

PALACE OF WATERLOO

Written by

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EXT. BOWLING ALLEY - NIGHT

A vibrant glow from a grand neon sign boasting the name, "PALACE BOWL," illuminates the surrounding corn fields. The parking lot is abuzz with activity -- FAMILIES have traveled for miles to get here.

SUPER: Waterloo, Iowa - 1970

INT. BOWLING ALLEY - NIGHT

A thick cloud of SMOKE hangs over the colorful molded fiberglass tulip chairs and scooped Brunswick benches. FAMILIES and BUSINESSMEN alike have gathered to shake off the rigors of a long week.

Focus on a spritely girl, YOUNG BILLIE, 8, who is methodically going through her pre-bowling ritual.

She laces up her shoes, polishes her ball, carefully writes her name on the scorecard, and straightens it along with the pencil on the desk. As she finishes prepping, she overhears a conversation happening in the adjacent lane.

BOY 1, clean-cut, 17, polishing his bowling ball, is talking to GIRL 1, 16.

BOY 1

Bowling is the sport of kings and commoners alike. It's an amalgamation of skill, strategy, precision, and finesse. When you step onto the polished wooden lanes, a world of possibilities opens up before you, brimming with excitement and yet challenging you to your very core. When you achieve the elusive strike, a spectacle that sends shockwaves of euphoria through both the bowler and the onlookers -- It's like looking straight into the gates of Nirvana.

Girl 1 twirls her hair, not giving a damn about the ethos of bowling, but paying just enough attention to smile at him as he looks up at her.

GIRL 1
I can dig it.

BOY 2
Well then, I guess you're up.

Girl 1 grabs any old ball from the rack and without stopping, walks up to the lane and heaves the ball. She turns around before the ball is halfway down the lane and retakes her seat. Strike! Boy 1 doesn't have words for this.

GIRL 1
You're up, hon.

Boy 1 grabs his ball and carefully lines himself up to throw. He takes several beats before beginning an awkward approach to the line. He holds his pose and watches the ball strike the pins, leaving a 7-10 split.

BOY 1
Shoot!

The pinsetter gets stuck as it tries to collect the pins. Boy 1 moves to the ball return.

BOY 1 (CONT'D)
There's usually a button somewhere.

Young Billie interjects.

YOUNG BILLIE
That won't work. They need to do it
from the counter. I'll tell 'em.

She runs off toward the front counter. Over Boy 1 and Girl 1's shoulders, we see Young Billie approach the front counter and talk with a pretty YOUNG WOMAN behind the desk. Another WOMAN, whose face is obscured, moves aside.

BOY 1
This has never happened to me
before.

GIRL 1
It's not your fault. It could
happen to anyone.

A whale of a SIREN goes off on one of the pinball machines, declaring a player has broken the high score.

Finally, the pins reset. Young Billie comes running back.

YOUNG BILLIE
All set!

GIRL 1
Thank you, sweetie.

YOUNG BILLIE

No problem.

(to Boy 1)

And you'll want to come around with
a Brooklyn for that seven-ten if
you want that 'elusive' split
spare.

Young Billie and Girl 1 smile at each other, then Young Billie grabs her ball, and rolls a majestic STRIKE!

INT. PALACE BOWL - KITCHEN - NIGHT

WILBUR, early 50's, Young Billie's grandfather, sporting a finely tailored polyester suit, exits the kitchen area and stops. He takes an ornate wooden pipe to his lips and strikes a match over the tobacco.

INT. PALACE BOWL - CONTINUOUS

Wilbur steps out into the main corridor of the alley. A young employee, FRITZ, 17, approaches. The top buttons of his uniform are visibly undone.

WILBUR

Fritz, my boy, I know you're new,
but these buttons here on your
uniform --

Wilbur pulls Fritz in tight by the collar.

WILBUR (CONT'D)

-- They have earned their place in
this world, and it's fastened
firmly inside the hole opposite of
them.

Wilbur fixes the boy's shirt and gives him an encouraging pat on the shoulder.

FRITZ

I think the ladies dig this look,
Mr. Wilbur. It shows them I got
stuff going on.

Wilbur laughs then taps him gently on the side of the head.

WILBUR

Yeah. Uh huh. I can dig it. You got
stuff goin' on alright, kid.

(MORE)

WILBUR (CONT'D)
But you don't want to reveal
everything at once. Understand?
Besides, we're a classy
establishment, Fritzy-boy.

FRITZ
Of course. Thank you, Mr. Wilbur.

Wilbur strolls down the corridor. He traces his fingers along one of the velvet stools to check the flawless stitching, then exchanges waves with a few regulars.

He proceeds past the pro shop and the arcade, making a point to connect with each EMPLOYEE. As he approaches the soft serve ice cream machine, a nod to the woman operating it earns him a generously overflowing cone.

Wilbur shifts his gaze towards Young Billie.

Young Billie finishes throwing the ball down the lane. Strike!!! She turns to see Wilbur standing there with the ice cream cone and runs towards him.

YOUNG BILLIE
Grandpa Spike! That's three strikes
in a row!

WILBUR
Wow! A turkey! That's fantastic,
Billie.

Wilbur bends down to hug her and hands the ice cream cone off, which she enthusiastically accepts.

YOUNG BILLIE
Can you play with me?

WILBUR
Of course. I can't let your ego get
too big just yet. I've just got to
check on some things in the back.

YOUNG BILLIE
Before you go, will you do the
trick?

Wilbur deliberates, then smiles.

Young Billie takes a large bite of ice cream and squeals with joy.

Wilbur retrieves three shells and a red rubber ball from his pocket. He positions the ball beneath the central shell.

Wilbur shuffles the shells, allowing Young Billie to closely track their motion. Coming to a halt, Young Billie confidently indicates the middle shell as her choice. He lifts the shell, revealing empty space beneath it.

Undeterred, Young Billie swiftly points to a second shell. Nothing. Young Billie picks up the last shell. Still nothing.

Maintaining his cool demeanor, Wilbur casually extends his hand behind Young Billie's ear, retrieving the red rubber ball.

YOUNG BILLIE (CONT'D)
You have to teach me that!

WILBUR
Another time, Pebbles.

Wilbur pats Billie on the head and then continues on.

BILLE
Ah, c'mon.

Billie watches with admiration and a little ire as Wilbur walks towards the machine room behind the lanes.

INT. PALACE BOWL - PIN DECK - NIGHT

Wilbur ventures into the heart of the alley, where the pin-setting machinery creates a mesmerizing rhythm.

Wilbur stops at a door marked: MAINTENANCE. Standing next to the door is, LEVON, 40's, a tall, clean-cut, ex-marine-looking man.

LEVON
Good evening, sir.

WILBUR
What's waiting for me downstairs?

LEVON
Mostly the usual slingers and river-boaters. There was this one fella that I got a weird vibe from, sir.

WILBUR
No more of that "sir," stuff, okay? Well, let's go see what we can see, shall we?

LEVON
Yessir. I mean, yes.

Levon opens the door to the maintenance room.

INT. PALACE BOWL - MAINTENANCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Inside, Levon swings open a set of shelves on the far wall that are lined with bowling pins -- some of which look like they could've been fashioned from George Washington's apple tree. A hidden staircase is revealed and both men disappear down the stairs. The secret wall closes behind them.

Moments later, Young Billie is seen entering the maintenance closet and looking at the pin-lined wall, a half-eaten ice cream cone melting in her hand.

INT. CARD ROOM - NIGHT

Wilbur and Levon walk past a few Blackjack and Poker tables full of men of various social statuses. The atmosphere is lively as Wilbur moves to the bar. He motions to the BARTENDER, 40, male, for one of his regular drinks.

The bartender pours a club soda over ice and garnishes it with a twist of lemon and a couple of dashes of Bitters. Wilbur slides an envelope full of cash across the bar.

WILBUR
For the Chief.

Wilbur pulls on his pipe.

BARTENDER
I noticed something off about him during his last visit. He was acting rather peculiar, dropping hints about the risks he's been taking and whatnot.

WILBUR
Tell him to talk to me. I'll remind him about the "risks" of certain photos of him and our performers ending up in his wife's hands.

Wilbur leans on the bar to survey the room. A drunken man, ROYCE, 30, gets up off his barstool and staggers down the hallway past a series of doors with red lights over them. He finds a door with a green light and enters.

INT. PEEP SHOW BOOTH - NIGHT

Royce enters, scans the dimly lit, velvet interior until he spots a stool. He sits and then inserts a token into the coin slot, which reveals the window into the performance area.

From his jacket, he takes out a knife and places it on the shelf beneath the window.

INT. PEEP SHOW PERFORMANCE AREA - NIGHT

THREE EROTIC DANCERS are performing for the MEN in the booths. One of them, SHARON, 28, is performing close to the booth that Royce has entered.

When his window opens, a faint light shines on his face.

Sharon takes a moment, then acknowledges the new patron.

SHARON

Fuck.

Sharon quickly covers her break in character.

CINDY

What is it?

Sharon turns her back to the patrons.

SHARON

It's my dirtbag ex-husband.

SHEILA

Should we get security?

SHARON

It's not like he can get in here.

Cindy switches places with Sharon to move her away from Royce.

INT. PEEP SHOW BOOTH - NIGHT

Royce follows Sharon with his eyes.

ROYCE

You slut! Get over here and look me in the eyes. You're nothing without me!

INT. PEEP SHOW PERFORMANCE AREA - CONTINUOUS

Royce continues his rant but his voice can't be heard inside the soundproof walls of the performance area.

Sharon can't help but look at him.

SHARON

I feel like his head might pop like a balloon.

SHEILA

Don't worry, baby. My ex was worse than this dude.

Cindy moves to the window in front of Royce and plants her ass squarely on the glass to block his view.

After a beat, Cindy moves away from the window and starts laughing at Royce.

INT. PEEP SHOW BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Royce becomes increasingly agitated as the retractable window closes.

ROYCE

Shit!

He pounds at the window, then puts another token in the coin slot. When it opens, Sharon is no longer in the room, but Levon is!

Levon nods for the man to leave.

ROYCE (CONT'D)

Where did you go, you whore?

Just then a KNOCK is heard on Royce's door.

ROYCE (CONT'D)

This room is taken! Get your own!

WILBUR (O.C.)

Royce is it? I'm going to need you to come out here. You are free to leave, but I can't have you harassing our employees.

ROYCE

Is that what you call them? I paid to be here and I'll stay until my time is up. You wouldn't want me to report this place, would you?

A SECURITY GUARD kicks open the door and pulls Royce out, but not before Royce grabs his knife from the shelf. He conceals the knife in his hand as the security guard holds him by both arms from behind. Wilbur faces Royce.

WILBUR

Your state is understandable. Sharon is quite easy on the eyes.

Royce mutters with his jaw clenched and tries to break free.

WILBUR (CONT'D)

That's quite the battle you're going through, Royce, but I'd say the alcohol and self-loathing are winning, hands down.

Suddenly, Royce breaks free from the security guard and lunges at Wilbur.

ROYCE

Back to the gutter where you belong!

Wilbur tries to stop Royce's advance but Royce is able to stick his knife into Wilbur's ribcage, knocking Wilbur to the floor near a poker table.

The Security Guard steps in and rips Royce off the top of Wilbur. Chaos ensues as STRIPPERS, CARD DEALERS, and other PATRONS join the melee.

INT. CARD ROOM - NIGHT

Wide-eyed and frozen in terror, Young Billie peeks through the curtain hanging down the sides of a poker table. Wilbur lies sprawled on the ground, his blood seeping from a grievous wound and running under the table.

Wilbur notices Young Billie and takes her hand.

A drop of ice cream falls into the blood and mixes in a strangely beautiful dance.

WILBUR

Pebbles -- You shouldn't be here.

The melee continues across the room as Levon, the security guards, and the strippers try to corral Royce.

Wilbur lets go of Young Billie's hand and slowly stands, mustering up his last bit of strength. He stumbles towards the last stripper booth that has an "out of order" sign on the door.

INT. OUT OF ORDER BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Wilbur pulls a key from his pocket and inserts it into the lock. Then he pulls out a token, but in the process, another token slips from his grasp, hitting the floor.

Wilbur disappears through the doorway. A mysterious BURST OF LIGHT emanates from the booth.

The wall that separates the booth from the performance area has disappeared and has been replaced by a bright, rippling PORTAL into another realm. Wilbur steps through the portal, and it closes behind him.

INT. OUT OF ORDER BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Young Billie runs to the door. She bends down, picks up the token which has a special crest carved into it, and then opens the door.

Young Billie's face goes pale when she sees the room is empty. Suddenly, Levon snatches her up from outside the door and carries her away.

INT. HIGH-RISE OFFICE BUILDING - DAY(PRESENT DAY, 1996)

Billie, 34, now a focused real estate attorney, dressed impeccably in a blazer and pantsuit, walks swiftly through an office, talking on her cellular phone.

SUPER: St. Louis, Missouri - 1996

BILLIE

I can get the entire thing condemned because of the shitstorm across the street in the old Bemis building. Led-leeching, rat infestation, squatters -- it all plays. It'll hold them up with inspections and improvement orders for so long that they won't be able to keep the doors open.

(MORE)

BILLIE (CONT'D)
You'll be able to get the entire
building for pennies on the dollar,
Okay?

INT. BILLIE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Billie rounds the corner and enters her office. She stops when she sees a skinny man with choppy, poorly dyed black hair and eye make-up, GERRY, 45, sitting in her chair at her desk with his feet up.

BILLIE
Grace, I gotta run, but I'll fax
that paperwork shortly.

Billie hangs up the phone and swipes Gerry's feet off the desk.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
Don't you have any puppy dogs or
Girl Scouts to strike fear into?
Perhaps an overzealous group of
leaves in the wind to protect the
boss-man from?

Billie motions for Gerry to get out of her chair.

Gerry slowly stands while making lewd facial gestures towards her.

GERRY
What's it been now -- ten years
we've worked together?

BILLIE
I try not to keep track.

GERRY
And you still think I'm not gonna
know what the hell you get up to?
All your little side hustles over
the years and now commiserating
with the competition --

BILLIE
That's a big word for someone who
eats their dinner with stray cats
in the alley behind Dollar General.

Gerry moves around the desk and picks up a portrait of Billie's family: A HUSBAND and YOUNG FRATERNAL TWINS.

GERRY

I haven't told Roger yet.

Gerry sets down the portrait. He picks up another picture of Young Billie with Wilbur.

BILLIE

And what exactly is there to tell?

Billie takes the photo from Gerry and points to her law degree on the wall.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

I graduated second in my class at the University of Chicago to a guy named Barnaby. He was a devastatingly unremarkable lump of dough, whose mediocrity was consistently elevated, while my ideas were scoffed at and undermined, all because he had a cock. So tell me again why I shouldn't be keeping my options open.

GERRY

Because you took a job here, as a glorified bag lady, and we own you.

Gerry sidles up next to Billie and sniffs at her neck.

GERRY (CONT'D)

The boss would like to see you.

Gerry leaves.

A FAX comes in with an image of a newspaper clipping from the Waterloo Dispatch. There is a picture of a bowling alley with the headline: "Palace Bowl set to be demolished to make way for new 42-unit condo development."

A handwritten note is scrawled across the bottom of the page that reads: "About time they tore that old rat trap down."

Billie pulls the fax off the machine and sets it atop a stack of papers.

INT. ROGER'S OFFICE - DAY

Billie steps inside to see her boss, ROGER, 60, who embodies the essence of a second-rate, Italian crime boss after lap-band surgery.

The shelves are filled with pictures of Roger posing with the very creatures whose lifeless forms now adorn the office walls.

BILLIE

You wanted to see me?

ROGER

Yes. Come in, have a seat. The Stewart property. You close that yet?

BILLIE

Just need to fax over the final paperwork. We should be all set for signing by the end of the week. But

--

ROGER

Good. Good. Now, there's another thing I need you to take care of.

BILLIE

Can it wait until tomorrow? I'm running out to try and make my kids' soccer game.

ROGER

The Glenwald Estate bubbled back up this morning and is threatening to go into bank foreclosure. This is becoming a real thorn in my side. We should have had that in hand weeks ago. I don't care how you do it, just take care of it before I get another call from Big Jim.

BILLIE

Jeezuz. If *Big Jim* wants two hundred thousand square feet for his bogus canning operation, he needs to be looking south of Sauget, not demanding we get him half a block of prime, city waterfront for nothing. What's with this guy? No matter of legal easement claims is going to get that for what he wants to pay.

ROGER

Peaches. I'm serious --

BILLIE

Okay. Okay. I'll take care of it this time, but I don't know that I can keep doing this, Roger.

ROGER

You always do.

Roger slowly exhales a puff of cigar smoke. He slides a Tiffany's box across the desk toward Billie.

BILLIE

What's this?

ROGER

Listen, my wife has one. Makes her wet every time she touches it.

BILLIE

Jesus.

Billie purses her lips with unease.

ROGER

Anyway, what am I gonna do with it?
Enjoy.

Billie picks up the box and looks inside.

Her eyes go big.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Morality is it? It's a luxury we can't always afford. You've got mouths to feed, a husband who's more interested in "creative expression" than paychecks. You're here because you know the rules and how to find fatigued spots in those rules. The cosmos will come to correct everything at some point, but in the meantime, I need you to be the rabid dog I hired you to be! Understand?

Billie nods, then looks up at the clock on his wall.

BILLIE

I do need to run. I'll take care of it.

Billie rushes out.

EXT. SPORTS COMPLEX - DAY

A group of PARENTS stand on the sidelines of a soccer field, cheering on their KIDS. The coach, LYLE, 32, a tall man with curly hair, wearing an Adidas tracksuit, runs up and down the sidelines shouting encouragement to his team.

LYLE

Great job, Dylan! Keep it up! Now
pass it to Lindsey! Pass it, Dylan!

Enter Billie, who walks down the sideline talking on her cellular phone. She's clearly the only person overdressed for the occasion.

BILLIE

(into the phone)

Yes, I understand the terms of the deal. We need to close by Friday or this thing runs into foreclosure and then we're screwed.

Billie notices her children, fraternal twins, age 6, LAUREN and BROOKS, male, playing in a patch of daisies. She takes the phone away from her ear.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

Lauren! Brooks! Eyes on the ball!
This is not a game!

The kids smile and wave at their mommy while the other parents give each other looks about Billie's ironic statement.

Chaos erupts on the field when the ball bounces off one of the players towards the parents. The players all converge in a cluster near the ball.

LYLE

Okay, come on guys, let's focus!
Everyone back in position!

Lyle tries to untangle the kids, but they all continue laughing and piling on top of each other. Eventually, he's able to untangle the scrum and get them back in position.

LYLE (CONT'D)

Good job, everyone. Now let's keep it moving!

Billie is now back in business mode.

BILLIE

(into the phone)

It's gotta happen now. I have the mayor and the city inspector out on the line. They both walk if we don't close this today. I promise this is the last time I'll ask you for a favor like this.

The WHISTLE BLOWS FOUR TIMES to signal the end of the game. Billie wraps up her phone call and walks over to the players.

A tall, SHADOWY MAN with a hat pulled tightly over his head watches Billie intently from behind the bleachers.

LYLE

Good job Bobcats!

He gives all the kids high-fives as they head to the sidelines. Lyle notices Billie approaching.

LYLE (CONT'D)

Hey, hon. Everything okay?

BILLIE

Oh yeah. All good.

Billie switches into mom/wife mode without skipping a beat. They share a brief, warm embrace. She walks with Lyle over to the team.

BROOKS/LAUREN

Mommy!

BILLIE

Hi, my loves!

LAUREN

I scored seven goals, mama!

BILLIE

Wow! Interesting. I guess I might have been watching a different game.

Billie gives Lauren a hug and Brooks licks an orange slice and then hands it to Billie.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Billie and her family arrive at a Buick sedan. Lyle throws a bag of balls and equipment into the trunk as Billie straps Lauren into her car seat.

LYLE

Do you need a ride to your car?

BILLIE

No, I'm just on the street out there. I'll see you guys at home.

LYLE

Okay. See you at home, hon.

Billie stares at Lyle's clothes.

BILLIE

Interesting that your DJ costume doubles as a soccer thingy too.

LYLE

I wouldn't call it a costume --

Billie tilts her head and smiles. She gives him a quick kiss before walking away.

Lyle settles into the car as Billie walks away.

EXT. SPORTS COMPLEX - DAY

Billie is followed by the tall, shadowy man, BOYD, 50s.

Billie takes out her phone, looks back at her family, and waves again but doesn't notice Boyd.

Boyd sidles up next to Billie, matching her pace.

BOYD

They say those things can cause brain cancer.

Billie ignores the man.

BOYD (CONT'D)

I suppose it's worth the risk with all the joy you must get in ruining people's lives.

BILLIE

And you get joy from harassing strangers at the park?

BOYD

I truly wish we were strangers, and that I had never heard the name Billie Ballo.

BILLIE

Okay. Who the hell are you?

Billie stops.

Boyd looks over his shoulder and realizes that Lyle can no longer see them. He grabs Billie by the arm, pulls out a knife, and tugs her towards the busy street.

BOYD

I lost my business, I lost my home, and now my family.

BILLIE

Sir, I'm not sure what you think happened, but I'm certain there's something we can work out here.

BOYD

The boat storage facility on Webster. It was supposed to pay for college for my daughter. You had some phony neighborhood census done saying that my business was ruining property values.

BILLIE

Well, boat storage can be a problem.

Boyd pulls Billie's hair into a fist with the hand that was holding her arm.

BOYD

I was there for fifteen years and nobody ever complained. Then you convince my buyers that I might as well be running a homeless shelter on top of a landfill. Nobody would touch it until some mystery person called "Big Jim" comes along and offered to take it off my hands for a pile of hog spit. I couldn't keep the business going because of the publicity, so hog spit is what I took.

Boyd holds the knife up to Billie's throat.

BILLIE

Big Jim? You must be mistaken. I work for Roger Androzzi and Associates.

BOYD

It doesn't take much digging to figure out who Big Jim funnels his money through.

INT. BUICK - DAY

Lyle is driving across the parking lot towards the exit. Brooks sees his mom down the street.

BROOKS

Daddy, does Mommy know that man?

Lyle looks up to see the altercation taking place.

LYLE

Oh no --

He slams the car into park.

LYLE

Stay here!

He rushes out of the car towards Billie.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Billie and Boyd have reached the very edge of the sidewalk now.

BOYD

You're going to take me down to see Big Jim and straighten this all out.

BOYD (CONT'D)

Or I'm going to send you back to the gutter where you belong!

Just then Lyle yells out as he runs towards them.

LYLE

Billie! Stop! Somebody help!

Boyd is distracted momentarily, allowing Billie to free herself from his grasp. Boyd stumbles backward into the street. Suddenly, a Brunswick Bowling truck runs him over.

INT. ANDROZZI AND ASSOCIATES OFFICE - MORNING

In a state of mounting panic, Billie rummages through stacks of papers. Finally, she finds the fax regarding the bowling alley that arrived earlier.

Billie picks up the phone and dials out.

BILLIE

Hey, Jane. Would you be able to send me over the statutes regarding historic building preservation in Black Hawk County, Iowa? Yeah -- As soon as possible. I owe you --

Billie hangs up the phone and hastily throws a few other items from her desk in a bag. She stops for a beat to examine her office before turning to walk out.

EXT. SUBURBAN FRONT YARD - DAY

Lyle works alongside MARCO and JUAN, 40s, installing a retaining wall in the front yard of a customer's house.

LYLE

So how long you fellas been working for Gus?

MARCO

No se --

LYLE

You seem like you love it. I'm really starting to feel like I found my calling.

JUAN

Pinche gringo.

LYLE

Exactly. I think we're gonna be good amigos.

Suddenly, Billie pulls up in her car towing a Uhaul trailer. The twins are in the backseat with the car windows down.

LAUREN

Hi daddy!

Lyle looks up.

LYLE

Hey guys. What's going on?

Lyle walks over to the vehicle.

BILLIE
Hey, just hop in okay?

LYLE
What do you mean? Me and my
hermanos are bonding over here. You
don't just walk --

Lyle looks back at Juan and Marco as they curiously observe
the scene.

BILLIE
We need to -- we're heading out of
town.
(looking back at the kids)
Going on a *special adventure*.

LAUREN/BROOKS
Yay! Adventure!

Lyle looks at the kids and then the Uhaul trailer.

LYLE
Did something happen? What's in the
trailer?

BILLIE
Did something happen!?

She catches herself and regains her composure. She softens
her tone again and speaks under her breath so the kids don't
hear.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
We'll go to the house and grab some
essentials. You and Brooks can
drive the Buick.

LYLE
Drive the Buick where exactly?

Billie grits her teeth.

BILLIE
Get. In. The. Car, sweetheart.

Lyle steps back toward the yard and calls out to his
coworkers.

LYLE

Hey amigos, I need to head out with the family for a bit. You got this, right?

Marco makes a lewd gesture.

EXT. PALACE BOWL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Lyle and Brooks pull the Buick into the empty lot.

INT. BUICK - CONTINUOUS

Brooks is playing a very noisy electronic video game.

LYLE

Okay, buddy. I've been asking nicely for a few hours now. Let's go ahead and turn off the game.

Brooks ignores him.

LYLE (CONT'D)

Don't you want to see why we packed up all our things and drove through the cornfields all day?

Still no response. Just as Lyle is about to swat at the game console, Billie and Lauren pull up alongside them in the car towing the Uhaul trailer.

Lyle smiles at her and takes a deep breath.

EXT. PALACE BOWL - PARKING LOT - DAY

The family stands together, holding hands, looking up at the remains of the now crooked and rusty neon sign.

It reads: PAL E OWL.

BILLIE

Who's ready for a little excitement?

Lyle purses his lips.

LAUREN

Mommy? Are we poor now?

BILLIE

Just the opposite, baby. Wealth is measured by the legacy we leave behind. That's why we're here.

Brooks wrinkles his nose.

BROOKS

Can I play my game now?

Lyle picks the boy up.

LYLE

We'll make our own games, bud. It's gonna be fantastic.

EXT. PALACE BOWL - DAY

The family stands outside the front door of the bowling alley. Billie takes a key out of her purse and wrestles with the lock to get the door open.

She lets the family cross the threshold, then follows them.

INT. PALACE BOWL - CONTINUOUS

The family stands quietly for a moment as they look around at the decrepit condition of the interior. Lauren pinches her nose closed at the musty smell.

LAUREN

Ewwwy -- smells like daddy's feet.

The kids run off to explore the alley.

Billie breathes in deeply, taking it all in with a bright smile on her face.

BILLIE

The good news is, the lanes look like they're in decent condition.

Lyle looks out at the lanes.

LYLE

I can't wait to roll some rocks!

Billie rolls her eyes at his misplaced enthusiasm.

BILLIE

That's not a thing that people say, babe.

Just then, a CEILING TILE FALLS and nearly strikes Lyle on the head. He changes his demeanor in a hurry.

LYLE

Jesus, what did you do?

BILLIE

Oh, Lyle, I didn't DO this. This is for all of us. It's going to be hard at first, but you'll see. It'll all be worth it.

LYLE

Oh. My bad. I'm sure this natural disaster will be Da Bomb in a few weeks with a little elbow grease!

BILLIE

I mean, look over here. You can set up your DJ table right here, and have live Emo nights on Wednesdays, huh?

Billie walks over to a dimly lit corner near the lanes and mimics the actions of a DJ spinning some records. She begins to HUM a dance beat and the kids begin to move to the rhythm.

LYLE

Well, I guess that would be a nice touch.

A loud CRASH is heard from behind the lanes.

Billie and Lyle rush to inspect.

INT. PALACE BOWL - MACHINE ROOM - DAY

Billie and Lyle reach the machine room behind the lanes. Their attention is drawn to Brooks, who stands near a heap of boards and pipes.

Standing alongside Lauren is Levon, 74, a rugged man with a long, distinguished white beard.

Lyle and Billie rush to grab their kids. Once realizing that everyone is safe, Billie turns to the man.

She freezes as if she's seen a ghost.

LEVON

Pebbles? Is that you? You've grown so much.

Levon cocks his head to the side and squints as he sizes Billie up. Billie is still frozen, unable to form words.

Lyle breaks the awkward silence.

LYLE
Hey, Lyle Holmes.

Lyle moves to shake Levon's hand, but Levon's gaze stays on Billie.

LEVON
Twenty six years, 3 months, and
twelve days. I've thought of you
every day.

Billie's gaze shifts beyond Levon's shoulder, to a picture captured three decades prior. Levon stands with Wilbur, their faces illuminated with joy.

BILLIE
I don't understand -- how --

LEVON
Life has a funny way of bringing
people together, my dear.

BILLIE
Oh, Levon -- I can't believe it's
really you.

She moves in and gives Levon a big hug.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
I'm sorry -- this is my family. My
husband, Lyle, and my twins, Lauren
and Brooks.

Lyle stands up straighter and tightens his grip on the kids.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
Guys, this is Levon. He helped
Grandpa Spike first open the place.

She changes her tone again and turns back to Levon.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
The alley hasn't been open for --

LEVON
Five years and twelve days. Needed
to make sure the hardwoods stayed
in good shape.

(MORE)

LEVON (CONT'D)

Your grandpa put so much care into crafting them with the finest maple this side of the Mississippi. I just couldn't watch them go to hell.

LYLE

They look amazing. I think you just made our lives a lot easier.

Billie steps closer to the photograph. A framed bowling jersey adorns the wall behind the two men in the photo, catching her attention momentarily.

LAUREN

Mommy, this place is creepy. I don't think I want a bowling alley anymore.

Levon, who hasn't taken his eyes off Billie, now turns his focus to Lauren.

LEVON

(to Lauren)

You look just like your mother when she was that age.

LAUREN

Will I get really old like you?

LEVON

Well, if you don't sweat the small stuff, and eat your broccoli, I'd say the odds are in your favor.

BROOKS

I hate broccoli!

Both children start to make gag noises at the thought of eating greens.

LYLE

Well, Mr. Levon, on that note -- thank you again for all the work with the uhh -- oak wood and whatnot.

There's an awkward silence.

LYLE (CONT'D)

You know, the kids haven't eaten since Quincy.

(MORE)

LYLE (CONT'D)

I should get them to the house and settled before they destroy anything else. We'll see you when you get home.

BILLIE

Sure, sweetie. Thanks.

Lyle grabs the kids.

LYLE

It was great to meet you, Mr. Levon.

They turn and leave.

Billie sizes up Levon.

The two of them stand speechless for an extended beat.

Billie finally breaks the silence.

BILLIE

You wouldn't believe how many times two six-year-olds have to stop to pee in 400 miles. Made the trip twice as long --

LEVON

I was starting to doubt myself. I kept thinking I was just a crazy old man whose mind was falling apart. But something told me he's still out there somewhere -- I could feel it.

BILLIE

Oh, Levon -- Wilbur is gone. He doesn't deserve this kind of devotion from you.

LEVON

Don't you ever wonder why we never found him? There's something I need to tell you --

BILLIE

So you stayed on and worked for the previous owners?

LEVON

I needed to be able to have access to the -- basement after your grandmother sold the place.

BILLIE

Access? I'm not sure why anyone
would want --

Billie looks at her watch.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

Oh shoot, I have a meeting with a
contractor. I need to head up
front. Will you leave me a way to
get a hold of you? I want to hear
all about what you've been up to.

LEVON

You were so certain that red ball
was under the shell because that's
what logic told you --

Billie backs up a few paces and then turns to go.

EXT. PALACE BOWL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Lyle approaches JEFF, 30, a sturdy, bearded man wearing a flannel shirt and jeans. He's gathering some equipment out of his pickup truck, which has a logo, "Stars and Stripes Construction" and a big American flag emblazoned on the side.

LYLE

Hi there. How's it going?

JEFF

Oh, hi. I'm Jeff. I'm supposed to
be meeting a -- Wilhelmina Ballo
here.

LYLE

Oh, Billie? It's Billie -- yeah
she's inside. I'm Lyle -- her
husband.

Lyle holds his hand out to shake Jeff's hand. Jeff pauses for a beat to notice Lyle's attire, then gives Lyle a firm, midwestern handshake. Lyle winces slightly but tries to keep his composure.

JEFF

Will you be joining us for the
walkthrough then?

Lyle shakes out his hand a little as he can't quite hold in the pain any longer.

LYLE

Uh -- no. Billie's got it. I'm off to get these kids to our new, er, old, er -- to the house.

LAUREN

Mommy said we get to see the one horse in this town.

Lyle, embarrassed, tries to move her along quickly.

LYLE

Ah yes, that's nice sweetie. Yep. Let's get going. Nice to meet you, Jeff.

He waves at Jeff and moves the kids to the car.

INT. PALACE BOWL - PIN DECK - DAY

Levon, holding a backpack over his shoulder, double checks to make sure everybody is gone, then approaches the door marked 'MAINTENANCE.' He opens it, slips inside, and closes the door behind him.

INT. OUT OF ORDER BOOTH - DAY

Levon pulls a token from his pocket with a special crest on it and opens the door.

He sets the timer on his wristwatch to thirty six hours before pulling a photo album out of his bag. He flips quickly through pages of old photographs, mostly of Wilbur, that have Post-it notes with writing scribbled next to each photo.

He stops on the last page which contains a single Polaroid without a Post-it note. He pulls it from the sleeve. The photo is of Wilbur posing with three young women outside the entrance to the Palace Bowl. He studies it for a beat and flips the photograph over to see a handwritten date: "April 29, 1970."

He drops the token in the machine which sets off a series of sparks and folds in the air around him. Holding the picture, he closes his eyes and concentrates.

The PORTAL opens up and Levon hurls himself through the opening. It quickly closes behind him.

EXT. BEHIND PALACE BOWL - ALLEY - DAY (APRIL 1970)

SUPER: April 1970.

Levon emerges from the portal to the back alley of Palace Bowl, under a large floodlight. The portal closes.

He bends down to pick up the token from the ground and puts it in his pocket before walking around the building.

EXT. PALACE BOWL - ENTRANCE - DAY

Levon rounds the corner toward the front of the alley and sees his jovial, younger self talking with a DELIVERY TRUCK DRIVER.

Levon steps back out of sight until the conversation is finished. Once his younger self steps inside, Levon hurries across the parking lot.

INT. PALACE BOWL - DAY (PRESENT DAY, 1996)

SUPER: 1996

Jeff walks in with a clipboard and a small tool bag.

JEFF

Hello? Anyone here?

Billie exits the kitchen area.

BILLIE

Hi. Hey. Yeah, over here. You must be Jeff?

They shake hands.

JEFF

Yeah. Billie is it?

BILLIE

Yeah, that's right.

JEFF

I was surprised that someone wanted to save this old place. She's got some nice bones, but probably a better idea just to take her out in the back pasture and put her down.

BILLIE

Thanks for that, uh, beautiful allegory, but I'll take my chances. This place has a lot of rich history that I think can be a valuable outlet for this community.

JEFF

Building condos would have meant a lot of work for a lot of people around here.

BILLIE

I'm sorry?

JEFF

Should we get started then?

PRE-LAP

A sentimental sounding 90's SONG comes up.

EXT. TOWN OF WATERLOO/PALACE BOWL - DAY

Lyle and the kids drive through the town of Waterloo. This is intercut with Jeff and Billie touring the alley as well as Levon in 1970.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

- They pass through the old historic buildings of downtown and past a bustling farmer's market.
- Billie and Jeff look at some cracks along the base of the building.
- Levon in 1970 breaks open a door to an office inside the bowling alley.
- The kids stare out the window and point emphatically at a drive-in burger joint.
- Billie and Jeff peer under the plastic on the lanes to assess the condition of the floor.
- Levon stops at a piece of paper that shows the deed to the Palace Bowl. He scans the document and settles on the names: Luca and Francesca Ballo 117 North Main Street, Waterloo, IA.
- The family sees a MAN driving his John Deere riding mower alongside the road, drinking a beer.

- Jeff ruts around above some ceiling tiles and shows Billie how fragile they are.
- The kids see various factories and the plumes of smoke being expelled.
- Jeff holds up some old photographs against the current condition of the front counter area.
- Levon, carrying his backpack, rushes out the front doors of the bowling alley.
- Lyle drives the car between two large cornfields on a stretch of road that leads to their new home.

END MONTAGE.

INT. PALACE BOWL - DAY

Billie and Jeff finish the walkthrough, and Jeff hands her a carbon copy of some estimate notes he's been taking.

JEFF

I'll put some more concrete dates and numbers together, ma'am, but I'd say this'll be somewhere in the two fifty to three hundred ballpark. Should be able to get the bulk of it done by next year.

BILLIE

What!? Two to three hundred thousand!? Dollars!? The place only cost eighty!

JEFF

Well ma'am, um, since this is going to be a historic preservation, we'll need to restore everything to its original 1945 state.

BILLIE

Next year!? I need to get this place up and running by the end of summer. Jeezus Christ!

Billie throws the paperwork on the front counter.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

Thank you for your time, Jeff. Send me the full estimate when you can.

She motions for the door and walks him out. Another SHINGLE FALLS from the ceiling. Jeff tries to put a rosy spin on the situation.

JEFF

It'll look nice when it's all done,
but you'll have to get extra
permits from the city -- the lien
on the property and all.

Billie curls her lip up in frustration and encourages Jeff to leave.

EXT. BALLO HOUSE - EVENING

Lyle maneuvers the car into the driveway of an American Foursquare style home, its vintage charm still intact despite the passing years. Exiting the car, Lyle takes a moment to survey the property.

The kids burst outside to explore the new territory.

INT. BALLO HOUSE - EVENING

Lyle opens the front door and has a look around. The kids tear past him --

LAUREN

Dad, we have the biggest yard in
the world!

BROOKS

Yeah! We saw a skinny old dog out
there with a crazy look on its
face!

LYLE

Okay, let's stay inside for the
night. I'll get some snacks out of
the car and a couple of chairs.
We'll have a picnic in our new
kitchen.

EXT. BALLO DRIVEWAY - EVENING

Lyle opens the Uhaul and pulls out a couple of chairs.

He notices a brand new red Camaro driving by the house very slowly, then the car speeds away.

He is startled by a voice:

TINA (O.C.)
Welcome to the neighborhood!

Lyle turns to see a woman, TINA, 60's. He drops the chair he's holding.

Tina picks it up for him.

TINA (CONT'D)
Jesus Christ, I didn't mean to startle you, slim. Just thought I'd say hi. I didn't bring a damn pie or anything, just wanted to let you know if you need anything, and I mean, anything --

Tina pulls out her wallet and then a picture.

TINA (CONT'D)
This here is Mama.

Lyle looks the photo over.

LYLE
I see the resemblance.

TINA
I was adopted, but anyway, the old bitch and her husband died last week of carbon monoxide poisoning.

LYLE
That's --

TINA
She always said she wanted to die in her sleep. My whole life she said she wanted to die in her sleep. Got what she wanted I suppose. Shit, I wish I could have said goodbye to the bitch though.

Lyle cocks his head to the side, realizing that Tina is a bit off --

LYLE
I'm sorry to hear that.

Brooks and Lauren run out to meet Lyle.

Tina looks 'em over.

TINA
Son of a bitch.

She looks at Lauren.

TINA (CONT'D)
You look just like a little girl
that used to live in this house a
long time ago.

LYLE
Well, my wife grew up around here.

TINA
Was her name Billie?

Lyle looks at Tina curiously.

TINA (CONT'D)
Oh jeez. She didn't tell you that
she was moving the family back into
the house she grew up in? My oh my!
This is gonna be fun.

LYLE
You're telling me that Billie Ballo
grew up in this house?

TINA
Right up 'til about the time that
her granddaddy got --

Tina makes a throat-slitting motion.

Tina looks at the kids.

TINA (CONT'D)
Oh, I'm sorry. My good sense
sometimes can't catch up with my
mouth. I've lived in my house for
forty years. Never had any kids.
Lotta dumb ass men came through
here though.

Lyle looks down at the kids.

TINA (CONT'D)
Of course. I'll be on my way. Tell
Billie that old Tina said hello.
And remember. You need anything, I
mean anything at all.

Tina struts off.

Lyle looks around at the neighborhood and then toward their
house.

In the distance, he sees a COYOTE prowling back and forth at the back of their property.

INT. KWIK TRIP GAS STATION - DAY

Billie walks into the gas station and goes to the front counter to buy a pack of cigarettes. She sees a female clerk, CHEROKEE, 34.

CHEROKEE

What can I get you?

BILLIE

Lucky Strikes.

Cherokee looks over her head for the smokes.

CHEROKEE

You don't seem like the shallow type.

BILLIE

I'm sorry?

CHEROKEE

The cigarettes. Shallow people believe in luck. Strong people believe in cause and effect.

BILLIE

Is that like a fortune cookie or something? Can I just get the cigarettes?

CHEROKEE

Just trying to keep things loose around here.

BILLIE

So, what kind of cause and effect led you to work in this gas station? Jesus.

Billie throws her arms up in the air.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

I mean -- this is the first pack I've bought in six months and you come at me with some dime store philosophy.

CHEROKEE
Is that what they're calling
Emerson now?

BILLIE
What? Emerson?

Billie takes a closer look at the clerk and tilts her head to the side.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
Cherokee? Cherokee Knight?

CHEROKEE
You used to go on and on about his essay about individualism and self-reliance. I thought the opportunity to reference Emerson was sublime.

BILLIE
Holy shit! I don't remember him saying that! You remember me talking about that? I was in the eighth grade I thought I was so --

Billie composes herself.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
Holy hell, I haven't seen you in what -- twenty years? You stayed. I didn't mean -- I mean working at a gas station is honest work. I'm just a little worked up. I just moved my family back here and I -- you look great. We'd sit there and spin those little tops we made in woodshop and see whose would spin the longest. You always beat my ass. It's nice to see you.

Billie looks around the store again.

CHEROKEE
I own the place and four others.

BILLIE
The gas station? Of course, you do!

Cherokee comes out from behind the counter and the two embrace.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
I mean, it would be fine -- if you were just working here.

CHEROKEE

I know you don't believe that for a second. I heard you bought the old bowling alley. I thought about putting a bid on it myself but --

BILLIE

You realized it was a money pit?

CHEROKEE

I realized that Blane Neuman had plans to tear the place down and put up condos. I don't know how you managed to push him out, but something tells me he won't forget it.

BILLIE

That guy? He's a lightweight. I eat d-bags like him for breakfast.

Cherokee gives her a half smile.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

But -- out of curiosity what gives you the idea that he won't --

Cherokee nods toward the gas pumps outside.

Billie turns to look outside and sees the same bright red Camaro that Lyle saw at their house.

The red Camaro spins its wheels until they start to smoke and then drops the car into gear -- causing it to burn rubber.

Billie looks back at Cherokee.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

(sarcastically)

Seems like a nice guy. Curious that he knew I'd be here.

CHEROKEE

There's only like four places someone would be in this town.

BILLIE

Still -- uncanny timing for the spreading of the Camaro tail-feather display.

Billie looks deep into Cherokee's eyes.

BILLIE (CONT'D)
You're not going to admit you
called him?

CHEROKEE
You're not going to tell me how you
rat-fucked that bag of dicks?

Billie flips her pack of cigarettes in the air and gives a little smile as she turns to walk out.

BILLIE
Maybe one of these days.

INT/EXT. CAR/BALLO HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Billie sits in her car listening to music. She lights a cigarette and looks at her childhood home.

Billie pulls out her cellular phone and scrolls down to her former boss's number. She takes a long drag off the cigarette and decides not to dial, then throws her phone back in her purse.

Suddenly, HEADLIGHTS shine in as a car pulls into the driveway behind her. Billie looks in the rearview mirror to see her mother, SYBIL, 55, getting out of her vehicle with a big bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Billie smashes out her cigarette and gets out.

SYBIL
Back to smoking, are we?

BILLIE
What are you doing here?

SYBIL
Well, I thought I'd lend a helping hand and bring over some dinner. If I know you, the cookware will be the last thing unpacked.

Billie eyes her suspiciously.

SYBIL (CONT'D)
Can you grab the other bags in there, sweetie?

Billie reluctantly complies.

BILLIE

We're fine, mom. You didn't need to do this. And KFC?

SYBIL

Oh, I remember you loving this when you were young. We must have eaten it three times a week --

BILLIE

Exactly. That's why I haven't driven within five miles of a KFC since then.

SYBIL

But you did return to the house you lived in as a kid. Must not have been a horrible childhood.

BILLIE

Nothing that happened was the fault of this house.

SYBIL

And you bought the alley. I'm starting to think I should take this personally that you haven't been back in years to visit little old me.

Billie bites her lip. She opts to hug her mother instead.

INT. BALLO HOUSE - NIGHT

Billie and Sybil enter the house.

The family, playing in a fort made of empty boxes, wheels around to see Billie and Sybil.

LAUREN

Mommy!

BILLIE

Hey, you guys remember your Grandma Ceecee.

They all stare for a beat without moving or saying anything. Sybil, not one to beat around the bush, moves right in.

SYBIL

Hug your grandma.

She sets the bucket of chicken on the counter and pulls two Blow-Pop lollipops from her purse. She holds them out as she bends down with open arms for a hug.

SYBIL (CONT'D)
Who wants a sucker!?

BILLIE
Oh, Mom, they need to eat dinner
first.

Billie's attempt is futile as the kids run up to her for a big hug and grab the suckers.

BROOKS/LAUREN
Yaaay!

Lyle straightens himself out and approaches Sybil. He leans in and gives a weird handshake/side hug.

LYLE
Hello, mom.

SYBIL
Lyle. So nice to see you getting a chance to put your engineering chops to work with the fort here.

BILLIE
Lyle has actually been doing quite well as a landscaping designer lately.

LYLE
Well, I wouldn't say 'designer,' but I enjoy working in the dirt. However, my music is finally at a place that I think the public --

Sybil is clearly not interested in his story. She starts unpacking the KFC.

SYBIL
Kids! Who wants some fried chicken?

INT. BALLO HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The family, including Billie, thoroughly enjoy the finger-licking and such.

BILLIE
I know you'd rather see that alley demolished.

SYBIL

Perhaps. But if I hadn't sent the fax, we wouldn't be sitting here, together as a family for the first time in --

Sybil raises an eyebrow and looks at Lyle, who is devouring a drumstick.

LYLE

Oh, me? Yes, fate works in mysterious -- oh, I think it was Christmas. Maybe three or four years ago, you stayed with us.

SYBIL

These babies were barely making proper words with all the twin language they'd made for themselves.

BILLIE

Mom -- dad's health -- he needed us in St. Louis with him.

SYBIL

So, all I needed to do was get cancer?

Billie sets down her food and clenches her jaw.

BILLIE

Well, school doesn't start for a couple of months. I can't have the kids at the alley while we work on it.

SYBIL

Of course, I'll watch them. They can help me at the stables.

Lyle continues to destroy the chicken.

SYBIL (CONT'D)

(to Lyle)

I'll take that as a sign that you approve.

BILLIE

How are things at the farm by the way?

SYBIL

(to the kids)

Well, I do have a new miniature pony named, Bill, and he would love to play with the littles.

LAUREN/BROOKS

Yay! Pony!

Billie gets up and walks to the kitchen.

INT. BALLO HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Billie throws away her paper plate and looks up at the archway that separates the kitchen from the dining area.

She notices a wooden etching of a bowling ball and pins, inlaid in the wall. She lets down her guard here for a moment and reaches up to touch it.

It's the same crest that is found on the special tokens used to enter the portal but it does not dawn on her.

Sybil enters.

SYBIL

I can't believe that ridiculous thing is still here. It looked god-awful the day your grandfather 'gifted' it to us. But now with years of smoke stains and --

Sybil stops abruptly and starts to tear up a little.

SYBIL (CONT'D)

Do you think you can find anything good left in that place? He disappeared on all of us. It might as well be ash. Take your good memories and leave that hellscape alone. I beg you.

BILLIE

Oh, mom --

Lyle enters and has missed the major beats here.

LYLE

I like it. I think it's very nouveau chic. I've seen wood carvings like this at the boutique furniture shops back in St. Louis for a pretty penny.

Sybil, giving Lyle a sideways glance, returns to her regularly scheduled smarminess.

SYBIL

I'm sure. Well, anyway, you're the ones that have to look at it.

Sybil goes back into the dining room.

Lyle gets a moment with his wife as they throw all the paper plates and cups into the trash.

LYLE

You didn't think it was worth mentioning that we were moving into your childhood home?

BILLIE

Not now, Lyle. It's fine. It was available and it was affordable. That's all.

Lyle simmers with being rebuffed again.

LYLE

So, how'd the walkthrough go?

BILLIE

It was a shakedown. I think we're better off doing the work ourselves anyway.

Lyle takes a stand. Sort of.

LYLE

Look, you pick up and run your entire family out of town without giving any explanation besides, "We need to get out." You know I'm a good sport and usually up for an adventure, but I need to know we're a team, and this is starting to feel like a one-woman show, and the rest of us are just caught up in Hurricane Billie.

Long pause.

Billie steps in close to Lyle.

BILLIE

We have to make this work here. There's a lot you don't know about St. Louis. I've --

Sybil walks back into the kitchen with more trash interrupting the moment. Billie breaks away from Lyle.

Lyle takes the cue from Billie and changes the subject. He looks up at the wooden etching again.

LYLE

So he was like a big deal back in the day, wasn't he? Like a bowling champ or something?

SYBIL

Lyle, you're not very good at this. If you're going to change the subject, then you can't ask a question out loud that you already know the answer to. Unless Billie has never mentioned her dear Grandfather's many accolades. And I know that isn't the case.

BILLIE

And I'll say it again -- he was one of the early members of the PBA circuit during the Golden Age of Ten-Pin Bowling, right up there with the likes of Don Carter and Dick Weber. He even won the Grand Slam in '58. He did great things.

SYBIL

Ha! Don Carter was a pervert of the highest order. Some kingpin of bowling he was.

LAUREN (O.C.)

What's a pervert, mommy?

BILLIE

Okay, mom. We appreciate you coming, but it might be time to get the kids to bed. It's been a big day.

BROOKS/LAUREN

Noooooooo!

EXT. BALLO HOUSE - BACKYARD - EVENING

Billie waves goodbye to Sybil and then lights a cigarette. She listens to the crickets chirping loudly in the dark, then sees the silhouette of a coyote cross the street.

INT. BALLO HOUSE - SUNROOM - MORNING

Lyle is setting up his DJ equipment. He puts on some obscure Cure record and starts bopping his head. Billie walks by and rolls her eyes, puts her headphones on, and steps outside for a run.

EXT. BALLO HOUSE - MORNING

Billie steps out of the front gate and starts to run. She's deep in her music when a Chevy Suburban speeds up alongside her and comes to a screeching halt.

Gerry steps out of the car and grabs her.

INT. CHEVY SUBURBAN - CONTINUOUS

Billie gets thrown into the backseat next to Gerry. Roger sits in the front passenger seat smoking a cigar. Billie turns to the man who threw her in the SUV.

BILLIE

Jeezuz, Gerry! What the fuck!? Was that shit necessary? What the hell do you want?

She hits Gerry across the chest.

ROGER

Easy, sweetheart. We just want to talk.

BILLIE

How'd you find me?

GERRY

You're still using the company phone, toots.

BILLIE

I'm seriously going to put a fucking pencil through your eye, you --

ROGER

You can have your little small-town fantasy if that's what you want. But you left some unfinished business when you split town a couple of weeks ago.

BILLIE

Roger, I told you. I'm out. I'm done with that. I wrapped up my accounts for you in a nice little bow.

ROGER

It seems your bow-tying isn't as tidy as it once was. Almost as if your head is in a different place. Big Jim won't go quietly into the night.

Roger looks directly at Billie and tilts his head.

Billie stares off for a few beats, not fully able to wrap her head around yet another mess.

GERRY

What he means is --

Billie comes back to reality and gives Gerry a piercing glance.

BILLIE

I know what he fucking means. I'll handle it, Roger. I will. Tell Jim it'll be squared away next week. First thing.

Billie gets in tight to Gerry and grits her teeth.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

You've got a little hair dye running down your cheek.

Gerry resists touching the black-dyed sweat bead running down the side of his cheek as he and Billie have a momentary stare-down.

Billie steps out of the car and looks back in as Gerry covertly tries to wipe the dye from his face.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

Many thanks for the pleasant visit, gentlemen. We'll have to do this again real soon.

She slams the door.

EXT. SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Billie stands on the sidewalk, the Suburban speeds away.

INT. PALACE BOWL - DAY

Billie and the kids are cleaning out some garbage from behind the reception desk. Lyle enters with a couple of banker's boxes.

LYLE

Hey, look! I found some old photos of the place. Look at the lights along that west wall. Those gotta be original.

BILLIE

Babe, it's just a technicality card you can play to hold things up for developers who don't know about that sort of stuff. We'll make a couple of high-profile items look like they've been historically restored and move on.

Lyle's excitement gets taken down a few notches.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

But find me some photos of the outside of the building. You can work on the marquee sign. That'll keep the preservation board distracted.

Lyle starts rifling through more of the boxes.

Billie moves to the sink area between the kitchen and the front desk to wash off some paint rollers.

The sink won't turn on at first, so Billie takes a hammer and taps on the handle, then takes a mighty swing, missing the handle and striking the faucet. Brown water sprays everywhere, soaking the children.

Billie begins cussing and frantically trying to stop the water. Lyle has a sensible response and reaches under the sink to turn the shutoff valve.

Billie looks at the children, covered in rust water, and realizes that she has put her family's lives in a blender of uncertainty.

Billie, apologetic, wraps her arms around both children, who are in a bit of shock, and pulls them in tightly for a long beat.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

Who wants some KFC!?

BROOKS/LAUREN
Yaaaaaaaay!

EXT/INT. BALLO HOUSE - DRIVEWAY/CAR - NIGHT

Billie pulls the car into the driveway. Lyle, an extended, blaring, slurp through his straw at the bottom of his soda, cranes his neck around both ways.

BILLIE
What are you looking for?

LYLE
Oh, nothing.

BILLIE
(sternly)
Lyle.

LYLE
It's just that, yesterday there was a car that drove by slowly a couple of times and then just took off.

BILLIE
What did it look like?

LYLE
It was red. Like a sports car. I'm sure it's nothing but when we were leaving the alley -- I could have sworn I saw the same --

Billie's knuckles go white from gripping the wheel.

BILLIE
It was probably nothing. I just remembered I forgot to shut off the lights at the alley. You guys go in and pick out a movie to watch.

LYLE
Babe?

BILLIE
It's fine.

Lyle helps the kids out of the car and Billie backs away.

EXT. PALACE BOWL- - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Billie peels into the parking lot and notices a utility truck parked outside the building.

INT. PALACE BOWL - NIGHT

Billie hears the sound of a jackhammer and follows the rumble to the edge of the building. She sees TWO MEN, dressed in city uniforms tearing a hole in one of her lanes.

She begins yelling and waving her hands wildly.

Worker 1 stops the machine.

BILLIE

Stop! What the hell are you doing?

WORKER 1

Ma'am. We got a call from a concerned citizen. Said they smelled gas.

BILLIE

Jesus. There's nothing in here that runs on gas. Why would you --

WORKER 1

There's a city line that runs directly under lane ten here.

WORKER 2

At least that's what it says on our blueprints.

BILLIE

Don't you have to let the owner know when you're about to start digging a mineshaft on their property?

BLANE (O.C.)

Unless of course there is a historical easement on the property that allows the city access to the building.

Billie turns to see a tall, Norse-looking fella in an oversized suit and a gold chain, BLANE, 31. He's marveling at himself.

BILLIE

A historical -- I would have seen
that.

BLANE

I was a little surprised at such a
rookie move by someone as
accomplished as yourself.

BILLIE

How do you know --

Billie turns to look at the hole in the floor and back.

BILLIE (CONT'D)

You're Blane Neuman? The psychopath
in the Camaro?

BLANE

(to the workers)

Thanks for getting here on such
short notice, Frank. I owe you one.

FRANK

It turns out we had our map upside
down. The gas line actually runs on
the other end of the building.

BILLIE

What the fuck are you talking
about? Trust me, you don't want to
dig another inch --

BLANE

She's right, boys. I think I might
have overreacted. Probably the
walleye fritters I had earlier
doing funny things. You can call it
a night.

The workers begin to pack up.

BILLIE

You were the one who put that weak-
ass bid on this building?

BLANE

You know what? You're right. I
didn't think anyone would be stupid
enough to try and spin this
shithole into gold.

BILLIE

Let me guess, you're
Rumpelstiltskin in this story and
you're here to help. Well, I got
something you can spin --

Billie goes behind the counter and grabs a mop.

BLANE

42 state-of-the-art condos! That's
what this community needed. Not
some place for teenagers to get
ginned up on the smell of mineral
oil and hairspray before they smash
every window in town looking for a
hand job.

BILLIE

That sounds very specific. You'll
be paying for the damage you
caused, and you will regret making
me your enemy.

BLANE

I'm just a concerned citizen,
ma'am. Can't have any city folk
waltzin' into our town, thinking
they know what's best for us
Waterluvians.

BILLIE

I'm calling the police.

BLANE

You might instead want to focus on
how you're going to raise the funds
for the remodel --

Billie steps on the end of the mop to break off the handle.

She holds it up as she walks, eyes wide, toward Blane.

EXT. PALACE BOWL - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Blane's Camaro is seen doing several donuts before peeling
out of the parking lot.

Billie exits the front door as the sounds of the Camaro grow
faint into the night. Still holding the mop handle, she
lights a cigarette.

INT. PALACE BOWL - NIGHT

Billie shines a FLASHLIGHT into the new hole in her floor to inspect the damage.

BILLIE

Great --

She picks up one of the pins that are strewn about the lane and, in a fit of rage, throws it at the set pins at the end of the lane. This causes a loud clanking noise in the back when the pinsetter tries to pick up the pins.

INT. PALACE BOWL - MACHINE ROOM - NIGHT

Billie, armed with the mop handle, approaches a jammed machine. She inserts the mop handle. Finally, the pin breaks free, sending it crashing into the door opposite.

Billie looks up at the door and notices a sign that reads: "MAINTENANCE."

Billie stands and takes a deep breath. She pushes the door open. Her flashlight illuminates the space beyond, revealing a sight that triggers a surge of nostalgia.

INT. PALACE BOWL - MAINTENANCE ROOM - NIGHT

Inside, Billie's gaze is immediately drawn to shelves displaying a collection of old bowling pins.

The rush of emotions overwhelms her.

INT. MAINTENANCE ROOM - NIGHT (1970)

SUPER: 1970

INTERCUT/PRESENT DAY

Young Billie reaches her hand out toward the wall.

Intercut present-day adult Billie with Young Billie in 1970.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

- Adult Billie is jolted back to reality. She moves the shelving system open to reveal a staircase behind it.
- Young Billie walks down a dark staircase, music and people's voices loom. She comes to the massive card room and ducks underneath an unoccupied poker table.

- Adult Billie steps to the bottom of the stairs and tries to turn a light switch on. Nothing happens. She shines the flashlight around the old card room, now covered with many years of dust and cobwebs. She notices footprints in the dust leading somewhere.

- Adult Billie follows in the footsteps as they lead to the stripping lounge. She walks to one of the booths and tries another light switch nearby. This time it works and turns on some mood lighting over the doors to the strip booths. She moves to one of the booths with an "out of order" sign hanging on the door. The door is slightly ajar.

- Young Billie watches Wilbur stumble into the same door, marked with the "out of order" sign.

- Adult Billie opens the door and slowly walks inside.

- Young Billie picks up the token off the floor.

END MONTAGE.

INT. OUT OF ORDER BOOTH - NIGHT (PRESENT DAY)

Adult Billie reaches toward her neck and takes off a necklace that has the same token hanging from it. She inserts the token into the coin slot and is caught off guard when the retractable window opens up and the lights on the dance stage come on. After a beat, the lights crackle and spark before shutting off.

Then a bright PORTAL opens up in front of her. She gradually works up the courage to step in. Once she is through, the portal closes behind her.

EXT. PALACE BOWL - NIGHT (MAY 1970)

SUPER: May 1970

Adult Billie emerges on the other side of the portal under an outdoor flood light at the back of the bowling alley. She slowly walks around to the front of the building, and looks up to see a gorgeous, fully operational, blinking neon marquee sign: PALACE BOWL.

The parking lot is filled with cars (from the 60s) and patrons mingle outside the front entrance.

Still very confused, Billie enters through the front door.

INT. PALACE BOWL - CONTINUOUS (MAY 1970)

Billie walks inside to a lively scene. Palace Bowl is fully restored to its original glory.

Billie moves to the front counter, where a YOUNG SYBIL, early 20's, magnetic in her purple jump-suit, is working the counter. An older man is ogling her as he fumbles through his wallet. Sybil acknowledges Billie.

YOUNG SYBIL

What size?

BILLIE

Excuse me?

YOUNG SYBIL

Shoes?

BILLIE

Oh -- um -- I'm not sure --

Suddenly, Young Billie runs up to the counter. Billie steps aside in bewilderment.

YOUNG BILLIE

Mommy, the dingus on lane eight
needs a reset.

Eye roll from Young Sybil as she pushes a button and speaks into an intercom.

YOUNG SYBIL

(into the intercom)

Reset on eight, please.

Young Billie turns to look up at adult Billie.

YOUNG BILLIE

I like your earrings.

Adult Billie runs her fingers along one of her dangling earrings but is stunned and speechless -- just staring at Young Billie. A garbled voice comes back over the radio.

RADIO VOICE (O.S.)

All clear on eight.

YOUNG SYBIL

(to Young Billie)

Okay, sweetie. They should be all set. You sure you don't want to play in the arcade?

(MORE)

YOUNG SYBIL (CONT'D)
Maybe you should take a break from
the lanes for a bit.

YOUNG BILLIE
Don't be crazy, mommy.

Young Billie turns and runs back toward the lane. Billie
watches in shock.

The whale of a SIREN goes off on one of the pinball machines,
snapping Billie back to reality. She turns her glance to the
left and sees Wilbur holding the shirt collar of a young
employee.

YOUNG SYBIL
(to Billie)
Sorry about that. What size?

Billie staggers backward into the exit.

EXT. PALACE BOWL - NIGHT

Levon jogs past the entrance to Palace Bowl in a hurry. He
looks at his watch, which reads: five minutes.

EXT. PALACE BOWL - NIGHT

Billie walks out in a hurry and stops to gather her breath.
The Camera moves up into the night, showing the glowing
Palace Bowl neon sign against the expanse of the town of
Waterloo.

END OF PILOT