SAMPLE SCREENPLAY

Written by

Marcel Tira

Copyright (c) 2026

Sample

marcelt@cinematicink.net

AUTUMN DAHLIA

(SAMPLE PAGES)
Confidential — Not For Distribution

FADE IN:

EXT. CEMETERY — CHICAGO SUBURBS — DAY

Autumn has arrived overnight — the Midwest kind, loud with color and suddenly cold. A low gray sky hangs just above the trees.

Maple leaves skitter across a row of old granite headstones, half-sunk into earth that's been tended, forgotten, and tended again.

CLARA HARTMANN, 32, kneels beside one of them. Her movements are steady and deliberate.

She presses a single burgundy dahlia into the soil at the base of the stone. She does this every year. She still isn't sure why her mother loved these flowers, only that she did.

Clara lingers a moment. Silent.

She stands, brushes dirt from her knees, and walks toward the gate without looking back.

The dahlia sits in the dark soil. The grave marker behind it:

EVELYN HARTMANN
1909—1951

INT. FAMILY HOME — BEDROOM — DAY

The house is already half-emptied. Boxes marked in black ink. Rectangles of unfaded wallpaper where pictures hung for twenty-some years.

Clara walks around the room, sorting stuff in her mind.

She opens a wardrobe. Works through it piece by piece. Dresses that smell of cedar. A coat she recognizes. Shoes she doesn't.

At the back — a wooden box. Small. Unmarked.

She pulls it out, sets it on the bed, and sits beside it.

A long moment.

She opens it.

Inside: a stack of letters tied with twine. Pressed between the last two — a dried burgundy dahlia, kept with care.

Clara lifts the top letter. Reads the first line.

She stops.

The handwriting isn't her father's.

INT. FAMILY HOME — BEDROOM — LATER

The letters are spread across the bed. Clara has read several.

She reads carefully.

Each letter is signed only with the initial "D."

They aren't explicit. They aren't scandalous. They're something quieter — two people writing in a private shorthand. Bits of professional language. Mathematical notes. Mentions of long nights she can't place.

One line stops her:

"You wore it again today. The dahlia. I've decided it means you're close to something true."

Clara looks up from the page. Stares at nothing.

She reaches the bottom of the stack. Beneath the tied letters — a single sealed envelope. Smaller. Unopened. Evelyn never read it.

Clara holds it. Turns it over. Blank on the back.

She opens it.

Inside: a photograph. A man in his late twenties. Civilian clothes. London behind him — wartime London, sandbagged doorways and gray streets. His face is open, intelligent. He looks straight into the lens.

No name. No date.

Clara studies it. Sets it down. Picks it up again.

She goes back through the letters. She's looking for something now — and finds it. One letter, third from the bottom. A slip in the writing:

"...*and Daniel —*"

The sentence continues as though nothing happened. "D." again for the rest.

Clara noticed it before. She notices it again now.

INT. FAMILY HOME — KITCHEN — LATE AFTERNOON

Clara at the kitchen phone. She dials. Waits.

THOMAS (V.O.)
(warm)
Clara. How's the house?

CLARA
Almost done. I'm just finishing the bedroom.

A beat. She chooses her words.

CLARA (cont'd)
I found a box in the back of the wardrobe.

A brief silence. Half a second.

THOMAS (V.O.)
(still warm)
Lots of old things back there. Anything important?

Clara looks out the kitchen window. The backyard. A maple tree near the fence, almost bare.

CLARA
Some old papers. Nothing.

THOMAS (V.O.)
Drive safe.

CLARA
I will.

She hangs up. Stands still.

He knew the box was there.

She doesn't know how she knows. But she knows.

INT./EXT. PAUL'S CAR — MOVING — LATE AFTERNOON

Paul drives. Gloves on. The city passing outside — autumn Chicago, the light already fading at four.

Clara in the passenger seat. The wooden box in her lap. Both hands resting on it. Eyes forward, watching the road without really seeing it.

Paul glances at her. Back to the road. Then glances again.

PAUL
Your mother's?

Clara looks at him.

She doesn't answer.

Paul nods once, barely. He understands the answer is yes — and that yes is all he'll get tonight. He puts his eyes back on the road.

The city moves past the windows. Indifferent. Enormous. Unaware of what she's holding.

INT.CLARA AND PAUL'S HOME — KITCHEN — NIGHT

Chicago, 1969. A good house on the northwest side. Solid furniture, warm light, the smell of dinner recently cleared. A house that is full.

Clara sits alone at the kitchen table. The wooden box in front of her. She's been here a while. A glass of water sits untouched.

PAUL (O.S.)
Clara? You coming up?

CLARA
In a minute.

She takes out one of the letters — the one she keeps returning to. Smooths it on the table.

She reads.

We move in on the letter.

The letter fills the frame. We read with her.

"*The eastern sequence held longer than expected. Certain patterns resist resolution not from complexity but from the nature of the variable itself. Some quantities do not simplify. They only become more precisely known.*"

The letter continues, but we pull back to Clara.

She isn't confused. She understands the words. What she doesn't understand is the temperature underneath them — something moving beneath the language she can feel but can't name.

Like music in a language you don't speak. You feel the emotion. You can't catch the words.

She sets the letter down. Picks up the photograph.

Looks at him.

After a long moment, she places everything back in the box. Closes the lid. Rests her hands on top of it.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. BLETCHLEY PARK — GROUNDS — NIGHT (1940)

The same stillness. The same held breath.

But the world has shifted. The air colder. The dark absolute — wartime dark, without streetlights, without margin.

The grounds of a country house repurposed into something it was never built to be.

Huts in the distance. Light seeping under doors. The low murmur of machinery.

The war, working through the night.

INT. BLETCHLEY PARK — HUT 6 — NIGHT (1940)

EVELYN HARTMANN, 31, stands just inside the door of a long, low room crowded with tables, machinery, stacked papers, and the focused quiet of people doing work they can't discuss anywhere else.

She isn't wide-eyed. Two years in intelligence work have taught her what rooms like this take from people. She simply assesses.

Pinned to her lapel: a burgundy dahlia.

A SUPERVISOR, 50s, harried, approaches.

SUPERVISOR
Mrs. Hartmann. Good crossing?

EVELYN
Adequate.

SUPERVISOR
We'll put you with the Hut 6 team. Pattern analysis. You'll find—

EVELYN
Who's running the Enigma intercept decryption?

He blinks. Not the question he expected.

SUPERVISOR
That's Hut 8. We—

EVELYN
And the cross-referencing against known plaintext?

SUPERVISOR
(a beat)
Hut 3. But your file says—

EVELYN
My file says I'm good at pattern recognition. Which means you'll want me wherever the patterns are thinnest.

He looks at her.

SUPERVISOR
Right. Follow me.

She does. As she moves through the room, a few people glance up. Some notice the dahlia. No one asks.

INT. BLETCHLEY PARK — ANALYSIS ROOM — LATER THAT NIGHT

Smaller. Quieter. Four people around a large table covered in intercepts and cipher worksheets. A room that runs on tea and the kind of concentration that looks like calm but isn't.

Among them: DANIEL WHITAKER, 28. English. He has the air of someone slightly elsewhere — not absent, just ahead.

His eyes are on the papers, but whatever he’s seeing isn’t on the page.

Evelyn takes the empty chair. Pulls the nearest intercept toward her. Studies it.

Thirty seconds.

EVELYN
(quietly)
What’s the current hypothesis on the key cycle?

The others look up. Daniel doesn’t. He answers without lifting his eyes.

DANIEL
Twenty-four hours with an afternoon reset. At least until last month.

EVELYN
And now?

DANIEL
Now it’s less regular. Which either means a protocol change or human error. We’ve been arguing which for a week.

EVELYN
Which do you think?

Daniel finally looks up. He assesses her quickly, completely.

DANIEL
Neither. I think they’re scared. Scared people aren’t regular.

A beat.

EVELYN
Then that changes what we’re looking for.

DANIEL
Yes.

He goes back to his papers. She goes to hers.

Across the table from each other. The work between them.

We stay with them a moment. The sound of the room. The scratch of pencils. Outside, somewhere, England is at war.

INT. BLETCHLEY PARK — ANALYSIS ROOM — NIGHT (SEVERAL MONTHS LATER — 1941)

The room has been at this for hours. Papers across every surface. Empty cups. A stillness from people who've worked past the hour.

On the central table — two transcripts. Laid side by side. The same transmission, sent twice on identical cipher settings. A catastrophic operator error. The senior analysts have been attacking it mathematically for three days.

Columns of figures. Systematic elimination. The correct approach, applied without result.

Daniel is not working the columns. He is sitting slightly apart from the group, both transcripts in front of him, not writing anything. Just looking.

Evelyn, across the room, watches him do this. She has watched him do this before. The stillness that isn't absence — it's concentration of a different kind. As though he's listening for something no one else is tuned to.

Daniel sets the mathematical analysis aside entirely.

He starts reading the two transmissions the way you'd read a sentence.

Not as numbers. As meaning. As a person who made a mistake under pressure and tried to cover it.

After a long silence —

DANIEL
(quietly, to no one)
He was rushing. Someone was standing behind him.

The room goes still.

SENIOR ANALYST
I'm sorry?

DANIEL
Look at the variations. They're not random. He was correcting himself in real time. That's not a cipher pattern.

He lays a finger against the second transcript.

DANIEL (cont'd)
That's a man who was nervous.

He has humanized the intercept. He has read the psychology of the operator through the mathematics. And in doing so — identified the precise nature of the vulnerability.

Not just that an error was made. Why. And how. Which tells them exactly where the structural weakness in the cipher lives.

Not the solution. But the door.

The senior analyst stares. Then picks up a pen. Starts writing with the focused speed of someone who has just understood something important.

Evelyn has not moved.

She is watching Daniel with an expression she will spend the next two years trying to redefine as professional admiration.

It is already something else.

He doesn't look up. He is already back in the papers, pulling the next thread. Already somewhere ahead of the room.

She looks away.

Outside, the wartime dark is absolute. Inside, someone has found a door.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. CLARA AND PAUL'S HOME — KITCHEN — NIGHT (1969)

Clara at the kitchen table. The box in front of her. Her hands flat on top of it, exactly as we left her.

She doesn’t know what she just moved through — only what it felt like.

The letters. The photograph. The temperature under the language.

She opens the box again. Takes out the photograph.

Looks at it for a long time.

Then she picks up the phone.

She dials.

It rings. Rings.

She hangs up before anyone answers.

She isn’t ready.

She sits with it a while longer. Then closes the box. Turns off the kitchen light. Heads upstairs.

The box on the table in the dark.

In the soil beside Evelyn’s grave, the dahlia she planted this morning holds against the autumn cold.

END OF SAMPLE