

KNIVES OUT

A Murder Mystery by

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EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE MANOR HOUSE - DAWN

The grounds of a New England manor. Pre-dawn misty.

INT. MANOR - PANTRY / LIVING ROOM / FOYER / HALLWAY - DAWN

INSIDE THE MANOR

Unlit and still. Gothic with a theme of antique games, arcane puzzles and decorative weapons.

First floor: A drawing room, living room, kitchen. The detritus of a party. Stray champagne flutes.

INT. THROMBEY ESTATE - 2ND FLOOR - DAWN

Follow one housekeeper named FRAN carrying a tray of coffee up a flight of stairs.

Second floor: a hallway, doors all closed. The house has not woken up, and Fran steps lightly. Up a much narrower creaky flight of steep stairs.

INT. THROMBEY ESTATE - 3RD FLOOR MASTER BEDROOM - DAWN

Third floor: the master bedroom suite.

FRAN
Morning Mr Thrombey

But the bed is empty, unslept in. A robe thrown across it.

Fran heads out onto the landing and UP an EVEN NARROWER half flight of stairs, which leads to a single door.

INT. HARLAN THROMBEY'S STUDY - DAWN

A cramped attic study, every shelf crammed with curios.

The door swings open and Fran sees:

HARLAN THROMBEY himself. 85 years old. Slung across a white leather day bed.

Throat slit. Drenched in blood. Very much dead.

CUT TO: Title card, on black.

THEN TO:

INT. MARTA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

MARTA CABRERA wakes with a cry.

Plain, modern, cramped. Marta, in her late twenties, takes a moment to catch her breath. Opens a window.

EXT. SOUTH BOSTON HOUSING PROJECT - MORNING

A tiny window in a cheap apartment building opens, Marta's face appears breathing deep.

SUPER: "ONE WEEK LATER"

INT. CABRERA KITCHEN - MORNING

Marta sits in front of a laptop. Her MOM is at the table with her, her sister ALICE watches CSI on an iPad on the counter top. Murder related dialog from the show.

Marta scroll through a jobs site, tired, eyes dead. Her mom watches, concerned.

MOM

Alice, turn that off now.

ALICE

Why it's almost over, what - they're finding out who did it and the wifi sucks in my room so it doesn't play it's like two minutes left what there isn't even anything bad on it, it's just normal tv and they're just talking ok ok godddd whatever ok whatever.

MOM

Now please just turn it off.

Turn it off. Now.

Alice. Off.

They're talking about murder on it, your sister just had a friend she loves slit his throat open she doesn't need to be hearing that right now let's be sensitive!

Mom standing yelling, Alice slams the iPad cover closed. Marta puts her head in her hand. Looks at her mom, who looks back at her with protective sympathy. Marta starts laughing at the absurdity of it, but the laugh turns into crying.

MARTA

Thanks mom. I love you. God, none of this seems real. Alice you can keep watching your show it's alright.

ALICE

No, I guessed who did it anyway. I'm
sorry Marta.

Alice hugs her sister. Marta's phone rings. WALT THROMBEY.

MARTA

It's Harlan's son. Maybe it's about
the funeral.

(answers)

Hi, Walt.

(listens)

Uh huh.

Her face shifts in confusion.

MARTA (cont'd)

What?

EXT. PRIVATE ROAD - LATE MORNING

A long narrow private road leading to the Thrombey estate.

Marta's shitty SUBCOMPACT car buzzes by, towards the house.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE FRONT DRIVE

Several cars, including a police cruiser with a few
uniformed officers by it. Marta pulls up. An officer eyes
her, approaches.

COP

Excuse me ma'am. Are you with the
help?

MEG, Thrombey's college aged granddaughter, trots out.

MEG

Hey! Her name is Marta, she was
granddad's nurse, she's with us.
"The help?" What the hell.

MARTA

(to the cop)

It's ok, sorry.

MEG

(mutters)

It's not ok. Cops, man.

They hug, and are both instantly crying. They laugh.

MEG (cont'd)

Oh god. Look at us.

MARTA

How are you? This week, how have you

MEG

Yeah. It's been rough, the whole week just awful. And now this,
(the cop cars)
we thought we were done.

MARTA

Walt called me, but yeah I thought the cops got our statements already, what are we

MEG

I dunno, they've got more dumbass questions, something. Dumb.
(she vapes)
How are you doing?

MARTA

Not good. Alone, lots of just, this
(the crying)
and not knowing what to do next.

MEG

Anything you need, you're part of this family Marta.

MARTA

Thanks.

(beat)

I wanted to ask, but I didn't want to bother you guys, I didn't hear anything, is the funeral, is there a day for it, or

MEG

It was yesterday.

Marta's face falls.

MEG (cont'd)

Marta I told them that all of you, Fran, everyone who worked with him should have been there, you were closer to Granddad than anyone the past few years, but they got on this whole roll about it was for the family and it was a family thing, they took a vote and we got outvoted. I'm so sorry.

MARTA

It's ok

MEG

It's not ok. This idiot family.

They both start laughing.

INT. FOYER

Thrombey's eldest daughter Linda opens the door for Marta.

LINDA

How you doing kiddo.

Linda is 60ish, well put together, sharp and steely eyed. She dresses and speaks with just a little more sharpness than any situation she's in requires.

MARTA

Hi Linda. How are you?

LINDA

Ueuh. The funeral helped. I guess. Just seeing him. I thought you should have been there, I'm sorry. I was out voted.

Linda's husband Richard walks in, on the phone. Same age as Linda, gruff and confident, will put his feet up on anything.

RICHARD (ON PHONE)

I'm not the cop so I don't know. Alright fine, don't come, get arrested. Die up your own ass all I care.

(hangs up)

He's not coming.

(to Marta)

Ransom. Little shit. Missed the funeral. No, he is, he's a little shit.

STATE TROOPER WAGNER, fresh faced in his 30s, pokes his head in through a door.

TROOPER WAGNER

Excuse me, we're ready for you now, we'd like to see you one at a time.

LINDA
I'll start. Hopefully Joni and Walt
are on their way.

Linda exits with Wagner, leaving Richard and Marta.

RICHARD
So. How you doing kiddo.

INT. LIBRARY

Mystery and horror memorabilia scattered on the shelves.

Linda sits opposite three men: LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT, in his 30s, in a working suit. Very good at his job. The young Trooper Wagner stands behind him.

Sitting back behind both of them, almost blending into the background, is a slight man in a linen suit. Legs and arms fold sharply, like a paper crane. Silent, listening.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Good to see you again, just to reintroduce ourselves, I'm Detective Lieutenant Elliott, Trooper Wagner here. We just want to run through everything one more time. I'm going to record this if it's alright, just makes it easier.

(squints at his phone)
I think that's... going... ok.
Speaking to Linda Drysdale, nee Thrombey, Harlan Thrombey's eldest daughter, regarding the events the night of his demise, November 8th.

TROOPER WAGNER
We're sorry for your loss.

LINDA
(dry as chalk)
Thank you that means a lot.

Elliott checks his notes.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
So the whole family was gathered at the house that night... for your father's eighty fifth birthday party.

LINDA
Yes.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

How was that?

LINDA

The party? Pre my dad's death? It was great.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT OF THE PARTY - FLASHBACK

Warmly lit, classic rock playing, food laid out. Linda and Richard mingle happily with the rest of the family (who we'll meet shortly.)

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)

Anyone besides the family there that night?

LINDA (V.O.)

Uh. The caterers. Fran, the housekeeper. Marta, Harlan's nurse caretaker person, hard worker, good girl. Family's from Ecuador. And Wanetta - Greatnana, Dad's mom.

At the snack table wearing a dozen coats, a woman who might be three hundred years old. She pounds down chips and dip like a machine.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)

(wow)

His mom? How old is she?

LINDA (V.O.)

Nobody knows.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)

Your son Ransom, he lives in town right? He was at the party too?

LINDA (V.O.)

Yes but he left early.

RANSOM DRYSDALE, roguishly handsome in his early 30s, breezes out the side door, past Greatnana.

GREATNANA

Ransom, are you leaving?

INT. LIBRARY

The strange man in the linen suit taps Elliott's chair with his toe, as if reminding to ask him something.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Right, did all three of you arrive to
the party at the same time?

LINDA
N...o, Richard went over early to
help the caterers set up, I got there
around 8, Ransom a little later.

She raises a questioning finger to ask about the man but

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
And in Boston you and your husband
work for a real estate firm?

LINDA
(sharp)
It's my firm.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
(checks notes)
Sorry. Right.

LINDA
I built my business from the ground
up.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Just like your dad.

LINDA
Just. Like my dad.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Were you very close?

LINDA
We had our own secret way of
communicating. You had to find that
with dad. You had to find a game to
play with him. And if you did that,
and played by his rules...
(beat)
Yeah we were close.

CUT TO: Richard in the chair Linda was in, giving his
statement.

RICHARD
Everyone idolizes their dad, right?

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Do they?

RICHARD
Very much not, don't know why I said
that. But Linda does.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT OF THE PARTY

Harlan Thrombey, surrounded by his family, Richard and Linda
flanking him, a birthday cake with candles. All smiles.

RICHARD (V.O.)
Harlan started with a rusty Smith-
Corona, built himself into one of the
bestselling mystery writers of all
time. Linda followed his lead. We
did. Linda and I.

INT. LIBRARY

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Seems like all his kids are self made
overachievers.

Richard makes a "...sure" face. CUT TO:

WALT THROMBEY now sits in the questioning chair. Late 40s,
softly obsequious in a sweater and loafers. His leg is in a
cast.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (cont'd)
Speaking to Walt Thrombey, Harlan's
youngest son.

Elliott points to Walt's cast.

WALT
Augh, bicycling accident. Dumb.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
So you run your dad's publishing
company?

WALT

Yeah. It's my - it's our, it's the family's publishing company, dad trusts me to run it. 30 languages, over 80 million copies. A real legacy. You guys fans?

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

I don't read much fiction -

TROOPER WAGNER

BIG fan. Big.

TROOPER WAGNER (cont'd)

His plots, like something like "A Thousand Knives," with the - I don't want to spoil it but - the cow and the shotgun, I'm like how did he come up with that?

WALT

Dad said the plots just popped into his head fully formed, that was the easy part for him -

TAP from the linen suit man's foot.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

You live in town, right? What time did you and your family arrive at the party?

Walt looks at Linen suit, thrown.

WALT

Uh. We all got there about 8.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT OF THE PARTY

Walt laughing and mingling with his nervous wife DONNA.

WALT (V.O.)

My wife Donna, she's my rock.

Richard backs up into Donna, who YELPS in fear and throws her martini in the air. Richard jumps, but Walt doesn't even register it.

RICHARD

Jeeesus! Donna, you alright?

WALT (V.O.)

And my son Jacob, he's sixteen. Very politically active.

His angry looking son JACOB, who is always on his phone.

INT. LIBRARY

Quick cuts, each in the chair:

MEG
He's an alt-right troll dipshit

RICHARD
The boy's literally a nazi

WALT
Kids today, with the internet,
amazing.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
So the night went well then?

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT OF THE PARTY

The exact same moment we saw with Richard and Linda of Harlan in front of the birthday cake - but now it's Walt, Donna and Jacob next to Harlan.

WALT (V.O.)
Yeah. We're all gutted but I'm happy we got that night with dad. To be by his side, to think about our books and what we've accomplished with them, it's like I can still feel his hand on my shoulder.

INT. LIBRARY

WALT
Passing the torch.

Cut to: JONI THROMBEY in the chair. A striking woman, tall and boho chic in chunky jewelry and a flowy dress.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Speaking now to Joni Thrombey,
Harlan's... daughter in law?

JONI
Mm. I was married to his son Neil,
We had one daughter, Meg, and then
Neil passed on fifteen years ago.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
And you've obviously stayed close to
the Thrombeys.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT OF THE PARTY

Joni dances with various family members, free and flowing.

JONI (V.O.)
Oh they're my family. I feel
simultaneously freed by and supported
by them, that balance of opposites is
the nugget of Flam.

INT. LIBRARY - PRESENT

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Nugget of?

JONI
Flam.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Flam nugget.

JONI
The nugget of truth.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Uh?

JONI
At the center of the Flam philosophy.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Ah! Sorry Flam, right, your skin
care company.

JONI
I forgive you yes, it's skin care but
it promotes a total lifestyle. Self
sufficiency with an acknowledgment of
human need. That's Flam, but it's
also Harlan. He got me and Meg
through some tough times.

Meg in the chair.

MEG

Granddad gives my mom a yearly allowance, and he's never missed wiring a tuition payment to my schools. He's a genuinely selfless man.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

You left his party early?

MEG

To see some friends at Curry.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT OF THE PARTY

Meg trots out. Linda, pissed, to Richard so Joni can hear:

LINDA

Dad's paying for her crypto-Marxist postdeconstructual feminist poetry theory whatever major, she could have stuck around for the cake.

INT. LIBRARY

JONI

I think Linda was upset. But Harlan understood.

Tap.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

But you two arrived together to the party?

Joni looks at the linen suit man.

JONI

If I could - pause - because I, who is that guy? And why are we doing all this? Again?

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Right. We're following up here, just being thorough, in order to determine the manner of death.

Cut back to Walt in the chair.

WALT

(what?)

The manner of death? I can save the taxpayers some money here -

Walt gestures vaguely to his throat.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

That's the cause of death. The manner of death is still pending.

WALT

(almost laughing)

So by "manner of death" you mean if he was killed. If one of us killed him. One of his family?

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

None of us think that, this is pro forma, all of it.

CUT TO: Richard in the chair. He doesn't buy it.

RICHARD

Ok. So who the fuck is that?

He points at linen suit. Elliott takes a breath.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

This is Benoit Blanc.

RICHARD

(the hell?)

Benoit Blanc?

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

He is... a...

Elliott looks back at Blanc, prompting him to introduce himself, but the man stays silent.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (cont'd)

He's a

RICHARD

Does he talk?

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

He does.

They all look back at Blanc.

BLANC

I do.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Mr. Blanc is a private investigator of great renown.

Joni in the chair.

JONI

Wait a minute - I read a tweet about a New Yorker article about you. The last of the gentlemen sleuths? You solved that case with the tennis champ - you're famous!

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Mr. Blanc requested to sit in on the questioning and I happily consented. I can vouch for him.

Linda in the chair.

LINDA

Oh you vouch for him, well thank you, detective I just met five minutes ago. Mr. Blanc, I know who you are, I read your New Yorker profile. It was delightful. I just buried my eighty five year old father who committed suicide. Why are you here?

Elliott and Wagner turn back to Blanc, who leans forward slightly and speaks in the gentlest southern lilt you have ever heard in your life.

BLANC

I am here at the behest of a client.

LINDA

Who?

BLANC

I cannot say, but let me assure you this: my presence will be ornamental, a respectful, quiet, passive observer. Of the truth.

Elliott and Wagner turn nervously back to Linda. She doesn't look thrilled. Cut to Richard.

RICHARD

Fine. Are we getting there?

BLANC

Nearly. Harlan's nurse. She was at the party in a professional capacity?

Blanc begins idly playing with a silver dollar.

RICHARD

Marta?

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT OF THE PARTY

The family is engaged in an animated discussion, Marta standing on the outskirts.

RICHARD (V.O.)

I guess. Harlan hired her to be around, take care of whatever medical needs pop up, but really she's like part of the family.

Richard beckons with his cake, calls Marta into the discussion, into the circle of the family.

RICHARD (V.O.) (cont'd)

Good kid, been a good friend to Harlan. Her family's from Paraguay. I know Linda likes her work ethic.

INT. LIBRARY

RICHARD

"Immigrants - we get the job done."
From Hamilton.

Wagner gives him a smile to show he got the reference.

Cut to Linda back in the chair.

BLANC

May I just - and then I'll recede, but as a self made man myself I have to express my admiration for how you've followed in your father's footsteps.

LINDA

Thank you.

BLANC

The whole family too. Joni with her things, Walt with his publishing empire.

LINDA

Well.

Blanc pauses. Doesn't push anything. Just waits a moment.

LINDA (cont'd)

Yes. I mean. Walt, yeah. He's done well with what dad's given him, but it's not the same. I built my company up from nothing, like dad. Walt - not like it matters but he was sort of adrift, dad gave him the job, but really dad hands him a book twice a year and Walt publishes it, I mean... it's different.

BLANC

But surely Walt runs the merchandising, adaptations, film and television rights...

Linda squints, narrowing her eyes on Blanc. Softly:

LINDA

Are you baiting me, Detective? You know he doesn't, and you think I'm dumb enough to be baited into talking family business, into shit talking my brother in front of a state trooper and police detective -

Richard in the chair.

RICHARD

Walt doesn't run shit! There are no film or tv rights, Harlan's never allowed any adaptations of his books. Hates the idea.

BLANC

No!

RICHARD

Oh yeah! Drives Walt nuts, cause that's where the real money's at. When he gets a little Irish courage in him he'll get into it with Harlan.

BLANC
Did he get "into it" at the party?

RICHARD
Oh my god.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT OF THE PARTY

Walt with a drink in his hand has cornered Harlan. Richard watches across the room as Walt goes from arguing to pleading.

RICHARD (V.O.)
He wouldn't leave him alone. Poor Harlan had to give him the hook.

Harlan has had enough, he takes Walt's arm and leads him into the drawing room for a private talk.

RICHARD (V.O.) (cont'd)
I didn't hear what he said but he must have really handed him his lunch, Walt was like a wounded puppy the rest of the night.

INT. LIBRARY

Walt in the chair, indignant.

WALT
What? Richard said what? Jesus. No, we didn't get "into it."

BLANC
I'm just trying to get an accurate impression - Harlan took you aside at the party, when you returned you were chastened, what did Harlan say to you?

Walt starts to open his mouth, hesitates. Off his frightened face we FLASH BACK:

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT OF THE PARTY

Walt, drunk, Harlan guiding him firmly into the shadows.

WALT
 If you'll just look at - the
 Netflix guys, their business
 affairs guy sent over
 something, hard numbers this
 time, and I think - this is Walt.
 a window, it's not going to
 last and you should just
 look at these numbers Walt.

WALT
 Dad you put me in charge of our books
 let me be in charge, let me do this!
 Please.

HARLAN
 They're not our books, son. They're
 my books. And this is not how I
 wanted to have this conversation but,
 you're right, it's unfair of me to
 keep you tethered to something that
 isn't yours to control.

WALT
 What?

HARLAN
 I've done you a grave disservice all
 these years, I've kept you from
 building something that's yours.
 You're not going to run the
 publishing house anymore.

WALT
 Dad. Are you firing me?

HARLAN
 We'll talk about details tomorrow.
 But my mind's made up.

Harlan squeezes his arm, then leaves him shell shocked.

INT. LIBRARY

Back to Walt's hesitating face. The briefest of moments has
 passed. Walt lies:

WALT
 We talked, we had a business
 discussion, about ebooks, Jesus, it
 was nothing.

(MORE)

WALT (cont'd)

You want to talk about an argument,
hell Ransom had an argument with him.

BLANC

Ransom, Richard and Linda's son?

WALT

Look we love Ransom, he has a good
heart, we love him.

BLANC

...but

WALT

But he's always been the black sheep
of the family, and I'm not, I, I keep
stuff like this in the family, but
with Ransom, he's never had a job, he
lives beyond his means, parties drugs
I dunno. But dad supports him
financially, they've got this love
hate bond. They fight. But that
night, god. They had a blow out.

BLANC

About what?

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT OF THE PARTY

The family having a conversation, everyone but Harlan, Jacob
and Ransom. It grinds to a halt as through the door to
Harlan's study indistinct shouting booms.

WALT (V.O.)

I don't know, nobody could make it
out, but it was huge. And it was
strange they went in another room to
do it - they usually love stoking up
drama in front of the family.

Ransom bursts out of the doors and storms out of the party,
past Greatnana.

GREATNANA

Ransom are you leaving?

INT. LIBRARY

Richard in the chair.

BLANC

Speaking of getting into it, you were at the house early to help the caterer set up. Did you converse with Harlan at that time?

RICHARD

He was there, I'm sure we spoke.

BLANC

In his study?

RICHARD

I don't think so.

BLANC

I questioned the caterer this morning. She didn't see you helping her staff, but she did hear Harlan in a screaming match with someone that afternoon. In his study.

RICHARD

I don't, a screaming match? No. Joni was there early too, maybe it was her, ask her.

BLANC

These were two male voices.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY OF PARTY

A CATERER walks through with a platter. Pauses, hears shouting through the wall.

BLANC (V.O.)

Harlan shouted the phrase

HARLAN (O.S.)

...you tell her or I will!

INT. LIBRARY

BLANC

You tell her. Or I will. Bells ringing?

For a just a split second, Richard considers what he is going to say. In the second, we FLASH BACK:

INT. SMALL STUDY - DAY OF PARTY

Harlan showing Richard photos on a laptop. Long lens photos, of Richard kissing a woman who is not Linda. Richard glares at it, Harlan turns an old baseball over in his hands.

RICHARD

This is none of your goddamn business, Harlan. Stay out of my marriage.

Harlan holds up a sealed small envelope with flowery embroidery, "L" written on the front.

HARLAN

I know my daughter. She'd want to know. I've put it all in this letter to her, tomorrow she gets it.

RICHARD

I'm warning you once, don't do this like hell -

HARLAN

She deserves to know, you're going to tell her!

Harlan slams the baseball down on the desk.

HARLAN (cont'd)

You tell her or I will!

INT. LIBRARY

Back to Richard. He grins, snaps his fingers.

RICHARD

Yes. I know - yes, ha. So. Harlan decided to finally put his mom in a nursing home. Which Linda always opposed. And I was going to wait till we were back home in Boston to tell her, so there wouldn't be a whole scene, but Harlan wanted me to tell her then. That was it. Sorry. Forgot.

BLANC

It happens.

Joni in the chair.

JONI

The house?

BLANC

Early. Richard said you were there.

JONI

I was. At the house early.

BLANC

To see Harlan?

JONI

To see Harlan. Yes.

Joni stops, smelling something in the air. She's about to ask about it but -

BLANC

What were you seeing Harlan about?

JONI

It was just a mix up with the payment for Meg's tuition.

BLANC

I'm sorry to press, what kind of mix up?

Joni hesitates, we FLASH BACK:

INT. SMALL STUDY - DAY OF PARTY

Harlan at his desk, toying with the same old baseball. This is a thing he does at his desk. Joni standing, arms crossed.

JONI

The school hasn't got the check yet, I don't know why Alan didn't mail it

HARLAN

Alan didn't mail it because he caught a discrepancy. Alan's office has been wiring tuition directly to the school, as per your request. But Phyllis's office that handles your yearly allowance has been wiring the tuition money directly to you as well. As per your request. You've been double dipping Meg's tuition, stealing from me. A hundred thousand dollars a year. For the past four years.

Harlan shows Joni a letter from his business manager, with transaction receipts attached.

JONI

Harlan. I don't know how this mix up happened but

Harlan opens his ledger, hand writes a check.

HARLAN

I'm writing this tuition check, then that is the last money you or Meg will get from me.

JONI

Heh. Harlan come on

HARLAN

Joni this money has propped you up, and kept Meg in a Peter Pan state of perpetual nonsense majors. I know it'll hurt but it's for the best.

Joni's speechless, her face frozen. Harlan puts the baseball down and detaches the check, holds it out to her.

HARLAN (cont'd)

My mind's made up.

INT. LIBRARY

Back to Joni. She shakes her head.

JONI

Just a money wiring issue. With the office at the school. So I had to ask Harlan to cut a check for this semester. No big deal.

BLANC

Ah. Just checking - ha, check-ing.

Blanc is incredibly pleased with this pun.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Why don't we take a breather.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Joni comes out into the foyer from the library, obviously rattled. She pulls it together quick when Linda comes down the stairs.

LINDA

Joni. You haven't seen Richard have you?

JONI

No, I was just in with the - no.

INT. SMALL STUDY

LINDA (O.S.)

Richard!

Alone, Richard waits very still for Linda's footsteps to walk away, then when he knows she's not coming in he furtively rifles through desk drawers, finding various ridiculous ephemera. He finds a small locked drawer, jimmies it open with a letter opener.

Inside - the small pink envelope Harlan threatened him with in his flashback. He rips it open, pulls out the card inside.

It is blank.

Richard almost laughs. Drops it onto the desk.

RICHARD

Son of a bitch.

He spots Harlan's old baseball. Grabs it, spitefully chucks it out the open window.

EXT. SIDE OF HOUSE - DAY

Blanc, Elliott and Wagner stroll long the wide lawn beside the house. Blanc ignites a long thin cigar.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Maybe I'm a victim of my own expectations.

(MORE)

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (cont'd)

But when the great Benoit Blanc
knocks on my door, I expect it's
going to be for something... if not
extraordinary, at least interesting.
This is an open and shut case of
suicide.

(checks watch)

And Benny we're at the point where I
need to know what we're doing here.

Blanc notices the OLD BASEBALL lying in the grass. He picks
it up idly.

BLANC

The method, throat slit. Typical of
a suicide?

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Dramatic. Which tracks. The guy
lived in a CLUE board.

INT. FOYER

Marta sits alone, across from a portrait of Harlan. Muffled
voices out on the patio. Cigar smoke drifts by outside.

She creeps over to the glass door. Puts her ear to it.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (O.S.)

You ask me to drag all these good
people back for questioning, go over
it all again, I don't get it. This
is a pleasant family with the usual
quarrels but no possible motives for
murder - where are you going?

At that moment, BLANC's face appears right next to Marta's
staring right at her through the distorted glass. She yelps
and falls back.

EXT. PATIO

Blanc opens the glass door. Marta steps back sheepishly,
but with a warm nod Blanc beckons for her to join them.

BLANC

Harlan Thrombey's nurse, Marta...

MARTA

...Cabrera

BLANC

Marta Cabrera.

TROOPER WAGNER

Miss Cabrera, we'll be with you soon,
if you'd just wait -

BLANC

Miss Cabrera, I did a little poking,
you're hired on a part time basis as
a registered nurse, yes?

MARTA

Yeah, I don't work for a VNA. Harlan
hired me directly.

BLANC

You're paid a flat rate for how many
hours a week?

MARTA

Fifteen.

BLANC

And how many hours a week do you
actually work?

MARTA

It... depends.

BLANC

Many more than 15. Yes. Why?

MARTA

I started at 15, but slowly he...
needed more help.

BLANC

Medical help?

MARTA

He needed a friend.

Blanc smiles at the girl, genuinely touched.

BLANC

Does having a kind heart make you a
good nurse? Or do people assume your
heart is kind because you're good at
your job? I'm musing, you don't have
to answer that.

(beat)

And you cared for him...?

MARTA

I did. I cared for him. I never really had a relationship with my dad, I guess in a way Harlan -

BLANC

Sorry, how long did you care for him, I meant?

MARTA

Five years.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Blanc.

BLANC

Yes. Marta we were just discussing possible motives in the family. I suspect Harlan has told you much unfiltered truth about each of them, and also that you are not the type to betray his confidence, so I'd like to know if you are a good liar?

MARTA

No. No, ha. I have a thing where I physically, I actually... I'm sorry this is gross, if I even think about telling a lie I start to throw up.

BLANC

Really? Is Richard having an affair?

Marta is stunned. She FLASHES BACK TO:

EXT. PATIO - DAY - FLASHBACK

She reads, Harlan sits at his laptop, heavy with sadness.

HARLAN

Why do men instinctively pull at loose threads on their parachutes?

MARTA

What?

Harlan spins his laptop towards her - the Richard photos.

EXT. PATIO - DAY

Back to our scene. Marta looks queasy, tries to stall.

MARTA

Heh - Richard? - affair? Heh.

BLANC

A yes or no will do.

She struggles, her jaw clenched, face working hard, then attempts -

MARTA

.....no

And immediately VOMITS into a nearby planter.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

TROOPER WAGNER

Whoa!

Oh my god!

They all rush to her, Blanc brings water, awfully concerned.

BLANC

Dear girl I'm sorry. I assumed you were speaking figuratively.

Blanc takes the shortest acceptable beat of concern before turning to Elliott.

BLANC (cont'd)

But I was obviously right, Richard is having an affair, his father in law found out and confronted him. "You tell her. Or I will."

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Even if it's true... you ok?

Marta gives a weak thumbs up, recovering

ELLIOTT

Even if it's true, protecting his marriage is weak sauce as a motive.

BLANC

Well. And then there is... Joni.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

TROOPER WAGNER

Joni?

Joni?!

TROOPER WAGNER (cont'd)

Lifestyle guru Joni? No. Harlan was supporting her and her daughter, she had the opposite of a motive.

Marta tries to quietly slip back into the house

BLANC
And if that support was threatened?
Miss Cabrera one moment please

MARTA
I'm just going to go get some Scope

BLANC
Miss Cabrera, was Harlan planning on
cutting off Joni's allowance?

Off Marta's "oh god no" face:

INT. STUDY - DAY - FLASHBACK

Harlan looking at the letter from his business manager, with
the transaction receipts. He sighs heavily.

MARTA
What's up?

HARLAN
When does a lifeline become a noose?

MARTA
A moose?

He hands her the letter.

HARLAN
No, not a moose.

EXT. PATIO - DAY

Marta's face works against impending nausea.

MARTA
I...

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Ok don't answer that if you're going
to puke. Please.

But Blanc presses.

BLANC
Meg said Harlan pays the school
directly, Joni says he sends the
money to her.

(MORE)

BLANC (cont'd)

Both were true, she was pocketing the double payment, Harlan found out and cut her off without a cent. Yes? No?

Marta starts to shake her head no, but her throat convulses. She nods. Blanc hands her a glass of water.

TROOPER WAGNER

And she bumps him off for the inheritance? Come. On! Have you seen her instagram? She Hamptons with Gwyneth.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

I don't buy that she'd kill him over an allowance, Blanc. She has her business. More weak sauce.

Blanc idly scratches a spot on the side of his neck.

BLANC

That I'll grant you. But she lied. To me. All three of them did.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Three?

BLANC

Walter.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

The value of Thrombey's books for film and tv, now Walter can cash it in. Again though, for patricide it's weak.

BLANC

But there was something else. Harlan had turned Walter down before regarding film rights, but that night something Harlan said shook him. We look at the pattern, Harlan was cleaning house. I wonder...

(to Marta)

did he plan to fire Walter?

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Ok, Blanc -

TROOPER WAGNER

C'mon -

MARTA

(honest & relieved)
If he did he didn't tell me. Thank
god. Can I wait inside? I don't
feel like I should be here.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Yes, but stay close.

She steps back in, grateful. Blanc to Elliott:

BLANC

You've been very patient my friend,
and you are right, none of these weak
alibis and domestic squibbles answer
your question: why is Benoit Blanc
here? But now I will tell you why.

(beat)

I am here because this morning
someone dodged one very important
question.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Who?

BLANC

Me. Linda asked who hired me.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

So who hired you?

BLANC

I. Don't. Know. An envelope of cash
showed up at my apartment yesterday,
with the news clipping of Thrombey's
death.

TROOPER WAGNER

An envelope of cash? That worked?

Blanc indicates with his fingers - several inches thick.

BLANC

An envelope of cash.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Hm. I'd like that for evidence.

BLANC

Of course.

Blanc hands him an empty envelope and news clipping.
Elliott arches an eyebrow, doesn't push it.

BLANC (cont'd)

So somebody suspects foul play, but goes through this ha cha dance of hiring me, of staying anonymous. Why? It makes no damn sense. Compels me though.

(beat)

Walk me through everyone's whereabouts at the time of death.

Elliott hesitates, but Blanc's got him hooked. He flips open his notebook. Blanc leans back, closes his eyes.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

The party broke up at 11:30. Everyone stayed the night at the house, because they planned a family breakfast the next morning.

INT. SECOND FLOOR LANDING - NIGHT OF PARTY

Marta and Harlan vanish up the stairs towards the third floor, while Richard and Linda head into the bedroom right next to the stairs. Down the hallway Joni waves, and ducks into another bedroom.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)

Marta took Harlan upstairs to give him his meds, Richard and Linda and Joni went right to bed. Now we do have this: the stairs leading up to Harlan's bedroom and his attic office creak horribly.

INT. RICHARD AND LINDA'S GUEST ROOM - NIGHT OF THE PARTY

Richard sleeps deep, Linda sleeps lightly.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)

And Linda is a light sleeper. So we know every time someone took the stairs that night.

INT. JONI AND MEG'S GUEST ROOM - NIGHT OF PARTY

Joni has decorated the room with colorful silks and candles. She is in lotus position on her bed, meditating.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)
The first was when Joni heard a ka-
THUNK from somewhere above her in the
house.

Ka-THUNK! Joni looks up at the ceiling.

INT. SECOND FLOOR LANDING - NIGHT OF PARTY

Joni trots down the hall and up the creaky stairs.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)
Worried about Harlan, she went to
check on him. Waking Linda.

INT. RICHARD AND LINDA'S GUEST ROOM - NIGHT OF PARTY

CREAK CREAK CREAK! From outside. Linda's eyes pop open.

INT. THIRD FLOOR LANDING - NIGHT OF PARTY

Joni knocks on the door of Harlan's attic office. It opens,
and Harlan answers. In the room behind him we see Marta,
her back turned, preparing a hypo needle.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)
Harlan was in his attic office with
Marta. He explained that they had
just knocked the GO board over - that
game with the grid and stones, they
play it every night, and he was fine,
go to bed. So she does.

The spilled GO board on the floor. Joni kisses Harlan on
the cheek, goes. He shuts the door.

INT. RICHARD AND LINDA'S GUEST ROOM - NIGHT OF PARTY

Linda has just gotten back to sleep.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)
Ten minutes later, Linda is woken a
second time, by Marta leaving.

CREAK CREAK CREAK! Linda wakes, supremely annoyed.

MARTA (O.S.)
Walt! I'm leaving now!

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT OF PARTY

Walt and Jacob sit on the porch, Walt with a cigar, Jacob with his phone. Marta trots through, saying goodbye.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)
Walt was smoking a cigar on the porch with his son. He saw her leave and drive off, and noted the time - midnight.

Walt glances at his watch. Midnight.

INT. RICHARD AND LINDA'S GUEST ROOM - NIGHT OF PARTY

Linda with a pillow over her head.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)
Fifteen minutes later, Linda is woken for the third and final time. By someone coming down the stairs.

CREAK CREAK CREAK! Linda wakes. You've gotta be kidding me.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT OF PARTY

Walt, still smoking with Jacob, spots Harlan through the glazed glass, coming down the stairs in the foyer.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)
Harlan. Who came down for midnight snacks, which Walt tried to discourage.

WALT
Dad, go to bed!

Through the glazed glass, Harlan goes back up the stairs.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)
This is at 12:15. Based on this, the medical examiner determined time of death to be between 12:15 and 2am. As Walt was finishing his cigar, about 12:30, Meg came home. She went straight to bed. Walt and Jacob turned in shortly after that.

Meg pulls up, trots past Walt and Jacob and inside.

INT. JONI AND MEG'S GUEST ROOM - NIGHT OF PARTY

Meg stirs, wakes. Joni is asleep.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (V.O.)
Sometime later that night,
undetermined but possibly near 3am,
Meg woke up because the dogs were
barking outside. She used the
bathroom and went back to bed.

EXT. PATIO - DAY

Elliott snaps the notebook closed.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
And that's it. Everyone's stories
matched, every movement accounted
for.

BLANC
There is no other staircase up to
Harlan's rooms?

Blanc scratches that same spot on the side of his neck.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
No. Just the creaky one.

BLANC
And Linda is certain another trip on
it would have woken her? Hm.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
You've got a bad rash there.

The spot on his neck. Blanc seems intrigued by this.

BLANC
Do I? Interesting.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
(not interesting)
Yeah. Interesting.

TROOPER WAGNER
So I guess we can rule out Ransom, he
wasn't there. And Marta, Harlan was
alive after she left. But Meg got
home during the time of death window.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Except it was a suicide. Harlan hit both carotids, he took no chances, and the significant splatter patterns are unbroken. Meaning nobody was near him when it happened. It's basically impossible for anyone but Harlan to have cut his throat.

BLANC

Physical evidence can tell a clear story with a forked tongue.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

What?

BLANC

And as we've seen this morning, all people can lie. Well. Almost all.

INT. LIBRARY - LATE AFTERNOON

Marta in the chair. She shifts, uncomfortable.

Blanc, Elliott and Wagner in their normal places.

BLANC

Ms. Cabrera, we've kept you waiting all afternoon because I wanted to hear from you last. I wanted to have the entire picture of the evening in my head. Your piece of it is at its very center. So please, take your time. You took Mr. Thrombey upstairs at 11:30. And left at midnight. Think very carefully. And with as much detail as possible, tell us what happened in that half hour.

Marta is very still. A moment of silence. Blanc flips his silver dollar into the air.

She does not say a word, but in that moment while the coin hangs in the air we FLASH BACK with her to:

INT. HARLAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

The night of the party. A clock on a nightstand: 11:32. Off screen we hear Marta leading Harlan up the creaky stairs.

MARTA
Up up up up - you got it?

HARLAN
I got it. Up up up I got it.

Marta enters the room, and behind her we see Harlan keep climbing up the narrow stairs to his office.

MARTA
Up up nooooo no not tonight, no straight to bed tonight it is soooo late c'mon. Harlan. Harlan!

She grabs a med kit from the bedroom and follows him, exasperated.

INT. HARLAN THROMBEY'S STUDY - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Harlan sits, setting up a GO board. Marta enters.

MARTA
It's late, I had champagne no no no

HARLAN
It's my birthday, we are - You had one glass - we're not breaking tradition on my birthday.

Marta puts two vials and a pill box on the GO board. She pulls out two plastic wrapped hypodermics.

MARTA
Take your goddamn medicine and go to bed.

HARLAN
If you're going to put that vile shit in me you will have to earn it. On my birthday.
(playing it up)
Eighty fifth. So old. Soo olddd

MARTA
Alright old man. 8x8 game.

She sits and they start clacking white and black stones on the board.

HARLAN
Why can't I beat you at this game?
Oh uh huh.

MARTA
Because I'm not playing to beat you, I'm playing to build a beautiful pattern.

They play fast, and Marta is obviously winning.

HARLAN
Elder abuse. I'm calling the AARP.

MARTA
Don't make me get the belt.

HARLAN
It's basically over. My only hope is that an earthquake will strike. But what are the chances -

Harlan starts shaking the table with his knee. He looks around, startled. Marta just stares at him, deadpan.

HARLAN (cont'd)
Get under a door frame!

He tips the whole table and the GO board and med vials and syringe and med kit fall to the soft rug. Things spill out of the kit. A mess. Marta just shakes her head.

MARTA
Meds then beds.

HARLAN
Fair.

She retrieves the vials and loads a syringe from one of them. Harlan rolls up his sleeve revealing a pre-inserted catheter. He crosses to close the room's only small window.

HARLAN (cont'd)
Ugh, Walt's smoking a cigar on the porch. Nasty things.

MARTA
How was tonight?

She hooks the syringe up to the catheter and slowly injects him bit by bit while he talks.

HARLAN
Tonight was... good.

MARTA
Because I know you weren't looking forward to it.

HARLAN
No. But I did it. Cut the line on all four of them. It was not easy. This goddamn fortune.

(MORE)

HARLAN (cont'd)

Sometimes I think, everything I've given my family, I've done, maybe without knowing it, maybe, to keep them beneath me. I should have what... maybe, I don't know. Encouraged Walt to write his own stories, not just be a caretaker of mine. Like you said I should. Been a father, not just a provider, to Joni. Like you've also said. I should have been kinder to Linda. And Ransom.

Harlan takes a curved ornamental dagger from a display mount, turns it over in his hands.

HARLAN (cont'd)

Jesus there's so much me in that kid. Confident, stupid, I dunno. Protected. Playing life like a game without consequence, till we can't tell a stage prop from a real knife.

He stabs it into the desk, sharp and real. Leaves it there.

HARLAN (cont'd)

I don't fear death. But god I'd like to fix some of this before I go. Close the book with a flourish. I guess we'll see.

MARTA

I guess we will. Hey. Old man. You've had a long day. Let's do drugs.

She loads the second syringe from the second vial.

HARLAN

Is that the good stuff?

MARTA

Yeah but just a tiny bit.

HARLAN

Send me to lala land. Why did I wait till my mid eighties to become a morphine user, this stuff's the best.

She pulls the needle from the second vial... then sees the label. Freezes. Blinks at it.

MARTA

Oh my god.

She snatches up the first vial she just injected him from. Compares the label to the one she just picked up. They're similar but not the same.

HARLAN

Is there a problem?

MARTA

This is what I just gave you 100 milligrams of. But I messed up.

HARLAN

You gave me 100 milligrams of the good stuff.

She immediately pulls an EMERGENCY KIT from a nearby shelf, starts calmly but quickly going through its contents.

HARLAN (cont'd)

What's the good stuff dosage supposed to be?

MARTA

Lets not call it that right now - three milligrams.

HARLAN

That's much less. So what happens?

MARTA

I give you an emergency shot of Naloxone, so that you don't die in ten minutes.

HARLAN

Well no pressure. You know that's an interesting, efficient method for murder, I need to write that down.

He gets a little notebook and scribbles while she checks and rechecks the kit contents with increasing urgency.

HARLAN (cont'd)

So if someone switched the meds on purpose I'd be dead in ten minutes, like stone cold dead?

MARTA

You'll feel symptoms in five. Sweats, disorientation.

(MORE)

MARTA (cont'd)
Then yeah, that big a dose, injected,
within ten your respiratory - your -
yes ten minutes.

HARLAN
From the time of injection, so
eightish now. And even if the victim
called an ambulance when he first
felt symptoms, if he was at a country
home like this one... where the
ambulance takes fifteen minutes to
arrive, it would be too late. If the
victim didn't have this emergency
Naxostuff.

He watches her. She's now digging around the carpet,
looking under the couch. She dumps the entire contents of
the kit out and is now frantically going through it. A bead
of sweat rolls down Harlan's brow.

HARLAN (cont'd)
Marta. Do you have Naxostuff?

MARTA
Yes! Naloxone yes it comes with the
emergency kit - it should be here,
it's - fuck. No Harlan it's not
here. It's not. Oh my god.

They look at each other for a second. She's panicked. He's
thinking.

MARTA (cont'd)
Where's my phone? Shit -

She picks up a landline phone on the table, dials 911 with
shaking hands -

Before it can even ring, the line goes dead.

She looks, unbelieving: Harlan's finger is on the cradle.
His eyes are locked with hers, serious and certain.

MARTA (cont'd)
Harlan what are you doing?

HARLAN
Marta, listen to me.

MARTA
Harlan we need to - are you
crazy, we need to call, they
need to get here I need to -

HARLAN
Stop. Stop stop, Marta
listen there isn't time stop
now stop

She goes for her cell phone across the room and Harlan stops her - they trip and fall to the ground with a KA-THUNK.

MARTA
What are you doing are you nuts?

HARLAN
Marta it's too late it is over, it's too late I am dead listen. LISTEN.

He actually puts his hand over her mouth.

HARLAN (cont'd)
Listen. If what you said is true I am gone, there's no saving me, we have six minutes. There is one last thing I need to do in this world, and only you can help me do it. But you need to trust me and do everything I say.

MARTA
What do you want to do?

HARLAN
Get you out of this. Think of your mom - please trust me, we have to make this look ironclad like it can't have been your fault. You. Can't. Have done this.

MARTA
My mom...?

CREAK on the stairs outside.

HARLAN
Get up.

A knock on the door.

JONI (O.S.)
Harlan? Marta? Everything alright?

Harlan and Marta stand. She's dazed, deer in the headlights, but he's focused and sharp. He turns her away from the door.

HARLAN
Stand here, keep your back to me, don't say a word.

Harlan opens the door. While he gets rid of Joni we stick with Marta, who stands stock still, tears running down her face, eyes wild - what does she do?

HARLAN (cont'd)
Joni.

JONI
I - hi - I heard something, is
everything ok?

HARLAN
Oh yes we just, I just knocked over
the GO board, sorry about that.

JONI
Everything's alright?

HARLAN
Yes yes all fine, go to bed Joni.

JONI
Ok. And maybe we can talk tomorrow
about the, uh, the thing with

HARLAN
Yes. Tomorrow.

JONI
Love you, Night.

HARLAN
Night night.

Harlan shuts the door. Looks at the knife still sticking in
the desk. Then takes Marta's shoulders, looks in her eyes.

HARLAN (cont'd)
Your mom is still undocumented, if
this is your fault she'll be found
out and at best deported, your family
will be broken.

A new kind of fear in Marta's eyes.

MARTA
Oh god

HARLAN
But we're not going to let
that happen. I have a plan,
it's not going to be easy
but you have to do exactly
what I tell you. Will you
do this Marta? This last
thing. For me, and for your
family. Will you. Please.

She's terrified. But she nods.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - NIGHT OF THE PARTY - FLASHBACK

Walt smoking and Jacob.

HARLAN (V.O.)
Go downstairs as noisily as you can,
say goodbye loudly.

MARTA (O.S.)
Walt! I'm leaving!

Marta exits quickly, down to her car.

HARLAN (V.O.)
Call attention to the time if you
can.

MARTA
God it's almost midnight.

Walt checks his watch.

INT. MARTA'S CAR - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

She drives out the guard gate and down the private road.

HARLAN (V.O.)
Drive out the gate, then to avoid the
security cameras, pull off the road
BEFORE the carved elephant.

Up ahead - a weathered wood carved elephant statue.

MARTA
Wait... was it before or after?

HARLAN (V.O.)
AFTER the carved elephant.

MARTA
No, he said - before? Was it?

HARLAN (V.O.)
BEAFTERFORE the carved elephant.

MARTA
Shit...

She yanks the wheel and pulls off BEFORE the statue.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Marta trudges away from the parked car, tree branches catching her hair.

HARLAN (V.O.)
Park and come back on foot up to the house,

MARTA
Goddammit Harlan.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE SIDE GATE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

A waist-high stone wall with a little pedestrian gate. The house up ahead. Marta goes through the gate and up towards the house.

HARLAN (V.O.)
Take the side yard path, through that little gate.

The DOGS sprint down the moonlit yard from the house towards Marta.

HARLAN (V.O.) (cont'd)
The dogs will know you, they shouldn't bark.

The dogs stop at Marta and lick her hand.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE SIDE YARD - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Marta looks up the side of the looming house. A sturdy trellis on the wall, and high above a third story window.

HARLAN (V.O.)
You've got to get up to the third floor without being seen, and the only way is to climb the side trellis and come in through the trick hall window.

MARTA
You've gotta be kidding me.

HARLAN (V.O.)
I am not. Do it.

Cut to: moments later, Marta climbing the trellis. It's easy going until a piece BREAKS under her foot, and she swings for a second by one hand.

HARLAN (V.O.) (cont'd)
And for godssakes don't make any noise.

INT. THIRD FLOOR LANDING - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

What appears to be a dead end hallway, with a painting at the end. BUT suddenly the end wall swings away like a door, revealing a WINDOW behind it. Marta heaves her way in through it, and steps lightly into Harlan's bedroom.

HARLAN (V.O.)
Once you're inside, this is the tricky part.

MARTA (V.O.)
THIS is the tricky part?

INT. HARLAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

HARLAN (V.O.)
Get my robe and cap from my bedroom.
And put them on.

She picks them up from the bed. Stops. A moment of doubt.

INT. HARLAN THROMBEY'S STUDY - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Back to the scene with Harlan. Marta stops him.

MARTA
Harlan this is - I -

HARLAN
Suspicion is going to fall on you,
and we need to make this so airtight
your average cop will entirely
dismiss you as a suspect. This seems
crazy but it will work.

INT. HARLAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Marta in the robe, pulling the cap on, tucking her hair under it.

HARLAN (V.O.)
Now, go downstairs.

INT. SECOND FLOOR LANDING - NIGHT OF PARTY - FLASHBACK

Marta, in Harlan's robe and cap, creeps down the creaky stairs, then keeps going down.

HARLAN (V.O.)
Walt and Jacob are smoking outside.
They'll see you...

INT. FOYER - NIGHT OF PARTY - FLASHBACK

Marta come down the stairs, and sees the outline of Walt and Jacob outside through the glazed window windows.

HARLAN (V.O.)
...through the glazed window.

She holds her breath, a deer in the headlights.

WALT
Dad, go to bed.

Marta heads right back up the stairs.

HARLAN (V.O.)
You were seen leaving, the security cameras show you driving off, and twenty minutes later I am seen alive and well by my son.

INT. SECOND FLOOR LANDING - NIGHT

Marta climbs the creaky stairs.

HARLAN (V.O.)
You've gone from suspect number one to an impossibility.

INT. HARLAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Marta ducks in, ditching the robe and cap on the bed.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE SIDE YARD - NIGHT

Marta shimmies down the last of the trellis.

HARLAN (V.O.)
 Leave the way you came. And don't.
 Be. Seen.

She hops to the ground, then FREEZES and almost shouts.

She's facing a darkened first floor window. Wide open. And inside it, staring RIGHT AT her, is Greatnana.

Marta is frozen. Greatnana isn't moving either. Just has her eyes locked on Marta.

After what seems like forever, Greatnana cocks her head slightly and asks...

GREATNANA
 Ransom? Are you back again already?

Marta breathes. And backs away. Then turns and goes, quickly, down across the lawn.

HARLAN (V.O.)
 Drive home. Sometime in the next few days the police will question you.

INT. HARLAN THROMBEY'S STUDY - NIGHT

Back to Harlan and Marta.

MARTA
 Harlan I can't lie I'll puke

HARLAN
 Don't lie. Tell fragments of the truth. In this exact order:

INT. LIBRARY - LATE AFTERNOON

Blanc catches his coin. Lieutenant Elliott and Trooper Wagner look up at Marta, expectant. Just a brief moment has passed since we left them.

MARTA
 I took him upstairs. We played our nightly game of GO, at some point he knocked the board over and Joni came up to check on us. Then I gave him pain medication, he pulled his shoulder last week, and left him in his study. At midnight. Said bye to Walt, went home.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
What medication did he get?

Marta chooses her words very carefully:

MARTA
Since his injury I've been giving him
a 100 milligram IV push of Toradol, a
non narcotic analgesic. And to help
him sleep, 3 milligrams of morphine.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Anything unusual about his demeanor?

Uh oh. Marta keeps it solid. Superhuman effort.

MARTA
No.

The three men nod. Blanc holds Marta's gaze. She holds it
right back. Then he smiles.

BLANC
Well that sounds about right. Thank
you Ms. Cabrera.

INT. FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

Marta walks calmly out of the library. Then across the
foyer into a small door.

INT. HALF BATH

Marta walks in, closes the door behind her, locks it, turns
on both the taps, and PUKES into the toilet.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

HARLAN THROMBEY - his portrait, with an ambiguous look on
his face.

Marta. Soda water in hand at the reception that night.
Staring shell shocked at Harlan.

The reception for friends of the family. Tables of food.
Twenty or thirty people milling, in dark tasteful clothes,
with the whole Thrombey family.

A tearful Fran has cornered Marta, talks through sobs:

FRAN

I don't think he killed himself I don't. I don't. There's this Hallmark movie Deadly By Surprise where Danica McKellar plays a wife who gets poisoned by her husband but bit by bit so she thinks she's going crazy and she ends up killing herself, and my cousin who's the receptionist at the medical examiners office says that kind of thing can totally happen, she says it's not even like 3% as crazy as stuff she's seen come through the -

As Fran's talking, Marta looks at the room of family members, gathered around talking. She FLASHES BACK to:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT OF PARTY - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

NIGHT OF THE PARTY

Harlan and Ransom go off together to have a private talk, leaving the family having a heated conversation in the living room.

RICHARD

I don't like him no he's an asshole but maybe an asshole's what we needed
oh uh huh yeah there you go

JONI

Oh god. Yeah an asshole's what Germany needed in nineteen thirty ever

Marta stays on the outskirts. Fran, with a tray of champagne flutes:

FRAN

Jesus. I'm gonna disappear until the politics talk is done. You want some champers?

MARTA

No I'm technically working. Thanks.

Marta checks her watch. Meanwhile Donna, who's had a few, is tearing into the family fight.

DONNA

We're losing our way of life and our culture, there's millions of Mexicans coming and this isn't Joni don't make this a race thing, I'd say the same thing if they were European immigrants - we allow them in and they think they own what's ours

JONI

Oh god really - yeah it's not a race thing yeah

Oh yeah, if the Swiss were clogging in the streets - They're putting. Children. In cages. I mean these are camps.

RICHARD

Nobody's saying that isn't bad, but I blame the parents

JONI

For wanting a better life for their kids, isn't that what America

RICHARD

For breaking the law. You're going to hate hearing this but it's true, America is for Americans. Marta, come here.

Richard beckons her over, waving his cake plate. We've seen this moment before, silent, during Richard's questioning.

LINDA

Oh god don't.

Marta is drawn over next to Richard, very uncomfortable.

RICHARD

No, Marta your family came from Uruguay but you did it right, she did it legally, I'm saying. You work hard, and you'll earn your share from the ground up just like dad and all of us did - Marta I bet you agree with me.

LINDA

Leave the poor girl alone.

RICHARD

No Marta do you agree, I'd like you to answer - you wanna become an American, there are legal ways to do it, but if you break the law it doesn't matter if you have a good heart, you gotta face the consequences.

At that moment booming shouts begin behind the study door - Harlan and Ransom going at it. Ransom bursts out.

Marta takes the opportunity to slip into the hallway, alone. She breathes hard. Takes a champagne flute from the tray. Drinks it in one gulp.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

END FLASHBACK. Marta in the same spot, Fran still talking her ear off. The room sways. Marta sucks in breath, sways, and braces herself against the wall.

FRAN

Oh my god Marta, what?

Meg runs over, rubs her back.

MEG

Whoa hey, c'mere, hey. What do you, you want water? Breathe. Hey. Fran have you still got your stash?

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

Empty and dark, fireplace blazing. Above the fireplace is an ornate mantle clock. Fran uses a key to unlock one of several tiny drawers hidden in its face, takes out a joint and hands it to Meg.

FRAN

Take em whenever you need em - they're just drying out since you gave me that Juul.

MEG

Thanks Fran.

Fran leaves them alone.

MARTA

I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm sorry

MEG

Stop saying you're sorry Jesus

Meg lights the joint.

MARTA

God my heart won't stop, I can't - it's just everything, no, thank you

she refuses the joint, then realizes where it came from.

MARTA (cont'd)
That's where Fran keeps her stash?

MEG
Who ever opens a clock?
(then)
Walt! Walt!

INT. LIVING ROOM

Walt yells at a non responsive, bored Greatnana.

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>WALT DO YOU WANT DINNER, NANA? DINNER? TO EAT? EAT?</p> | <p>LINDA Walt she's fine, she ate the whole salmon spread already.</p> |
|--|--|

Meg grabs Walt, pulls him to Marta.

MEG
Did you tell Marta yet? What we all
talked about?

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>WALT No, not yet, is now a good time?</p> | <p>MEG Yes a very good time. Right now.</p> |
|--|---|

WALT
Marta. We've talked it over, and
(wait)
Are you smoking grass?

MEG
No.

WALT
We talked it over and the whole
family, we want to take care of you.

MARTA
What does that mean?

MEG
We all think you deserve something.

WALT
Financially, we want to help you out.
You were never anything but good to
dad. Because of that, you can count
on us.

Walt embraces her, Meg puts a hand on her back.

Over Walt's shoulder, Marta sees Harlan's portrait again. Has its expression changed? It looks like it has a slight conspiratorial smile. Marta breathes - maybe this is all going to be ok.

WALT (cont'd)

I thought you should have been at the funeral, by the way. I was outvoted.

EXT. SIDE PORCH - NIGHT

Later. Marta comes out to get some air. Exhales deeply.

And then jumps - she's not alone. Benoit Blanc sits in a wicker chair in the dark, smoking a long thin cigar.

MARTA

Wah ha. Detective. You're still here?

BLANC

Mm.

Silence. Blanc smokes and stares at Marta. Marta shifts.

MARTA

Did you know Harlan?

BLANC

He knew my father who was a police detective. Years ago.

MARTA

So that's why you're here?

BLANC

Here now here? No. I stayed hoping to speak to you a little more.

MARTA

Uh?

BLANC

Something is afoot with this whole affair. I know it, and I believe you know it.

MARTA

So you're... going to keep digging.

BLANC

Harlan's detectives they dig, they rifle and root, truffle pigs.

(MORE)

BLANC (cont'd)
I anticipate the terminus of
gravity's rainbow.

MARTA
Gravity's Rainbow.

BLANC
It's a novel.

MARTA
I know. I haven't read it.

BLANC
Neither have I. Nobody has. But I
like the title. It describes the
path of a projectile, determined by
natural law. Voila, my method. I
observe the facts without biases of
the head or heart, I determine the
arc's path, stroll leisurely to its
terminus, and the truth falls at my
feet.

(beat)
The medical examiner was ready to
rule this a suicide, but Elliott
agreed to keep it pending for forty
eight hours. Tomorrow morning I
search the grounds and the house,
begin my investigation. I want you
to be by my side for it. My
confidant, my eyes and ears.

MARTA
What but - why me?

BLANC
I trust your kind heart. Also you
are the only one who had nothing to
gain from Harlan's death. So.
Watson.

Blank puts out his cigar, stands.

MARTA
You want my insight into this family?
None of them are murderers. That's
my insight.

BLANC
And yet. Be it cruel or comforting,
this machine unerringly arrives at
the truth. That's what it does.

MARTA

Always?

He does a little bow.

BLANC

Tomorrow at eight.

Marta watches him go.

INT. CABRERA LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Marta gets home. Her mom is on the couch, zoning out in front of the tv, still in a cleaning uniform. Without a word Marta sits next to her. Stares at the TV.

Off her eyes, we FLASH BACK with her:

INT. HARLAN THROMBEY'S STUDY - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

HARLAN

I know I missed something... there's going to be something I missed. But I know you can beat it. Without losing your soul you have to do what you have to do to beat this, and win.

MARTA

I can't.

HARLAN

You can and you have to. For me. Right now.

She's out the door and he shuts it.

INT. OUTSIDE HARLAN'S ATTIC OFFICE DOOR - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Marta stands frozen. Soft voices of Walt and Jacob float up from downstairs. She turns back to the door.

Silence. Moments going by. Shit. Can she do this? Shit.

No. She turns and pushes back into the office -

INT. HARLAN THROMBEY'S STUDY - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

MARTA

Harlan I have to get you help -

Harlan reclines on the couch in the middle of the room, ornate dagger against his throat. Marta's eyes go wide.

HARLAN

Do what I say and everything's going to be ok, Marta. I promise.

She makes a move to stop him and with one quick motion he DRAWS THE DAGGER across his throat. Blood sprays.

She leaps back, hands to her mouth, spins and leaves the room, closing the door behind her.

EXT. THIRD FLOOR LANDING - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Breathing hard, silent crying. Then her breathing slows. Her brain taking over. Resolve settling. The dice are thrown. She wipes her eyes. Then bounds down the stairs, out of frame.

MARTA (O.S.)

Walt, I'm leaving now.

INT. CABRERA LIVING ROOM

Back to Marta and her mom on the couch. She puts her hand on Mom's knee.

MARTA

Everything's going to be ok. I promise.

MOM

(of course)

I know.

They go back to watching tv. But Marta's mind is buzzing.

On her white sneaker, we see but she does not - one single drop of blood.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE GUARD GATE - MORNING

The gate is open, Marta's car pulls up just inside it. The small Guard house next to the gate, Blanc, Elliott and Wagner outside it. Blanc waves to her.

INT. GUARD HOUSE

Thrombey's security man, MR PROOFROC, guides them into the cramped dusty space. Proofroc is old and salty. He shows them old photos of the house, stuck to a steel fridge with big brightly colored fruit magnets.

MR PROOFROC

Fifty years I worked this estate, back when it was the Redfirns. Course back then security meant making the rounds with a 94, keeping your ears open. Before all this modern technology.

Nothing in the room is newer than 1988. An 8 inch CRT monitor shows a phosphorescent live feed of the road outside the gate, and a top loaded VHS VCR sits next to it.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

So what do you have from that night?

MR PROOFROC

Eh?

He squints, hard of hearing.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

What do you - WHAT DO YOU HAVE, FROM THAT NIGHT, WHAT DO YOU HAVE FROM THAT NIGHT?

TROOPER WAGNER

WHAT DO YOU HAVE FROM THAT NIGHT?

Proofroc squints at Marta, who asks him quietly

MARTA

What do you have from that night?

MR PROOFROC

Well the video here, I saved the tape from that night, usually I erase 'em with the magnetic de-gauser, but I thought better save that one. Cause, security. That's the live feed there.

Marta notices something with alarm - the video feed shows the road outside, and at the top edge you can just barely see the carved elephant that marks the gardener's utility road. She realizes Harlan said

HARLAN (V.O.)
 ...to avoid the security cameras,
 pull off the road AFTER the carved
 elephant.

Marta keeps a poker face, but.. shit.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
 (to Proofroc)
 Can we see CAN WE SEE THE TAPE? THE
 TAPE? FOR THE NIGHT? TAPE!

MARTA MR PROOFROC
 (quiet, to Proofroc)
 They want to see the tape. Oh sure.

CLACK! The tape loads into the mechanical VCR. An
 impossibly grainy, smeared night vision view of the road
 outside the gate. Time stamp: 10:02pm.

TROOPER WAGNER
 It's like a Japanese horror movie.

MR PROOFROC
 (proud)
 I record it SSLP, gets eight hours
 per tape. Nine pm to five am.

BLANC MARTA
 Can we - (to Proofroc)
 (to Marta)
 Can we scan forward? Can we scan forward?

MR PROOFROC
 Hold the play button down and press
 the FF down halfway till you feel it
 grind.

Wagner does, the machine makes horrible noises and the
 picture frizzles and frazzles. Then stops and ejects.

MR PROOFROC (cont'd)
 And hold the tape down or it'll
 eject.

BLANC
 Can your guys digitize it so we can
 scan it properly?

TROOPER WAGNER
 I'm sure we can.

MARTA

I got it.

Marta grabs the tape from the VCR.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

THANK YOU

BLANC

THANK YOU

MARTA

Thank you.

MR PROOFROC

You're welcome.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

They all hack through the overgrown gardener's path.

TROOPER WAGNER

That wood elephant, it's a thing from his book "The Ivory Blade."

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Amazing. Blanc the grounds are lovely but you think what, someone broke into the house? To kill Harlan? Is that why we're out here?

BLANC

I think it's an unlikely but fascinating possibility. And if they did, there will be traces.

TROOPER WAGNER

I'll take that, thanks ma'am.

Marta hands Wagner the VHS tape. Then she discretely pockets something she had held in her hand next to it - a few of the bright fruit MAGNETS from Proofroc's fridge.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE SIDE YARD

The group hikes up out of the woods, towards the low wall with a small pedestrian gate that leads to the east lawn.

Marta is out in front. During the following, she notices something: The earth around and under the gate is soft and bare. And clear as day: HER FOOTPRINTS from the other night, the only ones from women's shoes. The same ones she has on now. Her breath catches. SHIT.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Any luck with the black sheep, whatshisname?

TROOPER WAGNER

Ransom. No, but we have an address.
Ten Oak street.

BLANC

Ten oak. That's a pleasant thing to
say. Ten oak. Tenoak.

TROOPER WAGNER

Ugh this mud, my boots are going to
stink.

BLANC

Mud - has it rained the past week?
No - Nobody move! Freeze! Everyone!
These footprints must not be
disturbed!

(sees)

Marta!

Marta has already walked through the pedestrian gate and up
onto the lawn, stepping in her pre-existing prints. She
turns back, playing dumb.

MARTA

What?

BLANC

Don't - stop there, don't -

MARTA

I can't hear you, what?

She trots back to them through the gate, stepping into her
returning prints.

BLANC

No no no nodon't - don't step on the,
ok, alright. Aughhhhh ok.

MARTA

What?

Blanc sidesteps up to the gate, not stepping in the mud.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Alright, Wagner let's get the boys on
it, check the prints, tape off this
area, keep it clear.

The dogs come running down the lawn, barking at the men.
They tear through the gate, further messing up the mud.

BLANC
Wehell. She-it. Dogs.

MARTA
Hey boys, easy. Hey. Hey.

She pets them and they quiet down.

BLANC
Best judge of character is a dog.
I've found that to be true.

The dogs start BARKING and bolt towards the house, where Richard and Linda are pulling up in their lux SUV.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
They're doing the will reading at
ten, whole family will be here soon.

Elliott heads up towards the house. Blanc meanders up the lawn, and Marta follows.

MARTA
I've never been to a will reading.

BLANC
You think it'll be like a game show.
No. Imagine a community theater
performance of a tax return.

They approach the side of the house. Blanc does a gentle, meandering study of the layout.

Marta steals a look at the trellis she climbed.

Oh no. A piece of the white lattice trellis that broke off when she was climbing - about eight inches long - lies in the grass beneath it. Her eyes dart up - yup, there's the broken spot. Shit.

BLANC (cont'd)
SWEET BEANS

Marta starts - did he spot it? No - he's come face to face with Greatnana, standing stock still on the porch. She stares at him like a bird.

BLANC (cont'd)
Good morning Mrs. Thrombey.

He approaches her, slowly. When his back is fully turned Marta takes her shot and KICKS the piece of trellis under some thick bushes at the base of the house.

Blanc and Greatnana stare at each other. Blanc gets very close to her, great sympathy in his eyes. Greatnana stares back. It's almost like they're communicating. This goes on for a little too long. Then Blanc breaks from the trance, and turns to Marta.

BLANC (cont'd)
Do you think you could handle the study?

INT. HARLAN THROMBEY'S STUDY

The blood is now only a subtle dark stain, but other than that the room has been left intact from the night of the party. Marta and Wagner observe as Blanc paces the room.

BLANC
(to Marta)
Where's your medical bag?

MARTA
I... don't know - I left it here, I always leave it with Harlan at night.

TROOPER WAGNER
They must have taken it in as evidence. I'll check on it.

Blanc picks up the GO board and sets it on the table. Examines its grid idly.

BLANC
How'd the GO board get knocked over?

MARTA
We were just goofing around.
(beat)
What are you thinking?

Blanc sighs gently, turns the baseball over in his hands. Looks like this was a bust.

BLANC
I'm thinking about my cat. And the 2:20 train back to the city.

Blanc tips the GO board over, and it lands on the carpet with a nearly inaudible WHOMPH. He stares at it.

But his concentration is broken by sharp barking outside. They go to the tiny window and look out.

A DASHING MAN in his early 30s climbs out of a vintage Porsche. The dogs go NUTS, biting at his pant legs.

BLANC (cont'd)
Let me guess.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE FRONT DRIVE

The man kicks off the dogs and limps toward the house, cursing. Lieutenant Elliott and Office Wagner step out onto the porch.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Hugh Drysdale?

RANSOM
Ransom. Call me Ransom, my middle name. The help call me Hugh.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
I'm Lieutenant Elliott, this is officer Wagner, we'd like to ask you a few questions about the night of

RANSOM
Uh huh.

He blows past them and into the house.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Walt, Donna and Jacob (nose in his phone) sit around the room. Linda and Richard stand, on their phones. Ransom breezes in, bumping Donna who YELPS, startled.

Elliott and Wagner follow.

TROOPER WAGNER
Sir excuse me, we are officers of the law.

RANSOM
You gonna run me in? I don't feel like talking. I'm distraught.

Ransom disappears into the kitchen, comes out eating a sleeve of pinwheel cookies.

Blanc and Marta slip in. Elliott nods to Blanc.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Blanc, anything you need to ask him?

RANSOM
The hell anyway is this arrangement?

BLANC
Mr. Drysdale

Ransom sizes up Blanc with a grin.

RANSOM
CSI KFC?

Ransom grabs Fran the housekeeper's sleeve as she walks by.

RANSOM (cont'd)
Hey Frannie can you get me a glass of
cold milk?

Meg and Joni have just entered, and Meg heard this.

MEG
Hey asshole. Not her name, not her
job.

Fran walks off with a scorching look at Ransom.

RANSOM
Meg. How's your LUG degree coming?

MEG
Trust fund prick.

JONI
Alright. Guys.

ALAN STEVENS, the family's attorney, knocks and enters with
an assistant, SALLY, who juggles several attache cases.

ALAN
Hey everyone. Hey. I'm just going
to set up in the other room, be ready
in ten minutes.

They go off to the library, leaving the family all together
in tense silence.

WALT
Funny Ransom, you skipped the funeral
but you're early for the will
reading.

JONI
Ok, people grieve in different ways,
let's not

WALT

(to Ransom)

It's funny you're here at all. Why are you even bothering, that's what I want to know.

RICHARD

What's that supposed to mean?

WALT

He knows what it means.

RANSOM

Look at you Walt, you're so excited about this.

LINDA

Walt, what?

WALT

Jacob was in that bathroom the night of the party.

JONI

Is that where you were all night?

RICHARD

The hell were you doing in the bathroom all night?

JACOB

Nothing.

MEG

Swatting Syrian refugees.

JACOB

No.

MEG

Alt right troll.

WALT

I don't know what any of that means

RICHARD

It means your son's a little creep.

WALT

Oh MY son's a creep?

JONI

Guys! Walt he was in the bathroom...

WALT
He was in the bathroom

RICHARD
Joylessly masturbating to pictures of
dead deer.

WALT
Ok you wanna go?

They go at each other and do some half-hearted slap-fighting
before Linda and Joni break them apart. Ransom's loving
this.

RANSOM
We gotta do this more often.

LINDA
Alright! Enough. Jacob, we get
where this is going. The bathroom's
next to Harlan's office, where he had
the big fight with Ransom. You heard
something. Spill it.

JACOB
I just heard two things.

INT. HALF BATH - NIGHT OF PARTY - FLASHBACK

Jacob on the toilet, hearing non distinct yelling through a
vent high in the wall. But two words poke through:

HARLAN (O.S.)
...my will!

INT. LIVING ROOM

JACOB
And then there was more shouting, but
I also heard Ransom say "I'm warning
you."

Walt raises his arms, triumphant.

LINDA
Ransom? What's this mean?

He just eats cookies, silent.

WALT

It means dad finally came to his senses and cut this worthless lazy brat out of the will.

(to Ransom)

And you better sell your little Porsche and you better give your notice at that country club and kick whatever fashion drugs you're on cause if you think after the bridges you've burned, the shit you've said and what you've put this family through for the past ten years that any of us are going to support you, are going to give you like dad used to say a single red dime you're nuts.

Ransom looks around the room. Cold faces.

RICHARD

Son.

RANSOM

(mock gravity)

Father?

RICHARD

Did Harlan tell you he was cutting you out of the will?

RANSOM

Yes.

RICHARD

Then he's done what we weren't strong enough to do - this might finally make you grow up.

Ransom is really slapped by this but he doesn't let it show.

LINDA

I think it might be the best thing that could happen to you.

RANSOM

Thanks - my mother, folks.

JONI

It won't be easy for you but it'll be good. Most good things aren't easy.

RANSOM
Up your ass Joni, you've got
your teeth bit into this
family tit so hard

MEG
Oh 'up your ass' very nice
you homophobic privileged
little vampire

RANSOM
(going down the line)
Up your ass, up your ass, up your
ass, up your ass

And now everyone is shouting at each other.

Blanc has heard enough. He sets the baseball down on a side table, and drifts out. Marta follows him.

EXT. FRONT PORCH

Blanc breathes in the air. Marta joins him. From inside the house, the shouting continues.

MARTA
What was that about will readings
being boring?

BLANC
Exception that proves the rule.

Fran bursts out of the living room, muttering

FRAN
Asshole.

She storms off around the house. A beat of thought. Then:

BLANC
I'm warning you. Ransom said. I'm
warning you.

One of the dogs bounds up the steps to Blanc.

MARTA
You heard Ransom in there, it's the
kind of thing he says. Are you still
going to catch that 2:20?

When Blanc goes to pet him, the dog drops something to his feet with a clatter. Marta freezes.

MARTA (cont'd)
 What's he got there? Hey boy. You
 find a stick? He's always bringing
 junk into the house -

It's the piece of broken trellis. Blanc picks it up,
 examines it, and suddenly his eyes go sharp.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE SIDE YARD

Holding the piece up as he studies the trellis that runs up
 the side of the house. Marta runs up beside him.

BLANC
 This looks like a relatively fresh
 break - yes. Right there.

He's spotted the broken spot on the trellis. Just up from
 it, what looks like a boarded window.

BLANC (cont'd)
 Wait - that doesn't make sense,
 where's that window?

INT. LIVING ROOM

The whole family in a screaming match, but Blanc and Marta
 walk through and up the stairs. Three people notice:
 Elliott and Wagner (who follow) and Ransom (who doesn't.)

INT. THIRD FLOOR LANDING

Blanc looks down the "dead end" hallway. Marta joins him,
 out of breath.

BLANC
 Show me, but don't step on the
 carpet.

It's a runner rug, and Marta delicately steps on the wood
 siding as she goes to the wall with the painting. And swings
 it open, revealing the window.

TROOPER WAGNER
 It's the trick window! From "A Kill
 For All Seasons!"

Elliott and Wagner at the top of the stairs, and Blanc
 motions them not to approach.

BLANC
Off the carpet!

He drops down to his knees, removes a loupe from his jacket, and holds it in his eye. Then, his face inches from the carpet, he scans it. All the way to the window. Then stops.

BLANC (cont'd)
Traces of dried mud. I suspect they go the length of the hallway.

MARTA
Footprints?

BLANC
No, just traces.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Depending on when it was last cleaned, it could be from anytime

BLANC
But that would not explain this.

He motions to the base of the window sill - obvious scuffs of dried mud. Marta winces.

Blanc tosses the piece of trellis to Elliott.

BLANC (cont'd)
Analyze this mud. It will match these traces, and you will find similar samples leading up the trellis on the side of the house.

(beat)
On the night of the party, somebody who did not want to be heard climbing the steps went to a great deal of trouble to break into Harlan Thrombey's rooms. I think I'll miss that train after all.

INT. LIBRARY - MINUTES LATER

The whole family assembled. Marta stands in the back, with Blanc, Elliott and Trooper Wagner.

Alan Stevens, Harlan's attorney, sits at a table with papers in front of him, assistant Sally beside him.

ALAN

Well. Thank you all for getting together like this, it isn't legally necessary but I thought because you're all in town and some of you are leaving soon, it would be best -

BLANC

Excuse me Mr. Stevens. As to that, ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to gently request you all remain in town until the investigation is completed. Shouldn't be more than two days.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

He's gently requesting, I'm ordering. Thank you.

Nobody likes this.

LINDA

What?

JONI

Can we ask why? Has something changed?

BLANC

No.

JONI

No it hasn't changed or no we can't ask?

BLANC

Mr. Stevens, please continue.

ALAN

Right. Well the other reason I thought this gathering would be, uh, beneficial is that as I told Walt, Harlan altered his will one week ago. He sealed it and asked me not to submit it to the courts for probate until after his death. So in case there's any confusion about anything we're all together, we can talk. I can't imagine any of it will be that complicated, Harlan's assets included um

SALLY

...the house

ALAN
the house which he owned outright, um

SALLY
sixty million

ALAN
right in various cash accounts and
investments, yes and of course the
real assets are sole ownership of um

SALLY
Blood Like Wine

ALAN
Blood Like Wine publishing, his
publishing company. Ok.

Walt's wife puts her hand on his knee. He squeezes it,
smiled tightly.

ALAN (cont'd)
Um, he did write up a statement when
he made the recent changes, he wanted
it read first, so:

(reads)
"Some of you may be surprised by the
choice I've made here. No pleasure
was taken in the exclusion, and its
purpose was not to sow greater
discord in the family, quite the
opposite. Please accept it with
grace and without bitterness. But do
accept it. It's for the best."

Gently condescending eyes shift to Ransom. Linda sees this,
puts her hand on her son's hand, and he immediately gets up
and moves to a chair in the corner.

Alan's assistant hands him an envelope and he removes a
single sheet of paper with one short typed paragraph.

ALAN (cont'd)
Ok. So - oh wow, yeah, not complex
at all. This'll be quick. "I Harlan
Thrombey, being of sound mind and
body, yada yada, my assets both
liquid and otherwise, I leave in
their entirety to Marta Cabrera. My
entire ownership of Blood Like Wine
publishing I leave in its entirety to
Marta Cabrera.

(MORE)

ALAN (cont'd)

The copyright of its catalog
likewise I leave in its entirety to
Marta Cabrera.

The air around Marta's head goes away. The room spins
She's not sure what's happening. Blanc is looking at her.
The whole family is looking at her.

Walt bursts out of his chair and grabs the will

WALT

No.

LINDA

No.

WALT

No. What?

(beat)

That can't be - that can't be right

RICHARD

What the genuine shit

WALT

That can't be right it's
right

ALAN

It's right

Donna begins to hyperventilate. She puts her head between
her knees, breathes deep.

LINDA

No no no Alan this can't be legal,
there are, we're his family

WALT

We're his family, Alan he
obviously wasn't,
something - I don't know
what but something wasn't
right here

RICHARD

Are there safeguards against
this?

And from the back of the room, slowly rising above the din
of confusion and cursing, slowly drawing even Marta's deer
in the headlights attention... Ransom. LAUGHING. Loud and
weirdly sincerely, tears down his cheeks, laughing his head
off.

JONI

Alan there's a mistake

MEG
 Mom if it's what granddad
 wanted

JONI
 No this is a mistake, this
 is ours.

LINDA
 Alan take that piece of paper and
 shove it up your ass and get out.
 And you cops, out!

They don't but Ransom slips out, his child-like laughter
 trailing after him.

RICHARD
 Linda -

LINDA
 No, we need to talk and we need to
 fight this thing and we're not going
 anywhere. GET OUT! We're the
 Thrombeys goddammit! This is still
 our house!

A beat of silence. Then all eyes go to Alan. Who looks
 down at the will. His assistant Sally points helpfully.

ALAN
 Sorry, there's, uh. "Likewise the
 house at two Deerborn Drive and all
 belongings therein I leave to Marta
 Cabrera.

Linda goes for Marta.

LINDA
 You little bitch. Did you know about
 this? What did you do to him to make
 this happen, were you two what were
 you boinking my father?

Marta recoils, stumbles back.

MEG
 'Boinking?'

RICHARD
 Linda!

JACOB
 Anchor baby.

WALT
 Marta! Jacob! And Linda -
 please!

JONI
Linda please - Marta, you need to
tell us though,

WALT
Yes Marta, did dad discuss
this with you?

JONI
You need to tell us
everything you know about
this and we need to talk
about this,

WALT
This isn't what dad wanted,
this isn't fair but we can
work this out

RICHARD
Jesus don't mob the girl,
let's talk about this

The whole family is coming towards her like zombies. Blanc
takes her by the arm and steers her towards the door.

BLANC
I think heads have to cool a little,
and in the meanwhile I'd maybe run.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE FRONT DRIVE

Marta stumbles out of the house in a daze. Behind her, the
entirety of the family floods out after her, shouting
reassurances and questions and accusations and a general din
of confusion.

MARTA
I - I have no idea why he - I just
need to think - I'll call you or have
him call me or do something I don't
know

She gets in her car and slams the door, and it's instantly
like A Hard Day's Night - the family gathered around trying
to talk through the window and rapping to get her attention.

Marta keys the ignition - chug chug chug. Nothing. Oh god,
not now - chug chug chug. It won't turn over.

Richard opens the door, she pulls it closed again and locks
it, this is like a horror movie. Blanc is trying to get the
family to back off but no dice.

Marta puts her head in her hands, all of it swirling and
echoing and horrifying, she has no idea what to do.

HONK!

She turns - a honking car pulls up right beside her and through the family crowd she sees Ransom in his Porsche, waving "get in." With no other options she pushes out of her car and through the family and JUMPS IN with him.

As he GUNS IT and careens out of the driveway he shouts back at the family with a wave

RANSOM

I think this could be the best thing
to happen to all of you!

And they're gone. The family keeps shouting at each other.

Blanc watches the Porsche recede, his expression unreadable. DING! His phone buzzing. He checks it. His expression darkens.

INT. RANSOM'S PORSCHE

Tearing down the private road, away from the house. He's still laughing, she's still shell shocked. Slowly, his laughter eases to a stop. A moment of silence.

RANSOM

Ok seriously though, what the hell?

She shakes her head, looks at him. What the hell indeed.

INT. LINDA'S ROOM

Linda stands in her childhood room, by the window in the ebbing light. From a shelf she pulls a stack of PINK NOTECARDS, identical to the one Harlan showed Richard in his office. But these are covered in writing, sweet little notes, a father to his daughter.

She looks up. Walt in the doorway. She wipes her eyes, indicates the notes.

LINDA

I was just thinking about Dad's games. This all feels like one, it feels like something he'd write, not do. I keep waiting for a big reveal, where it all makes sense. How nice would that be?

Her little brother hugs her. His eyes tired and dark.

INT. SMALL STUDY

Joni alone, head in her hands, crying.

BLANC

You were very much counting on that inheritance weren't you?

Blanc standing in the doorway.

JONI

What did you say?

BLANC

I don't think anyone in the family would do anything truly dark unless they were in a place of desperation. Now I know that Harlan cut you off, money-wise, but that would not make you desperate. You have your business, you have your image, your Flam.

JONI

Uh huh.

BLANC

But you see, I ordered some of your featured product. The snail jelly moisturizer, tried it out. I have delicate skin, you can probably tell, and I got a hell of a rash. So I googled two words: Flam and rash. And what did I find? Beauty product message boards, pages and pages of complaints, warnings, rashes. So I did a little more digging. Flam has been broke for years. You've kept your lifestyle up and the company afloat with the money you were skimming from Harlan. And you would have been fine with the inheritance. But now it's all going to come crashing down.

Joni's face has become hard and cold.

JONI

And what's your goddamn point?

BLANC

Just fair warning. When good people get desperate, the knives come out.

(MORE)

BLANC (cont'd)
 I hope you haven't, and I pray you
 won't, do anything rash.

He leaves her alone in the dimming evening light.

EXT. ROADSIDE FAMILY RESTAURANT - LATER

The Porsche parked out front.

INT. RESTAURANT - CORNER BOOTH

Tucked into a dark corner, Marta is miserable. Ransom is bemused, but regards her closely.

They sit in silence. A waitress sets a sausage plate down.

RANSOM
 (to the waitress)
 Could we get an extra bowl please?
 (to Marta)
 You look like you're gonna pass out.
 Have you eaten all day? Eat.

She joylessly shovels food in her mouth, starving.

MARTA
 This is a nightmare.

RANSOM
 Uh huh. So why.

MARTA
 Why

RANSOM
 Why. Did he leave you everything.

MARTA
 Are you asking if we were screwing?

RANSOM
 (angry, no)
 Hey.
 (then)
 I know my granddad. That wasn't him.
 But this is everything, there must
 have been a bigger why and you know
 it.

MARTA

Well Ransom how about it had more to do with you guys than with me.

RANSOM

(agrees)

Yeah.

(beat)

Yeah that's the only thing that makes sense. In which case this was a really shitty thing for him to do to you.

Marta is unexpectedly effected by this. The waitress breezes by, sets an empty bowl on the table.

MARTA

Did he tell you anything?

RANSOM

Just I wasn't getting a cent.

MARTA

He wanted you to build something from the ground up, like your parents

RANSOM

something from the ground up, like my parents

RANSOM (cont'd)

yeah. My mom built her business from the ground up with a million dollar loan from granddad. My dad owns none of it, and mom made him sign a prenup. He lives in fear. I know that's what granddad wanted to protect me from by doing this, and I know I shouldn't say this out loud but when he told me, Jesus Christ I coulda killed him.

(beat)

After I left the party, though. I was driving fast, nowhere, just in the night. And I got this weird... clarity. That from here on I was going to have to do for myself. And that felt... good. The old bastard.

(beat)

Marta I know three things. One: I know he didn't commit suicide.

MARTA

What makes you think that

RANSOM

I don't think it. I know it. Cause I knew my granddad. So you're not going to bullshit me. Because two: I know lying makes you puke. Cause of that mafia game last fourth of July.

Marta sinks back, suddenly nervous.

RANSOM (cont'd)

And three. I know that you just ate a full plate of sausage and baked beans.

She looks down at her empty plate. Oh no. He pushes the large empty bowl in front of her.

RANSOM (cont'd)

So look me in the eye. And tell me what really happened to my granddad.

Her lip quivers. She looks like she might attempt it. But then tears drop from her eyes.

MARTA

You bastard. Please don't turn me in.

Ransom pull the bowl away, and puts his hand on hers.

RANSOM

Marta. Tell me everything.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE - EVENING

Dusk settles heavy. Warm light from the windows.

WALT (O.S.)

There have to be options here.

ALAN (O.S.)

No. I don't know how many times I can repeat the same two simple pieces of information.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Lit by a fire in the fireplace, the whole family pacing around, Alan the lawyer looking very tired seated at a table in the center of the room.

ALAN
 If Harlan was of sound mind when he
 made the changes, and we've all
 confirmed he was

RICHARD
 Would a sound person do
 this! Sound how?

LINDA
 The very action speaks to
 unsoundness!

ALAN
 not legally no, you not liking what
 they did does not speak to
 testamentary capacity.

JACOB
 What about undue influence?

WALT
 Yes! Undue influence!

ALAN
 (weary)
 Did you just google that?

WALT
 If Marta was manipulating dad
 somehow, if we found out that she had

LINDA
 Gotten her hooks into him

WALT
 Somehow or something

ALAN
 You need a strong case for that.
 You've got nothing. "She endeared
 herself to him through hard work and
 good humor" won't cut the salami.

JONI
 What about the slayer rule?

All eyes turn to her. Her face is lit by her phone.

JONI (cont'd)
 I did just google that.

ALAN
 The slayer rule obviously does not
 apply here.

RICHARD
 What the hell is the slayer rule?

JONI

It's if someone is convicted of killing the person they can't get their inheritance.

ALAN

Not even convicted, even if they're held responsible for their death in civil court

WALT

Like OJ

ALAN

Like OJ, yes. But Harlan committed suicide.

All eyes turn to Blanc, who this whole time has been sitting in a chair by the fire, lost in thought.

JONI

Detective Blank. You said that the investigation is continuing. You made a point of that. Do you suspect foul play?

BLANC

Mister Blanc. If you please.

(beat)

There is much that is still unclear. But yes. I suspect foul play.

The eruption you would expect breaks out.

RICHARD

Meaning Marta?

BLANC

I have eliminated no suspects.

RICHARD

Ok you're full of shit, I don't trust this guy with his tan suit, and Alan god bless you you're useless.

ALAN

Thank you.

Alan takes that as an excuse to leave.

RICHARD

There's one answer to this: she can renounce the inheritance.

WALT
 She knows it's what she
 should do, it's the right
 thing to do.

LINDA
 We've gotta make her do the
 right thing.

Meg rounds on her mom, speaks quietly, in tears.

MEG
 Mom. If Granddad wanted Marta to
 have everything, that's what he
 wanted.

JONI
 No, this was not him. He loved us,
 he wanted us taken care of. He
 wanted you to have an education.
 Meg. You think I can pay for your
 school?

This leaves Meg shaken.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Beer bottles now stacked up in front of Ransom. Marta has
 just told Ransom everything. He stares into space, and
 makes the slightest hint of a laugh which I'll write as:

RANSOM
 Heuh.

MARTA
 I know, just saying it it sounds
 insane but it's all true. I think
 Blanc's been on to me from the
 start - I don't care if I go to jail,
 but my mom... my sister, we can't -

Nothing but silence from Ransom. Maybe he's deep in
 thought. A strange glint in his eye.

MARTA (cont'd)
 Why are you looking like that?
 (beat)
 Ransom?

RANSOM
 I always thought I was the only one
 who could beat Granddad at GO. I
 always thought that meant something.

MARTA
 I know you did.

RANSOM

At the party, that night, my last conversation with him, our last fight, that's what he told me, about you. That you beat him nearly every time. More than me. And I thought what a strange thing to tell me. But I think I get it now. I think it did mean something.

(beat)

I'm not telling the family shit. You're not going to jail. That detective is not going to catch you. And you're not giving up the family fortune. Think about what Granddad did to see this through, this was what he wanted not just for you but for his family, and for him. And yes for you. You've come this far. Let me help you go all the way.

Marta looks at him hard.

MARTA

This isn't you. You could turn me in right now and get your cut of the inheritance. Why?

RANSOM

Because fuck my family. They don't deserve any of this. I can help you and we can fool them all and get away with it... and then you will give me my cut of the inheritance. The perfect ending, we all win. You, me and Harlan. Deal?

Silence. Broken by Marta's phone ringing. On the phone ID - "MEG T"

Marta takes a breath, looks at Ransom. And picks it up.

MARTA

Meg

MEG (ON PHONE)

Marta. Oh that was nuts.

I know

MARTA

MEG (ON PHONE)

Are you ok?

MARTA

Yeah are you?

MEG (ON PHONE)

I'm fine, I mean everyone's nuts, they're all going, I don't know, they've lost it. No one knows I'm calling you, I wanted to - I don't know what I wanted, I wanted to say sorry for how everyone was.

MARTA

No...

MEG (ON PHONE)

And... I guess I wanted to ask...

(beat)

What are you going to do?

MARTA

What do you mean?

MEG (ON PHONE)

Well the... with the, will. What are you going to do?

Marta looks at Ransom. What indeed.

MARTA

What do you think I should do?

MEG (ON PHONE)

You should do what you think is... right. I think you should give it back to us. Granddad always took care of us, we're his family, I know he was like family to you but we're his actual family. Marta you know this isn't fair, we've always been good to you and we're going to take care of you, everyone loves you and you're like family and we'll take care of you but you have to make things right, you know what's right.

Marta, keeping eye contact with Ransom. Then, her voice quavering, Meg drops what is for her the big bomb:

MEG (ON PHONE) (cont'd)

Marta mom's broke, she says I'll have to drop out of school.

MARTA

No, no. I won't let that happen.

(MORE)

MARTA (cont'd)

(beat)

Whatever money you need Meg, I'll help you. I don't want you to worry.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

Meg on the phone. Her face horrified, mortified, barely comprehending what she's just heard.

MARTA (ON PHONE)

I'll take care of you. I promise.

MEG

Thanks.

MARTA (ON PHONE)

And once I get the -

Meg hangs up, lets the phone drop from her ear. Tears in her eyes. She turns to her whole family gathered behind her, silent and expectant.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Marta realizes the connection's dead, holds the phone in her hand like something delicate she just broke.

RANSOM

Ok then. Did the detective find anything suspicious at the house?

MARTA

(in a daze)

Mud. Tracks upstairs - where I broke in through the window.

Ransom winces.

RANSOM

Identifiable prints?

MARTA

No.

RANSOM

Good. Ok. Good. Hey. You've just gotta ride the next few days out until the investigation putters out, cause it will, cause no matter how sharp this Blanc guy is he's got nothing. Relax.

INT. MARTA'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

She wakes to a sharp rapping at her door. Her sister Alice pokes her head in, flustered.

ALICE

Marta get your ass up, what the hell is happening? There's a guy here and a bunch of stuff, everything's going crazy, are we rich??

Marta lifts her head from her hands.

MARTA

Maybe, I dunno.

ALICE

I don't even know what that means but you better get your ass up.

Marta looks at her phone - 28 missed calls.

INT. CABRERA LIVING ROOM

Marta stumbles in - Alice in front of the TV, mom pacing.

MOM

(subtitled Spanish)

Oh my god Marta what is all this, what did you do?

The TV is tuned to local news - an anchor stands outside THEIR APARTMENT BUILDING.

LOCAL NEWS ANCHOR (ON TV)

...we again we don't know much about Marta Cabrera or the exact relationship she had to Harlan Thrombey, beyond being his home nurse, and the Thrombey family has yet to release a statement...

MARTA

Is that here?

ALICE

Oh yeah it is. Wait so is that true? Are we rich?

Marta looks out the blinds - several local reporters down in the streets with their vans and cameras.

MARTA

Oh my god.

INT. DONNA'S CAR - MORNING

Donna, Walt's wife, listens to the same coverage on the radio as she pulls up to their suburban home.

EXT. WALT'S DRIVEWAY - MORNING

Donna gets out with groceries. Approaches the front door.

Stops. YELPS. Drops the groceries.

There's a SHADY LOOKING MAN in a dark overcoat waiting near the door. He turns to her.

DONNA

No no no no

She runs back towards her car. Tries the door but it's locked and she dropped her keys with her groceries

DONNA (cont'd)

No Walt said he'll have the money
we'll figure it out NO!

The man takes a step towards her, Donna turns and RUNS - STRAIGHT into the arms of Blanc.

BLANC

Whoa whoa - Mrs. Thrombey, are you
alright?

Trooper Wagner exits his prowler back behind Blanc. Donna turns to look - the shady man is gone.

DONNA

He - oh god.

She collapses in nervous sobs. Blanc nods to Wagner.

INT. WALT'S KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

Blanc sets tea down in front of the still shaken Donna. Wagner stands by.

TROOPER WAGNER

We've got local officers on alert for
the man, if he's still around.

BLANC

Do you know who he was, what he wanted?

DONNA

I - no. I have no idea.

BLANC

Well it's lucky I came by, Mrs. Thrombey. But I'm here to press you a bit on something uncomfortable. See, I checked the hospital logs for Walt's bicycle accident. You admitted him nine days ago... at three in the morning. Not prime bicycling time. So I dug a bit more. Now it's possible he was shot in the leg while on a bicycle, but at the very least he buried the lede.

Blanc slides a medical record with X-Ray printout of a bullet wound to a thigh bone.

DONNA

It started small. Side investments. But he got deeper in, and losing money so fast...

BLANC

...and he started drawing from the publishing company. How much? Alot. Donna. I know Walt is in big trouble. But if he's done something worse to try to fix it - or is going to do something worse -

Donna looks up at Blanc, scared.

BLANC (cont'd)

Where is Walt now?

INT. CABRERA LIVING ROOM

MOM

Lawyers were here, very big lawyers it looked like, and some other guys I didn't know, they left all this for you and business cards, so many business cards, and there was a pile of other stuff when I got home -

Mom shovels some official looking legal letter and courier envelopes into Marta's arms.

MOM (cont'd)
 (subtitled Spanish)
 Hey. I don't like this.

MARTA
 (subtitled Spanish)
 I don't like it either mom. I'm slipping out the back - I'll be back later, don't talk to anyone.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY

Dim and dingy. Marta comes out of their apartment door, then jump, startled - at the end of the hall, lurking: Walt.

MARTA
 Hey.

Walt's eyes are rimmed red. His heavy cane taps.

WALT
 Hey.

They're not sure what to do so they awkwardly hug. Marta still has the envelopes in her hands.

WALT (cont'd)
 How you doing?

MARTA
 Well. Walt I want you to know I didn't know about any of this. This is

WALT
 I know you didn't, we all went kinda crazy yesterday

MARTA
 Understandable

WALT
 You're still very important to all of us, I want you to know that.

MARTA
 I haven't even looked at all this yet, this legal stuff, is this from you guys? Is there anything I should know about it?

Marta flips through the envelopes, squinting.

WALT
it isn't from us. Maybe just local lawyers and accountants who saw the news and want to jump on it, I'd be careful of it all. But no, we're all, I mean we're still hoping that we won't, the family won't have to bring lawyers into this.

One envelope sticks out - a blank plain letter sized envelope, no postage, no return address.

MARTA
...good

WALT
Marta. Is it your intention to renounce the inheritance?

MARTA
No. This is what Harlan wanted.

WALT
Well. The truth is Harlan has put you in a very hard position here. It was unfair of him.

Marta's phone buzzes - Caller ID: "maybe B BLANC". She ignores it.

WALT (cont'd)
You didn't ask for this, you're, we as the family, we see you as the victim in all this.
(beat)
And we want to protect you.

Walt's hand on his cane. Gripping tight.

WALT (cont'd)
You see what this kicks up with the press and the scrutiny, and we know... with your mother...

MARTA
...with my mother.

Marta's spine straightens.

MARTA (cont'd)
What did Meg tell you.

WALT

This isn't about who - you're missing the point, we're not attacking you with this. Marta if your mom came here illegally, criminally, if you come into this inheritance with the scrutiny that entails I'd be afraid that could come to light. That's what we're all trying to avoid here. We can protect you from that happening, or if it happens.

MARTA

You're saying even if it came to light, with the family's resources you could help me fix it.

WALT

Yes. The right lawyers, none of those local guys but New York lawyers, DC lawyers, enough resources put towards it, yes. But there's no need it should ever even come up. But yes.

MARTA

Ok. Good.

WALT

Ok?

MARTA

Cause Harlan gave me all your resources. So that means with my resources I'll be able to fix it. So I guess I'm going to go find the right lawyers.

WALT

Marta.

He shuffles towards her. For the first time she feels a hint of physical threat, and backs up quick into her apartment.

WALT (cont'd)

You better be sure you want to -

She slams the door

INT. CABRERA KITCHEN

and leans against it, breathing hard. But angry and focused. She dumps the legal envelopes in the trash but keeps the mysterious envelope, opens it and pulls out:

Half a sheet of paper, roughly torn. A photocopy of the header of some sort of medical document, "OFFICE OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER" Under that, a photocopy of a tag with her name on it. And hand written in block letters at the top: "I KNOW WHAT YOU DID."

Marta's phone BUZZES, and she jumps. Caller ID: "maybe B BLANC". She hesitates, then sends it voicemail. Looks at the mysterious letter in her hands.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE FRONT DRIVE - DAY

Wagner's prowler pulls up. Blanc gets out of the passenger side, Wagner out of the drivers seat, and a third UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICER gets out of the back. He was the SHADY MAN. He carries the folded overcoat he was wearing in front of Donna's house.

Blanc nods to the Wagner and the officer.

BLANC

Gentlemen, thank you, and I promise not a word to Elliott.

(into the phone)

Miss Cabrera it's Benoit Blanc. I had the police drop your car back at your home address. Marta I have a strange premonition... be careful. And call me back at your soonest convenience.

INT. GREATNANA'S ROOM

Dim. By an open window stands GREATNANA. Blanc enters, she turns. They look into each others eyes.

BLANC

Mrs. Thrombey. I've always found it

A long pause as he thinks of exactly the right word.

BLANC (cont'd)

sad that youth assumes age to be a muffling agent, like cotton gauze. A lessener of desire, curiosity and all the little glass baubles. Of youth.

(MORE)

BLANC (cont'd)

Grief. Why is grief the providence of youth? Maybe it's comforting, the thought that when we'll most encounter it we'll have gained some immunity, maybe by projecting that onto our elders we think we can manifest it for ourselves. I don't know. But I'd imagine that age deepens all feelings. Including grief. This was a long walk to offering condolences again for the loss of your son. And asking you if it isn't presumptuous of me to not think too harshly of your family, if I am as I suspect the first to console you. They're young aren't they.

Blanc sits.

BLANC (cont'd)

One thing I do assume of age is weariness. And maybe that's just another version of the cotton gauze projection. But even with the years I have, damned if I don't get more tired every day. Tired of what I do. Following arcs, like lobbed rocks. The inevitability of truth - lord how grand - sounds like a rosy eyed optimism, maybe. I do believe it. But the complexity and the gray lies not in the truth but what you do with the truth once you have it.

Greatnana's eyes move slightly.

BLANC (cont'd)

I think you have something you want to tell me. I think you're very perceptive and very capable of telling me what you saw the night of your son's party. But I'll happily wait. I'm in no rush. I find it quite pleasant. Sitting here with you.

He reclines, not particularly looking at her. She looks back at him. Every now and then a breeze stirs the window sheers.

INT. RANSOM'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Too nice. Ransom wakes to his phone ringing.

RANSOM
(bleary)
Yeah

MARTA (ON PHONE)
Hey it's me, I'm outside.

RANSOM
Outside where?

A rapping on the window from outside the room.

EXT. RANSOM'S HOUSE

A nice little single residence home. Marta's car parked next to Ransom's Porsche out front, Marta peering in the window breathless when Ransom opens the front door in a robe.

MARTA
Sorry.

INT. RANSOM'S LIVING ROOM

Ransom studies the mysterious letter. Marta pushes aside a stack of New Yorkers and sits on the couch.

RANSOM
Well I don't know what this is from

Indicating the tag photocopy with her name.

MARTA
It's my medical bag tag. They have my medical bag. For some reason.

RANSOM
OK, but this is the header of a blood analysis, from the local crime lab. On Harlan. Marta, it would show the morphine overdose.

MARTA
Shit. Why would they test his blood?

RANSOM

Standard police procedure, any
unnatural death.

MARTA

So I'm screwed! How did Harlan miss
this?

RANSOM

He never remembered this kinda
procedural shit.

MARTA

How do you know all this stuff?

RANSOM

I was his research assistant. For a
summer. To be fair I sucked at it
too.

MARTA

Shit shit shit shit shit. So wait if the police know this why am I not in jail?

RANSOM

The crime lab must not have sent it to them yet. But this was dated yesterday morning, the clock is ticking.

(regards the paper)

This wasn't from the police. Why would somebody send you this?

MARTA

Blackmail.

RANSOM

No it makes no sense. Blackmail only works if this is the only copy. But the report, the data, the blood samples, it's all at the crime lab down the street.

(beat)

The bag is open, the cat's coming out. What was the point of sending you this?

INT. HALLWAY

A uniformed COP runs down the hallway in Thrombey's house and bursts into the room where Blanc sits with Greatnana.

COP

Mr. Blanc, a call from Lieutenant Elliott - you need to get down to the medical examiners office right now.

Blanc stands, smelling something big, nods a goodbye to the still silent Greatnana and rushes out with the cop.

A moment after he's left, Greatnana slowly raises a finger as if to say "wait."

A long beat.

Then Blanc runs back into the room and goes to her, puts his ear to her mouth. She whispers something to him. He takes the info with gravity. Then looks up at her.

BLANC

Thank you dear one.

He kisses her gently on the forehead. Then dashes out.

EXT. NORFOLK ROADS

Siren blazing, the cop car SPEEDS into town.

EXT. MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE

The cop car pulls past an identifying sign into the parking lot of a one story stand alone building, joining several other cop cars, and fire trucks. Journalists kept at bay.

The building is a charred brick husk. Black smoke, debris. It's been gutted with an explosion and a blazing fire.

Blanc steps out of the cop car and finds Lieutenant Elliott.

BLANC

What's the cheese?

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Five AM, a break-in alarm was triggered. Before we could even respond neighbors reported the flames. It went up quick, the whole place is gutted. Blood stores, records, all gone. No employees around, thank god.

BLANC

Any surveillance cams?

Elliott gestures wearily to the charred remains of a security camera on the smoking shell of an awning.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
And speaking of, the security tape
from the Thrombey residence was
scrambled. Somehow.

Blanc unsurprised. He motions back to the building.

BLANC
What was still pending from the
autopsy?

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
The report on the blood work.

BLANC
Blood work?

Blanc chews on this.

Across the street, Marta and Ransom pull up in her car.

INT. MARTA'S CAR

MARTA
Holy shit. Did - was this connected?

Ransom looks at her - yeah it's likely. They both instinctively duck down in case the cops look over.

MARTA (cont'd)
Who would blow up a whole real
official building just to blackmail
me?

RANSOM
Someone who knows how much money
you're about to inherit.
(beat)
Do you know how much money you're
about to inherit?

MARTA
No. Oh god don't tell me.

RANSOM
(realizing)
Have you checked your emails this
morning?

Marta looks stunned. She stabs at her phone, quick swipes.

MARTA

...nothing

RANSOM

Junk folder?

MARTA

Uh. Yeah.

She shows him an email from 092832@shushmail.com. No subject line, simple text: 1209 Columbus Rd 10AM

Marta looks at Ransom, then at the clock on her dashboard - 9:32, then at the charred building.

EXT. MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE

Blanc looks around, deep in thought. He spots Marta's car.

INT. MARTA'S CAR

Marta peeking up through the window.

Blanc sees her. She sees him. Ducks back down. Shit.

RANSOM

Marta. This means that the tox report, the only thing that could prove your guilt, exists as a paper copy, in the possession of this blackmailer. Who will be at this address. In half an hour.

Blanc begins to walk straight towards Marta. Quickly and with purpose. Shouts something, Lieutenant Elliott follows.

RANSOM (cont'd)

Marta. Did you hear me.

Marta peeks again - Blanc coming at them full speed. Twenty paces from the car. Closing in fast.

MARTA

Yeah.

She sits up, throws the car in gear and FLOORS IT.

EXT. MEDICAL EXAMINER'S OFFICE

Her subcompact PEELS OUT and buzzes off down the road.

Blanc, crestfallen, runs back towards the cop cars in the parking lot, shouting at Elliott, who flags a cop.

INT. MARTA'S CAR

The whine of the engine, Ransom puts on his seat belt. In the rear view, siren lights as cop cars pour out of the parking lot in pursuit.

MARTA
You regret helping me yet?

RANSOM
I regret not taking the Porsche.

Her phone buzzes - Blanc calling. IGNORE.

EXT. NORFOLK ROADS

Marta buzzing down the road, cop cars a quarter mile back.

INT. COP CAR

Blanc in back, Elliott in front, Trooper Wagner driving.

COP (ON RADIO)
Vehicles in pursuit in
Washington Street

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
(into radio)
No force - repeat that.
Possible murder suspect.

Their speedometer creeping up on 85

INT. MARTA'S CAR

Marta's speedometer creeping up on 55.

MARTA
Oh my god oh my god oh my
god I am literally flooring
it

RANSOM
Are you flooring it?

Her phone rings - Blanc again. She looks over - cop cars are RIGHT ALONGSIDE them. Blanc holds his phone up, looks at her quizzically. Points to the phone.

RANSOM (cont'd)
This is going well.

MARTA
This is stupid, I'm pulling over

RANSOM
If you miss your shot at getting that
tox report it's all over...

MARTA
Aaauuuuuawwwaaagghhh

She hits the brakes.

EXT. NORFOLK ROADS

Marta's car PEELS TO A STOP and the two COP CARS on either
side blaze by, hitting their brakes.

She pulls off onto a SIDE STREET and into narrower city
streets, down narrow alleys, using her small car to nimbly
dart through small spaces.

The cops can't follow, and she loses them.

She pulls to a stop in a secluded little back lot.

INT. MARTA'S CAR

Marta, breathing hard. Ransom is shocked.

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>MARTA Ok. I'm all just pure adrenaline now it's like I swallowed bees. What's the the whatsitcalled address ok. And I just - I mean whatever they want, I just say yes right, just to get that report back. And destroy it. Ransom. Thank you. I couldn't do this without you.</p> | <p>RANSOM 1209 Columbus road. And destroy it.</p> |
|---|---|

He smiles slightly. A quick moment of silence between them.

Then: RAP RAP RAP on Ransom's car window.

Blanc. Standing right outside. Marta looks in her rear view - the cop car has pulled up silently behind them. Another pulls up in front.

EXT. PARKING LOT

Ransom and Marta step out of the car, hands raised for some reason.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

That was the dumbest car chase of all time. Put your hands down.

BLANC

(to Marta)

I spoke to Wanetta Thrombey, Greatnana. The night of the party she saw someone climb the trellis to the third floor.

MARTA

Should I, I should have a lawyer?

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Mr. Drysdale, come with us please.

Elliott leads Ransom off by the elbow. Ransom throws a look back at Marta - he has no idea what's going on.

MARTA

What's going on?

BLANC

It was Ransom. "Ransom came back" she said. I don't know what he came back to do, but we'll find out.

Marta looks at Ransom - oh no. Senile Greatnana thought she was him. This is a mistake. But... she glances at her watch - 9:51.

BLANC (cont'd)

Did he tell you to drive when he saw me coming?

Ransom's being led to the police car. Marta decides:

MARTA

Yes.

Marta gets back in her car. She pretends to take a sip from an empty soda cup, but actually SPITS UP a little into it.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT (O.S.)

Blanc.

BLANC (O.S.)

(to Elliott)

I'll drive with Marta.

To Marta's horror Blanc opens her passenger door.

BLANC

Let's go to the police station, I want a full run down of everything he said to you, and I can catch you up on where we're at.

EXT. NORFOLK ROADS

Cop cars coast through town, Marta's bringing up the rear.

INT. MARTA'S CAR

Marta glances at the dashboard clock - 9:55. Blanc, casual:

BLANC

Strange case from the start. A broken arc, a case with a hole in the middle. A donut. I'm just talking through my process here, let me know if this is boring.

Marta's arms are locked, her eyes steal a glance at the clock - 9:58.

BLANC (cont'd)

I feel the noose tightening - the family are truly desperate. Walt owes bad men money, his life depends on the inheritance. Joni's entire business and carefully cultivated image will crumble without it. And Richard - I sense there's more at stake for Richard than his marriage.

MARTA

Richard signed a pre-nup. With Linda. Ransom told me - he'd get nothing if she divorced him.

BLANC

Of course! So he may be the most dangerous of all.

(MORE)

BLANC (cont'd)
 Desperate motives, the mystery of who
 hired me, the impossibility of the
 crime, and yet -

Up ahead, a street sign - "Columbus Road." Marta tenses.

BLANC (cont'd)
 A donut! One central piece, and if it
 reveals itself the fog would lift,
 the arc would resolve, the slinky
 become unkinked

MARTA
 I need to pick something up. From a
 friends. A check. For a thing. Can
 I stop and pick something up?

BLANC
 Sure.

EXT. NORFOLK ROADS

Marta's car makes a sharp turn, leaving the cop caravan.

EXT. 1209 COLUMBUS ROAD

A row of storefronts - 1209 is vacant. Marta's car pulls a
 few stores past it. She gets out of the car.

MARTA
 I'll just be a few minutes.

Marta runs into a bustling hair salon.

EXT. BACK ALLEY

Marta ducks out the back door of the salon, goes two doors
 down to 1209, and slips into the back door.

INT. 1209 COLUMBUS ROAD

Dark, empty retail space. Lit only by the painted-over
 front windows. Marta edges her way in, her eyes still
 adjusting from the sun.

MARTA
 Hello?

Her foot hits something on the dirty concrete floor.

HER MEDICAL BAG.

She kneels, picks it up gently.

Next to where it was lying, she finds something else curious - the burned remnants of a piece of paper. Only a charred corner remains.

She turns her attention back to the room. Creeps forward.

MARTA (cont'd)

Hello?

Ahead - a silhouette. A person. Seated in a chair, in the center of the room. Silent, facing her.

MARTA (cont'd)

I don't have much time. Whatever you want we can work it out, but we figure it out right here, right now, and I leave with that report.

A beat of silence. Nothing. Something's not right here.

MARTA (cont'd)

Hello?

Marta takes a step closer, lifts her phone, and turns on its flashlight.

Illuminating the ghostly face of FRAN, the housekeeper.

Marta, barely breathing:

MARTA (cont'd)

Fran?

A SPIDER crawls across Fran's face. Marta STIFLES A SCREAM and leaps back, sucking in air.

A moment of stillness. Her phone BUZZES - Blanc calling. Marta ignores the call, frozen.

Her eyes go to: A white letter sized ENVELOPE in Fran's hand, resting on her lap.

Marta swallows. Leans in, carefully and quietly for some reason, and SLIPS the envelope from the lifeless fingers.

Unsealed. She opens it.

It is empty.

Before this can even sink in, a rattling, grating DRAW OF BREATH - from Fran.

Marta starts - oh my god - and goes to her, checking a pulse, checking her eyes, lays her on her back. Fran sucks in thin breath, her eyes finding Marta in the glare of the dropped phone flashlight.

MARTA (cont'd)

Fran! Fran! Can you hear me? Fran, give me a sign if you can hear me!

FRAN

You

MARTA

Me? Fran it's Marta, you called me here, you sent me the email, I'm here. I'm going to call an ambulance and you're going to be ok but can you tell me what happened, did you take something, what's happened to you -

Weak, Fran grabs Marta's wrist, and Marta focuses on her.

FRAN

...copy... copy

MARTA

A copy. A copy... of this?
(the envelope)
Where?

FRAN

...stashed...

MARTA

Stashed where? Where is it Fran?

These words are barely given breath:

FRAN

you... did this... won't... get away.. with this

Her eyes seize. Her breath gets ragged. Marta is paralyzed with shock and fear. Fran is dying.

Marta looks at the medical bag in her hand. Then at Fran, struggling with her final breaths, eyes wide with fear.

She takes a step back from the dying Fran. Fingers tight around the medical bag. Letting her die.

But then, a decision: no. Marta dials 911 on speaker, drops to her knees and starts administering mouth to mouth.

PHONE
911, what is your emergency?

EXT. 1209 COLUMBUS ROAD

Blanc sitting in the car, singing softly to himself.

BLANC
Sometimes I stand in the middle of
the room... not going left... not
going right...

He looks at the hair salon - what's taking so long? And then sirens, as an AMBULANCE pulls up two doors down, and EMT's run into the abandoned storefront.

BLANC (cont'd)
Oh no.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - LATER

Marta and Blanc sitting silently in the fluorescent-lit waiting room. Marta with her face in her hands. Blanc is on his phone, mostly listening.

BLANC
(into phone)
Mm hm. Mm.
(listens awhile)
Huh.
(listens)
And that was it? Mm hm. Alright my friend, thank you for the update. No I'm here with her. No need for that, I'll bring her in once we get word that the housekeeper is stable. It's still touch and go.
(listens)
No. I don't know. Alright.

He hangs up. Marta looks at him.

MARTA
This is over. People are getting hurt, I've gotta stop this. I'm going to tell you the truth.

BLANC

Young Ransom just told Lieutenant Elliott everything. Who just told me everything.

MARTA

Good. Wait god I hope he didn't cover for me, did he tell the real truth, about me switching the-

And the disguise and all the-

And the blackmail with the-

BLANC

Yeah

Yes

Mm.

MARTA

I just wish you'd caught me before Fran got hurt.

(beat)

Why did Fran take my morphine? She obviously had swiped my bag from the house, but she didn't seem like a user to me, unless that's why she needed money...

(beat)

I dunno, doesn't matter. I should tell the Thrombeys myself, I feel like I owe that to them.

BLANC

I don't think that's a good idea

MARTA

No, I need to do it. I won't do any of this if I can't do that. I really need to. I gave the doctors my number, they'll call if anything changes with Fran.

BLANC

We'll round up the Thrombeys at the house, along with a police escort.

MARTA

For the arrest after.

BLANC

You can tell me your whole story on the drive over, from your perspective. I want no more surprises.

Marta stands, a dead man walking, resigned.

EXT. NORFOLK ROADS

Marta's car drives through the scenic countryside. Inside we see but don't hear her telling a long story to Blanc, who looks at the passing countryside, brow knit.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE FRONT DRIVE - AFTERNOON

All the family cars there, along with two police cruisers. Marta's pulls up.

INT. MARTA'S CAR

MARTA

...said it was stashed, the copy, and then she told me "you did this, you won't get away with it" and then I called the ambulance. And that's it.

She turns the engine off. Looks up at the house. Breathes.

BLANC

Alright. Are you ready?

INT. FOYER

Marta and Blanc enter. This really feels like a walk towards the gallows. Richard, Walt and Meg are there. Meg avoids eye contact with Marta.

RICHARD

Ah. Ok, has she come to her senses?

WALT

She's standing right here - Marta

BLANC

Is the rest of the family here?

WALT

In the living room.

BLANC

I think maybe, if we could...

Blanc beckons, and Richard and Walt file out. On her way out Meg hugs Marta, weeping.

MEG

I'm sorry, I'm so sorry I told them about your mom. I was angry and scared, I'm sorry

MARTA

It's ok, Meg. I understand. Believe me. It's alright.

Meg sniffs, dries her eyes.

MEG

God I wish Fran had come in today. I could use some of her stash.

They hug one more time. Then when Meg walks off towards the living room, Marta realizes something.

MARTA

Oh my god.
(to Blanc)
I know where the tox report is.

INT. DRAWING ROOM

Marta jimmies the clock drawer open with a letter opener.

She pulls a FOLDED PIECE OF PAPER from inside, blows loose pot leaves off it. She hands it to Blanc.

MARTA

She practically told me where it was. What a terrible blackmailer. Anyway this'll tie everything up. And I just handed it to you, god you're you're not much of a detective are you?

BLANC

To be fair you're a pretty lousy murderer. Perhaps we deserve each other.

INT. LIVING ROOM

The family gathered, impatient. Lieutenant Elliott and Trooper Wagner are there too, with another uniformed officer. Ransom sits in the corner, his face passive.

Marta gulps. Blanc is a few steps behind her. As she speaks, he unfolds and reads the tox report.

MARTA

Um. You guys have always been good to me.

(MORE)

MARTA (cont'd)

And what I'm about to say isn't going to be easy, and you're going to be upset, but especially after everything you've gone through the past few days, I thought you deserved to hear it from me.

Walt smiles at her, "you're doing the right thing." Marta takes a deep breath.

Blanc has finished reading the report. He refolds it carefully.

MARTA (cont'd)

I -

BLANC

Excuse me. You have not been good to her. You have all treated her like shit to steal back a fortune that you lost and she deserves. You're a pack of bloody vultures at the feast, but you're not getting bailed out, not this time.

(beat)

Ms. Cabrera has decided definitively not to renounce the inheritance.

WALT

What?

MARTA

What?

BLANC

Furthermore it will be my professional recommendation to the local authorities that the manner of death in the case of Harlan Thrombey is ruled as suicide, and the case is closed.

RANSOM

What?

MARTA

What? No, Blanc -

BLANC

Thank you all for coming goodbye.

He firmly guides Marta out by the elbow. A beat of silence.

RICHARD

Is anybody else confused?

As the family breaks out in hubub, Linda notices her dad's OLD BASEBALL on the side table where Blanc left it. What's that doing here? She picks it up.

INT. LIBRARY

Blanc steers Marta into the library, as sounds of hubub and shouting come from the other room.

MARTA
What the hell? I want to come clean,
this is over -

BLANC
Almost.

Elliott bursts in, motions to the living room, then Marta, then Blanc.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
What - with - what?

BLANC
I'm sorry, could you - officer
Wagner!

Wagner enters.

BLANC (cont'd)
Please keep the family out of this
room and get them out of the house if
you can. But stand by with your
additional officer.

TROOPER WAGNER
Get the family out?

BLANC
Yes but not all of them.

Blanc whispers something to Wagner, who nods and exits.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT
Drama.

BLANC
Indulge me.

MARTA
Blanc I just want the truth to come
out

BLANC

The truth! Yes! The truth, you have brought the truth to light my Watson, just as I suspected you would. Have a seat, please.

Marta sits. Elliott remains standing.

MARTA

I told Ransom, Ransom told you, I'm telling you now - it is an immovable fact that I killed Harlan.

BLANC

Yes you did, yes he did, yes you are, but. But. I spoke in the car about the hole at the center of this donut. And yes, what you and Harlan did that fateful night seems at first glance to fill that hole perfectly. A donut hole in the donut's hole. But we must look a little closer. And when we do, we see that the donut hole has a hole in its center - it is not a donut hole at all but a smaller donut with its own hole, and our donut is not whole at all!

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Blanc I can tell you're enjoying this but -

BLANC

Why. Was. I. Hired? The answer to your question "why are we here" is an question itself, it is time to answer it. Why would someone hire me?

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Someone fishing for any crime that could help reverse the will.

BLANC

I was hired before the sealed will was read. Yes, the person must have known the contents of the will. But one step further - that same person must have known a crime was committed, and further, if the intent was to reverse Marta's inheritance, they must have known that Marta was responsible.

(MORE)

BLANC (cont'd)

(beat)

An intriguing combination of factors. Someone who knew what Marta did, wanted to expose it, but could not reveal how they knew.

MARTA

Fran? She was blackmailing me, she knew what I did

BLANC

But Fran wanted money, ergo she did not want the crime exposed.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Did someone in the family see Marta doing something suspicious?

BLANC

They would have had no reason to not speak up. No. The answer is not so simple.

Blanc sits, suddenly weary.

BLANC (cont'd)

Now with the entire solution in my field of view, the arc of this case is a tragedy of errors. And Marta, it will not be easy to hear. But there is at least one truly guilty party behind it all, guilty in the true sense of acting with malice, and committing a heinous crime with selfish intent.

(calls)

Trooper Wagner.

MARTA

(stunned)

Trooper Wagner??

Blanc squints at her. No.

A moment later Wagner leads Ransom in. Ransom looks at Marta softly, sadly.

RANSOM

Marta I'm sorry. I told them everything, I figured it was all up. I'm sorry.

MARTA

It's alright Ransom, I'm glad you did.

BLANC

Not exactly everything though.

MARTA

Is this about what Greatnana told you? She saw me that night, she mistook me for Ransom

BLANC

We'll get to that. But first, Mr. Hugh Ransom Drysdale, you might tell us all why you hired me.

RANSOM

Why I hired you?

BLANC

You're right, let's back up. To the night of the party. Your argument with Harlan. What were the overheard words by the Nazi child masturbating in the bathroom - "my will" and "I'm warning you." You and Harlan were "drama mamas," you shared a love of twisting the knife into one another. I don't believe he would have slipped it in halfway - no, I submit that Harlan told you everything.

INT. SMALL STUDY - NIGHT OF PARTY

Ransom and Harlan face each other.

RANSOM

You can't be serious.

HARLAN

Not a red dime or word of my work to a single one of them, you included.

INT. LIBRARY

BLANC

Marta, remind me what Ransom said his conversation with Harlan ended with.

MARTA

Harlan told him that I could beat him
in GO.

BLANC

And I asked myself - Marta? Why
would the topic of the will have
steered around to Marta? There is
one obvious explanation...

INT. SMALL STUDY - NIGHT OF PARTY

RANSOM

You are not this crazy. You would
not just throw your fortune away

HARLAN

No. I'm giving it to Marta. All of
it.

RANSOM

Ha. To your Brazilian nurse are you
goddamn insane.

HARLAN

I'm sane for the first time
in my life and I've done it
I've made the change to **my**
will it's done

RANSOM

I'm going to stop this
Harlan, I -

RANSOM (cont'd)

I'm warning you!

Push into a vent in the wall.

INT. LIBRARY

RANSOM

That is some heavy duty conjecture.

BLANC

Granted. But it's the only way what
comes next makes sense. So you storm
out, you drive off into the night.
You tell Marta later of what was it,
feeling an overwhelming sense of...

MARTA

Clarity. That he has to make do for
himself from here on out.

BLANC

Exactly.

EXT. NORFOLK ROADS - NIGHT OF PARTY

Ransom's Porsche SKIDS TO A STOP on the side of the empty road. Sits idling.

BLANC (V.O.)

Marta. The will. Harlan. "You won't get away with this." Do for yourself. And a plan forms. A very simple, very easy plan.

A beat. Then the Porsche roars into a skidding U-TURN and drives back the way it came.

EXT. PRIVATE ROAD - NIGHT OF PARTY

Ransom's Porsche kills its lights and drives slowly down the private road, hooking a left at the CARVED ELEPHANT that marks the utility road.

BLANC (V.O.)

You return to the house, careful to avoid the gate's security camera range.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT OF PARTY

The Porsche parked, Ransom hacks his way through the woods.

BLANC (V.O.)

Then on foot up towards the house,

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE SIDE YARD - NIGHT OF PARTY

The party is still going on inside. Ransom slips through the side gate, up towards the house, and up the trellis.

BLANC (V.O.)

You sneak in, up the trellis so as not to be seen by the rest of the family, who are still having their party downstairs.

INT. THIRD FLOOR LANDING - NIGHT OF PARTY

The painting wall swings aside, and Ransom climbs through, leaving mud traces on the sill and the carpet. He heads straight down the narrow hall and into Harlan's bedroom. The party din from downstairs.

BLANC (V.O.)

What you need to do will take moments. But it is essential you are alone, and undetected.

Ransom disappears into the darkened doorway.

BLANC (V.O.) (cont'd)

You knew the medications Harlan took. You knew what Marta would be injecting him with that night. And you knew if Marta was responsible for his death, even unintentionally, the slayer rule would nullify the changed will, and you would get your share back.

INT. HARLAN'S BEDROOM

Dark and still. Marta's medical bag, open. Ransom has unwrapped two syringes and has the two vials out - the Toradol and the morphine (the "good stuff.")

Using the syringes he extracts the liquid from both vials... and then injects the liquids back into the opposite vials. He SWITCHES THE MEDICATIONS.

BLANC (V.O.)

You use the syringes in the kit to switch the liquids in the two medication vials. And as a final precaution, you take the Naloxone, the life saving antidote.

Replacing the vials he takes an injection pen, closes the bag up and leaves.

INT. LIBRARY

Marta is stunned, she can't even process this.

MARTA

No, no that's impossible.

BLANC

It is the truth. Hand me that vial of morphine, I'll show you.

Blanc has placed two identical vials on the table behind Marta. Her mind is still spinning, she glances at them, takes one and absently hands it to him.

MARTA

If he did that, if the meds were switched, then when I got them mixed up...

(oh my god)

I accidentally switched them back. But then I gave Harlan

BLANC

The correct doses. Yes. But not accidentally. I taped over the labels of these two vials.

Blanc shows white tape over the one she just handed him. Picks up the other vial, shows the same.

BLANC (cont'd)

The vials themselves are identical. How did you know that this was the morphine?

MARTA

I... just knew

BLANC

You knew because there is the slightest, almost imperceptible difference of tincture and viscosity between the liquids. You knew because you had done it a hundred times. You gave him the correct medication. Because you are a good nurse.

MARTA

Then Harlan was...

BLANC

I'm sorry Marta. But yes. Harlan was perfectly fine.

He unfolds the tox report and hands it to her.

BLANC (cont'd)

His blood was normal. The cause of death was truly, solely suicide, and you are guilty of nothing but some damage to the trellis and a few amateur theatrics. In fact if he had listened to you, he would be alive today.

Marta is white as a ghost. She shudders, buckles over.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

My lord.

BLANC

A twisted web, and we are not finished untangling it. Not yet. Marta when Greatnana spotted you climbing down the trellis she said

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE SIDE YARD - NIGHT OF PARTY

Marta facing Greatnana, who says:

GREATNANA

Ransom? Are you back again already?

BLANC (V.O.)

Are you back again already, because earlier that night -

CUT TO: the exact same scene but RANSOM hops down off the trellis, and is startled by Greatnana staring at him.

GREATNANA

Ransom, you're back!

He puts his finger to his lips - shhh, and blows a kiss as he walks off into the night.

INT. LIBRARY

Marta with her fingers on her temples, still unbelieving.

RANSOM

Marta c'mon.

(to Blanc)

This is stoopid with two o's and you don't have a shred of evidence, you're just spinning a fairy tale.

BLANC

Not a shred no, just as we have no real proof of Marta's mixing up the vials so it's your word against -

RANSOM

You have her confession!

The sharpness of this makes Marta look at Ransom for the first time.

BLANC

Ah right, we do have that. If you'll indulge me, I'd like to spin a little further.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE SIDE YARD - NIGHT OF PARTY - FLASHBACK

Moonlit, silent.

BLANC (V.O.)

Much later that night you would have to come back to the house, to break back in and retrieve the incriminating tampered vials.

A dark figure, Ransom, approaches the side gate. But when he opens it, the two dogs come bounding across the lawn, barking loudly.

BLANC (V.O.) (cont'd)

However, this time the dogs were outside. They barked. Waking Meg.

A light goes on upstairs. The dogs keep barking, paws on the gate. Ransom backs off.

BLANC (V.O.) (cont'd)

No matter. You'll get the vials tomorrow.

INT. LIBRARY

BLANC

Oh I can only imagine when you woke up the next morning and got the news not of a medical error and guilty nurse, but of a slit throat and suicide!? But I LOVE imagining it. Confusion! Terror! What did you feel? What did you think?

(MORE)

BLANC (cont'd)

Well there's only one thing you could have thought: That you underestimated Ms. Cabrera, and that she covered up her assumed crime by faking Harlan's suicide. Yes?

INT. RANSOM'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - DAY

A nervous Ransom tears a clipping from the local newspaper about Harlan's death, stuffs in it an envelope with a huge fold of cash, and addresses it to Blanc. The New Yorker profile open on the couch.

BLANC (V.O.)

So the circumstances are perfect for the anonymous hiring of a me: you know a crime has been committed by Marta, you need her to be caught for it, you cannot reveal how you know.

INT. LIBRARY

BLANC

Enter Benoit Blanc.

Elliott can't help but roll his eyes.

LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT

Alright Benny wrap it up.

BLANC

The body was discovered early the next morning. The police, the medical examiners, the family, everyone swarms in,

(to Ransom)

and there is no possible way you can get to Marta's medical bag to remove the vials. You must wait for your moment, when the investigation is over and you know the house will be empty. And that is why you missed the funeral.

INT. THIRD FLOOR LANDING - AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK

Ransom bounds up the stairs, climbs under the POLICE TAPE blocking Harlan's study, and enters.

BLANC (V.O.)

there is no one home to wonder why you're going into Harlan's study. Or so you think. But the funeral... was for family only.

Fran comes around the corner, spots Ransom and is about to say something, but doesn't.

BLANC (V.O.) (cont'd)

Poor Fran. She witnessed you tampering with Harlan's medication in the medical bag. She did not know what you were doing. But she knew you were up to no good. And so her mind begins to turn.

Ransom pockets the two incriminating vials from the medical bag and replaces the Naloxone pen. When he stands to go she retreats.

INT. LIBRARY

MARTA

Oh god that movie she told me about, with Danica McKellar, that's what she was talking about -

BLANC

She loved Harlan. She hates Ransom. So the poor girl decides to test her theory and make this asshole pay. She gets a copy of the toxicology report, I will be honest I have no idea how

MARTA

She has a cousin - she told me, she has a cousin who works as a receptionist at the examiners office!

BLANC

Well voila. The numbers mean nothing to her, but if Ransom is guilty its existence is a threat, so she photocopies the header and makes her blackmail note.

MARTA

So why did she send it to me?

BLANC

She did not. She sent it to Ransom.

INT. RANSOM'S LIVING ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

Ransom walks in sorting mail - finds the blank envelope, reads the blackmail note inside, and slowly grins.

BLANC (V.O.)

And when Ransom first gets it, what is his reaction? Elation! He still thinks Marta gave Harlan the tampered drugs! A blood tox report will prove Marta's guilt!

INT. LIBRARY - DAY - FLASHBACK

The will reading, the family assembled. Ransom sits in back, a sly smile on his face as the will is read.

BLANC (V.O.)

He goes to the will reading in high spirits, ready to see the family tear themselves apart, secure in the knowledge that it will all be undone when the tox report comes to light. And then...

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Beers stacked up. Marta has just confessed. Ransom's face is unreadable.

BLANC (V.O.)

Marta's confession. And everything turns on its head. Now he realizes that Marta has committed no crime, and the tox report will prove her innocence. The changed will is going to stand. He has lost. Unless.

INT. LIBRARY

Blanc rounds on Ransom.

BLANC

Unless you decide.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Ransom giving Marta his pep talk -

RANSOM
...you're not giving up your family's
fortune!

INT. LIBRARY

BLANC
You are not giving up the family
fortune.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

RANSOM
You've come this far!

INT. LIBRARY

BLANC
You have come this far. Just one
step further. Just one last act, in
for a penny, in for a pound. You
decide. You are in.

CLOSE ON: A lighter ignites a rag stuffed in a tin gas can.

THE CAN: Being thrown through a window in a brick wall.

INT. MEDICAL EXAMINERS OFFICE MORGUE - FLASHBACK

Empty, dark. The flaming can falls in slow motion from the
high window. Hits the floor, ignites.

BLANC (V.O.)
Step one: destroy all evidence of
Marta's innocence.

The flames dance in the reflection of a glass case of
refrigerated BLOOD SAMPLES.

BLANC (V.O.) (cont'd)
Step two:

INT. RANSOM'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT / DAY?

CLOSE ON: The BLACKMAIL NOTE - at the bottom is written "1209 COLUMBUS ROAD 8AM" A hand TEARS this bottom part off, then puts the top half in an envelope.

BLANC (V.O.)
Send Marta the anonymous email with a
late morning rendezvous time,

CLOSE ON: An email addressed to Marta being typed on a phone, "1209 COLUMBUS ROAD 10AM"

INT. APARTMENT BACK HALLWAY - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Ransom creeps down the hall, slips the ENVELOPE into the letter slot of Marta's door.

BLANC (V.O.)
and deliver her the blackmail note.

EXT. 1209 COLUMBUS ROAD - MORNING - FLASHBACK

Ransom's Porsche pulls up. He gets out, pulling on gloves.

BLANC (V.O.)
Step three: keep your appointment
with Fran.

INT. 1209 COLUMBUS ROAD - 8AM - FLASHBACK

Fran standing in the middle of the room, nervous. She turns as Ransom walks in and strides towards her.

FRAN
I knew it. I knew you were a no good
son of a bitch, I knew Harlan
wouldn't have just killed himself.

RANSOM
Yes, you were right Fran.

Ransom sees the medical bag on the floor, kneels and pulls something out of it.

FRAN
I knew you were guilty as shit. Now
you're gonna pay for it don't come
near me I'm warning you I -

But he's upon her, hand over her mouth, stifling her scream as he pushes the syringe into her neck and PUSHES THE PLUNGER.

MINUTES LATER - her inert body in the chair. He fishes through her pockets, finds the envelope, and takes the TOX REPORT from it, leaves the empty envelope in her hands.

On his way out: lights the tox report on fire, drops it burning next to Marta's bag. We stay with it as it burns away.

BLANC (V.O.)

Now the board is set. Marta will get the blackmail note. You will put the pieces together for her - the tox report, her one chance at getting away with it all. You'll guide her to the rendezvous. You'll make an anonymous call to the police, they will catch her there with the body and the burned evidence. Marta will be arrested for killing Fran... and Harlan.

INT. LIBRARY

MARTA

Oh my god. She said -

INT. 1209 COLUMBUS ROAD - FLASHBACK

Marta holding Fran on the floor, her dying words -

FRAN

you... did this...

INT. LIBRARY

MARTA

She didn't say "you did this," she wasn't talking about me, she said

INT. 1209 COLUMBUS ROAD - FLASHBACK

Exact same moment but this time we hear -

FRAN

Hugh... did this...

INT. LIBRARY

MARTA

Hugh. Cause you made the help call
you Hugh. Cause you're an asshole.

BLANC

(to Ransom)

It would have worked. If we hadn't
brought you in for questioning, so
you could not make your anonymous
call. And if Fran had not stashed a
safety copy of the tox report.

INT. 1209 COLUMBUS ROAD - FLASHBACK

Marta turns away from the dying Fran.

BLANC (V.O.)

And if Marta had not outplayed you
once again.

Marta turns back, calls 911, gives mouth to mouth to Fran.

BLANC (V.O.) (cont'd)

By having a kind heart. By saving
Fran's life, though it meant her
losing the inheritance and going to
jail. She didn't play your game, she
saved Fran's life.

INT. LIBRARY

For the first time, Ransom looks afraid.

RANSOM

Fran's alive?

Marta's phone starts to ring. They all see the caller id -
it's the hospital.

BLANC

(to Marta)

Oh yes. Fran, who will confirm this
fairy story or something close to it.

(to Ransom)

And will send you to jail.

She answers the call, puts the phone to her ear.

MARTA

Yes.

A long beat, then her face breaks in relief.

MARTA (cont'd)

Yes. Thank you doctor, that's great news, we'll be there soon.

She hangs up. And smiles with radiant joy.

MARTA (cont'd)

Oh thank god.

(to Blanc)

She's ready to talk.

Ransom stares at Marta, his face a mask.

BLANC

Trooper Wagner, if you would keep Mr. Drysdale in custody while Lieutenant Elliott, Ms. Cabrera and myself go to the hospital to take Fran's statement.

Ransom stands. Steps to Marta, who's frozen, looking in his eyes. His poker face breaks. And he grins.

RANSOM

I want to say this just to you, not to a courtroom of cameras, just to you because you know it's the truth: we allowed you into our home. We allowed you to take care of granddad, to be part of our family and now you think you can steal it from us? You think I'm not going to fight for our birthright, our home, our ancestral family home?

BLANC

Harlan bought this house in the eighties. From a Pakistani real estate baron.

RANSOM

Oh go to hell, you child. You think you got me cause Fran's alive. But Fran's alive, so what have you got me for? So I get attempted murder -

(MORE)

RANSOM (cont'd)

(to Blanc)

I stuck the needle in her chest by the way, but your version is better, I should have done the neck -

(to Marta)

I get arson for the bombing, maybe a few other charges, with a good lawyer I'll be out before you know it.

Face to face, Ransom's face hateful, Marta's strong and set.

RANSOM (cont'd)

And then you'll see just how much hell I can wreak on your life, you vicious little bitch.

But then... Marta's face starts to do things. Odd things. Convulses. Her jaw clenches. Her cheeks bulge.

And the PROJECTILE VOMITS into Ransom's face.

RANSOM (cont'd)

AUGH! WHAT THE SHIT!

He falls back cursing, she drops to her knees, spitting. Wagner, inappropriately excited:

WAGNER

Oh my god that means she was lying!

MARTA

Yes, Fran's dead.

(to Ransom)

And you just confessed to her murder.

Ransom takes this in. Then he smirks.

RANSOM

Well. In for a penny...

In one fluid motion he spins to the ornamental WALL OF KNIVES, grabs one -

BLANC

No!

and TACKLES MARTA...

Time slows as Blanc and Elliott lunge to stop him but it's too late -

Ransom and Marta fall together, his arm arcing down

And as the they hit the ground his arm comes down

PLUNGING THE KNIFE UP TO THE HILT IN HER CHEST.

They lie still, breathing hard. Her eyes wide with pain and horror. His cold and wild.

But then she blinks. Squints.

And he cocks his head. Realizing something.

Withdraws the knife from her chest.

Its fake blade had retracted into the handle. It's a theatrical prop.

He pumps it up and down a few times, the spring making a pathetic toy noise.

Ransom smirks.

RANSOM

Shit

And is VIOLENTLY TACKLED out of frame by Trooper Wagner.

Leaving Marta lying on her back. Blanc shouting if she's alright, Elliott and Wagner wrestling Ransom into cuffs, it all fades into the background as she holds the knife and stares at the ceiling.

INT. SMALL STUDY

CLOSE ON: Harlan's old baseball being set carefully back in place.

By Linda. She's about to leave, but she notices the pink envelope on the desk. Picks it up, takes out the blank note. Seems to recognize it, and smiles sadly.

EXT. THROMBEY ESTATE FRONT DRIVE - LATER

Linda comes outside and joins the family.

Several more police cars, and an ambulance. Ransom is loaded into the cop car. His family are held at bay by officers, but they react in different ways -

Richard yelling at the cops. Walt sobbing, Donna collapsed against him, Jacob on his phone.

Joni staring into space, ruined. Meg talking to Lieutenant Elliott, crying. She's just learned about Fran.

Linda watches the circus, strangely disconnected, going to light a cigarette. With a strange smirk, she uses the flame to warm the blank note from the office, and HIDDEN WRITING starts to appear - a note from her father. Their secret communication. As the letters appear, her face changes.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Marta sits, a blanket over her shoulders. An officer who's just taken her statement walks away. Blanc approaches.

MARTA

Can I ask. At what point did you suspect I had something to do with Harlan's death?

BLANC

From the moment you first set foot in front of me.

Taps her shoe. The tiny, faded spot of blood.

MARTA

Oh my god.

BLANC

I want you to remember something very important: you won not by playing the game Harlan's way, but yours.

Through the window she sees the family outside.

MARTA

I should help them. Right?

BLANC

I have my own opinion. But I have a feeling you'll follow your heart.

He gives her a wink, and strolls off.

INT. FOYER - LATER

Marta shuffles to the front doorway. One last glance at Harlan's portrait, its grin now gentle and content.

EXT. FRONT PORCH / BALCONY

She stands on the threshold. Sees Blanc get into the front door of a cruiser, and it drives off - Ransom in the back. He looks back at her through the window.

The family out on the lawn. Not sure where to go or what to do. They all turn to see: Marta standing very small, but somehow not, in the doorway of her house.