sense of grit earned from years of physical toil. Unbothered, she verbally spars with customers new and old.

She walks into a face full of cigar smoke, she coughs and wafts it away.

Hazel moves to the back wall of the room to catch a breath. She takes a moment to tie back her nest of curls before waving over DAISY VESTRY, a ditzy barmaid who's a few years Lorraine's senior.

HAZEL

Have you heard back from the girls?

DAISY VESTRY

No, Miss Azie. I've been staying close to the phone just like you said.

HAZEL

I hope they're back before I have to grow an extra pair of hands.

DAISY VESTRY

Is it possible to grow an extra pair of hands, Miss Azie?

Hazel gives her a "look."

HAZEL

Just take these glasses. I've got to get myself cleaned up before --

Across the bar, a stuffy white-haired button shirt steps in from the cold with measured footfalls.

DAISY VESTRY (O.S.)

Before what, Miss Azie?

UNCLE GUY WALKER (54,) surveys the motley lot of drinkers crammed into the room.

HAZEL

Before he gets here.

(pointing:)

Get that man a drink. And keep him busy.

DAISY VESTRY

For how long Miss Azie?

HAZEL

As long as you can give me.

She ducks out of Guy's view, behind a crowd singing Happy Birthday...

Hazel slips through a door, into

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

A meager backroom apartment with a den, kitchenette and adjoining bedroom shared by the sisters.

Hazel scurries around the room. She removes her apron before moving to light a lantern. Then to light the small corner fireplace --

An ever-present RADIO plays Christmas music through elevated static...

Hazel checks the window. No sign of Lorraine or Philly.

There's a shuffling outside the door --

DAISY VESTRY (O.S.)

Excuse me, mister -- you can't --

Uncle Guy storms into the room. He takes a moment to collect himself as he huffs for air.

UNCLE GUY

Hazel.

HAZEL

You sure do know how to barge through a door.

UNCLE GUY

I hope you weren't trying to keep me distracted all night with the prospect of free booze.

HAZEL

Wild Turkey. Straight. I know what you like to drink.

UNCLE GUY

I haven't had a drink in five weeks. I've given it up. You have my word.

HAZEL

Your word isn't worth tissue paper. What do you want?

UNCLE GUY

You've debts to settle, Hazel.

HAZEL

My debts are in order.

UNCLE GUY

Your husband's debts. My brother's debts.

HAZEL

My husband will settle his debts when he's back in country.

UNCLE GUY

He's dead, Hazel. M.I.A. You know what that means?

HAZEL

Of course I do. "Missing In Action." I read the papers same as you.

UNCLE GUY

So you accept it. He's gone.

HAZEL

Of course I don't accept it. Explain his letter --

UNCLE GUY

Yes. I know all about the letter.

HAZEL

You don't believe me? Here -- look for yourself --

From a desk drawer, she finds the LETTER. She takes it from between her diary pages.

HAZEL

Look -- look at the postmark. Three years. Three years after he "went missing" he sent it. Explain that.

UNCLE GUY

We've been over this before.

HAZEL

If you read it you'd know he was really alive.

UNCLE GUY

I'm not here for your letter. I want you to sign this --

From his coat, he produces a stack of LEGAL DOCUMENTS.

HAZEL

And this is?

UNCLE GUY

An official declaration of my brother's death. He's been missing four years. I'm within my legal right to declare him dead.

HAZEL

If you think he's dead then what do his debts matter?

UNCLE GUY

Debt doesn't die, Hazel. Only men do.

HAZEL

You've got some kind of nerve.

UNCLE GUY

Sign the papers, Hazel. And we can put this whole nasty ordeal behind us.

HAZEL

Why are you doing this? Because of how things ended between us?

UNCLE GUY

Don't... My no good father did nothing in his life besides leaving the Blow Fly to my washed out brother. And what did he do? Turn it into a slum for moonshiners.

HAZEL

The Blow Fly? You want the Blow Fly Inn?

UNCLE GUY

As outlined in my father's will, should anything happen to my brother this place becomes my property.

HAZEL

I'm his wife. He's still alive.

UNCLE GUY

Let him go, Hazel. Sign the papers and be done with it. Be done with him. Come back to the real world.

HAZEL

We made a mistake, Guy. One I don't intend to make again.

UNCLE GUY

Sign the papers, Hazel. For the sake of your family.

He drops the forms on a small table. Moves to exit --

HAZEL

My family? Your brother did what he had to do for my family. You can call him a wash out all you want but at least he worked for the things he wanted. He provided like I'm trying to provide right now.

UNCLE GUY

Hazel. In life, there's the things we want and the things we're owed. If I can't have what I want, I'm taking what I'm owed. That includes the Blow Fly.

The doors SWINGS OPEN -- Philly, Lorraine, and Dewey hurry inside.

PHILLY

Hazel! Hazel! We heard Uncle Guy was on -- the -- way --

Dead silence in the room. Uncle Guy stares. Unfriendly.

DEWEY

Hi. Mister Walker. Mrs. Walker.
Just figured I'd give the girls a
lift home.

UNCLE GUY

Philandering with the enemy, I
should've known.

PHILLY

Enemy? We're your family.

UNCLE GUY

You're no family of mine.

He pulls Dewey along in his stride out the door.

UNCLE GUY

Let's go, boy. It's going to be
another late night for us.

The door shuts. Leaving alone the three Walker women.

Hazel collapses into a chair, sobbing. Lorraine rushes to
comfort her --

Philly's rage boils over. She rushes out of the room.

BLOW FLY - CONTINUOUS

Philly pushes through bar patrons, chasing down Uncle Guy and
Dewey. She's right on their tails, yelling --

PHILLY

You can't yell at Hazel that way
making her cry and all that you
dirty no good scoundrel!

The lively crowd is taken by the rowdy girl. They cheer her
on --

PHILLY

If my Papa was here he'd knock you
one so stiff across the jaw it'd
knock your big ole blockhead right
off!

The room ERUPTS. Uncle Guy is in a fury.

UNCLE GUY

Your Papa isn't here kid. And he's
never coming back.

That hits Philly like a brick to the gut. Tears fill her eyes.

DRINKER

Oi! This jerk made the little one cry.

The crowd JEERS. They PELT Uncle Guy with trash. He retreats out to the cold.

The crowd's attention falls away. Everyone goes back to their drinks.

Philly disappears behind the bar as Hazel re-emerges on the floor. Red faced and all. Back to work.

EXT. BLOW FLY - NIGHT

Chance trudges through ankle deep snow passed a few small shops. Digging a path towards the warm light of the Blow Fly Inn.

INT. BLOW FLY - NIGHT

Chance pushes open the door with a heave. He presses his full body to the door to shut it against the wind. He takes a moment, overwhelmed by the atmosphere.

He steps down from the landing onto a WHITE BOARD in the floor.

IT CREAKS. A long and noticeable cry.

The jovial atmosphere of the room turns to dead quiet. Everyone stares down the stranger.

The stares fall away. Conversations resume, kick back to full volume.

Chance swallows his nerves, moves over to the Bar.

AT THE BAR

Hazel pours herself a stiff beverage and eyes the weary, attractive traveler shaking off the cold.

CHANCE

Excuse me. I'd like to rent a room if possible.

HAZEL

No rooms available until the summer months.

CHANCE

People travel in winter.

HAZEL

Not to a town called "Christmas."

CHANCE

I'll pay to have a room made ready.

HAZEL

I'm sorry but --

Chance slaps a STACK OF CASH on the counter.

CHANCE

No saying sorry to that, is there?

HAZEL

Suppose not. How about a drink? On the house.

CHANCE

Who do I have the pleasure of drinking with?

HAZEL

Hazel Walker. The owner of this establishment. And you are?

CHANCE

Chance Holywell. You can call me your tenant. I want to rent your room through the month.

HAZEL

I don't normally house guests that long. I'm not much of a landlord.

CHANCE

I'm sure more cash could convince you otherwise.

HAZEL

You have a job, Mr. Holywell?

CHANCE

I'm a Bible salesman.

HAZEL

You make good money hawking Bibles?

CHANCE

A lot of people seem to be finding their faith through their wallets these days.

HAZEL

Don't lie to me, Mr. Holywell. I don't have much patience for liars.

CHANCE

He who tells falsehoods must tell others to make the first lie true. Sooner or later, a tower constructed of lies is bound to collapse.

HAZEL

What Bible verse is that?

CHANCE

Deuteronomy fifteen thirty-eight.

Hazel considers. Thinks. Smiles at the man. He smiles back.

HAZEL

I'll have my daughters get your room ready.
(off:)
Philly! Lorraine!

The two girls hurry out from the Apartment. Philly eyes Holywell with a curious look.

HAZEL

Girls. This is Mr. Holywell. He's going to be staying with us through the next month.

PHILLY

The next month?? We don't keep guests at all from the months of --

LORRAINE

The rooms are filthy! All Papa's old stuff is still --

HAZEL

Enough talking. Go grab some fresh sheets and clear up the junk in room four. On the double now, girls.

The sisters scatter off to work. The adults return to the bar.

CHANCE
 (to Hazel:)
 Another drink?

Philly heads up the staircase leading to the two rooms on the second level. She throws a suspicious glare at the customer now flirting with her mother.

INT. ROOM FOUR - NIGHT

Philly and Lorraine throw together the finishing touches on the room.

Hazel and Chance bulldoze inside, slightly too tipsy.

HAZEL
 Here's your room, Mister Bible salesman.

CHANCE
 A thousand thank you's, ma'am. It's a beautiful room. Dusty. But beautiful nonetheless.

HAZEL
 Out girls.

PHILLY
 But Hazel --

HAZEL
Scram.

Lorraine takes her sister's arm, leads her off.

HAZEL
 I hope you'll find everything to your liking.

CHANCE
 How could I not? It's been far too long since I've anyone's company. Let alone someone so beautiful.

HAZEL
 I'm flattered, Mr. Holywell.

CHANCE
 You don't have to call me Mr. Holywell. Only Chance.

HAZEL
 Chance it is, then. Goodnight.

CHANCE

Is there a Mister Walker, Hazel?

HAZEL

I never gave you permission to call me by my first name.

CHANCE

My apologies. I took the liberty.

HAZEL

To answer your question, my husband is... abroad.

CHANCE

Any possibility he won't return?

HAZEL

Goodnight, Chance. Don't make me kick you out on your first night.

CHANCE

Cheeky.

Hazel shuts the door, leaving him alone.

Chance lays back on the bed. Head rested in clasped hands, he stares up and away.

INT. SISTER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Philly and Lorraine share a bed, curl up together under blankets.

Lorraine tries to sleep. Philly pokes her on the shoulder --

PHILLY

Lorraine. Who do you think that man was?

LORRAINE

Just a customer. What does it matter?

PHILLY

He and Hazel were laughing. It was like they were long lost friends.

LORRAINE

Mama's allowed to have friends. She's allowed to laugh.

PHILLY

But she doesn't know him.

LORRAINE

Philly, you're going to learn eventually that life is better lived when you mind your own business.

PHILLY

I can't help having a curious disposition.

LORRAINE

Go to bed, Philly. Don't make me write a letter to Santa telling him you refuse to go to bed.

PHILLY

You wouldn't dare.

LORRAINE

You're right. He already knows.

PHILLY

I'm asleep! I'm asleep!

She squeezes her eyes shut, pretends to be fast asleep.

Lorraine rolls over, drifts back off.

A few beats... maybe minutes... maybe an hour or two later...

Philly rolls back over, cautious. She takes a careful look at her sister. Still deep in slumber.

PHILLY

Lorraine? Lorraine?

Lorraine snores in response.

Philly slips out from under the blankets. She tip-toes down to the floor...

She crouches down on all fours. Crawls across the floor to the

WALL

Where she moves a painting leaned in the corner, waiting to be hung.

Philly slides her hand between a LOOSE set of boards.

They PRY FREE from the wall without a sound.

Philly looks back to check on Lorraine again -- still sound asleep.

She crawls inside...

INT. CRAWLSPACE - NIGHT

Philly climbs up the latticework of wall construction. With each step she knocks free dust and loose debris.

She steps up carefully to a joint between the wall and second floor. She squeezes her petite frame into the space and is finally in

PHILLY'S HIDEOUT

A tight crawlspace under the second floor, decorated with FADED PICTURES and NEWSPAPER CUTOUTS.

Philly crawls over, lights a candle using a worn pack of matches.

The little girl digs something from a pile of junk collected in the corner...

AN 8MM FILM REEL. In rough shape, to say the least.

Philly closes one eye, looks through the film frame-by-frame, illuminating it against the flickering candlelight.

As she unspools the film, she can make out the rough shapes of soldiers moving in formation as part of a WORLD WAR 2 NEWSREEL. The frames focus on one man in uniform in particular... Philly stares at the man's face. His laughter burned onto celluloid. The image is distant. A far off capture of the past.

A tear falls from her eye... when she hears...

THE CHIME. A kind of low, broken lullaby.

Philly turns over, she presses her hand to the floorboard above her. It gives --

She peeks out of the crawlspace, underneath

CHANCE'S BED

She stares at the back of his boot heels. He sits on the edge of the bed.

The song continues...

Beneath the song, Philly can hear the faint sound of Chance SOBBING. Then something changes... the sobbing becomes a low muttering of curses. The words are muddled, unknown.

Philly peeks out further from under the bed, spots a

MIRROR.

In the reflection, she can make out Chance's misshapen form. A hunched over mass hiding away in the dark.

He clutches something in his hands like it were a precious jewel -- THE MUSIC BOX CYLINDER.

Philly leans in for a closer look.

When...

A sharp pain JOLTS through Chance's body. He WRETCHES, throws himself to the floor --

Philly looks on, disturbed.

Waves of pain ride through the man's body like lightning. His limbs SPASM. He struggles for control of himself --

His hands GRASP at his face. He PULLS at his skin -- he RIPS, he CLAWS.

Philly can barely see through shadows but is almost certain she sees his skin pull like ELASTIC.

In the dark, it looks like Chance is trying to REMOVE HIS OWN FACE.

Philly shields her eyes, drops under the floorboards with a SNAP.

CHANCE'S ROOM

Chance snaps at attention to the sound. He looks around the room, suspicious.

He moves to the bed --

PHILLY'S HIDEOUT

Philly hears him getting closer. She blows out the candle. She sucks in shallow breaths, nervous --

CHANCE'S ROOM

Chance pushes the bed across the floor. He stares down at the floorboards.

He waits for a sound.

PHILLY'S HIDEOUT

Philly presses her hand to her mouth. She can see the man's silhouette from between the floorboards.

Chance takes another look around the room. Decides it was nothing.

He moves the bed back over Philly's hiding spot.

She lets out a quiet sigh.

FADE TO:

INT. SISTER'S BEDROOM - DAY

Lorraine strings a shoddy, unvarnished violin. She plucks at the strings as if to test them.

She plays. Rough around the edges, but she's getting the hang of it.

KITCHEN

Philly stands on a wooden crate, craning over the stove. With an outstretched arm she cracks two eggs into a pan simmering with melted butter.

LIVING ROOM

Hazel, still feeling the booze from the night before, tries to sleep it off on the sofa bed.

The sounds of Lorraine's practicing cuts the morning serenity, Hazel wraps a pillow around her ears.

Philly tip-toes over to the sofa with breakfast on a tray.

PHILLY
Hazel... Hazel..?

HAZEL
What, Philly?

PHILLY
Time to wake up. I made you
breakfast.

Hazel accepts her lost chance at sleep, pushes herself up off
the sofa.

HAZEL
You made me breakfast?

PHILLY
Precisely.

HAZEL
Honey, you can't even reach the
stove, what on Earth did you make?

Philly uncovers the tray -- revealing a BEAUTIFUL breakfast
spread.

Hazel eyeballs the hot food, but her stomach CHURNS at the
smell --

She darts out of frame into the bathroom. From inside, she
can be heard VOMITING.

PHILLY
Hazel? Hazel? You really should eat
something!

HAZEL
I'm sorry, Philly, but Mama's not
in the mood for eating.

PHILLY
I promise it'll make you feel
better.

HAZEL
Not now --

PHILLY
But Hazel --

Her mother opens the door, looks at her daughter with a
frown.

HAZEL

Oh Philly, can't you call me "Mama"
just once in your life?

PHILLY

You need to eat something, Hazel.

HAZEL

Why do you call me that?

PHILLY

Call you what?

HAZEL

"Hazel."

PHILLY

It's your name. Now -- eat.

Hazel steps out of the water closet. Composes herself before
falling face-first back to the sofa.

HAZEL

I couldn't bear the thought...
Okay, maybe just a piece of toast.

She nibbles on a corner piece.

HAZEL

Wait, wait, what am I doing?

Hazel covers the tray.

HAZEL

Take this upstairs at once. Before
it goes cold.

PHILLY

Oh. So first we're sheltering him,
now we're playing housemaids for
him?

HAZEL

As long as he pays us, meals are
gratis. And you, little girl, had
better learn your place. Now move
your cute little keister.

Philly takes the tray from her mother, she stomps to the
door.

HAZEL

But leave the coffee.

Hazel pinches the coffee cup off the passing tray.

PHILLY

What did you say his name was?
Holywell?

HAZEL

Holywell. Chance Holywell. That's
right.

PHILLY

Sounds like a made up name if you
ask me.

HAZEL

Just bring the man his breakfast,
Philly.

Philly groans, kicks open the swinging bar door --

INT. BLOW FLY - DAY

-- to find Chance Holywell sitting alone at a table in the
completely empty Blow Fly Inn.

Philly stops dead in her tracks at the sight of his pleasant,
toothy smile.

CHANCE

Good morning, ma'am.

PHILLY

Breakfast for you.

She sets the tray down on the table, scurries away.

CHANCE

Actually -- little girl.

PHILLY

I don't like it when people call me
"little." Or refer to me only as
"girl."

CHANCE

My apologies. But you can't blame
me if I never got your proper name,
can you?

PHILLY

I figure I can blame whoever I
want.

CHANCE

Care to join me for breakfast? I can't remember the last time I shared a meal with anyone let alone such a little beauty.

PHILLY

I don't think so, I have to finish my homework.

CHANCE

Ask your mother. I mean no harm --

He rises to meet her.

The service door swings on its hinge -- Hazel steps back, surprised to see Chance there.

HAZEL

Something wrong with breakfast, Mr. Holywell?

CHANCE

As a matter of fact, there is: I seem to be eating it alone.

HAZEL

Then you'll eat with us. Come on, how do you take your coffee?

CHANCE

Black. With lots of sugar.

Philly scowls at the strange man. He throws a smirk and a wink in her direction.

BEDROOM

Lorraine fiddles with the tuning of her violin. She picks up a new song.

AT THE KITCHEN TABLE

Hazel pours a steaming fresh cup from the pot. Seated across from Chance, she picks at a muffin.

Philly stares over a school book stuffed with papers. She eyes Chance with a thinly veiled suspicion.

Chance digs into his breakfast. He pours a piping hot coffee, downs it in a drawn-out gulp.

HAZEL

Slow down there. It's all going to the same place.

CHANCE

My apologies. You see, being on the road so long and all...

HAZEL

You're not too accustomed to home cooking anymore are you?

CHANCE

Let's just say I've seen the inside of every greasy spoon on the West Coast.

He goes for another pour of coffee, notices the child glaring at him.

CHANCE

Something wrong, Philly?

PHILLY

Your face looks crooked.

HAZEL

Philly Walker! Shame on you. What an awful thing to say.

PHILLY

What? It's true!

HAZEL

Apologize. Now.

CHANCE

It's alright. It's alright. Now why would you say that Philly?

PHILLY

It's just the way you look, I guess.

CHANCE

Because I look this way that gives you the right to say so?

PHILLY

Your face didn't look like that yesterday.

CHANCE

Didn't look like what?

PHILLY

Crooked.

CHANCE

Philly, it's easy to mock others for their looks when you've got a face as symmetrical as yours.

PHILLY

What does that mean? Symmetrical?

HAZEL

He means both halves of your face are perfectly aligned dear. They match half-and-half.

Chance presses his index finger to the indentation on the tip of Philly's nose.

CHANCE

Ever notice the little line on the tip of your nose? It means you've got the face of an angel. An angel face for a little angel.

Philly flinches from the older man's touch. She feels at the tip of her nose.

HAZEL

Will you be in long today, Chance? I'm about to open the bar.

CHANCE

I actually have some business to pursue in town. That is if I could ask you for a favor.

HAZEL

Ask away.

CHANCE

Judging by the reputation of your establishment I'm lead to believe your husband was in good standing with the fine folk here in Christmas?

HAZEL

Well... Yes.

CHANCE

Marvelous. By chance would you happen to have a contact list?

(MORE)

CHANCE (CONT'D)

Perhaps an address book of good Christians looking to update their holy books.

HAZEL

Are you asking me to help you make a sale, Chance?

CHANCE

If I made a sale it would be a genuine miracle.

HAZEL

Let me find his address book. It's here somewhere.

She steps away. Chance finishes off his final cup of coffee. Notices Philly still giving him the death glare.

CHANCE

Keep making that face, little girl, it's bound to get stuck that way.

PHILLY

Couldn't that happen to you too?

He shoots her a shifty look, then rises from the table. Chance follows the sound of the violin to

THE SISTER'S BEDROOM

Lorraine continues to practice. Chance watches her a moment from the doorway, until she notices him.

CHANCE

Pardon the intrusion. I couldn't help but hear you playing. May I?

LORRAINE

Sure.

Chance takes the violin and the bow from her. He begins to play lightly, careful with the strings, then with great vigor.

Hazel steps into the room, enamored by his skill.

KITCHEN

Philly's ear turns to the O.S. sound. She recognizes the song from the night before.

THE SISTER'S BEDROOM

Chances finishes the song. Hazel and Lorraine applaud.

HAZEL
Marvelous. Simply marvelous.

CHANCE
I used to play quite well. In another life.

LORRAINE
Maybe you could give me lessons?

CHANCE
Perhaps. By the sounds of it, you're already on your way.

HAZEL
I have something for you --
Winston's little black book.

She passes Chance a worn, leather-bound address book.

HAZEL
I hope it serves you well.

CHANCE
Everything I do is in service of the Lord.

He slips the book into his coat pocket. With another grin, tip of the hat, he's out the door --

KITCHEN

Philly glares at him from the table. Chance returns one final look at her. The suspicious girl doesn't break.

He slinks away. Leaving the door to swing back-and-forth.

EXT. CHRISTMAS STREETS - DAY

Town Center sprawls with the usual morning hustle-and-bustle of commuters packed with holiday shoppers.

Chances hobbles along a snow-banked sidewalk, he checks the book for an address:

MARIETTA LEWIS. 1313 St. Allen Ave.

EXT. MARIETTA'S HOUSE - DAY

A cozy hamlet in the residential part of town. A bell rings inside --

Marietta Lewis (62,) a lonely widow, answers the door. A smile parts the deep wrinkles in her face --

MARIETTA

Hello?

Chance Holywell returns a tooth-filled grin of his own.

CHANCE

Good afternoon, ma'am, my name's Chance Holywell, World Publishing Company. Could I have a moment of your time?

MARIETTA

I'm sorry. I'm not interested in buying anything today.

She tries to shut the door, Chance places his foot to stop it from closing.

CHANCE

Your late husband was a partner of Winston Walker, was he not?

MARIETTA

Whatever you're involved in, I can assure you I want no part in it.

CHANCE

So you do remember your late husband's business partner Winston Walker, don't you?

MARIETTA

Winston Walker is dead.

CHANCE

Can I share with you a secret? Winston Walker is alive and well. He's very much looking forward to seeing you again, Marietta.

Marietta's face downturns. Stunned by this.

CHANCE

I'll show myself inside.

Marietta steps aside. Chance enters.

CHANCE

Now, if I may ask you a question:
can you recall on one hand --

INT. BLOW FLY INN - DAY

Lorraine wipes down tables, flips chairs. Getting the bar ready for the start of the day.

Hazel rushes in, throwing on a heavy overcoat.

HAZEL

Your Uncle called. I've got to meet him about some business from yesterday. Philly's on a class trip, be sure to pick her up.

LORRAINE

Of course, Mama.

Daisy Vestry heaves a heavy bucket of filthy mop water into the room.

DAISY VESTRY

Miss Azie! Miss Azie! Drain pipe's frozen solid again.

HAZEL

Lorraine -- boil some water and pour it down the drain.

DAISY VESTRY

What am I supposed to do with this dirty mop water?

HAZEL

Daisy Vestry, you're a bright girl. Drink it for all I care.

DAISY VESTRY

But Mrs. Walker, I don't think I can drink this whole bucket.

Hazel and Lorraine pause, give Daisy Vestry another "look."

Hazel opens the door and pushes herself outside against a RUSH of snow.

INT. ALLISON'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Single mother ALLISON WARD (50) pours two cups of freshly-brewed tea for the attractive stranger seated at her table.

CHANCE

Allison, if I may, could I ask you a question?

ALLISON

I'm all ears, Mr. Holywell.

CHANCE

Please, call me Chance.

ALLISON

I'm all ears, Chance.

CHANCE

Can you recall on one hand the amount of years since you last replaced your edition of the Holy Bible?

ALLISON

No, I don't think I can.

CHANCE

Then I have an exciting offer for you and just for you, my sweet.

Chance heaves several ORNATE BIBLES out of his suitcase.

CHANCE

An offer that I assure you is too opportune to pass. Particularly for such a beautiful creature such as yourself with a husband to please for Christmas.

ALLISON

I don't have a husband.

CHANCE

On behalf of men everywhere, what a damned shame that is.

He leans in closer to her --

CHANCE

I'm ready to part with this genuine kid leather-bound King James at half off catalogue price. A deal for you and only you. It will be our little secret, I trust?

ALLISON

Why yes, our little secret. Let me fetch my pocketbook.

Allison moves for her handbag across the room.

CHANCE

I love secrets. They're like little truths unto themselves.

ALLISON

If you don't mind my asking, how did you come across my address?

CHANCE

Why, Mrs. Walker provided it. I'm boarding at the Blow Fly Inn.

ALLISON

Figures as much. I should've known.

CHANCE

I was lead to believe you and her husband were old acquaintances.

ALLISON

Acquaintances? Sure, that's one way I'd put it.

CHANCE

Is something amiss? I was told Mr. Walker was an upstanding Christian man.

ALLISON

Upstanding? Ask Hazel Walker where the money for that inn of hers came from and you'll find how "upstanding" he really was.

CHANCE

You're not saying he was some kind of criminal are you?

ALLISON

All I'll say is Winston had me under his thumb. Like a lot of people in this town, my name was caught up in that moonshine racket of his.

CHANCE

Moonshine racket?

ALLISON

He made his fortune off illegal booze in this town. And in this town, everyone was a customer.

(MORE)

ALLISON (CONT'D)

Some even say Winston hid a collection of bottles worth thousands before he was drafted.

CHANCE

Worth thousands? Where on Earth would you hide something like that?

ALLISON

I've said too much.

CHANCE

Please, say more.

ALLISON

We have our little secret, Chance. I have my own secrets with Winston Walker.

CHANCE

Remember what I said, secrets are little truths unto themselves. You are a honest, truth-telling Christian woman... Aren't you?

Allison has rejoined him at the table. He moves his hand around her shoulder, with his other hand he moves his fingers up her arm.

CHANCE

Aren't you?

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHRISTMAS - DAY

A be-speckled TEACHER leads her class of about twelve schoolchildren through a busy downtown district. Sidewalks burgeon with pedestrians.

TEACHER

Right this way, class. Single file.

The children follow diligently... save for Philly. She falls behind the rest of the class, overcome by curiosity.

TEACHER

Philly Walker! Care to join the rest of the class?

As she trots ahead to keep up with the class, Philly spots

CHANCE

Exiting a brownstone across the street, his demeanor saying he's made another fine sale.

Philly follows him from across the street (using her classmates as cover) until Chance stops at an

ALLEYWAY

Chance stands at the threshold of a narrow pass pockmarked by trashcans overflowing with waste. Steam screams into the alley from underneath manhole covers.

From behind some trashcans, he hears a MEOW.

Chance reaches out, approaches an ORANGE TABBY CAT.

ACROSS THE STREET

Philly ducks behind a light post. The Teacher leads the class farther ahead, leaving her behind.

She slinks across the road at a busy intersection.

ALLEYWAY

Chance calls the cat closer. It hisses, recoils. He reaches out for it --

The cat SWATS his hand.

FROM THE END OF THE ALLEY

Philly sneaks a peek at the scene --

Chance SNATCHES the cat up by the scruff of the neck. It SCREECHES.

Philly wheels back around the corner, afraid to see the feline hurt.

She forces another look --

The Alleyway is EMPTY.

Except for the Tabby Cat, which slips between Philly's feet and down the sidewalk.

Philly takes a look around for Chance. No sign of him. She turns in the direction of the tabby, deciding to follow it.

EXT. WALKER LAW OFFICE - DAY

Hazel climbs the snow-covered steps of Guy Walker's Law Office.

INT. WALKER LAW OFFICE - DAY

Hazel steps inside, shakes off the cold.

Guy's secretary, a teenager named KATHERINE, files her nails at the front desk. She eyes Mrs. Walker from her periphery.

KATHERINE
He's waiting for you.

Hazel half-smiles, crosses to the door --

INT. GUY'S OFFICE - DAY

Hazel finds Uncle Guy seated at a large desk, opposite a timid-seeming woman in the corner, FRANCES HYLAND (30.)

UNCLE GUY
Hazel! How wonderful you could make it.

He rises to greet her, smiling ear-to-ear. He takes her coat to hang.

HAZEL
You asked me here, Guy. Don't seem too elated.

She and Frances make brief eye contact. Frances shies away.

HAZEL
Where's the Delligatti boy? I didn't see him outside.

UNCLE GUY
I gave him the day off. A Christmas surprise, if you will.

HAZEL
Ebenezer Scrooge has a heart after all.

UNCLE GUY
I trust you brought my brother's letter.

HAZEL

As requested.

Hazel digs the letter from her pocket, places it in Uncle Guy's outstretched palm.

UNCLE GUY

Splendid. I asked to see you so that we might continue our palaver from yesterday.

Uncle Guy gives the letter to Frances, who looks it over.

UNCLE GUY

(to Hazel:)

Drink?

HAZEL

You said you quit drinking, didn't you? During our *palaver*.

UNCLE GUY

It's only crème de menthe. No harm done.

Guy pours three glasses of crème de menthe. Passes one to each of the ladies.

UNCLE GUY

Before we get to brass tax, I wanted to apologize.

HAZEL

Apologize?

UNCLE GUY

For my boorish behavior yesterday. I understand we are... strained at the moment. But I think it's best we keep emotions out of our relationship.

HAZEL

Why am I here, Guy?

UNCLE GUY

Hazel -- this is Frances Hyland, you do know Mrs. Hyland, don't you?

HAZEL

Of course. Hyland's Thrift on seventh street across from the Polk's Drugstore.

UNCLE GUY

Frances here has a spectacular hobby, and what is that hobby, Mrs. Hyland?

FRANCES

Well, if I do say so myself, I have a keen eye for handwriting. At the store, I authenticate rare letters. Mostly personal pieces written by authors and poets to their loved ones. I had the most exciting piece come across my desk just the other day: a letter written to Jane Austen from her sister Cassandra, postmarked -

HAZEL

I'm sorry, sorry. But this has what to do with my letter?

Guy unfolds a letter of his own, from his pocket.

UNCLE GUY

This letter was written to me by my brother in the Winter of 1944. Sent from Belgium.

HAZEL

Before he went missing in the Ardennes forest.

UNCLE GUY

Before he was killed in the Ardennes forest. Frances, if you please --

He gives the letter to Frances, who places it next to Hazel's letter. She carefully looks over the handwriting, making notes as she goes.

UNCLE GUY

I've got a sneaky little suspicion about your letter, Hazel. And Frances here is going to prove it.

HAZEL

And if she doesn't?

Frances glances up from the letters to see the nervous look in Hazel's eyes.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHRISTMAS - SIDEWALK - DAY

Philly shoves passed commuters. Still in pursuit of the feral cat. She keeps a safe, inconspicuous distance from the fast paced creature.

It rushes through the crowds as if it knows Philly follows close behind.

The Tabby cuts quick -- headed for Town Square. The behemoth Christmas Tree towers over all.

Philly almost has the cat when

THE TEACHER CATCHES PHILLY IN HER ARMS.

TEACHER

There you are young lady! You had
me absolutely --

The Tabby Cat disappears into a churning sea of traveling leather shoes.

Philly wrestles free from the teacher's grip. She BOLTS through the passersby.

TEACHER

Philly Walker! Get back here at
once!

IN THE CROWD

Philly's lost. No sight of the Tabby.

Towering adults step over her, almost tripping on the pint-sized Enola Holmes dodging stomping feet and clomping heels.

She cowers in the middle of the crowd. No one notices the little girl halted with no idea what to do. Until she notices

THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

Philly's got a wild idea.

INT. GUY'S OFFICE - DAY

Frances works over the letter. Guy paces back-and-forth. He occasionally throws a glance to Hazel, who fidgets with her thumb and finger.

The letter expert waves over Uncle Guy, they share whispers a moment.

HAZEL

In case you'd forgotten, there is a third person in the room who'd like to be privy to the conversation.

Uncle Guy waves her off, finishes exchanging whispers.

UNCLE GUY

Thank you, Frances. Give your husband my best.

Frances collects her things, exits.

Hazel and Uncle Guy sit in silence for a long moment.

UNCLE GUY

Give up the ghost, Hazel.

HAZEL

I'll never give up on your brother.

UNCLE GUY

You have so much hope for survival that you'll forge a letter in his name?

HAZEL

I haven't the slightest idea what you're talking about.

UNCLE GUY

Allow me --

He places the two letters in front of her. Red markings dot the dense passages of writing.

HAZEL

Am I supposed to make something of this?

UNCLE GUY

Irregularities. Blots of ink indicating a shaky hand or "Forger's tremors" as they're called.

HAZEL

A shaky hand is nothing new for a soldier whose seen combat.

UNCLE GUY

And there: notice the added marking on the "T" in this line, absent from the same letter at multiple points in the writing.

HAZEL

That could've --

UNCLE GUY

And see how the ink is heavier here before turning lighter there. A telling sign of a forger checking her handiwork.

HAZEL

Her handiwork. If you're going to accuse me of something I'd rather you flat out accuse me.

Uncle Guy considers his next words. Straightens himself --

UNCLE GUY

There are two very distinct possibilities here: either you forged this letter to secure a loan in my brother's name or you've been had by a skillful, international con-man pretending to be my brother.

HAZEL

Let me guess, you're inclined to believe the first possibility.

UNCLE GUY

How could I not be?

HAZEL

I didn't write that letter.

UNCLE GUY

Hazel, just admit it.

HAZEL

Admit to what? I didn't write that letter.

UNCLE GUY

If you're in trouble, I can help you. You don't need to resort to forgery.

HAZEL

I did NOT write that letter!

UNCLE GUY

But forgery or not you used that letter to secure a loan in my brother's name.

HAZEL

He was gone. I had to keep the Blow Fly open.

UNCLE GUY

By breaking the law.

HAZEL

What was I supposed to do?

UNCLE GUY

You could've come to me. I could've helped you.

HAZEL

Your help comes with a price.

UNCLE GUY

A price you were more than willing to pay once upon a time.

HAZEL

Not anymore. I'm leaving.

Hazel takes her letter, moves for the door. Guy steps ahead to place himself between her and the exit.

UNCLE GUY

Let me help you, Hazel.

HAZEL

By kicking me out of my home? By throwing my children on the street?

UNCLE GUY

It could be our home.

HAZEL

It was never your home and will never be.

UNCLE GUY

Whatever your problems may be, I can help you get rid of them. I can make all your problems go away.

HAZEL
You are my problem.

She tries to shove passed him.

UNCLE GUY
Wait -- wait -- Hazel. I'm begging
you.

HAZEL
Let me go!

UNCLE GUY
Hazel -- I'm still in love with
you.

Uncle Guy is hit by SPLASH of crème de menthe. Hazel empties
the glass in his face.

HAZEL
There! Now it doesn't count.

UNCLE GUY
What doesn't count?

HAZEL
Saying you still love me. You can't
love someone who's thrown a drink
in your face.

UNCLE GUY
Hazel --

HAZEL
My family and I will vacate the
premises at once, Mr. Walker. I can
assure you, by this time tomorrow
the Blow Fly will be all yours.

UNCLE GUY
That wasn't what I intended.

HAZEL
But it's what you wanted. And so,
now you have it.

UNCLE GUY
...

HAZEL
Good day, Mr. Walker.

Hazel throws her coat over her shoulders, pushes passed Uncle
Guy out the door.

Guy sits back in his now empty office, crème de menthe streaming down his face, marveling at the damage he's done.

EXT. WALKER LAW OFFICE - DAY

Hazel holds her head high as she steps down the office's stair case.

Her knees almost buckle but she catches herself. Overcome with emotion, unsure what to do, she runs against the flurrying wind.

INT. TREE BRANCHES - DAY

Philly climbs high through thick, massive tree branches. Way too high to be noticed from street level.

She pauses at a precarious perch to scan the crowd. No sight of Chance... no sight of the

TABBY CAT

Tail waving happily through the crowd.

Philly trails it with her eyes. As she tracks the cat she climbs higher up the tree, shaking it --

AT THE BOTTOM OF THE TREE

Philly's movement disturbs the lashings that anchor the tree to the ground.

One of the lashings SNAPS.

AT THE TOP OF THE TREE

Philly doesn't feel the tree lurch, she doggedly pursues sight of the runaway tabby.

When...

ANOTHER LASHING SNAPS.

The tree sways WIDE. No way Philly misses that as she's swung through the air, heels clacking.

Philly clings to the tree for dear life --

The crowd of commuters below stop and stare at the sight of the girl at the top of the tree --

The tree SWAYS again -- Philly white knuckle grips the top of the tree trunk as the final lashing SNAPS at the base.

Philly's eyes go WIDE. Time stands still but for a moment before

THE CHRISTMAS TREE FALLS.

Protected by the overgrown branches, Philly lets out a HOWL as the tree rushes to meet the ground --

The once towering tree lands with a THUD in the middle of Town Square.

Philly tumbles out of the tree branches into a soft pile of snow. Unharmd save for some minor scratches.

Concerned onlookers crowd around her. Unsure of whether to be more worried about the girl or the tree.

Philly pushes her face out of the snow -- when she's approached by

DEWEY

Well, Philly, I knew you were a Little Grinch. But this is pretty on the nose, don't you think?

Philly spits out a mouthful of icy slush.

PHILLY

I am not a Little Grinch.

DEWEY

Come now, let's get you home.

He offers her a hand. With groan, she takes it.

INT. ULRICH'S HOUSE - DAY

A surly Irishman named ULRICH MULRONEY (65) hunches over a CHRISTMAS VILLAGE built on his dining table. Through thick cigar smoke he peers through a magnifying glass, painting a figurine.

The doorbell buzzes. Ulrich curses, looks up from his handiwork. The doorbell buzzes again. He begrudgingly sets down the figures.

IN THE DOORWAY

Stands Chance Holywell, he extends a hand. Ulrich doesn't shake it.

CHANCE

Chance Holywell. World Publishing Company, Third Highest Ranked --

ULRICH

That'll be enough, son. Whatever you're selling I ain't buying.

CHANCE

Please, it would only take a moment.

ULRICH

A moment that could likewise be spent finishing my Christmas Village in peace.

CHANCE

But I come bearing a message for you, Mr. Mulroney.

ULRICH

A message? From who?

CHANCE

One Winston Walker.

Ulrich's demeanor sours. He removes his cigar, now a bad taste in his mouth.

ULRICH

Winston Walker, you say?

CHANCE

Indeed.

ULRICH

Come on in, then.

Chance steps inside --

INT. ULRICH'S HOUSE - DAY

Ulrich shuts the door behind them -- LOCKS it.

CHANCE

If it isn't too much trouble, I could do with a cup of coffee.

ULRICH
How's about a snakebite?

CHANCE
Flat bourbon if you have it --

Chance pivots to the old man, just as

ULRICH PUNCHES HIM IN THE NOSE.

Chance buckles -- crawls back --

ULRICH
Carrying a message for me, aye?

He takes Chance by the collar --

ULRICH
Whatever the message may be, son. I
don't want no part of it. Specially
no message coming from vermin like
Winston Walker.

He punches Chance in the gut twice, hard enough he stumbles
into the adjacent

DINING ROOM

Chance crashes into the table, toppling several blocks of
figurine buildings.

Ulrich hooks him across the jaw with a left, then a right.

Chance falls back into the Christmas Village.

Ulrich grabs Chance by the arm -- stretches it across the
dining table.

ULRICH
Here's a message for Winston
Walker, courtesy of Ulrich
Mulroney. The only man he couldn't
buy.

ULRICH PRESSES THE CIGAR AGAINST CHANCE'S PALM.

His skin hisses, burns black.

Ulrich looks for a reaction --

-- Chance LAUGHS.

With his free hand he

STABS ULRICH WITH A HYPODERMIC NEEDLE.

The old man collapses to the floor --

Chance climbs atop him. He looks Ulrich in the eye as his thumb presses the plunger.

CHANCE
Every man has his price, Ulrich.
Time to pay yours.

Ulrich convulses for a moment, his eyes go blank. Dead.

Chance tastes the blood gushing from his broken nose.

He stands, faces a mirror. Looks at his crooked face.

Chance pinches his nose tight... clenches his teeth... SNAPS
IT BACK INTO PLACE.

He laughs again, his eyes move to Ulrich Mulroney's face.

INT. NATIONAL BANK - DAY

A mild-mannered BANK TELLER counts out bills for an impatient
MR. MERCHANT.

TELLER
There you are, Mr. Merchant. One
hundred and fifty-five dollars,
zero cents.

MR. MERCHANT
It's about damn time.

He snatches his cash off the counter, paces out of the lobby.

TELLER
Next in line.

Grinning from ear-to-ear, a man in a striped scarf steps up
to the counter...

ULRICH MULRONEY.

ULRICH
I'd to make a withdrawal, please.

TELLER
In what amount?

ULRICH
All of it.

TELLER

Pardon?

ULRICH

Every last penny, son.

EXT. NATIONAL BANK - DAY

Ulrich hobbles out of the bank onto the frozen streets. He ties the striped scarf around his face to shield from the cold.

AROUND THE CORNER

Ulrich spots Marietta Lewis frantically waving a down a pair of POLICE OFFICERS outside his home.

ULRICH

Bloody old bag...

Across the street... Marietta spots the prying man. Sure she's seeing a ghost.

She points him out to the officers --

They move in his direction, waving him to come closer --

Ulrich turns on the heels of his boots. Calmly start to hobble back around the corner, just a naïve old man.

Out of sight, his hobble becomes a jog -- a sprint -- a mad dash away from the approaching officers.

INT. BLOW FLY - DAY

Lorraine plays the violin, seated on a barstool in the corner.

Business is dead. Several drunks sleep scattered at various tables. One man reads, none of them pay much mind as the song finishes.

Daisy-Vestry APPLAUDS her --

LORRAINE

Thank you, Daisy-Vestry. But that's not necessary.

DAISY VESTRY

Are you kidding? That was beautiful.

LORRAINE

You don't have to say that.

DAISY VESTRY

No, no I mean it. I just love the sound of the guitar.

Daisy hums the tune to herself, caught in the melody, she carries on sweeping.

Hazel RUSHES inside. She slams the door behind her.

She's disheveled, her crying eyes betray her state of mind.

HAZEL

Pack your things, Lorraine. We're leaving.

LORRAINE

Leaving? What on Earth?

HAZEL

You heard me. Pack your things.

She notices the drunkards asleep in the barroom.

HAZEL

Out! Out! I want everyone out.

She storms around the room, pulls one of the men out of his sleep and pushes him towards the door.

DAISY VESTRY

You don't mean me, do you Miss Azie? I ain't even done with my sweeping.

HAZEL

Daisy-Vestry. You're a kind, beautiful girl. But you're dumber than a dust bunny.

DAISY VESTRY

Are dust bunnies supposed to be smart, Miss Azie?

HAZEL

Yes. You can finish your sweeping, honey.

Daisy-Vestry wanders off, broom in hand.

Hazel rounds the Bar, Lorraine on her heels --

LORRAINE

So if I'm supposed to pack all my things. Where do you suppose we go?

HAZEL

I don't know.

LORRAINE

Well, what are we going to do for money?

Hazel pours herself a drink --

HAZEL

I don't know.

-- downs it.

LORRAINE

What about school? My college? Philly still has to finish --

HAZEL

Lorraine, I said I don't know. That means I don't know.

Lorraine looks stricken.

LORRAINE

Mama. You've got to know something. You always do.

Hazel collects herself.

HAZEL

I'm sorry baby. "I don't know" may not be the answer you want to but it's the only answer I have at the moment. To put things plainly, your Uncle Guy wants us gone. Immediately.

LORRAINE

Gone? But what about Papa? What about when he comes back?

HAZEL

Your father's dead, sweetie. At least your Uncle seems to believe so.

LORRAINE

What do you believe?

The door opens --

Dewey and Philly rush in, press the door shut against the howling wind.

DEWEY

You'll never guess what kind of tree I pulled this cat out of --

PHILLY

Nobody likes a tattletale!

HAZEL

Enough! You have some kind of nerve showing your face around here, Dewey Delligatti.

DEWEY

Excuse me?

HAZEL

After all I've done for you. My husband took you in and cared for you like you were our own. We've practically betrothed you to our daughter. Who thinks the world of you --

DEWEY

Lorraine what is she going on about?

PHILLY

Hazel, are you feeling okay?

HAZEL

Be quiet, Philly. For once I just wish you didn't have something to say. Now go pack your things.

PHILLY

Pack my things? To go where?

HAZEL

Philly just do as I say --

PHILLY

I deserve an explanation.

HAZEL

Your Uncle has taken ownership of our home and means to have us removed.

(MORE)

HAZEL (CONT'D)

Dewey here was working with him the whole time, helping him do it.

DEWEY

Now wait just a minute, I won't sit here and be accused --

LORRAINE

Dewey is that true?

DEWEY

Of course it isn't true! Well, at least not all the way true.

LORRAINE

Not all the way true?

Dewey stammers, stutters for a response. His back against the wall.

EXT. BLOW FLY - DAY

Ulrich Mulroney sprints around to the back of the Blow Fly. He struggles to catch his breath.

He looks up to a second floor window, climbs a ladder leading to a small fire escape.

INT. CHANCE'S ROOM - DAY

Outside the window, Ulrich pries at the seal. It opens. He climbs through the threshold when he TRIPS OVER --

INT. BLOW FLY - DAY

Dewey still struggles for a response -- the Walkers close in on him when

THERE'S A CRASH UPSTAIRS.

HAZEL

Daisy-Vestry, Mr. Holywell isn't here is he?

DAISY VESTRY

No ma'am, I believe he left this morning.

HAZEL

That noise came from his room.

DAISY VESTRY

I can go check it out no problem,
Miss Azie.

Daisy-Vestry moves up the stairs, down the second floor landing, up to the door leading into

CHANCE'S ROOM

A key turns in the lock, Daisy-Vestry opens the door, steps inside to see

A FACE OVERGROWN WITH SCAR TISSUE.

Chance recoils quickly -- throwing his hands across his face. At the same time he drops

ULRICH MULRONEY'S FACE.

Daisy-Vestry SCREAMS.

CHANCE

Out! GET OUT! GET OUT!

Daisy-Vestry runs out of the door, slamming it shut behind her. She runs down the stairs, face coated in tears --

DAISY VESTRY

Miss Azie! Miss Azie!

HAZEL

My word, Daisy-Vestry, what's wrong girl?

She blubbers something unintelligible, pushes passed the Walkers and runs out the door.

ON THE LANDING

Chance steps out of his room covered ONLY by his bathrobe. Flashing that handsome smile of his, of course.

CHANCE

Well, I suppose that's the last time I lounge about in my birthday suit.

Everyone LAUGHS. The tension falls away.

Philly glares at the man.

EXT. BUNGALOW - NIGHT

Snow drifts around Daisy-Vestry's humble, one-bedroom bungalow.

INT. BUNGALOW - NIGHT

Daisy-Vestry checks the street outside the window, swathed in a thick blanket.

No one outside.

She moves away from the window, back to her radio and a hot cup of tea.

Then... she hears a low tune... a MUSIC BOX LULLABY...

Daisy-Vestry checks the window again:

THE SILHOUETTE OF A MAN STANDS ACROSS THE STREET.

She pulls the curtains taut -- checks again --

The man is GONE.

Daisy-Vestry checks the window lock. She moves through the house, checking the locks on the doors and windows, drawing the curtains.

She crosses to the Kitchen, headed for the back door, which is

HANGING WIDE OPEN.

Daisy-Vestry presses herself against the door. Locks it.

Checks outside -- no one there.

CHANCE (O.S.)

Have you ever heard the story of
the Farmer and the Snake?

Daisy-Vestry spins at the sound of *his* voice.

Chance steps into her view, seemingly out of shadow.

CHANCE

I asked you a question, Daisy-
Vestry.

DAISY-VESTRY

No, no. I haven't.

CHANCE

One cold winter's morning, a Farmer is walking home when he finds a snake frozen in a shallow puddle of ice. He fishes the snake out and carries it home with him, bundled in his scarf. He rests the snake by his fireplace, he nurses it back to life. And as soon as that snake is healthy enough, you know what it does?

DAISY-VESTRY

I - I don't.

CHANCE

It bites the old Farmer.

With a gloved hand he caresses her shoulder...

CHANCE

As he lay there dying, the Farmer cries, "Why Snake? Why did you bite me? I cared for you. I loved you. Why would you do this?" The snake says back to him: "I'm still a snake."

He slaps his hand over her mouth, stifles a scream. With his free arm he grabs her around the shoulders, wrestles her out of view of the windows.

Chance reaches into his coat pocket -- finds the HYPODERMIC.

HE STABS IT INTO DAISY-VESTRY'S TEMPLE. HIS THUMB PRESSES THE PLUNGER.

Daisy-Vestry thrashes in his arms. A DEATH RATTLE.

Chance drops her unmoving corpse to the floor. Wipes the sweat from his brow. When...

THERE'S A KNOCK.

AT THE FRONT DOOR

Chance checks the peephole --

Standing outside, huddled in her winter coat, shivering against the wind, is Hazel Walker.

INT. BLOW FLY - NIGHT

Philly tip-toes into the empty barroom. Hazel is gone. Lorraine nowhere to be seen.

The little girl creeps upstairs, to

CHANCE'S ROOM

Philly rifles through the drawers, finding only folded clothes, a few Bible samples and various catalogues.

She moves to the bed, throws off the covers. She checks under the pillow, lifts the mattress. Finding nothing.

Then, under the bed, she finds a SUITCASE.

She opens it, inside is a STASH OF U.S. ARMY GRADE NEEDLE KITS.

EXT. BUNGALOW - NIGHT

Back outside Daisy-Vestry's bungalow, Hazel plants her fist into the door --

HAZEL

Daisy-Vestry, you in there? Open up before I catch cold.

She knocks again --

HAZEL

Daisy?

Knocks again -- the door OPENS.

DAISY-VESTRY leans outside the open door. A striped scarf around her neck and a mans coat on her shoulders.

DAISY-VESTRY

Something the matter, Mrs. Walker?

HAZEL

Mrs. Walker? No need to be so formal now, Daisy-Vestry.

DAISY-VESTRY

I'm sorry, Miss Azie. I know I always call you Miss Azie.

HAZEL

You seem a bit rattled after earlier. I wanted to make sure you were okay, and apologize for what I said earlier.

DAISY-VESTRY

You don't have to, Miss Azie. Really. I'm just not used to a man like that Chance Holywell around.

HAZEL

He sure is something isn't he? Well, if you're okay Daisy-Vestry, I'll let you get to sleep.

DAISY-VESTRY

Thank you, Miss Azie. I appreciate it.

HAZEL

Goodnight, Daisy-Vestry.

DAISY-VESTRY

Miss Azie?

HAZEL

Yeah?

DAISY-VESTRY

That Chance Holywell... do you care for him?

HAZEL

As friends?

DAISY-VESTRY

More than friends.

HAZEL

I like to think my heart still belongs to my husband, wherever he may be.

DAISY-VESTRY

I'm sure he feels the same way, Miss Azie.

HAZEL

You're a sweet girl, Daisy-Vestry. G'night.

DAISY-VESTRY

Goodnight.

She watches Hazel walk off into the snowy night.

INT. BUNGALOW - NIGHT

Chance Holywell shuts the front door behind himself... a cunning grin on his face.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Hazel trudges across a snow embankment. The wind is harsh and brutal.

She trips -- falls in the snow --

A hand helps her up, pulls her to her feet --

CHANCE

Care for some assistance m'lady?

HAZEL

I wasn't aware Bible salesman worked at night.

CHANCE

The devil works hard, but Chance Holywell works harder. Now if I may, can I escort you home?

HAZEL

Only if you promise to never refer to yourself in the third person again.

They share a laugh -- Chance extends an arm. Hazel takes it.

INT. CHANCE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Philly pulls open the closet, inside are Chances shirts, slacks, and coats. She digs through the pockets --

Empty. She finds.

Philly stuffs her hand into the deep pocket of a thick winter coat.

She feels something inside -- a spongy, fleshy kind of something.

She grabs on to it, pulls out

ULRICH MULRONEY'S FACE.

Philly falls back, kicks it away. She SCREAMS.

Lorraine throws open the door --

LORRAINE

Philly? What on Earth have you gotten into now?

PHILLY

Face on the floor! Face on the floor!

LORRAINE

A what on the where, Philly?

PHILLY

There's a face -- a face on the floor!

She points at the flesh "mask" on the floor.

LORRAINE

Philly, you can't be serious. Now let's get out of here before Mr. Holywell comes back.

PHILLY

You have to believe me Lorraine, you have to -- just look.

LORRAINE

Shut up, Philly. And pick up this mess!

Then they hear -- the downstairs door SHUT.

Hazel and Chance can be heard entering, laughing all the way.

Lorraine and Philly peek outside the door:

Hazel jokes, moves behind the Bar for two glasses and a bottle of Scotch.

Chance flirts in kind, starts for the STAIRCASE.

The girls crawl away from the door. They argue in elevated whispers:

LORRAINE

He's headed this way, Philly -- clean this mess up!

Philly piles the needle kits back into the suitcase --

PHILLY
I'm trying -- I'm trying --

LORRAINE
Where do we go? Where do we go?

PHILLY
I -- I --

LORRAINE
Philly! Hurry!

Philly throws the suitcase under the bed, and thinks --

PHILLY
Lorraine -- get under the bed.

LORRAINE
Under the bed? What are you --

Philly grabs her by the shirt, pulls her under the bed, just as

CHANCE OPENS THE DOOR.

He steps inside, removes his coat and tie, before he realizes something is... off.

The closet door open... the bed disheveled... drawers left open...

He checks under the bed. The trunk out of place.

Chance eyes the room, suspicion growing. He moves to the closet door when his step lands with a

SQUISH.

He looks down -- at the imprint of his shoe on Ulrich's disembodied face.

Chance FLIES INTO A RAGE -- he rips his clothes from the hangers, tosses open the drawers, throws his suitcase onto the bed --

CHANCE
Where are you goddammit? Where are you?! I know you're in here!!

UNDER THE FLOORBOARDS

Philly clasps a hand over Lorraine's mouth. They listen, careful not to make a sound, as Chance TRASHES the room.

BACK WITH CHANCE

He stuff clothes into his suitcase without care. Forces it shut.

CHANCE

Alright, alright. Think... think...

He packs a stack of Bibles, the last of his things.

UNDER THE FLOORBOARDS

The girls listen in as Hazel stomps inside the room --

HAZEL (O.S.)

What the hell is going on in here?

CHANCE (O.S.)

Hazel -- my apologies --

HAZEL (O.S.)

I have half a mind to throw you out, y'know!

CHANCE (O.S.)

Again -- my apologies, Hazel. But a very urgent matter has come to my attention. And I must leave at once.

HAZEL (O.S.)

But you're already paid up through the month.

CHANCE'S ROOM

Chance gestures around at the mess he's created.

CHANCE

Keep it. For damages.

Chance slinks passed her.

CHANCE

Goodbye, Hazel.

HAZEL

Goodbye, Mr. Holywell.

He's gone.

Hazel, now alone, sits on the bed.

She hears a noise --

HAZEL

Alright girls, out from under
there.

Philly and Lorraine crawl out from under the bed. Philly
laughs, playing innocent.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

The train's whistle SOUNDS. Steam shoots from exhaust ports.

A train pulls to a stop at an elevated platform. Officers
blow their whistles, clearing the passengers to disembark.

EXT. PLATFORM - DAY

Travelers step off the train and clamor down the platform.

A handsome, broad-shouldered TRAVELLER takes a good look at
his new surroundings before stepping down off the train. He
removes moth-eaten striped scarf from round his neck.

The clean shaven man follows a series of station signs along
the wall until meeting one that reads:

"WELCOME TO CHRISTMAS. POPULATION 1,102"

He's swept along in the flow of foot traffic...

EXT. CHRISTMAS STREETS - DAY

The Traveller crosses a cobble stone street lined with iron
gas lamps. The streets bristle with cars and carolers alike.

Christmas time in small town America.

He passes Town Square, where city workers pull ropes to re-
stand the 75 FOOT SPRUCE TREE.

EXT. MARIETTA'S HOUSE - DAY

A gloved hand knocks on the painted glass door pane. The
shadow of a LARGE MAN stands starkly across a white curtain.

Marietta fiddles with the lock from inside. She opens the
door holding a glass of hot tea.

MARIETTA

Hello -

The words fall out her mouth almost immediately. She looks at this unseen visitor with a look of shock and terror. Her fingers go limp.

THE TEA GLASS SHATTERS ON THE FLOOR.

The gloved hand pushes her back inside the house.

EXT. BLOW FLY - DAY

Uncle Guy pulls his 1946 BUICK DELUXE out front of the Blow Fly Inn.

He steps out, looks over to a rusted OLDSMOBILE parked parallel to the curb, packed with boxes and bags.

INT. BLOW FLY - DAY

Philly carries a stack of plates into the barroom, she heaves them into an empty box.

HAZEL

Philly, careful with those plates.

Lorraine enters, carrying another box.

LORRAINE

Here's the last of our things from the bedroom.

HAZEL

Great. Set it against the wall.

Hazel wraps a bar glass --

HAZEL

Did you ever hear back from Daisy-Vestry?

LORRAINE

Nothing yet. I tried phoning but got no answer.

HAZEL

Try again in an hour, won't you? She seemed spooked after her encounter with Mr. Holywell.

PHILLY

She did seem spooked, didn't she? A little too spooked if you asked me.

HAZEL

Well, no one did ask you, Philly. Finish up with the kitchen.

PHILLY

Just a minute -- did Daisy ever tell you what spooked her so bad?

HAZEL

We all know what spooked her. Daisy-Vestry is a modest girl. She just happened to walk in on him --

PHILLY

Taking off another man's face?

HAZEL

Philly --

LORRAINE

You don't actually believe that.

PHILLY

You saw the face on the floor, just like I did.

HAZEL

Is that true? You saw a face on the floor?

LORRAINE

It was a Halloween mask, is all.

PHILLY

A mask? That's a load of malarkey!

LORRAINE

A good Halloween mask.

PHILLY

Just like I said: malarkey!

HAZEL

Language, Philly.

PHILLY

You've got to believe me, both of you.

LORRAINE

You're acting like a silly little girl getting silly little ideas in her head.

PHILLY

I'm not silly. I'm serious. If it were a Halloween mask how come it looked exactly like Mr. Mulroney, Papa's cigar man?

UNCLE GUY (O.S.)

Ulrich Mulroney, you mean --

The girls turn -- Uncle Guy shuts the door behind him.

UNCLE GUY

Ulrich Mulroney was found dead yesterday. Marietta Lewis found him, apparently poisoned.

HAZEL

You have no business being here.

UNCLE GUY

Strange thing is, Marietta and two policeman swear they encountered Mr. Mulroney in the streets not even an hour after she found him.

HAZEL

And this has what to do with us?

UNCLE GUY

It has nothing to do with you, but everything to do with that Holywell fellow who was staying here. Marietta also claims he threatened her.

HAZEL

Well he's gone now.

UNCLE GUY

Gone?

HAZEL

Left last night. Some urgent matter he had to tend to.

UNCLE GUY

How convenient for Mr. Holywell.

HAZEL

If that's all you needed, I supposed we'll be going now as well.

UNCLE GUY

That won't be necessary. I came here to stop you from leaving.

PHILLY

Stop us? Why?

HAZEL

Lorraine, take your sister into the other room --

PHILLY

But -- but --

HAZEL

Now. Lorraine.

Lorraine takes Philly, retreats behind the service door. After a beat, they both peak into the room.

Hazel stares at Uncle Guy a silent moment.

HAZEL

What do you want from me? One moment you drive me to hatred, in the next you demand my love. You tell me to leave, you beg me to stay. So, please tell me, what do want from me?

UNCLE GUY

The truth.

HAZEL

I've always told you the truth. I didn't write that letter.

UNCLE GUY

Did you love me?

HAZEL

I did not write that letter.

UNCLE GUY

Did you ever love me the way I love you?

HAZEL

I did not write that letter.

Uncle Guy takes that as his answer.

UNCLE GUY

All I've ever wanted is to be seen
by you the way my brother was seen.

HAZEL

Your brother didn't need to be
seen, he saw himself. He knew who
he was despite what people thought.

UNCLE GUY

He was a swindler. A criminal who
pushed good, innocent people into
criminality with him.

HAZEL

Whatever he did he did for our
family.

UNCLE GUY

But he's gone. I'm here. I'm here
right now.

The front door OPENS. A heavy wind blows inside a blanket of
snow.

The HANDSOME TRAVELLER presses the door shut, his face
wrapped in his striped scarf.

HAZEL

My apologies sir, but we're closed
for the day. No rooms, no drinks.

HANDSOME TRAVELLER

No drinks? Not even for an old war
dog like me?

He unwraps the scarf, revealing

HAZEL

Winston...

Tears run over in her eyes -- she rushes over to embrace her
husband, WINSTON WALKER (56.)

Uncle Guy can only stare at him, incredulous.

UNCLE GUY

This... This can't be...

Winston and Hazel lock lips. A passion unforgotten --

-- Guy averts his eyes.

HAZEL

I don't believe this. I mean, I do believe this. But -- but -- how can this be true?

WINSTON

It's true, it's true.

HAZEL

You're alive. I knew you were alive. Everyone tried to tell me I was crazy for believing all this time.

WINSTON

I was almost a goner for sure, but the thought of you and the girls kept me alive. Your belief kept me strong.

He holds her close --

WINSTON

And here I thought you'd forgotten me.

Philly and Lorraine RUSH into the room.

LORRAINE

Papa! Papa!

WINSTON

There's my girls!

PHILLY

Oh Papa! Papa! We never forgot about you!

WINSTON

Nor I you, my darling angel face. Didn't you get my letters?

PHILLY

We only ever received one.

WINSTON

One letter out of the hundred I sent?

Uncle Guy clears his throat -- making it known his brother hasn't greeted him yet.

UNCLE GUY

Right then, about that letter.

Winston steps out of his family's embrace, steps towards his brother barrel-chested.

WINSTON

Yes. Let's discuss my letter. More importantly, let's discuss you throwing my family out on the streets.

UNCLE GUY

Let me be the first to apologize --

WINSTON PUNCHES HIM ACROSS THE FACE.

Uncle Guy falls back -- toppling a table in his stumble.

WINSTON

Apology accepted.

He helps Uncle Guy stand to his feet.

UNCLE GUY

You always were the bigger man, Winston.

WINSTON

Get out of my house. I never want to see your face again.

Uncle Guy pinches his bloody nose. He looks to Hazel --

-- she turns away from him. Holds the girls closer.

Uncle Guy limps towards the door, but not without turning back to take a closer look at Winston.

WINSTON

Something the matter, brother?

UNCLE GUY

Your face.

WINSTON

What about my face?

UNCLE GUY

Your face looks... crooked.

This catches Philly's ear.

Winston grinds his teeth --

Uncle Guy straightens his overcoat, wipes the blood from his lip, rushes outside.

Winston takes a seat back at an empty table... He cries.
Hazel embraces him.

WINSTON

Sorry, sorry. It's been so long. I
was worried you girls wouldn't even
recognize me.

HAZEL

Never, darling. Never.

Lorraine hugs him --

LORRAINE

We'll always love you, Papa.

WINSTON

Always?

HAZEL

Yes. Isn't that right, Philly?

Philly stands a cautious distance away from him.

PHILLY

Yeah... that's right.

He outstretches his arms, inviting her in for a hug. She
steps over and he wraps his arms around her.

WINSTON

That's enough tears, then, how
about a drink?

HAZEL

A wonderful idea! I've still got
that bottle of Tullamore under the
kitchen sink.

WINSTON

I'll get the glasses --

They move behind the bar, giddy.

Philly stands back and watches her father's every move. A
glimmer of suspicion grows in her eyes.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Winston tucks Philly into bed, Hazel watches from the
doorway, a warm smile across her face. The whole family back
together at last.

WINSTON

Goodnight, my darling angel face,
and sweet dreams.

He leans in to kiss her forehead, leans away --

Philly grabs him by both sides of the face. She moves his head left, moves him right, takes a look up, tilts his head down.

WINSTON

Something wrong with my face,
Philly?

PHILLY

You look... different.

WINSTON

Of course I do. I'm an old man now.
People get older, faces get older
too. Even that perfect face of
yours one day will look wrinkled
like mine, is that alright?

PHILLY

Alright.

He gives her another kiss, pulls the blanket up to her chin.

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Hazel shuts the door, gentle.

WINSTON

She's an inquisitive little beast,
isn't she?

HAZEL

You should know. She certainly is
her father's daughter.

Hazel falls into Winston's arms. They hold one another for a long moment.

They kiss again -- before --

FALLING INTO BED

Winston and Hazel kiss, passionate. They press their bodies against one another --

HAZEL
Winston... Winston...

WINSTON
Shhh.

HAZEL
The girls will hear.

WINSTON
They're downstairs.

HAZEL
Wait... Wait...

Her hand moves his away --

HAZEL
Before we -- before we -- I have to
tell you a secret.

WINSTON
Keep your secret. I already know.

HAZEL
You do?

WINSTON
I'm no fool, Hazel.

HAZEL
I thought you were dead. We thought
you were dead.

WINSTON
Hell, I thought I was dead too.

HAZEL
You forgive me?

WINSTON
There's nothing to forgive.

HAZEL
I love you...

WINSTON
Did you love him?

HAZEL
Never. I never loved him.

WINSTON
Tell me again.

HAZEL
I never loved him...

WINSTON
Again... and again...

HAZEL
I never loved him... I never loved
him... I never loved him...

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Philly sits at the dining table, looking miserable over her schoolbooks.

Lorraine unpacks plates and silverware from a box.

A crooner croons a Christmas carol over the radio.

Lorraine looks over at the unhappy little girl studying across the table. She takes a large spoon from the box, she imitates the crooner singing into it like a microphone.

Philly is nonplussed.

Lorraine swings to the music, she dances across the room, silly.

Philly breaks, smiles. Lorraine pulls her into the dance -- they sway around the Kitchen.

Hazel slinks into the room, quiet. She watches her daughters dance.

The two girls spin around, howling with laughter. They notice Hazel. The moment fades away.

HAZEL
Philly, you're awful chipper for a girl *this* close to getting a stocking full of coal for Christmas.

PHILLY
Sheesh. It's not even noon yet, what did I do?

HAZEL
Your teacher phoned earlier.

PHILLY
Oof.

HAZEL

She told me you tried to run away during your field trip.

PHILLY

In my defense, I was investigating not running away.

HAZEL

I don't want to hear it, Philly. Just get your nose back in that book and don't get up from the table until you've learned something.

Hazel moves to the kitchen, pours a cup of coffee.

HAZEL

You're on thin ice as is. Count yourself lucky your father is home.

Winston leans in the room, fixing a tie around his neck.

WINSTON

Am I missing something?

HAZEL

Your daughter tried to run away from her field trip yesterday.

WINSTON

Is that true, darling?

PHILLY

Wouldn't you like to know.

HAZEL

Philly, that is your father.

PHILLY

So he claims.

HAZEL

Not this again --

WINSTON

Honey. You know it hurts me to hear you say something like that.

PHILLY

It does?

WINSTON

And I don't think Santa Claus looks too kind on folks hurting one another's feelings at Christmas, do you?

PHILLY

Santa Claus isn't real.

Hazel and Lorraine GASP --

WINSTON

Darling, don't say that. You know it isn't true.

He reaches for her, she flinches.

PHILLY

Just leave me alone! I want to be alone.

Philly huffs, snatches her book off the table, stomps to the bedroom.

GIRL'S BEDROOM

Philly slams the door shut.

BACK WITH THE FAMILY

Winston gives Hazel a worried look.

HAZEL

Don't worry, she'll come around.

WINSTON

I understand. This must all be confusing for her.

HAZEL

Not for all of us.

They embrace. Kiss.

Lorraine shields her eyes with a dinner plate --

LORRAINE

Ew! Ew! I'm still in the room.

Her parents laugh. Winston turns for his coat --

WINSTON

I'm going into town to settle some business. Don't plan any surprise parties while I'm away.

HAZEL

No promises.

He throws on his coat and is out the door.

Lorraine lowers the plate, Hazel motions her to the bedroom door.

GIRL'S BEDROOM

Philly stares down at her book. Tears stream down her red face. She wipes them away without expression.

Wet spots blot the typeface on the pages.

There's a knock -

PHILLY

Go away.

Lorraine comes in anyway.

LORRAINE

Why are you being so mean to Papa, Philly? Is something wrong?

PHILLY

That's not him. That's not Papa. He's different.

LORRAINE

Of course he's different. People change.

PHILLY

You don't understand. Please leave me alone.

LORRAINE

Philly, part of growing up is realizing that adults aren't always who we want them to be. They aren't perfect. They make mistakes. Don't you think you should give Papa another chance?

PHILLY

Leave me alone, Lorraine.

Lorraine moves Philly's hair out of her face, then leaves her alone.

Philly only cries harder. Shuts the book.

She crawls down off the bed, crosses the room to the wall. Philly moves the loose boards. She crawls inside.

IN THE WALL

Philly climbs the latticework of wall construction.

Philly squeezes, slips herself into

THE CRAWLSPACE

Philly lights the candle, which reveals her crawlspace has been CLEANED OUT.

Her trinkets missing. Her newspaper clippings stripped away.

Philly crawls around -- finds the film canister -- she opens it to find

THE FILM REEL IS MISSING.

EXT. RIVER BRIDGE - DAY

On a small bridge overlooking a semi-frozen river, a gloved hand UNSPOOLS the film reel. Wraps it around a bundle of newspaper clippings and old photographs.

Winston Walker TOSSES the bundle into the river -- it sinks.

He tightens a moth-eaten, striped scarf around his face, disappears into a flurry of snow.

INT. BLOW FLY - DAY

The entire barroom is decorated for a PARTY.

Hazel stands atop a ladder. She strings a banner across the second floor bannister.

Downstairs, Lorraine crosses with her arms full of party supplies.

Dewey follows her --

DEWEY

Honest I mean it Lorraine, how many times do I have to apologize?

LORRAINE

Let me think... I'd say you need to apologize another twenty-one thousand, three hundred sixty-eight times before I'd even begin to consider forgiving you.

DEWEY

I've meant every apology thus far. And I'll mean every one after. Give me a chance to prove it to you, Lorraine.

LORRAINE

You didn't know anything about my Uncle Guy trying to kick out Mama?

DEWEY

I didn't know a thing.

LORRAINE

You swear?

DEWEY

I swear.

Lorraine looks back -- to Hazel up high on the ladder.

LORRAINE

Okay, you can take me to the party tonight.

Dewey pumps his fist, exclaims.

LORRAINE

But -- If you're late. And even by one minute. There's your only chance gone. You understand?

DEWEY

Of course I understand. Have I ever been one to disappoint?

Lorraine can't help but smile --

LORRAINE

Get out of here. I'll see you tonight.

Dewey gives her a polite kiss on the cheek. Opens the door --

-- Uncle Guy stands in the doorway.

They share a silent look. Dewey closes the door behind him on the way out.

Lorraine has left the room.

Guy stands silent.

Hazel spots him from across the barroom.

HAZEL

What're you doing here? I thought your brother made it perfectly clear you're no longer welcome around our family.

UNCLE GUY

I'm part of the family too.

HAZEL

You say that now.

UNCLE GUY

Is that all I am to you? A stranger to be turned away.

HAZEL

Yes. A stranger. And you had better leave before my husband returns.

UNCLE GUY

Husband. There you go again, saying that word. You don't really think that man is your husband, do you?

HAZEL

What do you mean by that? Of course I know my own husband when I see him.

UNCLE GUY

I don't believe him when he says that he's my brother. And I don't believe you when you say that he's your husband.

HAZEL

What's there not to believe? He looks like Winston, sounds like Winston, walks like Winston too.

UNCLE GUY

I know my own brother and that wasn't him. I could see it in his eyes.

HAZEL

In his eyes? Guy, when you get worked up you get awful dramatic.

UNCLE GUY

I could see it, Hazel. I looked into his eyes and saw a man I couldn't recognize.

HAZEL

Right before he socked you across the jaw.

UNCLE GUY

I'm sure you enjoyed that.

HAZEL

More than I should have.

Hazel climbs down to look him eye-to-eye.

HAZEL

If he's not my husband, then who do you suppose he is? A man in a mask?

UNCLE GUY

I don't know who he is. But he means to deceive you.

HAZEL

For what reason?

UNCLE GUY

He's trying to take control of this house and everyone in it.

HAZEL

Not unlike yourself.

UNCLE GUY

Hazel, please.

He grabs her arm -- desperation growing --

UNCLE GUY

You have to believe me: that man is not my brother.

HAZEL
Let go of my arm.

UNCLE GUY
Go see Marietta Lewis, you'll find
out all about him.

HAZEL
Marietta Lewis is an old hag.

UNCLE GUY
An old hag who's now rotting in the
morgue.

HAZEL
I beg your pardon? Marietta is
dead?

UNCLE GUY
Strangled, it would seem.

HAZEL
And you think Winston has something
to do with it?

UNCLE GUY
He's trying to deceive you. By any
means necessary.

HAZEL
Let go of me.

She swats away his hand. Guy releases her.

HAZEL
It's time for you to leave.

UNCLE GUY
And so, it is.

He straightens his posture. Turns heel to the door and exits.

Above them a corner of the banner comes loose, falls.

Hazel sighs, climbs back up to the top of the ladder --

HAZEL
Lorraine! Come give me a hand in
here.

LORRAINE (O.S.)
Coming!

Hazel straightens the banner, reads the painted text:

"WELCOME HOME WINSTON."

HAZEL

And find your sister will you?

An O.S. RADIO PROGRAM plays lively Christmas orchestral tunes:

RADIO PROGRAM (V.O.)

...And now, Hollywood International Silver Company, creators of 1847 Rogers Brothers silver plate, presents...

INT. ALLISON'S APARTMENT - DAY

Allison sets down a plated peanut butter sandwich in front of her DAUGHTER, who listens to the *Ozzie & Harriet Christmas Special* which plays from a large console radio.

There's a KNOCK at the door. Allison crosses to answer it.

RADIO PROGRAM (V.O.)

...The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet. Starring America's favorite young couple Ozzie Nelson and Harriet Hillier...

The studio audience APPLAUDS.

Allison wipes her hands on her apron. Checks her hair and face in a wall mounted mirror. She opens the door.

RADIO PROGRAM (V.O.)

"Look at Rogers Road. Why, you can certainly tell Christmas is coming..."

Allison is petrified. Her eyes wide with fear. Face frozen in terror.

Winston smiles back at her, warm.

WINSTON

Merry Christmas, Allison. Is that hot chocolate I smell?

She SLAMS the door on him -- he KICKS it open. Allison is thrust back against the wall.

Her Daughter jumps out of her seat --

DAUGHTER

Mommy! Mommy!

ALLISON

Go to your room, honey. Mommy's gonna be okay.

The little girl starts to cry --

ALLISON

Now. Honey.

She scampers off -- Winston kneels down to Allison, he puts his face close to hers.

ALLISON

Please, Winnie, please. I didn't tell no one I swear.

WINSTON

Didn't tell them what, Allison? What didn't you tell them?

ALLISON

I swore! I swore! You made me swear never to tell nobody. And I never told a soul.

WINSTON

Get ahold of yourself. What did I make you swear to?

ALLISON

Why are you asking me? You told me you were hiding them.

WINSTON

Hiding what? What did I hide?

ALLISON

You should know!

He slaps her --

ALLISON

The bottles. The bottles you hid before you left.

WINSTON

Where are they?

ALLISON

That. You never told me. Alls I know is that you hid thousands of dollars wortha moonshine somewhere deep. Somewhere buried.

WINSTON

But where?

ALLISON

I don't know -- I don't know --

WINSTON

If you don't know, then who does?

ALLISON

Ulrich. Ulrich Mulroney.

WINSTON

Ulrich Mulroney is dead. Another answer.

ALLISON

There's no one else.

He hits her once more -- as hard as he can.

ALLISON

Guy -- Guy Walker. Your brother.

He takes a handful of her hair --

WINSTON

You lie.

ALLISON

He knows. He knows everything. About the moonshine, about the bottles. He knows it all. Why do you think he wanted that place of yours so bad?

WINSTON

He thinks the bottles are there... how would he get that idea in the first place?

ALLISON

He's got his desires on that wife of yours.

WINSTON

That's over with now.

ALLISON

You ask him. I'll sure he'll sing a
different tune.

Winston considers...

INT. CRAWLSPACE - DAY

Philly throws the film canister, frustrated. It clatters in a nearby corner.

She cries. Slams her fists into the boards. She kicks, stomps her feet --

And hears a HOLLOW KIND OF ECHO.

She kicks again --

SOMETHING RATTLES.

Philly kicks the boards at her feet over and over -- the boards SHIFT.

Philly crawls on her belly, reaches down to the loose boards.

Behind them -- she can hear the sound of WIND.

Philly pries the rotted board out of place, it gives easily.

She reaches inside, digs through a loose pile of packing paper and insulation when...

...A BOTTLE ROLLS OUT...

Philly catches it in her petite hands.

An unmarked, corked green bottle filled with a clear liquid.

She uncorks it -- takes a whiff --

PHILLY

Yeck!

She wretches. The smell of pure grain alcohol insults every last one of her senses.

Philly peers into the dark crevasse between the floor, hidden inside are

ONE HUNDRED BOTTLES OF MOONSHINE.

INT. BUICK DELUXE (MOVING) - DAY

Uncle Guy parks outside his Townhouse. A downtrodden look across his face.

He reaches for the bottle of Wild Turkey sitting in the passenger seat.

EXT. TOWNHOUSE - DAY

Guy fights against a furious winter's wind, which almost knocks him off his feet.

He trudges through ankle deep snow, reaches the Front Door, realizes --

-- it's already OPEN.

Guy pushes the door fully open.

INT. THRESHOLD - DAY

Guy stands in the open threshold. Snow billows inside from behind him.

Uncle Guy takes a step inside, the door creaks shut behind him.

He takes step after careful step, further into the hallway.

Uncle Guy stops. The glow of a flickering fire trickles in from an adjacent STUDY.

He hears music... a simple tune... a MUSIC BOX LULLABY...

Uncle Guy steps towards the glow of the fireplace, towards the music... into the

STUDY

Winston waits for him, seated in a leather armchair. In his hands is the inner cylinder of a child's wind up toy. Across from him, another chair sits empty.

He and Guy stare at one another. A long beat.

The music winds down...

UNCLE GUY
(re: the bourbon)
Drink?

WINSTON
Depends on what you're having.

UNCLE GUY
Wild Turkey. Straight.

WINSTON
Make mine a double.

Uncle Guy chuckles to himself. Moves to a Mini-Bar in the corner.

WINSTON
What's so funny?

UNCLE GUY
If you knew my brother, you'd know he'd never let a drop of bourbon touch his lips. No matter the occasion.

Uncle Guy fixes two drinks in high ball glasses. He reaches for something hidden under the Mini-Bar --

WINSTON
Times change, brother.

UNCLE GUY
Yes. Times do change. But not Winston.

Guy draws a REVOLVER from a hidden spot in the Mini Bar. He wheels around --

UNCLE GUY
If you knew anything about my brother, and I mean *really* knew anything about him, you'd know that too.

He takes a step towards his brother. Embellishing the gun --

UNCLE GUY
But you're not my brother. Are you?

WINSTON
I'll tell you the whole story, if you like.

Uncle Guy sets a drink down on a small table in front of Winston. He takes a seat across from him before he swallows his beverage.

All the while, the pistol stays pointed at his brother --

WINSTON
Where shall we begin?

INT. CRAWLSPACE - DAY

Philly wraps the bottle in her sweater. She crawls backwards to fit in the wall. She squeezes her tiny body between the floorboards --

IN THE WALL

Philly tip-toes down the delicate framework of the wall construction.

She kicks free loose debris --

But the rotted wood beneath her BENDS. It starts to GIVE.

Philly adjust her footing --

A BOARD SNAPS.

She almost FALLS THROUGH. Catches herself.

Philly climbs to the side -- reaches up --

The bottle slips from under her arm --

She reaches for it --

THE BOARDS UNDER HER GIVE WAY.

Philly FALLS THROUGH. So quick she can't let out a scream, only a PANICKED GASP.

Philly falls down, through the wall, into DARKNESS.

INT. STUDY - DAY

Winston and Uncle Guy are still seated across one another, locked eye-to-eye.

Winston winds up the music cylinder. The incessant song plays again...

UNCLE GUY
Who are you?

WINSTON
I had no mother to love me... No
father to guide me...
(MORE)

WINSTON (CONT'D)

Before I found the Army, I knew
only the existence of a monster.

UNCLE GUY

Is that what you are? Some kind of
monster?

Winston leans forward, for his drink --

WINSTON

I am Winston Walker. I am Private
Winston Walker, Easy Company.

His face *changes*, he morphs into CHANCE HOLYWELL.

CHANCE

I am Chance Holywell, World
Publishing Company. Third highest
ranked Bible salesman, Northeast
market.

His face *changes* again, into DAISY-VESTRY.

DAISY-VESTRY

I am also Daisy-Vestry. Unassuming
barmaid.

His face *ages rapidly*, wrinkles transform him into ULRICH
MULRONEY.

ULRICH

I am Ulrich Mulroney. Apparently
the only man in this town too
prideful to be bought.

Chance leans back into his chair... he settles into Winston's
face.

WINSTON

I am many people. But, at the same
time, I am no one.

He swallows his bourbon.

UNCLE GUY

You killed my brother.

WINSTON

I knew your brother in a way you
never will. In fact, I was more a
brother to him than you were. Or
ever could be.

UNCLE GUY

You have no right to say such a thing.

WINSTON

Haven't I? Let me set the picture for you...

EXT. ARDENNES FOREST - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Snow falls over the dense forests of Ardennes. The front is silent. Dark shapes move to-and-fro, covert.

AMERICAN SOLDIERS huddle quietly in their foxholes.

WINSTON (V.O.)

December, 1944. The dead of winter.
Middle of the Ardennes forest...

TWO SOLDIERS sit close together in a shallow foxhole. The real Winston Walker speaks to an indistinguishable Chance, just a silhouette of a soldier against the moonlight.

WINSTON (V.O.)

With our bodies buried in the snow
and dirt we shared together, we
dreamed together, and we bled
together just before the bombs
fell.

There's a far-off COUGH of cannon fire --

SOLDIER (O.S.)

Incoming --

ANOTHER SOLDIER (O.S.)

Take cover!

Winston and Chance shield their faces, dig in to the dirt just as

EXPLOSIONS RIP THROUGH THE TREES.

Soldiers are blown from their hiding spots. Trees burst, collapse over the holes in the dirt. Fire and dirt are KICKED skyward in plumes.

The bombardment continues for what feels like FOREVER --

Chance cowers in his foxhole, in the fetal position.

WINSTON (V.O.)

I spent endless nights counting every explosion, waiting for the night when the flash would finally land in our foxhole. I almost believed it never would. Until it did.

Chance cries -- the real Winston holds on to him.

Suddenly...

THERE'S A FLASH.

WINSTON (V.O.)

That's when the impossible gets you. When you believe it won't.

Chance is thrown back thirty feet by the blast --

He screams a silent scream, clenches his face in agony. His body is a smoldering wreck.

An overwhelming RINGING deafens the sounds of the continued barrage around him.

Chance pushes himself to his feet...

He limps through the blood and dirt and snow back to the crater that used to be his foxhole. In the smoking ruin he finds only

A PARTIAL PAIR OF WINSTON'S DOG TAGS.

EXT. MEDICAL TENT - DAY - STILL IN FLASHBACK

ARMY SURGEONS, smocks covered with blood, peer down over Chance's damaged body. They operate desperately.

WINSTON (V.O.)

The surgeons did the best for me they could... Even still...

INT. ARMY HOSPITAL - DAY - STILL IN FLASHBACK

Chance lies in a hospital bed. Body covered in bandages, a sheet strapped over him to limit movement. A cloth mask shields his face.

An ARMY DOCTOR and NURSE approach the bed.

ARMY DOCTOR

Any idea who this poor S-O-B is?

NURSE

This is all that was found on him.
Can barely make out the name
though.

She extends the charred, twisted remnants of Winston's dog tags.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Winston holds out the damaged tags for Guy to see.

WINSTON

This. This is all that remains of
your brother. His life is my life
to live now.

Uncle Guy shifts in his chair, uneasy.

WINSTON

In his final moments before fatally
flashing into nothingness, Winston
told me everything. He told me all
about the Blow Fly Inn. The wife
and two beautiful little girls he
left behind. The moonshine bottles,
worth thousands, that he stashed
away.

UNCLE GUY

The bottles... of course the
bottles.

WINSTON

The only thing he neglected to
mention was where.

UNCLE GUY

So now you want his life. You want
his family. You want his bottles.

WINSTON

The way I see things they're
already mine. My name is Winston
Walker. This is my life now.

UNCLE GUY

You can wear his face. You can
repeat his lies. But you'll never
be him.

(MORE)

UNCLE GUY (CONT'D)

My brother was a man who had many secrets. And he buried most of them in the walls of the Blow Fly.

WINSTON

Where are the bottles, brother?

Uncle Guy presses the trigger on the gun -- it COUGHS. Empty.

WINSTON

Come now. There won't be any need for all that.

Winston opens his clenched palm -- out fall SIX BULLETS.

Guy sits back in his armchair, sobriety washes over him.

UNCLE GUY

Is this where you kill me?

WINSTON

This is where you kill yourself.

(indicates:)

There's an overcoat outstretched on the back of your armchair. Reach into the inner left-hand pocket.

Uncle Guy reaches into the deep pocket of a black wool coat laid over the back of his chair, he finds

A U.S. ARMY HYPODERMIC NEEDLE KIT.

UNCLE GUY

What am I supposed to do with this?

WINSTON

Put it together.

Uncle Guy screws the needle into the plunger's chamber --

WINSTON

Here.

He passes over a small vial to Uncle Guy, who reads the label:

UNCLE GUY

Suxamethonium chloride. Will it be painful?

WINSTON

Causes temporary paralysis. At a safe dosage, its effects last maybe ten minutes at most.

(MORE)

WINSTON (CONT'D)

Taken liberally, however,
suxamethonium chloride can be very
lethal.

Uncle Guy pulls back the plunger, the chamber FILLS with
chloride. He flicks the end of the hypodermic.

WINSTON

Now, inject yourself. Left arm. On
the vein where your forearm meets
the elbow.

Guy points the needle to his arm -- he hesitates --

WINSTON

Well, go on then.

Guy grips the hypodermic, and LUNGES.

Uncle Guy wrestles Winston in the chair, with the hypodermic
held HIGH -- ready to STAB DOWN --

Winston swats it away --

THE CHAIR TOPPLES OVER WITH THEM

The hypodermic FLIES, skitters across the floor under a
bookshelf --

Winston and Uncle Guy wrestle across the floor.

Winston has him around the throat --

He SQUEEZES.

He grips TIGHTER... and TIGHTER...

Uncle Guy's eyes BULGE... veins PROTRUDE from under his
skin...

He paws at Winston's face. He claws for his brother, trying
to grab on to anything.

WINSTON

Look at me. Look at me.

Guy tries to look away.

WINSTON

Look into my eyes.

He forces Guy's eyes open to see HIMSELF. Though Chance-
Winston smiles down at him, HE WEARS UNCLE GUY'S FACE.

Winston squeezes down on his windpipe -- it crushes with an audible KR-KRAK.

Uncle Guy's eyes go BLANK. The last of the air leaves his lungs in a final rush.

Winston stands over his body, heaves to catch his breath.

WINSTON
Secrets buried in the walls, you
say?

INT. BLOW FLY - IN THE WALL - NIGHT

Darkness. Silence. Philly stirs. Her head throbs. She pushes herself off the floor.

She checks herself -- nothing broken. A small trickle of blood has dried from a scratch on her forehead.

By some miracle, the bottle of moonshine survived the fall intact.

She reaches for it -- a GLINT of light crosses her hand.

Philly follows the light along the wall to find a small, broken opening in the old wooden boards.

She pulls them apart, kicks the boards out of place --

Philly crawls on her hands and knees, realizes she's in the
CELLAR.

EXT. OLDSMOBILE (MOVING) - NIGHT

Winston squints through a snow-blinding flush of white.

He parks outside the Blow Fly. Runs inside.

INT. BLOW FLY - NIGHT

Hazel rushes into the barroom, throwing on her overcoat.

Lorraine calls down to her from upstairs --

LORRAINE
She's not up here. I've checked all
the boarding rooms.

HAZEL

Alright, get on your coat. Call Kathleen's mother to see if she maybe went there.

Winston enters, looks at the party decorations adorning the room.

WINSTON

I hope the party hasn't already finished without me.

HAZEL

Philly's gone missing.

WINSTON

Missing?

HAZEL

Yes, we've checked everywhere. She's nowhere to be found.

LORRAINE

(leans in:)

Kathleen's Mom says Philly isn't there. But says she'll stay put in case she shows.

WINSTON

You don't possibly think she would've run away? She'd freeze to death.

HAZEL

If she ran away, she could only be so lucky.

Hazel grabs two kerosene lanterns off a table --

IN THE CELLAR

Philly stumbles through the dark, hands out in front of her. She knocks over an old mop handle. It CLATTERS to the floor, knocks over a stack of pails and old crates. They CRASH against the concrete.

UPSTAIRS

Hazel and Winston turn at the sound --

HAZEL

What was that?

WINSTON

It came from the cellar. Did you think to check down there?

HAZEL

The door's locked. It's always been locked.

Winston marches toward the cellar door.

DOWN IN THE CELLAR

Philly finds an old flashlight. She scans the room. The moonshine bottle under her arm. She finds the STAIRCASE leading upstairs.

THE CELLAR DOOR OPENS

A shaft of light illuminates Philly --

Winston stands at the staircase landing. The cellar door hangs open.

His daughter stares at him like a deer caught in headlights.

She grips the moonshine bottle closer...

WINSTON

What's that you got there, Philly?

PHILLY

It's nothing. I found it.

WINSTON

Are there are more bottles like that one?

PHILLY

No. This was the only one I found.

WINSTON

Give it here, angel face. Come up and hand it over to Papa.

Philly hesitates -- she's backed against the wall.

Winston reaches out to her, almost as if he's about to snatch the bottle from her hands.

WINSTON

Give me the bottle, Philly. I don't want to have to take it from you.

He pulls a HYPODERMIC NEEDLE from his pocket --

WINSTON
Come now, give it to Papa.

PHILLY
I don't know who you are -- but
you're not my Papa.

WINSTON
Give me that bottle, little girl.

PHILLY
I don't like it when people call me
"little." And I especially don't
like it when people refer to me
only as "girl."

SHE SMASHES THE BOTTLE IN HIS FACE.

Winston falls back -- HE HOWLS IN PAIN --

-- and drops the hypodermic.

He recoils -- grabs at his profusely bleeding face.

HAZEL (O.S.)
Winston? Winston?

Philly snatches the needle off the floor. She crawls back
into the hole she kicked in the wall.

HAZEL (O.S.)
Is something going on down there?

Winston lets out a PRIMAL SCREAM -- his face is CUT TO
RIBBONS. Clean slices coming apart like a rubber mask. His
face is falling apart at the seams.

He reaches into the wall -- can't fit himself inside --

Winston waits a moment, and hears

PHILLY CRAWLING INSIDE THE WALLS

He follows the sound up the staircase...

INT. BLOW FLY - BARROOM - NIGHT

Hazel runs to the cellar door.

HAZEL
Winston, is she down there?

He pushes her out of the way -- a terrifying madness overcomes him.

WINSTON

She's in the walls! She's in the walls!

HAZEL

My god, what happened to your face??

Winston follows the sound of Philly climbing the latticework of wall construction.

IN THE WALL

Philly navigates the insides of the Blow Fly's wall. Headed for the only place she can think is safe.

BACK IN THE BARROOM

Hazel and Lorraine can only watch as the crazed, bloodied Winston runs up the stairs in a frenzy. He reaches the second floor landing --

CRAWLSPACE

Philly squeezes into her hideout. Her heart beats out of her chest.

SECOND FLOOR LANDING

Winston heads for the door of Chance's rented Bedroom.

BARROOM

Lorraine backs away from her mother --

LORRAINE

Wait here, Mama.

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM DOOR

Winston tries the doorknob -- locked.

HE KICKS IT OPEN.

BEHIND THE BAR

A pair of hands pull the SHOTGUN from the wall mount.

CHANCE'S ROOM

Winston stumbles inside, he grunts like a monster.

His face bleeds, the gashes in his skin grow WIDER. The red flesh of his muscles and tendons show from underneath.

CRAWLSPACE

Philly lets out a WIMPER -- almost catches herself --

CHANCE'S ROOM

Winston kicks away the bed. Stands above the crawlspace. He pries the floorboards apart, finding

PHILLY.

Winston picks her up out of hiding --

HE CLENCHES HER AROUND THE THROAT.

Her squeezes down on her, when he hears

KLA-KLAK.

Suddenly, Winston is staring down the barrels of the shotgun, held by

LORRAINE.

LORRAINE

Let my sister go.

WINSTON

Now Lorraine. That's not very polite is it? Pointing a rifle at your dear Papa.

LORRAINE

You're not my Papa. He'd never hurt Philly. He'd never hurt any of us.

WINSTON

I'll snap her fragile, little neck. Try to stop me.

LORRAINE

You let go of her -- or I'll shoot.

WINSTON

You couldn't.

LORRAINE

Yes, yes I can.

HAZEL

He's right, Lorraine. You can't.

Hazel steps into the room, behind Lorraine.

WINSTON

Thank God you're here, my love.
Maybe you can talk some sense into
our girls.

HAZEL

Give me the gun, Lorraine.

LORRAINE

But Mama --

HAZEL

Give it here.

Lorraine hands the gun over to her --

-- Hazel AIMS IT AT WINSTON.

HAZEL

Let her go, you bastard.

Winston laughs. He drops Philly to the floor. She coughs,
hacks for air, crawls over to Lorraine.

WINSTON

I happen to know there are two
loads of rock salt in those
barrels.

HAZEL

Rock salt in the left to put you on
your ass. Buck shot in the right to
put you in the dirt.

She primes the left trigger -

HAZEL

You ought to know. You put them
there. Who are you? And where's my
husband?

WINSTON
I am your husband.

HAZEL
You're not - you're - you're some
kind of monster.

WINSTON
Is that what you want to see? You
want to see the monster?

He POKES his fingers into one of the many slits in his face --
HE DIGS INSIDE. PUTS HIS ENTIRE HAND INSIDE BEFORE
PEELING BACK HIS FACE...

...the Walker women coil in TERROR just as...

WINSTON RIPS THE SKIN FROM HIS FACE. Exposing a ghoulish
skeleton face covered in a TATTERED MESS of MUSCLE TISSUE and
TENDRILS.

He LAUGHS at the terrified girls. Steps towards them --
Hazel PULLS THE TRIGGER.

A blast of rock KNOCKS WINSTON OFF HIS FEET. The girls
scream, recoil.

He WRITHES on the floor, screaming.

Hazel primes the RIGHT trigger, steps closer to him -

Winston SWATS the end of the shotgun.

Hazel FIRES. Buckshot GLANCES off Winston's shoulder. He
falls to the floor.

HAZEL
Run girls! Run!

Hazel tries to thumb another shell into the chamber but DROPS
IT. She trips back through the door --

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

Snow flies thick and fast passed the speeding Oldsmobile.

Lorraine peers over the steering wheel. Hazel loads the
shotgun, seated on the passenger side.

Philly checks for headlights behind them -- no one on the road.

INT. OLDSMOBILE (MOVING) - NIGHT

Lorraine can barely see over the steering wheel. The car fishtails left and right.

LORRAINE
Philly sit down!

Hazel catches the wheel --

HAZEL
Careful.

The car rights itself.

HAZEL
Where are you taking us?

LORRAINE
Dewey's family had a farmhouse they used to take their winters in. His parents left it to him in their will.

HAZEL
How much further?

LORRAINE
A couple miles outside town, I think.

HAZEL
Good. When we get there we'll need to phone the police --

PHILLY
Lorraine look out!!

She points out a patch of BLACK ICE just as

THE CAR SWERVES INTO A SPIN.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

Rubber tires cry against the pavement. The Oldsmobile skids, and spins, skids, and spins.

INT. OLDSMOBILE (MOVING) - NIGHT

Lorraine puts all of her body weight into a desperate pull of the wheel -- against the skid.

Then finally --

THE CAR CRASHES AGAINST A TREE.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

A cloud of exhaust fumes cloud the clear night sky. Philly stumbles out from the backseat of the wreck into a pile of snow. She clutches her head... bleeding.

Hazel picks her up, helps her to her feet.

LORRAINE (O.S.)
Mama... Mama are you there?

Hazel and Philly together pull Lorraine from the driver's side window. The door is completely smashed, pinned against the tree.

LORRAINE
My arm -- watch out for my arm --

Lorraine clutches her BROKEN FOREARM.

They're broken and bloody, but the Walker women stand together, still alive.

HAZEL
How much farther to the Delligatti farm?

With her good arm, Lorraine points across a snow-covered field to a

FARMHOUSE.

Little over one mile away. The only beacon of light against a black Winter's sky.

LORRAINE
There.

HAZEL
Come on, girls. Hurry.

Together, they limp off the road. They trudge through deep snow across the field to the farm off farmhouse.

INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Philly sips on a cup of hot tea. Hazel throws a blanket over her shoulders. She wipes away the blood from Philly's forehead with a wet cloth. Philly rests her head.

Dewey helps Lorraine take a drink of her own. Her arm is wrapped in a makeshift sling.

DEWEY

I phoned the authorities. They're going to send out an officer as soon as one is available.

Hazel mouths "THANK YOU." Indicates that Philly asleep in her arms.

Christmas music can be heard from a radio: a choir sings about silent nights.

Hazel holds the girls close, they listen together. Philly peeks up at her mother, notices tears in her eyes.

PHILLY

Hazel, don't cry. Not because of him.

HAZEL

I'm not crying because of him, dear. I'm crying because not even now, after everything, can you call me "Mama."

PHILLY

...

HAZEL

I'm sorry. I feel like such a fool.

PHILLY

Hazel, why would he do all this?

HAZEL

He's a wicked man, my dear. Wicked men have no mercy.

As the choir finishes...

THE POWER CUTS OFF.

They're plunged into darkness -- everyone jumps to their feet.

HAZEL

Philly, time to get up.

LORRAINE

Dewey, how long do you think before that officer arrives?

DEWEY

Should only take them a few minutes at the most.

Hazel primes the shotgun --

HAZEL

I'm not sure we have that long.

LORRAINE

He's out there... He's out there...

PHILLY

You don't really think he's out there do you?

HAZEL

Quiet, girls. Listen.

Outside -- the sound of WIND moves around them. Almost like faint, patient footfalls.

Hazel traces the path of the footfalls with the end of the shotgun. She peers down the sight, drawing a path leading directly to

THE FRONT DOOR

The steps fall away... into SILENCE.

Hazel trembles. She steadies the shaking weapon in her hands.

DEWEY

Here. Let me take this.

He gives her an assuring look. Slips the shotgun out of her hands into his. And waits.

The young Dewey waits. For a noise. For movement. He waits before

TURNING THE GUN ON THE GIRLS.

HE FIRES --

-- Hazel TACKLES her daughters out of the way.

The buckshot tears apart the wall --

The Walkers duck behind a sofa.

Dewey FIRES AGAIN. Sending chunks of upholstery flying into the air.

He moves to Hazel's coat on a coat rack, digs out several SHOTGUN SHELLS.

BEHIND THE COUCH

The Walkers hide in pure terror. Lorraine leaps out of her mother's grip --

LORRAINE

Dewey, what are you doing?

HAZEL

Get down!

WITH DEWEY

He loads the last shell into the rifle. Primes it --

DEWEY

I'm so very sorry to tell you, my love. But Mr. Delligatti...

He steps through a wide shadow, into a wash of moonlight, revealing

CHANCE HOLYWELL.

CHANCE

...Had a sudden change of heart.

Lorraine SCREAMS.

He aims at her --

-- Hazel pulls her out of the way.

BEHIND THE COUCH

They huddle together while Chance BLASTS TWO MORE HOLES INTO THE WALL.

Philly motions them, silent, to follow her --

They crawl out of sight, just as

Chance pokes the shotgun barrel around the couch.

He moves around a corner, into the

HALLWAY

He jumps. Points the rifle --

CHANCE

Gotcha!

There's no one there.

Chance moves through the house, predatory. He's light on his feet, every step is careful, calculated.

He moves through the darkened house, back out of the Hallway, when...

Hazel TACKLES him.

They wrestle back-and-forth for control of the shotgun -- they stumble through the Living Room. Toppling a lamp, clearing off wall decorations.

He gives the rifle a final pull with all his force -- Hazel is swung around violently but keeps her grip -- she pulls back. Then realizes

CHANCE IS GONE.

A hand grabs her shoulder from behind a curtain. She jumps around --

HAZEL

Lorraine!

They huddle close together.

HAZEL

Where's your sister?

LORRAINE

I don't know...

Hazel turns the gun towards the empty house... she scans the open space with the sight at the end of the barrel. Then she hears... a song...

A MUSIC BOX LULLABY.

Chance sings...

CHANCE

Up on the housetop reindeer pause --

Chance pokes his head around a corner. His face that of ULRICH MULRONEY.

Hazel FIRES -- wood splinters, a miss.

CHANCE

Out jumps good ole Santa Claus --

He jumps from behind a loveseat in the Living Room -- now wearing DAISY'S FACE.

Hazel BLASTS a hole through the loveseat -- nothing but cotton.

CHANCE

*Down through the chimney with lots
of toys --*

Chance stands from behind the kitchen counter -- buckshot rips apart the varnished wood.

CHANCE

All for the little ones'

There's a long silence. Chance's song falls away.

Hazel and Lorraine stand close. The rifle trembles in her hands, her sight darts around the room. Unsure from where he will appear next.

Chance SPRINGS out of hiding. Now disguised as FATHER CHRISTMAS himself.

CHANCE

Christmas joys!

Hazel readies to fire, but sees --

HE'S GOT PHILLY HOISTED UNDER HIS ARM.

Hazel's finger falls off the trigger --

HAZEL

You let her go.

CHANCE

*Ho ho ho! Who wouldn't go? Ho ho
ho! Who wouldn't go!*

He runs for the Front Door --

LORRAINE
Philly! No!

HAZEL
Lorraine --

Lorraine chases him out the Front Door, Hazel follows.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL - NIGHT

Chance trudges down a snow-banked trail with Philly clutched tightly in his arms. She KICKS and SCREAMS.

PHILLY
Let me go! Let me go!

Hazel and Lorraine follow far behind.

Chance stops to catch a breath, lost. Philly BITES his hand. She drops to the ground, dashes into the tree line.

Chance HOWLS like a beast, chases after her.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Philly trudges through the snow. Her little legs kick soil and sleet into the air. She crawls through twisted trees and overgrown branches.

Chance chases after her with teeth bare, his face contorted with madness.

From far O.S. Hazel and Lorraine call out to her.

Philly ducks behind a tree, unseen.

Only a few feet away, Chance wanders through the snow, lost. After a moment, he heads in the opposite direction.

With the coast clear, Philly breaks cover. She heads for the edge of the tree line when she realizes she's on

A HILLTOP

Philly stops short of running off the edge -- she looks behind her. NOTHING.

She eyes the steep drop running down to the shore of a FROZEN LAKE. A road runs parallel to the lake just on the other side.

A branch SNAPS behind her, Philly looks --

CHANCE TACKLES HER.

He and Philly both TUMBLE DOWN THE HILL.

They land on the snow banked shore of the lake.

Chance squeezes Philly around the waist -- just as her mother and sister reach the top of the hill.

PHILLY

Down here! I'm down here!

CHANCE

Shut up, girl.

He slaps a hand over her mouth. He steps out onto the ice. It shifts under his foot, uneasy. Chance trips back.

PHILLY

We can't cross together, the ice'll
break -

CHANCE

For once, I think you're right.

Chance THROWS HER onto the solid ice of the frozen lake -- she slides like a stone.

HAZEL

Philly!

Chance moves across the ice towards the little girl. The ice CREAKS and CRACKS under him, the shifting of his weight disturbs the delicate surface.

He grabs Philly by the coat, stands over her.

She watches his footfalls -- and the ever-growing CRACK IN THE ICE that follows him.

Hazel and Lorraine stand on the edge of the lake --

HAZEL (CONT'D)

(calling out:)

You're trapped, Chance. Please,
just let me have my little girl.

CHANCE

She's my little girl. She's my
family --

HAZEL

She's not your family, Chance.
Please.

CHANCE

No one's going to take her away
from me -- Not ever -- Not again --

Philly watches as the chasm in the ice opens, racing rapidly towards them -- she reaches into her coat -- SHE GRABS THE HYPODERMIC NEEDLE.

PHILLY STABS CHANCE IN THE LEG.

He CRIES in pain. And they both FALL THROUGH THE ICE.

LORRAINE

Philly!

HAZEL

Oh God -- no -- no --

She tosses aside the rifle, Lorraine and Hazel sprint across the ice, towards the hole in the ice.

The water splashes, churns into a fury. Then calms.

Hazel and Lorraine lean over, Hazel reaches into the water.

HAZEL

Philly? Philly?

She sloshes around the water, desperate.

Lorraine pulls her away --

The water is still. A long beat.

They wait...

PHILLY BREAKS THE SURFACE OF THE WATER.

She GASPS for life --

Hazel and Lorraine crowd around Philly, they take off their coats and bundle her tight --

Hazel's eyes run over with tears. She holds her daughters close.

FADE TO:

EXT. FROZEN LAKE - LATER

Red and blue lights FLASH. Police cars surround the lake's perimeter. Policemen survey the scene, the break in the ice.

A Medic tends to Lorraine at an ambulance --

MEDIC
 (to Hazel:)
 We had better get these two to the hospital.

The ambulance takes Lorraine away, with her arm strapped in a proper medical sling.

Hazel and Philly climb into the back of a police car.

INT. POLICE CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Hazel holds Philly close. Philly's eyelids grow heavy, she drifts off to sleep in her mother's arms.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

The police car pulls away. Hazel carries Philly inside.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Philly lies in bed, swathed in thick blankets and quilts. A Nurse takes her temperature then moves to turn off the lights.

Hazel tucks Philly in.

HAZEL
 Goodnight, Philly. I love you.

PHILLY
 I love you too -- *Mama*.

Hazel looks into her daughter's eyes, she examines her face.

PHILLY
 Something wrong, Mama?

HAZEL.
 Nothing dear... sweet dreams.

Now in the doorway, Hazel takes one last look at her daughter. Then exits, the door shuts behind her.

A long beat. Silence.

Philly opens her eyes... she reaches beneath the hospital sheets to find

The inner cylinder of a child's music box toy.

She winds it...

A lullaby plays...

CUT TO BLACK.