

DEWDROPS & MOONBEAMS

Written by

Aaron Adams

theaaronadams@gmail.com
815.501.3721

EXT. GREEN BACKYARD HORIZON - DUSK

Where the well-kept edge of a 1950s Rockwellian town meets a golden sweep of farmland. Post-sunset. An almost-surreal rosy-brass descending into deep-blue twilight. Sky meets earth. A vast field, leading up to - here - a sweet green grass carpet of well-kept home lawn.

Field and lawn meet at a perfect edge. Raw earth against lush grass.

At the ground: A boot tip. A splash. Then a stream... of liquid hits the soil, puddles, and begins soaking in.

Shimmering gold, it's - a pee stream?

A man's VOICE just above - where a veritable sermon begins.

NORMAN

...So I release the class and set
out to the crosswalk, raise my stop
sign, my SHIELD and kindergarteners
start comin'.

Relieving himself is NORMAN, a hale but kind-looking man in his 40s. Crossing guard vest still over his 1950s attire.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Then, I see the little guy just as
he spots a handsome looking
ladybug. I watched his head spark.
The wheels turning...

Behind him, the world is almost theatrically alive. The night's a portrait of light. Just a little extra charming in every way.

Three chairs and an audience of two friends, TOM and GRANT. Beers in hand. Their attention and grins locked.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

(laughing)

I saw the ideas... build that lil'
bug a fort? Introduce him to that
grasshopper on the next bush?
(A strong move) Put it in your
pants? Eat it? ...which I would
have warned him of, given how much
certain foods can criminally taste
like ladybugs smell.

He focuses. The pee halts... then re-starts.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

But before I can ask -- I watch this lil' guy gingerly pick it up, put it in a pudding cup -- and make the beautiful mistake of approaching old Carl at the news stand.

GRANT

Not that curmudgeon! Poor misdirected boy!

NORMAN

And the tyke asks Carl if he would keep ROLAND company til he got out of school. You shoulda seen that old skin-tag's face. As if the child had asked him to vote for Senate Provision 48!

The stream stops. Aftershocks.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

Old Carl says no with a level of darkness no one deserves. I jumped in and told 'im. I'm here all day and Roland the ladybug has a place with me. I could use the extra set of eyes watching out for the 5th graders. They're trouble. The nerve of him to dim the little guy's shine like that.

TOM

It's being around all those headlines. Leads a man to think the world's worse than it is.

He zips his pants reflectively. A head shake that's both wondrous and disappointed.

NORMAN

The man's personality is drier than his toothbrush. I just don't understand it... old bastard.

TOM

Carl's wife had that bad news from Doctor Macintosh though, I somehow heard. In't that the latest?

Their heads all take a solemn cancer bow, as Norman returns to his chair.

GRANT

Now now, this night has no place
for your melancholy, Thomas.
Norman! That was a veritable
sermon. You are an orator, sir. I
think you plucked two – no – THREE
of my heart strings.

NORMAN

Say, Tommy. Order of Albatross is
having their Solstice Sockhop
Friday. Bonnie is making fritters.
You've gotta come.

TOM

No, no. I don't want to upset
anyone.

NORMAN

You ain't done nothing, Tom!

GRANT

Who are you to deprive the mostly
good people of Fairbury of your
most delightful dance moves?

TOM

(playfully)
Are they even ready for Tom's
Electric Jig?

GRANT

Decidedly no.

TOM

I tend to agree.

GRANT

(faux outrage)
They don't deserve it, Thomas.

TOM

I'm sorry, Norm. It just doesn't
feel like the right time, with
everything...

ELEANOR (O.C.)

Which one of you boys can give me a
hand?

Tom's darling wife, Eleanor, wholesome but fiery, stands just
outside the back door.

NORMAN

Elle, you're home!

GRANT

Eleanor... don't you think your gold-hearted husband should at least consider the sockhop?

ELEANOR

That... is completely up to him. Those hens hell-bent on making him miserable are sure to be there. With the LOOKS and whispers. That Edna Eden! A lot of business SHE has judging anyone with that hairy mole growing out of her face. I swear they're at least three inches long at this point. That's what makes her so mean.

GRANT

Ever-present dental floss.

TOM

I really think she's mad about something else...

NORMAN

Say, Elle! You aren't by any chance, making anything in the line of say, rhubarb pie?

ELEANOR

Norman Baker, it just so happens I am. And it just so happens I saw you relieving yourself dangerously close to my garden again. So I nominate YOU.

They go inside. The gents sit and sip in reflection.

TOM

You going? You're taking that gal, aren't you.

GRANT

Donna is a damn mysterious enchanting delight, sir. And she would be my date, thank you. I'm not sure I want to go if I can't see my friend Thomas's undesirably famous electric jig.

(calming, then soft)

Nah. You know I'm just kidding.

(MORE)

GRANT (CONT'D)

Don't let anyone push you into
stuff like that. Lucifer knows you
got reasons. Those—

He pauses in a long stare.

GRANT (CONT'D)

Those people are brutal.

TOM

I was hoping you were kidding about
The Great Electric Jig being
undesirable.

GRANT

Indeed! But the Stupid Solstice
Sockhop too! Boring. Like that
fancy above-ground swimmin' hole
Jeffers just got. Teases you with
the prospect, idea and notion of
fun without ever delivering the
genuine article. That's it. I
declare that the Loyal order of the
Albatrosses's Semi-Annual Solstice
Sockhop, while fun to say, is the
above-ground-pool of affairs.

Just then Norm pops back. Just as they all begin to break,
Norman stops them short.

NORMAN

Ope! Guys! I almost forgot.

He produces from his pocket, a pudding cup capped with rubber
banded paper — and a few tiny holes. And produces a grin.

NORMAN (CONT'D)

(snickering to himself)

I took over Roland duties!

They all beam.

GRANT

Sir. I'm feeling just so — St.
Francis of Assisi-esque. May I?

Norman happily hands him over, and in a swift spell-ish
motion — Grant releases. Roland flies into the twilight,
where a thousand fireflies light his way. And the lads look
on in a moment of delighted, drunk silence.

TOM
Another lady that flew away,
Norm... God bless Bonnie for
staying.

Grant elbows Tom in approval, then Norm in playful support.
As they all tipsy-chuckle in the moonlight.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. EVERETT HOME - EARLY MORNING

The modest but symmetrically charming blue colonial with a
little quirky character.

INT. EVERETT HOME - CONTINUOUS

The sleeping bedroom is quiet but says much. Under her eye
mask, Eleanor stretches out a blind hand to the other side of
the bed. Empty.

EXT. EVERETT HOME - MOMENTS LATER

In the still beautiful dawn, silhouetted against the low
purple bloom of morning, Eleanor crosses the lawn to a shed-
ish outbuilding - treats in hand.

At the door she happily struggles to hold two coffee cups, a
doughnut and the morning paper in hands, teeth and arm to
open the door with a foot - proudly.

ELEANOR
Hussah!

The door spills open to let the dawnlight in. She steps in
with bold, playful declaration.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
I am possibly the most beautiful,
talented and conscientious woman in
Fairbury. Just - ASK me!

Inside. Tom, interrupted, smiles up from his work.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
Evidently you can't sleep, you
charming but also slightly loud
oddfella?

TOM
I'm sorry. It's just been like that lately. Wake up thinking.

She glares.

TOM (CONT'D)
Not even in a bad way. You know, it's just...

A thousand-yard stare. A little smile. A little awe.

TOM (CONT'D)
You know. I don't.
(snaps proud & cheesy)
But whiiiiile I wait, what I DO know is that I, THOMAS P. EVERETT—

He sweeps in and admires with his hand.

TOM (CONT'D)
—Can fix this here Zenith transistor television for one Mr. Leroy Anderson — for six American greenbacks!

He sticks out a smooch-ready cheek.

ELEANOR
Don't you make light of it. It makes people happy. Keeps em connected. It's noble wo—

TOM
Don't you say it, lady!

He fixes his jaw and points.

ELEANOR
And that's ANOTHER good week.

She goes in — but he cuts away with a sudden reveal.

TOM
(through a Cheshire grin)
But get this. See that?

He pulls off the dial panel and points.

TOM (CONT'D)
That's a secret timer I installed that shuts off every 30 minutes.

ELEANOR
Why on earth.

TOM
So that tubby bastard needs to get
up and move his blood at least
twice an hour. And you KNOW I'm
right.

ELEANOR
(appalled)
What is wrong with you?

TOM
The doc told him to lose weight. I
worry about him! And selfishly,
he's my second favorite player in
the municipal band!

ELEANOR
(sweetly)
What is wrong with you.
(beat)
There are other ways.

Focused on the panel as he puts back, beaming.

TOM
There suuure are. And I love that
this can be one of them.

She's noticing something else behind him.

ELEANOR
Thomas, what's that? Are you up to
something?

Tom stands. Walks over and pulls the tarp complete.

TOM
Nah. Nah. That's pop's old Indian
Scout. Finally got it running.

ELEANOR
No. The big one.

TOM
Bah, just one of his old
experiments. I'm actually just
takin' it apart a little.

He slips into another glare.

TOM (CONT'D)
Gotta try to appreciate what makes
the good ones tick.

She snaps her fingers in his face.

ELEANOR
No. Come back, YOU. It's too early.
Go have lunch with Grant and ask
about that Donna, gal. I like that
one.

At the door, she holds...

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
Tom, is that another letter from
the city clerk on your bench?

TOM
Ah yes. Evidently city board
suddenly needs to investigate our
property line.

ELEANOR
This is absurd. What else—

TOM
Also my services no longer needed
for the Fairbury municipal
volunteer fire-fighters brigade. No
doubt another mayoral decree...

Tom picks up the letter, plus a second underneath it.

TOM (CONT'D)
It's fine. It's fine. I just need
to keep showing up, they're always
dismissed. Just Mayor Potter trying
to keep me on my heels.

ELEANOR
You mean miserable?

Elenor is still eying the bench — a partially covered letter.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
What about that one.
(relization)
From— CHICAGO. The report! You DID.
Official request?

She reaches for it eagerly and Tom snatches it up.

TOM
Denied! As I knew it would be. I
just wanted to humor you.

ELEANOR
This is getting vindictive. We need
the truth—

TOM
(definitively)
Everyone knows the truth. IT'S FINE—
(beat)
I've been managing it just fine.

A loaded pause while she processes.

ELEANOR
You okay?

TOM
Yeah. Of course.

She shoots a playful glare and starts out again.

TOM (CONT'D)
But, I did wanna let you know I'm
gonna swing by Doc later while I'm
in town. On account of the sleep
and all.

She holds, processes, accepts with a smile.

ELEANOR
Good. Let's talk tonight.

EXT. MAINSTREET FAIRBURY - SUNNY MORNING

Of course it's a street of Rockwellian flair. Capped by a
fine city hall and lined with greenery. The butcher, the
baker and certainly the druggist's shop line the bustling
small-town street.

The cars have fins and heads have a variety of hats. The deep
colors, sunshine, or perhaps the way people walk says it all.
The simplicity of the signage confirms it.

Tom pulls up in his old worn blue truck and jumps onto the
sidewalk. Walking. Newspaper under his arm.

VOICE (O.C.)
Not from Fairbury? Not to be
trusted.

A man, The MAYOR, POTTER, rotund and choleric but charismatic, is nearby at a gazebo giving an impassioned speech. His small audience of assorted 1950s figures stands at excited attention. Reacting with small bursts of approval.

MAYOR

I say! Why, we saw what almost happened at the north by southeast line! If it hadn't been for the watchful eye of Conductor Bloom, we'd have four hobos from way up north wandering our streets.

The crowd mutters. Then a few shouts.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

It's a terrific truth! We can't truly know who our neighbors are.

As Tom walks by, the Mayor's eyes connect. A smug smile. Followed by a fleeting aside.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

(toward Tom)

Case in point! BUT ANYWAY---

Several heads turn from the group. A couple of them chuckle with him before refocusing on the gazebo. The Mayor chuckles and resumes.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

But we can be ready! And that starts with a strong mayor. Because as swell people say "Fairbarians know what's right."

Tom shakes his head. And shakes it off. Turning into Marvin's Marvelous Diner – as the large charming sign above says. Bumping a man on his way out.

MAN

Ope!

TOM

Ope!

They slip past each other with a nod.

INT. DINER – CONT'D

Already at the counter, Grant is playfully lecturing the waitress BONNIE. Bonnie is simple, pretty but with a way about her. Something exciting. In the eyes maybe. Or that knowing grin.

GRANT

I'm tellin' ya Bonnie, Your husband is being wasted. He belongs in office. We need people like Norman in positions to affect their goodness.

Tom takes a seat next to Grant.

TOM

Bonnie, you're pretty AND patient today.

BONNIE

He's a sociopath, but delightful in doses.

GRANT

I resemble that comment. A DELIGHTFUL sociopath. Morning, Thomas, I was just telling Bonnie that Norman is made for more than the crosswalk!

TOM

Nonsense. There's no higher office. Holding a stop sign! Holding the universe together. For the children. Someone has to, ya big dummy.

GRANT

For the children. Now. See, that, Bonnie? I appreciate that. I've changed my mind completely. When ya put it like that. How he does that, Bonnie? Tell Norman he's fine to play Street Chicken for now.

Bonnie grins and spins – back to the counter of customers. Grant spins in his stool to Tom. Sipping his coffee with performative decision.

GRANT (CONT'D)

How are ya, friend?

TOM

I'm just fine. And you seem more than fine. I'd guess you got whiskey in there, but today. No. I think it's something stronger. Perhaps, Donna?

GRANT
(faux aghast)
I feel attacked.

TOM
Elly insisted I ask.

GRANT
Why that invasive, black hearted-
(suddenly a puppy)
What did she say?? Does she like
her?? I'm 85 percent sure I do.
Something's gotta be off. I'll bet
you a ripe peach she's touched.

TOM
Yes. She likes her. That's what it
means when she asks.

Grant takes notice: on the counter. Tom's newspaper.
Something else poking out. Pen, pencil, schematics, notes.

He pulls it out.

GRANT
Welly well well. What do we have
here?
(reading aloud)
Dewpoints, Moon phases. Frequency
of cellos.
(laughing back to Tom)
Thomas, you beautiful madman!

Tom snatches at the papers playfully.

TOM
Hey, now!

GRANT
Just tell me a little!

TOM
Not today. Not yet. Plus we don't
know where your hands have been!

GRANT
I know. Promise? And no you won't.
I didn't read much. I just like
that you're doing it. A man needs a
side project. Especially you.

TOM

Meh. I'm just. Just sort of a simple man's art project. Break from the TVs, ya know.

GRANT

He lied! Simple, indeed.

While Grant takes a long draw from his coffee — Tom is now elsewhere.

In his long view of the diner he connects eyes with a few different characters, with mixed reactions. In micro-moments. A mother with her son, looks away. A businessman nods in understanding.

GRANT (CONT'D)

What? You're sundowning, sir.

TOM

(still scanning)

Nothing. I can see it in their eyes. I should still be laying low. No need to spoil anyone's lunch.

GRANT

(suddenly serious)

The hell you do. What you're seeing there are a bunch of irredeemable personality flaws that have nothin' to do with you.

TOM

I don't know. Sometimes I just feel like they're mad about something else.

GRANT

I think you're too generous. Personality flaws are what's afoot—

Tom interrupts himself. Ducking his eyes and voice.

TOM

Christ almighty(!) It's him.

Grant still isn't following.

TOM (CONT'D)

His FATHER.

Grant scans. Connects eyes with the serious eyes of A YOUNG MAN, in his mid 30's.

GRANT

Who? Oooh. It's fine. Of all people who should know the truth. You're a hero. Don't let—

TOM

He's coming over.

They both pause and stare with cautious anticipation as he strides toward them silent, but with eye contact and intent.

GRANT

Steady, Thomas. You SHOULD talk. He's a good man. He knows the truth if anyone does. —Should be coming to thank you. You did everything you could and more for that poor bo—

A soft-social explosion interrupts the moment — and THE MAN'S approach, as Edna Eden blows in with The Mayor and a select few.

EDNA EDEN is NOT unattractive, though there IS The Mole on her face with a few unattended hairs when the light hits right. Indeed imperfectly steamy, with a melodramatic toxic, forbidden charm. Something about her, in a different way. She's sad too.

EDNA EDEN

Why Thomas Everett. The Mayor just finished. We wondered why
(beat)
you're here that is.

GRANT

(piping)
I believe the sign says Marvin's
NOT Machiavellian's.

EDNA EDEN

Oh, Grant Pierce. I didn't see you there! —Been that way since the day you decided to become invisible.
Go, Figure!

GRANT

(half to himself)
It was a matter of moral survival.

Silently hushing Grant. He civilly and confidently acknowledges each of them.

TOM

Hello Ms. Eden. Mrs. Marshall — I sent Edwin an old transistor I fixed to help him at the front. Lessen the homesickness.

Her face — aggression fades to thoughtfulness.

TOM (CONT'D)

Miss Hopper. I saw your painting in the Gazette, genuinely — inspired.

Miss Hopper's smugness suddenly softens, she swoons...

TOM (CONT'D)

And Edna, I go for night walks and I do believe I twice last week saw your silhouette on the shade, dusting off that old Bolero?

A moment of shock. Her red-handed self-consciousness. He completes the thought.

TOM (CONT'D)

And the same amount of times through the window at Slipper's Tavern.

The nerve! Gasps. Chuckles. The Mayor breaks in.

MAYOR

Let's not -- what we came to -- inquire about is -- well -- as you know, the Loyal Order of the Albatross Solstice Sockhop is this Friday. And I -- Fairbury -- has some very important visitors coming to town. Powerful people. Interested in investing in our fine town's infrastructure.

TOM

(doubtful)

Infrastructure of your campaign?

Mayor halts. Quietly writhes. Then ignores the comment.

MAYOR

They've... come to visit; they'll be attending as my guests. Now given your -- contentious reputation -- we wanted to come in the spirit of the community to suggest that you consider not--

EDNA EDEN

What the mayor is perhaps too honorable to say is, this town deserves better. And we'd ask that your participation reflect that. The Great Guthrie Radio Hour is best enjoyed from the comfort of home.

GRANT

Here we've had it! You can practically hear her gettin' PICKED ON in grammar school.

Before he can even get started, Bonnie butts in from behind with powerful demurity and grace.

BONNIE

(O.C.)

Now, now, Edna Eden.

Heads turn unison to BONNIE.

BONNIE (CONT'D)

You look positively ravishing today. AND you know exactly what you're doing, and that, as President of the Fairbury Fairmaids Etiquette Society, that pettiness is bad for your complexion AND digestion. I do wish you'd take care of yourself.

Turning to the Mayor with a beaming hostess smile.

BONNIE (CONT'D)

And you, Mayor. Look - tired. If not for your health, please be civil for the simple fact that you can't go a week without my pecan pie. Lest you suddenly pe-can't.

GRANT

(mouth agape)

Pe-cant-

TOM

I feel like I've caused enough trouble today.

Stands from the stool and parts the group toward the exit - but pauses mid-stride near the exit and tilts his head seriously toward the mayor. Cool and straight.

TOM (CONT'D)
Though I have my limit.

Resuming to the group as he springs to the door, pauses with a half-bow at the half-open door..

TOM (CONT'D)
I'd leave you all to have your pie
while you still pe-can.

They pause at the second graceful lashing.

EXT. MARVIN'S MARVELOUS DINER - CONTINUOUS

Out the door and down the sidewalk, Tom's intense walk shows the weight of the moment on him.

INT. MARVIN'S MARVELOUS DINER - CONTINUOUS

Still frozen in a moment of dumbfounded shock - their wits return when Edna snaps out of her shock-

EDNA EDEN
Hmph!

Off in a huff - she follows. The others snap-to - and huff after.

EXT. MAINSTREET FAIRBURY - CONTINUOUS

Tom's halfway down the block, approaching the red and blue barber pole, when Edna, Mayor Potter and crew catch up with him.

EDNA EDEN
Mr. Everett, I'd like to address
the nerve you have, answering a
reasonable request with such plucky
surliness.

Tom approaches the barbershop door, where the OLD BARBER BERNIE, is surveying the scene, like the Captain of some ship.

BARBER BERNIE
You band of DISinformed misfits
don't belong anywhere near this
sacred blue and red pole.

They all pause and confront each other.

EDNA EDEN

Do you hear me? The Mayor deserves
a little more respect, AND an
answer.

BARBER BERNIE

He deserves a trial by jury.

MAYOR

(ignoring the comment)
The great people of Fairbury do
too.

BARBER BERNIE

Perhaps not a trial, Mayor – but a
nice stern reckoning.

TOM

Ms. Eden, I don't know just where
I'll be, but I will not be at the
Loyal Order of the Albatross's Semi-
Annual Solstice Sockhop Social.

EDNA EDEN

Maybe you should go up to Snowy
Pass and think about what you did.
(a smug pause)
Or didn't do.

Barber Bernie's last straw breaks. He lunges forward with
animated fire – Tom restrains him but the speech continues.

BARBER BERNIE

Straight from the gas lamp! You and
your Mayor can try to bamboozle
fine Fairbarians all you want but
not in the sphere of this sacred
pole.

The group reels and starts to back off.

BARBER BERNIE (CONT'D)

Wait! Let me help you out first.
It's time that mole had a trim and
I'm the man for the job.

He snips at the air in Edna Eden's direction with his
scissors. She holds a hand to her mole in pearl-clutching
fashion and the group continues their retreat as Tom ushers
the feisty old man inside.

INT. BARBERSHOP - CONT'D

Barber Bernie and Tom blow in from the maelstrom.

The sanctuary is lit gold by late afternoon sunbeams. Three spinning chairs, mirrors, rows of tonics and a collection of combs soaking in a beaker filled with bright blue barbicide.

BARBER BERNIE

The nerve! This a BARBERSHOP. A sacred.

He cracks the door to yell one last shot after them.

BARBER BERNIE (CONT'D)

Where we know, appreciate, and celebrate the truth!

Turning back to the shop and Tom.

BARBER BERNIE (CONT'D)

Tommy. I'm sorry, son. You didn't deserve that.

The place is peopled by half a dozen patrons and three barbers. Along the side wall, a gallery of three old men in folding chairs - ever so still but not sleeping - holding patient, silent, ancient court. Each with a knowing grin.

BARBER BERNIE (CONT'D)

We know your truth in here. Don't we boys?

The gallery: three wise heads nod sage agreement.

Barber Bernie shows Tom a seat next to a father in his 30s. He is playing eager audience to the barber chair a few feet away.

Atop this chair, his young boy, no more than two. His head - a silky blond mop with just a handful of chaotic, irreverent curls.

BARBER BERNIE (CONT'D)

Now, lest we allow unremarkable people with puckered anuses dim our shine any further, you've come at a special time, Tommy.

He places an affectionate hand on the little boy's head.

BARBER BERNIE (CONT'D)

Ethan here, is atop his throne for his very. first. haircut.

Tom is struck. Mutters half to himself in true reverent awe.

TOM
I'll. Be. Damned. A rite of
passage. Special day, indeed.

The gallery and the father all nod, without a word. Bernie turns to the boy respectfully.

BARBER BERNIE
Shall we?

The rite begins like a stage performance, spotlit by afternoon sunbeams that radiate the moment. Bernie's focused affectionate brow carefully considering, deciding, snipping.

TOM
(to the father)
I was just thinking about being
here, seeing this right now. A
man's first haircut. Feel it??
Those clippings are nothing short
of unicorn dust. There — watch it.

Bernie listens proudly. The father beams. The gallery nods in approval. The cut continues.

Snips, here and there. Then long, crisp cuts turn tips into golden rows. Pristine gold sparks of the boy's hair cascade through the sunbeam and glitter in an impossibly beautiful afternoon fireworks show.

TOM (CONT'D)
Bernie, look out! Yer steppin in
cosmic dust. You're gonna notice at
the sockhop Friday.

Tom jesting.

TOM (CONT'D)
Ain't that right. Bernie's gonna
cut that rug right up.
Just wait and see.

The gallery nods. Tom quiets and slows as his awe returns to the scene.

TOM (CONT'D)
Thank you so much for having me.
Little prince. Appreciate this
MOMENT. It's an honor to be
reminded.
(losing himself)
(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)
It'll never be like this again.
When everything was still special.

Tom's fixation on the cascading hair clippings – fades to snow – as he slips into a similar but different scene.

TOM (CONT'D)
Before it slowly changed. And
suddenly. Everything was different.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SNOWSTORM – DAY

Snow. Just snow. Cascading beautifully as it does. Guided by inevitability rather than gravity. Flakes so big it's almost surreal. Tom is now somewhere else completely.

Pulling back. Golden hair, a boy's head. Tom's view. As he looks out at the surreal scene.

BARBER BERNIE
Thomas. Thomas!

INT. BARBERSHOP – CONTINUOUS

Tom snaps back – to the barbershop moment.

BARBER BERNIE
(still focused on the cut)
You were doing just a fine job
finding the magic in that moment,
Thomas. As you do. I recognize that
nonsense from your father.

Tom smiles. The gallery nods. The boy nods.

BARBER BERNIE (CONT'D)
But then ya slipped somewhere... ya
know ya shouldn't be. Everyone here
knows the truth and more. That's
our honor. Now get out of here
before I finish with him and turn
my shears on that mess atop your
head.

Tom grins. And exits.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD LANE – EVENING

The sun now lower in the sky. The time when shadows become long and greens turn deeper. The lane is lined by well-kept, hundred-year-old homes unique to small towns.

Tom strides the sidewalk with easy purpose. Past 1950s cars, honest front yards, eaves, ancient towering trees and peopled porches – taking note of his surroundings, the horizon, the smell of the air.

Half a block to take it in, before he turns up the walk of an old victorian house, veined in ivy – past a wrought-iron sign on the lawn that reads “Dr. Aloysius T. Macintosh, Doctor of Medicine & Other Matters.”

INT. VICTORIAN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Tom lets himself in and steps into the tiled parlor. It's a slip back in time, even for the period. Stained glass, strong ornamental woodwork in its bannisters, frames and beams. Floral wallpaper and oriental rugs complete the space.

Tom scans the curious place, his eyes land on a credenza. Neatly on top a doily – a stack of tarot cards, a bell and a placard that reads: “Pick a card, ring bell.”

Tom's curious, but takes – the Fool. He laughs it off and rings the bell.

From a curious speaker in the corner – a phonograph bell suddenly reports.

VOICE

Enter the gates of science.
Upstairs!

INT. UPSTAIRS PARLOR CLINIC - CONTINUOUS

Tom enters the classic homey medical space with all of the medical charts, instruments, anatomic models one should expect. A wily old man in a medical frock has his magnified face at a looking glass – DOCTOR MACINTOSH is carefully examining – a violet.

DOCTOR MACINTOSH

Thomas! Come here!

His giant magnified eye turns from the looking glass, to connect eyes with Tom through equally magnified glasses. He presents the flower in front of Tom's face.

DOCTOR MACINTOSH (CONT'D)

Ever smell this flower? Take a whiff.

Tom agrees. Approves. The doctor is carefully eyeing a stopwatch. Silently counting. Back to Tom with the flower and a grin.

DOCTOR MACINTOSH (CONT'D)
Ever smell this flower? Take a nose gander.

Confused. Tom repeats. And so does the doctor's countdown. Again.

DOCTOR MACINTOSH (CONT'D)
Ever smell this flower. Take a w-

TOM
-Doc. Are you feeling alright? I do believe-

DOCTOR MACINTOSH
-Don't patronize me, or I'll slap ya like the day you were born. More zing than slime.

He prods the flower closer to Tom's face.

DOCTOR MACINTOSH (CONT'D)
Now smell this flower. Again. For the first time.

Tom sniffs. It IS nice.

DOCTOR MACINTOSH (CONT'D)
Viola odorata. Have a chemical called ionones - that create rapid olfactory fatigue - that means they make your smeller forget - within 15 seconds.
(proudly emphasizing)
That means that every time you smell a violet, you're smelling it for the first time.

He waits for Tom's reaction. A smile.

DOCTOR MACINTOSH (CONT'D)
See! I knew you'd appreciate that. One of those quintillion things that's a little more special than most folks give it credit for - or remember.

TOM

Is this a new eastern medicine phase? Are the tarot cards downstairs part of this?

DOCTOR MACINTOSH

Bah. That's just science being beautiful. The cards are for the crazy religious fundamentalists who keep darkening my door. They refuse to touch the cards therefore can't proceed to the bell. Just last week I ignored a Methuselah's Witness for an hour because the pious bastard couldn't ring the bell! Best part, he didn't bother anyone else.

He quickly changes gears, puts on his stethoscope and pats the table – a seat for Tom.

DOCTOR MACINTOSH (CONT'D)

Enough of that. Let's talk Thomas. As usual it's been YEARS since your last exam. What brings you to me today?

He immediately launches in a speedy but skilled exam while Tom speaks.

TOM

Doc. I don't think it's much, really just that I've been waking up at all hours and can't seem to get back to sleep.

The doctor pries open Tom's eye, peers inside his ears.

DOCTOR MACINTOSH

And you lie there thinking about what?

TOM

Nothin' much. I just have too much energy to fall back—

DOCTOR MACINTOSH

Nervous or inspired?

TOM

Doc?

DOCTOR MACINTOSH

The energy?

TOM
Welp. Both? I don't know.

The doctor quickly wraps his exam and looks Tom in the eyes.

DOCTOR MACINTOSH
Just as I thought. You're Thomas.
Everett. Otherwise you're in fine
health.
(beat)
Now. Why are you really here?

TOM
Well, I guess also—

DOCTOR MACINTOSH
Ah yes, the ALSO we needed.

Doc stands straight and begins slowly, pensively pacing.

TOM
I guess once in a while, things
line up just right, and I sorta —
slip.

DOCTOR MACINTOSH
Transported. Moved.

TOM
Well. Yes. That's it—

Doc suddenly swoops in with his face energetically close to
Tom's.

DOCTOR MACINTOSH
Where do you travel. And when? And
why is it Snowy Mountain Pass,
March 1953?

Tom's eyes drop. And his silence says it all.

DOCTOR MACINTOSH (CONT'D)
See your ailment is soul-adjacent.
An overworked mind, because you
left your heart up on that
mountain.

TOM
It's just that coming up on two
years now. People.

DOCTOR MACINTOSH
People. Are not your problem.
Everyone.

(MORE)

DOCTOR MACINTOSH (CONT'D)

EVERYONE knows you did everything you could for that poor boy. You've got the temperature-induced Raynaud's and cold urticaria to prove it.

(beat)

But there's something broken in them that's outside the field of medicine. They let go of the magic. They forgot. Not in 15 or 30 seconds, but more gradually over time. Forgetting to notice the moon. Appreciating wet streets at night. And how impossibly charming our nuances can be.

TOM

Where the special things go... then forget how much they deserve it. And stopped trying.

DOCTOR MACINTOSH

Indeed. They let themselves get sad and mad, about something else that's between them and the binnacle boy. But Thomas. THAT is not you. You remain tuned in, no matter how much it hurts. So as your physician, I diagnose that you are more alive than most of them.

TOM

So, there's nothing you can—

Doctor Macintosh considers Tom a moment in silence. Closely. Hard in thought.

DOCTOR MACINTOSH

Eureka. I have just the thing.

He turns to a large wooden medicine cabinet against the wall and begins fumbling through the hodgepodge vault of tablets, bottles, serums and powders.

Scanning bottles, reading, pushing and tossing aside. Deeper into the back corner — a ha — The ONE. He turns back to Tom, carefully reviewing the bottle through goggle-esque glasses.

DOCTOR MACINTOSH (CONT'D)

"Corzaprill 39.2." That's it. Now, clearly I don't administer this remedy much. Actually never.

(MORE)

DOCTOR MACINTOSH (CONT'D)

But as a man of medicine I'm
obliged to consider the unique
composition, constitution AND
physiology of the patient.

He hands the bottle to Tom.

DOCTOR MACINTOSH (CONT'D)

Take one tablet each night,
outdoors, after dark. You may
discover you feel the need for two
on or around the full moon. That's
fine.

Tom starts to open his mouth. He has questions on his face,
but halts – reconsiders – re-begins – then resigns himself to
the remedy.

Doc reads every moment on Tom's face. Waits. Then smiles.

DOCTOR MACINTOSH (CONT'D)

You're gonna be fine, kid. I'll
come by the house in a week.

He opens the door for Tom, warmly.

DOCTOR MACINTOSH (CONT'D)

And Thomas?

Tom holds on the stairs and turns back to the parlor.

DOCTOR MACINTOSH (CONT'D)

Walk home.

A pause.

Careful though. It's a lovely night
out there.

Tom proceeds.

EXT. DOCTOR'S VICTORIAN HOME – NIGHT

The stars are waiting, as Tom steps out into fresh shimmer of
the night. Dew drops hang from the tips of deep-green blades
of grass. CRICKETS a comforting constant. The moon IS large.

Tom pauses and takes it in. A long serious study of all the
senses. He knocks on the cold wrought-iron railing beside
him, grips it. Dew here too. Rust. Appreciation. A deep
breath of cool twilight air. And strides into the night.

EXT. MEADOW FOOTPATH - NIGHT

The shadow of a hill against a deep sunset. Small under the moon. The small silhouette of Tom begins to climb it. Up and slowly, quietly over the crest. Atop. The silhouette stops.

Tom's face - pensive but calm. He is indeed taking it in. Especially the moon - not quite full by a few days.

Down to his pocket, the pills. He takes them out and considers them.

TOM
Alrighty, then.

He twists off the top. Pops a tablet into his palm. And palms it into his mouth. Again from his pocket, a bottle. Beer. The quiet POP FIZZ of an old cap. Chases the tablet down.

TOM (CONT'D)
Ope. That there IS a full moon.

He pops a soliloquy finger up at the moon.

TOM (CONT'D)
Three days, I think. Accord'n to
the Farmers Almanac.
(beat)
Welp. As prescribed...

He pops another tablet in his mouth. Another swig of beer. And continues on home.

EXT. EVERETT BACKYARD - NIGHT

Eleanor's face. A half smile. Sly focus.

ELEANOR
Do'er of misdeeds. I'll start...
RASCAL.

Norm's face. Similar, serious-and-playful attention.

NORMAN
Misfit.

Grant's face. Also a game face.

GRANT
Ne'er-do-well.

ALL
Ooooooh!

The three are semi-circled in the backyard under the stars and that same moon.

ELEANOR
Troublemaker.

NORMAN
Hellion-NOPE
(beat, touché)
Rap-scall-ion.

GRANT
THEN hellion- WAIT- ...MISCREANT.

ELEANOR
Do we really think miscreant has
more energy than that rapscallion?

Both men nod.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
Fine. Derelict!

NORMAN
Deviant!

GRANT
Guttersnipe.

NORMAN
Not hellion?

GRANT
Fine, Hellion. That's fair.

ELEANOR
Then guttersnipe.

They slow. Playful intensity. Norm hesitates.

NORMAN
Scape-grace.

ALL
OOOOOoooh.

Heads turn to Grant. Anticipation...

ELEANOR
C'mon. One more.

Grant's face is blank, then slowly- a fierce smile.

GRANT
Blackguard!

They all sit back and smile.

ELEANOR
Alright, Extra action or
engagement. Playfulness.

NORMAN
Antics!

GRANT
Shenanigans! Ope! Then- hijinks

ELEANOR
Chicanery. SKULDUGGERY!

NORMAN
Bullshit! Wait! The..
(beat)
Injustice~

They're all stuck now. Excited. Grinning and thinking. When
from the shadows.

TOM (O.C.)
Crime!

ALL
Yeeeeesss!

They all jump up. Tom has returned.

GRANT
We left out Tomfoolery. It's a
heated night of expressions in
escalation, Thomas! Take a seat and
turn your magic on, good sir!

Tom smooches Eleanor as she hands him a glass.

ELEANOR
I'll let you instigators get after
it. My new cookbook - Ms. Huang's
Far-East eats says dinner tonight
is something called - forgive my
midwestern - General TIS-OW's
Chicken.

GRANT
Properly world and exotic. You
know, I've had genuine article none-
other than Shaang-High itself.

She rolls her eyes. Leaves him trailing as she starts toward the house, then holds and turns.

ELEANOR
Also, Thomas.

GRANT
(silently mouthing)
Nooooo. Noooo.

Norm gives tiny-nods. Nonononono.

ELEANOR
Can you come help for a minute?

They move toward the house. She calls over her shoulder.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
Both you stay away from my garden.
I got tomatas comin'.

EXT. BACKDOOR - CONTINUOUS

Up closer to the house. Tom and Eleanor, regroup.

TOM
Darlin'?

ELEANOR
What's this I hear about the diner?

TOM
Oh. That's nothin. People being..
people.

ELEANOR
Tell me.

TOM
No, Elle! Why let them have any
more. Today was today. A man's
thoughts are his. I prefer to keep
them ou-

ELEANOR
But you're not. I can see it's on
your mind all the time.

TOM
You know, speaking of people not
minding their own business-

ELEANOR

Oh, Tom. That's not fair! I'm allowed to care. Especially when you're grumping around here half the time.

TOM

Perfect. Perfectly cornered! I can't do right by half of Fairbury. I can't mind my own business. Even in my own house.

(loud aside to the gents)

WITH MY GOOD PALS TELLING STORIES.

He's wide-eyed and intense now.

ELEANOR

Ya know. You of ALL people should understand.

He's glaring. Her eyes fill

TOM

Perhaps you need to mind your business too.

ELEANOR

Thomas. You sure can be a bastard sometimes.

She turns. He catches her arm.

TOM

Elle, I'm sorry.

ELEANOR

It's okay. Maybe I should leave you alone.

He starts to try and calm her again.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

This is between you and yourself now. I hate it all. And I love you. And I have your back. WE do! More than you'll ever know.

Full tears. She stomps to the house. But turns violently.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

And I'll ask ya to take me to the Loyal order of the Albatross's Semi-Annual Solstice Sockhop on Friday. I deserve it! I deserve it!

(MORE)

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

I deserve it! We need it! And most of all, it's high time you looked this town in the eye again.

Tom holds a poker face, then relents.

TOM

Fine. I'll go.

She huffs in. Tom gathers himself, then strolls back to the boys. Sheepish — they heard it all. Tom takes a drink.

TOM (CONT'D)

Gentlemen...

NORMAN

We're sorry, Tom. It's just that she— we—

TOM

It's fine. Toast to a fine night?

GRANT

I really should be going. Donna's comin by for the radio hour.

NORMAN

Yeah. And Bonnie's got a pie... in the warmer.

Tom takes another drink.

TOM

Welp. Suit yourselves. It's fine. I'll see ya'll Friday.

He sits and takes a long drink. The constant moon still above.

TOM (CONT'D)

Since, NOW I have a mandatory ticket to that DAMNED sockhop.

They put their heads down. Giving space. Still not looking up, Tom follows.

TOM (CONT'D)

Gents. I'm sorry. I know you— I need to just—

Looking directly at them, maybe some mist in his eyes.

TOM (CONT'D)

I understand. Thank you.

They slowly turn and leave. Alone now. Tom broods and sips. A long pause.

Suddenly he gets up, strides over to the garden. Silhouette against the deep blue twilight, under the moon and stars, unzips and starts relieving himself. Swaying and drunk now.

TOM (CONT'D)
(slurring and defiant)
Take ya to the stupid sockhop?
Sure! Stay away from the tomatas.
Not tonight.

A drunk-slug grin on his face. He turns and stumbles toward the house.

EXT. GARDEN. NIGHT

It's just the quiet garden, now, in the night. Crickets, stars and fireflies. Dew sparkles on the deep green grass.

The moon cascades across the sky like a clock as time and the night pass. Serene midwestern peace – when – in a quiet instant – vines creep from the deep brown soil.

Up close – covered in dew and lunar sparkle – it's deep green with sprouts popping – creeping, then growing a little more.

And the moon hovers above.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. SNOWY SKY – DAY

Huge flakes. Cascading down. Intoxicating.

INT. TOM'S BEDROOM – MORNING

Tom's eyes open in one calm, decisive motion. Focus. He breathes deeply. Sits up with his crown of bedhead. And looks around.

Eleanor's side of the bed is empty. –But there's a note. A sheet of lined memo pad with a grey tabby cat. Reading...

ELEANOR NOTE
Dear Tom,
I've left for good.
Just kidding.
(MORE)

ELEANOR NOTE (CONT'D)

I've left for Bonnie's, the Bank, the Butcher, the Baker, and all the cliché loveliness. Might even buy myself a dress for Friday. Hope you feel better, you surly colicky grump. Tell me more tonight on the hill. Love, Elle.

He grins thankfully. KNOCK NA-NA KNOCK KNOCK.

Tom's at once cautious, confused and incredulous.

KNOCK NA-NA KNOCK KNOCK.

Tom gets out of his bed. Striped pajamas. Out toward...

The front door. KNOCK NA-NA KNOCK KNOCK.

He swings it open.

INT/EXT. FRONT DOOR THRESHOLD

Outside. The tidy red door swings open. Where stands, Tom. Curious. Looking at the person...

On his stoop. A MAN with a large toothy grin. Practiced and perfect. A powder blue suit. Gold cufflinks, tie-clip, a single tooth, capped by a head of combed, beaming white hair.

TOM

Morning?

The polished man holds his pose, just nodding and grinning.

TOM (CONT'D)

Morning, good sir...

Still the curious, creepy hold. The smile.

TOM (CONT'D)

Peace be with you, Reverend Pritchard.

A hand shoots out, choreographed and extra.

REVEREND PRITCHARD

AND! Aaaaalso with YOU, Thomas! How does the lord find you this morning. Smells like you perchance hath been partaking in the Devil's chalice? So be it..

(flipping tone)

(MORE)

REVEREND PRITCHARD (CONT'D)

We haven't seen you at church in
some time!

TOM

You— banished me for a millennium
with the fire of a thousand suns?

REVEREND PRITCHARD

—The lord sees your point.

(an idea!)

The good word is, the good book can
be followed from the comforts of
home!

He resumes the creepy glare and grin, anticipating.

What? Tom's face is— confused. He waits. Uncomfortably.

TOM

Reverend, what CAN I do for you?

REVEREND PRITCHARD

You see, the church thrives on the
good will of men.

The grin. The wait.

REVEREND PRITCHARD (CONT'D)

And the gifts. Not monetary,
necessarily. Men find all manner of
ways to give. Say something from...
THE GARDEN?

TOM

Well, the lord is out of luck
because unfortunately it's barren.

REVEREND PRITCHARD

Dishonest is at least three and a
half sins, Thomas.

TOM

Reverend, let's not make this the
second biggest misunderstanding to
ever happen in a garden. I assure
you, the lord is missing out on
nothing.

Turning and closing the door.

REVEREND PRITCHARD

Just a few!

TOM
I'll see you in, well, a
millennium, I suppose.

The reverend still going. TOM closes the door and waits,
while the over-polished man huffs off.

Tom regroups. A few moments.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.

Unbelievable. KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK!

Tom swings the door open.

TOM (CONT'D)
Reverend, I'm sorry, we just don't—

Not the Reverend. On the doorstep. A gal: ESTER SUMMERSON.
Smiling, beaming, librarian energy. Odd and excessive.

Tom's taken aback.

TOM (CONT'D)
Ester Summerson.

She curtsies and flutters her fingers. A ring.

ESTER
Missus!

TOM
Of course. Mrs—

ESTER
Ester Summerson-VonGant. How ARE
you Thomas Everett? I am here
because the boosters club is
currently taking donations to send
the children to tour overseas.
You've heard them?

TOM
Not Rachmaninov. But that's nice—
for them.

ESTER
Well, the boosters club was simply
wondering if you might be able to
help support the arts today with
say — something simple — mayhaps
from the garden??

This again. He rolls his head.

TOM
I'm sorry, Mrs. Summerson, but—

She flutters her fingers again.

TOM (CONT'D)
Summerson VAN-GANT. But there's
nothing in the garden.

ESTER
Please, Mr. Everett, it's for the
children. And the arts. To feed the
children of the arts.

Tom mutters the door closed. Turns. A deep breath.

A BARRAGE OF KNOCKS... He yanks the door open.

THREE TOWNSPEOPLE. OUTSIDE now. Huge grins of anticipation.

Tom shuts the door fast without a word — thinks a beat — then
sprints through the house to the back.

At the windows, he rips back the curtain to see.

The garden — is full of the biggest, reddest most perfect
tomatoes imaginable. Size of muskmelons. Hundreds of them.

INT. EVERETT HOME - A WHILE LATER

Tom sits still in a chair, stewing and still, except for a
rapidly bouncing knee that says it all.

The phone rings. Tom springs. Snatching the bell of the
receiver off the hook.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
Mr. Everett, you have a call from
Beachwood 379. Will you receive?

TOM
Yes! Thank you, Lorraine.

OPERATOR
Stay on the line.
(beat, then a whisper)
Tom? Is— it true about your garden?

TOM
Ye— I don't k— Lorraine, will you
please put it through?

A sigh. The call changes with click.

TOM (CONT'D)

Elle? Edna Eden must have finally
put a gypsy curse on us!

GRANT (PHONE)

Wouldn't be the first time. Thomas.
What's this about—

TOM

Grant. It's— I'll see you tomorrow.

GRANT

At the sockhop??—

Tom hangs up. The phone rings again. He storms out.

EXT. EVERETT HOME - A SHORT WHILE LATER

Eleanor's classic blue sedan rolls up the dirt drive between
the house and Tom's workshop.

INT. TOM'S WORKSHOP - MOMENTS LATER

The radio blaring, Tom is wrenching away at some partially
obscured contraption in the corner.

The door opens and Eleanor glides in. He doesn't notice.

Her eyes draw down to the workbench, strewn with nuts, bolts,
oddities, personality and chaos. Partially obscured: A
journal.

As she lightly flips through a few pages. They're a mix of
designs, notes, illustrations, calculations and deep poetic
chaos — with curious headlines, notes and underlines.

"FOR PLUCKING HEART STRINGS."

"THE PHYSICS OF FEELINGS."

"VIOLETS: ALWAYS SMELLING FOR THE FIRST TIME: THE MIND (AND
HEART) FORGETS."

"BE MAGIC. AND THE MAGIC THAT LIES IN OTHER MEN, SLEEPING BUT
NEVER DEAD, WILL RISE UP AND MEET THINE OWN."

She flips it closed. And dials down the radio volume with a
long turn. Appreciating the music as she goes.

ELEANOR

I found a dress for the sockhop.

Tom turns. He looks for words, but nothing.

TOM

This— tells me you haven't looked
out the back yet.

ELEANOR

Why *no*? What of it?

Tom doesn't even try. Only cracking a small grin and shaking
his head. Just wait until she gets a load of this...

EXT. EVERETT BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Just their backs — as they stand squarely and in awe of
what's before them. Then Elle's stone face — with a thousand
yard stare.

ELEANOR

Now those are some fiiiiine lookin'
tomatas.

(suddenly to Tom)

Just look at em!

TOM

Darlin, I AGREE. Those there do
indeed look like some sort of
punchy cannonballs of flavor with
complexity and depth promising to
change your day. No doubt delicious
with just salt and pepper or even
plain — perhaps some olive oil.
But there's the question of WHY.
What DID you plant this year?

ELEANOR

Same old heirlooms I steal from
Edna Eden's garden every year.
Did you check the farmer's almanac.

Tom is incredulous.

TOM

Right. Because every ninth summer
when mercury is in retrograde,
tomatoes the size of bowling balls
pop up in random gardens.

ELEANOR

You said cannon—

TOM

—Not the focus, Elle! But yes, I did check the almanac and there's nothing to explain THIS. And people are talking. Half a dozen people came asking. Phone keeps ringing. LORRAINE ON THE SWITCHBOARD KNEW.

ELEANOR

Well. Let em look. Take the win. Bumper crops happen. You of all people appreciate the cosmic fantastical unknowns. That's the universe givin' you something back. See, even the universe knows you're a good man who deserves it.

Tom is calming and softening. A smile.

TOM

How mystical of you. Copernicus. That you? Can I call you Madam Caroline Howard?

ELEANOR

You can call me whatever you want, so long as you don't call me late for dinner.

Tom chuckles.

TOM

You really want to call this okay? It's high-strangeness, Elle!

ELEANOR

It's WEIRD. But there's nothing you can do about it, 'cept maybe make a couple hundred tomato pies and a ten gallon caprese salad. Let's just figure it out when we get back.

(beat)

Windy Wine Waltz Night??

Tom rolls his head back.

TOM

Awe, dang it, darlin — I'm just not up for it ton—

She glares.

TOM (CONT'D)

All this weirdness. People comin' by.

ELEANOR

All the more reason to get out then! Thomas P. Everett. We made a deal eleven years ago that we'd do this for ourselves. Sometimes you gotta make your own magic. Especially when you don't feel like it.

EXT. HILLY OVERLOOK - EVENING

Two glasses of red wine sit side by side. Part of a greater spread that sits atop a plaid wool blanket. A fresh wind occasionally blusters hair and trees to life.

ELEANOR (O.C.)

More than— more than desired.
(beat)
I'll start. Much.

TOM (V.O.)

Overdone.

ELEANOR

Excessive.

TOM

Overwhelming.

ELEANOR

Egregious.

There are Tom and Eleanor. They're lying on their backs.

A mid-century radio croons. Picnic Basket. A bottle of burgundy. A plate of grapes.

Around them. Vastness. It seems they sit atop a high hill. The sun now low in the sky. Everything green and golden. In an almost surreal scene that looks over the town below and miles of green sweep beyond.

Their faces are all cheeky smiles as they stare skyward.

TOM

Extreme.

ELEANOR

Unbearable!

TOM
IN-SUFFERABLE.

ELEANOR
Woof! That was swell.

They stare at the sky in silence.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
Tom?

TOM
Elle?

A beat of silence while she thinks.

TOM (CONT'D)
What's bothering ya?

ELEANOR
Part of me thinks we should move
away from this place.

TOM
(affectionately)
Silly girl! Why would you say a
thing like that.

A longer beat.

TOM (CONT'D)
Huh—

ELEANOR
It's these people, Tom! They know
the truth but it seems like some of
them are hell bent on making you
miserable.

TOM
I don't think that. They're just
mad about something else, is all.
If they feel like I let 'em down —
that's simpler — easier for them to
understand.

ELEANOR
Let 'em down. Sometimes I feel like
my husband never came back from
Snowy Pass. You saved seven lives
then did everything you could for
that poor boy. It's not your fault.
They should never have been sent up
there in the first place!

(MORE)

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Now look at how they project! Edna Eden. Sarietta Rose, Fannie Hopper, the Mayor... Tom — you've got to get that Sheriff's report. If the Mayor's hiding it and Chicago won't respond, we go higher.

Tom suddenly darkens and interrupts.

TOM

Say we did? What would happen? The mayor would double down. Crush it somehow. He always finds a way — but we'd most certainly bring back a bushel of grief and memories. Everyone arguing' again. Over me? That's the last thing these people need.

(beat)

Indeed, I reckon it's the very problem.

A long pause.

ELEANOR

Tom?

TOM

Sugar?

ELEANOR

What's bothering you?

Tom lets out a long sigh.

TOM

I just—

(beat)

Ya see—

(beat)

I guess it's just that — sometimes I just find myself asking...where did all the special things go?

ELEANOR

That makes me so sad. What do you mean?

TOM

Pop used to tell me you're gonna do something important some day. That meant a lot to me. Still does. It's just taking so long. I still believe him.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

And sometimes I think about him not getting to see how much it mattered to me — and it dims my shine. I thought I would have done more. By now.

ELEANOR

More!? Malarkey! You're a talented tinker and a thinker. You take the machines that move people and make them work again. It's smiles in front of dance hour. And shivers during The Shadowmancer Hour. The haunting beauty of Debussy. And the sand of a good Sousa!

She sits up. The radio plays on.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

(turning warmer)

Whatever it is you need to get done, you better keep trying cuz it's all you've got. The moment at hand. I'll never be as good at anything as Harry Benson is at trumpet. And you're not the secret agent you fancied you'd be when you were twelve. But no one in the world is as good as you about appreciating and celebrating things the way they deserve to be. Appreciation and magic is a hard thing to hang onto. And you fight hard. I'm here to help.

Now sitting cross-legged at Tom's head, she leans over and peeks at him upside down.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

(sudden seriousness)

And Tom — there's something else. I've been seeing some things. Cars driving by the house. People lookin' our way in town.

TOM

What else is new.

ELEANOR

(sharply)

People I don't recognize.

(beat)

You and I know what the Mayor is capable of.

(MORE)

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

It's more than letters in the mail,
now. I'm worried about this place.

Tom ponders a moment — grows sadder. Shakes his head and
mornfully chuckles

TOM

This—

He head again, reaching. Nothing.

TOM (CONT'D)

This—

(beat)

Alright.

She doesn't understand.

ELEANOR

The report?! You must! How! It's
the tru—

He cracks a grin. Cranks the radio. And shoots to his feet.
He playfully grabs her around the waist and spins her and
holds—

TOM

(loaded with truth)

Yes.

He breaks them into a dance. The music swells.

TOM (CONT'D)

It's high time I showed you the
dance of my people!

ELEANOR

(giggling)

Your PEOPLE?

He spins her. Pulls back. Their motions swoon with the music.

TOM

Indeed. It's very cheesy, cheeky
and swoony and works best under
high winds.

The wind gusts strongly.

TOM (CONT'D)

And here we are! But first!—

He yanks her in. Their faces now close. The sun even lower
now. A colored sky.

TOM (CONT'D)

Pretty gals must be kissed at great heights. It's a rule. Laws of the universe. A Fairbury ordinance! Not even up to me.

As the music crescendos and wind blows the world alive, and the couple dances in front of a colored sky. He plants a grand smooch. Almost surreal. And positively, unapologetically charmed.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. HILLY LANDSCAPE - A SHORT WHILE LATER

Almost fully night now. Just a purple glow and silhouettes. A large hill, two tiny figures - Tom and Eleanor make their way down.

EXT. HILLSIDE PATH - CONTINUOUS

Almost completely black with just a dusk glow on their faces. Stars at their back. Tom and Eleanor make their way home in serene, content silence. Drunk on wine and the moment. Just footsteps, breath, and the sound of the night.

EXT. EVERETT HOME - CONTINUOUS

From the field, the house sits warmly - a few hundred yards and a few thousand fireflies away. Peaceful when - movement in the plants, the squeak of damp grass. They're whispering.

BOY'S VOICE (O.C.)

I said keep it down. You're breathing like my pop in his morning constitutional.

SECOND BOY'S VOICE (O.C.)

Lay off me! I'm over here crawling like the Illini brave in the night!

THIRD BOY'S VOICE

Yer both full of wind, piss and excitement.

It's typical boys - army crawling out of the night.

BOY ONE

Alright! Halt, rapscallions! Gimme the spy glasses.

The three lie side-by-side on their stomachs, heads down looking over the Everett house and garden. Boy two hands over the glasses. HIS MAGNIFIED EYES – the WONDER.

Through the binoculars, the garden is as surreally tomatoed as it was in the day. Even glistening in the night.

BOY ONE (CONT'D)
I'll – be.

BOY TWO
Lemme see!

He wrenches the binoculars away.

BOY TWO (CONT'D)
Zowy.

Boy three yanks them over.

BOY THREE
Son of a–

Boy two hits him on the arm.

BOY TWO
Ope!

BOY ONE
Let's go!

BOY THREE
You sure we should be doin this?

BOY ONE
Look. At. Them. Tomatoes. Just look at em!

BOY TWO
Yeah, but I heard he and his buddies PEE in that garden!

Boy one yanks the binoculars back, hands them to the other.

BOY ONE
I said look at them tomatas!

BOY TWO
(in awe again)
Those ARE some fiiine lookin tomatas.
(beat)
But I heard he got that kid froze on snowy.

Boy one yanks the binoculars back and hits his friend.

BOY ONE

That's a bunch of malarkey! And you know it. You're just mad you're failin Spanish. Now shush! We came here for the treasure of the Sierra Madre and Ima get it.

They all churn their elbows toward the garden. Up to the garden. Huge tomatoes everywhere.

Boy two pulls out a buck knife and cuts a softball size tomato from the green vine. Perfectly red. Shiny. Healthy. Full of possibility. Together they admire in awe.

Boy one calls their collective attention to— another. EVEN. BIGGER. The collective gasp.

BOY TWO (O.C.)

(from behind, stunned)

Guys. Get a loada this.

They turn.

Time slows and the heralds sing. You can see it on their faces as eyes draw into the distance and focus on...

The. Biggest. One. Yes. Like a small bowling ball!

Amazing.

Broken by LAUGHTER. The boys turn heads, to the house, through the vines. Topsy Tom and Eleanor are arriving home. They're laughing. The game.

TOM

Friendly!

ELEANOR

Flirty!

TOM

LOOSE!

ELEANOR

(beat)

TARTY

TOM

SLAG!!

ELEANOR

What? That's too big of a jump!
TRAMP!

TOM

(to the garden)
Wait wait.

ELEANOR

(still laughing)
Ignore them! Tomorrow! Not a word.
To the davenport! For more wine!

TOM

(slurring a little)
Well, that's rude now, ISN'T IT.
Just a society by the way it treats
its prisoners AND produce.
(to the tomatoes)
GOODNIGHT, TOMAYTAS!

Tom and Eleanor stumble inside.

The boys sit silent and crouched in the garden, down among the tomatoes and vines. Above their heads – you can already see silliness and dancing, in two silhouettes on the shade.

The night's music blooms as a show unfolds on its window stage, the boys scamper away. Across the green. Into the far. Under the moon. In the night.

EXT. 1950S BUNGALOW - LATER

Crickets over the quiet postcard scene. The large parlor windows glow gold on the sturdy squared home.

INT. BUNGALOW PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

A smart comfortable 1950s home in every way, and a little more. Patterns and textures. Wood paneling, wall paper and ornamental design.

In the center. Across the davenport, like the last supper, a group is gathered around the coffee table. One of THE tomatoes perched atop. Simply amazing.

From outside in... the Three Boy Thieves. Two sets of parents. A curious little sibling. A cat. All gawking inward.

At the center below them, on the Davenport, the Reverend smugly holds court.

REVEREND PRITCHARD
 Pilfered! You boys have found
 yourself in a curious situation. On
 one hand, in the Lord's eyes. On
 the other hand. THAT is a fiiiine
 lookin to-ma-to.

FATHER ONE
 Now. We ARE moraled people. But...

MOTHER ONE
 HANK. Be a role model. Then
 again...

MOTHER TWO
 Perhaps we should think about this
 more advantageously for ourselves.

FATHER TWO
 I like her idea.

FATHER ONE
 This is a blessing! Tom Everett's a
 generous man. It's his blessing!
 Practically a proactive donation.

With a knife, he leans in with his creepy grin.

Suddenly- the group is in a giddy moment of deliciousness.
 Almost musical and surreal. Crooning, cooing swooning. Eyes
 wide and aglow - smiles wider. Tasting, nibbling, sharing.

Tomato juice on chins, shirts and the morning paper. Then
 bickering, hoarding, gorging - those fine big red tomatoes.

And the music blooms as the inevitable happens.

MONTAGE - THE TOWN TAKES INTEREST

How silly and pretty word travels. As all the quirky,
 beautifully cliché characters you'd expect from a vintage
 small town go to work with their words on another kind of
 vine.

Whispers covered by cupped hands. News delivered at knocked
 doors. Words across the counter, cash till and confessional.

- Old ladies drive by in boat-like cars - goose-necking out
 the window for a view of Tom's garden.

- The druggist passes a prescription - and a bit of gossip.

- At a traffic stop, the policeman flips around his paper pad
 to show the driver a sketch of a tomato - THEN A GIANT ONE.

Over picket fences. Over the switchboard. Over the Mayor's big breakfast. The town is talking.

- At the beauty parlor - under the hair dryers - sprightly ladies with beehive hairdos buzz with gossip.

- The news drops with the sugar cubes at Edna Eden's tea time.

- Norm at his crosswalk.

- Grant at his theatre projector.

- Bonnie at the diner.

They all, inevitably, hear. And the morning has only just begun.

OVER BLACK

KNOCK NA-NA KNOCK KNOCK.

KNOCK NA-NA KNOCK KNOCK.

INT. EVERETT BEDROOM - MORNING

Elle lifts her eyemask and the blackness becomes bedroom.

KNOCK NA-NA Noc-Noc-Noc-Noc-Noc-Noc-Noc!...

EXT. EVERETT HOME FRONT STEP - MOMENTS LATER

The door opens inward, where Tom and Elle stand like a curious, groggy American Gothic.

TOM

Was?- That knock the bolero you're always singin' to when you drink wine Thursd-?

EDNA EDEN

-THOMAS... EVERETT...so strange to be seeing you again! It just seems like you've been so quiet for a while.

TOM

I'm somehow less surprised. Good to see you too, Edna.

EDNA EDEN

That people in small towns run into
each othe—?

TOM

—That I've been quiet for a while.

An awkward beat.

EDNA EDEN

(aside)

Yes. Here we are.

(resetting)

Well, I'm just following up on
behalf of the mayor. You seemed
— uncertain — yesterday about
attending The Loyal Order of the
Albatross's Semi—

TOM

Yes— thanks. The ball. My mistake
for seeming undecided. I am certain—
ly—not attending this year.

He steps back from the door.

EDNA EDEN

—But this is an invite from the
Mayor who has special gue—

TOM

Edna, if ya knew how little I cared
your head would spin.

EDNA EDEN

And he believes your garden might
be this town's ticket to bigger
things.

TOM

The town is fine as they are.

He goes to close the door.

EDNA EDEN

Thomas Everett! People in small
towns are supposed to look out for
each other!

Tom turns, incredulously. A long beat.

TOM

Edna. Eden...There are two types of
things in the universe from here.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

Things that are going to happen.
And things that aren't. THIS— So
happens to be the second.

He goes to close the door once and for all when a foot shoots from inside. Stopping it open. Eleanor's.

The door slowly peels back open. One Eleanor C. Everett pokes her head out. What a grin.

ELEANOR

Edna. Please forgive my tired
grouch of a husband. He's just
being nice. And what he means to
say is— we'll see you at seven.

Before Tom can say a word. She shuts the door and presses her back to it in satisfaction.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Hang onto your observations for
just a night, Tom. And go grab a
sack o' those tomatoes. I need a
night out. We deserve it and so do
they.

She cracks a catty look. Locks in with mysterious-serious eyes.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

And so do THEY.

EXT. FAIRBURY HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

From high atop an angry, hundred-year oak tree, you can see the shiny chlorophyll night. A few spotlights light the face of the Fairbury High School Gymnasium. Music and revelry spilling from inside.

The dew is already out and so are the people. Mirror black streets and a handful of fine 50s cars. Old, young, in-between — all types of people that make a town — mosey toward the proud little institution from all directions.

INT. GYMNASIUM SOCKHOP - CONTINUOUS

Certainly no high-school dance. And what a fun difference. There's a dance floor, hung decorations, tables, chairs and punch, but also...

Some doowop group with a sax and a few lady singers wails.

The room is peopled with quirky small-town characters in all their endearing flavors. An elderly couple shows off on the dance floor. A fat man in a fez flirts with a highly beehived lady. A few over-coiffed couples cackle unnecessarily loud at some unremarkable comment.

At the front, the wide set of doors yawns open at once and our three couples take a few steps in – then take it all in, as another man in a fez unicycles across the row of them.

Norman and Bonnie on one side. Grant and DONNA on the other. Tom and Elle in the middle, each with a burlap sack in hand.

Each of their faces, as they survey the characters – a mix of bemusement, caution, amusement and affection. All these characters. This town. This place. This night. They approve.

EDNA EDEN (O.C.)
Welly well well!

Edna Eden swoops in with her hens all dressed with some prickly attempt at perfection.

EDNA EDEN (CONT'D)
At the request of the Mayor
himself, the second guests of honor
have arrived.

She bows broadly.

HEN 1
Debatable honor.

Edna shuts her up with a gesture – flashes a glance to Grant.

EDNA EDEN
And bless your hearts, some of
those famous tomatoes everyone's
been hearing about through the
grape vine!

ELEANOR
Or the tomato vine!

Cheeky chuckles.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
And thank you. We are most
certainly here at our pleasure.

BONNIE
Morbid curiosity if nothing else.

ELEANOR

This music is JUST wonderful.

Edna's uncomfortable. She shoots another look to Grant.

EDNA EDEN

I should let the Mayor thank you!

As she whisks them away, they hand off the sacks and follow.
Through the sea of curious noses, dresses and demeanors.
Handsome and homely. Classy and quirky. All oddly charming.

And the doowop wails.

INT. GYMNASIUM CORNER - CONTINUOUS

A man with a big nose, face and bowler - swallows a shot in
one slug from a frosty ice glass - then turns his head. His
mouth and eyes tighten.

Suddenly he winds up his arm and throws. A bell hanging by
the wall rings as the ice glass explodes on it. A game!

Celebrations all around.

Here, the Mayor is deeply engaged with an audience of a HALF-
DOZEN MEN. Some of them FAIRBURY ALDERMEN. The rest - mid-
century, country-ish gentlemen of different cuts, shades and
age, but all with some extra polish - and something - off.

The crowd in front of them parts and Edna Eden struts up, our
three couples in uncertain tow.

One of the Country Gentlemen Guests puts a presumptuous hand
on Edna Eden's waist. She shirks it with a glare of disgust.

The Mayor notices. Caught off guard and not happy. Flustered.

MAYOR

Everett! Tom! Tom Everett! The
prodigal son! Thank you for coming!

(a low aside to Edna)

You didn't need to bring them over.
Remember our GUESTS.

He grabs her arm tight. She wrenches it away. Grant notices.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Yes! We have special guests! Who
appreciate the spirit of Fairbury
and are here in the interest-

(goadng the guests)

PROSPECTIVE interest...

(MORE)

MAYOR (CONT'D)
in breathing new life into our fair
town!

Grant leans into Tom, low.

GRANT
I don't like the cut o' THIS jib.

TOM
Breathing new life. Hmph. I admit I
didn't know we were running out of
breath.

(beat)
Gentlemen, pleased to make your
mysterious greeting. Just what sort
of afflatus does the soul of our
town have to look forward to,
exactly?

The man is uncomfortable.

MAN
Excavation-Based Municipal Wealth.

TOM
Mining?

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.C.)
OH, HAVE MERCY!

All heads turn to the sideboard, full of food and
refreshments. THE WOMAN is first to take a bite of Tom's
tomatoes. Skewer in hand.

The exclamation. The look on her face. Her audience in awe.
AN ACADEMIC MAN seizes his, bites. And CHANGES. New religion
on his face.

MAN'S VOICE (O.C.)
Limerent and divine at the same
time!

Two more guests take to their skewers. Then more!

OLD MAN
Never have these dentures ever! Now
THAT'S A FINE TOMATOOO!

The crowd moves and mumbles, curious, toward the table. More
bites of tomatoes go down. Eyes go wide. The room blooms and
swoons for a moment, as, for just a moment, people are struck
by the extraordinary punch of those tomatoes.

A few moments of near chaos, as all types experience a rare moment. Then slowly winding down. The last of the room finishing the last few bites. A collective sigh of left-over delight.

Musicians take up guitars, horns and mic again and the dance resumes.

Our three couples take the dance floor with others. Close in together, now intimate in a crowd – the conversations change.

ELEANOR

Any idea what that was about?

TOM

I believe some sort of exorcism.
Were they that good?

ELEANOR

Never tried.

TOM

Me neither. Maybe for the better.

Tom is craning his neck in all directions, eyes scanning everywhere. Then – the mayor and his guests. Elle notices.

ELEANOR

What's the matter?

He recovers quick.

TOM

What? Matter? Why not a thing. Just people watching when I should be appreciating the second most delightful gal in Fairbury.

ELEANOR

(smiles, faux offended)
Second!?

TOM

Now, we both know Maybelle Hurley is possibly the finest lady to walk this earth.

ELEANOR

Oof. She is sweet. She's ninety three thou—

TOM

—heart o' gold! Tell me I'm wrong.

ELEANOR

I'll settle for second. How is
Grant getting on with Donna?

They both glance to the couple dancing nearby.

TOM

Oof. Not well.

ELEANOR

What do you mean? They look happ-

TOM

She's not gonna be tuned in enough
for him. I think he'll feel let
down.

Norm and Bonnie dance their way by.

TOM (CONT'D)

See. Norman!

He gestures. Across the room. Grant is engaged. She's aloof.

NORMAN

Nope. He's looking for it in her
eyes.

BONNIE

Woof. And NOT finding whatever it
is that ne'er-do-well is looking
for.

TOM

Please go support him. I need some
piccalilli!

He barks as he parts the group and departs for the food.

INT. GYMNASIUM CORNER - CONTINUOUS

CONDUCTOR BLOOM is playing wallflower. A stoic, polished,
black man with an air of control - the dress uniform perhaps.
He's quietly surveying. Tom saunters up, munching off plate-
in-hand. And comfortably joins his watch.

TOM

Conductor...

Bloom returns a subtle nod and a friendly elbow back - still
looking straight. Tom notices that. And takes another bite.

TOM (CONT'D)
Something— not quite right about
tonight, eh?

BLOOM
You noticed. Indeed. It is not.

TOM
All the Mayor's men. Seen them
before?

Bloom's gaze is still unbroken.

BLOOM
One other time. It was dark. But it
was them.

TOM
What do ya make of it?

BLOOM
It's too soon to say. But I aim to
find out. Excuse me.

Across the room, the Mayor and crew are excusing themselves.
Bloom starts quietly after them. But turns to Tom.

BLOOM (CONT'D)
Everett. I know I can trust you, so
I'm going to ask you to keep an
extra eye out for me. BUT... come
straight to me.

He nods. Tom watches reflectively. But— a tap on his arm.

A round spectacled face is beaming to see him. Belonging to a
soft-natured little man in a plaid suit and bowtie. Several
scout troop pins. He's drunk.

BESPECTACLED MAN
I don't believe it! You're here!

TOM
Reggie! How are you, sir. I'd have
called if it was planned.
(beat)
Scout's honor!

The timid man just smiles and beams. Until his eyes start to
mist over. Then fill. His smile and composure breaking.

TOM (CONT'D)
Reggie! I think you need some air!

EXT. SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

Tom escorts Reggie to a quiet spot below a lamp.

TOM

It sure is nice to see ya.
Something got you in a mood, fella?

Tom's trying to straighten his suit and mood. But the man breaks.

REGGIE

I'm! I'm just so sorry!

He doubles in grief, but Tom pulls him up.

TOM

What would YOU be saying that for?

REGGIE

YOU know why! EVERYONE knows. You weren't even supposed to be there!

TOM

(carefully)
Reggie, I wanted to be...

REGGIE

NEITHER WAS I! And why? All for some Scouts mountaineering record?!

TOM

You stop that right now. Thoughts like that are a waste of your good nature. Besides.

(beat)
We're all sorry.

MAYOR (O.C.)

Sure we are.

Tom and Reggie turn.

A looming silhouette - The Mayor - strolls up. Two of his aldermen at his sides.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Have I interrupted an eyes-wide-open moment?

Reggie drunkenly darkens.

REGGIE
(ironically, sage)
You. Speak— of the devil —himself.
And it wasn't even about a record.
(breaking)
It was for you!

He lunges at the three politicians. Tom holds him.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
It would've been so much worse if
not for Tom!
(softening)
And then you lied.

Drained of passion. His head sadly satellites back to Tom.

REGGIE (CONT'D)
And someone died.

The Mayor's had enough.

MAYOR
Quite moving. Perhaps in another
life.
(pivoting, darkly)
I'm here for a word with you,
Everett.

Tom's eyes narrow as he loosens his grip on Reggie and
straightens.

MAYOR (CONT'D)
You didn't need to embarrass the
town like that.

TOM
I was simply clarifying for the
town. When I see a recklessly
ambitious man with the finite funds
who wants to run for governor.
Naturally I have questions.

Tom takes a step forward.

TOM (CONT'D)
You know, Mayor. I go for a lot of
nighttime walks. Elle thinks it's
weird but I sure do see a lot of
interesting things other folks
don't. Last week I saw a surveyor
workin' his math in the direction
of Snowy Pass. And tonight I see
him again.

Tom gestures with a nod, to the man on the Mayor's right.

MAYOR

Did ya now? And you expect
Fairbarians to believe YOU?

TOM

Now, I know you can AND will
obfuscate and gerrymander the truth
to death among neighbors.

(beat)

But this one's just between you and
me.

The mayor scans the company and bites the moment before
anyone can hear another word.

MAYOR

Everett, don't you eve—

TOM

(straight and dark)
Sheriff's report from last year.
November. Seventeenth.

He shoots an uncomfortable glance back at his own company.

The Mayor leans forward with steel. Tom is bellicose stone.
Everything darkens — fast.

MAYOR

(low, growling and evil)
Everett, I'm warning you. This can
get so— much— worse for you. You
think I can't—

ELEANOR (O.C.)

Tom, there you are!

It's Elle. Approaching. clearly scared. Her eyes dart from
face to face as reads the moment. She recovers — a forced
grace.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Let's— let's not fight this fine
moonlit night! My husband has
promised me a night out. And I'm
collecting.

She puts her arm through Tom's. Men on both sides become
proper.

The mayor holds a dark, lingering glare as he steps backward and boldly turns and walks into then night.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. FAIRBURY STREET - CONTINUOUS NIGHT

Perhaps from the sockhop or some nearby phonograph - soft music carries in. Tom and Elle stroll the shiny night streets among the quiet homes. A welcome calm settled in.

TOM

Oof! What a night. What a PLACE.
What a gaggle o' yahoos.

ELEANOR

Lot to unpack there... think it's worth it?

TOM

Decidedly no. Better to appreciate from a safe distance, preferably with an emergency exit.

ELEANOR

Speaking of. Just what did I interrupt back there?

TOM

Aw, just poor ol' Reggie. You know that gent has a few and starts to think.

ELEANOR

I mean the Mayor.

They walk in silence while he thinks.

TOM

I'm not sure yet.

ELEANOR

Well if you know something-

TOM

-I'm not... sure if I know what I might possibly know. More of a feelin. I promise I'll let you know the second I suspect everything isn't all right with the universe.
BOOP-

He reaches over. Makes his point with boop on the nose.
Eleanor begrudgingly but with a smile – moves on.

TOM (CONT'D)

All this over silly tomatoes. We
coulda stayed home! What are we
going to do with those damn haunted
fruits anyway?

ELEANOR

I knew you'd feel that way. And I
agreed. That's why I called Zerby
Green Grocers. He took one taste
and wrote us a handsome check.
Pickin' em up as. we. speak.

TOM

Hot damn! That'a gal!

Eleanor walks, smiles and eyes him, blooming in her savvy
strut. Affirmative.

TOM (CONT'D)

Sold em all? Handsome check? How
handsome? Not as handsome as me—

Eleanor leans over, smooches him, and whispers in his ear.
Tom's face of delight. So many emotions. Processing.

TOM (CONT'D)

Well isn't this just a DAMN fine
night! You know, I walk this very
route almost every night. But this
here spot is going to be extra
charmed from now on.

ELEANOR

You and your night time weirdo
walks. But I love that – for you.
Whatever keeps the lid semi-screwed
on.

TOM

It IS good for me I'll have you
know! It's how I get my essential
dose of what I call Vitamin O!

She's doubtfully amused at nonsense.

TOM (CONT'D)

Yep. Luminarium they call it. While
that Vitamin D they talk about
prevents rickets, Vitamin O
prevents rackets!

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

So absorbed for the imagination and
general wonderment.

ELEANOR

You ARE a weirdo!

TOM

I'm serious.

(he's not, clown)

Just THINK'ov it! You ever notice
the people who spend the most time
out at night are always the
soundest of body and mind.
Conductor Bloom walkin them tracks.
Ever notice nearly every milkman ya
meet is in a great mood!?

The walk continues. Under giant old elms, deep long shadows,
green grass, and nostalgic American charm.

TOM (CONT'D)

But, more than that. It's what you
learn about people when they're not
trying to tell you something. See
up there?

He nods a direction - a few houses up.

TOM (CONT'D)

Clear up there. That's old Jim
Walker.

ELEANOR

The bank clerk?

Tom's smile flashes with excitement as he corrects her.

TOM

The WRITER! Banker by day. But the
man is up there almost every night,
clacking away at that typewriter. I
haven't got a clue what he's workin
on. But I'm proud of him. And can
you believe no one even knows!?

(beat)

And over there!

He points to the other side of the street - a bungalow. Elle
squints...

ELEANOR

I can't see anything-

TOM
(a punchy whisper)
Listen!

They hold their breath in the crickets and the night. Sure enough, quietly – PERFECT PIANO comes up like a breeze. Their exchange is whispered and excited.

ELEANOR
Mic? Mic Evans?

TOM
(beaming)
The one! Can you believe it??

ELEANOR
I thought he stopped years back
after the last record man turned
him down?

TOM
Never. He just keeps getting better
and better. I don't think we've
seen the last of old Mic. I just
hope not.

The sound lowers as the walk continues. From the next little A-frame, a COUPLE ARGUING.

TOM (CONT'D)
Yeah. They're not doing so well.

Lowered heads.

ELEANOR
Shame. They're such good people.

A few more steps and Tom stops them.

TOM
Last but not least. The ever-spicy
Edna Eden herself.

They turn their eyes to the glow of front parlor window of an old victorian. One silhouette on the shade – Edna Eden – full bolero – wine glass in hand. They watch for a moment, enjoying.

TOM (CONT'D)
Look at that! Almost every night.
She's good!

Beat.

ELEANOR
She's sad.

Beat.

TOM
I suppose you're right.

Suddenly, Elle shoots out a hand and grips Tom's elbow – dead serious.

ELEANOR
My. Days.

TOM
You don't think she's talent–

ELEANOR
(a harsh whisper)
Tom! Everything is not alright with
the universe...

She directs his attention...

Ahead to the street corner – a clean cone of light casts downward to the sidewalk. Someone there, laying on the sidewalk. And not moving.

EXT. LAMPLIT CORNER - NIGHT CONTINUOUS

Under the beautiful cone of light against the deep night – the figure lays prone. Navy blue suit, dress shoes, a hat toppled off nearby. It's–

TOM
It's Bloom!

Tom and Elle scamper up and turn him over. A trail of blood on his head, the conductor is limp.

ELEANOR
Is he?–

Tom holds him up. Shakes him lightly. Listens in.

TOM
Nah. He's breathin'. Conductor!
Conductor Bloom...

Still nothing.

TOM (CONT'D)
 Ya hit your head but you're here.
 Come on back, Michael!

Bloom stirs. And— ALERT.

BLOOM
 I heard it!

TOM
 What, Michael?

BLOOM
 I heard it. The tracks told me.
 Listen to the tracks.

TOM
 Well, as I've told ya, fella — you
 hit. your. Head. Elle, help me sit
 him up.

Eleanor is distracted. Still on her knees but vertical again
 — squinting into the night. She's — seen something.

TOM (CONT'D)
 Elle. What is it?!

Still fixated into the dark distance. Her response is
 absent...

ELEANOR
 Nothing. Nothing I just—

Movement! In the distance. She spots the shadow slip into
 view — then disappear in a wink.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
 Tom! There it is agai—

Interrupted, Elle's cut off as Bloom scrambles to his feet.
 And hurdles into the shadows. Tom and Elle scrambling after,
 to...

EXT. MOONLIGHT TRAIN TRACKS — CONTINUOUS

Deep in shadow, the nearby train tracks. Two rails, mint in
 the moonlight. Conductor Bloom drops to his knees between the
 tracks. Tom and Elle fall in on the other side. Winded.

From his coat, Bloom produces an old brass stethoscope. He
 puts it over his ears, then drops cone to the tracks — and
 listens.

Holding his breath. Focus. Shiny sweat – yes – a very serious nod. He pulls the scope off and places it on Tom.

BLOOM
(almost inaudible)
Listen to the tracks.

Both men duck their ears back to the tracks! Elle joins. A long silence of short breaths, and ears on metal.

TOM
I hear it. That– far? Comin or
goin?

Bloom grabs the scope back. Produces a shiny stopwatch from his pocket. He listens and click. It TICKS.

BLOOM
Comin'
(beat)
But. Slow-in'
(beat)
Fourteen. Fifteen. Stop.

He yanks his ear from the track and stares like a hawk down the line.

TOM
Well? You can't see it.

Bloom's thousand-yard stare is unmoved.

BLOOM
Only light that's not a fire fly.
One point three five miles out.

EXT. COUNTRY TRAIN TRACKS - NIGHT

Down in the distance, the locomotive is indeed stopped, flanked by deep corn on either side. A few of the wooden cargo cars yawned open to the glow from within.

MEN BARK SHARP ORDERS IN THE NIGHT. Work begins.

EXT. DARK COUNTRY TRACKS - CONTINUOUS

The Conductor, Tom and Elle creep down the tracks. The tall green cornstalks and a million shadows on either side. Keeping their heads low, and voices lower.

With care and confidence, they crab-step, look and listen. Bloom in the lead – Elle, a stalker in stilettos, starts to quietly outpace him.

EXT. COUNTRY TRAIN TRACKS - NIGHT

Down on the tracks now. MEN IN COVERALLS drop ramps onto train cars and begin unloading. Very large equipment. Brutally strong metal monstrosities.

EXT. DARK COUNTRY TRACKS - CONTINUOUS

Bloom slows – and halts the Everetts too. Just barely – they can see now. Squinting. Bloom pulls out binoculars.

LARGE IN FOCUS: Men moving mining equipment off the train – then slowly muscling the machines into the tall corn. Several machines. Several men.

Including the Mayor's guests.

Tom grabs them. Then Elle. Back to Bloom.

Suddenly a flashlight, turning sweeps them, briefly. The binoculars glint. SPOTTED.

They take off. Back down the tracks into the dark. But more lights follow. Reaching and sweeping.

A chase begins.

Just corn, shadows and tracks, under the moon.

The Conductor, Tom and Elle. Hurdling through the night. Through the deep green and shadows. Boldly. Especially Elle. No words. Just SHOE SOLES, GRAVEL and BREATH.

Their long strides seem to hang in the air as the surreal sprint becomes a moment. Because–

Behind them charge FOUR MEN. Two of the Mayor's men. Two of his guests. A chaotic angry light show of pumping lanterns and flashlights.

TRADING SHOTS. THE SCENE ESCALATES AND PLAYS OUT IN GRAND CHARMED NOIR.

Until Elle suddenly breaks left into the corn. Bloom and Tom after. ...And the Mayor's men behind them.

EXT. CORN FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Now in corn. Three bold Fairbarians chased by four angry men. In the deep green lush of leaves - shooting by in the moonlight as our adversaries race down the rows with reckless abandon.

MORE EXCITED SHOTS AND CUTS. FAST, ANGSTY AND BEAUTIFUL.

The pursuers are fast. In the corn, the Fairbarians are faster. Connecting eyes through the rows, changing lanes and navigating this familiar midwest jungle.

From the moon overhead, the nefarious race is geometrical spectacle. Botanical tracers through the sea of green. Each one a thrilled, terrified, determined soul.

The Mayor's men lose their orientation, fall behind. Three tracers continue.

EXT. CLEARING - MOMENTS LATER

Bloom, Tom and Eleanor crash from the sea of stalks into the shiny dew-grass night. All heaving breath.

Bloom quickly sets about a survey - taking out his compass, checking his watch, the position of the moon - then turns his binoculars on the town train signal and light in the distance.

He speaks evenly to Tom as he remains locked.

BLOOM

Tom. I need you to listen to me.

Adjusting the binoculars. Squinting hard.

BLOOM (CONT'D)

I need to bring this to Chicago.
Please keep an eye out. But please
keep this to yourself. I need a
shade under two days.

ELEANOR

Just what do you think it is?

IN THE DISTANCE the signal BELLS aloud with red lights. Through the binoculars, Bloom clocks it, checks his watch.

Then turns to them, with a dire look.

BLOOM
Trouble's come to town.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. MARVIN'S DINER - THE NEXT MORNING

It's crowded. In a booth, Norman and Grant sit across from each other sipping coffee. At Norman's side, a boy, about 9. Misty eyed - and focused intently across the table at Grant.

GRANT
(cavalier but caring)
He knows he's not the handsomest boy in the sandlot - which is objectively true - so he's gotta find someone to look down on - even if it means inventing something or being really, really mean. It's called last-place avoidance, Timmy.

The boy only blinks. But listens.

NORMAN
Yea. Sorta what he said!

He eyes Grant with chiding caution.

NORMAN (CONT'D)
They're good kids. But they're swingin at other things, bud!

GRANT
That Elgin boy's adopted. And Billy Cramer fell down last year in front of everyone at the rhubarb festival. Can you IMAGINE being that poor little knuckle head when it's time to go to sleep!

The boy widens a smile.

GRANT (CONT'D)
And that Draper boy. Most obvious of them all! He's got a misshapen head!

NORMAN
Innocence, Sir. Let it be a little longer.

GRANT

It's not even that bad. But you
know it bugs em!

With a woosh, Tom swoops into the empty seat. Norman excuses
the boy.

NORMAN

Go tell Mister Reed your
grasshopper joke.

TOM

(to the waitress)
Gunpowder green, please.

Tom is skittish. Checking around. Paranoid even.

TOM (CONT'D)

Gentlemen, I need your help.

TOM (CONT'D)

After the Albatross's last night -
Elle and I took a lil' moonlight
walk.

GRANT

As a Thomas does.

TOM

We found. Bloom. Knocked out cold!
(beat)
By someone. Turns that Illini
Warrior sniffed out what you caught
a whiff of earlier.

NORMAN

He was onto something?

TOM

He was. And that didn't stop him.
The warrior listened to the tracks.
And they told him trouble is afoot.
Sure enough it was, just a mile up
the line.

A busser leans in to fill water.

ALL THREE MEN

Thank you. We're fine. Yes. Fine.
Fine. Not for me. Welp- we're doing
it anyway. Okay. That's fine. OPE!
Spilled a little. It's fine. Good.
Thaaaanks much, fella!

The busser leaves. Back in.

TOM

We saw THEM. Taking mining equipment. Off the train. Into the corn.

GRANT

I feel like there's a more efficient way to steal corn...

TOM

Corn is what saved us. We were spotted AND chased. They sure meant business.

A waitress steps in to fill coffee. He breaks for a smile. Then leans back in...

GRANT

But why? Don't make sense...

TOM

But look deeper, friend. The oldest Farmers Almanacs'll tell you - Snowy Pass is home to one of the great deposits of Gallavantium in the midwest.

Realization.

GRANT

Hence the mining equipment.

NORMAN

But the pass is protected by Rolling Rock Accord of '33.

GRANT

Hence the night.

Tom hesitates. Holds a thought. Then darkens.

TOM

Gentlemen. I told you. If we all kept up like this. Good people keep looking the other way because they don't want the trouble. If we gave ourselves reason to do worse... trouble would find us. And this small town would discover bigger problems.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

And when they arrive we had better damn know who we are – and what matters – or else we might not recognize em!

He checks his surroundings, then doubles down.

TOM (CONT'D)

Now Bloom. He's comin' with the cavalry in two days. To watch. And wait.

GRANT

Of course you aren't.

TOM

Gentlemen. I don't care what anybody says or what anyone thinks of me. Fairbury is MY town. And I'm – tired.

(beat)

I know it's those men from up North. And I know it's the Mayor. Now we know why they're here.

(beat)

Tonight – when the sun goes down. I'm headed back to Snowy Pass. And I'm not coming back without the proof this place deserves.

Tom slaps down a notebook full of scribble.

TOM (CONT'D)

Listen.

EXT. EVERETT BACKYARD – EVENING

Looking across field, a nervous afternoon is darkening into a heavy purple evening. But there's weather grumbling far in the distance from angry clouds – a few faint flashes of light. Still far.

INT. EVERETT KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

Tom at the back with the curtain pulled. Assessing. The light. The weather. He lets it go. Reflects. It's time.

He walks into the adjoined den where Elle sits at an easel painting – a rather haunting landscape dominated by a menacing ancient oak tree, its crooked branches backed by a haunting deep colorful dusk.

TOM

Darlin— I mean Rembrandt. I'm
headed out for a while.

ELEANOR

Oh, dear...

TOM

Precisely. Fellas and I gonna have
a few at the tavern then plant a
bunch o' buck wheat seeds in Sal
Drummond's front yard. Norm caught
that old goat barkin' at the poor
Palmer kid last week.

ELEANOR

Of course you are.

TOM

It's good for the bees. They like
it.

He cracks a Cheshire grin. She curtsies back with a wink.

But when Tom turns. His face is already very. serious.

EXT. FAIRBURY ROADS - NIGHTFALL

Tom's worn, blue pick-up cuts into the night. A faint RUMBLE
far in the distance.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD LANE - CONTINUOUS NIGHT

Tom's truck rolls through the Rockwellian night
neighborhoods. A far off flash of light.

EXT. DOWNTOWN FAIRBURY HOTEL - CONTINUOUS NIGHT

Darker. Quiet. Glow rows of street lamps and a few shop
marquees alight. The stately hotel waits. Tom's pick-up pulls
in softly across the street. The headlights blink out.

INT. TOM'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Tom watches the front, shaded windows, of the lobby bar —
where silhouettes of dining and drinking play out.

Tom's eyes are fixed. He turns up some sweet melody on the
old radio. And waits.

EXT. EDGE OF TOWN - NIGHT

On the other side of town, the storm is rolling in. And it's getting dark. Behind a large blooming bush, Norm and Grant lean on the back of Grant's old Studebaker.

On their left, the edge of Fairbury, then fields and storm. On their right, The City Works.

NORMAN

So what exactly are we looking for?

GRANT

I don't know either. But we'll know it when we see it.

Beat.

NORMAN

I'm worried about Tom.

GRANT

He's not gonna get himself hurt, plus he's got that Du Su Quong book I got him from the Orient.

NORMAN

I KNOW he won't. That's not what I'm talkin about. I mean- I know everything that's happened would dim his shine for a time. But I always knew he'd hang onto it. Pull through. But lately. I wonder.

Thunder rumble. A roll of lightning. They pause for the show.

GRANT

Bah! He'll be fine. Plus, we've got his back.

He throws a few air strikes.

GRANT (CONT'D)

You know I was born on Dia- De- Los-Muertos? Means a cross over when the veil was the thinnest and the universe was yet undecided about me. Bellicose and pugilistic! Not to be kerfuffled with!

NORMAN

Have you decided about Donna?

GRANT

I. Feel. Attacked. Norman! I struggle because I can't tell if she's simple or holdin' something back.

NORMAN

She DOES have a way about her.

Grant points and whisper shouts his agreement

GRANT

YES. The Way! Positively indescribable. Like a cosmic punch in the face, all the same.

NORMAN

Impossible to prepare for.

GRANT

Gals like that should come with a warnin' label! Like Bonnie!

NORMAN

(fondly)

You're gonna feel something, fella.

GRANT

You didn't see the scarf?

NORMAN

Holmes?

GRANT

Now, I wouldn't expect you to, seeing as you haven't scratched at the map quite as hard as I have.

NORMAN

Not even, you madman!

GRANT

Comes from Morocco. Where I happen to HAVE BEEN. 'Long with Hong Kong, Lithuania, Prague and Saigon.

NORMAN

Find what you were looking for?

GRANT

I resemble that comment. But it's how I know that that scarf Donna had on last night comes from deep inside the walls of the Marrakech Medina.

(beat)

Means Donna has more to say.

As they stare into the coming storm, he cracks a very very slow wide grin.

GRANT (CONT'D)

Maybe...

Norm has noticed something.

NORMAN

Heads up, Nature Boy.

In the distance, on the outroad, headlights turn the corner in their direction. The pair ducks to the side of the car. They're covered in the blackness of the looming bushes.

Two beams from two headlamps cut the dark as it approaches. They hold low as the car passes...

GRANT

That's Elle.

NORMAN

Naw! Can't be!

GRANT

You know another Nash Rambler with a poodle on the dash?

Norm's face knows.

NORMAN

We should. We should make sure she's safe.

They scramble into the car and drive into the night.

EXT. DOWNTOWN FAIRBURY HOTEL - CONTINUOUS NIGHT

Tom waits like a gravestone. The revelry continues until - The Mayor's Mysterious Sharp-dressed guests spill out the front door into the night, get in a shiny sedan, and roll into the night.

Tom waits, starts his truck, and follows.

EXT. FAIRBURY - NIGHT

Over the next several minutes, all people are silent, while the storm, and the looks on each of their faces say everything. There is deep concern, trepidation, anger, patience, and uncertainty. As Tom goes on his pursuit, and Grant and Norm go on theirs.

INTERCUT BETWEEN:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD

A lonely, empty, liminal highway – just corn for miles in every direction. On one side clear moonlit night. The other: an angry sky. RUMBLING thunder, rolling great cloud billows and flashes.

INT. GRANT'S STUDEBAKER

The two men ride silently, pensively and the dramatic weather and landscape races by and comes alive around them.

Norman's face – a bit concerned, then saddened.

Grant's face – far away, then darkening.

EXT. WINDING ROAD PASS - CONTINUOUS NIGHT

Trees lean over the empty curve. The storm growls in the distance. Two lights get bigger. A shiny sedan approaches and passes. A few more moments. Tom's truck follows.

INT. TOM'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS NIGHT

The storm on one side. Clear on the other. Tom cranes his head to take it in. Take note of the almost full moon. Then flips off his headlights. And turns up some haunting melody on the old radio.

EXT. ANOTHER SMALL TOWN - CONTINUOUS NIGHT

The outskirts of another small town, not unlike Fairbury, where the storm is even closer. Sheets of lightning create surreal moments of day. Eleanor's car rolls into town.

Moments go by. Then Grant's sedan rolls after.

EXT. BACK OF SNOWY PASS - CONTINUOUS NIGHT

It's starting to rain now. The wind crescendos and falls. The shiny sedan comes to a stop under the monolithic rock face. The three men get out, pop-up umbrellas and start walking.

A moment. Still without lights. Tom's truck pulls up after. He gets out, pulls on a slicker. He goes after on foot, and the MUSIC follows him.

EXT. SMALL TOWN NEIGHBORHOOD - CONTINUOUS NIGHT

Elle's car rolls down the quaint nuclear street - now coming violently alive in the storm. She pulls into the drive of a charming, modest home, next to another parked car.

She gets out. A quick scan of her surroundings - cowering under the growing maelstrom - then hurries inside.

Just down the street. Grant's sedan sits quietly.

INT. GRANT'S SEDAN - CONTINUOUS NIGHT

They've seen it all. They exchange glances. Their faces say it all.

EXT. BACK OF SNOWY PASS

Tom is now fighting wind, rain and electricity as he climbs the now steepening terrain. Reaching the top, his view suddenly looks over an ominous scene.

Below, in the wind and the rain, under the harsh glow of work lamps, a dozen men in rubber coveralls operate all manner of machinery.

Tom up top in his slicker, hood up, holding low - takes it in with fury and concern.

EXT. SMALL TOWN HOME - NIGHT

Now the rain beats down. It drums on the roof of Grant's Studebaker as the men watch and wait.

Until, in the distance, the front door of the small home opens.

Grant and Norm squint to see through the dark and the downpour.

Elle comes out. And a man follows. After a quick hug, they each hurry to their cars and drive away.

Grant and Norm's faces. They say it all.

EXT. MINING SITE - CONTINUOUS NIGHT

Tom watches from his outcrop as mother nature rages. The three out of towners walk up with their umbrellas and stop. Lit under the work lamps and survey the work.

Tom's seen enough. From under his slicker he pulls out a large old fashioned camera, complete with metal bulb flash.

He frames it, carefully, holding low. He waits. Looks up at the sky.

The sky is quiet for a moment, before a wicked fork of lightning splits the heavens. Tom snaps the trigger.

The flashbulb joins the lightning. Got it. He retreats into the night.

EXT. GRANT'S HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

The night is calm now. Storm passed. The last afterdrips of rain still popping. Everything now wet with a touch of twinkle.

Tom is in the drive. Leaning against his truck. When Grant and Norm return in the Studebaker.

They get out and approach. The three men stand together. Silently. Darkly. Heavily. Tom breaks it -

TOM

Fellas. Everything is not okay in Fairbury.

Silence. Grant and Norm can barely make eye contact. Tom notices.

TOM (CONT'D)

What- fellas. What's happened? You see somin' too?

Their eyes still hang.

GRANT

Tom. I'm afraid we find ourselves
in a position where we've gotta
tell you somethin we don't wanna -
but will - as best pals must.

Tom's face waits.

GRANT (CONT'D)

We saw Elle.

(beat)

Somewhere we're not sure she
shoulda been.

NORMAN

We're not sure. There could be a
perfectly swell explanation.

GRANT

Elle happened to drive by tonight.
We followed her. To Maybell. Where
she went to some house. And spent a
spell inside.

(beat)

With Roger Ellis.

Tom is - crushed.

NORMAN

Now Tom, she's a great gal. Don't
go dark. You just need to talk to
her and- and-

(beat)

We just love ya both so much.

Tom remains silent.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN SLOWLY

INT. TOM'S WORKSHOP - UNDER WATER

Under a rippling clear water-bath. Submerged. Tom's face is a
blur. It's a ballad. And haunted.

INT. TOM'S WORKSHOP - CONTINUOUS

Tom pulls the developed photo from the tray of liquid and
holds it up for interrogation. He's silent. Watching it drip.

Holding... Until his face darkens with a decision.

EXT. TOM'S WORKSHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Tom yanks open the back door and rips a tarp off. Standing like a man on a mission, breath heaving. Looking at – that proud, prodigious Indian Scout Motorcycle. He takes a moment to admire the iconic, fierce machine.

EXT. COUNTY HIGHWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Tom races through the highway night. He's in classic leather gear. Strong, begoggled and determined. Blasting through this storm.

It's chaotic and dangerous, but somehow – Tom grins and pushes the throttle harder. The show of storm and night is almost theatrical.

Raindrops race to meet him as he cuts through the dark emptiness. Just him, the highway, and open, harvested fields surrounded by storm. His headlight, one lonely cone of light barely cutting through the heavy night.

MULTIPLE SHOTS OF VARIOUS TOWN FIGURES – IN THEIR OWN MOMENTS AND SPACES – EACH LOOKING UP TO FACE AND CONSIDER THE STORM.

THE MAYOR, EDNA EDEN, BONNIE & NORM, GRANT...

EXT. CHICAGO HOTEL - NIGHT

Bloom stands in the downpour – stoic with his umbrella. He's blurred by a billion drops of water, but beautifully backlit by the Chicago noir night.

Tom punches his way in on the bike. Stops. Without a word, he reaches into his heavycoat breast and produces – an envelope.

Bloom reaches and receives it into the cover of his umbrella.

EXT. COUNTY HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Tom's back on the road headed home. His headlight splitting the lonely night. Raindrops race through Tom's view – surreal, dramatic and rhythmic.

Focused entirely on the road and ride, Tom becomes transported...

CUT RACING RAINDROPS IN DARK NIGHT TO WHITE LIGHT AND FLUTTER.

FADE TO:

White fades in. First blurry. Swirly white. More focus. It's snow. A blizzard of giant flakes. Cascading heavily, beautifully downward.

A snowy, pine-lined pass comes into view. Wind swirling and whipping the snow with increasing violence. Coming more into focus. Through the blizzard. The forms of people approach from the distance.

One large. Several small. Far behind – another. Trudging.

The first form is Scout Master Reggie, blown, freezing, terrified in the bluster.

He stops, turns to look back. Six freezing young scouts look miserable back – terrified and trudging.

Reggie looks beyond them, squinting. So much snow.

A moment. Another form lumbers into view. It's Tom, carrying a small boy – fragile, shivering, and in bad shape.

TOM
(screaming over the storm)
He can't go any further!
(beat)
You guys go ahead. Same direction.
Keep the wind on your left. Don't
stop for a second!

INT. ROCKY OUTCROP – A SHORT WHILE LATER

It's not quite a cave, but a den with a wide open view of the chaos outside. Tom stumbles in and starts comforting the boy – rubbing a beefy glove on the boy's chest.

It's not good. Tom hurriedly turns his back to the stone and leans. Unzips his coat and desperately tries to enclose the boy. He holds him tight. And settles. Nothing left but to wait.

He settles into a saddened thousand-yard stare – out of the den's mouth – a surreal frame for the hauntingly beautiful white cascading chaos outside.

CUT TO:

CUT FROM WHITE FLUTTER TO RACING RAINDROPS AT NIGHT.

EXT. COUNTY HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

It's back to just Tom. Riding. Alone, in the rain, on the bike, in the night.

EXT. EVERETT HOME - BACK IN THE STORM

Tom's motorcycle blasts up the drive and slides to a stop. Tom's silhouette, described by lightning - jumps off, rolls it into the shop, and huffs inside.

INT. TOM'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Tom suddenly wakes in his bed.

INT. EVERETT KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Tom looks out the back window into the morning. Elle has her easel outside and has partially painted a handsome grey tabby cat.

EXT. EVERETT YARD - MOMENTS LATER

Tom heavily crosses the yard from the house to his shop.

INT. TOM'S SHOP - DAY

Tom tinkers, time passes. Funeral-type energy. The sun crosses the sky and light changes - he maintains his fugue.

Late afternoon is now settling in. Tom's still in the shop. A knock at the door - followed by Elle popping her head in.

ELEANOR

You've been out here all day.
Haven't talked to ya.

TOM

(grumbling)
I'm fine. Just working on a few
repairs.

She notes an envelope on the workbench. He sees, covers it.

ELEANOR

Are you sure everything's alright?

He looks at her, rather cold and unmoved. Not even his face is going to elaborate. She lets it sink in, then slowly makes her worried way back to the door.

TOM
Say, Eleanor.

She turns in anticipation.

TOM (CONT'D)
I think I'm going to head into town later. I need to take care of something.

ELEANOR
I know you think you know something, but Bloom said to wait. I'm worried. Please don't do anything rash. Talk Norm and Grant—

He snaps quietly.

TOM
—Oh, I've talked to Norm and Grant!

ELEANOR
What do you mean by that?

TOM
(harshly)
It means maybe you should worry about yourself, sometimes.

ELEANOR
Listen to this? Ask them!? I'm tired of hearing from everyone else. This is about me!

She retreats under his intensity.

TOM
But you've been heard. I'll just stay put because that's what Elle thinks Tom should do! Now if you'll kindly excuse me, I have some staying put to do.

She doesn't respond, just sheepishly retreats — and leaves.

Tom reflects for a moment. He quickly moves to the door and watches — but doesn't go after her.

His gaze turns to the darkening horizon. And the town. It's a serious, pensive look — followed by a change.

He grabs an envelope off the workbench, slams the door – and heads out.

As he fades up the trail into the darkening night – another shadow steps in – waits – then follows.

EXT. HILLY LANDSCAPE – FADING EVENING

A large hill fills the view, in silhouette against the late evening sky of fading gold – darkening in the distance.

A small form, Tom, slowly ascends on foot – a solemn procession – toward the town and darkness.

But then another small silhouette – sneakily forms – follows the crest.

THEN – a third? One more tiny silhouette creeps up the crest – following the follower.

EXT. EVERETT FRONT DOOR – CONTINUOUS

Grant's Studebaker pulls up.

INT. EVERETT FRONT DOOR – CONTINUOUS

Elle's already peering out. Knock knock. She opens to Grant. She's visibly distraught.

ELEANOR

Mercy, am I glad to see—

Grant is all business.

GRANT

—I'm here to see Tom.

(darkly, loaded)

Thought someone needed to check on him.

ELEANOR

I see. Welp, he's been brooding in his shop all day.

INT. SHOP – CONTINUOUS

The door flies open. The pair enters. It's – quiet.

ELEANOR

Mercy. He went.

GRANT
He went where?

ELEANOR
He didn't exactly say. But I've got
a bad feeling.

Grant's eyes have zeroed in at the back of the shop.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
Will you go find him?

He suddenly turns his glare on her. His response is loaded.

GRANT
Elle, I think you need to go find
him. Go ring up Otis T and Joe
Foley. Doc Macintosh. And Norman.

Grant's eyes slowly return to the back of the shop, where all
manner of Tom's notes and blueprints are left out.

ELEANOR
What are you going to do?

GRANT
(with intense gravity)
We're- going to help our friend.

He descends upon the shop.

EXT. SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Outside. Elle is already in motion. She gathers herself and
runs to her Rambler. Speeds away - toward the town, into the
darkening twilight.

EXT. FAIRBURY STREET - NIGHT CONTINUOUS

Tom is now in town. The on-foot procession continues. The
ancient oaks, the quaint houses, the green green grass - and
the deepening blue twilight all around. He takes it in - then
darkly refocuses - on just what's ahead.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT CONTINUOUS

The strong black car seems small, surrounded by vast
cornfields on all sides. Closer in, looking through
windshield, it's big. Bloom is behind the wheel. Dead silent
and serious.

In the passenger seat, behind him in the back, Bloom has company. Three equally serious STATE POLICE MEN.

The beams of light from his headlights cut the night as the car surges through the night. With one, two classic state police cars rolling behind.

EXT. DOWNTOWN FAIRBURY - NIGHT CONTINUOUS

The downtown is bustling. A derby flair. People are walking, sitting and generally reveling in every direction. There is music, confections a few wholesome games.

Tom moves intently through it all. Not what he's here for. Just ahead...

EXT. FAIRBURY PARK - CONTINUOUS

A proper Sunday night in the large public park. At the far end. The Municipal Bandshell caps the end. City Hall peeks up just behind it. A full moon now firmly above.

Moments pass as he continues up the sweep of green. But a shadow joins the view. It's the follower. It's Mayor Potter's right-hand survey man.

But now as he stands, watching, on his face is danger, because down in his hand is a billy club.

A squeeze of the club, and another moment and he steps after.

But. Gets. Stopped. By a strong hand on his shoulder - that spins him.

It's Norman. Standing strong, and uncharacteristically serious.

RIGHT HAND MAN

What!? What are you about fella?

NORMAN

Who are you?

RIGHT HAND MAN

(smugly)

I'm a visitor. What? Nice little town doesn't welcome folks?

NORMAN

Why are you following my friend, Tom Everett?

RIGHT HAND MAN

(stalling)

Who? That gent? Is that Tom
Everett? I heard he's a bit of a
bad--

From behind his back, the billy club slowly creeps out. Norm
grabs him by his collar.

NORMAN

Tom Everett is a good man, he
doesn't deserve any of this. I'm a
good man too, but you deserve this.

EXT. BANDSHELL - CONTINUOUS

As Tom approaches the bandshell, the top rows - something
hits. People notice like they felt it. A few whispered
comments. More heads turn.

On stage, the municipal band fills the night with some
striking overture. People in the audience notice: it's Tom
Everett. Is that? It is.

After a pause at all the looks. Tom starts slowly up the
center aisle stairs. Ascending as the music blooms and the
heads turn his way - with all manner of reactions.

EXT. FAIRBURY NEIGHBORHOODS - NIGHT

Elle in her Rambler - scanning side to side for him. Driving
slowly. For a moment, she notes the full white moon above.

She looks back down to the radio - and turns the shiny knob
UP. Indeed, it's the same song being played at the bandshell.

Her search continues down the lane, under the moon.

INT. TOM'S SHOP - CONTINUOUS

All shadows and worklamps now - Grant hammers and cranks away
at some project - metal perhaps - mostly obscured by a tarp
and the busy men around it.

Grant momentarily looks up - through the window at that same
moon. It's getting late.

A knock at the door. Grant swings it open to Doc and TWO
MIDWEST MEN.

GRANT

Doc! We need your help in the
highest of other matters.

DOCTOR MACINTOSH

And I come with confederates.

MAN ONE

We heard Tom needs help! What can I
do!? You know I always knew he—

Grant cuts him off with a friendly tug inside.

GRANT

You're here. Where's Norman.

DOCTOR MACINTOSH

Elle and I both called. No one can
find him.

EXT. CITY HALL - CONTINUOUS

Quieter here. Shadowed from towering trees on either side,
Tom approaches the ominous front doors — silent, classic and
civic with hard shadows.

He approaches. Slowly. Ready. Like a knight would a dragon.

He holds a moment — when a man steps forward from the
shadows. It's The Father, Virgil.

VIRGIL

City business on festival night?

TOM

Virgil Colburn. Well, nothing too
special. Just something that — just
couldn't wait.

Virgil wisely considers Tom with a smile.

VIRGIL

Any longer.

Tom shifts awkwardly.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)

I've been trying to talk to you,
Tom.

A long pause. Tom ponders deep.

TOM

I know.

VIRGIL

Why hide.

TOM

Because— Because these days, there seem to just be two types of people in this town. I never knew which you were... Either way I knew I couldn't handle it.

VIRGIL

I know you told the truth. I know you gave everything you could, and more.

TOM

I'm — not so sure.

VIRGIL

You STAYED with him.

TOM

I tried. But you know I always—

VIRGIL

He still had your socks on, Tom.

A long long pause. Tom's face is a dozen emotions.

TOM

Why? ... Didn't you tell? Them?

VIRGIL

No one ever asked me. Can you believe it? And when I tried to speak up— I realized it wasn't about me anyway. You neither.

(beat)

Folks just wanted to be worked up. We were perfect.

Tom's reflects a moment — music still drifting in.

TOM

The— the way you are here, now. You got more excuses than anyone in this town to be bitter. But you're not.

Now it's Virgil's turn to quietly reflect.

VIRGIL

I was. I still am. So far as I can tell, what defines a man, isn't so much what he does when he's happy. It's the rest of the time.

(beat)

But what do I know?

They both reflect in silence.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)

I guess whether it's good or bad. And of course it's both. You've just gotta ask yourself. What's your way forward? Doesn't have to be perfect. But you can find your way. And that'll be who you are. Doesn't matter what anyone else says. I had to choose.

TOM

So you ain't here to stop me?

VIRGIL

I'm here because I want you to find yours. And because I know what's going on too. You deserved better, Everett.

Tom reflects, turns, and proceeds through the large doors.

INT. CITY HALL - NIGHT CONTINUOUS

The door closing echoes around the dim cavernous lobby - made with strong and artistic style from another time. The seriousness of a funeral home with the passion of an art gallery. Stairs, banisters and gallery of heavy dark wood, portraits of important predecessors, gilded accents and lush carpet.

And Tom does take it in. Small in the middle of it all.

The monolith stairs ahead, he starts to climb, a behemoth CREAK with each step. Up and around the edge of the lobby. Higher. The bold oak handrail smooth on his palm.

So while some beautifully menacing melody croons in from the bandshell outside. Tom ascends. Religious. His slow, steady, dead-serious procession to...

INT. THIRD FLOOR HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Tom rounds the corner into a wide, lush hallway that ends at a giant lone wooden door. Slowly, cautiously, he proceeds past mirrors, ornaments and memorial art.

Up to the door. At the door. His hand on that great brass knob.

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The darkness is thick. The sound is dead. Vague shapes of furniture describe a large stately office. The municipal band haunting faintly below. Great windows lining the walls let in the night as the only light.

Except the glow of a cigar in the corner.

A crack of gold at the door. Angles open. Tom's silhouette steps coolly in and stops.

MAYOR

Close the door. You belong in the
dark as much as I do.

He turns his head back to the window. In the low glow from outside, his face reflects over the fest below.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

It's amazing to me. Grinning fools.
So content. The mediocrity of it
all. It almost makes a man jealous
to be so simple. Almost.

The mayor relights his cigar. His harsh face momentarily aglow while his hog lips puff it alive. Tom holds still.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Then I saw you walking across the
green. Stopping to smell the
flowers. And wondered if you were
making the mistake I suspected.

Beaming cherry bright. The cigar is lit. Smoke blooms.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

And here you are.

Tom remains silent.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

Nothin huh? Ya come all the way up here, risking more than you'd probably guess, just to stand there and stare? Say nothing?

(beat)

Though I suppose I shouldn't be surprised. That's pretty in character for Tom Everett. Runs in the family, eh-

TOM

-I know what you've done.

MAYOR

And just what is it - you *wish* you knew I've done?

TOM

The mining. On the back side of the pass. I followed your friends and saw it myself.

MAYOR

Yourself? Trustworthy testimony from a man with your credibility.

TOM

Nothin' less than photographic evidence.

The mayor takes a strong step forward. The moon peeks in. And the band plays on.

MAYOR

A picture? And am I IN IT?

(beat)

Of course, not. A few fuzzy forms? I can explain THAT away in a dinner toast! They were speculating ahead of a GREAT TOWN ANNOUNCEMENT. Or worse, it was someone else and THAT'S why I'm promising to get even tougher on crime.

TOM

These people are smarter than you think. Just because some of em still know how to smile.

MAYOR

Oh, please!

TOM
 (darkly)
 Why don't we tell em everything and
 find out, then?!

They both stiffen.

TOM (CONT'D)
 We won't. Because they don't
 deserve any more of - this. Listen,
 I don't need to be saying anything
 as long as they stop-

Now Tom steps sharply in. The moon in the window over his
 shoulder.

TOM (CONT'D)
 And YOU stop. And give me the
 sheriff's report so people can know
 what really happened.

MAYOR
 What did really happen?

A long pause. Tom looks out the window. Shakes his head.

TOM
 Is this what you imagined you'd be?
 When you were a kid? Feeling like
 this? Seeing things like this?
 Something else is bothering you.
 Something oddly - weak about it.

MAYOR
 Weak? Listen Everett! What men like
 you will never understand is that I
 choose. Yes...YES. Big decisions
 can be made very quietly. And very
 suddenly.

The band plays on. The Mayor slowly starts pacing the room,
 in front of the windows and the moon.

MAYOR (CONT'D)
 Something so seismic at the mere
 firing of a synapse. Like the time
 I decided, deliberately, to no
 longer be loyal to my wife. With
 indifference that surprised even
 me. It felt like arithmetic. Men
 have decided to bomb nations during
 a sip of tea.

(MORE)

MAYOR (CONT'D)

You dreamers want it to be so ceremonial but the reality is folks just change their minds sometimes, and sometimes they're good or they're bad but they don't care, because they have made a decision.

The Mayor passes, on the wall, a blunderbuss gun. He pats it. Tom hardens.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

The hardest part is you'll never know when it will happen, or when it already has. There are many versions of what you think is right and good. And this is mine. And there's nothing you can do about it.

TOM

And what a weak way to justify it all. We all want more and better, but at some point you started hurting people. The boy died for what? Another violet on your lapel for the governorship? And you convinced yourself you had a reason. You made a decision. I've spent my entire life figuring out I don't need to say anything. Cuz there's nothing to say about all this. And you're right. There's nothing I can do about it but use the force I know I could. That's my decision.

Tom slams his fist onto the desk knuckles first. His forearm flexes. Tom's gaze drifts through the great window to the lights outside - and falls long.

TOM (CONT'D)

You think I don't understand what it's like to change suddenly? Don't fancy yourself so special.

He watches the lights of the town outside blur.

EXT. SNOWY MOUNTAIN DEN - DAY

For a moment - cascading snow. From inside the den. Tom's dreadful white face. His eyes.

TOM
You, Mayor, gave me my moment.

INT. DARK OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Tom's back. His gaze is still lost in the distance out the window. The Mayor listens darkly, intently.

TOM
It did happen suddenly. And oh - so quietly.

EXT. SNOWY MOUNTAIN DEN - DAY

For a moment - cascading snow. From inside the den. Tom's dreadful white face. His eyes.

TOM
I just - held him and held him.
(beat)
But I could feel him fading.

INT. DARK OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Back in the office.

TOM
It's the most at peace I've ever felt. I supposed I might be right behind him, but you know? - The scariest part was-

EXT. SNOWY MOUNTAIN

Tom sees the freezing boy's face change. Outside the cascade of beautiful snow.

TOM
Somehow I couldn't shake the feeling of- of how lucky he was.

Tom's lost in both places.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The Mayor's voice RIPS him back to reality. The growing Festival outside brightens the hue and sharpens the shadows.

MAYOR

If you had any idea how little I cared your head would spin. Have I not adequately explained the monster I am? Do you truly fancy you'll EVER get that report?! That report is so out of reach for you. Locked away! In the deepest vault, in the furthest corners, behind the strongest steel – in a place you simply never see.

He lets it sink in.

TOM

I see a sad man calling himself a monster. That while you say you're a monster I know you were once a poet. You say you were born this way, I know you only became sad when your grandma Hellen passed. And so I understand that while you say the report is locked away behind all manner of fire and brimstone. I know it's on the credenza behind you. Which is a beautiful word.

The mayor jerks a look over his shoulder to the desk, but Tom springs fast – to the desk – snatches up a plain manila envelope in plain view.

The mayor snatches at it – but Tom holds a look on him that warns everything. He turns to walk out.

EXT. DOWNTOWN FAIRBURY – CONTINUOUS NIGHT

Eleanor parks her car, exits and starts hurriedly walking through the festive street – scanning for him.

EXT. FAIRBURY PARK – MOMENTS LATER

She steps onto the quad, full of distracted revelers. In the distance, up the green, the bandshell and city hall loom large. And so does the moon. Still no Tom. She hurries on.

INT. TOM'S SHOP – CONTINUOUS

A larger group of men now stands around the large project – frustrated, confused and confounded.

The poking, wrenching, elbowing and debating. They snatch the blue prints from each other.

GRANT
(reading the blueprints)
"Missing"... you don't say.

MIXED COMMENTS
"I'm telling ya, it's for a small fuse!" ... "A failsafe!"... "I think it's more metaphysical than that!" ... "Life comes at you fast eh?."

The passion of the problem escalates. So do voices. Tools and parts. Pointing and poking. Plans strewn about.

A loud WHISTLE cuts the chaos to silence.

All heads turn. Edna Eden herself is at the door – a little conflicted and emotional – but fiery serious.

EDNA EDEN (O.C.)
Not something.

Without a word she walks to them. The dumbfounded group of men parts for her. Grant's eyes widen.

She approaches, staring up at this large unseen project. She slowly reaches to her neck to a chain, pulling it up, to then where a delightful old heirloom ring screams in silence.

Holding it up. She considers it. Misting. A way they've never seen her. Moved. The men are too.

EDNA EDEN (CONT'D)
(in such pretty pain)
Missing some-one.

With that. She smooches the ring goodbye and plunges it in a small exposed panel. A HUM!

They all know it. Smiles of wonder. Something's come to life.

EXT. PARK BANDSHELL - CONTINUOUS

Tom hurries through the crowd, envelope in hand. Excusing himself. He approaches the side stage. BAND DIRECTOR PALMER notices while conducting – communicates...

With a few looks, gestures and nods – a gentleman's understanding. The music swells.

Now while Tom waits patiently – up above the full white moon, now in perfect view – catches his attention.

EXT. FAIRBURY PARK

Eleanor hurries across the sprawling green, under the moon, through the garden lights, sparklers and smiles.

Her only focus is up and ahead – to the bandshell.

EXT. OUTSIDE TOWN CONTINUOUS TWILIGHT NIGHT

In the distance, a hill silhouetted. The very last of twilight is the backdrop. The stars and fireflies are both turning on.

EXT. BANDSHELL SIDE STAGE - CONTINUOUS NIGHT

Tom, waiting. The municipal band comes to crescendo, finishing. He hurries up onto the stage. Respectfully takes the mic. And speaks up over the Fairbury buzz.

TOM

Excuse me, everyone...

The buzz continues.

TOM (CONT'D)

Excuse me, I'm sorry to interrupt.

No luck. Conductor Palmer moves in sharply and wrap-tap-taps his baton on the podium.

Now it quiets. To near silence.

He's greeted from the audience. Warmly reciprocates. Then to other townsfolk.

TOM (CONT'D)

Jimmy. I hope you enjoyed that 45.

(beat)

What? Milly? I read it TWICE.

(beat)

I- I just need a minute.

He then looks up to see the Mayor behind the top row – with a steel look watching this unfold.

TOM (CONT'D)

Thank you. I hope Fairbarians are –
having a fine evening. And sorry. I
don't mean to interrupt. I just
need to– well I– see–

TOM (CONT'D)

I know a lot of ya'll don't like
me. Yes, some of ya think I'm
alright, but still – that's always
bothered me. But I can be okay with
it...

A few low, mixed reactions as folks listen intently on.

TOM (CONT'D)

But now I need to speak up. Because
each one of ya is being lied to.

AUDIENCE

(A collective gasp)

OLD MAN

Who are you to talk, Everett?

TOM

I'm sorry to say. But you weren't
told the truth, then. And now
there's a bigger lie. And The
Mayor's behind them both. And I've
got proof right here.

He holds up the envelope. The crowd begins to stir. Support.
But jeers too. Chatter. Louder. A plain woman with a beehive
pipes up.

BEEHIVE WOMAN

He shoulda put you in the town
lockup!

COACH

Everyone knows he's a hero. You're
just bitter ya lost the bakeoff to
Eleanor.

She's aghast. So are others. Quirky squabbles brew in the
crowd. A few heated words. More shouts at Tom, good and bad.

TOM

Now– Listen folks.

(beat)

This here– report. Please just–

Fever pitch. In the crowd the noise and squabble overflows – shouts up at Tom become sharper.

TOM (CONT'D)
Folks, it just – the truth...

OLD MAN
And when are we gonna get more o'
them tomatas!?

With THAT, excited chaos sweeps the crowd and comments fly.

He gives up, trails off. A moment of acceptance before the roar. And he retreats – toward the bandshell backstage.

INT. BANDSHELL BACKSTAGE

The dim back of community venue. A few stage lights, music stands and sousaphones prove it.

The Fairbury Municipal Band resumes, but Tom's furious. A volcano inside. Rock-jawed. Clench-fisted. His face is a slideshow of different emotions, when–

Over his shoulder, an open door filled with golden light from outside – Elle's silhouette – with a sort of surreal grace – steps into view.

Almost sensing her – Tom turns. As she runs up to him for a sympathetic hug.

TOM
NOT. Tonight.

He wrenches himself away and keeps his head. Taken aback, she stumbles back into the musical instruments behind her. They shift and clamor.

TOM (CONT'D)
I'm afraid I'm a bit of that grouch
you love to talk about.

ELEANOR
Tom! What's the matter?

TOM
WHAT'S the– MATTER? How much time
you got, Elle!? Listen, it's a
lovely night, maybe you should go
enjoy it – say – with Roger Ellis.

The bomb stops them both. Tom's glare against Elle's horror.

ELEANOR

Aww, Tom. That's what you think?
After everything? Together?

He's just broken and speechless, waiting.

Just feet away, a giant sousaphone shifts and atop – just barely nudging an electrical box on the wall – its lever flips ON.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Roger Ellis is a banker, you fool!
Showing me a house in Maybell
soonest he could.

Tom is flabbergasted.

Outside, PA speakers hum ON. Suddenly the crowd is hearing it all. They quiet. And listen in.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Yeah. We got that little bit of
extra money from those stupid
tomatoes and I'm going to get you
out of here! You deserve better!
And these people don't deserve you.

Townsfolk outside – man, lady, old, young – the faces outside are all now intent.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

They're never going to change their
minds. They're too far gone. It
doesn't matter what you tell them
or how much proof they get.

The faces outside react. Some quietly object. Some agree. Others have a little hurt. They're all affected.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Everyone knows it was Potter's
fault. Just like everyone knows
you're a good man. What you tried
do for that poor boy?

She softens and takes his hand.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

But no, that's not good enough for
them. Nothing ever will be. Because
it's not about you. I was wrong,
Thomas! We both were. No report
will ever fix it. Because it's got
nothing to do with you.

Outside the bandstand and beyond, collective heads bow and eyes drop. As the comment sinks in.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Poor Evelyn Bates lost Albert.
Johnny Jensen can't play football
any more because of his knee. You
know how much that meant to him.

An old woman sheds a tear. A young man in a letterman jacket takes a deep breath.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Mic Evans is a grouch because he
never made a record and he has no
idea what his music means to all of
us. Plucky Bastard!

Outside. Heavy stillness. As the reckoning sinks deeper.
Heads down. Reflection. Many frowns. A few tears. Not a
sound.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Elmer Brawn never made it to
France. Rosetta Jane can't walk to
the pass any more. And Edna Eden's
fiancé's been dead twelve years.

Edna's face flashes.

Backstage, Eleanor is looking past Tom's eyes – somewhere
into the soul.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

They don't deserve you Thomas! Let
me take you away from here. Be with
people who love you for all the
reasons you deserve to be loved.
These people are never going to
change.

She pulls him in.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Cause they don't know how beautiful
they are no matter how much you try
to remind them. You've given them
everything you have and it's still
not enough. And it never will be
because they're mad – AND SAD –
about something – else.

NORMAN

Fellow Fairbarians! May we have
your attention.

Mass awakening. Confusion. All heads turn to – stage left
behind the uppermost row – stands Norm with his stop sign up.
Grant is with him.

GRANT

Tom Everett, has one more thing to
give.

From the dark bushes behind them – Doc and the other town
helpers roll in – a behemoth. A giant canvas covers it.

It's stopped. It's big. What is it? Norm rips off the canvas.

A collective gasp – it's a giant – telescope of sorts. A
metal barrel, meters high, pointed like a World War One gun
at the beaming moon.

Tom and Eleanor emerge curiously from behind the bandshell to
see.

TOM

(muttering in awe)
Magnificent. Bastards.

Mysterious, wondrous – the invention has a seat mounted on
the side over control levers, a few brass knobs and switches.

Mounted along the top and sides, curious features include a
weathervane, film reel, phonograph bell – with all manner of
antennas and gears. It's cobbled, complex and amazing.

Everyone takes in everything. Up to the large barrel end –
capped with a large wheel of colored stained glass.

The crowd notices Tom slowly walking in wonder to the front –
toward the machine. Eyes fixed. They part to make way.

Tom approaches his wondrous machine reverently, slowly
reaching out to flip – a switch.

A BEAM of intensified moonlight shoots into the faces of the
struck audience.

CROWD

Gasp and Awe

At the base of the machine is a goggled porthole – beaming
white with moonlight. Corded next to it – a set of big old
pilot headphones.

Tom picks them up and turns to an approaching BANKER-ISH MAN. Tom gently places the phones over the man's ears and directs him to the porthole.

With a few purposeful steps he ascends to his chair and starts working the controls, levers, switches and knobs.

Slow and unsure, the man rests his face into the viewer and—

BANKERISH MAN

Have. Mercy.

His mouth opens. He grasps on with a trembling hand.

The faces of the crowd. They respect — this moment.

Tom throws another lever. The man's mouth drops open in awe. A tear runs down his face.

He pulls away. Religiously. Struck. A million mile stare. He's— changed.

He removes the headphones, turns to the WOMAN, respectfully waiting behind him. She raises her hands to receive them — but he silently insists — placing them gently on her bowed head.

She puts her face to the beaming porthole — amazed.

Tom continues at the controls smoothly until — something wrong — when —

Out from the crowd steps— Virgil.

It's his moment. He knows it. Tom knows it. Without a word — just a nod — Virgil climbs up and takes the controls — starts working the levers, switches — effortlessly.

A change! NOW — the woman beams — as light shoots from the edges of the porthole. Her mouth drops open. Positively struck. Virgil feels it too.

Over the next minutes a charmed, haunted, nighttime procession begins. Silently, piously, almost ceremonial.

As characters of all types from Fairbury wait their place in line.

Theatrically beautiful under the beaming round moon. One after another. They step up to this thing and experience...

As each turns away. The power of the moment is on their faces.

With tears, tremors, smiles and most reflective of eyes – we see awakening, understanding, passion, melancholy, appreciation, PEACE.

They each leave changed – heads down – and the procession continues. Virgil at the controls. Under the moon.

EXT. BANDSHELL STAGE - CONTINUOUS NIGHT

Visibly reeling from a moment at the machine – Mic Evans timidly climbs onto the empty stage and he approaches– the piano.

He sits, pauses, and begins – to play. It carries across the night. Everyone is moved. Boy, does he play.

EXT. FAIRBURY PARK BENCH - CONTINUOUS NIGHT

At a bench on a nearby hill overlooking it all – Tom and Eleanor approach and just sit – perfectly, predictably framed beneath that constant moon. Giant, charmed and surreal.

Watching the people, the moments, the night. Some dancing has begun, under the string lights, on the park green.

Without looking, Elle reaches into her pocket and produces before Tom – one of THE tomatoes.

TOM
YOU. SAID!

His aghast smile, her devilish grin.

ELEANOR
Last one. Hopefully ever.

She takes a divine bite, and hands it over. He does the same. Magic.

EXT. TOM'S MACHINE - CONTINUOUS NIGHT

This big, curious contraption. This... Happiness Machine looming at the moon. But also somehow sad. But very moving. And very important this night.

The soft ceremony. The procession. More faces of Fairbarians as they come and go, with changed souls. Edna Eden is just leaving – turning with a tear that streams down her cheek – over her mole.

EXT. FAIRBURY PARK GREEN - CONTINUOUS NIGHT

Bonnie and Norm are in close, intimately dancing under the moon and string lights. Eyes locked in their own moment.

EXT. TOM'S MACHINE - CONTINUOUS NIGHT

The line. More faces turning from the machine - human, endearing, changed.

INT. FAIRBURY TAVERN - CONTINUOUS NIGHT

The door flies open. From outside - a breathless Grant steps passionately in and locks in on-

Edna Eden, at the bar, looks up shyly from her seat. A smile.

EXT. SNOWY PASS MINING SITE - NIGHT

The mysterious mine men are hard at work when - A GUNSHOT - stops them cold. They all stand straight and look up.

The state police are semi-circled around them. It's over.

EXT. FAIRBURY PARK BENCH - CONTINUOUS NIGHT

On their bench, Elle goes to take his hand but - something in his pocket-

He looks down and takes out - the pills. He grins a long smile and tosses them. They exchange a long, loving, easy glance of understanding -

A BOY in a flat cap passes - Tom gently stops him, whispers in his ear - hand him a manila envelope. The boy runs off.

Tom brings his attention back to Eleanor - before slowly leaning in for that inevitable cinematic kiss - under that perfect damn moon.

EXT. TOM'S MACHINE - CONTINUOUS NIGHT

Another woman finishes her turn at the machine. Recovering, she turns, removing the headphones for next person in line. It's - The Mayor.

Sternly, sheepishly he accepts them on his head. About to step up, he takes a last look over shoulder and-

Conductor Bloom is standing stone-faced behind - towering over him. His arms are crossed. In one hand, Tom's picture of the latest crime.

A tap at his arm distracts – the boy in a flatcap – hands him the manila report. He slowly takes it. He knows. He darkly turns his face back to the fading, trembling Mayor.

Aghast, exposed, shaken – Potter waits for the next move.

Bloom's long unbroken, angry stare shows the worst. When slowly, with a nod, he directs the Mayor Potter to take his place at the machine.

Trembling, Potter turns and steps in...

White light washes over as his face close in on the porthole.

EXT. FAIRBURY PARK BENCH - CONTINUOUS NIGHT

Tom and Elle's kiss gets closer – under the moon.

EXT. TOM'S MACHINE - CONTINUOUS NIGHT

At the porthole, the mayor's face closes in. Eyes widening. His mouth gasps open. Tears start down his face.

Closer. Welling up from inside him a scream – of the soul – growing louder. SWELLING.

POTTER'S FACE (SILENT)

Dear— God.

IT'S TOO MUCH.

IT'S EVERYTHING.

WONDER. HORROR. PAIN. BEAUTY.

EXT. FAIRBURY PARK BENCH - CONTINUOUS NIGHT

Tom and Eleanor's kiss connects.

EXT. TOM'S MACHINE - CONTINUOUS NIGHT

POTTER'S FACE (CONT'D)

(under a silent scream)

HAUNTING. IMPOSSIBLE.

NO. YES. PLEASE. MERCY—

(growing)

IT'S JUST— SO! —

CUT TO BLACK.

END.