

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

“Dead of Winter”

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. MANHATTAN STREETS (STOCK) . ESTABLISHING

Winter has Manhattan in its grasp. Dirty snow is piled up along the sidewalks, icicles hang from the bare branches of trees, cabs send up waves of slush as they move down the streets. The imagery should be cold and stark, not festive.

CUT TO:

INT. CANDLEWORKS CHAMBER - DAY

A metal brazier heats a vat of hot wax in a cozy underground chamber. The candlemaker of the world below lifts candles carefully and moves them to a wall rack to harden. The rack is full of similar candles. Father, Vincent and some tunnel children watch. Father holds a finished candle, admiring it.

FATHER

These are lovely, Rebecca. I do believe they are the finest candles you’ve make for us.

REBECCA

You said that last year.

VINCENT

It was true last year.

FATHER

And the year before.

REBECCA

I love making the Winterfest candles. They’re special.

SAMANTHA

(eagerly)

Do we get to take them up now?

REBECCA

The first batch is ready for delivery. I don’t see why not.

The kids look to Father. When he nods, they surround Rebecca, clamoring for candles. She gives the finished candles to the children.

SAMANTHA

Bet I’ll finish first!

GEOFFREY

I bet you won’t.

SAMANTHA

Will so.

GEOFFREY

Won't.

FATHER

This is not a race. You've been given a very important responsibility... understand?

The children nod.

FATHER

Good. Well, you have your lists. Now off you go.

Geoffrey bolts for the door to get a head start. Samantha notices.

SAMANTHA

Hey! No fair!

Samantha is off as well.

FATHER

Now be careful up there!

They watch the children run off down the tunnels.

REBECCA

Wasn't so long ago that I was delivering candles instead of making them.

FATHER

I remember... especially the year when you fell and twisted your knee.

VINCENT

Sometimes we have to fall, Father ... to learn how to get up.

REBECCA

Mouse was the worst. The first year I made the candles, he broke half of them with that catapult of his.

FATHER

(chuckles)

Our poor helpers thought someone was flinging missiles at them.

(to Vincent)

And you and Devin had your fair share of misadventures, as well as I recall.

VINCENT

(takes a candle)

A few...but we always made our deliveries... and I...think I still remember how.

Vincent holds the candle and turns it tenderly between his fingers

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CATHY'S BALCONY - NIGHT

The same candle, now in Catherine's hand.

The terrace windows are rimmed with frost, and there are traces of old snow along the parapets. Both are warmly dressed against the winter chill.

CATHY

Vincent, it's beautiful. Remember how I told you when I was little I was afraid of the dark?

Well, my mother gave me a candle to light at the bedside before I went to sleep. It was just a tiny little thing, a birthday candle. Somehow it made it alright. I've loved candles ever since.

VINCENT

This is...no ordinary candle. This is for Winterfest. It's a special time for us. We have other celebrations; all the holidays and traditions we share with your world, but... Winterfest is our own. It's a time to remember the past... dream of the future.

Each year we deliver these candles to our helpers in the world above. Without their light our world would be dark; our lives would be cold without their warmth. The candles are our way of saying that they're a part of us.

Everyone, the entire community, has agreed...this year's Winterfest would be incomplete unless you are there.

Catherine is deeply touched. For a moment she searches for the words to express how much she values this sign of acceptance from the world below, but no words are adequate.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FATHER'S CHAMBER – NIGHT

Samantha and Father are playing chess. Vincent stands behind Samantha's chair and watches as she makes a move. Father studies the board.

FATHER

Mmm... You might want to reconsider that move, Samantha. You've left your knight undefended.

Samantha just shakes her head.

FATHER

No?

Father shrugs, reaches out, captures the knight with a bishop and removes the piece from the board, as Geoffrey bursts in, breathless.

GEOFFREY

I'm finished!

(sees Samantha, reacts)

What are you doing here?

SAMANTHA

Playing chess.

(moves piece)

Check. And mate in one.

GEOFFREY

You can't have made it first. I ran all the way.

As Father stares at the board in dismay, Samantha calmly exits the chamber, pausing to talk to Geoffrey.

SAMANTHA

I took the subway.

They exit the chamber.

FATHER

I'm looking forward to Winterfest. There are a few helpers I can still beat.

VINCENT

(placing an arm around Father's shoulders)

Don't think of yourself as a bad player, Father... only a very good teacher.

(leans and kisses Father's head)

Father begins to put away the chess set.

FATHER

Is the Great Hall in order?

VINCENT

One of the tables needed some repairs. Cullen and I carried it up to his workshop.

FATHER

Good...good.

(beat, muses)

A third of a century.... It's hard for me to believe it, Vincent. You were only a babe in arms that first year...

VINCENT

My oldest memory is of a Winterfest; I must have been three or four.

I remember a cold, dark room. My footsteps echoed all around me. I was frightened. Devin held my hand... and then they lit the candles and the darkness pushed back. When I glimpsed the tapestries for the first time... it took my breath away.

Father continues putting the chessmen away. He absentmindedly plays with a chess piece.

FATHER

(reflective)

It was John who hung those tapestries...

VINCENT

Paracelsus?

FATHER

He was the one who found the Great Hall. For a time he talked of making it his chamber. Even then, his dreams were... large.

VINCENT

But he was exiled before the first Winterfest.

FATHER

Yes. Afterwards we... needed a way to heal ourselves. There was barely enough to fill one table then. The children laid the places. The wound was so raw... He'd been part of us for so long.

VINCENT

What happened, Father?

FATHER

A mistake was made. There was a place laid for each of us... and an empty chair where John always used to sit. I took it away.

(beat)

Pascal's father removed the place setting. Not a word was spoken. We...just went on.

For a moment, Father sits, staring off down the years, to that chair that still stands empty in his memories, then he returns to the present.

FATHER

Well, that's history now, dead and gone. So, tell me, did you talk to Mouse about the raccoon?

Father reaches over to the box with the chess set.

VINCENT

Yes... yes. He promises... solemnly, that Arthur will remain at home this year.

We are tight on the chess set as Father's hand closes the hinged lid. A stylized rose, worked in bright silver, is inlaid into the top of the black lacquer box. Hold on the image and ...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MASK MAKER'S LAIR IN A CAVE – DIM

Flickering reddish torchlight illuminates a dank chamber deep within the earth. The walls are covered with dozens of masks. Masks carved from wood or stone, cast in plaster, sewn together from leather. Life-like human faces, their mouths open as if to scream cover one table. Everywhere empty eyes gape down from the rock walls. The chamber is malign, disturbing.

ANGLE ON MASK MAKER

As she shapes the features of a clay bust on a table in front of her. Her long fingers are skilled, but somehow cruel; she twists the clay as if she were trying to hurt it. She's tall. Her skin is pale. There's something wild-eyed and fierce about her. As she works, she addresses a figure in the shadows that we do not see.

MASK MAKER

Bring me the face. Without the face, I cannot do it.

REVERSE ANGLE

On the figure in the shadows. He wears a black cloak, a hood, gloves. We cannot see his features, but when he replies, he speaks with Vincent's voice.

MAN IN SHADOWS

(Vincent's voice)

Whatever you require, Tamara. That you shall have.

RESUME ON TAMARA

She seems vastly amused.

TAMARA

You talk so sweet.... That voice will get you anything.

(beat)

Bring me the face, and I will make it yours. The man who wears it now won't be needing it, will he?

MAN IN SHADOWS

(Vincent's voice)

No, I don't imagine he will.

TAMARA

Will you kill them all?

MAN IN SHADOWS

(Vincent's voice)

They are my friends, my family. Their world is my world. Why should I mean them harm, Tamara?

He pauses for a beat, then answers his own question, but now he speaks in Father's voice, and then in the voices of other members of the underground community.

MAN IN SHADOWS

(in Father's voice)

Because they disgraced me, took away everything that mattered... work and home and all I loved?

(in Pascal's voice)

Because they stole my systems, my notes, the journals of my research and explorations?

(in Mouse's voice)

Because they chased me from their light, hounded me even from my sad refuge in the darkness?

TAMARA

(laughs, amused)

You have the voice, but not the words. The mouse boy doesn't talk so good.

ANGLE ON THE CLOAKED FIGURE

As he steps forward, so the light from the chamber's torches falls across his face, and see for the first time that it is Paracelsus. His mask of beaten gold covers one side of his face.

PARACELSUS

(in Mouse's voice)

Okay good. Okay fine.

Tamara looks up, clearly a little in awe of his verbal mimicry, but she is still not convinced.

TAMARA

But even with the voices... even with the face... If they find you out, this time they will kill you.

(goes back to working the clay)

It was all so long ago. What has their world to do with you?

PARACELSUS

(in his own voice)

Their world is mine by rights. I made them. I taught them. But... they have lessons yet to learn.

TAMARA

What kind of lessons?

PARACELSUS

Poetry lessons...

(begins to recite)

That this world, which seems / To lie before us like a land of dreams, / So various, so beautiful, so new / Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light, / Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain; / -And we are here as on a darkling plain / Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight, / Where ignorant armies clash by night.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE WELL - NIGHT

A huge black shaft sinks deep into the bowels of the earth. The only sound is the steady drip of water somewhere far below. A solitary figure slowly climbs the steps that spiral around the interior of the well. One hand feels the wall carefully as she ascends. Narcissa carries a small, covered basket, but no light, making her way through the darkness.

She is smiling, talking to herself low under her breath, seemingly at ease even in this venomous dark.

NARCISSA

You were so good to me today. I got everything I need... beautiful stones, beautiful crystals... everything I need.

Suddenly she hears the sound of footsteps echoing faintly down the well, and reacts with alarm. She stops where she is, craning her head up.

NARCISSA'S POV

Her vision is badly impaired by her cataracts as she stares up the well. Everything is blurred and out-of-focus; all we can see is the flickering light of the torch as someone descends the steps toward her.

Finally, dimly, Narcissa can make out the figure of a tall, cloaked man coming toward her. Narcissa shrinks back against the wall, alarmed. You run into some strange people this far down.

NARCISSA

Who...who is there?

The cloaked figure comes to a stop several steps above Narcissa. He carries a burning torch in one hand, a white canvas sack in the other. When Paracelsus speaks, he uses Vincent's voice.

PARACELSUS

(in Vincent's voice)

Vincent.

The familiar voice puts Narcissa at ease. She smiles, climbs another step, her hand groping in front of her.

NARCISSA

Oh, Vincent...so far from home, child.

Paracelsus continues down the stairs.

PARACELSUS

(in Vincent's voice)

I'm sorry to frighten you, Narcissa. I did not think to meet anyone in such a dark place.

NARCISSA

(continues to ascend as she replies)

Oh, I know all the dark places...the black gulfs, the shadows, the hidden doors.... The dark is my friend, child. I am not afraid.

(a beat)

Vincent?

ANGLE ON NARCISSA

Her groping hand reaches up and touches the sack Paracelsus carries. Her smile vanishes; she looks concerned, confused. Her fingers fumble against the sack, and we see that the white canvas is spotted with blood from whatever is carried within.

NARCISSA

(feeling bag...snatches back her hand in sudden fear)

Blood. What is it?

ANGLE ON PARACELSUS

As he descends a step, his look implacable. The charade is over now, and he speaks with his own voice.

PARACELSUS

Only a face...and a candle, to light my way in the dark.

Narcissa's hand touches Paracelsus and she pulls it back as if burned.

NARCISSA

(afraid)

No...you are not Vincent. You are the evil one.

PARACELSUS

Down here there is neither good nor evil... only strong and weak.

Narcissa stumbles away from him, down the steps.

PARACELSUS

Have a care... the steps are slippery. Let me light your way.

He pokes his torch at her, setting her ragged clothing afire. Narcissa screams, drops her basket, tries to beat at the flames with her hands, but they spread too fast. As the fire envelopes her, Paracelsus pushes her over the edge.

His face is almost expressionless as he watches her fall. The sounds of Narcissa's screams dwindle slowly away.

PARACELSUS

There are no friends in the darkness, old woman. In the dark, all men are enemies.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

CUT TO FATHER'S CHAMBER

FADE IN:

INT. FATHER'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

The council is meeting to plan the Winterfest. Present around the table are Father, Vincent, Mary, and a big bear of a man named William.

FATHER

Also... we need volunteers... to guide our helpers down...

MARY

Pascal has put the word out on the pipes.

FATHER

Excellent. Well, William, how are you doing with the food?

WILLIAM

Ought to be plenty, but it'd help if we had an exact count of who's coming and who's not.

MARY

Has anyone heard from Narcissa?

WILLIAM

She doesn't answer our calls. Pascal thinks she must be down below the pipes again.

VINCENT

Lana left a candle in her chamber. If she returns in time, she will find it there, but... Narcissa's nature is a solitary one. I was just a boy the last time she came to Winterfest.

MARY

It makes me worry. We see so little of her...

FATHER

Mary, it is her choice to live apart from us...

MARY

But think of her age! Her eyes get worse every year....

VINCENT

Oh, Narcissa can see things that are hidden from you and me. And wherever she might wander, she always finds her way home.

FATHER

And usually with some outrageous tale of where she's been.

CUT TO:

INT. TAMARA'S LAIR - NIGHT

Paracelsus' hand is shown touching a mask, its features twisted grotesquely, as if in great pain. The camera draws back and Paracelsus comes into view.

PARACELSUS

Alas, dear Jacob... Father. I knew him well, Tamara. A fellow of infinite jest... of most excellent fancy.

TAMARA

(to Paracelsus)

We can begin. Is that the box Vulcan made up for you? What is it?

PARACELSUS

A shadow, dear Tamara... an echo of what once was... and can never be again. It was 35 years ago that I gave Jacob his chessmen... a token of my affection... of our friendship.

TAMARA

Friendship is a wonderful thing. The arming device?

CLOSE ON THE BOX

Paracelsus flips open the lid. Inside this box are no chess pieces snug in their niches, but

rather the makings of a crude, but very powerful, explosive device.

PARACELSUS

On the lid. Press the rose. The next time the box is opened... checkmate.

Tamara steps up behind Paracelsus. Very carefully she reaches around and removes the beaten gold mask. Beneath, the skin is scarred and twisted.

TAMARA

Pretty.

PARACELSUS

(impatient)

Get on with it.

As she does,

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CHAMBER OF THE WINDS LONG STAIRCASE

The great stone stairway in the Chamber of the Winds is crowded, as a long line of people make their way downward, Vincent and Cathy and their little group of helpers are in their midst, surrounded by a mixed group of subterraneans and helpers. A few of the travelers carry lanterns and flickering torches, and there is an unlit Winterfest candle in every hand. The wind howls through the chamber, whipping at clothing and hair, but the spirits are high. There is loud talk, joking.

Vincent leads Catherine through the crowd of tunnel dwellers who have gathered together at the foot of the stairs in front of a set of towering wooden doors, twice the height of a man. A massive wooden beam holds the doors shut against the force of the wind.

Vincent looks at her and hands her his candle as he moves to the doors and lifts the heavy wooden beam, setting it aside. He pushes, and the doors creak open slowly, revealing an echoing expanse of darkness. When the doors are open, it creates a kind of wind-tunnel effect, and the velocity of the wind seems to increase sharply, as it goes howling down the tunnel. No one moves until Vincent turns back to Catherine.

ANGLE ON VINCENT AND CATHY

Cathy smiles and reacts as the wind shrieks around her.

VINCENT

Can I lead you through the dark?

CATHY

There is no darkness, Vincent...when you're with me.

Together they walk through the doors into the room beyond, their figures vanishing into blackness. Father follows. The rest of the tunnel dwellers and guests crowd after him.

CLOSE ON FATHER

He sits at the head of a table, a Winterfest candle burning in front of him... Father's face, lit by the flame of the single candle, as he begins to speak.

FATHER

The world above us is cold and gray, summer a distant memory. Our world, too, has known its winters, so each year we begin this feast in darkness, as our world began in darkness.

We pull back slowly from Father to take in the table in front of him. As one, several others touch their Winterfest candles in the flame of Father's, until the wicks catch. Now Vincent and Mary carry on the story, their speeches continuous, familiar words of an oral tradition. Vincent lights Catherine's candle as he speaks, Mary lights Peter's candle as she speaks...

VINCENT

Long before the city above us raised its towers to the sky, men sought shelter in these caverns.

MARY

In those days, these tunnels were dark places, and those who dwelt here dwelt in fear and isolation.

VINCENT

This was a land of lost hope... of twisted dreams, a land of despair... where the sounds of footsteps coming down a tunnel were the sounds of terror... where men reached for knives and rocks and worse at the sound of other men's voices.

FATHER

But at last a few people learned to put aside their fear.

MARY

And we began to trust each other... to help each other.

VINCENT

And each of us grew stronger... those who took the help, and those who gave it.

FATHER

We are all part of one another... one family... one community. Sometimes we forget this, and so we meet here each year to give thanks to those who have helped us... and to remember... even the greatest darkness is nothing, so long as we share the light.

We track back along the length of the table, each person passing the candle light to the person beside them. On and on it goes, two long parallel streams of light, as candle is lit from candle all along the length of what we now see is a long wooden table. With each new candle, the hall grows brighter. We continue to pull back until...

The great chandeliers are lighted and hoisted up to the ceiling, a violin begins to play; a tall man in a top hat and tails is performing tricks, couples are dancing...

INT. GREAT HALL - LATER

Now brilliantly lit by a myriad of candles, torches, lanterns, and bustling with activity. The chamber is cavernous and high-ceilinged, hewn long ago out of solid stone. The great double doors through which the tunnel dwellers entered stand at the far end of the hall. In an upper gallery the walls are covered by a series of magnificent old tapestries, their colors faded now, perhaps fraying a bit at the edges, but still obviously things of beauty and great antiquity, depicting a variety of medieval scenes (castles, dragons, hunting, etc.). We hear the sounds of laughter, and lively music... the buzz of conversation.... Some of the guests are moving

about to visit with other friends, some are dancing...

CUT TO:

VINCENT AND CATHERINE

As they climb the steps to the upper gallery, Vincent is showing Catherine the tapestries.

CATHY

They're wonderful. Where did they come from? Who was the artist?

VINCENT

Those are mysteries we've never solved, Catherine. Perhaps they're enchanted.

(beat, fondly)

I used to imagine that they were magic windows... that if I stared at them long enough and hard enough, they might open up for me, and I could pass through to another world.

But when I reached out, it was only cloth.

From the look on Catherine's face, we know she understands his yearnings.

CUT TO:

Samantha and Geoffrey playing a game of checkers. Samantha executes a triple jump, removing Geoffrey's last pieces from the board.

GEOFFREY

This is a stupid game. I'm going to go get some cake.

Geoffrey jumps up and runs off, Samantha shrugs and returns the checkers and board to a low shelf carved from the stone wall. The shelf also holds other games, and the familiar black lacquer box.

As Samantha leaves, we hold on the shelf. A hand enters the frame, picks up Father's chess set, lays the substitute in its place. Nothing about the hand or sleeve tells us who it belongs to. We begin to move in on the box.

A long finger delicately touches the silver rose inlaid in the lid, then presses down on it. The inlay depresses slightly, with a small, sharp click, then pops back into place when the finger lifts off it. As the hand moves stealthily away, we hold for a long beat on the box.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

RESUME GREAT HALL

The man in tails is doing a balloon trick. Father and Mary come into view as they cross the hall together, talking. She's worried, he reassuring.

MARY

I know she seldom comes to Winterfest, but it's been so long with no word...

FATHER

Oh, I'm sure she's fine. Narcissa is indestructible... but if it will help you rest easier, we'll put together some sort of search first thing tomorrow.

They reach the corner where the games have been placed. Father looks over the shelf and picks up the chess set.

FATHER

You know, you really ought to let me teach you to play chess. It's a wonderful game.

CUT TO:

ANOTHER PART OF THE HALL

The magician in tails is performing a balloon trick for Jamie, Lou the barber, and a few others.

JAMIE

If you really are the greatest magician in the world, how come you do all your tricks on subways?

LOU

The little lady's gotcha there.

MAGICIAN

No, no, no, no, no. Those are only token appearances.

When that provokes wincing all around, the magician clears his throat and continues with a shrug.

MAGICIAN

Oh, yes, yes. I love... I love the subway. And the streets... And, what Broadway theater can compare with New York streets? Hmm? I see it all. Yes. The men rushing to work, the children at play, the girls in their beautiful summer dresses... And everyone wanting a little magic.

(Smiling, he turns his wand into a handkerchief.)

And Sebastian is there.

A little behind them, Rebecca is talking with Peter. Lou joins them.

REBECCA

It must be frightening sometimes, knowing that you have the power of life and death in your hands.

DR. ALCOTT

You get used to it. If you don't, you'd better get out of medicine. Otherwise the stress will eat you alive.

LOU

Gimme my racket any day. I screw up, some guy walks out with crooked sideburns... but at least he walks out.

DR. ALCOTT

I'm sure your work has its own rewards, Lou.

LOU

It's a thrill a minute. You want sometime, you can watch me sweep out the hair...

Nearby Sebastian is delighting a circle of tunnel children with a floating ball trick.

SEBASTIAN

(giving the ball a name)

Here comes Charlie. Oh. There. Look. Come say hello. Steady, steady.

(Ball disappears behind the cloth, and he moves away as if following the ball)

Where is he going now?

TRACKING WITH PASCAL

As he moves across the room toward an exit. He passes SEBASTIAN, who is still performing.

Mary is standing with Father and reaches out to stop him.

MARY

Pascal, are you leaving so early?

PASCAL

(a bit sheepish)

I have to check the pipes.

Catherine and Vincent join them.

FATHER

My dear friend, what's there to check? Everyone is down here, including our helpers.

PASCAL

(awkward shrug)

I don't like to be away too long. You never can tell....

VINCENT

Pascal, surely you can spare a few hours.

PASCAL

I just want to check the pipe chamber, make sure that everything is...

CATHY

Still there?

Pascal grins and nods gratefully, then hurries away. Cathy looks amused.

VINCENT

You're smiling.

CATHY

Our worlds are so different. Every day I see people who work just for a paycheck. But Pascal and his pipes...

VINCENT

The tapping is the sweetest music in the world for Pascal.

Vincent and Catherine stroll across the room pausing to watch Sebastian.

SEBASTIAN

(still working with the floating ball trick)

Where's he going?

CUT TO:

INT. UPPER TUNNELS - LATER

Pascal is making his way along one of the upper tunnels, close to his pipe chamber. Pipes large and small run along the wall, but there is no tapping, only the background sound of the subway. Yet, suddenly Pascal stops, frowns as if puzzled. Still we hear nothing. He moves to the wall, waits, listens. Nothing. Still dissatisfied, he takes his stethoscope out of his pocket and presses it to one of the pipes. For the first time we hear a sound; very faint and far-away, a barely audible metallic scratching. Pascal concentrates harder as we ...

RESUME GREAT HALL

Father, the chess set tucked under his arm, is having an animated conversation with Dr. Alcott. Mouse listens.

FATHER

Peter, those journals you gave me are quite fascinating. Some of the results they're getting with laser surgery these days...

DR. ALCOTT

(chuckles)

Makes you wish you had a laser down here, doesn't it?

FATHER

I'd give anything...

MOUSE

Build you one!

FATHER

Ah... no. No thank you, Mouse.

SEBASTIEN

(interrupting)

Ah, chess... the game of kings! Not to mention rooks and pawns!

(laughs)

Well, set them up. Set them up. Time for your annual humiliation.

FATHER

Never again. Last year you took my king.

SEBASTIEN

Well, isn't that the whole idea?

FATHER

The whole idea is that you capture the pieces. You do not make them disappear.

(to Dr. Alcott)

Peter, would you care for a game?

DR. ALCOTT

(Peter Alcott smiles but seems disinclined.)

Jacob, have you ever considered talking to a psychologist about this streak of masochism?

ANGLE ON DANCE FLOOR

The musicians are playing a lovely waltz. In the background a few dancers whirl across the floor. Catherine and Vincent are listening to the music, rapt. Father, the innocent-seeming chess set still under his arm, detaches himself from Dr. Alcott and drifts over.

FATHER

It's going rather well, wouldn't you say? Catherine, do you like the music?

CATHY

Mmm.... Very much. I've always loved the waltz....

FATHER

Well, you know in its time, the waltz was considered, quite scandalous...wicked, even.

CATHY

(smiling)

Imagine that.

(to Vincent)

Vincent, can I ask you something very... personal?

Father turns to leave.

VINCENT

You know you can ask me anything, Catherine.

CATHY

Do you dance?

Father turns back toward them and smiles.

Vincent looks at her for a long beat, smiles, and is about to reply when suddenly Pascal come rushing back into the Great Hall and interrupts.

PASCAL

Vincent, you have to come. There's a sound on the pipes....

(realizes he's interrupted)

Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt.

VINCENT

What kind of a sound?

PASCAL

I don't know. It's so weak. Normally it would be lost in the traffic, but with the system so quiet....

FATHER

Then how do you know it's a message? I mean, it could be anything... a loose fitting... steam rattle....

VINCENT

Or Narcissa. We must be sure.

(to Cathy)

I'll return as soon as I can.

Catherine smiles and watches wistfully as Pascal and Vincent rush out together. Father turns to Catherine.

FATHER

You know the origins of the waltz are quite interesting. It's from the German word walzen, meaning to glide or to... to roll. It was made popular....

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. UPPER TUNNELS - LATER

Pascal is listening through his stethoscope, moving it from place to place as he talks.

PASCAL

I was so sure.... I guess I must be hearing things. Wait a second... there... there it is again.

Again we hear the metallic scratching sound, faint, far off. Vincent stands close to the pipe as he listens.

VINCENT

I hear it. Pascal, where does this pipe originate?

PASCAL

I'm not sure.

(Vincent surges ahead, following the pipe)

But I think we're about to find out.

They run down the tunnel together.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GREAT HALL

ANGLE ON FATHER

As he sits down with Sebastian to play a game of chess.

FATHER

I ought to have my head examined for letting you talk me into this.

Father unfolds the chess board and positions it between them.

SEBASTIAN

You can examine it all you like, Jacob. It won't help your game one little bit.

Father harrumphs and reaches out to open the black box. His attention fixed on the magician.

FATHER

I warn you, I shall watch every moment.

But just as Father's fingers touch the latch, the dance music stops and a sudden hush falls over the Great Hall. Father turns to see what's wrong.

ANGLE PAST FATHER

As the Winterfest guests slowly move aside. In the background we hear hushed voices and we push through the crowd to Vincent as he enters carrying Narcissa in his arms; she lies unconscious, burned, and very badly hurt. Pascal walks a few steps behind him. A shocked silence prevails as Vincent makes his way across the room.

Peter is the first to snap out of it.

DR. ALCOTT

Jacob!

FATHER

Lay her on the table. Quickly... clear a space! Geoffrey, get my bag. Quickly now!

Mouse sweeps a tabletop clear of party debris, and Vincent gently lays down Narcissa. Father begins to examine her.

FATHER

Where did you find her?

VINCENT

Down in the shattered rooms, below the stone circle. She must have crawled there.

FATHER

Her pulse is very weak. Oh my God, look at these burns. We must get her up to the hospital chamber right away. She's very dehydrated.

Suddenly, to everyone's shock and dismay, Narcissa begins to struggle hysterically against Father. She knocks him away, sits up.

CLOSE ON NARCISSA

As her strange half-blind eyes stare into the chamber, she shouts out a warning to no one and everyone.

NARCISSA

The evil one...is here!

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. HOSPITAL CHAMBER - LATER

Vincent and Cathy watch with concern as Father treats Narcissa, who now lies, still and unmoving, on a bed in the hospital chamber. Mary is assisting Father while Dr. Alcott, in the background, prepares a hypodermic.

FATHER

We need to get some fluid into her. Mary, give her a rochest IV, large port.

Narcissa moans and stirs feebly.

NARCISSA

Vincent.

Vincent moves forward, takes Narcissa's hand, clasps it.

VINCENT

I'm here, Narcissa.

She seems to draw strength from his very presence.

NARCISSA

Beware... the poison rose...

The old woman suddenly gasps. All the tension goes out of her. Her eyes close, and she settles back into sleep.

CLOSE ON DR. ALCOTT

The hypo still in his hand from the injection he just gave Narcissa.

DR. ALCOTT

There... that's better...

Vincent angrily grabs the doctor by his wrist.

VINCENT

What have you given her?

DR. ALCOTT

(innocently)

Well, something for the pain... to help her sleep.

FATHER

Oh, Vincent, honestly, what's got into you? Peter, can you give me a hand?

DR. ALCOTT
Right.

Vincent releases Dr. Alcott and turns to look at Cathy. Off their worried faces we ...

DISSOLVE TO:
INT. GREAT HALL - LATER THAT EVENING
The mood is somber.

REBECCA
Narcissa never went above. How could this happen?

JAMIE
The evil one, she said.

ANGLE PAST MOUSE
Sitting beside the table where Father abandoned his chess game. The black lacquer box is close at hand. Intercut shots of Mouse as he idly drums his fingers on the top of the box, listening to the others.

LOU
The evil one. Who's that supposed to be?

JAMIE
We all know who she meant.

REBECCA
(frightened)
Paracelsus. She said he was here.

SEBASTIAN
But did she mean here?
("producing coins" near Jamie's ears)
Or here?

JAMIE
Cut it out, Sebastian!

WILLIAM
I hear what the man's saying. Did she mean here in New York, or here in the tunnels, or here... in this room?

REBECCA
Well she can't have meant here at Winterfest. Can she? Her injuries...she must have been delirious.

LOU
Yeah. Some kind of nightmare if you ask me... like one of your fever dreams.

Vincent returns. Cathy is with him, Father and Dr. Alcott just behind. The guests regard them anxiously.

VINCENT

Perhaps she dreamt that she was burned and broken and left to die. If so, we share the nightmare.

REBECCA

Narcissa... will she survive?

FATHER

She's...resting fairly comfortably. Mary is sitting with her. We'll have to take shifts... until she's stabilized.

VINCENT

Her spirit is strong. She will not die.

JAMIE

But what about Paracelsus? Did she say anything else?

DR. ALCOTT

Nothing intelligible. She was delirious... something about a poisoned rose...

FATHER

(to Jamie)

Narcissa lives in a world of demons and spells and malign forces. For her they exist, but...

SEBASTIAN

Jacob, there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

LOU

Like what... hoodoo and hocus-pocus?

VINCENT

Narcissa has abilities that none of us understand.

FATHER

If there is evil among us, where is it hiding? I see nothing but friends... people I've known and trusted for years... colleagues... helpers....

SEBASTIAN

A good illusion makes you think that you can see things that aren't really there. Perhaps one of these... friendly faces is just a passing mirage... a chimera...

Sebastien begins to move around the room.

SEBASTIAN

He could be lurking behind this...

(touches Jamie's face lightly)

or this...

(gestures at Lou's face)
or even here...
(touches Cathy's face)
lovely though it is....
(he walks back toward William)
He could be...anywhere.

As Sebastian approaches William, the big man angrily grabs his wrist and holds him.

WILLIAM
What the hell kind of game you trying to play, scaring everybody?

JAMIE
(to William)
Let him go! What are you afraid of? Maybe you're the one.

WILLIAM
Paracelsus is supposed to be some kind of magic man, right? Well, the only magician I see...
is right here.

William shoves Sebastian, and he stumbles back, holding his arm.

FATHER
(shouts)
Stop it!
(quiet falls)
Winterfest is a time for brotherhood...for joy...and trust. Now, if we forget that...if we allow
this day, of all days... to be tainted with fear... then Paracelsus will truly have won!

Everyone looks abashed. Sebastian manages a smile.

SEBASTIAN
Yes. You're quite right. William, my dear boy, I... I do apologize.

He offers his hand. William hesitates, then takes it.

WILLIAM
I'm... I ought to be the one to apologize.
(awkwardly to all)
Look...there's some more wine, and uh...a cake or two that's hardly been touched. Maybe
we could....

FATHER
An excellent idea.

Some of the tension seems to dissolve. The fiddlers begin to play again, another waltz. The
guests begin breaking up into small clusters of conversation, etc. The mood is much more
subdued than it was earlier; these people are shaken, trying to carry on gamely and reaffirm
their fellowship despite everything, and it shows. But Vincent stills seems troubled.

ANGLE ON CATHY AND VINCENT

As they draw a little apart from the others and talk quietly in a corner of the Great Hall. Vincent looks out over the guests, his concern plain on his face.

CATHY

You think he's here, don't you?

VINCENT

My mind says it cannot be... but a small voice inside me whispers yes.

CATHY

I feel it too.

VINCENT

It makes no sense. How could he ever hope to bring off such a masquerade? There are no strangers at Winterfest.

CATHY

(thoughtful)

Could he impersonate one of the helpers?

VINCENT

The helpers are part of us. Friends.

CATHY

Sometimes we drift away from our friends. We lose track of them for a little while... and when we see them again, if they seem changed, we don't think twice about it.

Vincent weighs Catherine's words. They make sense; it would be much easier for an enemy to pass as a helper than as one of the tunnel dwellers.

VINCENT

Most of those who were helpers thirty years ago are gone now. Paracelsus could not know the others.

CATHY

Surely there must be a few... those who were helpers from the very beginning, who knew Paracelsus when he was part of your world.

VINCENT

Only three...

(beat, VO)

Peter...

Intercut a brief shot of Dr. Alcott in animated conversation with Father.

VINCENT

(continuous, VO)

Lou...

The barber is joking with another guest by the wine casks.

VINCENT

(continuous, VO)

And Sebastian...

The magician is seated with several children, running through a few simple card tricks.

ANGLE ON FATHER

as Samantha and Geoffrey interrupt his conversation.

SAMANTHA

Father, can we borrow your chess set?

FATHER

Yes, of course you may. I left it over there on the table by Sebastian.

(aside to Geoffrey)

Geoffrey... watch out for her.

GEOFFREY

She's going to spot me a rook.

Catherine approaches Dr. Alcott as the children run off.

CATHY

Peter, did you ever tell Father how we met?

DR. ALCOTT

Of course not.

(grins)

After all... I have your reputation to protect.

(to Father)

Would you believe, she was stark naked at the time.

CATHY

In a hospital delivery room.

They laugh and Peter gives Cathy a big hug.

ANGLE ON MOUSE AND SEBASTIAN

The lacquer box is visible in the background as Mouse studies three cards that Sebastian has spread in front of him.

SEBASTIAN

All you have to do, my dear Mouse, is find the red king.

MOUSE

This one.

Sebastian turns over the card Mouse is pointing to, and uncovers the ace of spades.

SEBASTIAN

Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear.

As Sebastian is about to reshuffle, Vincent flips over the other two cards. They're both aces of spades as well. Sebastian smiles and shrugs sheepishly.

SEBASTIAN

Oh!

In the background Samantha and Geoffrey grab the black box and sit down to play. Vincent sees them and reacts.

ANGLE ON THE BOX

As Samantha begins to open the lid, Vincent's hand holds it shut.

SAMANTHA

Father said we could.

Vincent takes the box and shows it to Catherine when she appears.

CATHY

The rose.

Off their long, meaningful look, we ...

DISSOLVE TO:

LOU - A SHORT TIME LATER

Lou is standing with William by the wine casks as Cathy approaches with the box. Vincent is with her.

CATHY

Lou...I thought you might want to have a game of chess.

Lou looks at Cathy, at the box, smiles, shrugs.

LOU

Try Father. He's your chess player. Me, I wouldn't know a horse from a castle. Now if you want to get up a game of five card stud....

CATHY

Father's out of my league. I'll teach you the moves.

She presses the box toward him. Lou backs away.

LOU

Nah. I'll pass.

Catherine looks suspicious. She looks at him for a long beat, then walks several paces away. But as Lou starts to go back to his conversation, she turns.

CATHY
Lou!

She throws the black box at Lou.

CLOSE ON LOU

The terror is plain on his face as he whirls away from the box, throws up his arms to protect himself.

The box strikes him and opens, scattering chess pieces all over the floor. Pull back to reveal that Lou alone is crouched in a defensive posture, caught in the act of diving for cover. All eyes are on the barber. A hush falls over the Great Hall. Mouse comes forward to stand beside Vincent, the second black box in his hands.

MOUSE
Yours?

He flips open the lid suddenly: Lou can't help but flinch.

MOUSE
Disarmed it.

VINCENT

We found Father's set in the tunnel... where you hid it.

Lou rises from his crouch and William grabs him before he can run. They grapple: then a foot long, razor-sharp blade springs out of the barber's sleeve. He stabs William in the stomach. The big man falls.

Vincent leaps over William, roaring, striking out at Lou as he backpedals. Lou falls.

CLOSE ON LOU

As Vincent throws Lou on a table and his claws tear away half the mask. Lou manages to get up, and he grabs Samantha in the process.

LOU / PARACELSUS
(Paracelsus' voice)

One step closer and the child dies. The hour of unmasking is at hand, it would seem.

He holds his blade at Samantha's neck, backing away slowly. Vincent growls in angry frustration. With his free hand, Paracelsus rips off the torn mask and casts it contemptuously aside.

Father has been tending to William's wound. He rises.

FATHER

John....

PARACELSUS

Paracelsus. John is dead...killed by you, Jacob.

Paracelsus is backing away toward the tall double doors while the tunnel dwellers move toward him. Hands grasp chairs, candelabras, anything that can pass for a weapon.

CATHY

Let the girl go!

PARACELSUS

So your dear Vincent can rend me limb from limb? I think not. No. Regretably, it would seem I need a hostage.

FATHER

Then take me. I'm the one you want, John... not the girl. We both know that.

The alchemist hesitates, then shoves Samantha away, grabs Father's shoulder and holds his knife to Father's throat. The girl runs.

CLOSE ON PARACELSUS

He stares into Father's eyes, the blade poised at Father's throat – an uncertainty on his face for a moment. Vincent, Catherine and the others are too far away to help; Father's life hangs in the balance.

FATHER

What happened to you, John? You were a good man once...my friend.

PARACELSUS

(looking confident and angry again)

Spare me the homilies, Jacob. These poor deluded fools may not know what happened, but you and I... we remember... don't we?

CLOSE ON FATHER

as Paracelsus shoves the point of his blade right up under Father's chin, forcing his head back.

FATHER

We remember... differently... John.

ANGLE ON SEBASTIAN

As the old street magician suddenly raises an arm and flings one of his flash paper fireballs at Paracelsus.

The alchemist staggers back, blinded for a second, and Vincent takes advantage of the distraction to pull Father safely out of harm's way. Then he turns back to face Paracelsus, who has already run and pulled open the great wooden doors. The wind comes howling into the Great Hall with awful, almost supernatural force.

Paracelsus runs off into the Chamber of the Winds, and Vincent follows. In the Great Hall, the wind roars, the candles and torches are extinguished by the terrible force of the wind, and darkness seems to sweep into the hall like a living thing.

INT. HOSPITAL CHAMBER

Father, assisted by Dr. Alcott, has bandaged William's stomach wound. Mary, Sebastian and Catherine are close by when Vincent returns with Mouse and Jamie.

VINCENT

There's no sign. He melted away like a shadow.

FATHER

A shadow that will fall over our world again... unless we find him, and stop him.

VINCENT

You took a great risk, Father. Paracelsus might have killed you... yet he...let the moment pass.

FATHER

Believe me, I was as surprised as anyone... Not that I'm complaining, mind you. Maybe he feared for his own life.

(trails off, thoughtful)

VINCENT

No. I'm not sure it was just fear.

FATHER

In his eyes.... There was such anger there... and hatred... and yet... just for an instant, mind you... I thought I saw a hint of sadness as well.

(briskly)

Well... I probably imagined it. At any rate, Catherine is our real hero. How could you possibly know it was Lou?

CATHY

Well... I ruled out Peter when he told that embarrassing story of his. There was no way Paracelsus could have known that Peter had delivered me.

VINCENT

And Sebastian had been trying to get Father all day to play chess.

CATHY

The last place Paracelsus wanted to be when that box was opened was across the chessboard. That left Lou.

FATHER

Well, however you did it, we are deeply grateful...dear Catherine.

SEBASTIAN

And the rest is silence.

Everyone begins to stir, get to their feet, excuse themselves, start toward the door...

MARY

I need to check on Narcissa.
DR. ALCOTT
Yes. We'll need a guide back up.
(Father helps Peter with his coat)
Thank you, Jacob.

Vincent's voice stops the exodus.

VINCENT

Is this the way we want Winterfest to end? Each of us slinking away to nurse our wounds, each alone? Have we forgotten what this day means?

His words strike home. Sheepish looks are exchanged.

MOUSE

Okay, good. Okay fine.

Mouse extends a hand to Vincent, who takes it. Everyone smiles, and the mood changes.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GREAT HALL - LATER

PAN AROUND THE CHAMBER

The tunnel dwellers and helpers are linking hands, joining together in a circle...except for Catherine, who stands at the center of the circle, smiling and looking around.

ANGLE ON FATHER

As he smiles and reaches out a hand.

FATHER

Catherine... you're a part of us now. Come, complete the circle.

Deeply moved, Catherine takes Father's hand, then looks over to Vincent, taking his hand and completing the circle, binding the community together again for another year.

FATHER

The darkness... almost engulfed us this year, but our unity... gave us strength. Our shared light... showed us the truth. As we part for another year, let us remember that darkness is only the absence of light... and all winters end.

Everyone looks around the circle in satisfaction and finally, triumphantly, raise their joined hands upward.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GREAT HALL - LATER

The candles are out, the torches extinguished. The Great Hall is wrapped in darkness again for another year. Vincent and Catherine stand alone in the center of the chamber. The room is lit by a single lantern. Its light casts their shadows behind them on the wall, taller than life.

CATHY

(softly)

Can you hear it, Vincent?

VINCENT

(puzzled)

Only the quiet... and the wind outside, crying to get in.

CATHY

Listen! You can hear it if you try...the music...

The silence is profound. But Vincent looks into her eyes, and listens, and smiles.

VINCENT

Yes...I hear it.

(beat)

Catherine... that question you asked me earlier...

CATHY

I remember.

Wordless, Vincent guides her out into the room. Together they move off out of frame.

LONG SHOT - GREAT HALL

We angle down from above. Catherine and Vincent, in each other's arms, are tiny figures at the far end of the huge chamber. Behind them, etched in the lantern light, their shadows dance against the wall, vast and silent and graceful, waltzing to a private music that only they can hear.

FADE OUT:

THE END