

THE MAN FROM BEYOND
Pilot

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Final Draft 9/13/2021
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COLD OPEN:

INT. PARLOR ROOM - NIGHT

Pitch black. All that can be heard is the breath of several people.

3 loud knocks are heard on what sounds like a table.

TALLULAH TRANCE (V.O.)

There is a visitor here - from
beyond the veil. Are you Edward G.
Tully? Knock once for yes and two
for No.

One Knock is heard.

TALLULAH TRANCE (V.O.)

Mr. Tully, are you alone?

After a long beat, two knocks are heard. LILLY (24) begins to whimper softly - terrified.

TALLULAH TRANCE (V.O.)

Mrs. Willamina Tully, are you also
with us here tonight? Knock once
for yes and two for no.

One knock is heard.

TALLULAH TRANCE (V.O.)

Lilly, your parents are waiting for
you. They are among us now. You
have a question for them?

LILLY TULLY (V.O.)

(With conviction)

Mother-Father will you tell me -
how you died. The police say it was
an accident. Was it murder? I must
know.

It is as silent as the grave.

TALLULAH TRANCE (V.O.)

I will now attempt to channel the
spirits through my body.

Suddenly, Tallulah begins to breathe heavily - her body convulsing wildly. A chair is heard scraping across the floor accompanied by a horrible inhuman sound. Lilly reacts with fright.

Tallulah moans softly, letting it build, creating an eerie atmosphere.

A set of candles begin to flicker in the pitch darkness. In a glimpse, there are EIGHT people surrounding a mahogany table, all involved in -

A seance.

The candles re-ignite, but for an instant as flaming orbs.

TALLULAH TRANCE (V.O.)

(As Willamina Tully-high
pitched voice)

My dear children, Lil' and Alfie.
It is joyous to reach out to you
after all this time. My sweet,
sweet children together again!

LILLY TULLY (V.O.)

Mother! Is that you? Yes, it's me
your Lil'! And Alfie is here too!

TALLULAH TRANCE (V.O.)

(As Willamina Tully)

It is I, Lil' I've broken through!
I want you to know that your father
and I are so happy in Summerland.

There is repeated knocking on the table when it lifts into the air in the very dim light. Audible gasps break the momentary silence at the rattling of the table.

ALFRED TULLY (V.O.)

Tell us how you and father
perished?

Some in the group shout out things they see and feel. "Who touched my head!" "Something just moved past my leg!" "Can you see it, what is it!" - The tension rises as the candlelights go out.

TERRENCE (V.O)

(As Edward - booming
voice)

Make haste my children. There was
indeed foul play. Twas the
automobile that holds the secret to
catching the culprit!

A flashlight blooms in the faint darkness through the candle's smoke and -

- into the face of TERRENCE (30) who is standing in the center of the EIGHT PEOPLE holding the table on his back while holding the SPIRIT TRUMPET to his lips.

Standing proudly is BARNABAS BLACKWOOD (28) as he tears off his fake mustache and glasses.

BLACKWOOD
(Speaks abruptly)
Halt! That's enough!

Everyone shifts their attention toward Blackwood and back at Terrence who drops the spirit trumpet.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)
(Confident)
Tallulah Trance, I am Barnabas
Blackwood and YOU madam are a
FRAUD!

Blackwood's flashlight catches the crazed look on Terrence's face. Tallulah pretends to break out of her trance.

TALLULAH TRANCE
(A bit dazed)
What - what's happening? Terrence?

The parlor room lights turn on exposing everything. Terrence drops the table off his back and lunges at Blackwood. Everyone moves out of the way and gasps at the confrontation.

Blackwood punches Terrence in the face and bolts for the door.

TERRENCE
I'll kill you. You little bastard!

Everyone is in shock. They all stare at Tellulah who is beside herself with embarrassment.

EXT. TULLY HOUSE (MILLIONAIRE'S ROW 5TH AVE) - CONTINUOUS

CAPTION: New York January 1922

Flakes of snow drop slowly on OFFICER MIKE (40) as he leans against the bannister in front of the Tully House. He twirls his night stick. Beside him sitting on the stoop with his camera is ROGER (30) a reporter for the NY Tribune.

ROGER
Did you hear something?

OFFICER MIKE

No, but it's almost midnight. He should be out by now.

INT. OUTSIDE THE PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

The door swings open as Blackwood falls through the door. The table smashes through the door after him.

Blackwood runs to the end of the hall and into the foyer as the giant Terrence races through the door after him brandishing his pistol. He fires just missing Blackwood as he flies into the Foyer.

EXT. TULLY HOUSE (MILLIONAIRE'S ROW 5TH AVE) - NIGHT

Blackwood stumbles out the front door to see Officer Mike and Roger waiting for him.

BLACKWOOD

Thank God, Mike. I need you to -

A bullet shatters the glass in the front door. Blackwood ducks.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)

- Shoot!!!

Officer Mike pulls out his pistol.

OFFICER MIKE

The Amazing Blackwood ladies and gentlemen! He always knows how to make an entrance! Or is this an exit?

The door swings open as Terrence grabs Blackwood by his collar still holding his pistol. Officer Mike has his gun trained at Terrence. The reporter takes a photo as the bulb partially blinds Terrence.

OFFICER MIKE (CONT'D)

(Aimed at Terrence)

Drop it!

Blackwood uses the distraction and kicks Terrence in the groin. He races to the bottom of the steps. Terrence buckles over as the Reporter takes another snap.

EXT. TULLY HOUSE - LATER

There are now more POLICE at the scene. Officer Mike has Terrence and Tallulah handcuffed and is moving them toward the PADDY WAGON.

Tallulah walks by Blackwood and spits at his face.

TALLULAH TRANCE
Did you find pleasure in that?

BLACKWOOD
Do you enjoy manipulating the pain
of others?

OFFICER MIKE
Get inside.

Officer Mike puts them in the back of the PADDY WAGON.

Blackwood approaches Lilly and Alfred Tully.

ALFRED TULLY
Thank you for your assistance Mr.
Blackwood in this - endeavor.
However -

BLACKWOOD
(Blackwood puts an arm
around Tully.)
Roger. Come here and take a photo
of me and Mr. Tully.

Roger turns and stands in front of the two to take their photo as they shake hands.

ALFRED TULLY
As I was saying. I wanted to -

BLACKWOOD
(Confident)
- Yes, you are very welcome Mr.
Tully. As a duly designated
representative of SAM and the Great
Houdini. It is my honor to have
assisted you in this case - free of
charge.

ALFRED TULLY
(Awkward)
Yes, and I thank Mr. Houdini for
his assistance as well.
(MORE)

ALFRED TULLY (CONT'D)
But there is the matter of the door
to the parlor room, the bullet
holes and the front door -

BLACKWOOD
Ah yes, I would send your bill to
the 13th Precinct as I'm sure Miss
Tallulah Trance will be more than
happy to pay for it. Good night to
you both.

There's commotion in the Paddy Wagon between Terrence and
Tallulah as everyone shifts their focus on them. Alfred and
Lilly turn to see that Blackwood has vanished into the night.

BEGIN TITLE CARD

EXT. 160TH STREET & RIVER/APARTMENT BUILDING- NIGHT

There is a giant hole with fences being built up on 161st and
River. The House that Ruth built, isn't - yet. Snow is
everywhere.

A YELLOW CAB pulls up to the apartment complex as Blackwood
hops out and pays him.

The lights flicker slightly. He looks behind him in the
darkness. Nothing.

He clutches his temples as he feels an intense pain. He takes
out a small flask and drinks. He takes a deep breath.

INT. BLACKWOOD'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Blackwood enters as light pours into the hallway. Blackwood
passes a poster of himself in tails with his hands out toward
a woman in a trance who is floating through a ring of fire.
It says BLACKWOOD THE BOUNDLESS PERFORMS HIS NEWEST FEAT THE
LEVITATING WOMAN THROUGH FIRE.

INT. BOYS BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

He creeps past an open door to see two small beds parallel to
each other. NATHAN (5) and MORRIS (4) sleep soundly.
Blackwood kisses his boys foreheads. He walks out.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Blackwood, in his pajamas, pushes his bed next to his wife HELEN'S (26) bed. She's reading a book about the philosopher RAMBAM.

He kisses her cheek. She barely acknowledges him as she is wrapped in her book.

BLACKWOOD

You stayed up late for me? It's nearly 2.

HELEN

I sleep better when you're snoring next to me.

(Beat)

Also, this book is fascinating.

BLACKWOOD

(He looks at the book cover.)

Rambam? You want me to relive the horrors of Hebrew school all over again?

HELEN

(She nudges him playfully.)

He was under occupied Islamic territory in Cordoba Spain for over a decade and continued his Jewish studies in secret. He became a doctor and the greatest philosopher and scholar our people have ever had. What is your excuse?

BLACKWOOD

(Grins)

I have none. I'm a bad Jew with no desire to further my religious study, however -

He leans in to kiss her.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)

- I did a Mitvah this evening by uncovering a charlatan, but most importantly, I was shot at -

HELEN

(Overly concerned)

What?!

BLACKWOOD

Yeah, I was shot at repeatedly
which has given me a profound
respect for life and I need...
comforting.

HELEN

You poor thing. You must have been
terrified?

BLACKWOOD

Extremely.

They continue to kiss as he unbuttons his pajama shirt.
Blackwood feels a wave of pain as he touches his temples.

HELEN

Headaches again?

BLACKWOOD

Yes.

She continues kissing him.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)

Oh, would you look at that. It's
slowly going away.

Blackwood attempts to take off her nightgown when she stops
abruptly. She moves back to her bed.

HELEN

We can't, sorry. I have an
appointment at the Mikvah on
Friday.

He groans and looks up to the ceiling in audible pain.

BLACKWOOD

What's today?

HELEN

Wednesday.

He falls back onto his bed dramatically.

BLACKWOOD

Suddenly, my headache has come
back. This is what I get for
marrying an Observant Jew. Mother
was right. You can't help who you
fall in love with.

HELEN

It's only a few days and I will
give you as much - COMFORTING as
you need.

He rolls over.

HELEN (CONT'D)

So, you really were shot at?

BLACKWOOD

(Yawns)

Only slightly. Thankfully he was a
horrible shot.

HELEN

Teddy! You shouldn't be so blasé
about this. You could've been
killed.

(Beat)

Perhaps, you should ask Harry for a
gun or a bodyguard or - Teddy?

Blackwood is fast asleep and snoring. She goes back to her
book smiling.

INT. DINING ROOM/KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

Blackwood stands in the kitchen. He twirls a pan as his two
boys Nathan and Morris sit in their chairs excitedly watching
him.

Blackwood opens the ice box theatrically and pulls out four
eggs. He juggles them and in mid-air, the eggs disappear one
after another. The boys applaud in excitement. He goes over
to Nathan.

BLACKWOOD

Nathan, did you take my eggs?

NATHAN

(Giggles)

No, Abba.

BLACKWOOD

I think you have them under your -

Blackwood tickles Nathan and magically procures an egg from
each armpit when he lifts his arm to laugh.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)

Arms? Curious place to put a couple
of eggs.

He looks at Morris who is desperately waiting for his turn.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)
Morris, You have the other ones
don't you?

MORRIS
(Laughing)
No, Abba!

Blackwood moves his hands to Morris' ear. He has one hand that taps his left ear and he seemingly produces two eggs from his son's right ear, one after another.

Blackwood takes the eggs to the counter and looks like he's smashing one, but it disappears. It reappears again out of his mouth. The boys laugh.

He lays out the four eggs and looks confused. Helen, in her bathrobe, enters the kitchen.

BLACKWOOD
Am I missing something?

He goes over to his wife and wraps his arms around her. He magically pulls an egg from her pocket. He kisses her cheek.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)
So that's what you've been hiding
from me.

He bows to his children and begins to make the eggs. Helen pours herself a cup of coffee.

HELEN
The Incredible Mr. Blackwood, kids!

BLACKWOOD
Thank you all! That was egg-citing,
now wasn't it?

Everyone stares at him with silence after that joke.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)
I'll make sure to never use that
joke with my audience.

HELEN
I'd like my eggs over easy if you
please, Mr. Blackwood.

He bows cordially.

BLACKWOOD
Coming right up, m'lady.

INT. KITCHEN/DINING ROOM - LATER

Blackwood juggles a few plates and puts the scrambled eggs on them, placing them in front of his boys. They devour the eggs on sight.

Blackwood places Helen's eggs in front of her.

BLACKWOOD
(Giddy and curious)
Read anything - interesting?

Helen reads the headline with a picture of Blackwood and Terrence struggling on the front step of the mansion.

The Headline says "Local Magician debunks medium at the witching hour on Millionaire's Row."

HELEN
Apparently, a handsome young man fought a giant with a gun, while unarmed.

NATHAN
Was that you, Abba?

BLACKWOOD
I don't know Ima, did they mention the name of this fearless adventurer?

HELEN
Apparently, his name is Barnabas Blackwood.

NATHAN
Abba, Why does mommy call you Teddy?

BLACKWOOD
Barnabas is my stage name, my boy.
(To Helen)
Continue.

HELEN
(Smiles)
A mysterious man of unknown origins. By day, he's an illusionist, by night a debunker of spirit mediums.
(MORE)

HELEN (CONT'D)

(Beat)

He is performing this Sunday at the Ambassador theatre.

BLACKWOOD

(Slightly disappointed)

I was supposed to be a conjurer
bourne of the mysterious Carpathian
Mountains.

HELEN

Sorry my love. They'll get it right
next time.

BLACKWOOD

Still, it's good ink before the
show.

(Checks his pocketwatch)

Which reminds me. I have to meet
Hollis in an hour. I have a run
through at the Ambassador.

(Beat with flourish for
the kids)

Hopefully, the Great Houdini will
be so riveted by my performance
that he'll see fit to give me a
prime date at the Hippodrome.

HELEN

I'm sure Harry will be delighted to
see what you have in store and most
importantly your audience.

BLACKWOOD

Yes, well after my last few
performances the only place to go
is - up.

HELEN

(Reassuring)

You'll be great!

He kisses the boys heads and then his wife as he heads for
the door.

BLACKWOOD

Thank you my love. Off I go.

HELEN

(Abrupt)

Oh, would you be able to take the
laundry to Mrs. Haversham's on your
way there?

BLACKWOOD

Yes, of course your majesty.

He gets his large coat and grabs the bundle of laundry and walks out the door.

EXT. THE BRONX - MORNING

Blackwood holds the bag of laundry over his shoulder as he trundles it down the street. He walks carefully as the sidewalk is slippery with snow and ice.

Blackwood looks down at the snow, and for a moment they seem to ripple.

An unseen wave hits Blackwood as his temples pulse in pain. He looks behind him as if he's expecting to see someone there.

Nothing. A swallowing sound attracts his gaze upward. For a split second, the galaxy is shown to him and then disappears. He shakes it off and continues his walk.

EXT. THE BRONX ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

From the alley is a MYSTERY MAN bundled up, his face unseen. He wears a black bowler hat and BRIGHT RED GLOVES.

The mystery man observes Blackwood from behind the wall as he walks into the laundromat.

INT. AMBASSADOR THEATRE - LATER

Blackwood stands on stage rehearsing.

BLACKWOOD

Ladies and Gentlemen, for tonight's performance I want you to contemplate the wonders of the universe.

His theatricality is on full display.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)

I have scoured the world for the strange, the unbelievable and the impossible. Tonight, we will uncover what I have discovered throughout my travels.

HOLLIS (50), the only other person in the theatre, yells from the front row.

HOLLIS
(Shouts across)
Go on! Get to it - enough of the babble, we want a show!

Blackwood tries to ignore him. He pulls out a deck of cards and shuffles them dramatically from one hand to another. His hands shuffle the deck with lightning speed.

BLACKWOOD
While, as a boy in Hong Kong. I studied under master Shin Zu.

He fans out the cards and then magically in his other hand, he fans out another deck. He shuffles with one hand.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)
Not only could he shuffle a deck with one hand. He could make any card he wanted, DO whatever he wanted.

(Beat)
I wouldn't play him in a game of poker if I were you.

He shows the Ace of Spades and then tosses it on the floor. Then he shuffles the second deck and flips one over for the Ace of spades.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)
So I remove the ace of spades from both decks.

He shuffles the two decks together. He taps the top deck and there is another Ace of spades.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)
(To Hollis)
I'll do a few more card tricks and end with -
(Beat)
- oh Hollis, I'm missing a card, the Queen of spades. Do you have it?

HOLLIS
(Annoyed)
Perhaps, you should check your pockets.

BLACKWOOD
 (Grins)
 Not if you check yours first.

Hollis checks his front pocket to find the Queen of spades folded inside. Hollis is slightly entertained.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)
 Then we move on to the levitating woman through fire.

Blackwood moves around the stage.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)
 - Once I was travelling deep into the Congo, I came across a tribe of savages called the Mongo. I observed them enacting a strange ritual with a virgin girl and a ring of fire. It captivated me so I -

HOLLIS
 (Yells)
 Too much talking! Get to it! Get TO IT!

Blackwood brings out his assistant LARA (20) who lies in front of him. He extends his fingers towards her and puts her in a trance and -

- she lifts into the air. He shows the ring and sets it ablaze.

BLACKWOOD
 The Mongo worshipped the flame and this ritual, if successful, brought a bountiful harvest in the fall. If it failed - they would have 20 years of famine.

Blackwood performs the trick using the hoop to show - no wires.

HOLLIS
 Faster! Why is it taking so long!
 Boo!

Blackwood puts Lara back on the floor.

BLACKWOOD
 Hollis? What are you doing?

HOLLIS
I'm simulating the crowd.

BLACKWOOD
(Slight smile)
Thank you, Lara. We'll continue a
little later.

She walks off the stage. Blackwood sits on the edge of the stage.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)
(To Hollis)
Okay, what's wrong?

Hollis walks toward the stage.

HOLLIS
Attendance has been - lacking
lately. Also, Sam and Lee think you
talk too much and I must say, I
agree with them.

BLACKWOOD
That's preposterous. I set the
mood. I'm telling a story. Without
that, how can I capture their
attention? Ensnare the senses.

HOLLIS
(Subtle tone)
The Shuberts want you to ensnare
them sooner. Also, we need
something new. It's been a while
since you added a new act.

BLACKWOOD
Funny you should say that my
friend. I have something I'm
working on right now. You ready?

HOLLIS
If it doesn't involve you yammering
on.

BLACKWOOD
(Agitated)
Imagine if you will, a world on top
of our world and then again many
worlds on top of that one.

(Beat)
And in these worlds are many
versions of yourself.

(Beat)
(MORE)

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)

What if you could see into this world - see the other you. How would his life be different than yours?

(Dramatic beat)

I call it the MULTIPLE MAN!

HOLLIS

(Not impressed)

Is this one of Harry's?

BLACKWOOD

(Frustrated)

No, it's not one of Harry's. I want to use a giant mirror with smaller mirrors scattered across the stage.

Blackwood demonstrates where he would put the mirrors.

HOLLIS

I don't know, Barnabas. It sounds too complicated. You always have to be quick with mirrors. They make the object look further away or even distorted.

Blackwood jumps down from the stage to stand next to Hollis who lights a cigar.

Blackwood takes a swig from his flask as he feels a headache coming on.

HOLLIS (CONT'D)

Harry said it and I agree. You have some of the fastest hands I've ever seen on stage.

BLACKWOOD

Well, I'm not Harry.

HOLLIS

And I'm not asking you to be. Listen, you've got the knack for showmanship, but you get so wrapped up in your story you forget to perform your trick. What you need is a great hook. If captivate the crowd win you win the box office. Capitalism 101, Me Boyo!

BLACKWOOD

I got good ink today, Hollis. I think we're turning the corner. I really do.

HOLLIS

I read about it this morning. I think you need to be packing heat the next time you bust up one of those spook joints or else I'll be reading your ink in the obituaries and then I won't have a client.

BLACKWOOD

Helen said the same thing.

Hollis puts an arm around Blackwood as they walk down the aisle and out of the theatre.

HOLLIS

She's a smart girl. Marrying her was the best thing you've ever done.

(Beat)

Now, I want you to head up to Harry's and work out your new act. If it doesn't work, I know he'll have something fantastic for you to use.

INT. RED LINE SUBWAY CAR/UPTOWN - LATER

Blackwood stands in a crowded car. His head begins to hurt again. He sees flashes of the galaxy above the car's roof. He takes out his flask with only a drop left.

Blackwood looks across the sea of people. He feels someone's eyes on him.

TWO MEN, one with a HANDLE BAR MUSTACHE (30s) and another with a BOWLER HAT (30s) and a gruesome gash under his left eye stare at Blackwood from the back of the train.

As soon as the doors open at 110th street, Blackwood jumps out. The two men leap out of the doors after him.

EXT. 110TH STREET - CONTINUOUS

Blackwood darts down the street weaving through people. He looks back to see his pursuers racing after behind the sea of people.

Blackwood races across the street, cars honking nearly hitting Blackwood as they stop. The two men are alerted and aware of Blackwood crossing the street and causing traffic.

Blackwood turns down an alleyway behind 111th.

The Two Men finally enter the alleyway. Handle Bar Mustache is holding a pistol. They run to the end and see the trash cans next to the fence. No Blackwood in sight.

The two men slowly survey the alley as Blackwood is hiding behind the trash cans. The two men come closer to the fence and is distracted by more honking vehicles.

The two men run out of the alley. Blackwood gets up relieved.

INT. HOUDINI'S HARLEM TOWNHOUSE/2ND FLOOR LIBRARY - LATER

POV of WALTER PORTER (40) sitting at a round table, in front of him is HARRY HOUDINI, (48) but his face is not seen.

There is a lit candle near Houdini on the table to his left and a tambourine on a small table beside Houdini on his right.

HOUDINI

Walter, I want you to relax. Take a deep breath. In and out. Before we try to contact your sister, I want you to see your sister. What she looked like. What interested her. Concentrate on her and have her image in your mind. Hear her voice as the way she spoke to you.

Houdini's assistant JIM (30s) ties Houdini's arms.

HOUDINI (CONT'D)

I've asked my assistant Jim to tie my arms, which would make it impossible for me to move any of these objects.

After Jim is done, Houdini shows his arms are tied and unable to move.

HOUDINI (CONT'D)

(To Walter)

Would you like to see if I'm tied properly?

Walter holds out his arm and tugs on the ropes and is satisfied.

WALTER

(Uncomfortable)

I don't understand why we have to do this?

HOUDINI

It's necessary for you to understand. Now please focus, listen to my voice.

(To Jim)

Jim, could you bring the doll.

Jim approaches holding a doll and places it on the table in front of Walter.

WALTER

It gave me the willies when HE did it. I don't know.

HOUDINI

Walter, if I am to help you. You will need to trust me. Look at the doll. This was your sister Maude's yes?

WALTER

(Hesitates)

Yes.

HOUDINI

She named it Margie...Marga -

WALTER

(Shocked)

- Marguerite. That's incredible how did you -

HOUDINI

(Interrupts)

- Now I want you to remember a time where you watched Maude playing with Marguerite. Can you envision it for me?

Walter nods.

HOUDINI (CONT'D)

(Focused)

Now, we are going to turn off the lights and Jim is going to turn on a red light throughout the seance. All right?

WALTER

(Nervous)

Yes.

The candle is extinguished and the lights go out. They are in pitch blackness.

HOUDINI

Today, we are attempting to contact
the spirit of Maude Porter. Maude
died at the age of 12 of Scarlet
Fever November 12th 1908.

The red light clicks on. The light has an eerie affect on the table and on Harry.

Now, we can see Harry's face in the red light as well as Walter, who seems to be tranced by the glaring red light.

HOUDINI (CONT'D)

Maude, if you have crossed over
from the great beyond. Let us know
you are here by moving objects in
the room.

Silence. After a moment, the tambourine begins to shake.

HOUDINI (CONT'D)

Maude, do you have a message for
your brother, Walter.

Houdini does not appear to be moving. Walter has growing unease.

The doll on the table begins to twitch and move as now both the tambourine and the doll are moving simultaneously.

HOUDINI (CONT'D)

Maude, show yourself to Walter.
Allow him to touch the etheric
plane. To once more, look upon his
sister with grace and reverence.

Walter looks over beside Houdini to see a SMALL WOMAN wrapped in what looks to be a gauzy white sheet. Her face has the look of his dear departed sister.

WALTER

(Excited)

Maude?! Maude, is it you - sweet
girl?! It has to be you!

HOUDINI

(Abruptly)

Lights!

The house lights turn on. Houdini stands as a showman with arms extended as he has escaped his bondage.

The SMALL WOMAN standing next to him is his assistant TRUDY (20s) who now looks nothing like Walter's dearly departed sister.

TRUDY
I'm sorry to have frightened you,
Mr. Porter.

HOUDINI
It's only my assistant, Trudy.

WALTER
(Shocked)
I...I don't understand. She looked
so much like my sister.

HOUDINI
(Satisfied)
You saw what I wanted you to see.
I made you believe.

WALTER
(Confused)
But I watched you...your hands were
tied...you didn't move, how did -

Houdini lifts up his leg holding the tambourine clutched between his toes.

He pulls a small string attached to the back of the doll to make it dance with his hands under the table.

HOUDINI
As you can see I have duplicated in
great detail all of your Mr.
Weatherby's spiritist hokum...and
probably better than he, I might
add.

WALTER
(Shaken and upset)
Amazing! How could I have been such
a fool?

Houdini takes Walter by the shoulders.

HOUDINI
No, Walter you aren't a fool. You
loved your sister, it was this -
criminal who took advantage of your
grief. It is why I do what I do.

Houdini walks Walter out of the Library.

HOUDINI (CONT'D)

I would be more than happy to
recommend a colleague to debunk
Weatherby if you so desire.

INT. HOUDINI'S HARLEM TOWNHOUSE/2ND FL PARLOR ENTRANCE

Standing at the open door. Walter shakes Houdini's hand.

WALTER

(Grateful)

Thank you, Mr. Houdini, sir. Thank
you.

EXT. HOUDINI'S HARLEM TOWNHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Blackwood races hurriedly up the steps toward the front door.

HOUDINI

Teddy! I was just thinking about
you. Come in.

Blackwood, shaken, walks past them both without
acknowledgement which perturbs Harry.

Walter begins to walk away. Harry sticks his head out the
door as he's leaving.

HOUDINI (CONT'D)

Good luck Walter and remember -
Tomorrow, if you find yourself in
Times Square at noon. Simply, look
up.

INT. 2ND FLOOR PARLOR ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Harry looks at his friend who is white as a sheet and out of
breath.

HOUDINI

You look as if you've seen a ghost.

Blackwood quickly walks up the steps.

INT. HOUDINI'S HARLEM TOWNHOUSE/3RD FLOOR OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The room is somewhat cluttered with a giant chalkboard with
elaborate descriptions of tricks and devices written on it.

There are many books in shelves as well as a few scattered all over the wooden floors. Giant curtains block most of the sunlight from coming in through the window.

Blackwood goes straight to the bookshelf and pulls out Divine Comedy: The Inferno from the bookshelf. He opens to the middle to find a small bottle of Scotch.

Houdini walks in and pulls out a glass from behind his back and hands it to Blackwood before he downs the bottle directly.

HOUDINI

What in the hell has come over you,
Teddy?

Blackwood takes the glass and pours himself a drink. He slams it back and pours another.

BLACKWOOD

Two men - were following me on the train. They were carrying guns.

HOUDINI

Did they follow you here?

BLACKWOOD

No. I managed to lose them before I came here.

HOUDINI

I read today's paper. It's possible that they were hired by the spiritualist church because of last night's debunking fiasco?

Harry throws the newspaper down on his desk.

BLACKWOOD

I don't think Tallulah Trance is with the church. Besides, I thought it was a good write up.

Harry opens the giant curtains and heads over to his desk.

HOUDINI

(Perturbed)

Did you? What were you thinking last night?

BLACKWOOD

What do you mean?

HOUDINI

It was negligent and asinine and
not to mention dangerous for you
and everyone in that room.

BLACKWOOD

How was I supposed to know -

HOUDINI

- What do I always say? Our job is
to expose the fool, not be one.
Make sure you have an Officer
present with you in the room. I
can't have your death on my
conscience and your family without
a father or a husband.

BLACKWOOD

It won't happen again.

Blackwood sips his scotch.

HOUDINI

So tell me. Is Tallulah Trance
still using her ogre as the spirit
trumpet?

BLACKWOOD

Yes. She didn't change a thing
after three sittings. Although,
there was a strange moment this
time - just before I exposed her.
The candle lights in the room
flashed - for an instant.

HOUDINI

(Chuckles)

Sounds like you allowed Tallulah
into your mind to play. She had you
believing in ghost lights, hmm?

BLACKWOOD

No, she isn't that good. It wasn't
something I'd seen before.
Something more elusive.

HOUDINI

Like what?

BLACKWOOD

(Grimaces)

It's probably nothing.
(MORE)

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)

Honestly, I've been having these intense headaches lately followed by a strange image. I'm probably going mad.

(Beat)

Maybe it's a tumor.

HOUDINI

So morbid, Teddy. What you need is rest to get your mind from feeling delusional.

BLACKWOOD

Perhaps it's the late nights of the seances.

HOUDINI

Well, let me ask you, Teddy. Why do you debunk?

BLACKWOOD

(Not understanding the question fully)

Because you ask me to.

HOUDINI

My dear boy, you can simply say no.
(Beat)

You know why I do it? It's betrayal in belief. It is with the deepest concern that I have watched this great wave of Spiritualism sweep the world and has taken such a hold on people's vulnerability during their bereavement. And that's the betrayal that's become a menace to health and sanity.

They both share a wholehearted look.

BLACKWOOD

(Unsuspecting)

Right.

Blackwood drinks the last of his Scotch in his glass before he can pour more. Houdini gently takes the bottle from him and puts it back in the bookshelf.

HOUDINI

(Sarcastic)

I may be a teetotaller, but if you drink all of my hooch I won't have anything for my guests later this afternoon.

Houdini nods at Blackwood to follow him.

HOUDINI (CONT'D)

Now, on to pressing matters. I've got something to show you! I think it'll help you out of your rut.

INT. HOUDINI'S LIBRARY/2ND FLOOR LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Houdini, with flourish, pulls a white sheet off of a large black wooden box. With two doors on top and two on the front.

HOUDINI

What do you think?

BLACKWOOD

(Lukewarm)

Harry, it's a box.

Houdini shakes his head at the lack of imagination from his pupil.

HOUDINI

Wrong! It's THE box.

BLACKWOOD

Sawing a girl in half is passe. I'd get laughed out of the Ambassador.

HOUDINI

Ahh, that's the trick. You play the game the same. Take a tall woman, the taller the better.

Harry opens the top and the sides.

HOUDINI (CONT'D)

Continue to make it business as usual. You saw her in half, then you put her together again -

He closes them again as he pulls them apart.

HOUDINI (CONT'D)

Then you have the open ends facing the audience - and here comes the trick -

He puts the boxes back together again. He opens the tops.

HOUDINI (CONT'D)

- Two smaller girls wearing identical clothes as your tall woman exit out of both ends!

Blackwood looks at it curiously.

BLACKWOOD

A little too simple isn't it?

HOUDINI

It's a fresh update to an old trick-
(Beat)

-And you're guaranteed a thunderous applause and laughs!

BLACKWOOD

Why don't you use it?

HOUDINI

I haven't sawed anyone in half in years. Also, I've got nowhere to put the act in my show.

(Beat)

I figured you could replace the levitating woman through fire with this one.

Blackwood looks at the box and platform it's standing on.

BLACKWOOD

Jim did a fantastic job with the build.

(Beat)

Do you think I could commission Jim to build something for me?

HOUDINI

Of course, my boy. What's the idea?

BLACKWOOD

(Excited)

It's called the Multiple Man - you start with a large mirror that has an open compartment where the mirror's slide open.

HOUDINI

You want to come through the mirror?

BLACKWOOD

Yes, I'll also need a double with additional mirrors around the stage to complete the effect.

Houdini looks thoughtful as he works the trick in his head.

HOUDINI

It could work. Although, I wouldn't want to use so many mirrors on stage. They can create distortions. Also, they've been overused.

BLACKWOOD

What are you talking about? You use them all the time? You made Jennie disappear with one, remember?

HOUDINI

Ahh, clever boy. Yes, it's true, but Jennie was just one elephant. I wasn't trying to multiply her.

BLACKWOOD

Okay. So, it's like you said, it's an update to an old trick.

HOUDINI

(Smiles)

You're beginning to sound too much like me.

BLACKWOOD

Agreed. You think you could get Jim to build it for me?

HOUDINI

Of course, I think he'd enjoy the challenge. You can also take my saw a woman in two trick. Two for the price of one.

Blackwood shakes his hand.

BLACKWOOD

That is a deal. I think I'll add it this weekend.

HOUDINI

Fantastic. I'll have Hollis' man pick up the box today!

(Beat)

(MORE)

HOUDINI (CONT'D)

And my assistant Trudy and her twin sister Tilly who have already been prepping the act will assist you on Sunday.

(Excited)

I think the Shuberts will actually appreciate a little extra oratory for this performance!

BLACKWOOD

(Perplexed)

How did you know? I just came from the theatre.

HOUDINI

(Winks)

I'm the Great Houdini! I know everything. Tell me, have you cut down on the chatter?

BLACKWOOD

No.

HOUDINI

Repetition is the name of the game. Your audience demands more show with little to no tell.

Blackwood holds his emotions in.

HOUDINI (CONT'D)

(Beat)

Oh, I almost forgot, I have something I want you to give to Helen.

He races to the bookcase and pulls out a book and hands it to Blackwood.

BLACKWOOD

Moses Mendelssohn? Are you trying to make my life more difficult?

HOUDINI

Not at all, Teddy. Your wife is strengthening her roots. Mendelssohn was proto emancipation.

BLACKWOOD

You do realize you've created a monster?

HOUDINI

Helen is an accomplished scholar
and teacher in her own right. I'm
just feeding the beast as it were.

A phone rings from the third floor.

HOUDINI (CONT'D)

Aha! I have to get this.

BLACKWOOD

When did you install a telephone?

Houdini races to the stairwell.

HOUDINI

Yesterday. It's a fantastic
invention isn't it?

Blackwood walks to the door.

HOUDINI (CONT'D)

I almost forgot. You have the
camera from my last performance?

BLACKWOOD

Yes.

HOUDINI

Fantastic, don't forget to bring it
tomorrow before noon. My left side
is best. Also, make sure you run
into Officer Mike while you're
there.

BLACKWOOD

Of course.

Blackwood leaves with book in hand.

INT. UNDERGROUND CLUB - NIGHT

It's a large crowd filled with men and women drinking and smoking. JAZZ music is being played by an ALL BLACK 12 piece band. Blackwood sits at a table with a bottle of whisky he grabbed from the bar.

The Two Men from the subway enter the club. The Handle Bar Mustache Man nudges the other man and spots Blackwood signaling his "whereabouts" with his head.

Blackwood is joined by the two men who intrude. The Handlebar Mustache Man puts his hand on Blackwood's shoulder.

HANDLEBAR MUSTACHE MAN
May we sit?

Blackwood doesn't move a muscle as the two men take a seat. Handlebar Mustache Man opens his jacket and flashes his gun as a warning.

HANDLEBAR MUSTACHE MAN (CONT'D)
(New York accent)
We just wanted to have a friendly
chat with the Great Blackwood.
(He pats his shoulder)
You don't mind do ya?

BLACKWOOD
What do you want?

HANDLEBAR MUSTACHE MAN
Well, we were stopping to get a
drink with our employer and low and
behold, here you are. What are the
odds?

BLACKWOOD
Who's that? Miss Trance?

HANDLEBAR MUSTACHE MAN
Nah, but he is a great admirer of
Miss Trance.
(Beat)
He doesn't want to see her hurt by
some two bit mutt like you.

The man with the bowler hat takes Blackwood's glass and knocks back his drink.

BLACKWOOD
I'm just hired to debunk frauds.
It's not my problem if they're all
bad at it. Frankly, it makes my job
a lot easier.

HANDLEBAR MUSTACHE MAN
Everyone's hired to do a job.
Miss Trance was hired to do a job -
and we're hired to do a job.
(Beat)
Consider this a warning, you and
Houdini stay away from Ms. Trance.
We'll stay away from you.

BLACKWOOD
Okay, I got the message. Now, can I
leave?

HANDLEBAR MUSTACHE MAN
That depends on you Blackwood.
Sometimes you showbiz types have
thick heads. You come in here enjoy
the - hospitality our organization
provides. Then you embarrass our
friends.

(Beat)
Which forces me to make it
personal. You understand, right?

Blackwood's feigns anger - he's calling their bluff.

BLACKWOOD
You leave my sister and father out
of this!

BOWLER MAN
(Irish accent)
Look. You've made the magic man
upset..

The Handlebar Mustache Man lights a cigar using a match from his matchbook.

HANDLEBAR MUSTACHE MAN
They're in good hands, Blackwood
don't worry. You don't get out of
line. I don't pay them a visit.

The BARTENDER (30s) walks over to the table. He doesn't look happy.

BARTENDER
Hey Mike, you here to get this
deadbeat to pay his tab.

Handlebar (Mike) looks up confused at the bartender.

HANDLEBAR MUSTACHE MAN
How much does he owe?

BARTENDER
A hundred.

Mike turns and grins back at Blackwood.

HANDLEBAR MUSTACHE MAN
Well Magic Man, you heard him, pay
up.

Blackwood gets defensive. A big smile on his face.

BLACKWOOD

Your right, I owe this man and I'll pay him but first - as a sign of good will. How bout a magic trick. Just for you guys? To show there are no hard feelings?

The Handlebar Mustache Man blows smoke in Blackwood's face. Blackwood coughs and waves the smoke away from his face.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)

One trick. It'll only take a minute. I promise. It's a sight to be seen.

Blackwood accidentally knocks the whisky bottle, spilling the alcohol all over the table. The two men back away from the accident.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)

I apologize. Clumsy me. Must be the booze.

HANDLEBAR MUSTACHE MAN

Yeah, must be.

BOWLER MAN

I don't get it. This is a magic trick?

BLACKWOOD

(Upset but calm)

I assure you. This trick will have you guys blazing.

(Beat)

Now, to demonstrate this. I'll need matches.

The Handlebar Mustache Man hands Blackwood a matchbook from his coat pocket.

HANDLEBAR MUSTACHE MAN

Here you go.

Blackwood holds the matchbook up and shows the two men.

BLACKWOOD

I'm going to light a match and put it out and then place the burned match back into the matchbook. As you see there are 9 matches in there.

Blackwood rips out a match from the book.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)
Now, there are only 8 left.

Blackwood lights the match and puts it out.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)
Watch the match as it goes back to
where it came from. Attached like
it was never ripped from the book.

He shifts his hands and flings his fingers toward the matchbook. He opens the matchbook to reveal that the burned match is back in the matchbook. The two men clap in amazement.

BOWLER MAN
How did you do that?

BLACKWOOD
A magician never reveals his
secrets, but I'm happy to show you -

Blackwood strikes the rest of the matches and throws it on the alcohol drenched table as it catches on fire. The two men fall back from their chairs.

The Bartender tries to grab Blackwood. Blackwood clocks him in the jaw and runs for it.

HANDLEBAR MUSTACHE MAN
You little, shit!

The Bowler man falls over trying to race after him.

EXT. NIGHT CLUB - CONTINUOUS

Blackwood runs up the stairs and onto the streets.

He turns a corner and across the street. He runs down a few blocks and looks back. He seems to have lost them. He begins to have another violent headache. This headache seems to slow him down causing him to stop a moment.

The vast Universe appears before him clearly. He walks near it, reaching out until -

It disappears and -

The Handlebar Mustache Man appears before him drawing his pistol from his jacket. Behind Blackwood is the Bowler Man. Blackwood has no where to run.

HANDLEBAR MUSTACHE MAN

Look at that, Eddie. Seems like he ain't the only one who knows a magic trick or two.

BOWLER MAN

Funny. Think we should teach this little shit how to respect other people's property.

The Bowler Man grabs Blackwood and holds him. The Handlebar Mustache Man punches Blackwood in the face, then once in the gut holding the pistol, knocking him to the floor.

He searches his body and takes all the money from his wallet and throws it back down on him.

HANDLEBAR MUSTACHE MAN

If you so much as step within a block of the 71 club, try doin' your act with two broken thumbs.

The Bowler Man gives Blackwood a kick while he's down. They laugh as they walk away.

The overhead lamps flicker from long thin flames to orbs and back again. Blackwood lays on the cold concrete floor, beaten as snow trickles down.

In the shadows nearby, the Mysterious Man appears watching Blackwood and then disappears back into the shadows.

INT. BLACKWOOD'S APARTMENT - LATER

The door unlocks as Blackwood enters the apartment. His two boys come running to the door to see their father beaten. His face dirty and his clothes in tatters and icy wet.

NATHAN

Abba? Are you okay?

Blackwood gives them a warm hug.

BLACKWOOD

I'm all right boys. You should have seen the other guys.

Helen walks over to her husband and sees his face.

HELEN

(Prompt)

It's time for bed boys. Brush your teeth and get into bed.

Morris kisses his father on the cheek and goes into the bathroom with his brother. Helen hugs her husband tightly.

HELEN (CONT'D)
(Overly concerned)
What happened?

Helen reacts to the smell of booze.

HELEN (CONT'D)
Wow. That smell.

Blackwood pulls from his inner jacket pocket, the slightly damaged book Houdini had given him.

BLACKWOOD
Before I forget, Harry wanted me to give this to you. He thought you hadn't tortured your husband enough with old Jewish philosophers. He thought you should study a new one.

She takes it.

HELEN
What happened, Teddy?

He dodges the question as he puts his jacket on the hook and walks toward their room. She follows him.

BLACKWOOD
It - was nothing. Some hooligans didn't like one of my tricks, so they got a little rowdy.

INT. BLACKWOOD'S APARTMENT/BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

He takes off his shoes and tosses them on the floor. He sits on the bed. She stands in the doorway.

BLACKWOOD
Whoo, I'm pretty ripe. I think I need a bath.

Blackwood removes his shirt.

HELEN
So, we're not going to talk about it? You come home beaten, dirty, smelling of hooch. You frightened me and the boys, but everything is just capitol?

BLACKWOOD

What do you want me to say, Helen?

HELEN

I want you to look at me and tell
me what's going on.

He gets up from the bed and holds her.

BLACKWOOD

It's nothing I can't handle.
Honest. I'm just burning it at both
ends between the act, Harry and the
seances.

HELEN

Then, maybe it's time you stop
being Harry's errand boy. Stop the
seances and just focus on your
magic act.

He walks into the bathroom.

INT. BLACKWOOD'S APARTMENT/BATHROOM

Blackwood starts the bath. She follows him in.

HELEN

You think I don't see it, but I do.
You're not happy, Teddy. Something
is scaring you and this night work
you're doing is dangerous. You need
to talk to me. I'm your wife.

(Beat)

I've seen you sneaking around with
your flask of whiskey when you
think I'm not looking.

BLACKWOOD

(Snaps)

Scared? So are you a shrink now?
I'm tired Helen and I want to take
a bath and go to bed.

HELEN

(Snaps back)

You want to wallow in self pity
that's up to you, but leave me and
the children out of it.

She walks toward the door.

BLACKWOOD

Sweetheart, you know I love what I do. It's just with Harry - I can't let him down, you know?

She stands with her back to him.

HELEN

Harry? You've been trying to chase Harry's approval since you were ten. Don't you think it's time to come out of his shadow?

BLACKWOOD

What is that supposed to mean?

He ponders as she walks out.

EXT. 47TH AND BROADWAY - LATE MORNING

A Bellevue ambulance pulls up in front of the Palace Theatre. A CROWD is starting to coral around the theatre as THREE MEN wearing white jackets open the back of the truck.

Houdini leaps down from the truck with vigor and puts his hands in the air. The crowd gets excited and cheers. The Three men begin to put a straight jacket on Houdini.

Blackwood stands nearby and takes a photo of Harry being put in the straight jacket. The crowd appears to be growing. On Blackwood's other side is Roger, writing in his note pad.

Blackwood feels strange. All of a sudden - a headache grips his temples.

OFFICER MIKE (V.O.)

What the hell happened to you?

Blackwood looks over to see Officer Mike in his bright blue uniform staring at his face.

BLACKWOOD

Sweet 16 birthday party got out of control.

OFFICER MIKE

(Smiles)

Teenagers are animals.

BLACKWOOD

Vicious bloodsuckers. You two ready?

Roger nods. Officer Mike straightens his jacket and nods. Officer Mike begins to yell loudly.

OFFICER MIKE

So, who is the nut they're trussing up in the straightjacket?

Blackwood takes another photo.

BLACKWOOD

That's no nut, except professionally. That's Houdini! The Escape King!

The Men in White Jackets finish strapping the straightjacket. Another Man ties a rope around Houdini's ankles.

OFFICER MIKE

What Asylum is he escaping from now?

More people begin to file into the already crowded space. Officer Mike starts pushing people back as he tries to walk toward the ambulance.

A MYSTERIOUS MAN, only seen from the back, in a BLACK BOWLER HAT and BRIGHT RED GLOVES walks up behind an unsuspecting Blackwood.

Blackwood looks down and notices the remaining snow on the ground rippling as it had before. His headache resurfaces as he holds his temples with his fingers.

Officer Mike looks at Blackwood who is out of sorts.

OFFICER MIKE (CONT'D)

(Whispers)

Barnabas. Are you okay?

Blackwood snaps back to reality.

BLACKWOOD

He doesn't - escape from anything until he gets to the top of the - top of the Palace theatre where he's playing his show.

The crane picks up Houdini and begins to lift him into the air by his ankles. Officer Mike barrels through the crowd and attempts to grab Houdini and misses as he's raised to the heavens.

Blackwood looks up to find the Universe floating above Houdini who is suspended in the air on the crane.

Blackwood, with all his strength, points his camera and takes a few pictures of the Universe.

The Mysterious Man slowly moves toward Blackwood through the crowd.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)

Houdini advertised he'll get out of that straightjacket when he gets to the top of the theatre.

The fear is palpable as the crane lifts higher and higher with Houdini dangling.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)

It's a bet between him and some vaudeville agent named Pat Casey, that he won't do it. Whoever loses pays 1,000 dollars to the Knights of Columbus building fund.

(Beat)

Though it's a question who'll pay if he breaks his neck -

The Mysterious Man finally approaches Blackwood and draws a knife from his pocket, but concealing from civilians as he nears Blackwood very methodically.

Blackwood feels a knife dig into his back. Houdini dangles wildly as he attempts to break from his shackles.

MYSTERIOUS MAN

(Whispers)

Tanel Liebowitz. I am the harbinger of death. I bring you a warning.

Blackwood begins to turn his head back as the knife digs into his back a bit deeper - he winces.

Officer Mike yells at Houdini from a distance.

OFFICER MIKE

Hey, he's a nut all right! They ain't wasting that straightjacket!

(Beat)

Nut or no nut, he'll be booked for disorderly conduct for carelessly risking his life like this!

BLACKWOOD

(To Mysterious Man)

What do you want?

MYSTERIOUS MAN

(Whispers)

You ruined me. Took everything in
my life away. I wanted you to know
I'm returning the favor.

BLACKWOOD

You intend to murder me in broad
daylight?

MYSTERIOUS MAN

(Light chuckle)

I'm not stupid Teddy. Your time is
coming soon. You can't run from it.
Helen can't save you from it.
Neither can the great Houdini.

Blackwood is growing in his distress and winces in pain from
the knife and his headache.

BLACKWOOD

(In pain)

We can discuss this. Whatever you
think I've done -

The pain is gone. Blackwood turns back and there is no one
there except for the innocent crowd.

OFFICER MIKE

Barnabus, what's wrong with you?

Blackwood is fixated on searching for the Mysterious Man with
the knife through the endless sea of fans. Officer Mike
nudges Blackwood.

BLACKWOOD

Nothing -

Harry is almost out of his straightjacket. Blackwood sees
that the Universe above has disappeared.

OFFICER MIKE

(Loudly)

As I was saying. There ain't no
stunts can be pulled off on
Broadway since the war, unless
you're in the army?

BLACKWOOD

I was in the Infantry in '17 and
'18, at the battle of Argonne. Does
that count?

The straightjacket falls to the ground as the crowd cheers wildly. Houdini throws his hands out in exclamation. Blackwood begins to take more photos.

OFFICER MIKE
The war's over, lad. Looks like I
gotta do my duty, Knights of
Columbus or no Knights -

The crane begins to lower Harry back to the earth.

As soon as Harry touches down, Officer Mike and a gaggle of OFFICERS begin giving summons to everyone in the area, including Harry.

Blackwood looks back to the sea of people in the crowd. His anxiety is growing as a wave hits his head and begins to throb.

He rushes off into the crowd. Houdini looks up from his thrown of fans to see Blackwood's back racing away from him.

INT. CITY COLLEGE OF NEW YORK IN HARLEM/CLASSROOM - LATER

Helen stands behind a massive desk. Shakespeare's Hamlet is opened on her neat and tidy desk. Behind her is a blackboard. She writes Undiscovered Country.

She doesn't look at the page as she recites from memory and looks at her all MALE CLASS.

HELEN
To grunt and sweat under a weary
life, but that the dread of
something after death.
(Beat)
The Undiscovered Country from whose
bourn no traveller returns, puzzles
the will and makes us rather bear
those ills we have. Then fly to
others that we know not of?
(Beat)
Thus, conscience does make cowards
of us all.
(To her class)
What is Hamlet talking about here?

A STUDIOUS YOUNG MAN with glasses, raises his hand.

STUDIOUS YOUNG MAN
Fear of death, of the unknown.

HELEN

Perhaps? Hamlet is angry and he
feels like his life is meaningless.

(Beat)

Could it be an existential crisis
he's having?

We see the lights in the hallway flicker strangely. Helen
looks out her glass door to see the strange occurrence.

Suddenly, her husband Blackwood is at the door through the
window. Helen jumps with fright as he appears. He waves her
to come out.

She composes herself and turns back to her class.

HELEN (CONT'D)

Let's take a few moments to read
all of Act 3. I'll just be outside
in the hall for a moment.

She exits the classroom.

INT. CCCN/HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Helen attempts to stay calm.

HELEN

(Furious)

What are you doing here, Teddy? If
someone sees me out of class -

BLACKWOOD

Someone has been - following me.
They know who I am. Who I really
am?

(Beat)

I just thought - he talked about
you. I thought he might come here.

Helen collects herself.

HELEN

Who?

BLACKWOOD

(Terrified)

I don't know. I was at Times Square
with Harry and a man came from
behind. I didn't see him. I didn't
recognize his voice. He said I
ruined his life. He called himself
the harbinger of death.

HELEN

Could he be with Tallulah Trance?

Blackwood dismisses the idea quickly.

BLACKWOOD

I already had a run in with HER people. They don't know me. This man is different.

HELEN

We should go to the police. You can ask your cop friend Mike for help.

Blackwood takes a deep breath.

BLACKWOOD

He only knows me as Blackwood. We should probably keep it that way.

HELEN

(Frustrated)

Is this why you've been beat up and keeping things from me? Why didn't you tell me this sooner?

BLACKWOOD

I didn't want to worry you.

HELEN

And how has that been working out?

(Beat)

What would you like to do?

BLACKWOOD

Let me talk to Harry. He's had some run ins with these people before.

HELEN

So you DO think it's one of these mediums?

BLACKWOOD

It has to be.

HELEN

Maybe, we should leave town for a few days. Stay with your parents in Newark? What if they come after our kids?

Blackwood looks determined.

BLACKWOOD

No, we aren't running with the kids. I just need to talk to Harry. I just need you to be careful.

(Beat)

I'll keep the boys home tomorrow just as a precaution.

HELEN

You'll pick them up today then?

He nods in approval.

BLACKWOOD

I'm sorry I disturbed your class. I wasn't sure what to do.

He kisses her and walks away.

HELEN

I love you, Teddy. Please be careful.

She composes herself and walks back into her classroom.

INT. GUN SHOP - LATER

Blackwood enters the shop. The MAN behind the counter nods at him. Blackwood examines the guns on the rack behind the clerk.

MALE CLERK

What can I do for you?

BLACKWOOD

Can I look at the Colt M1911 and the Browning FN?

MALE CLERK

I see you know your firearms.

The man places both weapons on the counter. Blackwood picks up the BROWNING PISTOL and holds it like a professional. He cocks back the hammer.

EXT. BLACKWOOD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The Shabbat candles illuminate the room from the window. Blackwood stands at the table with his Kippa holding the Siddur in his hand reciting the Shabbat prayer.

Helen stands next to him with her head covering. The boys are wearing their kippas. On the table is a roasted chicken. There is a bowl of potatoes and freshly baked challah bread.

The boys take turns drinking from the Kiddush cup. Blackwood and Helen wash their hands with a cup. Blackwood and Helen return to the table.

BLACKWOOD & HELEN
(Hamotzi prayer in Hebrew)
Baruk atah adonai alahanu mela
holam homatzi lechem mein haaretz.

NATHAN
(Anxious)
Can we eat now?

HELEN
Yes. Who wants some chicken?

Blackwood carves up the chicken and doles it out for the children, his wife and himself. Morris turns his nose up at the chicken.

MORRIS
I don't want to eat meat. I want a cheese sandwich.

BLACKWOOD
We're not having dairy. We're having meat.

MORRIS
(Upset)
Then, I just want Challah then!

Blackwood rolls his eyes as Helen cuts the Challah. The kids devour it. Blackwood notices the lights outside the window begin to flicker. He goes to the window to look at it.

Helen comes behind him and puts her arms around his waist to see out the window as well.

HELEN
You, okay?

Blackwood continues to see the street lights flicker and the flames to orbs.

BLACKWOOD
I'm not creating all of this in my head, right? You CAN see the lights outside - actually see them?

HELEN

I do, but just because we can't understand something doesn't make it not real.

(Beat)

I don't think you're crazy.

BLACKWOOD

(Earnest)

There's something that I haven't told you.

HELEN

What is it?

BLACKWOOD

Well, I've been getting a few of these really painful headaches randomly. Bad things seem to happen when they occur.

HELEN

What kind of bad things?

BLACKWOOD

Each time I've had them, I've been chased, beaten, had a knife at my back. I think they're all connected somehow, when the bad things are finished, the headaches subside.

(Beat)

But the strangest part of it all is I see the stars in space appear before me. Now, tell me.

(Beat)

How am I not crazy?

Helen looks on with deep concern for Blackwood, not knowing how to answer that revelation.

MORRIS

(Interrupts)

Abba, Nathan keeps taking my kippa.

HELEN

Nathan! Give your brother his kippa back!

Blackwood shudders as he looks out onto the black and vacant streets.

Behind him Helen picks up Morris' kippa and puts it on his head and hugs him. She looks over at her husband, worried.

EXT. AMBASSADOR THEATRE - NIGHT

Two spotlights shine brightly into the night sky as the marquee of the theatre says, "THE AMAZING BLACKWOOD". A large number of people are approaching the theatre.

A black vehicle stops in front of the building as Houdini steps out along with his wife, BESS (40s).

INT. AMBASSADOR THEATRE/DRESSING ROOM HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

A LARGE MAN wearing overalls stands vigil over the Dressing Room door.

INT. AMBASSADOR THEATRE/DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Blackwood is sitting in front of the vanity mirror with make up being applied to his face by his MAKEUP ARTIST. She covers up his bruises.

There's a knock at the door. Helen opens the door, along side her is Houdini and his wife Bess.

HELEN

Look who came to see you before
your big show.

Bess is holding flowers.

HOUDINI

There he is. Bess and I brought you
flowers for good luck.

Blackwood stands up and hugs Bess and shakes Houdini's hand.

BLACKWOOD

Thank you so much.

HOUDINI

Are you ready? How are you feeling?

BLACKWOOD

Oh, you know. A little nervous, but
that's to be expected. How's the
turnout?

HOUDINI

Not good. At least half full. I
heard the distinct sound of
crickets.

BESS

Oh, stop it Harry. It is a massive turnout. You should be proud, Teddy.

HOUDINI

(Smiles)

Yes, you should be. It almost looks like my show.

BLACKWOOD

(Sincere)

Thank you again for everything.

HOUDINI

Teddy, when you ran off on Thursday after the stunt - I was worried something happened.

Blackwood and Helen share a knowing glance.

BLACKWOOD

I want to talk to you about that - after the show, all right?

HOUDINI

Anything for you, my boy. You'll do great. Break a leg - or two.

(Beat)

Well, we should leave you to it.

BESS

Good luck, Teddy.

BLACKWOOD

Thank you.

Houdini and Bess exit, while Helen looks at Blackwood from the door.

HELEN

Are you going to be all right? If you want, I can talk to Harry about it.

BLACKWOOD

No, I'll talk to him later. Besides, I spoke to Hollis. If you haven't noticed, he has his extra large stagehands roaming the theatre tonight.

HELEN

I'm so proud of you. This is your moment to be great. Pretty soon they'll say Houdini who and shout The Amazing Blackwood!

BLACKWOOD

Thank you, my dear.

HELEN

For what?

BLACKWOOD

For being on my side through all my madness.

HELEN

Who else is going to do it?

Blackwood and Helen kiss.

BLACKWOOD

You're ruining my make-up.

HELEN

That's my line.

Helen exits the room, while Blackwood takes a swig from his flask.

INT. AMBASSADOR THEATRE - NIGHT

A packed house, as Helen takes a seat with Houdini and Bess in the front row. The curtains close and a drum roll sets the tone. A MAN dressed in a tuxedo walks on the stage and near the mic.

MAN

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, to the Ambassador Theatre. Tonight, we have a special treat for you all, but first. Here we have in our audience is the one and only Harry Houdini! Please stand up.

Harry stands up and greets the audience.

MAN (CONT'D)

We have a wonderful show for you folks tonight. A night filled with excitement, intrigue, electricity and most of all AMAZEMENT! Are you ready to be captivated?!

The crowd cheers and claps.

MAN (CONT'D)
Without further adieu. I give you
the AMAZING - BLACKWOOD!

Thunderous applause erupts as Blackwood rushes to the stage
wearing a tuxedo and top hat.

BLACKWOOD
Thank you everyone.

Blackwood stands center stage looking confident as ever.
Hollis watches from the side of the stage looking nervous.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)
We are all trapped in our own
minds. As crazy as that sounds,
it's true. Whether it's reading the
paper or listening to that new
fangled contraption, the radio. We
get wrapped up in the news,
favorite serials and our beliefs to
the point we create our own stories
from that. A fabrication if you
will. What is reality and what is
not? Our minds are the gateway to
endless possibilities - or a
weekend with the in-laws in Newark.

The crowd chuckles. Houdini admires Blackwood's confidence
and stage presence. Hollis is relieved for now.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)
Well, tonight. I urge you all to
open your mind and be free of any
worry or doubt. Now, let's begin.

Blackwood walks by a small table that has a deck of cards set
on top. He grabs the cards and walks back to the mic.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)
Everyone knows what this is?

Blackwood removes the deck of cards out of the box. Everyone
shouts "Cards".

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)
(Smiles)
Intelligent audience tonight.
Okay, now I'm going to pick a
random person from the audience.
(Points)
(MORE)

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)

You Miss in the 6th row with the
beautiful feathered hat. Come to
the stage please.

The FEATHERED HAT WOMAN walks toward the stage. Blackwood
helps her up the steps and toward the center stage.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)

Hello. What's your name Miss?

FEATHERED HAT WOMAN

Lucille.

BLACKWOOD

Lucille. I want you to shuffle this
deck.

FEATHERED HAT WOMAN

I don't know how to shuffle.

BLACKWOOD

That's okay. Just shuffle it the
best way you can. Now, I will give
you instructions while my back is
turned so I can't see anything
you're doing. You understand?

FEATHERED HAT WOMAN

Yes.

BLACKWOOD

Good.

Blackwood turns his back on the Feathered Hat Woman as she
shuffles the deck, horribly and slow.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)

How are you doing, Lucille?

FEATHERED HAT WOMAN

(Nervous smile)

Okay.

The audience chuckles.

The Feathered Hat Woman drops a few cards and picks them up.
She takes a few glances at the cards she dropped and
reshuffles them back into the deck.

FEATHERED HAT WOMAN (CONT'D)

I'm done.

BLACKWOOD

Good. Now, the deck you just shuffled, I need you to pick one and when you pick that one take a look at it, but don't tell me what you picked. Keep that card in your mind.

(Beat)

Now, have you picked your card?

FEATHERED HAT WOMAN

Yes.

BLACKWOOD

Good. Can you show the audience the card you picked.

The Feathered Hat Woman shows the audience her card which is a 7 of hearts.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)

Now, that you've shown the audience, can you please reshuffle the deck one last time.

The Feathered Hat Woman reshuffles the deck.

FEATHERED HAT WOMAN

Finished.

Blackwood turns around and takes the deck from the woman.

BLACKWOOD

Good. Now, I'm going to take a random card from the deck and ask you if it was the card you picked.

Blackwood takes the card from the deck and holds it without looking. He looks at the card and then at her.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)

Lucille, was your card the 7 of hearts?

Blackwood shows the Feathered Hat Woman and the audience the 7 of hearts card.

FEATHERED HAT WOMAN

(Shocked)

Yes.

Everyone claps.

BLACKWOOD

Wonderful. There's one last trick
to this. When you shuffled the
first time, did you drop 3 cards?

FEATHERED HAT WOMAN

(Still in shock)

Yes.

BLACKWOOD

And did you look at those 3 cards
that you dropped?

FEATHERED HAT WOMAN

Yes.

BLACKWOOD

Great. The 3 cards that you
dropped. Was it a 4 of diamonds, 3
of spades and 8 of clovers?

FEATHERED HAT WOMAN

Oh my God, yes. That's incredible.

BLACKWOOD

Indeed. Now, can you look through
the deck and tell me if those cards
are in there?

The Feathered Hat Woman looks through the deck thoroughly.

FEATHERED HAT WOMAN

They're not here.

BLACKWOOD

That's impossible. Do you mind?

Blackwood takes the deck and fans them out and shows the audience.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)

She's right. They are not in this
deck. Where could they possibly be
then? Sir, yes, you with the
mustache in the 4th row. Could you
stand up please.

The MUSTACHE MAN stands up.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)

You Miss with the blonde hair in
the 8th row. Please stand up.

The BLONDE LADY stands up.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)
And you Miss with the short brown
hair in the 6th row please stand
up.

INT. AMBASSADOR THEATRE/LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The Mysterious Man walks through the lobby putting his ticket in his coat. He is wearing RED GLOVES and a long black coat. He has a brown Macintosh hat and his face is covered with a bright red scarf.

INT. AMBASSADOR THEATRE - CONTINUOUS

Blackwood looks at the 3 audience members standing from their seats.

BLACKWOOD
The 3 standing. Could you reach
into your coats and show everyone
what's in your pocket.

The 3 audience members reach into their coat and reveal the 4 of diamonds, 3 of spades and 8 of clovers to everyone.

Everyone claps including Bess, Houdini and Helen. Helen couldn't be more proud while Houdini has a pleasant smile on his face.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)
A round of applause for my guests.

Everyone cheers and claps loudly.

The Mysterious Man enters the theatre and stands near the entrance watching Blackwood.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)
Now, for my next trick I will need
my assistant to bring out a --

The lights begin to flicker like before. Blackwood feels uneasy as another headache begins to emerge. His confidence slowly begins to shrink.

He squints at the lights as it affects him visually and mentally. The crowd is very quiet.

Blackwood hears whispers coming from the audience as it gets louder in his ears. He seems very hazy as he sees the Universe appear in the crowd.

He sees a giant black void form over his head. Out in the audience another black void begins to grow.

Is it moving toward Blackwood?

Helen, Houdini and Bess look on with deep concern.

Blackwood places his hand to block his eyes from the lights as it appears the Mysterious Man has disappeared along with the image of the Universe and the voids. Blackwood collects himself quickly and regains his confidence.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)

Sorry for that ladies and gentlemen. I was just trapped in my mind for a moment. As I was saying - for my next trick I will need my assistants to come out and bring a black box.

2 MALE ASSISTANTS carry out a black box the size of a coffin and place it on a platform out on the stage. The box has six small windows with individuals curtains on each.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)

I know what everyone's thinking. You've all seen the saw the lady in half trick, but have you really? Let's find out.

(Beat)

Now, I will need someone in the audience.

Blackwood looks in the audience and points to a fairly TALL WOMAN.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)

You there Miss, in the 3rd row.

The tall woman in a blue dress stands up and walks toward the stage. Blackwood helps her up the steps and near the black box.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)

What is your name Miss?

TALL WOMAN

Cassandra.

(NOTE: THE TALL WOMAN WILL NOW BE REFERRED TO BY HER NAME CASSANDRA)

BLACKWOOD

Cassandra. Thank you for doing
this. Are you scared?

CASSANDRA

A little.

The audience chuckles.

BLACKWOOD

A little? Good. You should be.
That was a joke.

(Beat)

Now, I'm going to have you come
around the box and get up on the
platform and enter the box.

Cassandra is assisted to the top of the platform and into the black box laying flat on her back. Blackwood opens the individual curtains on the black box to reveal that she's in the box.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)

Obviously, you can see that she is
in fact in the box. Is it
comfortable in there Cassandra?

CASSANDRA

Yes, I'm all right.

BLACKWOOD

Now, I'm going to ask for the saw
and the sawhorses to be brought on
stage.

Blackwood closes the individual curtains.

HOUDINI

(Whispers to Bess)

I showed him how to perform this.

BESS

(Whispers)

Shush, Harry. Please, don't ruin
it.

The two Assistants bring out two sawhorses and they place the box on top of the saw table. Blackwood opens the curtains.

BLACKWOOD

Now, I am going to cut Cassandra in
half with this saw. Let's hope this
is not Cassandra's last resting
place tonight.

Blackwood orchestrates the saw to cut the box in half while she wiggles her feet in the windows.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)
Are you okay, Cassandra?

CASSANDRA
I feel like half of me is gone.

BLACKWOOD
Well, that seems to be the case here. Don't worry. I will now attempt to bring her back in tact.

The two assistants lift one half of the box back on the rolling cart as well as the other. You can see her legs wiggling in one box and her head in the other.

He rotates the black box a few more times and stops. Blackwood opens the top door of the black box.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)
Cassandra. Would you please step out of the box and onto the platform.

TRUDY as Cassandra leaps out of the box wearing a blue dress with her arms in the air. The audience claps.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)
Hold on. You look a bit shorter?
How did that happen?

TRUDY
I don't know.

BLACKWOOD
Wait a minute. What's going on?

Blackwood looks into the box and helps out another girl that looks just like Trudy. It's her twin TILLY.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)
Ladies and gentlemen. I give you two Cassandras!

The audience erupts in applause including Houdini who is proud. Blackwood takes a bow with the two Cassandras and stares at Helen.

Houdini whistles loudly at Blackwood while Hollis is excited from the overwhelming applause.

BLACKWOOD (CONT'D)
Now, for this next trick I learned
from a Shaman in Borneo -

Hollis' excitement turns into worry again.

INT. AMBASSADOR THEATRE/DRESSING ROOM - LATER

Blackwood enters as you hear the thunderous applause from the distance. Blackwood is drenched in sweat as he takes off his coat and bow tie.

There's a knock at the door. He looks to the slightly opened drawer with his Browning pistol peeking out.

BLACKWOOD
Who is it?

HELEN
It's your wife.

BLACKWOOD
Come in.

Helen enters the dressing room excited for Blackwood.

HELEN
You did it!

BLACKWOOD
I did and it's exhilarating. This
is the moment I've been waiting for
all my life. Did you hear them? I
couldn't have done it without you.

HELEN
No. This was all you. You were
magnificent. Even Harry was
pleased. He couldn't stop talking
about you. He's very proud of you.
I'm proud of you, Teddy.

BLACKWOOD
Thank you, my love.

Blackwood gives Helen a deep and passionate kiss.

HELEN
Now, hurry up and change so we can
celebrate. Harry wants to take us
out for a late night celebratory
dinner at Delmonico's.

BLACKWOOD
I'll be out in 10 minutes.

HELEN
Okay - The Amazing Blackwood!

Helen exits. Blackwood looks at the mirror removing his make up. The lights begin to flicker again. His mirror ripples as well and shifts into the Universe. The black void begins to grow out of the mirror. Oddly, Blackwood is not experiencing any violent headaches.

He looks at it strangely as he touches it - but it feels solid. He's in a trance until -

There's a knock at the door. Blackwood comes back to reality. Blackwood walks toward the door.

BLACKWOOD
Helen, I told you I'll be done in -

Blackwood opens the door and is shot as he falls back to the floor. The Mysterious Man puts his pistol back into his jacket and runs down the hallway.

Blackwood's bodyguard lays on the ground unconscious. Blackwood is bleeding through his white dress shirt.

FADE TO BLACK.