

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

It is 1924. Chicago.

The streets are coated in rain and the stench of alcohol.

THOMAS, a young man, walks lonesomely down the road, the rain and dim lighting forming his silhouette.

His hands are shoved into his pockets, his fedora mysteriously covering half of his face as his back is arched broodingly.

He approaches a small door, knocking on it vigorously. HOUSEWIFE opens the door, eying the man suspiciously.

HOUSEWIFE
How can I help you?

Thomas lifts his head, rain dripping off the brim of his hat. Thunder and lightning clash, illuminating his features.

THOMAS
I was hoping for a barrel.

The housewife's eyes widen, opening the door for Thomas to step inside.

INT. HOME ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Thomas steps inside, taking off his fedora. He spots a door to his right, the housewife stepping towards it.

HOUSEWIFE
You'll find what you're looking for
down here, sir. Everyone does.

She opens the door, a staircase leading to a lower level. Laughter and voices echo through the house, Thomas' features stern.

THOMAS
Thank you.

Thomas walks down the stairs, the Housewife closing the door behind him, the hall going pitch black.

INT. SPEAKEASY - CONTINUOUS

Thomas enters a glamorous room, people of immense wealth crowding around a bar.

Soft jazz plays. Flappers dance on stage, the crowd hooting and hollering for just an ounce of their attention.

A woman in a fancy dress walks past, Thomas tapping her on the shoulder.

THOMAS

Do you know where I can find a
Harold Masterson?

Thomas reaches inside his trench coat. The lady laughs him off, walking away. His arm falls to his side, defeated.

A man then walks past, Thomas trying to get his attention.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Excuse me, sir? I-

The man continues walking, ignoring him. Thomas sighs, examining the speakeasy with intrigue.

Thomas' eyes widen with wonder, immersed in the scene. Blinded by the lights, he stumbles over to the bar, bumping into a fifty year old man, HAROLD, who is wearing a tailored suit.

HAROLD

Easy there, lad.

Harold raises a cigar to his lips, Thomas uneasy. Harold taps the counter vigorously, then turns back to Thomas.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

There's plenty to go around. Here,
let me buy you a drink.

THOMAS

Oh, I'm not here for-

Harold scoffs, flabbergasted. The bartender, JOE, walks up, waiting patiently.

HAROLD

Not here for a drink? Then what are
you doing down here, boy?

Thomas plays with his trench coat nervously, the wet fabric squishing between his fingers.

Harold turns to Joe.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

You hearing this, Joe? He's not
here for a drink.

Everyone at the bar laughs, Thomas looking to the floor, embarrassed. Harold looks back to him, stone faced.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

(stern)

What are you here for, youngin'?

THOMAS

(hesitant)

Well, I...

BEATRICE, a young flapper, walks up to the bar.

BEATRICE

Not everyone comes for the booze,
Harold. Some come for the life of
the party.

THOMAS

(to himself)

Harold...?

Harold nods to her, straightening his posture.

HAROLD

Whatever you say, Doll.

Harold whistles for Joe. Beatrice rolls her eyes.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

A shot of gin.

Joe nods, preparing the drink. When he's done, he hands it to Harold and then walks off.

Harold raises his glass to Thomas, beginning to walk off.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Enjoy the party.

THOMAS

Wait-

Thomas goes to follow him, but Harold disappears into the crowd. Beatrice pulls Thomas back.

BEATRICE

Trust me, he's the last person here
you would want to converse with.

Beatrice sits down at a free barstool, motioning for Thomas to join her. He leans against the counter.

THOMAS
Might I ask why?

BEATRICE
Why? His ego barely fits underneath
his hat. And it doesn't help that
he owns the joint.

Thomas presses his lips together, turning look into the crowd.

THOMAS
That's a shame... I was hoping to
ask him a few questions.

BEATRICE
Questions?

Thomas straightens his posture, uncomfortable. Beatrice looks him up and down, suspicious.

THOMAS
It's nothing... it can wait.

Thomas looks around the speakeasy, in awe. There is a pause.

BEATRICE
You've never been to a speakeasy
before, have you?

Thomas shakes his head.

THOMAS
I know a couple buddies who have...
this was the first one I could get
into.

Beatrice nods, trying to gain eye contact with him, but fails.

BEATRICE
(annoyed)
I can tell...

Thomas shakes his head.

THOMAS
I mean, I've heard the stories, but
I didn't expect it to be so...

BEATRICE
Glamorous?

Thomas nods, his eyes darting between different people in the crowd.

THOMAS

I haven't even heard good stories.

Beatrice tilts her head, a realization dawning on her.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

But it's got me thinking... who could hate a place like this?

Beatrice turns to look around the club with him. Thomas is in awe, while Beatrice is unamused. Thomas chuckles to himself, bashful.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I feel so out of place... I mean just look at this place.

Beatrice then turns back to look at Thomas.

BEATRICE

You know, mister...

Beatrice grabs his tie, making him turn to face her.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)

I've been stuck here for over a year and it's not the party you're looking for.

She lets go of his tie, Thomas straightening it.

THOMAS

What do you mean by that?

Beatrice scoffs, looking around the room.

BEATRICE

It's a facade... a distraction. They all look happy, but they must know it'll end when the morning comes.

Beatrice laughs to herself.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)

The color drains over time... come here enough, and it'll happen.

Beatrice taps the counter, Joe rushing over.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)

The usual, Joe.

Joe nods, preparing her drink. When he's finished, he hands her a small glass of whiskey. She nods to him, Joe walking off. She takes a sip.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)

No matter how much you refill each night, there's always a bottom to every bottle.

Beatrice turns to Thomas, her eyes glossy.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)

And no matter how many times I reach that bottom, I keep coming back.

Beatrice looks at her whiskey, her lip quivering.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)

Why do I keep coming back?

Thomas looks around the room, the same look of awe in his eyes.

THOMAS

Maybe a distraction is what you need; what everyone needs.

Thomas runs his fingers through his hair, turning back to Beatrice.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Here... the gloom and the storms don't have to be the norm.

Beatrice shakes her head, downing the rest of her drink. The residue of the whiskey settles at the bottom.

BEATRICE

Here, we exploit the law and beat it with a bottle until the shards start flying.

Beatrice eyes the speakeasy with distaste.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)

This is the devil's house, and we greet him kindly at the door.

Thomas looks around the room, everything bright and loud - nothing like Beatrice is describing.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)

Can I ask you a question?

Thomas nods, eager.

THOMAS
Anything.

BEATRICE
Do you consider yourself a hero?

Beat.

THOMAS
What?

BEATRICE
Do you do what's right, or do you
let fantasy get in the way?

Thomas plays with his tie, avoiding eye contact.

THOMAS
I try to see the best in
everything, ma'am.

Beatrice scoffs.

BEATRICE
That doesn't answer my question.

THOMAS
Well, I'm afraid it wasn't a very
good question.

BEATRICE
Well, I suppose you're right.

A beat.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)
So let me ask you a different
question.

THOMAS
Go ahead.

Beatrice looks away, scanning the room uncomfortably.

BEATRICE
What do you see in this place?

Thomas thinks about it for a minute, putting his fingers to
his lips as he thinks on it.

THOMAS

If I'm being honest... I've always been an open-minded person.

Thomas looks around the speakeasy, a smile slowly forming.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I've been told my whole life how to feel... here, I can make up my own mind.

Thomas turns back to Beatrice.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Maybe this place is a reward for our suffering.

Beatrice turns to him, eying him warily.

BEATRICE

That's rather odd of someone like you to say.

Thomas turns to her.

THOMAS

(nervous)

Whatever do you mean?

Beatrice grabs him by the collar of his trench coat, reaching her hand into an inner pocket. She pulls out a police badge, holding it up for him to see.

BEATRICE

Is this yours?

Thomas' lip quivers, hesitant to speak. Beatrice throws it onto the counter, the metal banging loudly against the wooden surface.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)

Do you know how many of your buddies comes in every week? I've seen every kind.

Thomas sneaks the badge back into his pocket.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)

The temperamental, the skittish...

Beatrice pauses, looking Thomas in the eyes.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)

The eager.

Thomas looks away, lowering his head like a hurt puppy.

THOMAS
(whisper)
I won't say anything.

BEATRICE
I know.

Beatrice stands up, straightening her dress.

BEATRICE (CONT'D)
Y'all never do.

Beatrice walks off, Thomas letting out a shaky breath. He runs his fingers through his hair, feeling down.

Joe walks up to him, taking Beatrice's cup and begins cleaning it. Thomas knocks his finger on the counter, Joe perking up.

THOMAS
I'll have what the lady ordered.

Joe nods, preparing a new drink. He then hands Thomas a glass of whiskey, waiting for him to take a sip.

Thomas picks up the glass, eyeing it before taking his first sip.

END.