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EXCERPT FROM "GUIDED TOUR"

FADE IN:

INT. ELMWOOD HALL, A GILDED AGE MANSION - DAY

SUPER: "Newport, Rhode Island, 1972"

Two white POLICE DETECTIVES comb through the blackened rubble of a fire-ravaged room. The FIRST DETECTIVE sees a blistered antique chair lying on its side. He sets it upright, kneels down, and sniffs it like a dog. He moves on, carefully examining other items: A seared strip of medieval tapestry. A scattering of cut-glass beads. A charred antique dresser slashed with deep gouges, as if by an ax. Something glossy and colorful catches his eye. He pulls the object from the debris and dusts it off. It's an African mask.

CUT TO:

INT. THE LIVING ROOM OF SUSANNA'S APARTMENT - DAY

The face of SUSANNA HATCH, twenty-three. She's petite, with a sensual mouth, freckled skin, and tousled auburn hair. Her hazel eyes stare intently.

INT. ELMWOOD HALL, A GILDED AGE MANSION - DAY

The First Detective examines the mask. He holds it in front of his face. A voice calls to him from across the room.

SECOND DETECTIVE (V.O.)
Hey! Check this out.

The First Detective lowers the mask. He walks over to his partner, who points to a kerosene can lying on the ground. The First Detective hooks a piece of scrap wood through the handle, and raises the can to eye-level. He smiles with satisfaction.

CUT TO:

INT. THE LIVING ROOM OF SUSANNA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Susanna's eyes. They scan. Probe. Search for answers. She takes a slow drag on a joint.

INT. A POLICE INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

A disheveled JOE BELL sits at a table. He's black, mid-forties, with an intelligent, seasoned face that's devoid of expression. The mugshots of three young black men with Afros lie on the table in front of him. The First Detective munches peanuts and stares at Joe. The Second Detective leans against the wall, watching. The First Detective picks up the photos, glances at them, and tosses them back on the table.

FIRST DETECTIVE

Black Panthers, my ass. More like
black pussies.

The detectives LAUGH. Joe is impassive. The First Detective picks up a metal tool with a clamp on the end. He eyeballs Joe.

FIRST DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

My uncle was a vet. He fixed a lot
of horses with this. And other
animals.

The Second Detective lunges forward. He yanks Joe to his feet, knees him in the groin, and pins him against the wall. The First Detective pushes the emasculator against Joe's cheek.

FIRST DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

They gave you up, boy. Now either
you confess, right now, or I will
cut off your nuts and stick up 'em
up your nigger faggot ass. And
that's just for starters.

EXT. BOSTON SKYLINE - DAY

Glass office towers and the blue ribbon of the Charles River glint in the sun.

SUPER: "Boston, Massachusetts 1986"

EXT. A STREET IN A WORKING-CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Susanna saunters along a sidewalk. A mangy cat skitters across the trash-strewn street. Two ELDERLY LATINO MEN sit on lawn chairs outside a convenience store, watching the world go by. SUSANNA raises her hand in ritual greeting. They nod. Smile. A YOUNG BLACK MAN leans against a parked car, chewing on a peppermint stick. He glances idly at Susanna.

EXT. SUSANNA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Susanna clambers wearily up the steps to the front porch. The grey triple-decker looks neglected: peeling paint, missing shingles, an overgrown front yard. Susanna checks her mailbox. Nothing. She unlocks the door and enters.

INT. SUSANNA'S APARTMENT - THE LIVING ROOM - DAY

Susanna pads into the living room. It's cheaply furnished -- not quite student trash-pick but close. A TV with rabbit ears squats in the corner. She tosses her keys on the coffee table, and pushes a button on the answering machine.

ANNOUNCER'S VOICE

You have two new messages.

VOICE OF MIGUEL ALBIZU

Oye, mamita, you there? Pick up.
Please.

Susanna hits the delete button. Next she hears the cultured patrician voice of her father.

VOICE OF CHARLES HATCH

Susanna. It's your Dad. Could
you...?

She jams "delete" again. She flops on the couch and reaches for a handcrafted wooden box on the coffee table. She takes out a joint and a lighter. She fires up the joint, takes a drag, and leans back on the couch. She gazes at an African mask on the opposite wall. It's museum quality, not tourist kitsch. Her eyes seem to question the mask...

CUT TO:

EXT. A RHODE ISLAND BEACH - DAY

...which is gripped by delicate white hands. The hands belong to LINDSAY PETTIGREW, an attractive, WASPY woman in her forties. She's barefoot and wears a summer dress. Lindsay turns to a grinning Joe Bell, who gestures encouragement. She tries to put on the mask, but her wind-blown hair gets in the way. She laughs, throws up her hands. Joe laughs, too. She tries again. This time she succeeds. She faces Joe from behind the mask. She spreads her hands: what do you think? He nods and laughs happily.

JOE

Yeah!

BACK TO:

SUSANNA'S LIVING ROOM

Susanna contemplates the mask and takes a drag on the joint. JEANETTE, her roommate, comes in. She's chubby and nerdy with a kind face and a toothy smile. She wears a robe, and her head is wrapped in a towel.

JEANETTE

Hey there.

SUSANNA

Hey.

She offers Jeanette the joint. Jeanette declines.

JEANETTE

You coming to the party?

Susanna says nothing, takes another hit.

JEANETTE (CONT'D)

Sweetie, you gotta get out. This is not healthy. Kevin will be here in five minutes. We'll give you a ride, okay?

Susanna says nothing. Jeanette shrugs, leaves the room. Susanna puts the stub of the joint back in the box. She gets up from the couch and slouches into...

THE KITCHEN

She takes a beer from the refrigerator, flips off the cap. Claspings the bottle, she returns to...

THE LIVING ROOM

She sinks back down on the couch and takes a long pull on the beer. She examines the label on the bottle. Her eyes shift to the mask on the wall. It stares back. The doorbell CHIMES. She puts down the beer and pads into....

THE HALLWAY

She opens the front door. MIGUEL ALBIZU stands there, smiling and flipping a yo-yo. He's twenty-five, lithe, compact, cafe-au-lait skin, startling blue eyes. His jet-black hair is swept back in a ponytail. Susanna looks at him coldly, giving nothing away. After a moment, she turns and walks back into the house. He follows her into...

THE LIVING ROOM

She settles back on the couch, eyes averted. He sits in a threadbare easy chair. Silence. Except for a WHIRRING window fan and the WAIL of a police siren in the distance. She chugs her beer.

MIGUEL

How you been?

She is resolutely silent.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)

I got me a new niece. Raquel had her baby. Talk about cute, man, you wouldn't believe. Like this little tiny angel. That's what they call her, Angelina. I was just there, in San Juan. Everyone sends their love.

Susanna re-lights her joint.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)

You painting?

Still no response.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)

Look--

SUSANNA

What the fuck are you doing here?

He places a bunch of keys on the coffee table in front of her. The key chain features a hand-painted stone in the colors and shape of Puerto Rico.

MIGUEL

I got us a new apartment in Queens. Beautiful, two bedrooms, view of the park, you're gonna love it. And the roaches are bi-lingual.

Susanna laughs bitterly.

SUSANNA

You don't have a clue, do you? You don't have a fucking clue.

MIGUEL

I'm clean.

SUSANNA

Well, aren't you a saint.

MIGUEL

Susanna--

SUSANNA

Miguel, you are embarrassing yourself.

Miguel

Why do you fight it?

SUSANNA

God, that's a tough one. Let me see... Because I don't want to go back to hell?

MIGUEL

We belong together.

SUSANNA

Oh Christ.

MIGUEL

I love you. You love me.

SUSANNA

Of course, it's so simple.

MIGUEL

Yes.

SUSANNA

Your ego is unbelievable. You know that? I mean, look at this.

She picks up the keys, turns them over in her hand.

SUSANNA (CONT'D)

This is pathetic.

MIGUEL

It's real.

SUSANNA

It's a pathetic joke. And you know why? Because you're serious. You are so fucking full of yourself that no matter what I say, no matter what I do, you still have this idea that I can't live without you. Well, let me be real clear, okay, as clear as I can possibly be. It's simple. Two words. Two simple words. Fuck! Off!

She hurls the keys at him. He ducks.

SLOW MOTION -- The keys and the Puerto Rico stone tumble through the air and STRIKE the African mask. It BREAKS in two and falls to the floor.

DISSOLVE TO (AT
REGULAR SPEED):

FLASHBACK - INT. THE BALLROOM AT ELMWOOD HALL - NIGHT

A huge antique chandelier CRASHES onto a polished hardwood floor. Hundreds of cut-glass beads fly in all directions.

BACK TO:

THE LIVING ROOM

A distraught Susanna bends over the broken mask.

SUSANNA

Oh my God.

Miguel tries to help.

SUSANNA (CONT'D)

Get away! Get the fuck away from me!

She holds the pieces of the mask in her hand. Tears stream down her cheeks.

SUSANNA (CONT'D)

No, no, no....

MIGUEL

Oh baby, I am so sorry--

SUSANNA

Get out.

MIGUEL

It's a clean break, we can--

Jeanette rushes in. She's dressed for the party.

SUSANNA

Don't touch it! Don't you touch it.
Just get the fuck out.

Reluctantly, he retreats towards the door.

MIGUEL

I'll call you.

He exits.

JEANETTE

What happened? What did he do?

Susanna, still tearful and in shock, shakes her head. She examines the pieces of the mask in her hands.

JEANETTE (CONT'D)

Oh no, oh sweetie, I am so sorry.
But you know what? We'll get it
fixed, we will. I know this guy, he
does amazing work, you won't know
the difference, really. It'll be
like new.

Susanna sits bolt upright.

SUSANNA

I have to see him.

Susanna strides out of the living room and into....

HER BEDROOM

Jeanette follows.

JEANETTE

But he's poison.

SUSANNA

Not Miguel.

Susanna carefully puts the broken mask in a draw. She reaches underneath the bed and pulls out a backpack.

JEANETTE

Who then?

SUSANNA
It doesn't matter.

JEANETTE
Who?

Susanna rifles through her dresser, grabs clothes, tosses them into the bag.

JEANETTE (CONT'D)
Who are you talking about?

SUSANNA
Joe Bell.

JEANETTE
Oh God. I thought you were done with all that.

Susanna picks up a framed photo of Lindsay and Joe from her bedside table. She glances at it, wraps it in a T-shirt and thrusts it into the bag.

SUSANNA
I am just getting started.

JEANETTE
What do you mean?

Susanna bustles out of the bedroom and into....

THE BATHROOM

Jeanette follows, concerned. Susanna grabs her toothbrush. She glances in the mirror and frowns.

SUSANNA
God.

JEANETTE
What is going on with you?

SUSANNA
Can I borrow some of your stuff?

Jeanette is incredulous.

JEANETTE
You mean make-up?

SUSANNA
I need to look regular.

Susanna snatches up some of Jeanette's cosmetics and stuffs them in her toiletries bag.

JEANETTE

Okay, but...

Susanna hurries out of the bathroom and back to...

THE BEDROOM

Jeanette is hard on her heels.

JEANETTE (CONT'D)

Stop! Okay? You need to calm down,
take a breath.

Susanna ignores her. She takes a file folder and a small tape recorder from a walk-in closet. She puts them in her bag.

JEANETTE (CONT'D)

You're having some kind of
emotional reaction. Miguel shows up
like a bad penny and suddenly
you're rushing off to see this old
guy in jail? It makes no sense.

SUSANNA

Don't forget to feed the cat.

Susanna grabs the bag. Jeanette blocks her path.

JEANETTE

What is going on? Tell me.

Susanna kisses her on the cheek and dashes from the room.

EXT. SUSANNA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Susanna gallops down the front steps. Jeanette runs out onto the front porch and calls to her.

JEANETTE

When will you be back?

Susanna turns.

SUSANNA

When I know the truth.

JEANETTE

About what?

Susanna doesn't respond. She's already hurrying down the street.

JEANETTE (CONT'D)

Susanna!

Jeanette looks baffled and concerned.

EXT. RAILROAD TRACKS - DAY

A train speeds through the Boston suburbs.

INT. A TRAIN - DAY

Susanna sits by a window. She pulls a bulging file folder from her pack and sets it on her lap.

INT. ELMWOOD HALL - DAY

A majestic room of palatial extravagance: marble pillars, an ornate stucco ceiling, chandeliers. A red-carpeted staircase, flanked by wrought-iron railings, sweeps up to the second-floor. Exquisite antique tapestries adorn one wall. A group of camera-toting TOURISTS listens attentively to Joe Bell, their tour guide. He looks dapper in a blue blazer, red carnation, bow-tie, pleated pants, polished loafers. He exudes an easy charm.

JOE

.....and Elmwood Hall was his cottage for the summer season.

A YOUNG COUPLE exchange incredulous glances.

JOE (CONT'D)

That's right, that's what they called them back then. Cottages. Now when he died in 1893, the millions he made in railroads and coal, and this itty-bitty cottage, went to his son and heir, Cornelius Chase Junior.

Joe gestures to a portrait of a tall, pallid man with mutton-chop whiskers. He poses stiffly in a morning coat and stovepipe hat. An Irish wolfhound sprawls beside him.

JOE (CONT'D)

That's him, right there, with his faithful pooch. Kinda look alike, don't they?

The tourists laugh.

BACK TO:

THE TRAIN

Susanna opens the file folder. She scans a clipping from a newspaper dated August 23, 1972. The headline reads: "Tour guide arrested in mansion fire". A photo shows a scruffy Joe Bell in handcuffs and leg-irons escorted by the First and Second Detectives and flanked by other grim-faced cops.

INT. A PRISON PSYCHIATRIC UNIT - DAY

An older Joe Bell, in prison-issue jumpsuit, pushes a book cart down a bare corridor. ALONSO, a boyish Latino guard, greets him with contained excitement.

ALONSO

Hey Professor. Did you--?

Joe smiles.

JOE BELL

I got it. In English, couldn't get the Spanish.

He removes a paperback from the cart, handling it as though it were priceless porcelain. His tone is reverential.

JOE

Pablo Neruda. Say after me.

ALONSO

Pablo Neruda.

JOE

One of the greatest poets who ever lived.

ALONSO

One of the greatest poets who ever lived.

Joe carefully hands him the book.

JOE

What you going to do with it?

ALONSO
I'm going to take care of it.

JOE
How much?

ALONSO
Like it was the last book on earth.

Joe nods approvingly.

JOE
How's your Mom doing?

ALONSO
Better. She liked the tape.

JOE
Good. It's healing. Healing music.

HENRY, a lanky balding inmate with bad teeth and a tic, runs up. He points excitedly at the book.

HENRY
First edition, right?

ALONSO
Henry, it's a paperback.

HENRY
No no no no, gotta be a first
edition, gotta be, top of the line,
we deserve the best in literature
and music and...and...all of it,
nothing but the best. The best the
best nothing but the best. Ain't
that right, Joe?

JOE
That's right, Henry.

HENRY
What you got for me, Joe? You got
something for me?

Joe pulls another book from the cart and gives it to Henry.

JOE
Henry, you know me. I don't forget
no one.