

**BLACKSAD**

Chapter One  
"Somewhere Within The Shadows"

Written by  
Javier Grillo-Marxuach

Based on the Graphic Novel  
"Blacksad: Somewhere Within The Shadows"  
By Juan Díaz Canales and Juanjo Guarindo

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## THE WORLD OF BLACKSAD

While the cars, clothes, and attitudes all make clear that this material takes place in a time like the late 1940s/early 1950s, and in a country not unlike the United States...

Our cast consists entirely of anthropomorphic ANIMALS.

Our city is not New York, or Chicago, or Los Angeles. It's all of them and none of them depending on our needs. While historical events are roughly correspondent to those in the human world, the specifics can be very different.

Physically, *Blacksad* exists on a human scale.

The more common animals - dogs, cats, pigs, iguanas - are all average height for a person, 5'8". Larger animals - hippos, rhinos, elephants, gorillas - get up into the 6' range, but no taller than 7'.

Rodents are significantly smaller, about toddler sized on average. Giraffes? Only their necks appear in frame, their heads are never seen.

All of our animals dress like humans, and walk upright like humans - they also all have opposable thumbs and operate props like regular people...

But they also have some of their animalistic traits, you'll see...

**SMASH IN TO A WIDE SHOT OF A BIG CITY AT NIGHT**

Shafts of light from art deco SKYSCRAPERS pierce the thin veil of night time fog.

A PLAINTIVE, MUFFLED JAZZ TRUMPET plays.

**TRAVEL PAST THE SKYSCRAPERS**

Between tenements, and water tanks, and DOWN TO STREET LEVEL to SETTLE on a squat and squalorous bit of the city.

A dilapidated sign reads:

**WELCOME TO NEW HAMELIN  
HOME OF RODENT PRIDE**

In the first block past the sign stands an especially ugly residential building. The threadbare awning over the front entrance tells the name of the place:

**EXT. THE VANDALEUR APARTMENTS - NIGHT**

And next to it:

**EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS**

Dark and dank. Steam RISES from a grate by a rusting dumpster.

And next to that:

**A BLACK CAT IN A BLACK SUIT AND TRENCH COAT**

Smoking a cigarette with one hand. Bouncing a BALL OF TWINE with the other. This is JOHN BLACKSAD. Private detective.

If you need a human comp, think of Blacksad as Gabriel Byrne in *Miller's Crossing*... reincarnated as a black cat.

BLACKSAD (V.O.)

Yeah. I know what you're thinking.  
A cat playing with a ball of twine  
how typical. Thing about clichés  
is, they're there for a reason...  
and sometimes, a ball of twine can  
be a cat's best friend.

Blacksad looks up to:

**A THIRD FLOOR WINDOW**

Where an acrid yellow light bleeds from filmed-over glass,  
and ominous SHADOWS move from within.

BLACKSAD (V.O.)

Three stories up from this alley,  
in some shitty apartment, a bunch  
of rats is holding a baby for  
ransom.... and that means they just  
scored a visit from me... and my  
ball of yarn.

Blacksad drops his cigarette - and before it hits the ground  
and he lifts his hand back up:

**HIS CLAWS COME OUT - SNICKT!**

Blacksad JAMS THE BALL OF YARN INTO A POCKET...

And LEAPS onto the dumpster:

**TO HOOK HIS CLAWS ON A PIPE ON THE SIDE OF THE VANDALEUR**

He CLIMBS up the side wall, his overcoat waving like a dark  
cloak in a hard wind.

**INT. THE VANDALEUR - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER**

A window SLIDES OPEN. Blacksad clings to the pipe outside.

In one slick, fluid - even catlike - motion, Blacksad POURS  
HIMSELF ONTO THE FLOOR, plants his back against the wall, and  
advances to an intersection.

BLACKSAD (V.O.)

Kidnappers. I hate 'em. Especially  
rats. And these aren't your run of  
the mill rats...

Blacksad peers around a corner to see:

**A FIVE FOOT-TALL RAT (RAT #1)**

Sitting on a stool outside a door. A cold, wet cigar clenched  
in his teeth, wearing a greasy undershirt below suspenders -  
holding up tatty trousers with a hole letting out his  
disgusting fleshy tail - the rat reads a racing form.

BLACKSAD (V.O.)

These are city rats.

**CLOSER ON THE RAT (#1)**

Engrossed with his reading.

**CLOSE ON BLACKSAD**

Removing the ball of yarn from his pocket

While narrating in V.O., Blacksad stealthily TOSSES the ball into the hallway toward Rat #1:

BLACKSAD (V.O.)

On a job like this you need to be quiet. Observant. Stealthy. A gun's the last thing you want to bring to this fight.

**FOLLOW THE BALL ROLLING DOWN THE HALLWAY**

To the rat, leaving a line of yarn in its wake.

**THE BALL STOPS AT THE TIP OF RAT #1'S SCUFFED SHOES**

Rat #1 wrinkles the racing form to see it, then stands and looks to the line of yarn leading down the hallway and around the intersection.

The rat follows the ball of yarn...

Down the hall...

Around the corner...

**AND RIGHT INTO BLACKSAD'S FIST**

SLAM!

**SMASH CUT TO:**

**BLACKSAD - WALKING SOFTLY DOWN THE HALLWAY**

He stops beside the door and KNOCKS softly.

VOICE FROM INSIDE (RAT #2)

What's-a matter Jonesy?

Blacksad shakes his head, then lets out a soft and unintelligible MURMUR.

RAT #2 (O.S.)

Stop fucking around Jones.

(off another MURMUR)

Ok. Ok. Fine.

**THE DOOR OPENS TO REVEAL RAT #2 - BRANDISHING A GUN**

Blacksad GRABS Rat #2's gunhand and SLAMS it against the wall.

Before the gun hits the floor, Blacksad SLAMS the ball of twine into the rat's mouth...

Then PUNCHES him out and quietly lies him down on the floor.

Two rats down. One rat to go.

**INT. THE VANDALEUR - SHITTY APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS**

Blacksad pads into the living room.

A baby CRIES behind the closed door to the one bedroom.

Blacksad reaches the door to the bedroom.

He KICKS it open!

**INT. THE VANDALEUR - SHITTY APARTMENT - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS**

RAT #3 - sitting on the bed holding the baby - SHOTS to his feet as the door SLAMS against the wall, scrambling to put the baby down...

And to reach for his gun...

Just as Blacksad enters:

**AND WHIPS THE BALL AGAINST THE WALL BEHIND THE RAT**

Confused, Rat #3's head turns to the ball as it bounces back toward Blacksad...

**WHO PLUCKS IT FROM THE AIR AND WRAPS IT AROUND THE RAT'S NECK**

GARROTING THE RAT INTO UNCONSCIOUSNESS.

As the rat FALLS TO THE FLOOR...

**BLACKSAD LOOKS TO THE BABY ON THE BED**

A sweet little PIGLET, little pink face peeking out from a fuzzy blanket.

**BLACKSAD PICKS UP THE BABY**

And smiles.

**INT. THE VANDALEUR - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER**

The door to the apartment SHUTS behind Blacksad...

Giving just enough time to spot:

**THE THREE UNCONSCIOUS RATS**

Tied up with twine.

As Blacksad STRIDES down the shadowy hallway holding the piglet in a beautiful hero shot:

BLACKSAD (V.O.)  
City rats. Bullets are too good for  
them.

**CUT TO BLACK.**

**TITLE CARD:**

In black and white, *film noir* block letters - the font that old-timey newspaper guys used to call "Second Coming."

**BLACKSAD**

**CHAPTER ONE  
"SOMEWHERE WITHIN THE SHADOWS"**

**EXT. THE CITY - DAWN**

The sun rises over canyons of steel, glass, and brick.

**BLACKSAD WALKS CENTER-PUNCHED**

Under an elevated train bridge.

**INT. BLACKSAD'S OFFICE - DAWN**

From inside, the marbled glass on the door reads  
"ROTAGITSEVNI ETAVIRP DASKCALB NHOJ".

The door OPENS. Blacksad ENTERS, doffing his overcoat and suit jacket, draping them on a hatrack, and advancing to a door in the back of the room, rolling up his sleeves.

This place is shabby - a single desk, no cute gum-cracking assistant - but it is clean and organized.

This is both home and workplace.

Past the door and the main room is

#### **A SMALLER ROOM**

That looks like a prison cell: a plain bed with a saltine for a mattress, a sink on the wall under a mirrored medicine cabinet.

Blacksad steps to the sink, turns the spigot, and washes the RAT BLOOD from his hands.

As he does... A SQUEAK from the front room.

#### **BLACKSAD LOOKS UP TO THE MIRROR**

And sees the front door OPENING to allow a shadowy figure.

Blacksad opens the medicine cabinet, craftily pulls out a snub nosed revolver, and drops it into his pocket before TURNING AROUND to see:

#### **A GERMAN SHEPHERD**

In a dark suit and overcoat:

BLACKSAD  
Smirnov.

Not a warm welcome. No love lost.

#### **SMIRNOV NODS - LOOKS TO THE WALL**

One of the many neatly framed and placed images is a group picture of a MILITARY UNIT...

#### **ALL DOGS AND ONE CAT**

In the image, a YOUNGER BLACKSAD stands a few feet from the rest of the unit. An outcast.

SMIRNOV  
You remember.

BLACKSAD  
Almost didn't. You're not screaming  
for help.

Smirnov shakes his head and sees something on Blacksad's overcoat on the rack:

#### **A BLOOD STAIN**

He holds up the coat's sleeve.



SMIRNOV

You wouldn't know anything about  
three rats wrapped up in twine over  
in New Ham, would you?  
(off Blacksad's look)  
Meatballs and red sauce?

BLACKSAD

You come to discuss haberdashery?

Smirnov lets the sleeve fall, leans against the door:

SMIRNOV

Gonna ask me in?

Blacksad steps into the room and toward his desk:

BLACKSAD

I don't think that I will.

SMIRNOV

I came to offer you work.

Blacksad sits at his desk, PUTS HIS FEET UP, waves him in.

BLACKSAD

Chief Detective Smirnov. You  
haven't laid eyes on me since the  
war, now you want to hire me?

Smirnov crosses to the desk looks for a chair, there is none.

SMIRNOV

You could use the money to buy  
yourself another chair.

Blacksad shrugs, crosses his fingers behind his head.

SMIRNOV (CONT'D)

It's outside of my jurisdiction.

BLACKSAD

All ears, poochie.

SMIRNOV

And requires discretion.

BLACKSAD

Re-appropriation of stolen goods?  
Revenge? Attitude adjustment?

SMIRNOV

Protection. I need someone of  
your... persuasion.

BLACKSAD

What persuasion is that?

SMIRNOV

The kind that strikes fear into the cowardly lot of criminals.

BLACKSAD

My "persuasion" gets fifty a day plus expenses. Striking fear's a little more.

SMIRNOV

Fifty? You're two bits if that.

BLACKSAD

Seeing as you wouldn't fight next to me in a war, I'm okay squeezing you.

SMIRNOV

It isn't me you're squeezing. And I'm sure the client can afford you.

As Blacksad looks up at Smirnov... intrigued...

**EXT. OPULENT MANSION - DAY**

Smirnov's squat and unattractive car PUTTS around the glorious fountain at the center of the circular driveway to the glass-and-wrought iron front door.

**INT. OPULENT MANSION - FOYER - CONTINUOUS**

A CHIMP BUTLER opens the door to admit Smirnov and Blacksad.

Blacksad looks around the sumptuous home, neither impressed nor unimpressed.

The arc of his vision comes to a halt:

**AT THE SIGHT OF A LARGE WALRUS IN A DOUBLE-BREASTED SUIT**

A fat, jowly beast with a permanently angry expression on his face. This is OTTO BENNUS.

BENNUS

About fucking time, Smirnov.  
(then, to Blacksad)  
Is this the private dick?

SMIRNOV

John Blacksad - Otto Bensus,  
President of Mega Monolithic Motion  
Pictures.

Neither offers a handshake. Bensus regards Blacksad  
dubiously, then turns to Smirnov:

BENNUS

What is this, a joke? You trying to  
curse me? Of all the animals you  
could bring into this shit show.

Smirnov shoots Blacksad a look - yeah, Bensus is an asshole,  
but he's a rich asshole:

SMIRNOV

He's a hundred a day plus expenses.

Blacksad nods, maybe Smirnov's okay after all.

BENNUS

He's bad luck.

BLACKSAD

Keep talking about me like I'm not  
here, and I won't be.

BENNUS

You promise?

BLACKSAD

Just tell me who I'm here to scare.

BENNUS

You're not here to scare. You're  
here to protect. My studio's most  
valuable asset: Natalia Wilford.

(off Blacksad's silence)

Heard of her?

BLACKSAD

I don't go to pictures.

BENNUS

Yeah, well, her new romantic  
musical comedy opens this week and  
she's in production on the next one  
already.

SMIRNOV

She's also been getting death  
threats from some nut-job.

BLACKSAD

Credible?

SMIRNOV

(what do you think?)  
Got you here.

BENNUS

Last thing I need is my brightest  
star getting snuffed by some  
whackadoodle.  
(zero empathy)  
Murdered actresses are bad for box  
office.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Oh Otto... you're such a romantic.

All eyes turn to the mezzanine:

**TO SEE NATALIA WILFORD**

"Brightest Star" indeed. Veronica Lake, Rita Hayworth, and Marilyn Monroe all reincarnated in a single white cat.

Natalia wears a cocktail dress with fishnets and stilettos, and smokes a long, thin, black cigarette with a gold filter.

Natalia SASHAYS across the mezzanine and down a GREAT STAIRCASE... every eye in the room follows her.

BENNUS

Isn't she something?  
(to Smirnov)  
Everyone says you cats are self-centered, solitary creatures, but god-damnit if you don't look great on screen.

Blacksad looks at Bensus like his face is a speed bag, but Natalia arrives before he can retort, wrapping her graceful arms around Bensus' bountiful jowls.

NATALIA

Otto, darling.  
(glancing at Blacksad)  
Is this my protector?

BENNUS

I'm your protector, sweetie... he's just muscle.  
(as she eyeballs Blacksad)  
And he's the best in the business, am I right, Smirnov?

BLACKSAD

I'm a private detective ma'am. I'm here to identify and track down your stalker.

BENNUS

You take my money, you'll be whatever the lady needs you to be.  
(off Blacksad's silence)  
Now that you've been introduced, I have important business that I have had to postpone in order to insure my little canary's safety.

NATALIA

I eat canaries.

BENNUS

Don't I know it.  
(to Blacksad)  
Walk with me, cat.

Bennus makes his way to the door. Chimp Butler OPENS IT to REVEAL Bennus' Maybach Limousine.

BENNUS (CONT'D)

Don't get any fancy ideas about what you came here to do.  
(stops at the door)  
She's got a premiere this Friday. You keep her alive, you get paid. You find her stalker, you get paid even more... but make no mistake, that's my piece of ass. You touch a whisker on her pretty little head, I'll be using your mouth for an ashtray.

Bennus pats Blacksad on the shoulder and heads for his limousine. A master of his world.

As Blacksad turns to look at Natalia...

#### **INT. OPULENT MANSION - DRAWING ROOM - DAY**

Chimp Butler enters carrying a burlap sack full of mail and upends it on a table:

#### **RELEASING A CASCADE OF LETTERS**

Many of them feature explicit, harshly rendered drawings of rape and violence. Others just look like the angry scrawls of mad men.

NATALIA

You can look through the letters  
all you want, but we all know why  
you're here.

BLACKSAD

Do we?

NATALIA

Otto thinks he's such a big  
wheel... but I can see him spin.  
Every night he goes off to his wife  
and kids he thinks I'm on my back  
with some other animal... so he  
wants you to scare them away.

BLACKSAD

All these letters are from the same  
guy?

Natalia BLOWS A PUFF OF SMOKE in Blacksad's face. He waves  
the smoke away and turns back to the letters.

NATALIA

Real scribbler, isn't he?

Blacksad keeps his eyes on the letters, all business, no  
indication that he's about to lay it down:

BLACKSAD

Lady, save the acting for the  
screen.

NATALIA

Excuse me?

BLACKSAD

You heard me. Your whiskers are  
shaking and you're hanging on to  
that stogie for dear life. You're  
shook to your core and you know  
it's legit.

She knows she's been made but isn't ready to admit defeat:

NATALIA

Wow. You really are a detective.

Blacksad looks up and locks eyes with her, all business:

BLACKSAD

You're gonna be a homebody until I  
can find this creep. I drive you to  
the studio and back, no detours.

(MORE)

BLACKSAD (CONT'D)

If you have a guest room, I'd like  
to use it to run my investigation --

A snide look crosses her face:

NATALIA

John Blacksad. You snarl like a  
tiger but you're just a little  
kitten aren't you? Did you forget  
who's paying the bills?

(off his look)

I'm a star... and you know what  
stars do?

(driving it in)

They shine.

**SMASH CUT TO**

**A SLAVKO VORKAPICH-STYLE MONTAGE**

Of THE CITY at night under a BOUNCY, JAZZY tune!

BLACKSAD (V.O.)

Natalia Wilford knew damn well she  
was in danger, but she didn't let  
that keep her from the boys and the  
sauce, and she really wanted me to  
see that none of this bothered her.

**- NATALIA'S BOAT TAIL LINCOLN LIMOUSINE**

CROSSES the frame as:

**- NEON NIGHTCLUB SIGNS**

BLAZE across the screen, right before a:

**DISSOLVE TO**

**- NATALIA ACCEPTING A LIGHT!**

From a Zippo lighter-bearing FOX IN A SHINY SUIT.

**- BOTTLES OF CHAMPAGNE POPPING!**

**- NATALIA DOWNING A FLUTE OF BUBBLY IN ONE GO!**

Then EXCHANGES it with a full one from a SECOND FOX.

**- BLACKSAD LIGHTING A CIGARETTE**

Watching, annoyed but unfazed.

**- MARTINI SHAKERS SHAKING**

In the hands of GORILLA BARTENDERS.

**- NATALIA IN THE BACK OF HER LIMO**

Drinking with the foxes, who NUZZLE her provocatively.

**- BLACKSAD DRIVES**

Really not appreciating the waste of his time.

**- TRUMPETS BLOW FROM GARISHLY LIT BANDSTANDS.**

BLACKSAD (V.O.)  
That didn't make my job any easier,  
but then again what's new?

The montage ends, PUSHING into a shot of the marquee of:

**EXT. CLUB IMPERIAL - NIGHT**

Crowded, smoky, noisy. Enough red velvet and gold thread to make Caligula blush.

Smoking up and falling out of her dress, and seated at a table with many, many empty glasses on the cloth, Natalia and the Foxes down the dregs of the latest round.

**AS A RABBIT WAITER BRINGS MANY DRINKS ON A TRAY**

Natalia GULPS one down as the foxes greedily grab the drinks from the tray.

As they party:

**ANGLE ON BLACKSAD SITTING AT THE BAR**

STUBBING OUT HIS CIGARETTE and checking his watch.



BLACKSAD (V.O.)

You'd think a dame like Natalia would have more self-respect than to alley-cat with some greasy-furred foxes she picked up at a juke joint, but I guess she had to show that fat bastard walrus who was really boss.

Blacksad LIGHTS ANOTHER CIGARETTE, then looks a few tables away to see:

**A TRIO OF POLAR BEARS, SITTING AT A DARKENED TABLE**

Wearing black double breasted suits, drinking schnapps from shot glasses.

The HEAD BEAR slips a bill to a WEASEL IN AN OVERCOAT AND FEDORA.

As the head bear says something into the weasel's ear:

**CLOSE UP ON THE PIN ON THE BEAR'S LAPEL**

A stylized white snowflake on a red circle with a black border.

Any resemblance to a fascist sigil is completely intentional.

**THE WEASEL SLIPS AWAY AS BLACKSAD SPEAKS**

BLACKSAD (V.O.)

Thing about bosses, is that there's always a bigger boss. Polar bears. Bad business. I spent five years overseas fighting those white supremacist hairballs, now they run around the city like they never opened the ball on us in the first place, and I gotta watch them get stinko and talk garbage on other species on my turf.

Blacksad watches:

**THE WEASEL STEP BEHIND SOME DRAPES**

Blacksad then DRAGS ON HIS CIGARETTE and tracks the weasel with his eyes as he sneaks his way, shrouded by gold and red, toward Natalia.

**ANOTHER ANGLE ON THE WEASEL**

Looking to Natalia... getting closer from behind the drapes...

**AND REACHING INTO HIS OVERCOAT**

Digging for something... taking it out...

**ONLY TO FIND BLACKSAD'S HAND CLAMPED ON HIS WRIST - HARD**

Wincing, the weasel SPINS to see Blacksad - snuck up behind him - grip TIGHTENING.

The weasel's name is WEEKLY, and he does not look like he has had a happy life: his fur is mangy, his teeth are yellow, and his eyes are narrow and disreputable.

BLACKSAD

Easy slick.

(tightening)

Show me what you're packing or the last thing through your head's gonna be my fist.

WEEKLY

I ain't doing squat -

(re: what he's holding)

It's - it's a camera, see? Little spy gadget - I got it from the war -

BLACKSAD

You didn't get your fill of bears in the war?

WEEKLY

They pay on time. It's just business. It's nothing.

Keeping his grip on Weekly, Blacksad opens the camera with a SWIFT JERK and lets the film spiral out... he then DROPS the camera into a champagne bucket.

BLACKSAD

Damn right it's not. Why are you sneaking up on the luvvie? What are you into the bears for?

WEEKLY

So many questions...

(a skeezy smile)

How about I answer over a drink?

**TIME CUT TO**

**THE BAR - MOMENTS LATER**

A GORILLA BARTENDER pulls a boilermaker, then places the mug of beer and shot of whiskey in front of Weekly, who takes the shot glass...

WEEKLY

Mother's milk...

But before he can drop the shot glass into the beer, Blacksad SNATCHES it out of reach.

BLACKSAD

First you talk.

WEEKLY

(reaching for the shot)

Oh come on -

BLACKSAD

Only reason you're not picking up your teeth with broken fingers is I gotta keep my operations on the QT for the lady's sake... we understand one another?

WEEKLY

(a sigh, then)

I'm just a picture snapper, okay?

BLACKSAD

Is that what you did in the war?

WEEKLY

No - I wrote nudie books for you doughboy degenerates.

(a missing teeth smile)

Nowadays, I sell photos to the papers and the gossip rags, okay... and in the last few days, the white coats over there -

BLACKSAD

The polar bears?

WEEKLY

Yeah, those Arctic Wind shitbuckets... anyway, they tipped me off that the starlet's sweating the satin with some big shot walrus and they want proof, that's it.

BLACKSAD

They got an axe to grind with the walrus?

WEEKLY

Hell if I know. I just take the scratch.

BLACKSAD

You're straight as a bag of eels and coat hangers, aren't you?

WEEKLY

It's a living. You her body man?

BLACKSAD

I'm asking the questions.

WEEKLY

Aren't you a prickly pear.  
(off Blacksad's silence)  
I'm just saying. You're her shadow -  
so you know where she and the walrus are gonna be, right?  
(conspiratorially)  
You drop the dime. I snap a few pickies of the two. The bears pay up, you and me could make a lotta lettuce.

Blacksad drops the shot in the beer and pushes the drink toward Weekly.

BLACKSAD

Drink your swill and scram.

Weekly CHUGS the beer and lets out a loud BELCH, then slams the mug down on the bar.

As he speaks, Weekly makes a big show of reaching into his breast pocket to make sure Blacksad doesn't think he's pulling out a gun...

And produces a business card, which he places on the bar in front of Blacksad:

WEEKLY

Wear that high hat all you want, pal, but eventually, everyone needs a weasel. You're in with the beautiful people - smart guy like you can also make coin offa them. And not just the walrus and the bears neither.

(MORE)

WEEKLY (CONT'D)  
(re: the card)  
My answering service.

And off Blacksad, watching him go...

**EXT. OPULENT MANSION - FOYER - NIGHT**

The doors OPEN into the darkened space. Hard shadows from high up windows crisscross the marble floor.

Blacksad SHUTS the doors.

Natalia BARRELS in, and crosses to a console on the far end of the room, which she opens to REVEAL a full bar.

NATALIA  
Come on shamus, you got me home  
alive, now will you have a drink?  
(off his look)  
What's your poison? You don't  
strike me as a bourbon cat... or  
vodka... and no way a gumshoe like  
you is into the tropical spirits...  
(turns to Blacksad)  
Are you going to come have a drink  
like you're wearing big boy pants  
or are you gonna stand there  
gawking like some perv?  
(off his silence)  
Oh, I get it. Strong and silent?  
Man of few words?

BLACKSAD  
You've had enough.

Natalia moves closer, all her sex appeal and charm evident in spite of her drunken shake and slur:

NATALIA  
How would you know? I don't think  
you've ever had enough of anything.  
I see it.  
(touching his face)  
In your eyes, you see everything I  
have... and it makes you green,  
doesn't it?

BLACKSAD  
Green? I got problems enough as it  
is.

Even as she insults him, Natalia caresses Blacksad's chest, finding the strap to his revolver and slowly dragging a finger across the leather to his blue steel.

NATALIA

And you don't let anyone forget it,  
do you? Got dealt a bum hand so  
you're gonna be Johnny Funwrecker  
to anyone who cracks a smile.

If that fazed John Blacksad in any way you wouldn't know it, he takes her hand off his body and lets it drop to her side:

BLACKSAD

I didn't know we were having fun. I  
just see a little girl lost who'll  
put anything in her mouth to stop  
feeling the way she does.  
(as she pulls away)  
What's your story? Daddy didn't  
love you enough? Or maybe he loved  
you too much?

Natalia SLAPS Blacksad.

NATALIA

Bastard.

He doesn't even flinch.

BLACKSAD

You get that one for free.

NATALIA

Good thing I'm rich.

She rears back for round two - WHOOSH!

**HE CATCHES HER HAND IN MID ARC**

Their eyes meet.

Is he gonna slap her or kiss her?

Blacksad SHUSHES her.

Natalia looks at him like "what, I thought this was foreplay?"

But Blacksad just looks over to:

**THE DOOR TO THE DRAWING ROOM - AJAR**

Blacksad lets her go and walks to the door.

A DRAFT moves the fur on his face.

**BLACKSAD GETS CLOSER TO THE DOOR**

To see AN OPEN WINDOW inside, drapes billowing.

**BLACKSAD REACHES FOR THE LIGHT SWITCH BY THE THRESHOLD**

To REVEAL:

**INT. OPULENT MANSION - DRAWING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Natalia's Chimp Butler LIES BLUDGEONED ON THE TABLE atop all of the stalker's threatening letters.

**ON TOP OF HIS BLOODY TORSO, A NOTE**

Written in blood:

**KITTENS WHO FUCK FOXES GET THE KNIFE**

**NATALIA ENTERS AND SCREAMS**

Blacksad chews floor to Chimp Butler, carefully - and gently - putting his hands on the wounded animal as he might have a fallen comrade-at-arms.

Chimp Butler meekly lifts his hand, clamping it on Blacksad's, and whispers through the thick blood bubbling over his lips and teeth:

CHIMP BUTLER

He... just... went... out...

Blacksad spins to look at the terrified Natalia:

**AS HE SPRINTS TO AND OUT THE WINDOW**

BLACKSAD

Call an ambulance! Now!

Blacksad LEAPS HEAD FIRST out the window:

**EXT. OPULENT MANSION - NIGHT**

And TUMBLES DOWN ONTO THE GROUND to land on his feet and into a power crouch.

Blacksad draws his gun and scans the terrain.

**NATALIA'S MANSION IS RINGED BY ENGLISH STYLE GARDENS**

Lots of bushes and trees, put together to give the illusion of beautiful wilderness...

All of it made ominous in the still of this moonless night.

**THE STALKER IS NOWHERE IN SIGHT**

Blacksad keeps scanning.

**UNTIL HIS WHISKERS TREMBLE**

A rustle.

**FROM A NEARBY BUSH.**

Blacksad moves from his crouch into a stealthy FOUR-LEGGED RUN, his body quicksilver in the night.

With a mighty PUSH from his back legs, Blacksad LAUNCHES himself like a missile:

**AND FLIES THROUGH THE BUSH**

Blacksad TUMBLES BACK TO HIS CROUCH, gun at the ready, when:

**SLAM! A LARGE, FAST CREATURE BODY CHECKS HIM**

And then WHOOSHES into a nearby bush!

Then silence.

Blacksad recovers, SCRAMBLING to his feet:

**SLAM/WHOOSH! FROM ANOTHER SIDE**

Blacksad FIRES his revolver - BANG! BANG!

**THEN FALLS AGAIN, HIS GUN FLYING INTO THE NIGHT**

Blacksad twists himself back up - not happy about this developing pattern - when:

**WHOOSH!**

But no SLAM - this time Blacksad is ready:

**HE CLOTHESLINES THE SHADOWY ATTACKER!**

Sending him to the ground.

Blacksad REARS BACK on his attacker:



**PULLING A LEATHER SAP FROM HIS POCKET**

And WHIPS HIM - once, twice...

**BUT THE ATTACKER GRABS BLACKSAD'S HAND WITH A SCALY CLAW,**

Coming INTO A SHAFT OF LIGHT to reveal:

**AN IGUANA IN A BALACLAVA**

Iguana THROWS a punch at Blacksad, Blacksad evades and HITS HIM WITH THE SAP AGAIN...

But Iguana rolls with the punch, SPINS -

**AND SLAMS BLACKSAD WITH ITS TAIL!**

But Blacksad isn't about to let himself get blindsided again.

He GRABS Iguana's tail and SLAMS his sap into Iguana's back.

**IGUANA SHRIEKS INTO THE DARK NIGHT**

As Blacksad keeps up his punishment...

But the animal kingdom is unpredictable, and so is what happens next:

**IGUANA'S TAIL BREAKS OFF!**

Blacksad REELS, FALLING ON HIS BACK, holding the fleshy appendage:

**AS IGUANA RACES OFF**

And vanishes into night and fog.

Blacksad gets to his feet...

**AND LOOKS DOWN AT THE IGUANA'S TAIL**

Broken in his hand.

BLACKSAD (V.O.)  
Fucking reptiles.

**DISSOLVE TO**

**INT. OPULENT MANSION - FOYER - NIGHT**

The Iguana's tail still in hand, Blacksad watches as Chimp Butler is put in a STRETCHER by two WHITE-COATED BOVINES.

**AND TAKEN THROUGH THE OPEN FRONT DOORS**

To a waiting ambulance.

Beside which is Otto Bensus' Maybach limousine.

**SMIRNOV AND OTTO BENNUS - AT THE FOOT OF THE STAIRS**

Bensus is balls deep in a huff and bluster:

BENNUS

My number one star's shooting a big scene tomorrow and the sicko that wants to kill her and do the nasty on her dead body got in the house?  
(indicates upstairs)  
The doc's had to shoot her up with enough tranquilizer to drop a buffalo!

Smirnov lights a cigarette, his voice cold:

SMIRNOV

The butler's gonna be okay, if that matters any to you.

BENNUS

Who gives a shit? I have twenty more of him waiting in line! Is this shit show what my money gets me?  
(as Blacksad approaches)  
You said this pussy was the best! Were you conning me, copper?

Blacksad clocks Bensus and decides that this conversation requires something less subtle than diplomacy:

BLACKSAD

Keep wagging those fat jowls, I'll pull out your tusks and jam them so high up your ass you'll be shitting scrimshaw for a year.

BENNUS

Who the high holy fuck do you think you are to talk to me like that?

Blacksad GRABS one of Bensus' tusks and PULLS HIM DOWN.

BLACKSAD

Your little canary's gonna sing tomorrow. I'll see to it.

(MORE)

## BLACKSAD (CONT'D)

And she'll be at her big premiere the day after that, alive and smiling - you know why? 'Cause it's my job and I am a goddamned professional.

(not letting up)

Now you're gonna get in your ritzy ride, and you're gonna go home to your fat wife and your fat kids, and you're gonna let the professionals do their work.

Bennus looks up at Blacksad, snarling his answer:

BENNUS

Uncle.

Blacksad lets Bennus go.

Bennus shoots straight back up and STRAIGHTENS HIS SUIT ROUGHLY like he's showing it who's boss.

Bennus then GLARES at Smirnov and Blacksad, and holds up a finger as if that made him the winner in this discussion.

**BENNUS TURNS AND STORMS OUT TO HIS LIMO**

Blacksad DROPS the iguana's tail in front of Smirnov.

BLACKSAD

I got this off the perp.

SMIRNOV

So we know it's a reptile.

BLACKSAD

Some kind of lizard all right.

SMIRNOV

Get eyes on his mug?

BLACKSAD

Nah. Wearing a bally.

(re: the tail)

You get an ID offa that?

SMIRNOV

We don't print tails, Blacksad, you know that. The lose them in the fight, they regrow them different, no distinguishing marks.

BLACKSAD

You know the polar bears are  
chiseling in on the walrus, right?

SMIRNOV

You think that has something to do  
with these death threats?

(off Blacksad's shrug)

Bears are bad business. If they're  
in this, you best watch your six.

BLACKSAD

I pumped plenty of lead in that  
fascist scum in the war.

(then)

Right now I got a lizard to find  
and a star to keep shining.

Blacksad turns and goes. Smirnov watches him, exhaling a puff  
of cigarette smoke...

**INT. OPULENT MANSION - NATALIA'S BEDROOM - LATER**

Natalia lies snuggled in bed. As she turns and goes into an  
even deeper sleep...

**REVEAL BLACKSAD AT THE DOOR**

Now in shirt sleeves, gun and strap clearly visible. He  
watches her sleep for a moment, then closes the door.

**INT. OPULENT MANSION - MEZZANINE - CONTINUOUS**

Blacksad pulls up a stool, setting it in front of the closed  
door to Natalia's bedroom. He sits, lights a cigarette, and  
waits...

**CUT TO**

**EXT. MEGA MONOLITHIC MOTION PICTURES - ENTRANCE - DAY**

Natalia's limo CRUISES through the massive wrought iron gates  
to the studio complex.

Any resemblance to the Paramount lot is completely  
intentional - down to the beautiful theater dominating the  
center courtyard.

**INT. NATALIA'S LIMO - CONTINUOUS**

Blacksad drives. He looks at Natalia:

**IN THE REARVIEW**

She sits curled up in the passenger seat, eyes concealed behind massive sunglasses, arms wrapped around herself for dear life.

**INT. SOUNDSTAGE - DRESSING ROOM - DAY**

Natalia sits at her chair - fully made up - before a mirror, wearing a formal but wholesome gown (imagine anything worn by Debbie Reynolds in *Singin' In The Rain*).

Natalia practices her song, singing softly to her own reflection:

NATALIA

*They met as you and I/And they were  
only friends/But before the story  
ends/He'll kiss her with a  
sigh/Would you? Would you?*

Natalia tries to continue, but her eyes WELL UP. She keeps trying - because the show must go on - but her voice SPLINTERS AND CRACKS as she sobs.

BLACKSAD (O.S.)

You're gonna ruin your make up.

Natalia looks in the mirror to see Blacksad, standing at the door, watching her empathically.

NATALIA

They have a whole coven to spackle  
it back on.

(now sobbing)

How can I sing a love song after  
what that... creature did... to my  
friend... in my home...

(then)

Take me away. Please.

Blacksad lights a cigarette, puts his eyes on top of hers in the mirror.

BLACKSAD

Where's there to go?

(off her look)

Hardest firefight I saw 'cross the  
pond... I was the only cat in my  
unit and the dogs left me for dead  
in the ruin of this bombed out row  
house with three slugs in me.

(MORE)

**BLACKSAD (CONT'D)**

I lay there bleeding for a day and  
a night before more friendlies  
showed up. The shock from a shell  
musta started a phonograph about  
halfway through that hell... and  
this song played over and over  
again. Silly little love song.  
Didn't even understand the words. I  
should be dead all the blood I  
lost. I think it was the song kept  
me alive.

(then)

Your song's gonna keep someone  
alive. Maybe you'll never know who,  
but it's true. Might even be the  
world's unluckiest cat.

And off Natalia, nodding, ready, drying her tears...

**INT. SOUNDSTAGE - MOVIE SET - MOMENTS LATER**

A perfect "small town square" complete with multiple gazebos,  
a small pond with a fountain in the middle, white picket  
fencing, and all the bunting that studio money can buy.

All in front of a vast "magic hour" cyclorama swirling with  
beautiful clouds. A large FAN provides the gentle breeze.

Shadows shroud everything outside the boundaries of the  
set... the crew scurries about in darkness... a camera crane  
rises overhead...

DIRECTOR'S VOICE (O.S.)

Okay, marks everybody! Aaaaand -  
ACTION!

**A PAW HITS PLAY ON A REEL-TO-REEL RECORDER**

The tape SPINS... Pre-recorded music plays...

**ON STAGE**

Natalia SINGS... beautifully...

**AS BLACKSAD LEANS ON AN ARC LIGHT, WATCHING**

He can't take his eyes from hers, and she can't take her eyes  
from his. As she sings...

**PUSH IN TO BOTH THEIR FACES IN A SERIES OF**

**CROSS DISSOLVES**

As the word DROPS OUT between Blacksad and Natalia, and her song gently makes its way into his heart. She has the voice of an angel, and with every note, every word, it only flies closer and closer to heaven.

NATALIA

They met as you and I/And they were  
only friends/But before the story  
ends/He'll kiss her with a  
sigh/Would you? Would you?/And if  
the girl were I/Would you? Would  
you?/And would you dare to  
say/Let's do the same as they?/I  
would, would you?

By the time she's done, Blacksad's heart is hers.

**INT. SOUNDSTAGE - DRESSING ROOM - LATER**

Natalia enters to find Blacksad, standing by the make up table, looking to the door with a not inconsiderable amount of expectation.

Natalia takes one look at his starstruck face and smiles:

NATALIA

Look at you.  
(a killer smile)  
Another victim of movie magic.

BLACKSAD

That was... beautiful.

NATALIA

Of course it was.

BLACKSAD

Were you faking it?

Natalia steps toward Blacksad...

NATALIA

Never.  
(slyly)  
That's why I'm good.

Blacksad steps toward her...

BLACKSAD

You're better than good.

NATALIA

It's a curse. Men go to bed with a  
song and they wake up with the  
singer.

And they keep getting closer...

BLACKSAD

So who are you?

And closer... and closer...

NATALIA

Who do you want me to be?

Now they are face-to-face:

BLACKSAD

The girl who's smart enough to be  
all these other people. She'll be  
plenty.

Natalia rubs her face against his (cats don't kiss: they  
NUZZLE). Their cheeks, necks, noses touch one another.

It's hot. She comes up, rears back a little, and looks him in  
the eye:

NATALIA

That girl's not so pretty.

BLACKSAD

Not so pretty's the air I breathe.

**SMASH CUT TO**

**INT. OPULENT MANSION - FOYER - NIGHT**

The front door SLAMS OPEN. Blacksad and Natalia enter,  
FALLING OVER ONE ANOTHER.

Blacksad LIFTS HER ONTO HIS ARMS like Rhett Butler taking  
Scarlett O'Hara, and ASCENDS THE STAIRS as she presses her  
face to his neck.

**INT. OPULENT MANSION - NATALIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (MONTAGE)**

In a DEEPLY ROMANTIC PLAY OF MUSIC AND IMAGES, Blacksad and  
Natalia have ecstatic, cathartic, animalistic sex...



**BLACKSAD AND NATALIA ENTER A SHAFT OF MOONLIGHT**

Coming in from a window, NUZZLING one another passionately.

**HIS HANDS RUN UP HER BACK.**

As hers undo his belt.

**NATALIA'S FUR RISES**

As his hand STROKES, and his rough tongue FLICKS.

**ONE OF BLACKSAD'S CLAWS POPS OUT FROM HIS FINGER**

It finds the zipper for her dress and LOWERS it.

Their clothes barely hanging on, the two FALL IN BED as she nibbles his neck.

**FROM OVERHEAD**

Natalia Wilford and John Blacksad TANGLE, their bare bodies entangled in shiny satin sheets... as their

**CLOSE ON THEIR FACES**

Nuzzling, rubbing, one's fur caressing the other...

Until they CLIMAX SIMULTANEOUSLY, eyes locked on one another.

**TIME CUT TO**

Blacksad on the bed, smoking a cigarette as Natalia sleeps draped over him. Blacksad takes a deep drag... and then, as he exhales...

Something occurs to him.

As he gently lifts himself out from under Natalia...

**INT. OPULENT MANSION - DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT**

Still buttoning his shirt, but his shoulder holster and gun on, Blacksad stands by the now dimly-lit table where Chimp Butler was left bleeding.

He reaches for the stack of papers on the table and pulls out the note left by the stalker:

**CATS WHO FUCK FOXES GET THE KNIFE**

Blacksad looks away and - for a moment:

**A GAUZY FLASHBACK TO THE CLUB IMPERIAL**

Where Natalia carouses with two foxes in shiny suits.

**RESUME ON BLACKSAD**

BLACKSAD  
Son of a bitch.

He puts down the note, a plan forming.

NATALIA (O.S.)  
I'm used to men walking out on me,  
but they usually stay for  
breakfast.

Blacksad reaches for his holster, hands her his gun:

BLACKSAD  
Know how to handle a mohaska?

**NATALIA POINTS TO A MOVIE POSTER ON THE WALL**

It depicts her in the arms of a mobster, both of them pointing guns dead ahead.

NATALIA  
Excuse me? I played a gun moll in  
*The City Never Sweats*.  
(off his look)  
Yes. I know how to fire a gun.

BLACKSAD  
Take it. Go to your room and lock  
yourself in there. I have a lead I  
have to track down.

NATALIA  
Premiere's tonight.

BLACKSAD  
I'll be back to drive you to  
wardrobe, hair, and makeup, but  
until then... anyone knocks on that  
door who isn't me, shoot first, ask  
questions later.

She nuzzles him, then, as she detaches:

NATALIA  
Thank you.

BLACKSAD  
I'll earn that. I promise.

Blacksad STORMS out, his stride full of purpose.

**SMASH CUT TO**

**EXT. THE CITY - DAWN**

As the sun CRESTS over the skyline...

BLACKSAD (V.O.)

The Iguana's note said he saw Natalia having a time with those two greasy foxes. Somehow he got back to her house fast enough to lay the smack down on the butler and leave his signature for us to find. Obviously he was in the club, watching her... so I figured, you wanna catch a creep, who better for the job than a bigger creep?

**INT. DAILY SNOOT NEWSPAPER - BULLPEN - DAY**

Weekly SAUNTERS through glass and wood doors - emblazoned with the words **MOOR YTIC** - his demeanor sunny and ingratiating. You'd mistake him for the mayor... if he weren't a greasy weasel.

WEEKLY

(waving o.s.)

Iris! Nice to see you - you still owe me that beer, and weasels always collect!

Weekly reaches his desk to see someone sitting on his chair, face obscured by an open newspaper.

WEEKLY (CONT'D)

Hey fella! Off the divan!

BLACKSAD

This rag gives rags a bad name.

Blacksad LOWERS the newspaper. Weekly is not thrilled:

WEEKLY

Yeah, well, the Times Literary Supplement wasn't hiring.  
(the joke doesn't land)  
What's the rumpus?

BLACKSAD

You said it. Eventually everyone  
needs a weasel.

WEEKLY

Didn't think it'd be a day later.

BLACKSAD

So you got lucky.

WEEKLY

My luck depends on the girth of  
your wallet.

BLACKSAD

My wallet's the girth of a big shot  
walrus who's not gonna be happy to  
know you're trying to get blackmail  
on him for a bunch of polar bears.

Weekly shrugs - is this guy for real?

WEEKLY

So you're blackmailing me with...  
blackmail?

BLACKSAD

Has an elegance.

WEEKLY

Ain't that the goddamn truth.

BLACKSAD

How long've you been the tail on  
Natalia's ass?

WEEKLY

Couple of weeks?

BLACKSAD

Snap pictures everywhere she goes?

WEEKLY

Rolls and rolls of celluloid.

BLACKSAD

What about a darkroom? Got one of  
those?

WEEKLY

How dark do you want it?

**INT. DAILY SNOOT - DARKROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Bathed in red light, Weekly puts a picture of Natalia on a clothesline teeming with photo paper.

Blacksad picks pictures off the clothesline and puts them on a work bench, where he INSPECTS THEM WITH A MAGNIFYING GLASS.

**UNDER THE GLASS: A PICTURE OF NATALIA IN A CROWDED NIGHTCLUB**

Blacksad uses a grease pencil...

**TO CIRCLE ALL THE REPTILES IN THE CROWD**

He puts the image down and GRABS another: also of Natalia in a club...

**BLACKSAD CIRCLES ALL THE REPTILES AGAIN**

And continues to do it into a:

**MONTAGE**

Nightclub pictures... grease pencil circles... reptiles...

A stack of pictures GROWS before Blacksad... until:

**BLACKSAD DRAWS A RED CIRCLE AROUND A RED CRESTED IGUANA**

He puts that picture aside.

**ANOTHER PICTURE - THE SAME IGUANA**

Blacksad starts a stack.

**THE IGUANA STACK GROWS**

As Weekly drops the lens of an ENLARGER...

**TO CREATE AN EVEN LARGER IMAGE OF A RED CRESTED IGUANA**

And another... and another... And another...

**END MONTAGE**

As Blacksad regards the work bench... where he has splayed out a series of enlargements of:

**A RED CRESTED IGUANA**

As Blacksad lights a cigarette...

WEEKLY

An iguana?

BLACKSAD

Red crested iguana.

(to Weekly)

Their tails drop if they get trapped. It's not the most common reptile trait.

WEEKLY

And that's the heel that wants to kill Natalia?

BLACKSAD

What are you taking notes?

WEEKLY

I would if I thought you had a shot in hell of nabbing that son of an egg. I'd ask for an exclusive... but all we've done here is narrow it down to a couple of thousand reptiles in the big city.

BLACKSAD

Natalia's movie premieres tonight. This lizard's been escalating his rain of terror. He wants to make a ruckus. He wants to be seen...  
(looks at the image)  
And I never forget a face.

**DISSOLVE TO**

**EXT. MEGA MONOLITHIC MOTION PICTURES - NIGHT (AERIAL)**

SPOTLIGHTS now ring the beautiful theater, casting bright shafts of white light into the cloudy sky.

**A CROWD OF FANS AND REPORTERS**

Stand on the receiving end of a RED CARPET.

**THE NEON-LINED MARQUEE READS:**

**WORLD PREMIERE  
NATALIA WILFORD and DON LOCKWOOD  
in  
"THAT'S NO LADY!"**

Over all of this, the voice of a REPORTER:

REPORTER (O.S.)

The stars are out for a premiere that will make the history books...  
(MORE)

REPORTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
and, wait... I think I see her...  
yes, the woman of the hour...

**CUT FROM AERIAL**

**TO NATALIA'S BOAT TAIL LIMO - PULLING UP TO THE RED CARPET**

A MONKEY IN A MONKEY SUIT opens the limo door.

**NATALIA STEPS OUT**

TILT UP to REVEAL her legs, in high heels and opaque stockings. Then her arms: wrapped in kid gloves and dress open enough to reveal a flash of her soft and beautiful fur.

**THE CROWD GOES WILD**

Natalia BLOWS KISSES at them. If Natalia has been scared to death about being stalked by a reptile, she is acting the hell out of this entrance.

She SASHAYS FORWARD and waves as the POPPING of FLASHBULBS fills her ears and STROBES across her face.

**STAY ON THE LIMO AS NATALIA CLEARS THE FRAME**

To REVEAL Blacksad, now in a black tux and cashmere coat standing by the opposite limo door - a shadow over his face.

BLACKSAD (V.O.)  
Show business. What a joke. Three  
days into my career as an angel to  
the stars and I've had a bellyful.

The monkey DRIVES THE LIMO AWAY.

**BLACKSAD REMAINS**

His bearing still but coiled, ready for anything: a cat on a mission. Somewhere around is an iguana waiting to strike.

**REVERSE ANGLE ON NATALIA - REACHING THE THEATER ENTRANCE**

To REVEAL the PRESS: two DOGS with Speed Graphic cameras and press passes tucked in the bands of their fedoras, a CAT in a smart pencil skirt, a PIG cranking a NEWSREEL CAMERA.

There's even a RHINO DOORMAN in a long, double breasted coat with gold buttons.

**OTTO BENNUS STANDS BY THE THEATER DOORS**

Nodding impassively.

BLACKSAD (V.O.)

If these pagans only knew the goddess they came to worship is scared shitless.

As the reporters CLAMOR to talk to Natalia:

**A HAMSTER SCURRIES THROUGH THE LEGS OF THE REPORTERS**

Imagine HEDDA HOPPER AS, WELL, A HAMSTER - about two feet tall - reaching up to Natalia with an old-timey mic on a TELESCOPING ROD.

HAMSTER REPORTER

Natalia! Over here! Over here! Can you tell your loving audience a little bit about your new movie?

As she goes through the canned movie star interview spiel:

NATALIA

Oh, tonight is all for the fans, all of our beautiful, and loyal admirers who have made Mega Monolithic Motion Pictures the biggest and most popular movie studio in the world...

**RESUME ON BLACKSAD**

As he LIGHTS UP AND INHALES:

Blacksad then looks up and EXHALES a cloud of smoke as he:

**MAKES EYE CONTACT WITH NATALIA**

His expression softens... she smiles lovingly...

**THE WORLD SLOWS DOWN.**

BLACKSAD (V.O.)

All day long I watched her shaking in her high heels as the walrus' witches shone her up for the big night. She knows firsthand the world's a dark and ugly place, and she knows no amount of glitter's gonna dress that up, but she still gets up there and sells the fantasy... 'cause she's a star... and stars shine.

Blacksad watches as Natalia keeps talking to the reporters.



**BUT HE THEN BREAKS EYE CONTACT**

And his gaze darkens.

**NATALIA NOTICES HIS DARKENING EXPRESSION**

And she turns - a look of fear playing across her face - to she sees what he sees:

**AN IGUANA**

Skulking in the shadows - on the edge of the crowd.

**HIS FACE INTERMITTENTLY ILLUMINATED BY CAMERA FLASHES**

Iguana's eyes blaze with cold, evil intensity.

The soundscape DROPS BACK IN and the world SPEEDS UP as:

**BLACKSAD DROPS HIS CIGARETTE**

And BREAKS FOR IGUANA.

**IGUANA**

Turns and RUNS!

**BLACKSAD**

RUSHES through the REPORTERS until:

**A FLASH GOES OFF IN BLACKSAD'S FACE!**

Momentarily stunned, Blacksad shoves the CAMERA-WIELDING DOG.

As he EXITS FRAME to continue the chase...

**EXT. BACKLOT - MOMENTS LATER**

The lights cast hard shadows on the ground and stage walls.

**IGUANA ENTERS FRAME, RUNNING**

As does Blacksad behind him, giving chase...

Getting closer, closer, closer...

**BLACKSAD THEN JUMPS TO FLY-TACKLE IGUANA!**

Blacksad and Iguana FALL to the ground - giving Iguana just enough space to LAND A JAB ON BLACKSAD'S FACE.

**IGUANA THEN SCRAMBLES TO A RUN**

Heading for the open gate of the SOUNDSTAGE up ahead.

**BLACKSAD RECOVERS AND STANDS**

Shaking his head, Blacksad PULLS his trench coat open...

**TO DRAW HIS GUN**

Right before BREAKING INTO A RUN.

**INT. SOUNDSTAGE - MOMENTS LATER**

Blacksad stops before the stage's now-open MASSIVE ENTRANCE, backlit, coat waving in the breeze like a knight's cloak.

**REVERSE INTO THE SOUNDSTAGE - NOW LIT BY WORKLIGHTS**

The FULL GRID, WITH OVERHEAD PIPES, PLATFORMS, CATWALKS, AND HANGING LIGHTS is now visible, destroying any illusion of fantasy.

Beneath all that is the "small town square" set seen earlier - but without the movie lighting, the crew, and the piped-in music.

It's a strange and disorienting sight.

**BLACKSAD'S GUN LEADS THE WAY**

Casting long shadows over gazebo walls.

He hears a SCURRYING and spins...

**TO SEE IGUANA'S SHADOW OVER THE PICKET FENCE**

Drawing a gun... and turning...

Blacksad ducks.

Iguana FIRES! BANG!

**BLACKSAD ROLLS ON THE GROUND**

Iguana misses!

Blacksad looks up to track the shadow - scurrying behind a gazebo - And FIRES!

**BANG! BANG! BANG!**

The darkness BREAKS WITH MUZZLE FLASHES AND DUST.

**IGUANA LEAPS OUT FROM BEHIND ANOTHER GAZEBO**

His movements becoming more and more reptilian...

**AS HE LANDS ON THE MAIN GAZEBO ROOF**

Then VAULTS to grab a low-hanging light and uses that to CLIMB onto a PLATFORM overhead.

**BLACKSAD SHAKES HIS HEAD**

Then breaks into a RUN, his body adopting a FELINE CROUCH as he SPRINGS onto the roof of the main gazebo...

**AND GRABS THE ARCLIGHT**

To vault himself onto the platform!

**BUT IGUANA LIES IN WAIT**

And looses a HAYMAKER to Blacksad's face, followed by an OPEN HANDED STRIKE that knocks the gun from his hand!

Blacksad reels from Iguana, then recovers...

**AND DROPS HIS HANDS WOLVERINE-STYLE AS HIS CLAWS COME OUT!**

Just as Iguana moves in for another round.

With the skill of a martial artist, Blacksad attacks with a SLASH COMBINATION THAT CROSSES IGUANA'S FACE WITH RED LINES.

Snarling, the Iguana LUNGES FORWARD...

**AND BITES DOWN ON BLACKSAD'S SHOULDER**

Blacksad CLENCHES HIS TEETH IN AGONY - but even as the blood trickles from the bite, he GRABS Iguana's coat:

**AND THROWS HIM OFF THE RAFTER**

With a mighty SCREAM.

But Iguana KEEPS HIS JAW LOCKED on Blacksad AND TAKES HIM ALONG FOR THE FALL!

**IGUANA'S JAW UNLOCKS IN MID-AIR**

Now separate, the two animals FALL IN SLO-MO.

**BLACKSAD URNS HIS HEAD, THEN HIS LEGS AND BODY IN MID-AIR**

To LAND ON HIS FEET - at the same time that Iguana -

**SPLASHES INTO THE POND!**

Iguana lies there for a moment, then looks up to see:

**BLACKSAD - STANDING OVER HIM**

BLACKSAD  
And that is a wrap.

Blacksad's FIST COMES DOWN LIKE AN AXE ON IGUANA'S FACE:

**CUT TO BLACK.**

**FADE IN:**

**EXT. STUDIO LOT - SOUNDSTAGE ENTRANCE - NIGHT**

Two UNIFORM DOGS perp-walk Iguana to a black-and-white...

As they CLEAR FRAME...

**REVEAL BLACKSAD, LEANING ON THE ENTRANCE**

With Smirnov, both smoking.

SMIRNOV  
That is one sick son of an egg.

Blacksad nods, then looks into the distance to see:

**EXT. STUDIO LOT - THEATER - CONTINUOUS**

Partly visible from this vantage point. The premiere's audience FILES OUT...

**INCLUDING NATALIA**

Who steps out with Otto Bensus, WAVING at the FLASHING cameras from the reporters as the gathered crowd APPLAUDS.

SMIRNOV  
Heck of a dish that Natalia Wilford...  
(looks at Blacksad)  
All the time I spent on this case, I never stopped to look at those getaway sticks.

BLACKSAD  
Well, you are a dog, Smirnov.  
(looks him in the eye)  
See you at the pictures.

Blacksad drops his cigarette, steps on it, and walks away...  
and as he does...

**NATALIA CATCHES HIS EYE**

Her gaze CLOSING THE DISTANCE between them.

They stare at one another.

She mouths the words "thank you"... as she smiles:

**SNAP! THE IMAGE FREEZES IN BLACK AND WHITE**

Transitioning into...

**A MONTAGE OF STILL BLACK AND WHITE IMAGES**

Imagine the kind of black and white pictures Weekly takes on  
his beat - a little bit Weegee, a little bit TMZ...

BLACKSAD (V.O.)

The Iguana would stand trial and go  
down the river for a good long  
time... long enough to forget all  
about the pictures. And Natalia,  
let's just say she decided to put  
me on retainer.

**- FLASH! BLACKSAD - IN A TUX - IN A NIGHTCLUB WITH NATALIA**

Imagine it like a still from the "Broadway Melody" number in  
*Singin' In The Rain*.

**- FLASH! NATALIA SINGING ON A SET**

Surrounded by CAMERAS, SOUND EQUIPMENT, and LIGHTS.

**- FLASH! BLACKSAD WATCHING HER SING**

Smoking his cigarette, his admiration for her undimmed.

BLACKSAD (V.O.)

And it was good. Hell it was better  
than good. It was love. First time  
for me... never imagined what it  
really felt like until I had it.  
(a deep sigh)  
Those were the best days of my  
life.

**- FLASH! BLACKSAD AND NATALIA IN BED**

Having more animalistic sex.

**- FLASH! NATALIA - IN TIGHTS, PRACTICING DANCE ON A BARRE**

As Blacksad sits on a stool in the corner of the rehearsal room, watching, smitten...

BLACKSAD (V.O.)

But black cat means black luck, and that kind of luck catches up with a guy no matter how hard and how quiet he can sprint.

**- FLASH! NATALIA - IN A GOWN - GETTING INTO A LIMOUSINE**

With Otto Bensus.

**- FLASH! BLACKSAD WATCHING FROM HER FRONT DOOR... PISSED**

As a sullen Chimp Butler watches with him.

BLACKSAD (V.O.)

Didn't matter that I loved her, didn't matter that she loved me back... there's love and there's the world. She wanted both.

**- FLASH! NATALIA AND BLACKSAD IN HER BEDROOM**

Arguing.

**- FLASH! CLOSER ON NATALIA AND BLACKSAD - SHOUTING**

The images TURN TO:

**FULL COLOR AND MOTION**

And it's a hard verbal firefight:

NATALIA

You don't get it, do you?

BLACKSAD

Oh, I get it. I get it all over the place.

NATALIA

Then stop acting like you don't  
know what's what! I give Bensus up  
and this is all gone!

(gesturing)

The house, the Lincoln, the chimp -

BLACKSAD

(cuts her off)

And pimping yourself out to some  
slobbering pinniped -

Natalia GRABS a vase:

**AND SLAMS IT INTO THE WALL BEHIND BLACKSAD - CRASH!**

NATALIA

- my god damned career!

Blacksad doesn't flinch or take his eyes off her.

But everything that had to be said has been said.

Blacksad takes his time replying.

BLACKSAD

You have bags of talent with looks  
to match and you think the only way  
to stay in business is to have an  
affair with a married man? What's  
any of this worth if you have to  
make the beast with that bastard?

Natalia's demeanor goes still. Her voice cold and cruel:

NATALIA

It's. Worth. Everything.

They stare at one another in silence.

Blacksad nods, turns and goes.

Natalia does the same - in the opposite direction.

**INT. OPULENT MANSION - FOYER - MOMENTS LATER**

Blacksad strides to the front door. Chimp Butler looks at him  
- sadly - and opens it for him.

Blacksad reaches the threshold and puts a hand on Chimp  
Butler's shoulder. The two look at one another - friends.

**AND AS BLACKSAD LEAVES NATALIA WILFORD'S MANSION**

Forever...

**ANGLE ON NATALIA - ON THE MEZZANINE**

Watching him, a cigarette in her mouth.

She exhales a huge cloud, shakes her head and walks back to her bedroom...

As the doors to the bedroom CLOSE behind her:

**THE FRONT DOORS CLOSE BEHIND BLACKSAD**

And off Chimp Butler, walking as the ECHO of shutting doors hangs in the air...

**FADE TO BLACK.**

**OVER BLACK:**

BLACKSAD (V.O.)  
More than a year went by before I  
saw her again.

**FADE IN:**

**EXT. OPULENT MANSION - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT**

Blacksad stands in front of the fountain...

**AMID A FLOCK OF PARKED BLACK AND WHITES**

Lights BLAZING RED AND BLUE into the dark night.

BLACKSAD (V.O.)  
It was a time in the night when  
nothing good happens... and the  
tone in Smirnov's voice on the  
phone was one I hadn't heard since  
the war.

**REVERSE ANGLE TO THE FRONT DOOR**

Where Smirnov stands, looking down, clearly stricken.

**CHIMP BUTLER STEPS OUT BESIDE SMIRNOV**

And crosses to Blacksad.

They look at one another. Chimp Butler has tears in his eyes.



**INT. OPULENT MANSION - NATALIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Blacksad enters. Smirnov follows.

**DETECTIVES AND CORONERS TAKE PICTURES**

FLASH! FLASH! FLASH! Smirnov steps past Blacksad:

SMIRNOV  
(to everyone else)  
Give us the room.

The detectives and Uniforms CLEAR OUT...

**TO REVEAL NATALIA - NAKED IN BED**

A bullet hole between her eyes.

Blacksad watches, not letting his emotions show.

SMIRNOV (CONT'D)  
Now. Blacksad. You're here as a  
witness and to offer  
consultation... nothing else.

BLACKSAD  
Is that really why you called? What  
kind of "else" are you afraid of?

SMIRNOV  
(doesn't want to say)  
How about we start with the witness  
part? You were with her a while as  
her -

BLACKSAD  
I was her lover.

Smirnov looks at Blacksad. He didn't know this.

SMIRNOV  
God. What a kick in the balls.  
(off Blacksad)  
You wanna have this conversation  
outside?

BLACKSAD  
I wanna have this conversation over  
and done with.

SMIRNOV  
She have any enemies?

BLACKSAD

Only one I know for sure is an Iguana doing a bit upstate for assault and attempted murder.

(then)

She still with the walrus? I'm not up on current events but he had some shady goings-on with the polar bears - maybe we need to start looking there.

Smirnov turns to Blacksad, his tone firm:

SMIRNOV

No. There's no "we" in this. You ID'd the vic, gave your statement, now you let us do this work.

(off Blacksad's silence)

You hear me?

BLACKSAD

(ice in his veins)

You have been heard.

Blacksad steps away, nothing left to say.

SMIRNOV

Hey. Blacksad.

(off Blacksad)

Sorry for your loss.

Blacksad says nothing and steps into...

**INT. OPULENT MANSION - MEZZANINE - CONTINUOUS**

Blacksad steps out of the bedroom... and as he looks back at the door...

**DISSOLVE TO**

**INT. OPULENT MANSION - MEZZANINE - DAY - FLASHBACK**

As he carries Natalia into her room like Rhett Butler carrying Scarlet O'Hara.

As this and THE FOLLOWING TRIO OF FLASHBACKS takes place:

BLACKSAD (V.O.)

A star had been eclipsed, leaving my past in darkness. Lost somewhere within the shadows.

(MORE)

BLACKSAD (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
I try to forget the war, hell, I  
try to forget pretty much  
everything that happens to me...  
but I never forgot her, not for a  
minute, no matter how hard she hurt  
me. She was all the past I had. And  
nobody can live without a past.

**RESUME ON BLACKSAD**

Walking down the stairs to:

**INT. OPULENT MANSION - FOYER - CONTINUOUS**

Where he looks up and:

**DISSOLVE TO**

**INT. OPULENT MANSION - MEZZANINE - DAY (FLASHBACK)**

Natalia - the first time Blacksad laid eyes on her - standing  
at the railing, looking like all the bucks in the world.

BLACKSAD (V.O.)  
Out there, hiding somewhere, was  
the guilty party. Guilty of at  
least two murders. He murdered  
Natalia... and he murdered my  
memories.

**RESUME ON BLACKSAD**

Now at the front door of the mansion, looking ahead as:

**DISSOLVE TO**

**EXT. OPULENT MANSION - DRIVEWAY - DAY (FLASHBACK)**

The sun shines down on Natalia's Lincoln - the only vehicle  
on the driveway - and Natalia looks out the back door window  
at Blacksad.

**SHE BREATHE ON THE WINDOW GLASS**

And traces a heart on the fog.

**RESUME ON BLACKSAD**

Now in the shadows between police cars and lights...  
Natalia's opulent mansion looming over him.

BLACKSAD (V.O.)  
And that bastard was going to pay.

**BLACKSAD TURNS AWAY FROM THE MANSION**

And as he walks into the inky gloom of night...

**ANGLE ON A DARK CORNER OF THE MANSION**

Where an AMBER LIGHT sparks faintly in the night.

**CLOSER TO REVEAL**

That the light comes from a Zippo...

Held by a figure in a trench coat and wide-brimmed hat...

Lighting a cigarette...

**A POLAR BEAR**

Watching Blacksad. Drawing on his cigarette... and as he exhales...

**THE SMOKE DISSOLVES INTO A SHOT OF BLACKSAD...**

Walking into darkness.

**FADE TO BLACK.**

**END OF PILOT**