

THE WHISTLER CABARET

Written by

Heath Houseman

FADE IN:

EXT. WHISTLER VILLAGE - DAY (2016)

Fall - HIGH ABOVE the modern Bavarian Village, the heart of Whistler-Blackcomb, British Columbia, Canada, a ski resort.

A crisp MAPLE LEAF flutters over the village and we follow it until it lands at the feet of ROBERT "BOB" HOUSEMAN (88) and JENNY HOUSEMAN (78).

Robert has a thick mop of wild white hair, piercing blue eyes in a kind, inviting face with a well groomed white mustache. His body is frail, his back bent.

He leans on a wooden walking stick that has a compass in the handle-top. We can see that it's spinning, like a compass might spin in the Bermuda Triangle. He has a SALVATION ARMY button pinned to his lapel.

Jenny's much more vital, shorter, wider, with white hair like Robert's, but cut in an Audrey Hepburn pixie crop - we can tell that she had a similar beauty when she was young.

Both are South African-Americans that retain a STRONG ACCENT.

A fast-moving stream of PEOPLE walk by them.

Jenny points at the shops, restaurants, hotels around them, Robert nodding: yes, yes, oh yes, how everything has changed.

ROBERT

This used to be the garbage dump,
Jenny-love. Where'd the bears go, I
wonder?

A well-dressed, no-nonsense WOMAN passes - LUCY MACLEOD (60). Jerks to a halt, spins around.

LUCY

Bob...? Bob? Bob Houseman? Is that
you?

(beat)

Oh my god. Oh! My! God! Mr. and
Mrs. Houseman! It's me. Lucy! Lucy
MacLeod!

Robert and Jenny return polite smiles and frowns: sorry?

LUCY (CONT'D)

Lucy... From the Cabaret.

JENNY

Oooh. Lucy LSD. Well, look at you.

The three of them laugh and the conversation begins - lots of catching up to do.

EXT. WHISTLER VILLAGE COFFEE SHOP - DAY

INGRID'S VILLAGE CAFE, Robert, Jenny and Lucy at table on the outdoor patio, sipping coffee. Lucy watches the Houseman's, eyes alight.

LUCY

Wow. No one's called me that... in a long time. Don't tell my clients, or my family. Please.

(laughs)

Oh, it's so good to see you, I can't believe this! What are the odds? I have so many questions...!

Jenny caresses Robert's hand. Lucy notices. There's a beat, then...

LUCY (CONT'D)

...have you seen it?

The Houseman's shake their heads.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Come on. I'll take you. It'll be my pleasure.

EXT. ALTA LAKE - DAY

Sunset - Robert and Jenny stand side by side at a point overlooking the lake, Lucy, her car, a forest of trees and a dirt road behind them.

Lucy keeps her distance, a sacred moment.

Although there are houses and docks around the lake, the area they're in is overgrown, a secret garden at the edge of a downward slope of rock.

The lake lies below the rock, ice cold, glacier fed water.

Flat grassy area to their left, the weathered outline of a building FOUNDATION within it: The BURNT remains of MOUNT WHISTLER LODGE.

The wind picks up, rustling their hair.

Robert checks the compass in his walking stick. It's spinning.

He looks to Jenny, her eyes on the foundation. He follows her gaze and nods, ready.

She cusps his elbow and leads him to the flattened area, taking small, slow, careful steps.

They stop at the edge of the foundation. Robert kicks at it with his boot, knocking away rotted, charcoaled pieces of wood.

He looks to Jenny again, then... she releases his elbow and he steps across the threshold, into the foundation.

He stumbles. Jenny reaches out to steady him, but he uses the walking stick and rights himself. She backs off and lets him continue on alone.

A few steps in, he looks at the compass again: It has stopped spinning. He smiles - a secret smile, no surprise here.

Leaning on the stick, he takes in his surroundings and we circle around him. As we do this, a vaporous DOORWAY and WALLS appear - the double-door entrance and the walls to the lodge.

We hear early 1970s BLUES ROCK AND ROLL blow in on the breeze, so faint it's almost inaudible.

The door, walls and music fade away.

ROBERT

Jenny, dear? Did you... did you hear it?

Excited, Robert walks deeper into the flattened area, to the heart of the foundation.

The wind blows again and the music returns.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Sounds like... wait a minute... sounds just like... Sparkling... Apple?

JENNY

That's right, darling.

Robert closes his eyes and then...

...the doorway and walls of the lodge appear around him, no longer vaporous, but solid. Like he's standing in the middle of the dance floor of the real building.

The walls of the lodge are made of enormous rustic varnished logs with big knots and imperfections. Chinking made of dry moss is shoved in between the logs. If you pulled the moss, light would filter in from outside.

Vaulted ceiling with rustic log beams, wooden dance floor soaked with beer, short raised stage, massive stone fireplace and a long bar - it's all back, like Robert is in 1972 when the lodge was in its party time prime.

The blues rock CRANKS UP and hundreds of young, long-haired MEN AND WOMEN appear, DANCING in a SLOW MOTION frenzy to Sparking Apple, a three-man BLUES ROCK BAND in the middle of a set, playing on the raised stage.

Some of the men and women are topless.

Colored stage lights flash and strobe lights pulse, turning thick clouds of swirling cigarette and marijuana smoke into a trippy hypnotic effect.

Robert stands in the middle of it all.

Then the lights, smoke, dancers and building fade away.

A couple of rock-harmonica notes linger for a beat - haunting. And then it's all gone.

Robert once again stands alone in the remains of the lodge.

He turns around and looks to Jenny, smiles his secret smile. Her eyes tear up when she sees it.

He reaches to Jenny. She crosses to him. They lean into one another.

ROBERT

It was a big resort. One of the best we ever had.

JENNY

Well, yes. It was a big... something.

ROBERT

My dream come true. See? You put your mind to it, Jenny, dreams can come true. We lived it.

JENNY
We survived it.

ROBERT
It's what I was meant to do, you
know. Run resorts.

JENNY
I know, sweetheart.
(beat)
Ready?

ROBERT
I am. I'm very tired.

Jenny leads Robert out of the foundation, toward Lucy, who
turns to go with them.

We back away, toward the lake, away from them.

Robert reaches into a pocket and puts something in his mouth.

JENNY (V.O.)
What are you eating?

ROBERT (V.O.)
Chocolate.

JENNY (V.O.)
You're not supposed to eat
chocolate.

ROBERT (V.O.)
("Don't worry," Afrikaans)
Moenie worry nie. Would you like
some? It's Cadbury.

He offers a chocolate to Jenny, she takes it and they get
into Lucy's car as...

...we move over the dark water of the lake, and now we can
see exactly where the lodge was in relation to it. The
breathtaking Garibaldi Mountain Range reveals itself,
snowcapped peaks glowing in the distance.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Hospice inpatient facility.

Robert lies in bed, his children standing around him: SHANE,
STARR, SKYE and HEATH. Jenny sits by his side, holding his
hand. Tension high, everyone at the breaking point.

Heath holds his father's walking stick. He doesn't realize it - no one does - but the compass is spinning. We can see it.

Robert is dying. Eyelids so heavy he can hardly keep them open, breathing slow, labored. We can hear a rattle in it.

Jenny weeps silently.

Robert's eyes snap open and they're bright - 100% there. He looks at his family.

ROBERT

Oh. So beautiful. My morning glories.

He closes his eyes. A beat, then the smallest of smiles appears - the same secret smile we saw before.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Ooooo, I like that. The music.

JENNY

The what?

ROBERT

The music. Sparkling..

JENNY

Apple.

Eyes closed, he nods slowly. Jenny turns to her children.

JENNY (CONT'D)

(whisper)

Sparkling Apple.

Another beat, then Robert's eyes open again, but this time it's much harder to do. He struggles to speak.

JENNY (CONT'D)

Sh... don't, darling... just sh...

ROBERT

I'm... sorry.

JENNY

Sorry? Why? What on earth for?

ROBERT

For leaving you in the lurch.

JENNY

You're not leaving me in the lurch.

ROBERT
I can't fix it and I'm sorry.

JENNY
Sh... sh now...

ROBERT
I need to fix it and I can't.

JENNY
I tell you what. You go on ahead,
talk to the travel agent, make the
arrangements, book the tickets.
I'll catch up a little later.

He closes his eyes and nods.

ROBERT
OK. I'll take care of it.

JENNY
Yes. Like you always do. You always
fix it. You're a cowboy with the
heart of a Zulu warrior, my love,
so you don't have to worry. You
don't have to worry about me. It's
OK, to go, my love. It's OK. Go.

The spaces in between Robert's breathing get longer. Finally,
they stop.

HEATH
...he's gone.

Robert takes a big breath.

HEATH (CONT'D)
Nope. He's back.

The family laughs, big laughter filled with tears.

ROBERT
I'm going to a big resort.

SKYE
What?

SHANE
What'd he say?

STARR
Sh!

ROBERT
A big, big resort.

Robert takes his final breath and dies.

The family breaks and tears flow.

Heath lays the walking stick on the bed, placing his father's hand on it. The handle with the compass is close to Robert's head.

We see that the compass has stopped spinning.

And now we rise - slowly - to the ceiling, looking down, the whole room below us, Robert in bed, surrounded by his grieving family. We keep rising, a classic near death experience.

We travel through the roof, floors of the hospital, break through the rooftop and keep going up.

Pulling away faster now, the hospital shrinking, getting smaller and smaller the higher we go.

Blasting through clouds, we see Southern California, the western United States, North America, and then the entire blue planet.

We're orbiting the earth.

The planet rotates to Africa and we drop like a rocket toward the continent, zooming toward South Africa and right into...

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. AIRPORT - SOUTH AFRICA (1971)

O.R. TAMBO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, JOHANNESBURG.

Passenger gate.

TITLE OVER: JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA, 1971