

WINTER'S TALE

by

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based on the novel by Mark Helprin

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SECOND REVISION

FADE IN:

THE ATLANTIC OCEAN - CLOSE SHOT

Sparks of sun break like daytime stars off the bright, moving water. TILT UP...

EXT. ELLIS ISLAND - DAY

The STATUE OF LIBERTY stands bronze in the blue ribbon of the Hudson. Mighty wooden sailing ships fly their billowing colors at dock.

SUPERIMPOSE: 1895

INT. ELLIS ISLAND - HOLDING ROOM - DAY

Enormous. Nearly one hundred MEN AND WOMEN wait in a thick knot of lines, Asians, Asiatic Russians, Balkans.

At the head of one line, a pale but elegant YOUNG MAN cradles an INFANT to his chest, stroking the baby mechanically, staring at a closed door ahead.

The door swings open and a YOUNG WOMAN emerges, tall and strong, eyes blinking self-consciously.

A wordless exchange with her husband as she takes her baby back, and he walks towards the open door she has just vacated. He glances back at her.

As she crosses to one of the benches under an open spring window, he can see a CHALK MARK on the back of her blouse, visible for a moment, and then the door closes behind him.

INT. ELLIS ISLAND - EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

Small. Full of spilling, window-slatted sun.

SERIES OF SHOTS

The Young Man spits into a vial.

Blood is taken.

His body is examined as the DOCTOR MUMBLES to a CLERK in a suit who scribbles notes on a pad.

A chalk "C" is marked on the back of his jacket.

INT. ELLIS ISLAND - HOLDING ROOM - WIDE ANGLE - LATER

The Young Man crosses the crowded room to find his wife nursing their baby at one of the benches. As he sits with her (VFX) TIME BEGINS TO MOVE FORWARD.

The window light grows amber as people around them VANISH, one by one, or in small families. Now there are less than a hundred, scattered about the room and night has come. Faces SOB or stare, all empty now, like ghosts.

INT. ELLIS ISLAND - HOLDING ROOM - SAME ANGLE - NIGHT

The Young Woman holds her child, WEEPING, as her husband stands over her, hands making soft prayer-like gestures of comfort.

An OFFICIAL moves from another small family to theirs. He makes a couple of ATTEMPTS in DUTCH, GERMAN. Finally...

YOUNG MAN

We have English. A little.

OFFICIAL

I'm sorry. You'll have to go back.

YOUNG MAN

What? No. Why?

The Official, eyes still empathetic despite the dark burden of his labors, gently turns the Young Man around, checks the mark on his back.

OFFICIAL

It's consumption.

YOUNG WOMAN

What about the baby?

Her English is no better.

YOUNG WOMAN

Is there a place for him? If we have to go back, we'll leave him.

OFFICIAL

I'm sorry.

YOUNG WOMAN

You don't understand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

What she says conveys so much in so few words.

YOUNG WOMAN

You don't understand what we left.

But the Official is already gone towards the next of the condemned. She stares up at her husband.

EXT. SAILING SHIP (ELLIS ISLAND) - NIGHT

Deckhands hoist provisions for the voyage home. The Young Woman stands on deck, staring at the lights of Manhattan.

She tears her gaze away, adjusts her baby's blanket, looks nervously up at the Captain's cabin where her husband is visible, ARGUING, animated in a lantern-lit porthole.

INT. SAILING SHIP - CAPTAIN'S CABIN - NIGHT

The Young Man faces the CAPTAIN, holding a thin wad of bills out to the old sailor. The old man shakes his head. The WORDS he spits back are accented in RUSSIAN.

CAPTAIN

Not enough.

INT. SAILING SHIP - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

The Captain's door SLAMS in the Young Man's face. He stumbles down the hall, numb with disappointment.

He PUNCHES a wall. A framed painting falls.

He KICKS his rage at an innocent door. The door flies open.

Something catches his eye in the dark room. Squinting, he tries to make out what he sees.

A SMALL SHIP seems to hang magically in midair, as if sailing in blackness.

The Young Man steps forward, turning up the lantern on the pine wall until the room is bathed in light.

INT. SAILING SHIP - MEETING ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Green leather chairs surround a long oak table. In a glass case attached to the back wall is a four foot replica of a sailing ship.

The Young Man stares at its miniature weighted keel, small masts and smokestacks.

A brass plaque reads: CITY OF JUSTICE.

The Young Man lifts a chair and SMASHES the case.

EXT. SAILING SHIP - FANTAIL - DAWN

A few stolen tools are strewn on deck. The Young Man and Young Woman have been working furtively all night.

There is a hollowed-out desperation to their faces made worse by the harsh, early light.

He is completing a hinged vent as she finishes making a bed of baby's blanket in the hull.

VOICE (O.S.)

You there. What are you doing?

A YOUNG OFFICER appraises them and their enterprise.

OFFICER

Are you crazy?

The Officer reaches for the small ship, but the Young Woman steps in front of him, blocks his way.

OFFICER

Lady --

YOUNG WOMAN

He can grow up. Fall in love.  
Have a life. Do you know how much  
good can come from just one life?

OFFICER

He'll drown. That's all the good  
that will come of it.

YOUNG WOMAN

Who are you?

The Officer stares at her, not understanding.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

YOUNG WOMAN

Who are you to say a miracle isn't possible?

He looks from the sleeping baby to New York, sun breaking off its already rising towers like a promise.

Finally, he turns and walks away without a word.

YOUNG WOMAN

We have to hurry!

She lifts her sleeping infant in her arms and presses her lips to his sweet head. She WHISPERS so as not to SOB.

YOUNG WOMAN

Baby, baby, baby, boy.

EXT. SAILING SHIP - FANTAIL - WIDE ANGLE - MORNING

The Young Man lowers the tiny ship on a long rope down to the moving surface of the water. His wife looks away.

And though he will live another five months, she another seven, in many ways they will never really speak again.

Such is what we will sacrifice for our children.

EXT. HUDSON RIVER - DAY

The miniature sailing ship darts on small crests, drifts in and out of whirling eddies.

OLD WOMAN (V.O.)

There is a legend that tells us how the night sky came to be filled with stars.

The sun glints off the waves in glancing flashes as the tiny vessel sails through full-sized harbor traffic.

OLD WOMAN (V.O.)

The legend says that each of us is born with a miracle inside and that miracle is meant for one person, and one person alone.

The sun is setting as the tiny ark washes up on the beach of the Lower West Side, near where a group of RUDDY-SKINNED MEN AND WOMEN are using their bare feet to dig clams.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OLD WOMAN (V.O.)

According to the legend, the universe returns us here again and again until we find the person who our miracle is for, one chance to express our unique purpose in the dancing evolution of the universe.

A YOUNG WOMAN spots the tiny ship, eyes widening at its impossible, squirming cargo. A HANDSOME MAN, with long braided black hair, reaches down and lifts up the child.

OLD WOMAN (V.O.)

All our lives and their arsenals of scenes and images are part of a great and deeply moving plan, a promise of eternal benevolence. And when we fulfill our destiny, we leave this earth and rise up...

TILT UP TO the first stars in the sky calling us in.

OLD WOMAN (V.O.)

And we become stars.

SUPERIMPOSE: WINTER'S TALE

TILT DOWN --

EXT. BROOKLYN NAVY YARD - SUNSET

Two CON ED WORKERS stand over an open manhole, yellow dome lights from the parked CON ED TRUCKS sweeping them as they rock from foot-to-foot in the cold off the river.

SUPERIMPOSE: 2014

Steam spills from the open manhole on the eastern edge of Manhattan, illuminated by halogen work lights, like puffs of breath from a sleeping subterranean dragon.

One worker peers down into the steaming hole, looks back up at his cohort, shakes his head.

CON ED #2

Like a crazy person. What do they call it?

CON ED #1

What?

CON ED #2

Smart at one thing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CON ED #1

One *weird* thing.  
 (as the other nods)  
 Savant. Idiot savant.

CON ED #2

What are those pumps, anyway, like  
 a hundred years old?

CON ED #1

My uncle, he used to work Midtown  
 back in the day. One Thanksgiving  
 he tells me about this guy they  
 used to bring in, knew the old  
 steam system like the back of his  
 hand.

CON ED #2

Come on.

CON ED #1

Get this, never a coat, always  
 just boots and jeans, year round.

CON ED #2

Maybe his father.

CON ED #1

Maybe.

That's when a figure climbs up through the steam, rising,  
 CAMERA TURNING TO REVEAL the sun-stained Manhattan  
 skyline across the river behind him.

Wearing only boots, jeans and leather jacket in the  
 winter wind. Long hair and beard, twenties, eyes oddly  
 absent; this is PETER LAKE.

CON ED #2

You need more gear, something?

Peter Lake just shakes his head.

PETER LAKE

Fixed.

CON ED #2

You serious? That pump was toast.

PETER LAKE

Well, now it's fixed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CON ED #2  
(claps his gloves  
together)

Don't have to tell me twice.

PETER LAKE  
It reminds me of something, though  
I can never remember exactly what.

Con Ed #2 shoots his partner a look. Then reaches into his coat pocket, hands Peter Lake an envelope.

CON ED #2  
Foreman says, cash.

Peter Lake nods, checks the payment, puts the envelope in his pocket. Then, without a word, he starts off.

Con Ed #2 is already closing the manhole. But in most of us there is that part which senses magic, the world behind the world. The departing figure stirs a mote of Con Ed #1's imagination not remembered since childhood.

CON ED #1  
Yo. Pal.

Peter Lake turns and catches the man's eyes.

CON ED #1  
How long you been doing this for?

For a moment Peter Lake's eyes seem to focus a bit more sharply, as if staring across a deep divide.

PETER LAKE  
A very long time.

CON ED #1  
What's your name?

Peter Lake stares another beat, something so terribly sad about the hint of a smile he returns.

PETER LAKE  
I couldn't say.

The worker stares after him as he goes, finally shrugging it off, the sense of the extraordinary passing into memory and then finally vanishing altogether.

EXT. BARROW STREET HOTEL - DUSK

Peter Lake climbs the steps to a turreted, brick SRO hotel that has stood for nearly a century.

## INT. BARROW STREET HOTEL - NIGHT

Peter Lake pulls off his jacket, removes the envelope. He crosses past his bed and opens the closet door.

He lifts an old burlap sack, deposits the cash inside amidst what must be thousands of dollars, some still bearing the blue seal of silver certificates.

One black suit hangs there, unwashed, as if it has done so for an impossibly long time.

He reaches into the inside jacket pocket and removes a small knot of faded silk. Once red, the years have bled away its color, and stolen its softness.

Still, he stares at it with such profound longing it seems to rip his heart apart.

He walks back to the window, holding the silk knot in his hand and looks out into the winter night.

TILT UP to find a first star in the darkening night sky, twinkling like a promise, like a beacon.

TILT DOWN TO...

## EXT. WILLOW STREET (BROOKLYN HEIGHTS) - NIGHT

Dawn's first glow brightens the snow that covers blue slate pavers, carpets stoops of brownstones, whips up light around gas street lanterns.

SUPERIMPOSE: 1916

OVER A BANGING. A STABLE is attached to a low-slung townhouse. Its old wooden door exhales from the inside with each BANG.

Another HIT and the door flies open. Standing in the night, nose spilling clouds, is a MAJESTIC WHITE HORSE.

The horse looks around almost guiltily. No sign of any sleepy owner. He takes a tentative step forward, hooves CRUNCHING snow, then another, out into the street.

Dawn is a promise on the lower edge of the sky. The horse begins to walk towards the light. Then trot. Then run.

EXT. BROOKLYN BRIDGE - WIDE ANGLE - MORNING TWILIGHT

The white horse gallops, a hurtling streak, across the giant spiderweb marrying the sleepless city to Brooklyn.

His heart beats with joyful liberation. Manhattan draws the horse like a magnet, like oats, like a mare.

EXT. THE BATTERY (MANHATTAN) - DAWN

The horse is brought to a stop at the edge of a whitened field by a wrought iron fence, a tall iron gate blocking his way.

Beyond, the harbor takes the color of new light. The horizon glows gold with dawn and fills the horse's eyes.

OVER the muted PATTERN of FOOTSTEPS in snow. MEN are running across the brightening field of the Battery.

The Men run with all their strength across the high snow, yet they run in SLOW MOTION. Despite their exaggerated movements, there is nothing comical about them.

One MAN is fleeing a DOZEN OTHERS. He is hatless, in only scarf and winter jacket. His PURSUERS are dressed in heavy coats and bowler hats and are closing the gap.

One stops, spreads his feet, raises a pistol and FIRES at the fleeing Man, but the SHOT misses its mark.

The horse watches as the fleeing Man approaches the tall iron gate. The horse backs up behind a woodshed.

He wants no part in this.

EXT. THE BATTERY - BEHIND THE WOODSHED - OUT OF SIGHT

The horse stands still, breathing hard. After a moment, he noses out, curious for a better look.

EXT. THE BATTERY - CONTINUOUS ACTION

The fleeing Man has made it to the fence, opens the gate with a violent uppercut, is through and SLAMS it shut.

His face is now visible as he grabs a steel dink from his belt, POUNDS the latch into an unmovable position.

Wiry and handsome, sharp eyes and shaggy hair, find PETER LAKE, thief among thieves, still early twenties.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

His pursuers are closing as Peter Lake turns to race up the street, slips on a pool of ice and goes down HARD.

Peter Lake looks up to see the DOZEN MEN throw themselves at the fence. Strange, bent faces, noses and ears that look sewed back on. Their cruelty leaps from them like sparks. They are called SHORT TAILS.

One THUG raises his pistol.

VOICE (O.S.)

No!

The MAN who speaks isn't the fastest climber, nor the slowest, but he is clearly their leader. His name is PEARLY SOAMES.

PEARLY SOAMES

Not like that.

PEARLY SOAMES has almost blinding blue eyes. A scar runs from his chin to his ear, a souvenir from his father who tried to cut his throat at the age of four.

PEARLY SOAMES

We have him now. We do it slow.  
With a knife.

The Short Tails continue scaling the fence. Peter can never outrun them now. He might stay down if not for the odd intrusion of a great white horse peering at him from behind the woodshed.

PETER LAKE

You're in bad shape when a horse takes pity on you, you stupid bastard.

Peter Lake manages to stand. Wipes the blood from his mouth with his hand. He opens his arms wide.

PETER LAKE

You look like a nice sort. You're certainly big enough. Give a fellow a hand, why don't you?

The Men are dropping from the fence like insects. They can't see the horse behind the shed and take their time.

PETER LAKE

Horse.

Peter approaches; the horse takes a step back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PETER LAKE

Horse.

The horse just stares.

PETER LAKE

Please?

The horse stands still a beat, deciding. Then the horse bolts over the pool of ice towards Peter Lake and lowers his wide white neck.

Peter Lake throws his arms around what seems like a moving swan and springs onto the horse's back.

PETER LAKE

Go!

But the horse turns, races straight for the Short Tails.

PETER LAKE

No. Wait! The other way --

The horse is about to run straight into them, their mouths gaping "O"s, and into the fence beyond, when, at the last possible instant, the horse leaps.

Peter looks down at the gaping men, craning their necks as the horse soars straight over their heads.

WIDE ANGLE (VFX)

The white horse flies over the Battery, a good fifty yards, and lands on the other side of the white field.

PETER LAKE

What are you?

Peter Lake touches his long neck as the horse eases into a pitched canter down Water Street.

PEARLY SOAMES stands amidst his gawking fellows, his gun pointed down. He begins blasting SHOT after SHOT into the snow.

HOLD ON his eyes like electric lights, blazing with rage.

PEARLY SOAMES

He's got the damned horse.

EXT. PENN HOUSE (EIGHTH AVENUE) - DAY

A GRAND HOUSE sits among other grand houses that pepper the snow-covered fields overlooking Central Park. OVER, PIANO MUSIC can be heard.

A small MAN with an optometrist's case stands at the door of the house, nervously adjusting his glasses. He KNOCKS.

INT. PENN HOUSE - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The OPTOMETRIST follows a BUTLER down a long oak hallway, lined with framed covers of the *New York Sun*.

Headlines -- "AFRICA DIVIDED IN BERLIN CONFERENCE" -- "GOLD!" -- "EARTHQUAKE IN SAN FRANCISCO" -- and on each cover, a corner photo of a smiling -- handsome -- and ever aging man -- EDITOR IN CHIEF, ISAAC PENN.

INT. PENN HOUSE - SITTING ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Thick Indian rugs and Italian leather chairs nestle among shelves which bear a library's worth of books.

Turning from the fire is ISAAC PENN himself (50), eyes quick as the flames in the hearth. OVER, the PIANO CHORDS echo from another room as the Optometrist ENTERS.

ISAAC PENN

Good afternoon.

OPTOMETRIST

Then we are not for you, I take it.

ISAAC PENN

Who's we?

OPTOMETRIST

You don't need glasses, yourself, sir?

The Optometrist has set his large case on a side table, opens it revealing various arcane ocular instruments.

ISAAC PENN

Never have. Grew up looking for whales. Glasses wouldn't have been the thing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OPTOMETRIST

Is it your wife that needs spectacles, Mr. Penn?

ISAAC PENN

Dead.

OPTOMETRIST

I... oh... I'm sorry.

ISAAC PENN

(forgiving)

Years ago.

(honest)

Still, you never really stop missing them, you know?

He catches the uncomfortable stare of the man before him.

ISAAC PENN

For my daughter. She'll finish soon. Nice, isn't it? Brahms.

THE FRONT DOOR bursts open. A dervish, small WILLA (5) POUNDS up the stairs and is gone. Isaac Penn smiles indulgently.

The music has stopped. A young WOMAN fills the doorway. Her red hair is lit so brilliantly by the window light that it appears to be burning.

Her dress is white and thin. Lace, without which it would be scandalous, moves rapidly up and down above her chest.

She has steady blue eyes but she trembles, her blush and BREATHING the result of what must be a very high fever.

ISAAC PENN

Beverly, this man has come to make you some new glasses.

The Optometrist stares, her youth and beauty in contrast to her obvious illness. She manages a forgiving smile.

BEVERLY

Don't worry. It's not contagious.

He shakes his head as if to say she's misunderstood him.

OPTOMETRIST

No, no.

He puts a meter from his open case in front of her eyes, now beginning to flip lenses before her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

OPTOMETRIST  
My sister, she... she had it.

BEVERLY  
I'm sorry.

OPTOMETRIST  
Better this way, or this way?

She gestures to the latter setting.

OPTOMETRIST  
This way, or this way...  
(flip)  
This way or this way...

BEVERLY  
How many thousands of times in a day do you say those words? You must practically own them.

He smiles.

OPTOMETRIST  
This way or this?

BEVERLY  
How old was she? Your sister?

OPTOMETRIST  
Twenty. When she died.

BEVERLY  
You never think you're as old as you're ever going to get.

OPTOMETRIST  
No. I suppose not.  
(beat)  
This way or this?

BEVERLY  
The fever. It can make things wonderful.

She smiles, her expression trying to comfort him.

BEVERLY  
Even right now, I can see winter as it turns around the room on the light, darting from white lances to rays and silver crosses, to the optical glass, to the fire, to the reflective windows and illuminating each of us.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BEVERLY (CONT'D)

The sicker I become, the more  
clearly I can see that everything  
is connected by light.

He has stopped moving, stares at her, mesmerized by her  
vision. She smiles the sad smile of the dying.

BEVERLY

Do you have glasses for that?

EXT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - EVENING

Rush hour is past. The last commuters make brave combat  
across 45th Street against waves of gusting snow.

Peter Lake leads his horse across the street.

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - STABLES - NIGHT

Commuters exchange coins for their horses' board with a  
round, squinty fellow (CECIL MATURE) and race for the  
last trains. Cecil stokes a fire pit in the floor.

CECIL MATURE

(turning)  
Hello, Peter.

PETER LAKE

Cecil.

Cecil's eyes land on what Peter is leading out from the  
shadows behind him.

CECIL MATURE

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Peter Lake smiles proudly, pulls out a coin.

PETER LAKE

Something, isn't he? And boy, can  
he jump.

Cecil is inspecting the horse, practically waddling in a  
circle around the giant beast who looks down at him with  
a tolerance usually saved for old friends' children.

PETER LAKE

I want oats and a blanket for him.  
Cashmere.

CECIL MATURE

He's the best duff you ever stole,  
Pete.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER LAKE

He's not duff. He's my new partner. Ain't you, horse?

The horse actually swings his eyes to look at Peter, although his expression is implacable.

CECIL MATURE

You can't just keep hiding out up in the attic. Word just went out, Pearly's tripled the reward. He's got his guys looking everywhere.

PETER LAKE

Ugly son of a bitch found me this morning. Horse saved my life.

Cecil nods, thoughtful, then takes the money and starts digging oats from a bin with a stir pot.

PETER LAKE

I figure I'll get out of town until summer. Me and this horse. We'll steal us enough to tide us over.

Peter has taken the blanket from Cecil, lays it over the horse's back, rubbing it warm and flat on smooth hair.

PETER LAKE

Let the whole thing blow over, you know.

CECIL MATURE

Don't see Pearly much as the blowing over kind.

Peter shrugs. He's got a point. Cecil digs in his pocket.

PETER LAKE

Just board him, Cecil.

Peter Lake smiles, passes, ruffling the short man's hair and heads into the body of Grand Central Station.

CECIL MATURE

(holding a buffalo nickel)

Pete, you forgot your change.

But Peter Lake is gone. Cecil flips the coin, closes his fist, stares up at the horse, who returns his gaze, nods.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CECIL MATURE

Wondering when you'd get here.

INT. PENN HOUSE - UPPER FLOOR - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Willa Penn, the smallest, in long johns, and nightshirt, pads down the hall and begins climbing up the stairs.

INT. PENN HOUSE - BULKHEAD LANDING - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Willa pauses in front of the door to the roof. She opens a cedar chest there, digs out fur boots and a hat which she navigates expertly. She finds a thick mink stole.

EXT. PENN HOUSE - ROOF - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Willa traverses a winding wooden walkway that leads to a circus tent fastened to the roof, canvas illuminated by lantern light within, top open to the winter sky.

INT. ROOFTOP TENT - NIGHT

A platform replete with bed, chairs, and a small table bearing a lantern. Beverly lies on her back, staring up.

BEVERLY

Hi.

She speaks without shifting her eyes from the sky.

WILLA

Hi.

BEVERLY

You're not supposed to be up here this late, you know that, baby.

WILLA

I know.

Beverly sits up, opens her arms and the child folds into her. This older sister is all the mother she's ever known.

WILLA

Everybody's all packed to go up to the lake tomorrow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEVERLY  
I'll come the next day,  
sweetheart. Daddy just has to get  
my tent ready.

WILLA  
So you can stay cold?

BEVERLY  
So I can stay cold.

Beverly strokes the child's hair. Willa says nothing.

WILLA  
In the day I can forget about it.  
But then it keeps going around in  
my head like a circle.

BEVERLY  
(simple)  
Things are harder at night.

WILLA  
You can't die, Bev.

BEVERLY  
Sweet girl. It's not up to me.

WILLA  
Are you going to be lonely?

Beverly takes a moment before answering.

BEVERLY  
I know I'm going to miss you.

Willa looks up at the sky.

WILLA  
And then you'll go there.

BEVERLY  
I hope so.

WILLA  
Tell me again.

BEVERLY  
There is a great dance and we all  
have our part. And when we are  
done here, after one life or a  
thousand, we rise up, into the  
sky, and we become stars.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WILLA

Tell me their names again.

BEVERLY

Baby, it's too cold. You need to go to bed.

But Beverly is already lying back, swaddling this tiny girl so only her eyes remain visible amidst the furs, staring upward from Beverly's chest, both looking into the night sky, which is clear as ice, and full of stars.

BEVERLY

Columbia, Lepus, Canis Major,  
Canis Minor, Procyon, Betelgeuse,  
Rigel, Taurus, Aldebaran, Gemini,  
Orion...

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - UP ANGLE - LATE NIGHT

The domed roof of the nearly-empty station is splashed with lights arranged into constellations of stars.

From a hatch in the sky, Peter Lake scans the terminal below. Satisfied the coast is clear, he closes the hatch.

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - ABOVE THE SKY - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Peter Lake rises from the floor of his attic hideout amidst silver struts and arches, warmed by visible streams of air rising from the lights set into the floor.

A feather bed sits atop a plank of solid oak. Engineering books are stacked on a small night table. Pots and pans hang in a makeshift kitchen in the corner.

Peter crosses, presses down on a floorboard with his foot, a hidden hatch opening to reveal a wooden box.

He takes out the box and sits on his bed.

From within he removes a familiar baby's blanket, now faded with age. Then he takes out a small bronze plaque, stares at the words inscribed there: CITY OF JUSTICE.

EXT. WAREHOUSE (MEATPACKING DISTRICT) - NIGHT

Closed until just before dawn when carcasses will roll in, fresh from slaughter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A MAN in an overcoat and bowler hat disappears inside.

INT. WAREHOUSE (MEATPACKING DISTRICT) - NIGHT

The MAN (ROMEO TAN) navigates a bustling industry of corruption, where Short Tails are gathered in small groups updating maps with labels like "flammable churches"; "gold shipments"; "water supply vulnerabilities"; "charity payrolls"; "unprotected food banks and toy deliveries"; and "lists of bribable officials, actresses, hospital administrators, politicians, clowns and bastards."

Romeo arrives at the two wooden doors at the back of the room and RAPS hard, twice.

PEARLY SOAMES (O.S.)  
(sunshine boys)  
Enn-ter!

INT. PEARLY SOAMES' OFFICE - NIGHT

Large oak desk. Dark wooden walls. Gold platters, diamond tiaras, pearl earrings, raw rubies and emeralds the size of babies' fists are piled everywhere.

ROMEO TAN  
The fire at St. Patty's is set for  
Sunday Mass.

PEARLY SOAMES  
Not what I care about.

ROMEO TAN  
We got the word out to everyone.  
Five hundred for his head.

Pearly Soames stands at a high window, looking up at the glowing clouds which cover the full moon.

PEARLY SOAMES  
And the horse?

ROMEO TAN  
Same. Seems a lot for a horse.

PEARLY SOAMES  
He's not a horse. He's a dog.

ROMEO TAN  
You just said --

Pearly silences him with a glance.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Out the window, the clouds are beginning to part, revealing a bright, peaking orb.

ROMEO TAN

Far as we can tell, he hasn't left the city. Woola Boys are watching the bridges. New York's not that big. We'll find him.

PEARLY SOAMES

You better.

ROMEO TAN

I know, boss.

Pearly nods, his gaze already going back to the sky.

ROMEO TAN

You don't mind me asking, what's so special about Peter? You used to like him. Never saw me a better thief and a good egg, too. How come now we're supposed to kill him?

PEARLY SOAMES

Do you ever wonder about the world, Romeo? The workings of things?

ROMEO TAN

No, sir.

PEARLY SOAMES

Probably best not to start now.

That's when the clouds part and moonlight strikes. Gold and gems explode with a brightness to shame fire.

PEARLY SOAMES

They think I steal their gold and gems for wealth. They measure their value in weight and size.

(contemptuous)

Ants.

(VFX) The lights grow, beams intersecting, not reflecting randomly off the gold and gems but firing at the desk.

PEARLY SOAMES

What is most precious about them is eternal and has no weight at all.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

(VFX) The light forms a three-dimensional image on the desktop, first just rough patterns but then resolving into shapes that form a skyline.

PEARLY SOAMES  
Peter Lake is human. But that  
horse might leave a trail.

(VFX) One building in the skyline of light grows brighter than its neighbors.

PEARLY SOAMES  
... And Yahtzee.

Pearly starts for the door.

PEARLY SOAMES  
Grand Central Station. Kill him.  
By the way, see if you can grab  
that horse while you're at it.

ROMEO TAN  
I thought you said it was a dog.

Pearly SIGHS.

PEARLY SOAMES  
You will be the kind of person who  
likes New Coke, won't you, Romeo?

Romeo stares at him blankly. Pearly shakes his head.

PEARLY SOAMES  
Just get the boys.

EXT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - NIGHT

A storm of SHORT TAILS in their long coats spill into the 42nd Street entrance.

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - NIGHT

Short Tails swarm the empty station, Pearly in the lead.

Cecil Mature stands at the stable door inside the station, looking up at the painted ceiling's starry sky.

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - ABOVE THE SKY - NIGHT

The door to Peter Lake's room BANGS open. Pearly ENTERS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The room is empty, bed stripped, only a pile of mechanical books remain.

Peter Lake is gone.

EXT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - NIGHT

Pearly stands with Cecil, blue eyes hard with rage.

PEARLY SOAMES

I'd kill you dead where you stand  
if it was allowed. Eat your eyes.

CECIL MATURE

Why do you say stuff like that,  
Pearly? It's hurtful.

Pearly PISTOL-WHIPS Cecil across the face. Cecil goes sprawling into the snow, nose bent and bleeding.

PEARLY SOAMES

We're going to have to go about  
this a different way.

Cecil looks up from the snow as Pearly and the gang head away down the block. He opens his hand. In it, that single buffalo nickel. Despite broken nose, Cecil smiles.

EXT. EIGHTH AVENUE - BEFORE FIRST LIGHT

The snow has stopped. Satchel on his back, a FIGURE emerges from a window on the top floor of a large house.

He swings onto the gutter, an acrobat, slides halfway down a drainpipe, jumps off a ledge, lands on the stoop.

HE CROSSES THE STREET to where the white horse stands under the cover of a medium-sized elm, branches leaning over the wall to Central Park.

The thief begins unloading his bag.

PETER LAKE

For your goods to cash exchange,  
you do better with silver.

Silver paper weights, picture frames go into saddle bags already brimming with sterling candlesticks, pewter place settings.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER LAKE

You do best with gold, obviously,  
but Pearly's stolen most of that  
which isn't locked up tight.

He strokes the horse's nose.

PETER LAKE

That is a good night's work, my  
friend.

Peter Lake swings up onto the back of the horse, they  
move slowly up the edge of the park.

PETER LAKE

Pearly can't hold a grudge  
forever. We'll go south, to  
Florida, or Maryland maybe. That  
sounds like a place you'd like.  
Hey!

Peter Lake is trying to steer the horse into the park.  
But the horse has ideas of his own. He simply stops.

Peter Lake urges him on, but the horse just stands fixed,  
now staring across the street. Peter follows his gaze...

EXT. THE PENN HOUSE

Isaac, Willa and many servants all mount three large  
sleighs, one piled high with luggage.

Their horses are harnessed in troikas. The sleighs pull  
away in the SHOUTS of drivers and the RINGING of BELLS.

PETER LAKE looks at his horse, shakes his head.

PETER LAKE

It'll be light soon. We need to  
get out of town. Pearly's got a  
hundred eyes looking for us.

He taps with his heels, but the horse remains unmovable.

PETER LAKE

Come on!

But the horse is having none of it. He just continues  
staring at the house.

PETER LAKE

Seriously? What more could  
actually be worth it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The horse remains impassive. Finally, Peter Lake SIGHS.

PETER LAKE  
(dismounting)  
Fine. But this is our last one.

And the horse turns and nudges him with such sudden, unexpected affection that Peter Lake LAUGHS.

PETER LAKE  
Who's more of a fool: a horse who  
won't listen to his master, or a  
master who listens to his horse?

EXT. PENN HOUSE - ROOF - DAWN

Beverly lies in bed in her rooftop tent, watching morning break across the city. It is only when she hears her own BREATHING that she knows the fever has returned.

She takes her pulse, looks into the mirror, touches the glass, which goes opaque with steam from her fingertips.

EXT. PENN HOUSE - DAWN

Peter Lake is examining the bars on the parlor windows. Different strips of metals are incorporated into the bars in helical patterns and inlaid crosshatchings.

PETER LAKE  
(impressed)  
Heroic.

He reaches into his satchel and removes a metal grappling hook attached to a long knotted rope. He starts to swing it, once, twice, three times...

EXT. PENN HOUSE - ROOF - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Beverly has moved to the roof door, looks at her hands, which are radiating heat. She opens the door and, dropping her night hat, goes inside.

PAN LEFT --

THE GRAPPLING HOOK lands, CLANKING, on the edge of the roof, rope pulling taut against the ledge.

FALL OVER the ledge to see Peter Lake climbing the knotted rope, hand-over-hand, up towards the roof.

## INT. PENN HOUSE - MAIN STAIRS - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Beverly descends the spiral staircase, discarding clothing as she goes, moving like a lantern in the fading dark.

## EXT. PENN HOUSE - ROOF - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Peter stares curiously at the odd, tented room lashed to the roof. Who could live here, whose ruffled pillows and kicked-off sheets, whose lanterns and books are these?

He takes a step to enter and then, oddly embarrassed, thinks better of it, turns instead towards the bulkhead door.

## INT. PENN HOUSE - BATHING ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

The Penn bathing pool is a tank of black slate and marble ten-feet-long, eight-feet-wide, and five-feet-deep.

Beverly steps in, already stoked by the fire inside her, BREATH rising fast. She opens a spigot all the way.

BEVERLY

God, make me cold.

Water flows over a smooth stone ledge, spews from the yawning mouths of golden whales.

## EXT. PENN HOUSE - ROOF - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Peter Lake kneels, inspects the door to the house which is wedged ajar by a woman's night hat.

He draws his pistol and pulls open the door.

## INT. PENN HOUSE - BATHING ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

The pool is half-full. Beverly, burning up, slips into the water, vanishing under its surface.

## INT. PENN HOUSE - STUDY - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Peter Lake ENTERS, inspects the room with a practiced eye. He heads directly for a painting of a racehorse.

Peter slides his fingers along the frame with the tender expertise of a lover, touches an unseen button.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OVER, A CLICK. The painting on its hinge swings away from the wall to reveal an enormous metal safe.

PETER LAKE

Hello, beauty.

INT. PENN HOUSE - BATHING ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Beverly's arms, whiter than ivory, stretch out and make a lute shape as she clutches the golden whale in front of her, letting the spilled water cool her flesh.

INT. PENN HOUSE - STUDY - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Peter Lake rests his gun on the desk, presses his cheek flush against the metal safe and stills his BREATHING.

His hand goes to the dial as his lips begin to move soundlessly, WHISPERING words we cannot hear.

INT. PENN HOUSE - BATHING ROOM - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Beverly emerges from icy waters and wraps a towel around her, clasps it at the neck with a silver broach.

She walks to face a standing mirror. She reaches out to touch the glass. No steam. Her heat has subsided.

INT. PENN HOUSE - STUDY - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Peter Lake hears the CLICK of a tumbler. Behind him, dawn brightens the windows on the other side of the hallway.

Beverly passes the open door to the study in her flowing towel, not seeing Peter.

Peter glimpses a diffuse reflection in the sidelong glass of the open painting, spins.

At that precise moment, morning explodes on the panes in a BLINDING FLASH (VFX), and when he blinks away the light, half-expecting to see a ghost, the doorway is empty.

INT. PENN HOUSE - CONSERVATORY - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Beverly sits at the piano, takes a moment, then begins Brahms' *Violin Concerto*. Its opening is no less than a CRY from the human heart.

INT. PENN HOUSE - STUDY - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Peter Lake, hand on the safe's handle, is shocked still by the explosion of MUSIC. He lifts his gun.

INT. PENN HOUSE - CONSERVATORY - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Beverly drives the fierce black engine of SOUND. She SINGS and SPEAKS to the piano, HUMMING NOTES, or SINGING them, sometimes closing her eyes and striking very hard.

WIDER

PETER LAKE stands in the doorway, rooted, as Beverly finishes the piece. He steps backwards into the darkness.

The floorboard CREAKS.

Beverly looks up, startled. Peter Lake holds up his hands in a warding gesture. She stares at him, fixed in place.

PETER LAKE

It squeaks.

It takes her a while to respond, looking at the utter shock and fear and adoration on the man's strong face.

BEVERLY

What?

He moves his foot up and down on the loose plank that had given way. It SOUNDS like a child's toy.

PETER LAKE

It squeaks.

BEVERLY

Age. You have a gun.

He quickly puts it in his belt, mesmerized by her beauty.

PETER LAKE

Sorry.

BEVERLY

What are you doing here?

PETER LAKE

Robbing the place. That was the idea, anyway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEVERLY

Is that still your intention?

PETER LAKE

I... no. No, it isn't.

OVER, outside a horse WHINNIES, strong. Dawn continues to alight on the window panes, so soft, like the start of something. The moment of their meeting lasts forever.

BEVERLY

Well, then, I suppose it would only be polite to offer you a cup of tea.

INT. ROCHAMBEAU OYSTER PALACE - BEFORE DAWN

A vast underground cave supported by arches like those of a Roman aqueduct. Gas lanterns throw shadows on gray stone walls.

PATRONS pack the long wooden tables like mollusks. OYSTER BOYS labor and SHOUT as if edging a great ship into port.

GIANT DOORS swing open, revealing Pearly and a dozen Short Tails. Pearly's eyes flash in the lantern light.

All motion stops, the room goes silent. Diners stare up. The only SOUNDS are shells SHIFTING on trays of ice.

ROMEO TAN

Table.

(looking around)

That one.

Folks at the long wooden table towards which the Short Tails stride nearly fall from their seats; waiters clear with impossible speed, providing a perfectly set place by the time Pearly sits.

A trembling OYSTER BOY rocks in place.

OYSTER BOY

How many are you going to have?

PEARLY SOAMES

Ten dozen. From the thyme-hickory fire. And a knocker of buttered rum.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SERIES OF SHOTS

Oysters are shucked by Pearly's long, unforgiving fingers, broken open with precise conviction.

Gray orbs are devoured by Pearly's too sharp teeth, splitting and spitting milk and steam.

Buttered rum from an iron mug spills down Pearly's wet lips, soaking the scar under his chin.

PEARLY SOAMES

Another ten dozen. Another  
twenty. Keep 'em coming. Now!

(VFX) Something is different about Pearly. The food is changing him. As he grabs trays of oysters from the filing row of oyster boys and dives into them, his fingers appear as longer instruments, nails sharp as spears.

His VOICE has a deeper RASP as he begins to ramble.

PEARLY SOAMES

They're trying to fill the sky  
with stars is what they're doing.

Watch him chomp; his teeth seem to have multiplied, now tiny rows of daggers; his eyes bulge out of his head (VFX).

PEARLY SOAMES

They've got a spot picked out up  
there for every virtuous soul.

Short Tails stare in frightened awe as he shovels oysters at an alarming rate, chasing a caloric fugue.

PEARLY SOAMES

But there's no room in the heavens  
for the likes of us, boys. Not  
Pearly Soames. No room for me.

(VFX) He tries to blink but his eyes are bulging so far out of his head his lids can't close over them.

PEARLY SOAMES

I wonder who picks the color of  
their wings.

He stops eating. Turns towards the Oyster Boy. Smiles.

PEARLY SOAMES

Get me a nice roasted owl, please.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The Oyster Boy blinks at Pearly's gentle tone.

OYSTER BOY

Sorry, sir. Don't got no owls.

Pearly's hand moves impossibly fast, nails tearing the soft flesh of the boy's neck O.S., sending him to the floor, life spilling on sawdust, legs kicking, then still.

Pearly stares at the blood on his hands, somehow seeing past it, past the walls of the world.

Pearly sweeps his place, platters and shells CRASHING, begins to draw with blood on the white table paper.

Fast lines take rough but clear form. A woman's silhouette. Face turned AWAY FROM us, barely a profile.

PEARLY SOAMES

Find her.

He colors in a long mane of dark red hair.

PEARLY SOAMES

Find her. And you'll find him.

ROMEO TAN

Who?

PEARLY SOAMES

The girl. The red-haired girl.

ROMEO TAN

Which red-haired girl?

He grabs Romeo, pulls him close, SNARLS through fishy, stringy spittle. POUNDS the sketch with his fist.

PEARLY SOAMES

This one, idiot. The one who is his destiny.

INT. PENN HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Beverly pours tea into fine china as Peter watches across the table, mesmerized by her hands, her skin, her eyes.

PETER LAKE

You did understand the part about my coming here to steal from you?

BEVERLY

My father, technically.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER LAKE

I broke in.

BEVERLY

Where? He takes epic measures to bar entry.

PETER LAKE

Well, actually you left the door to the roof wedged open.

BEVERLY

Did I? I must stop doing that.

The two sit there. The awkwardness is hypnotic, a madness, like both have been transported to a dream.

PETER LAKE

You shouldn't be scared.

BEVERLY

I'm not.

PETER LAKE

No. I can see that. The tea's good.

BEVERLY

It's called Lapsang Soujong. It's black and from China, but its smell always reminds me of London.

PETER LAKE

I've never been. To London.

BEVERLY

I didn't think so. No.

Another silent beat.

PETER LAKE

What's wrong with you, if I'm not being rude?

BEVERLY

Consumption. I'm nineteen and I've never been kissed on the mouth. I'm sorry, that came out wrong. I don't know anyone, you see. I can't go out, I can't dance, I sleep in a tent on the roof to keep my body temperature within reason.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BEVERLY (CONT'D)

I've got, maybe, according to the doctor who came up from Baltimore, a year and a half. In Boston, they said six months. And that was eight months ago. So really, I'm already two months dead.

The pull between them is heavy, like gravity.

PETER LAKE

I'm Peter Lake.

BEVERLY

Where are you from, Peter Lake?

PETER LAKE

Here. Well, New Jersey, actually. I've never known my real parents.

BEVERLY

And you steal things?

PETER LAKE

It didn't start out that way. My mother wanted me to be a mechanic. I always had a knack for fixing, for getting to the insides of things.

BEVERLY

Like safes.

PETER LAKE

Well, that's where it ended up, anyway. But lately I've been in something of a disagreement with an old boss.

BEVERLY

I imagine disputes are hard to settle in your line of work.

PETER LAKE

Challenging.

BEVERLY

What's the best thing you've ever stolen?

He holds her eyes.

PETER LAKE

I'm beginning to think I haven't stolen it yet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BEVERLY

Aren't you the charmer?

She smiles, sets down her teacup.

BEVERLY

It was lovely to meet you, Peter Lake.

He rises obligingly.

PETER LAKE

I have to leave New York. A few months at most. Let those disagreements blow over. When I get back, I was wondering....

She reaches across and stills his lips with her fingers.

BEVERLY

I'm going to the country myself.

A smile to melt even the stoniest heart.

BEVERLY

And by the time you get back, I'll already be dead.

And suddenly watching her rise and turn away from him is the hardest thing he's ever had to bear.

BEVERLY

Please don't steal anything on your way out.

EXT. PENN HOUSE - MORNING

Peter emerges, crosses to face his waiting horse. He can barely see in the bright light, his heart beats too fast.

PETER LAKE

We have to go. We should leave the city. Right now.

Peter Lake turns, looks at the house.

PETER LAKE

Horse. What have you gotten me into, horse?

INT. PENN HOUSE - STUDY - MORNING

Beverly touches the cold window as a man and horse vanish into the white park and the world beyond.

EXT. WEST SIDE DOCKS - DAY

Tall wooden sailing ships and bulky metal freighters fill rows of berths beyond a stretch of metal fencing.

MEN hoist a pallet of cargo from the deck of a broad-beamed clipper, furling sails snapping in the wind.

The men are tall, lean, cowed in robes of thick rabbit's fur, working ropes on pulleys to lower the stacks of cargo.

One MAN turns, pulls back his cowl. He is handsome, Native American, maybe fifty, skin reddish, long white hair pulled back into a ponytail. Though older now, this is the same man who found that baby washed up on the beach. His name is HUMPSTONE JOHN.

HUMPSTONE JOHN

Take lunch.

The others look at him -- it's early but, hey, he's the boss -- shrug, and head off into the mists.

HUMPSTONE JOHN

Stop hiding back there. It's not dignified.

Peter Lake emerges from the morning haze.

PETER LAKE

Neither is being sliced up for bait by Pearly Soames' silver dagger.

HUMPSTONE JOHN

Hello, Peter.

PETER LAKE

Dad.

HUMPSTONE JOHN

(off the horse)  
And look at what the wind blew in.

Humpstone John rubs the horse's head who bows slightly and accepts the attention. The man turns back to Peter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HUMPSTONE JOHN

You want some clams?

EXT. WEST SIDE DOCKS - DAY

Peter Lake and Humpstone John sit on low wooden kegs, pulling clams off a grill set over an ashcan fire.

PETER LAKE

Good clams.

Humpstone John's look seems to say, well, we have clams.

HUMPSTONE JOHN

A letter would kill you?

Peter Lake takes a long draft of the broth.

HUMPSTONE JOHN

Where did you find him?

PETER LAKE

Who? The horse?

HUMPSTONE JOHN

Yes, the horse. Who else?

PETER LAKE

I didn't really find him. He sort of found me.

This seems to satisfy the older man.

HUMPSTONE JOHN

But you didn't come here to talk about a horse.

PETER LAKE

I need some fatherly advice. I've met a girl...

HUMPSTONE JOHN

I see.

PETER LAKE

She's nothing like me. We have nothing in common.

Humpstone John's smile is growing.

HUMPSTONE JOHN

Oh?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER LAKE

She's dying.

HUMPSTONE JOHN

Aren't we all?

PETER LAKE

Not just dying, she's consumptive.  
Near death.

HUMPSTONE JOHN

Ah.

PETER LAKE

We've just met and I feel like  
I've known her a thousand years.

HUMPSTONE JOHN

Umm.

PETER LAKE

Pearly's on top of me. If I don't  
get out of town, I'm as good as  
killing myself.

HUMPSTONE JOHN

Peter, is there a question here?

PETER LAKE

Dad, what should I do?

HUMPSTONE JOHN

The answer's obvious. Stay as far  
away from her as possible.

Humpstone John inspects his son's face.

HUMPSTONE JOHN

Which I imagine, since you're  
here, isn't very far at all.

Peter slowly nods.

PETER LAKE

No. I suppose not.

Humpstone John smiles.

PETER LAKE

What?

HUMPSTONE JOHN

Your mother had that same face  
when she fished you out of the  
drink in that silly little boat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He sucks a clam.

HUMPSTONE JOHN  
Most of the others wanted to eat  
you.

PETER LAKE  
Well then, thanks for that, Mom.

HUMPSTONE JOHN  
Let's take a walk.

EXT. WEST SIDE DOCKS - WALKING - DAY

Peter Lake, leading his horse, and Humpstone John stroll  
the docks. The fields of Newark drift in and out of the  
mist across the gray water of the Hudson.

HUMPSTONE JOHN  
She always hoped you'd be a  
doctor.

PETER LAKE  
Mechanic, Dad.

HUMPSTONE JOHN  
They're the same in Old Speech.

Peter shakes his head, he didn't know that.

HUMPSTONE JOHN  
Peter, you remember our people  
have ten songs?

PETER LAKE  
Yes.

HUMPSTONE JOHN  
That one learns them, beginning at  
age thirteen, one each decade?

PETER LAKE  
Yes. I never learned them.

HUMPSTONE JOHN  
That's right. It's why we sent  
you away. Because finally, you  
were not one of our tribe and,  
much as we loved you, our laws  
forbade you learning them.

Peter Lake nods.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HUMPSTONE JOHN

They tell us that inside each of us is a miracle, a unique purpose in the evolution of the universe. Our miracle is for one person and one person alone. They tell us that the universe returns us here again and again, until we find the single person our miracle is for. When we are close, the universe reaches down to help us fulfill our destiny and then we fly up and become stars.

PETER LAKE

Stars?

HUMPSTONE JOHN

Stars.

PETER LAKE

And the universe helps us? How exactly?

HUMPSTONE JOHN

The universe sends spirit guides. Sometimes they speak to us through small children. Sometimes they appear in the shape of short men.

PETER LAKE

Short men? Seriously?

HUMPSTONE JOHN

Often they come to us as animals. One is Athansor, Dog of the East. He also appears as a white horse.

PETER LAKE

Hell of a day to miss school.

Peter Lake looks at his horse who, at this moment, looks like nothing more than a large white horse.

PETER LAKE

All I know is I am pulled to her like air when I'm under the water.

HUMPSTONE JOHN

Perhaps this girl is the path destiny has chosen for you. But if so, know this, the cost is likely to be very high.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PETER LAKE

I'm pretty good at thinking on my feet.

Humpstone John closes his eyes at Peter's youth.

HUMPSTONE JOHN

Son, as the universe tries to push towards eternal order, chaos pulls as hard to thwart it. It, too, has agents.

PETER LAKE

What are we talking about? God and the Devil? Angels and Demons?

HUMPSTONE JOHN

Those are some of the newer names.

PETER LAKE

Same old Dad. I come to talk about love and I get a theology lesson.

Peter Lake kisses the older man on the head.

PETER LAKE

I'll stay in touch.

Humpstone John watches him go, his WORDS like a SIGH.

HUMPSTONE JOHN

They're the same thing.

EXT. PENN HOUSE - DAY

A FEW MEN are tying Beverly's numerous trunks to the top of a sled attached to two large bay horses.

Beverly stands on the front stoop, supervising the operation, glancing up and down the street.

CARRIAGE DRIVER

That all of it, miss?

BEVERLY

All of it? No. Not even close.

She turns to head back inside. As she does, the DRIVER opens his coat and withdraws a sheet of roughly-printed paper. On it, Pearly's silhouette of the red-haired girl.

He glances up as Beverly turns away. A perfect match.

EXT. CITY STREETS - HIGH ANGLE - DAY

White horse and rider hurl down the street like a comet.

EXT. PENN HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Beverly emerges. A MAN stands with his back to her.

BEVERLY

Driver?

But the man who turns isn't her driver at all. His eyes sparkle blue, face pale in the winter light.

PEARLY SOAMES

I'm afraid he's become indisposed. Suddenly come into a small fortune by his standards, I imagine. He's left me to take care of business.

(bows deeply)

Pearly Soames. And you might be...

BEVERLY

Beverly Penn.

PEARLY SOAMES

Penn. Well, Peter certainly likes to reach above his station.

(eyes narrow)

And you've got a bit of the fever, haven't you, button. Already only half here. Interesting.

BEVERLY

You know Peter? Peter Lake?

She's becoming increasingly uncomfortable.

PEARLY SOAMES

Know him? Oh yes. We're associates, you might say. Well, past tense, I suppose. The boy had such potential. Could he steal, like art, like physics. I raised him like my own, you see -- after those redskins threw him to the proverbial wolves -- had him pegged to inherit the keys to the kingdom.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEARLY SOAMES (CONT'D)

I would have shown him which flower to give your boot, how to bait a boy into traffic with a rolling rubber ball, that there's worms to inflame in even a good man's soul. But Old Pete, he started having ideas. Here's how to steal a diamond brooch without spilling the red; there's how to take the ring and leave the finger. But it's the ripples that give the work meaning. Ideas, they end up doing more good than harm. And that's really opposite to the plan, isn't it? I mean doing harm, that's the whole point. Him under my wing and he turns out to be playing another tune, ordering fish when we're having fowl, swinging for the other team, as they say.

(shrugs, resigned)

We were just growing in different directions.

Pearly smiles white in winter sun. Hide your children. He takes a step towards her. She takes a step back.

BEVERLY

You know, I might not go upstate until tomorrow. No bother at all. I'll be happy to pay you.

That's when she sees more MEN emerging from under trees across the street. Short, disfigured. In bowler hats.

She steps backwards, towards her open door but a SHADOW drops in behind her, blocking her escape. Romeo Tan.

Pearly continues walking towards the stoop as Romeo begins nudging Beverly towards him, into the street.

BEVERLY

I'm not frightened of you --

PEARLY SOAMES

Beautiful. Sick. Too young to die --

BEVERLY

My father has a strict policy not to negotiate with kidnapers --

PEARLY SOAMES

I'm betting you're who his miracle is for, that he has to save you --

BEVERLY

You won't get a penny of ransom --

PEARLY SOAMES

And if you can't be saved by him --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PEARLY SOAMES

The universe doesn't advance. Job done. Mission accomplished.

They face each other on the curb. Pearly looks into her eyes. She looks right back. He draws his silver blade.

PEARLY SOAMES

I love blood on the snow. So melodramatic.

WHIP TO THE END OF THE BLOCK.

PETER LAKE is coming around the corner. See what he sees.

HIS POV

Pearly's dark form facing Beverly, her bright hair, fire in the sunlight. Something glints silver. A blade.

BACK TO SCENE

PETER LAKE

Ha!

The horse is already moving like lightning. Still, there's no way a charging horse can beat a swinging blade.

WITH PETER

(VFX) But the horse takes such powerful strides that he moves too fast, so fast that even light beams are visible as Peter reaches down...

WITH BEVERLY

As the blade comes towards her neck, Peter hangs onto the horse with only his thighs, going upsidedown as he grabs her waist and whips her onto the back of his horse.

PEARLY SOAMES

Nooo!

Peter Lake looks over his shoulder at Pearly, Short Tails chasing on foot, climbing into cars, mounting horses.

PETER LAKE

Hello.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

She wraps her arms around his waist. She is breathless, exhilarated, terrified, thrilled.

BEVERLY

Peter Lake. Nice to see you again. We should probably have a talk about your choice of friends.

FOUR SHORT TAILS ON HORSEBACK spill from a side street.

BEVERLY

To your left, go!

Peter pulls the reins, the white horse veers left.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

Peter Lake drives the white horse hard across town, galloping through low-slung branches.

Beverly looks over her shoulder.

Charging fast is Pearly, on his mighty gray steed, Short Tails on their bays galloping in a pack behind them.

BEVERLY

Go fast.

PETER LAKE

Yes. Clearly.

The branches overhead EXPLODE with grazing bullets.

PETER LAKE

(to Beverly)

Low.

(to the horse)

Faster.

He and Beverly hug the body of the horse as, impossibly, the horse goes even faster.

HIGH ANGLE

The white horse races out into the hills of the East Side, the dark pack of pursuers close behind.

BEVERLY

We can't outrun them forever.

PETER LAKE

They can't follow us out of the city. Not north, anyway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEVERLY

Why not? That doesn't make any sense.

PETER LAKE

I think Pearly can't go north of Manhattan. It's a turf thing.

BEVERLY

You think? God, running away with strange men is not as shrewd an idea as it sounds.

PETER LAKE

No. I'm pretty sure.

BEVERLY

Well, that's a tremendous relief.

PETER LAKE

The problem is, I don't know anywhere outside of New York. Unless you count New Jersey.

Just then, another volley of BULLETS strafes the branches.

BEVERLY

I do.

PETER LAKE

Count New Jersey?

BEVERLY

Know places outside of New York. Go up along the river. Head towards Hastings.

Peter angles the white horse, and they bound straight towards the white ribbon of the frozen East River.

BEVERLY

Peter -- Wait!

ON BEVERLY

as she realizes what Peter is going to do.

BEVERLY

I said along the river. The ice isn't strong enough --

But the horse is already leaping, arcing with wild height and grace towards the center on the frozen river.

EXT. EAST RIVER (FROZEN) - DAY

HOOVES SMASH into ice. CRACKS run the hard surface. The white horse turns and gallops up the ribbon of ice.

Peter and Beverly have to SHOUT over the rushing wind.

BEVERLY

Will it hold?!

PETER LAKE

No idea!

WITH PEARLY

As he and his riders hit the ice in pursuit. More CRACKS race back and forth, like children freed for recess.

WITH PETER

As he spins and pulls his GUN, using Beverly's shoulder to steady his aim as they race upriver.

PETER LAKE

May I?

BEVERLY

Be my guest.

He appraises the growing web of cracks between them and Pearly, squints and FIRES off SIX ROUNDS in a spread from the Eastern shore of the city to Blackwell's Island.

ON THE RIVER

BULLET HOLES meet RACING CRACKS, transforming solid form into SHIFTING PLATES, and then a section of river TUMBLES into black water, carving a moat from shore to shore.

WITH PEARLY

As his MEN pull up short, so close to the edge a couple go pinwheeling off their horses into the icy drink.

WITH PETER

Pearly and his men fall farther and farther behind.

BEVERLY

You're a hell of a shot.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER LAKE

I'm not really. It's more the dynamics of the situation. Tensile strength-to-weight ratios.

BEVERLY

Okay.

They look back at the stymied Short Tails.

PETER LAKE

Are you all right? All the excitement and... the way you are?

BEVERLY

I'm perfect. Head upriver.

Beverly reaches down and scoops up a bit of snow lodged in the horse's saddle. (VFX) The frozen water melts instantly and rises as steam from her hand. She closes her fist.

WITH PEARLY

As he stares at the diminishing forms of Peter and Beverly, while Short Tails fish their shivering cohorts from the icy waters. Pearly fumes.

PEARLY SOAMES

Can't follow him up there.

ROMEO TAN

Why not?

PEARLY SOAMES

Rules. Border dispute. Couple hundred years ago. Shortsighted.

ROMEO TAN

(hopeful)

Well, we almost had him --

Pearly SHOTS ROMEO.

PEARLY SOAMES

(to his men)

Keep watch on the city. Every way in and out.

Pearly uses his foot to shove Romeo's body into the freezing river, falling the dark depths, out of sight.

EXT. SNOW FIELDS (UPSTATE NEW YORK) - DAY

Two tiny figures on a tiny horse canter across endless fields of pure white spreading out in all directions.

EXT. LAKE OF THE COHEERIES - MAGIC HOUR

A frozen lake surrounded by enormous houses that glow like Christmas ornaments, the horizon all snow dunes.

CHILDREN skate in fast circles around each other, moving at speeds unsafe for adults.

Little Willa is a tiny torpedo, shooting into a wide curve, then cutting to a halt in a flying fan of snow.

She pauses, a perfectly still nucleus amidst the swooping electrons of her peers, stares at the empty horizon.

WILLA

Listen.

No one is paying attention. But she stays as she is, head cocked slightly, ears open as wide as coffee cups.

WILLA

Do you hear a horse?

And there, spilling over the hilltops, is a HORSE bearing a man in furs and the silhouette of a woman, her hair streaming back behind her like light itself.

WILLA

Beverly!

The other children scatter as the horse closes, magical, relentless, slowly to a crawl, its riders dismounting.

The boys eye Peter suspiciously. But Willa has eyes only for Beverly. She leaps into her sister's arms.

BEVERLY

Hello, little one.

Peter Lake stands looking at the rolling hills, like the sleeping backs of giant angels, the houses which glow in the closing dusk, and is overcome by such perfect beauty.

PETER LAKE

(awed)

I've only known the city.

Beverly sets down Willa, looking around, understanding.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEVERLY

It's called Lake of the Coheeries.  
We've been coming since I was a  
little girl. My father says  
nothing happens here that isn't  
supposed to.

WILLA

I'm Willa.

Peter looks down. A small form stares up, inspecting him  
with a patient appraisal that belies her age.

WILLA

Are you Beverly's boyfriend?

Peter opens his mouth, then closes it again.

BEVERLY

Let's go inside. I'm sure Father  
will have something to say about  
the matter.

INT. PEARLY'S WAREHOUSE (MEATPACKING DISTRICT) - NIGHT

Pearly tours the room now filled with CHILDREN, clearly  
homeless, clustered together in small groups.

Another Short Tail, DINGY WORTHINGTON, stands with  
Pearly, gesturing like a conductor without a stick.

DINGY

Them's for beggin', them's for  
Three Card Monty and apples,  
them's tiny dancers, woola boys,  
pickpockets, lockpicks, short con,  
vandals, and general thieves.

Pearly's gaze has fixed on one boy who polishes a crisp  
apple on his fraying wool coat, takes a bite.

The boy notices a tall girl, obviously malnourished, a  
reed standing beside him, hands her his apple.

PEARLY SOAMES

Not that one. Throw him back.

Another Short Tail has joined them, WHISPERS something to  
Dingy. Dingy nods.

DINGY

They called from the bridge. The  
boss, he'll see you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Pearly's expression is hard to read. Fear?

EXT. PENN HOUSE (LAKE OF THE COHEERIES) - EVENING

The most splendid house on the lake. Six stories.  
Chimneys spew black smoke. Light dances in the windows.

INT. PENN HOUSE - STUDY - EVENING

Books line the walls. A fire rages in a hearth large  
enough to comfortably sleep a family of four.

Peter Lake sits on a wooden bench, looking uncomfortable.

Isaac Penn ENTERS, shutting the door behind him, sits in  
a chair directly across from Peter, looks into his eyes.

ISAAC PENN

Um, ah, do you take wine with your  
meals?

PETER LAKE

(surprised)  
Sometimes.

ISAAC PENN

Good, we'll have wine tonight.  
Would claret be all right with  
you?

PETER LAKE

Oh yes, anything. But isn't it  
pronounced 'claray'?

ISAAC PENN

No. Claret. You say the 't' just  
as in 'filet.'

PETER LAKE

Filet? I thought it was 'filay'?

ISAAC PENN

No. Filet. Just as in wallet.  
You don't say walley, do you? You  
say wallet. Same with filet and  
claret.

Peter Lake smiles, relaxing at this kind old fellow.

PETER LAKE

Thank you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ISAAC PENN

You're welcome. You know what?

PETER LAKE

Sir?

ISAAC PENN

You look like a crook. Who are you, what do you do, what is your relationship to Beverly, are you aware of her special condition and what are your motivations, intentions and desires? Tell the absolute truth, don't elaborate, stop if a neighbor child or a servant comes in and be brief.

The old man's eyes are suddenly so sharp and challenging, Peter has to keep himself from swallowing audibly.

PETER LAKE

How can I be brief? These are complicated questions.

ISAAC PENN

You can be brief. If you were one of my journalists, you'd be finished by now. God created the world in six days. Ape him.

PETER LAKE

I'll try.

ISAAC PENN

Unnecessary.

PETER LAKE

All right.

ISAAC PENN

Unnecessary.

PETER LAKE

My name is Peter Lake. You're right, I'm a thief, and a good one. I love Beverly, our relationship goes by no name. I have no intentions; I desire her and I am moved by love. Do you understand?

He is sure his WORDS make no sense, so is surprised when he receives any ANSWER at all.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ISAAC PENN

How do I know that you are not moved by vanity or curiosity? How do I know that you aren't here for the money in this family?

PETER LAKE

I was an orphan. Orphans don't have vanity. I'm not sure why but one needs parents to be vain. And curiosity has no bearing here.

ISAAC PENN

And the money?

PETER LAKE

No disrespect, sir, but I imagine the presence of the kind of money you have could erode any feeling, maybe even love.

This is not at all the answer Isaac Penn imagined.

ISAAC PENN

So, what would one do to prevent such an erosion as you say?

PETER LAKE

I'd never take a penny from you. I would accept no favors, not even a kind word to anyone on my behalf.

Isaac Penn folds his eyebrows into arches.

ISAAC PENN

And of her condition?

PETER LAKE

I've never loved much before. So death hasn't really been something to avoid. But now when I think of losing her...

He stares into the fire.

PETER LAKE

Is it possible to love someone so completely they simply can't die?

ISAAC PENN

No.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

PETER LAKE

I'm a thief, as you keenly observed. I can steal with the best of them.

He holds the old man's eyes.

PETER LAKE

Can't I steal just one life?

ISAAC PENN

And will you fill her head with this nonsense?

PETER LAKE

It isn't nonsense, sir. It's hope.

Isaac Penn leans back, steeples his hands.

ISAAC PENN

We'll see about you.

PETER LAKE

Does that mean I might try that claret now?

ISAAC PENN

Yes. Let's both, shall we?

The old man doesn't smile, but he doesn't frown either, those watchful eyes ever vigilant, holding on Peter.

ISAAC PENN

And one more thing. She sleeps in her tent on the roof.

He opens the door suddenly, children scattering backwards into the parlor.

ISAAC PENN

And you do not.

EXT. FOREST (LAKE OF THE COHEERIES) - NIGHT

Peter Lake and Beverly walk among the pines on the edge of the lake. Peter is in furs, Beverly wears only a thin, white summer dress, neck open to the freezing cold.

BEVERLY

They put you out? But you were only twelve.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER LAKE

I wasn't one of them, that's all.

BEVERLY

I could hate them for doing that.

PETER LAKE

Don't.

BEVERLY

What did you do? To live, I mean.

PETER LAKE

I danced and sang in the street for coins. I picked pockets. I lived with two girls for awhile.

BEVERLY

Two. Aren't you the playboy?

PETER LAKE

I was young. It wasn't like that, mostly. Then Pearly scooped me up. He said I had talent.

BEVERLY

I'm guessing it wasn't your singing.

That's when Peter Lake's expression changes.

PETER LAKE

It's not getting any better, is it?

Beverly stops, looks down. (VFX) The snow at her bare feet starts to melt and pool.

BEVERLY

No.

Peter looks back, clocks the trail of melted snow marking the path to where they stand, flowing like a ravine.

PETER LAKE

Let me try something.

He walks to her and takes her hands. (VFX) She glances down as the snow at her feet melts faster, then back up at him.

BEVERLY

(embarrassed)  
Actually, this isn't helping.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PETER LAKE

Can you hear your heart?

BEVERLY

When the fever comes on it's about  
the only thing I can hear.

Peter Lake nods.

PETER LAKE

When you first go to crack a safe,  
your heart beats so loud you can't  
hear the tumblers. You have to  
learn to slow it down. So you can  
work between the beats. The trick  
to it is lists. Meaningless words  
you say as you exhale that can  
stretch out your breath. Inhale  
quiet. Exhale and say your words  
until your breath is gone. Get  
it?

BEVERLY

I think so.

PETER LAKE

Do you need a list? Animals are  
good. Colors. Buildings.

She shakes her head, closes her eyes, inhales. Then...

BEVERLY

Castor... Auriga... Capella...

Peter is rapt by her perfect face in moonlight.

BEVERLY

Ursa Major... Ursa Minor...  
Polaris...

She opens her eyes, glances down at her feet where the  
snow is no longer melting. Her VOICE is a WHISPER.

BEVERLY

Peter, it's working.

WIDE ANGLE

Peter and Beverly stand holding hands in the forest under  
a star-filled sky.

BEVERLY (V.O.)

Pleiades... Perseus...  
Cassiopeia...

INT. PENN HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Peter Lake sits hunched over a drawing pad at the kitchen table, nursing a tumbler of Scotch. He has drawn a girl with a flaming mane, not unlike Pearly's sketch.

Willa's tiny form PADS down the hallway, crossing columns of moonlight into the kitchen. She stands facing him.

WILLA

Those are mine. The paper too.

PETER LAKE

I figured as much. Is it alright that I borrowed them?

She looks at the image on the paper, a miniature judge.

WILLA

Okay.

PETER LAKE

Thanks. I couldn't sleep. I like to draw by the moon. I'm not very good and the light helps hide it.

He speaks to her like a smaller equal. Willa finds this reasonable.

WILLA

Is it Beverly?

PETER LAKE

I don't know anyone else with red hair.

WILLA

Do you love her?

PETER LAKE

With all my heart.

WILLA

Do you swear?

PETER LAKE

Yes.

WILLA

Say it.

PETER LAKE

I swear.

She stares up and through him, like a tiny ghost.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILLA  
Okay. Come with me.

And before he can respond, she is tugging at his shirt.

EXT. PENN HOUSE - NIGHT

Willa leads Peter across the short span from the back of the house to the GREENHOUSE, plate-glass windows shining.

INT. GREENHOUSE - NIGHT

Despite the cold, the walls of glass sweat. Leaves are draped like curtains; tropical flowers burst, blossoms of reds and yellows; vines stretch languidly down support struts, or loll like spent lovers across the floor.

WILLA  
It's a princess bed. I made the  
neighbor boys make it for her.

Willa has led Peter to a giant feather bed on the floor.

WILLA  
They listen to me.

Lavender and white rose bushes ring the bed like a crown.

WILLA  
Daddy told me a story about a  
princess who died. And a kiss  
that made her not dead anymore.

Willa takes his hand.

WILLA  
I know things. Even though I'm  
little. I know this place is  
magic.

In the moonlight her face seems older, transformed.

WILLA  
If you kiss her here, she won't  
die. I know it. Okay? Say okay.

She stares up at him intently, eyes full of desperation.

PETER LAKE  
Okay.

Willa nods at this, the absolutely right answer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILLA

Okay.

She raises her arms to be lifted.

WILLA

You can put me to bed now.

EXT. BROOKLYN BRIDGE - SUPPORT ARCH - HIGH ANGLE - NIGHT

Set so deep into the firmament of the city that hundreds died of the bends erecting the giant stone arches.

From this height, a small figure approaches the base of the towering structure. He casts an eerie, long shadow.

EXT. BROOKLYN BRIDGE - SUPPORT ARCH - NIGHT

Set into the stone base of the archway is a single metal door, unadorned.

Pearly faces the closed portal, perceptibly steeling himself. Hard to imagine what can scare this guy.

He KNOCKS.

The door swings open revealing a MAN in a butler's uniform who dips his chin deferentially, behind him only blackness.

PEARLY SOAMES

I have an appointment.

The man opens the door wider, letting in more street light. Only now do we see that his lips are sewn shut.

Pearly ENTERS.

INT. BROOKLYN BRIDGE - SUPPORT ARCH - NIGHT

One of the largest interior spaces in New York City. Lanterns set on the far edges of the football field-sized space send flickering shadows up sheer brick walls the height of cliffs.

The cavernous space is empty, and the mixing of the black of darkness and the red of brick and fire are hellish.

Pearly follows the mute until he comes to another door at the end of the room. The mute KNOCKS and steps aside.

Pearly removes his hat and ENTERS.

INT. JUDGE'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

The door closes behind him. Pearly stands in pitch dark. A deep VOICE resonates across the impenetrable blackness.

JUDGE (O.S.)  
Hello, Pearly.

PEARLY SOAMES (O.S.)  
Your Honor.  
(beat)  
Sir...

JUDGE (O.S.)  
Oh. Of course.

OVER, the CLICK of a lamp chain illuminates a slim black MAN (THE JUDGE) who sits on a single chair in a small empty room reading *A Brief History of Time*.

JUDGE  
Fascinating stuff. They get it almost all wrong.

He turns the book over in his hands.

JUDGE  
But they do persevere.

PEARLY SOAMES  
Forgive the intrusion.

The Judge looks up, eyes so pale green they seem yellow.

PEARLY SOAMES  
I am here to request special dispensation regarding the current boundaries of jurisdiction.

JUDGE  
Riveting. Proceed.

PEARLY SOAMES  
I'd like permission to travel north of the city, Your Honor.

JUDGE  
Well, that's quite a request, Pearly. Considering what happened the last time.

PEARLY SOAMES  
A misunderstanding.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JUDGE

Okay, let's get on with this.  
It's Christmas and I could eat a  
village.

(sighs)

God, how I miss the old days.

The Judge stands. (VFX) The shadow he casts moves out of  
step with its host, a slow, reluctant follower.

JUDGE

Pearly Soames, Warden of Manhattan  
and the five boroughs, on what  
grounds do you make this request?

PEARLY SOAMES

I have come to believe a human is  
on the verge of using his miracle  
to make a formidable advancement  
for the other side.

JUDGE

What is your evidence?

PEARLY SOAMES

Presence of Guardian Angels, Your  
Honor, both the White Dog of the  
East and Cecil Mature.

The Judge smiles, almost wistful.

JUDGE

How is Cecil?

PEARLY SOAMES

.... Fine?

The Judge shrugs off the past.

JUDGE

Go on. What else do you have?

PEARLY SOAMES

A vision.

He holds up his sketch of the redhead.

PEARLY SOAMES

A red-haired girl drawn in a fugue  
with the blood of a virgin.

JUDGE

Pearly, Pearly, Pearly, that could  
be anyone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PEARLY SOAMES

He has already met a girl who matches this description.

(beat)

She's dying.

This gets the Judge's attention.

JUDGE

And he loves her?

PEARLY SOAMES

Purely, entirely, and with all his heart.

JUDGE

Interesting. So you believe his destiny is to save her?

PEARLY SOAMES

Yes, Your Honor.

JUDGE

A man's destiny is often not what it seems. If you are wrong, you could do more harm than good.

PEARLY SOAMES

Yes, Your Honor. But I have a feeling about this one.

JUDGE

You trained him, didn't you? The apple of your eye. Embarrassing, no?

PEARLY SOAMES

Shit happens.

The Judge's wan smile suggests truer words are rarely spoken.

JUDGE

If you are right, oppositional magics may already be gathering to assist him.

PEARLY SOAMES

Agreed, sir. That's why I have to stop him as soon as possible. I just need permission to go north.

The Judge steeples his fingers, considering.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JUDGE

Denied. Rules are not subject to a hunch. Your prohibition from the Northern territories is upheld.

PEARLY SOAMES

I'm telling you, I need to stop this one now --

Flaring yellow eyes more terrifying than runaway fire.

JUDGE

Now! Now? Do you have any idea what now is? Now is not a point. Now is an illusion. Now I was flying. Now I breathed fire and ate them as they fled. Now I whipped my tail and the winds trembled. Now I am hidden in this pale shade of flesh and bone. Now I am witness to man's eternal salvation. Now I am witness to his demise. Do not speak to me of time, demon. Its simplest ebbs and turns elude your meager understanding. Find another way. Dismissed.

The Judge sits again, picking up a worn copy of a book that won't be published for a century.

PEARLY SOAMES

Stand on ceremony why don't you --

The Judge's VOICE is a dragon's ROAR.

JUDGE

Dismissed.

EXT. FROZEN LAKE - AFTERNOON

Peter Lake has just taken Beverly, Willa and a gaggle of neighborhood children for a ride, his white horse hooked to a giant sleigh.

Beverly passes him bright-eyed Willa who is excited by the clear winter's night and races for the house.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEVERLY

(calling after)

Ask the maid to get everyone hot  
Antwerp Flinders. And no gin.

He helps her down, pulls her to a pause as she starts  
towards the house, every moment alone breathless.

PETER LAKE

Let me take you dancing. How  
about New Year's Eve?

BEVERLY

I can't, Peter.

PETER LAKE

Is it me? Because I'm not a  
gentleman with a driver and the  
right clothes.

BEVERLY

You know it's not that.

PETER LAKE

What, then?

BEVERLY

I got sick very young, you see. I  
wasn't even ten. I've never had  
the opportunity for society.

He says nothing.

BEVERLY

My father says dancing will kill  
me.

He has moved closer, puts his hands on her shoulders.

PETER LAKE

Fathers are overprotective.

He smiles a thief's smile, one that could steal hearts.

INT. PENN HOUSE (LAKE OF THE COHEERIES) - NIGHT

THROUGH THE OPEN FRONT DOOR the children fall off the  
sleigh like zombies and stumble inside only to be  
intercepted by MAIDS rescuing discarded scarves and hats.

HOUSEGIRL

Coats stay on. We're all going  
next door for a late night  
peppermint.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Beverly and Peter, ENTERING together, detect instantly the QUIET URGENCY in the HOUSEGIRL'S TONE.

BEVERLY

What is it? What's wrong?

OVER, CHUNGA. A deep THUD. The house TREMBLES. Peter and Beverly exchange nervous glances.

HOUSEGIRL

It's been happening all afternoon.

CHUNGA. The house TREMBLES again.

HOUSEGIRL

Something to do with the furnace.

Her cheerful expression is a waxen mask, held in place for the children. This girl is terrified.

HOUSEGIRL

Your father's been down there for an hour with the mechanic. He sent the rest of the staff to the Gamelys' and asked that you join them right away.

The Housegirl is already rapidly pulling on her coat.

HOUSEGIRL

I was told to wait for you both and tell you. Now, children.

CHUNGA.

PETER LAKE

You go on, Bev. I'll go see if I can help out downstairs.

And before she can work out whether or not she wants to protest, Peter Lake vanishes into the house and is gone.

HOUSEGIRL

Miss, the little one.

Beverly looks down. The other kids are out the door. But Willa stands anchored to her leg, a tiny sentry.

HOUSEGIRL

Miss.

Beverly takes a last look after Peter and then, scooping Willa up in her arms, heads out into the night.

INT. PENN HOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Peter Lake ENTERS through the old brick archway. The basement is enormous and most of it is taken up with a soot black furnace the size of a small house.

Isaac Penn and a wide-shouldered MECHANIC (WINSTON) stand at the RAGING, infernal maw of the furnace.

Pipes and valves lay spread on the cement floor like the entrails of a badly butchered autopsy.

CHUNGA.

The furnace SHAKES. Much LOUDER down here, the pipes RATTLE and dust snows from the ceiling.

ISAAC PENN

(turning)

Peter. Hello.

The old man is sweating, as is the mechanic, and there is no whimsy on the old man's face. Peter Lake can see why.

Atop the furnace is a pressure gauge and its needle twitches steadily in the red. The pipes and seams of the furnace seem to BREATHE, on the verge of exploding.

ISAAC PENN

She's jammed up.

CHUNGA.

PETER LAKE

Let me take a look.

ISAAC PENN

We're in the red already. You should go next door.

PETER LAKE

What about you? That thing sounds like it's about to blow sky high.

Peter is already dripping sweat like the other two men. He strips off his shirt.

ISAAC PENN

Go down with the ship, as it were.

PETER LAKE

It's a house. Not a ship.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ISAAC PENN

My wife made this place. She picked every stitch of furniture, every pillow, every sconce and window frame. Wouldn't do to leave it.

CHUNGA.

ISAAC PENN

Listen. You go next door. Go on. Winston, you too, please.

But Peter Lake is already pushing forward. The front panel is open, revealing an impossibly complex series of metal pipes, bellows, cranks, winches, tubes and organs.

PETER LAKE

Something's not right. The steam can't come.

Peter Lake reaches inside the body of the furnace.

ISAAC PENN

Are you nuts? Some of those pipes are burning hot.

PETER LAKE

I have a sympathy for complex systems, how parts go together or come apart. Like locks.

He's TALKING but he's not really paying attention to his own VOICE. The rest of him is entirely in his fingers.

PETER LAKE

You've just got to feel for the connections. That pipe's too hot, avoid it, avoid it, that one's blocked, so the problem's before it. That's stuck. Wait, wait.

Peter Lake moves something inside the machine.

PETER LAKE

Uh-oh.

ISAAC PENN

Uh-oh?

CHUNGA! CHUNGA! CHUNGA! CHUNGA!

The giant furnace is SHAKING and with each successive SPASM the arrow jumps all the way into the red.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PETER LAKE

Oops.

CHUNGACHUNGACHUNGACHUNG.

ISAAC PENN

Oops?

Peter's hands are working furiously, this ROARING fight for life in the room growing LOUDER, DEAFENING.

CHUNGACHUNGACHUNGACHUNGA. Steam is HISSING from the joints, FLAMES ARE LICKING up the sides of black metal.

CHUNGAGAGAGAGAGAGAGAAAAAAA.

Peter Lake grabs something inside the mighty beast and turns with all his might.

The furnace SHAKES, suddenly the room SCREAMS with HISSING STEAM as the pressure is released.

EXT. PENN HOUSE - NIGHT

Chimneys ROAR, flames BELCHING high into the night sky.

INT. PENN HOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Peter turns from the furnace door to face Isaac Penn, who wraps him up in his arms and holds him like a bear.

It takes Peter a moment to understand that the shaking of the older man's back is him weeping. Peter hugs him back.

INT. PENN HOUSE - NIGHT (LATER)

The house has an air of CELEBRATION.

The boys, already in pajamas, chase each other in and out of doorways as if in a French farce.

Peter Lake is heading down the hallway to his room, snifter of brandy in his hand.

Willa comes wandering down the hall, appearing to be more a combination of nightshirt and face than actual girl.

She stops in front of him, raises her arms wordlessly and he obliges her by lifting her up. She gives him a kiss.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILLA

Good night, Peter Lake.

PETER LAKE

Good night, little Willa.

He sets her down and turns, practically colliding with Beverly who is heading up to her tent on the roof.

Unlike the rest, who sleep in flannels despite the raging fires and CHUGGING heater, she is in simple silks.

BEVERLY

My father says you saved all our lives.

PETER LAKE

He's overstating things. It was just his and the furnace man's.

BEVERLY

And yours.

PETER LAKE

Well, mine too, I suppose.

She appraises him.

BEVERLY

Thursday is New Year's Eve.

He nods his head.

BEVERLY

I'd like to go dancing.

And with that, she turns, heads up towards the roof. He stands transfixed, staring at the space where she stood.

EXT. PROSPECT PARK - WALKING - DAY

Pearly is walking under the bare branches in sharp winter sun. Too close at his side is a bald MAN (GABRIEL).

PEARLY SOAMES

You guys have no sense of personal space, you know that?

GABRIEL

Sorry.

They stop. (VFX) The sun backlights Gabriel so he almost glows.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEARLY SOAMES

You do that on purpose? The backlighting thing? Remind you of the old days?

GABRIEL

You take great risk coming to me for this --

PEARLY SOAMES

The sky's blue. Birds go tweet tweet. Mandy, you came and you gave without taking. We done with the obvious stuff?

Gabriel just stares at him.

PEARLY SOAMES

You owe me. This is me calling in my marker.

Pearly takes out a small blue glass vial of liquid.

GABRIEL

You know I cannot directly intervene.

PEARLY SOAMES

Relax, flyboy. It's caffeine. Just makes the heart beat a little faster.

Pearly holds the bottle up, glinting in the sun.

PEARLY SOAMES

Someone would have to be real excited to experience any deleterious effects, effects which would be what you might call incidental. You know the rules. Debts can always be paid.

Gabriel stares at him a long moment. No love lost here.

GABRIEL

And then ours is settled?

PEARLY SOAMES

Then we're square. Five by five. The opposite of hip. Won't fit in a round hole.

Gabriel takes the vial in his hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PEARLY SOAMES

I was wondering, them all trying to go up and you come down. Was it worth it, becoming human? Or was it an impulse buy?

Gabriel turns, starts walking into the sunlight. Pearly has to squint as he calls after him.

PEARLY SOAMES

Did it leave scars? How do you wear a bathing suit?

Pearly's smile is full of satisfaction and sadistic delight as he CALLS after the man.

PEARLY SOAMES

Don't you miss the wings?

INT. PENN HOUSE (LAKE OF THE COHEERIES) - STUDY - NIGHT

Isaac Penn and Peter face off in front of the fireplace.

ISAAC PENN

Absolutely not. It will kill her.

PETER LAKE

Walking on the beach will kill her. School will kill her. Field hockey will kill her. Steamship or train journeys will kill her.

Isaac Penn tries to INTERJECT, but Peter bashes through.

PETER LAKE

Yellowstone Park, Irish Setters, swimming in the Atlantic Ocean, everything but sitting at home and waiting to die will kill her.

Isaac Penn is struck, overwhelmed by detail.

ISAAC PENN

She told you all that?

Peter's silence is answer enough.

ISAAC PENN

I love her so very much, Peter.

PETER LAKE

I know, sir. So do I.

Isaac Penn turns towards the window, maybe to hide tears.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ISAAC PENN

My wife always loved New Year's  
Eve. She favored a spot not far  
from here called Mouquins.

EXT. MOUQUINS - NIGHT (NEW YEAR'S EVE)

A small yellow building sits atop a snow-covered hill.  
MEN and WOMEN in TUXEDOS and BALL GOWNS stream in. Over  
the door a hanging banner promises: "HAPPY NEW YEAR."

Peter, elegant in black and white, gives Beverly his hand  
and walks her toward the door. Her eyes sparkle.

BEVERLY

I still can't fathom how you ever  
convinced my father.

PETER LAKE

I told him never getting to dance  
is a kind of death too.

BEVERLY

Somehow I think it wasn't that  
simple.

He looks at her, so hard she can feel herself being seen;  
small, pale form, ethereal yet on fire.

PETER LAKE

You. Are impossibly beautiful.

BEVERLY

So. Are you.

He leans in and kisses her. Finally, she pulls away.

BEVERLY

Stop it. I'll melt all the snow  
I'm standing on.

PETER LAKE

Give me a chance and you'll melt  
all the snow in the world.

They are transfixed by love, so much so, she has to shove  
him, like a child on a playground, to break the spell.

BEVERLY

Come on.

They resume their way towards the door, giddy, still like  
children.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEVERLY

My mother always said it was bigger on the inside than on the outside.

Two DOORMEN push open the doors TO REVEAL...

INT. MOUQUINS - CONTINUOUS ACTION

Bigger on the inside than out. A ballroom longer than a football field with tables lining each side and raging stone hearths every twenty yards. An USHER, back TO us, leads them to a finely set table for two, pours champagne in crystal flutes. We still cannot see his face.

USHER

Miss Penn, an honor. You are the spitting image of your mother.

Her eyes brim instantly, but she smiles up at the man.

BEVERLY

Thank you.

Peter Lake lifts a small square of chocolate wrapped in gold foil embossed with the single word: Coheeries. It dances across his knuckles and, to Beverly's delight, vanishes in his now empty palm.

PETER LAKE

Everything tonight is magic.

On the floor, dancers move in and out, dances of various speeds and styles, yet somehow never colliding, couples neither in step with each other nor out of it.

PETER LAKE

M'lady...

Peter Lake takes her hand and gently guides her across the floor. His hand slides around her waist.

Then, he begins to move her.

AT THE TABLE

The Usher refills their flutes. He reaches into his topcoat, turning slightly so we can see his face.

Gabriel, the man from the park, pours the liquid from the blue vial into Beverly's glass. He turns away.

## EXT. MOUQUINS - CONTINUOUS ACTION

The white horse stares in through the window. In the curve of his black eye we can see Peter and Beverly as they merge into the tumbling spin of the dance.

## INT. PENN HOUSE - STABLES - NIGHT (LATER)

Peter Lake is bringing the white horse fresh oats, steaming hot from the fire. He is still wearing his tuxedo, though his bow tie hangs loose around his neck. He notices Beverly's red scarf, forgotten on the sleigh.

He turns over his shoulder and looks up. Illuminated by lantern light, Beverly's silhouette is visible through the canvas of her rooftop tent.

She pulls the ribbon out of her hair, shadows cascading down her shoulders. Then she begins to take off her gown.

Peter knows he should look away, out of decorum, out of simple decency.

Instead he stands fixed, as if in a trance, staring at her lithe form slowly revealed, rendered in shadow.

She spreads wide the canvas flaps and steps out, naked, to stare up at the stars.

Then, as if called, she looks down and sees Peter staring up at her.

The moment lasts, then she turns, and holding the tent open a beat, throws a look over her shoulder.

The briefest smile of invitation and she lets the canvas curtain fall closed.

## EXT. PENN HOUSE - ROOF - NIGHT

Peter emerges onto the roof, Beverly's standing form visible through canvas feet away. He can barely breathe.

He moves forward like a man drugged, pulled along by magnetism, by gravity.

He pulls back the canvas, still holding her red scarf. She stands there, naked, perfect, her back to him.

Then she turns, blue eyes alight with desire.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEVERLY

You're late.

PETER LAKE

I'm sorry.

BEVERLY

If you don't make love to me, no  
one ever will.

There is something so simple about her statement, his  
heart fractures into a thousand tiny shards.

PETER LAKE

Then that's exactly what I'll do.

And they are kissing before the flap is closed behind  
them.

A SERIES OF SHOTS

They move as if they have been kept from one another for  
a thousand years. Chest against chest, hallucinatory and  
light, they feel as if they are whirling in a cloud.

BEVERLY

Places.

PETER LAKE

What, baby?

BEVERLY

Places we have been.

HOLD ON Peter as, slowly, the smile fades from his eyes,  
the pounding light in his heart growing dim.

PETER LAKE

No.

His breath catches.

PETER LAKE

This isn't right.

But her breath is still.

PETER LAKE

No, no, no.

INT. PENN HOUSE - STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Servants CRY OUT as he carries her down the stairs.

EXT. PENN HOUSE - NIGHT

Peter carries her through the moonlit snow towards the greenhouse.

INT. GREENHOUSE - NIGHT

Peter pushes through the lush jungle of parting green leaves and blossoms, Beverly cradled in his arms.

PETER LAKE

Baby, please.

He lays her on the soft down bed encircled in a ring of white roses, on a carpet of lavender, kneels over her.

PETER LAKE

Please, baby. Don't go.

He touches the curve of her cheek, still warm.

PETER LAKE

You can't leave.

Peter leans down and kisses her, only stillness from once welcoming lips. His kiss cradles a WHISPER.

PETER LAKE

Don't go, don't go.

His tears spill on her cheeks as he looks down at her.

PETER LAKE

Please.

Moonlight dapples through tall branches. Roses move in the invisible breeze. Beverly remains only still.

PETER LAKE

Please.

But sometimes, death is just death.

PETER LAKE

Oh no.

Finally, when he can gather breath, he closes her eyes, forever blue in memory, and his WEEPING will not end.

EXT. CALVARY CEMETERY (QUEENS, NY) - HIGH ANGLE - MORNING

Markers of the dead spread in uneven geometry across snow-covered fields. The city skyline rises in the distance.

EXT. CALVARY CEMETERY (QUEENS, NY) - MORNING

Two GRAVESMEN use winch levers to lower Beverly into the ground beneath a trellis of winter roses and lavender.

The funeral is a small tableau of black on white; as if all color has been banished from the world along with her light.

Men and woman huddle in black suits and dresses, black overcoats and black wool hats, hearts and imaginations torn open by the impossibility of the inevitable.

Peter stands apart from the family, only slightly, but that gulf, between the loss of a loved one and the loss of one's true love, feels impossible to cross.

He crouches down, kneels and picks a small sprig of winter lavender from near the grave, holds it tight in his fist.

A SMALL HAND touches his. He looks down. His eyes are streaming tears still frozen on his face, making him sparkle in the bright winter sun.

Willa looks up, pointing into the sky.

WILLA

Maybe that's her.

Overhead, a single star shines bright despite the morning sun, a point of light amidst all their sinking darkness.

PETER LAKE

Maybe so.

He manages a smile for this lovely little girl. Puts his hand on the back of her head as if to somehow protect her from falling backwards into the always waiting void.

The casket slowly vanishes from sight. The too brief home of flesh Beverly left behind is now gone, too.

ISAAC PENN closes his eyes, hoping she is with her mother now, and all the others he's known and lost to time.

Willa comes to stand beside her father. When Isaac Penn turns to where he had been standing, Peter Lake is gone.

And somehow he knows that, like Beverly, he will never see the likes of him again.

INT. PEARLY'S OFFICE - MORNING

Pearly is hunched over his desk, devouring a bloody breakfast of steak and eggs with his fingers.

The door swings open. When Pearly looks up (VFX) he has too many teeth and glowing eyes, utterly inhuman.

Dingy Worthington has to look away, and when he looks back Pearly is just a normal-looking fellow, teeth gnawing meat fat -- as if seeing evil is always just a trick of the light.

PEARLY SOAMES

Which part of always knock wasn't clear?

DINGY WORTHINGTON

Sorry, boss. They spotted him. Otter did. Peter Lake, I mean. He's back.

PEARLY SOAMES

Where?

DINGY WORTHINGTON

He was at a graveyard over in Queens burying some girl.

Pearly Soames takes a moment, letting the information flow through him like a first hit of some powerful drug.

PEARLY SOAMES

Do they still have him?

DINGY WORTHINGTON

That's just the thing. They can't lose him. He's just... walking.

PEARLY SOAMES

Get. Everyone.

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - STABLES

The stables are quiet, shut for the holidays.

Peter Lake sets a bucket of oats in front of his horse. The giant beast's black eyes are heavy with concern.

Peter strokes the horse and it nuzzles him, wishing its huge shoulders could take the weight of this pain.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Peter takes from his side pocket that small sprig of lavender, and from the pocket closest to his heart, finds her red scarf, knots the flower in soft silk.

He rises. Throws water on his face from the bowl. He crosses to his beautiful steed, touches his nose.

PETER LAKE

A fight will do us some good.

He reaches for him but the horse steps aside, unwilling.

PETER LAKE

Don't.

He looks up at his horse.

PETER LAKE

Please.

And this time, when he mounts, the horse doesn't resist. They push out into the light of the dying winter sun.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - VARIOUS SHOTS - DUSK

They wander aimlessly, the city a marvel of burgeoning commotion. But Peter can only stare down at his horse's back.

EXT. BATTERY PARK - DAWN

Their journey has brought them to the Battery. The field where Peter and his horse first met is now more gray ice than snow.

VOICE (O.S.)

And... wait for it... you failed.

Peter looks up to see Pearly on his giant steed, facing him, grinning from ear-to-ear.

PEARLY SOAMES

You couldn't save her. Your beloved red-haired girl. Whatever the universe wanted from her, it's lost in the wind.

Behind Pearly, emerging from the trees, are literally HUNDREDS OF SHORT TAILS, on foot or horseback.

PEARLY SOAMES

Was she going to be important?  
President? Pope?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PEARLY SOAMES (CONT'D)

Great grandmother of the first man on Mars? Or was it something simpler? Was she capable of great love? The kind that makes the world warm and light and gives others hope? The kind of love that tilts the scales? Well it doesn't matter anymore. She's dead now. Already cold, dead and in the ground.

The Short Tails are slowly closing in. Pearly's smile has become a grimace, a death mask.

PEARLY SOAMES

Quit me? You don't quit me, boy. I've been blackening souls and crushing miracles for longer than I can remember. Ever ask yourself why the universe goes to all that trouble to help you fulfill your destiny and then throws me in your path. Maybe God's just as bloodthirsty as the rest of us. Maybe he doesn't want eternal benevolence and light. Maybe he just likes a good fight.

PETER LAKE

Pearly Soames, I have no real idea what you're talking about.

For a brief second, a flash of the old thief's smile.

PETER LAKE

But I know one thing. It's a shame your daddy didn't do a better job on your neck with that soda bottle.

Pearly smiles back at Peter. Cold but oddly intimate.

PEARLY SOAMES

No guns. I want to hear his flesh rip from his bones.

The Short Tails, like a tide released, hurl themselves towards Peter Lake and his horse.

Peter Lake leans back, pulls up, horse rearing, legs coiled, ready to jump.

PETER LAKE

Wait. Stop, boy, don't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

This strange army has raised a FOREST OF SHARP PIKES, thirty or forty feet deep.

PETER LAKE

You won't clear them.

Peter almost has to force the horse's torso down. With the way blocked except for a SMALL OPENING ON THE LEFT, Peter Lake spurs the horse and makes for the breach.

BEHIND HIM

Pearly's army comes alive. This has all been planned. Pearly's soldiers are funneling Peter onto the bridge.

With nowhere else to go and a hundred sharp pikes corraling him, the horse sidles onto the ramp.

EXT. BROOKLYN BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS ACTION - MORNING

Coming from the Brooklyn side, more Pikemen march towards them. The white horse could clear the pikes on that side but the cathedral-like arches are blocked with weighted nets that reach down to within feet of the pike heads.

The two groups halt in place, fixing their pikes close to the nest. Only then do the FIGHTERS come forward, one TEAM from each side, savage, with swords.

Peter Lake leans down, gently stroking his nose, his impossibly soft mane, kisses the horse's head.

When he looks up his eyes are changed, hard as diamonds.

PETER LAKE

Ha!

The white horse charges. HOOVES TRAMPLE. The world is a MOVING FOREST OF SWORDS, cutting flanks and chest.

When the fighters see blood they SCREAM, emboldened by the spilling mortality of so powerful a creature.

A SWORDSMAN lunges for Peter Lake, slashing him deep across the back. Peter grabs the weapon, swinging wildly, parrying and lunging with his stolen sword.

Peter Lake, too, is cut everywhere and bleeding. He feels cold, despite the perfectly clear outline the sun creates around the bridge, the city beyond, the clouds and sky.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

But he keeps fighting, killing as many as he can, until the first wave of fighters are all dead, scattered around him.

The SECOND WAVE begins to close. The time has come. Peter Lake stares at his attackers, then leans down.

PETER LAKE  
(to the horse)  
I want you to go.

The horse stops moving, frozen by the unexpected words.

PETER LAKE  
You won't make it with me on your back. And the truth is I wouldn't want you to even if you could.

The horse's stillness is protest enough.

PETER LAKE  
Don't you see? There's no reason anymore without her. This is what I came here for.

And, unexpectedly, Peter Lake dismounts, his single position of battle superiority suddenly relinquished.

His attackers hold, unsure of his utterly suicidal tactic. Peter Lake faces the horse.

PETER LAKE  
You saved me once. Let me return the favor.

The horse rears, kicking its front legs just above Peter's head. Peter almost smiles.

Suddenly the horse begins tiger pacing, north-south across the narrow walkway of the bridge.

The slatted wooden path is hardly twice his length but he coils back and forth, a blurred motion, impossibly fast.

The Short Tails think he is crazed. Only Pearly closes his brow in concern.

PEARLY SOAMES  
Get them! Now!

The attackers lunge at his command. They are almost on the horse when he arches back on visible waves of power.

He compresses himself into something almost round, laws of physics bending, if not breaking altogether.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

(VFX) Then, with a ROAR, the horse unfolds in a white silken movement -- are those gossamer wings flashing in the perfect angle of the sun -- and flies into the air, clearing steel cables and nets with ease.

PEARLY SOAMES

Shoot it, you idiots!

Guns are drawn, BULLETS hurl into the air but the effort is like trying to chase a jet with slingshot stones.

(VFX) The horse is a FLASH of white overhead, brighter than the bright sky, like a mid-morning star, and then he is gone.

PEARLY SOAMES

(eyes glowing fury)

Cut him to ribbons.

The Short Tails attack. Peter is an uncanny swordsman, skill to best a dozen men. Maybe fifty. But not hundreds.

He spins and twirls, taking down Short Tails like wheat at harvest, a battle trance in his eyes, as if he can see, not where they are, where they will be.

But there are just too many, and for each ten that fall a cut scores Peter Lake's chest, or pierces an arm, until, finally he is more bloodied than alive and backed against the cables that form the edge of the bridge.

A knife goes deep into his belly. Peter Lake smiles. Pearly head butts him savagely.

WIDE ANGLE

PETER LAKE tumbles, tiny, off the side of the Brooklyn Bridge towards the perfectly blue waters far below.

PEARLY SOAMES

watches as Peter Lake disappears into the water in a white and violent kiss.

Pearly stares over the edge at the flat surface. Finally, he turns to his man closest.

PEARLY SOAMES

Leave the dead. Let the coppers clean 'em up. Never hurts to give folks a good scare.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Pearly Soames turns and heads back towards Manhattan, the remains of his army following, not even looking back.

EXT. BANKS OF THE WEST SIDE - NIGHT

The moon glides across black water, the illusion of motion a gift from the rippling tides.

A FIGURE breaks the still surface, crawls out into the mud, the very spot where a tiny boat washed ashore so many years ago. Bloody. Battered. But somehow not dead.

Peter Lake stands, rubs his head, seeming perplexed. He touches his face, his pocket, brings out that small knot of silk, wet and dark, like a tiny heart.

PETER LAKE

Who am I?

The small knot of fabric means something to him, precisely what he is not sure. All he knows is a terrible, crushing sadness. He closes his fist around it.

OLD WOMAN (V.O.)

When true love is lost, life can bleed of all meaning.

As Peter stands on the water's edge, something extraordinary begins to happen. TIME MOVES, the city across the river growing, SKYSCRAPERS RISING.

OLD WOMAN (V.O.)

We are left blank, and the world moves like a passing carnival we can witness but never join.

He bows his head, THE CITY BEYOND GROWING FURTHER AND FASTER STILL, EACH DECADE MAKING WAY FOR THE NEXT.

OLD WOMAN (V.O.)

But as long as we still live, then the possibility of destiny abides.

Peter Lake begins walking away from us, towards the bridge and the still RAPIDLY EVOLVING CITY.

OLD WOMAN (V.O.)

Who we are, and what we are meant for is yet to be discovered.

Peter Lake is small IN FRAME as the flowing time SLOWS, THE CITY SETTling INTO A SINGLE, MORE MODERN PRESENT.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OLD WOMAN (V.O.)

And once in a very long while that  
journey may defeat time itself.

TILT UP TO that single star in the night sky.

TILT DOWN TO...

EXT. BARROW STREET HOTEL - MORNING

Peter Lake, hair long and bearded, comes down the steps  
of his motel, wearing jeans and a worn leather jacket.

SUPERIMPOSE: 2014

A passing horse pulling an empty tourist buggy catches  
his attention as it snorts clouds in the cold.

He stares after it a beat. Then, shoving hands into his  
pockets, putting his head down, he walks into the city.

EXT. 12TH STREET - WALKING

Peter Lake cuts an odd figure amidst all the coming and  
going New Yorkers who are bundled in heavier winter garb.

RACK FOCUS.

A WOMAN (VIRGINIA GAMELY) is emerging from an apartment  
building. Long black hair spills into the open hood of  
her coat, frames beautiful, sad green eyes.

VIRGINIA

Abby, come on, please.

A hooded, parka-swaddled GIRL (ABBY) comes hurling out of  
the building, perfect in the way of seven-year-olds.

ABBY

I was dawdling.

VIRGINIA

Yes.

The tiny dervish leaps into Virginia's arms, vibrating  
with the pent-up energy that comes before a big snow.

ABBY

Carry me.

VIRGINIA

(setting her down)

Not likely, miss. You're big now.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

But there is something terribly sad about Virginia's smile. They head off hand in hand down the block.

RACK FOCUS.

Peter Lake has walked right by them, vanishes into the city.

EXT. NEW YORK HOSPITAL - MORNING

Abby and Virginia ENTER a tall building, unseasonable sun dappling the pavement through fast-moving clouds.

INT. NEW YORK HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM

A long room with pictures of trains and imaginary landscapes on its blue and pink walls.

Virginia sits with Abby on one long couch. Across the room a woman and son, the boy, maybe a year older.

Abby is playing with the fresh Band-aid plastered to the inside of her arm, looks up and notes the boy doing the same.

Virginia can barely watch as shy smiles are exchanged, a promise of the future that breaks her heart.

NURSE (O.S.)

Virginia.

A NURSE has emerged from behind swinging doors, smiles a kindly smile and nods.

NURSE

He'll see you now.

INT. NEW YORK HOSPITAL - DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The walls are decorated with framed diplomas, talismans against a finally indefatigable enemy. Virginia sits across from the handsome black DOCTOR, his voice SOFT.

DOCTOR

The cell replication rate is just too high.

VIRGINIA

Can't we increase the chemo?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOCTOR

Abby's at the maximum dose now.  
And you can see how uncomfortable  
she is, what it's doing to her.

VIRGINIA

Radiation.

DOCTOR

We've talked about this. The  
tumor is just too close to the  
heart.

Tears are spilling freely down her cheeks, so familiar  
that she seems entirely unaware of them.

VIRGINIA

What can we do?

Though both know the answer, the Doctor takes his time.

DOCTOR

Make her comfortable.

VIRGINIA

She's only seven.

DOCTOR

I'm sorry.

She stares. Then she buries her face in her hands. If  
she could, she would see him glance at the photos of his  
wife, his grown children, his hands, and fight back his  
own tears. But she can't. She is too busy **WEeping**.

EXT. COLUMBUS CIRCLE - EVENING

Virginia is walking down the street with Abby who now  
wears a red checkered scarf around her head.

VIRGINIA

Hey, Abs, I have an idea.

ABBY

You're always having ideas, Mom.

VIRGINIA

Yes. That's true. But this one  
is a very good one.

ABBY

Better than five-chocolate pie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VIRGINIA

So much better, infinite is too tiny a measure to describe the gap.

ABBY

All right then. I'm listening.

Virginia stops, she kneels so she is facing her daughter.

VIRGINIA

What say we let your hair grow back?

ABBY

We'd have to stop the treatments.

VIRGINIA

Yes, I suppose we would.

The little girl stares at her mother. Impossible to tell how much or how little she understands but we sense it's likely more not less. Then she nods.

ABBY

Okay. That is a good idea.

Virginia nods back at her daughter.

ABBY

Can I chase the pigeons now? I won't hurt them.

Virginia smiles and Abby races off, small arms held high, sending the ambling flock aloft, into flight.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY

Peter Lake is on his knees, drawing on the pavement with colored chalk.

His eyes are wild, heart engaged, making broad, sweeping strokes, scampering back and forth on hands and knees as he completes the image.

PULL BACK AND UP TO REVEAL --

Peter standing small in the center of a rendered silhouette, face turning away so as to obscure her features. But her hair is a rich and flaming red.

PETER LAKE

Who are you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He would stand there for hours, for days, if some small memory would just jog free. But nothing ever comes.

SAME SCENE - MOMENTS LATER

Peter walks head down, across the winding slate path.

VOICE (O.S.)

Hey there!

In the center of the path stands Cecil, flipping that silver coin high like a tiny star.

PETER LAKE

Do I know you?

Cecil just smiles.

CECIL MATURE

You forgot your change.

Cecil whips the coin, underhand, with tremendous speed, Peter's reflexive catch worthy of an outfielder in the majors.

The small girl SLAMS into him at full speed and bounces off, going down hard in front of him on her small butt.

Abby looks up at the strange man standing over her. Something about his eyes soothes her.

ABBY

I smashed into you.

PETER LAKE

You did. Are you all right?

Though she is not sure why -- she is certain she can stand on her own -- Abby reaches up with both hands.

ABBY

Am I light or heavy?

Peter doesn't know why his heart is so beating fast.

PETER LAKE

Light as a feather.

ABBY

I'm Abby. What's your name?

PETER LAKE

I don't know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ABBY  
Everybody knows their name.

PETER LAKE  
Not me.

ABBY  
You're silly.

Abby drops her head back and cranes upward at the sky.

ABBY  
Look at all the stars. They have names, you know?

PETER LAKE  
What?

ABBY  
The stars. I just can't remember them.

Peter is rapt by her perfect face in moonlight. Something stirs, something long forgotten.

PETER LAKE  
Castor...

VIRGINIA  
(arriving)  
Abby? Sir, please put my daughter --

He sets Abby down, looks at Virginia a long moment. Then he looks back up at the stars.

ABBY  
Nice to meet you.

Virginia takes Abby's hand, leading her away.

VIRGINIA  
You have to watch where you're running.

But Virginia can't help taking a last look at the figure standing alone on the path, something regal about him, as if he were a warrior long ago lost from his campaign, for some reason mouthing in a low VOICE the names of stars.

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - MAIN HALL - NIGHT

Amidst rushing passengers and glowing pixilated ads, Peter Lake navigates his way to the center of the hall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Something is moving inside him, not quite memory, but its precursor, like froth at the edge of coming tide.

He looks up. There, unlit for decades, the complicated patterns of constellations wind across the domed ceiling.

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - ABOVE THE SKY - NIGHT

Peter opens a door to blackness. He finds a pull cord in the dark by feel and, remarkably, the single bulb works.

He stares at the empty room where only a mattress platform and dirty mirror remain, the hint of memory again dancing at the edge of consciousness.

Peter walks tentatively forward looking for a particular spot on the floor. Then he pushes with his foot, and a compartment opens revealing an old wooden box.

Peter sits on the platform and opens the box. From within he removes the faded silk of a soft blanket; a gold foil-covered square of chocolate grown solid that reads COHEERIES; an old copper plaque inscribed CITY OF JUSTICE.

He turns the plaque over in his hands. He looks up, catching his reflection in the dirty mirror. Then he rises, writes in the dirt on the mirror:

PETER LAKE?

INT. TRUMP TOWERS - PENTHOUSE - DAWN

A MAN sits up in bed, abrupt, as if awoken by a dream. We are ON HIS BACK, framed by morning light, as he rises.

The walls are black and gray, subtle pinstripes of paint, as if the apartment had donned a finely tailored suit.

But what is most remarkable about the apartment is the eastern light, spilling in through the tall windows.

He crosses to a long dresser that spans the wall at the base of the tall windows, pulls open a long top drawer.

Within is a fortune of colored stones, rough diamonds, rubies, emeralds, not a king's ransom but a kingdom's.

He uses both hands to scoop out the gems, laying them out on the long ledge below the window as the sun rises.

He's working faster and faster now, as if to meet some deadline of growing light we cannot understand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He finishes scooping out the gems just as the sun pulls free of the horizon and flares towards us.

RACK TO the GEMS as dawn strikes and they begin to glow, light finding its way between them in a cat's cradle of beams.

Behind him, a GIRL sits up in the bed.

GIRL IN THE BED

Pearly...?

REVERSE ANGLE

Pearly Soames, unchanged by time, stands looking down at the lattice of streaming color, reading meaning there.

PEARLY SCAMES

Son of a bitch can't still be alive.

EXT. NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY - MORNING

Peter Lake, face now clean-shaven clean, hair trimmed and wearing khakis and a white shirt, walks up the wide cement steps, glancing at the old stone lions.

INT. NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

The first time in any century he has set foot in a library. He stares in awe at the opening space before him.

Peter locates the main desk, faces the LIBRARIAN.

PETER LAKE

I have had some kind of amnesia.

LIBRARIAN

Okay.

Small shrug. Not impressed.

PETER LAKE

I'm looking for something. It could be a place, or an establishment, an area, or a state of mind, I'm not really sure. But they make chocolate.

He drops the solid Coheeries chocolate square on her desk. The Librarian lifts it, turns it over in her hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Librarian shrugs, begins to TYPE at her terminal.

PETER LAKE

I never knew there were so many.

LIBRARIAN

I'm sorry?

PETER LAKE

Books.

The Librarian just shakes her head. Takes all kinds.

LIBRARIAN

Okay, Coheeries, I've got one hit.

EXT. THEATRE (HUDSON STREET) - DAY

An AGING MARQUEE READS: THEATRE OF THE COHEERIES.

Home to vaudeville many years ago. Along the way this venerable house became a porn cinema. Then closed down.

Peter kneels down. Near the pavement is a simple bronze plaque missed by vandals: Donated to the City of New York by Isaac Penn. He touches the tarnished metal.

EXT. MEATPACKING DISTRICT - DAY

Wet streets of sawdust and warehouses of carcasses have been replaced by trendy stores and shoppers. Mostly.

INT. WAREHOUSE (MEATPACKING DISTRICT) - DAY

The same warehouse Pearly occupied a century ago, though now maps have given way to scrolling monitors, thugs to MEN who might be agents or brokers on Bluetooth headsets.

INT. PEARLY'S OFFICE - DAY

Beyond the technological advances here, too, the office is much the same as it was a century ago.

Pearly wears a Tom Ford suit, works a chalkboard in the middle of the room like a physicist on speed.

But instead of equations, he is drawing lines of causality that link names we know, PETER LAKE, WHITE DOG, BEVERLY, CECIL MATURE and OTHER NAMES we do not recognize.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He extends a chalk line to its terminus at the edge of the board and writes RED-HAIRED GIRL, chalk CRACKING.

Pearly steps back. Does not like at all what he sees. Presses a buzzer and another MAN in a fine suit ENTERS.

PEARLY SOAMES

Romeo.

CESAR TAN

Cesar. Romeo was my grandfather.

PEARLY SOAMES

Whatever. Get the boys.

Pearly is rifling files, removes a WANTED POSTER of Peter Lake issued by the NYPD in 1914.

PEARLY SOAMES

Drop everything else. Find him.

CESAR TAN

Boss, this thing's a hundred years old.

Pearly narrows his eyes.

PEARLY SOAMES

Do I strike you as someone who wouldn't know that? That I might be slipping? Getting on in age? Going around the proverbial bend?

Cesar stands fixed in place, acutely uncomfortable.

PEARLY SOAMES

Do I, Cesar?

CESAR TAN

No, sir.

PEARLY SOAMES

Do you remember how I told you your grandfather died?

CESAR TAN

Yes, sir.

The blood has drained from Cesar's face.

CESAR TAN

I'm sorry, sir.

But Pearly has already turned away, back to the board.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PEARLY SOAMES

Just find him. We may have killed  
the wrong redhead.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - DAY

Peter Lake stares up at the neon world. One building  
holds his interest. He heads into The New York Sun.

INT. NEW YORK SUN - READING ROOM - DAY

Dappled sun spills through vertical windows onto dark  
wood furniture. Peter Lake ENTERS. A WOMAN sits alone  
at one of many long tables, reading, only her back  
visible.

Peter Lake walks to the CUSTODIAN behind the main desk.

PETER LAKE

Isaac Penn, please. The woman in  
front said he was back here.

CUSTODIAN

This is the Isaac Penn reading  
room.

PETER LAKE

I mean, I'd like to speak with  
him.

CUSTODIAN

Be a neat trick. Penn's been dead  
90 years. You a little...  
(twirls his finger)  
You know?

Peter Lake takes a moment. The information more  
disappoints than startles him.

PETER LAKE

There is a theatre on Hudson  
Street called the Theatre of the  
Coheeries. I was wondering what  
information you might have on it.

The man turns to a terminal. TYPES.

CUSTODIAN

Nope.

PETER LAKE

Nope?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CUSTODIAN

Not listed here.

PETER LAKE

But I was there.

CUSTODIAN

I didn't say you wasn't. I just said it's not listed here.

In the b.g., the WOMAN looks up from the table at a listening angle, the sun behind her obscuring her face.

CUSTODIAN

Penn was a rich guy. Trump rich but like in the '80s, you know?

PETER LAKE

Not really.

CUSTODIAN

Anyway, he gave a lot of stuff away before he died. All the bigger gifts, parks, amphitheaters, museums, they're listed here. But some of the smaller gifts still haven't been catalogued from the microfiche, along with a portion of their personal papers and journals. Keeps the grad students busy.

PETER LAKE

Might I see them please. These micro-fish?

CUSTODIAN

Sure. Two forms of I.D.

The Custodian slides a form across the desk.

CUSTODIAN

Fill this out. Two week approval period and you can search back there to your heart's delight.

The Custodian reacts to Peter's disappointed expression.

CUSTODIAN

Stuff's historical, you know?

WOMAN (O.S.)

So many regulations these days.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The mysterious reader has joined Peter at the reference counter. Only now can we see her sad, lovely face.

VIRGINIA

Virginia.

PETER LAKE

Peter.

She squints at him. But clean-shaved, washed and freshly dressed, he bears little resemblance to the homeless man who held her daughter aloft in Central Park.

VIRGINIA

Do I know you from somewhere?

PETER LAKE

I don't think so, but I can't be sure.

She looks at him, oddly.

PETER LAKE

I have had no memory for as long as I can remember. Maybe there was once a blow to the head, although I can't find a scar. The world has always seemed a great fog that is just now lifting, although not fast enough for my tastes. But I feel I have to do something, and that I am getting close to whatever or whomever it is I'm looking for...

He pulls out the chocolate square, holds it in his palm.

PETER LAKE

I have become convinced that if I could learn what this Coheeries is, it would help jog my memory. But now it will take me two weeks with two forms of I.D., that I don't have, to even get a look back there.

His eyes narrow, move around the room, not unlike a dog's scanning the oblivious strut of a slow-moving bird.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

PETER LAKE

Although, I have a growing suspicion I might be able to get to what I need more quickly once everybody's gone home for the night if I just knew what a micro fish looked like. Do they swim?

VIRGINIA

You know places like this have all sorts of security systems?

PETER LAKE

I somehow find myself undaunted.

She appraises him.

VIRGINIA

Well, you're in luck. I work here so I don't need any approvals, isn't that right, Jack?

CUSTODIAN

Reporters come and go as they please, Ms. Gamely.

He gestures behind him. Virginia smiles, and Peter Lake follows her around the desk, back towards endless stacks.

PETER LAKE

I appreciate the help, Mrs. Gamely.

VIRGINIA

Miss. I wasn't having any luck anyway.

PETER LAKE

What were you looking for?

It takes a moment to answer, sad smile chasing her words.

VIRGINIA

A cure for cancer, I suppose.

INT. NEW YORK SUN - MICROFICHE ROOM - AFTERNOON

The sun has fallen lower in the sky, endless racks of slouching boxes cast long shadows on parquet floors.

Peter Lake is moving down yet another row of boxes, inspecting labels handwritten in black ink.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The labels read: "Invalid Deeds and Trusts"; "Past Holdings"; "Letters of Agreement"; "Letters of Protest"; "Signatory Notes" --

VIRGINIA

I've got something.

Virginia begins pulling down a box and Peter is there on the other side, helping her, setting it on a metal table.

A single word adorns the cardboard, "COHEERIES."

INT. NEW YORK SUN - MICROFICHE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Virginia feeds the thin black tongue into the machine. Hits the scroll wheel and the film begins to STUTTER.

PETER LAKE

Wait a second.

Peter Lake goes around the projector, opens the back and reaches in, fingers moving without paying much attention.

VIRGINIA

I thought you didn't even know what microfiche were?

PETER LAKE

I don't. I'm just... good with machines. Try it now.

She turns a lever and an image is projected on the blank wall before them: simply a large, beautiful house.

VIRGINIA

Damn. Must be mislabeled. This isn't a theatre.

She reaches for the STOP LEVER but Peter stills her hand.

PETER LAKE

Coheries isn't a theatre... it's a town.

Now people are spilling out of the house, MEN AND WOMEN, fashionable in the furs of the early 20th century.

VIRGINIA

Jesus, that's old man Penn himself. Look at him.

Peter stares at the CHILDREN who follow. He is unaware that now he dances that square of chocolate across his knuckles. A scale playing up and down his spine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER LAKE

Brahms. She played Brahms.

The CHILDREN pose out on the frozen lake. But it is not they who hold his gaze, but the WOMAN behind them.

Sun hits her hair so, even in black and white, it burns. She smiles, alive in a way she can never be again.

PETER LAKE

Beverly.

She seems to look straight through time into his eyes. And when he can bear her gaze no more, he looks away.

PETER LAKE

Her name was Beverly.

His eyes are spilling tears. But Virginia is fixed on the MAN beside the beautiful girl. She looks to Peter.

VIRGINIA

That's... this can't be... was your father?

But the truth is as undeniable as light in a dark space. This is the same man that stands before her, unchanged.

VIRGINIA

What's going on here?

Peter just shakes his head, heart heavy.

PETER LAKE

She's dead.

Peter is looking back at the screen, buffeted by loss, and by the sweet, cruel flood of returning of memory.

VIRGINIA

What's happening?

PETER LAKE

They're all dead a hundred years.

Virginia sees the children throwing snowballs; adults laughing; Peter's arm around Beverly's waist.

VIRGINIA

No. Not all of them.

He looks at her, not understanding.

INT. NEW YORK SUN - HALLWAY - WALKING

Peter is walking down the hallway, Virginia a half step behind. Both are lost in their own worlds.

They come to two giant glass doors that read:

"EDITOR-IN-CHIEF."

They push in through the swinging glass.

INT. EDITOR-IN-CHIEF'S OFFICES - RECEPTION - AFTERNOON

A round room bigger than most New York apartments. Large oval windows REVEAL abounding tops of skyscrapers struck by sun. The RECEPTIONIST looks up, dismayed.

RECEPTIONIST

Yes?

VIRGINIA

I'm Virginia Gamely. I work here.

RECEPTIONIST

Yes.

VIRGINIA

I write the food column.

RECEPTIONIST

Yes.

VIRGINIA

Is she in?

RECEPTIONIST

Do you have an appointment that I am not aware of, Ms. Gamely?

Read: are you out of your mind?

VIRGINIA

No. But this... these are special circumstances, this man... I think she might know him --

RECEPTIONIST

The Editor is a very busy woman --

That's when the GIANT DOORS to the main office swing out and TWO DIGNITARIES emerge, followed by an ANCIENT WOMAN walking with a cane. Despite her diminutive size and extreme age, she exudes intelligence and power.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OLD WOMAN

Thank you, Ambassador. I'm glad  
we could come to an understanding.

We may recognize her VOICE and now understand that this  
Old Woman is she who has been NARRATING our story.

As the men EXIT, the OLD WOMAN barely glances at the  
reception desk. She begins back towards her office.

OLD WOMAN

I feel like a milkshake for lunch,  
Marge. Do you think Dr. Levi  
would kill me? Chocolate with --

VIRGINIA

Ms. Penn...

The Old Woman turns, looks at Virginia.

VIRGINIA

I'm --

But Peter Lake has stepped forward. And he says only:

PETER LAKE

Willa.

The Old Woman looks at him, eyes narrowing, then growing  
wide and bright. She drops her cane and he steps  
forward, kneeling, wrapping her in strong, familiar arms  
and she holds onto him so tight, as if he were life  
itself.

PETER LAKE

Little Willa.

Willa's eyes are squeezed shut, as if to hide all the  
interceding years in darkness.

OLD WILLA (OLD WOMAN)

Hello, Peter Lake. I've missed  
you very, very much.

The Receptionist and Virginia can only stare.

EXT. PENN HOUSE (ABOVE CENTRAL PARK) - AFTERNOON

Virginia stands with Willa as she unlocks the front door,  
watching Peter Lake who stands one step behind them.

Peter stares up at the house he once entered as a thief.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

His attention is drawn to the now giant trees across the street, long branches spilling over the wall of Central Park, where a white horse once waited for him.

OLD WILLA  
Come inside. Please.

She pushes open the door.

INT. PENN HOUSE - DAY

A SERVANT greets Willa, takes her coat as Peter wanders down the hall. More framed *New York Sun* covers have been added to include 9/11 and OBAMA ELECTED. Willa's face has replaced her father's in the corner photo on each.

OLD WILLA  
Where did you find him?

VIRGINIA  
I think... he found me.

Willa just nods as if this makes a kind of sense to her.

VIRGINIA  
Ms. Penn. How is this possible?

OLD WILLA  
Willa, please. Virginia, isn't it? I've read your recipe column. I quite like your lemon meringue.

Virginia doesn't know what to say.

OLD WILLA  
I don't know. I've lived over a hundred years and all I can say is that in a life that long you do see things. Things that don't quite add up to the world as promised, or even the world we think we know.

She stops, as if, even for so sharp a mind, these ideas are hard to gather in one place and give words.

OLD WILLA  
First there is the world we imagine as children. Acquisitive. Where we gather things and believe they are ours to keep. Friends, love, wealth.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OLD WILLA (CONT'D)

Then there is the world of impermanence, where everything we love finally leaves us and life is loss. But there is a third world, one I have only come to glimpse. A kind of connectedness between things, like a great clock working behind the scenes and of which we are all tiny parts. I cannot name its purpose, and I have done little more than glimpse its workings but these things I do know. Neither senselessness nor justice are what we perceive them to be. Balance is sought not in a single lifetime but over decades. And things pass. But they also reoccur.

They step into...

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

All modern now. Except for the small table where Peter and Beverly shared tea so many years ago.

OLD WILLA

I always held on to that table. Nothing special. Can't say why.

Peter Lake sits at the table, spreads his arms over the surface of the wood and bows his head to the tabletop.

OLD WILLA

He loved my sister terribly. She was like a bright light.

VIRGINIA

How can he be here?

OLD WILLA

Maybe his grief got hold of him and never let him go.

VIRGINIA

Ms. Penn, he hasn't aged.

OLD WILLA

Who decreed the invisible forces of physicists more real than the equally invisible tides of the heart? Gravity holds us to this world, why can't love?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OLD WILLA (CONT'D)

Who among us can say a miracle  
isn't possible?

Virginia nods, not entirely sure she understands.

VIRGINIA

How did she die?

OLD WILLA

Consumption.

Willa walks to the window, looks up at a single, pulsing  
star in the night sky.

OLD WILLA

I spent the night she died  
searching the skies for her. I  
found her there in Orion's Belt, I  
think. She used to say when our  
work on earth was finished, we  
would fly up and become stars.

Peter Lake looks up.

PETER LAKE

What work? She was 19. How could  
she have possibly been finished?

OLD WILLA

I am looking at you, unchanged,  
after a hundred years. Maybe her  
work was to forge a love so  
powerful it would keep you alive.

PETER LAKE

But why? Why do that to me?

Willa just shakes her head.

OLD WILLA

You've always been special, Peter.  
Perhaps there is something you are  
still meant to do.

PETER LAKE

What?

OLD WILLA

I haven't the faintest idea. May  
I make you some tea?

He holds her eyes. And then, though sad, he smiles.

EXT. PENN HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Willa stands at the door, looking at Peter Lake.  
Virginia stands at the bottom of the stoop, giving them  
time.

PETER LAKE

Thank you for bringing me back  
here.

OLD WILLA

I have a feeling we won't see each  
other again, will we?

He starts to PROTEST.

OLD WILLA

It's poor manners to talk back to  
your elders.

PETER LAKE

Technically, I think I'm still  
older than you.

(sad smile)

No, I have a feeling we won't.

He leans in and kisses her on the forehead.

OLD WILLA

Goodbye, Peter Lake.

PETER LAKE

Goodbye, Little Willa.

Willa smiles up at him, then CALLS down the stoop.

OLD WILLA

I look forward to your next  
recipe, young lady. I'm very fond  
of pecans.

But when Virginia turns, the door is shut, Willa already  
gone. Peter Lake descends the stoop to the pavement.

VIRGINIA

I have to get my daughter off the  
bus at three.

Virginia looks at Peter Lake, unsure.

VIRGINIA

I live down on 12th Street. I've  
got a chicken --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER LAKE

I have a few things I need to get.

He returns the tentative smile.

PETER LAKE

But I do like chicken.

ACROSS THE STREET

A FELLOW (GWATHMI), with a crooked nose and a thick fur coat, leans against the park wall, watching Virginia and Peter finish their conversation. He stubs out a smoke, pulls a cell phone out of his pocket, speed dials.

GWATHMI

Tell the boss we found him.

As Peter splits off, Gwathmi follows him, a distant but trailing shadow in the closing day's light.

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - EVENING

Short Tails linger. On the ceiling, unseen at first by any but children, the OLD CONSTELLATION LIGHTS WINK ON.

INT. VIRGINIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Virginia sets a roasted chicken on the table where Abby sits, her red checkered bandana around her head.

ABBY

I'm not really that hungry, Mom.

The circles around Abby's eyes are dark, tiny arms frail.

VIRGINIA

Try and eat something, baby.

Virginia is fighting a battle they have already lost. Both know it. But child cannot let mother fight alone.

ABBY

Okay.

Virginia carves. Her child's sudden question stills her hand.

ABBY

Mama, where do you think we go when we die?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VIRGINIA

I don't know, baby girl.

She looks out the window and up at the night sky.

VIRGINIA

I met someone today who says we go  
up into the sky and become stars.

She smiles at her daughter.

VIRGINIA

How lovely would that be?

O.S. the BUZZER rings.

EXT. VIRGINIA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Peter Lake stands with that old wooden box under his arm, street lamp corona revealing the first dust of snow above him. Virginia opens the door, he disappears inside.

REVERSE ANGLE

A few SEDANS pull up and Cesar Tan emerges, rubbing his hands in the cold, followed by a variety of Short Tails.

CESAR TAN

Hate winter. Should move to  
goddamned Florida.

GWATHMI

Take him?

CESAR TAN

No.

Cesar lights a smoke.

CESAR TAN

We wait for the boss. This one's  
personal, I guess.

Gwathmi just grimaces, not at all a pleasant notion.

EXT. GRAIN YARDS (RED HOOK, BROOKLYN, NY) - NIGHT

Old, used up horses, cheaper than machines, lashed to grain mills, pull in endless circles until they drop dead from exhaustion and are slaughtered for meat and glue.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

One white horse looks like he's been pulling for years. Despite his scars and toil, there is something regal about him.

A squat FIGURE steps into the yard, approaches the horse. The horse notices him and, for the first time in what may be decades, he stops.

CECIL MATURE

You're a hard fellow to find.

Man and horse appraise each other.

CECIL MATURE

He's going to need you.

The horse just stares at him. So many years of pulling, everything else has gotten fuzzy, memories turned to dreams.

But seeing this man as he unhooks the harness, an old focus starts to come back into his eyes.

VOICE (O.S.)

Hey --

The NIGHT WATCHMAN has emerged, hand on his pistol.

NIGHT WATCHMAN

What the hell do you think  
you're --

Cecil Mature doesn't even turn, his cane moving with incredible speed and precision, KNOCKING first the gun from the guard's hand, then dropping him out cold with a single swing.

Not once has he taken his eyes off the horse.

CECIL MATURE

You remember now, don't you, old  
friend?

The horse stares back at him. Takes a slight step backwards. Cecil flips the cane and SMASHES the padlock on the doors.

EXT. ATLANTIC AVENUE (BROOKLYN, NY) - NIGHT

Cecil watches as the horse begins to run, easily navigating the few driving, HONKING cars.

CECIL MATURE

Don't screw it up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

But in Cecil's VOICE there is only love.

INT. BROOKLYN BRIDGE - NIGHT

Pearly stands in the Judge's chambers, the Judge now reading a copy of the collected works of Yates.

JUDGE

You were just here.

PEARLY SOAMES

That was a hundred years ago.

JUDGE

Like I said.

The Judge glances down at the page.

JUDGE

(reading)

I never slouch.

(looks up)

What can I do for you, demon?

PEARLY SOAMES

The human Peter Lake.

JUDGE

This old saw again.

PEARLY SOAMES

He's neither angel or demon. I can detect no spell or charm, no pact with you, so how's he still alive?

JUDGE

You couldn't see the sea for the swells.

(beat)

Is that how it goes?

PEARLY SOAMES

Are you talking forest and trees here, Lu?

JUDGE

I'm talking what we're always talking. Stars in the sky. Miracles.

PEARLY SOAMES

I stopped him from saving her --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JUDGE

Not his miracle. Hers.

PEARLY SOAMES

I'm sorry?

JUDGE

You were so fixated on stopping him, you missed her entirely.

Pearly gets it all at once.

PEARLY SOAMES

... Their love.

JUDGE

She made him love her so much he couldn't die. He was her miracle.

Pearly lets that sink in.

JUDGE

Not your very best case. Not the one they'd take to series. Not ready for prime time.

PEARLY SOAMES

I always like it when you're funny. God loved your jokes too, right? Isn't that why he kept you around?"

(VFX) The Judge's eyes turn to raging, yellow fire for just a second, then cool to their impossible green.

JUDGE

Are you here to make a request, demon?

PEARLY SOAMES

I want to kill him and I want him to stay dead.

The Judge cocks his head, interested.

PEARLY SOAMES

No more lives, no more chances. I want him turned to snow and scattered to the four winds.

JUDGE

Older rules would apply. You'd be fighting as a mortal. Rather extreme, don't you think?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PEARLY SOAMES

I'll tell you something that  
should chill your blood.

(beat)

Do you even have blood?

JUDGE

Of a sort.

PEARLY SOAMES

No matter how far we tilt the  
scales our way, no matter how many  
we turn dark, nothing seems to  
break their capacity for hope.  
They pass it back and forth like  
the flu at a preschool fair.

Pearly holds the Judge's eyes.

PEARLY SOAMES

We're losing, one star at a time.

The moment lasts. Finally...

JUDGE

You'll have to say the words,  
Pearly.

PEARLY SOAMES

I hereby request that the loser of  
our fight die the one true death.

JUDGE

Last chance.

Pearly's answer is only silence.

JUDGE

Granted.

Pearly nods, starts to go.

JUDGE

Pearly.

Pearly turns back.

JUDGE

Be careful. I'd hate to lose you.

Pearly looks at the other, surprised.

PEARLY SOAMES

Why?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

The Judge is already reading again, doesn't look back up as he answers.

JUDGE

You get used to people.

INT. VIRGINIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Peter sits with Abby on the couch, the little girl in the bandana turning the old blanket over in her hands.

ABBY

You floated here? In a ship?

PETER LAKE

That's what I was told.

She lifts the old bronze plaque, stands and levers it between her palms, catching and reflecting the light.

VIRGINIA

(entering)

I have chocolate, strawberry and pistachio.

PETER LAKE

Pistachio?

ABBY

I hate vanilla.

VIRGINIA

She hates vanilla.

Abby's eyes roll up in her head.

ABBY

Mama. There's a mean man coming.

Virginia drops the bowls to the floor, Peter up and catching Abby as she starts to violently seizure.

VIRGINIA

Put her on the couch!

Virginia races out as Peter lays the small, seizing child on the couch, returning with a wooden tongue depressor.

Virginia is pushing the flat wooden plank between CHATTERING teeth, Abby's tiny body still seizing.

VIRGINIA

Relax, baby, relax. Mommy's here.

Peter Lake glances out the window, sees the GROUP OF SHADOWS gathered in front of the house.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OUTSIDE

A car has pulled up, FIGURE emerging, looking up at the window, eyes like blue diamonds that pierce the night.

Peter looks down at Abby, her contortions slowing. Her bandana has come off in the commotion.

What Peter sees stills his heart.

PETER LAKE

Red hair.

Abby's hair has begun to grow back, and her head is covered by a soft, orange fuzz.

PETER LAKE

Abby has red hair.

PETER LAKE'S EYES CLOSE.

Pieces falling into place, like the tumblers of a lock or the parts of some great unseen clock.

Peter looks at Abby. Then, to the window, Short Tails outside closing like rats drawn to the smell of red meat.

PETER LAKE

We have to go. Now!

VIRGINIA

Peter, you don't understand.  
She's --

PETER LAKE

I think I know how to save her.

VIRGINIA

She has a malignancy in her heart.

PETER LAKE

I think I'm supposed to save her.

VIRGINIA

Stop. Just stop. The doctors tried everything. There's no hope.

OVER, BANGING downstairs at the front door.

VIRGINIA

They said only a miracle...

PETER LAKE

I'm her miracle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VIRGINIA

What are you talking about --

PETER LAKE

It's why I stayed alive.

(off Abby)

For her.

Something LANDS hard enough on the roof to JAR the room.

VIRGINIA

What was that?

From below, the BANGING on the front door increases.

VIRGINIA

What's going on?

PETER LAKE

Virginia. You have to trust me.  
Maybe Willa was right. Who can  
say a miracle isn't possible?

She stares at him. OVER, more BANGING.

PETER LAKE

Please.

Finally, Virginia nods. Peter has Abby in his arms and is up fast, Virginia racing after him into...

INT. VIRGINIA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

The DOOR downstairs gives way in final BANGING protest, producing scores of Short Tails.

PETER LAKE

Up!

Our group makes for the roof as the Short Tails on the ground floor POUND up the stairs after them.

As Peter spins to open the door, he locks into two blue eyes three flights of stairs below.

PEARLY SOAMES

Shoot them!

The dull FIRECRACKER REPORTS of bullets ECHO in the stairwell as our three BANG out the bulkhead door onto...

EXT. ROOF - CONTINUOUS ACTION - NIGHT

The cold winter hits their lungs like water, surprising them. Yet Virginia cannot stifle a sharp intake of breath. Backed by the starry sky stands a giant white horse.

VIRGINIA

There's a horse on the roof.

Virginia moves toward it, hand reaching out.

PETER LAKE

Careful...

But the mighty beast just lowers its head to her touch, and then nudges her gently on the cheek with his snout.

Peter jams a shard of brick into the bulkhead door latch, advances as the horse sniffs Abby, then lowers its head to look at Peter.

PETER LAKE

Hello, old friend. It's been a very long time.

The horse stares at him with love, then throws his head back and WHINNIES, a deep and mighty sound, like THUNDER.

PETER LAKE

(to Virginia)

Can you mount him?

Virginia's arms are around the horse's neck and she is on his back like mercury.

He hands her Abby and then mounts. OVER, FOOTSTEPS.

PETER LAKE

You know where to go.

OVER, SHOUTS. BANGING on the door Peter jimmied shut. THE HORSE backs up to the rear edge of the roof. Pauses.

VIRGINIA

What is he --

PETER LAKE

Shh. Let him do the math.

THE WHITE HORSE begins running straight towards the far edge of the roof.

THE DOOR flies open, brick shard EXPLODING into dust.

{CONTINUED}

CONTINUED:

THE WHITE HORSE accelerates.

PEARLY SOAMES stands in the doorway, setting his stance, taking aim.

THE WHITE HORSE leaps over the edge of the roof.

(VFX) PULL BACK TO PEARLY as he FIRES... SHOOT FORWARD with his BULLET towards the jumping horse as PETER LEANS BACKWARDS... bullet WHIZZING just clear of his eyes.

THE WHITE HORSE soars through the air, Virginia staring in wonder at the moving lights of the city below.

THUD! The horse hits a lower roof, still running, then jumps again, flying towards the next square in an endless checkerboard of rooftops spreading forever uptown.

PEARLY SOAMES lowers his weapon, ROARS.

PEARLY SOAMES  
Do not lose them!

EXT. NEW YORK ROOFTOPS - HELICOPTER SHOT - NIGHT (VFX)

CHASE a WHITE HORSE as he leaps from roof to roof, picking up speed, jumps going wider and wider still.

TILT DOWN ON THE STREET, BLACK SEDANS race against traffic up 9th Avenue, trying to keep up with the outpacing horse above.

EXT. HENRY HUDSON PARKWAY - NIGHT (VFX)

The horse bounds up the Henry Hudson Parkway, Short Tails racing after them, all the way to the center lane of the bridge, and springs off towards the dark banks of the Hudson.

The Short Tails' cars race across the bridge, avoiding the sudden snarl of BRAKING traffic caused by a flying horse, increasing speed in ever widening pursuit.

EXT. FROZEN LAKE (COHEERIES) - NIGHT (VFX)

A white plain lit only by the moon. A shape hurls from the sky and lands with such force the thick ice CRACKS.

The horse PANTS vanishing clouds. Virginia has to use her ear to find the shallow BREATH of her unconscious child.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Circling the lake are once-beautiful houses, now dark, some boarded up, or run down, others simply abandoned.

VIRGINIA

This is the place. From the pictures.

Peter dismounts. He is looking for one particular house.

PETER LAKE

There. On the other side of the lake.

VIRGINIA

It looks forgotten.

PETER LAKE

This way.

VIRGINIA

What about those... whoever they were? Christ, who are they?

PETER LAKE

Short Tails. I think they can't follow us here.

VIRGINIA

You *think*?

Peter smiles.

That's when the headlights appear on the edges of the crater that surrounds the lake, peering white eyes.

Cars hurl down them now, rolling onto the ice, spilling Short Tails between Peter and the old Penn house.

The white horse is positioned beside Peter, Virginia holding Abby in her arms beside them. On the icy lake, now stand about FIFTY SHORT TAILS.

A single FIGURE climbs up the snowbank directly on the lake's edge, facing Peter. Pearly Soames.

PEARLY SOAMES

(singing)

'Everybody wants to save someone,  
if it takes all night...'

VIRGINIA

I thought you said they couldn't come here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PETER LAKE

(shrugging)

Rules change.

PEARLY SOAMES

Good to see you, Pete.

Pearly looks at Abby.

PEARLY SOAMES

Seems I got my redheads mixed up.  
An honest mistake. I'll fix it  
now. Fifty of us. One of you.

He looks at Peter, his eyes shining with contempt.

PEARLY SOAMES

You're not saving anyone. There's  
no miracle tonight. And her  
destiny winds up being skewered to  
the end of my sword.

Peter just turns to his horse.

PETER LAKE

I guess you know what to do.

(VFX) The horse looks at him then goes back on his haunches, compressing, and shoots straight up into the night sky.

PEARLY SOAMES

Always a coward, that White Dog.  
Boys.

The Short Tails start to advance.

PETER LAKE

Why do you do it, Pearly?

PEARLY SOAMES

I know my destiny. And it's to  
kill the likes of you.

But then, Peter just smiles and looks up. Pearly follows his gaze, his expression changing.

(VFX) A TINY SPECK in the sky RAPIDLY GROWING in size. Pearly appraises the situation in seconds, eyes moving from the sky to his small army of men, their heavy black cars.

PEARLY SOAMES

Off the ice! Get off the --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

But there's no time. (VFX) Scramble as they might, the horse explodes out of the sky, SLAMMING down on the ice.

(VFX) Thick ice CRACKS and ROARS, black water bubbles through seams in shifting planes of ice, MEN and CARS slipping into watery dark as the white horse leaps away to safety.

Pearly SCREAMS his rage and leaps at Peter just as Peter leaps at him, and the two figures COLLIDE in midair.

The battle that ensues is savage. Fists, elbows, knees, teeth, nails, heads, palms, chins, feet.

The two fight with the fury of betrayal fueled by the heady mix of opposing ideology and disappointed love.

And then, finally, it is done, Peter Lake stands holding Pearly aloft by the throat, high in one hand.

And with a quick move of the wrist, he SNAPS Pearly's neck and drops him where he falls, dead, to his knees.

(VFX) And Pearly Soames turns to snow.

Peter Lake is speechless, just stares at the kneeling snowman, bent and PANTING.

VIRGINIA (O.S.)

No.

Peter turns. Virginia's expression changes. She is looking at the child in her arms.

VIRGINIA

Abby? Abby!

Virginia drops to her knees. Abby's eyes are closed as if in sleep. Her chest has gone still.

PETER LAKE

No! Not again.

Peter Lake lifts the small, still body.

PETER LAKE

Not again.

And he's already moving fast through the snow.

INT. PENN GREENHOUSE (LAKE OF THE COHEERIES) - NIGHT

A dark forest of leafless trees, grown petrified from seasons of the invading, impossible cold.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The door BANGS open from Peter's kick and he is inside, Virginia trailing, Abby's body cradled in his arms, just as Beverly's was nearly a century ago.

VIRGINIA

Stop! What are you doing?

Virginia follows Peter Lake through the untended wood, ducking branches or thickets where flowers once grew.

PETER LAKE

It has to still be here.

And then, rounding a copse of dead elms, Peter Lake sees what he's been looking for.

Where white roses once grew are now only coils of thorn. The lavender has gone on old winds, leaving only a faint purple dusting on the feather comforter which is stained half brown from a leak in the roof. Willa's magic bed.

Peter Lake lies Abby down gently, kneels over her.

VIRGINIA

What is that?

PETER LAKE

A bed made of wishes a hundred years ago by a little girl who is now an old woman, a bed made to save a girl with flaming red hair from dying too young, a place made for a miracle to happen.

Peter places his hands on Abby's chest and begins working there, as if breaking up something beneath the skin.

PETER LAKE

Pumps and valves, joints and tensile cording, energy distribution systems. I'm just a mechanic. But what are we if not machines?

Virginia stares, numb from the shock, at her daughter's still chest, her lifeless gaze.

PETER LAKE

Machines that need a little nudge from the universe to run.

Peter Lake stops, something coming to him. He reaches into his pocket and takes out that faded silk knot.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PETER LAKE

Is this why we love at all? To  
save? You were always the one,  
weren't you?

He unties it and inside, as impossibly preserved by time  
as Peter himself, is that single sprig of lavender.

PETER LAKE

Please. You were always the one I  
was meant to save.

He places the sprig on the bed. He leans down and kisses  
Abby on the lips, not a lover's kiss, but not a parent's  
kiss either. It feels, if anything, like a blessing.

PETER LAKE

(mouth to mouth,  
soft)  
Come back.

And the kiss lasts. Peter's tears fall from his cheeks,  
land on hers. But Abby remains still. He closes his  
eyes.

PETER LAKE

Come back.

SMALL VOICE (O.S.)

Why are you crying?

Peter Lake opens his eyes. Abby stares up at him.  
Behind him, Virginia is hugging herself, wracked with  
SOBS.

ABBY

Why is everyone crying? Did I get  
sick and fall down again?

Peter Lake sits back on his haunches and looks at her.

PETER LAKE

Yes, Abby. But you're better now.  
You won't get sick anymore.

He lifts her up, and hands her to her mother, a motion  
not unlike when he returned her through the playground  
bars.

INT. PENN HOUSE (LAKE OF THE COHEERIES) - STUDY

Virginia and Abby stand in the same room where Isaac Penn  
once interrogated Peter regarding his daughter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The house is abandoned. Furniture preens in moonlight, as if having long ago forgotten what it is to be seen.

Peter ENTERS carrying mink blankets for Virginia and Abby, which they use to wrap themselves.

PETER LAKE

Clar-et.

VIRGINIA

What?

PETER LAKE

I always liked this room.

Before she can respond, Peter pulls open the door.

EXT. LAKE OF THE COHEERIES - NIGHT

Virginia, Abby and Peter have emerged from the dark Penn house wrapped in mink blankets.

Abby takes a few steps forward, now stands staring at the snowman that was once Pearly.

She reaches out and scoops a snowball from his cheek, which she compacts in tiny fists. Then she turns and throws it at her mother.

And they are on him, Peter, Abby and Virginia, making snowballs of the villain and tossing them at each other until he is little more than a formless mound and memory.

OLD WILLA (V.O.)

I do not know why so many things  
conspired to save one little  
girl's life.

EXT. LAKE OF THE COHEERIES - NIGHT

Virginia and Abby are already on the back of the white horse as Peter mounts the steed.

EXT. MANHATTAN - NIGHT

OUR THREE RIDERS stare across the moonlit ribbon of the Hudson at MANHATTAN, her lights sharp and moving, a promise of hope and possibility to all who first see her.

OLD WILLA (V.O.)

But then a thought occurred to me.  
What if it wasn't just Abby?

EXT. VIRGINIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Peter and Virginia stand looking at each other.

OLD WILLA (V.O.)

What if we are all unique and the universe loves all of us equally. So much so that it bends over backwards across the centuries for each of us. And we were just lucky enough to see it.

Peter Lake kneels down and kisses Abby on the head.

INT. VIRGINIA'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Virginia kneels in front of Abby, taking off her small coat. Then she hugs her, holding her so very tightly.

OLD WILLA (V.O.)

Sometimes we save. Sometimes we are saved.

EXT. CALVARY CEMETERY - NIGHT

Peter stands one last time at Beverly's grave.

OLD WILLA (V.O.)

But nothing has been without purpose, neither the suffering of the children, nor the agony of love that ends in death, nothing.

Then he walks a few feet and climbs on his horse.

OLD WILLA (V.O.)

What if we are all part of a great equality, a pattern that we may someday understand?

The horse goes back on its haunches and with a single flap of glowing gossamer wings, hurls skyward.

OLD WILLA (V.O.)

And one day, when we have done what we alone are capable of doing we fly up...

EXT. PENN HOUSE - ROOF - NIGHT

Willa stands on a platform on the roof, tent long gone, an old woman looking up at the full night sky.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OLD WILLA (V.O.)  
And like Peter and my sister, we  
reunite with those we love the  
most...

Two stars flicker where once there was only one; a pair  
of tiny lights flaring with the brightness of lovers.

OLD WILLA (V.O.)  
What if we get to become stars?

FADE OUT.

THE END