

NEW ENGLAND MURDER MYSTERY

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. BILLY'S ROOM -- MORNING, SEPTEMBER 1977

A pop-culture obsessed teenager's room. Dark curtains block out the harsh sunlight for the kid snoring away in bed.

He has action figures, Star Wars collectibles, posters of horror novels made into primetime miniseries:

The theatrical one-sheet for "China Doll" features a cockney urchin dragging a rag doll behind her, its ceramic head cracked horribly...

Next to it, the poster for "Rhiannon" shows a gothic schoolgirl controlling a campfire with her mind...

Both are written by Miguel Prince, whose bearded, bespectacled author's photo is on the bookshelf.

The snoring, though, comes from BILLY PRITCHETT, age 17. He's got an unruly bowl cut and freckles on his cheeks.

There's a quiet knock at the door and Billy's mother, ELAINE, 49, pops her head in.

ELAINE

You said you wanted me to wake you?

He speaks, face down in his drool-covered pillow.

BILLY

Mmm, five more minutes.

ELAINE

It's 9:45.

Billy shoots up in bed.

BILLY

I said to wake me at nine!

ELAINE

And I did. The first time I woke you up...

BILLY

Jesus christ, ma!

He's instantly on his feet, only his tighty-whities hiding his modesty.

ELAINE

I am not your alarm clock! Maybe
come home earlier than 3 a.m. and
you won't need a wake-up call!

She leaves him to freak out. He bolts around the room
frantically looking for something. When he can't find it, he
calls out to her, in the living room.

BILLY

Mom, have you seen my uniform?!

ELAINE (O.S.)

I ironed it - it's hanging up!

INT. PRITCHETT LIVING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Elaine settles back onto the couch where a tabloid hit piece
is currently running on their rabbit-eared television.

BARBARA WALTERS (O.S.)

*...with a deeper dive into the life
of best-selling romance novelist
Rebecca Fontaine.*

TV SCREEN

On display are a cache of FAMILY PHOTOS sold to the press.

BARBARA WALTERS (O.S.)

*Raised by a womanizing father and
expelled from a slew of girls
boarding schools, her love of bad
boys drove her into the arms of
inveterate bachelors, Marlon Brando
and Troy Donahue.*

PUBLICITY SHOTS of the stars mentioned fades to STOCK FOOTAGE
of industrial films.

BARBARA WALTERS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*A history of odd jobs followed:
stewardess for Pan-Am airlines,
switchboard operator at the Shelton
Hotel, and a brief stretch as a b-
movie actress before she sold her
first novel, "Laredo."*

With her newfound success, quick cuts of PAPARAZZI IMAGES
take over the screen.

BARBARA WALTERS (O.S.) (CONT'D)
*Five marriages followed, but which
 one of them was true love? Was it
 the jet-setting French-Canadian
 banker who took her around the
 world? Or was it the prisoner at
 the Lompoc County jail she met
 while doing research for her
 controversial second book, "Sisters
 of the Clink?" Find out next on
 Rich & Shameless...*

BACK TO SCENE

Billy exits his room, his bellhop uniform only halfway buttoned up. He grabs his bike from the hallway and starts to leave.

ELAINE
 Wait, what about breakfast?

BILLY
 Can't, I'm late!

ELAINE
 At least take some toast--

He's nearly out the door when he turns back quickly and plucks some bread from the toaster. He shoves it into his mouth to placate her and leaves.

EXT. MORROW BAY -- MINUTES LATER

Billy rides his ten-speed through the sleepy, New England beach town of Morrow Bay, Massachusetts. In the summer, the place is filled with tourists but here in early September there are none to be seen.

As Billy crests a hill, the latest best-seller by Miguel Prince is advertised on a wind-beaten billboard. He waves to the dying court jester on the cover and coasts down the hill.

EXT. THE LION'S HEAD -- SOON AFTER

Billy turns down a forest lane and rides his bike the length of it. The road ends in a large, Victorian manor, the Lion's Head.

It's a big, scary, isolated house on a rocky stretch of coast, placed high on a cliffside, replete with ornamental gargoyles and stained glass windows.

There's a small parking lot next to the sprawling gardens that surround the place. Billy steers in and hides his bike in some bushes near the front door and heads up the walk.

The imposing entrance has a Lion's Head door knocker that clatters as Billy enters.

INT. THE LION'S HEAD -- CONTINUOUS

As Billy quickly fastens the rest of the buttons on his uniform, we get a good look at the place...

It's a Bed & Breakfast with mahogany railings, red velvet curtains, and forest green carpets. It's tastefully appointed with leather upholstered chairs, tiffany lamps, and a regal grandfather clock.

Smoothing his shirt down, Billy approaches the front desk, where a frazzled frenchman, MARTAN LAROCHE, 36, is dealing with an angry, midwestern couple.

MARTAN LAROCHE
Mondieu, I am so zorry about zis.
We will get it fixed as soon as
possible. This is not how the
Lion's Head does business!

Billy watches as the wormy little man grovels.

MARTAN LAROCHE (CONT'D)
Can I please make this up to you?
How about I zend up a bottle of
champagne? Will zat do?

The overweight couple nod. No one's ever treated them this good. They appear sated for now and head back to their room as Martan calls after them.

MARTAN LAROCHE (CONT'D)
Please let me know if zer is
anything furzer I can do!

Martan watches them go, then turns to Billy, the ingratiating smile fading.

MARTAN LAROCHE (CONT'D)
You're late.

BILLY
I know I'm sorry, my alarm clock--

Martan takes off, binder in hand. Billy's forced to play catch up.

MARTAN LAROCHE

You beg me all zummer for zis job
and when I am finally giv'in you're
nowhere to be seen!

BILLY

Martan, it'll never happen again. I
promise!

MARTAN LAROCHE

You mus' think I am stoopid? I take
a chance on you because it's off
zeason and zis is the thanks I get?

BILLY

I'm here now, I'm ready to work.

They pass the study where a camera crew is busy setting up.
Billy peeks inside.

MARTAN LAROCHE

(over his shoulder)

Keep up, please.

BILLY

What's going on in there?

MARTAN LAROCHE

It is none of your concern, but
they are getting ready for an
interview.

BILLY

So he IS coming?!

Martan scoops a pile of books up off a counter and continues
on.

MARTAN LAROCHE

I told you when you interviewed dat
zis would be work. It would not be
you hanging out vis your favorite
author, chit-chatting!

Martan hands the books off to an employee stacking Miguel
Prince paperbacks in the Lion's Head picture window. But he
can tell that Billy isn't satisfied yet.

MARTAN LAROCHE (CONT'D)

He's in town for "Wordfest, New
England." Arriving today, staying
through Sunday.

BILLY
The publisher's convention?

MARTAN LAROCHE
Zat is the one. He comes here for
peace, for the quiet, to do
writing. He is not here to answer
your fan mail.

For the first time, Billy gets a look at the man stacking the books. He's larger than Billy previously thought, a veritable giant crouched down. He has extra fingers on both hands, elephantine features, and a partially caved-in skull. Billy gapes at him until Martan notices.

MARTAN LAROCHE (CONT'D)
William, this is my brother, Rene.

BILLY
Your brother?

Martan smiles.

MARTAN LAROCHE
We are twins. You don't see the
resemblance?

Billy nervously holds a hand out for RENE LAROCHE, 36, to shake. Martan's brother just stares at it and huffs. He turns back to what he was doing.

BILLY
What's his deal?

MARTAN LAROCHE
You take his job. He's very upset.

BILLY
I didn't know that.

MARTAN LAROCHE
Eh, what are you going to do? It is
not like we can put him out front
with the guests. Besides, he's
very happy cleaning up and doing
repairs while everyone's asleep.

As Martan walks off, Billy follows after, working up the courage to ask him something.

BILLY
What, uh... happened to him?

Martan laughs at the young man's bluntness.

MARTAN LAROCHE
He is a big one, no? Doctors say
thyroid disease.

BILLY
My uncle has thyroid problems. He
doesn't look like that...

Martan does his best to sound it out.

MARTAN LAROCHE
Mee-cro-cephaly, I think your
people call it.

He leads the way into the kitchen as Billy sticks with him.

BILLY
Martan, do I still have a job?

Instead of answering, Martan gives him a once-over.

MARTAN LAROCHE
William, your bellman's uniform is
atrocious. Please re-button it.

Martan goes to the fridge and grabs a bottle of Brut he
shoves deep into a bucket of ice.

MARTAN LAROCHE (CONT'D)
Here, bring zis champagne up to
room 17.

Accepting it, Billy turns to go, but is immediately spooked
by a frail, imposing figure in a maid's uniform. HELGA
LAROCHE, 57, is pale with "Bride of Frankenstein" hair. In
her hands is a sterling silver tea set.

MARTAN LAROCHE (CONT'D)
Zer you are, mother!

Helga glowers at Billy.

MARTAN LAROCHE (CONT'D)
William, zis is Helga. My mother.

Billy again holds out a tentative hand.

BILLY
Hello, Mrs. Laroche...

Helga grimaces at the outstretched hand. Doesn't say a
thing. Finally, Billy has to ask Martan.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Is everyone in your family allergic
to handshakes?

Martan grins, good-naturedly.

MARTAN LAROCHE
She is a woman of very few words.

He motions to the tea in Helga's hands.

MARTAN LAROCHE (CONT'D)
You can bring zat into the camera
crew, mother.

Helga backs out of the room at a glacial pace. When she's
finally gone, Billy turns back to Martan.

BILLY
She's lovely.

Martan chuckles. Billy's about to head out too, but remains
where he's standing.

MARTAN LAROCHE
William? The champagne?

Billy nods.

BILLY
I'm just gonna give her a couple
minutes head start.

INT. THE LION'S HEAD, LOBBY -- SOON AFTER

Billy's watching the front desk when it happens. The door of
the Lion's Head opens and MIGUEL PRINCE, 42, enters, trailed
by a group of eager, young assistants he tries hopelessly to
lose.

Prince is pale with beady, fetal alcohol eyes, coke-bottle
glasses, and an upturned nose. But the choir boy haircut
atop his head makes him wholly approachable; his overall vibe
that of a congenial uncle.

When Billy sees him, his mouth drops. He moves to stand and
greet the man when Martan suddenly rounds the corner.

MARTAN LAROCHE
Ah, Monsieur Prince! So good of you
to join us!

Prince sighs in relief when he sees a familiar face.

MIGUEL PRINCE
Hello, Martan.

They shake hands, warmly, as Billy notes under his breath.

BILLY
So they *do* shake hands...

Martan leads the author away from his hanger-ons.

MARTAN LAROCHE
We have you in the room you requested with the Smith-Corona you like, and I personally installed ze coffee maker. Have you given any thought to the morning shuttle? I can order eet, no problem.

MIGUEL PRINCE
No thanks, I drove down.

MARTAN LAROCHE
And how was it?

MIGUEL PRINCE
Eh, you know 95.

Martan turns to Billy.

MARTAN LAROCHE
William, ze bags!

Billy hurries over to take the small amount of luggage from Prince.

MIGUEL PRINCE
I'm afraid it's not much. William, is it?

BILLY
Uh, everyone just calls me Billy. If you'll come with me sir, I can show you to your room...

Billy waits until they're clear of Martan before he dares to speak.

BILLY (CONT'D)
I just wanted to say I'm a huge fan. I've read everything you've ever written, even the short stories. I think my favorite has to be "China Doll," when the bees come out of the forehead--

They're about to scale the grand staircase when an A.D. from the camera crew arrives by Prince's side.

ASS'T DIRECTOR
We're ready for you, Mr. Prince.

Prince groans but turns to go with them.

MIGUEL PRINCE
(to Billy)
You'll make sure--

Billy finishes the thought for him.

BILLY
Don't worry, I'll make sure
everything finds its way up to your
room.

INT. MIGUEL PRINCE'S ROOM -- MINUTES LATER

Billy enters Miguel Prince's empty suite. It's one of the nicer rooms the Lion's Head offers. He places Prince's bags down at the foot of the queen-size bed and decides to look around.

He runs his hand over the requested typewriter, even takes a seat at it to see if inspiration strikes.

Wanting to go above and beyond, he unpacks for Prince, putting suits on hangers and folded shirts in drawers.

When the suitcase appears empty, Billy moves to put it away only to find a manuscript in progress in one of the open compartments. He stares at it, a tantalizing risk...

Glancing over his shoulder as if someone were watching him, he's unable to stand it one moment longer...

He dives right in.

INT. LION'S HEAD, LOBBY -- SOON AFTER

Billy descends the Lion Head's grand staircase. Crossing the lobby, he peeks in on the interview to see what can be seen, but the lighting equipment blocks out everything but the subject's feet.

Returning to the front desk, Billy finds Martan on the phone deep in conversation, so he slides into one of the wooden chairs to wait.

There's a small black & white television behind the desk, playing at a barely audible level. Billy watches as a NEWS REPORT cuts into previously scheduled programming to advertise the midday news:

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

--at noon, fire fighters battle a blaze at the Four Seasons, Boston. Three floors of the Boylston street landmark go up in flames...

When Martan finally hangs up the phone, Billy motions to the screen.

BILLY

You see this?

MARTAN LAROCHE

Phone's been ringing off ze hook. Last-minute reservations. I wouldn't be surprised if we don't get a lot more. Everywhere in Boston is booked up solid because of the Convention.

BILLY

Bit out of the way... why are they coming here?

MARTAN LAROCHE

I don't question it. I just say, 'thank you.'

INT. LION'S HEAD, STUDY -- SAME TIME

In the Lion's Head's stately study there's a roaring fire despite the temperature. DICK CAVETT, 40, sits across from Miguel Prince, both of them in burgundy arm chairs. Prince is sitting beneath a fringed lamp, framed by the room's velvet drapes and floor to ceiling bookshelves.

DICK CAVETT

Where are we right now?

MIGUEL PRINCE

This is the Lion's Head, a charming Bed & Breakfast run by an equally charming French family. It's kind of a second home, one of my favorite places to write.

DICK CAVETT

Speaking of your writing, you seem to have adopted the mantel of America's favorite bogeyman. How does that make you feel?

MIGUEL PRINCE

It's certainly better than not being known for anything.

Cavett LAUGHS.

DICK CAVETT

I suppose that's right! Your origin story is almost as well-known as some of your books. You're broke, on food stamps, and married with a child on the way when your wife fishes the first pages of "Rhiannon" out of your office trash can and encourages you to finish it.

MIGUEL PRINCE

She's always been much smarter than me.

DICK CAVETT

Is it true that when the paperback rights sell, you don't even have a working telephone? You received a telegram from your editor saying that they went for something like \$400,000?

MIGUEL PRINCE

This is starting to feel like a puff piece. I love it.

DICK CAVETT

Then in defense of my journalistic integrity, I might as well ask about those pesky plagiarism rumors.

Prince laughs, grimly.

MIGUEL PRINCE

I guess I brought that question on myself...

He trails off, letting Cavett fill the dead air.

DICK CAVETT
No response?

Prince just throws up his hands.

DICK CAVETT (CONT'D)
At the risk of not remaining
neutral, I've read both books and
except for some rogue gerund
phrases, the connection just
doesn't seem to be there.

MIGUEL PRINCE
Well...
(beat)
I appreciate you saying that.

Cavett tries to move on.

DICK CAVETT
Now, you're in town for Wordfest,
New England. Tell us - are there
any other authors you're looking
forward to seeing this weekend?

MIGUEL PRINCE
I must confess I don't know exactly
who's supposed to be in attendance,
but I really like that guy who
writes those espionage novels.
Aubrey-something...?

DICK CAVETT
Trevor Aubrey?

MIGUEL PRINCE
--Yes, that's it! I try to grab
one of his books every time I'm
stuck on a flight.

INT. HUCK FINN DINER, RHODE ISLAND -- THE DAY BEFORE

Ninety miles from Boston, in a truck-stop diner, a small-town
WAITRESS is being flirted with by one of her customers.

TREVOR AUBREY, 51, is an upper-class Brit in a three-piece
suit and double windsor tie.

WAITRESS
We don't get European folks like
you in here much.

TREVOR AUBREY
I'm on assignment, tracking
someone. You see that mustachioed
gentleman by the bar? He's pulling
one over on your fellow waitress...

She looks over at the MAN at the counter. He appears more
like an off-duty cop, than anything else.

WAITRESS
He's a con artist?!

TREVOR AUBREY
Oh, not an artist, my darling. A
con man surely, but not an artist.
Look at the way his eyes flit
around the room before he makes his
move.

The man does appear overly nervous as he waves down his
SERVER.

CON MAN
I'll take the bill, please.

She plucks the total from her waitress book and places it
down in front of him.

SERVER
\$5.50

He checks his wallet and winces.

CON MAN
All I have is a fifty...

She opens the cash register to see if she can make change.
In the time it takes her to look, the man has changed his \$50
to a \$5 bill. The server makes change for the fifty and just
like that -- he's made over forty dollars.

He even tips his server with the leftover pocket change,
which makes Aubrey smile.

TREVOR AUBREY
That last part was a nice touch. I
assume you'll want to make her
aware of what just happened?

But the Waitress only scoffs.

WAITRESS
Screw her, she's always stealing my
tips!

Aubrey smiles from ear-to-ear.

TREVOR AUBREY
My, you are a tom cat, aren't you?

She bats her eyes, coquettishly.

WAITRESS
I do my best...

Aubrey leans in to inquire.

TREVOR AUBREY
Normally, I would never be so
forward, but...
(beat)
Does this place have a back door?

WAITRESS
(gestures)
Sure, by the bathrooms...

TREVOR AUBREY
What say you meet me out back and I
teach you all sorts of other things
you don't know?

Her face blooms in mischief. He nods, encouraging her.

TREVOR AUBREY (CONT'D)
Go on...

She practically skips down the back hallway. When she's gone, Aubrey quickly collects his things.

And promptly leaves.

By chance, REBECCA FONTAINE, 38, is nearby, using the diner payphone to talk to her agent.

FONTAINE'S AGENT (O.S.)
I don't know what to tell you. The
sales have plateau'd.

REBECCA FONTAINE
Because they have us on their
romance imprint. I don't write
romance, I write about
relationships!

FONTAINE'S AGENT
You want off the imprint just ask
Hank Angstrom--

REBECCA FONTAINE
Yeah-yeah, and I know just what
he'll ask for in return...

She looks out the horizontal blinds of the diner as Trevor Aubrey exits. He catches her eyeline and winks at her, before jumping into his Aston-Martin.

As the import peels out of the parking lot, Trevor's Waitress re-enters the diner from the rear. She watches through the windows as Trevor fades to a dot on the horizon. The server who got conned stops to ask her.

SERVER
Isn't he one of your tables?

WAITRESS
Yeah...
(beat)
He left without paying.

INT. LION'S HEAD, STUDY -- BACK TO SCENE

Returning to the on-camera interview with Miguel Prince, Dick Cavett keeps digging.

DICK CAVETT
Anyone else you're partial to?

MIGUEL PRINCE
Well, I read a lot of Duncan
Balfour in high school.

DICK CAVETT
As did I. Practically wanted to
circumnavigate the globe after
college!

MIGUEL PRINCE
Fleeing Borneo savages--

DICK CAVETT
--in a pith helmet. Although I
hear there's some question about
whether he'll attend or not...

EXT. MARA SERENA AIRSTRIP, KENYA -- TWO WEEKS AGO, MORNING

A pudgy book editor, PETER PHLEGM, 46, emerges from a twin-engine plane, cheeks already lacquered in sunscreen. He throws an arm up to block the brutal African sun and makes his way down the rolling staircase onto the tarmac.

EXT. SEKENANI GATE -- HOURS LATER

A double-decker bus dripping with hop-ons slows down just long enough for people to hop off. Peter Phlegm stumbles with his belongings but manages to keep his footing. He heads into the game reserve.

EXT. MAASAI-MARA GAME RESERVE -- SOON AFTER

By the time Peter Phlegm tracks down a park ranger, he's covered in sweat. They ride through the arid grassland in an open-air jeep designed for safari hunts.

Kilimanjaro giraffes gallop alongside them as they reach the Talek river, where Nile crocodiles feed on warthogs and spotted hyenas pick over impala carcasses.

In the brush, the jeep slows at the sound of gunfire. Clearing a ridge, they find a white man crouched in the undergrowth, a rifle pointed at a herd of lions. Above him there are vultures circling, waiting for their afternoon meals.

Phlegm climbs down from the jeep and approaches from the rear. When a twig snaps underfoot, the man whirls around on him, aiming his weapon.

DUNCAN BALFOUR, 63, with his prominent forehead scar and lined face from years of hard living, groans when he sees Phlegm.

DUNCAN BALFOUR
Jesus Christ, Peter - I almost
killed you!

He turns back to the lions as Peter takes a spot next to him on the ground.

PETER PHLEGM
I've been trying the phone number
you gave me for days.

DUNCAN BALFOUR
I didn't want to be disturbed.

PETER PHLEGM
I know writers need to unwind but
you can hunt lions any time!

DUNCAN BALFOUR

No, what I wanted to hunt was the white rhino, but they said it was endangered and I wasn't willing to pay the fine.

PETER PHLEGM

We need to talk about Wordfest.

DUNCAN BALFOUR

We've been over this; I won't debase myself at a convention--

PETER PHLEGM

You know how this is done! Pick a fight or two at a Q&A and you'll be all anyone is talking about.

DUNCAN BALFOUR

I gave you my answer.

PETER PHLEGM

Even if you're finally able to get a deal on a certain 1,200 page cowboy opus?

Balfour looks up from the rifle sight, hope in his eyes for the first time in a while.

INT. LION'S HEAD, STUDY -- BACK TO SCENE

Cavett briefly refers to his notes.

DICK CAVETT

I know a lot of the younger set are excited about the E.L. Galbraith reading.

MIGUEL PRINCE

Oh, the whole Garden of Eden set on Atlantis thing?

DICK CAVETT

It's surprising because she's supposed to be a bit of a recluse...

MIGUEL PRINCE

I think that's just tabloid gossip. If you lived in a Scottish castle would you ever want to leave?

INT. CASTLE GALBRAITH -- THE DAY BEFORE

A disheveled woman sneaks into her bathroom, holding her heeled shoes so as not to make any noise. Once inside, she quietly turns the lights on and steps in front of the mirror.

ELLA GALBRAITH, 36, has a witchy, bohemian style with a dark, flowy skirt and ruffled blouse. But her black eyeliner has been streaked from crying and she has bruises on her neck and arm.

Behind her in the mirror, her boyfriend is passed out in bed. She makes sure he's really under before applying make-up to the angry marks on her body.

When the bruises are sufficiently covered, she tip-toes back into the bedroom and starts to pack a bag.

Ella winces as she tries to open bureau drawers without making a sound. A creaking closet door causes her boyfriend to roll over in bed and she remains frozen until she hears him snore once more.

Fully packed, she rolls her suitcase towards the door. At the last moment though, she remembers something...

She holds her breath as she leans over to grab the Wordfest tickets off her bedside table. When she finally has them safely in hand -- she splits.

INT. LION'S HEAD, STUDY -- BACK TO SCENE

After thinking on it, Miguel Prince comes up with another one.

MIGUEL PRINCE

I will say though, I'm probably most excited for Dame Felt. I grew up reading her books.

DICK CAVETT

Such intricate plots...

MIGUEL PRINCE

Yes, plots that make your head spin! Some of her books just make you want to quit writing because--

DICK CAVETT

--who could do it better?!

MIGUEL PRINCE

Exactly.

EXT. LION'S HEAD, DRIVEWAY -- SAME TIME

As EUDORA FELT, 77, is wheeled down the rear ramp of an airport shuttle she still finds time to complain.

EUDORA FELT

I don't know why you picked this place! It's over thirty-five minutes from the convention hall! Surely there were closer shitholes?!

She has a high-necked blouse marked by an ugly broach, horn-rimmed glasses, and a stooped posture from osteoporosis. She grips the yapping terrier in her lap as her NURSE, an amiable Asian woman named Mrs. Cho, tries to assuage her.

NURSE CHO

Now hush! That writer, Mr. Prince, swears by it. If it's good enough for him, it should be more than adequate for your needs.

EUDORA FELT

(scowls)

Miguel Prince! Writing horror used to be a shameful act. The fact that this man is a bestseller shows that this country is going to hell in a handbasket, Mrs. Cho!

NURSE CHO

You don't have to be at odds with the man. Why don't you think about an idea you can work on together?

Eudora twists around in her wheelchair to give Cho a death stare.

EUDORA FELT

You shut your mouth!

Rene Laroche is outside, painting the railing. When he sees the two of them, he makes a big show of holding the front door open for the wheelchair lady.

Eudora turns to her Nurse when they're barely out of ear shot.

EUDORA FELT (CONT'D)

How nice, they employ circus freaks.

INT. LION'S HEAD, LOBBY -- CONTINUOUS

Billy's the first to see Eudora as she's wheeled in. He nudges Martan to get his attention.

BILLY

You know who that is?! Dame Felt.
The whistler of mysteries, the
madam of mayhem, the first
grandmaster of the Mystery Writers
of America!

MARTAN LAROCHE

William, I do not care. You gif' me
information I did not ask for--

BILLY

Oh, come on, Martan! Everyone knows
her story: her mother dies, her
husband asks for a divorce, so she
goes missing for 11 days! When she
returns, she has "The Corpse Danced
at Midnight" written - a stone cold
classic!

MARTAN LAROCHE

I'm not much of a reader. I prefer
walks in nature.

Billy grimaces as Eudora and Nurse Cho approach.

MARTAN LAROCHE (CONT'D)

Ah, Mrs. Felt! Welcome to the
Lion's Head, we are great admirers
of your work here!

EUDORA FELT

(bored)

How kind of you to say. I believe
I have a room?

MARTAN LAROCHE

Yes, of course.

NURSE CHO

You can put it on this.

Nurse Cho turns over Eudora's Bank Ameri-card and Martan quickly takes an imprint.

MARTAN LAROCHE

Just need a signature...

He holds up a register for Eudora to sign. Billy watches as the woman reaches out a weak, arthritic hand to grab the pen. He sees her hand shake as she struggles to sign. She drops the pen back onto the front desk as Trevor Aubrey approaches.

TREVOR AUBREY (O.S.)
Is that Dame Felt?

EUDORA FELT
(hearing his accent)
Is that... a fellow countryman?

TREVOR AUBREY
I am indeed!

Trevor leans over her, a dashing playboy in bowtie and cufflinks and bespoke suit. His hair is slicked back and parted with hair oil and he carries a gold pocket watch in his vest. He clasps Eudora's hand and plants a kiss on it.

TREVOR AUBREY (CONT'D)
Trevor Aubrey, madame. At your service.

Eudora looks away to stop from blushing.

EUDORA FELT
Aubrey. Yes, I've heard the name.
But I'm having trouble placing what
you do for a living.

Billy can't help but chime in.

BILLY
He wrote "Secret Agent!"

EUDORA FELT
Ah yes, the Cold War stories, the
spy novels. Those are popular with
men, I suppose. But I do appreciate
any attempt to bring class to an
otherwise classless profession.

EXT. LION'S HEAD, DRIVEWAY -- SAME TIME

Just as Eudora says these words, a sputtering, broken-down BEETLE arrives out front and an obese man see-saws out of the driver's seat.

RAY KOUFAX, 56, is bald and Jewish, wearing an ill-fitting suit with a too small tie under an unseasonably warm trench coat.

He takes a pull from the flask he has in his pocket and staggers up to Rene, the only Lion's Head representative still out front.

RAY KOUFAX

You're a big fella, aren't ya? Make sure my trunk finds its way inside.

He flips a quarter at Martan's brother and heads inside. Rene drops it but crawls on the ground to scoop it up.

INT. LION'S HEAD, LOBBY -- CONTINUOUS

As he enters the lobby, Koufax relights the stubby black cigar in the corner of his mouth. When he passes Aubrey, he leaves behind a cloud of noxious smoke that the Englishman has to wave away.

To distract from this, Martan snaps his fingers to get Billy's attention.

MARTAN LAROCHE

William, please bring Mrs. Felt's luggage up to her room.

INT. EUDORA'S HOTEL ROOM -- MINUTES LATER

Billy hobbles over the threshold of Eudora's hotel room, holding all of her luggage. He almost makes it to the bed, before the lot of it falls to the ground--

EUDORA FELT

Watch what you're doing! I've had those bags since before the great war!

Nurse Cho kneels down to help him pick up what fell.

NURSE CHO

Ignore her, she just needs her meds.

Cho manages to find her doctor's bag and begins stacking various prescriptions on the vanity bureau.

Pretending to unpack, Billy's eyes wander over one of the bottle's labels:

Glucosamine Chondroitin with Manganese for "reducing inflammation."

He's caught up in reading when Eudora finally turns on him--

EUDORA FELT
What are you still doing here?

NURSE CHO
He's waiting for a tip.

EUDORA FELT
Well, he's not going to get one!

BILLY
I didn't know we could do that...

EUDORA FELT
Is this really our room? It's got
none of the amenities I asked for.
No kitten portraits, no potpourri.
I've got half a mind to sue...
(beat)
Where's a lawyer when you need one?

INT. BOSTON METROCAB -- SAME TIME

In the backseat of a taxicab, ELIJAH DEVEREAUX, 37, sits looking dapper in a seersucker suit and suspenders. He's black, with a southern, molasses drawl, and his driver keeps looking in the rearview mirror, suspiciously.

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX
May I help you with something?

The man pretends he hasn't heard anything. So Elijah takes another tact...

He sees a dog-eared copy of "Juror's Prudence" on the driver's dashboard and smiles.

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX (CONT'D)
I hear that author's a bum.

The cabbie's eyes go wide.

CAB DRIVER
A bum? Ya know, you people are all
the same--

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX
Here we go...

CAB DRIVER
This fella's got more ingenuity and
American know-how than you could
muster in a thousand lifetimes.

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX
Even with that ending?

CAB DRIVER
I haven't gotten there yet...

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX
Oh, good! The family wins a huge
settlement from the conglomerate.

CAB DRIVER
That better be a fucking joke!

Elijah waves him off, good-naturedly, as the cab pulls up
outside the Lion's Head.

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX
It is. The real ending's on the
back flap.

Elijah grabs his things and gets out of the cab as the
puzzled driver flips to the back cover. Staring him in the
face is the author's photo:

A smiling Elijah Devereaux.

INT. LION'S HEAD, LOBBY -- MINUTES LATER

At the bank of telephones in the lobby, Elijah finds himself
deep in conversation with his book agent.

ELIJAH'S AGENT (O.S.)
They want you to sit in on a "race
in literature" conversation.

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX
Did you tell them--

ELIJAH'S AGENT (O.S.)
That you voted for Nixon twice?
Yeah, I told them...

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX
And still they insisted.

ELIJAH'S AGENT (O.S.)
Don't worry about it. How's this
new hotel?

Elijah looks across the lobby at Helga Laroche, who's busy
staring at him -- disgusted.

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX
They're really welcoming here.

At the next payphone over, Ray Koufax continues to smoke like a chimney.

RAY'S AGENT (O.S.)
You're broke, Ray. You need the
appearance fees.

RAY KOUFAX
I'm sitting on a trunk full of
manuscripts. There has to be
another "Angels with Filthy Souls,"
in there.

RAY'S AGENT (O.S.)
Hard-boiled detective fiction just
isn't selling anymore. We have to
start making some tough
decisions...

But Koufax doesn't hear him. He's busy looking at something else.

RAY KOUFAX
Hold on, trouble just walked in...

Rebecca Fontaine enters wearing a fishnet veil, stockings,
and a red cocktail dress that accentuates her trademark
heaving chest.

As she crosses the lobby, she pulls the focus of everyone who
sees her. Man and woman...

Even Rene Laroche, who begins to, well...

...touch himself.

When Martan sees this, he quickly restrains his brother and
hurries him into a back room.

EXT. LION'S HEAD, DRIVEWAY -- SAME TIME

A tie-dyed van filled with loose, hippie pin-ups screeches to
a halt outside. The van door slides open, spilling weed
smoke out across the grounds.

When it dissipates, ART LEROY, 39, climbs out with his
advisor a large, Native American shaman named THE CHIEF, age
unknown. They've been hitch-hiking.

After saying goodbye to the girls, Art licks his fingers and pinches out his joint, pocketing it for later. Together, they head inside.

INT. LION'S HEAD, LOBBY -- CONTINUOUS

As they enter the Lion's Head, Art's details come into focus. His hair is thinning at the temples and he's got yellow foggy glasses designed to hide his pupils.

He's on a plethora of drugs, with bags under his eyes and is slightly lethargic. But he seems to come alive when he sees who it is that's waiting at the front desk.

Rebecca Fontaine, in her full femme-fatale get-up, waits for Martan to finish up a call. Art sidles up to her.

ART LEROY

In town for the convention?

REBECCA FONTAINE

Yeah...

ART LEROY

That's great. You an author? I thought I recognized you.

REBECCA FONTAINE

Look, I'm just trying to check in.

ART LEROY

Me too, me too. Hey, if you're not doing anything later, we're doing a champagne brunch in my room. Nice spread. You worried about the cost? Don't be. Rolling Stone's footing the bill. They got me covering Wordfest, you know. First person point of view sort of thing.

Rebecca takes a small step away from him as Art seems to recognize his traveling companion for the first time.

ART LEROY (CONT'D)

Oh, how silly of me. Allow me to introduce - this is my lawyer, the Chief.

(beat)

He can join us, if that does anything for you...

When Martan finally hangs up the phone, Rebecca exhales with relief, grateful for the interruption.

INT. ART'S HOTEL ROOM -- MINUTES LATER

Billy swings both of Art's suitcases onto his bed. Art opens them immediately. Neither have clothes in them. One is filled with narcotics. The other: nothing but firearms. Colt .45s and .38 Specials. Even a sawed-off.

BILLY

Uh, I can leave if you want...

ART LEROY

Don't be stupid.

Art slaps his forehead.

ART LEROY (CONT'D)

Geez, you're probably waiting for a tip. Earth to Art!

He fishes a joint from behind his ear and slaps it into Billy's hand.

ART LEROY (CONT'D)

Don't go spending it all in one place...

He laughs to himself. Billy tucks the joint into his waistband and turns to go. He almost doesn't, but at the last moment, he turns back--

BILLY

Are you Art Leroy?

ART LEROY

According to my birth certificate.

BILLY

That is wild. I'm a big fan of "Scared and Disliked in Topeka, Kansas."

ART LEROY

Very cool, man. You a writer?

BILLY

I'm trying.

ART LEROY

Well, if you need any advice just lemme know.

BILLY

I guess I'm just wondering whether--

ART LEROY

Oh, not now. Not now, brother. I gotta tie off...

BILLY

Right... I'll leave you to it then.

Art leads Billy to the door. He's about to shut it after the kid when he sees that the room across from him has their door open, as well.

Ella Galbraith is in there, her bruises still covered up. She's wearing her gypsy threads: bohemian shawls, dripping chiffon, various crystals and talismans around her neck.

Art watches as she lights a sprig of sage and blesses her new room. As she does, she stares transfixed at the flame, eyes glowing like a firebug.

ART LEROY

Care to share?

She glances up at him, surprised.

ART LEROY (CONT'D)

My niece is a big fan of yours.

Ella doesn't respond. She simply walks over and shuts the door in his face.

INT. LION'S HEAD, LOBBY -- SOON AFTER

Billy returns to work only to be ambushed by his mother. She comes into the lobby waving an adorable sack lunch.

ELAINE

Hi, sweetie!

BILLY

Mom, what are you doing here?!

ELAINE

You left so suddenly this morning, I realized you didn't take a lunch.

BILLY

This is my job...

ELAINE

Oh hush, no one cares!

With his Dick Cavett interview finally finished, Miguel Prince emerges from the study.

ELAINE (CONT'D)
Is that him?

BILLY
Yes, but you can't--

Elaine calls out cross the lobby.

ELAINE
Yoo-hoo! Mr. Prince!

BILLY
Mom, don't!

ELAINE
Oh, he probably loves it!

Miguel approaches them, smiling.

MIGUEL PRINCE
Are you talking to me? It's been a while since I've been yoo-hoo'd...

ELAINE
My son just adores your books!

Billy palms his face which makes Miguel smile.

MIGUEL PRINCE
Well Billy, your mother is very charming!

Elaine touches his arm and laughs.

ELAINE
I wish. You know, I've been out on the dating scene recently and that is not the consensus!

They start laughing, but Billy is beyond embarrassed.

BILLY
Mom, he's married!

ELAINE
Who asked?! Hey, Billy-bear, tell Mr. Prince about that story you wrote--

BILLY
Mom!

ELAINE
Go ahead!

BILLY
 (reluctantly)
 I wrote a short story for that
 contest you judged last year. But I
 didn't place.

MIGUEL PRINCE
 I wouldn't take it personally. I
 kind of remember that I farmed that
 out to one of my assistants...

ELAINE
 See! I told you there's no way he
 wouldn't love your story!
 (to Miguel)
 Billy's father ran out on us, so
 we're looking for a strong male
 role model...
 (beat)
 ...for Billy.

Billy stands there inventing new shades of red.

BILLY
 Mom! Ya gotta go! And please, don't
 wait up. I'm working a double.

ELAINE
 I won't be there, don't you
 remember? You're on your own this
 weekend. I have the retreat...

She whispers so that Miguel can't hear.

ELAINE (CONT'D)
 Remember, the "*singles*" retreat...

BILLY
 Okay, that's fine! Just go!

ELAINE
 Geez, you're so serious! Seems just
 yesterday I was breast-feeding
 you...

She touches his cheek and waves goodbye to Miguel.

When they're finally alone, Billy's at a loss for what to
 say. It's Prince that ultimately saves him.

MIGUEL PRINCE
 Don't worry, my mother used to
 embarrass me to no end when I was
 growing up too--

He's about to say more when Martan Laroche approaches.

MARTAN LAROCHE
Monsieur Prince, I know you are
familiar with the Lion's Head, but
I am showing a couple of the other
guests around if you're interested.

MIGUEL PRINCE
I'll go if Billy goes...

MARTAN LAROCHE
I am sure zat William has other
duties to attend to--

BILLY
Sure, I'll go.

MARTAN LAROCHE
(sarcastic)
Excellent.

Prince heads over to the group of authors milling around the
side entrance.

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX
You joining us for the grand tour?

MIGUEL PRINCE
Looks like it.

Elijah holds out a hand for Miguel to shake.

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX
Elijah Devereaux. I think we're on
the same imprint.

MIGUEL PRINCE
I know who you are. You write a
hell of a page-turner.

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX
I knew I liked you.

EXT. LION'S HEAD, GARDENS -- CONTINUOUS

As Martan leads the way out into the gardens, Elijah
recognizes that Eudora might have a problem getting down the
two or three stairs. He asks the others:

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX
Little help, men?

Duncan Balfour, Trevor Aubrey, and a wheezing Ray Koufax assist him in lifting the mystery writer's chair down onto the grass.

EUDORA FELT

Thank you, kindly.

Nurse Cho takes control of Eudora's wheelchair as they rejoin the tour. They pass Rene who's doing yardwork. He stops to watch them pass, a big scary gardener's hoe in his hand.

Seeing Rebecca Fontaine in his periphery, Trevor Aubrey decides to high-five the giant. Rene appears confused at first, then suddenly overjoyed. No one speaks though until they're out of earshot.

EUDORA FELT (CONT'D)

I just love gardening, the
fragrance of the flowers...

She stoops to smell one, but Koufax is right next to her chain-smoking. She glares at him, but he doesn't get the message.

Behind them, Trevor Aubrey hangs back to clip a rose. He offers it up to Rebecca Fontaine.

TREVOR AUBREY

Thought you could bring some class
to this disgusting flower.

Rebecca suppresses a grin, despite herself.

TREVOR AUBREY (CONT'D)

Was that a smile I see?

She takes the flower. If only to make him shut up.

At the head of the group, Martan introduces a small, squat woman digging in the dirt.

MARTAN LAROCHE

Everyone, zis is ze Lion's Head's
resident chef and gardener, my
mother, Helga Laroche.

Trevor steps forward to kiss her hand.

TREVOR AUBREY

Martan, you never told us you had
such a young and beautiful mother--

Helga pulls her hand from his grasp and gives him a withering look. Trevor tries to laugh it off.

TREVOR AUBREY (CONT'D)
Quite the welcoming committee...

Billy leans in to whisper to Felt and a couple of the others.

BILLY
I heard rumors she was a Nazi
sympathizer who slept with the
Germans who came to her village.

Eudora lets out a hearty laugh. When Martan looks at her,
curiously, she apologizes.

EUDORA FELT
Excuse me. Laroche, that's French?

MARTAN LAROCHE
It is French Huguenot, yes.

EUDORA FELT
But your accent doesn't seem to
have the Huguenot inflection...

MARTAN LAROCHE
Alas, my brother and I grew up
stateside.

EUDORA FELT
And your father? Where is he?

MARTAN LAROCHE
Unfortunately, Dad is usually off
on business.

Eudora nods, taking in the information.

EUDORA FELT
When we first entered, there was a
patch of Monkshood. That can cause
aconite poisoning; upset stomach in
small doses, a slowing of the heart
in larger doses...
(beat)
...this is an Apothecary garden.

Helga Laroche smiles for the first time.

HELGA LAROCHE
Very good.

Ray Koufax removes the cigar from his mouth.

RAY KOUFAX

How do you know so much about
poisons?

EUDORA FELT

I served in hospital dispensaries
during both World Wars. Comes in
handy with the writing.

Her eyes settle on a bush with hanging bell flowers.

EUDORA FELT (CONT'D)

Brugmansia looks like angel
trumpets. It's very toxic, you
know? Leads to delirium. Terrifying
rather than pleasurable. Something
akin to temporary insanity. I
believe one young man castrated
himself after drinking only one cup
of its tea.

The male authors in the crowd suck in a breath.

EUDORA FELT (CONT'D)

The thing is... it's extinct in the
wild. It only grows in South
America. Someone would have had to
send it to you.

Eudora locks eyes with Helga Laroche.

EUDORA FELT (CONT'D)

I'm surprised it even grows here.

Helga stares back at the old woman, bitterly.

HELGA LAROCHE

Moist soil.

When Martan gets tired of the awkward silence, he moves the
tour on.

Art Leroy though waits for everyone to be out of range before
he pockets some brugmansia to go.

INT. LION'S HEAD, 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY -- SOON AFTER

The hotel's elevator doors open and Martan leads the way out,
lecturing as he goes.

MARTAN LAROCHE

The house was supposedly used
during prohibition to make bathtub
gin, but we haven't been able to
confirm zat.

As they continue down the hallway, Eudora examines the framed
art they have on the walls.

EUDORA FELT

These paintings... they're
reproductions, yes?

MARTAN LAROCHE

What makes you say that?

EUDORA FELT

The Glogow Madonna, Portrait of a
Young Man... no one's seen the
originals since World War Two.

MARTAN LAROCHE

All I know is they've been here
since I was a boy.

As they round a corner, they pass under an ominous painting
of a severe looking man in full regalia.

ART LEROY

Who's this?

Martan answers but tries to move the crowd along.

MARTAN LAROCHE

That is... my father.

Ray Koufax hangs behind to note:

RAY KOUFAX

Hm, the eyes seem to follow you...

He leans in, squinting, at one of the man's pins.

RAY KOUFAX (CONT'D)

Is that a... swastika?

He steps back to let Duncan Balfour take a look. As Balfour
leans in however, Koufax immediately starts laughing. He
takes his hawking, nicotine laugh with him down the hallway.

INT. EUDORA'S HOTEL ROOM -- LATER

With Nurse Cho's invaluable help, Eudora Felt writes out invitations to dinner for each of the authors in bold calligraphy.

Her hand occasionally shakes and cramps as she writes, but she massages it into use again and tirelessly presses on. When she finishes, she hands the stack of invitations to Cho to disseminate...

INT. LION'S HEAD, VARIOUS -- MINUTES LATER

One-by-one, Nurse Cho slides the invitations under each of the author's doors.

When she sees the invitation come in, Rebecca Fontaine crosses her hotel room in a luxurious silk robe to open the envelope. Inside it reads:

Eudora Felt cordially invites you to a "get to know you" dinner.

In preparation for the meal, Helga violently butchers a rabbit with the biggest butcher knife she can find.

Outside, her son, Rene, cuts wood for the study fire with an ominous axe he brings down in thunderous swings.

Up in their rooms, the authors ready for dinner. As Fontaine primps and preens, Art rolls a series of joints he hides in different places on his body. Koufax emerges from a smokey room at roughly the same time Duncan Balfour does.

Balfour appears to be on vacation. He's got on a panama hat, Hawaiian shirt, and madras pants as he descends the grand staircase towards the dining room.

One of the last dinner guests there, he makes for the bar area, introducing himself as he goes.

Behind him, Ella Galbraith enters quietly and tries to blend in with the wallpaper. Elijah though, won't let her off so easy.

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX

Where are my manners? Elijah
Deveraux, miss. I don't remember
seeing you on the tour...

Ella timidly shakes his hand.

ELLA GALBRAITH

Ella Galbraith. No, I didn't go on the tour...

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX

Well, honored to make your acquaintance.

She blushes ever so slightly and excuses herself to the bar cart. Trevor Aubrey is already there, standing in a crimson dinner jacket, helping himself to a drink. Upon seeing him, Art Leroy jokes.

ART LEROY

You know we're not playing baccarat later, right?

Trevor grins and is about to respond when Rebecca Fontaine enters, in a cocktail dress slit up to the waist. All the heads in the room crane in her direction.

REBECCA FONTAINE

Good Evening.

They nod as Fontaine twists the filter off one of her Merit Ultras. She puts it in a cigarette holder to keep her fingers clean, then looks expectantly at the men around her for a light.

Trevor is the quickest on the draw. He snaps open a golden lighter and Fontaine leans in, appreciatively.

REBECCA FONTAINE (CONT'D)

Thank you.

With everyone arrived, Martan enters wearing a butler's tux, one with tails.

MARTAN LAROCHE

If you'd all please take your seats...

As they sit down, it's Prince that notes:

MIGUEL PRINCE

Is it just us? All I see are famous faces...

MARTAN LAROCHE

Well, I thought for privacy sake best not to invite the other guests.

DUNCAN BALFOUR

Come now Prince, you know they'd
just barrage us with autograph
requests.

MARTAN LAROCHE

For dinner tonight our chef has
prepared a rabbit confit in lemon
beurre blanc sauce.

Helga emerges from the swinging kitchen door. She's been made
to wear a chef's apron and hat and looks fairly out of place.
She circulates with dinner, but Trevor Aubrey waves her off.

TREVOR AUBREY

None for me, luv - I prefer my
meals liquid.

He shakes the remnants of his drink to illustrate the fact.
Eudora, too, waves off any food that comes to her.

MARTAN LAROCHE

Drinks then, while we wait? We have
red and white wine decanted,
assorted liqueurs...

REBECCA FONTAINE

I'll have a Tab.

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX

Might as well have a libation. Do
you have Jim Beam?

EUDORA FELT

I've always disliked the taste of
alcohol, I'm afraid. Lifelong
teetotaler.

As Martan attends to people's drinks, Ella quietly flags him
down to speak privately.

ELLA GALBRAITH

Mr. Laroche, did you get my...

MARTAN LAROCHE

Dietary restrictions? Of course,
Ms. Galbraith. The kitchen is
making you a special meal as we
speak.

REBECCA FONTAINE

What sort of dietary restrictions?

Ella feels everyone's eyes on her and tries to answer as confidently as possible.

ELLA GALBRAITH

I have a weak heart. I must avoid trans fatty acids. That means no meat, milk, or margarine. I seek out vegetables where I can. I suspect the kitchen will be making me some sort of bitter greens salad. Spinach, arugula, endive... that sort of thing.

Several of the authors nod, politely. They had no idea she was so boring. Eudora, though, has locked in on her.

EUDORA FELT

Should we be on the lookout for an episode?

ELLA GALBRAITH

Oh, nothing like that. I just have a shot of epinephrine in my bag should the need arise.

EUDORA FELT

Drugs. That figures...

Forgetting her shyness for a moment, Ella's head shoots up.

ELLA GALBRAITH

How so?

EUDORA FELT

Aren't you the one they say has satanic influences in her work?

Ella laughs to herself.

EUDORA FELT (CONT'D)

You think the promotion of witchcraft is a laughing matter.

ELLA GALBRAITH

No, but I do think the smugness of you religious people knows no end.

EUDORA FELT

You don't think someone who says they're in league with the devil isn't someone to be feared?

ELLA GALBRAITH

No, I believe hysteria is something to be feared. One of my ancestors was burned alive in the Salem Witch Trials.

EUDORA FELT

But you are a follower of Aleister Crowley, are you not?

ELLA GALBRAITH

I don't know what one has to do with the other. I liked the Moody Blues in my youth - does that add to your argument?

EUDORA FELT

The moody what?

REBECCA FONTAINE

I think you're being a tad bit literal about her work.

(to Ella)

I find that my books are always being challenged too.

EUDORA FELT

You should talk! In my day, you married one person and that was it!

Fontaine's mouth gapes, taken aback.

REBECCA FONTAINE

I never took the woman who wrote "The Corpse Danced at Midnight" for a puritan!

ELLA GALBRAITH

Or "The Hunting Lodge...."

RAY KOUFAX

The ones with that Flemish fruit--

EUDORA FELT

Monsieur Lefevre is not a fruit! He's continental!

DUNCAN BALFOUR

You do go to the poison well a little too-often. It is usually a woman's method of killing...

EUDORA FELT

Excuse you!

DUNCAN BALFOUR

No offense intended, though it's really the unoriginality that bothers me. All your books are about disparate strangers who come together at an isolated location because they got an anonymous invitation and then all of a sudden, they start dying!

MIGUEL PRINCE

Oh, I don't know... before Mrs. Felt's books I had no idea arsenic poisoning mimicked decades of tobacco use overnight. And that cyanide smells like bitter almonds and can be attained easily enough from apple seeds.

Eudora zeroes in on him.

EUDORA FELT

You're the one who writes those penny dreadfuls.

MIGUEL PRINCE

Well, I should hope we charge a lot more!

She stares at him, puzzled for a moment, then cackles aloud, breaking the tension. The other authors eventually join in.

MIGUEL PRINCE (CONT'D)

I was always a great fan of yours. I grew up reading your who-done-its.

EUDORA FELT

Yes well, back then we didn't have the television miniseries and movies of the week that your generation swears by. We had to actually think up clever plots.

Of all the things she's said thus far, this is the one that really seems to irk Prince.

MIGUEL PRINCE

Doesn't stop you from cashing Hollywood's checks though, does it?

DUNCAN BALFOUR

Unfortunately, sales on their own mean very little.

RAY KOUFAX

You can sell a lot more peanuts
than caviar.

DUNCAN BALFOUR

Precisely. Most of these
"bestsellers" are just another low
in the shocking process of dumbing
down our cultural life. When I read
some of these bloated, illogical,
maudlin efforts, it makes me sad
for the youth of today.

MIGUEL PRINCE

Tell me what you really think!

DUNCAN BALFOUR

I wasn't necessarily talking about
you, but if you're looking for
feedback... from what I've read
you're immensely inadequate on a
sentence-by-sentence basis.

MIGUEL PRINCE

Not the literature preferred by the
academic, literary elite, is it?

DUNCAN BALFOUR

It's not the literature preferred
by me. At my core I am a travel
writer, a teller of exotic tales.
I crave dense, challenging works--

REBECCA FONTAINE

I think you mean you write books
for young rowdy boys.

DUNCAN BALFOUR

Excuse me, if I don't double over
in shame. I have read you Miss
Fontaine. The formulaic fluff, the
over-earnest amateur writing. The
vaguely fictionalized aspects of
your personal life; all about rich
families facing a crisis.
Blackmail! Incest! Divorce! And if
your female characters don't get
the respect and attention that they
think they deserve then they're out
to find a new man! Even when your
average woman on the street has no
such privilege!

REBECCA FONTAINE

There's nothing I like more than when someone, especially a man, minimizes how hard it is to write love stories. When they treat me as if I'm stupid, as if a resounding lack of critical acclaim could dissuade me. I write up to four projects at a time! I'm researching one, while outlining another, writing a third, and editing a fourth or sometimes more--

DUNCAN BALFOUR

While it looks like you're really working up to something, I'm afraid I must interrupt. At no point was I trying to offend you, merely trying to say that my interests have always aspired to something a little higher. I can tell you honestly that no one has scaled my verbal peaks. The word play, the linguistic playfulness, the aching lyricism--

Trevor Aubrey has heard enough.

TREVOR AUBREY

If by aching lyricism you mean misogynistic, sexist, braggadocious, and racist, then I quite agree.

DUNCAN BALFOUR

I think I have a few decades on you, sonny. So instead of speaking out, maybe listen instead. Besides, I've read you too. Your characters always seem to be cleaning up American messes. It's condescending.

REBECCA FONTAINE

No, condescending is sitting here acting like you're our goddamn professor.

DUNCAN BALFOUR

I'm not prejudiced against women writers! I'm just trying to start a conversation about why Miss Galbraith here hides her femininity behind initials to get boy readers?

TREVOR AUBREY

You're being long-winded, just like your novels.

DUNCAN BALFOUR

I don't have to take this from someone whose sole charitable contribution to literature is a second-rate imitation of James Bond!

TREVOR AUBREY

Bond is an international gangster! Thomas Leer is an overweight, bespectacled, serial monogamist.

DUNCAN BALFOUR

I can't understand a word you say with that accent.

TREVOR AUBREY

I speak the Queen's English!

DUNCAN BALFOUR

Maybe that's the problem. Maybe you haven't traveled the world enough to change your point of view. I got my start as a journalist. I saw the burning of Smyrna, covered the Spanish Civil War, went to China for Collier's, even covered Normandy in person. When the fighting got bad, I responded to a Red Cross recruitment effort. Signed up to be an ambulance driver. Saw body fragments, nearly lost a leg at the knee from shrapnel--

TREVOR AUBREY

Ah, so you never actually served...

Balfour stands suddenly.

DUNCAN BALFOUR

More than you!

He's looking for a fight, but Trevor remains right where he's seated, the image of calm and collected.

TREVOR AUBREY

I was British Naval Intelligence during World War 2.

(MORE)

TREVOR AUBREY (CONT'D)

We were in charge of subterfuge and misinformation. Dress a corpse as an airman and shove him out of a plane with false dispatches in the pockets. That sort of thing. Afterwards, I took the examinations for entry into the Foreign Office. Worked with both MI5 and MI6. Saw a great deal of the world there too.

Balfour responds, somewhat meekly.

DUNCAN BALFOUR

Foreign office operatives are forbidden from publishing under their real names.

TREVOR AUBREY

I write under a pseudonym.

When it's clear that Balfour has run out of things to say, the room descends into an uncomfortable silence.

Finally, it's Art Leroy who breaks it.

ART LEROY

Well, if we're all done measuring our dicks, maybe we let somebody else talk for a change.

EUDORA FELT

Maybe someone younger? Let us old farts listen for a bit.

MIGUEL PRINCE

What about Billy?

The bellhop steps forward, nervously. He hasn't said a word throughout dinner.

MIGUEL PRINCE (CONT'D)

Young Billy here is a writer.

DUNCAN BALFOUR

My condolences.

MIGUEL PRINCE

He's even given me a story of his to read.

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX

So how about it, Bill? Can you tell us a tale?

BILLY

What kind?

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX

I've heard through the grapevine
that this isn't the sleepy little
hamlet it's made out to be.

BILLY

What are you talking about?

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX

The murders that happened last
summer...

They all look to him, expectantly.

BILLY

Oh, you don't want to hear about
that. It's... inappropriate.

Miguel LAUGHS.

MIGUEL PRINCE

Well, now I insist you tell us!

Billy sighs, all eyes on him. He reluctantly starts to
speak when Eudora holds him off--

EUDORA FELT

Wait. Let's adjourn to the study
for coffees and brandy. I want to
be comfortable for this.

INT. LION'S HEAD, STUDY -- MINUTES LATER

Gone is the television equipment, but the roaring fireplace
remains. The authors slowly make their way in. They settle
down onto the couches and help themselves to the minibar.
Helga circulates with coffee, but Ella waves her off.

ELLA GALBRAITH

I can't, it makes my heart race.

Art pulls a joint out of his shirt pocket.

ART LEROY

Anyone mind if I burn one down?

Ray Koufax shakes his head and mutters under his breath.

RAY KOUFAX

Dope fiend.

He fishes a cigar out of the mantel cigar box. Art ignores him and lights up. He takes a deep, wincing puff and tries to pass to Miguel Prince. But Prince shakes his head.

MIGUEL PRINCE

No thanks, I'm actually sober. If I took a hit of that I'd most likely be looking for coke within forty-five minutes.

ART LEROY

Oh, I have coke too.

Miguel laughs again.

MIGUEL PRINCE

I appreciate that, but it wouldn't be pretty. Last time I used I gave my mother's eulogy high. You know "Junkyard Dog?" I don't even remember writing that.

ART LEROY

Come on, you know what they say - if you're not good at something right away, try-try again. I myself am on a pharmacopeia of drugs right now--

Duncan Balfour leans in, feeling left out.

DUNCAN BALFOUR

I used to go on alcoholic sprees with James Joyce.

ART LEROY

Hey man, nobody asked.

Art leaves him standing there, baffled, and joins the others on the couch.

ART LEROY (CONT'D)

I thought we were gettin' a story?

Hearing his cue, Billy steps forward, his nervousness palpable -- until Prince saves him.

MIGUEL PRINCE

Don't worry, kid. You're a teenager. We're not expecting much.

The bellhop breaks into a smile and reluctantly begins.

BILLY

I don't know how much you know about our town, but its economy revolves around the summer months. The locals, mostly fishermen, eke their way through the other nine months, but the tourism is what feeds the place. Because of this, Morrow Bay comes alive for just short of ninety days per year...

EXT. MORROW BEACH, PARKING LOT -- SUMMER, 1976 (DAY)

HARMONY HAYES, 19, hops out of her parent's station wagon in a tank top and jean capris and looks around smiling.

BILLY (V.O.)

She was one of the summer people, which was my term for the rich assholes that flooded the town from June to August. She was a senior when I was a freshman, nineteen when all of this happened. She was from three states away, but her family vacationed at the bay every year without fail. And I got used to seeing her around...

Billy steps out of an ice cream parlor with a sugar cone. When he sees Harmony across the lot, he lowers his sunglasses to get a better look at her.

BILLY

I had the biggest crush on her. But I guess I was too young because I was invisible to her.

When she sees him staring, Harmony winks at Billy. Instead of playing it cool, he frantically looks away. It makes her throw her head back in laughter. She goes off, grinning with her family.

When he's sure she isn't looking anymore, Billy turns to watch her go. Sees the muscular twenty-somethings coming out of the Piggly-Wiggly check her out. Sees her wave at them.

HARMONY

Hi, boys.

Billy lets his head drop, disappointed.

BILLY (V.O.)
After a while, she started to
get... a reputation.

EXT. THE LAND LUBBER, BAR & GRILL -- NIGHT

The tomboy who got out of her parent's station wagon is gone. Harmony's now in a halter top, caked in make-up, surrounded by men. They buy her endless shots and help her climb up onto the bar to flash them.

BILLY (V.O.)
The night of the bicentennial
fireworks she was out partying at a
bar. Around 2:30 a.m. she decided
to walk back to her parent's rented
bungalow. But she never got there.
The next day, they found her body
on the beach...

EXT. MORROW BEACH -- THE NEXT MORNING

Billy exits his house only to see a scrum of people crowding around something just a few feet off the boardwalk.

He pushes his way through only to withdraw suddenly at the sight of two naked bodies.

BILLY (V.O.)
But she wasn't alone. On top of
her was Elmer Jerome...

ELMER's in his mid-to-late fifties. He has tan skin the shade of George Hamilton, the leathery brown making the unnatural white of his teeth pop.

BILLY (V.O.)
He spent most winters caddying in
Florida and most of his summers on
the wealthy women he took out.
They ranged in age from late
forties to early eighties. He was
what was politely known as a
gigolo.

His body is splayed on top of a lifeless Harmony Hayes, her eyes open, blankly staring into the sun.

Billy watches as the coroners try and separate the bodies. But they're finding it difficult.

INT. LION'S HEAD, STUDY -- BACK TO SCENE

Billy stares into the fire as he continues his tale.

BILLY

The coroners called it "angel
lust." From time-to-time, if a
death is swift and violent and if
there's enough pressure put on the
cerebellum, a male victim can end
up with a post-mordem...

(beat)

...erection.

The authors murmur, nervously.

REBECCA FONTAINE

I don't understand. They were
killed while having sex? And they
got... stuck like that?

BILLY

Not exactly.

EXT. MORROW BEACH -- 1976, DAY

Billy eavesdrops on the CORONERS as they theorize.

CORONER #1

So, were they killed in the act?

CORONER #2

Both bodies show signs of being
moved. More likely they were posed
like this.

CORONER #1

Jesus... who the hell would do
this?!

INT. LION'S HEAD, STUDY -- BACK TO SCENE

The authors are in varying states of shock at Billy's story.

ART LEROY

How tawdry...

MIGUEL PRINCE

How deliciously evil...

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX

The person that did that deserves to die. And I should know. I'm on the board of directors for the "Eye for an Eye Foundation." You do know that Massachusetts has the electric chair...

RAY KOUFAX

Did the police ever solve it?

BILLY

The only thing they could come up with was that the killer must have had some kind of religious bent or was a prude about sex.

ELLA GALBRAITH

You hear that, Eudora? We're on to you.

EUDORA FELT

You've got me. I killed the town strumpet. The wheelchair's just for show.

She turns her attention back to Billy.

EUDORA FELT (CONT'D)

Young man, if I had known you liked the girl, I never would have pushed for you to tell this story.

Billy shrugs.

BILLY

It's okay. It wasn't meant to be.

Aubrey stands and puts a supportive arm around the boy.

TREVOR AUBREY

My mother forbade me from marrying my first love because she was "below our station." I've been a dedicated bachelor ever since.

Fontaine grabs her heart and sighs as the other male authors give Billy sex advice.

ART LEROY

Forget about her, I lost my virginity in a brothel and never looked back.

(MORE)

ART LEROY (CONT'D)

When you're a professional writer
you can get paid to do readings at
colleges and sleep with as many co-
eds as you want--

DUNCAN BALFOUR

When I was recovering from shrapnel
in Normandy, I bedded a Red Cross
nurse seven years my senior. By
the time I returned stateside, I
assumed she would follow after.
Days turned to weeks. Finally, she
wrote to say she was engaged to an
Italian officer. I was devastated.
It colored all my future
relationships...

Fontaine rolls her eyes.

REBECCA FONTAINE

I've heard enough, I'm heading to
bed.

She stands and is soon joined by the other women.

ELLA GALBRAITH

That sounds like a marvelous idea.

Seeing the talent leave the room, Aubrey nods.

TREVOR AUBREY

I think I'll retire too.

Balfour waves them off.

DUNCAN BALFOUR

Let 'em leave.

He pours Billy a brandy of his own as the others exit the
room.

INT. LION'S HEAD, SECOND FLOOR -- MINUTES LATER

As the authors find their respective rooms for the night,
Rebecca Fontaine digs in her purse for her room key. When
she finds it, she pauses, arm outstretched towards her door.

Waiting until the others have entered their rooms, she turns
heel and heads back down the hallway.

Under the watchful eyes of Monsieur Laroche's portrait, she
searches for a specific room. It almost looks like the eyes
are following her...

Perhaps, because... *they are*. Someone is peering out of the eyeholes of the painting.

The eyes watch as Rebecca knocks on Trevor Aubrey's door. He opens almost immediately and smiles when he sees her.

TREVOR AUBREY

I thought it would be you.

He moves aside to let her in. She heads inside, already taking her dress off.

As the door shuts, the portrait begins to shake, then suddenly becomes still...

After a moment, the painting swings forward, on hinges, and Rene Laroche steps out -- buttoning his pants.

FADE TO:

CHYRON: "FRIDAY"

INT. LION'S HEAD, VARIOUS -- THE NEXT MORNING

The authors wake in staggered fashion:

Fontaine sneaks out of Trevor Aubrey's room first thing in the morning, her shoes in hand so as not to make any noise.

Ray Koufax is hardly awake, but still somehow smoking in bed. He almost looks like he's about to drift off again when he breathes in too hard and starts having a coughing fit.

Across the hall, Art Leroy greets the morning sun with a nude meditation. The Rolling Stone reporter is out on his personal balcony doing yoga stretches and popping peyote buttons.

He spots Helga Laroche out in the garden and waves to her. When she sees that he's naked, she stands, outraged.

Suddenly frightened of her, Art hurries back inside.

INT. LION'S HEAD, LOBBY -- SOON AFTER

Now fully dressed, Art skips across the lobby towards the front desk. He flags the person behind it down.

ART LEROY

Hey man, do you know where I can
find a head shop?

As the hotel clerk looks puzzled, Miguel Prince and Trevor
Aubrey come down the grand staircase.

TREVOR AUBREY

Day one and they have me meeting
about movie rights for Thomas Leer.
I just know they're gonna demand to
make him younger.

MIGUEL PRINCE

You gotta go in with an open mind.

TREVOR AUBREY

Yes, maybe it won't be so bad...

MIGUEL PRINCE

No, it will be. But stay positive!

Aubrey heads out the door, all doom and gloom. He passes
Billy as the bellhop enters in his street clothes and makes a
beeline to Prince.

MIGUEL PRINCE (CONT'D)

Hey, what're you doing here? I
thought you didn't work until
tonight...

BILLY

I came in early to hear what you
thought of the story. No rush if
you didn't finish it.

MIGUEL PRINCE

Oh, I finished it.

BILLY

And?

He waits there, out of breath, for Miguel to respond. The
horror writer stares at the ground as he searches for the
words.

The wait is interminable and as the seconds pass, Billy
gleans his answer.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Oh...

MIGUEL PRINCE

Listen, you wouldn't be the first author to write a stinker. Hell, I wouldn't show anybody my early work for all the money in China.

He puts a comforting hand on the kid's shoulder.

MIGUEL PRINCE (CONT'D)

You're supposed to be bad at this age. Just don't stop. That's all that matters.

Billy nods, swallowing hard.

BILLY

Yeah...

He's saved from saying anymore by an intrusive sound coming from the top of the staircase. Martan is peeking around the corner, trying to get Billy's attention.

MARTAN LAROCHE

Psst, William!

BILLY

What is it, Martan?

MARTAN LAROCHE

Is zer any guests down there?

Billy looks around.

BILLY

Not really, why?

Martan beckons to whoever is behind him.

MARTAN LAROCHE

Very quickly, please.

He moves aside and two ambulance drivers carry a stretcher between them down the stairs.

When they reach the lobby, they struggle to lower the stretcher's rolling feet and Billy's curiosity gets the better of him.

The body bag isn't completely zipped and he sneaks a peek at who's inside. Eudora Felt's face is twisted in a death snarl, her lip *bloodied*.

When the paramedics see him looking, they zip it closed and roll the now upright stretcher out the side door. Martan follows them out, too busy to answer questions.

Fortunately, Nurse Cho descends the stairs, weeping into a handkerchief.

MIGUEL PRINCE

Mrs. Cho, what happened?

NURSE CHO

I don't understand my missus was normal when I went to bed.

MIGUEL PRINCE

What did the paramedics say?

NURSE CHO

They took a bunch of her medicines. They think it was her arthritis pills. I didn't know there was manganese in them. I can't believe I didn't spot the signs!

BILLY

Wait, pills? I don't understand. Why was her lip bloody?

NURSE CHO

The doctor said she probably fell when it happened. It doesn't make any sense. She was happy! She had all these theories about your story.

BILLY

About my story?

NURSE CHO

I should have been there...

MIGUEL PRINCE

I'm sure there's nothing you could have done.

Nurse Cho shakes her head, fighting tears.

NURSE CHO

I have to go. They wanted me to follow after. I don't know what I could tell them. There's so much to do...

She starts to head for the parking lot with Miguel calling after her.

MIGUEL PRINCE

If you need us to do anything just
let us know.

Mrs. Cho turns back at the last second.

NURSE CHO

I couldn't find her manuscript, the
latest one. She always kept it on
her. If it turns up, please let us
know.

She breaks down crying as she exits. Martan steps aside to let her pass, but there's the flash of some amateur paparazzi and he quickly goes to shoo them off the property.

With nothing left to occupy them, Billy and Miguel stare at each other, dumbfounded.

EXT. MORROW BAY -- SOON AFTER

Billy rides his bike through town with great purpose.

He passes the beachside where Harmony and Elmer's bodies were found and forces himself to look away.

He pedals on towards the town library...

INT. MORROW BAY LIBRARY -- MINUTES LATER

Given the waning days of summer, the library is practically empty. Billy hurries up to the elderly LIBRARIAN on duty.

BILLY

Do you have copies of the Gazette
from last year?

The woman sighs and leans over to wrestle a tray of film rolls onto the counter.

LIBRARIAN

It's on microfiche now, do you know
how to--

BILLY

Yeah, they showed us in school.

LIBRARIAN

Do you know the month?

BILLY
It'd be July.

INT. MORROW BAY LIBRARY, STACKS -- MINUTES LATER

Billy scrolls through the local paper's backlogs, muttering under his breath as the dates whizz by.

When he sees something that looks familiar, he spins the knob back the other way. Finally, a lurid headline comes into view:

"TWO DEAD IN GRISLY BICENTENNIAL SURPRISE."

Underneath the text is a panoramic view of the crime scene. In the foreground, the medical examiners crouch by the tarped bodies of the victims. Behind them, on the boardwalk, a crowd of spectators has gathered to watch.

As Billy scans the picture, something jumps out at him. He squints his eyes to see better...

On the periphery of the crowd is an unexpected guest: Helga Laroche.

INT. LION'S HEAD, STUDY -- THAT EVENING

As Ella Galbraith noodles on the piano, the other authors lounge around, drinking. In the corner of the room, Billy and Miguel huddle closely, speaking in hushed tones.

MIGUEL PRINCE
So, she was walking by and
curiosity got the better of her.
What's the big deal?

BILLY
Come on! Where's your imagination?

MIGUEL PRINCE
This is real life, not fiction. The
boring option is probably the right
one.

BILLY
Is that what happened with Eudora?

MIGUEL PRINCE
Eudora took the wrong medication.

BILLY

And that's all there is to it? What even is manganism?

Prince shrugs.

MIGUEL PRINCE

How should I know?

He scans the shelves.

MIGUEL PRINCE (CONT'D)

Here, look it up in the world book.

Billy follows his gaze and pulls a 40 lb. encyclopedia down off the shelf. He heaves it onto a desk, flips to the "M's," and reads aloud.

BILLY

Manganism. Characterized by loss of appetite, slurred speech, tremors in the extremities, rigid muscles, and little to no expression. The symptoms closely mimic Parkinsons...

He trails off, thinking.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Her hand shook when she signed the guest book.

Having overheard, Fontaine sits on the arm of Aubrey's chair to join in on the conversation.

REBECCA FONTAINE

She wasn't hungry at dinner either...

BILLY

But that's only a couple of the symptoms. For it to advance rapidly the way it did, doesn't that suggest a massive overdose?

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX

Maybe she committed suicide.

BILLY

Did the woman who annoyed us all last night at dinner seem like she was making plans to off herself?

Duncan Balfour returns from the bar area with an over-flowing drink.

DUNCAN BALFOUR
So, it's murder then!

Fontaine laughs.

REBECCA FONTAINE
Maybe it was the nurse! Maybe she was slowly poisoning her because she found out she was in the will!

BILLY
It's not that ridiculous. Eudora had blood on her lip! Maybe it wasn't from falling, but from someone force feeding her pills.

Aubrey shakes his head, skeptical.

TREVOR AUBREY
And who pray tell is your lead suspect?

He looks about the room.

TREVOR AUBREY (CONT'D)
Why Ms. Galbraith is a prime candidate. After all, poison is historically a woman's method of murder. Plus, she and Eudora came to loggerheads last night.

Ella breaks off her piano playing.

ELLA GALBRAITH
Excuse me?!

TREVOR AUBREY
I'm merely trying to illustrate how ludicrous this idea is. It'd be like saying Rebecca here is a suspect.

DUNCAN BALFOUR
Eudora did guilt her about her sex life...

REBECCA FONTAINE
Very funny. Besides, I have an ironclad alibi for the time Eudora would have been poisoned.

DUNCAN BALFOUR

Really? Someone can attest to your whereabouts all last night? Do tell...

REBECCA FONTAINE

Nice try.

TREVOR AUBREY

Maybe it's you, Balfour. You're so superior to everyone else, maybe you're getting rid of anyone you find untalented.

DUNCAN BALFOUR

Don't be ridiculous - I don't have that much free time!

Ella Galbraith quietly stands.

ELLA GALBRAITH

I'd like to say something, if that's okay.

Everyone seems kind of surprised that she's speaking at all.

MIGUEL PRINCE

Of course.

ELLA GALBRAITH

I know Dame Felt wasn't a big fan of mine. But I was always a fan of hers. I'd like to make sure she's at rest.

MIGUEL PRINCE

And... how do you expect to do that?

She holds up a worn guidebook: the Tibetan Book of the Dead.

ELLA GALBRAITH

By doing a séance.

There are more than a few raised eyebrows.

DUNCAN BALFOUR

You don't think bible-thumper Eudora would have had a problem with that?

ELLA GALBRAITH

It's not a religious ceremony.
 Besides, I think you're forgetting
 that Eudora's religion has one very
 big example of life after death.
 All this book does is act as a
 guide through the experiences that
 the consciousness goes through
 after death, in the bardo, the
 interval between death and rebirth.
 And anyone who wants to can feel
 free to join in...

She trails off as the authors look uncomfortably back and forth at one another, no one willing to say anything. Finally, Rebecca Fontaine can't take it anymore.

REBECCA FONTAINE

You know what, Ella? Count me in.
 I've always been a big believer in
 ESP, so whatever you need, I'm in.

Ella smiles, gratefully, as Rebecca helps her set up the talking board made of Masonite, covered in symbols and runes. Fontaine leans in.

REBECCA FONTAINE (CONT'D)

And don't worry about those guys.
 They're just--

ELLA GALBRAITH

Men? Yeah, I'm familiar.

As they prepare, Miguel turns to the lone lawyer in the room.

MIGUEL PRINCE

Well Elijah, what's the verdict?
 Is it murder?

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX

I wouldn't take the case. You
 don't even have a defendant. But
 if it was murder, it was clearly
 premeditated. And the person that
 planned and carried out the murder
 of a national treasure like Eudora
 Felt deserves to fry.

Art Leroy audibly balks.

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX (CONT'D)

Something I can help you with,
 friend?

ART LEROY

What kind of brother are you?

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX

One who's got a hell of a right hook.

ART LEROY

Why does the government get the right to murder anyone? Even in retribution. It's authoritarianism at its finest.

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX

You got a problem with it, why don't you organize a sit-in? You 4-F, anarchist New Yorker!

ART LEROY

(mocking his accent)

Now, now, no reason to get verbally abusive!

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX

I don't have to take this from some Berkeley-educated, counterculture beatnik!

ART LEROY

How dare you! I write for the poor man! For the working class! I worked in a pickle factory. I drove a cab. I was an anonymous institutional employee, a middle-class robot! I learned a long time ago to question authority. To not just be another cog in society!

By now Art is in Elijah's face, poking him in the chest.

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX

You better quit eyeballin' me, boy. I'm taking great pains not to sock you in the mouth.

ART LEROY

Oh, you're gonna hit me?!

They're both on their feet, ready to come to blows. Only Miguel Prince and Trevor Aubrey are able to pull them apart.

MIGUEL PRINCE

Whoa, fellas! Calm down!

TREVOR AUBREY
This isn't how civilized company
acts!

Elijah throws his hands up in resignation.

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX
You know what? He's right. I'm
heading to bed.

ART LEROY
I think that's a good idea.

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX
Ladies, gentlemen... I bid you good
night.

He heads for the door, throwing it open, only to reveal Helga Laroche, holding a tea tray. Elijah starts--

ELIJAH DEVEREAUX (CONT'D)
Jesus! Wear a bell, why don't you!

He skirts around her and heads upstairs as Miguel takes the tray from Helga.

MIGUEL PRINCE
We're actually fine, Helga, thank
you. We can serve ourselves.

Before exiting, Helga stares judgmentally at Ella's divination set-up, especially the Book of the Dead. Ignoring her, Ella focuses on the task at hand.

ELLA GALBRAITH
Can you pass that over to me?

She points to a discarded SHOT GLASS someone drank from. Rebecca slides it over and Ella cleans it off on the tablecloth.

REBECCA FONTAINE
So, how does this work? Do you go
into a trance? Does a ghost speak
through you?

ELLA GALBRAITH
Nothing so theatrical. Have you
heard of table rapping?

REBECCA FONTAINE
Yes.

ELLA GALBRAITH

Really?

REBECCA FONTAINE

No.

ELLA GALBRAITH

Think of it as knocking on a door
and hoping that someone answers.

REBECCA FONTAINE

Someone's... going to speak?

ELLA GALBRAITH

That's what the shot glass is for.
Any vibration and it should move on
the board. Give us an answer.

Ella turns to the others.

ELLA GALBRAITH (CONT'D)

Can we dim the lights?

Duncan Balfour's reading the paper under a tiffany lamp.

DUNCAN BALFOUR

I guess...

Grunting, he pulls the string, dropping the room into long
shadows. After a moment, Ella speaks.

ELLA GALBRAITH

This is an attempt to communicate
with the dead, to make contact with
their spirits, to translate their
thoughts to the physical realm...

She raps her knuckles against the hard wood of the table.
Then repeats. A kind of morse code...

Even the authors who aren't participating wait breathlessly
to see what will happen. When enough time passes though,
Balfour chuckles to himself.

That's when the lights flicker. *Twice.*

Ella smiles. Encouraged, she knocks again.

But this time nothing happens. Even when she repeats.

DUNCAN BALFOUR

Is that it?

Ella waits a beat, then finally, begrudgingly, nods.

Balfour turns the lights back on and stands, shaking his head.

DUNCAN BALFOUR (CONT'D)
Bunch of hooley. I'm going to bed.

REBECCA FONTAINE
Yeah, that's probably a good
decision. I have the panel
tomorrow...

She turns back to Ella.

REBECCA FONTAINE (CONT'D)
Do you need help cleaning up?

Embarrassed the séance didn't work, Ella refuses to look at her. She just starts putting her things away.

Realizing she's not getting an answer, Fontaine reluctantly follows the other authors out of the room.

When Ella's alone, she chokes back a sob, shudders racking her body. Refusing to give into it, she shoves the emotion down and wipes away any telltale sign of tears.

She's about to move the shot glass when she finds that it's hovering over a familiar sigil: the hanged man.

Refusing to think about it, she folds up the summoning board and gathers her things together.

She is wholly unaware that someone is watching her from outside the study's picture window. When she moves to the door, her watcher moves with her.

INT. LION'S HEAD, SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

As Ella scales the Lion's Head grand staircase, she notices that she's quite alone.

Reaching the landing, she picks up her pace. There's no one upstairs either. Not even a stray author.

She rounds the corner under the imperious eye of Monsieur Laroche's portrait. She's digging her room key out of her pocket when it happens--

At the other end of the hall, a hunched figure emerges in a wheelchair. It is dressed, head to toe, in Eudora's shawls.

Ella chokes on her fright. She nearly loses her room key, but somehow slams it into the keyhole. She wrestles with the knob as Eudora rolls ominously towards her.

Just before the figure can reach out and grab her, Ella throws her weight into the door and falls into her room.

She scrambles onto her knees, desperately flinging the door closed behind her. She slams the lock home.

Leaning back against the door, she hopelessly tries to catch her breath. It's the only sound that can be heard...

Until the KNOCKING starts...

FADE TO:

CHYRON: "SATURDAY"

INT. LION'S HEAD, LOBBY -- THE NEXT MORNING

Billy's urgently trying to convince Miguel Prince of his theory when Trevor Aubrey hurries over.

TREVOR AUBREY
Have either of you seen Miss
Fontaine?

Prince claps his hands to his cheeks and pretends to blush.

MIGUEL PRINCE
Why do you ask, huh? Do I smell
wedding bells?!

Trevor throws him a stiff, charitable laugh.

TREVOR AUBREY
I'm afraid the old girl has gotten
somewhat fixated upon me. I thought
I would duck out before she left
for the day...

BILLY
I think you're fine, I haven't seen
her today.

INT. LION'S HEAD, SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY -- SAME TIME

One of the Lion's Head's MAIDS carries a bundle of clean towels under her arm as she knocks on doors to clean. She gives a quick rap on Elijah's door and announces herself.

MAID
Housekeeping?

When there's no response, she lets herself in with the skeleton key. She's barely a few feet inside when she sees something that makes her SHRIEK at the top of her lungs--

Laying on the floor in a contorted ball under the desk is the body of Elijah Devereaux.

He has burns along one of his arms, the same arm that's gripping the charred plug of a burnt-out desk lamp.

The maid turns heel and goes screaming down the hall. The door frame remains empty until Billy and Miguel appear in it to see what the commotion's all about.

Cautiously, they step inside. The smell of burnt flesh is enough to make both of them retch.

Miguel puts a hand over his mouth to look closer. The outlet Elijah was reaching for has a halo of burn marks around it.

And, on closer inspection, the rug he's kneeling on has a faint watermark.

Unfortunately, it's all Prince can spot before the smell gets to be too much. He pulls Billy out of the room with him.

MIGUEL PRINCE
Come on, leave it for the police.

INT. LION'S HEAD, STUDY -- THAT AFTERNOON

Billy hurries into the study, loosening his bellman's uniform.

BILLY
I've got fifteen minutes, I'm on break.

He takes a seat next to Prince on the davenport. Miguel's in the middle of relaying the day's events to Trevor Aubrey.

TREVOR AUBREY
What did the police say?

MIGUEL PRINCE

Two junior detectives showed up
just long enough to declare it an
accident.

BILLY

But you said the wire was frayed?

MIGUEL PRINCE

It looked frayed.

BILLY

And he just happened to be kneeling
in water?

MIGUEL PRINCE

They say a vase fell over. Water
magnified the current.

TREVOR AUBREY

So that flicker of the lights last
night...

They look over at Ella. She's pacing the room, nerves shot,
digging into her bag for something, but coming up empty.

REBECCA FONTAINE

You okay, Ella?

ELLA GALBRAITH

I can't find my epi.

REBECCA FONTAINE

Do you need help looking?

ELLA GALBRAITH

It's probably in my room, I'm sure
it'll turn up...

REBECCA FONTAINE

Will you be okay without it?

ELLA GALBRAITH

I'm sure I'll be fine, I just need
to make sure to relax. Keep my
blood pressure down.

REBECCA FONTAINE

Well, let us know if we can do
anything.

She puts a hand on Aubrey's back as if speaking for the two
of them. Trevor involuntarily winces.

Whereas yesterday he welcomed the company, today he can't get far enough away from her.

TREVOR AUBREY
Maybe it was an accident.

MIGUEL PRINCE
Are we ignoring the fact that Eudora had an "accident" too?

TREVOR AUBREY
Two is coincidental. *Three* is murder.

REBECCA FONTAINE
(faintly British)
Yes, Miguel, it's far too early to come to that conclusion.

Aubrey rolls his eyes at her parroting. Fontaine catches sight of it out of the corner of her eye and decides to change her tact. She stands up.

REBECCA FONTAINE (CONT'D)
It is a shame about Elijah, though.
He was very handsome...

Aubrey does his best to ignore her.

TREVOR AUBREY
Do you really think there's someone who's got it out for us?

MIGUEL PRINCE
Maybe...

TREVOR AUBREY
But, why?

MIGUEL PRINCE
Exactly - why?!

DUNCAN BALFOUR
The real question is why are we letting this stop us from going to the convention? You people aren't scared, are you?!

Tired of being ignored by Aubrey, Rebecca slides in beside Balfour.

MIGUEL PRINCE
You can't be serious, Balfour - two people have died!

DUNCAN BALFOUR

And if there *is* a murderer roaming
around here why would you want to
stay?!

Fontaine laughs and lays a flirty hand on Balfour's arm. He
laughs, knowing exactly why she's coming onto him. He stands
up with an old man groan.

DUNCAN BALFOUR (CONT'D)

Well, I've got a panel and I'm
going. You can all stay here if
you want. But I've got a room full
of well-wishers waiting for me.
Just gonna change first...

He heads out of the room. Billy watches him go.

BILLY

That's it. Balfour did it. Case
closed.

Everybody laughs.

REBECCA FONTAINE

Why not Art? He called out Elijah
in front of everyone last night.
Maybe he's killing squares and old
conservatives!

She looks over at Art, smiling. But he's in bad shape...

He's sitting in the corner, chain-smoking and openly crying.
Looks to be on something too.

REBECCA FONTAINE (CONT'D)

Oh Art, I'm sorry. I didn't mean--

ART LEROY

No, you're right. Someone I fought
with died very soon after I yelled
at them. I'd suspect me too.

REBECCA FONTAINE

Hey, no one thinks you had anything
to do with this.

She hurries to console him as Ray Koufax slides over on the
couch, closer to Billy and Miguel.

RAY KOUFAX

I was on the fence before, but I'm
starting to think you two are on to
something.

(MORE)

RAY KOUFAX (CONT'D)

Guy tells us all how he supports the electric chair and the next day he's found fried in his hotel room? Doesn't add up. I took a correspondence course in bookkeeping to open my own private eye outfit... that is until my old business partner double-crossed me, but that's a different story all together. Long story short, I'm offering my services to you.

MIGUEL PRINCE

It sounds like you have a theory.

Koufax lowers his voice to share.

RAY KOUFAX

Writers are very solitary people. A convention like this gets them all in one place. Say someone purposely started that fire at the four seasons. Maybe the security was too good to do everything they had planned.

MIGUEL PRINCE

If you're saying it was planned in advance then how would the killer know the shipwrecked authors would seek out the Lion's Head? To my knowledge, before this weekend, I was the only author who ever came here...

He trails off, thinking.

RAY KOUFAX

Care to share with the class?

MIGUEL PRINCE

I'm... a part of this.

BILLY

Isn't that a little conceited?

MIGUEL PRINCE

No, it's a lot conceited.

RAY KOUFAX

You imagine they're saving you for last? Then why start with Eudora?

MIGUEL PRINCE

If you were trying to pull off a series of murders would you really want the madam of mysteries around to figure your game out?

Koufax nods.

BILLY

Still it's ironic that the queen of poisons doesn't notice that she herself is being poisoned.

MIGUEL PRINCE

Maybe that's something her poisoner wanted to point out.

BILLY

What?

MIGUEL PRINCE

That she's not so clever.

They all get there at the same time, but it's Billy who says it:

BILLY

Balfour!

The three of them are instantly on their feet, running towards the grand staircase in the lobby.

INT. LION'S HEAD, SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

Billy and Miguel are the first up the stairs, followed soon after by Ray Koufax, who's wheezing from decades of smoking.

Miguel pounds on Duncan's door and tries the knob. It's locked, so he pounds again.

This time there's a choking, gurgling sound from within. The three of them put their shoulder into the door. It's solidly built, but after an attempt or two, it splinters open--

INT. BALFOUR'S ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

They find Balfour sitting in a desk chair in the middle of the room. His head is thrown back, his tongue hanging out, a syringe stuck dead center of it.

The bottle of Ella's epinephrine is broken beside him on the floor and there's foamy bile running down his neck. Billy has to look away it's so bad.

They hear footsteps behind them and are soon joined by Trevor Aubrey. Prince turns to see him enter.

MIGUEL PRINCE

You still think these are just accidents?

INT. LION'S HEAD, LOBBY -- SOON AFTER

The authors are collected in the lobby waiting for DETECTIVE MURPHY, 60's, to finish up with his subordinates. He's got a walrus mustache, a belly that swells over his belt, and a thick "mass-hole" accent.

DET. MURPHY

Hey folks, my name's Officer Murphy. I'm a homicide detective from down the cape. How are yiz holdin' up?

They mumble their answers, too spooked to do anything else.

BILLY

Why'd they send someone from Cape Cod up here?

DET. MURPHY

I'm afraid a small town like Morrow Bay doesn't have the deaths that would justify a homicide division.

MIGUEL PRINCE

You sure about that?

He throws a polite smile Miguel's way.

DET. MURPHY

You was all down in the parlor when this happened?

MIGUEL PRINCE

Yeah.

DET. MURPHY

Has the, uh... victim ever been bopped for anything before?

They look at him confused, so Murphy elaborates.

DET. MURPHY (CONT'D)
Arrested. Has he ever been
arrested?

REBECCA FONTAINE
We wouldn't really know. None of
us are very close to him, we're
just in town for the convention.

DET. MURPHY
Anybody around seem shiesty?

ART LEROY
How much time you got?

DET. MURPHY
Aside from the broken bottle of
epinephrine and the syringe, we
have very little to go on. Here's
hoping one of them comes up with a
usable print.

He starts to head for the door, but is reminded of something.

DET. MURPHY (CONT'D)
Until then, I don't want to
inconvenience you, but I'm gonna
have to ask you all not to leave
the area.

TREVOR AUBREY
You want us to stay another night
in "Hotel Blood" where three
murders have happened?!

DET. MURPHY
I only see evidence of one.

TREVOR AUBREY
You mean to tell me that you're
still calling the first two deaths
accidents when they're clearly
not?!

DET. MURPHY
Not according to the boys in blue.
Look, if you're worried, I'll leave
a statie in a cruiser at the end of
the drive. Just in case...

He tips his hat and heads out.

DET. MURPHY (CONT'D)
Good day, everyone.

He's gone for barely a moment before the authors start looking at each other, suspiciously. They can't help it.

INT. LION'S HEAD, VARIOUS -- MOMENTS LATER

Despite what they've been told, the authors pack their bags as fast as they can. Martan hurries from room to room trying to put out fires.

MARTAN LAROCHE

You heard za polize officer, we're supposed to stay--

RAY KOUFAX

I don't give a shit! I'm not waiting here for someone to bump me off!

He storms into the hallway, suitcases in hand. At the grand staircase, there's a log jam of people trying to get down to the lobby with their belongings. They push and pull on each other to be first.

As they head for the front door though, Martan makes a final plea.

MARTAN LAROCHE

Please, ladies and gentlemen, if we could only--

From behind him on the stairs comes a voice--

RAY KOUFAX

Let 'em go.

The writers hesitate, briefly, near the front door.

RAY KOUFAX (CONT'D)

Someone's gonna write a classic out of this. Might as well not have any competition.

The only one undeterred is Ella. She looks back at the others, incredulously.

ELLA GALBRAITH

You're all certifiable! I'm getting the hell out of here!

She turns heel and exits. She isn't more than a few feet out the door when she spots Eudora's ghost waving to her from the front seat of Ella's rental car.

Ella blanches and stops in her tracks. She slowly turns around and heads back inside. Ray laughs when he sees her return.

RAY KOUFAX
Change your mind?

But Ella doesn't answer, just drags her things back upstairs.

INT. LION'S HEAD, STUDY -- SOON AFTER

Clear that they're now dealing with a serial killer, Billy and the writers isolate themselves in the study. As they're about to close the door though, Martan sticks his head inside.

MARTAN LAROCHE
You are all in here now?

RAY KOUFAX
Yes Martan, and we'd like some privacy.

MARTAN LAROCHE
That is fine, I just wanted to tell you that since all the other guests have checked out, I have unfortunately dismissed the rest of the staff. Has anyone seen William?

Behind the door, Billy shakes his head, so Ray hurries Martan out of the room.

RAY KOUFAX
No, I'm afraid not.

As the door shuts, Martan yelps--

MARTAN LAROCHE
Let me know if you need anything!

Next to him, Helga tries to come in with tea, but Koufax locks her out. Out in the hall, there's the sound of crashing china. Koufax grimaces and says through the door.

RAY KOUFAX
We're quite alright, thank you!

He turns back to the others.

RAY KOUFAX (CONT'D)

What is it with that woman and tea?!

MIGUEL PRINCE

Ray brings up a good point. If we're going to stay here, I propose from here on out that we only eat and drink things we ourselves have made.

TREVOR AUBREY

That's a good idea.

They settle into the couches as Miguel gets right to it.

MIGUEL PRINCE

Well, I don't know about the rest of you, but I'm not sitting around while the killer picks us off one-by-one. Who do we think's doing this? There are no wrong answers.

When no one speaks, he continues.

MIGUEL PRINCE (CONT'D)

Fine, I'll go first. I think one of us is knocking off the competition.

There's another suspicious round of glances as Koufax lights up a stogie next to Rebecca Fontaine. She swats the smoke away, annoyed.

REBECCA FONTAINE

Mr. Koufax here is broke. The "Four Seasons" was comped, the "Lion's Head," on the other hand, is not. He had a motive for stealing the manuscript AND bumping off another writer in his genre.

Ray exhales into her face.

RAY KOUFAX

Miguel misspoke. There are some wrong answers.

Rebecca gets up and moves across the room. She tries to take her old seat on the arm of Trevor's chair, but he leans forward, ignoring her. She stands and gapes at him.

REBECCA FONTAINE

Aubrey is a professional charmer.
Maybe he did it? Sociopaths do
lots of things that your average
person wouldn't...

Trevor glares at her.

TREVOR AUBREY

Are you insane?! Three people have
died! And you want to, what - talk
about us?!

Rebecca looks around at all the heads inclined her way.

REBECCA FONTAINE

Well, not anymore...

In an effort to get the eyes off her, Rebecca throws out
another theory.

REBECCA FONTAINE (CONT'D)

You said Eudora was killed first
because she's too good at
mysteries. And the second person
was a lawyer. Maybe someone fears
getting caught.

TREVOR AUBREY

Then how do you explain Balfour's
overdose?

MIGUEL PRINCE

Billy has a theory...

BILLY

You can tell them.

RAY KOUFAX

You'll have to speak up, son. It's
hard to hear you.

Billy reluctantly clears his throat.

BILLY

I think Eudora may have been killed
because she was on to the
bicentennial murder? Now the
killer's after anyone who might
have heard what she had to say.

TREVOR AUBREY

Why do you think they're connected?

BILLY

I don't know... maybe because there's a humor to them, macabre as it may be. But a sense of justice too. Someone thinks they're doing the world a favor.

MIGUEL PRINCE

By that reasoning, if they are connected, then only someone who was present last summer can be suspected.

BILLY

Yeah, but if you cross people off your list you might be ignoring the killer.

REBECCA FONTAINE

Who would want to kill writers?

ART LEROY

Our publishers? They say that an author dying is a boon to their sales...

RAY KOUFAX

I hate to say it, but the Nazis have always had a problem with freedom of thought...

TREVOR AUBREY

Are we really suggesting that our host has a secret S.S. member for a father?

RAY KOUFAX

It's not such a ridiculous idea. They used to outlaw non-german authors. They would have hated Eudora's decadence and moral corruption; they would have called her a corrupting foreign influence. Balfour drove an ambulance for the other side during the war. And Elijah's books would have been burned for no other reason than he was black.

TREVOR AUBREY

Okay, but what about the rest of us?

RAY KOUFAX

You're pro-Britain, Ella seems to condone satanism, Fontaine is libidinous--

REBECCA FONTAINE

Hey!

RAY KOUFAX

Art Leroy's a dirty liberal, and I'm Jewish - need I say more?

MIGUEL PRINCE

What about me?

RAY KOUFAX

There's a reason you're not dead yet. You're their number one customer.

MIGUEL PRINCE

My real last name is Prinze. I'm Latino on my mother's side. If your theory's right, they'll come for me sooner or later.

RAY KOUFAX

You got a better answer?

MIGUEL PRINCE

I think you're close. Whoever this is seems to be punishing people's weaknesses. Eudora was over the hill, her best books were behind her, so her killer uses her arthritis pills against her. Elijah's politics were killing his writing, so someone made sure he ate his words. And Balfour was an adrenalin junkie, so Ella's epinephrine goes missing.

TREVOR AUBREY

You're saying our flaws are going to be our downfall?

MIGUEL PRINCE

In a manner of speaking, yes...

ART LEROY

I don't need to ask what my flaw is. I'm going cold turkey. I'm not even gonna give the bastards a chance.

He absent-mindedly lights a joint and starts smoking it. It takes a few moments before he finally notices that everyone is staring at him.

ART LEROY (CONT'D)

What?

Billy points to his mouth. When Art realizes that joints are also drugs, he hurls it to the ground, stomping it madly.

INT. LION'S HEAD, SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

Art storms into his hotel room and seizes up the wastepaper basket. He sweeps all the paraphernalia on his desk into it.

Turning to his suitcase, he dumps the pills, the coke, the vials of ether, and the baggies of china white into the trash.

He pours the entire thing into the hallway trashcan and, after hesitating, leaves it there. He heads back downstairs.

But it isn't long before someone else comes along to claim what he left.

INT. LION'S DEN, STUDY -- SOON AFTER

It's barely an hour later and Art is already fiending. He smokes cigarettes like they're going out of fashion.

Behind him, Ella returns from the kitchen, clutching a cup of tea in both hands.

TREVOR AUBREY

What is that?

ELLA GALBRAITH

It's tea...

TREVOR AUBREY

I mean, where did you get it?

ELLA GALBRAITH

I picked the leaves just before it started raining...

They look at her like she's dense.

ELLA GALBRAITH (CONT'D)

They're not from the old bag's garden! How dumb do you think I am?

TREVOR AUBREY

And the water?

ELLA GALBRAITH

An unopened bottle of Evian that I
boiled within an inch of it's life.
Any more questions?

TREVOR AUBREY

I guess not.

She sips her tea by the picture window that looks out into the garden.

In the drizzling rain, Eudora's shawl-covered ghost, looks up from planting to wave at Ella, her hands covered in mud.

Ella forces her eyes closed and waits for the vision to pass. When she finally opens them again, there's no one in the garden anymore.

She exhales slowly and turns back to the room, a thin layer of perspiration covering her face.

Trying to regain control, she sips her tea. When that doesn't work, she stretches her neck and settles into a chair.

She tries to meditate but barely five seconds into it, she's grinding her teeth and wincing.

She gets up and starts to pace, making annoyed mouth noises that the others begin to pick up on.

REBECCA FONTAINE

You alright, Ella?

ELLA GALBRAITH

I'm fine, I'm just having a bit of
a panic attack--

She lets out an ear-splitting, frustrated scream as her limbs begin to shake uncontrollably. She collapses to the ground.

The first person to reach her is Art. He grabs her by the shoulders, to cut the shaking in half. He yells into her twisted face--

ART LEROY

Look at me.

And though her eyes are rolling back into her head, he's able to look at her pupils. They're as round as saucers.

ART LEROY (CONT'D)
What did you take?

MIGUEL PRINCE
What makes you think she took
something?

ART LEROY
I know what an overdose looks like!

MIGUEL PRINCE
If it was in her tea wouldn't she
notice?

ART LEROY
You heard what she ordered for
dinner the other night. If you
think she doesn't put the same shit
in her tea, you got another thing
coming. Call an ambulance!

Trevor grabs for the rotary, but the telephone wire is
snagged on something. He gives the whole thing a pull and
after a bit of resistance it comes loose...

...along with a bit of the book shelf. Not that anyone
notices that yet...

Trevor listens for a dial tone and when he doesn't hear one,
he presses down on the hook switch a couple times.

He follows the phone line to the wall and that's when he sees
what his handywork has wrought: a hidden door has cracked
open, one that was flush with the bookshelf. He stares at it
in confusion before he turns back to the others.

TREVOR AUBREY
Phone's dead.

When they look up and see the door open behind Trevor,
they're just as confused. But they wrench their attention
back to Ella.

MIGUEL PRINCE
Then we drive her.

INT. LION'S HEAD, LOBBY -- MOMENTS LATER

The study's double doors burst open and Trevor emerges
carrying Ella in his arms. Martan looks up at the commotion.

MARTAN LAROCHE
What happened to her?

TREVOR AUBREY

The phones are down! She's having
a heart attack! We need a car!

Ray Koufax forces his way to the front, fishing his keys out
of his pocket.

RAY KOUFAX

We can take mine.

As Martan checks the phones, Ray leads the way out the front
door.

EXT. LION'S HEAD, PARKING LOT -- CONTINUOUS

Ray's clunker is one of the first cars in the parking lot.
He unlocks it as fast as he can and Trevor wrestles Ella into
the backseat.

Getting in the driver's side, Ray tries to start the car, but
the engine won't turn over.

He gets out to pop the hood and see what's wrong. When he
does though, he only stares into the engine block,
dumbfounded.

The others hurry over to see what he sees: someone has cut
the engine out completely.

ART LEROY

What the fuck...

But Trevor doesn't waste any time.

TREVOR AUBREY

Here, let's take mine. It's only a
two-seater though.

Trevor's Aston-Martin is nearby. When he gets close enough
though, he sees something's also missing from his car.

TREVOR AUBREY (CONT'D)

Where the hell is my steering
wheel?

His dashboard is completely bald.

TREVOR AUBREY (CONT'D)

Is this a joke? What is happening?!

Martan hurries down the front steps.

MARTAN LAROCHE

Take my car.

He throws the keys to his Trans-am to Miguel, who catches them handily. But when they reach Martan's ride it's up on blocks.

MIGUEL PRINCE

Who would do this?! She's gonna die!

From behind him comes a quiet voice.

REBECCA FONTAINE

Miguel...

He turns to see what it is they want. Fontaine simply motions to Ella...

She's dead in Trevor's arms.

INT. LION'S HEAD, STUDY -- MINUTES LATER

As they lay Ella's body down gently on one of the fainting couches, Fontaine paces the room, manic.

REBECCA FONTAINE

I'm getting out of here; I don't care what you say. I'll walk if I have to!

TREVOR AUBREY

It's the middle of the night and it's raining. Where are you gonna go?

REBECCA FONTAINE

Far from here!

BILLY

It's at least two miles of woods between here and the highway.

REBECCA FONTAINE

We can't just sit here and do nothing!

TREVOR AUBREY

Am I the only person who wants to find out *why* this is happening?

REBECCA FONTAINE

Leave it to the police!

RAY KOUFAX

You trust that keystone cop who
came in here to figure this out?

REBECCA FONTAINE

I am not equipped to handle this!

MIGUEL PRINCE

Hey, we all want to be far from
this place, but there's not much we
can do without sunlight.

TREVOR AUBREY

Then we're agreed? First thing in
the morning. No matter what... In
the meantime. We find out
everything we can about this
fucking family.

(beat)

And it starts with going in there.

He motions to the bookshelf door they found. It stands there
half-open, daring them to enter...

INT. LION'S HEAD, PASSAGE -- MOMENTS LATER

Miguel pokes his head inside. When his eyes adjust, he sees
a long prohibition tunnel. He pushes the door open further
and is soon joined by the others.

The study's light illuminates a dusty walkway. But with the
added eyesight comes the realization that someone's been
there recently. There's the unmistakable trail of footprints
in the dust...

RAY KOUFAX

Anybody want to ask our hosts for a
flashlight?

When no one answers, Koufax breaks the handle off a broom.
He motions to Trevor's handkerchief.

RAY KOUFAX (CONT'D)

Do you mind?

Trevor hands it over without complaint and Koufax goes about
making a torch. He lights it with his zippo and leads the
way. The others follow after, hesitantly.

The narrow hall leads further underground. They continue
down until they reach a closed wooden door. Exchanging
nervous glances with the others, Koufax throws it open.

INT. SPEAKEASY -- CONTINUOUS

The room within is filled with bathtubs, remnants of homemade distilleries covered in decades of filth.

At some point someone used the space as a dungeon: there are sex swings and S&M bondage gear hanging from the ceiling.

The authors wind their way between obstacles and head towards another door in the far corner of the room.

INT. BASEMENT OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

They enter a cramped space with no windows to speak of. There are diplomas on one wall, a bookshelf of journals on the other.

By the door, a Thuringian state flag of Germany has as its coat of arms a lion's paw gripping a swastika. On the coat rack hangs a luger in a holster.

RAY KOUFAX

See what you can find.

They spread out around the room. Trevor pulls open a desk drawer and digs around.

TREVOR AUBREY

We got army medals...

He tosses the ones he finds onto the desktop.

TREVOR AUBREY (CONT'D)

Iron Cross, War Merit Cross, Wound Badge. He's at least a Captain's rank.

REBECCA FONTAINE

Can we get some light over here?

Koufax swings the torch over towards Fontaine who is combing through the journals.

REBECCA FONTAINE (CONT'D)

These are a mix of diary entries and what looks like random scientific thoughts...

Art chimes in, digging into some cardboard boxes.

ART LEROY

Same, I got medical records here.

Miguel opens a filing cabinet. In the uppermost tray, he finds dozens of passports.

MIGUEL PRINCE

Everyone's gonna want to take a
look at this.

They huddle over to see as Koufax's homemade torch lights the findings.

MIGUEL PRINCE (CONT'D)

They're all in different names:
Fritz Ullman... Helmut Gregor...
Wolfgang Gerhard...

He flips through some of them.

MIGUEL PRINCE (CONT'D)

He was in Greece in '60, Cairo in
'61, Spain in 1971...

Koufax looks around at the specimen bottles on the shelves. They're green with age.

His curiosity takes him to the desk. On top of it there's a photo of a young Helga, clutching a soldier in uniform. When Koufax sees the man, he inadvertently draws in a breath.

RAY KOUFAX

I don't believe it...

It's enough to make the others crowd around him.

REBECCA FONTAINE

What?

RAY KOUFAX

...the Angel of Death.

He gets a far off look in his eyes as Rebecca presses him.

REBECCA FONTAINE

Who is that?

RAY KOUFAX

Jurgen Velner. There were always
rumors that he'd gotten out of
Germany. Had surgery on his face
so he could stay hidden. He was a
doctor, wouldn't have been hard to
call in a few favors. Escape
through ratlines to South
America...

BILLY

Ratlines?

RAY KOUFAX

Think underground railroad for
former S.S. officers.

REBECCA FONTAINE

Why does that name sound familiar.

RAY KOUFAX

Because you're not jewish. He was
responsible for some of the most
despicable experiments ever done on
humans. He tested mustard gas on
children, removed organs just to
see the effect on the body. He
used to place prisoners into
centrifuges and spin them until
they were dead. He injected people
with animal blood, with sea water,
again just to see what would
happen. He amputated limbs,
injected chemicals into eyes to
change eye color. His work was
supposed to be about creating the
ideal soldier, but all he created
was death.

MIGUEL PRINCE

And you think this Velner is Papa
Laroche?

Koufax nods.

MIGUEL PRINCE (CONT'D)

Then, it's time we have a talk with
the rest of his family.

INT. LION'S HEAD, LOBBY -- MINUTES LATER

Koufax and Aubrey force Martan into a chair, next to his
crying brother, Rene.

MARTAN LAROCHE

Zis really isn't necessary.

RAY KOUFAX

Save it, frog-eater! We know all
about your father!

MARTAN LAROCHE

What does Andre Laroche have to do
with zis?

Koufax shakes his head.

RAY KOUFAX

Try Jurgen Velner.

Martan looks at his feet.

MARTAN LAROCHE

I don't know... who is zat?

Koufax steps in, menacingly.

RAY KOUFAX

Either you start flapping your gums
or I'm gonna have to beat you like
an old rug. I'm really hoping for
the latter.

MARTAN LAROCHE

I can't tell you what I don't know--

Koufax delivers a clean one-two to Martan's gut. The
Frenchman doubles over in pain, spitting blood.

Rene jumps up ready to defend his brother, but Martan holds
him back. When Rene finally settles back into his seat,
Koufax kneels down to talk to Martan.

RAY KOUFAX

Your father is Jurgen Velner, Chief
Surgeon of the S.S, Medical
Superintendent of the Ravensbruck
Concentration Camp, and personal
physician to Heinrich Himmler.

MARTAN LAROCHE

I don't know vat you're talking
about!

RAY KOUFAX

Better watch out, your accent's
slipping...

They dump the passports they found in the basement out in
front of him. Martan stares at them, grimly.

MARTAN LAROCHE

Eh, shit.

Trevor smiles wide.

TREVOR AUBREY

Indeed.

MARTAN LAROCHE

I don't know what you think you know, but I promise you - you don't know the whole story.

MIGUEL PRINCE

Then enlighten us.

Martan places a supportive hand on his brother's back before continuing.

MARTAN LAROCHE

Rene doesn't remember. He was always excited to see father. He'd run up to him even after he'd been gone for months. Traveling for work he'd say. What a joke. He had no interest in being a father. When he was here, he made our lives a living hell. He'd beat me for the smallest infraction. Wasn't like I could go wining to my mother about it. She almost seemed to enjoy my misery. She was his assistant at the camps - did you know that?

MIGUEL PRINCE

I didn't.

MARTAN LAROCHE

Yes, Ravensbruck had a woman's camp. She was particularly adept at selecting subjects from the ranks of prisoners.

REBECCA FONTAINE

Subjects for what?

MARTAN LAROCHE

A Study of Hereditary Biology and Racial Hygiene. It was genetic research on twins aimed to strengthen Nazi claims at supremacy. All their research was on undesirables. They had all the non-aryan patients they needed. So my mother, who was pregnant with his children, volunteered to be part of the study.

(MORE)

MARTAN LAROCHE (CONT'D)

They gave her radiation poisoning from an extended x-ray of her uterus. It's why I am short. It's why my brother is... the way that he is.

He ruffles Rene's hair.

MIGUEL PRINCE

While this walk down memory lane is certainly eye-opening, it doesn't explain why Billy here found a picture of your mother at the Morrow Beach murder scene last summer.

MARTAN LAROCHE

What are you suggesting?

MIGUEL PRINCE

We think that your mother was having an affair with Elmer Jerome and that your father saw them together.

Martan shakes his head.

MARTAN LAROCHE

That's not possible...

MIGUEL PRINCE

He killed Jerome and the girl must have seen--

MARTAN LAROCHE

No, I'm telling you that there is no way that can be true.

MIGUEL PRINCE

Why not? Just because you don't want it to be true doesn't make it so!

MARTAN LAROCHE

You're wrong!

MIGUEL PRINCE

How could you possibly know for sure?!

MARTAN LAROCHE

Because I killed him! He's buried in my mother's garden!

Martan's outburst has stricken the authors silent. Billy quietly leans over to talk to Miguel.

BILLY
Do you believe him?

MIGUEL PRINCE
I want to talk to the mother first.

INT. LION'S HEAD, LOBBY -- MINUTES LATER

Having been plucked from bed, Helga Laroche is led into the room in her pajamas by Ray Koufax. He forces her into a chair next to her children as she wrenches her arm away from him.

HELGA LAROCHE
Filthy romani!

She spits upon the ground, narrowly missing him.

RAY KOUFAX
Now-now, that's no way to act!

HELGA LAROCHE
How dare you put your hands on me!

RAY KOUFAX
Oh, you loved it!

Miguel steps forward, breaking them up.

MIGUEL PRINCE
Come on, this is getting us
nowhere.

He turns to face Helga.

MIGUEL PRINCE (CONT'D)
Mrs. Velner, we've brought you here
to--

HELGA LAROCHE
Who is this?!

MIGUEL PRINCE
Don't bother, your son's already
told us who you people really are.

She sneaks a withering look at Martan before turning back to Miguel.

HELGA LAROCHE
And what has he said?

Ray Koufax kneels down to get right in Helga's face.

RAY KOUFAX
That you are a nazi whore!

Helga smiles.

HELGA LAROCHE
He has always had a terrible
imagination. My husband is a
doctor. A bacteriologist. That is
all.

RAY KOUFAX
Didn't stop you from cheating on
him though, did it?

HELGA LAROCHE
You shut your mouth!

MIGUEL PRINCE
Tell us about Elmer Jerome.

HELGA LAROCHE
Who?

RAY KOUFAX
Let's just skip you pretending that
you don't know what we're talking
about. Your husband was gone for
long periods of time and you let a
golf caddy into your secret garden--

Helga raises her hand to strike Koufax, but he catches it,
handily.

RAY KOUFAX (CONT'D)
Nuh-uh.

Smiling, he lets the arm drop. Helga waits for her anger to
abate before responding.

HELGA LAROCHE
I vasn't the only one he was going
vith.

MIGUEL PRINCE
Who else?

Helga points to Billy in the back of the crowd.

HELGA LAROCHE
That one's mother!

All the heads in the room crane to look at the boy. Billy turns bright red.

MIGUEL PRINCE
Is that true?

Billy shakes his head but finds it hard to speak. Martan slowly rises to his feet.

MARTAN LAROCHE
You were late the first day of work, the night after the fire at the Four Seasons.

BILLY
That doesn't mean anything--

MARTAN LAROCHE
My god, it all makes sense. Have any of you seen his journal? It's just ways to kill people!

BILLY
You looked in my journal?!

MARTAN LAROCHE
Do you deny it?!

BILLY
I'm a writer!

Miguel's starting to look worried.

MIGUEL PRINCE
What's he talking about?

Billy's eyes dart incredulously from face-to-face.

BILLY
Don't tell me you believe him?
You've gotta be kidding me!

MARTAN LAROCHE
(to Miguel)
Think about it. You're his idol - why do you think he's keeping you around? He wants you to see how clever he is!

Prince glares at Billy, increasingly concerned, as Martan continues.

MARTAN LAROCHE (CONT'D)
 Why would he kill Eudora?! It
 wasn't because she was too good a
 sleuth it was because she insulted
 you at dinner! I was there - I saw
 it! As the bellhop, he had access
 to the guest's luggage -- Eudora's
 pills, Elijah's plug. Miss
 Galbraith's adrenalin...

Martan's words are hitting home with many of the authors.

MARTAN LAROCHE (CONT'D)
 Who would ever question a seventeen-
 year-old when Nazis in hiding could
 so easily take the blame?!

Now everyone is looking to Billy for answers. He scrambles
 for a solution and is relieved when one finally comes.

BILLY
 If Martan is telling the truth,
 there's an easy way to settle
 this...
 (beat)
 I say we dig up Herr Velner's body.

EXT. LION'S HEAD, GARDENS -- SOON AFTER

The rain is still falling in droves as Billy, shovel in hand,
 digs like a man possessed. He's a good three feet below
 ground level and out of breath when he motions to one of the
 other shovels.

BILLY
 You know, this might go faster if
 you guys pitched in.

RAY KOUFAX
 You're doing just fine, kid.

Billy returns to digging briefly, before stopping once again.

BILLY
 You sure this is where you buried
 him?

Martan nods. He watches Billy dig in silence for a few
 moments before whispering to his brother. Rene grabs a spare
 shovel and jumps into the hole with Billy to help.

BILLY (CONT'D)
 Thank you.

MARTAN LAROCHE

Don't thank me. He loves working
with his hands.

Together, Billy and Rene put their backs into shoveling the dirt that has by now turned into back-breaking mud. It isn't long before they hit something, unseen.

Rene scrambles out of the hole as Billy starts bailing out rainwater to see better.

When the skeleton comes into view, Billy sits back on the edge of the grave, all his energy sapped.

RAY KOUFAX

How 'bout it... the kraut was
telling the truth.

BILLY

That doesn't mean he was right
about everything.

Billy says this to Miguel, in particular. But Prince doesn't answer. He only moves towards the door.

MIGUEL PRINCE

We should get out of the rain.

INT. LION'S HEAD, STUDY -- MINUTES LATER

As the authors towel off, Miguel stares at the wall, thinking.

MIGUEL PRINCE

No one should be alone. You go
anywhere but your room, you do it
with a buddy. And we'll need
someone to keep watch.

RAY KOUFAX

I'll do it. I can't sleep
anyway...

TREVOR AUBREY

Awful eager there, fella...

RAY KOUFAX

Fine, you do it.

TREVOR AUBREY

(bluff called)
No, you can do it.

Billy clears his throat as they head for the door.

BILLY

Where am I supposed to sleep?

As Miguel passes him, he barely looks at the kid.

MIGUEL PRINCE

Far from us.

INT. LION'S HEAD, VARIOUS -- SOON AFTER

As the authors prepare for bed, blockading their doors, Billy finds a janitor's closet to curl up in. He rolls a bath towel up and puts it under his head to use as a pillow.

In his room, Miguel peers out the window at the unending storm outside.

When he draws the blinds, he barely misses the figure on the roof across from him as it's briefly lit up by lightning.

INT. LION'S HEAD, STUDY -- SAME TIME

Putting a blanket over Ella's corpse, Ray Koufax dims the lights in the room. He pulls an arm-chair over towards the roaring fire and gets comfortable.

Digging in his pockets, he comes out with a Cuban cigar he lights with his zippo. He sits there, smoking, digesting the day.

When a noise comes from outside, he twists in his seat to stare out the picture window. It's just long enough for him to miss the poison sumac that falls down the chimney and burns up in the fire...

Convinced he's hearing things, Koufax turns back around and goes back to smoking. It isn't long though before he's coughing, sputtering.

He holds the cigar away from his face, but the pain continues. He throws it into the fire and clutches at his throat.

Rising unsteadily to his feet, he only makes it a couple feet before he falls back onto the antique coffee table.

And as the light drains from his eyes, the last thing he sees is someone staring in at him from outside the window.

FADE TO:

CHYRON: "SUNDAY"

INT. LION'S HEAD, SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY -- THE NEXT MORNING

The storm has finally broken. With sunlight now coming in through the upstairs windows, the authors begin to wake.

There's the sound of bureaus moving and doors tentatively opening. Art sticks his head out to see who else is up.

He joins Rebecca and Aubrey in the hall, but they visibly recoil when they see how pale and sickly he's become.

TREVOR AUBREY

You don't look so good, friend.

ART LEROY

I didn't sleep. I'm detoxing from about a thousand things. At this point, I might prefer death.

Hearing voices, Billy opens his eyes on the floor of the janitor's closet. He rises, rubbing his neck from sleeping funny.

He joins the others in the hall. When they see him their conversations stop. They stand in forced silence until Miguel joins them.

MIGUEL PRINCE

Everybody alright?

They nod their assent and head downstairs. Unsure if he is to go with them, Billy follows after, tentatively.

INT. LION'S HEAD, STUDY -- CONTINUOUS

The authors arrive at the closed study doors and look back and forth at one another, no one brave enough to open them. It takes Miguel to step forward and throw them apart.

They find Koufax sprawled out on the floor, a blotchy, pink rash on his face and down into his throat. His tongue lolls out of his mouth, bloated and diseased.

When Miguel sees the body, he swallows hard, making up his mind.

MIGUEL PRINCE

That's it. They can keep my clothes, all my belongings.

(MORE)

MIGUEL PRINCE (CONT'D)

I'm not staying here a moment longer. I'm getting the hell out of here.

ART LEROY

Way ahead of you.

EXT. LION'S HEAD -- MOMENTS LATER

Rebecca, Trevor, Art, and Miguel hurry down the front steps of the Lion's Head. They head in all different directions as Billy fumbles to unlock his bike from where he left it.

Art drags behind, clutching his stomach and shuffling along as best as he can. He isn't more than a few steps from the hotel when he steps on something and hears a recognizable click.

ART LEROY

Oh, come on--

He barely moves but it's more than enough to set the land mine off. The explosion sends bits and pieces of him all over the Lion's Head parking lot.

The deafening noise, more than the thin bloody mist that lands on them, sets the authors off. They take off again, running as fast as they can.

Miguel heads for the open gates of the driveway, but before he can get there a line of machine gun fire streaks across the ground. He dives into a ditch as more shots ring out, coming from the nearby woods.

Billy cowers near the front entrance but keeps trying to see who the shooter is.

Hearing the gunfire, Rebecca makes for the far edges of the garden.

She charges through the underbrush, thorns and thistles tearing up her arms. But her adrenalin is pumping and she barely notices.

She comes to a fence designed to keep small animals out and as she goes to scale it, she receives a nasty shock...

The fence is *electrified*. She wrenches her hands back to see waffle mark burns on her palms.

Trevor Aubrey has gotten the farthest. He heads straight for a clearing in the trees, jumping over felled branches and dodging gunshots.

He appears to be home free when he suddenly hits a trip wire. It sets off another land mine to his right. The ensuing shock wave launches him into a leaf-covered foxhole.

When he lands at the bottom, one of the wooden stakes that are stuck there pierces him through the thigh. As the gunfire ceases, the sound of his screams echoes across the grounds.

Billy runs from obstacle to obstacle, staying low, but no more shots are fired. He's soon joined by Miguel at the edge of the foxhole.

BILLY

Still think I have something to do
with this?

Miguel shakes his head, trying to catch his breath.

MIGUEL PRINCE

I'm sorry for doubting you. Let's
get him out of there.

Billy and Miguel try and lift him from the hole, but the slightest shift in weight causes Trevor to cry out in agony. They try again, but finally he has to wave them off.

A new round of gunshots sound. The shooter is aiming at something new...

Rene Laroche comes tearing around the corner. He's heard his friend, Trevor's, screams and come to help.

Taking in the scene, he snaps off the top half of the wooden stake sticking out of Trevor's leg, then hoists him up and onto his shoulder in a fireman's carry. Trevor begins to yelp in pain, but the whole process takes less than five seconds.

As Rene runs him to safety, Billy and Miguel exchange awed looks before hurrying to catch up.

INT. LION'S HEAD, STUDY -- MOMENTS LATER

Rene lays Trevor down unceremoniously on a couch in the study. He's about to step back and let the others in to see to him, when Trevor grabs him suddenly by the collar.

TREVOR AUBREY

You saved my life. Thank you.

Rene's not used to being talked to; he nods up and down until Trevor finally lets him go. He fades into the background as Miguel leans in to assess the damage.

MIGUEL PRINCE

We need a first aid kit.

Happy to be of service, Rene runs off to grab it. Miguel undoes his belt and slides it around Trevor's thigh, pulling it tight.

MIGUEL PRINCE (CONT'D)

Billy, hold this.

As Billy rushes to oblige, Rene returns with the first aid kit. Miguel digs inside it for the roll of bandages and starts tending to Trevor's leg as Rebecca Fontaine paces, hyperventilating.

REBECCA FONTAINE

We waited too long. We're stuck here now...

MIGUEL PRINCE

It's Sunday afternoon. None of us went to any of the Saturday events. Come Monday our assistants and managers will be combing the earth for us. We just have to make it until then.

REBECCA FONTAINE

And how are we supposed to do that? We were being shot at, Miguel! I can't stop shaking. Trevor's gonna need surgery!

MIGUEL PRINCE

Rebecca, it's gonna be okay. I promise you. Just get yourself cleaned up.

He motions to her bloody, scratched-up arms and burnt hands. Fontaine seems to notice them for the first time as Miguel hands her a bottle of petroleum jelly from the first aid kit.

MIGUEL PRINCE (CONT'D)

Do you want Billy to come with you?

REBECCA FONTAINE

No--

She blurts this out, then quickly backtracks.

REBECCA FONTAINE (CONT'D)
I mean... I'm sure I'll be fine.

She heads upstairs as Miguel turns back to his patient.

TREVOR AUBREY
She's not wrong. I need surgery.
The best you can do is keep the
wound clean. Is there hydrogen
peroxide in there?

Miguel digs through the kit, quickly.

MIGUEL PRINCE
No, doesn't look like it.

TREVOR AUBREY
It's fine, we can use Vodka, but--

MIGUEL PRINCE
Nothing from the minibar, I know.

TREVOR AUBREY
If you can find a closed bottle
though we're in business. Any
clear alcohol really, nothing
brown.

MIGUEL PRINCE
We'll have Billy do an inventory.

INT. FONTAINE'S HOTEL ROOM -- SAME TIME

Fontaine gently washes the dried blood from her arms,
blotting the cuts with the petroleum jelly. She's extra
careful of the burns on her hands...

Putting the cap back on, she appraises herself in the mirror.
Leaving the bathroom, she comes back only a moment later.

She can't help herself. She digs in her make-up bag for her
powder concealer and starts dabbing at her cuts. When she
finishes with her arms, she turns to her face.

She's powdering her nose when she first notices it: her eyes
are blood shot. She pulls her lips back and sees the blood
at the gum line.

Growing concerned, she moves a strand of hair out of her face
only to come away with a whole tuft of hair.

She screeches, stumbling backwards. Somehow, she finds her
footing and makes for the door, throwing it open wide--

INT. LION'S HEAD, SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Fontaine comes face-to-face with Helga Laroche.

REBECCA FONTAINE
Help me, please!

Helga cups the woman's pleading face.

HELGA LAROCHE
Oh my darling, what a timeless
beauty you are. You have a true
gift with the make-up. As a child
in Germany this was the brand the
older women in my village used. Of
course, it was eventually
discontinued because of the lead in
it. Their teeth would fall out...
but before that, they always looked
so beautiful.

Fontaine rips herself out of the old lady's grasp and goes
tripping down the hallway as Helga laughs behind her.

HELGA LAROCHE (CONT'D)
Takes a while to build up in the
system. That's why I had to switch
it out with your make-up on day
one.

Fontaine manages to grab the staircase bannister before her
legs give out. This stops her from rolling down the stairs,
but just barely.

Scraping her legs all the way down, she fights to stand
upright at the bottom. She pushes through the closed study
doors--

INT. LION'S HEAD, STUDY -- CONTINUOUS

Trevor is the closest person to Fontaine. She dives for him,
her speech slurring.

REBECCA FONTAINE
Help me! Please!

When she lands on Trevor's bad leg, he wails--

TREVOR AUBREY
Get her off of me!

Billy and Miguel pull Rebecca back, only to see the score the lead poisoning has waged on her body. They pull their hands away at the sight of her crying blood.

With no one to hold her up, she loses her balance, whirls around, and crashes through a glass side table.

She rolls over, face pale, sucking in air and staring up at the ceiling.

BILLY

What is happening?!

Billy and Miguel lean down to help her.

BILLY (CONT'D)

What's with the make-up?

MIGUEL PRINCE

I don't know but it found its way
into all of her cuts--

They try to continue, but they're drowned out by Trevor, constantly repeating:

TREVOR AUBREY

*Get her away from me! Get her away
from me! Get her away from me!*

By now, he's bright red and sweating. He tugs at his collar unable to get comfortable.

Delirious with fever, he begins tearing his clothes off. He even goes as far as ripping away his bandages, revealing a horrible pink rash.

Billy and Miguel are forced to restrain him.

BILLY

It's that thing from the garden,
the suicide plant! It must have
been on that spike...

MIGUEL PRINCE

Whatever this is, it's out of
control. I need you to get
something.

He digs in his pockets and hands over his room key.

MIGUEL PRINCE (CONT'D)

Go up to my room. In my medicine
bag I think I have some bacitracin.

BILLY
You really think that'll do
anything?

MIGUEL PRINCE
Probably not, but it's all we have.

Billy nods and hurries out of the room.

INT. MIGUEL'S HOTEL ROOM -- MINUTES LATER

Billy rushes to unlock Miguel's door. Once inside, he makes a beeline for Prince's suitcase. There's no medicine bag inside, so he crosses to the bathroom.

There's a leather bag on the counter. When Billy finds the bacitracin, he turns heel to run from the room. Before he can get there though, he trips headlong onto the carpet.

He looks back at what caught his foot: a vaguely familiar trunk he recognizes as Ray Koufax's. It lies knocked over and several manuscripts have come out.

Getting to his feet, Billy looks at the names on them. The one on top is "The Winds of Dusk" by Eudora Felt. Billy's eyes bulge. He lets it drop to the floor.

The next couple scripts are rabbit-eared and older. They belong to Ray Koufax.

The last one he sees is "Kiss of Death," the very story he gave Miguel to read...

Billy's mind races as he backs out of the room. Clutching the remaining manuscripts, he heads back downstairs.

INT. LION'S HEAD, STUDY -- MOMENTS LATER

Miguel is busy attending to Aubrey, so he doesn't hear Billy come in. The first book hits him in the chest. He looks up as Billy throws another at his head--

MIGUEL PRINCE
What the hell, Billy?!

BILLY
Why do you have these?!

Miguel takes a quick look at what's been thrown at him. His face drops. He leaves Trevor on the couch and stands.

MIGUEL PRINCE
It's not what you think--

BILLY
Because what I think is you killed
six people!

MIGUEL PRINCE
I could never, ever do that! It's
just...

He stammers, trying to explain.

MIGUEL PRINCE (CONT'D)
Writing is really fucking hard!

BILLY
How could you--

MIGUEL PRINCE
Look, maybe I stole the
manuscripts, but I didn't kill
anyone!

BILLY
You let everyone believe that I was
a killer - I don't believe a single
thing you've said!

He plucks a fireplace poker from its holder and waves it
wildly in front of him.

BILLY (CONT'D)
You stay back.

MIGUEL PRINCE
Billy, it's me. It's Miguel. You
don't actually think I could have--

BILLY
I don't know what to think! But I
can tell you one thing - you're
getting the hell out of this room!

MIGUEL PRINCE
Billy, Trevor can't be left alone!

BILLY
He won't be - now get out of here!

He comes towards Prince, windmilling the iron poker. Miguel
flees backwards, guarding his head. The moment he's out in
the lobby, Billy locks the study's double doors.

He takes a moment to catch his breath and throws the poker back at the fireplace. It clangs against the marble and settles onto the rug with a thud.

Billy heads back over to check on Trevor. He pulls the bacitracin out of his pocket and is about to apply it when he notices that the rash has faded somewhat. He looks up to see that Trevor's eyes aren't as delirious as they once were.

BILLY (CONT'D)

How are you feeling? The rash...
it looks better.

Trevor strains to speak.

TREVOR AUBREY

It still burns, but... maybe it's
better, yeah.

Behind Billy, the door built into the bookshelf silently opens.

BILLY

But, what changed? Rashes don't
get better on their own.

TREVOR AUBREY

I'm just glad you turned the
temperature down. It was so hot
before...

It hits Billy like a bolt of lightning.

BILLY

Oh my god...

TREVOR AUBREY

What?

BILLY

It was the bandage that made you
sick...

TREVOR AUBREY

Am I hallucinating? Didn't Miguel
put that on me?

BILLY

No, he got it from--

Billy turns only to be hit over the head by Rene Laroche. The lights in the room go down as soon as he does. The last thing he sees is a familiar face standing over him...

INT. LION'S HEAD, STUDY -- AN HOUR LATER

Billy wakes up tied to a gurney. He tries to force the straps, but they won't budge.

With the minimal range of motion afforded to him, he takes stock of the room. He can see Aubrey bludgeoned to death on the floor a few feet away from him.

On the couch that previously housed Aubrey, Rene sits holding Rebecca Fontaine's limp dead body propped up next to him. Her leaden make-up gives her the look of a porcelain doll, her cheeks rouged with her own blood.

Billy swallows the rising tide of vomit in his throat as the sound of whistling comes from behind him. He listens to the footfalls of leather shoes until a figure enters his periphery.

JURGEN VELNER

I'm tired of looking at that dented
orb you call a head. Put your
helmet on, Gerhardt.

Rene leaps to his feet, obliging.

RENE LAROCHE

Sorry, papa!

With no one to hold it up, Rebecca's rigor-mortused body falls back against the couch. Billy watches as her dead eyes stare back at him.

After a moment, Rene returns with an authentic, WW1-era, Pickelhaube helmet on; the one with the spike on top.

JURGEN VELNER

Much better.

The figure speaking has a regal, Austrian accent. As he comes into focus, Billy strains to recognize Officer Murphy.

JURGEN VELNER (CONT'D)

Ah Billy, so good of you to join
us.

The Massachusetts brogue is long gone.

BILLY

I don't understand. We saw your
body in the garden...

JURGEN VELNER
Previous owner. Did you think we
bought this place?

He smiles, sickly.

JURGEN VELNER (CONT'D)
How rude of me - you probably can't
see very well. Let's get you
propped up--

Velner stomps violently on a hydraulic lift that props Billy up so that he can take in the entire room. Martan is sitting nervously in the corner.

MARTAN LAROCHE
I told them you were dead, father.

Velner answers, immediately and disdainfully, refusing to look at his son.

JURGEN VELNER
Very good, you tricked them for a
few hours!

He walks up to his other son.

JURGEN VELNER (CONT'D)
When Gerhardt here saw my wife with
that disgusting gigolo, he ran home
as fast as his two legs could carry
him. He had hoped to find his
brother. Instead, he found me.
My first night home in years and I
have to kill my wife's lover!

Helga sits terrified on the opposite couch, not saying a word.

JURGEN VELNER (CONT'D)
That should have been it, but that
poor girl had the misfortune of
stumbling upon the scene. Oh well,
in the wrong place at the wrong
time...

He pats Rene on the back, lovingly.

JURGEN VELNER (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, son. I know you wanted
to keep her, but hopefully this one
is a good trade.

He runs a hand through Fontaine's hair and turns back to Billy.

JURGEN VELNER (CONT'D)
Perhaps I shouldn't have left young Gerhardt alone with the bodies. Although when I heard how he arranged them, I thought -- what a creative mind! Like father, like son...

He lets the smile fade from his face.

JURGEN VELNER (CONT'D)
Again, that should have been it. I thought my dear wife had been thoroughly punished. Unfortunately, she betrayed me a second time...

He grits his teeth as he glares down at his wife.

JURGEN VELNER (CONT'D)
This time with a *Mexican* author.

Helga appears shamed for the first time, her eyes glued to the floor in front of her.

JURGEN VELNER (CONT'D)
I had to get her attention. I needed something flashy. Something showy. And of utmost importance...
(beat)
The writer had to go down for it.

Helga excuses herself from the room. Velner looks as if he's going to say something, but in the end, let's her go.

JURGEN VELNER (CONT'D)
From there things went more or less according to plan. Initially, I wanted to poison Ella Galbraith with Bella Donna but when Art Leroy suddenly went cold turkey, I just knew I had to improvise. And sure, I wanted to inject Aubrey with syphilis, but there was just no way of finding a sample at the last minute. Thank God we had young Gerhardt here to save the day and kill him in the proper fashion. Despite the hiccups though, I couldn't have planned it better if I had written it.

BILLY

These aren't characters in a book!
They're people!

JURGEN VELNER

No, they're interlopers! They are
out-of-towners! They do not belong
here!

BILLY

Oh, that is rich! You don't see the
irony there? You calling out
someone for encroaching on your god
given space?

JURGEN VELNER

You don't think Americans do the
same?! Sure I helped the Race and
Settlement Office identify jews to
be killed, but you people continued
the Tuskegee experiments for nearly
thirty years after the war! You're
such hypocrites that you condemn us
and turn right around and give the
Japanese immunity for their human
experiments - which were leaps and
bounds more horrific than ours -
just because your government wanted
the information they gleaned for
their biological warfare program!

BILLY

This has nothing to do with me!

JURGEN VELNER

Oh Billy, that's where you're
wrong! We could just kill you too,
but it'd be a waste of fine, Aryan
blood! I spent most of my time
during the war trying to create the
perfect soldier and as you are
around the age most boys were
drafted at, you are the perfect
subject to continue my work...

BILLY

What the fuck are you talking
about?!

JURGEN VELNER

We're going to inject a very
promising bacteria into your bone
marrow and see what happens.

BILLY
Jesus Christ!

JURGEN VELNER
Now, it's been a long time since I
practiced medicine. But I've been
thinking long and hard about
getting back into it.

He steps towards Billy with a thick, scary-looking syringe.
The boy starts to squirm against his bonds.

JURGEN VELNER (CONT'D)
Unfortunately, anesthesia would
muddy the results. You understand,
don't you?

Billy looks terrified as the Doctor approaches.

JURGEN VELNER (CONT'D)
Now, take a breath...
(beat)
Because this is really going to
hurt.

Billy tries to shake himself free, but it's no use. The
needle goes deep into his hip as he screams bloody murder.

Velner nods, sympathetically.

JURGEN VELNER (CONT'D)
I know, I know! Almost done!

When he drains the syringe, the Doctor pulls it out at an
angle, causing Billy to yelp.

JURGEN VELNER (CONT'D)
All better! Now, if you'll excuse
me, I have to ready the second
needle.

He heads through the study's double doors and leaves them
open while he refills the syringe.

In the brief moments he has free of Velner, Billy desperately
looks about the room for something, anything to save him.
His eyes land on Rene, who is silently mopping up blood
nearby.

BILLY
Psst, Rene!

Martan interjects from his corner of the room.

MARTAN LAROCHE
Don't talk to him.

But Rene has looked up from mopping, so Billy takes a chance.

BILLY
Rene, you know how people treat you
differently because of how tall you
are and how you look different?

MARTAN LAROCHE
I said, don't talk to him!

But Rene answers anyway.

RENE LAROCHE
Yes?

BILLY
And how old ladies and young kids
are scared of you?

He nods, now truly interested.

RENE LAROCHE
Yeah...

MARTAN LAROCHE
Shut up, William!

BILLY
Your father is the reason all those
things happened. He made you the
way you are by making your mother
sick when you were in her belly--

Martan crosses the room and slaps Billy across the face.

MARTAN LAROCHE
That's enough!

Billy smiles, his lip bleeding.

BILLY
The same goes for you Martan. He
won't stop until you do something.

But Martan doesn't answer, only crosses back to where he was
sitting.

Out of options, Billy lies there, bleeding from the hip. He
appears crestfallen, until something tugs at one of his
restraints. Billy torques his neck to see what it is.

Miguel Prince has crawled in the open study doors. He's hidden from Rene and Martan by the couch between them. He puts a finger up to his lips to keep Billy quiet while he loosens the straps.

Although his fingers fumble nervously at the latches, he gets through them with little resistance.

Billy waits until Rene's back is turned and Martan is zoned out before he climbs down from the gurney.

Miguel is busy helping him to his feet when Velner's syringe enters his neck.

Seeing Prince suddenly collapse, Billy runs headlong into the mad doctor. Velner is bowled over as Billy flees the room.

Instead of exiting the Lion's Head, Billy hightails it up the grand staircase.

With the inoculation pumping through his veins, running is agonizing, especially with Velner's two children hot on his heels.

INT. LION'S HEAD, SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

Billy runs through the hall, passing room numbers at great speed. He's looking for something...

When he gets to Art Leroy's room he launches his body at the closed door. It resists at first, then cracks open on the second attempt.

Billy throws himself inside, slamming the door shut just as the brothers Laroche arrive on the other side, banging and trying to force their way inside.

INT. ART LEROY'S ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Billy forces a bureau in front of the door, wedging it under the doorknob.

He slides across the bed to get at Art's suitcases. The one filled with drugs is wide open and empty, so he tears open the other as Rene crashes through the hotel room door.

Billy's just able to grab a HANDGUN and turn and fire, before Rene tackles him to the ground.

The bullet tears through Martan's shoulder, as Rene wrestles the gun free.

INT. LION'S HEAD, STUDY -- MINUTES LATER

Rene forces Billy into a chair in front of his father. Martan enters after, lagging behind and clutching his bloody gunshot wound. When Velner sees him, he unloads--

JURGEN VELNER

What the hell happened? You were supposed to be watching him! You let him escape?!

MARTAN LAROCHE

(sarcastic)

Yes, I wanted to be shot.

JURGEN VELNER

What did you just say to me?!

Velner slaps Martan on the back of the head.

MARTAN LAROCHE

Stop! I'm bleeding!

JURGEN VELNER

Good, you deserve it!

He smacks his son again, as Rene looks on, confused.

JURGEN VELNER (CONT'D)

Your brother's not the idiot,
you're the idiot! You're the freak!
You always have been!

He starts poking Martan in his wound, until tears come to the hotel manager's eyes.

JURGEN VELNER (CONT'D)

Oh, you're going to cry now, are
you? Well, go ahead! It won't help
you one bit!

Velner's about to poke at the wound again when Rene catches his arm. He looks up at the giant, aghast, as Rene picks him up with ease and throws him out the picture window.

Billy doesn't waste a moment. He grabs the fallen fireplace poker and wheels away at each of the brother's heads.

He connects several times before Helga Laroche comes screaming into the room, butcher knife raised overhead. She stabs Billy in his right shoulder and the poker comes loose.

But the adrenalin is with Billy. He turns and kicks the nazi bride in the chest. She goes flying over the couch as Billy drops to the floor to retrieve the poker with his other hand.

Although they're injured, Martan and Rene dive for him. Billy swings blindly with the poker, beating them about the face and neck until they fall into a heap on the ground.

By now he's head-to-toe covered in blood splatter. Exhausted and out of breath, he climbs over the couch to get at Helga.

She frantically tries to crawl away from him. But Billy catches up with her, easily. He pulls her up by a handful of her hair.

BILLY

You're coming with me.

Hobbling towards the exits with Helga, he pushes his way outside.

EXT. LION'S HEAD, PARKING LOT -- CONTINUOUS

Billy's unsure on his feet, tripping down the front stairs and using Helga as a crutch.

As he stands up straight, Jurgen Velner comes screaming around the corner from the gardens. He's got bits of broken glass sticking out of his skin.

Billy winds up like a baseball player with the fireplace poker and connects with Jurgen's head with a sickening thud.

When Helga sees that her husband is now truly dead she starts screaming at the top of her lungs.

BILLY

Shut the fuck up! You're leading me out of here.

HELGA LAROCHE

Are you crazy? That's a mine field!

BILLY

He must have shown you how to get past it--

HELGA LAROCHE

He didn't! I swear!

BILLY

Well, that's bad news for you--

Billy kicks her square in the back and Helga goes tumbling into No Man's Land. The first explosion knocks her into three others, her body thrown around like a rag doll until it's unrecognizable.

The blasts have rocked Billy onto his back and little pieces of Helga Laroche rain down upon him. He sits up, shell shocked and dazed.

His bike is where he left it earlier. Billy pulls it from the bushes and, unsteadily, manages to throw a leg over. He's just barely able to start pedaling.

Heading through the parking lot, he sticks to areas that have already been detonated. He weaves from side to side, missing land mines by mere inches. He's beyond caring...

But somehow, he makes it out the front gate. He picks up speed. He's halfway down the long, forest drive when he begins to let hope creep in. By the time he makes it to the street, he's crying tears of joy.

FADE TO:

CHYRON: "Monday"

INT. MORROW HIGH CLASSROOM -- MORNING

Happy, carefree students greet each other after a long summer break. The only person who doesn't seem to be excited is Billy, whose scars are just beginning to heal.

As the morning bell rings, he takes a seat in the back of class, his eyes a million miles away...

Up front, an eager TEACHER in her mid-twenties tries to get the rowdy classes attention.

TEACHER

Good morning, class! Settle down!
I hope you all had a happy and
pleasant vacation! Which brings us
to our first assignment--

There are scattered groans from around the class.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

I know, I know - I'm a monster! But
the best way I can get a sense of
where you're at as a class is to
see how you express yourself.

(MORE)

TEACHER (CONT'D)
I've tried to keep it interesting.
Tell me what you did over summer
vacation.

Billy looks up as the teacher begins handing out the
worksheets.

TEACHER (CONT'D)
Take one and pass it down. You can
begin writing under the prompt.

When the assignment finds its way to him, Billy raises his
hand. The teacher nods when she sees him.

TEACHER (CONT'D)
Question? Yes?

BILLY
I'm gonna need more paper.

FADE OUT.

THE END