

Spring April 2017

Everyone Dies When They Come to My House

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Everyone Dies When They Come to My House

Written by

David Techman

A thesis screenplay presented to the
Faculty of the Department of
the School of Film & Television
Loyola Marymount University

In partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts in Screenwriting

May 2017

A Screenplay

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Film & Television,

Loyola Marymount University of Los Angeles, California

Everybody Dies When They Come to My House

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Fine Arts

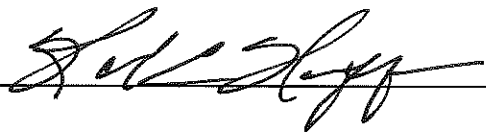
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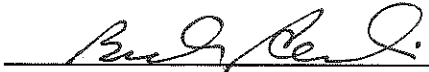
David Techman

APPROVAL TO ADVANCE TO CANDIDACY

The following student has met all the criteria to advance to candidacy
for an M.F.A. in Fine Arts with an emphasis in Screenwriting

Student: David Techman Date: 5/4/17

Committee Co Chair (690):  Date: 12/12/2017

Committee Co Chair (691):  Date: 5/4/17

Advanced Screenplay Project Title:

Everybody Dies When They Come to My House

Criteria for advancement to candidacy:

Student has demonstrated sufficient ability and knowledge to complete the thesis project.

Approved to Candidacy

Not Approved to Candidacy

Comments

ADVANCED SCREENPLAY PROJECT APPROVAL

The Advanced Screenplay Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Screenwriting submitted by the candidate fulfils the requirements and standards set forth in the University Bulletin by the Division.

Screenplay Title: Everybody Dies When They Come to My House

Student: David Techman Date: 5/4/17

Committee Co Chair: SCWR 690 Karol Hoeffner

Signed: [Signature] Date: 12/12/2016

Committee Co Chair: SCWR 691 BEITH SERLIN

Signed: [Signature] Date: 5/4/17

Director of Graduate Screenwriting: Karol Hoeffner

Signed: [Signature] Date: 5/4/2017

Dean: Stephen Ujlori

Signed: [Signature] Date: 5/4/17


This feature length screenplay written by

David Teichman

under the guidance of a faculty committee
from the School of Film & Television at
Loyola Marymount University, and approved
by the members of the committee, has been
presented to and accepted by the Graduate
School in partial fulfillment of the thesis
requirements for the degree of Master of
Fine Arts in Screenwriting.

Advanced Screenplay Project Committee:

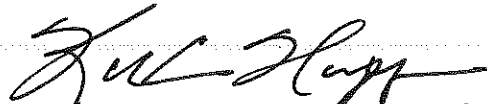
Committee Chair: SCWR 690



Committee Member: SCWR 691

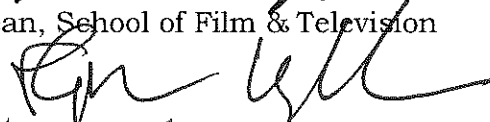


Director of Graduate Screenwriting



Dean, School of Film & Television

Date


5/4/17

EVERYBODY DIES WHEN THEY COME TO MY HOUSE

Draft 5

Written by

David Techman

Based loosely on the writer's experience
with various swing scenes.

414 High St.
Staunton, VA 24401

Pennsylvania 6-5000--uh, I mean (757)-775-0727

FADE IN:

EXT. DANCE STUDIO - NIGHT

A three-story building. Mostly dark, although some light shines from the third-floor windows. Billie Holliday's "Just the Way You Look Tonight" softly plays.

SUPER: 1957

INT. DANCE STUDIO - NIGHT

A empty wooden floor, chairs set around the walls. Only half the incandescent bulbs in the ceiling burn.

The music emanates from a slick three-speed turntable. Nearby shelves hold a slew of records, waiting to be played.

The TAPPING of shoes. Through the windows, streetlights shine on the city street three stories below.

A LEAD (20) and a FOLLOW (22) pull off some decent Lindy hop moves. They wear casual 1950s clothes.

The Lead sends the Follow out on a rock-step, sticks his free hand behind his back. They execute a pretzel. Not the greatest, as the Lead seems to be worrying something over.

From the shadows near the turntable one can see them dancing in the light.

The song winds down. The Lead leads a couple of basic turns, then hesitates, messes up a move, and grimaces, too upset.

LEAD

I'm sorry. My head's not in it.

Awkward silence. Follow turns Lead's head back towards her.

FOLLOW

Don't keep blaming yourself. It was a freak accident. And partly my fault, for--

LEAD

No. I made the choice, I caused it.

The Follow steps in and hugs him. She meets his eyes.

FOLLOW

It takes time. We'll get past this.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG (RECORDED)
 DIG, MAN, THERE GOES MACK THE
 KNIFE!

The voice makes them jump and gasp. "Mack the Knife" starts to play.

The Follow and Lead look towards the turntable.

LEAD
 Hello? Who's there?

Someone hunches there, back to them. A STALKER.

BEGIN STALKER'S POV. He looks down at his BLACK-GLOVED HANDS flanking the spinning record player. A MASK (which we cannot see) covers his face.

Stalker turn to see the Lead and Follow through the mask's eyeholes. They look unnerved. The Follow takes the Lead's arm. The Stalker plods towards them.

FOLLOW
 Who is that? Hey.

She half-laughs, starting to think it's a joke.

LEAD
 We were just practicing.

No answer. They look at the mask.

FOLLOW
 You wearing that to fit the song?

Ignoring her, the Stalker lean close to the Lead, staring into his eyes. At last, recognition. The Lead's face falls.

LEAD
 Oh. Listen, I'm really sorry . . .

LOUIS ARMSTRONG (RECORDED)
Just a jack-knife, has old MacHeath, dear,

SLICE! TEAR. The Lead gapes. The Stalker looks down to see his black-gloved hand gutting the Lead with a jackknife.

The Lead, choking, falls, with a sound of INNARDS SPILLING. The Follow screams. She makes a clumsy attempt to run to the right. The Stalker lunges, knife out, blocking her.

The Follow screams again, backing up. Stalker soon works her into a corner, near a window. She cowers.

FOLLOW

What? . . . Why did you?

Stalker holds up the knife, folds it closed, puts it away. He holds out a hand. The Follow tries to talk. Terrified.

Stalker beckons to her, then brings wide his right arm. He holds out his left hand in a hook, offering it to her.

FOLLOW (CONT'D)

You . . . want me to dance?

Stalker nods. The record plays. Singing about death.

The Follow can hardly stop shaking enough to take the hand and get into closed position. She glances about for a chance to escape. Losing the beat as the Stalker jockeys.

Rock, step, trip-ple-step, trip-ple-step, rock-step

EXT. DANCE STUDIO - NIGHT

The Follow CRASHES backwards through the window, flailing and screaming. Freeze. A CRUNCHING WET IMPACT.

OPENING TITLES

STOCK FOOTAGE of 1930s and 1940s swing dance, gradually fading into 1980s and contemporary swing. Glenn Miller's "In the Mood" plays, then the song "Lavender Coffin."

EXT. RUFDERSON UNIVERSITY - TERRACE - DAY (PRESENT DAY)

KATIE O'CALLAGHAN (20), fraught with anxiety yet always deliberate, paces by a round four-person table with an umbrella, talking into a phone.

KATIE

I know we need to finalize the list! I don't want to accidentally make anyone miss the dance.

MILDRED HALLIDAY (20), a chipper bundle of energy wearing a poofy skirt, nods knowingly. Katie doesn't notice.

KATIE (CONT'D)

I'm still trying to reach Tom. I will. You're welcome.

She hangs up. Mildred explodes out of her chair.

MILDRED

There's the guy. HEY TOM!

TOM (27), tired-eyed PhD student, walks outside, sandwich in hand, obscure history books under arm.

Mildred bounds up to him. Katie follows, hesitant. Each step a conscious effort, even though she wants to talk to him.

TOM

Mildred! Hello, Katie.

KATIE

Hello. Tonight. It's, are you--?

TOM

Right, you're coordinating rides!
Mmmm. I'm way behind.

MILDRED

In June? Grad school must suuuuck.

KATIE

There's space, it looks like.

She touches a chair. Unsure if she should lean on it, sit. She lets her hand fall. Tom sighs, shifts his books.

TOM

I shouldn't. I'm sorry.

Before he can turn, Mildred hems him in.

MILDRED

You know Franklin wants everyone
still on campus to come. The
Rufderson U. Swing Club needs you!

She sits on a table with undue spryness.

KATIE

(stepping closer)
It's vintage formal.

TOM

I know. And I'm sure you'll look
lovely in your 1940s gown.

His flirtation rattles Katie. She shrinks, unable to respond.

TOM (CONT'D)

There'll be a regular dance soon.

KATIE

There will.

MILDRED

On campus. Not in a sweet mansion!

TOM

(glaring at his books)
And I'm stuck in history! Listen, I
have my car. Maybe I'll drop by.

Mildred nods, but Katie remains unsatisfied. She cannot tear her eyes from Tom, nervous as she is. She blurts out.

KATIE

I think you do deserve a break!

It all but panics her.

TOM

You're right, Katie. Every day I'm
thesising. I can give up an
occasional Friday to swing.

KATIE

(so relieved)
That's great.

Pause. Awkward pause. Her relief quickly gives way.

KATIE (CONT'D)

I should--send Franklin the list?

MILDRED

(taking charge)
Yep. We should all do some homework
before then. Come on Katie!

She trots off, dragging Katie with her. Tom waves. A few yards along, Mildred slows to walk beside Katie.

KATIE

Thank you for helping.

MILDRED

I can't always, but you know I will
when I can.

Katie sighs, looking slightly guilty.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

I know you'll be better once we get
you to the dance.

INT. COLLEGE APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Math books, notes, and complex equations surround Katie's computer. Katie types an email. "TO: Franklin Grouper. SUBJECT: Carpool List."

Her cursor hovers over "send." She takes her hand from the mouse, reads a passage, making sure all is right. She tentatively touches the mouse.

Katie clicks send, glad to have that huge task behind her. She switches to an early 90s puzzle/strategy game which she had paused. Extremely difficult stuff.

Katie shifts closer. Hand on mouse, eyes missing nothing. The game becoming her world. She clicks a few things, pauses. Thinks. Unpauses, makes a few deliberate, measured clicks.

She fits it all together, face growing surprisingly relaxed. Doing very well, too.

INT. FRANKLIN'S ROOM - DAY

An actual bedroom, too big for a dorm room. Sheets of big band era music line the walls. Every. Damn. Inch.

FRANKLIN GROUPER (25), African-American, decisive leader and massive fanboy of swing, looks in a mirror. He wears 1940s pants, suspenders, vest, and a shirt with faint pink stripes.

FRANKLIN

(on phone)

The ride list is finalized. You'll be back in time to drive, right?

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY (INTERCUT)

MORT STEPHENSON (25), unremitting and self-assured, holds a phone--and a big knife. He chops grapefruits.

MORT

There's so much to set up. Tonight needs to be perfect!

Franklin puts on an AUTHENTIC BROWN FELT PORKPIE HAT, looking from it to the vest critically, but his voice has a smile.

FRANKLIN

To impress the townie dancers?

MORT

To impress her.

He looks over all the empty plates, ingredients, drinks, a wistful intensity steeling over his face.

Franklin stops, pretty sure he knows what Mort means.

FRANKLIN

Dinah?

A FEMALE SNORT. Franklin motions for the snorter to shush.

MORT

I know it can work out between us.

FRANKLIN

After two years? Is she worth all this? There are other girls.

He chuckles playfully. Mort remains deadly serious.

MORT

She is. And she's taking her final class this summer. I need tonight to go well! It's my last chance!

His eye roves to something white and fluffy on the counter, out of the grapefruit splash zone. A LUCKY RABBIT'S FOOT.

MORT (CONT'D)

That's why it had to be here. It's a lot like that lodge we stayed at, that wonderful weekend--

FRANKLIN

(clears throat)

Your uncle knows how big the crowd will be, right?

MORT

Sure. Charles really has warmed up to having the dance here. We're making swing-themed snacks now.

With an optimistic smile, he WHACKS a grapefruit in half.

END INTERCUT.

FRANKLIN

I can't wait to meet him. You'll be at campus by seven? Okay. See you.

He hangs up, puts a pair of glasses on, checks how they look.

ELLA (24), African-American, a serious girl, less swing-obsessed, with a low bullshit tolerance, sits on Franklin's bed, marketing textbook open, wearing a soccer uniform.

ELLA

Mort should be over her.

Franklin nods. He shrugs off the vest, carefully puts his porkpie aside. He gets a chartreuse zoot suit out of the closet, holds the vest up beside it.

ELLA (CONT'D)

No, no, no.

FRANKLIN

(unbuttoning his shirt)

No what?

ELLA

That is the worst suit you own.

FRANKLIN

It's period.

ELLA

As in, it's terrible, period.

She gives Franklin a good-naturedly stern look. Franklin dons a "Live and Let Lindy Exchange 2013" tshirt, quite a contrast to his pants, suspenders, and shoes.

FRANKLIN

We gotta go all out for swing.

ELLA

You wear that suit, Mort's uncle will run us out of his house.

Franklin hops onto the bed beside Ella.

FRANKLIN

I say tomato?

ELLA

(a broad smile)

I say tomahto.

FRANKLIN

Let's call the chartreuse off.

He rests his arm around Ella. She kisses him.

INT. COLLEGE APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Mildred, excited as ever, bounces in, carrying a dress and a shoebox. She notes the game, still open on the computer--a victory screen, in fact.

MILDRED

Your idea of "fun" makes my head hurt. Nobody else can solve that thing like you! Picked out a dress?

Katie, following Mildred in, indicates her bed.

KATIE

I've narrowed it down.

FOUR vintage dresses, surrounded by bows, jewelry, hats.

MILDRED

Four layers. You'll be sweating like a hog.

KATIE

Millie . . .

MILDRED

Come on, we have to get going!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COLLEGE APARTMENT - OUTER BATHROOM - DAY

Katie and Mildred, now in their dresses, apply makeup in front of the mirror, along with Katie's ROOMMATE (21), who flaunts a short skirt and a crop top. Quite a contrast.

ROOMMATE

You guys are cute, with your crazy swing dance thing.

MILDRED

Where are you off to?

ROOMMATE

Clubbing, duh, Friday.

KATIE

So we go dancing, you go dancing. Same thing.

ROOMMATE

I go normal dancing. You guys are totally stuck in the '40s. Or '30s?

MILDRED

Neither. We reinvented swing, made it 21st Century!

ROOMMATE

Um I know old when I see it.

KATIE

Retro is cool. And in swing, everyone's in synch, you can learn the steps. It's a safe place.

She speaks with strong conviction, then grows nervous. She steps back from them, intent on putting away her mascara.

The Roommate smacks her now-mulberry lips. She shrugs.

ROOMMATE

Don't get it. Knock yourselves out

Roommate leaves. Mildred mouths "weird-o." The door shuts.

MILDRED

Try to make sure you dance with Tom, okay? For me, and you.

Katie smiles in reply, faintly uncomfortable. She considers herself in the mirror. Mildred tries on one hat from her bag, then another. Leaves the second one on.

KATIE

I'd decided to go with a bow.

MILDRED

Are you sure? Great, let's go.

Katie lays three bows in a line. Green, white, and polka dot.

KATIE

I'm wearing a patterned dress, so a solid color might be better. The spotted one--hmmmm.

She walks in a circle around Mildred, pointing at the bows.

KATIE (CONT'D)

The green goes better with my hair, the white with my skin. I don't think I should go without one since a lot of people will either have hats or hair accessories.

She lifts her hair, tries different positions in the mirror.

KATIE (CONT'D)

The green one does stay tied better. Which is a minor detail.

She pushes the white and polka dot bows to the side, picks up the green one.

KATIE (CONT'D)

I'll wear the green one. More girls are likely to wear light-colored bows, and it suits my hair.

Deadly serious, she turns to Mildred. Mildred leans there, waiting patiently. She gives a teasing smile, elbows Katie

MILDRED

Missed the Saturday dance. Heard they crowded the floor. Katie takes so long to decide, we don't get around much anymore.

They both chuckle. Suddenly serious, Mildred shifts closer and touches Katie's arm.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

I know it hasn't been easy, Katie, but you don't have to worry so much. Sometimes, you can just-- decide and move on.

KATIE

Mmmmm.

Katie looks away, haunted. Catching up the green bow, she brushes her hair.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Franklin and Mort shift large speakers into Mort's trunk. Ella sits on Franklin's hood. All three are dressed up, Franklin in an orange zoot suit. He looks at the sky.

ELLA

(checking her phone)

They're saying it's gonna be the worst storm in years. Why'd he want us to schedule it tonight?

MORT

Uncle Charles didn't say. He didn't want to let us even have it there at first.

FRANKLIN

How did you convince the old guy?

MORT

I just kept talking. Told him more about me and Dinah, how important tonight would be . . .

Franklin pops his trunk to stuff in his dance shoes. His trunk already teems with CDs, 33s, cassettes, books, and even a few DVDs, VHS, 45s, and 78s.

MORT (CONT'D)

The swing club library will attend the dance too.

FRANKLIN

Always!

Ella grins--of course it will. Mort hears a TAPPING. He breaks into an excited smile, hurrying towards the sound.

MORT

Dinah! Here we are.

DINAH (23), blind and amiable, taps along. Mort greets her animatedly. Katie, meanwhile, has stolen up close to Franklin, but not that close. He notices her.

FRANKLIN

Hey. It's all sorted out! How are you today?

KATIE

I'm all right thanks. I know I'll enjoy the dance.

She manages to take one step closer, absently touching her bow. Thinking about that again, praying it wasn't a blunder.

FRANKLIN

You always do. Life with swing is much better than life without it.

BENNY (22), tall and twitchy, drums his fingers on his thigh and bobs his head. On reaching the group, he takes out his earbuds. He carries a trumpet case.

BENNY

Hey, g--hey guys. Is there r-rrrr--oom for my tahhhhhhrumpet? I just got, ah, out of band pah, pah . . .

DUKE (20) glides up to them. Everything he does is smooth.

DUKE
I would think, cats and chicks, the
word our Benny wants is "practice."

BENNY
(mildly)
F--uh, fuck you, Duke.

Duke laughs, does an enviably fluid body roll. Mort, in step
with Dinah, rejoins them.

DINAH
. . . Some of them still don't
believe that I swing dance.

MORT
And do it very well. You look
absolutely radiant tonight.

DINAH
(laughing it away)
Thanks.

ANDREA (21), confident and incredibly beautiful with curly
hair, strides towards them, raising a hand in salutation.

KATIE
It's only Art who isn't here.

DINAH
Oh good, Art's coming!

FRANKLIN
His lab was running late. We're
picking him up.

Katie gives this new development some serious analysis.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
Time to get moving.

With fresh excitement, he opens his passenger door for Ella.
Mort opens his passenger door for Dinah.

EXT. SIDE OF ROAD - DAY

Everyone stands around Mort's car, it's hood open. Mort bangs
on his car.

MORT
It must be my alternator again.

KATIE

We won't be able to go? We'll have to take two trips. Some of us will get there late. If the rain starts--

ANDREA

The alternator should be similar to diodes we were working with last month. I can probably fix it.

BENNY

You ell, electrical engineers are ah-amazing.

Andrea smiles at the compliment. She leans over mess of parts and wires under the hood. Deep in concentration, she unconsciously adjusts an out-of-place curl.

FRANKLIN

Any way we can help?

ANDREA

No thanks! I've got it.

Katie, worries not wholly allayed, steals a look at the clouds. A few shades darker than usual.

EXT. CELL PHONE TOWER - DAY

No doubt about it: dark clouds. But not as dark as the gloves, hidden in trees--black-gloved hands manipulating some kind of controls.

Not far from the tower, two WORKERS sit drinking coffee.

WORKER 1

Looks like a storm all right.

WORKER 2

We got it easy. Glad I don't work for the phone company no more. These towers stand up to anything.

The faint sound of a MOTOR, getting louder.

WORKER 1

What's that noise?

WORKER 2

Sounds like . . . Not a jet.

They look for the noise. Worker 2 points up.

WORKER 2 (CONT'D)

What the--?

A small plane flies in their direction, very high up. It resembles an old WWII-era bomber.

WORKER 2 (CONT'D)

Kids oughtta know better.

The gloves work the controls.

The plane flies straight. It has a package strapped to it and a frowning shark-like mouth painted below the nose.

WORKER 1

It's headed for the--!

The plane flies into the cell phone tower--and EXPLODES.

The Workers flee as debris fall around them. A heavy scrap just misses Worker 2. He hears Worker 1 cry out.

Worker 1 lies on the ground, a steel beam on top of him. A pool of blood on the cement grows bigger and bigger.

I/E. FRANKLIN'S CAR - EVENING

Franklin and Ella ride in the front; in the back, Katie, Benny, and ART (19), a portly and shy bespectacled science type. Katie lowers her phone.

KATIE

Art, there's no service, at all.

ART

Um. That's weird.

KATIE

I hope it's back soon . . .

Franklin hums "String of Pearls." Ella tries to recall.

ELLA

Is that, uhhhh. "String of Pearls?"

Franklin nods. He follows Mort's car (running fine) into a turn, slowing to cross the old one-lane wooden bridge over a surprisingly deep creekbed, given how little water there is.

CLACK, CLACK: over the bridge, and the HOUSE stands before them. Three stories plus attic, over a century old. Exuding the grandeur, and wealth, of a bygone age.

FRANKLIN

Wow. Ella, this is perfect.

ELLA

Mort wasn't exaggerating.

Katie keeps staring even after the others look away, as focused as when she plays her tricky computer games.

The curtain in the attic window twitches. Like it was peeled back ever so slightly, then released, to fell into place.

Katie inhales, instantly uneasy once more.

KATIE

Did you see that, up there?

FRANKLIN

See what?

KATIE

Someone watching from the attic.

FRANKLIN

I doubt it . . .

EXT. DRIVEWAY - EVENING

They pile out of Franklin's car as Andrea, Dinah, Duke, and Mort get out of the other. Katie still looks atticwards.

ART

(towards DINAH)

It's, um, spectacular, and so old.

Katie points at the attic, but a MOTOR distracts her.

Mildred drives over the bridge on an ancient little MOTOR SCOOTER, hair streaming in the wind.

MILDRED

Make way for Mildreeeed!

She pulls up to a stop near them. A little too quick, as her dress flies up.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

Yolo.

Bag in hand, she goes to stand by Katie.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

Yup, I could use a place like this!

KATIE

Mildred. I saw someone in the
attic. I certain. But--

MILDRED

Let's head inside, Katie.

Obediently, Katie follows. Franklin and Mort lead the way.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

CHARLES (78), a convivial relic of the past, stands on the
staircase in a 1950s suit. He sweeps off his hat and bows.

CHARLES

Welcome, my young friends--to your
dance hall!

The students, lingering just beyond the entryway at the far
side of the room, don't respond at once. Too busy marvelling
at the old house, even grander on the interior.

Stately dark panelling. Carved tables. Comfortable chairs and
couches. A fireplace. A wood floor, ideal of dancing. A long
table of carved mahogany not far from the stairs.

Their awe pleases Mort. Charles, beaming, descends the steps.

Franklin remembers himself and, raising his own hat in
dilatory response, goes to shake Charles's hand.

FRANKLIN

I'm Franklin Grouper, club founder.
Thank you. Your house is, wow, what
a venue! Is that--?

Spying an old cabinet with a crank, he rushes over and opens
the top. A 1910s VICTROLA PHONOGRAPH.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

Check it out, guys! We can actually
play our 78s.

Mort and Ella both chuckle at him.

Katie, standing near the back of the group, still looks a
little thoughtful, apprehensive. She leans towards Mildred.

GLENN (O.S.)

Hello.

The rough voice near her makes Katie jump, and Mildred grabs her arm. Everyone turns. GLENN (80), ever-staring, raises a hand and half-smiles.

CHARLES

There you are, Glenn. My
groundskeeper--and only company.

The students ad-lib greetings.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Glenn doesn't talk much, but he
likes old music.

GLENN

Didn't know swing was back.

The young people spread out, looking around. Mildred steers Katie towards the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mildred, just inside the door, murmurs to Katie.

MILDRED

Relax. Think about getting to dance
with Tom when he--Oo! Oo! Chips!

(sings)

All I want is potato chips!

A big table in the center teems with food, including a silver serving bowl overflowing with chips. A mountain of sweet potato fries. Grapefruit, chicken strips, potato wedges.

By each dish, a little sign names a swing song related to the food. This, and Mildred, get a little smile out of Katie.

Mort, proud and excited, leads Dinah in

MORT

Snacks are in here. I'm about to
put lemon jelly rolls in the oven.

DINAH

Oh, that's my favorite!

MORT

I thought they'd be a hit.

(half-hugging her)

This house is an amazing place.

Duke and Franklin poke their heads in. Duke snaps, points to bottles of alcohol and soda on the side counter.

DUKE

Drinks. That, I can dig, daddy-o.

FRANKLIN

Let's get setting up, guys.

Before Katie follows him, she idly notices a basement door across the kitchen. Latched shut. DISTANT THUNDER.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Benny sets up a laptop on the long table. Most of the others move furniture. Andrea carries a giant speaker by herself.

ELLA

You want a hand?

ANDREA

Nope. I'm good, thanks.

Katie steps forward, wanting to help. Gets in the way of Art and Dinah, carrying a stand. Steps back, anxiety waxing. She examines the record on the Victrola to distract herself.

MORT

(slithers up to DINAH)
I should show you around the house.
It's almost as nice as that lodge
we visited.

DINAH

That was a good time.

MORT

Truly magical.

Grinning, he goes to where Franklin hefts a floor lamp.

FRANKLIN

I hope all the townies have a good
time tonight.

MORT

With luck, tonight will be perfect.

He squeezes his rabbit's foot. Franklin looks at Dinah, then inquisitively at Mort. Mort nods. Franklin slugs his aarm lightly, gives him a look--"Let it go, man." Mort whispers.

MORT (CONT'D)

I can recreate it and we'll be
together. You'll see!

Katie makes way for Charles and Glenn, who set the Victrola cabinet by some shelves of records, then relax.

Mort props a plaque on the mantel, between two dog statues.

MORT (CONT'D)

Hope you don't mind, Uncle Charles.

Katie and Mildred read the plaque. "Swing competition: best newcomer. Keep on swinging!" Charles shifts, uncomfortable.

CHARLES

That old antique.

MORT

If I hadn't found that in the attic, I doubt I could have convinced him to let us come.

GLENN

Knew some Lindy steps once.

CHARLES

Did you really?

Glenn, with a noncommittal noise, wanders off.

KATIE

Will you be dancing tonight?

CHARLES

Me, no, I don't remember any of it.
Lindsay liked to swing . . .

Drifting closer to the mantel, he stares up at a large portrait dominating the wall. The smiling LINDSAY (18).

Charles locks eyes with the portrait. Almost unconsciously, he pulses, humming "Stupid Cupid," begins to do the twist.

Too soon, he drops his head, sadness creasing his face.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Lindsay. My late wife. I still miss dancing with her.

MILDRED

Awwwww!

Charles swallows his sadness, looks around his house. Everything in it old. A soft smile, full of longing. By now, a lot of the others are listening

CHARLES

Wouldn't life be grand if it were
still 1957?

FRANKLIN

Not so much if you're black.

DINAH

Or a woman, or disabled . . .

ART

(a ways away, mumbling)
Also, um, polio. We have vaccines.

CHARLES

Well, yes, but the music was so
much better that some of today's
ostrobogulous tunes. And bread was
a dime a loaf.

MILDRED

I want cheap bread AND equality!

DISSOLVE TO:

Benny and Andrea have the sound set up. Glenn lurks nearby.
Benny presses play, and an instrumental rendition of "Don't
Sit Under the Apple Tree" plays.

GLENN

(eerie, dreamy voice)
"Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree."

BENNY

You knnnnow y-your, ah, ma-music!

CHARLES

I never knew you cared for swing.

GLENN

Stopped in '58. Got spooked.

FRANKLIN

What would make you give up swing?

Glenn, seeing he has everyone's ear, girds himself for an
prodigiously long speech (for him). He speaks low.

GLENN

Boy and girl, brutally slain. At a
swing scene. Never caught him.
Only clue was club's copy of "Mack
the Knife" was stolen.

A loud KNOCK on the door startles everyone.

FRANKLIN

It must be the townies. Swingtime!

He runs to answer it, the story already forgotten. Katie doesn't look away from Glenn. Thrown off, shaken. She pads to the Victrola, checks the record on it.

"Mack the Knife," performed by Louis Armstrong.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Dark of night. Rain coming down fast. The rush of the river beneath the bridge. Swing music from the well-lit house.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A dance floor so full, near-collisions are inevitable. People of all shapes and sizes, people in their teens, late 20s, late 30s, early 60s. All there to swing.

Katie dances with a young man, concentrating hard but a little less anxious. Her countenance brightens when she sees that Tom has just come in.

Andrea leads while Duke follows. Meanwhile, Franklin and Ella pull off some flashy moves.

Charles watches, overwhelmed. He lights a Chesterfield cigarette.

The song ends. Benny puts on "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy."

KATIE

(approaching TOM)

Tom . . . glad you made it.

TOM

Yeah. This place looks hopping.

(removing his suit coat)

Do you know where the coats go?

Katie, glad for something to do, relieves him of it.

KATIE

I can take it. I'll be right back.

TOM

Thanks. I'll catch you for a dance?

Katie nods. She carries the coat, holding it a bit closer than absolutely necessary. Things are going pretty well!

INT. ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Two interior doors. One on either side of the front door. Katie looks between the two, the suit coat on her arm.

She reaches for the one on the kitchen side, pulls back her hand. Suddenly afraid this isn't the right one. She looks at the opposite door. At last decides, opens it.

Wrong room! An ordinary front room, another door on the far side. Katie tugs the door, wanting to close it before anyone sees her mistake, but she stops.

Something looks out of place. A black leather glove, dropped square in the middle of the floor. Dark stains upon it.

Katie regards this small incongruity. Softly closes the door. She hurries to the other door, opens it. The coat closet.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Katie reenters, scans the room for Tom. Who is, alas, dancing with someone else. Missed opportunity. Katie retreats to a chair, not far from one sofa.

Mort and Dinah sit on the sofa, her cain leaning between them. They laugh together.

DINAH

You remember that whole thing!

MORT

A truly magical night can impress
itself in your mind.

They lapse into companionable silence. Mort tries to keep himself from staring at her.

Art clears his throat, getting their attention.

ART

Um, hey. Dinah. If, you aren't
dancing, would you like to dance?

DINAH

I'd love to.

She nods at Mort, reaches out. Art takes her hand and leads her to the dance floor.

Mort, annoyed, crosses his legs, knocking Dinah's cain over. He picks it up and with loving, almost sensuous care, puts it right where it was.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (LATER)

"Stray Cat Strut" plays. Benny talks animatedly and in detail to Glenn, using gestures and raps to indicate the music. Duke practices smooooth solo moves, a drink in his hand.

Katie, near a wall, stops dancing with Franklin, apologetic.

FRANKLIN

It's fine. Dipping takes practice.

KATIE

I need to improve. Some leads use dips regularly.

She looks over at Tom, dipping Mildred. Franklin notices, nods with understanding.

KATIE (CONT'D)

I don't know why it's giving me so much trouble.

FRANKLIN

There's nothing to worry about.

Franklin indicates where Art dances with Dinah. Both smiling. Having a great time. Dinah misses Art's hand. They reset, continue. No big deal!

Franklin brings Katie into closed position, leads a basic, dips. Katie hesitates, doesn't dip far. Franklin rights her.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

You may be thinking too hard.
(pulsing with music)
You go when you feel him lead it,
but you control how much.

KATIE

I'm afraid to give too much weight.

FRANKLIN

Try a small one, focusing on form.

He leads her in a tiny dip. Katie still looks around.

Glenn dances with Ella, basic moves. He's okay, but it looks somewhat strained. Charles sees, shakes his head.

Andrea dances with some townie. Following his moves superbly.

Mildred and Tom have moved closer at hand. Laughing merrily, Mildred starts to pinwheel. Tom, taken by surprise, covers.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
 ("dipping" himself)
 Essentially you're dipping
 yourself. Let's try that exercise
 we did in the lesson.

Katie tries it, Franklin's fingers barely supporting her, slower than the music. It goes okay. He tries to lead a full dip. She tenses. Still not right. Katie is super frustrated.

KATIE
 I don't want to do it wrong!

FRANKLIN
 You'll get it. You'll just feel it.
 Try not to think, try to have a
 good time. That's why we dance.
 (hugging KATIE)
 I worried to. Before I found swing.

He moves on, leaving Katie curious. She watches Mildred and Tom. Mildred has a high old time. Not dancing all that well.

MILDRED
*Singin' the blues while the lady cats cry,
 Wild, stray cat, you're a real cool guy.
 I wish I could be as carefree and wild.
 'Cause I got cat class and I got cat style.*

The song ends. Mildred sticks the ending, quite near Katie.

TOM
 Thanks.

MILDRED
 You too! I was just talking about
 that song today--what are the odds?

Tom turns towards Katie, and some of Katie's frustration over dipping abates.

KATIE
 Hello again . . .

She wrestles with her worries, her gaze floating for just a moment towards the Victrola with "Mack the Knife" on it. In that moment, a lady with a PIXIE CUT materializes.

PIXIE CUT
Want to dance?

TOM
Oh. Sure.

He takes her hand and leads her away.

MILDRED
Sitting one out?

KATIE
Maybe so.

A pause. Mildred waits. She decides she'll have a long wait.

MILDRED
Let's dance. I won't even ask
whether you want to lead or follow.

Katie smiles, goes with Mildred to an open patch. They
jockey, Mildred leading.

MILDRED (CONT'D)
Katie. I know how much you want to
dance with Tom.

KATIE
(slightly embarrassed)
I guess I do. Yes.

MILDRED
You know you can ask him to dance!

She leads follow-in-front.

KATIE
I was thinking of it--of how I
should. It isn't always easy to get
to him when a song starts. If it's
later in a song but not very near
the end, it could be seen as I
don't want to dance a full song--

MILDRED
(pleading)
Katie, Katieeee. Is dancing not
helping at all?

She pop turn catches Katie.

MILDRED (CONT'D)
You think too much. Sometimes you
just have to do something!

She spins Katie, a little too forcefully.

MILDRED (CONT'D)
So next chance you get, get out of
your head, and go ask him, darn it!

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Katie, a bit flushed and sweaty, fills a cup of water, guzzles it. Dinah, Andrea, and Ella stand by the food table, Dinah eating a chicken tender.

ELLA
You think he's not still into you?

DINAH
What, after two years? We're just
friends!
(laughing)
You know Mort's nostalgic moods.

Ella and Andrea share a look. Andrea looks to Katie. Katie gets herself another water, pretending not to hear them.

ANDREA
Why'd you break up with him again?

ELLA
(reproachful)
I don't think that's our business.

DINAH
I just, I didn't feel that way
about him anymore. So it was better
to end it.

Finishing her chicken, she wads up the napkin and, cane under one arm, feels her way to the trash can.

ELLA
You and Mort are the past. What
about you and Art, the future?

DINAH
(hesitating)
I'm figuring out exactly what.

She taps out of the kitchen.

ANDREA
Do we tell her Mort's after her, or
not? What's better?

Ella pulls a sweet potato fry off the table.

ELLA
 (singing)
*You'll never have no better than
 my, sweet potato fries.*

She eats the fry. Andrea laughs, and even Katie smiles. Katie puts her cup on the counter, paces into the living room.

ANDREA
 But yeah, I have no idea.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A few dancers get ready to head out. Thunder reverberates. Even with the music, one can hear the rain falling. "Jeepers Creepers" plays.

Katie sticks to the wall. She sees Tom, alone. Finally, the perfect opportunity. She readies herself. Steps forward.

SINGER (RECORDED)
Jeepers, creepers. Where's you get those peepers?

Katie halts, a flash of something snagging her peripheral vision. She tries to find what she saw.

Her eyes open wide, staring up at a mirror on the wall.

REFLECTED in it, MACK THE KNIFE lurks in a dark doorway, watching the dancers in the mirror. He wears all black with a ferocious, distorted shark mask. Overfull with teeth.

His peepers shift and lock onto Katie's.

Katie gasps. She whips her head, trying to find the doorway, to verify the monster. She looks back to the mirror.

Nothing. The mirror shows swing dancers, closed doors, nothing more.

Art hangs out on the fringe, his eye on the kitchen.

KATIE
 Art! Did you see that mirror?

She points. Art looks at the mirror, then at her, confused. Katie realizes there's no point in trying to explain.

KATIE (CONT'D)
 I thought someone was watching me.

ART
 (RE: all the dancers)
 Everybody's too busy dancing.
 (softly)
 Um, I think. A trick. I tell myself
 that so I don't worry.

Katie smiles. Reflected in the mirror, couples part as the song fades out. Art ventures towards the kitchen.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Torrential rain. Fewer cars. The river bloated.

INT. ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

A small throng of TOWNIES puts on rain gear, collects coats and purses. Franklin, Charles, and Ella join them.

FRANKLIN
 You all leaving? The dance goes
 till midnight.

ELDERLY LADY
 Some of us aren't as young as you
 college students. And that rain!

YOUNG PROFESSIONAL
 We have, you know, jobs.

Franklin grins at the good-natured barb. Charles opens the door for them. A lot of handshakes.

CHARLES
 Thank you all for gracing my humble
 house.

FRANKLIN
 Yeah, thanks! Hopefully you'll be
 seeing more of us at your scene.

ELDERLY LADY
 Thanks for the dances.

Charles shuts the door behind them, making the rain quieter.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Franklin, stepping back in, looks around. Only the core students left now. Benny dances with Dinah to "Zoot Suit Riot." Bobbing his head in time. Andrea DJs.

Duke sinks into a chair, discarding his empty glass. He puts his hand over his stomach, groans. Not so smooth anymore. Tom and Mort chat as they amble across the floor.

MORT

You're leaving? The night's not over. The best is still ahead!

Tom nods ruefully. Mildred drifts up, Katie behind. Franklin surreptitiously draws Mort to the side. Mildred hugs Tom.

MILDRED

See you next week.

KATIE

Uh . . . Are you sure, you're leaving?--I only, it isn't very late. For a Friday.

TOM

I know, I just have lots to do tomorrow. Every day I'm thesising.

They laugh at his habitual wry pronouncement. Two beats.

KATIE

The coat closet.

INT. ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Katie opens the coat closet. Tom reaches for his suit coat.

KATIE

I'm happy you could come.

TOM

Me too. Next time we'll dance for sure.

They hug. It totally lasts longer than Mildred's hug!

KATIE

I'll see you at lessons.

Donning his coat, Tom passes out the front door. Mildred nudges Katie. Katie smiles, grateful for her support. Beat. Serious, Mildred leans closer.

MILDRED

Not everyone understands, but I know you're trying.

Katie squeezes Mildred's hand, but doesn't look at her. Without aim, her eyes wander to the door opposite the closet.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

As the song ends, Benny leads Dinah back to her cane. They thank each other. Benny stops by the DJ table. Twitches.

BENNY

Have y-y---, have you seen G--lenn?
He was . . . asking about muh,
myyyy trumpet.

ANDREA

(scanning the room)
I don't know where he is.

BENNY

Well. I'm g-g--gonna--ah get it.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

One umbrella wends from the porch to the parked cars. Far away, one last car drives off, across the bridge.

Benny steps around puddles, one hand holding the umbrella, the other drumming a tune he hums. Thoughts on the puddles, the trumpet, the music in his head. He opens his car door.

SPLASH, SPLASH, SPLOSH. Wet footsteps. Benny straightens, confused. He pinpoints where the sound is.

Startles in alarm.

Black rain slicker. Black gloves. A jackknife.

SLICE! TEAR. Benny screams, clutching his stomach. Blood drips on the ground. Instantly washed away. Benny falls. A gloved hand brings the knife down, ready to cut more.

The other sets something on the ground, shiny in the feeble light. A bugle, smaller than Benny's trumpet. Another SLICE, and a splatter of blood darkens the bugle

The downpour drowns out Benny's screams.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dinah hangs up a rotary phone, addresses Katie and Mildred.

DINAH

They're working on the cell tower.

A the DJ table, Mort bends down to speak to Andrea. Shrugging, Andrea puts on "Fire," a classic blues song. Dinah taps towards the wall. Art taps her on the shoulder.

ART

(anxious as ever)

Dinah. Would you like to . . . ?

DINAH

Of course.

She leans her cane on the wall. They move onto the open floor, already feeling the pull of the slow music.

Mort, seeing them, thumps over to a wall and leans, glum.

Duke, sweating but a little better, rolls up to Mildred.

DUKE

Heeeeey. Would you care to cut, a--

He holds his stomach, shaking, moans.

DUKE (CONT'D)

I should sit this out. Sorry.

MILDRED

Feel better!

Duke totters to a chair. Dinah and Art have already gone from closed to close embrace. Mort watches, rabbit's foot clenched in his hand.

KATIE

(joining MILDRED)

There was a fancy stained glove in the middle of the floor.

MILDRED

In one of your computer games?

KATIE

No, here. Now it's gone. Why was it there? Why would anyone wear it?

MILDRED

(RE: FRANKLIN'S ZOOT SUIT)

Who would wear that, ordinarily?

KATIE

Something . . . It's out of place.
I can figure out what.

Katie spies Charles shuffling out of a side hallway.

KATIE (CONT'D)

(very apologetic)
We borrowed your phone, we couldn't
find you to ask, and our cell--

CHARLES

Oh, no worry. I was after Glenn, to
see if he'd check on the generator.
We sometimes lose power.

He observes the blues-dancing young with a faraway look.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Not an ostrobogulous dance at all.

Duke heaves himself to his feet, positively green.

DUKE

Hey, cats. I got to go. I feel
really beat up. Ugggghhh.
(defensively)
I only had two rum and Cokes.

Franklin sighs, breaks away from Ella. He offers Duke an arm.

FRANKLIN

Come on Duke. I'll drive you home.

CHARLES

I can drive him.

FRANKLIN

You don't have to!

CHARLES

Oh, just to the bus stop. It won't
be long. This is the most life
we've had here since--

The portrait over the mantel, and the new addition of the
plaque, draw his eyes. He shrugs off the moment.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Wouldn't want to make you stop.

KATIE

That's very thoughtful.

Mort bounds over, enthused once more.

MORT

Uncle Charles! You did say we could stay here, if the storm's too bad?

CHARLES

Of course, we've plenty of beds and blankets. Come on, young man.

Mort beams--a definite victory!

DUKE

Urrrghh. Another time, Mildred.

He stumbles. Charles offers him an arm, but Duke declines, struggles onward.

MORT

Don't get sick in my uncle's 1959 Pontiac GTO!

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

In that 1959 GTO, Duke hunches in his seat. Charles drives from the garage, down the driveway. Past Benny's car.

Benny sits in the driver's seat of his car, eyes closed. His trumpet on the passenger seat.

In front of him, above his lap, a glimpse of bloody bugle.

I/E. CHARLES'S CAR - NIGHT

Charles and Duke cross the bridge. The bumps make Duke groan. Charles looks over at him with sympathy.

CHARLES

You'll soon be as right as rain.

The high water roars beneath them.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A lazy Lindy song saunters through the air. Mildred chats with Art and Dinah.

Franklin sits beside Ella, close to where they've pushed the Victrola and shelves of records near the wall. Katie stands beside them, her attention once more on that mirror.

KATIE

Oh the shark, babe, has such teeth.

She looks down at the Victrola, registers surprise. For the "Mack the Knife" record is no longer there.

Mort stands by Andrea's table, observing the room.

MORT

In the late night, everything seems relaxed, easier.

ANDREA

Because we're all tired. I need my beauty sleep.

Andrea shifts a lock of hair more to the side. Katie steps up to them, tentatively rests a hand on the table.

KATIE

Did we play any records?

ANDREA

Nope! All laptops and CDs.

Katie assumed as much. She slips back to the shelves, looks through the 78s by Franklin and Ella.

FRANKLIN

. . . good number of townies and non-regulars. Next step is to get more students at the local club.

KATIE

Is that important?

FRANKLIN

Mort and I graduate next year.

(getting into it)

I want to make sure there's as much overlap as possible between us and the local scene. That way--

Ella pushes him.

ELLA

Franklin, don't you ever think about anything but swing?

KATIE

We didn't use this record player.

She seems unaware she interrupted them as she looks at records. Franklin shakes his head to confirm they didn't.

ELLA

Even your homework comes second to teaching dance sometimes.

Katie bumps Ella's chair, still too focused, surprising Ella.

FRANKLIN

I see you at swing pretty often.

ELLA

You drag me here.

She smiles, though. Franklin leans to get a look at the records Katie sifts. LPs, a few tapes and CDs, Many 78s.

KATIE

The record's not here; it was on the player when we came in.

ELLA

What record?

KATIE

Mack the Knife. Like in Glenn's story. Why would someone take it?

FRANKLIN

I'm sure nobody did.

KATIE

And who would take it away?

ELLA

(getting up)

What? I don't know. You sound like you need a drink or something.

Katie, now realizing she maybe pushed too hard, creeps away.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Katie finds Art and Dinah conversing peacefully by the food table, Art facing away. Music seeps in.

ART

Dances are the best environment. I think. Socially. There's some structure.

DINAH

Yes, it makes it easier!

She smiles at him, knowing he really gets it. Katie at last decides to go for a drink.

ART
Have you tried the jelly roll?

DINAH
No, I forgot! I'd love some.

ART
I can get it.

Dinah nods, grateful. Art gets the knife, goes and cuts two slices. Dinah, hearing him, finds a napkin, holds it out.

Katie takes her hand away from a liquor bottle, instead considering more water. Art sees her.

DINAH
Thanks. You know, there are several swing songs about jelly rolls.

ART
I read it was a slang term, for, well . . .

He takes her napkin, puts a slice on it, hands it back. Their fingers touch for a second or so. Katie decides she isn't thirsty, silently pads back to the living room.

DINAH
Things they couldn't sing about?

A pause. Neither of them moves away. Then, each take a bite.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Katie slides past Mort, who watches Art and Dinah, face tight with frustration.

DINAH (O.S.)
Mm, this is so good!

Mort steps to the side, back to the wall, glares at his rabbit's foot before smacking his leg.

MORT
Dammit, no, no!

INT. ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Ella opens the window. She stares sedately out into the dark, rainy night. Franklin soon joins her. Behind them, Katie comes and looks towards the spare front room, mind at work.

FRANKLIN
What's up, babe?

ELLA
Nothin'. I like the rain.

Franklin puts his arm around her. They watch it pour down. A very faint BUZZ, nigh inaudible. Ella turns her head to hear.

ELLA (CONT'D)
You hear that?

FRANKLIN
The storm?

ELLA
No. That buzz.

Franklin shakes his head. The buzzing carries louder, clear.

FRANKLIN
Wait. Yeah. Sounds like a--

ELLA
Chainsaw? Why the hell would
someone be in the rain with that?

Katie looks outside. Franklin shrugs. No reason. Nonetheless, it growls somewhere out there, out of sight . . .

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A lull in the music. Katie stands, twisting her hands, while most of the others sit.

KATIE
Something isn't right.

MILDRED
Try to relax, Katie. Please.

KATIE
I saw a . . . does no one else feel
uneasy? The gloves, the record?

ANDREA
 (muttering)
 You have "feeling uneasy" covered.

FRANKLIN
 Maybe Benny or someone thought the
 record was from our swing library
 and took it out there.

He hops up.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
 I'll go check--and I'll grab a few
 to play, since we have an actual
 gramophone. Who's coming with?

He directs the question at Katie, not too forcefully. Andrea
 meanwhile looks slightly miffed her songs aren't good enough.

MILDRED
 In the pouring rain?

KATIE
 (considers briefly)
 All right, I will.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Katie and Franklin, holding umbrellas against the driving
 torrent, pick their way around puddles.

FRANKLIN
 You want everything to be in place
 when you get anxious, don't you?

KATIE
 Mm. Understanding makes it easier
 to plan . . .

Benny sits in the front seat of his car, mostly in shadow.

KATIE (CONT'D)
 What's he doing out here?

FRANKLIN
 Listening to his own music? Benny's
 a funny guy.

Before Franklin can pop his trunk, the sound of a CAR makes
 them look across the yard.

KATIE

Good, Charles is back. I have a question for him.

Charles's GTO drives steadily to the bridge. They can just make out Charles's 1950s suit and hat.

Charles pulls onto the bridge.

SNAP! CRASH! The bridge collapses. The car plunges down.

Katie screams. She and Franklin sprint, knowing his life may depend on it, knowing it may be too late already.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

Katie and Franklin reach the edge, cautiously look over. Katie shivers violently and covers her face.

The crumpled, half-submerged car lays upside down in the wood wreckage. Nobody could survive that.

A mangled blue arm sticks out the window. The current tugs it straight out, unable to budge Charles's crushed body within.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mort's mouth hangs open at the half-wet Katie and Franklin. The others hover around.

MORT

Are you sure?

FRANKLIN

There's no doubt, man.

KATIE

I'm so sorry.

Mort looks crushed. Katie reaches out to him, but he goes to sit down. Franklin and Ella both pat him on the shoulder as he passes. Mort sinks down onto the couch.

Mildred scurries over to the phone. She starts to dial, listens, replaces the receiver.

MILDRED

Even the land line's down now.

Dinah beelines to Mort, gives him a side-hug. He touches her hand, then hugs her closer while crying just a little, wipes tears while holding his rabbit's foot.

MORT
Thank you, Dinah.

ANDREA
We should leave and report it.

KATIE
But the bridge is out.

FRANKLIN
What about another way, Mort?

MORT
The forest out back is too dense.

DINAH
That wouldn't be easy for me.

Art touches her arm. Mort doesn't notice, but he does wipe his eyes and assume some authority.

MORT
Then we all need to stay here. We
knew we might have to.

Katie doesn't look convinced. She steps a little aside, mumbles to Ella.

KATIE
That sound you heard outside

ELLA
I forgot about that. What about it?

KATIE
I don't know . . .

FRANKLIN
(standing up)
Here's what we should do: the storm
being bad as it is--

FZZZT!

Darkness. CRIES of alarm.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The house has gone pitch black. No light anywhere, save a sickly moonbeam choking through the clouds. Then, lightning.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Darkness. Thunder. Then, beams of light as everyone but Dinah uses their phones. Not much, but enough so they won't trip.

DINAH
What happened?

ART
The power went out. It's okay.

ELLA
This is bullshit right here.

She holds the light so Franklin can see her glaring at him.

DINAH
You get used to the dark. Trust me.

Everyone laughs with her, easing up a bit. Except Andrea.

ANDREA
I say again: we should leave.

KATIE
Charles mentioned a generator?

MORT
It's in a shed, to the kitchen side of the house. Glenn has tools out there; he was tinkering with it.

FRANKLIN
(calling)
Glenn?

No sound in the dark except rain.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
Andrea. You're an electrical engi--

ANDREA
Fine! I'll fix the generator; you figure out how to get out of here.

She sashays towards the entryway.

FRANKLIN
I can go with you.

ANDREA
I'll handle it.

ART

Um, I wouldn't mind, if you--

Andrea turns, framed in the doorway, arms folded.

ANDREA

I don't need any help

Not giving anyone a chance to argue, she spins and stalks out, phone held in front of her.

Mort stands again, visibly upset. Katie notes his mein, edges towards him.

KATIE

It was quick. He didn't suffer. We--
 (she halts, remembering)
 The supports! The water wasn't up
 to the supports. Yet it collapsed.

Mort, at first kind of grateful, now turns away, towards Dinah. Mildred makes "cut it out" motions at Katie. Katie turns to Ella, who steps away. Franklin acknowledges Katie.

FRANKLIN

At least all the townies got out.

KATIE

(sotto)
 There's something we're not seeing.

MILDRED

Katie, no.

She touches Katie's arm to offset her firm tone.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mort passes out flashlights from a low cupboard, also stocked with battery-powered lanterns and candles.

MORT

It's better than our phones.

FRANKLIN

(taking a lantern)
 Could it just be the breakers?

He holds up the lantern, casting light on the basement door, still latched by chain.

MORT

No. The whole house lost it.

Franklin turns from the door, lowers the lantern.

FRANKLIN

We could ask Glenn to help Andrea.

MILDRED

(imitating ANDREA)

"No thanks! I can handle it."

MORT

I know right where his room is.
upstairs. Dinah, want to come with
me? I did promise you a tour.

DINAH

I think I'd rather stay down here.

MORT

Oh, of course! I'll be right back.

KATIE

(whispering)

Millie. Glenn might have taken the
record after mention--

MILDRED

(grabbing Katie)

We can come with you.

Katie doesn't look quite so eager.

EXT. YARD - NIGHT

Andrea paces through the rain.

She reaches the shed, hesitates a moment. Nervous. Shoves the
door open. Is someone watching her?

Generator, tools, darkness. Nothing out of the ordinary. Out
of habit she flips the light switch. It doesn't work.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Mort holds the lantern, walking between Katie and Mildred,
who has a flashlight. They pass a large chest covered by a
sheet, a fancy stone cross and a bowl of flowers atop it.

MILDRED

Lavender! Smell it?

She inhales deeply. Mort turns back to pluck a flower. Katie
waits a moment later before giving voice to her thought.

KATIE
Franklin sometimes decides,
quickly, what we all have to do.

MILDRED
He's used to making decisions, but
I do get what you're saying.

KATIE
I didn't--he's not unreasonable.

MORT
Glenn's room's up ahead. He and
Uncle Charles both . . .

He slows, and his speech breaks. Katie steps in front of him
and hugs him.

KATIE
I'm sorry, Mort.

MORT
It's, ah, you know, a shock.

KATIE
I know. I know it is.

Her eyes fix dart to the stone cross they passed . . .

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DUSK (FLASHBACK)

Young Katie looks down at a tombstone, the top in the shape
of a cross. Her tears fall freely.

YOUNG KATIE
Dad. You didn't have to. There must
have been another way!

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Mort looks at Katie with a little gratitude. Then he breaks
away, tamping down his grief. Mildred looks from the cross
back to Katie, squeezes her hand.

MORT
We should get Glenn and get back to
Dinah and the others.

Near the far end of the hall, he pounds on a door.

MORT (CONT'D)
Glenn? Hey, you awake?

No reply. Mort knocks again, opens the door. He peers in, shining the lantern.

MORT (CONT'D)

Empty.

KATIE

I last saw him dancing . . .

Mort doesn't respond. Mildred trots down the hall, opens a door, glances in, doesn't find it too enthralling, shuts it.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Millie, don't be a snoop.

MILDRED

I'm not, I'm just curious. And maybe Glenn's around.

Katie and Mort smile slightly. Mildred turns to another door, near the lavender chest. She tries it, but it's locked.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

(banging on the door)

Hello in there?

Not a movement within.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Franklin and Ella sit on the couch, Art in a chair. Dinah stands with her cane, faltering.

DINAH

Did he say the restroom was--there?

Art gets to his feet in an instant.

ART

Down that hall. Would you like me to show you?

DINAH

Sure. Thank you.

She turns to the stairs. Art gently touches her elbow. Dinah nods. Art directs her out of the room as she uses the cane.

Franklin plays the flashlight over the wall. Ella doesn't look at him. She speaks, no judgment in her voice.

ELLA

Katie's getting in a state.

Pause. Franklin faces Ella fully, puts a hand on her knee.

FRANKLIN

Okay. Tell me what's up.

ELLA

It's this creepy old place. We're stuck here with the lights out.

She looks at him, cuts off his reply.

ELLA (CONT'D)

Couldn't we have found a nice normal venue when we couldn't book on campus?

FRANKLIN

Like our past venues? A high school gym. A Greek church. A speakeasy, a karate studio, a fountain in the park. Potato potato.

Both teeter on the edge of laughter.

ELLA

The dance was fun. I guess.

FRANKLIN

Let's call the calling-off off?

Ella laughs. She puts her hand on Franklin's, holds it.

EXT. SHED - NIGHT

Andrea bends over the generator, concentrating and annoyed. She adjusts her dark curls.

Hearing something, Andrea straightens. She turns her head to better hear.

ANDREA

Hello?

Nobody enters. The faintest step. Or just wet grass rustling?

ANDREA (CONT'D)

I'll have it done. Let me work!

She returns to the generator. Thinking she has it, she shuts the machine, turns it on. Nothing. What a drag.

INT. FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Art and Dinah stop in front of the bathroom.

ART
Here we are. Um, I need to ask you.

DINAH
Ask me what?

ART
Are you and Mort back, I mean, is there anything between you?

DINAH
No, that's long over! He's been acting weird, but no. I'm single.

ART
Um. Good. I mean okay.

Dinah reaches for the doorknob, feels a keyhole below it.

DINAH
All these doors have old locks. Old house thing, I guess.

She pushes the door open, leans her cane outside the door.

ART
Um, I can wait, and help you back to the living room.

DINAH
You don't have to.

ART
I know. I mean, I'd like to.

DINAH
I'd like you to.

She steps into the bathroom. Suddenly, she steps back out and hugs Art close.

INT. SHED - NIGHT

The generator ROARS to life. Andrea jumps and yelps. The naked bulb in the shed comes on. Andrea gives a self-satisfied sigh, composes herself.

At the window, she sees lights on in the house. Also her reflection. She smiles, adjusts her hair, nods. Fabulous!

EXT. SHED - NIGHT

Andrea steps into the downpour with raincoat and umbrella. She turns towards the back of the house, sizing up the woods.

Dark, thick--impenetrable. Not worth it.

From the shadow of the shed, a Stalker (POV) watches her.

Andrea starts to walk back towards the house. Then she looks back towards the bridge, thinking hard.

The power lines by the bridge seem intact. But they hang slack off the house.

The Stalker sidles through the trees. Silent. Keeping a little closer to Andrea now.

Andrea splashes towards the front yard. In time she comes to the downed wire. She looks up. No tree nearby. No branch beaten down by the tempest. Only a wooden-handled pole saw.

The Stalker patters up behind Andrea as she looks at the saw. A black gloved hand raises a dull metal wrench. Andrea hears, turns to see--

WHUMP! The Stalker deals her a nasty blow in the middle of her curls. Andrea falls back, landing on the wire.

CRACKLE. Electricity jolts through her body. The shock throws her onto the lawn with a splash. Limbs splayed, eyes staring.

EXT. FRONT YARD - TREE - NIGHT

A rope over the bough of a large, leafy tree. No sound except rain and . . . HAMMERING?

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mort flops onto the sofa and drops his lantern. Franklin and Ella now stand. Katie and Mildred take seats. Art and Dinah remain near the hallway door, standing close together.

FRANKLIN

That girl's a helluva engineer.

MILDRED

Hey. Was that her knocking?

KATIE

The door's unlocked.

Mildred, ever the dynamo, bounces up.

MILDRED
 Okay, I could swear I heard it. Am
 I going bonkers?

Laughing, she trots into the entryway. In short order, they hear the door open.

MILDRED (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Hello? Huh . . .

An umbrella POOFS open. The door shuts. A bit of silence.

KATIE
 What are we going to do?

FRANKLIN
 There isn't much to do.

Katie wants to talk about so much. But she gives up.

Mort sighs heavily. Dinah, pity on her face, goes over, touches his shoulder.

DINAH
 He seemed like a nice man.

Mort's expression brightens considerably. Also turning thoughtful. He puts his hand over hers.

MORT
 Oh Dinah. I really need friends
 like you right now.

A horrified SCREAM pierces through the rain, giving them all a jolt.

KATIE
 Mildred?

MILDRED (O.S.)
 (screaming, far away)
 Hellllp!

Everyone bolts for the door, Franklin and Ella in the lead.

EXT. FRONT YARD - TREE - NIGH

The seven survivors huddle under umbrellas, shock on all their faces. Mildred half-hides behind Katie.

Andrea's staring, corpse swings from the tree.

Conspicuous behind and above her, two orbs stick out from the tree trunk. An apple and a chestnut, nailed there.

Franklin recovers first.

FRANKLIN
Everyone, get inside.

Only Ella moves. The others recover slowly. Franklin bellows.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
Come on! Get going!!

He runs back towards the door and the cars. The rest follow. Art helps Dinah hurry across the slippery grass.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Franklin veers away and runs to Benny's car. Benny still sits in the front seat, leaning against the door.

FRANKLIN
Benny! We gotta go in!

He bangs on the window. Benny doesn't stir. Franklin, with a creeping sense of dread, looks back at the others, all waiting. All not wanting to consider . . .

Franklin yanks open the door. Benny falls out.

His stomach has been cut all open. The bugle has been thrust into his innards.

Several screams and yells. Water batter's Benny's horrified, pain-twisted face. Katie looks away, up to where he sat.

Blood smears the back of the seat in a crude letter "B." His trumpet rests on the passenger seat, left behind.

Beat. Then everyone runs for the house. Katie, freaked out of her mind, last of all.

INT. ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Franklin slams the door behind the shuddering Katie, already running into the living room. Everyone casts aside umbrellas.

KATIE
They were nailed on the tree.

FRANKLIN
 Make sure all the doors and
 shutters are locked up!

KATIE
 How do we know whoever . . . Isn't
 already inside?

FRANKLIN (O.S.)
 Just lock them!

The others scatter. Art and Dinah swerve toward the kitchen,
 Mort into the front side room.

Katie, door behind her, rests her hand over her mouth,
 petrified, running through every mental calculation.

Until Mildred, having checked one window, slingshots around
 her to check the other. Katie turns, deadbolts the door.

Mildred nods her approval. They head into the living room.

KATIE
 (muttering)
 So cruel. So sick.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Franklin and Ella join the others, coming from around the
 staircase. All stand, stiff, tense.

FRANKLIN
 There's no way anyone can get in.

KATIE
 He may be in already!

FRANKLIN
 There wasn't time.

He speaks so curtly that Katie appears taken aback by his
 tone, as well as dubious. Franklin tries again, friendlier.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
 There wasn't, Katie.

ELLA
 The back door was locked. Any of
 you find an unlatched window?

Everyone shakes their heads no. Katie retires, but her face
 betrays misgivings.

MORT

Do we just wait inside now?

FRANKLIN

Yeah. The river'll go down, or
they'll fix the phones . . .

Katie picks up the land line, listens, hangs it up. People spread around the room, some sitting down. Katie stands by herself, clenched up tight.

KATIE

Why would he use a bugle?

ELLA

Does there have to be a reason?

KATIE

(coming over)

Yes, because it feels planned out
and he's been stalking us!

FRANKLIN

What's more likely? Someone's
stalking us, or it's some random
psycho and you're--you know how you
sometimes get.

He says it gently. Katie appeals to Art and Dinah.

KATIE

I'm not. The bridge seemed like
sabotage--we heard a chainsaw.

ART

Katie? I don't think this helps.

Katie works herself up, ending up on the sofa's far side. She points violently in the direction of each piece of evidence.

KATIE

It helps me! You didn't see the
little things. The stained glove
out of place. The "Mack the Knife"
record vanishing, after that story.
The tree had an apple and chestnut!

Mildred comes to her rescue, concerned.

MORT

Katie, nobody gives a shit.

KATIE

I saw a man dressed like a shark!

DINAH
Dressed like a shark?

KATIE
Masked, watching us, at the dance.
I think. It was just a glimpse.

MILDRED
You didn't tell me about that.

KATIE
No, but I saw it. We have to think.

FRANKLIN
Well what do you say we do?

Katie freezes. No suggestions, but still much frustration.

KATIE
I don't know! But we can't save
ourselves if we don't know what
we're saving ourselves from!

FRANKLIN
All we should think about is
surviving, not worrying about--

MUSIC blares too loud, startling everyone. "The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea." Dinah, her hand on chair, cries out. Everyone glares at Mort, who bends over Andrea's laptop.

MORT
Sorry. I thought, we're all tense.
Swing music always helps.

Franklin shakes his head at his friend, smiles.

DINAH
Interesting choice of song, Mort.

MORT
I know it's your favorite.

DINAH
(trace of suspicion)
It was, a couple of years ago.

Everyone feeling the pulse, their frustration slipping away.

FRANKLIN
If we wait, we should be safe.

Katie nods, semi-relenting. She chews on her lip. Mildred reaches out a hand.

MILDRED

It is a weird time to ask . . .

DISSOLVE TO:

Mildred and Katie dance, still a bit tense. Ella and Franklin do a slow balboa, a hair apart. Art and Dinah dance slightly closer than in closed, only 6-count basics and low-key moves.

ELLA

This is crazy we're doing this.

MILDRED

A little better now?

Katie nods. Dinah murmurs something to Art, who chuckles.

FRANKLIN

It'll pass the time while we wait.

ELLA

You think Lindy's the cure for just about anything.

FRANKLIN

You know that's an exaggeration.

They dance with too much tension, not quite close enough.

MILDRED

What if we all went into the woods?

KATIE

We might be more vulnerable.

MILDRED

(not quite sold)

Say I took my motor scooter, we made a ramp on the bridge . . .

Seeing Katie's face, she breaks into a laugh, which makes Katie laugh softly.

Katie notices Mort sitting unhappily all alone. Sympathetic, she motions for Mildred to wait a minute, goes over to Mort, doesn't know exactly what to say. He looks up at her.

MORT

Things go wrong. I just want to get back to before they did.

KATIE

I'm sorry he's gone.

MORT

Yeah. Yeah. Poor Uncle Charles.

He looks at the swing placque on the mantel, then at the dance floor (Dinah and Art, in particular), shifting his rabbit's foot from one hand to the other. He holds it up.

MORT (CONT'D)

This hasn't been lucky tonight.

A beat. Mort looks away, and Katie returns to Mildred. They dance, and Mildred gets into the song in her habitual way.

MILDRED

(sings)

You've got me in between, the devil and the deep blue sea.
Okay. So we won't leave.

She YELPS as the music goes silent and the room is plunged into darkness.

MORT

Damn. Now even that's gone.

Grumbling. Cell phones come out, casting dim light.

MILDRED

What do we do now?

FRANKLIN

What's wrong with sitting here in
the dark waiting it out?

He picks up the lantern Mort left by the sofa, turns it on.

MILDRED

I really don't want to!

ART

Yeah.

DINAH

Amateurs!

Only she and Art find it funny this time.

FRANKLIN

He probably turned it off to lure
us out. We stay here, safe.

Katie gives the DJ table a longing look. Rambles across the floor as anxiety besets her afresh.

KATIE

It was disgusting. For somebody to
kill people--like that.

Nobody replies. She sits down, mostly in darkness, turns on
her phone but doesn't shine the light around.

KATIE (CONT'D)

She was hanged, but her neck wasn't
broken. So she died some other way.

ART

Um? No. I don't think so, and, her
head was hit. I observed.

KATIE

He put her there after killing her?

FRANKLIN

This is not what we should be
talking about right now.

Mildred, though she finds the subject distasteful, shuffles
closer to Katie. Sits next to her.

KATIE

An apple. A bugle, when there was a
trumpet right there.

Ella, on her toes, motions for them to shush.

FRANKLIN

What is it?

ELLA

Thought I heard something.

Nobody breathes. They can't hear anything.

CRACK. Faint, on the kitchen side. Dinah points.

DINAH

I heard it.

FRANKLIN

Shit.

He grabs a fire poker, motions for Mort and Art to go towards
the bathroom. Absolutely in command.

He starts to cross the room. Katie grabs at him.

KATIE

Wait. We shouldn't be trying to go--

FRANKLIN

If he's trying to get in, we should
be ready. We have the advantage!

He pushes around her and runs into the kitchen. Mildred touches Katie's back, giving her a supportive glance while urging her on. Ella takes Dinah's hand, stays.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Franklin checks the basement door. Chain still in place. Then he goes to the window. Listens. Katie and Mildred hang back.

They wait. They wait for something to lunge at the window or slice through the shutters. For a dire report from the other room.

Mildred erupts into motion, startling Katie. She pulls out a drawer. Napkins. Another drawer: cutlery. She snatches two carving knives and backs up to Katie. Ready for an attack!

Nothing.

The rain pelts down. Thunder rumbles. So many little sounds out there, sounds that mask, sounds meaning nothing.

With a final glance at the basement door, Franklin steps back, poker at his side. He parts Mildred and Katie, going back to the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The three traipse back out of the kitchen. Art and Mort return from the bathroom hallway. Though on edge, they nod. Safe. Ella stands by the entryway.

ELLA

Everything's fine here.

FRANKLIN

I guess it was nothing. The storm.

Franklin replaces the poker, stands in the center. Mildred paces as Katie lurks by the DJ table. Her eyes wandering to that Victrola again. Mort and Art both end up near Dinah.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

We can't drive ourselves crazy.
Here's what we'll do.

KATIE

I see that connection.

FRANKLIN

Huh?

KATIE

The record and the mask I saw. What about the parts of the deaths that aren't normal?

MILDRED

Katie. I know puzzles help you, but you need to stop.

KATIE

I've got to do something while we're waiting!

Mildred sets both her knives down. Katie continues back and forth, a Newton's cradle. Franklin gives her a hard look.

FRANKLIN

All we need to know is a psycho is out there and we're in here.

KATIE

If you think enough, till you understand. It can save your life.

Mildred heaves a sigh.

FRANKLIN

No. That's anxiety talking. You're bopping around inside your head.

Ella heaves a sigh.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

Listen to me. When you're dancing--

ELLA

If we had power, I'd turn music on; then maybe you two would quit it.

She pushes herself off the wall.

ELLA (CONT'D)

Looks like we're gonna be in here; we might as well have decent light.

Sparing her Franklin a look somewhere between endearment and frustration, she beelines for the kitchen.

MORT

You're right, we should.
(leaning toward DINAH)
(MORE)

MORT (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I know it won't help you
much, but for the others--

DINAH

I'm fine.

Mort nods, trails after Ella into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mort and Ella drag a bunch of candles and holders, as well as
matches and another electric lantern, out of the cupboard.

MORT

Tonight's turning out . . .

ELLA

Not so good.

Mort nods, but he struts right back to the living room with
his load. Ella makes a weary sound in her throat. She sets
her candles down on the table.

Passing over the alcohol, she fills a cup at the tap. Drinks.

The door to the basement remains securely closed. A metal
yardstick slides through the crack like a shark slices
through the waters.

Ella finishes her water. She munches on a carrot stick,
pacing back around the table to get her candles and matches.

ELLA (CONT'D)

Swing dance.

(surveying table, annoyed)

Swing snacks . . .

Something about the spread seems odd. She looks closer.

The yardstick presses down on the chain, on a link marred by
a dark band the color of rubber cement. With the softest
RATTLE, the chain falls in two.

On the table, picked-over snacks. Chicken, grapefruit, jelly
roll. All decimated, none completely empty. Except one.

ELLA (CONT'D)

Huh. They're all gone.

The plate labelled "sweet potato fries" has hardly a crumb.

The door to the black basement silently drifts open.

Mack the Knife grabs Ella from behind, his many-rowed fangs gritting over her shoulder, white in the dim light from the living room. He presses a handkerchief over her mouth.

Ella's eyes bug out. She yells into the cloth, tries to struggle. Her eyes droop. Her limbs lose power.

Mack drags her almost soundlessly back into the basement.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mort sets up some candles on the DJ table with a lighter. Mildred smiles, appreciating the reassuring glow. Katie has retreated into a corner.

Franklin lifts his porkpie, runs his hand over his head.

FRANKLIN
(calling)
Hey, Ell?

Ella doesn't respond, which confuses Frankln.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

At the bottom of the stairs, Mack the Knife SLAMS the semi-conscious Ella against the floor, stunning her further as her head hits the cement. Ella moans.

The rain sounds louder, dripping in through a broken window.

Crouching over her and breathing hard with exertion, Mack holds up his jackknife. Opens it. Ella opens her eyes to see:

Mack digs the blade into her left eyeball. Goopy mess.

Ella's mouth opens. She tries to choke out some sound. In too much pain to scream. Blood and other fluid.

Mack, with a faint shudder, quickly plunges the blade deep. Ending her suffering.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The room empty, lifeless.

FRANKLIN (O.S.)
Ella. Answer me, babe!

He sounds concerned now. Franklin walks in, looks around. The open cupboard. Unlit candles on the table. Snacks. A bitten carrot on the floor by--the open basement door.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

Why did you go--?!

His eye falls on the chain. Not unlatched. Severed..

Covering his mouth, Franklin rushes to the door, looks down the stairs.

Ella lies on the floor, not moving, half hidden in shadow. Rain too loud. A faint rustle of cloth.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

Ella!

Mort grabs him as he starts to run downstairs, holds him back. Katie and Mildred hover in the kitchen doorway.

MORT

He might be down there!

Franklin struggles free. The soft tinkle of glass, splashes, fabric moving.

Franklin bolts down the stairs, almost tripping. Mort, grabbing a knife from the drawer, soon shadows him.

Franklin reaches Ella--and screams.

Mack has stuffed her emptied eye sockets with the sweet potato fries.

FRANKLIN

NOOO!

He collapses by her body, crying. Mort, terrified, forces his eyes away, to the smashed window, then around the basement.

Katie, lingering halfway down the steps, turns and covers her eyes. She tries to shield Mildred. Mildred has already seen. She vomits over the railing, tears falling from her eyes.

MORT

(flipping out)

He could still be here!

KATIE

Where?!

She looks at the boxes, lamps, forgotten possessions and obsolete furniture.

A hulking shadow makes her stiffen. She tries to cry out!
 Until she sees that their lights falling on some jugs and
 bottles casts the shadow.

MORT
 (grabbing Franklin)
 Franklin! Franklin! We have to go.

FRANKLIN
 No.

MORT
 We're vulnerable here.

KATIE
 We are. Come on.

She helps Mildred up as Mort drags Franklin to his feet.
 Franklin struggles to reach for Ella, beyond reason.

Something creaks in the basement. Collective gasps. Franklin
 stops struggling away from Mort, resumes it after a moment.

Still nothing. No killer charging out of the shadows.

Katie pushes Mildred softly up the stairs to the door. She
 glances at the kitchen, back at the broken basement window.

Mack the Knife crouches, his shark-head stuck through the
 window, watching her again.

Katie shrieks. Mort sees too.

MORT
 Hurry, go back!

Katie glances back and forth once more, Katie finally gives
 Mort a hand with Franklin. She pushes Franklin's head up,
 forcing him to look at Mack.

He gives up his fight. They hustle him back up the stairs.

Mack drops down through the window. Stands in the basement,
 knife out, as his prey flees. He takes a step.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mort slams the basement door. Grunting, he pushes the heavy,
 snack-laden kitchen table against it.

Franklin has stopped sobbing but still cries. He hunches on the floor, against a counter. Mildred steadies herself on the sink. Katie, Art, and Dinah stand there, helpless.

MORT

This'll keep the bastard out.

He takes a roll of duct tape from a shelf. Kneeling on the table, he begins to seal it with long strips of sturdy tape.

DINAH

Ella . . . ?

MILDRED

It was horrible.

She almost retches again, controls herself. Katie rubs her back, then takes her hand and squats down by Franklin. There for him.

The door rattles, trying to push open. Art trundles forward and pushes the table against the door. Mort applies tape twice as fast.

The door goes still and silent. They all relax a little. Art lets the table go.

Mort climbs off the table, goes towards Dinah. She has no idea; she's already in Art's arms. Mort looks away and sits, his back against the table.

Katie watches the table, Mildred and Franklin on either side of her. Long pause.

KATIE

Why the sweet potato fries? She was already dead.

FRANKLIN

(half-hysterical)
SHUT UP about it!

Katie She tries to take his hand. He pulls away. She stays quiet a moment, thinking.

KATIE

An apple and a chestnut on a tree.

FRANKLIN

They were probably already there!

ART

It couldn't have been. The apple was white, where the skin was torn.

The others look at him. Art gets uncomfortable, fidgets.

ART (CONT'D)

Sorry. I notice these things. You
have to, in bio lab, umm. Observe.

Dinah squeezes his arm. Katie starts to speak again.

MILDRED

Katie. I need you to stop now.

KATIE

Let me think it out! I need to!

She stops. She closes her eyes.

QUICK FLASH: Benny dead in the car. The letter B smeared in
blood on the seat.

Katie's eyes pop open. She sees it all.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy of Company
B. Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree.
'Neath the Spreading Chestnut Tree.
Sweet Potato Fries.

Mildred and Mort gape as they slowly recognize the pattern.
Franklin squinches his eyes shut. Katie touches his shoulder.

KATIE (CONT'D)

They're all popular swing songs.
(beat)
His murders all come from swing.

FRANKLIN

No. NO!

He shoots to his feet and glares at her. Katie and Mildred
slowly rises too. Mildred tries, can't.

MILDRED

It kind of looks like she's right.

FRANKLIN

That's fucking insane.

He looks at the window, trying to remove himself from the
scene, the madness, Katie's horrid logic. His face cracks.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

How could anyone hurt Ella?

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Art leads Dinah out of the kitchen. Both sit on the couch, looking scared. Each with a knife beside them.

Seconds pass. They hear low voices arguing in the kitchen.

DINAH

Do you think we're safe?

ART

We locked all the other doors and shutters. I guess so? We'll hear him if he tries to force a window.

They shift closer to each other.

DINAH

But I think we are.

She wipes away a tear. They simultaneously put an arm around each other.

ART

I'm glad you're here with me.

Dinah turns her head to him. Beat. She gives him a very small kiss.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mort, Katie, and Mildred face each other, all in dark moods. Franklin leans on the counter, disconnected from the world.

MORT

Okay, but you don't know he's killing us "because we dance."

KATIE

We would need more evidence.

MILDRED

You're making it hard for us all.

KATIE

Glenn seems like a strong suspect. I believe I saw him after I saw the shark at the dance . . .

MILDRED

You see so much, it's hard to tell what's important.

She speaks reproachfully. Katie overlooks it.

KATIE
When he told about the murders--

FRANKLIN
(surprisingly low emotion)
You don't need to know who.

KATIE
How can we protect ourselves if we
don't know who we're protecting
ourselves against?

MILDRED
(tinge of annoyance)
However we can.

FRANKLIN
You won't stop, will you?

MORT
You should learn when to keep it to
yourself. The shit we put up with!

His vitriol nettles Katie away. She circles Mort and Mildred,
descending into her highly analytical mode.

KATIE
It can't be one of us. So it's
Glenn or a crazy townie. Glenn
seemed to genuinely love swing. Why
would he give us a clue if he was
going to start killing?

FRANKLIN
(whispered)
Oh, dear God.

He and Mort look frustrated. Mildred, twice as much.

KATIE
All right. Let's lay all the
evidence out while we--

MILDRED
Damn it Katie, will you just stop
analyzing? It doesn't matter!

Her outburst leaves Katie completely stunned. Katie gazes at
her best friend, hurt. She looks at the floor. Mildred avoids
looking at Katie while pouring herself a glass of whiskey.

Mildred drinks. No sound but the rain.

Franklin pushes away from the counter and makes for the door.

MORT
Hey, where're you going?

FRANKLIN
To be alone.

Katie looks tempted to stop him. She halfway moves to do so.

MORT
Hang on, man. I know what's it's
like, losing the love of your--

FRANKLIN
No you don't so shut up. He can't
get in, yeah? Back off.

He dashes out of the room, hiding his face, not seeing how his words have stung Mort. Katie steps up.

KATIE
Nobody should be alone. I'm going
after him and--I'm not going to
think about it first.

She looks steadily at Mildred, almost with defiance. Then grabs a knife and runs after Franklin.

MILDRED
Katie . . .

Katie doesn't even falter. Mildred, guilt etched in her face, sits on the table. Mort plops into a chair.

MORT
If he tries to force the basement
door, we'll hold the table down.

Mildred listlessly nods. Mort huffs, disgruntled, and looks at nothing in particular. His eyes find the jelly roll.

EXT. SIDE YARD - NIGHT

Mack the Knife stands still, holding his knife in front of him. Watching the water wash the blood and gore off his fancy gloves, off his blade. Making it clean again.

He doesn't heed the rain striking his slicker, running down the mask into his eyes, dripping off his fangs.

Mack snaps his clean, glinting knife closed. His eyes wander over the house.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Art and Dinah, holding each other tighter in the candlelight, both turn their heads back as Katie disappears up the stairs. Dinah shrugs. They kiss.

ART

I . . . I like you a lot.

Dinah reaches to touch Art's cheek.

DINAH

Thank you for telling me.

Substantial pause. Art kisses her again.

DINAH (CONT'D)

We might die. If he gets in, I'm easy prey.

ART

Don't talk about that.

DINAH

The rooms all lock. They're safer.

ART

We are safe here, inside, probably.

DINAH

Yes, but if we're not. We could lock ourselves in a bedroom.

Art waits, uncertain, as she struggles to choose her words.

DINAH (CONT'D)

Because, we might die, and, I've never . . . And I want to.

Art stares into her sightless eyes. Dinah, uncertain, leans in as though to whisper. Art stops her.

ART

We're two of a kind.

They hug. Then they stand, knives with them. Dinah picks up her cane. She sets it down, reaches for Art's hand. He leads her carefully around the couch. Towards the stairs.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Franklin leans against the wall by that chest with the lavender, cross, and cloth. He carries a battery-powered lantern and wears a snarl of frustration.

FRANKLIN

I said I needed to be alone. Go away! Now.

Katie, holding a knife and using her phone like a flashlight, shakes her head.

KATIE

I don't think so.
(shifting around)
I promised Mildred and Mort I'd stay with you.

FRANKLIN

Katie. Please? Leave me, the fuck, alone.

He can barely get the words out. Katie, sympathetic, stands there, not sure what to say. Seeing she won't go, Franklin heaves a sigh, sits on the chest. Katie stands close by him.

Art spots them as he and Dinah clear the top stair. Franklin doesn't look at them. Katie and Art make eye contact. Art darts a look at Franklin, nods.

Dinah senses some tension. Still holding her hand, Art pulls her a little closer. They tactfully pad down the hall.
FOOTSTEPS CLIMBING STAIRS.

Katie watches Franklin. She touches his arm.

KATIE

I know, with what you're going through, it must hurt a lot.

Her tone makes Franklin look at her. She fidgets.

FRANKLIN

Who did you lose?

KATIE

(refocusing)
I don't know, why. Somebody, presumably Glenn, wants to
(checking her words)
hurt us.

FRANKLIN

You could've done that downstairs.
What made you come up here?

Katie, tensing with anxiety, paces away. She tries to speak, just doesn't. Her eyes find the locked door from earlier.

KATIE

Maybe there's a clue behind that
door, and that's why it's locked.

Franklin jolts to his feet with a huff of frustration.

INT. THIRD FLOOR BEDROOM - NIGHT

Art locks the door. He and Dinah stand, holding hands.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mildred sits on the table beside the bowl of potato chips, munching on one. Deflated. Mort sits in an adjacent chair.

MILDRED

He hasn't even tried to get in.

MORT

He's trapped here like us, unless
he goes into the forest.

Mildred, unwilling to think about it, eats another.

MILDRED

I shouldn't have snapped at her.

MORT

Katie is getting insufferable.

MILDRED

Cut her some slack! This isn't the
first time she's dealt with death.

MORT

It isn't? What do you mean?

Mildred slides off the table and looks down, tight-lipped.

MORT (CONT'D)

Wait. Last Parents' Weekend, she
said her--

MILDRED
 (surprising ire)
 Forget I said anything!
 (ashamed, covering eyes)
 I'm sorry. I don't deal well with
 not being happy.

Mort rises to cut a slice of jelly roll. Mildred looks to see if he understands.

MORT
 I used to be so happy.

MILDRED
 Ohhhh. Before, your uncle, um?

MORT
 When I had Dinah.

A strong gust of wind drives rain against the windows. Then they hear it. A knife SCRATCHES the window, trying to get in.

Mildred cries out, jumping and grabbing Mort.

MORT (CONT'D)
 It's all right! That's a branch.

They both relax. Mildred sighs as she sits. Mort nibbles the piece of jelly roll.

MORT (CONT'D)
 That was the best part of my life.

MILDRED
 (pitying)
 We have all to give up the past.
 Keep going. Yeah.

She perks up slightly. Mort stares at her, almost sullen.

MILDRED (CONT'D)
 You know how many girls come to--

MORT
 What, live only in the present?

MILDRED
 No. No. I know, that isn't good.

MORT
 You don't fucking give up on
 someone you love, Mildred.

Knocking his chair over, he stalks to the door, looks into the living room.

MORT (CONT'D)

Where did she go?

He glares at Mildred, as though she drove Art and Dinah away. Mildred shrinks down, takes another potato chip.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

The outer part of the doorknob lies on the ground, popped off by Katie's knife. Katie and Franklin work on getting the rest of the doorknob off and the door open.

KATIE

(guilty)

I wouldn't break in, normally. It's good to have something to work on.

FRANKLIN

We don't need to talk about it.

Katie falls silent. She looks at the cross on the fragrant chest. Sadness. Then, it reminds her of something, but what?

CLUNK! The doorknob hits the ground. The door eases open.

Franklin stands, glances back at Katie--this is what you wanted?--and steps away so she can enter.

Holding the lantern up, Katie pierces the darkness.

INT. CHARLES'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The lights spreads, showing an antique bed, furniture, lamps. A half-open closet full of 1950s clothes.

A wheelchair and an easy chair face a small table by the window. An old 4-speed turntable rests there. Katie notices the record on it. "Stupid Cupid".

If there remained any doubt that this was Charles's boudoir, it would be laid to rest by the packs of Chesterfield Cigarettes beside the bed. Also by the pictures.

Over the dresser, a greatly enlarged snapshot of YOUNG CHARLES (17) and Lindsay at a high school dance. Charles wears the same suit he did tonight. Beside it, a somewhat enlarged photo of the two at another dance.

Smaller pictures on the walls, dresser, table show the pair on their wedding day, honeymoon, and growing old together-- for about ten years. Then, Lindsay in the hospital. In every picture except the first two, Lindsay sits in a wheelchair.

Then, Lindsay's funeral. Then, Charles weeping at her newly dug grave. Then, FIFTY more pictures: Charles visiting her grave each year, growing old.

Katie turns again to the wheelchair. Lindsay's wheelchair. She joins Franklin, gazing up at their happy picture.

KATIE

How sad. He loved her so much.

FRANKLIN

Two people who loved dance.

For the first time that night, he removes his porkpie hat.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

She didn't love it at first.

KATIE

Charles's wife?

FRANKLIN

(exploding)

Who the hell do you think?

He throws his hat, hard enough to knock over lamp.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

I got her into swing and swing
killed her!

INT. THIRD FLOOR BEDROOM - NIGHT

Art and Dinah make love, complete with some nudity.

INT. THIRD FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

A flashlight hangs from Mort's hand as he watches the door, listening to them. Fury, betrayal, despair on his face.

Fury grows. He lifts his rabbit's foot to his mouth and sings his teeth into it, trembling uncontrollably, eyes aflame.

A soft CREAK down the hall. Mort jerks his head up, wary and confused. He takes a step towards it.

INT. CHARLES'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Franklin stomps around the room, breathing hard. Katie glares at him. The lantern and phone lay on the bed.

KATIE

Did you hear me?

FRANKLIN

She was right, I was obsessed with swing. That's why this happened.

KATIE

No. It is not your fault!

FRANKLIN

How do you know that?

KATIE

I know.

FRANKLIN

What happened??

KATIE

Stop asking about it!

FRANKLIN

I know swing makes you calm, but are you ever really fucking calm?

KATIE

You're starting to piss me off.

FRANKLIN

Well I'm pissed off about what happened downstairs, so I guess we're both angry.

He swipes off his glasses, his tears smearing the lenses.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

At least I'm not too scared to get anything done.

KATIE

Bad things can happen if you don't plan for everything!

FRANKLIN

So you're saying it was my fault!

KATIE

I'm saying it wasn't mine!

Hysterical, crying, she grabs her hair, pulls on her bow until it comes undone.

KATIE (CONT'D)

It wasn't my fault he died! We lost our house and everything, the economy and the crooked bank.

FRANKLIN

(incredible force)
Who did you lose?

KATIE

Dad. It tears you, to find someone you love--

This plunges Franklin into a fresh wave of grief. He sinks onto the bed and slams his fist on it, over and over

KATIE (CONT'D)

And I'm sorry you did, because I found Dad and he had an accident.

She falls to the floor, clutching the bedsheets so tightly.

KATIE (CONT'D)

He thought that was best. Like all those people in 1929, who accidentally fell out of windows.

FRANKLIN

Oh God, Katie.

KATIE

If you think everything through, you can not lose everything.

She feebly drags herself halfway up.

FRANKLIN

Maybe he couldn't prevent it any more than you could.

He pulls her down, sitting beside him.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

Because some things, nobody could ever imagine. So you can't plan.

KATIE

And it's not your fault if they happen.

They cling to each other and cry, helpless to stem the flow.

Through the refraction of her teary eyelashes, Katie looks in the dim light at the heartbreaking story the pictures tell.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Charles must have felt the same way.

It makes her cry even harder.

FRANKLIN

Thank you for not leaving me alone.

They huddle together, grief holding them fast.

INT. THIRD FLOOR BEDROOM - NIGHT

Art and Dinah lay on the bed, holding each other. A picture of perfect contentment. Dinah kisses Art on the cheek. Art sits up, strokes Dinah's hair.

ART

I'll be right back.

He pulls his pants on.

ART (CONT'D)

I just have to use the bathroom.

DINAH

I'll be here.

She moves her hand down his arm. Art steps towards the door, then turns back.

ART

I know we've safe, inside, but, um, could you lock the door, and unlock it when I come back?

DINAH

Yes.

Art leads her to the door. He kisses her, steps into the hall. Dinah locks the door.

Dinah returns to the bed and lies down, lazily smiling. She rolls onto her stomach. Listening to rattling and dripping of the rain outside. Feeling drowsy.

A CLICK. Practically indistinguishable. It makes Dinah open her eyes none the less. She listens hard. Nothing more.

DINAH (CONT'D)

Art?

She sits up and turns to the door. Turns her head again, trying to hear anything. No sign of life, no sound but rain.

A black-gloved hand silently extracts a metal key from the lock below the knob.

Shrugging it off, Dinah lays back down, cheek resting on the pillow. A little confused, but waiting for Art.

Mack the Knife jumps on top of her, slipping something around her throat and driving her face into the pillow. Dinah's brief surprised shriek is quickly drowned in eiderdown.

The slight girl thrashes, trying to yell. The shark man pulls tight with both hands on the thing around her neck.

Dinah tries to reach back and punch him. Slams her fists into the bed, tries to push up.

Mack pulls so tight that Dinah rears up, eyes wide. A steel wire strung with pearls pulls tight across her throat. Cutting off all air, turning her silent screams to rasps.

So tight she can't claw it away. It bites into her skin. Drips of blood. Dinah growing feebler. Sinking, face-down.

Until she no longer struggles, and nothing sounds but Mack's exerted breathing. Breathing, the rain, and a far-away FLUSH.

INT. THIRD FLOOR BATHROOM - NIGHT

Art buttons his pants, stepping away from the noisily-FLUSHING old toilet. He steps to the fine porcelain sink with crystal taps. Washes his hands with a bar of Ivory soap.

He looks in the mirror. His smiling, bespectacled face stares back at him. Art is happy. He doesn't look anxious at all.

POV. Someone opens the bathroom door, silently. Observes Art smiling into the mirror, using water to neaten his hair.

The watcher pads nearer. Art doesn't notice. Almost close enough now to reach out and stab Art. But Art turns!

Surprise and fear nearly make him cry out. Then, he relaxes, smiles with recognition.

ART

Oh! It's you. You scared me.

He laughs. The other party says nothing. Art, not worried, does reflect on the larger, serious situation at hand.

ART (CONT'D)

At least we're safe up here . . .

He turns back to the mirror, shuts off the water, and dries his hands. The person viewing him shifts forward.

A hatchet raises into the air. Art finished drying his hands, sees the attack coming. Horror and realization.

ART (CONT'D)

What are you--wait, I didn't--

The hatchet delves into his forehead, splitting his skull.

Art cries out and falls, the chopper sticking out of his head. Blood and some brain matter run onto the tile floor. The killer looks down at Art, already dead. Walks away.

INT. CHARLES'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Katie and Franklin stand beside the bed, looking at the door. Uncertain and wary. Eyes still damp, faces still streaked.

KATIE

What did it sound like?

FRANKLIN

I don't know. It's probably nerves.

Franklin pockets his glasses.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

We should go back to the others.

Katie nods. They pick up the lantern and phone, recover the bow and porkpie respectively. At the door, they share one more fierce hug.

They walk into the hall's yawning darkness. Closing the door on the entirety of Charles's life. Cutting off all light.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Franklin and Katie, wearing bow and hat, walk softly down the stairs, their lights merging with shine of candles and lanterns in the room. Franklin acknowledges the empty couch.

KATIE

Art and Dinah went upstairs.

She speaks quietly. A very faint crunch reaches their ears.

FRANKLIN
(hissing)
Mort?

Nobody responds. They sneak closer. Louder crunch.

KATIE
(whispering)
Mildred?

The crunching stops. Katie's fingers clench around her knife. She and Franklin lean and peer into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mildred sits by the bowl of potato chips, one in her hand, staring at them. Relieved, she eats the chip.

MILDRED
I thought I heard you guys.

FRANKLIN
You should've answered.

Katie's eyes go from the bowl to Mildred.

KATIE
Potato chips.

Dread stealing over her face, she rushes forward.

KATIE (CONT'D)
Millie, "all I want is POTATO
CHIPS!" It's a swing song, they
could be poisoned!

Mildred jumps up with alarm. Katie knocks the silver bowl from the table. It clangs to the ground, spilling out--

Potato chips. Scattering them all about. Mildred grabs Katie.

MILDRED
Katie! Katie, it's all right. I was
eating them all night. I'm safe.

Katie calms down. Mildred lets go of her with a half-chuckle.

MILDRED (CONT'D)
You had me half afraid something
bad would fall out of there.

Katie picks up the empty bowl, sets it upright on the table. She starts to laugh at the absurdity of the idea. Mildred joins in. It never takes much to make Mildred laugh.

Katie hugs her friend tightly.

MILDRED (CONT'D)
I'm sorry I snapped at you.

KATIE
You had a point, Millie.

MILDRED
You moved fast!

As they step apart, Franklin comes over, footsteps crunching.

FRANKLIN
Where'd Mort go?

MILDRED
Upstairs, after Dinah again.

Franklin walks back to the door, looks into the dining room. Mildred and Katie hang behind him.

MILDRED (CONT'D)
I stayed, in case he tried to force his way in.

KATIE
I still think it's likely Glenn.

FRANKLIN
They're all still up there.

He slips between the girls, back to the table. Considers it.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
Let's find them and stay together.

Franklin tugs the table away from the door. He struggles, so Katie and Mildred help him.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
We'll go to the safest place,
whether that's inside or out.

Franklin wedges a chair under the basement doorknob. Katie tests it. Doesn't look like the killer's getting in.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
I shouldn't have run off.

MILDRED
Anybody would have!

KATIE
I'm glad that you did.

Franklin offers a warm smile. He takes a knife and a lantern.

FRANKLIN
Come on.

Mildred and Katie simultaneously follow him, on the search.

INT. THIRD FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Katie and Mildred hover outside the bathroom as Franklin eases open the already-ajar door. A dim light shines out.

Franklin freezes. Then springs out, slamming the door. He leans against it, teeth clenched. All Katie glimpses is something small and very white against the floor.

FRANKLIN
He got inside. Art's in there.

Katie shudders. Mildred moans. Franklin stares at her keenly until she stops, then nods.

KATIE
I think I saw . . .

She opens the door herself. Not all the way, and she doesn't look far inside. Only far enough to reach the white thing.

She dangles it from her fingers. Mort's lucky rabbit's foot. Franklin takes it from her.

FRANKLIN
Mort! What if he got Mort too?

KATIE
And Dinah. She was with Art.

Franklin pockets the rabbit's foot. They seek with renewed urgency. One door isn't shut. Down the hall, their lights just touch the attic trapdoor in the ceiling. It hangs open.

FRANKLIN
Mort? Dinah?

The three edge along, straining to hear a response.

INT. THIRD FLOOR BEDROOM - NIGHT

The door swings opens, admitting Franklin, Katie, Mildred.

Dinah lies in the bed. She could be sleeping, her head on the pillow turned to the side.

KATIE
(whispered)
Dinah?

Still they dare to hope she sleeps. Until they see her face.

Dinah's jaw hangs open in a fight for air lost long ago. Above it, lifeless eyes. Below, the pearls dug into flesh.

Mildred, casting trepidatious glances into the hall, moves towards them.

KATIE (CONT'D)
Millie don't look!

Katie hustles her to the other side of the room, keeping her turned away. Mildred needs little encouragement. Franklin pulls the sheet over Dinah's head.

KATIE (CONT'D)
(mostly to herself)
"A String of Pearls."

MILDRED
This can't be a person doing this.
It's a monster.

KATIE
I don't think so.

MILDRED
(shivering)
Wouldn't she lock the door? He got
in anyway.

KATIE
Glenn, as groundskeeper, might have
a master key. This seems to point--

FRANKLIN
We need to move now, Katie. Mort's
in trouble.

He spins and pads into the hall. Mildred shakes her head at Katie. Katie gently tugs her along, following Franklin.

INT. ATTIC - NIGHT

The storm sounds too loud, both drumming on the roof and in the open air. Little light from outside. More floats from the open trapdoor. Lying open. Nothing but light coming through.

Franklin's upper body shoots up, light and knife held before his frightened face. He whips in all directions.

The curtains parted and the French window flung wide.

Lots of junk, including statues like those on the mantel. Things scattered and broken everywhere, piles and boxes toppled. As though there had been a struggle.

A leg in dress shoes and pants sticks out. Franklin climbs right up. Katie and then Mildred follow.

Franklin kneels. The girls come to look over his shoulder as he leans his eyes into his hand.

FRANKLIN

Damn, Mort. I'm so sorry.

Mort sprawls on the boards, a massive gash in the side of head, visible through all the blood matting his hair and pooling on the ground.

Blood taints the sharp corner of a white marble table.

Katie lays her hand on Franklin's shoulder. He touches her hand, takes a deep breath, not moving.

A small, unstained metal train sits by Mort, outside the blood's radius, on top of a road map for the city of Chattanooga. Franklin half lays down, staring at it.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

(sadly)

"Is this the Chatanooga choo-choo?"

Katie kneels next to him. She reaches out her hand for Mort's wrist. So much blood around his head. She rears back on feeling his flesh, stands.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

He's down there somewhere.

He no longer looks at his best friend. Just at the trap door. A couple of silent tears crawl down his cheeks.

Katie, rain speckling her, looks out the window. The same window where she saw someone.

The house's steep side drops down below the sill. No ladder or rope or easy way to enter.

KATIE

He was here, before. Is this how he got in?

MILDRED

You were right about this too.

She points at a table, set neatly against the wall, free of junk. At a record on the table. Katie comes to look

"Mack the Knife" by Louis Armstrong.

Also on the table, one more photo of Lindsay--standing up. She beams, wearing a dress and holding a dark rectangle.

In the center of the abutting wall is a faint rectangular outline, like something had leaned there for fifty years.

Katie picks up the 78.

KATIE

Glenn hid it up here.

FRANKLIN

Let's go, away from him.

He waits by the trapdoor. Katie regards the clue in her hand, angrily whirls it like a frisbee out the open window. A long pause before they hear it BREAK far below.

INT. THIRD FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Franklin shuts the attic trapdoor. Mildred grasps a length of pipe while Katie holds up a lantern and a knife.

FRANKLIN

Ella, Mort. Because you hate dancing? Fuck you, Glenn!

He bellows it down the hall. If Mack hears, he gives no sign.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

I guess it was Glenn.

KATIE

Yes. But there are little things, I can't see how they fit.

MILDRED

What?

KATIE

Why Glenn told us about the murders, pretended to enjoy swing.

FRANKLIN

It isn't going to help us now.

KATIE

Okay. Something else . . .

She muses, her eyes on the trapdoor. Mildred looks at it too.

FRANKLIN

We're all that's left. Let's just get to the safest place we can.

(seeing them looking up)

Not there. Far away from here.

MILDRED

Outside?

FRANKLIN

Yes.

MILDRED

All right, go, now!

(pleading, to KATIE)

I just want this to be over.

Katie nods with a tinge of reluctance. Franklin takes the lead, knife held at the ready. Katie nudges Mildred in between them and keeps an eye on their rear.

In formation, the trio makes slow, grueling progress.

They push together more as they pass the bedroom where Dinah lies. Expecting a dark figure to fly out, wildly slashing. None does. Then, they're coming up on the next door.

INT. SECOND FLOOR STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Franklin makes it a few steps from the bottom when Mildred SCREAMS. Franklin spins around.

Katie jumps down several steps, landing next to Mildred, as Mildred sticks out her pipe and points her phone towards the dark corner beside the stairs.

Nothing but a picture, a large, idealized 1950s diner scene. Mildred draws an uneven breath. Franklin glares, annoyed.

MILDRED

It's nothing, I'm sorry, I'm sorry.

KATIE

It's okay.

Franklin nods, forgiving. Mildred has got the shakes.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Mildred shakes harder as they shuffle closer to the door to Charles's bedroom.

KATIE

We won't let him hurt us.

MILDRED

Mort fought back and he still died.
How does he get around? What if it
is a ghost?

She lists towards hysterics. Franklin and Katie each take one of her arms. Mildred gets half a grip on herself, sits on the chest between the stone cross and lavender. Holding the bowl, she inhales its pleasing smell.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. It's just Glenn could be
hiding anywhere.

Katie picks up the cross. Concentrating, solving--an expression Mildred knows well.

KATIE

Mildred. What are those flowers?

MILDRED

Lavender. Why?

Katie puts the cross on the floor. Takes the bowl from Mildred to place beside the cross. Gently and deliberately moves confused Mildred off the chest.

She faces them, eyes begging them to say she's wrong.

KATIE

(sings)
All I want is a lavender coffin.

Franklin gets it. Katie whisks off the cloth.

Mildred gasps. Katie creaks open the lid of the chest.

Glenn. Impaled on spikes that line the chest. Blood more rusty than shiny. Face muscles gone stiff.

Glenn is dead, and he has been for hours.

MILDRED
 (quietly freaking)
 Then who?

Katie doesn't seem to be aware of her, or of anything but Glenn. She gazes down at the dead man she just discovered.

EXT. SMALL BACKYARD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Young Katie dashes around the side of the building, frantic.

A tree with several branches sawed off.

A fallen ladder. A leg wearing jeans and an old shoe.

A sharp-toothed saw dripping with blood.

Young Katie stares down at something so heart-rending, so destroying, she can barely open her mouth to scream.

KATIE'S FATHER, cut open, dead.

KATIE (V.O.)
 I'm sorry.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Katie kneels by the chest, softly touching Glenn's shoulder.

KATIE
 I'm sorry I thought it was you the
 whole time when you didn't do
 anything. I'm sorry you died too.

She lowers her face to the floor and cries, her shoulders shaking. Mildred kneels next to her, wanting to be comforting but too terrified to do much.

Franklin softly closes the lid. He squats in front of Katie, then offers her a hand.

Katie accepts. Sucking in a deep breath, Katie wipes away her tears. She takes a last look at the stone cross and the lavender coffin, stands with Franklin's help.

KATIE (CONT'D)
 He's dead. I don't know who it is.

MILDRED
 I want to get out of this house.

She tries to pull Katie and Franklin.

MILDRED (CONT'D)
 We'll sit in the middle of the
 yard, back to back, and even in the
 storm it can't sneak up on us.

Her decisiveness slips, showing the fear driving her.

MILDRED (CONT'D)
 Just please. Please. Let's get out
 of here.

Katie seizes her hand, holds it tight. Franklin removes his hat, turns towards the stairs and escape.

FRANKLIN
 It was some random guy all along?

KATIE
 It doesn't matter who he is. We're
 going, Millie.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Mildred, Katie, and the hatless Franklin walk out the front door together, still bearing weapons and lights. They clear the narrow overhang; torrents saturate them.

Mildred goes down several steps, inhaling the damp air, free. Katie lingers at the edge of the rain, scanning the yard. Franklin, to the side, follows Mildred more slowly.

Sensing Katie no longer behind her, Mildred turns and looks up at her best friend, waiting.

Above them, curtains in the open second floor window drift.

KATIE
 There are more trees that way. The
 cars could give him cover. Okay,
 over there should be fine.

Mildred smiles, nodding her approval. She turns to climb off the last steps.

SPLATCH.

With no warning at all, a big statue of an apple, weighing a hundred pounds or more, smashes Mildred's head into a bloody mess, no longer recognizable as Mildred. Her body hits the ground within a second.

Shock immobilizes Katie; then she SCREAMS, a horrible scream.

Franklin, recovering, looks up.

Black fabric with Mack the Knife's ever-snarling hyperdemonic visage peering down at them. The curtains swallow him up.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Millieeeee!

She backs under the overhang, fixated on what remains of Mildred. Her legs give out, and she collapses sideways.

Franklin runs into the house, not even thinking. Katie sees she's alone. Fear gives her a new strength. She scrabbles to her feet and careens after Franklin.

INT. SECOND FLOOR FRONT ROOM - NIGHT.

Franklin stares into the room, lantern extended. Katie, gasping for breath, catches up.

Mack the Knife has left. The curtains blow in the rainy breeze. Nothing out of place, except for something left on the floor in front of the window.

Franklin slowly walks towards it, Katie holding his arm and looking behind her, half-expecting the monster to attack out of thin air.

Franklin picks up the object: one of the dog statues from the mantel. He shows it to Katie.

The dog's nose is broken off.

Seconds pass. Katie cannot keep her voice even.

KATIE

"The doggone bloodhounds lost the scent."

FRANKLIN

"Now nobody knows where Long John went."

Katie cries openly in grief and fear. She sits, her back to the window, face to the door. Franklin sits beside her and holds. Watching for the monster's return.

DISSOLVE TO:

Katie and Franklin still sit below the window. Katie no longer cries. They watch the door. Katie stirs.

KATIE

How are we going to survive?

FRANKLIN

I don't know.

KATIE

I'm exhausted. We can't sit here
and wait either for help to come or
for him to attack.

Franklin looks away, silent. Katie stands, shuts the window.

KATIE (CONT'D)

We need to fight him.

FRANKLIN

How? He can keep slipping away.

KATIE

So we can't chase him.

She reaches down a hand, helps Franklin up.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Here's what we do: we put ourselves
in the most advantageous position
we can--and lure him out.

FRANKLIN

He won't attack then; he has time
and the house on his side!

KATIE

What if he were provoked?

Franklin digests this, not sure he follows.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Franklin and Katie plod down the front steps, very careful to
go around, and not to look at, something on the ground. They
look along the house, at bushes, at trees, at shadows.

They walk to the cars. Hands full of lights and knives, they
don't bother about the drenching rain.

Faces set, they avoid Benny, go to the trunk of Franklin's
car. Franklin unlocks it. They move urgently, unsure when
something might lunge out at them.

KATIE

At least we don't need power.

Franklin reaches into the swing club library, pushes aside the CDs, the 33s. He extracts a 78, nods at it.

He lets the trunk drop. Katie and Franklin patter back to the house, squelching over the sodden ground.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Franklin and Katie push furniture further to sides, ensuring the absolute maximum open space in the middle.

Battery-powered lanterns, flashlights, phones, and candles combine their might and even this is woefully inadequate compared to the lighting when the dancers first arrived.

Katie takes two carving knives, the fire poker, and Dinah's discarded cane. She puts them on the DJ table.

Franklin holds up the 78: "Time Changes Everything" by Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys. He puts it on the Victrola's turntable. He and Katie face each other across the room.

FRANKLIN

This is a terrible plan.

KATIE

I know, but we have to try it.

FRANKLIN

Really, Katie? Even with all the variables we don't know?

KATIE

We can't worry about that.

Franklin regards her with respect, nods. He turns away to crank up the old Victrola, then lowers the needle and opens the doors. Crackling scratches echo through the room.

Franklin doesn't move from the table, so Katie comes to him. She holds out her hand. Much as Mack did, sixty years ago.

KATIE (CONT'D)

He may be watching.

(beat)

Would you like to dance.

The music starts. Franklin takes her hand, and they walk onto the floor, close to the table with weapons.

They make eye contact, more nervous than they have ever been in a dance. They begin to jockey, waiting for the rock-step.

VOCALIST (RECORDED)

*There was a time when I thought of
no other.*

Franklin leads Katie into the basic. They relax a little, the long-practiced moves so ingrained in their muscle memory.

VOCALIST (RECORDED) (CONT'D)

*As we sang our own love's refrain.
Our hearts beat as one,
As we had our fun,
But time changes everything.*

Katie and Franklin try to keep their guard up, twisting their heads this way and that, in case the shark sneaks up. Franklin leads turns and swingouts to maximize visibility.

VOCALIST (RECORDED) (CONT'D)

*When you left me, my poor heart was broken.
Our romance seemed all in vain.
The dark clouds are gone,
There's blue skies again,
For time changes everything.*

The dance grows easier, as the night's tension slowly seeps out, floating away, same as always.

An instrumental interlude in the song. Franklin basket whips Katie. They soon land in a Suzy-Q-swivel-circle. A Lindy circle brings them back to closed.

They remember why they decided to dance. Looking around, they see they're still alone. They look back at each other. Smile.

VOCALIST (RECORDED) (CONT'D)

*Time has past, and I had forgot you.
Mother Nature does wonderful things.
I guess that it's true,
For me and for you,
That time changes everything.*

Franklin dips Katie. A pretty good dip. She straightens as they relax with a basic. Grinning at each other. In the zone of the magic of swing. Katie's eyes on Franklin's.

MACK THE KNIFE (O.S.)

(weary)

You still persist in this evil.

Mack rests one hand on the mantel, shoulders stooped. His other hand holds the jackknife at his side.

Katie cries out. She and Franklin drop their connection and fumble back to the DJ table. Mack doesn't move.

VOCALIST (RECORDED)
*You can change the name of an old song
 Rearrange it, and make it swing.
 I thought nothing could stop me
 from loving you.*

The record has a bad scratch. It skips, locked in time.

VOCALIST (RECORDED) (CONT'D)
*Nothing could stop me from loving you--
 Nothing could stop me from loving you--
 Nothing could stop me from loving you . . .*

MACK THE KNIFE
 Still! You don't care--you refuse
 to understand--what it does.

FRANKLIN
 What--swing dancing does?

MACK THE KNIFE
 Swing kills the innocent and
 destroys lives.

Mack yanks the needle off of the record, cutting short the
 inexorable mantra. He SMASHES the brittle 78 into a thousand
 pieces against the swing placque on the mantel.

KATIE
 So you're punishing us for that.

MACK THE KNIFE
 You invaded the house with it.
 Lindsay's house.

KATIE
 How did you know Lindsay?

Mack doesn't hear her, his eyes gazing across years.

MACK THE KNIFE
 The 1950s were a magical time.

"Stupid Cupid," happy and innocent, plays very quietly.

MACK THE KNIFE (CONT'D)
 Swing was part of the past, long
 dying out by 58. Yet, a swing scene
 seduced Lindsay.

EXT. DANCE STUDIO - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The song fades. Lindsay, wearing an ordinary 1950s dress, stands amidst applauding people of all ages, sweaty and smiling. The Follow presents her with a familiar placque.

MACK THE KNIFE (V.O.)
Lindsay took to it and danced well.
She even won a special award for
beginning swing dancers.

Lindsay holds up the placque and poses. A flash of light.

QUICK FLASH: This picture of Lindsay, on the attic table.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mack glares at the placque on the mantel, the same one, with hatred and sadness.

MACK THE KNIFE
Mort should never have found it.

KATIE
What was Lindsay to you?

INT. DANCE STUDIO - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Lindsay dances with the Lead, who is obviously twenty times more experienced than she is and not half as masterful as he thinks he is.

Lindsay, laughing awkwardly, tries to keep up with his flashy, flawed moves.

MACK THE KNIFE (V.O.)
A single dance with a reckless and
an overconfident lead.

The Lead takes her through some steps that almost make her lose her balance.

Couples dance, crowding. The ambient sounds and music grow.

MACK THE KNIFE (V.O.)
A freak accident, they called it.

The Lead gets ready to lead Lindsay in an aerial.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mack stares straight ahead. The sound of Lindsay gasping.

LINDSAY (V.O.)

Ahh!

LEAD (V.O.)

Oh no. Look out!

SNAP. Lindsay's agonized SCREAM consumes all other noises. Mack squeezes his eyes shut.

MACK THE KNIFE

Her back was broken. She couldn't walk, couldn't dance. In time, she died of it.

Eyes tearing up, he holds out his jackknife, flicks it open.

INT. DANCE STUDIO - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Mack stalks towards the Lead and Follow.

MACK THE KNIFE (V.O.)

I had to end it. So I did.

He disembowels the Lead.

MACK'S POV. He stares at the bloody knife, the Follow beyond.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

MACK'S POV. He stares at the clean knife. Beyond it, Katie and Franklin huddle against the table, armed. Terrified, but with some pity.

MACK THE KNIFE

Swing died of old age. The thing that hurt her was gone.

(pointing the knife)

And now it came back to life!

Katie glances at the mirror, remembering when she first saw him. She looks closer at the shark-man, as though she senses something familiar about him.

MACK THE KNIFE (CONT'D)

(with bitter regret)

Even old Glenn was a secret swinger. He had to learn too.

KATIE

Who are you?

MACK THE KNIFE

Mack the Knife. One who can stop
that filthy, ostrobogulous dance.

Katie zeros in on his eyes, as he stands under Lindsay's
portrait. Where Charles once stood.

KATIE

Charles.

Franklin and Mack both stare at her. Mack gives a single nod,
pushes up the mask. Yes. Mack the Knife is CHARLES.

FRANKLIN

That's impossible. We saw you die.

KATIE

The bridge collapsed . . .

CHARLES

I wanted you to see that, after I
sawed the bridge.

He takes one step closer, allowing himself a steely smile.

KATIE

Duke! Wearing your clothes.

CHARLES

He was already dead. I poisoned his
"rum and Coca Cola." Then returned
to purge the evil.

QUICK FLASH: EXT. RIVERBANK - NIGHT

Mack flops off a slippery rope spanning the river, turns with
his knife to cut the rope.

BACK TO SCENE

Charles suddenly screams, grabbing and waving the placque.

CHARLES

You stole my grand-nephew from me!
You brought it to my house!

KATIE

We didn't know.

FRANKLIN

Not even Mort knew, did he?

Charles masters his hysterical rage. He sets the placque down, glaring with incredible coldness. Katie steps back, knife held out, and grabs Dinah's cane as well.

KATIE

Charles. Please, listen to us.

CHARLES

Just a jackknife has old Macheath.
(pulling down mask)
And time hasn't changed anything.

He draws out a machete to complement his jackknife and lumbers forward, a shark who has scented blood.

Charles gives a couple of jabs with the fire poker, trying make him back up. Charles shifts back, always just out of range, waiting for an opportunity. Trying to herd them.

Katie swings the cane and hits him in the side of the head. SNAP. Charles grunts, but the fiberglass cane breaks in half.

Franklin and Katie circle with Charles. Franklin succeeds in THWACKING him with the poker. Charles bears it startingly well. He's on the hunt.

Franklin thrusts the poker, piercing Charles's shoulder. An animal growl erupts from the rows of teeth. He backs them up by the mantel.

Franklin pockets his knife and holds Katie, as though to comfort her, almost in closed position, his left hand holding both the poker and her right hand. He whispers to her.

Charles has them scared. He lunges forward with both machete and knife, Franklin's right arm moves back, building tension.

Franklin popturns Katie hard. She spins past Charles, sticking out her knife and cutting his arm as she goes.

Charles in turn sticks out the jackknife, which makes a slit on Katie's shoulder. She shrieks, grabbing the wound.

Franklin brings the fire poker down hard on Charles, knocking him to his knees. Charles gasps, still growling. Before Franklin can hit him again, Charles PLUNGES the machete into Franklin's stomach.

Franklin wails in agony. He gets his knife out of his pocket. Charles kicks his feet.

Franklin crashes down, badly wounded, as Katie stabs Charles again in the shoulder and retreats. Charles kicks the fire poker across the room. Brings his machete high over Franklin.

KATIE

No. Stop it!

Charles looks at her. Katie retreats, knife held out.

KATIE (CONT'D)

I convinced Mort to try in swing, I stole him!

FRANKLIN

What?

CHARLES

You will both die.

He prepares to slam the machete down into Franklin.

KATIE

I'll cut up every photo you have.

She now has Charles's full attention. He snarls. Katie's fingers close on a lantern. She backs around the table.

KATIE (CONT'D)

I'll snap her record and throw her chair out the window. I'll take Lindsay away for good.

She runs up the stairs, not waiting for an answer. Bellowing in rage and horrified despair, Charles pursues her, fast for a man in his late 70s but slower than a coed.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Mack, coming from the landing up the second staircase, hears some kind of CLUNK. He wields his two blades.

The lantern light dribbles out of Charles's bedroom. Charles runs to the doorway, desperate to save his treasures.

As soon as he gets there, the lid of the chest silently rises up behind him. Katie climbs out and off of Glenn's corpse, her breath coming fast. The spikes have torn her dress but only scratched her back a little.

She begins to slink towards the stairs, then reconsiders. Knife held up, she creeps to the bedroom doorway.

INT. CHARLES'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Charles kneels by the lantern, on its side in the middle of the room. He looks under the bed. Katie sneaks up behind him, about to drive the knife into his back.

A BANG in the hall makes her jump. She looks to see that the chest's lid has slammed shut. She whirls again to the shark, already on his feet.

Katie attempts to stab him with her puny carving knife, and he incises her arm with the machete, following it up with a jab to her hand with his jackknife. Blood runs out her arm.

CHARLES

Scarlet billows start to spread.

Katie cries in pain. Her knife clatters on the floor.

She runs into the hall, towards the stairs.

Humming "Stupid Cupid" with a sinister grumble, Charles stomps after her. The tune morphs into "Mack the Knife."

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Katie stumbles down the stairs, holding her arm. She grabs another knife and hunkers down by the couch. Franklin hauls himself up using the mantel, free hand over bloody stomach.

KATIE

Franklin! You need to run!

FRANKLIN

I don't think I can.

Charles appears at the top of the stairs, descends them, moving slower, feeling his injuries.

CHARLES

Lindy hop will die again. Tonight
puts it in its grave for good!

He heavily clomps to the bottom stair, exuding loathing.

MORT (O.S.)

You're going to PAY!

Mort, head gashed and bloody, sways at the top of the stairs.

CHARLES

They will. I'm glad you're all--

MORT

Fuck you, you sack of shit!

He storms downstairs. Charles steps backwards.

CHARLES

You had to learn what swing costs.

MORT

You killed Dinah. Evil psycho
fucking murderer!

CHARLES

After what you did, don't you see
we're the same?

Katie creeps towards the DJ table. Charles hears and swings his machete without aiming. She retreats, towards the mantel.

Mort swings the hatchet, driving Charles a step towards Katie. Charles holds up his machete, ready to block.

MORT

God damn you fucker, you made me
suffer just like you did.

CHARLES

So you understand now? I don't want
to kill you. But if you're too far
corrupted by swing . . .

KATIE

You can never kill swing!

She stands tall and confident. Charles looks over.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Swing's not the past, like before.
It's the present now. Ten thousand
people dance it.

Charles's trembles with rage, facing her fully. Katie dances trip-ple step, trip-ple step, rock step. Taunting him.

CHARLES

I can destroy it completely.

KATIE

Spring has spread pretty far.

As Charles attempts to hurtle towards her, CHOP. His back arches, and he rasps with pain. Behind him, Mort steps away.

Groaning, Charles stumbles, the hatchet sticking out of his back. He falls forward and flounders on the ground.

Katie throws herself forward and slams the knife down. Charles writhes, causing her to miss. The knife blade breaks against the floor.

Charles swipes his jackknife, making Katie hop back. He turns to Mort. Pushes himself half up. Ready to attack him.

FRANKLIN

Katie!

He throws Katie the swing placque.

CHARLES

Lindsay would want this.

He tries to get up with both knife and machete. Katie leaps forward and smashes the corner of the placque on his head. Charles thuds down flat.

Katie hits him over and over, battering the shark head until the placque turns red and Charles lies still.

Mort pulls the jackknife out of his great-uncle's hand and stabs it into his side. Mack the Knife does not even flinch.

Katie slowly stands, breath ragged, and drops the placque. It BREAKS on the floor. She and Mort step away from the body. Katie circles around Charles, touches Mort's shoulder.

KATIE

We thought you were dead.

MORT

No. I attacked him. He knocked me out and I guess left me for dead.

FRANKLIN

You saved us, man.

KATIE

You did.

She and Mort walk over to Franklin, help him to a chair. Katie checks stomach wound.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Do you think you'll be all right?

FRANKLIN

Probably so, if I don't move much.

MORT

You'll be okay, buddy. We all will.

The three friends look at the dead killer.

MORT (CONT'D)

I didn't know about Uncle Charles.

FRANKLIN

It wasn't your fault.

KATIE

You couldn't know . . . What did he mean? He said you're the same, after what you did?

MORT

(shrugging)

Ravings. He was a lunatic.

FRANKLIN

When did you realize who he was?

MORT

In the attic, while we were struggling. I found Dinah and I was so mad, when I saw the attic open I went up without thinking.

KATIE

Hmmm.

She paces a few steps away, looks at the hatchet.

MORT

I found Art when I came down. Yeah. I was trying to find a weapon.

KATIE

He turned your "death" into another swing song. But not Art's murder.

FRANKLIN

Rrrrgh. Doesn't matter now.

Katie brushes it off, sits in a chair opposite them. Smiles.

KATIE

You have your rabbit's foot? Maybe that's what kept you alive.

Mort, a little uncomfortable with the odd remark, chuckles. He reaches into his pocket. Finds nothing.

MORT
I must've dropped it in the attic.

FRANKLIN
I got it.

He pulls out Mort's lucky rabbit's foot, passes it to Mort, who pockets it.

KATIE
We found it by Art.

Mort freezes. He breaks into a smile.

MORT
I guess Charles took it, uh.

KATIE
Charles had a specific pattern, and Art's death didn't fit.

She slowly rises from the chair, serious and too certain.

KATIE (CONT'D)
Did you kill Art?

MORT
(scoffing)
What, me? No. Ha, no. What?

FRANKLIN
Katie, Charles did!

He doesn't sound confident. Thinking over all she said.

KATIE
Did you hear Art and Dinah?

MORT
(irritable)
Hear what?

KATIE
Them making love.

Mort wanders away from Franklin, trying to escape her words.

MORT
No I didn't.

KATIE
You heard him with the girl you loved, didn't you? He took your place. She'd never go back to you.

MORT
 (exploding)
 Fuck him. Fuck Art! I couldn't let
 him steal her.

Too enraged to be scared, he snarls at both of them. Franklin sits stock still, appraising his best friend in a new light, not quite able to accept it.

FRANKLIN
 I've known you for years, Mort.
 You're not a killer. Are you?

Mort sighs but doesn't deflate. He drags back to Franklin.

MORT
 Charles killed Art.

FRANKLIN
 (accepting the sad truth)
 No, he didn't, Mort.

KATIE
 Why couldn't you let her go?

She looks at Dinah's broken cane. Mort does too, then back at Franklin. At the scorn in his face.

MORT
 You're still judging me? Because I
 won't give up on my true love?

Quick as white heat, Mort snatches up the knife Franklin dropped and cuts Franklin's throat.

MORT (CONT'D)
 Why can't you ever stop, Katie?

Franklin chokes futilely, grasping at his throat, all the red bubbling out. Katie screams in horror. Franklin struggles to stand. Mort shoves his chair over. Katie flattens against the wall, watching Franklin die.

MORT (CONT'D)
 Charles wouldn't stop either. He
 knew what I'd just heard. He said I
 had to. My own uncle, the shark.

He ignores Katie, baring his teeth at Charles's body.

MORT (CONT'D)

"It's the only way, you have to,
you're not a man, you're letting
your girl get taken from you. You
have to fight for love like me."

INT. SPARE THIRD FLOOR ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Mort unstable, almost broken. Mack the Knife whispering in his ear. He puts the hatchet in Mort's hands.

MORT (V.O.)

"If you kill him, she'll love you."

INT. THIRD FLOOR BATHROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Mort buries the hatchet in Art's skull.

The rabbit's foot floats to the floor.

MORT (V.O.)

I'd do anything for Dinah. But he
tricked me.

INT. THIRD FLOOR BEDROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Mort shakes Dinah's body. Horror, then grief, then rage.

MORT (V.O.)

He wanted me out of the way so he
could, could hurt Dinah.

INT. ATTIC - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Mort screams at Mack. Mack gestures, calmly explaining sad and inevitable truths.

MORT (V.O.)

He said I had to learn. Swing will
always cost you your love.

Mort charges at Mack.

MORT (V.O.)

There was no other way for it to
end. I shouldn't have let swing
seduce me, shouldn't've brought it
to haunt him. You son of a bitch.

Mack thrusts Mort back. Mort trips. His head hits the table.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mort kneels by Charles like an animal, screaming at him.

MORT
You son of a bitch!

He abruptly remembers Katie, slowly looks up at her. Wiping away his tears, he tugs the machete away from Charles.

MORT (CONT'D)
They'll think he did it.

Katie takes a step away, keeping her eyes on him.

MORT (CONT'D)
I guess he gets what he wanted.
(standing with machete)
The cops will find Charles killed
all the swingers except his nephew.
Even poor Katie O'Callaghan.

Katie breaks eye contact and flees to the kitchen.

MORT (CONT'D)
I don't even want to, but
(sings)
*You've got me in between, the devil
and the deep blue sea.*

Machete held high, he stalks after Katie.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Katie grabs a flashlight. She shines it around, picks up a steak knife. Mort, illuminated in the doorway with his machete, demonstrates how inadequate that is.

Weapon held back, Mort edges towards her.

MORT
It can be fast, like with Franklin.

Katie, no real plan, looks for anything to help. There sit the remains of Mort's jelly roll. Dinah's favorite snack.

Katie grabs the platter and swings it, flinging the sticky mess into Mort's face. Splat.

Mort, snarling, holds out his machete, wipes his eyes clean.

Katie has gone. FOOTSTEPS thump down the basement stairs.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Katie stumbles over Ella's body, bounds up as Mort descends the stairs. She backs away.

MORT
Look at it this way: you can join
your father.

His unfeeling observation sends a shock through Katie.

KATIE
What?

She scrabbles back along the wall, helpless.

KATIE (CONT'D)
How do you know? You can't!

Mort scents the advantage. He presses it.

MORT
Mildred let something slip and I
put it together. That's why you're
so fucked up, isn't it?

Katie squinches her eyes shut. Mort steps over Ella.

MORT (CONT'D)
He died, you can do the same.

Katie feels behind her. Her hand finds something. She looks. A little brown jug, ceramic.

MORT (CONT'D)
You want to keep living? I'm giving
you an easy out. After tonight.

Katie swings the jug, taking him by surprise. It shatters over his head. Mort drops down and yells.

Katie, tossing her flashlight outside, scrambles up through the window Charles broke to get in.

The glass rips at her dress and skin. Mort regains his feet and cuts a gash in her leg as she pulls it away. Katie staggers but runs off into the night. Mort screams after her.

MORT (CONT'D)
You can't puzzle your way out of
this! There is no escape. Face it!

He pulls himself up through the window.

INT. ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Empty and silent, except for the rain outside. A startling CRASH as Katie smashes through the front window with Mildred's pipe. She clambers through and runs into

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Katie looks towards the back hallway, the kitchen, the staircase, and finally Charles's mask-clad carcass. She hears the front door unlock and open.

Mort enters the living room, sees Katie clasp the lead pipe, standing near his dead uncle. Terrified, Katie swings the pipe wildly, though he's well out of range.

Mort steps closer, so Katie throws the pipe. It hits Mort hard, bruising his face. He doesn't stop coming.

MORT

Let it happen. You've seen everyone die. Just do the same thing: die, like your father died.

QUICK FLASH: EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

Young Katie sits beside her father's grave.

BACK TO SCENE

KATIE

I know . . .

Broken, she holds up her hands, accepting the inevitable.

KATIE (CONT'D)

I give up.

She lowers her hands, shivering with fear.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Please. Make it quick.

MORT

Of course. I'm not evil. It'll be as quick as--as I lost Dinah.

He looks into her eyes a moment; he curls his machete back. He lunges and swings with enough force to chop off her head.

Katie leans backwards, leading herself in a perfect dip. The machete whizzes over her head, throwing Mort off balance.

Coming out of it, Katie pulls Charles's jackknife out of the back of her dress.

She stabs Mort through his carotid artery.

Mort lets out a shocked, choking cry. He drops the machete and gurgles, sinking to the ground. He stares up at Katie.

KATIE

I've seen everyone die. But I'm
going to live.

She slits his throat wide open. Mort convulses. Mort dies.

The white rabbit's foot, discarded on the floor, soaks up its owner's blood.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Bloodstained Katie wanders out the front door, dragging the throw from the sofa behind her. Still holding the jackknife.

She covers Mildred's body with the throw. She plops onto the porch steps and sits, waiting. Waiting for the dawn.

The rain soaks her, washing off the blood. Katie ignores it. She tosses the gleaming knife onto the muddy yard.

EXT. CAMPUS - NIGHT

Dark sidewalks. Plenty of students about. Lit up dorms, dark academic buildings.

SUPER: THREE MONTHS LATER.

The third floor of a dorm. Katie stands at the open window, staring out into the night. "Sing, Sing, Sing" plays, not too loud. The incredibly happy music has no effect on Katie.

A tear trickles down her cheek. She keeps staring, not seeming to see the beautiful campus, the students passing.

Her Roommate steps up beside her, sympathetic and concerned. She touches Katie's arm, speaks to her. Katie looks over at her, smiles and nods.

The Roommate leaves. Picks up her phone, switches off "Sing Sing Sing." Beat. Her eyes regain some focus and clarity. She wipes away her tears, still sad but peaceful.

Katie catches up her polka dot bow, pulls back her hair.

EXT. CAMPUS CENTER - NIGHT

A sign identifies the brightly-lit and rather unaesthetic building as "RUFDERSON UNIVERSITY - CAMPUS CENTER."

INT. CAMPUS CENTER - CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Strains of "Black Coffee" drift out of an open door across a carpeted hall. A chalkboard propped by the open door reads "SWING CLUB! Learn how to dance. Beginners welcome. FREE!"

INT. CAMPUS CENTER - LARGE ROOM - NIGHT

Dozens of couples form a circle in the middle of the room. They stop dancing as the music fades, turn to the center.

Katie, bow in hair, and a Young Man stand in the center. Katie also wears--Franklin's porkpie hat.

KATIE

And that concludes our beginner lesson. Please, please stay for social dancing; we'll be playing music for another 90 minutes.

The surrounding students APPLAUD, begin to MURMUR. Katie waves them quiet and holds up a hand towards the DJ table.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Remember! You don't have to be shy if it's your first time. Anyone can ask anyone to dance. You can always say no. We're here to have fun.

The crowd gives a few small claps, and the circle breaks apart. Some people already start to partner up.

Katie tosses the hat onto a chair and beelines for Tom, standing not far off. "Twisting the Night Away" blares.

KATIE (CONT'D)

Tom!

TOM

Hey Katie. Good lesson tonight.

KATIE

Thank you.

Katie extends a hand to Tom, not taking her eyes away.

KATIE (CONT'D)
Would you like to dance?

TOM
I'd love to.

They grab hands. Seeing they have enough room, they jockey just a few times, get right into swinging.

SAM COOKE (RECORDED)
*Hear they have a lot of fun
Puttin' trouble on the run.
Man, you find the old and young,
Twistin' the night away.*

Tom leads a snazzy move. Katie's smile up at Tom broadens.

The DJ drums his fingers, pulsing with the beat.

A tall, fit girl with perfect makeup and hair leads a guy.

Newbies, nervously dancing basic steps. Dancers who aren't very good but are having such fun. Show-offs. Romantic couples. Fat. Thin. Dark. Light.

Such a wide cross-section of the campus. All swing dancing.

Tom leads Katie in a basket whip. They move with sublime counterbalance. Healing after the horrors of the summer. Joyous as they dance with each other.

For a few seconds, we watch them dancing through the window. As though someone in the darkness might be observing them.

SAM COOKE (RECORDED) (CONT'D)
*He's dancing with the chick in slacks.
She's movin' up and back.
Oh man, there ain't nothin' like
Twistin' the night away.*

Tom dips Katie. Like everything they do, it is so cute.

KATIE
Yeah!

SAM COOKE (RECORDED) (CONT'D)
Yeah!

Katie jauntily sings along while they dance, the same way Mildred used to. Tom can't help but mirror her grin.

KATIE
*Twistin'. Twistin'.
Everybody's feelin' great.*

Tom leans Katie into him, so close together.

KATIE (CONT'D)
*They're twistin'. Twistin'.
 Twistin' the night away!*

They hit the break on the nose. The music stops.

CUT OUT.

ENDING CREDITS

Credit song, "Everybody Dies When They Come to MY House."

This'll get gory, Laurie.
 Oh, do feel the axe, Max.
 Death by drowning for Browning.
 Ev'rybody dies when they come to my house.

I hear you choakin', Joaqin!
 From the neck hang, Chang.
 Want your throat slit by straightt razor, Frazer?
 Ev'rybody dies when they come to my house.

I'll use some methods "macaber"
 To ensure daylight fills ya.
 Hearing you groan as the flesh leaves the bone.
 You better die if it kills ya!
 My wakazashi, Takashi.
 Why, meet your vivisector, Hector.
 Try the chair of electricity, Felicity.
 Ev'rybody dies when they come to my house.
 Browning! Laurie! Takashi! Katie!
 Ev'rybody dies when they come to my house.

Flesh I'm tearin' from Karen.
 Time to impale Gail.
 Face on the burner, Werner. (sssss)
 Ev'rybody dies when they come to my house.

You're blown to bits, Fritz.
 Smile for my shotgun, Soohyun.
 Alive I'll bury Mary. OR Next I'm killin' Dylan,
 Ev'rybody dies when they come to my house.

All of my victims, welcome!
 Don't make me chase to erase you
 In the den, on the porch, with a sawblade or torch,
 So many ways to "un-face" you.
 To the embalmer, Palmer.
 Did you need this intestine, Yestin?
 Splash acid on ya, Sonia.
 Ev'rybody dies when they come to my house.
 Face! Crimson! Flesh! Carve! Dump bodies!
 Ev'rybody dies when they come to my house.

Don't bother beggin', Megan;
 Discussion will end with concussion!
 Here's why I'm stabby, Gabi:
 For crying out loud, do you not get it yet?
 Ev'rybody dies . . . When they come to my house!

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

The open room of a small station, filled with desks, Police Officers behind them.

A SERGEANT (50) sits behind a desk, face drawn and dissatisfied. He reads a case file labelled "Swing Murders."

INSERT - FOLDER

The Sergeant's hand turns through sheet after sheet, each containing a photo of one of the dead bodies.

Duke in the wreck. Benny with the bugle. Andrea hanging.

Dinah, choked by pearls. Art, hatchet in his head. Glenn in the chest.

Ella and Mildred. Pictures of them from before and then outlines of their bodies--it's too horrible to see again.

Mort. Franklin.

A pool of smeared blood where Charles was killed.

A trail of blood leading out the door, as though something was dragged.

Matted, crushed wet grass by the now-lower river, with a scrap of torn black fabric on a thorn.

A photograph of a smiling, well-dressed Charles. Beneath it, the words "Presumed dead."

BACK TO SCENE

The Sergeant closes the file and sets it aside. Not satisfied at all.

FADE OUT.

THE END