

1

INT. AN APARTMENT - NIGHT

1 \*

A dark bedroom doorway, the sound of someone moving inside the room. A small light switches on and the sound continues.

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The light switches off again. A FIGURE appears in the doorway, walking backwards as if checking out the room one last time.

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As the figure turns, we see a masked face and strange, orange toy gun in its hand.

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\*

It moves slowly and chaotically around the dimly lit apartment. We see the figure only from behind and sometimes from the side. He is wearing a series of THREE HALLOWEEN MASKS that keep changing. One mask is of a pig-like creature, one of a haggard witch-like figure, and the other of a somber undertaker figure.

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As the lights are turned off, the figure opens the apartment door and leaves. From an upper window we see the figure heading to a car as he bleeps to unlock it. He gets in and drives away.

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TITLE SEQUENCE

\*

In darkness and in slow motion, the TOY HANDGUN slowly twists around in a series of hands, like a BOY'S HAND, WOMAN'S HAND, MAN'S HAND back and forth until a finger is resting on the trigger. We watch the gun's firing mechanism as it is drawn back and then begins moving forward. Just as two metal pieces of the firing mechanism come together, a slow, successive series of BANGS, followed WHITE LIGHT SATURATION and then ORANGE LIGHT SATURATION.

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2

INT. THE LARSON MANSION - DAY

2

MARLA LARSON is sitting at a DESK in THE LIBRARY of her 19th- century Victorian Mansion attempting to locate a BUSINESS CARD amongst scattered things. She finds the card of Paul Siegrist, DDS and dials the number she has written in pen on the back.

\*

(CONTINUED)

Throughout the film there is the unseen presence of a documentary filmmaker named DOUG WILSON, but his presence is rarely noted and he is never actually seen.

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TWO-WAY PHONE CONVERSATION, ONLY MARLA IN FRAME.

Out her LIBRARY WINDOW, Marla is watching a YOUNG MAN with a CLIPBOARD slowly approaching the mansion from a distance. She is listening to the CELL PHONE ringing in her ear until we hear Paul pick up. We are watching the YOUNG MAN stopping and starting as he flips through THE PAGES of his clipboard.

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PAUL (O.S.)

Hi Marla

MARLA

Hi Paul, I'm here with Doug. Are you done for the day?

\*

PAUL (O.S.)

Yeah, pretty much, just some paper work paying some bills for the office. Can everybody still get together tonight? Did you get ahold of them?

\*

As she talks to Paul, Marla is still watching the YOUNG MAN who has paused ON THE SIDEWALK, looking at a clipboard.

\*

Marla's husband, TOM LARSON, is unseen in another room occupied with something.

\*

Out beyond the YOUNG MAN, we glimpse someone in ONE of the THREE HALLOWEEN MASKS walking by on the sidewalk.

\*

MARLA

Yeah, we're still on. Mike thinks he might be a minute or two late, but other than that it's all arranged.

\*

PAUL (O.S.)

Great. Sure. That's okay. You know the process you referred me to?

MARLA

Mhmm.

\*

PAUL (O.S.)  
 I think it will work well, making  
 what we're doing more  
 structured... maybe more  
 challenging than where we were  
 last time we met.

\*  
\*

Marla's DOORBELL rings.

\*

MARLA  
 (distracted by the  
 bell)  
 That's great. I'm glad you liked  
 it.

\*  
\*

TOM LARSON (O.S.)  
 (shouting from  
 another room)  
 Marla?

PAUL (O.S.)  
 I suppose you thought so too, or  
 you wouldn't have sent me to it,  
 right? I guess my overall  
 assessment was that it...

\*

MARLA  
 (interrupting)  
 Sorry Paul, could you hold for a  
 minute.

\*

MARLA'S MUFFLED VOICE is heard talking or shouting to Tom Larson, maybe asking if he can get the door, and then she gets back on with Paul.

MARLA  
 Hey Paul, I'm sorry, someone's  
 ringing the doorbell.  
 (beat)  
 I'll see you there later, okay.

\*

PAUL (O.S.)  
 Okay, see you in a while.

MARLA  
 Alright, bye.

\*

Marla goes to THE FRONT DOOR. An old brown manila PACKAGE with German stamps and postmarks is wedged there.

She reaches down, picks it up, and puts it aside on a nearby table. The YOUNG MAN at the door is a political canvasser, wearing a SCHERING FOR CONGRESS BUTTON.

\*

3A

EXT. A PARK WITH A FOUNTAIN IN THE MIDDLE OF A TRAFFIC CIRCLE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

3A

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\*

THE PARK is mostly empty as cars move around the traffic circle, turning into and out of it here and there. DRIVERS and PASSENGERS wearing the three HALLOWEEN MASKS are glimpsed in A FEW CARS as they pass.

\*

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MIKE BRANNIGAN enters the park on foot, circling the fountain, looking for and finding the underground ENTRANCE TUNNEL to the fountain pump room set into the sidewalk. When he finds it, he kicks its METAL DOOR with the heel of his boot, and then looks around to see if anyone is watching.

\*

\*

\*

3B

EXT. A STOPPED CAR - DAY - CONTINUOUS

3B

\*

LISA (BIRKEN) BRANNIGAN drives up to circle and stops before she enters it. She sees Mike from her car. Mike notices her car.

\*

\*

\*

4A

EXT. SMALL TOWN MAIN STREET - DAY - CONTINUOUS

4A

\*

Background street noise is heard with voices of passing people over them.

Marla is walking down the town's MAIN STREET, window-shopping. We see her from inside and outside the windows as she is followed down the sidewalk. Persons in the THREE HALLOWEEN MASKS pass, are occasionally reflected in WINDOWS, unnoticed, or half-noticed, but as she turns her head they are seen as normal, unmasked, walking away from her - sometimes stopping and turning so we see their faces.

\*

\*

\*

4B

FRAME SHOP - DAY - CONTINUOUS

4B

\*

Marla enters a frame shop where Lisa is in the back. She waits a minute until Lisa appears.

\*

\*

Marla studies the woman she suspects or knows has been sleeping with her husband, as Lisa tries to not seem awkward.

LISA

Hi, can I help you?

MARLA

Yes, hi. I wanted to check if a frame was ready. The name is Marla Larson.

Lisa leafs through the work orders and finds Marla's job.

LISA

No, I'm sorry. It's not done yet. It'll be ready Friday.

MARLA

Okay, that's fine. Just walking by so I thought I'd check on it.

LISA

Okay, anything else?

MARLA

No, that's it. Thanks.

5

INT. PAM'S HOUSE - DAY

5 \*

Pam comes home. Her sons, JACOB and NATHAN WELLS (ages 8 and 6), are heard romping in the background.

PAM

(shouting)

Boys? Hang up your coats. Did you hear me?

JACOB (O.S)

(shouting)

Yeah.

NATHAN (O.S)

(shouting)

Yes momeeeeee.

Pam sees a VERY OLD, UNOPENED PACKAGE on her kitchen counter, under letters from the day before. It is from Germany but with no return address. She begins opening it.

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PAUL is washing a few DISHES in the SINK, and then starts to look at the mail on the counter. There is a similar VERY OLD PACKAGE with him name on it. \*

Paul is staring out the KITCHEN WINDOW, thinking. \*

The DOORBELL rings and Paul goes to the FRONT DOOR to find a camera pointing at him. It is the documentary filmmaker with a crew. \*

7A OMITTED

7A \*

7B OMITTED

7B \*

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\*

8 EXT. DOORWAY OF LISA'S HOUSE - DAY  
 Mike steps onto the stoop of the house of LISA (BIRKEN) BRANNIGAN (his ex-wife and ex-house). He pauses, looking around and noticing a CAR parked down the street. He's seen it before but can't place it. Looking down, he sees a PACKAGE on the porch and picks it up. It is addressed to him and seems to be postmarked from Germany, just like the other three. He rings the DOORBELL and a SMALL DOG begins barking inside. LISA comes to the door, wearing shorts and a T-shirt - like bedclothes.

8 \*  
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\*  
\*

LISA  
 Brianna had to get some things  
 from her room.

There is a pregnant silence.

MIKE  
 (uncomfortably)  
 Okay.

\*

LISA  
 Did you get off work early today?

MIKE  
 Yeah, a few minutes.

LISA

I saw you wandering around the fountain when I was driving home. What were you DOING?

MIKE

Just waiting for an appointment to start, killing some time.

LISA

Okay. It looked kind of STRANGE driving by.

\*

Mike looks annoyed, but Lisa just shrugs her shoulders.

MIKE

I was sort of scouting out a scene for a role I'm playing.

\*

LISA

In the Christmas play?

While Mike speaks, Lisa's little dog is barking inside behind her.

\*

\*

MIKE

Yeah. Some of the people from the cast are putting together...

\*

LISA

(interrupting Mike to yell at the barking dog)

Shut up Mitzi!

MIKE

(starting again)

I was saying some of the people from the cast are working on a new play and one scene there's something about the underground pump house for the fountain. I was just looking at where the entrance to it was.

\*

\*

More pregnant silence as Lisa looks over her shoulder back into the house.

\*

\*

LISA

(distracted)

So, are you planning to actually  
BREAK INTO the tunnel under the  
fountain, like take a crowbar to  
it in the middle of the night...  
or does somebody have a key,  
or...?

\*

\*

\*

MIKE

(sarcastically)

No, I'll probably just use a blow  
torch. Could you check...

\*

\*

\*

Mike looks down noticing their daughter BRIANNA has been  
quietly standing at the door, listening. He glares at  
LISA without answering.

\*

\*

MIKE

Hey sweetie, you all ready to go?

\*

BRIANNA

Hi Daddy.

\*

\*

As Brianna comes out the door, Mike starts to turn away  
holding her hand but LISA stops him.

\*

\*

LISA

What's that?

MIKE

What?

LISA

The package in your hand.

\*

MIKE hands the PACKAGE to LISA. She takes it, reads his  
name on it, seeing other stuff in German on it, looks him  
in the eye, and shoves it back. She steps back and shuts  
the door.

POV as MIKE walks to his car with BRIANNA. He is staring  
at the CAR he noticed before.

\*

\*

A man, JACK WELLS, is in LISA'S SHOWER. We do not see  
him. Lisa is brushing her teeth.

\*

\*

LISA

I asked Mike about what he was  
doing at the fountain.

JACK (O.S.)

And?

\*

LISA

He said he was researching a role  
for a play they're doing.

\*

JACK (O.S.)

A play set in the park?

\*

\*

LISA

No, the fountain, or the room  
under the fountain where the water  
pumps and stuff are. I don't  
know.

\*

\*

JACK (O.S.)

And what about it?

\*

LISA

That's what he was doing, looking  
at the entrance to the tunnel  
leading to it. There are like  
metal doors in the ground.

\*

JACK (O.S.)

THAT'S interesting. Did he say  
what that has to do with the  
Christmas play?

\*

\*

LISA

No, but you can be sure it's  
something weird. One of Mike's  
THINGS I guess. But that not  
enough to make him crazy or  
dangerous, right?

\*

\*

JACK (O.S.)

All that depends on the judge and  
a lot of OTHER things, like I said  
before. Just keep taking notes,  
there seems to be something odd  
there for sure.

\*

\*

(beat)

Did he say how much admission  
they're going to charge for the  
play under the fountain? How many  
people can be seated there? Four,  
five?

9A

CONTINUED: (2)

9A

Lisa is getting ready to enter shower.

\*

LISA

\*

No idea, maybe you could ask him.

\*

JACK (O.S.)

\*

(howling like a wolf)  
Maybe later, but for now let's  
give it up for the Wolf Man. A  
ooooooo!

\*

Lisa draws back the shower curtain part way.

\*

JACK (O.S.)

\*

OH yes!

\*

9B

INT. CAFE - DAY

9B

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MARLA

\*

I think ONE way, maybe the best  
way to make Tammy work for you is  
to study someone like her.

\*

(beat)

\*

Do you know Mike's ex-wife Lisa.

\*

PAM

\*

Yes, a little. But wouldn't that  
be a little weird with Mike and I  
...

\*

MARLA

\*

(awkwardly)

\*

Actually, no. I think your  
emotional investment and, well,  
the curiosity anyone would have

\*

(beat)

\*

I think that gives the right  
context. You know? That's the  
right frame of mind to understand  
the character. You can handle it,  
right. Maybe, well, you know, it's  
BETTER to know more

\*

(beat)

\*

at least I'd be that way...

\*

10 A INT. A MOVING CAR - DAY

10 A

Former cop and part time private investigator THYS KRUGE is driving through the small town's streets in the late afternoon listening to THE CAR RADIO. The radio is turned down as he begins to speak. Thys' face remains unseen but his hands are sometimes seen on the wheel. Now and then we see reflections of the THREE HALLOWEEN MASKS within car, as if they are the driver.

As he obsessively DRIVES AROUND THE SMALL TOWN, he passes MIKE in the traffic circle, PAUL on the street, and MARLA'S house.

All images are POV of the other person in the car,

Thys' driving is punctuated with pauses, not only because he is having a conversation with an unseen and unheard other person, the documentary filmmaker in the passenger seat, but also because he is paying attention to his driving.

THYS (O.S.)

You know, I gotta tell yuh. No matter how old I get, I never cease to be amazed at the STAYING power of The One Ten.

(beat)

(suspiciously)

REALLY? You don't know about The One Ten.

(beat)

I'd never have SUSPECTED that.

(beat)

You're serious, right?

(beat)

(amused)

Sure. Okay. Let's see. Where do I even START?

10 B INT. CAFE - NIGHT

10 B

\*

Reaction shots are dispersed throughout as each person speaks.

These CAFE discussions are first done ad lib, then refined into tighter dialogue.

(CONTINUED)

10 B CONTINUED:

10 B

MARLA explains they are going to actually be starting something that will help prevent and prosecute elder abuse in their community.

PAM wants to know how it will WORK. How will the play affect what people do in their jobs, or families and other places? Or do they not know yet?

MARLA says she thinks they don't know yet, really. But theater has a way of increasing or ENRICHING awareness so Marla thinks what we do will hopefully be able to be utilized and absorbed by many of people who may be most able to affect change. In truth, MARLA does know, in that it's about one, real case.

PAM wants to know if they would INVITE such people to the play, or INCLUDE them in their remake? Or are they going to video-record it and put it on DVD, have people working in this area USE it for training and so on.

MARLA thinks all are great ideas, and all are possible but, at this stage, the process itself should just serve to be taking everyone in the right direction. Their main goal is to create more understanding and awareness of what's happening to older people and what the current systems are basically failing to do.

PAM asks if she means there's something in the process ITSELF that's going to make what they do different from just a reworking of a play, and MARLA confirms this. There's something in this particular process that helps make this happen.

PAUL explains how it's a unique opportunity that MARLA is has experience in theater AND the issues of elder abuse.

10 C INT. A MOVING CAR - DAY

10 C

THYS

Okay well, first, in almost every community, all across the country-- and I've heard that since the war it's even in Germany and Japan too--there's some kind or another of a special, OFFICIAL, printed copy of a book by none other than George Washington.

(beat)

It's called Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation.

(beat)

Right.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

THYS (CONT'D)

And IN that book there are a hundred and ten such rules and they're pretty wide ranging.

(beat)

Well, I can't really cite any of them now, but they're not hard to find. They go by different names. I myself have heard them called "The GW One Hundred and Ten," or "The One Hundred Ten," but most people I think call them "The One Ten."

(beat)

Is that look you're giving me because you don't understand, or because you think I'm crazy?

(beat)

Not that I CARE, really.

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11

INT. A CAFE - NIGHT

11

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They then begin discussing the setting.

The setting for the adventure is their very own town of Saint-Gabriel today.

In 1837 Saint-Gabriel was a newly chartered and quickly growing town, and this was at the very same time of one of the greatest financial crises in American history.

All over the Midwest, local banks and other concerns tied to communities like Saint-Gabriel had been selling securities to finance the construction of roads and other infrastructure, and this money was mainly coming from foreign sources, like England.

Right within the beginning of the second part of Dickens' story, before the first spirit appears, where Scrooge wakes up and thinks it's twelve noon, he starts going on about how if time did not work properly then he would never be able to profit from those who owe him money. He says something like his whole business would amount to nothing more than what he calls A MERE UNITED STATES SECURITY.

Scrooge was actually very proud of the fact that he DIDN'T invest in securities from places like Saint-Gabriel, even though at the time it was the second biggest and most prosperous city in a large, growing new US state. Scrooge was proud of himself because everyone

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around him who took part in this American investment back then, many of them in London, lost all their money when communities like Saint-Gabriel backed out and went insolvent.

So one of Scrooge's great investment decisions might have very well been to NOT help make Saint-Gabriel what it became back then and in part what it is today. And we can use this fact, just injecting the idea into our play that he knew a group of fellow Londoners who foolishly invested in Saint-Gabriel, lost a lot, and this made it possible for Scrooge to ruin them by buying them out.

The group then begins to discuss the characters they are creating.

THYS (O.S.)

Well, it's supposed to be CLEAR where they came from. These one hundred and ten rules, if you're to believe it, were supposedly written down by George Washington himself, a kind of record of how he did things, how ALL great statesmen and citizens should do things.

(beat)

On the other hand, there have been people who claim to have proved that these one hundred and ten rules were just schoolboy grammar exercises commonly assigned to students at the time to practice their penmanship. These one hundred and ten rules, THESE people say, are exactly the same as another set written by French Jesuit priests some one hundred years earlier, translated into English at some point, ending up as one of Washington's homework assignments, and from there to what they are today.

We are watching the group around the table for a moment from outside before we hear them inside.

PAUL explains that, first, each of them is creating a NEW, CONTEMPORARY character out of one the characters already in A Christmas Carol.

14

INT. A MOVING CAR - NIGHT

14

THYS (O.S.)

That's right. French Jesuits. But whatever that side of the story may amount to, the main thing to know about The One Ten is that since the great American financial crisis of 1837, civil authorities of each community and each state have enshrined A COPY of these rules in some location, and this location is SUPPOSED to be quote "KNOWN BY ALL BUT SPOKEN ABOUT BY NONE." (beat)

That's one problem with this place. People think they can understand things they really aren't ABLE to understand.

(beat)

Right, well I'm just telling it as I've learned it. I didn't say I'm pretending to fully UNDERSTAND it. You read me?

(beat)

Yeah, that's right. I have a Masters degree in History. Did you know that?

(beat)

(beats)  
And I've always read a lot. These kinds of things interest me.

bars  
(beat)

(sighs)  
Well, mainly the history of the English resistance to the French in North America

III NOI  
(heat)

(beat)  
in this area in particular

in the  
(heat)

(beat)  
Okay, in the end, when it comes to the 110, it all seems to come down to three groups, in my experience at least. The first are those who know about The One Ten. The second are those who DON'T know about them. And the third are those who can't SAY.

can c  
(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

THYS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Well, in a way, The One Ten book  
is there as a set of reminders of  
how to be CIVIL.

(beat)

In being civil in these ways, it's  
supposed to better prepare us all,  
and especially those in positions  
of authority, to better handle any  
real or potential social crises,  
like financial crises or whatever  
that may affect a particular  
community or state.

(beat)

Yes, like the Crisis of 1837,  
exactly. That's where it came  
from.

(beat)

No, not in EACH AND EVERY  
community, I imagine.

(beat)

Actually, since it got started in  
1837, I understand there have been  
a few communities and maybe even a  
few states that, for whatever  
reason, have either abandoned this  
practice of enshrining The One Ten  
or maybe even simply FORGOTTEN  
about it. But again, I'd urge you  
to focus not on The One Ten's  
LOSING their power but rather the  
fact that they seem to be GAINING  
power.

(beat)

There's more though, so hold on.  
Here and there, in more and more  
places, these days at least, it  
seems, The One Ten are routinely  
being accused by someone or  
another of being a sort of SECULAR  
BIBLE or some series of  
COMMANDMENTS that might conflict  
with either the teaching of Jesus  
or the principles of  
egalitarianism, no less.

(beat)

Yes, but I'D say despite all this  
stuff, from they're being  
Washington's penmanship homework  
to some of the controversy I just  
mentioned, The One Ten can still  
be found in other places, outside  
of community archives.

(MORE)

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THYS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

You see them being acted out in churches, business organizations, the military, in colleges and universities, and so on.

Actually, they seem to play big role in these places, as far as I've seen as least.

15

OMITTED

15 \*

16

INT. A CAFE - EVENING

16 \*

PAUL notes that while there's a good deal of freedom in what they are doing, it also has boundaries that make it more a story about THE CHARACTERS than Dickens' original story itself. Also, since we know so little about Dickens' characters, we have a lot of room to re-invent them, fill them in.

The center of it all is the character of Scrooge who, in our case, is a retired auto worker named GENE CARTER. THYS, who is not there at the cafe, will be playing him, instead of playing Scrooge as he has so many times in that last few years.

GENE is then described a bit. Actors discuss his looks, etc.

17A

INT. A MOVING CAR - NIGHT

17A

THYS (O.S.)

Now, that's what The One Ten are, and much of that I'D say is more commonly known. But there's also another side to em that's not so well known.

(beat)

Well, while most people, I would say, are not aware The One Ten are a set of rules and most might not be able to actually name of any of the rules, there are SOME people who supposedly can not only name many or all one hundred and ten rules, but those people who also follow some sort of SECULAR PATH the rules lay out.

(MORE)

THYS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

These people consistently take part in rituals and organizations that in many different ways secretly BREAK each of these rules in order to hold and use power.

\*

(beat)

Yeah, I thought you'd like that, right?.

\*

(beat)

One key to using The One Ten for power is to be able to have enough affiliations with people, and have the right relationships to have the access and ability to SELECTIVELY, and I said selectively, break any of the one hundred and ten rules when it suits you.

\*

(beat)

The people who are best at this even go so far as to use The One Ten to exclude others with less power who break one or more of The One Ten, even when the people being excluded don't know they have broken any rule or even know that any such rule ever existed.

\*

(beat)

Yes, that's right. Since I had to explain The One Ten to you, then you must have been, and I suppose still are, one of those people.

\*

(beat)

You can laugh. It IS funny. But it's also not. You know what I mean?

\*

\*

PAUL explains that the modified characters they make up may be based on themselves or on their actual friends, acquaintances, and relatives, alive or dead, who may be more or less in fictional disguise.

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\*

Pam fondles Paul's knee under the table.

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One example might be one's mother becomes the character Mrs. Cratchit.

\*

\*

THYS (O.S.)

Up ahead on the right you'll see  
the Larson's house, otherwise  
known as the HISTORIC KERWIN  
MANSION. I'll bet you old  
Matthias Kerwin used The One Ten  
like a MASTER in selling his  
radioactive cures for melancholia,  
backaches, and whatever back in  
the mid-eighteen-hundreds.

(beat)

Marla's Christmas Carol Group,  
that's what I'm calling em because  
they don't have a name as far as I  
know,

(beat)

they seem to have become involved  
in something else altogether  
different from The One Ten. You've  
heard about that already I  
suppose.

(beat)

NO?! You're not interviewing the  
right people my friend.

(beat)

Well, Marla has introduced this  
group to something, a PROCESS.

(beat)

Marla and Paul actually invited me  
to take part, even though I told  
them I have real reservations on  
what it'll produce. Now Marla says  
they're calling me "This Year's  
Scrooge."

(beat)

Yep, This Year's Scrooge. Kinda  
funny because I play Scrooge EVERY  
year, right?

(beat)

Yeah, sure. I agreed to act in it,  
but I'm not going to get involved  
in the writing.

(beat)

Marla's IDEA, and I don't know  
where this is going, or if I WANT  
to know, her idea is to do that  
old thing of a play within a play  
that exposes some kind of  
conspiracy.

(beat)

Yes, like Hamlet, exactly.

(beat)

(MORE)

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THYS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Well, that's complicated.

(beat)

You see, there was a guy named Jon Birken. He was about 29 when his wife ran off to some other state last year leaving him with their 8 year old son named Cody. I knew Jon quite well, since he was a boy, along with his half-brother Danny. They used to come over to our house and use my work shed to make all kinds of things.

(beat)

Although I didn't know this until recently, it turns out Jon's mother, Eveyln Birkin, was petitioning Marla's husband, Judge Tom Larson, for custody of Cody

(beat)

and it was all kind of ugly

(beat)

Well, because she was claiming Jon had become mentally unstable and violent.

(beat)

It appears that Larson didn't take her seriously and wouldn't give custody to Evelyn.

(beat)

Now I think it's possible part of his decision had to do with the fact that Evelyn had basically abandoned her husband, FRANK, Jon's dad, and was refusing to take any responsibility for him now that he's developed some kind of disability, something like Alzheimer's disease, as I understand it. Now, I don't KNOW this to be true but, well, YOU know, I know things, so OKAY, it seems to the case.

(beat)

So, what ends up having happened is Jon seems to have put his boy Cody to bed and, after he was asleep went into the bedroom, shot Cody in the head, laid down next to him, and then turned the gun on himself.

(beat)

Yes, I know, BUT, it doesn't end there.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

THYS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

While I don't think that she NORMALLY would have done anything, Evelyn seems to be organizing a campaign to impeach Tom Larson from the bench, AND, it seems to be clear that a local lawyer named Jack Wells, who used to be married to Evelyn many years ago, is using Frank's niece Lisa Brannigan to help Evelyn impeach Larson or at least discredit him so Wells can take Larson's place in the next election.

19

INT. A CAFE - EVENING

19

MARLA shuffles A FEW PAGES and clears her throat, having a sip from her DRINK.

She tells them she is putting together a remake of the character of the Wife of Scrooge's Nephew Fred. The name of this character is ALLISON CARTER, who is GENE CARTER'S niece.

MARLA deceptively explains she is kind of basing her character on a woman who comes to clean for us on Thursdays. She was talking to this woman about her aunt who is 82 and needs help. Her cousin helps her aunt with a variety of things everyday or so and when she takes the aunt's checkbook to the store to buy her things she also buys food for herself and her kids and takes that home. When MARLA acted upset by this she seemed confused, as if this was perfectly okay. MARLA had to tell her it is definitely not okay, and her cousin needs to stop.

So now MARLA'S really not sure what she should do. She's known the housekeeper for several years and so on. But what if it was MARLA herself alone in a few years and the housekeeper was helping her do more than her agency was paying her for, and what if MARLA was not in position to compensate her, maybe even know or appreciate what she was doing for her? 'Will she steal from ME or other she works for?' asks MARLA.

THYS (O.S.)

Besides Marla, I also know Pam  
Wells is involved in the group  
too.

\*  
\*  
\*

(beat)  
Pam is a nice young woman really.  
She's been raising her two kids on  
her own for years.

\*  
\*

(beat)  
Yeah. She has a job doing  
something for the military.

\*

(beat)  
Marla's son David works for the  
military too. He's been around  
here lately.

\*  
\*  
\*

(beat)  
Pam wasn't actually in the play  
with us last year, and I don't  
believe any of them knew her,  
although I've known her for years.

\*  
\*  
\*

(beat)  
No, she just kind of popped up  
after being urged by Mike  
Brannigan. She gave Marla a call  
saying she was interested in  
taking part and that she'd acted  
in the past.

\*  
\*  
\*

(beat)  
Yes, WELLS. Right. She used to be  
married to Danny Wells, Evelyn  
Birken and Jack Wells' son.

\*

(beat)  
Yes, right, he's the half-brother  
of Jon, they BOTH used to hang out  
in my work shed. I did a lot of  
night shifts on the force then, so  
I saw em both quite a bit in  
summers, in the afternoons, at  
least for a few years back then.

\*  
\*  
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\*

(beat)  
And Mike, who I believe Pam is  
dating now and, like I said,  
brought her into the play. He  
played the Ghost of Christmas Past  
this last year.

\*

(beat)  
I think he still works as a  
grounds keeper at Maplewood  
Cemetery.

\*

21

INT. A CAFE - EVENING

21

\* \* \* \* \*

PAM explains she is reworking Scrooge's housekeeper, Mrs. Dilber. Her name is TAMMY CARTER. She's another niece of GENE CARTER, and she's a spiritist, like an expert at conducting seances and all that. PAM is making it so TAMMY may in fact be behind the summoning of the first spirit and the next three spirits. [Marla pushes changes on this part at some point.] Just a minute ago, when PAM was talking, says MARLA, she started imagining the niece as a daughter-in-law named ALLISON CARTER, and Allison having a role to play here too. She could be somehow involved with TAMMY in staging GENE'S night of haunting.

As far as Elder Abuse goes, PAM sees TAMMY as someone who actually works to protect GENE by scaring him, by teaching him lessons in this way. Does that make sense, wonders PAM?

PAM supposes this could bring up questions like are TAMMY and ALLISON engaged in some kind of abuse, or are they actually preventing GENE'S own self neglect?

22

INT. A MOVING CAR - EVENING

22

THYS (O.S.)

There is this idea out there, and I believe it's growing, that this process Marla is using is somehow out to replace The One Ten, to replace them with something better but, I suppose, like most of these things, this is all really far fetched. The FACT is, people who spread this kind of stuff around miss the point ENTIRELY. This process really has no particular fixation on The One Ten per se. Instead, it's the Nound Spooks that are its adversaries, or the Nound Spook CULTS, I mean.

(beat)

Yeah but, all of this aside, yuh know, for the most part, up until recently at least, those with power have had little or no time or need to care about anything LIKE this process.

HR (beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

THYS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

But, in the last several years I've seen things change to the extent now that there are some people even saying The One Ten are some kind of global conspiracy having to do with the Freemasons and all that, like one hundred and ten people or their secret rituals, or some such thing.

(beat)

Then there are OTHERS who think The One Ten is the foundation of globalism, the post-war trans-Atlantic alliance. Then, too, as if this weren't enough, there are still others who somehow believe both at once, so

(beat)

I KNOW, fucking CRAZY right?

23A

INT. A CAFE - EVENING

23A

PAUL tells how his character is based on Man Guest, a guest at the Christmas party of Scrooge's nephew Fred. Paul is calling him MARK WENSEL. PAUL explains how he has been thinking about his role in relation to the Visitor of Christmas Future and how the grave sequence is changed to a nursing home sequence, like Scrooge, instead of seeing his own grave, sees himself in a nursing home, being neglected, people stealing his money that has gone into receivership, and things like that, being financially exploited and otherwise abused all while he is STILL LIVING and not after he dies. He thinks this might mean cutting some of the scenes with Scrooge's maid stealing his curtain rings and all that, but he also thinks that it might work out okay with what he's heard Marla and Pam are doing with that character, Mrs. Dilber.

MIKE tells him his character is Topper, a friend of Scrooge's nephew Fred. This character's name is BRIAN WELLER. Mike was first thinking Brian was a guy who is maybe somehow working against the best interests of GENE, kind of in an indirect way by helping build a system for his friend Fred to succeed in USING his uncle GENE in a campaign against the welfare system. 'You know the scene near the end when the Gentlemen collecting for charity in his office who he turned away earlier on but then later promises them money?' says Mike. 'I see Brian as sort of intervening in that and directing the money to their cause through himself, making him able to get more power over the system, putting himself on their board of directors and stuff. Mike says he then thought they might

have to add a whole scene to the play to make it possible though. 'Can we do that?' Mike asks. MARLA says she doesn't know, and that it is a good question.

23B

INT. A MOVING CAR - NIGHT

23B

THYS (O.S.)

No, that's right, it's really nothing economic, for or against business, individual liberty, or any of THAT stuff.

\*

(beat)  
It's not about the market and not about those who set up politics to tend to it, and all that, but instead, again, it's all about the NOUND SPOOKS, the spookISM.

\*

(beat)  
It's not about the material production or its means, but about the whole SPIRIT of the place, or what the spooks have DONE to it.

\*

(beat)  
And, I think, it's really nothing  
NEW either. It must have been  
here even in 1837.

(beat)  
Yeah, it's like the Spooks EVOLVE.  
(laughing to himself)

Yes, Spook evolution.  
Spookolution. Sure, why not.

(beat)

Okay.

Now, I should say, while I'd like to think those who know power don't go for such stuff, that they take this spookism for what it is, recent events in my own experience seem to indicate otherwise. Most of my life things seemed safer, more predictable. There were basically two sides, right, and each played against all too obviously constructed extremes, one against socialism or communism and the other against fascism, capitalism or whatever. You understand? But that's not the case anymore. NOT, ANY, MORE. The only constant is change, as they say.

23C EXT. CAFE PARKING LOT - EVENING

23C \*

As the meeting breaks up, PAUL leaves the café/restaurant and goes to his CAR. While in the PARKING LOT he sees what appear to be MASKED FIGURES at a distance, passing under STREETLIGHTS on the main street.

24A INT. A MOVING CAR - EVENING

24A

We see the PAUL from inside the car while he is in the parking lot in the previous scene.

THYS (O.S.)

You see, what comes with the process are the DREAMS.

(beat)

Yes, their dreams, all of their dreams, all mixing together, some with music, some frantic, peaceful, like waves of repressed laughter, absurd laughter moving through Christmas parties and into the streets.

(beat)

Okay, maybe like Mardi Gras, I suppose. Why not.

(beat)

What's that? Say again.

(beat)

No, I don't mind. Why would I? They can call me This Year's Gene, Ole Gene, Frosty the Snow Man or whatever they want. But did you hear what I just said? There are things I KNOW.

(beat)

Like I know they will see me, or someone like me in a dream. And you know WHO I or that person like me will be? It'll be each one of them, his or herself.

(beat)

(laughing to himself)

How's that for a prediction?

(beat)

(repeating in a mocking manner)

How do I know.

(beat)

You're not supposed to ASK how I know.

(MORE)

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

(CONTINUED)

THYS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(beat)

I can't say. BUT, and this is the  
key, they'll just be dreams.

(beat)

Yes, they'll just be dreams. And  
like ALL dreams, they'll be WRONG.

(beat)

I mean that dreams aren't RIGHT.

(beat)

Yes, you can forget looking for  
symbols and all that crap, that's  
not what matters here, at least  
when it comes to talking about the  
process.

(beat)

NO, dreams give you nothing in  
themselves. You have to, well, how  
should I put it?

(beat)

It's like you have to act them  
out, or be acting ALONG WITH THEM,  
with the people or things in them.  
And you have to APPLY SYSTEMS to  
them,

(beat)

like the process the group is  
using. Then they'll somehow give  
you something that's RIGHT instead  
of wrong. Then they'll become  
right.

(beat)

Yes, there actually IS a system  
that would make these dreams  
right. You see, that's the  
process, right there, one thing it  
can do.

(beat)

Looking at the new Christmas Carol  
group though, I'm afraid to say I  
really doubt if any of these  
PARTICULAR people may ever realize  
this.\*  
\*  
\*  
\*\*  
\*  
\*  
\*\*  
\*  
\*\*  
\*  
\*\*  
\*  
\*\*  
\*  
\*

LISA

Hi, here for your picture? Larson,  
right?

MARLA

Yes.

\*  
\*  
\*\*  
\*

LISA

It's right here. You pre-paid so,  
it's all yours. Thanks.

\*  
\*  
\*

MARLA

Okay, great. Thanks.

\*  
\*  
\*

25

INT. LISA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

25 \*  
\*  
\*

Lisa is watching TV as the PHONE rings. She answers it.  
We see Tom Larson on the other end for a moment, and then  
do not see him again until the end of the conversation,  
hanging up.

\*  
\*  
\*

All CUs.

LISA

Hi.  
(beat)  
Nothing, watching TV. Are you  
thinking about me? Is that why you  
called?  
(beat)  
Only thinking?  
(beat)  
Okay. I was wondering if you were  
getting my calls.  
(beat)  
Really. I wish. Mike's at your  
party, so I'm stck here at home  
with Brianna.  
(beat)  
I don't know.  
(beat)  
You can come over HERE.  
(beat)  
What do you KNOW? What are they  
doing?  
(beat)  
It's about The One Ten right?  
That's what I've heard.  
(beat)  
AROUND, I dunno. What else did  
your hear?  
(beat)  
From Marla?  
(beat)  
Elder Abuse awareness?  
(MORE)

\*  
\*  
\*

LISA (CONT'D)

What's that?  
(beat)  
Sounds strange. I don't get it.  
(beat)  
Maybe.  
(beat)  
Do you think Marla knows?  
(beat)  
About WHAT? About US.  
(beat)  
Yeah.  
(beat)  
It's all kind of freaking me out,  
to be honest. Something strange  
is going on. She was in the frame  
shop to day to pick up that  
picture.  
(beat)  
No, something strange IS going on.  
(beat)  
I don't care. Why don't you come  
over for once.  
(beat)  
You can park down the street. The  
street's a dead end and no one  
come down it.  
(beat)  
What's so urgent? I'm needing  
you. Don't you want to come over?  
(beat)  
Can't you just skip out?  
(beat)  
I know it's your party, but it's  
really MARLA'S party right? Just  
come over for a while and then go  
back.  
(beat)  
Make an excuse. Are you out of ice  
yet?  
(beat)  
I'm just kidding.  
(beat)  
Okay. Okay. Mhmm. Call, okay?  
(beat)  
Bye.

\*  
\*  
\*\*  
\*  
\*

\*

\*  
\*  
\*

THYS (O.S.)

The REASON I think they won't  
really succeed is, well, like most  
of us, their lives and abilities  
are too limited by apprehension,  
peer pressure, how they've learned  
to behave in order to be accepted  
for who people think they are.

Maybe it's an odd way of putting  
it.

(beat)

I suspect in one way or another  
they'll all get spooked and this  
new play will become like a  
diversion, a sort of a way to feel  
they're doing something after  
they've actually stopped doing  
anything.

(beat)

I think the play will keep them  
hidden within entertainment,  
something fictional, a kind of  
safe place they're used to and  
that they NEED.

(beat)

But, then again, maybe they're  
right. Maybe they know ME better  
than I know THEM. I am, after  
all, "This Year's Scrooge," am I  
not?

(beat)

Well, kinda. I mean it was nice to  
be invited into the group, but,  
you know, they're doing the work.  
My hope is they won't need me. And  
they really don't WANT me, if  
they're smart. I complicate  
things. I fuck em up and ruin  
them with my good intentions.

(beat)

I know they've all HEARD about it,  
but since I haven't heard from any  
of em I doubt if any of em have  
any idea Jon and Cody were close  
to me, at least at one time.

(beat)

Sure, and ADDING to that, who the  
hell knows where DANNY is.

(beat)

(MORE)

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THYS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Me, I'm having these nightmares, curious and weird, all of them with an orange toy handgun, like one of the investigators found in the boy Cody's hand I guess.

(beat)

Yeah. That's what I heard through the police grapevine, but they didn't release that information to anyone outside. They seal that kind of stuff. I never saw it.

(beat)

Then there's this crazy-assed letter Jon was writing still up on his computer and printed out, his so called, well-researched FINDINGS about how taxes and some covert NATO POLICE STATE was somehow making his life unliveable, stealing his liberty and poisoning Cody with ideas against freedom. He wrote that he knew SOMEDAY SOON he would need to take a stand, when THEY finally came for them both.

\* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \*

There is a pause as he becomes upset.

I'm sorry. You know, I ask myself, non-stop, what the hell happened with him. You'd think after 40 years doing that job but...

(beat)

What the hell is HAPPENING in this place? You know..

(beat)

Yes yes, what did I do, DIDN'T I do. I still don't really know.

(beat)

(angry and louder)

What could I do with this damn...  
this fucking MESS?

\* \* \* \* \* -

All are in pump house under fountain. We see PAUL holding a THIN RED BOOK but we cannot hear them talking.

LISA is watching the fountain, parked in darkness, on a  
cell phone.

\*  
\*

LISA  
Marla probably tells him  
everything, talking about it all  
the time.

(beat)

I really don't like it. You know?  
It's too weird to have both Mike  
and Marla still hanging around  
each other. I thought the end of  
the last play would be the end of  
that.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

JACK (O.S.)  
Yeah, but don't worry, it'll be  
over soon.

\*  
\*  
\*

Another, third voice interjects.

\*

THYS (O.S.)  
NO, it WON'T ..., at least soon  
enough for YOU.

\*  
\*

JACK (O.S.)  
What?  
(beat)  
Who the hell is THAT?

\*  
\*  
\*

LISA  
I DUNNO.

\*

JACK (O.S.)  
(angrily and  
suspiciously)  
Is there someone there WITH you  
Lisa?

\*  
\*

LISA  
No, he's somewhere else, listening  
in on the line.

\*

JACK (O.S.)  
Who IS this?

\*  
\*

THYS (O.S.)  
You heard what I said, counselor,  
YOU FUCK, and you can just think  
about who this IS.

\*  
\*

A beep and a silence. \*

29 INT. CAFE - NIGHT

29 \*

MIKE and PAM have stayed behind in the cafe after MARLA and Paul have gone home. They are eating PIE and talking. \*

MIKE

So that's where we are at this point. The custody hearing is in two weeks. We'll see, I guess.

PAM

Did you know Danny and I went through a divorce too? Most people in the family don't.

MIKE

Seriously? \*

PAM

(sipping coffee)

Mhm. \*

MIKE

So, I guess you know all about all the paperwork and the meetings all too well then.

PAM

Yeah, I suppose it was different since he was over there and I was here.

\*  
\*

MIKE

Yeah, I can imagine.

Mike's cell phone begins ringing and he answers it. It is Lisa.

\*  
\*

MIKE

Yep?

(beat)

She's spending the night at my mom's.

(beat)

Somewhere Lisa.

(beat)

SOMEWHERE. What's it matter?

(MORE)

\*  
\*

MIKE (CONT'D)  
 Are you writing a book?  
 (beat)  
 She's already in bed by now.  
 (beat)  
 Yeah.  
 (beat)  
 Okay.  
 (beat)  
 Hold on, wait a minute. You know  
 when you call me it's still the  
 0723 number. You said you'd get  
 that changed.  
 (beat)  
 BECAUSE, when you call people they  
 think I'M calling them, or I'm  
 trying to get ahold of them.  
 (beat)  
 No, I told you before, YOU need to  
 change it. It's not my phone  
 anymore.

LISA hangs up on MIKE. There is a moment of silence as  
 MIKE realizes she's no longer on the line.

MIKE  
 Sorry about that.

PAM  
 I KIND of know how it is.

MIKE  
 Then you REALLY know how much it  
 sucks, I think.

There is a silence as they both take bits of pie.

PAM  
 You mind if I ask why you two  
 split?

MIKE  
 You know her, right. She's Danny's  
 cousin, or HALF cousin...

PAM  
 Not very well really. I remember  
 seeing you two at a family thing  
 just after Brianna was born. But I  
 never really talked to her.

MIKE  
 The key point to know is that  
 she's a tramp. She can't help it  
 really.

PAM

(awkwardly)

Hmm.

(beat)

Have you had a chance to take a  
longer look at the process stuff?

\*

\*

MIKE

(sipping his drink)

A bit, yeah. Mhmm.

\*

PAM

Have you seen the stuff about the  
Nound Spooks?

MIKE

Yeah, I did, but I didn't quite  
get what it's supposed to be  
about. What do YOU think?

\*

PAM

I know it sounds strange, but you  
know the weird dreams we both had  
with people in masks and the  
orange kids guns?

MIKE

Yeah.

\*

PAM

That's why I brought up the  
process stuff. What we've been  
experiencing are the Nound Spooks.  
That's what they ARE. That's what  
the process is about in some way,  
making sense out of such nonsense  
like in our dreams or  
imaginings.

\*

\*

MIKE

It's about interpreting our  
DREAMS?

\*

\*

PAM

No, that's not really IT.

\*

\*

Cut to outside-in shot of the the two still talking and  
fade.

\*

\*

30

INT. MARLA'S MANSION - NIGHT

30

MARLA is reading in the LIBRARY when her husband TOM  
comes home. \*

MARLA

(shouting)

Don't forget to charge the kitchen  
phone. \*

TOM (O.S.)

(shouting)

Okay. \*

(beat) \*

I'll be upstairs. \*

TOM plugs the CELL PHONE into the KITCHEN socket and  
heads off to bed. We never see his face. Marla leaves  
the library going to the KITCHEN. On the cell phone,  
glowing as it charges, are a few missed calls from what  
reads out as MIKE BRANNIGAN's number. She picks up the  
phone and deletes them. \*

FADE OUT: \*

FADE IN: \*

31A

INT. A NURSING HOME - DAY

31A

\*

The poem The Windows by french poet Stephane Mallarmé  
plays incorporated into music or visual as THYS OR GENE  
BIRKEN stands at a window. \*

Las du triste hôpital, et de l'encens fétide  
Qui monte en la blancheur banale des rideaux  
Vers le grand crucifix ennuyé du mur vide,  
Le moribond surnois y redresse un vieux dos, \*

Se traîne et va, moins pour chauffer sa pourriture  
Que pour voir du soleil sur les pierres, coller  
Les poils blancs et les os de la maigre figure  
Aux fenêtres qu'un beau rayon clair veut hâler, \*

Et la bouche, fiévreuse et d'azur bleu vorace,  
Telle, jeune, elle alla respirer son trésor,  
Une peau virginal et de jadis ! encrasse  
D'un long baiser amer les tièdes carreaux d'or. \*

Ivre, il vit, oubliant l'horreur des saintes huiles,  
Les tisanes, l'horloge et le lit infligé, \*

(CONTINUED)

La toux ; et quand le soir saigne parmi les tuiles,  
Son œil, à l'horizon de lumière gorgé,

\*  
\*

Voit des galères d'or, belles comme des cygnes,  
Sur un fleuve de pourpre et de parfums dormir  
En berçant l'éclair fauve et riche de leurs lignes  
Dans un grand nonchaloir chargé de souvenir !

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Ainsi, pris du dégoût de l'homme à l'âme dure  
Vautré dans le bonheur, où ses seuls appétits  
Mangent, et qui s'entête à chercher cette ordure  
Pour l'offrir à la femme allaitant ses petits,

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Je fuis et je m'accroche à toutes les croisées  
D'où l'on tourne l'épaule à la vie, et, béni,  
Dans leur verre, lavé d'éternelles rosées,  
Que dore le matin chaste de l'Infini

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Je me mire et me vois ange ! et je meurs, et j'aime  
— Que la vitre soit l'art, soit la mysticité —  
À renaitre, portant mon rêve en diadème,  
Au ciel antérieur où fleurit la Beauté !

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Mais, hélas ! Ici-bas est maître : sa hantise  
Vient m'écœurer parfois jusqu'en cet abri sûr,  
Et le vomissement impur de la Bêtise  
Me force à me boucher le nez devant l'azur.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Est-il moyen, ô Moi qui connais l'amertume,  
D'enfoncer le cristal par le monstre insulté  
Et de m'enfuir, avec mes deux ailes sans plume  
— Au risque de tomber pendant l'éternité ?

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Translation in subtitles

\*

Weary of the dull hospital and rank fumes

\*

Rising into the banal whiteness of the curtains

\*

Toward the large bored crucifix of the empty wall,

\*

The dying dissembler straightens his old spine

\*

He drags himself and goes, less to warm his rotting body

\*

Than to see the sunlight on the stones, to glue

\*

The white hairs and bones of his gaunt face

\*

To the windows that a clear sun-ray tries to bronze.

\*

And his mouth, feverish and greedy for the blue azure,  
As once when young it inhaled its treasure,  
A virginal skin and of long ago! soils  
With a long bitter kiss the tepid panes of gold.

Drunk, he lives, forgetting the horror of the holy oils,  
The infusions, the clock, and the inflicted bed,  
The cough; and when evening bleeds along the tiles,  
His eye, on the horizon gorged with light,

Sees golden galleys, beautiful as swans  
Sleeping on a river of crimson and of fragrance  
Rocking the rich tawny flash of their lines  
In a great apathy charged with remembrance!

Thus seized with disgust for man with his blunt soul,  
Wallowing in contentment, where only his appetites

Eat, and who insists on fetching this filth  
To present it to the woman suckling her little ones,

I flee and cling to all windows which open inside  
From where one turns one's back to life, and, blessed,  
In their glass, washed by eternal dews,  
Gilded by the chaste morning of the Infinite

\*  
\*

I look at myself and see me as an angel! and I die, and I  
love

\*  
\*

– May the glass be art, may it be mysterious–  
To be reborn, wearing my dream as a crown,  
In the anterior sky where Beauty flowers!

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But alas! Here-below is master: its obsession  
Sickens me at times even in this safe shelter,  
And the impure vomit of Stupidity  
Forces me to stop up my nose before the azure

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Is there a way, O Self who knows bitterness,  
To break open the crystal insulted by the monster  
And to escape with my two feathered wings  
– At the risk of falling through eternity?

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\*

Marla is driving and passes a motel, slowing down a bit  
to look for Tom's car on a whim. Surprised at seeing  
Thys' car, she turns around and waits across the street  
out of view.

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After a while she sees Thys emerge and get into her car,  
followed in a few minutes by... Pam.

\*  
\*

Gene is working in his work shed as Paul narrates. \*

PAUL (V.O.) \*

Before getting started, one thing  
needs to made very clear. Gene's  
father was dead. There is no doubt  
in anyone's mind about that. The  
register of his burial was signed  
by all the proper parties. The old  
man had given up the ghost. \*

(beat) \*

Now, having said this, I don't  
mean to say I know for sure what  
it really means to give up the  
ghost. I suppose the most obvious  
meaning is that his spirit had  
separated from his body, and that  
being alive kept them together.  
But, then again, to give something  
up means to let it go, or to kick  
a habit, to move on, and to give  
someONE up is to surrender him or  
her to the authorities. In the  
end, the wisdom of our ancestors  
is in that saying, and who are any  
of us here to do anything to  
really question those kinds of  
things. Basically, things like  
this are traditional, kind of like  
the 110. So, like I said, suffice  
it to say Gene's father had given  
up the ghost. And I'd urge you to  
take that for all its worth. \*

(beat) \*

Did Gene know his father was dead?  
Of course he did, in some real  
sense. But at the same time it's  
also true that his father was in a  
state of crisis, and that seemed,  
at least in this case, to not be  
mutually exclusive with being  
dead. \*

(beat) \*

How could it have been any other  
way, really? Gene and his father  
were like close friends, partners  
in crime, as the saying goes. \*

(MORE) \*

PAUL (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 One could say Gene was his dad's  
 SOUL executor, his SOUL  
 administrator, his SOUL signer,  
 his SOUL residuary legatee, his  
 SOUL friend, and maybe in truth,  
 his SOUL mourner. In reality, even  
 Gene himself wasn't so torn up by  
 the sad event, but he was a good  
 son on the day of the funeral,  
 giving his best words to the  
 memory of his father.

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MARLA  
 (looking at script)  
 Sorry Paul, can I say  
 (beat)  
 I think we need to change some of  
 the language here.  
 (beat)  
 That's okay. Go on.  
 (beat)  
 Later.

PAUL  
 The mention of his father's  
 funeral brings me back to the  
 point I started from. There was no  
 doubt that Gene Sr. had given up  
 the ghost. This must be distinctly  
 understood, or nothing really can  
 come of this story. If we were not  
 clearly convinced that King Lear  
 had not in some sense given up the  
 ghost and was in crisis from the  
 early part of the play onwards,  
 there would be nothing more  
 remarkable in his sound and fury  
 than there would be in any other  
 old man, behaving in odd ways to  
 literally astonish his daughters'  
 weak minds.  
 (beat)  
 Why do this, bring in King Lear  
 and all that?

MARLA  
 Is it okay for now if we just go  
 with it and I'll explain later?

PAUL  
 Okay..., sure.

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PAUL (V.O.)

Near the side entrance to the work  
shed his father had long ago  
painted and hung a sign and Gene  
had never taken it down. There it  
hung, years afterwards, above the  
main tool bench: G & G.

(beat)

As he sat there in the work shed,  
Gene Jr. could hear the cars that  
sped by his house go wooshing and  
sloshing up and down the road,  
their windows up, the heat  
blasting, and wipers wiping away  
the windshield slush. The clock on  
the wall had just clicked on four,  
but it seemed to be getting dark  
already. It hadn't been light all  
day really, and lights were on in  
the windows of the house some 30  
yards from the shed. The light the  
house gave off came through the  
shed window with milky smears upon  
the palpable grey air.

(beat)

The door of Gene's work shed was  
always left open so he might see  
that WOMAN coming through the  
glass of the storm door. She  
seemed to stay in the house most  
of the day but would then show up  
unexpectedly at almost any time.  
Gene was always cold, but the  
woman seemed to always not be  
bothered by the cold. When she  
showed up, she always seemed to be  
dressed like it was summer, like  
she didn't feel the cold.

(beat)

As he stared out the window, he  
seemed to be lost in thought.

Theater stage set is both Tammy and Allison's house with  
door, but two different chairs, a different side table,  
and background.

With Gene, it's always a mix of behaviors that might at one time contradict the emotion or distract from it.

MARLA

Hello. Happy Happy!

She puts her arm around him and hugs him from behind.  
Gene pats her head.

PAUL (V.O.)

Gene's daughter-in-law comes upon him so quickly that this was the first he knew of her being there.

35B INT. GENE'S WORK SHED - DAY - CONTINUOUS

35B \*

GENE

Yeah RIGHT.

ALLISON

Awe c'mon. I know you don't MEAN that.

GENE

I sure as hell do. Happy Holidays!  
What've YOU got to be so happy about? You work for the government?

ALLISON

Come on. What's up with you being such a dark cloud? Do YOU work for the government?

GENE

SURE. Yeah, right. That's a good one. I WISH.

ALLISON

Don't get upset Dad. It's okay.  
I'm just pulling your leg.  
(beat)  
What you doin'?

GENE

What am I supposed to do when I live around people like that?  
Happy Halloween my ass! What's it to you people except a chance for more time off?

35C INT. REHEARSAL SPACE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

35C \*

MARLA

Awe come on! Really?

THYS

I'll have my own Happy  
Halloweendays, and you all can  
have yours. Good enough?

MARLA

So you don't want to do ANYTHING  
this year?

THYS

No, how about let's not and say we  
did. Let the government take care  
of it.

MARLA

There's a lot of things the  
government does wrong, but I think  
it does SOME good too. Right?

Gene's niece TAMMY, who had been listening in the  
DOORWAY, applauds.

PAM

Yeah, you tell him!

THYS

Let me hear any more of YOUR crap  
and you'll celebrate losing your  
job.

PAM

You can't fire me, I have a  
contract.

THYS

Really? Are you a LAWYER?

35D INT. GENE'S WORK SHED - DAY - CONTINUOUS

35D \*

ALLISON

Don't be bent out of shape. Come  
on! You'll be up at the house and  
over at Tammy's tonight, right.

GENE  
 (feeling somehow  
 guilty)  
 I've got stuff to DO. See you  
 later.

ALLISON  
 I'm not asking for anything FROM  
 you, we can be friends right?

GENE  
 (smiling)  
 Could ya get LOST for Christ's  
 sake!

ALLISON  
 I'm sorry you're being so stubborn  
 today. We never had any kind of  
 fight, did we? I'm asking you  
 because we want you there, and I'm  
 not gonna get in a bad mood, no  
 matter what you say.

GENE  
 How about 'Merry Disappearance?'

ALLISON  
 And a crappy New Year?

GENE  
 Yes. Get out.

ALLISON leaves the work shed. She stops just outside the  
 door to say hi to Gene's niece TAMMY and attorney MARK  
 WENSLER. Tammy seems much more friendly than usual.

\*

\*

\*

THYS  
 (reading)  
 What the hell is THIS now, another  
 one with her hundred and whatever  
 bucks a week, and a husband and  
 family, talking about a Happy  
 Halloweendays.

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MARLA

As she leaves, TAMMY and MARK  
enter.

PAUL

Hi, I'm Mark. Mr. Carter, right?

THYS

(reading)

My dad's been dead for years.

PAUL

We're hoping Gene Sr.'s support of  
progressive causes runs in the  
family. We understand your a  
longtime union brother.

MARLA

When it came to causes, Gene and  
his dad had been two kindred  
spirits. This guy he was looking  
at was right about that. But  
hearing the ominous word  
progressive, Gene frowns, shaking  
his head.

BRIAN

(a bit perturbed, but  
polite)

You don't care much for the union  
anymore?

THYS

I don't care about a LOT of shit,  
since you're asking me. I don't do  
Happy Holidays, and I can't afford  
to make the government merry  
merry. I pay taxes for the  
government and all that, and they  
cost enough. Those who have done  
crap have to deal with them, not  
me.

PAUL

Yeah, I hear you. That's okay. How  
do you like your new SUV?

THYS

It's none of my business.

(beat)

(MORE)



37A

INT. ALLISON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

37A

\*

PAUL (V.O.)

Gene goes up to the house and sits  
in front of the TV.

(beat)

He's sitting in a lounge chair as  
Allison is fixing dinner. He's  
awake but also as if in a dream.

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Until recently, Gene had lived in  
the house that his daughter in law  
Allison and his son Nick now live  
in by themselves. He'd raised a  
family there and then lived there  
alone with his wife until she died  
a few years before and his son and  
daughter-in-law moved in.

Transition with a slow flash and a moment of watching  
Gene, then hold on back door, then Gene gets up and walks  
toward it.

Now, the fact is that there was  
nothing at all odd about the BACK  
DOOR. It's also in fact odd that  
Gene hadn't given one thought to  
his dad since he was last  
mentioned during Tammy's visit to  
the work shed that afternoon. This  
being the case, anyone would  
really be pressed to explain how  
it happened that Gene, having his  
the back door knob, saw in the  
glass, without its changing in any  
way, didn't see, HIMSELF, but HIS  
FATHER instead.

(beat)

It wasn't well lit as the other  
objects in the house, but it had a  
dismal light about it, like a bad  
lobster in a dark cellar. It  
wasn't angry or ferocious, but  
Gene felt as if it was looking at  
him like his dad used to look at  
him, kind of studying, judging,  
wondering. Though its eyes were  
wide open, they were perfectly  
motionless.

This, and its livid color, is what is making it horrible,  
but its horror seems to be in spite of the face and  
beyond its control, rather than a part of its own

(CONTINUED)

expression.

As Gene focuses on this phenomenon, he can again see it as the reflection of his own face too.

Gene is shaken up. His blood has become conscious of a terrible sensation he hadn't known since he'd been a baby. He puts his hand upon the DOOR LOCK, slides it aside, and walks out onto THE PATIO.

He pauses for an undecided moment before he closes the door behind him, looking cautiously back through it into the house, as if he half-expects to be terrified with the sight Gene Sr. actually standing there. But there is nothing on either side of the door, except the glass from the other direction. He steps back inside the doorway and closes the door with a big thud.

THE SOUND OF THE DOOR CLOSING resounds through the house like thunder. Every room above and every can and bottle on every shelf seems to have a separate sound of its own.

As he listens to the continuing resonating of the sound, he walks through all the rooms of the house to see that all was okay.

LIVING ROOM, BEDROOM, BATHROOM. All are as they should have been. Nobody under the table, nobody under the SOFA, the CEILING FAN on low, SPOON AND A BOWL OF JELLO ON THE TABLE BESIDE HIS CHAIR. OLD CHAIR, SIDE TABLE, TV, another living room CHAIR.

Now satisfied, he closes the DOOR to the garage, and locks himself in, double-locks himself in, which is not his usual thing to do. Now secured against any surprise, he takes off his shoes, puts on his slippers and sits down in front of the TV to eat his jello.

A rerun of a police show is on, but he can't extract the least sensation of warmth from understanding it.

Before long, he finds himself studying Allison's PIG COLLECTION on the nearby bookcase. If each smooth figure had been a blank at first, with power to shape some picture on its surface from the disjointed fragments of his thoughts, there would have been a copy of his FATHER'S FACE on every one.

He begins to drift off to sleep. As his head sinks back in the chair, his glance happens to rest upon an OLD DIGITAL CLOCK, its readout so small he had not been able to see it for years. Now asleep and dreaming, it is with great astonishment, and with a strange, inexplicable dread that as he looks, he sees these numbers begin to

scroll backward and forward. Its alarm begins beeping as do all in the house.

PAUL (V.O.)

This lasted half a minute, or so, but it seemed like an hour. The alarms ceased as they had begun, together. Then came a banging noise, out in the garage,

(beat)

Sound of banging can.

as if some person were beating on a hollow can. Gene then remembered to have heard that ghosts in haunted houses did things like this. Poltergeists!

The back door opens with a banging sound, and without a pause, the figure of Gene's father comes on through the door and passes into the room before his eyes. Upon its coming in, the sound of the TV goes mute as if to say I know him! My father's ... ghost! and then comes on again, but at a low volume.

The same face, the very same. His dad. Though he stares at the phantom through and through, and sees it standing in front of him, though he feels the chilling influence of its death-cold eyes, and notices of a plastic mouth guard in his father's mouth he had not observed before, he is still incredulous, and fights against his senses.

GENE

Hey!

(as if to startle the ghost, to get its attention)

What do you WANT?

GENE'S FATHER

(taking out his plastic mouthguard and repeating Gene's tone)

What do I WANT? I want ALOT!

That's what I want. What do YOU want?

The members of the cast are all in their regular clothes, but standing, reading their lines and narrating.

THYS  
I'm asking who ARE you?

MIKE  
No say, ask me who I WAS.

THYS  
Who WERE you then? Are you  
supposed to be some kind of ghost?

MIKE  
(lamentingly)  
I USED to be your friend, your  
dad.

PAUL  
The ghost stands across from Gene,  
staring.

MIKE  
You don't really believe me, do  
you?

THYS  
No, I don't, really.  
(beat)  
To be HONEST...

MIKE  
So, seeing you clearly don't  
believe your eyes AND your ears,  
what DO you believe Gene?  
(beat)  
Well...?

THYS  
I don't know.

MIKE  
Why DON'T you believe them then?

THYS  
I dunno. I suppose because a lot  
of things can make you goofy, see  
and hear things. Too many  
medications? Not enough. You know,  
overdose.

GENE  
You see this bottle of pills?

GENE'S FATHER  
Yeah, I see it.

GENE  
You're not looking at it.

GENE'S FATHER  
(impatiently)  
I can see it anyway. What ABOUT  
it?

GENE  
Well! All I've gotta do is swallow  
a few more of these and I'll be  
seeing all kinds of things I  
suppose.

Image of a trembling BOY in a chair, terrified by his  
father.

At this, Gene's father lets out a frightful cry and bangs  
his EMPTY METAL CAN with such a dismal and appalling  
noise, that the boy holds on tight to his chair to save  
himself from losing it. Add to this the even greater  
horror when the phantom takes the MOUTH GUARD from his  
mouth.

Gene diverts his eyes.

THYS  
For Christ's sake! What is it you  
WANT from me? Can you just TELL me  
please.

MIKE  
OKAY, smart guy. I want you to  
tell me if you, Gene, believe I'm  
REAL or NOT?

THYS  
Yes, I do. I have to, right? But  
WHY?

MIKE

WHY is that everyone is a Visitor  
 and that Visitors need to in one  
 way or another walk abroad among  
 his fellow men, to travel far and  
 wide, and if the Visitor in him  
 does not do this in life, it is,  
 HE is condemned to do so after  
 death. He is doomed to wander  
 through a world in pain and  
 sorrow, seeing what he can do  
 nothing about, but might have been  
 able to have been able to do.

MARLA

Again the spectre raises a cry,  
 and bangs its CAN and wrings its  
 shadowy hands.

THYS

(looking him up and  
 down)

Why are you all tied up like that?

MIKE

I'm wearing ropes that I wove in  
 my life. Aren't they NICE? I made  
 them of my BEING, fiber by fiber,  
 and yard by yard. The world I  
 created around me. I spun each  
 fiber of my own free will, and I  
 wore them inside like organs and  
 outside like a skin. Their fibers,  
 their weave is my life, twisted  
 lie by lie, pretence by pretence,  
 rumor by rumor, misusing power and  
 trust. Is this skin, is this...  
 PATTERN, this FEEL, is it strange  
 to you?

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Sitting in a chair, Gene trembles more and more as he  
 touches the fibrous rope, running its frayed ends through  
 his fingers as they emerge from his skin.

MIKE

You GOD damn well know it doesn't. It's not as full, as heavy, and as long as this years ago. You've worked on it even more since. It's your obsession the same way it was mine.

MARLA

Gene glances around him on the floor, expecting himself to be surrounded by some fifty or sixty yards of ROPE, but can't see any.

THYS

Dad, can you tell me something else? Make it make some more sense. I ...

MIKE

I don't have any sense to give but none. You get me? Sense comes from other places, far away. And you learn it from OTHER ministers, to other kinds of men. Why do you think you have the ABILITY to understand things, living like you do. Did the TV somehow convince you of this self delusion?

(beat)

(resigned)

Fact is, I can't tell you what I would really like to tell you. That's for sure. I can really only tell you one more thing. I can never rest. I can never stay put. I can never be anywhere for very long. Before, my Visitor never really made it beyond our work shed. In life my Visitor never went out beyond the narrow limits of our little world here, and our TV, but now long nights on the road always lie ahead of me.

MARLA

Gene had a habit, whenever he was brooding on something, to put his hands in his pants pockets. He was doing that then, pondering what the Ghost had said, but without lifting up his eyes.

38F INT. ALLISON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

38F \*

GENE'S FATHER

(solemnly)

Gene, you need to give me up.

GENE

To give up the Ghost?

His father, on hearing this, lets out another cry, and  
clanks its can furiously.

GENE'S FATHER

(furious)

God DAMN IT! LISTEN to me!

GENE

But you were always telling  
riddles, dad. You know, I was  
just...

GENE'S FATHER

RIDDLES. Riddle this Gene!

(beat)

I never realized what a riddle  
WAS. The common welfare isn't a  
puzzle. It was THE STATE Gene. THE  
STATE was my riddle. Everything I  
ever did, my whole life wasn't  
without meaning, it was a lie, a  
DAMNED JOKE full of FALSE meaning.  
If there is a God, this is HIS  
riddle. This is the challenge  
we're here left to solve. Is THAT  
something you can understand?

It holds up its thick ROPE at arm's length, as if that  
were the cause of all its unavailing grief, and flings it  
heavily upon the ground again.

LOOK AT ME GENE. Do you know why I  
sat there watching TV with my eyes  
turned away fixed on flickering  
images, and never turn them to  
that God I REALLY worshipped? Was  
there anything I could have done  
that mattered, as I RANTED on  
about freedom and NONSENSE I had  
no GUTS, BRAINS, sinewy FIBER to  
learn to make right?

XCU of his father in Gene's face. The boy begins shaking.

38G INT. REHEARSAL SPACE - NIGHT

38G \*

MARLA

Gene was very much dismayed to  
hear his father's ghost talking  
like this, and began to quietly  
shiver in fear.

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38H INT. ALLISON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

38H \*

GENE'S FATHER

Listen to me, for Christ's sake!  
My time's almost up. This is  
SERIOUS.

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BOY GENE

I will. Just don't get mad. C'mon.  
PLEASE. I'm...

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GENE'S FATHER

I'm here to give you a serious  
warning. You still have a chance  
of escaping what's happened to me.  
A chance and hope that I'm trying  
to make possible for you, THROUGH  
YOU.

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GENE

You were always a good dad to me.  
I know that. You live on through  
me, I wanted you to know I know  
that.

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GENE'S FATHER

(flustered)

I don't know ANYTHING and I don't  
want to HEAR that. I don't need to  
live through you, I need to DIE  
through you, to DIE.

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(beat)  
The only way for you to see this,  
the only way I can SEE TO this is  
that you need to be haunted, by  
three OTHER Visitors than me.

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(beat)  
That's right. I've got your  
ATTENTION finally, huh?

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\*

GENE

Is that how I'm supposed to avoid  
what will happen to you, what you  
just told me about?

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GENE'S FATHER

Yes. That's right. It's the one  
chance to kill me, MY one PATHETIC  
chance to die through you.

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Gene's father starts to turn away, distracted, anxious to  
leave.

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GENE

But wait a minute  
(beat)  
I can't  
(beat)  
How can I DO that? What does that  
even MEAN, I mean, and WHY,  
what's, I'm...

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GENE'S FATHER

Without these Visitors coming, you  
will definately end up joining me  
and following me down the road I'm  
on, drifting through space and  
time.

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(beat)  
Listen, (lowering his voice) the  
first Visitor will come tonight,  
at one.

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(beat)  
Then, the second one will come the  
next night at the same time. The  
third the next night at midnight.  
Don't expect to see me any more,  
and make damn sure, for your own  
sake, and for me, make sure you  
remember what you need to do.

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Okay?

\*

GENE

To give up the ghost.

\*  
\*

GENE'S FATHER

(amused)  
Yes. To give up the DAMNED ghost.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

GENE

To give up on you.

\*  
\*

GENE'S FATHER  
 (flustered, agitated  
 and desperate)  
 To SURRENDER me. To TURN ME IN.  
 Turn me OVER.

When it says these words, the ghost takes its MOUTHGUARD it has been hiding in its hand, puts it back in his mouth and bites down on it. Gene knows this by the squeaking sound its teeth make, when the jaws were brought together and grinding over the plastic. Gene then decides to take a chance and raise his eyes again, and finds his father standing there, with his ropes wound over and around his arm.

The ghost walks backward from him and at every step it takes, the back door opens a little, so that when the ghost reaches it, it is wide open. His father asks Gene to come closer, and he does. When they are within two paces of each other, his dad holds up its hand, warning him not to come any closer.

Gene stops, not so much in obedience as in surprise and fear. He sees nothing but his own reflection in the door glass. Gene begins to notice confused noises in the air, incoherent sounds of anger, lamentation, and regret, shouts inexpressibly sorrowful and accusatory. The ghost, after listening for a moment, joined in the cursing and floated out upon into cold night.

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Gene goes to the glass door, desperate in his curiosity. He opens it and looks out.

SPFX

PAUL (V.O.)  
 The air is filled with PHANTOMS,  
 wandering here and there restless,  
 and in a hurry, and cursing,  
 complaining, demanding as they go.  
 Every one of them is wearing ropes  
 like his dad. Some few (they might  
 be guilty coalitions) were tied,  
 even woven together, but none were  
 free. Many had been personally  
 known to Gene in their lives.  
 (beat)

(MORE)

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PAUL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

He had been quite familiar with one old ghost, a SOCIAL WORKER who cried piteously at being unable to make a difference with a poor woman holding an baby, whom it saw below sitting on a doorstep, locked out by her abusive husband. The misery with them, charity volunteers, activists, organizers, was clearly that they sought to interfere for good in human matters but had lost the power for ever.

(beat)

Whether these creatures faded into mist, or mist enshrouded them, he couldn't tell, but they and their voices faded together, and the night became as it had been when he had earlier walked from the work shed.

There is a flash and Gene is sitting again. He tries to say 'Fucking crazy' but is stopped at the first syllable, looking at the clock and thinking he saw it said twelve.

PAUL (V.O.)

As was often the case, Gene had lost track of time. It couldn't have been possible that he'd slept through a whole day and far into another night.

(beat)

It also wasn't possible anything had happened to the sun and it was twelve noon.

(beat)

The idea began alarming him as he groped his way to the front window. He had to rub the frost off with the sleeve of his shirt before he could see anything, and could see very little then. All he could make out was, that it was still very foggy and extremely cold, and that there was no noise of cars passing, and making their usual stir, as there sure would have been if night had come upon day and taken possession of the world.

(beat)

(MORE)

PAUL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

This was a great relief, because his US savings bonds wouldn't amount to much if there weren't any days to count by.

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The group discusses leaving this part about savings bonds in. Is it due to the 110, or....?

PAUL

Gene went to back to his chair again and thought it over and over, but couldn't make anything of it. The more he thought, the more perplexed he was, and the more he tried not to think, the more he thought.

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(beat)

His father's Ghost bothered him beyond words. Every time he resolved the situation within himself, after telling himself that it was all a dream, his mind tipped back again, like a pendulum in slow motion, to the place where he had begun, and he would come the same problem to be worked all through. Was it a dream or wasn't it?

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GENE seems to be awake from this dream state.

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The team discusses how the spirits are really the real people, the exploiters, and others.

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PAUL (V.O.)

Gene remained in this state until the clock had passed three quarters more, remembering all of a sudden that his father had warned him of a visit when the clock struck one.

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(beat)

(MORE)

PAUL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

He told himself he wouldn't fall asleep until the hour had changed and, considering that, like his father, he couldn't any more go to sleep than go to Heaven, this was perhaps the smartest thing he could do.

(beat)

The next fifteen minutes were so long that more than once he convinced himself he must have dozed off and missed the it moving.

A HOME RETURN CRISIS ensues here. Gene begins feeling anxiety that he must get home to help his father. His father needed to be turned in, to heaven. He needed to be given up to God. My father, who art in heaven...

The sound of GENE'S heart beating faster.

Click!

THYS

A quarter past.

Click!

Half-past!

Click!

A quarter to.

Click!

It was time!

He speaks before the hour ticks off, which it now does with a deep, dull, hollow, melancholy thud. Suddenly A LIGHT flashes up in the room and a figure appears on the other side of THE STORM DOOR.

Gene finds himself face to face with the unearthly Visitor.

The Visitor, named Pinka, is a strange figure like a very familiar cartoon character, yet not so like a cartoon as like a witch, viewed through some supernatural medium. Its hair, which hung about its neck and down its back, was black and plastic. The ARMS were very long and manly,

the hands the same, as if its hold were of uncommon strength. On its head was a feed cap.

\*

They speak through the STORM DOOR.

\*

GENE

You're the Visitor my dad told me  
was coming.

\*

\*

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VISITOR ONE

Yes, you remembered you were  
having visitors tonight uncle  
Gene.

\*

\*

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MARLA (V.O.)

Though its lips did not move, its  
voice was clear as if they did.

\*

\*

\*

GENE

Who, and what are you?

\*

The Visitor takes off its FEED CAP.

\*

VISITOR ONE

I am PEEN-KA, a Visitor  
passing...Bye! PASSED. Bye!

\*

\*

\*

GENE

Where?

\*

\*

VISITOR ONE

No, past YOU.

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\*

MARLA (V.O.)

Maybe Gene couldn't have told  
anybody why, if anybody could have  
asked him, but he really wanted to  
see the Visitor in its feed cap,  
and asked it to put the cap back  
on.

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VISITOR ONE

And mess up my marvelous hair?

\*

\*

GENE

What are you going to do? What's  
your reason for being...

\*

\*

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VISITOR ONE

Your HEALTH, and WELFARE.

\*

\*

\*

Gene is now seated again as the Visitor puts out its strong hand as it speaks, and clasps Gene gently by the arm. It gestures 'Get up and walk with me.'

PAUL (V.O.)

It wouldn't have been any use for Gene to plead that the weather and the time of night weren't any good for walking around outside. His chair was warm, and the outside thermometer was dropping. The grasp, though gentle as a woman's hand, wasn't to be resisted. He stood up, but seeing that the Visitor was making towards the back door, he held on to be kind of dragged along.

GENE

We've gotta watch it. I'm not too steady on my feet and I'm liable to fall.

VISITOR ONE

Just hold my hand there, and you'll be okay. I've got ya.

GENE  
I grew up here in this place.

CU of Tammy with mask on top of her head.

The Visitor stares at him mildly. Its gentle touch, though it had been light and instantaneous, appears still present to the old man's sense of feeling. He is conscious of a thousand smells floating in the air, each one connected with a thousand thoughts, and hopes, and joys, and cares long, long, forgotten.

Gene's lip is trembling and there seems to be a tear on his cheek.

The Visitor and Gene go to a door at the back of the house. It opens and reveals A LONG, BARE, DEPRESSING ROOM.

41

INT. TAMMY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

41 \*

As they enter Tammy's house, there is an odd look to the place, an odd kid of dirtiness, like a place with too many parties and not enough everyday living, too much television and fast food brought home.

There isn't even a slight echo in the house, not a squeak and scuffle from the mice that had moved inside for the winter, not a drip from the half-water-faucet, no creaking of a door, no sound of the furnace blower. This silence somehow gives a freer flow to Gene's sadness.

The Visitor touches him on the arm, and points to what seems to be a YOUNG MAN, his younger self, his uncle, his son, a boy, sitting in a chair absorbed in his reading, as in a BAROQUE VANITAS SCENE.

As a disembodied voiceover, the actors discuss this scene. They are trying to make it like niece's house with delusions. They wonder if this is reminiscence or fiction. Maybe Marla thinks it needs to be the latter.

42

INT. TAMMY'S HOUSE - DAY

42 \*

The YOUNG MAN is not reading now, but staring at the wall despairingly. Gene looks at the Visitor, and with a mournful shaking of his head glances anxiously towards the door.

He sees a GIRL.

Another home return crisis begins for Gene.

The door opens and a little girl, much younger than the boy, comes darting in, putting her arms about his waist.

GIRL/ELLIE  
I'm here to welcome you home.  
(clapping her tiny  
hands, and bending  
down to laugh)  
To welcome you home, welcome you  
home, welcome you home!

BOY GENE  
Welcome me home?

(CONTINUED)

GENE

Excuse me, I'm not sure how I  
should go about it, really,  
(beat)  
but I need to go home. My father  
needs me and  
(beat)  
I can't seem to find way out here  
(beat)  
and...

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She claps her hands and laughs, and tries to touch his  
head, but being too little, laughs again, and stands on  
tiptoe to hug him. Then she begins to drag him, in her  
childish eagerness, towards the door, and he goes with  
her.

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Gene is now holding the Visitor's hand again.

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VISITOR ONE

She sure is a handful, but she has  
a big heart, right.

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GENE

Yes. You're right. That's true.  
Yes, and she had a little girl.

\*  
\*  
\*

VISITOR ONE

Yep.

\*  
\*  
\*

GENE

Yeah, well... I'd...

\*  
\*

He feels the Visitor's gaze, and stops.

\*

VISITOR ONE

What's the matter?

\*  
\*

GENE

No, I was saying I have to... I  
can't say...

\*  
\*  
\*

VISITOR ONE

But not completely though, right?

\*

GENE

Well, no. I'd just like to be able  
to say a word or two to my niece  
now. That's all, cuz I was...

\*  
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\*

43

EXT. TAMMY'S BACK YARD - NIGHT

43

\*

The boy gets up and turns off the hallway light. Gene and the Visitor again stand there side by side in the open air.

VISITOR ONE

Time's getting short. Let's hurry.

GENE POV

He is not alone, but sits by the side of a YOUNG GIRL in a MOURNING DRESS in whose eyes are tears.

(beat)

He watches someone else, some young man talking to the girl. It is not him. It couldn't be. The girl looks familiar. It is the woman to whom he had long been married.

GENE

(starting to get up)

I'm sorry,

(beat)

but I need to go home.

Tammy comes up to Gene from behind.

VISITOR ONE

(whispering)

Let's go!

GENE

That's enough. I don't want to see any more of it. C'mon. For Christ's sake, PLEASE.

PAUL (V.O.)

But the relentless Visitor puts its arm around him, and pulls him to watch what happens next.

44A

INT. TAMMY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

44A

\*

PAUL (V.O.)

They were in another scene and place, a room, not very large or handsome, but full of COMFORTABLE FURNITURE.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PAUL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Near the TV sat a beautiful young girl, so much like the last one that Gene believed she was the same, until he saw her, now a comely matron, sitting opposite her daughter. The noise in this room was tumultuous. There were more children there than Gene in his agitated state of mind could count, and, unlike the celebrated herd in the poem, they were not forty children conducting themselves like one, but every child was conducting itself like forty.

CUs of kids acting deranged.

The consequences were uproarious beyond belief, but no one seemed to care, on the contrary, the mother and daughter laughed heartily, and enjoyed it very much, and the latter, soon beginning to mingle in the playing, got pillaged by the young brigands most ruthlessly.

Gene turns to the Visitor, and seeing that it is looking at him with a face in which, in some strange way, there are fragments of all the faces it had shown him, he watches it like a screen.

GENE

You need to leave me alone now. I need to go home because my father, well  
(beat)  
He's...

Seeing the pasty face of THE MASK beside him, and dimly connecting it with its influence over him, he seizes the Pinka mask now propped on Tammy's head, and in one sudden action presses it down over her face.

The Visitor drops beneath it to its knees so that the mask covers its whole face. Though Gene presses down it with all his force, he can't hide the person who has kneeled down from under it and is now giggling.

He is conscious of being exhausted and overcome by an irresistible drowsiness and, further, of being in a

44A CONTINUED: (2)

44A

comfortable chair. He gives the mask a parting squeeze, in which his hand relaxed, and it's only a few minutes again before he sinks into a heavy sleep.

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44B EXT. A MOVING CAR - DAY - CONTINUOUS

44B

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Pam follows Lisa. She looks curious when she sees exactly where Lisa's going.

44C EXT. AN APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY - CONTINUOUS

44C

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Pam parks out of sight and uses a somewhat sophisticated telephoto camera hooked to a smart phone. In a minute, she sees Tom Larson go into the building as well, and then the curtains are drawn.

44D EXT. AN APARTMENT - DAY - CONTINUOUS

44D

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Pam goes to the apartment, placing what looks like a kid's sticker (actually a microphone) on the door and adjusting a device attached to the smart phone, and listening with an ear bud as she walks away.

45 EXT. & INT. ALLISON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

45

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The moment Gene's hand is on the door, a strange voice calls him by his name telling him to come in.

VISITOR TWO

Come on in! Come in! Get to know us for God's sake. Take a load off.

PAUL (V.O.)

Gene entered timidly and hung his head. He wasn't the grouchy Gene he had been anymore, and though the Visitor's eyes were clear and kind, he didn't like looking into them.

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VISITOR TWO

You've never seen me like this before, have you?

\*  
\*  
\*

(CONTINUED)

GENE

Nope. I really can't say as I  
have.

VISITOR TWO

You haven't been hanging out with  
the younger crowd lately I guess.

GENE

I don't think I have. Do you have  
many of those people here?

VISITOR TWO

More than two thousand.

GENE

That's a lot of people to cook  
for.

Allison gets up, smiling.

THYS

Take me where I'm supposed to go.  
I had to go last night and I  
learned some things I'm working on  
now. What's going on tonight?

VISITOR TWO

C'mon, take hold of my hand.

PAUL (V.O.)

And perhaps it was the pleasure  
the good Visitor had in showing  
off this power of hers, or else it  
was her own kind, generous, hearty  
nature that led them straight to  
the dining room because that's  
where she went, taking Gene with  
her.

The group talks about Allison's housing situation, Gene's  
son Nick, and so on.

\*

THYS

At this point, yeah, there's not  
only regrets, but real  
RESERVATIONS  
(beat)

(MORE)

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THYS (CONT'D)  
 about not just Marla's effect on  
 others, or however she might be  
 imagining it, but I'm also  
 thinking now about Marla herself.  
 (beat)  
 To be frank, there are things  
 involved that are much more  
 complicated, INTRACTABLE than I'm  
 sure she is aware of.  
 (beat)  
 Nope I can't, sorry. Not this one.  
 (beat)  
 No, no. It'll be alright.

PAUL  
 Then up rose Nick, Allison's  
 husband, Gene's own son, dressed  
 down in a cotton T-SHIRT, but  
 clean, and he laid down the TABLE  
 CLOTH.

MARLA  
 Where's Ellie?

MIKE  
 She's not staying. Tammy took her  
 back with her when she left.

MARLA  
 Why? She's supposed to have dinner  
 here.

PAUL  
 Nick doesn't like to see his wife  
 disappointed, even if it was only  
 in joke, so he pulls Ellie out  
 from behind the CLOSET DOOR the  
 girl runs into Allison's arms.

MARLA  
 And how did Ellie do today?

MIKE  
 Great, better than ever. Somehow  
 she gets thoughtful, sitting by  
 herself in front of the TV so much  
 at home, I think, and she comes up  
 with the strangest things you ever  
 heard.

(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

She told me earlier that she hoped the people saw her in the church because she was disabled and it might be nice to them to remember who made lame beggars walk and blind men see.

PAUL

Ellie's active little footsteps were heard coming across the floor and she was back before another word was spoken.

(beat)

Nick made the gravy and mashed the potatoes with incredible vigor. He sweetened up the apple-sauce and Ellie laid the napkins by the plates. Nick sat Ellie beside him in a tiny corner at the table and finished setting chairs. After the dishes were set, they all sat down.

MARLA

Well, Happy Holidays to us.

Ellie sits very close to Nick's side. Nick holds her withered little hand in his own as if he loved the child and wished to keep her by her side and he dreaded that she might be taken from him and Allison.

GENE

Is she still with us?

VISITOR TWO

Yes, but I'm worried about her.

GENE

No, come on. Please.

VISITOR TWO

It's not your problem, you have enough to worry about. You're busy, right?

MARLA

Gene hangs his head to hear his own words quoted by the Visitor, and is overcome with penitence and grief, though he does not quite know why.

VISITOR TWO

It's really not a simple situation  
with her.

(beat)

She really needs someone to  
advocate for her with the state,  
and the courts. It's just not good  
enough to complain about paying  
taxes for them and be generally  
dissatisfied with things.

PAUL

Gene feels ashamed from the  
Visitor's rebuke and, now  
trembling, casts his eyes down to  
the ground, but then raises them  
again in flash hearing his own  
name.

MARLA

Thanks grandpa Gene for making all  
this possible.

MIKE

Yes, I wish I really had him here.  
I'd give him a piece of my mind to  
chew on. Some government rations,  
as it were.

MARLA

Nick... Ellie...

MIKE

It should be Christmas Eve. That's  
when we're supposed to make toasts  
to the health of stingy, hard,  
unfeeling bastards. Right dad?  
Just like Scrooge. You know it,  
right? Nobody knows it better than  
us I'm thinking.

PAUL

Gene just sits there, unaware he  
is being talked about.

MARLA

Come on, please. Just stop.  
Please?

MIKE

That's alright. I'll drink to all self-righteous bastards FOR all of us, not for the BASTARDS because they do enough on their OWN, right. A Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year! I hope they'll be very merry- happy. How's that?

PAUL

With a repressed smile, Allison drinks the toast after him. It's the first of their proceedings which has no heartiness in it. Ellie drinks last, but she doesn't finish it.

(beat)

Gene is the grand lord of the family. Even though he is kind of there, the mention of his name in conjunction with Scrooge casts a dark shadow on their dinner.

TAMMY has picked up GENE and brought him to party at her house. MARK and BRIAN are both there. They come in the door and we see them from outside as they are greeted.

PAUL

It was a much greater surprise to Gene to recognise the place as his own niece's, and to find himself in a DRY, GLEAMING ROOM, with the Visitor standing smiling by his side, and looking at that same time at his niece, her smiling with approving affability.

MIKE

Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha! If you should happen, by any unlikely chance, to know a woman with a better LAUGH than Tammy, all I can say is, I want to know her too. Introduce her to me, (looking at PAM) and I'll cultivate her ... acquaintance.

PAUL

It is a fair, even-handed, noble adjustment of things, that while there is infection in disease and sorrow, there is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good-humour. When Tammy laughed in this way, holding her sides, rolling her head, and twisting her face into the most extravagant contortions, Brian laughed just as heavily. And their assembled friends, being not a bit unreserved, roared out lustily.

MIKE

Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha, ha!  
He said the holiday was total bullshit, really, I swear to God.

49B INT. TAMMY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

49B \*

TAMMY

(drunk)  
More shame on him then, I suppose.

PAUL (V.O.)

Tammy was very pretty, VERY pretty. With a dimpled, surprised-looking, capital face, a ripe little mouth, that seemed made to be kissed as no doubt it was, all kinds of good little dots about her chin, that melted into one another when she laughed, and the sunniest pair of eyes you ever saw in any little creature's head.

(beat)  
Altogether she was what you would have called provocative, you know, but satisfying, too. Oh, perfectly satisfying!

TAMMY

He's a funny old guy, that's for sure, and not as good to be around as he could be. But that's nothing new. So, hey, what goes around comes around n'shit, so I don't have anything to say against him  
(beat)  
right now.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

TAMMY (CONT'D)

(beat)  
You KNOW he's loaded Mark. At  
least you keep telling me he is.

MARK

And... what about it? His money  
isn't any use to him. He won't be  
doing any good with it. He can't  
make himself comfortable with it.  
He doesn't even have the  
satisfaction of thinking he is  
ever going to help you or Ellie  
with it.

TAMMY

I still don't trust him, or him  
and Allison. But really, I feel  
sorry for him. I couldn't be angry  
with him if I tried. The one who  
really suffers from his moods is  
himself. Like this afternoon when  
he got it into his head to not  
like us, and he wouldn't come to  
our party. What are the  
consequences? Not much, right.

MARK

Right, I think he's not missing  
much. He seems happy and I ...

TAMMY

(interrupting)

Well I'm DAMN glad to hear you  
admit it because I don't have ANY  
faith in some people to have a  
good time. Like YOU, Mark.

(beat)

(looking at Brian)

So go on Mark. He never finishes  
what he begins to say. He's such a  
funny guy.

It was their turn to laugh now, at the notion of Tammy,  
now way more than half in the bag, getting Gene to the  
party. But being thoroughly good-natured, and not caring  
a lot about what they were laughing at, Tammy eggs them  
on passing the bottle. As they do, many come to Gene and  
hug him or shake his hand.

But they don't devote the whole evening to the bottle.  
After a while they play different games.

First is blind-man's bluff. Mark fakes it, peeking under

the blindfold. It is a done thing between him and Brian and that the Tammy knows it. The way he goes after a FRIEND OF TAMMY in the BLACK DRESS is an outrage on the credulity of human nature. Knocking down a side table, tumbling over the chairs, bumping up against the kitchen table, smothering himself among the curtains, wherever she goes. He always knows where the lacey friend is. He doesn't every really try to catch anybody else. If you fall up against him (as some of them do) and stand there, he makes like he's trying to grab you but instantly have slips off in the direction of the black dress. Tammy's friend often cries out that it isn't fair and it really isn't. But when at last he catches her, when, in spite of all her slippings away and her rapid flutterings past him, he gets her into a corner where there is no escape, then his conduct is the wildest. His pretending not to know her, his pretending that it is necessary to touch her, and further to assure himself of her identity by pressing a certain ring upon her finger, and a certain chain around her neck, is out of control. Though she tells him what she thinks of all this, when another blind-man is set loose, they become very confidential together, behind the curtains.

Tammy doesn't do the blind-man's bluff, but just makes herself comfortable in a LARGE CHAIR with a FOOTSTOOL, in a snug corner where the Visitor and Gene are close behind her.

When a game of How, When, and Where starts, that makes her jump up. In this game Tammy beats her friends hands down, and they were sharp girls too, as Mark could have told you. There might be twenty people there, young and old, but they all play, and so does Gene, for, wholly forgetting about the interest he had in what was going on, that his voice makes no moving sound in their ears, he sometimes comes out with his guess quite loud, and very often guesses right, too.

The Visitor is so happy to find him in this mood and watches him with such happiness when he begs like a boy to be allowed to stay until the guests leave. But this, the Visitor said could not be done.

GENE

They're starting a new game. One half-hour, c'mon, only thirty minutes.

PAUL (V.O.)

It was a game called 'Yes and No,' where Tammy had to think of something, and the rest had to find out what is was, she only answering their questions with a Yes or No, as the case may have been. The rapid fire of questioning to which she was exposed revealed that she was thinking of an animal, a live animal, rather a disagreeable animal, a savage animal, an animal that growled and grunted sometimes, and talked sometimes, and lived in London, and walked about the streets, and wasn't made a show of, and wasn't led by anybody, and didn't live in a menagerie, and was never killed in a market, and was not a horse, or an ass, or a cow, or a bull, or a tiger, or a dog, or a pig, or a cat, or a bear. At every new question that was put to her, Tammy burst into a fresh roar of laughter, and was so inexpressibly tickled that she was obliged to get up off the sofa and stamp.

49C

INT. TAMMY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

49C

\*

TAMMY'S FRIEND

I have it! I know what it is! I know what it is!

TAMMY

What IS it then, c'mon?

TAMMY'S FRIEND

It's Gene!

And Gene it certainly was. While everyone loves Tammy's performance, some object that her reply to the question if it was a bear should have been a yes, in that the no they had gotten was enough to have diverted their thoughts from Gene supposing they had ever had any tendency that way.

MARK

Gene's been a lot of fun, that's for sure, and I think it would be downright ungrateful not to drink to his health. Here is a glass that says

(beat)

(pretending to listen  
to the glass)

'Yaaay Uncle Gene!'

'Yaaay, Uncle Gene!' they all join in.

TAMMY

A Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year to the old guy, bore, bear or whatever he is. He'd not gonna take it from me, but he's getting it anyway. Uncle Geeene!

FLASH

50A

EXT. A ROADSIDE ALONG AN OPEN FIELD - DAY - CONTINUOUS

50A

\*

Mike is walking along a TRASH STREWN ROADSIDE in Kosovo with a man who is BOTH an Albanian friend and his brother, two men interchangeably seen as they walk.

MIKE (V.O.)

I'm walking along with my brother who lives in California and we're talking about my mom and then I'm talking to a friend I know from when I was in the Army in Kosovo, and he's telling me we need to meet some people at the big swimming pool there.

(beat)

Then there we are in a HUGE PARK throwing a FRISBEE, and then

50B

INT. A ROOM IN A GUESTHOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

50B

\*

I'm sleeping in a GUEST ROOM in town, being awakened by a CALL TO PRAYER and a ROOSTER and I just want to sleep but can't.

MIKE (V.O.)

Then I go out of the room and down the stairs and I'm at Marla's house, at a PARTY, like maybe a Christmas party, I guess. Some PEOPLE are kind blurry, but I know them, who they are. And I'm doing all kinds of things at the party.

As he listens to a man talking to him, Mike is nodding, anxiously looking around.

BLURRED MALE FIGURE

If things don't change soon, nobody'll be working and then nobody'll be able to buy anything. That's why you can't raise taxes. It's hard to be in business, I'm not sure if I'll have to lay people off before long. At home we're trying to lower our carbon footprint, there are lots of things I'd never thought of and I've been learning about since things started turning bad. But if we raise taxes, and then we can't attract business, it's gonna get even worse.

Mike is dancing with A WOMAN who is both PAM and MARLA, but neither exactly. They are dancing in formal style, in sweeping motions and, as they talk, unheard, he notices she is looking at him strangely now and then. As they pass back and forth in front of a MIRROR he is seeing her dancing with three persons (or is it the same person), wearing each of the THREE HALLOWEEN MASKS.

Conversations of guests are overheard.

GUEST ONE (WEARING KAHT MASK)

They'll be running everything soon, or running everything BADLY, and nobody will be working except those in the government.

GUEST TWO (WEARING SCHWEINRITER  
MASK)

I'm just saying they're not doing what they need to be doing to find the Arabs right here who are terrorists.

\* \* \* \* \*

As Mike walks with A WOMAN through the party, A PERSON turns from the SCHWEINRITER masked figure into the PINKA masked figure. The woman he is with has the orange plastic TOY HANDGUN attached to her dress like a pin. Many others passed are blurry. There is a sexual tension as they both steal away for a moment of passion.

\* \* \* \* \*

52

EXT. A RESTAURANT/CAFE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

52 \*

We see the group at the table and then focus on Pam as she begins to talk.

＊  
＊

53

EXT. AN OPEN CITY LOT - DAY - CONTINUOUS

53 \*

Pam is walking in the ruins of an urban neighborhood in a vast urban LANDSCAPE of lots.

\*  
\*

PAM (V.O.)  
I'm lost in something like an airport dream, you know, needing to be at the airport or being there and really desperately needing to get to a plane. But no matter what I do I can't seem to get there.

(beat)  
And I'm walking with someone I  
don't know and there's music  
playing and I'm just loving the  
music, and I feel happy, like  
laughing inside but, I'm also  
crying inside, like a lost child,  
can't find my way to the airport.  
It's weird, good and not good.

\* \* \* \* \*

As she walks through the urban scene above, Pam is accompanied by a RAPPER, rapping the words from EMINEM'S STAN, listening to it as well. For a minute Pam is happy to be lost in the song, in her head, then not. The Rapper shows her an orange plastic TOY HANDGUN.

\* \* \* \*



## UNMASKED WOMAN

Do you know his song?  
 (the woman looks  
 away, bored)  
 I LOVE it.

\*  
 \*  
 \*  
 \*  
 \*  
 \*

The woman starts singing the song again.

\*

We see each of the following scenes roughly as Marla describes them.

\*  
 \*

## MARLA (V.O.)

I'm walking with a man who is both my father and a stranger. We're walking by a lake, looking for my son David, but it's like David's still a boy and not now.

\*  
 \*  
 \*  
 \*  
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 \*

(beat)  
 Like Pam said, I'm feeling like either sorrow, or joy, or somehow both could just break out of me at any moment, but I'm also feeling I should be getting to my Christmas party.

\*  
 \*  
 \*  
 \*  
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 \*

(beat)  
 As I went on walking I felt SO GOOD and happy to be with my dad again. He died seven years ago in Florida. And then, after I don't know how long, near the water's edge I see a see-through, shiny, orange plastic TOY HANDGUN on the ground, like a squirt gun I guess. Somehow I think it's David's and I start to feel anxiety, but I'm still happy to be with my father who is and isn't the person I'm with.

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 \*

Paul is talking with documentary filmmaker.

\*

PAUL

To be honest, I've got to say I don't know how it'll go at this point, but I think the least we'll get from it is a fun play for next year.

(beat)

Are you asking if it's any clearer what Marla wants from it for her elder abuse activism, or...?

(beat)

That's the part I really still don't understand. I'm not sure. I'm also really not sure if everyone has the same motivations, goals or whatever.

PAUL

Well, yeah. Last night I had this weird dream.

61

INT. A CONCERT VENUE STAGE AND BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

61

The following things taking place roughly as Paul describes them.

PAUL (V.O.)

It's kind of like I'm in college again, hanging out with the guys I was in a band with. And I was riding a BIKE around inside, and then playing with the BAND, doing a warm-up song, jamming with them, really IN it, you know, lost in it, like you can get sometimes.

62

INT. A BUILDING - DAY - CONTINUOUS

62

During Paul's narrative, a figure wearing a KAHT MASK is standing in a room and sees something at a distance, the figure zooms towards it pounding to stop before a MIRROR. In the mirror it is Paul.

PAUL

And then I'm in a big room somewhere and I see something at a distance, and like in a fast action film clip I zoom towards it pounding to stop in front of a mirror, seeing myself in it.

63A

INT. LARSON MANSION - DAY - CONTINUOUS

63A

\*

CLOSE UP

\*

PAUL (V.O.)

\*

From there the dream becomes  
stranger in that I'm in Marla's  
house and I'm in a room looking at  
a GROUP of people who I'm sure I  
know, but they're all blurry. And  
I want to see them but can't. I  
hear them talking and I'm  
thinking, YEAH, FUCK The One Ten.  
If they can do it, so can I, so  
can everybody. I'm excited, but I  
know I have to get to the show  
where the band is playing, and  
they need me there.

\*

(beat)

\*

Then, I'm walking around Marla's  
house again I come upon a group of  
people, and I can tell they don't  
like me because I'm in this band  
and look the way I do.

\*

(beat)

\*

I see myself in a window and I'm  
wearing this MASK, like a pig, and  
I start moving, making motions in  
the reflection of the window to  
some vague music.

\*

(beat)

\*

Then SOME GUY, one of the guys who  
doesn't like me being in a band  
comes and squeezes my shoulder and  
asks "Are you alright Paul?" He's  
smiling, but kind of  
condescending, humoring me, making  
fun of me. And I just turn to him  
and keep moving making strange chu  
chu sounds, like an instrument, a  
snare drum or something, and I'm  
smiling inside the mask. I'm  
elated as I keep making that sound  
and moving. Then, I take a few  
shuffle steps back, reaching into  
my inside jacket pocket and  
produce a kind of kid's plastic  
orange gun. It kind of feels good  
in my hand, with my finger on the  
trigger. And I'm just standing  
there, still moving.

\*

(beat)

\*

It's totally absurd, and strange.

\*

63B INT. SIEGRIST HOUSE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

63B \*

PAUL

And funny, no doubt, for sure.

(beat)

But it's really weird because  
Marla said she dreamed of an  
orange plastic kid's gun too.

(beat)

The other three were doing that  
because it somehow has something  
to do with the process.

(beat)

Yeah, but I myself didn't have a  
dream like that until last night.

JODIE

Did anyone else say they dreamed  
of the orange gun?

PAUL

(uncomfortably)

If you really want to know, yeah.  
Weirdly enough. Both Mike AND  
Pam, but in different ways, both  
orange guns.

64A EXT. TAMMY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

64A \*

GENE

Are Visitors' lives short?

TAMMY

(distracted, looking  
around, still drunk)

Everybody's life is short. Most of  
em here will be finished tonight.

GENE

Tonight?

TAMMY

(distracted and  
looking around)

I'd say tonight around midnight.  
And that's coming before too long.

GENE

Excuse me if I am embarrassing  
you, but I can see something  
strange coming out of your skirts,  
behind you. Is it a foot or a  
claw, or...?

(CONTINUED)

TAMMY

It might be a claw. Let's see.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

From behind her Tammy brings a child who clings unto her.

GIRL

Look here. Look, look, down here!

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

It was a girl wearing cat face paint. White, meagre, ragged, scowling, wild, but prostrate too in her humility.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Where graceful youth should have filled her features out, and touched them with its freshest tints, a stale and shrivelled hand, like that of age, had pinched and twisted her, and pulled them into shreds. Where angels might have sat enthroned a devil lurked, and glared out menacing.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Gene recoils. Having her shown to him in this way, he tries to say she's nice, but the words choke themselves.

\*  
\*  
\*

GENE

Is she yours?

TAMMY

Without the state she don't belong to anybody. And she hangs onto me like this all the time. This girl is Welfare Fraud. She's like a feral cat.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

GENE

Doesn't she have anywhere to live?

\*  
\*

VISITOR TWO

Better to let her run wild than let the STATE get its hooks in her. Right?

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Gene turns away for a moment and then, turning back around, he looks for the Visitor. But it is gone.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Gene gets up and moves. As before, some rooms are darker and Gene enters them in slow motion.

\*  
\*  
\*

Out of one room, a Phantom Visitor slowly, gravely, silently, approaches. In the very air through which this Visitor moves it seems to scatter gloom and mystery.

It is shrouded in a KAHT MASK which conceals its head, its face, its form. If it weren't for this, it would be difficult to detach its figure from the others mulling about the room, and separate it from the darkness by which it was surrounded.

He feels it is tall and stately when it comes beside him, and that its mysterious presence fills him with a solemn dread. He knows no more, for the Visitor neither speaks nor moves.

THYS  
Are you the next Visitor?

The Visitor doesn't answer, but just points downward with its head.

Are you gonna show me the things  
that haven't happened, but will  
happen now?

The lower portion of the mask is contracted for an instant in its folds, as if the Visitor is inclining its head. That is the only answer he receives.

Although well used to ghostly company by this time, Gene is afraid the silent shape so much that his legs tremble beneath him, and he finds that he can hardly stand when he gets ready to follow it. The Visitor pauses a moment, like it was observing Gene's condition and giving him time to recover.

But Gene is all the worse for this. It thrills him with a vague uncertain horror to know that behind the dusky mask there are ghostly eyes intently fixed upon him, while he, though he stretches his own to the utmost, can see nothing but a spectral hand.

Gene squints at the empty eyes looking through the eye holes of the mask.

THYS  
I gotta tell ya, I'm more afraid  
of you than any of the others.  
(beat)  
(MORE)

THYS (CONT'D)

But, you know, I know you're here  
to help me with my dad.  
(beat)  
Can't you say ANYTHING to me?  
(beat)  
PLEASE?

It gives him no reply. It seems to be staring straight  
ahead of them.

Go on! I'll follow you. I'm afraid  
I don't have much time. You know,  
I have to get home...

MARLA

The Phantom Visitor moves away and  
Gene follows.

(beat)  
They hardly seem to enter the city  
as it seems to spring up around  
them and encompass them in its own  
act. But there they are, in the  
heart of it, on the main street,  
amongst the shop windows.

(beat)  
The Visitor stops beside one  
little knot of policemen and  
lawyers. Seeing that the Visitor's  
hand is pointed to them, Gene  
moves in closer to listen to them  
talking.

(beat)  
No, says one cop, I don't know  
much about it, either way. I only  
know he's there.

PAUL

'How long ago was it?'

MIKE (V.O.)

A few weeks ago, I think.

PAUL

'What was the matter with him?'

MIKE

I dunno. Maybe a stroke or  
something?

MARLA

Gene is at first inclined to be surprised that the Visitor should attach importance to this conversation that seemed so trivial. But feeling assured that they must have some hidden purpose, he concentrates on what it was likely to be.

(beat)

This conversation could hardly be supposed to have anything to do with what had happened to his father. That was the past, and this Visitor's area was the Future.

— **beats**  
(beat)

Gene also couldn't think of anyone immediately connected with himself to whom it would apply. But whoever they applied to it had to have something in it to help him with his dad. He tried to soak up every word he heard and everything he saw.

(beat)

PAUL

They leave the busy scene and are then in a place where Gene had never been before.

65A

INT. AN APARTMENT - NIGHT

65A

This is the same apartment from the opening scene and the one Lisa uses for her trysts with Tom Larson. It is the apartment of Lisa's late cousin Jon Birken who murdered his son and committed suicide in the bedroom. Since Jon's death, Lisa has taken over the mortgage on the apartment and is paying for it with Frank's money. She uses it as a meeting place for her other affairs as well.

## MARK

(sarcastically)

You know, we couldn't have met in a better place. Sweet memories.

a ~~beat~~  
(beat)

Geeze. There's still more stuff in this place than I would have expected.

expected  
(heat)

BRIAN

But I like the Halloween getup.  
Your idea?

MARLA (V.O.)

Tammy sits down in a flaunting  
manner on a chair, her elbows on  
her knees, and looking with a bold  
defiance at the other two.

TAMMY

You know, every person has a right  
to take care of their own selves  
and their families, right?. God  
knows Gene and my aunt always did  
the first, but SCREW the second.

BRIAN

Okay, but don't sit there staring  
into space as if you're having  
second thoughts.

TAMMY

AM I? Is that what I'm doing?

BRIAN

Looks like it but, okay then,  
whatever right. Who's the worse  
off for this, and who's better?  
Those are the only real questions,  
at least as I see it.

TAMMY

Yes, right.

BRIAN

Maybe nobody should say it, but  
the truth is that if he'd been  
even decent to the people who  
cared about him, he'd have had  
somebody to live with him now.

TAMMY

Yeah, that's true. I really do so  
much for him, even now. Allison  
just drives him crazy, as far as I  
can see.

BRIAN

Right, I was saying earlier I wish it was a little MORE really, and it should have been, I still think, if I could have found it all.

In silence, an account of Gene's assets are laid out by Brian who writes down the sums he came up with on a piece of paper for the other two to see, and then adds them up into a total.

As they sit grouped around their papers, in the scanty light afforded by the room's lamp, Gene views them with a detestation and disgust which could hardly have been greater though they had been obscene demons, marketing the corpse itself.

PAUL (V.O.)

'Wow!' laughs Tammy when Mark, producing a plastic bag with MONEY in it, tolls out their loot on the table. He tells them this is the end of the cash itself, that's it. Gene had stashed it away from everyone away when he was alive, to profit whatever fools came along by chance to find it after he died. But now, as it turns out, THEY'RE those fools

Gene recoils in terror, because the scene has changed, and now he is almost touching a bed, a bare bed on which he imagines beneath a sheet something, or things were lying covered up.

The room is very dark, too dark to be looked around in with any accuracy, though Gene glances around it in obedience to a secret impulse, anxious to know what kind of room it is. A pale light, rising in the outer air, falls straight upon the bed, and on it, plundered and bereft, unwatched, unwept, uncared for he imagines the body of a man, of a boy.

Gene glances towards the Phantom. Its steady gaze is fixed upon the bed. He imagines covers are so carelessly adjusted that the slightest raising of them, the motion of a finger upon his part, would disclose the face. He thinks of it, feels how easy it would be to do, and longs

to do it, but has no more power to pull the covers than  
to unmask the Visitor at his side.

Gene moves to the window, looking down into the parking  
lot. The poem returns. It is the same window scene,  
repeated.

No voice pronounces these words in Gene's ears, but still  
he hears them when he looks at the bed.

Las du triste hôpital, et de l'encens fétide  
Qui monte en la blancheur banale des rideaux  
Vers le grand crucifix ennuyé du mur vide,  
Le moribond surnois y redresse un vieux dos,

Se traîne et va, moins pour chauffer sa pourriture  
Que pour voir du soleil sur les pierres, coller  
Les poils blancs et les os de la maigre figure  
Aux fenêtres qu'un beau rayon clair veut hâler,

Et la bouche, fiévreuse et d'azur bleu vorace,  
Telle, jeune, elle alla respirer son trésor,  
Une peau virginale et de jadis ! encrasse  
D'un long baiser amer les tièdes carreaux d'or.

Ivre, il vit, oubliant l'horreur des saintes huiles,  
Les tisanes, l'horloge et le lit infligé,  
La toux ; et quand le soir saigne parmi les tuiles,  
Son œil, à l'horizon de lumière gorgé,

Voit des galères d'or, belles comme des cygnes,  
Sur un fleuve de pourpre et de parfums dormir  
En berçant l'éclair fauve et riche de leurs lignes  
Dans un grand nonchaloir chargé de souvenir !

Ainsi, pris du dégoût de l'homme à l'âme dure  
Vautré dans le bonheur, où ses seuls appétits  
Mangent, et qui s'entête à chercher cette ordure  
Pour l'offrir à la femme allaitant ses petits,

Je fuis et je m'accroche à toutes les croisées  
D'où l'on tourne l'épaule à la vie, et, bénî,  
Dans leur verre, lavé d'éternelles rosées,  
Que dore le matin chaste de l'Infini

Je me mire et me vois ange ! et je meurs, et j'aime  
— Que la vitre soit l'art, soit la mysticité —  
À renaitre, portant mon rêve en diadème,  
Au ciel antérieur où fleurit la Beauté !

Mais, hélas ! Ici-bas est maître : sa hantise  
Vient m'écœurer parfois jusqu'en cet abri sûr,  
Et le vomissement impur de la Bêtise

Me force à me boucher le nez devant l'azur. \*

Est-il moyen, ô Moi qui connais l'amertume,  
D'enfoncer le cristal par le monstre insulté  
Et de m'enfuir, avec mes deux ailes sans plume  
- Au risque de tomber pendant l'éternité ? \*

GENE

This place is for creeps. I won't  
forget this BELIEVE me. Let's go  
now, please. \*

BACK IN THE LIVING ROOM OF THE APARTMENT. \*

Still the Visitor seems to be staring at a paper on the  
table where Mark and Brian are sitting. \*

THYS

(squinting at a  
document)

I understand you, and I want to  
know who it will be. Where do I  
sign? \*

MARLA

Tammy points to the signature line  
of a document giving Tammy Power  
of Attorney over his affairs. \*

THYS

I can't see ANYthing good  
connected with a death or that  
dark room we just left. IS there? \*

PAUL

The Visitor leads him out the door  
down stairs unfamiliar to his feet  
and as they go along, Gene looks  
here and there to find himself,  
but nowhere is he to be seen. They  
leave in Tammy's car for Allison's  
house. \*

FADE OUT: \*

FADE IN: \*

MARLA

Quiet. Very quiet. The once noisy  
little kids are as still as  
statues in one corner, and sit  
looking at one BOY, who has a book  
in front of him.

PAUL (V.O.)

Where had Gene heard those words?  
He hadn't DREAMED them. The boy  
must have read them out as he and  
the Visitor stood over the  
threshold. Why did he not go on?

MARLA

The boy lays his work on the  
table, and puts his hand up to his  
face.

66

INT. TAMMY'S HOUSE - DAY

66

\*

ELLIE

The color hurts my eyes.

TAMMY

(mean)  
The COLOR? Aw, poor Ellie!

67A

INT. ALLISON'S HOUSE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

67A

\*

NICK

They're better now, again. Maybe I  
wouldn't talk about your eyes to  
your mother when she picks you up.  
Okay?

The doorbell rings.

Ope, look there's your mom at the  
door.

Ellie hurries out to meet Tammy.

Still life - Vanitas. Tammy sits down at the table and is  
very cheerful with Nick and Allison. She looks at the  
stuff on the table, and praises Ellie for helping.

NICK

Was the nursing home made up well  
for the party this afternoon?

TAMMY

Yes. I wish you could go later. It would have done you some real good to see how nice a place it is all decorated up for the party. But you'll see it a lot. I told him you could walk there on Sundays.

Cut to Nick's blank reaction.

Allison, whose been listening, breaks down all at once. She can't help it. If she could have helped it, she and her father-in-law would have, perhaps, been farther apart, than they were.

She leaves the room, and goes upstairs into THE ROOM ABOVE, which is lighted cheerfully, and hung with Christmas DECORATIONS. There is A CHAIR set close beside the WINDOW that Ellie uses to look for he mom, and there are signs of some one having been there lately. She sits down in it, and when she thinks a little and composes herself. She is reconciled to what had happened, and goes down again quite happy to sit with Nick and Tammy at the table.

TAMMY

I bumped into Mark Wensel in the street today, and seeing that I looked a little down, you know, he asked me what was bothering me.

(beat)

When I told him about Uncle Gene moving to the home, he said he was really sorry about it and really sorry for me because he thought I was a good niece to Uncle Gene. How he knows that, I don't know.

ALLISON

(distracted)

Knows what?

TAMMY

How much I helped Uncle Gene.

ALLISON

Everybody knows that, I think.

TAMMY

I hope so. He said he was sorry about Ellie too. If he can be of help to me in any way, he said to come see him.

ALLISON

I'm sure he's a good guy. Both  
Nick and I really appreciate how  
he helped you do the papers to let  
us live here.

TAMMY

It's really your and Nick's house  
NOW.

Allison gives Nick an odd look.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

THYS

Something tells me our time is up.  
I know it, but I don't know how I  
know. Tell me who that was I  
imagined lying there...

MARLA

The Visitor stops. The eyes seem  
to be pointed elsewhere.

THYS

The house is over there. Why are  
you looking away from it?

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

PAUL

Moving again and wondering why and  
where they were going, Gene  
accompanies the Visitor until they  
reach a cemetery. Here, then the  
poor man, the boy, the THING whose  
name he had now to learn, lay  
underneath the ground.

(beat)

The Visitor stands among the  
graves staring down one of them.  
Gene moves towards it trembling.  
The Phantom is exactly as it had  
been, but he dreaded that he sees  
new meaning in its solemn shape.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

THYS

Before I get closer to that stone  
you're looking at, answer one  
question. Okay?

(beat)

Are these things that are gonna  
happen or just things that just  
MIGHT happen?

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

MARLA

Still the Visitor stares downward  
to the grave by which it stood.

\*

\*

PAUL

The Visitor was immovable as ever.

\*

MARLA

Gene creeps towards it, trembling  
as he goes, and reads the name on  
the stone. The fresh grave of  
Gene's younger son, and grandson.  
(beat)

\*

\*

\*

Is that what was lying in the bed?

\*

PAUL

The eyes seem to move from the  
grave to him, and back again, the  
Visitor now saying something  
indecipherable.

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

THYS

No, don't do that.

\*

\*

MARLA

The gaze is still there.

\*

THYS

(pleading, frustrated)  
Listen to me. I'm not the person I  
was. I won't be the person I had  
to be without these visits. Why  
show me this if I can't really be  
helped, you KNOW...?

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

MARLA

For the first time the mask  
appears to shake.

\*

THYS

Can you somehow PROMISE me I can  
still change things?

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

(beat)  
I can turn him in. I'll turn him  
over, give him up.

\*

\*

(beat)  
I'll do what all the Visitors made  
me realize I can do, and should  
do.

\*

\*

\*

MARLA

In his agony, he grabs the  
Spectre's hand.

\*

\*

(MORE)

MARLA (CONT'D)

It tries to free itself, but Gene  
is strong and holds on. The  
Visitor, stronger yet, breaks  
free.

(beat)

Holding up his hands in one last  
prayer to have his fate reversed,  
he sees an alteration in the  
Visitor's face. It has shrunken,  
collapsed, and dwindled down into  
a normal face.

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\*

THYS

I can give him up.

\*  
\*  
\*

\*

Vanitas 'ha ha' music.

\*

THYS

I don't know what to do.

(laughing and crying  
in the same breath)

I feel light as a feather, happy  
as a clam, drunk as a god-damn  
SKUNK.

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MARLA

He had shuffled into the nursing  
home lounge, and was now standing  
there, out of breath.

\*  
\*  
\*

PAUL

Really, for a man who had been out  
of practice for so many years, it  
was a splendid laugh, a most  
illustrious laugh. The father of a  
long, long line of brilliant  
laughs.

\*

THYS

I don't know what day of the month  
it is. I don't know how long I've  
been with the Visitors. I don't  
know anything. I'm like an ape.  
But I don't care. I'd rather be an  
ape.

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MARLA

Shuffling to the door, he opened it and stuck his head out. No fog, no mist, clear, bright, jovial, stirring, cold, cold, piping for the blood to dance to, Golden sunlight, Heavenly sky, sweet fresh air, and all the hills echoed.

THYS

(talking to a boy in Sunday clothes who was at the party)  
What day is it today?

MARLA

What? said the boy, a bit scared by Gene but trying not to show it.

THYS

What's today?

BOY

Christmas?

PAUL

It's Christmas! said Gene to himself. I haven't missed it. The Visitors have done it all, two months in one night. They can do anything they like. Of course they can. Of course they can.

Gene moves around the party, happy, stopping to speak to a teenage girl.

THYS

Is your husband here?

MARLA

'My DAD?' she says.

THYS

Where is he?

MARLA

He's in the dining room.

THYS

Thank you. He knows me.  
(with his hand  
already on the  
kitchen door)

I'll go in here.

PAUL

He turned it gently, and poked his  
face in, around the door. They  
were looking at the table (which  
was spread out in great array).  
The young workers are always  
nervous on such points, and like  
to see that everything is right.

THYS

Hello!

MARLA

Oh my God, the nurse started. Gene  
had forgotten for the moment,  
about her sitting in the corner  
with the footstool, or he wouldn't  
have done it, on any account.

67D

INT. NURSING HOME - DAY

67D

\*

NURSE

Why bless my soul! Who's that?

GENE

It's me. Gene. I decided to come  
to the party. Can I come in?

NURSE

Let him in! Hi there Gene.

Gene's father stands beside him hollering, protesting,  
demanding to be turned in, given up, but he goes unheard.

A home return crisis ensues.

GENE

Excuse me, but I need to go home  
because my father needs me to be  
there and...

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

67E INT. MARLA'S MANSION - NIGHT

67E \*

The TV news is droning in Marla's library reporting that the Jon and Cody Birken murder suicide has been reclassified as a dual murder allegedly committed by ex-police investigator Thys Kruege who recently took his own life leaving behind a confession that seems to be genuine. It appears that he had gained access to the scene of the first murder and killed himself there.

68 INT. A THEATER - NIGHT

68 \*

Actors emerge from behind the PROJECTION SCREEN into the opening work shed scene of their adaptation of A Christmas Carol, but the scene has a different actor for Gene and Tammy's character has been switched with Allison's.

TAMMY  
Hello. Happy Happy!

She puts her arm around him and hugs him from behind.  
Gene pats her head.

PAUL (V.O.)  
Gene's niece comes upon him so quickly that this was the first he knew of her being there.

GENE  
Yeah RIGHT.

TAMMY  
Awe c'mon. I know you don't MEAN that.

GENE  
I sure as hell do. Happy Holidays!  
What've YOU got to be so happy about? You work for the government?

TAMMY  
Come on. What's up with you being such a dark cloud? Do YOU work for the government?

GENE  
SURE. Yeah, right. That's a good one. I WISH.

(CONTINUED)

TAMMY

Don't get upset Uncle Gene. It's  
okay. I'm just pulling your leg.  
(beat)  
What you doin'?

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POV Marla

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From the side of the stage, behind the curtain, we see  
Lisa, Jack, and his associate in the audience. Marla is  
staring right at them from the stage. Tom and David are  
applauding from another part of the audience. In the back  
row are silent, masked figures.

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THE END

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