



LOOKING GLASS

Falls

INSPIRATION



As a film major at NYU, I was required to watch a lot of film noir: *Double Indemnity*, *Touch of Evil*, *Rear Window*. Inspired, I took it upon myself to watch a slew of neo-noirs: *Chinatown*, *Blade Runner*, *The Matrix*, *Twin Peaks*.

There's an appealing contradiction in the hard-boiled detective who was never so hard-boiled as to give up on romance; the tough-yet-soft hero who resists – yet succumbs – to the soft-yet-tough femme fatale.

Intriguing as it was, it was hard for a boy like me – a nerdy rule-follower who grew up in the sunny small-town suburbs of the Midwest—to relate to the dark, smoke-filled rooms and back alleys of 1930s urban America...

...until I attended an incredible immersive theater show in New York City. A silent and abstract modern dance production set in the 1930s, it was unlike anything I had ever experienced in my life. I quickly became obsessed.

The most amazing part of the show was how it transported its audience from the “real world:” after an inhibition-loosening libation, they are released into a four-story warehouse filled with dark and meticulous sets.

The audience is encouraged to be brave in their exploration. The further I went, the more I felt myself giving in to that exact temptation – I left the “real me” behind and became a fearless adventurer in this dark, twisty world.

I was inspired by the chance to escape my own pedestrian life behind to become someone else – someone more *bold* – for even just a few hours. **I wondered how someone like myself, a pretty boring “normal” guy, would actually fare in the high-contrast, low-morals world of those old black-and-white movies...**



WHAT IF

...the dynamic between a film noir detective and his femme fatale was flipped on its head?

WHAT IF

...instead of initially resisting and eventually succumbing to her charms, the hero was a hopeless romantic desperate to get her back?

WHAT IF

...theirs was already a love of a lifetime, and he had to restore the memory of their past in order to save her?

WHAT IF

...an “Ordinary Joe” got a second chance to become the hero he thinks his wife wanted?

LOOKING GLASS *Falls*

When a heartbroken widower discovers he can travel between his modern-day suburban home and a 1930s-Detective-Movie alternate dimension, he must out-manuever corrupt versions of familiar neighbors while chasing his dead wife's doppelgänger.

MAIN CHARACTERS

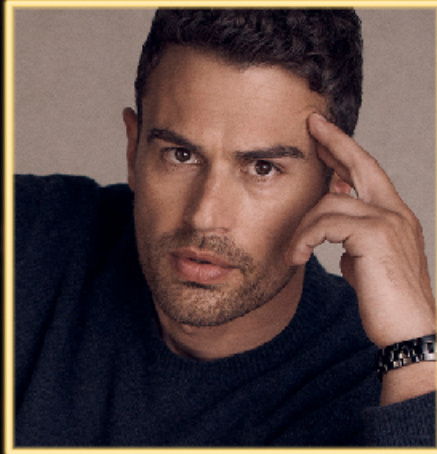
REID FLETCHER

REID FLETCHER is heartbroken.

Back in college, Reid was an art major who met the smart, funny, beautiful **MOLLY**, who shared his obsession with film noir. After falling for each other at a Bogart double-feature, their romance quickly blossomed. They moved in together, purchased an antique 1940s standing **cheval mirror** at a flea market, got married, and relocated back to the quaint rural town where she grew up to take care of her ailing father and eventually start a family.

Their marriage, while typically imperfect, was overall pretty damned blissful...until Molly was unexpectedly killed in a tragic car accident at the local lake, leaving Reid to raise their daughter alone...while questioning his own identity, living a life for which he didn't necessarily ask.

Now, Reid creates art inspired by his wife while his daughter forgets her mother more and more every day. He wallows in loneliness...until he discovers a parallel dream world called **CHEVAL CITY**.



MOLLY | "MARIE" TOMMASO

A brilliant, driven young woman, **MOLLY TOMMASO** escaped to the big city to become a lawyer just like her father. But when he fell ill, responsibility called her back to Looking Glass Falls. She took over his client list while giving birth to a daughter, cementing her family's life in town...but a tragic accident ripped her away from her husband,

daughter and mother, leaving a permanent void in their lives.

During his first visit to Cheval City, Reid encounters a wily femme fatale named "MARIE TOMMASO"...who looks just like Molly.

But that's impossible, isn't it? Because, as Reid soon discovers, a death in Cheval City causes an equivalent death in the "real world." So...conversely, if someone who looks just like Molly is running around Cheval City, shouldn't that mean someone who looks just like Molly is still running around in the "real world?!?"



CHARACTERS

PENNY FLETCHER

Penelope “**PENNY**” Fletcher is your typical pre/teen: she loves her dad, but she’s more concerned with her acne and who’s asking her to the school dance than she is remembering her mother, whose tragic death occurred when Penny was so young that she barely remembers her.

This is the source of much consternation for Reid, and makes him feel like a failure...which in turns creates a lot of friction with Penny, who is smart enough to wonder why her father is more concerned with the woman who left them...rather than the young woman who’s right in front of him.

Still, Penny’s precociousness and monumental reaction to “trivial” matters become Reid’s literal lifeline to the “real world.”

Notably, Penny does not seem to exist in Cheval City...



LYDIA | "MAMMA TOMMASO"



Molly’s decision to move back home to Looking Glass Falls made her mother **LYDIA** incredibly happy...but her tragic death plunged Lydia into a depression (sometimes fueled by a bit too much chianti) that has driven a wedge between her and her son-in-law Reid...especially when she drunkenly accuses him of not wanting to stay in town, or using Molly’s money to finance his “silly” art career.

Lydia knows Reid doesn’t want to spend a single second more than necessary with her, but she also knows she can guilt him enough to keep Penny – her last link to her dead daughter – within reach.

In Cheval City, Lydia is a large-and-in-charge mafiosa named “**MAMMA TOMMASO**.” Ruthless, Mamma took over The Family from her dead husband, and runs his crime ring better than perhaps even he did. She holds court at the Golden Dragon Lounge, and keeps her daughter Marie under her thumb. Reid soon discovers that Mamma is being vexed by a mysterious new rival named **RENAULD** who she thinks is encroaching on her turf.



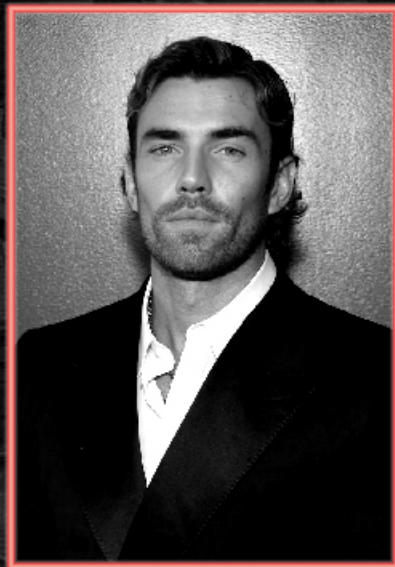
CHARACTERS

TREVOR SOAKS | "SOAKS"

Deputy **TREVOR** is married to Molly's childhood best friend, **KENNETH**. Fittingly, Trevor and Reid hit it off and quickly became best friends. Sadly, Trevor was the one to break the news to Reid that Molly had been killed in a car accident. Reid leaned on Trevor in the years since, asking advice on how to raise a precocious young daughter – something Trevor and Kenneth both know a bit about, given that they are raising their own adopted daughter **DEE** (who is Penny's best friend).

In Cheval City, the tables are of course turned, and Deputy Soaks is actually a criminal fence simply known as "**SOAKS**." He occasionally (and quietly) helps private dick Reid out (for the right price). It's these underworld connections that help Reid solve cases in Cheval City.

Soaks doesn't know how to feel when Reid uncovers his greatest secret: a clandestine, forbidden love affair with Golden Dragon Lounge owner **KEY-YONG** (this world's version of his beloved husband Kenneth)...but it seems Reid and Soaks are destined to lean on each other in any reality.



KENNETH LEE | "LI KE-YONG"

In Looking Glass Falls, **KENNETH** was Molly's childhood best friend. She was the first person to whom he came out, and they remained close until her death. He knows more than Reid realizes about Molly's family secrets. Kenneth runs the local coffee shop, and is married to Deputy Trevor Soaks...making them one of the most beloved, stand-up families in town.

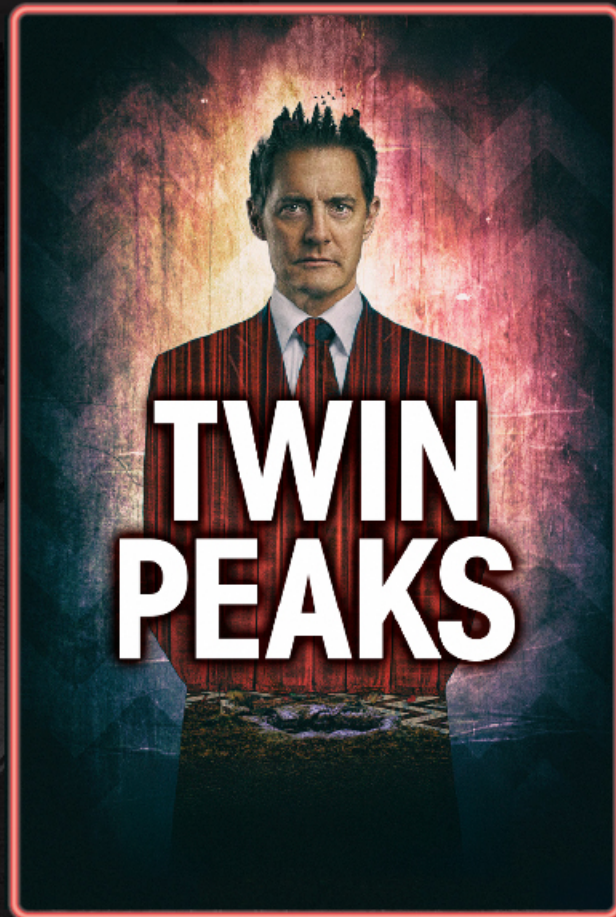
In Cheval City, Kenneth is "**LI KE-YONG**," proprietor of the Golden Dragon Lounge, a successful Chinatown bar once owned by his father – before Mamma Tommaso moved in and stole it after his death. He harbors resentment and suspects Tommaso might have contributed to his father's demise.

Like in the real world, Ke-Yong is friendly with Marie...and often does her favors, as they share a bond over their parents' disappointments. Unlike the real world, this Ke-Yong must hide his true feelings for his lover, Soaks. The two men are persecuted when their relationship is uncovered, a reminder to Reid that the past wasn't quite as "fun" for everyone.



TONE COMPARABLES

TWIN PEAKS



Eerie secrets simmering beneath the surface of a small rural town

WANDA VISION



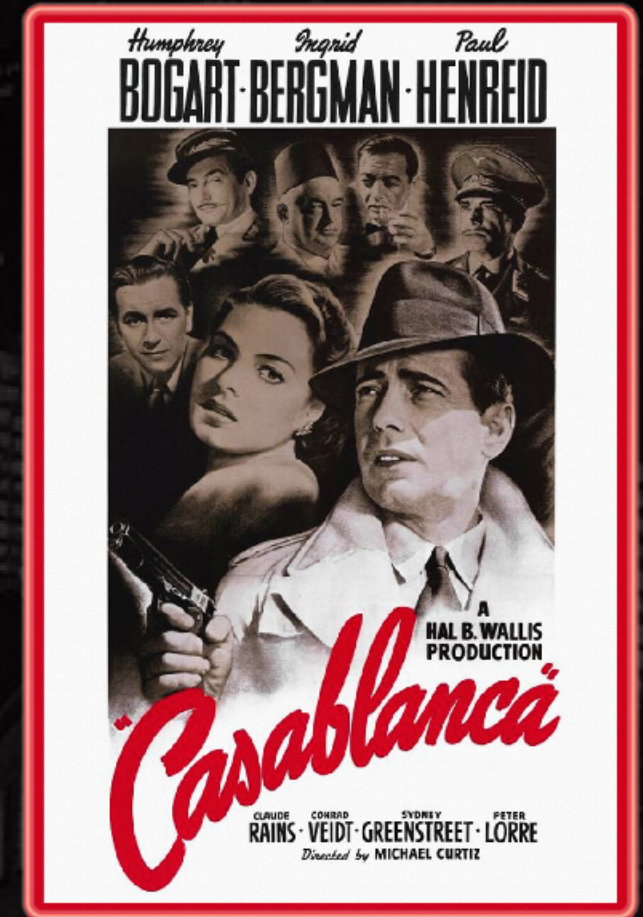
Tragic romance played across a shared love of old movies

DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES



Darkest human impulses wrapped in a sleepy, glossy suburban veneer

CASABLANCA



"A very mediocre film. It is a comic strip, a hotchpotch, low on psychological credibility, and with little continuity in its dramatic effects."

— author, philosopher and cultural critic Umberto Eco

THE WORLDS

LOOKING GLASS FALLS



LOOKING GLASS FALLS is a picturesque, rural town in Pennsylvania founded on the banks of the Delaware River. It made its name as a shipping hub, carrying timber and steel back and forth to the Great Lakes and the burgeoning cities to its south and east.

Eventually the town's growth stagnated, and it repositioned itself as an adorable tourist haven full of quirky artists and sleepy residents who preferred life in a small town to the hustle and bustle of nearby Philadelphia or Manhattan.

But underneath the sometimes-faded pastel wood siding, this colonial dreamscape hides darker secrets: like any town through which others' wealth and fortunes passed, criminals were bound to pop up like cockroaches. While "mafia" might be too strong a word for the crime that organized itself in Looking Glass Falls, there nevertheless emerged a tradition of extortion – and sometimes violence – that became woven into the fabric of the town's history.

Today, the town has worked hard to paint over those stories...though if someone chips at the veneer hard enough, the truth is bound to show through the cracks.

CHEVAL CITY



CHEVAL CITY is a dark, dank, dreary nightmare straight out of a 1930s film noir. A crumbling monument to urban decay, it feels like it's always night – due in no small part, perhaps, because everything here manifests in **black & white**.

While a depressing inevitability for its residents, the gloom inspires an aficionado of film noir like Reid, who finds himself in awe of such a perfect time capsule of America's celluloid past.

Comprised of slick, winding streets and alleyways filled with sinister villains (and only slightly-less-sinister allies), there are endless conspiracies and doublecrosses to uncover in the flickering grey neon lights of Cheval City.

Points of interest include: Ke-Yong's Golden Dragon lounge in Chinatown (not far from the grimy docks), the gothic City Hall/Hall of Records (where Reid often digs for clues), and the modest detective agency out of which Reid bases his operations.

STORY ENGINE & STRUCTURE



Each episode weaves two plots – one in the the real world of Looking Glass Falls and another in the fictional dream world of Cheval City – that reflect the connections between the two worlds and their inhabitants.

In a procedural manner, Reid takes hints and information he learns in each location back and forth, solving episodic mysteries and riddles that exist – in slightly altered forms – in both places.

In the pilot, Reid learns that *a death in Cheval City means an almost identical death in the real world...*

...a realization that unravels the bigger season-long story arc:

- **Is Molly really dead...or could she still be alive?**
- **If she is alive, why did she abandon him and their family?**
- **Most importantly, does that reason still pose a lingering danger to Reid and his daughter?**



PILOT EPISODE: "WHITE KITTEN/BLACK KITTEN"

A decade after **MOLLY**'s tragic death, her and **REID**'s daughter (**PENNY**) is 14 and forgetting Molly more and more each passing year. On the anniversary of Molly's accident, Reid and Penny go to mother-in-law **LYDIA**'s home for dinner alongside Molly's childhood best friend **KENNETH** (38), his husband **TREVOR** (40, local deputy), and their adopted daughter **DEE** (14, Penny's best friend). Unable to bear Lydia's chianti-soaked innuendo that he didn't love Molly enough, Reid retreats home...

...to find the *antique 1930s standing mirror* he and Molly purchased glowing a flickering silver grey. Unsure if he's drunk or dreaming, Reid reaches out...

...and tumbles headlong into a 1930s film noir. More specifically, into a private detective's office — one with Reid's name on the door!

In barges Trevor...or at least a version of Trevor, who instead of a deputy reveals himself to be a jewel fence. He offers Reid help in tracking down a missing topaz necklace, and though confused, Reid goes along to learn more about this strange new world in which he finds himself...a gritty place known as **CHEVAL CITY**.

Trevor (here called "**SOAKS**") takes him to a bar in Chinatown near the docks, which is operated by "**KE-YONG**" (this reality's Kenneth). Soon after, Lydia arrives. In this place, she is the fearsome mob boss known as "**MAMMA TOMASSO**." She insists Reid join her in the back room for a game of cards, and threatens him to uncover whether he's working for a mysterious rival mob boss, someone named "**Renauld**." Reid tells her he has never heard of him, but before she can decide if she believes him, Reid looks across the room and sees...

...Molly! His dead wife. She sees him, and slips out the back door. He gives chase to no avail. Trevor takes Reid back to his office and drops him off, where Reid finds Molly waiting for him.

She tells him her name (here) is "**MARIE**," and Reid can't believe he gets to talk to his wife again. She asks for his help in deciphering a random series of numbers, though she won't tell him why. After a brief moment of flirtation, she leaves him alone to pine. Soon though, he hears his daughter Penny calling him...

...and pulls himself back through the mirror into his boring suburban home office. Back in the real world once again, Reid finds Penny obsessing over a school dance. Unable to consider such trivial matters, especially after the night he had, Reid questions Penny about her memories of her mother. Sympathetic but annoyed, young Penny reveals that she barely knew her mother, and every year she feels more and more guilty as Reid grows more and more depressed about the situation.

Despite some car trouble, Reid manages to drop Penny off at school and heads over to the coffee shop Kenneth runs to commiserate with his wife's best friend. While there, they run into Trevor, who accidentally divulges some info about a case he's working on: a missing topaz necklace. Reid can't believe his ears, and wonders what exactly his "dream" meant.

Reid takes his car into the local mechanic, a sweet old man named Ernest, who offers condolences on the anniversary of Molly's passing, and says that



he can fix the car in a few days after he returns from a weekend fishing trip. Reid thanks him, and goes back home.

That night, Reid tries desperately to rekindle the magic of the mirror to no avail. It's not until he reminisces over a family photo album — and discovers a hidden scrap of paper containing the same number sequence given to him by "Marie" in Cheval City — that he notices the mirror's silver flicker has returned. He wastes no time in racing through it, back into the film noir world.

Once there, Reid does some digging, and is intercepted by Mamma Tomasso's right-hand-man. In Cheval City, Ernest is known as "**ERNIE**," and is considerably less sweet than his real-world counterpart. Ernie threatens Reid, and reveals that he himself is actually the one working for newly-arrived mob rival Renauld.

Soaks takes Reid back to Ke-Yong's Chinatown bar for more answers. While Reid finds Marie, Soaks sneaks upstairs with Ke-yong, where the two men consummate their secret affair. Meanwhile, Reid and Marie slip out into the back alley to talk, and while hiding, witness Ernie talking to a shadowy figure they assume is Renauld. Mama Tomasso and her goons suddenly appear, and after a shootout, Tommaso shoots Ernie right between the eyes for his betrayal.

Reid and Marie exchange concern for each other's safety, and Reid asks

her to leave town with him. She tells him she's tried, many times, but can never seem to leave. They almost kiss, but hold their passion in check once more before she leaves him.

Reid returns to the real world via the mirror, and the next day Trevor reveals he was able to solve the topaz necklace case using a tip Reid provided (which he learned while in Cheval City). While they drive around, Trevor gets a radio call about a homicide, and rushes to the scene.

Reid keeps a safe distance but overhears that the victim is none other than Ernest...who was shot between the eyes. Reid begins to panic, which only gets worse when Trevor's new boss arrives and introduces himself...as Sheriff **RENAULD**.

Trevor begins to drive Reid home, and Reid can't help himself but to piece together aloud to his friend his unbelievable experiences of late: the topaz necklace was in both places, and Ernest died in both places. Could that mean that possibly...Reid's dead wife Molly, who is alive in Cheval City as "Marie," might be alive here in the real world??

Trevor stops the car. He feels awful, knowing he should have told Reid years ago, but...while they did indeed find Molly's car that night ten years ago...they never found her body. Reid can't believe what he's hearing, and asks who covered this up. Trevor looks at his friend...

SEASON ARCS



SEASON ONE:

Reid discovers he can travel from his lonely, hum-drum life in Looking Glass Falls, Pennsylvania to his “dream world” of Cheval City, where his deceased wife Molly is still alive. Tempted to spend all his time with her there, Reid realizes doing so conflicts with his responsibilities to their typically difficult teenage daughter, whom he adores.

While Reid struggles to reconcile the two loves of his life, he uncovers a bigger problem: the deeper he digs, the more that the dark family secrets of his (dead?) wife’s past – including decades-long mafia ties – threaten to endanger his current family.

Did his wife commit crimes to try to protect the reputation of her dead father, a prominent lawyer and figure in their small town? Does the town itself harbor a secret past of racketeering, intrigue and murder, propagated when America was lurching into the industrial age, and a small shipping town was desperate to become something more?

Most importantly, can Reid “resurrect” his wife without resurrecting the same threat which took her away from their family?



SEASON TWO:

Reid is reunited with the very-much-alive Molly in Looking Glass Falls...but how will Penny react to suddenly having a mom? Can Molly clear her father’s name in court? Back in Cheval City, will Mamma Tomasso bump off her own daughter when she discovers Marie is a snitch for the Feds?!?

SEASON THREE:

Penny discovers the way to Cheval City...and wonders why she doesn’t exist there. Molly questions Reid’s obsession with “Marie.” Meanwhile, Marie finally finds a way to escape Cheval City – and into a new and different “dream” scape...!!!





"MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN."

It's undeniable that the slogan resonates with a lot of people. Political pundits have been desperate to determine why.

A lot of folks point to the pastel, streamline-modern vision of an easy, prosperous "future" of the 1940s and 50s. But as many now admit, that era of American history was a sanitized fantasy that hid a dark underbelly of desperation, violence, and unhappiness for many.

It's almost as if the sins and vices of the previous decades – depicted so vividly in film noir of the 1930s and 1940s – came to a head and were découpaged over with a colorful illusion of hopes and dreams that somehow managed to hold strong for a couple decades.

With the wisdom of hindsight, it's fascinating to investigate the blurred boundary between the darkness of film noir and the brightness of the post-war suburban American dream.

In **LOOKING GLASS FALLS**, there's enough of both to intrigue audiences. Reid is a role model: a family man, desperate to raise his daughter well while cherishing the memory of his "perfect" wife...even after he finds out she's much less perfect than he could ever imagine.

The show's premise literally forces Reid to confront two different versions of his family and friends...and to determine which of their personalities is true, and which is the façade: the simple small-town folks of Looking Glass Falls, or the desperately dark versions living in Cheval City...

ABOUT THE WRITER

also available:



Christopher ISENEGGER

The gay son of a former Catholic priest (relax, the Pope was cool with it), **CHRISTOPHER ISENEGGER** writes bitchy morality plays: comedies and genre stories about universal truths, told with a stylish sense of humor and filtered through a thoughtful social lens.

After interning at SNL and graduating from NYU Film, he moved to Los Angeles where he enjoys a career “below the line” in the art department working on big-budget blockbuster movies and little TV shows (that think they are big-budget blockbuster movies).

His screenplays have been recognized as: a 9/10 on The Blacklist; a PAGE Awards finalist, and an Austin Film Fest semifinalist. He is a big fan of dry heat, Thai guacamole, and unoaked white wines.

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