

The Spoiler

Written by

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Based on the book
"The Spoiler"

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FADE IN WORDS

Spoiler \Spoil'er\, n. 1. One who spoils; a plunderer; a pillager; a robber; a despoiler. 2. One who corrupts, mars, or renders useless. -- Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary.

FADE IN

EXT. DECK OF A WOODEN TALL SHIP - NIGHT - 1790

A MOONLIT sea shimmers, as a lighting storm puts on a show off in the distance. Sitting anchored near an archipelago is a two-mast schooner bearing the name HMS CUTLASS. A LOUD ROW rises from the crew gathered on deck.

Two men are blindfolded with their hands tied behind their backs, teetering on two planks over the dark sea. The wooden ship CREAKS and GROANS as it sways on the still waters.

RAEPH LEICESTER, young, strapping, square-jawed, with sandy hair pulled back in a ponytail, stands tall and appears not to be afraid of his life-threatening situation, while PARFREY VAN-HUYS, same age but with a smaller frame, scraggly dark hair, and effeminate facial features is less confident and whimpers with fear.

RAEPH

What hast brought us to this point?

PARFREY

You and your brigand ways brought us to this point!

An angry mob of PRIVATEERS approach. Everyone stops as a LOW THRUMMING HUM surrounds them. They poke the points of their swords in Raeph and Parfrey's backs to urge them forward and over the brink.

SAILOR

Try treason, you scalawags.

PARFREY

Merciful God, save us!

Raeph and Parfrey fall toward the black water below. Just as they are about to hit the water the THRUMMING INTENSIFIES with a FLASH OF BRIGHT BLUE LIGHT bouncing off the dark sea.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT - 1790

Inexplicably, Raeph and Parfrey land hard on a dirt road. Raeph is now dressed as a highwayman, in a black cloak and a domino mask wearing a tricorn hat with his hair pulled back in a ponytail. Parfrey, dressed as an aristocrat in a campaign wig with side burns and a ponytail under a feathery tricorn hat. Raeph and Parfrey look up shocked to see two horses looking down at them.

As Raeph and Parfrey attempt to get up and adjust themselves, they hear a WOMAN SHRIEK from a nearby Maryland colonial farm house.

RAEPH

Abigail?

Raeph quickly mounts a horse and heads towards the nearby house, while Parfrey fumbles to get on the horse to follow Raeph.

PARFREY

That's my Abigail!

INT. COLONIAL HOME - NIGHT - 1790 CONT.

Raeph and Parfrey jam in the doorway with each wanting to enter the house first. Raeph pushes past Parfrey, boots POUNDING the wooden floor across scattered debris: parchments, books, toppled oil lamps, liquids spilled on the floor, broken glass. LIT CANDLES in wall sconces light the room. Fire CRACKLES in the fireplace. Gossamer curtains flutter around the open French doors leading outside.

ABIGAIL FLETCHER, a young, beautiful woman of American gentry, is in the clutches of a dark figure with a mask covering the lower half of his face, the CHARACTER ASSASSIN. His eyes have an UNCANNY BLUISH GLOW that BRIGHTENS then GOES TO BLACK. Abigail reaches out to Raeph who rushes toward her with Parfrey behind him.

ABIGAIL

Save me!

The Character Assassin raises a large knife blade to Abigail's throat.

CHARACTER ASSASSIN

(deep disguised voice)

One step further and I will stick her like a hog.

Raeph and Parfrey stop in their tracks. Raeph is but a few feet from the villain. Parfrey steps away.

ABIGAIL

Raeph! Help me!

PARFREY

Unhand her, you foul fiend!

CHARACTER ASSASSIN

Not on your life... nor hers. She is a pretty little thing. Methinks I will make her my wife. But sadly I must needs take her life.

RAEPH

No, you mustn't!

CHARACTER ASSASSIN

But 'tis me mission. Then again, she be so very sweet to keep.

The Character Assassin kisses her on the check. Abigail winces and struggles against him.

Parfrey backs into the fire tool stand, knocking it over with a CLATTER. The Character Assassin shifts his attention.

Raeph kicks an oil lamp in the air. Contents spill. Lamp hits the Character Assassin in the head. He stumbles and drops the knife. Raeph rushes him. Abigail breaks free and runs behind Parfrey.

Parfrey takes up the ash shovel and holds it menacingly over the Character Assassin wrestling Raeph for the knife. Parfrey aims to hit the Character Assassin but is afraid of hitting Raeph.

The Character Assassin strikes Raeph down, gets the knife, lunges at Parfrey, and knocks the shovel from his hands. Abigail goes towards Raeph. Character Assassin steps on the long hem of her dress and yanks her back toward him. Her fingertips barely touch Raeph's.

Raeph gathers himself, grabs up a poker, and wields it like a sword at the Character Assassin who presses the knife against Abigail's throat.

Character Assassin whacks a LIT candle off a nearby wall sconce. The candle sets the floor, papers, curtains ON FIRE. Character Assassin's eyes once again GLOW BRIGHT BLUE.

CHARACTER ASSASSIN
Deed be done, and I have won!

Abigail and the Character Assassin disappear through the French doors and into the darkness. Raeph braves the inferno to rescue her but catches fire. Parfrey turns and flees the house. Raeph, AFIRE, runs out after him.

EXT. YARD OF COLONIAL HOME - NIGHT - 1790 CONT.

Raeph, coughing and gasping, falls to the ground and rolls to put out the flames. Parfrey drops to his knees. Both men watch the house burn. A DEEP-VOICED LAUGH emanates from the ROARING, CRACKLING FLAMES.

PARFREY
What manner of witchery is this?

RAEPH
Something is terribly amiss! Who hath wrought such a foul fate? Surely this is not what was written to be!

The LIGHT of the FLAMES of the burning house FLICKER across their puzzled faces.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS WATER FRONT SUNSET- DUSK - 2004

The fiery sun bounces off the water and glass high-rise buildings at sunset.

EXT. TRUHEART PUBLISHING - DUSK - 2004 CONT.

HORNS are HONKING with other SOUNDS of the bustling city as the even rush-hour begins. Truheart Publishing sign is prominent on the tallest glass high rise building in the heart of the New Orleans business district.

INT. TRUHEART PUBLISHING, LOBBY - DUSK - 2004 CONT.

MARSHA TUCKER, a disheveled brunette (35) wearing a smiley-face ball cap, a low-cut, sleeveless top covered in yellow smiley faces, black shorts, nylons with a hole in the thigh area, enters the building, the GOLDEN RAYS of sunset behind her. Her Rainbow Skechers SQUEAK across the polished floor as she stomps past the reception desk. Seeing Marsha, the female RECEPTIONIST picks up the phone. Marsha continues past the GLITTERING waterfall and Koi pond to the elevator.

INT. TRUHEART PUBLISHING, ROLFE'S OFFICE - NIGHT - 2004 CONT.

Marsha pushes through a pair of antique carved mahogany doors. From a beat-up black handbag, she pulls out papers as she approaches ROLFE LAFFERTY (50), distinguished and well-tailored, with jet-black hair graying at the temples and piercing eyes, Rolfe is sitting at a polished mahogany desk in a plush office. Above and behind his him hangs the company logo and title TRUHEART PUBLICATIONS. Rolfe, on the phone, looks at her with disdain.

ROLFE

Yes, Gloria. She just walked in.

Rolfe hangs up.

MARSHA

You sneaky, conniving, two-timing...
no, let's make that five-timing...
conniver!

ROLFE

(cold and hollow)

I see I will have to hire new
security.

MARSHA

That's right. The poor slobs living on
the shinola you pay them are
disposable and replaceable like any
other wage-slave of yours.

ROLFE

Why are you here?

MARSHA

I want what is rightfully mine!

ROLFE

I sent all your stuff to your place by
parcel post ages ago. Or did you have
to move again? Check with the post
office. Other than that, I have
nothing more to give or say. Now, go.

MARSHA

Five years of my life... pearls before
swine!

ROLFE

There you go again... overestimating

ROLFE (CONT'D.)
yourself.

MARSHA
Fine. Faux pearls then. Like that cut-glass sapphire you gave me for an engagement ring. Look what you've reduced me to. Working as a costumed server in a hokey theme restaurant... from which I just got fired because of someone from the sheriff's office looking for me... to serve me this!

Marsha waves one of the papers she carries in front of his face.

MARSHA (CONT'D)
An injunction to cease and desist from petitioning you and Truheart Publications for returning what is rightfully mine.

Rolfe does not make eye contact. He presses a button on the office phone.

MARSHA (CONT'D.)
Yeah, that's right. Don't even dare look at me with those Svengali eyes. Your spells won't work on me anymore.

ROLFE
Gloria, get security up here, will you? If they're off playing pinochle, tell them they are fired and call the police.

Marsha slams the other document on his desk.

MARSHA
And that's why you resort to taking out a restraining order? Is this how you repay me for my love, devotion, and endless labor that built your publishing empire?

Two BURLY MEN in uniforms enter.

ROLFE
Please remove her before she goes berserk as she is apt to do. Make sure

ROLFE (CONT'D.)
she takes these.

Rolfe hands the documents back to Marsha. She snatches them and glowers at Rolfe.

The men take Marsha by the arms and haul her out.

MARSHA
If I don't litigate, I shall surely
publicate! Rolfe Lafferty is a scumbag
exploiter of women writers for his
vainglory!

Marsha's protests echo from the halls.

Rolfe gets up and closes the door. He goes into his private lavatory and stands before the vanity mirror. He shuts his eyes and HUMS in monotone. Then his voice becomes BIPHONIC.

INT. PARKING GARAGE IN NEW ORLEANS - NIGHT - 2004 CONT.

Marsha walks to her car and notices a flat tire. She kicks it then POUNDS the roof with her fists. Tears fill her eyes. She unlocks and opens the door and throws her purse with the documents inside the car.

A CHILD'S RUNNING FOOTSTEPS echo in the garage. A small boy, MICAH WEEMS, appears rushing up behind her. He has long curly red hair and is dressed in 18th-century togs with a tricorne hat. His tiny voice ECHOES in the hollows of the garage as he tugs at her skirt.

MICAH
I prithee, mum, save us!

Marsha lets go a gasp and grabs the car door to brace herself. The keys in her hand TINKLE against a cylindrical container on the key ring. Micah tries to pull her away.

MARSHA
Hey!

MICAH
You must needs save us, missum! Hurry!

MARSHA
What in the name of Mergatroid? Save
you?
(looking around)
Are you lost? Where's your mommy?

MICAH

Mum, please, lest we all die!

MARSHA

Die?!

A BREEZE blows strands of hair across Marsha's face. The breeze becomes a STRONG WIND blowing Marsha's cap from her head. DARKNESS sets in. A LOW THRUMMING HUM rises. BLUE FLASHES of LIGHTNING dance around the garage. CAR ALARMS go off.

A pair of GLOWING BLUE EYES peer at Marsha through a dark haze. A Red Coat in a campaign wig appears, his face nothing but a DARK SHADOW with GLOWING BLUE EYES. With bayonet in hand, he lunges at Marsha and Micah. Marsha holds up the canister on her key chain. A ten-foot stream of mace fires at the RED COAT's face.

Suddenly, from the swirling maelstrom, Raeph appears, dressed as a highwayman and astride a great black steed. He aims his pistol. Micah runs toward Raeph holding his hat to his head.

MICAH

I found her, Master Raeph!

RAEPH

Come here, boy! Quickly!

Micah holds up his hand, Raeph hoists him up. Micah sits behind him. The Red Coat wipes his eyes then looks at Raeph who fires a shot at him. The Red Coat dives into a dark recess. The bullet ricochets off a pillar and hits the wall. Raeph rides over to Marsha and holds out his hand as the WIND HOWLS.

RAEPH

Come, madam! We must go!

MARSHA

You! This can't be!

Marsha bolts. Raeph rides after her, bends down. Several objects fall from his cloak and bounce off the garage floor. He puts his arm around her, and lifts her up on the horse. The horse gallops up the parking garage ramp to the roof level. HORNS HONK in rush hour traffic below.

Micah's hat blows away. Marsha screams as the horse jumps off the building to vanish in a BLUE BURST. The storm abruptly stops. The car alarms stop. The garage is empty and silent.

INT. PARKING GARAGE SECURITY OFFICE - NIGHT - 2004 CONT.

JACK WEATHERWAX, an older man in a security uniform, in shock, stands frozen looking at a display of monitors. Instinctively he picks up the phone and punches in 911.

INT. PARKING GARAGE IN NEW ORLEANS - NIGHT - 2004 CONT.

POLICE LIGHTS reflect off the walls as they surround Marsha's car with the drivers-side door open. Jack is there, talking to uniformed officers. An unmarked car pulls up. Two detectives get out: Detective RENEE SAVAGE, a tall and strikingly attractive African-American woman, and Detective CALEB ROSS, a tall, lanky, young man. They both snap on latex gloves as they approach the car.

INT. FROM INSIDE THE CAR - NIGHT - 2004 CONT.

The passenger's-side door opens and Renee bends in to open the glove box. She pulls out the registration. From the driver's side, Caleb reaches in and opens Marsha's purse. He pulls out her wallet and removes the driver's license.

CALEB

I got Marsha A. Tucker, 35, five foot five, 125 pounds, brown hair, blue-green eyes. Organ donor.

RENEE

That concurs with what I have here.

They both withdraw from the vehicle.

INT. PARKING GARAGE IN NEW ORLEANS - NIGHT - 2004

Renee notices an ornate brass button, a meerschaum pipe, and a small brown glass bottle, with a cork stopper, on the floor. She squats down for a closer look, then crinkles her nose.

RENEE

Is that a trace of mace I smell?

CALEB

I detect gunpowder. Look.

Renee stands up and goes with Caleb to examine a hole in a pillar. Caleb pulls out a pen and pokes in the hole. A round metal ball falls out. He quickly catches it in his gloved hand and holds it up between his thumb and forefinger. A uniformed officer brings Jack and the smiley-face cap over.

Renee takes the cap and puts it in an evidence bag.

JACK

That's the cap Marsha was wearing when she came in to park.

RENEE

Are you the garage's security officer?

JACK

Weatherwax. Jack Weatherwax. I'm the one who called... after what I heard and saw. Poor Marsha.

RENEE

I'm Detective Savage and this is Detective Ross.

CALEB

You know this Marsha Tucker?

JACK

Oh, yes. She's been coming here for years. She used to work for TruHeart Publishing, you know, as a writer. A beautiful, talented woman.

CALEB

Were you two...?

JACK

Only in my dreams... my sad, lonely-guy dreams.

RENEE

Can you tell us what you saw?

JACK

Follow me. I'll show you.

A van marked NOPD CSU arrives. A forensics team jumps out with equipment. One pulls out a professional camera and starts photographing. Renee hands the bagged cap to one and points to the items on the floor. Another technician sets marker and bags them. Caleb hands the metal ball to the technician. Renee and Caleb follow Jack to the elevator.

INT. PARKING GARAGE SECURITY OFFICE - NIGHT - 2004 CONT.

The door opens and in walk Jack, Renee, and Caleb. The small office has a desk and chair in front of a video monitor

display divided for each camera on each floor of the garage. Jack sits in the chair and taps on a keyboard.

JACK

There should be a couple of folding chairs there.

Caleb pulls over two chairs, opens them. He and Renee sit close on either side of Jack. They all look at the monitor.

JACK (CONT'D.)

I'll cue it up for you. I gotta tell you... this is disturbing to watch and hinky as hell.

On screen appears Marsha walking to her car whose rear faces the security camera.

CALEB

Look at the right rear tire.

JACK

It's flat, but wait.

RENEE

Who's that?

Marsha is seen with a boy in a tricorne hat. A BLUR of a figure in RED appears. A swirling black maelstrom forms and another figure on a horse take shape. A BLUE FLASH causes the screen to go to distorting static then return to normal. Marsha, the boy, and the figures are gone. Renee, Caleb, and Jack look at each other with incredulity.

JACK

I heard every car alarm go off. By the time I picked up the phone, it stopped.

RENEE

We'll need a copy of that footage.

JACK

Fine by me, but you'll have to ask the company. I can only play it. And you'll have to hurry, they only keep video on file for 72 hours. Here's their number.

Jack writes on a note pad, tears off the square, and hands it to Renee. In return, Renee hands Jack her business card.

Caleb does likewise.

RENEE
We'll be back in touch.

Renee and Caleb exit the office. The door closes.

INT. PARKING GARAGE IN NEW ORLEANS - NIGHT - 2004 CONT.

Renee and Caleb walk away from the security office.

CALEB
Think he's involved?

Renee pulls out her flip phone and punches in the number on the piece of paper in her hand.

RENEE
That video seems to be his alibi.
(to the phone)
Hello, is this Jenkins Security
Systems? My name is Detective Savage
with Missing Persons...

CALEB
Hinky. Huh. Who the hell says hinky
anymore?

The two detectives walk to the elevator and get in. The doors close.

INT. AUDITORIUM, LIBERAL ARTS BUILDING, UNIVERSITY OF NEW
ORLEANS - DAY - 1999 5 YEARS AGO

The auditorium door CREAKS open. Marsha Tucker, carrying books and a computer bag, sneaks in. She sits in the nearest empty seat. Rolfe Lafferty is speaking at the podium. Behind him on a large screen appears the words WORLD BUILDING: EVERY STORY YOU WRITE IS ITS OWN WORLD. BUILD IT RIGHT; BUILD IT WELL!

ROLFE
...whatever you write, be it fiction,
creative non-fiction, sci-fi, you must
always be aware the world you create
is con-

Books hit the floor with a loud CLUNK as Marsha pulls out her laptop. Everyone looks back at her.

MARSHA

Sorry.

ROLFE

Is that our very talented Ms. Tucker back there in the shadows? Please, come down into the light with the rest of your creative cohorts.

Marsha collects her things and moves to the second row.

ROLFE (CONT'D)

No, please, Ms. Tucker. There is a seat waiting for you right down in front.

Marsha takes the seat in the center of the front row. One of her books falls to the floor. STIFLED GIGGLES come from the other students.

MARSHA

Sorry.

Rolfe checks his watch then looks at Marsha who recedes in her seat.

ROLFE

As I was saying, it is vital that you burgeoning authors understand the importance of building convincing, palpable, alternate realities for your readers to experience. And that ends our session for today. Next week we will explore the World Wide Web and how Friendster, MySpace, and personal URLs can be useful tools... if Y2K doesn't cause the downfall of cyber space. Now there's a premise for a high-concept sci-fi piece.

The audience LAUGHS. Students leave their seats and head up the aisles. Marsha closes her laptop and slips it in the bag. She stands to leave.

ROLFE

Could you please stay, Ms. Tucker? I would like a word.

Marsha stops. Rolfe packs up his notes, grabs his satchel, and steps down from the podium. He approaches her. She looks around nervously. The auditorium is empty. Rolfe takes her by

the chin and gently turns her head toward him. He kisses her softly.

MARSHA

Not here. Someone might come in and see us!

ROLFE

You practically missed my entire lecture! Why so late?

Rolfe leads Marsha up the aisle toward the exit.

MARSHA

Yeah, sorry about that. Had to wait for my shift relief at Holler Dollar. Then there was a traffic jam in Terrytown.

They exit the auditorium as students for the next lecture file in.

INT. CORRIDOR, LIBERL ARTS BUILDING, UNO - DAY - 1999 CONT.

Rolfe and Marsha walk together toward the building exit as students rush by to get to their classes.

EXT. LIBERAL ARTS BUILDING, UNO - DAY - 1999 CONT.

Marsha squints against the bright sun. Rolfe pulls out a pair of sunglasses from his bag and puts them on.

EXT. UNO CAMPUS GROUNDS - DAY - 1999 CONT.

They walk and talk across the campus grounds.

ROLFE

I wish you would quit that job.

MARSHA

Sorry, but us starving students need the wage-slavery. We can't all be big-shot publishers sporting designer labels and driving fancy cars like you.

ROLFE

Big shot? TruHeart is such a small imprint.

MARSHA

You do well enough to teach a master class here.

ROLFE

Ah, well, not because of what I know but who I know, I admit.

MARSHA

Success is all about connections... and trust funds, ain't it?

ROLFE

"Ain't?" Literary genius that you are? You should be ashamed of yourself.

EXT. CAMPUS PARKING LOT - DAY - 1999 CONT.

Rolfe and Marsha arrive at her dinged and rusted 1989 Dodge Colt. Marsha grabs a ticket from under the windshield wiper.

MARSHA

Friggin' great! Aaaaarg!

Marsha pounds the hood of her car.

ROLFE

Don't go beserk. Give it here. I'll-

Marsha takes a deep breath.

MARSHA

No, I took a chance parking in the faculty lot, figuring I wouldn't be long.

Marsha unlocks and pulls open the car door. She throws her computer bag and books on the passenger seat. With her back to Rolfe she wipes a tear away. Rolfe leans on her car with one arm on the door, corralling her.

ROLFE

How about I take you to dinner tonight?

Marsha feigns a smile appreciating the offer of dinner.

ROLFE (CONT'D.)

We can talk about your amazing manuscript.

MARSHA

Oh, that old thing. Dead in the
doldrums, I'm afraid.

ROLFE

We will have to put some inspiring
wind into your sails of imagination.

Rolfe wraps his arms around her. Marsha pulls away and points
at a security camera.

MARSHA

You want to get fired? And I am only a
week away from getting my MFA, my
third superlative degree to get me
nowhere in life. I'd hate to lose it
over a bad case of head-over-heels!

Rolfe releases her. Marsha gets into the driver's seat. Rolfe
closes the car door. Marsha puts on her seatbelt and turns
the key. The engine starts with a COUGH and a SPUTTER.

ROLFE

I will pick you up at seven.

Marsha backs out and drives off.

INT. ROLFE'S CORVETTE - NIGHT - 1999

Marsha, dressed up for an evening out, gets in the car and
closes the door. Rolfe, dressed in dinner attire with jacket
and tie, hands her a satin sleeping mask and a PJB-100
(Personal Jukebox) with headphones.

MARSHA

What's this?

ROLFE

Put it on. I want to surprise you.

MARSHA

Look. I'm not into kink.

ROLFE

No? Your story-telling says otherwise.

MARSHA

People in the 18th-Century got... a
little weird, okay?

ROLFE

Look. It's romantic! Mysterious. Just put it on, sit back, listen to the music, and relax. It's a bit of a long drive.

MARSHA

Those Svengali eyes of yours... must be a trick of the light.

Marsha slips on the mask and the headphones. Rolfe reaches over, snaps on her seatbelt, then shifts into drive.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS STREET - NIGHT - 1999 CONT.

Rolfe's black Corvette rolls down the city street beneath the street lights.

EXT. AN ABANDONED PLANTATION HOUSE WITH A GAZEBO - NIGHT - 1999 CONT.

Gravel CRUNCHES as Rolfe's Corvette pulls up to a gazebo alight with lanterns. In its center is a table set with chafing dishes and a lit candelabra. Around the table area is a tent of mosquito netting. The night SINGS with CROAKS and CHIRPS. FIREFLIES LIGHT UP and flit from here to there. A run down plantation house, scorched from fire, stands dark and ominous in the background.

Rolfe gets out of the car and goes to the passenger side where he opens the door, removes the headphones and MP3 player from Marsha, and helps her out. He guides her to the gazebo then pulls off her sleeping mask. Marsha looks in awe at the romantic setting.

MARSHA

What is this place?

ROLFE

My secret hideaway.

MARSHA

You own it?

ROLFE

Maybe one day...

MARSHA

Then we're trespassing?

ROLFE

Don't worry. No one comes out here.
Well, except for maybe teenage
troublemakers... and star-crossed
lovers.

Rolfe takes her by the hand and leads her to the gazebo.

INT. THE GAZEBO - NIGHT - 1999 CONT.

Rolfe pulls out a chair for Marsha then fills two glasses
with sparkling cider and hands one to Marsha. He bends down,
crosses his arm with hers and entwined, they drink.

MARSHA

Alcohol-free. How thoughtful. What's
the occasion?

ROLFE

You are, my magnificent, most
enrapturing, MFA graduate.

He moves to the other side of the table, sits down, serves up
a plate, and hands it to Marsha before filling his own plate.
Marsha takes up a fork and eats.

MARSHA

Why make such a big deal?

Rolfe takes his knife and fork to cut up a piece of meat.

ROLFE

Because I love you and am proud of
you. I can't wait to see you in black
cap and gown with golden tassels.

MARSHA

I won't be doing that.

ROLFE

No? Why not?

Marsha takes another bite of food.

MARSHA

Can't afford it. Besides, I have to
work that day.

Rolfe sets the cutlery on the plate with a CLATTER.

ROLFE

This is where that talk ends.

He stands up and goes to Marsha where he towers over her. LIGHTNING from an approaching storm lights up his stern expression. Momentary confusion crosses Marsha's face.

MARSHA

I think a storm is coming.

ROLFE

The storm is in my heart.

Rolfe goes down on one knee, reaches into his pocket, pulls out a ring box, and opens it to reveal a SHIMMERING sapphire.

MARSHA

What? No. Why?

ROLFE

I hope that "no" doesn't mean "no."

MARSHA

No... it doesn't. I mean, yes! Yes!

ROLFE

But before we seal the deal you must promise to give up your imaginary lover.

MARSHA

My what?

ROLFE

Your Spoiler. I see the world you built and how you fantasize about him, and I admit, I am jealous.

MARSHA

Over a fantasy?

ROLFE

Fantasy can overrule reality in a heartbeat when dissatisfied in life. It's why you write, no? I don't want you to be dissatisfied, so...

Rolfe pulls out some folded papers and opens them on a table. He pulls out a pen and hands it to Marsha.

MARSHA

What's this?

ROLFE

A publishing contract with TruHeart.
I... I mean, we want to sign you on
for your epic historical romance, *The
Spoiler*.

MARSHA

Really? But... it's-

ROLFE

Not polished? I and my staff will help
you.

MARSHA

No. It's not good enough. I've had
over thirty rejections already.

ROLFE

Together we will make it good enough.

Rolfe leans in close.

ROLFE (CONT'D.)

We will build an exciting...

(kisses Marsha)

adventurous...

(kisses Marsha)

romantic...

(kisses Marsha)

wonderful world together.

Rolfe pulls back and points to the line to sign.

MARSHA

Shouldn't I read this first?

ROLFE

Don't tell me you don't trust me...
the man you are engaged to!

Rolfe slips the ring on Marsha's finger. Marsha signs the
document. Rolfe folds the papers and puts them in his jacket
pocket.

ROLFE (CONT'D.)

Now no more dreaming of that guy, I am
your *Spoiler* from here on out.

Rolfe moves in to kiss her. Marsha's eyes widen to see a BLUE LIGHT glowing inside the derelict plantation house. She jerks back from him.

MARSHA

There's someone in the house!

ROLFE

What? Nonsense.

MARSHA

No really. I saw a light inside.

Rolfe brushes a strand of hair from her face and runs his thumb over her furrowed brow.

ROLFE

I assure you, there is nothing there.
Now, where were we?

Rolfe kisses Marsha. THUNDER RUMBLES and LIGHTNING FLASHES in the distance. FROGS CROAK. FIREFLIES LIGHT UP. The LIGHT inside the dark house sparks to life then flares out.

INT. THE PARLOR IN AN ANTEBELLUM PLANTATION - DAY - 1790

The battered cover of a paperback book bearing the image of the masked highwayman on a rearing steed, with the title THE SPOILER in embossed lettering and the singular pseudonym GWYNYVERE, is shoved to the side and a bowl of hot stew is set in its place atop a wooden table. A small hand holding a wooden spoon dips into the bowl. Micah sits at the table. He pulls apart some rustic bread, dips it, and eats. He sips milk from a tankard.

MICAH

I am sure happy to be back. I escaped that bad man. He was a Red Coat, you know. The same that-

RAEPH

We are happy you did so. Now sit quietly and eat.

Coming out of a stupor, Marsha finds herself prone on a baroque sofa in a house with 18th-century décor. She sits up with a start to see faces looking down at her. Raeph's friend Parfrey, dressed in blue velvet waistcoat with a gold watch fob, frilly shirt and gold cufflinks, breeches, and wearing a campaign wig with a pig tail beneath a blue tricorne hat with feathered trim; his younger, haughty sister, PRUCILLA VAN

HUYS, in an ornate dress, fancy jewelry, and perruque, batting a fan; REVEREND FOGARTY, an aged Quaker with long gray locks hanging from beneath a black, broad-rimmed hat; MILO, the mute métise - standing and staring at Marsha. Raeph's masked visage enters the circle.

REV. FOGARTY

Be she all right, brother? She looks pale and near death.

PRUCILLA

What sort of garment is that? She be half naked!

Prucilla bats her fan fiercely.

RAEPH

Move back, all of you, and give her air.

The others pull back. Prucilla goes over to a HARPSICORD and plays.

MARSHA

What... is... all... this?

Raeph pulls out a kerchief from a vest pocket.

RAEPH

For your tears, madam.

Marsha grabs it and glares at him.

RAEPH (CONT'D.)

Be calm and fear not, my dear Gwynyvere. You are safe on my estate tucked away on the Bayou Segnette in Spanish Louisiana.

MARSHA

Bayou Seg... what? Spanish...? I was in a parking garage on Camp Street....
(more confused)
Gwynyvere? My name is Marsha, Marsha Tuck- ... Wait... What? You...
you're... No-no-no-no-no!

Marsha shakes her head and squirms. Something pokes her from underneath. Her fingers find her keys, then pulls her hand out, leaving the keys beneath her. She sits up and looks at them.

MARSHA

Who are you people?

REV FOGARTY

Doth she not know us?

Parfrey comes before Marsha, clicks his heels, and bows.

PARFREY

Parfrey Van Huys from Prince Georges County, Maryland, betrothed to Abigail Fletcher. And this is my dear, younger

PARFREY (CONT'D.)

sister, Prucilla.

(to Prucilla)

Show your blue-stocking bearing and curtsy to the honorable Gwynyvere.

PRUCILLA

(still playing)

Really, brother. Does a thoroughbred bow to a sow?

Parfrey shoots her an admonishing glare. Prucilla stops, stands up, snaps open and bats her fan, SNORTS with disdain, curtsies slightly, then returns to the harpsichord to play.

RAEPH

I am Raeph Leicester, your Spoiler, fearsome highwayman and plunderer of secrets, both of politic and passion.

Marsha puts her hands over her ears and shakes her head.

RAEPH (CONT'D)

You are the author of our lives as scripted in the book.

(to Micah)

Micah, lad, bring me the book.

Micha picks up the book and leaves the table. Eying Marsha warily, Micah comes to Raeph and hands him the book. Raeph looks at it then turns the back cover to Marsha. He shows her the author's headshot, Marsha from five years before.

RAEPH

Quite the uncanny rendering. I have never seen such perfection.

MICAH

What strange shoes she has! Feet
rainbows, they is.

Micah's eyes widen to see the hole in her nylons. He reaches
over to touch it.

MARSHA

Hey!

MICAH

See her skin! It sheds like a snake's!

Micah runs behind Raeph. Reverend Fogarty steps over and
leans down to examine Marsha's leg.

REV. FOGARTY

Most strange. Does it ail thee?

MARSHA

What? No!

REV. FOGARTY

Methinks the lady might require a
shawl.

Milo brings over a shawl and places it over Marsha's leg.
Marsha snatches it from him.

MARSHA

Stop it! Back off! All of you!

RAEPH

Mind not her curious couture. She is
of a different time and place where
people don't seem to mind... exposure.

MARSHA

The book. Where did you get it?

RAEPH

I acquired it whilst seeking you out
in your world.

Raeph hands Marsha the book.

PRUCILLA

He pinched it from some shop, thief
and rogue that he is... and a
devilishly handsome one at that.

RAEPH

Mind your termagant tongue!

PARFREY

Mind your tone when addressing my sister, sir!

REV FOGARTY

Gentlemen! Let's not engage in vain frivolities. *There is but little need to spend time with foolish diversions for time flies away so swiftly by itself; and, when once gone, is never to be recalled.* So sayeth William Penn.

Everyone casts a strange look at Rev. Fogarty.

MARSHA

This book went out of print right after... He's put you up to this, hasn't he?

RAEPH

He? Whom do you mean, madam?

MARSHA

Oh, don't play stupid with me! Rolfe. paid you to do this. It's the only possible explanation!

RAEPH

Rolfe?

MARSHA

(steely)

Rolfe Lafferty, Owner and master of Truheart Publications. He's got the money, the megalomania, and all the controlling rights to... to... this.

She tosses the book to the floor. Milo fetches it up, looks at it with reverence, holds it with care, and hands it to Raeph.

RAEPH

We know of no such person.

MARSHA

My ex.

MICAH

The evil man who took me away had an
axe!

Micah runs to Prucilla and interrupts her playing. She awkwardly raises her arms to avoid touching him as he falls to his knees, buries his face in her lap, and cries.

PRUCILLA

Now look what you've done. Made the
poor lad cry from gruesome memory?
Just look at my dress!

REV FOGARTY

Come to me, my lad.

Micah goes to Rev. Fogarty who rubs his hair to soothe him.

MARSHA

Ex, not axe. My former fiancé,
publisher, and exploiter. I was made,
played, betrayed. Today, served with
an injunction. And now... this!

RAEPH

Perhaps the shock or a bump to the
head when my horse jumped has rendered
you confused.

PARFREY

Quit with your prating and get to the
point!

(to Marsha)

Pray tell, madam, where is she?

MARSHA

Who?

PARFREY

My beloved betrothed, Abigail.

MARSHA

What are you talking about?

RAEPH

You are responsible for everything we
are and what we undergo. See here...

(opening the book)

...on pages 86 through 98.

Flashback of Raeph befriending Milo on the HMS tall ship.

RAEPH (V.O.)

You had me endure that torturous
adventure with little alleviation
aboard that damnable HMS vessel. It
was there I became fast friends with
Milo here.

Flashback to Raeph and Parfrey walking the plank on the HMS
tall ship.

RAEPH (V.O. CONT'D.)

Yet somehow, not days ago, I found
myself walking the plank with

RAEPH (V.O. CONT'D.)

insufferable Parfrey!

PARFREY

You, sir, are the cause of all our
sufferings!

RAEPH

If you recall, madam, this good man,
Milo, here was not spared your penning
an even crueller fate. Milo, open your
mouth.

Marsha gasps.

RAEPH (CONT'D)

It is you who had his tongue cut out
by pirates.

Raeph closes the book and sets it down.

RAEPH (CONT'D)

Then there is how you marked me. I
will prove to you that I am who I say
that I am.

Raeph removes his hat and mask to reveal an ugly scar from
below his right eye across the mangled bridge of his nose.

MARSHA

What are you? LARPer gone Branch
Davidian? This has to be Rolfe's doing
or some crazy bad dream... Or... am
I... dead?

Raeph sits next to Marsha.

RAEPH

You are most surely neither dead nor dreaming. This world is real. He's real. They are real. I'm real. Feel.

Raeph takes her hand and places its palm on his cheek.

MARSHA

I don't question that you are real... just who you really are.

Marsha pulls her hand from his face and looks furtively in his eyes.

RAEPH

Milo. Bring refreshments along with pen, ink, and paper please.

Milo brings a rolling cart with a tea set, inkwell, quill, and sheaves of paper. He pours up a cup of tea and hands it to Marsha. She takes the cup and hesitantly takes a sip, looks around the room at the ornate décor.

MARSHA

Where did you get all this stuff... eBay?

RAEPH

I acquired these artifacts during my many years plundering by land and sea, as you wrote of me. Though I do not recall a place called Yee Bay. Now please, madam...

Raeph passes his hand over the writing implements. Marsha sets down the cup and stares at the quills, inkwell, and sheaves of paper.

MARSHA

Please... what?

RAEPH

Write what needs to be written to restore our stories.

MARSHA

I can't write with these primitive tools!

PRUCILLA

Huzzah! A writer who knoweth not how

PRUCILLA (CONT'D)
to write?

RAEPH
Go back to your playing.

Prucilla turns and plays the HARPSICHORD.

MARSHA
Look. Just take me back to the city,
and I will write anything you wish...
in the comfort of my apartment with
modern equipment.

RAEPH
Even if I wanted to accommodate you
so, I cannot take you back.

MARSHA
You got me here. Now take me back!

Raeph sits beside her, takes her hand.

RAEPH
That was by a magic, I neither master
nor fathom.

Marsha closes her eyes, and clicks her heels together. She
opens her eyes and looks around.

MARSHA
You wouldn't happen to have a pair of
magical red shoes in this place? These
sneaks don't do the trick.

RAEPH
I have no recollection of acquiring
such an item, no.

MARSHA
So much for magic.

REV. FOGARTY
Our words work the magic we need in
life. What we profess oft manifests as
destiny.

MARSHA
And who wrote that?

REV. FOGARTY

You did, my dear... for me to say.

Raeph takes a quill, dips it in ink, and sets it in Marsha's hand, which he guides to put a stroke on the page.

PRUCILLA

(still playing)

Oh, stop your fawning, Raeph. She's obviously an incompetent cretin.

RAEPH

She is our only salvation.

PRUCILLA

(abruptly stops playing)

And just how, pray tell? We're worse off than before she came.

Prucilla gets up and paces in a huff.

MARSHA

Give me that quill.

Marsha dips the quill and applies it to the page. She scratches out a P then an R. The name PRUCILLA takes form on the page. She re-dips the quill and pens the letter D then I then E. She begins writing S when Raeph grabs the quill from her hand. Parfrey looks.

PARFREY

Mistress Gwynyvere! How dare you?

MARSHA

What? She's still standing and breathing. See? What I just wrote didn't do a damn thing.

(in exasperation)

I just want to go home!

Marsha reaches behind her back, snatches the key fob with the canister of mace, and sprays a stream into Raeph's face. He brings his hands to his eyes. Marsha drops the shawl and bolts out the door.

EXT. ANTEBELLUM PLANTATION GROUNDS - DAY - 1790 CONT.

Marsha flies down a path into the woods. She pushes through bramble. Marsha hears VOICES. On an embankment stand four NATIVE AMERICANS in traditional dress with bows and arrows and dead furry animals they've hunted. Marsha moves closer

and waves. They spot her. An arrow hits a tree near Marsha. She turns and bolts back to the path where a great mastiff hound with bared teeth bounds toward her. She heads for the water with the dog on her heels. She comes to the shoreline.

RAEPH
Pangloss! Hold!

The dog stops on the spot. Marsha looks at Raeph (still holding the book), the dog, then at the murky water in front of her.

RAEPH
Stop!

Raeph rushes in and grabs her by the waist. Marsha hangs suspended over the water and fights Raeph's hold. Within seconds the still surface of the lagoon begins to ripple. An alligator rushes up and snaps its jaws at Marsha.

Parfrey, Prucilla, Micah, Rev. Fogarty, and Milo run down to the water's edge.

PRUCILLA
What compels the vulgar fusssock to such recklessness?

PARFREY
How can this bloody addle pate benefit us?

REV FOGARTY
The light checks you when you speak an evil word... So sayeth our revered founder of the fellowship, George Fox.

Raeph releases Marsha from his hold. Marsha relaxes, softens.

MARSHA
I suppose I should thank-

A LOW TRUMMING HUM surrounds them. A STRONG WIND blows. BLUE FLASHES occur.

RAEPH
Everyone! Stay together and get back to the house!

An arrow comes out of nowhere about to hit Prucilla as Milo steps quickly in front of her. The arrow hits Milo in the chest. He drops to the ground.

RAEPH

Milo! Noooo!

Rev. Fogarty kneels down beside Milo and touches his neck. He looks up at the others and shakes his head. He then stands up and pulls out a prayer book.

RAEPH (CONT'D.)

(to Marsha)

Do you now see what is happening to us? First it was Abigail... then Carmelia, Milo's pregnant wife, followed by the Widow Ames and her adolescent son, Nathaniel. All beloved characters, all snuffed out!

The sky DARKENS. BLUE LIGHTNING CRACKLES around them and forms into a vortex.

MARSHA

What in the wild, wild world of virtual reality rides is this?

PRUCILLA

It's plain to see she cares naught about uuuuuuusssss.

Prucilla's last word falls into a vortex that sucks her into a BRIGHT BLUE LIGHT. The others follow.

INT. RENEE'S DESK, NOPD HQ - DAY - 2004

A BLUE LIGHT flashes on Renee's computer screen. She watches the video from the parking garage frame by frame. She looks up to see Caleb Ross with a box labeled BENOIT'S BEIGNETS which he opens and sets on the desk. A sheaf of paper hanging precariously from one of the folders drifts down to the floor. Caleb catches it before it hits the ground. He chomps on a beignet as he reads.

CALEB

What's casto-room?

Renee pulls a beignet from the box and nibbles it.

RENEE

It's pronounced castor-ee-uhm.

Caleb hands her the paper and takes another bite of his pastry.

CALEB
Yeah, and what is it?

RENEE
The scent glands from a beaver's anus.

Caleb chokes on a half-chewed bite.

CALEB
You could have given me a heads up! I don't think I dare ask about that other stuff. I won't be able to eat for a week.

Renee pours a cup of coffee and hands it to him.

RENEE
Forensics found traces of it on the brown bottle found on the parking garage floor. Their report indicates the substance in the vial, the button, the pipe, and the bullet are all over 200 years old.

CALEB
Think these were our vic's?

She signals for him to pull a chair around to sit next to her. They review the security camera video.

RENEE
I had our video techs enhance this but it still doesn't show us much. In fact...

The monitor shows a freeze-frame of Marsha and the boy in the tricorn hat. Renee clicks the mouse to zoom in. The boy has no face.

CALEB
For the life of me, I don't understand.

RENEE
Then there's this.

On the screen, a blurred image of a man dressed in red appears in another freeze-frame. Renee zooms in.

CALEB
Is that a campaign wig he's wearing?

RENEE

How do you know that?

CALEB

Fifth-grade school play, Lincoln Elementary. I played George Washington.

RENEE

Again. No facial features. Which means facial recognition is useless.

Caleb takes the mouse and clicks it. The smeared image of what appears to be a man on a horse approaches from the edge of a BRIGHT LIGHT.

CALEB

Am I seeing what I think I'm seeing?

RENEE

You tell me. Everything goes to static after that for forty-nine seconds. Then it returns to normal with no one in frame. Then the elevator doors open and our security guy, Jack Weatherwax, appears.

CALEB

Think he hacked the video?

Renee hands Caleb a report. He skims over it.

RENEE

The techs say they couldn't find any evidence of any alterations. They did get into Ms. Tucker's phone and laptop to find contact lists, emails, text messages.

CALEB

Whoa! Lots of nasty ones to a Rolfe Lafferty.

RENEE

He's the owner and CEO of TruHeart. He's coming in for questioning tomorrow. Other officers are contacting his employees. I checked to see if she had a record. There was this report from 2002 on a 415 and a 417.

Renee hands the report to Caleb who skims over it.

CALEB

She was brandishing an elephant-foot umbrella stand?

RENEE

And smashing up Lafferty's place, causing quite a row. The neighbors called it in. Charges were dropped. Nothing more came of it. Other than that, just parking and traffic violations. Then there's this.

Renee clicks the mouse to a webpage showing Marsha's face from the book cover and her profile.

BEGIN MONTAGE

EXT. BOOK STORE, NEW ORLEANS - DAY - 2000

- Marsha's author's headshot from the book cover appears larger than life on a poster with the book cover of a masked man in a tricorn hat on a rearing horse. It says COME MEET THE AUTHOR, GWYNYVERE! BOOK SIGNING OF THE SPOILER TODAY ONLY! A line of people stand in front of the display.

INT. BOOK STORE, NEW ORLEANS - DAY - 2000

- Marsha sits at the table stacked with copies of THE SPOILER. She smiles as she looks up at a woman with a long line of people behind her. Marsha uses a feathered pen that resembles a quill to sign the woman's book. She repeats her actions with one customer after another.

INT. VARIOUS BOOK STORES - DAY -2000

- A blend of scenes of a smiling, happy, fashionable Marsha signing books, doing readings, getting photos taken by the press, often with Rolfe, with SUPERIMPOSED SIGNS of locations: NEW YORK, LOS ANGELES, SEATTLE, TORONTO, LONDON.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANTS - DAY - 2000

- Marsha and Rolfe clink glasses, laugh, and kiss in different fine eateries with SUPERIMPOSED SIGNS of locations: CHICAGO, DETROIT, MIAMI, NASHVILLE, DENVER, WASHINGTON DC.

EXT. VARIOUS CITY SKYLINES - NIGHT - 2000

- Marsha and Rolfe stroll arm in arm, stop and kiss,

enraptured, in front of various backdrops: BIG BEN, EMPIRE STATE BUILDING, SEATTLE NEEDLE, FIREWORKS OVER THE WASHINGTON MEMORIAL, NEON LIGHTS IN TIMES SQUARE. Marsha's face is full of joy. Her eyes sparkle with the animated billboard showing her book, THE SPOILER, with her highwayman astride his steed.

END MONTAGE

INT. RENEE'S DESK, NOPD HQ - DAY - 2004

Caleb leans in, takes the mouse, and scrolls.

CALEB

I never heard of this book or Marsha Tucker or Gwynyvere for that matter. It looks like she was a big deal!

Caleb clicks on the computer to the close-up image of a masked man in a tricorn hat sitting upon a rearing steed.

INT. A STAGECOACH - DAY - 1782

Marsha, Raeph, Parfrey, and Prucilla, with her wig askew, find themselves jostling around inside a runaway stage coach.

MARSHA

How is this happening?

Prucilla opens a window and pokes her head out. She shrieks and feigns a faint on top of Raeph, who pushes her awkwardly on the seat. Parfrey looks out the window.

RAEPH

Where is Reverend Fogarty? Where's the boy? That's two more we've lost! What of it, madam?

MARSHA

Don't look at me! I have nothing to do with this... this... inexplicable insanity!

PARFREY

The driver. He will surely know where we are and where we are going.

Parfrey slides opens a window, holds his hat and wig on his head, and leans out. He quickly comes back in with a terrified look on his face.

PARFREY (CONT'D.)

Where is the driver?

Raeph and Marsha open and look out the other windows. The carriage hits a bump and Marsha falls atop Prucilla who shoves her off. Prucilla straightens her wig. Raeph opens the door and climbs outside. GUNFIRE is heard from behind. Prucilla, Parfrey, and Marsha peer out the small back window.

PRUCILLA, PARFREY, MARSHA

Bandits!

EXT. A COUNTRY ROAD - DAY - 1782 CONT.

Raeph climbs atop the speeding stagecoach and gets into the driver's seat. SIX MASKED BRIGANDS brandishing PISTOLS and GLINTING CUTLASSES are riding fast from behind. Raeph snaps the reins.

RAEPH

Yah! Giddyap! Yah!

Raeph looks behind to see the brigands with bandanas over their faces riding hard and fast. BRIGAND 1 raises a pistol and fires. The bullet whizzes past Raeph's ear. Another shot ricochets off the coach. The horses run at full speed. They take a curve and the coach tips onto two wheels.

INT. A STAGECOACH - DAY - 1782 CONT.

Parfrey (holding onto his wig and hat), Prucilla (holding on to her wig), and Marsha fall to one side as the coach careens. They are thrown back in their seats as the coach rights itself once it's around the bend. They jostle about while speeding over dips and bumps.

EXT. A COUNTRY ROAD - DAY - 1782 CONT.

Raeph cracks the reins and pushes the horses to the brink. They FOAM from the mouth and GLISTEN with sweat as their HOOVES POUND. DUST rises from the road. The wooden wheels of the coach spin wildly. A SPOKE SPLINTERS.

INT. A STAGECOACH - DAY - 1782 CONT.

Another SHOT from a pistol hits and breaks the back window, spraying glass all over Prucilla, Parfrey, and Marsha who jump to the seat on the other side.

EXT. A COUNTRY ROAD - DAY - 1782 CONT.

The brigands overtake the coach. BRIGAND 2 jumps astride a lead horse. Raeph jumps on the backs of the running horses to reach the brigand. Brigand 2 pulls on the bridle to get the horse to slow down. Raeph and Brigand 2 fight, each trying to push the other. Raeph yanks the brigand by his shirt and throws him off. He sits on the lead horse and kicks it to pick up speed. BRIGAND 3 and BRIGAND 4 jump onto the coach, one on each side.

INT. A STAGECOACH - DAY - 1782 CONT.

Brigands 3 and 4 peer in at the passengers, then open the side doors to get inside. The coach bumps and jolts. Marsha kicks at Brigand 3, gawking at her clothes. Prucilla removes her wig and helps Marsha to push him out. Parfrey wrestles with Brigand 4. Parfrey hangs head first out the open door as the road RUSHES by. His campaign wig flies off. The two women grab Brigand 4 by his shirt and britches and pull him to the other door and toss him. They turn to grab Parfrey before he falls out.

EXT. A COUNTRY ROAD - DAY - 1782 CONT.

Prucilla and Marsha lean out the BOUNCING coach, grab the doors and close them. The remaining 3 brigands gain on the team of horses. Raeph pushes them harder. The coach goes around a bend. An astonished expression crosses Raeph's face. He grits his teeth and pulls back on the reins.

RAEPH

Whoa!

INT. A STAGECOACH - DAY - 1782 CONT.

Parfrey, Prucilla, and Marsha are jostled chaotically about. Then the movement abruptly stops.

EXT. A COUNTRY ROAD AT THE EDGE OF A RIVER - DAY - 1782 CONT.

The lead horses' front hooves balance precariously on the edge of a slightly steep river bank lined with trees and thick brush. Brigand 1, coming hard and fast, goes right into the water, horse and all. The other two brigands manage to stop in time. They point their pistols at Raeph.

Raeph raises his hands and jumps down off the horse. Brigand 1 climbs out of the water with his horse in tow. The other brigands, BIG HARPE (18) and LITTLE HARPE (16), scruffy youth dressed as frontiersman with British militia coats, laugh

hardily.

LITTLE HARPE
Everybody out! 'ands in the air!

INT. A STAGECOACH - DAY - 1782 CONT.

Prucilla tears down a tied-back window-curtain and places it over Marsha's legs.

MARSHA
What are you doing?

PRUCILLA
We are in the company of ruffians.
Heed my advice and cover yourself!

Marsha snatches it from her. Parfrey tries to smooth down his hair and straighten his waistcoat. They step out the door. Marsha awkwardly wraps the curtain about her waist. Then she spies her key fob on the floor. She snatches it up.

EXT. A COUNTRY ROAD AT THE EDGE OF THE RIVER - DAY - 1782 CONT.

Parfrey steps out and helps Prucilla down from the carriage to face Big and Little Harpe, wearing bandanas and dressed partly as frontiersman, partly as British soldiers. The 3 thrown-off brigands 2, 3 and 4 limp up but stand in the background. Brigand 1 trains his gun on Parfrey.

BIG HARPE
(to Parfrey and Prucilla)
I says 'ands up.

Parfrey and Prucilla raise their hands. Little Harpe sees Marsha inside the coach. He raises his pistol.

LITTLE HARPE
You there! Get out!

Marsha stumbles out, trips on the curtain wrapped around her, and falls to the ground. She keeps her hand closed over the keys.

LITTLE HARPE (CONT'D.)
Dressed in such fashionable drapery no less. What a clowny smock! And those shoes!
(to Big Harpe)
Do you see this, big brother?

BIG HARPE

(to Raeph, Parfrey, Prucilla, and
Marsha)

We are the 'arpe brothers. Do as we
say, and no one gets-

RAEPH

'Arpe?

LITTLE HARPE

As in the musical instrument, you
know... 'arpe.

RAEPH

You cover your faces yet announce your
name?

BIG HARPE

What a right blunderbuss you be.

MARSHA

(under her breath)

The Harpe brothers? How are they here?

RAEPH

(in a low voice to Marsha)

Do you know these fearsome men?

MARSHA

(in a low voice to Raeph)

Only from historical research I did
for the book, but I never-

BIG HARPE

Quit yer yammerin'!

PARFREY

Where in this perfidious existence are
we?

MARSHA

My guess, not Kansas... which given
this strange string of current events,
isn't even a notion of statehood.

BIG HARPE

'ere be Kentucky. We are a contingent
of Butler's Rangers under the command
of Captain Caldwell. And if ye be
agin' the crown, ye be our captives.
And if not, ye still be our captives.

MARSHA
 (under her breath)
 This makes no sense!

RAEPH
 (in a low tone to Marsha)
 The fact we are in Kentucky? Indeed
 not! You never wrote it.

MARSHA
 (in a low tone to Raeph)
 I know what I wrote!

RAEPH
 (in a low tone to Marsha)
 Wait. There is something familiar
 here...

MARSHA
 (in a low tone to Raeph)
 Yes, there is...

Marsha locks eyes momentarily with Big Harpe whose eyes FLASH
 a BLUE GLOW then go to black. He gives her an evil grin.

PARFREY
 You! Big man! I know you! You stole
 away my betrothed, Abigail! Where is
 she, you devil?

BIG HARPE
 Silence, ye scurvy curs!
 (to Little Harpe)
 Check the carriage, little brother.
 See what's inside.

Little Harpe looks inside. He pulls out Prucilla's powdered
 wig.

LITTLE HARPE
 Looks like someone's flipped 'er wig!

Wet Brigand 1 laughs then stops when Big Harpe looks at him.
 Little Harpe tosses the wig to the dusty ground and again
 looks inside the coach. He pulls out the book, THE SPOILER,
 with its shiny, embossed cover.

LITTLE HARPE (CONT'D.)
 What be this then? It glitters as
 thought gilt but this be no gold.

Little Harpe tosses the book to the ground. It bounces and lands face down showing the back cover with Marsha's face.

LITTLE HARPE (CONT'D.)
'ey! Ain't that be she?

Big Harpe eyes Raeph.

BIG HARPE
(to Little Harpe)
Bring that to me.

Little Harpe picks up the book and hands it to Big Harpe. The two compare the picture to Marsha then turn the book to examine the illustration of Raeph.

BIG HARPE (CONT'D.)
Go minds them two over there.

Little Harpe goes over to Parfrey and Prucilla. Big Harpe drops the book and points and cocks his pistol at Raeph.

BIG HARPE (CONT'D.)
(to Raeph)
Ye be that robbing rebel spy. Playing
land pirate to traveling British
subjects whilst whisking stolen
documents away to that Washington
fella. There be a fine price on your
'ead, alive or dead!

PARFREY
You are loyalists? So am I!

LITTLE HARPE
Quiet, you!
(to Prucilla)
And you...

Little Harpe runs his pistol down Prucilla's check, neck, and slips the muzzle beneath her bejeweled necklace.

LITTLE HARPE (CONT'D.)
I'll be taking that and whatever else
you got that's precious.
(to Parfrey)
And you, 'ands over them gold
cufflinks and waist chain.

Parfrey and Prucilla remove their valuables and hand them to Little Harpe who shoves them in his pockets. He then turns

his lurid attention to Prucilla.

LITTLE HARPE (CONT'D.)

What else 'ave you got for me in the
way of pay, my pretty?

Big Harpe lowers his weapons and turns to his brother.

BIG HARPE

Leaves that for later, little
brother..

Brigand 3 opens a basket-trunk strapped to the back of the
coach, and pulls out Micah.

MICAH

Put me down!

MARSHA

Micah!

RAEPH

Unhand him!

BIG HARPE

Our fortunes 'ave tripled! First the
fancy lady in the curtain, then the
spoiler and spy, and now the boy! The
cap'n will pay us 'andsomely for the
lot.

(to the second henchman)

Take the lad and lash 'im to one of
the 'orses.

(to Raeph)

As for you... dead pays as good as
alive.

Big Harpe's eyes SPARK a brief GLOW as he prepares to fire.
Raeph sees the keys clutched in Marsha's hand holding the
curtain about her.

RAEPH

(to Marsha)

Madam, if there was ever a time to
bring out your harridan wiles... and
that blinding device of yours... now
is it!

Marsha looks at Raeph and drops the curtain. Everyone looks
in shock at her bare legs. She runs up and sprays her
canister in Big Harpe's face. Nothing but a weak FIZZLE comes

out. Big Harpe grabs her keys and pushes her to the ground.

BIG HARPE

Decked out like a berserk bird!

Big Harpe looks back at his men and laughs. The other brigands laugh.

MARSHA

What did you say?

Little Harpe clutches Prucilla and nuzzles her while Brigand 1 points his gun at Parfrey. Brigands 3 and 4 bring a kicking, struggling Micah to a horse and set him upon it. Big Harpe repoints his gun at Raeph and is about to squeeze the trigger.

Suddenly, the curtain comes over Big Harpe's head. Marsha jumps up, piggybacks him, and wraps the curtain tightly about his face.

Big Harpe swings wildly, staggers and struggles with the curtain. Both Marsha and the pistol drop to the ground. Marsha and Raeph dive for the gun. They both seize it.

RAEPH

Let go!

MARSHA

I'm gonna plug that thug!

RAEPH

Give me the gun before you-

The pistol fires with the FLASH and SMOKE of gunpowder. The bullet ricochets off the coach and hits Brigand 1 in the knee. He goes down. Parfrey grabs his gun and fires at Little Harpe. The gun only oozes water. Little Harpe laughs. Micah kicks Brigand 4 in the face, grabs the reins, and rides off. The brigands' remaining horses follow. Prucilla elbows Little Harpe in the gut then swings out her leg to deliver a high kick, knocking him down. Brigand 3 limps over to the fray.

PARFREY

My dear sister! Where did you ever learn to fight like that?

PRUCILLA

Sister Mary Oberline. Fitness instructor. Sacred Heart School for girls.

RAEPH
Parfrey, Prucilla, Gwynyvere! To the
river!

PARFREY
Prucilla and I can't swim!

RAEPH
Better to drown than to be taken by
the 'orrible 'arpe brothers. Go, now!

The four run toward the river while the brigands scramble about. BIG HARPE snatches up the book.

Raeph, Marsha, Parfrey with Prucilla run and jump off the bank into knee-deep water. Raeph notices a canoe in the brush nearby. They all make their way to it and clumsily climb in. Raeph picks up an oar and pushes the craft off the river bank. He paddles like hell into the swift current. Big and Little Harpe fire at them. Bullets hit the water. One hits and pierces the side of the canoe. The swift current has pulled them out and around a bend between the steep mountain rises on either side.

EXT. CANOE ON A RIVER - DAY - 1782 CONT.

Prucilla looks down to see the water BUBBLING up through the bottom of the boat.

PRUCILLA
Look!

RAEPH
Find something to stop it up!

Prucilla tries covering it with her feet. Parfrey pulls out a handkerchief from his vest pocket and stuffs it in the breach. Marsha scoops handfuls of water over the side. The canoe fills with water and begins to sink. Parfrey and Prucilla hold each other. Raeph reaches for Marsha's hand.

MARSHA
Here goes nothing!

Marsha rejects Raeph's hand, flops over the side, and does an awkward crawl with water splashing everywhere. She stands up in knee-high water. The canoe scrapes bottom and stops.

RAEPH
Me thinks we walk from here.

A group of frontiersman, stirring large pots boiling over fires and loading mules with heavy bags, stop their work to look at the oddball strangers. Raeph, Parfrey, Prucilla, and Marsha trudge toward the men.

EXT. RIVER BANK - DAY - 1782 CONT.

DANIEL BOONE (44), in frontiersman clothing and broad-rimmed Quaker hat with a leather satchel and powder horn strapped across his chest, and his son ISRAEL BOONE (23), approach Raeph, Parfrey, Prucilla, and Marsha, with their long rifles pointed at them.

DANIEL BOONE

I'm Daniel Boone. This is my son
Israel. Who might you be?

MARSHA

Did you say Daniel Boone?

DANIEL BOONE

Yessum.

PARFREY

Mr. Parfrey Van Huys of Prince Georges
County, Maryland. It's an honor, sir.

Parfrey bows. Then holds out his hand to beckon Prucilla forward. Several of the men gather round to ogle.

PARFREY (CONT'D.)

May, I present my fair sister,
Prucilla Van-

RAEPH

You will have to pardon my friend
here. He is a stickler for long-winded
social propriety.

One of the men, HUGH MCGARY (30s), in frontiersman leathers and beaver-skin hat, stomps up to them and brandishes his weapon.

MCGARY

Boone! Who be these strangers? Be they
friend or foe?

(tipping his hat)

Ladies.

McGary does a double-take on Marsha, wet and shivering.

PARFREY

Why, friends, of course.

McGary goes up to Parfrey, looks him up and down and inhales deeply.

MCGARY

I smell a Tory spy.

PARFREY

Not I.

McGary aims his weapon at Raeph. Daniel Boone puts his hand on the barrel and lowers it.

DANIEL BOONE

Mr. McGary here raises a critical question. Are you loyalists?

PARFREY

Yes!

RAEPH

No!

McGary raises his rifle point blank at Parfrey's head.

PRUCILLA

No!

Raeph steps between McGary and Parfrey.

RAEPH

My name is Raeph Leicester, and yes, I was a spy-

The surrounding men aim and cock their rifles.

RAEPH (CONT'D.)

-with the Culper Ring under the orders of General Washington.

Daniel signals the men to lower their weapons. McGary complies and steps back but maintains a stink-eye on Parfrey.

DANIEL BOONE

Ain't you that highwayman from back east? There be a price on your head.

RAEPH

So I've been told.

Marsha's teeth CHATTER loudly.

DANIEL BOONE

(eying Marsha)

Not sure where ye hail from, missy,
but them togs ain't very well suited
for these parts.

(to Israel)

Fetch a blanket for this lass so she
can cover up and stave her shivering.

Israel runs off. Daniel swings his rifle to indicate they should move to the camp. Marsha, Parfrey, Prucilla, and Raeph sit on rocks by one of the cooking fires below a steep rise. Parfrey and Raeph dump water and mud from their boots. Prucilla wrings water from her skirt. Marsha empties her sneakers and puts them back on.

Israel arrives with a horse blanket for Marsha. She crinkles her nose at the smell of it and hands it back. She slaps at BUZZING insects biting her. Boone takes the blanket and hands it to her. Marsha reluctantly accepts it.

DANIEL BOONE

I'd strongly advise you cover up. If'n
the skeeters don't bring you the ague,
the chills will. Besides, those bright
colors make you stick out like a
parrot in a hen house.

Marsha throws the blanket to the ground, slaps at the flies and mosquitoes biting her, and loses composure.

MARSHA

That's it! I have had enough! I don't
care how or what you do to me, but
come hell or high-water... well,
shallow water... I am going home!

Marsha stomps over and into the shallow river. She stops and looks around.

DANIEL BOONE

Where might yer home be, missy?

Marsha stomps back to the camp.

MARSHA

New Orleans.

DANIEL BOONE

Well, that be a-might far. That's a good seventy days of travel, give or take.

PRUCILLA

(swatting BUZZING flies)
Seventy days? I won't last seventy minutes!

DANIEL BOONE

I can get you an escort up to the Ohio River. You could follow that to the Mississippi. Got any money or goods to trade for the voyage?

PARFREY

Those bandit Harpe brothers took all our valuables.

DANIEL BOONE

Harpe brothers? When did you meet up with them?

PRUCILLA

They are what got us into this soggy situation.

DANIEL BOONE

You're lucky to be alive.

RAEPH

Kind sir, I don't know who you are or-

DANIEL BOONE

You don't? I'm mighty surprised.

PARFREY

Why is that, sir?

ISRAEL BOONE

My pa is legendary.

RAEPH

You are not in the book.

DANIEL BOONE

Book? What book? About me?

PRUCILLA

We lost it to the brigands.

MARSHA

No, it is not about you. I never included any real historical figures in my books! And do you know why? Because they make my heroes look lame!

RAEPH

I beg your pardon.

MARSHA

Prominent historical figures like Daniel Boone detract from the story line. Instead of following the swashbuckling adventures of Raeph Leicester, the Spoiler, we're here... let me guess... on the Licking River salt flats. The year would have to be-

DANIEL BOONE

The year of our Lord, 1782.

RAEPH

1782? Kentucky? We have gone back in time eight years and in a place never written for us to be!

MARSHA

See?

RAEPH

(to Boone)

Sir, I implore you... would you happen to have ink and parchment? It is rather urgent.

MCGARY

Why? So you can get a message to your pals up on the rise there.

Everyone looks up to see militiamen and Red Coats stationed high above. One Red Coat commander, CAPT. WILLIAM CALDWELL, looks down.

MARSHA

Buckle up for the Battle of Blue Licks.

A CANON FIRES from above. Earth and water SHATTER and SPLATTER with an EXPLODING SHELL. More men, horses, and mules scatter and flee in all directions.

McGary mounts a horse and races across the shallow ford.

MCGARY

Them that ain't cowards, follow me!

Several other men on horses follow. Daniel grabs a rider less horse and hands it to Israel, who mounts it and flies across the river. The REPORT of a rifle ECHOES. Israel drops from the horse into the river.

Daniel and the others run to the fallen Israel. Daniel turns him face up to see that he's dead. He clutches his son to his breast. Prucilla clings to Raeph and buries her head in his shoulder. Marsha goes up to Daniel Boone.

MARSHA

I'm... I'm so sorry.

DANIEL BOONE

Death is all about the living...

RIFLE and CANON fire rain bullets and shrapnel around them. Daniel picks up his son's rifle.

DANIEL BOONE (CONT'D.)

Come on! Or surely, we are all slaughtered men... and women.

Raeph passes Prucilla to Parfrey and helps Daniel carry his son's body across the river and into the woods. The others quickly follow. Marsha looks up to see Capt. Caldwell looking right at her. For a moment his eyes FLASH BRIGHT BLUE.

EXT. KENTUCKY WOODS - DAY - 1782

Daniel and Raeph place Israel's body in the brush and cover it. Daniel hands Raeph the rifle.

DANIEL BOONE

See if you can get it to fire. If not, use it as a club.

Raeph quickly swivels and points the rifle at Parfrey.

PARFREY

What? You wouldn't!

Raeph cocks it and the gun SPARKS and FIRES. Raeph jerks back from the recoil. Parfrey ducks with arms over his head. A man in ragtag British uniform and frontiersman clothes drops. They go take a look at the body.

MARSHA

I think it's one of the bandits who attacked us.

PRUCILLA

Yes, the one who fell in the river. He smelled like a filthy wet dog then as he does now.

DANIEL BOONE

That means the Harpe brothers are nearby. We must be wary and keep on the move.

RAEPH

Sir, with writing implements, we can resolve our predicament. Would you perchance carry any in that pouch of yours?

DANIEL BOONE

I fear we have no time for frivolity. Run!

Boone fires his weapon at several British militiamen coming through the bush. McGary appears on foot and joins Boone in firing. Raeph reloads and fires.

MCGARY

They've got us surrounded.

DANIEL BOONE

We need to flee then.

MCGARY

Flee? We must needs stay and fight these British dogs to the end!

PRUCILLA

Parfrey! Jump into the fray! Fight!

PARFREY

Fight? With what? I bear no arms.

PRUCILLA

Use your God-given arms for God's sake! Throw sticks and stones! Break their bones!

Prucilla picks up a rock and hurls it at a militiaman and clocks him in the head. Parfrey follows suit.

RAEPH
 (to Boone)
 Again, I beseech you. If you possess
 writing materials, please pass them to
 Gwynyvere.

DANIEL BOONE
 Gwynyvere?

RAEPH
 The woman with the garish garments.

DANIEL BOONE
 She's a damn beacon out here!

RAEPH
 She can save us! Just get her objects
 to write with.

McGary, and Raeph continue firing at men sneaking through the woods. Prucilla searches for something to throw. Parfrey ducks behind the men. Daniel Boone opens his pouch and retrieves a parchment and a piece of crumbling charred wood. He hands them to Marsha who takes them.

RAEPH
 Just try, madam.

Bullets WHIZ past. Marsha applies the charred wood to the page.

MARSHA
 I can't write under these conditions!

RAEPH
 Write... anything!

Marsha draws letters on the parchment. Prucilla SHRIEKS. Parfrey and Raeph turn around to see both Prucilla and Marsha gone. Raeph notices Marsha's parchment on the ground. He picks it up to see the smudged words TAKE ME H-.

RAEPH (CONT'D.)
 (disappointed)
 So I see. And so it is.

Raeph folds and puts the parchment inside his shirt and hangs his head. The shooting stops. The woods are still. Parfrey approaches Raeph and slaps him across the face.

PARFREY

You have cost me, sir. First Abigail.
Now my sister! As soon as we get back
to... to wherever we get back to, we
shall duel at dawn!

DANIEL BOONE

It grows dark. We must hie back to
Boonesborough.

RAEPH

We must go after the women, man!

DANIEL BOONE

Like my son, they are gone. There is
naught we can do. They have us, don't
you see?

PARFREY

You are no legend, sir, but rather a
lowly coward.

MCGARY

I knew we should've plugged you!

DANIEL BOONE

Bickering like badgers over a vole
don't solve a stinkin' thing. We need
to get back to defend Boonesborough.
That is where Capt. Caldwell and his
militia will be heading. You gentlemen
do as you fancy. McGary and I wish you
luck.

Boone and McGary bolt down through the bush, leaving Parfrey
and Raeph behind. Night approaches.

EXT. KENTUCKY WOODS - NIGHT - 1782

Raeph and Parfrey push through brush and land on a narrow
path.

PARFREY

Are you certain this is where they
went?

RAEPH

It's a path in the direction they took
and therefore most likely.

PARFREY

We should've followed Boone.

RAEPH

Feel free to go back and do so then.
I'll find the women.

PARFREY

Look, man! You have no idea where you
a-!

Raeph holds his hand to Parfrey's mouth.

RAEPH

Hush! Get in the trees. Listen.

Raeph and Parfrey move into the trees and squat down. Branches CRACK and SNAP. A horse's nose appears behind Parfrey. Parfrey jumps when it SNORTS on his neck. Raeph turns and points his gun. Above him sits Micah with Reverend Fogarty on a horse. There are two other rider less horses with them. Raeph lowers his weapon, stands up, and takes the boy from the horse. Reverend Fogarty dismounts.

RAEPH

Micah, my lad! Reverend Fogarty! We
thought you lost to the fates!

PARFREY

How be you here?

MICAH

I ran from the bandits and these
horses followed me and I heard gunfire
and seen men running. Then I saw the
Reverend wanderin' about, lost like.

REV. FOGARTY

'Twas the strangest thing, like in a
dream. I got carried off in a great
wind and awoke on a bed of moss
looking up at the sunlight through the
leaves of tall trees. I got up and
began walking until I heard
bombardments and the voices of men...
From tranquility into violence.

RAEPH

Yes, there has been a fearsome battle,
but I believe it has passed.

REV. FOGARTY

How glad I am to see you, my brethren.

PARFREY

As our we, dear sir.

MICAH

I be so very hungry, sir.

RAEPH

I well imagine you are, as are we. But you must be brave and strong until we can find safety and sustenance.

REV. FOGARTY

Where be Mistresses Prucilla and Gwynyvere?

PARFREY

Kidnapped by ruthless men. We are on the hunt for them.

REV. FOGARTY

Oh, my.

RAEPH

We have horses now. Let us mount up and pray we are on the right path.

They mount. The Reverend and Micah ride on one horse. Raeph is in the lead with Parfrey in the rear. They head down the trail into the darkness.

INT. NOPD HEADQUARTERS, INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY - 2004

Renee opens the door and motions Rolfe to go inside. Rolfe takes a seat at the small table. Renee and Caleb pull up two chairs and sit across from him.

RENEE

Thank you for coming in, Mr. La-

ROLFE

That's Doctor Lafferty.

RENEE

I do apologize. "Doctor" Lafferty. We are questioning everyone who knew Marsha Tucker, who's gone missing.

ROLFE

Yes, I understand there is a full-blown investigation going on.

Renee opens a dossier and pulls out a digital recorder.

RENEE

Do we have your permission to record this interview?

ROLFE

I am here to fully cooperate. But I must ask we make it quick as I have a flight to catch in a couple of hours.

CALEB

Where to?

ROLFE

How is that pertinent?

Renee turns on an audio recorder.

RENEE

I'm Detective Savage, and I am here with Detective Caleb Ross and interview subject Dr. Rolfe Lafferty in regard to missing person Marsha Tucker. For the record, Dr. Lafferty, would you state your full name?

ROLFE

Rolfe Wilhelm Lafferty, Ph.D.

RENEE

As you know, we're investigating the disappearance of Marsha Tucker.

ROLFE

Yes.

CALEB

Have you heard from her lately?

ROLFE

Yes. She stormed into my office yesterday afternoon... going off about getting fired from her job, that I was the cause, and other insane nonsense. The rantings of a seriously mentally-unbalanced person.

Renee slides two large, sealed plastic bags containing the injunction orders across the table for Rolfe to see.

RENEE

According to these documents we found in her purse in her abandoned car, you had filed a restraining order against her, and you had her served with an injunction pertaining to a lawsuit.

ROLFE

She's been harassing me and my company with frivolous lawsuits. I am within my rights.

CALEB

What exactly was your involvement with Ms. Tucker?

ROLFE

She did some freelance editing at TruHeart. That's all. I had to let her go because of her behavioral issues.

Renee pulls out a copy of *The Spoiler* and shows Marsha's picture on the back cover.

RENEE

She seems to be more than just a freelance editor to me.

ROLFE

Wow. Where'd you get that? We pulled it out of print... hmm... two years ago, was it? We have a whole new series going on now. Fresher, More adventurous and already in development for a network television series.

RENEE

Why is Marsha's picture featured on the back cover?

ROLFE

A marketing piece. She had a photogenic face, so we used it.

RENEE

And a singular, romantic penname, Gwynyvere? Also a marketing piece?

ROLFE

The penname is proprietary, like that of Carolyn Keene, totally made up. In truth, there are many Gwynyveres, all grad student interns, like Marsha was. Having all my writers identify with the pseudonym helps them write with the tenor they need to produce what I need.

CALEB

So, you two weren't in a romantic relationship?

ROLFE

What? Of course not! I'm a happily married man with a lovely daughter.

CALEB

That's not what witnesses say. The parking garage security supervisor told us you and Marsha were an intimate item. Marsha showed him the sapphire ring you gave her. He also said you tossed her to the curb for another grad student.

ROLFE

Parking garage supervisor? You believe a parking gara-? Look. She was an employee. That's the only relationship I had with the woman! Of course, in her deluded mind, she imagined there was something more between us. All fantasy, which she loved to ruminate.

RENEE

Did you have anything to do with her disappearance?

ROLFE

No.

CALEB

Where were you yesterday at 5:44pm?

ROLFE

I was in my office. My employees will swear to that.

CALEB

You mean all the Gwynyveres that look just like Marsha? Yeah, we've seen 'em. They've been notified to come in and be interviewed too.

ROLFE

Detectives, I came in good faith to share pertinent information, not be accused of committing a crime I had nothing to do with.

CALEB

So, you're calling her missing a crime?

ROLFE

If there are no more questions, I have a plane to catch. The next time we speak, it will be through my lawyer.

Rolfe leaves.

CALEB

What do you think?

RENEE

He's a narcissist and a liar who thinks he's smarter than us. I know he knows far more than he's letting on.

Renee picks up the book and eyes Marsha's picture.

EXT. AN ABANDONED PLANTATION HOUSE WITH A GAZEBO - NIGHT - 2004

Rolfe's current black Corvette rolls down the gravel and grass drive and stops. The headlights shed an EERIE ILLUMINATION onto the house. Rolfe gets out of the car, grabs a square case, and walks to the house and enters. A BEAM OF LIGHT from Rolfe's phone shows through the windows and travels around the interior. Then it goes off. The Corvette's lights dim and go out. All is dark. The SOUNDS of NIGHT CREATURES fill the air.

INT. PARLOR IN THE ABANDONED PLANTATION HOUSE - NIGHT - 2004
CONT.

Rolfe stands in the dark in what used to be a large parlor. He faces an antique, full-length, swivel mirror. There is a wooden table nearby. Rolfe opens the case and pulls a large

black candle and lights it with a lighter. He pulls out six metal singing bowls of different sizes and sets them around the candle. He pulls out the mallet and slowly rubs it on the edge of each bowl to generate TONES. Rolfe HUMS a deep note and enters into mediation. His voice becomes BIPHONIC in the style of Tuvan throat singing. He plays the bowls LOUDER and HUMS LOUDER and LOUDER. A HISS and CRACKLE followed by a LOUD THRUMMING HUM fill the room. The mirror lights up with an intense SWIRLING BLUE LIGHT. Rolfe opens his eyes, which GLOW BLUE. He walks into the light. It goes out. The mirror and the empty room are pitch dark.

EXT. OUTSIDE A BRITISH FORT ON THE OHIO RIVER - DAY - 1782

Armed British Red Coats stand point on the high, spiked wall as the wooden gates open to a small group of militiamen with Prucilla and Marsha in tow.

EXT. IN THE YARD OF A BRITISH FORT - DAY - 1782

Marsha is covered in sweat and filth. She has an Indian blanket drawn around her. She and Prucilla stagger forward as their captors, Big and Little Harpe, push them through the gates. CAPTAIN WILLIAM CALDWELL, approaches them and looks over the women, then directs his steely gaze to the Harpes.

CAPT. CALDWELL

Where are the two men?

BIG HARPE

They was well armed, fighting with that Boone fella. We snucks up from behind and grabs these two. And now for that reward you promised...

Capt. Caldwell pulls up a leather pouch from his belt, opens it and counts out coins which he places in Big Harpe's hand. Big Harpe counts it and gives a look of disgust.

CAPT. CALDWELL

Half the order delivered means half the price paid.

Capt. Caldwell signals two soldiers to take the women. Little Harpe seizes Prucilla.

LITTLE HARPE

'ow 'bout we 'angs onto these lovelies until we catch the others and come back for full price?

CAPT. CALDWELL

How about I order my men here to clap you in irons and hold you for trial on charges of piracy and murder? Don't be berserk.

Marsha startles at hearing his last word. She scrutinizes Capt. Caldwell carefully. He eyes her back.

BIG HARPE

Seeins as we are outmanned, I suggest we take our leave, little brother. The Harpes turn to leave.

CAPT. CALDWELL

And the book?

Big turns back, pulls out THE SPOILER from a pouch and tosses it on the ground before exiting out with their small entourage of Shawnee. The gates close shut. A soldier picks up the book and hands it to Capt. Caldwell. Prucilla and Marsha look at the book then at each other.

CAPT. CALDWELL (CONT'D.)

(to Marsha and Prucilla)

Ladies, I am your host, Captain William Caldwell in His Royal Majesty's service under the command of Governor Henry Hamilton. Might I say, you look worse for wear. Allow me to provide you with appropriate accommodations.

Soldiers lead Marsha and Prucilla into one of the small buildings with bars in the windows.

INT. A JAIL CELL - DAY - 1782

Prucilla and Marsha are in a bare room with a couple of ledge seats. They look around, befuddled.

PRUCILLA

Perchance you can wend a magic plume and send us to the king's realm where we can consume tea and sweetcakes all the-.

A JAILKEEPER, pushing a cart with plates and mugs, unlocks the door. Capt. Caldwell enters the cell. He is holding the book and briefly compares the likeness on the cover to Marsha.

CAPT. CALDWELL
 Uncanny portraiture. Who's the artist?
 I might like to commission him. Here
 are some victuals and drink to refresh
 you.

The Jailkeeper serves up hardtack and mugs of water.

MARSHA
 What? No low carb fare?

Marsha helps herself and devours the fare. She gives Prucilla a mischievous glance.

PRUCILLA
 Behold the driggle-draggle sloppy sow!

MARSHA
 That's it!

Marsha throws off the blanket and flies at Prucilla. The two women duke it out. They bump into the captain. Marsha slugs Capt. Caldwell in the face with the water mug, causing his nose to bleed. The book drops and slides under the ledge seat. Capt. Caldwell covers his face with his hand. Blood oozes through his fingers.

CAPT. CALDWELL
 Treasonous witches! You shall be
 hanged by the neck until dead at dawn.
 (to the Jailkeeper)
 Clean up this mess and come.

Capt. Caldwell exits.

MARSHA
 Witches, eh? Why not burn us at the
 stake then?

PRUCILLA
 Please, don't give him ideas!

The jailkeeper scrambles to pick up the mugs, tray, and scattered food, then exits with the cart, locking the door behind him. Marsha picks up the blanket and plunks down on a bench. Prucilla picks up a piece of hardtack from the floor, brushes it off, and takes a bite.

MARSHA
 Well, our catfight didn't work.

PRUCILLA

We must apply our feminine wiles then.

MARSHA

If only I had any.

PRUCILLA

And how, pray tell, do we escape this dreadful scenario? By your writing it so? Your feeble attempts have brought us nothing but more grief.

MARSHA

How can I write when I have nothing to write with? Notice how the quills, ink, and paper don't travel with us!

Marsha bolts upright on the ledge seat.

PRUCILLA

What?

MARSHA

Berserk. He said berserk.

PRUCILLA

Yes. Ruffian vulgarity quite unfamiliar to a person of my upbringing.

MARSHA

Of course it would be. It didn't come into usage in the English language until the 19th Century. Only one person I know used that... No!

PRUCILLA

Of whom do you speak?

Prucilla sees the corner of the book poking out from under the ledge seat. She retrieves it and sits next to Marsha.

PRUCILLA

Look!

Marsha takes the book and thumbs through it until she settles on a page.

MARSHA

You see? None of this is supposed to happen! Look here. In 1782, Raeph was

MARSHA (CONT'D.)
 robbing British loyalists and
 smuggling secret messages to the
 Continental Army. You were eleven
 years old and going to private school
 while Parfrey was...
 (flipping pages)
 ...being Parfrey. And... and Micah
 wasn't born yet... Carmelia, Milo, the
 Widow Ames... Don't you see?
 (closing the book)
 You all have purpose and must survive
 to make the story work in this book
 and its sequels.

Marsha sets the book on the ledge seat. She gets up and walks
 over to the barred window and looks outside.

MARSHA (CONT'D.)
 All these plot and character shifts
 must be Rolfe's doing since he took
 control. But how and why am I in it?
 And how would Captain Doohickey out
 there know about the book?

PRUCILLA
 Doohickey? I believe his surname to be
 Caldwell.

MARSHA
 Whatever.

Prucilla takes the book, opens it, and reads.

PRUCILLA
 Mistress Gwynyvere...

MARSHA
 Marsha.

PRUCILLA
 Beg pardon?

Marsha turns from the window to look at Prucilla.

MARSHA
 My name is Marsha. Gwynyvere was just
 a penname... yet another thing Rolfe
 stripped from me.

PRUCILLA

Marsha... Why did you make me so
callow and mean?

MARSHA

What?

PRUCILLA

It's not easy to act haughty and
constantly craft clever, catty
commentary that cuts to the quick.
Sometimes, I wish I could be soft and
sensitive and warm. Then Raeph
would...

MARSHA

Raeph would what?

PRUCILLA

You well know how I have loved him
ever since I was a little girl. But
you had him show affection for
Abigail, who was betrothed to my
brother! She's gone now. Can't you
please make it so-?

MARSHA

Prucilla... truth be told... I
wouldn't know how anymore. I've lost
the ability... and the desire.

PRUCILLA

Just this morning, you had desire
enough to write me dead!

MARSHA

Please note that it failed to
manifest, along with my last written
wish.

PRUCILLA

Tomorrow at dawn, your penned prophecy
will manifest true enough.

MARSHA

Maybe our dashing hero will come to
the rescue. Isn't that what always
happens with damsels in distress?

Marsha looks out the window. The cell grows dark with the
fading light of day.

EXT. OUTSIDE JAIL IN BRITISH FORT - 1782 - NIGHT CONT.

Soldiers tend their sentry posts. Marsha's face is pressed against the bars. She sees the Jailkeeper pass by.

MARSHA

Hey, you! The Captain wants my
confession. I need something to write
with over here!

THUNDER is heard from afar.

INT. PARLOR IN THE ABANDONED PLANTATION HOUSE - NIGHT - 2004

The room is dark. Rolfe is on his knees with the long, swivel mirror behind him. He staggers to his feet. He brings hand to his face.

EXT. AN ABANDONED PLANTATION HOUSE WITH A GAZEBO - NIGHT - 2004

Rolfe staggers across the lawn, past the run-down gazebo, and to his car. He gets in and turns on his phone. He notices smears of blood on the LIT screen. He looks in his rearview mirror to see blood running from his nose.

INT. NOPD PRECINCT, INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY - 2004

Renee and Caleb sit at a table across from one of Rolfe's writers, GWYNYVERE 1 (20) a brunette that looks similar to Marsha.

GWYNYVERE 1

Marsha Tucker? I never met her. She
left before I began working for
TruHeart...

INT. NOPD HEADQUARTERS, INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY - 2004
CONTINUOUS

Renee and Caleb sit at a table across from one of Rolfe's writers, GWYNYVERE 2 (20) a brunette that looks similar to Marsha.

GWYNYVERE 2

No, I never met Marsha. She had
already left TruHeart before I was
hired to work there...

INT. NOPD HEADQUARTERS, INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY - 2004
CONTINUOUS

Renee and Caleb sit at a table across from one of Rolfe's writers, GWYNYVERE 3 (20) a brunette that looks similar to Marsha.

GWYNYVERE 3

No. I never met or knew her. She was terminated because... you know... Isn't it awful how she treated Dr. Lafferty? He's such a wonderful man... and a genius! Do I need a lawyer?

INT. NOPD HEADQUARTERS, INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY - 2004
CONTINUOUS

Another GWYNYVERE leaves the room. Renee and Caleb collect their dossiers and interview equipment.

CALEB

Why do I feel like I'm in a bad episode of the X-Files?

RENEE

Notice how they all stuck to their scripts.

CALEB

And mentioned lawyers.

RENEE

It does check out that none of them knew Marsha. They joined the writing mill sometime after she left the firm. We need new leads...

Renee drums her fingers on the table.

EXT. IN THE WOODS AT THE EDGE OF A CLEARING - 1782 - DAY

Horses HOOVES TROT down the trail. Raeph, Parfrey, Micah, asleep, and Reverend Fogarty arrive at the edge of the forest and stop. They look down at the fort on the Ohio River.

REV. FOGARTY

Thinkest thou that they might be held there?

RAEPH

That I know not.

PARFREY
How will you know?

RAEPH
I'm thinking.

Micah awakens with a yawn.

MICAH
Where are we? What's that down there?

RAEPH
We have to find a way in.

MICAH
I need to pee.

Micah climbs down and goes into the brush.

REV. FOGARTY
Go not far, mi-lad.

RAEPH
Actually...

Raeph dismounts and follows Micah. Parfrey and Rev. Fogarty follow. After a few minutes, they return to the horses, relieved.

MICAH
Do they have vittles down there?

PARFREY
What's the plan then?

RAEPH
I don't know. We have one rifle with no powder or ball. There are dozens of them and only four of us. We could go down and surrender which would gain us entry.

PARFREY
Or I could go and introduce myself as a loyal subject to the king and-

RAEPH
And we would likely all be shot on the spot.

REV. FOGARTY
Where's little Micah?

RAEPH
What?

REV. FOGARTY
He was just now by my side and...

PARFREY
Look! There he is!

Micah is a far down field, running toward the fort.

RAEPH
His hunger drove him to this.

PARFREY
We must fetch him!

RAEPH
No. He's a boy. They won't harm him.

Rev. Fogarty mounts a horse.

REV. FOGARTY
Perhaps I can see to his safety.

Rev. Fogarty kicks the horse and takes off across the clearing. He holds onto his broad-rimmed hat.

RAEPH
Wait! Reverend! No!

PARFREY
Now what? Oh... balderdash!

Parfrey puts his foot in a stirrup. Raeph pulls him off. The men circle each other and raise their fists. The horse takes off across the field.

RAEPH
Now look how you've cost us with your impetuosity!

Raeph swings at Parfrey who dodges his punch.

PARFREY
Better than your indecisiveness!

Parfrey punches Raeph in the face. Raeph raises the back of

his hand to a bloody lip.

RAEPH

I told you I was thinking!

Raeph pops Parfrey in the jaw. Parfrey reels back but does not go down.

PARFREY

While you are thinking, time is wasting!

Parfrey swings and staggers. Raeph grapples Parfrey like exhausted boxers do. The two men, out of breath, stumble over to a fallen tree and sit on it.

RAEPH

To be painfully honest, I don't know what to do. I am at a complete and utter loss.

PARFREY

You? The infamous spoiler and errant spy for the patriot cause? At a loss? Why, just look at what you achieved. You brought us the great Gwynyvere, the creator of all that we know and live by! Don't tell me you are at a loss now!

Raeph stands up and looks from the edge of the woods down the slope across a field to the fort whose gates are open. Men mill about then take Micah, Rev. Fogarty, and horses inside. A small party of men on horseback ride out into the field with the gates closing behind them.

RAEPH

It looks like we are both at a loss.

Four militiamen on horseback ride up to Raeph and Parfrey walking out into the clearing with hands raised. They march the two men down to the fort.

EXT. AN ABANDONED PLANTATION HOUSE - NIGHT - 2004

Renee and Caleb, guns poised, step inside.

INT. PARLOR IN THE ABANDONED PLANTATION HOUSE - NIGHT - 2004

They enter the parlor with the long, swivel mirror and spare furnishings and see several people dressed in period

clothing. A woman is pinned to a worn-down sofa by a masked figure, dressed in a black cloak, tricorne hat, vest, breeches, boots, and striking ornate silver belt buckle.

RENEE

Sir! Put your hands up and step away from the woman.

CALEB

Everyone, Hands behind your head and stand where you are.

Caleb holsters his gun and puts the masked man in cuffs. Renee holsters her weapon and goes to the woman on the sofa.

RENEE

Are you all right? Can you tell me what he did to you?

WOMAN

What? Nothing! He did nothing to me. We're role-playing is all.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMAN

We're fan-fiction LARPerS. We're re-enacting scenes from "The Spoiler" series.

RENEE

LARPerS?

Caleb sees the RED RECORDING LIGHT from a video camera on a tripod. He steps over, shuts it off, and removes the camera.

WOMAN

Hey!

CALEB

It's evidence.

Renee steps up to the masked man.

RENEE

I believe you're the one we're looking for. What do you know about the disappearance of Marsha Tucker?

No response.

RENEE (CONT'D)

Detective Ross, call in back up and

RENEE (CONT'D)
 the tech squad to comb through this
 place. We're also going to need a
 wagon to bring these fine folks down
 to the precinct for questioning.

WOMAN
 Wait! On what grounds?

CALEB
 Renee, look what we have here.

Renee turns to see Caleb removing the mask and hat from the
 man in black who is actually a woman.

INT. NOPD PRECINCT RENEES OFFICE - DAY - 2004

On a computer screen, IZZY FRACK, dressed as Raeph Leicester,
 speaks on a video log.

IZZY (ON VIDEO)
 Welcome, friends and fans. I am your
 humble Spoiler.

RENEE
 Her name is Isabella Frack. She's 23.

Renee opens a folder and pulls out a series of print images
 of a person dressed in tricorne hat, black cloak, and domino
 mask on a video surveillance feed. She Hands them to Caleb.

RENEE (CONT'D.)
 All of these are her. At a book
 signing in New York. At another in
 Philadelphia. Here in the French
 Quarter.

CALEB
 Stalking Marsha Tucker dressed up as a
 male character from her book.

RENEE
 Well, her alibi is solid. She and the
 others were doing a vlog at that
 abandoned house that day. They were no
 where near the parking garage.
 Anything on Rolfe's wife and daughter?

CALEB
 He claims he got married in Malawi...
 or was it Mali?... and that the wife

CALEB (CONT'D.)
and daughter are traveling to exotic
and remote places around the world.

A KNOCK sounds and the door opens. Another detective pokes
her head in and hands Renee a report.

RENEE
We got more forensics from the house.
A set of tire prints. Falken Azenis
FK510.

CALEB
Let me guess, for a Corvette.

RENEE
What would Lafferty have to do with
that place? We need to have a come-to-
Jesus moment with him.

Renee picks up a phone and dials.

INT. A JAIL CELL - DAY - 1782

The Jailkeeper arrives with paper, inkwells, and quill which
he hands to Marsha and leaves.

MARSHA
Great. No table.

Marsha sits on the floor and uses the seat ledge. Prucilla
sits besides her and helps set up the inkwell and quills. The
book sits to the side.

MARSHA (CONT'D.)
What should I write?

PRUCILLA
Whatever will hie us thither and far
from hither!

Marsha dips the quill in ink and poises it over the page. A
drop of ink falls to the paper. She withdraws it,

MARSHA
What if I write the wrong thing? What
if what I write won't work or maybe it
works for me but not you?

PRUCILLA
Ugh! Just look at the book, why don't

PRUCILLA (CONT'D)

you?

MARSHA

You see? That's what doesn't make sense. It has already been written. So why isn't it as written?

PRUCILLA

Why ask me?

MARSHA

And where are the others? Don't they need to be here if things change?

Just then, the door opens. Soldiers shove in Raeph, Parfrey, and Reverend Fogarty with cuts, bruises, and dried blood on his face. Prucilla jumps up and hugs her brother. She then turns to Rev. Fogarty and touches his damaged face.

PRUCILLA

My dear sir, what have they done to you?

REV FOGARTY

'Tis of no concern. Remember the wisdom of William Penn, *Force may subdue, but love gains: And he that forgives first, wins the laurel.*

RAEPH

They beat him to extract information.
(to Rev. Fogarty)
What have they done with the boy?

REV. FOGARTY

I knoweth not. They separated him from me.

Marsha remains seated on the floor with quill poised. She looks up at Raeph who pulls the parchment with TAKE ME H- from inside his shirt and drops it to the floor beside her.

RAEPH

Let us hope your intent is to restore all wrongs to right... and not just your own.

PARFREY

Quickly! Write us out of here!

PRUCILLA

That's what I've been telling her!

MARSHA

Stop it, all of you! I can't with all this chaos...

(looking at Raeph)
and chagrin.

Reverend Fogarty goes down on his knees and takes Marsha's hands.

REV. FOGARTY

Look not out, but within... Remember it is a still voice that speaks to us, that is not to be heard in the noises and hurries of the mind. Again, William Penn.

MARSHA

Don't you have words of wisdom of your own?

REV. FOGARTY

Be they mine own or another's, heed them, for they speak truth. Go within and write.

Marsha looks at Reverend Fogarty. She reaches for the quill, dips it in ink, and set it to the page. Suddenly, Capt. Caldwell bursts in with armed soldiers.

CAPT. CALDWELL

(to Marsha)
Put down that plume!

Marsha scribbles words down. Prucilla quickly kneels by the Reverend and helps him up. The book is gone from the ledge seat. She pretends to stumble into Capt. Caldwell. They do an awkward dance.

CAPT. CALDWELL (CONT'D.)

Out of my way!

Capt. Caldwell jerks Marsha to her feet and snatches the quill from her hand. He grabs the paper, reads it, tears it up, and tosses the pieces to the floor. He seizes the inkwell and looks around.

CAPT. CALDWELL (CONT'D.)

Where's the book?

PRUCILLA
What book?

MARSHA
What book?

CAPT. CALDWELL
Don't play daft with me.

MARSHA
You had it.

Capt. Caldwell scowls at the Jailkeeper who shakes his head.

CAPT. CALDWELL
(to the soldiers)
Remove the men.
(to the Jailkeeper)
And you. Find that book or you'll be
in irons.

The soldiers force Parfrey, Raeph, and Reverend Fogarty from the cell. The Jailkeeper frantically searches the cell. Prucilla smacks his head when he looks under her skirt. He scratches his head and leaves, locking the door behind him.

EXT. COURTYARD WITH GALLOWS IN A BRITISH FORT - DAY - 1782

At dawn, Raeph, Parfrey, and Rev. Fogarty stand before Captain Caldwell. Prucilla and Marsha are brought outside and lined up beside them. The gallows loom above. Soldiers stand nearby. The hooded executioner stands on the platform where nooses hang.

DARK STORM CLOUDS begin to form.

CAPT. CALDWELL
Finally. You all will meet your fate.

He eyes Marsha. Marsha glares back. She gasps to see Caldwell's eyes FLASH A BLUE GLOW.

MARSHA
I know you.

CAPT. CALDWELL
Prepare the prisoners! To the gallows!

The soldiers march them up on the platform and bind their hands behind their backs and slip the nooses over their heads.

PRUCILLA
Set me free, and I will be your wife,

PRUCILLA (CONT'D)

your whore, whatever you want. I'm young and beautiful and can make you happy. I don't deserve to die!

PARFREY

I am not a traitor! I'm a Tory!

REV. FOGARTY

We are not for Names, nor Men, nor Titles of Government, nor are we for this Party, nor against the other because of its Name and Pretence; but we are for Justice and Mercy, and Truth and Peace, and true Freedom, that these may be exalted in our Nation. So sayeth our Quaker brother Edward Burrough,

CAPT. CALDWELL

(to Raeph)

And you? Do you have any last words?

RAEPH

Where's the boy?

CAPT. CALDWELL

I've decided to make him my ward.

Capt. Caldwell signals two soldiers who bring Micah over.

MICAH

Master Raeph!

CAPT. CALDWELL

(to Micah)

Silence, boy, or I will sell you to the Shawanese.

(to the others)

Once he's old enough, he'll make a fine foot soldier or perhaps a cabin boy with the Royal Navy.

MARSHA

No, he won't.

CAPT. CALDWELL

What say you?

Marsha steps to the edge of the platform and looks at Micah.

MARSHA

Micah, no matter what this man tells you, it is not true. Neither he or anyone else can change your destiny... the destiny I wrote for you.

Capt. Caldwell passes the boy to the soldiers.

CAPT. CALDWELL

Take him to the Chillicothe village... now!

The soldiers drag Micah away.

MICAH

No! Please, mum! Master Raeph! Save me!

RAEPH

You black-hearted brute. Cut me loose and I'll-

CAPT. CALDWELL

Hood them.

The executioner puts sacks over the heads of Reverend Fogarty, Parfrey and Prucilla. Raeph looks at Marsha.

RAEPH

Out of curiosity, madam, what did you manage to write?

MARSHA

Goodbye, cruel world! I'm off to join the circus!

The hood covers Raeph's then Marsha's head. Capt. Caldwell gives the signal. The executioner is about to release the trap doors when he and everyone else pauses. A LOW THRUMMING HUM occurs. The executioner pulls the lever and the trap doors drop. The wind BLOWS HARD. THUNDER BOOMS. A BRIGHT BLUE FLASH.

PRUCILLA

I love you, Raaaaaaeph!

Ropes stretch taught then loosen. Soldiers look from below to see empty nooses swinging back and forth.

CAPT. CALDWELL

Noooooo!

INT. TRUHEART PUBLISHING, ROLFE'S OFFICE - DAY - 2004

Rolfe is at his desk piled with printouts. Five young GWYNYVERES, brunettes similar to Marsha, sit in chairs in front of him. He angrily pours through the pages, tossing them about. He grabs a fistful and walks to the women and waves the documents.

ROLFE

The gallows! What happens after the gallows?

GWYNYVERE 1

The boy gets sold to the Shawnee...

ROLFE

To the others!

GWYNYVERE 2

We decided they should be spared at the last minute.

ROLFE

What? Why? didn't I explain that Raeph must die so we can make way for a new hero?

GWYNYVERE 2

Yes, but...

ROLFE

But what?

GWYNYVERE 1

He's such a strong character that the fans adore! We can't just, you know...

ROLFE

Out! You are all through!

He picks up the phone and pushes a button.

ROLFE (CONT'D.)

Gloria. The writers will be picking up their pink slips. They no longer work for TruHeart.

He hangs up the phone, puts his hands on his hips and glares at the women. GWYNYVERE 3 starts to cry. GWYNYVERE 4 puts a hand on her shoulder. They stand up and exit.

ROLFE (CONT'D.)

Wait! Gwynvere One... Where does Raeph go next?

GWYNYVERE 1

Given I no longer work for you, I don't have anything more to contribute.

Gwynvere 1 leaves and shuts the door. Rolfe fights to contain his rage. He goes back to his desk and shuffles through papers.

ROLFE

Wherever he is, she is. How did she even get into his world?

He throws pages around the room, grabs the square case, and exits.

INT. TRUHEART PUBLISHING, LOBBY - DAY - 2004 CONT.

Rolfe storms past reception. Gloria and a Security Officer watch him exit the building.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - DAY - 2004 CONT.

Rolfe climbs into his Corvette with the case. The door closes, the car turns on, backs out and rolls down the ramp.

INT. TRUHEART PUBLISHING, LOBBY - DAY - 2004 CONT.

Renee and Caleb walk in and show their badges to Gloria and the Security Officer who both point toward the door. Renee and Caleb run out.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF TRUHEART PUBLISHING - DAY - 2004 CONT.

Renee and Caleb jump into their unmarked car, plop a FLASHING POLICE LIGHT on the roof, and speed off, SIREN BLARING.

INT. HORSE BARN - HAY LOFT - DAY - 1793

Marsha GROANS, MUMBLES, tosses and turns. She awakens abruptly to see Raeph in the dimly lit hay loft with his arm over her. He gently pushes hair from her brow.

MARSHA

Wha-?

RAEPH

You appear to be suffering an incubus.

MARSHA

Incubus?

Marsha pushes herself up and looks around. She spits a piece of straw from her mouth. Raeph pulls straw from her hair. She studies him and tentatively runs her finger down his facial scar along his aquiline nose.

MARSHA

My fantasy lover... here in the flesh.

Raeph leans in and delivers a lengthy kiss. Marsha does not resist. Prucilla, sitting in straw, eyes them.

PRUCILLA

Aren't we getting familiar? A bit of the rumpy pumpy, had we?

PARFREY

What's that, dear sis-?

Parfrey sits up and sees Raeph and Marsha intimately together.

PARFREY (CONT'D.)

Oh.

A rooster CROWS. A horse WHINNIES. STREAKS of SUNLIGHT and DUST filter in to reveal the loft of a barn filled with straw and hay. The four crawl from the straw to look down over the edge of the loft to see several stalls with horses. The sounds of VOICES come from outside.

MARSHA

What in the name of Murgatroid?

PARFREY

Where in heaven's name are we now?

PRUCILLA

Where is Reverend Fogarty?

BRIGHT SUNLIGHT hits their faces as the barn doors open. Several men enter, open the stall doors, and take the horses out. The four look around and find a way down from the loft.

INT. A HORSE BARN - DAY - 1793 CONT.

They peer around the open barn door.

EXT. HORSE BARN WITH A LARGE TENT ACROSS THE WAY - DAY - 1793 CONT.

Raeph, Parfrey, Marsha, and Prucilla look out to a street waking up with the movement of people walking and riding on the cobblestone street in carriages. Directly across from the barn is a large tent bearing a banner with the word RICKETTS CIRCUS in fancy letters.

INT. A HORSE BARN - DAY - 1793 CONT.

Marsha and the others pull back so as not to be seen.

MARSHA

Talk about famous last words. It's Ricketts Circus.

PRUCILLA

(eyes widening, smiling)
A circus! Just as you wished!

RAEPH

We're in a city.

MARSHA

Philadelphia, 1793. It's the first circus ever to open in America.

RAEPH

Philadelphia? That's not good.

PARFREY

Why not, brother? We're back in the civilized world! Finally?

RAEPH

I'm a wanted man here.

PRUCILLA

You're wanted everywhere!

RAEPH

It's why I settled in Spanish Louisiana where there is no American jurisdiction.

PARFREY

That was years ago. Who is going to

PARFREY (CONT'D.)

know you now? Besides, I thought you were a hero for the patriot cause.

RAEPH

I was also a spoiler, an armed robber, and kidnapper.

PARFREY

Lest we forget your illustrious career!

RAEPH

And you sir, are a Tory, and the enemy to the patriot cause.

MARSHA

Stop beefing! We gotta figure this out.

RAEPH

Beefing?

MARSHA

There must be a backdoor we can sneak out of.

RAEPH

The problem still remains, madam, that your clothing is a draw for attention and confrontation.

PRUCILLA

Too late.

TWO MEN with pitchforks enter and face the four.

EXT. RICKETTS CIRCUS GROUNDS, PHILADELPHIA - DAY - 1793 CONT.

Pitchforks in hand, The men march Raeph, Parfrey, Prucilla, and Marsha to a small building. MAN 1 taps on the door. A young (20s), athletic, distinguished man JOHN BILL RICKETTS in colonial dress and campaign wig steps out. He stands with hands on hips and looks over the sorry lot.

RICKETTS

Well, what have we here?

MAN 1

They was hidin' in the barn.

Ricketts walks around the group and eyes them up and down. He reaches out and touches Marsha's smiley-face shirt.

RICKETTS

Interesting... What are you then? A clown act looking for work? Can you ride? Do tricks? Or should I have you arrested for being filthy freebooters?

PARFREY

I should say n-!

Raeph raises his hand to Parfrey's mouth.

RAEPH

Yes. Yes we are. We just arrived from...

PARFREY

From...

PRUCILLA

Louisiana!

PARFREY

Kentucky!

RICKETTS

Which was it?

RAEPH

Both, actually.

RICKETTS

You are quite the itinerate troupe. No wonder you look so... so travelworn. Come. Let's get you settled in. Where are your portmanteaus?

RAEPH

I beg your pardon?

RICKETTS

Say... you look a tad familiar... Have we met before? No? I know I've seen your face.

Raeph scrutinizes him.

RAEPH

I can't see how as I have been in

RAEPH (CONT'D.)
western territories.

PRUCILLA
Brigands took them. We were robbed
in... Ken-tuck-ee.

RICKETTS
Sorry to hear of such a tragedy. I'm
sure we have something in the way of
costumes. Follow me.

Ricketts leads them toward a line of small tents. Men lead horses toward the large tent. Jugglers and acrobats practice in the street. Ricketts voice trails away as he talks.

RICKETTS (CONT'D.)
Say, you could perhaps re-enact the
robbery! Playing on both terror and
humor! The spectators will be
thrilled!

On a post, a wanted poster saying WANTED FOR PLUNDERING:
RAEPH LEICSESTER, with a crude drawing of him, hangs.

INT. BACKSTAGE, THE BIG TENT, RICKETTS CIRCUS - NIGHT - 1793

Raeph, Marsha, Parfrey, and Prucilla are dressed up as clowns in costumes, face paint, and wigs. Marsha keeps the colorful smiley top and rainbow sneakers but is wearing a petticoat to cover her legs and a shawl around her shoulders. Raeph dresses in the black cloak, tricorne hat, and domino mask over a clown makeup. Prucilla and Parfrey are decked in more poofery to play rich passengers in the small coach about to be drawn onto the stage. Raeph is mounted on a black pony. Parfrey leans out the window.

PARFREY
I fail to understand why you choose to
play the very role for which you are
wanted.

RAEPH
Likewise on your part.

INT. A STAGECOACH BACKSTAGE - NIGHT - 1793

Prucilla, Parfrey, and Marsha squeeze together on the one bench seat with heads touching the roof in the cramped coach.

MARSHA

Great, An eighteenth-century clown
car.

PRUCILLA

(batting a fan)

This cake on my face irritates.

The coach lurches forward.

MARSHA

Here we go! Break a leg!

PARFREY

I hope not!

INT. THE BIG TENT, RICKETTS CIRCUS - NIGHT - 1793

The miniscule coach, pulled by two ponies with long, colorful plumes on their heads and JINGLING BELLS with Ricketts in acrobat costume standing astride the animals, enters the ring to large applause from a tent full of spectators. The coach makes a circle around the ring where jugglers and acrobats do their acts. The horses and coach stop. Ricketts does a side flip and lands on his feet to applause.

RICKETTS

Ladies and Gentlemen! We now have a most amazing act sure to horrify and humor! Based on true events, here is a re-enactment of an encounter with the infamous Spoiler!

Ricketts, the juggler, and acrobats clear the ring. He claps to cue the ponies to pull the coach. To the side of the central area, musicians play FRENETIC MUSIC and make SLAPPING, CLANGING, and WHISTLING NOISES. After two rounds, Raeph bursts forward on his pony. He holds a prop pistol in the air and rides around until he makes the coach stop. THREE CLOWNS, dressed as bandits, do somersaults and flips out into the arena to the HUMOROUS sounds The musicians make. They stop.

RAEPH

I am the spoiler! Stand and deliver!

Raeph fires the gun. A stream of colorful scarves pop out to the POP sound from the musicians. The audience laughs. Prucilla, Parfrey, and Marsha clumsily stumble from the coach to HUMOROUS SOUNDS from the musicians. The audience laughs. Raeph dismounts and the antics begin. Prucilla does her fancy

fighting with the clowns. Parfrey pulls odd objects from his waistcoat: a string of colorful scarves, playing cards that scatter all over, even a dove that flies off. Raeph chases Marsha then captures and holds her. The audience CLAPS and LAUGHS.

MARSHA

Having fun?

RAEPH

Fight me.

Marsha "fake" pounds Raeph with her fists. She reaches in a pocket of her skirt, pulls out a small covered pastry tin, uncovers it and smashes a cream pie into his face. Raeph leans in and kisses her, smearing pie on her face. A pie fight breaks out with the other clowns. The audience HOWLS with LAUGHTER. The music cues the antics to stop. The players wipe the cream from their faces as best they can and bow. Ricketts steps in, gestures toward the players, and applauds. He motions them to follow him to the front row of the audience, where a tall, distinguished man, GEORGE WASHINGTON, wearing royal blue velvet, a campaign wig, and tricorne hat with fur trim stands to greet them.

RICKETTS

Your Honor, Mr. President. May I be the first to welcome you to our humble circus. As your aide requested, I would like to present our new troupe.

WASHINGTON

Allow me to express my delight with your performances, all of you.

MARSHA

Did you say "president"?

RICKETTS

Do you not recognize the Commander in Chief of your new nation?

MARSHA

Now Washington's in the story? This is too much.

Raeph places his hands on Marsha's shoulders and gently pulls her aside.

RAEPH

What she means to say is, she finds

RAEPH (CONT'D.)
meeting you too much to bear. In fact,
she is on the brink of a swoon.

WASHINGTON
Your menacing guise and manner, sir,
are most convincing. I would swear you
to be he, the most wanted Spoiler in
the land.

PRUCILLA
He does play the part as though born
to it, doesn't he, milord?

Prucilla curtsies. Ricketts eyes Raeph curiously.

WASHINGTON
Madam. I am but a public servant
chosen by the people. Now I must take
my leave and return to my duties.

Washington takes and kisses Prucilla's hand. He turns to
leave with his entourage.

MARSHA
Didn't the Spoiler only rob loyalists?
I heard he was a spy and saboteur for
the patriot cause with Culper's Ring .

Washington turns to face Ricketts.

WASHINGTON
Is that so? Perhaps that aspect of
valor should be incorporated into your
act.

Washington walks away. Ricketts studies Raeph. As the crowd
files from their seats out of the tent, Raeph wiping cream
from his face with a rag, looks over to see a woman who
appears to be Abigail.

RAEPH
Abigail?

Parfrey looks at the woman who briefly looks over toward them
as she is in front of a CONTINENTAL ARMY OFFICER.

PARFREY
Abigail!

The woman exits, followed by the Continental Army Officer who

looks back at Raeph grinning. His eyes FLASH BLUE and he disappears out the exit. Raeph pushes his way against the tide of the crowd to reach her. Parfrey pursues him in the throng. Marsha and Prucilla follow.

EXT. THE RIGGS CIRCUS TENT - EVENING - 1793 CONT.

Lamplighters light the GAS STRRETLIGHTS. People mill outside as they leave the circus. Raeph and Parfrey look around. Neither the Officer nor Abigail is anywhere to be seen.

MARSHA

What has gotten into you two?

RAEPH

I saw Abigail and must find her!

PARFREY

We saw Abigail. Oh, where has she gone?

MARSHA

Didn't you see that officer in the audience? He looked right at you, Raeph. He'll be back with troops. And then-

RAEPH

And then I'll be long gone looking for Abigail.

PARFREY

And leave us to chains and irons? How noble.

RAEPH

You're more than welcome to join me. given she is your betrothed.

Parfrey stands, mouth agape, and looks around.

RAEPH

As I thought.

Raeph moves toward the barn. Marsha steps in front of him.

RAEPH (CONT'D.)

Out of my way, madam. Since you are loath to bring her back, then the obligation falls on me.

Marsha grabs him by the arms and looks into his eyes.

MARSHA

No.

Raeph relaxes his stance and bows his head. The four walk toward a small tent AGLOW with LANTERN LIGHT.

INT. RICKETT'S OFFICE - NIGHT - 1793 CONT.

The WANTED poster with drawings of Raeph masked and unmasked with facial scar, REWARD \$1000, is SLAPPED down on Rickett's desk. The Continental Army Officer points to it and looks at Ricketts.

RICKETTS

I can't rightly say I recognize him.

OFFICER

He robbed a coach in which you were a passenger but two years past.

RICKETTS

Masked bandits all look alike to me.

OFFICER

See here. I'm willing to pay you twice the reward offered plus what you figure their show brings in as revenue. I fancy your little venture here would benefit from such generous remuneration.

The Officer grins and pulls out a purse that JINGLES. He opens it. GOLD COINS CLATTER on the desk. Ricketts eyes it opens a drawer, scoops it in from the desktop, and closes the door. He walks to his office door and gestures for the officer to follow him.

INT. CHANGING TENT, RICKETTS CIRCUS - 1793 - NIGHT CONT.

Raeph, Parfrey, Marsha and Prucilla enter the small tent. There are furnishings of a dresser with a mirror, a small table with three chairs, a chaise-lounge, and a love seat with two folding cots. An oriental folding screen divides the changing areas. Raeph immediately takes up a wash basin filled with water and hurriedly cleans up. Prucilla and Marsha rinse off in basins of water then step behind the folding screen where they hang their clothing. Parfrey, face clean of paint, quickly dresses in clean shirt, breeches, stockings, shoes. He spies a pair of gloves, walks up to

Raeph, who is shirtless, and SLAPS Raeph in the face with the gloves.

PARFREY

I stay true to my words, sir. We shall
duel at dawn.

Marsha steps out from behind the folding screen in a man's shirt and breeches. She still wears her rainbow Skechers. Raeph and Parfrey look her over.

MARSHA

Now, now... none of that... How do I
look?

RAEPH

Madam, you need to get us back to the
plantation so-

Prucilla, dressed in a fine, fresh dress, steps out from the screen and adjusts her busk.

PRUCILLA

Plantation? Not I. I like it here
where society surrounds me instead of
swamp bugs and mugginess.

MARSHA

Would you rather get snuffed out by-

RAEPH

The character assassin.

MARSHA

Yeah, that.
(to Parfrey)
That goes for you too.

Marsha plunks down on the chaise-lounge.

MARSHA (CONT'D.)

Look, I'm pooped.

PRUCILLA

You shall not poop in here! How
vulgar!

RAEPH

Do you need the necessary then?

MARSHA

"Pooped" as in exhausted, wiped out, kaput not... Never mind. I have no energy for a lesson in inter-temporal idiom.

Marsha rolls on her side. Prucilla pouts but eyes Raeph's shirtless musculature.

RAEPH

Then let's set you to write.

Raeph searches the drawers to find paper and ink. He goes over to Marsha and gently shakes her.

RAEPH (CONT'D.)

Gwynyvere... here...

Suddenly, the LOW THRUMMING HUM causes the earth to vibrate. and the characters fold up like a wad of paper and disappear in a BLUE FLASH.

INT. CHANGING TENT, RICKETTS CIRCUS - 1793 - NIGHT CONT.

The tent flap opens, Ricketts and the Officer rush in to an empty and eerily silent space.

OFFICER

Where is he then? You said he was here!

RICKETTS

They were all here...

Ricketts, mouth agape, looks around the tent. The Officer's eyes briefly GLOW BLUE as he grits his teeth.

EXT. THE DECK OF AN ICE-COVERED TALL SHIP - DAY - 1776

WINDS HOWL. WAVES SPLASH. SNOW BLOWS. Raeph, Parfrey, Prucilla and Marsha appear on the icy deck of a TALL SHIP. Around them are the FROZEN BODIES OF THE CREW. The four fight off the bitter cold.

PARFREY

What in the name of perfidy is this?

Parfrey slips on the icy deck and grabs a mast to stay up.

MARSHA

I fell asleep. I was having a crazy

MARSHA (CONT'D.)

dream about being tossed about in a boat on high seas with crashing, swirling waves... and you were there... and you.. and you... that must have spawned this.

RAEPH

Of all the sea voyages you sent me, madam, this one is unknown to me!

PRUCILLA

So now shall we freeze to death?

RAEPH

Let's get below deck and find the captain's quarters!

Marsha slips and wobbles toward the cabin. The others follow.

INT. CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS - DAY - 1776 CONT.

The DEAD CAPTAIN sits frozen at his desk. Marsha pushes past him and tries to open a bureau drawer that is frozen shut. Raeph helps her pry it open. The ship lists. Marsha falls into the corpse. Raeph pulls her off. With hands trembling with cold, they pull out a ledger with the name OCTAVIUS CAPTAIN'S LOG on the cover.

MARSHA

We're on the Octavius, which was lost at sea while navigating the Arctic Circle in 1761. It was spotted adrift in 1775 frozen crew and all. I considered it but never put this in the book.

RAEPH

Then how do we rectify this?

The ship CREAKS and TILTS. Marsha retrieves a sheaf of paper, quill and inkwell from the drawer. She opens the inkwell and attempts to dip a quill which breaks. The ink is frozen. She throws the inkwell. It bounces off the dead captain's head.

MARSHA

Haven't you ever heard of pencils? I have nothing to write with, and even if I did, my fingers are frozen stiff!

PRUCILLA
 (shivering)
 Raeph. Hold me. Keep me warm.

PARFREY
 (shivering)
 Come sister, I will hold you. Our man
 seems preoccupied.

Raeph holds Marsha close and rubs her cold hands for warmth. A LOW GROAN sounds from the corpse. It opens its eyes and raises up with SNAPPING and CRACKING.

EXT. THE DECK OF AN ICE-COVERED TALL SHIP - DAY - 1776 CONT.

Parfrey and Prucilla stumble out onto the deck.

PARFREY
 Revenants! Run!

The SOUNDS OF METAL CLACKING come from the cabin. Raeph backs out. He's wielding a sword and fighting with the dead captain and other sword-wielding crew.

RAEPH
 Parfrey! Get a weapon and fight, man!
 Here!

Raeph lobs off the captain's arm with sword in hand. It slides across the deck. Parfrey cringes. Prucilla picks it up and pulls the sword free from the dead fingers. She takes on the revenant crew who have risen from the dead.

PARFREY
 Sister Mary Oberline?

PRUCILLA
 Sister Catherine Arles. Fencing
 instructor. Come on, brother. Get in
 the fight and get the blood going!

RAEPH
 Where's Gwynyvere?

Parfrey, Raeph, and Prucilla battle the crew. One by one, frozen zombie sailors come at them with daggers, cutlasses, and gnashing teeth. Marsha comes up from the hold. She has soot on her face and hands. She's holding a piece of coal and sheet of paper with writing.

MARSHA

Watch! I can stop them!

In the HOWLING WIND, Marsha scribbles with a piece of coal on the paper. One by one, the attacking undead disappear in CLOUDS of BLACK DUST. One of the undead crew throws a DAGGER that flies toward Raeph.

PRUCILLA

Noooooo!

Prucilla flies in front of Raeph. VOOM! The dagger pierces Prucilla in the chest. She drops to the deck.

PARFREY

Prucilla! No! Nooooo!

Marsha sees Prucilla dead on the deck as more undead crew encroach.

PARFREY (CONT'D)

Bring her back! Write her back to life!

Marsha tries to write with trembling fingers, but the wind snatches the paper, as it flies towards the violent vortex Raeph catches it, looks, and smiles. The LOW THRUMMING HUM sounds, the ship CRACKS and heaves and breaks apart. Undead crewmen fall into the sea. The vortex spins overhead and sucks Parfrey into it. Raeph reaches for Marsha's hand as they both get sucked up into the whirlwind filled with BLUE LIGHTNING.

EXT. AN ABANDONED PLANTATION HOUSE WITH A GAZEBO - NIGHT - 2004

LIGHTNING and THUNDER are in the distance. SIRENS ROAR. Rolfe's black Corvette speeds and slides down the gravel drive. The car stops in front of the house. Rolfe jumps out, leaving the door open. In the HEADLIGHTS, He runs toward the house. The TURNING LIGHTS of police cars and the detectives' car light up the gazebo and house. The cars surround the Corvette. Police in uniforms, Renee and Caleb jump out, guns drawn.

CALEB

Rolfe Lafferty! On the ground! Now!

Rolfe briefly turns in the GLARE of lights. He turns away and runs inside the house.

RENEE
 (to the uniformed officers)
 Go around back. Make sure he doesn't
 head into the swamp.

Renee, Caleb, and uniforms follow.

INT. AN ABANDONED PLANTATION HOUSE - NIGHT - 2004 CONT.

FLASHLIGHTS streak through the run-down interior of the house.

RENEE
 Rolfe Lafferty! We just want to talk
 to you.

CALEB
 You're making it worse for yourself by
 running off on us.

BIPHONIC HUMMING along with SINGING BOWLS emanates from a room down the hall.

INT. A HALLWAY IN THE ABANDONED PLANTATION HOUSE- NIGHT - 2004 CONT.

Renee and Caleb reach a door. They try to open it but something is blocking it. Caleb runs full force against it with a LOUD CRACK AND CRASH.

INT. PARLOR IN THE ABANDONED PLANTATION HOUSE - NIGHT - 2004 CONT.

A pile of broken chairs and an old table fly apart as the door BURSTS open. Caleb stumbles into the room followed by Renee. Rolfe is doing his BIPHONIC HUMMING and playing the SINGING BOWLS. A LOW THRUMMING HUM starts to rise. ELECTRIC CRACKLING with a BLUE LIGHT appear in the mirror.

RENEE
 Stop what you are doing and get on the
 ground!

ROLFE
 Detectives, have you ever heard of the
 resonance theory of consciousness?

Rolfe continues to run the mallet on the singing bowls. The LOW THRUMMING HUM increases.

CALEB

Put down that magic wand thing and get on the ground with your hands behind your head.

ROLFE

All matter is constantly oscillating. It's just a matter of syncing up the vibrations which in turn shifts reality.

Renee and Caleb approach cautiously. The mirror LIGHTS UP with an INTENSE SWIRLING BLUE LIGHT filled with CRACKLING LIGHTNING. A WIND kicks up.

RENEE

Mr. Lafferty!

ROLFE

That's Doctor Lafferty!

RENEE

Stop now, Lafferty, and as we say!

Rolfe stops playing the bowls, looks at the detectives, and grins.

ROLFE

You will never find her... nor me.

Rolfe leaps toward the mirror. Caleb fires his gun. The mirror shatters. The light, electricity, and wind stop. The room is dark and dead. GLASS CRUNCHES beneath the shoes of Caleb and Renee. Rolfe is gone.

CALEB

What the...?

INT. THE PARLOR IN AN ANTEBELLUM PLANTATION - NIGHT - 1790

THE ROLL OF THUNDER with a FLASH OF LIGHTNING awakens Marsha. She lifts her head off a pile of papers covered in writing. She is sitting at the wooden table where Micah's empty bowl with spoon still sits. She wipes sweat from her brow and neck. In the CANDLELIGHT are quills, inkwells, and blank papers. She spies one battered, dampened sheaf with a piece of SEAWEED with the writing in coal nearly washed off: TAKE US HOME. She picks it up. SLIGHT SNORING sounds from behind her cause her to turn. In the gloom of the room, she makes out Raeph asleep on the baroque sofa. She smiles and turns back to the table, dips the quill in the ink, sets it to

paper, and writes with determination.

Suddenly, the SOFT SNORES turn to STRANGLED GASPS. Marsha stands up and turns. A LIGHTNING FLASH reveals a dark figure straddling Raeph. A GUST OF WIND blows through. The CANDLE GOES OUT. FLICKERS OF LIGHTNING and CLAPS THUNDER come with a brewing storm. In a FLASH of LIGHTNING, Marsha sees Milo sitting on Raeph's chest and choking him.

MARSHA

Milo?

Raeph has his hands equally around the assailant's throat. Milo's eyes flash BRIGHT BLUE. The two men struggle with grunts and hisses. In the next LIGHTNING FLASH, Marsha spots the ceramic basin. She picks it up and smashes it over Milo's head. Both men fall to the floor. Raeph is on top, hands firmly squeezing his throat. A LIGHTNING FLASH reveals the assailant's face briefly appearing as Rolfe's.

MARSHA (CONT'D.)

Rolfe?

Raeph throttles him. With a hissing gurgle, Milo's body goes limp and lies still. The storm kicks up outside. FLASHES OF LIGHTNING show Milo/Rolfe's face with eyes wide open, mouth agape, and tongue hanging out.

MARSHA (CONT'D.)

Look! His tongue!

RAEPH

My faithful friend now turned fiend.
We have to get some light to see who
truly this character assassin is.

Raeph stumbles to the mantle to fetch the tinder box. When he lights a spunk and a candle, he turns to see Marsha straddling the body, giving chest compressions and trying to breathe life back into it. Raeph grabs a saber from the wall display.

RAEPH (CONT'D.)

What possesses you so, Madam, to
commit such a vile act in kissing a
corpse, and one of an evildoer no
less?

MARSHA

What? I wasn't kissing him.

MILO/ROLFE
Let's not go berserk.

MARSHA
So it is you.

The door bursts open. Parfrey enters with a pair of pistols. Raeph turns to face Parfrey.

PARFREY
It is time, sir.

RAEPH
Isn't it supposed to be at dawn?

PARFREY
Dawn draws nigh. Take your weapon.

Parfrey hands a pistol to Raeph whose hands are full with a candle and a saber. Meanwhile, Marsha is fixed on Milo/Rolfe.

MILO/ROLFE
It was I in the form of several others... looking for you. You left my office so hurt and angry. I followed... but you were.. gone. But now, I have found you, my love.

MARSHA
But how-?

MILO/ROLFE
I conjured a portal. And now, I am here to take you back. He must have created his own portal to bring you here.

MARSHA
A portal?

Milo/Rolfe reaches up to stroke Marsha's hair.

MILO/ROLFE
I love you, my Marsha, my Gwynyvere. Remember our passionate moments, how we made sweet love? Remember how I, Rolfe Lafferty, inspired and encouraged you in your creation?

Raeph, for a second, seems to flicker out with the THUNDER and LIGHTNING.

RAEPH
Unhand her!

PARFREY
(to Raeph)
Take the pistol!

MILO/ROLFE
He is nothing but a figment of
imagination, a faint impression...
Look and see for yourself.

Marsha turns to see Raeph fading out. The saber falls to the floor with a CLATTER.

RAEPH
Gwynyvere! I implore you!

Parfrey steps over, takes the candle from Raeph, and sets it on the table. He places the pistol in Raeph's hand, then steps back and aims his.

PARFREY
(to Raeph)
I shall count to three, sir. Then we
both aim and fire.

MILO/ROLFE
You love me. Not him. How can you love
someone who does not even exist?

RAEPH
But I do exist!

PARFREY
One...

MILO/ROLFE
As her love returns to me, so you
shall fade away into oblivion.

MARSHA
I...

MILO/ROLFE
But before he fades out completely,
please get him to tell me where the
other portal is so that I can destroy
it. Then you and I can live in happy
eternity.

MARSHA

Can you really get me back?

PARFREY

Two...

MILO/ROLFE

Yes! I have mastered the exact cymatic resonance to cross from our world to this one and back. I came to take you home where you belong.

RAEPH

(weakening)

No! I'm your love... Please... don't... abandon...

MARSHA

(looking at Milo/Rolfe)

You are the one true love of my life.

MILO/ROLFE

That's right, my dear. Let the Spoiler go. Let's move on wi-

Marsha pushes away and gets to her feet.

MARSHA

Not you. You can rot in Hades.

PARFREY

Three!

With slightly trembling hand, Parfrey raises and aims his pistol.

RAEPH

Madam... before I perish... please assure me that you had... nothing to do with... the drafting of this foul creature... designed to... expedite my end?

MARSHA

I never wrote him. I wrote for him.

LIGHTNING FLASHES and THUNDER CLAPS. Raeph is disappearing. Parfrey cocks the pistol.

RAEPH

Gwynyvere, do something!

MARSHA

Raeph! I... I love you. I conjured you. I give you life and strength that he cannot take away.

The other pistol drops from Raeph's fading hand. It hits the floor and fires. The bullet ricochets. Parfrey drops to the ground. A GUST OF WIND blows the candle out. FLASHES OF LIGHTNING create a STROBE effect. Milo/Rolfe rushes Marsha. A GROWL is heard. Pangloss lunges at Milo/Rolfe. A SHARP YELP occurs as Milo/Rolfe stabs the dog with a knife.

MARSHA (CONT'D)

A knife? Where the hell did he get a knife?

Milo/Rolfe pins Marsha on the bed and raises the knife. A LOW THRUMMING HUM. BLUE FLASH occurs with an ELECTRIC CRACKLE and a RAGING WIND. Prucilla comes through the mirror with the dagger in her breast.

MILO/ROLFE

So you do have a portal!

Prucilla rushes Milo/Rolfe and does her martial arts moves. Marsha jumps in the fray. Prucilla gets knocked to the ground next to Raeph who is and on all fours and becoming more solid. Milo/Rolfe turns on Marsha. Prucilla picks up the saber from the floor.

PRUCILLA

Marsha! Catch!

Prucilla tosses it to Marsha who catches it. Astonished, she wields it high.

MILO/ROLFE

Marsha, Marsha, Marsha... You really don't think you can destroy me. I am invincible.

Marsha closes her eyes and swings, slicing Milo/Rolfe's head clean off. Everything falls silent.

RAEPH

Gwynyvere, I am whole again!

PRUCILLA

Huzzah!

MARSHA

I guess at the end of the day, the sword is mightier than the pen. But Prucilla... how...?

Prucilla looks down at the dagger in her breast. She pulls it out. reaches into her bosom and pulls out the punctured copy of the book bearing the embossed lettering of THE SPOILER.

PRUCILLA

It appears your book saved my life.

Marsha eyes the damaged book, starts to smile, but then grows serious.

MARSHA

The body...

They look to where Milo/Rolfe fell but nothing is there.

PRUCILLA

It's gone! But who is that?

Prucilla sees Parfrey lying on the floor and scrambles to him.

PRUCILLA (CONT'D)

My dear brother!

Prucilla places Parfrey's bloody head in her lap. He groans and his eyes flutter open. Marsha falls to her knees beside him. Raeph does likewise.

RAEPH

You're alive, man!

PARFREY

What happened?

Pangloss limps over and licks Parfrey's face.

RAEPH

Pangloss as well!

MARSHA

Classic case of grazed and dazed.

They all laugh. LIGHTNING FLASHES and THUNDER rolls in the distance as the storm blows over. The first rays of daylight glimmer through the window.

INT. A STUDY IN THE PLANTATION HOUSE - DAY - 1790

The desk is cluttered with handwritten papers. Marsha, in a fine 18th-century dress, sets down the pen and goes to the window. The scene out on the yard is bright and lively. BIRDSONG and SOUNDS OF CHILDREN PLAYING fill the air. All her beloved characters--Rev. Fogarty, Micah, the WIDOW AMES and her teenaged son NATHANIEL, Milo and his wife CARMELIA with their BABY, Parfrey and Prucilla, even Daniel Boone as an old man--are strolling the green, playing with Pangloss, and working the garden. Dressed neatly and smoking a pipe, Raeph enters the study. He joins Marsha at the window.

RAEPH

Lost in your thoughts?

MARSHA

Just tired with a touch of writer's cramp.

Raeph caresses and kisses Marsha's hand.

RAEPH

You have worked wonders in restoring us all the lives we were meant to have. For this I thank you.

Marsha turns away from the window and sits on a small sofa in the room. Raeph sits beside her.

MARSHA

Raeph, do you think you could get that portal to work so that I might-?

RAEPH

I haven't an inkling of what it is, where it is, or how it works.

MARSHA

Then how did you come into my world and find me? You had to have some entry point just like Rolfe found his way here.

Raeph puts his forehead against Marsha's and holds both her hands.

RAEPH

The only way I got through was by love... your love. We were always in your thoughts and dreams. You wished

RAEPH (CONT'D.)
me there.

MARSHA
Simple as that, huh? Then why can't I
simply wish myself back?

RAEPH
Perhaps because you have not yet
completed your duty here. May I?

Raeph picks up some of the pages and reads silently. His mood
changes from pleased to perturbed.

RAEPH (CONT'D)
No, no, no. This absolutely won't do!

MARSHA
What do you mean?

RAEPH
I can't go out like a gotch-gutted
grinagog aging away on a... a... farm!
I need travel, engagement, adventure!
I need... Abigail.

MARSHA
Look, I've done your bidding and
written out everyone's stories,
including your own. I'm sorry it
didn't turn out as you wanted.

RAEPH
And is this truly how you wish it to
end for us.... for me?

MARSHA
(pauses)
I toyed with the notion that you and
Prucilla-

RAEPH
Prucilla? That bluestocking brat?

MARSHA
I could make you fall in love with
her.

RAEPH
Certainly not! Pray tell, what of
Abigail?

MARSHA

The truth is...

RAEPH

The truth is what? Tell me!

MARSHA

Abigail is...

RAEPH

Is?

MARSHA

Me... And I am she. I imagined being the object of your love through her. I kept her from you because... she never really existed. Of course you never existed either... until now.... until this...

RAEPH

If this is so, then all the more reason you must stay, madam, with me.

MARSHA

I can't.

RAEPH

Then I am doomed to a life of solitude.

MARSHA

I... I don't know why. It just has to be.

RAEPH

I see. Very well. I will leave you to your thoughts and penning of those final words.

Raeph gets up and leaves. Marsha goes back to the desk and writes. Her tears splotch the pages. Sunlight dips into darkness to the tune of CRICKETS and FROGS. Marsha has fallen asleep with her head on the desk. A gloved hand reaches from behind the drapery and takes an oil lamp and pours its contents on the floor. The same hand takes a lit candle and sets it to the soaked fabric. SMOKE fills the room. The curtains catch fire.

The GLOW lights up Marsha's face as the FLAMES GROW BRIGHT into a ROAR. She coughs and comes to in the thick smoke. She

goes to the door but it's locked. She coughs and tries to find a way out. The fiery curtains prevent her from reaching the windows. Everything catches fire. Marsha succumbs to the smoke. There is POUNDING on the door which breaks open. Raeph and Parfrey rush in.

RAEPH

Parfrey! Save the parchments! Don't let them burn!

Parfrey beats off FLAMES licking at the pages and gathers them up in the basket. Raeph picks up the unconscious Marsha and carries her out the door. Parfrey follows. They return and grab up all the parchments they can. The room begins crumbling as FLAMES ROAR. Raeph and Parfrey flee. They hear the same maniacal laughter of the Character Assassin when Abigail's house burned echoing behind them.

EXT. THE DOCK ON THE BAYOU - NIGHT - 1790

The burning plantation house lights up the scene. The characters are dressed in traveling clothes and stand on the lawn with bags. There is a horse-drawn coach and a couple of riding horses at the ready. Raeph, dressed in his highwayman garb, places Marsha, with the basket and leather satchels containing the pages of her manuscript, in a boat at the dock.

RAEPH

Thank you Milo for the lending of your craft that returned you here.

He then pushes it away from the dock. Milo holds a lantern as everyone watches Marsha float away.

PRUCILLA

Be she alive?

RAEPH

She is passed out from smoke and shock.

Raeph takes Prucilla's hand in his and kisses it.

PRUCILLA

But why, dear sir?

REV. FOGARTY

Thinkest thou she shall find her way back to her time and place?

RAEPH

She is a powerful conjurer. If she wishes it, it will come true. As for us, we have our lives to live with new adventures afoot and love aloft.

The characters collect their belongings and head for the coach. Milo and his two sons sit atop the coach in the twilight of dawn. Raeph is about to mount his steed when he sees a woman approaching.

RAEPH

Abigail?

Raeph runs to Abigail, takes her in his arms, and kisses her.

EXT. ON THE WATERS OF THE BAYOU - NIGHT - 1790

Marsha's eyes flutter open to see the figures of her characters going away from the burning plantation house. She sees Raeph, the Spoiler, sitting with Abigail upon a rearing horse as she drifts away.

INT. NOPD HEADQUARTERS, MISSING PERSON'S UNIT - DAY - 2004

Renee sits at her desk and takes a sip from her cup of coffee. Caleb walks over and plops a newspaper with the headline reads: MISSING AUTHOR FOUND! THE SPOILER RESTORED!

CALEB

See this?

Renee picks up the paper and reads

RENEE

(reading aloud)

Missing author, Marsha Tucker, creator of "The Spoiler," a best-selling book in 2001...

BEGIN MONTAGE WITH VOICEOVER.

EXT. SHORE OF THE BAYOU - NIGHT - 2004

- An old-style boat, with Marsha in it, floats just off shore.

RENEE (VO)

...was found afloat in a centuries-old boat on the Bayou Segnette.

- Marsha is helped from the boat. She is wearing a full-length dress from the late 1700s.

RENEE (VO)

Clad in an 18th-century dress, she was found bearing two leather pouches and a basket stuffed with handwritten ink-on-paper documents.

- Uniformed police pull the boat to shore. Their FLASHLIGHTS and FLASH PHOTOGRAPHY show leather pouches stuffed with documents.

RENEE (VO)

Police also found an out-of-print copy of Tucker's original book with a large hole through it.

- The cover of "The Spoiler," with a masked highwayman on an upright steed, shines in Renee's flashlight as she examines the hole piercing it.

RENEE (VO)

Police took Tucker into custody for questioning.

- Police lights spin with Marsha in the back seat of a patrol car.

END MONTAGE

INT. NOPD HEADQUARTERS, MISSING PERSON'S UNIT - DAY - 2004

Renee puts down the paper.

CALEB

I think she pulled an Agatha Christie.

RENEE

Pardon?

CALEB

Mysteriously disappear and get everyone all worked up? It's a publicity stunt.

RENEE

If it was, it sure paid off for her... new publishing deal, six-figure contract deals. The real mystery is, whatever happened to Dr. Lafferty?

RENEE (CONT'D.)

Poof. Gone. Right before our eyes.

Renee makes an explosion gesture with her hands. The phone rings. Caleb picks it up.

CALEB

NOPD Missing Persons Division...

Detective Ross speaking...

(taking notes on a notepad)

Uh-huh... When was she last seen...

and where? ... We'll be right there.

(to Renee)

Missing teen in Bywater.

Caleb hangs up. Renee stands up. They walk through the busy station and exit.

EXT. A TROPICAL RESORT PATIO - NIGHT - 2005

Marsha is sitting on a patio with palm trees and the sea in the backdrop. Laptop open, she is drinking a bottle of soda when a Skype call CHIMES in. On screen appears her new editor and publisher, LILA STONESPEAR with a sign STONESPEAR PUBLICATIONS behind her.

MARSHA

Hi, Lila.

LILA

Looks like you are living the high life.

MARSHA

I am adjusting.

Marsha raises her bottle to Lila's face in the computer screen.

LILA

I know you're on vay-cay, but I just wanted to touch base about the rollout schedule for your next book in the series. We've got some tight deadlines coming up.

MARSHA

Thanks I'm hoping to find some inspiration down here where there's a lot of pirate history. I promise to get your something soon.

LILA

As your editor and publisher, it is my duty to hound you. Think I could see a couple of new chapters by the end of the week?

MARSHA

Wow. That soon?

LILA

As the adage goes...

MARSHA

A writer's work is never done.

LILA

Now, be a good little workaholic for me, will ya?

Marsha smiles and closes the laptop. She tips back the bottle to swig the rest then gets up to go into the room.

INT. ROOM AT TROPICAL RESORT - NIGHT - 2005

Only the moonlight sifting through the open patio door illuminates the room. Marsha drops the soda bottle in the trash, opens the small refrigerator, and reaches for another bottle of soda. Suddenly, steely fingers grab her by the wrist. A second hand clamps over her mouth.

MAN'S VOICE (OS)

Quiet!

Marsha is dragged through the open patio door.

EXT. THE JUNGLE - NIGHT

It's pouring torrential rain and pitch dark. The ideal tropical paradise becomes dark and scary. RAIN is DEAFENING. Marsha is dragged through brush and mud. They come to a hut.

INT. A HUT IN THE JUNGLE - NIGHT

Marsha falls to her knees onto the straw floor of a bamboo hut. There's a SNAP of a chemical light stick. In its glow, is square-jawed MAN (PETER BRETT) dressed in camouflage. He sets the light stick on the floor. Marsha scrambles back into a thatch wall. A heavy mask with large painted eyes and boar's tusks fall from above to the floor. She gasps and looks up to see startling faces carved in wood and gourds leering down at her. The sound of gunfire and shellfire

rattle the walls of the hut.

PETER

Do you recognize this place? Do you
recognize me?

A grenade explodes not far beyond the walls of the hut. The man fires his machine gun from a window. Marsha covers her head. He turns to Marsha and pulls her hands down.

MAN

Answer me!

MARSHA

Yes. You're Peter Brett, special forces. I began a novel where you were on the hunt for a mysterious woman shaman with connections to a vast eco-terrorism ring in the middle of an inter-island tribal war.

MAN/PETER

That's right. You left me here in this godforsaken hut surrounded by enemy fire. So, do me a favor and write me out of this mess!

Zoom in on Marsha, who looks right into the camera, giving a "Here we go again" look.

MARSHA

Got a pen and paper?

THE END