

THE HOLLYWOOD FLY

Roberta Degnore

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FADE IN

EXT. VERMONT CEMETERY - DAY

Blizzard. A cheap coffin SNAPS from ropes into an icy grave. A PRIEST slams shut his Bible, the TWO MOURNERS scatter.

JACK BAER(20s) detains the priest to shake hands earnestly. SARA SMITH(20s), leans against Jack, smokes against the wind.

JACK

She was good. More than a mom.

SARA

Popular too.

The priest thrusts a box into Jack's hands.

PRIEST

She wanted you to have this now.  
Family history.

JACK

What family?

EXT. CABIN REAR - DAY

Jack, barechested, shoots karate kicks at the trees. He's not the best. He SCREAMS, hits hard, drops into the snow.

INT. CABIN - DAY

It's retro 1960s with psychedelic posters, blacklight, lots of photos of Jack and doting MOM. Graduation pic: Jack and Mom--the oddball hippy suspiciously eyeing straight parents.

Jack rushes in, throws practice kicks and photos cascade to the floor. He yanks karate gear and nunchuks from a hiding place, packs. A CAR HORN(os). He runs out, still shirtless.

I/E JEEP - DAY

Sara waits in an old Jeep, waves newspaper clippings at Jack.

SARA

She lied. It's all here.

JACK  
She must have had a reason.

SARA  
To keep you down? All you wanted  
was to be somebody, to stand up  
like Bruce Lee. What's wrong with--

JACK  
A lot of people are against  
violence like her.

SARA  
You keep telling me what you do is  
art. It could have been our ticket  
out of here an ice age ago.

JACK  
I still snuck it, trained.

SARA  
Not as sneaky as her.  
(re the clippings)  
You had a grandfather in the  
movies. She said she was all you  
had. You've got family.

The Jeep ROARS off. Jack stares at the cabin; this is hard.

EXT. VERMONT CEMETERY - DAY

WORKMEN place a new headstone in the snow: Janis Baer / 1962-  
2007 / Beloved Mother.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD CEMETERY - DAY

An old headstone bakes in the sun under waving palms. Jack  
raises a newspaper clipping of a MAN IN A GANGSTER SUIT, his  
head torn out. The headless guy has one arm around a WOMAN.

JACK  
"1901 to 1935, Jackson Baer. The  
Hollywood Fly." Grandpa?

Jack rubs dirt off the remains of a shabby photo medallion on  
the marker. Part of a face is barely visible.

A glimpse: It looks familiar? Jack touches his own face.

Sara approaches. He jumps in front of the photo to hide it.

SARA

Jack?

Sara trips, twists her ankle and cuts her hand on the headstone, leaves blood on it. Jack picks her up.

JACK

Don't hurt that flower.

SARA

Ow! You planted this twig?

He quickly tamps down dirt around a bare, stick-like bush, then carries Sara toward the dusty Jeep.

POV FROM GRAVE: watches them. LABORED BREATHING(os).

EXT. MOTEL - DAY

Bungalows press against a hill behind the Hollywood Bowl.

INT. MOTEL BUNGALOW - DAY

Jack wraps Sara's ankle as she kisses him all over. A bag of first-aid supplies spills around them on the bed.

JACK

We should have it looked at.

SARA

Look at me.

JACK

Yeah.

SARA

This is all we can afford.

She pulls him on top of her. They make out.

JACK

When I find what my grandfather left me, we can do everything.

SARA

Great-grandfather. You never knew the guy existed.

JACK

Why would my mom hide a safety deposit box out here?

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

She always wanted me to be independent, all that stuff, when I was ready. It must be big.

SARA

He wasn't.

JACK

A star? You don't know that. He was The Hollywood Fly. Nobody knew his real name, that's all.

SARA

Ever heard of him? Seen him? Ow!

He wraps her ankle, way too tight.

INT. HOLLYWOOD BANK - DAY

Jack stares at newspaper clippings, some legal papers. A BANK OFFICER(50) CLICKS his pen, impatient.

JACK

This is it?

BANK OFFICER

Mementoes can be valuable.

JACK

No cash? House?

BANK OFFICER

The bungalow was sold in 1982. July.

JACK

Some birthday gift.

BANK OFFICER

Excuse me?

JACK

That's when I was born.

BANK OFFICER

That's probably why she needed the money. You.

JACK

Who?

BANK OFFICER

Janis Baer. Your mother.

Jack looks like he's been kicked in the head. The bank officer scoops up the clippings of The Fly, all headless.

JACK  
Why? And why this?

BANK OFFICER  
(re the faceless photos)  
No masthead, no dates. Try the  
photographer. If he's still alive.

Jack notes the credit under the headless shots: E. Adams.

EXT. VENICE BEACHWALK - DAY

Jack and Sara eye the ODD BEACH PEOPLE as they search addresses. Sara limps on her bad ankle, hangs on his arm.

JACK  
Here it is.

SARA  
The neighborhood rocks.

Under the address, a line of doorbells on a gate. One is, "E. Adams, Photographs."

A steep stairway looms in the courtyard beyond the gate.

SARA (CONT'D)  
Set me up out here, baby.

Sara sits on a bench, they count coins for a Coke.

EXT. EVE'S BUILDING - DAY

Jack RINGS the bell. An immediate BUZZ answers.

EXT. EVE'S BUILDING/COURTYARD - DAY

Jack climbs the stairs to the motel-like second story.

POV JACK: An old B&W MOVIE flickers on the sunny bricks...

EXT. GRIFFITH PARK OBSERVATORY / 1930S NEWSREEL - DAY

A MAN IN A GANGSTER SUIT dances on a cable over a chasm like it's easy. His back to us, he charms the WOMEN at the ledge.

Some GUY works the crowd, begging change with a sloppy sign:  
"Paramount's Next Star--The Hollywood Fly."

FAKE WING TIP SHOES spin in a mystifying move on the cable.  
They're really soft ballet slippers painted to look jazzy.

The flickering image flashes white.

BACK TO SCENE

Jack runs to the window where the light beam fades.

INT. EVE'S STUDIO/APARTMENT - DAY

Broken film WHIPS on a projector. EVE ADAMS(50s), joint in  
lips, stops it. She's a twisted sunbeam, young but aged.

Clutter. B&W photos of oddly-posed dead stars and strange  
cemeteries layer the walls. Each, hand-tinted:

A naked James Dean fingers a computer.

Gable and Harlow fuck in a CAT scan machine's tunnel.

Fireworks light up mausoleums...

Jack stares at the projector.

JACK

What was that?

EVE

Thank you, Eve Adams. You're  
welcome, Jack Baer. That old  
thing? Just something I threw on.

JACK

Why are you showing that, here?

EVE

To catch a fly.

JACK

Not funny.

EVE

This is my life. Dead stars. I  
don't shoot them in the flesh  
anymore like when your, what, great-  
grandfather was working. Tea?