

I DIED A THOUSAND TIMES

by

Aaron Drane

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BRODER, KURLAND, WEBB, UFFNER
9242 BEVERLY BOULEVARD
SUITE 200
BEVERLY HILLS, CA 90210
PHONE: (310) 261-3400

"Cowards die many times before their death;
The Valiant never taste of death but once."

-- Julius Caesar

FADE IN:

THE NAKED CORPSE OF A MAN

lies on a piss-stained mattress staring up with empty eyes.

INT. SEEDY HOTEL ROOM - THE CITY - DAY

A lifestyle for the truly foul and mundane: Holes in walls. Single light bulb dangles from wire. Pimps, prostitutes and junkies dwell here. Old "Untouchables" episode reruns on TV.

Seconds tick. Then...

MAN arches up wildly into the air, jolted as if by electric shock, then collapses back onto the squeaky mattress. Moments later, MAN blinks his eyes with LIFE. He whispers.

MAN

Back in flesh.

MAN rises, disoriented, trembling as he clumsily enters

BATHROOM

and retches, puking poison into toilet. He rises, moves to

CRACKED MIRROR

Through split reflection, we see not the MAN'S face we've been seeing, but a disheveled-looking, death-pale JUNKIE, 30s.

(READER'S NOTE: Viewer will see character of MAN as the actor portraying him. However, the other characters in this script will see MAN as the Junkie body in which he inhabits.)

He scrutinizes every inch of his emaciated, slightly muscular body, as if inspecting for poor tailoring on a new suit. He splashes steamy water onto face. Something CRASHES to the floor. He looks down at a bloody SYRINGE beside his feet.

MAN

Damn junkies.

MAN grabs for a towel and a wallet falls out of hiding, landing in sink. He searches through it. Empty -- except for a driver's license belonging to a CURTIS RANOWSKI.

He holds license up to mirror, sees that Ranowski's photo matches the Junky's reflection. His face. The mask he wears.

MAN

You look as bad as I feel.

INT. BEDROOM -- MAN

yanks open drapes to blinding winter-cold daylight, shielding his eyes. Somebody POUNDS on door... Alarmed, MAN turns.

POLICE (O.S.)

Police -- open up!

Pounding intensifies as MAN quickly puts on a shirt, soiled pants, searches for shoes, then freezes upon setting eyes on

A NAKED DEAD WOMAN

sitting on floor with her back against the wall, strangled by a pair of nylon stockings still wrapped around her throat.

MAN

Shit.

Police BASH open door... Lock-chain pulls tight.

MAN

Shit.

MAN tosses boots, grabs wad of MONEY from bedstand, then climbs out window to find himself stranded on the second floor fire escape in the freezing cold without a ladder.

MAN

Shit.

POLICE BURST into room, guns drawn. They move to window as MAN releases fire escape, falls to alleyway... landing on his

BARE FEET

He runs for his life, squinting, half-blinded by daylight, his panic breath steaming out of his mouth in the cold air.

EXT. ALLEY -- MAN

runs half-naked, delirious. Police car stops in his path. MAN sprints over car. Two COPS emerge, taking aim at him.

COP #1

Freeze asshole!

MAN keeps going. Certain death. Cops OPEN FIRE hitting...

A GARBAGE TRUCK

as it RUMBLES between Cops and Man with a graffiti-ized depiction of Michelangelo's Creation of Adam on trash bin.

COPS #1/#2
Move the damn truck!

CROWDED CITY SIDEWALK -- MAN

shoves past holiday SHOPPERS. A miserable-looking

SANTA CLAUS

wearing stops ringing his bell, watching with stunned disbelief as MAN runs past.

SANTA CLAUS
Hey? --

Santa chases MAN, staying ten steps ahead of Cops.

MAN
Taxi... Taxi!

Pandemonium. MAN exhaustively hails cab. Santa grabs MAN.

SANTA CLAUS
You owe me money, Ranowski --
girls like them don't come cheap!

A TAXICAB

screeches to curb with ELYSIAN CAB CO. painted on side doors.

MAN

punches Santa, removes Santa's SHOES, jumps into Elysian Cab.

MAN
(looking at Santa)
Damn pimps.

Santa POUNDS on Cab as Cops swarm him like bees on honey.

SANTA CLAUS
I want my money!

Elysian Cab accelerates and disappears into traffic. Gone.

INT. ELYSIAN CAB

MAN chill-trembling from cold, bums cigarette from CABBIE.

MAN (V.O.)

The name: SAL LORREDO. In 1926
I was a detective employed by the
Pinkerton Detective Agency --
hunting down wanted criminals.

SAL LORREDO stares out deadpan at bleak skyscrapers.

LORREDO (V.O.)

When I died my soul went to hell.
And when I got there...
(dragging on cig.)
They gave me my old job back.

Cabbie, a casualty of throat cancer, speaks via voice box.

CABBIE

(in rearview, via
voice box)

Where to, Mister?

EXT. ELMO'S VIDEOS - DAY

A liquor store in a past life. Neon sign blinks Elmo's.

THE SHOES

Lorredo stole from Santa exit Cab. He hands Cabbie cash wad.

CABBIE

(via voice box)

Have a merry one.

Elysian Cab speeds off. Lorredo proceeds into

INT. ELMO'S VIDEOS

XMAS music PLAYS. Twinkle lights adorn shelves and displays.

DOGHEAD, 40s, sits behind barrier of CHICKEN WIRE. He's bald
from burn scars that cover his partially deform-melted face.

LORREDO

Your usual poor selection of a
Host almost got me killed again.

DOGHEAD

Thought I could get you in and out
of there before the Cops arrived
and things got nasty. My mistake.

Doghead shrugs, not caring. Lorredo turns and looks at
Ranowski's reflection in two-way mirror, feels his new face.

LORREDO

Who was this Ranowski?

DOGHEAD

A junkie who killed a squeeze and
chose to drown his sorrow on an
overdose of heroin and self-pity.

Lorredo's deadpan face and uncaring, unfeeling eyes reflect
not a spark of emotion or hope as he stares down at Doghead.

LORREDO

Let's have it.

Doghead takes final drag on cigarette held between twig-like,
burned fingers, speaks through stained canine-like teeth.

DOGHEAD

John Seymour Hamby: Failed to die
at prescribed time -- Missed
Incept Date. Immediate action to
be taken. Contract to be signed.

LORREDO

Profile on Hamby?

Doghead slides a manila file with numerous ringed coffee
stains on the cover through small opening in the wire.
Lorredo opens it to find a photo of Hamby and a data sheet.

DOGHEAD

Hamby was to be executed in the
gas chamber. Instead, he was
paroled on a legal technicality.

Lorredo closes file, slides it back through opening.

DOGHEAD

Hamby's so-called talents have
become a burden to The Company.

LORREDO

Any other instructions?

Doghead slides out a pair of black LEATHER GLOVES and SUNGLASSES. Lorredo puts on gloves. Rubs his hands.

DOGHEAD

None. Better not fuck this one up, Lorredo -- you haven't been utilized for awhile. And that host body doesn't make you immortal.

A ghost of a grin crosses over Lorredo's face.

LORREDO

(sarcastic)

I'm touched at your concern, Doghead. I've missed you too.

Lorredo proceeds out. Light spilling off monitors illuminates the demonic orange-amber glow in Lorredo's eyes.

DOGHEAD

Save your poor attempts at humor for others of your kind, Sifter. And address me by my proper title.

Lorredo opens door, turning back. Cold winter light of day bleaches him out into a menacing silhouette. Except his face.

LORREDO

(putting on sunglasses)

Sorry, Latin's not my strongpoint, Doghead. And try not to fall asleep smoking in bed again.

Lorredo exits, swallowed up by the over-abundance of light.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Dark. Old industrial part of city in final stages of decay. Only residents here are the homeless dregs living out of cardboard shelters and huddling around flaming garbage cans.

Lorredo approaches, a shadow moving through the night, passing a high cyclone barbed-wire fence of a wrecking yard.

LORREDO (V.O.)

In The Company, as in any large organization -- things go wrong.

TWO GERMAN SHEPHERDS

appear suddenly behind fence, BARKING ferociously at Lorredo. He stops, locks eyes with dogs. They cower off, whimpering.

LORREDO (V.O.)
Mistakes are made.

Lorredo crosses to storefronts, all closed for the night. He stops at a BUTCHER SHOP. A sign reads, HAMBY MEATS.

LORREDO (V.O.)
Accounts left unsettled.

EXT. HAMBY MEATS - NIGHT

Lorredo, a man on a mission, proceeds around to rear of building, into garbage-strewn alleyway. He stops in front of a steel fortified door with, "Service Entrance" printed on it.

LORREDO (V.O.)
When my Employers decide direct
intervention is required --

Lorredo's gloved hand knocks on door with a resounding thud.

LORREDO (V.O.)
I get a new lease on life in the
bodies of the recently expired.

A tall, slightly obese man opens door dressed in a soiled white t-shirt and dungarees, gnawing furiously on a messy barbecue rib, getting every morsel. Meet JOHN HAMBY, 43.

LORREDO
Department of Health.

Hamby chews off the remaining tidbit from rib, tosses it outside, wipes his greasy hands and mouth on his t-shirt.

HAMBY
At this hour?

Lorredo notes rib lying at his feet, then enters past Hamby.

INT. HAMBY'S PLACE

Hamby closes door, turns deadbolts, locking them inside. A wall divides morbid living space from butcher shop in front. Numerous black lights bathe area in a deep blue hue.

Red, orange and white painted cockroaches dart across floor in glowing streaks. Hamby painted them for his amusement.

LORREDO

Mind if I have a look around?

HAMBY

Go right ahead. Feel free. I'm going to finish eating my dinner.

Hamby sits back down at table and consumes giant plate of ribs as he watches a contestant spin Wheel of Fortune on tv.

INT. KITCHEN AREA

Lorredo enters past strings of tiny bones that hang in doorway like beads. He finds the large sink cluttered with dirty pots and pans. Something's cooking in a big pot.

HAMBY (O.S.)

(eating, w/ mouthful)

Second time this month you assholes knocked on my door -- don't you people have lives?

INT. LIVING AREA

Lorredo exits kitchen.

LORREDO

When it comes to quality control,
Mr. Hamby... we never sleep.

Dominating place are numerous taxidermic animals: dogs, cats, birds mostly, with a few wall-hanging game heads. Creepy thing about them are their eyes -- they have human eyes. As if their original eyes had been substituted for human ones.

LORREDO

I see you've been staying busy?

HAMBY

Taxidermy's a hobby of mine. I've always liked to work with my hands.

Hamby displays his large hand -- twice the normal human size. Lorredo knocks on padlocked door of ADJOINING ROOM to kitchen.

LORREDO

What's in here?

Hamby eyes Lorredo suspiciously.

HAMBY

M-my trophy room.

Lorredo approaches giant walk-in freezer across room, the only element of the butcher shop kept in this divided area.

HAMBY

Grade A beef. See for yourself?

Lorredo opens freezer door. Only one florescent light burns, and it flickers. Meat hangs on hooks. A cloud of vapor conceals most of the freezer. Nothing out of ordinary.

LORREDO

How's business these days?

Lorredo closes freezer door and takes a seat at table across from Hamby, now picking his teeth with a wooden toothpick.

HAMBY

Ain't complainin'. Any surplus meat I give to charity. Never know how doin' a good deed in this life might help you in the next?

Hamby smiles -- exposing upper and lower rows of ghastly, yellowed razor-sharp teeth. Filed to a point. Shark teeth.

LORREDO

Given your "talents," Hamby -- I'm afraid you're wasting your time.

Hamby belches, points at Lorredo with his toothpick.

HAMBY

There's something odd about you?

LORREDO

How do you mean?

HAMBY

Most Inspectors who come here -- first words out of their mouth are 'who's my supplier?' But not you.

LORREDO

Maybe I already know. Maybe I don't care to know. Maybe --

HAMBY

Maybe you're not an inspector?
Maybe you're an undercover cop?

Hamby studies Lorredo with the eyes of a predator.

LORREDO

I'm no cop, that I can assure you.

HAMBY

If you ain't a health inspector,
and you ain't no cop -- then what
the fuck you doin' here, man?

LORREDO

You've exceeded your quota. Time
for you to close shop. Permanently.

ANGLE UNDER TABLE TO REVEAL --

Hamby reaching for a giant MEAT CLEAVER inside a leather
sheath attached to underside of table by a strip of duct tape.

HAMBY

The hell you say? Butcherin's
been in my family two generations.

A contestant on tv spins Wheel of Fortune. APPLAUSE.

HAMBY

So you best get the fuck outta
here b'fore I put you on the menu.

Lorredo tosses an old contract down in front of Hamby.

LORREDO

Sign this. My Employers wish to
welcome you into The Company.

Hamby looks down at incomprehensible paragraphs of Latin on
contract, then looks up at Lorredo with bewilderment.

HAMBY

Your Employers? Who are you?

LORREDO

Think of me as an emissary.

HAMBY

I can't read.

LORREDO

Sign it.

Lorredo extends a pen to Hamby. Hamby eyes Lorredo's .45 now visible in his shoulder holster due to his outstretched arm.

HAMBY

How do I know you won't kill me?

HAMBY'S FAT FINGERS

touch wooden handle of cleaver, feeling the flat, contourless edges worn silk-smooth from years of use.

LORREDO

I told you. I'm an emissary sent here to welcome you into the Company. Nothing more.

Hamby signs contract. He looks up at Lorredo and begins to laugh -- displaying those frightful razor teeth of his. Lorredo also laughs. Hamby laughs harder. A tense moment.

HAMBY'S HAND

slides cleaver out of sheath. Both of them suddenly stop laughing. All is quiet. Hamby's hand freezes on cleaver. With a trembling hand, he releases handle; and we see why:

LORREDO

has the barrel of his gun pressed against Hamby's forehead. Lorredo shows no emotion, not a twitch of remorse -- only a face of cold stone. He cocks trigger back. Grins spitefully.

LORREDO

Burn well, Johnny boy.

Before Lorredo can fire, Hamby jumps up in a fit of rage, flipping table over -- the corner of which hits Lorredo's arm, catapulting his gun out of his hand and across room.

Hamby explodes into violence, picking Lorredo off his feet, tossing him through air... sending him CRASHING through a wall and into TROPHY ROOM. Lorredo breaks his fall on

INT. TROPHY ROOM -- A ROW OF SHELVES

containing several glass jars of human body parts: hearts, livers, kidneys, intestines... all preserved in formaldehyde.

Numerous human "trophy" heads adorn walls with various frozen expressions on faces, ranging from happy to sheer terror.

Several disemboweled human bodies hang from ceiling on meat hooks, exposing Hamby for what he truly is -- A CANNIBAL.

HAMBY

charges at Lorredo with meat cleaver.

Lorredo attempts to get to his feet to grab his gun -- but his feet slip on spilled organs and he falls back down.

Hamby swings cleaver at Lorredo, who dodges, kicking Hamby between the legs, causing Hamby to topple down onto Lorredo, as his cleaver instead cleaves into side casing of freezer.

They struggle. Hamby bites into Lorredo's shoulder. Blood spurts. Lorredo cries out, hammering Hamby's face with his fist until Hamby releases, his shark teeth coated with blood.

Hamby pulls cleaver free, as Lorredo SMASHES Hamby's head with a jar of formaldehyde, causing Hamby to stumble back.

Hamby gathers his senses, his shirt soaked with formaldehyde.

LORREDO (V.O.)

There's only one rule in my
profession: Above everything. At
all costs... stay alive.

Hanging corpses swing on hooks, bumping into each other.

LORREDO (V.O.)

Dying on the job isn't allowed.

Lorredo is trapped. His gun hopelessly out of his reach.

LORREDO

Expire before the job is completed
and you'll burn. The Company
doesn't give second chances.

Hamby lets out a guttural growl, like that of a rabid animal and charges Lorredo with cleaver raised.

Lorredo flicks flame on his BUTANE and tosses it at Hamby, igniting his shirt drenched in formaldehyde. Flames consume his body. Hamby stops, spins around screaming for a moment.

Lorredo dives for his gun, grabbing it as Hamby charges him again. Lorredo, rolls onto his back, takes aim at the human torch running toward him, yelling, swinging cleaver. Insane.

BLAM! -- Lorredo fires ONCE... TWICE... THREE times! But Hamby keeps coming -- bullets only feeding his raging fury.

Lorredo empties the chamber and clicks empty. Hamby reaches trapped Lorredo and stops, cleaver raised high with both hands, now ready to swing down and slay Lorredo. But...

Hamby falls straight over dead. Lorredo dives out of his way, as Hamby hits floor and engulfs nearby sofa into flames.

Lorredo gets to his feet, approaches Hamby, now a cooking heap of flesh. Lorredo sighs with relief. He reholsters gun, wipes blood from side of his neck where Hamby bit him.

LORREDO

Consider yourself expired.

EXT. HAMBY MEATS - NIGHT

Lorredo proceeds away, matter-of-factly lighting up a cigarette, smoking, like it was just another day on the job. In b.g., flames consume butcher shop, rising into dark night.

EXT. PARKVIEW CEMETERY - NIGHT

Lorredo places a single red rose on a gravestone. He removes the glove from his hand and touches the cold headstone, feeling its deadness. The wind blows colder.

C.U. GRAVESTONE

largest of its kind. A shrine. Engraved on it: HELEN MARIE LORREDO. 1897-1926. Loving Wife. Devoted Nurse. May She Find Eternal Peace.

LORREDO

I'm lost without you.

EXT. ST. ROCH CATHEDRAL CHURCH (1926) - NIGHT

Two SANITIZERS wearing surgical masks, pitch clothing into a burn barrel using pitchforks. A sign reads QUARANTINE.

INT. ST. ROCH CATHEDRAL CHURCH - SANCTUARY

Filled to capacity with THE DYING. The hospital was so overrun they converted church into ward. Beds replace pews.

Liquid-centered COUGHING resounds -- telltale sign of TUBERCULOSIS. Nothing less than a full-scale epidemic.

SUPER: Tuberculosis Outbreak, 1926

FIND Lorredo wearing surgical mask, kneeling at bedside of his dying wife, HELEN, 20s. She looks deathly pale.

LORREDO
They promoted me today.

Helen's frail hand touches PINKERTON BADGE on Lorredo's pocket, glimmering now in the downcast light. She smiles.

HELEN
Good, then you'll be moving on.

Distraught, Lorredo lowers his head onto pillow beside hers.

LORREDO
Miracles do happen.

PRIEST stops beside them, begins intoning last rites. Lorredo cuts him off with tired, nearly inaudible voice.

LORREDO
(not looking up)
Get out.

Priest hesitates, continues. Lorredo turns, showing us his intense burning fury. He gets to his feet, pushing Priest.

LORREDO
Keep away from her!

Helen begins coughing, convulsing. Lorredo stands, fists clenched, beaten but not willing to quit. Priest exits.

Helen quiets, lies motionless, struggling for each breath.

HELEN (O.S.)
Sal...

Lorredo returns to Helen, wiping her forehead with washcloth.

HELEN
Remember our agreement -- the promise you made to me?

Shock registers on Lorredo's face.

LORREDO

God help me. Helen, please...

Overcome by sadness, Lorredo chokes on his words. Helen, brave to the last, speaks with strong-willed determination.

HELEN

It's time.

Lorredo hesitantly sets FORTY-FIVE on bed. Both hold gun.

THEIR FINGERS

tighten together on trigger. At last moment, Helen, now completely exhausted, releases her grip on the gun.

HELEN

Forget about me.

BLAM! -- the blast echoes like thunder. And the deed is done.

FADE BLACK

INT. ELMO'S ADULT VIDEOS - NIGHT -- LORREDO

now wearing sunglasses, yanks open curtain of booth in back of store to find Doghead in wheelchair watching porno movie.

LORREDO

Contract's signed.

DOGHEAD

Arrivals and Departures have already notified me, Lorredo.

LORREDO

Good. Then I want my off-time.

Doghead wheels himself out of booth and back behind counter.

DOGHEAD

You've been reassigned.

LORREDO

Tell my Employers to fuck themselves. I've got two weeks off-time coming and I'm taking it.

Lorredo starts out.

DOGHEAD

You'll get your off-time and more.

Lorredo stops, turns back, deadpan. He removes sunglasses.

LORREDO

What's that supposed to mean?

DOGHEAD

The Company has decided to offer you a full pardon. A chance to reclaim the life that you lost.

Lorredo looks down mournfully.

DOGHEAD

Contingent upon you taking this case, of course. Choice is yours.

LORREDO

I killed the only part of that life that made it worth living.

DOGHEAD

But with a new life also comes a second chance to be with Helen.

Lorredo looks up at Doghead -- the reflecting light off monitors illuminates a tiny spark of hope in his eyes.

DOGHEAD

Rest assured -- that since you alone pulled the trigger on Helen -- that you alone took her life -- she didn't share your fate.

Doghead places a BLACK ENVELOPE containing Lorredo's PARDON in front of opening in wire. Lorredo stares longingly at it.

DOGHEAD

As for your pardon... take it or leave it. Choice is yours. Only a coward thinks suicide is painless.

The words stab deeply into Lorredo. Doghead grins spitefully.

LORREDO

My Employers don't give pardons. What's important about this case?

Lorredo reaches for envelope, but Doghead quickly retracts it.

DOGHEAD

You are only told what your
Employers think it expedient to
tell you, Sifter. Nothing more.

Lorredo stares hatefully at Doghead as he makes his decision.

LORREDO

Let's have it.

DOGHEAD

Emily Wharton: Immediate action
to be taken. Locate and expire.

LORREDO

Classification?

Doghead slides a manila file (Skinner's Profile) through
opening in wire. Lorredo takes it, begins perusing it.

ON OPEN FILE

we see a photo of a man with the intense, determined,
charismatic face of a messiah. This is ROBERT SKINNER, 40s.

DOGHEAD

Missed Incept Date.

LORREDO

Judging by her profile, she
doesn't seem like the type of
person we usually go after?

DOGHEAD

All further intel will be provided
when you meet your predecessor
tomorrow at the designated area.

Lorredo closes file and slides it back to Doghead.

LORREDO

Any other instructions?

DOGHEAD

None -- apart from the time
factor. They want this one done
fast -- within seventy-two hours.

Lorredo starts out, putting on sunglasses and black gloves.

DOGHEAD

Let me again say as a gesture of
farewell... I hope you fail.

Doghead gives Lorredo a shit-eating patronizing smile.
Lorredo stops, turning back, still wearing a face of stone.

LORREDO

If that happens, I'll make it
known that it was due to your
usual poor selection of a host.

Lorredo proceeds out; a stark black shadow of death.

DOGHEAD

That's a matter of opinion.
Personally, I find the choice a
most suitable one. An excellent
reflection of your --

LORREDO

Save it, Doghead.

Lorredo exits.

INT. OLD WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Pitch-dark. Forbidding. Condemned. Only source of light
comes from the numerous burning ceremonial candles.

A man stands in candlelight that illuminates his intense,
charismatic face. That of a messiah. Meet ROBERT SKINNER,
40s. If darkness had a voice, this man would possess it.

SKINNER

"Naked and alone we came into
exile.

A hundred dark figures stand before Skinner in columns and
rows, as if they were military soldiers. Both men and women
in black uniforms. Eyes forward. Transfixed. Obedient beyond
words. Meet the DISCIPLES of Skinner's DEVIL'S BRIGADE.

SKINNER

In her dark womb we did not know
our mother's face; from the prison
of her flesh have we come --

A fiery red-orange glow moves in the darkness... as the HEAD
PRIEST, Skinner's second in command -- steps down the rows,
stopping beside each Disciple carrying a hot BRANDING IRON.

ON BRANDING IRON

a symbol in the shape of an omnipotent eye. This symbol is called A KERN:  It represents the EYE OF AWAKENING.

SKINNER

... into the unspeakable and
incommunicable prison of this
earth."

High Priest moves to next Disciple and raises branding iron.
We hear the SOUND of searing flesh. None of the Disciples
cry out or show any pain. They keep their eyes focused ahead.

SKINNER

I hate the world the way it is
today. Full of repulsion. Filth
and corruption. Something needs to
be done. Changes need to be made.

Candlelight dances on Skinner's menacing face as he smiles.

SKINNER

And you, my newly initiated
Disciples -- have been chosen to
lead humanity into a new Awakening.

EXT. CUPID HOTEL - NIGHT -- A NEON CUPID

shoots a neon-propelled arrow that pierces a red heart.

CUPID HOTEL OFFICE -- CLERK'S HAND

with amputated ring finger SLAPS room key on counter.

CLERK (O.S.)

Room twenty-four.

Lorredo takes it, departs.

EXTREME C.U. LIGHT BULB FILAMENT

as it EXPLODES into FLASH of flame.

DEATH'S HEAD MOTH

in SLOW MOTION flies into flame igniting like flash paper.

Instead of a dying insect's cry, we hear the agonized slow-
pitched HOWL of a man, of Lorredo, crying out for redemption.

DARKNESS. Sexual MOANING is heard. People are fucking.

ROOM TWENTY-FOUR

Lorredo flicks on light, paralyzed with shock as he sees...

LORREDO AND HELEN

having sex on a large heart-shaped bed. They stop, looking over at LORREDO IN DOORWAY, giving him intrusive stares.

ON BOTH LORREDOS

reflected a thousand times by mirrored walls and ceiling as they stare at each other across room in dead silence. Lorredo's outward appearance of Ranowski is also seen.

LORREDO ON BED
(to Lorredo in
Doorway)
Take back your life.

PUSH into the darkness of Lorredo's eye -- into his soul.

BLACKNESS

LORREDO

flicks on light to find room EMPTY. He sighs, wipes the burning sweat from his eyes. Darkness plays tricks on him.

Lorredo enters closet and steps up onto a chair to push aside the wooden plank on ceiling that covers entrance to attic area. He reaches up into the attic darkness and retrieves a vintage-looking leather-bound suitcase, circa the 1920's.

Lorredo places suitcase on bed, unpacks black clothing, stowing them in drawers. Lorredo removes last item -- an old, age-worn shoebox, then puts suitcase back in closet.

He opens shoebox to find a silver metal flask filled with whisky. He takes a swig, then takes wallet out of box, inspects it to find cash, credit cards... and an old PHOTO of

HELEN

dark, alluring eyes looking out at him from the past. An unsettling whisper ready to pass over her lips. Haunting.

FLASH TO LORREDO

in past. Slick hair. Vintage suit. Same hotel. Same bed.
Holding same photo. He sips from same flask. Smiles.

LORREDO
Happy Anniversary, Helen.

He inserts gun barrel into mouth. Pulls trigger -- BLAM!

BLACKNESS

Over darkness: God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen as we fade into:

EXT. STREET CORNER - DAY

SALVATION ARMY BAND

plays on corner. Pedestrians pass by. Lorredo approaches
through thick clouds of steam rising from manhole covers.

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Lorredo?

Lorredo turns, sees MIDDLE-AGED MAN with dyed orange hair
approaching, limping with cane, wearing checkered coat.

LORREDO
Hello Nichols.

As ANTHONY NICHOLS nears, we see numerous sutures on his
bruised, battered face, and his left arm is slung.

NICHOLS
I knew it was you. Lookin' a bit
on the nod, but this body fits you
well. Me, this time I got lucky.

LORREDO
(re: wounds)
Been diving into empty pools again?

NICHOLS
Nah -- hazards of the job.

Nichols articulates himself with slightly effeminate gestures.

NICHOLS

Last time those fucks put me in
some old queen who had a heart
attack going at it with his live-
in stud -- and I come to -- guy's
over me balling his eyes out --

LORREDO

Tell me about the Warton case.

Lorredo lights up a cigarette, then extends the pack of Death
Cigarettes to Nichols who takes two, lighting up both of them.

NICHOLS

F.Y.I., man -- this woman
disappeared without a fuckin'
trace. Vanished, man. Gonzo.

LORREDO

Any reason why?

NICHOLS

None that I can find.

DISHEVELED BUM

stops, sporting a "crack smile" -- a knife-carved expression
ear-to-ear on his face; put there by a drug dealer for
failure to repay loaned money. We'll call him MR. HAPPY.

MR. HAPPY

Spare some change?

Nichols fishes into pockets, holding out a closed fist to
eager Mr. Happy. Nichols then opens his hand -- it's empty.

NICHOLS

"Change" comes from within.

Mr. Happy walks off, cussing. Nichols puffs both cigarettes
like no tomorrow, blowing out a few smoke rings. He pulls
out a POLAROID and extends it to Lorredo. Lorredo takes it.

POLAROID

grainy and partially out of focus -- shows EMILY WHARTON, 29,
at some kind of art opening. She wears old-fashioned glasses
that fail to hide her self-assured smile and determined face.

LORREDO

This her -- this Emily Wharton?

Nichols nods. Lorredo stares at Emily, strangely captivated.

LORREDO

She'll be hard to identify with
this. This the best you can do?

NICHOLS

Be lucky you got that -- Croakers
confiscated the rest -- had to
steal that off some flunky.

LORREDO

You been here two days -- and this
is the best lead you've turned up?

NICHOLS

Hey, we ran into some trouble.

LORREDO

We?

NICHOLS

Collins and me.

LORREDO

They dispatched two of you?

Nichols shrugs off the question like it was an insult.

NICHOLS

Like I's sayin', we woulda done
alot more but we ran into some
trouble on the way to her address.

Nichols points to Emily's address written on back of Polaroid.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - DAY

Choked with COMMUTERS. Nichols stands beside COLLINS, 20s,
acne-ridden metalhead wearing AC/DC shirt, swigging Nyquil.

NICHOLS

Drinkin' that shit'll kill ya.

As Collins drinks, a tiny hole appears out his chest. Blue
fluid pukes out of it. Nichols looks down bewildered.

NICHOLS (V.O.)

Out of fuckin' nowhere these bozos
open fire on us. Before we can
react -- Collins takes the fall.

Collins falls over dead. Nichols dives out of the way as
TWO DARK FIGURES

open fire from rear. Pandemonium erupts. People scramble.

BACK TO STREET CORNER

LORREDO
Who were they?

NICHOLS
Dunno. They might've been Joy
Boys. But that's only a rumor.

Lorredo gives Nichols a genuine look of surprise.

NICHOLS
Make matters worse, some dumbfuck
gets his face shot off --

SUBWAY TRAIN -- CANDY CLERK

runs in SLOW MOTION, gets peppered by bullets... falls dead
on top of Nichols, who shouts SILENT obscenities at Clerk.

NICHOLS (V.O.)
So I start blazin'.

Nichols, pinned under dead weight of Clerk, pulls out Uzi,
shooting at unseen assailants, blasting commuters in his path.

NICHOLS (V.O.)
They's shootin', I'm shootin'.
Croaker shows an' he's shootin'.

POLICEMAN, a.k.a. "Croaker", enters returning fire.

BACK TO STREET CORNER

Echo of gunfire and screams FADE.

NICHOLS
D'ya think they're gonna recycle
a guy like Collins after this
kinda fuck up? Hell no.

SIRENS of approaching FIRE ENGINE are heard. Nichols shoves
one of the half-smoked cigs into mouth, chews.

NICHOLS
Collins is gonna burn for this.

LORREDO
You almost get your ass expired
and you don't even know who by?

Nichols shrugs again.

NICHOLS
(re: facial wounds)
Hey, think these'll leave a scar?

SUBWAY STATION

Train pulls to stop. Blood coats inside windows. People exchange curious looks. Doors open. Out limps Nichols.

NICHOLS (V.O.)
Hey, iffen I woulda terminated in
there, I'd be takin' the heat
right along with Collins. No lie.

INSIDE TRAIN

Shock fills faces of boarding people as they gaze upon mass carnage: Bodies piled three deep, more blood than graffiti.

BACK TO STREET CORNER

Lorredo sighs, giving Nichols a dissaproving look.

LORREDO
That's all you have to report?

Nichols stutters like Porky Pig.

NICHOLS
Tha-tha-tha-that's all folks!
(checking watch)
Time for me to be headin' back.

Nichols looks around expectantly. As if on cue:

FIRE ENGINE

approaches with siren WAILING.

A BUS

pulls to curb. Doors HISS open. Commuters exit.

NICHOLS
There's my ride.

Nichols hobbles into street. In b.g., Fire Engine swerves around traffic, approaching. Commuters start boarding Bus.

NICHOLS
(waving back w/ cane)
See ya!...

Instead of boarding Bus, Nichols steps in path of Fire Engine. He doesn't flinch as Fire Engine mows him down, dragging his body underneath before hitting brakes, skidding on icy street.

Lorredo calmly watches as horrified PEDESTRIANS dash to Fire Engine underneath which lies Nichols very much dead. Lorredo proceeds down sidewalk unaffected.

LORREDO (V.O.)
Nichols is the kind of guy who took a dive through a greenhouse roof. Landing dead in front of a ladies' tea luncheon. Just to see the expressions on their faces.

Lorredo disappears back through clouds of rising steam.

LORREDO (V.O.)
All the world's a stage... and we keep coming back for an encore.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - INDUSTRIAL DIST. - DAY

Dark, dreary. Two eight story buildings built side-by-side with a courtyard of dead trees running the length in between.

LORREDO (V.O.)
What Nichols had mentioned about there being a heaven-sent operative, a Joy Boy --

Lorredo enters, looking up at the eight stories and separate tiered lofts that loom above him on both sides, like levels of a penitentiary. Decaying cement walls have been partially dismantled, giving the place a mausoleum-like appearance.

LORREDO (V.O.)
Given that name because they were said to always die with smiles on their faces -- had to be false.

Lorredo steps past an old chipped fountain centerpiece of St. Sebastian with only its upper torso and a few iron arrows still intact. Also missing are Sebastian's outstretched hands.

LORREDO (V.O.)

Joys existed as nothing more than superstition. Fairy-tale angels created by Sifters hoping for a happy ending... but never got one.

Lorredo knocks on door with sign that reads LANDLORD

INT. EMILY'S EIGHTH FLOOR LOFT

Landlord unlocks door, leads Lorredo inside.

LANDLORD

Restoration -- that's what she did. Had an eye for restoring lost things from the past. Stuff you thought there'd be no hope for.

Picasso's wet dream. A museum of various types and sizes of paintings and canvases that crowd every inch of floor of wall space. Two large drafting tables contain work in progress.

LANDLORD

That's kind of what I do also -- I'm a Linguist. There's not much need for my line of work anymore. Computers can do what I do faster.

LORREDO

A linguist, huh? Sounds fascinating.

Landlord leads Lorredo over to where high metal scaffolding is positioned in front of two ominous twelve-foot paintings.

LANDLORD

Ancient languages is my specialty. Managing this place pays the bills.

Lorredo is at once intrigued and captivated by the work.

LANDLORD

I believe she was restoring these paintings the day she disappeared.

Lorredo puts Franklin in Landlord's palm. He refuses it.

LANDLORD

Just find her. She was a good kid.

Lorredo nods, re-pockets money, proceeds to Emily's SLEEPING AREA, a small area that's partitioned off by moveable walls.

EMILY'S SLEEPING AREA

Spartan with futon. Lorredo finds her clothing in closet, among them the same evening dress she wore in the Polaroid.

INSIDE BATHROOM

Antique-looking. Lorredo opens medicine cabinet, looks over the typical essentials. He selects bottle of CODEINE PILLS.

PRESCRIPTION LABEL

typed is the name: Emily Wharton. Below that the prescribing doctor: MILTON NEUMEYER, M.D.

Lorredo closes cabinet.

BACK IN SLEEPING AREA

Lorredo searches, letting his expert-trained eyes take in everything they see. He glances up at ceiling and pauses.

ON CEILING

Dozens of yellowed and fading cherubs wallpapered across -- barely visible now through layers of paint used to cover them.

Lorredo picks up copy of Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment from bed-side table, thumbs through it... a BOOKMARK falls out of it and feather-drifts to the floor beside his feet.

Lorredo retrieves bookmark, unfolds it to find:

A FLYER

promoting A DANCE MARATHON at Pier Convention Building.

IN LIVING AREA

Quiet. Spooky still. Lorredo steps out to notice

LANDLORD

lying on floor beside table, lifeless. Apparently dead.

Lorredo draws forty-five, cautiously approaches. Takes Landlord's pulse, then peels open Landlord's eyelids.

HIS EYES

are rolled back in head, experiencing rapid eye movement.

Landlord awakes with start of fear, sitting up.

LANDLORD
It's the light.

LORREDO
Light?

LANDLORD
My narcolepsy. There's less reflected light during the winter because of cold temperatures.

Lorredo helps Landlord up.

LANDLORD
But those falling dreams, Christ...
(wiping face w/
handkerchief)
Them are the worst. Pure hell.
Ever get them?

LORREDO
Dreams?
(pause)
Never.

Landlord gives Lorredo curious look. They proceed out.

LANDLORD
Falling dreams, some say, mean
you're an old soul.

IN WALKWAY -- CARPENTERS

work to renovate walls, peeling off layers of wallpaper, exposing more yellowed, damp-rotted cherubs underneath. Lorredo regards them briefly as Landlord locks door.

LANDLORD
When you feel yourself falling,
you're really remembering the
death of your past life.

Lorredo and Landlord proceed, stopping at industrial elevator.

LANDLORD
(pushing button)
That's what they say anyway.

LORREDO
You believe that?

LANDLORD
Way I see it -- people that die
before they're s'posed to are
given a second chance -- sent back
to live the years that they lost.

Ding. Elevator arrives. Landlord lifts open wooden door.

LORREDO
If Emily contacts you, or if you
remember anything more, call me.

Lorredo hands Landlord his card. Landlord enters elevator,
pausing half-way inside as he reads card. ON CARD --

PINKERTON DETECTIVE LOGO

a "Big Eye", with slogan, "We Never Sleep." Below that,
Lorredo's typed-written phone number at Cupid Hotel.

Landlord looks up to see Lorredo walking away.

LANDLORD
Ain't you takin' the lift down?

LORREDO
No thanks. I prefer the stairs.

Landlord shrugs, lowers door. Elevator descends.

INT. DOCTOR OFFICE - RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Phone buzzes. RECEPTIONIST answers it.

RECEPTIONIST
Good afternoon, Dr. Neumeyer's
office... I'll give you his voice
mail.

Receptionist clicks button, hangs up. Lorredo approaches.

LORREDO
I'd like to see Dr. Neumeyer.

RECEPTIONIST
Do you have an appointment?

LORREDO
No, I don't. Just tell him I need
to speak to him, will you please?

Lorredo hands Receptionist his card, and takes a seat in the waiting area. Behind Lorredo, a MALE PATIENT (GRAHAM), reading National Inquirer, lowers paper to expose his middle-aged cherubic-looking face, as he eyes Lorredo with suspicion.

DR. NEUMEYER, early 40s, steps through an adjoining hallway door with a MALE PATIENT. Neumeyer hands him prescription.

NEUMEYER
Check with me tomorrow on that.

Male Patient exits. Receptionist summons Dr. Neumeyer over to check-in, pointing Lorredo out to him. Lorredo approaches.

NEUMEYER
What can I do for you...
(reading card)
Mr. Lorredo?

LORREDO
I'm investigating the
disappearance of one of your
patients named Emily Wharton.

NEUMEYER
I don't recall treating anyone by
that name here at this clinic?

Lorredo pulls out the bottle of codeine pills that he took from Emily's loft, pointing to the typed-written label.

LORREDO
That's your name, isn't it?

Neumeyer looks at it, nods.

NEUMEYER
Get me Ms. Wharton's file please.

Receptionist nods obediently, moves to file cabinet.

NEUMEYER

Why don't we talk in my office?

Neumeyer escorts Lorredo away. MALE PATIENT (GRAHAM) watches.

INT. NEUMEYER'S OFFICE

Dim-lit with a saltwater aquarium. Lorredo and Neumeyer enter. Neumeyer closes door and takes a seat at his desk.

NEUMEYER

I'm sure you're aware that it's illegal for me to give out any information about my patients.

LORREDO

I just want to find the woman. Your cooperation on the matter will be greatly appreciated.

Lorredo takes a seat on the leather sofa, allowing his coat to fall open, exposing his gun in holster for Neumeyer to see. Neumeyer eyes it, nervously clears his throat.

NEUMEYER

Of course. Anything to help.

Receptionist enters, hands a manila file to Neumeyer, then exits. On file is the name: Emily Wharton. Neumeyer sets file on desk and begins looking through it.

NEUMEYER

Emily came to me almost three months ago complaining about pain in the lower abdominal region. I ran some tests on her and diagnosed her to have choriocarcinoma -- a rapidly developing cancer in the uterus that results from unremoved fetal tissue from having an abortion.

LORREDO

Bad enough to cause her death?

Neumeyer, anxious for unknown reasons, begins to sweat.

NEUMEYER

Yes... yes, most definitely. By the time I diagnosed her with having cancer, it had already spread throughout most of her body, into her brain -- lungs even.

LORREDO

May I?

Neumeyer hands Lorredo Emily's file. He reads it.

LORREDO

Says here the last time you treated her was on the third of December. That was two weeks before her disappearance?

NEUMEYER

Yes, that's when I prescribed the codeine to her, for the pain.

LORREDO

There's no other entry on this chart after that date. Did you stop treating her at that point?

NEUMEYER

She never came back. Guess she felt there was nothing else I could've done -- nothing else anyone could've done, for her.

LORREDO

How long did she have left?

NEUMEYER

Hard to say exactly -- four, maybe five weeks at the most. More than likely Ms. Wharton's already dead.

Neumeyer gets up from desk.

NEUMEYER

Now, you must excuse me, Mr. Lorredo. I have patients waiting.

Neumeyer opens door. Lorredo exits.

INT. RECEPTION AREA

Lorredo steps through hallway door and exits. As he does, PATIENT (GRAHAM) sets down Inquirer and follows Lorredo out.

EXT. CONVENTION BUILDING - AMUSEMENT PIER - DAY

Families bundled warm, ride Ferris Wheel and Merry-Go-Round -- only rides in operation during winter. Over this:

EMCEE (O.S.)

'Round and 'round they go...

INT. CONVENTION BUILDING

Built during the turn of the century. Currently in need of refurbishment. FOLLOW spotlight down from source.

EMCEE (O.S.)

And where they stop...

CONTINUE DOWN as light widens into bluish haze that silhouettes the impish, seemingly misshapen form of:

THE EMCEE

40s, wearing black tuxedo, gleefully smoking a big cigar.

EMCEE

... Nobody knows.

PULL BACK from him, further into bluish haze that now becomes colder, more opaque, forbiddingly so, as it mixes with clouds of thick cigarette smoke. We glimpse first

A BANNER

proclaiming, Dance of Destiny. Situated directly below that

THE DANCE FLOOR

on which TEN COUPLES, double-digit numbers pinned to their sweat-soaked jerseys, move futilely, exhausted... determined.

TRAVELING with them, moving as they do, revolving, we find

THE BANDSTAND

A twelve-piece jazz ensemble PLAYS.

At front of stage, orange floor lamps illuminate strips of cellophane that flutter and flicker depicting flames.

EMCEE

Forty-five hours of never-ending dancing, ladies and gentlemen. Please reward our contestants with a nice, warm round of applause.

SPECTATORS

sitting in balcony, tired SENIOR CITIZENS mostly, APPLAUD.

EMCEE

These contestants need all the encouragement they can get -- they've got a long way to go.

LORREDO

buys ticket, proceeds inside, pausing as he becomes overwhelmed by familiar landscape before him.

LORREDO (V.O.)

The fact that the Head Office can only know a person's location on earth at the time of their death...

A GIANT MIRROR BALL

throws out a thousand points of light onto dance floor.

LORREDO

stares out pensively, hypnotized by this reflecting light.

LORREDO (V.O.)

Meant that Emily had to still be alive... somewhere. But where?

Out of this spectacle of music and bright lights...

A COUPLE

wearing number TWENTY-FOUR, dances into view. We know them.

LORREDO AND HELEN

Dancing merrily. They make eye contact with LORREDO ON SIDE.

LORREDO DANCING

Marry me?

Helen surprised, nods.

HELEN

Yes.

They kiss as they dance back into darkness beyond spotlights.

LORREDO ON SIDE

frantically fights past spectators to floor. Searching for them, scanning faces of dancers. But they're gone. Vanished.

THE BAND

strikes up waltz.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Care to dance?

Lorredo turns to meet

EMILY WHARTON

hair outlined nimbus-like. But it's definitely her.

Her most distinguishing feature are HER EYES -- inky-dark pools of blackness that nearly eclipse the rest of her face.

LORREDO

On your lead.

Emily takes Lorredo's hand, leads him to floor. They dance.

LORREDO

Thought contestants could only dance with their partners?

EMILY

And sponsors. The promoters encourage us to find sponsors in order to remain in the competition.

Emily notices that Lorredo is dancing still wearing his leather GLOVES and she gives him a compassionate look.

LORREDO

I must confess, I'm not a sponsor.

Lorredo remains deadpan, concealing the fact that he is strangely charmed by her. Emily smiles mischievously.

EMILY

No? Marathons aren't exactly crowd pleasers. They're like bingo -- boring unless you're old and in a wheelchair. Or dead.

Lorredo and Emily swap knowing glances.

LORREDO

I'm looking for somebody named Emily Wharton. Know her?

EMILY

We've met. And who are you?

LORREDO

Lorredo... Sal Lorredo. I was hired to find her. You kind of resemble her, maybe you're Emily?

EMILY

No. I'm somebody else.

Lorredo nods, pretending he doesn't know she's Emily.

EMILY

So why did you want to find Emily?

Lorredo revolves Emily. They move together almost like poetry, like they've danced together before in a past life.

LORREDO

I need to talk to her about something.

EMILY

What exactly?

LORREDO

It's personal. She around?

EMILY

No. She left. About an hour ago.

Lorredo is distracted by reflection from mirror ball that catches Emily's eyes, illuminating their deep brilliance.

LORREDO
You've got nice eyes.

EMILY
Thank you. So do you.

Lorredo keeps staring into Emily's eyes, lost in them.

LORREDO
Your eyes...
(striking chord
inside him)
They remind me of my -- of the
only other person I've ever met
who has those exact same eyes.

Emily smiles with understanding. She reaches up longingly to touch his face, his lips -- but then stops herself.

EMILY
They say a person's eyes reflect
what's in their soul.

LORREDO
That's true for some people, I
suppose. Know where she went?

EMILY
Who? Emily -- no. She just left.

Band concludes song. Buzzer SOUNDS.

EMCEE
(over speaker)
There will be a twenty minute rest
period for all contestants.

MARATHON COUPLES separate and file into rest areas.

EMILY
Thank you. It's been a very long
time since I've danced like that.

Emily turns and walks away. Lorredo watches her go.

WOMEN'S REST AREA - SHOWER STALLS -- EMILY

removes clothes, steps into shower, turns on steamy water,
closing her eyes, baptizing water SPLASHES down onto her.

LORREDO

watches her from behind a cement support pillar. A voyeur. He watches, fascinated by the way the water strikes against her body, how she applies the soap. The way she enjoys it.

EMILY

continues showering. She opens her eyes, as if aware of Lorredo's eyes upon her. She looks out of the stall to the cement pillar to see no sign of Lorredo. Nobody there.

DANCE FLOOR AREA -- LORREDO

stands in front of wall display showing numerous FRAMED PHOTOGRAPHS taken of all prior winning marathon couples.

C.U. ONE PHOTO IN PARTICULAR

Lorredo and Helen. The happy winning couple TWENTY-FOUR.

Lorredo touches glass cover with his gloved hand, running his fingers over Helen's image. Bells and whistles SOUND.

DANCE FLOOR -- BESIDE EMCEE

is a fifteen-foot wooden THERMOMETER. A red "mercury" line rises beside a numbered scale of money, stopping at \$30,000!

EMCEE

(over bells/whistles)

Temperature's rising fast, ladies
and gents -- and it's getting
mighty, mighty hot in here!

SHOWER AREA -- LORREDO'S POV

Empty. Quiet. Emcee's VOICE echoes off as Lorredo moves, hunting prey, stopping at empty shower stall where Emily was showering before. Lorredo looks at his reflection in pool of accumulated water, staring down at pale face of Ranowski.

RESTING AREA -- LORREDO

moves past sleeping women. No Emily. Somebody COUGHS... Lorredo turns, finds open BACK ENTRANCE leading out to

EXT. AMUSEMENT PIER

The winter sky is dark, gloomy, malignant. Emily leans on railing, staring meditatively at CRASHING waves below.

A menacing shadow falls on Emily. She turns, sees Lorredo looking at her forbiddingly.

EMILY

It doesn't have to end this way.

LORREDO

Fate never has a reason.

EMILY

I'm not the person you think I
am -- I'm not Emily Wharton.

Lorredo holds up Emily's Polaroid.

LORREDO

Pictures speak a thousand words.

Emily nods as she backs away, afraid but being brave.
Lorredo advances showing no mercy. A man of cold stone.

EMILY

The real Emily Wharton is
deceased. I'm somebody else.

LORREDO

Wish I could believe you. But
we're all accountable to the truth.

Emily's lips quiver to find words. And then she says it.

EMILY

Forget about me.

Lorredo's eyes widen with shock as a gun discharges -- BLAM!

INT. DANCE FLOOR -- EMCEE

FIRES starting pistol, blows smoke from barrel. He smiles.

EMCEE

Alrighty now... a healthy round of
applause as we welcome our dancers
back out to the dance floor!

THE BAND

plays fast tune.

MARATHON COUPLES

join up at dance floor and begin dancing.

EXT. AMUSEMENT PIER

Emily reaches out to touch him.

EMILY

Sal...

Lorredo steps back, still on the verge of pulling trigger.

LORREDO

Stay back.

THE SUN

suddenly and unexpectedly punches through dark storm clouds and a golden pillar of light shines down to illuminate Emily.

LORREDO'S FINGER

freezes half-way back on trigger. Gun trembles in his hand.

Maybe it's the way the sun shows on Emily's face. Her eyes.

Lorredo didn't see it before, but he sees it now -- Emily unmistakably resembles Helen. And he even whispers her name.

LORREDO

Helen?

Emily, choked by emotion, can only nod. Yes it's her. She smiles as tears well in her eyes. She finally can speak.

EMILY

I knew you'd come here to find me.

Lorredo shakes his head repeatedly, refusing to accept things.

LORREDO

No. This is a lie. Helen's dead.

INT. POLICE PATROL CAR - THIS MINUTE

At entrance to pier, two POLICEMEN compare the driver's license photo of Curtis Ranowski on an arrest report to the face of Lorredo holding a gun on Emily on pier.

POLICEMAN #1
That's him.

POLICEMAN #2
Let's bring 'em in.

Policemen exit patrol car and advance on unsuspecting Lorredo.

EXT. PIER

EMILY
Once upon a time there were two
strangers who met here on the
dance floor in 1924.

Lorredo shakes his head, and keeps shaking his head --
absolutely refusing to believe that Emily is, in fact, Helen.

LORREDO
Helen's dead. I killed her.

EMILY
Two strangers brought together by
fate. Who fell in love.

LORREDO
No.

EMILY
This is where you asked me to
marry you. I know you remember.

Lorredo's gun trembles more -- he grasps it with both hands.

LORREDO
No. This is all a lie!

Lorredo's eyes widen with shock and realization. He's now
convinced that she's really Helen. He lowers his gun.

BOTH POLICEMEN

appear aiming their guns at Lorredo.

POLICEMAN #1
Drop the gun and raise your hands!

Lorredo turns to see Policemen. Lorredo hesitates

POLICEMAN #2
Put down your weapon now!

EMILY'S DANCE PARTNER

who's been looking for Emily, appears out door beside Lorredo.

DANCE PARTNER

What's going on?

Lorredo seizes the distraction and turns and runs down pier.

POLICEMAN #1

Halt!

Lorredo keeps running toward crowds of people milling about near the amusement rides. Both Policemen take aim on Lorredo, but Emily jumps in front of them, preventing them from firing. They push her aside and chase after Lorredo.

EXT. AMUSEMENT PIER -- LORREDO

fights his way through the crowds, who remain oblivious to fleeing Lorredo, until the Police force their way past them.

FURTHER DOWN AMUSEMENT PIER

Lorredo disappears into pandemonium of people.

The pier is now swarming with more policemen hunting for Lorredo. They search but Lorredo's nowhere to be found.

REVOLVING POV FROM MERRY-GO-ROUND

watching Policemen through blur of CHILDREN circling past.

LORREDO

who's POV watches Policemen, waits until platform is away from them, then leaps off and runs away without being seen.

POLICEMEN

who are now spread out in every area of the pier, search in vain but fail to locate Lorredo. He's disappeared.

EXT. OLD PART OF SUBWAY - DAY

An impatient tunnel CREW stand off to the side wearing hardhats and holding shovels and silenced jackhammers watching as their FOREMAN approaches with a season-wrinkled DETECTIVE PHAELON, late 40s, and sharply-dressed FANCY, 30s.

FOREMAN

One of my workers discovered it when he opened up the section of tunnel coupla hours ago -- don't know how they coulda got in there.

FANCY

How do you mean?

FOREMAN

They closed this section of subway up at the turn of the century -- back when they built the new line. Nobody's been in there for the past 75 years. Here -- this is it.

They reach area where a 6'x4' hole has been chiseled through thick concrete. Phaelon takes Foreman's flashlight as Fancy motions him back. Another Worker hands flashlight to Fancy.

FANCY

We'll take it from here. No sense in deflowering the crime scene.

INT. DARK TUNNEL

Phaelon and Fancy climb through hole and flick on flashlights, beaming around to see an endless tunnel. You can't see two feet in front of your face in this spooky place.

PHAELON

Now you know why I hate taken the subway -- fuckin' tunnels gimme the jeebs.

Phaelon's voice echoes miles off through the blackness.

FANCY

Never know what could be down here.

They proceed a short distance, stop as their beams locate a series of elaborate drawings on tunnel wall.

PHAELON

What the fuck you think this is?

ON TUNNEL WALL

We recognize this symbol as KERN SYMBOL branded on Disciple's arms. Accompanied by more macabre drawings. Demonic-type creatures. Stuff that nightmares are made of.

PHAELON
Head over there. I'll go this way.

Fancy nods, heads off in other direction. Their flashbeams allowing them to see only small oval areas at a time. Eerie.

PHAELON
(calling out)
See anything yet?

FANCY
Nothin' yet --

Fancy falls over something in the dark. He rolls onto his side, shining his beam over to see what it was -- his face fills with terror and he stumbles back, getting to his feet.

FANCY
Mother of God-damn!

We see only Phaelon's flashbeam zigzagging in all directions as Phaelon runs the hundred yard dash in just under six seconds over to where Fancy was standing moments ago.

PHAELON
Fancy!

Phaelon searches with beam until he locates Fancy sitting on ground several feet away, staring mortified over in corner.

PHAELON
You okay?

Fancy is too shook up to utter a reply -- all he can do is point. Phaelon follows his trajectory with his beam over to

NUMEROUS CORPSES

all mummified due to lack of air. Horrified expressions frozen onto their grotesque faces. All in various stages of decay. Some half-skeletons. Judging by their condition, some of them have been here for decades if not longer.

PHAELON
Get forensics down here right away.

EXT. TUNNEL ENTRANCE - DAY

Phaelon and Fancy exit. Foreman is standing by.

PHAELON
(to Foreman)
Nobody gets in there 'less they're
wearin' a badge. That understood?

Foreman nods.

NEON CUPID

tirelessly fires arrow into throbbing heart.

EXT. CUPID HOTEL - NIGHT -- LORREDO

stops suddenly. Takes out gun, removes DO NOT DISTURB
PLACARD hanging from room doorknob. Cautiously enters.

INT. LORREDO'S ROOM

ESSER GRAHAM, 40s, the same man who was watching Lorredo in
Neumeyer's waiting room, turns to Lorredo. Graham wears plaid
suit, and has the over-zealous charm of a snake oil salesman.

GRAHAM
Grief is the disease of the
heart -- the pride-eating cancer
that must be cut out of thy bosom.

LORREDO
Cut the crap, Shyster -- and tell
me what you were after in here?

GRAHAM
(extending hand)
Name's Esser Graham. Brookman-
Cooperstein Life. "Here today,
gone tomorra -- so you best plan
ahead to prevent any undue sorrow."

Lorredo declines handshake, firing up cigarette. The flame
from Lorredo's butane, reflects in Graham's transfixed eyes.

GRAHAM
"The chains of habit and addiction
are too weak to be felt until they
are too strong to be broken."

Lorredo backs Graham into wall, stabbing him with gun barrel.

LORREDO
You still haven't answered my
question.

GRAHAM

Well, sir... I wear many hats.
I'm a friend of Emily's here in
the city searching for her.

LORREDO

So you're an investigator then?

GRAHAM

Well, sir, not exactly. I perform
a divine healing service, in a way.
(patting briefcase)
You see I sell Life Insurance

Graham pulls out PEZ DISPENSER with head of the POPE in
headdress on it, "dispenses" single tablet into mouth.

GRAHAM

I also sell vitamins in these here
handy-dandy dispensers. They're
good for the soul. Try one?

Lorredo rejects offer with shake of head, reholsters gun.

GRAHAM

My brother, you look in need of a
touch -- a deliverance. A divine
breakthrough. You've got a
situation in this life that just
absolutely won't budge and --
(dispensing Pez
tablet into mouth)
You're just stuck, as it were --
wanting salvation not damnation.

Graham reaches out to touch Lorredo's forehead.

GRAHAM

You really do need a touch.

Lorredo grabs Graham's hand, twisting it painfully behind his
back, SLAMMING him up against wall, bloodying his nose.

LORREDO

Why were you in here -- spill.

As Graham speaks, Lorredo gives Graham a precautionary pat
down, checking to see if he's concealing weapons.

GRAHAM

Easy now... easy!

LORREDO
You've been tailing me.
(twisting harder on
Graham's hand)
You followed me from Emily's
doctor clinic, isn't that right?

Lorredo pulls Graham's billfold out of his front pocket,
searches through it. He finds only a

BUSINESS CARD

a golden harp suspended by two bluebirds of paradise.

GRAHAM (O.S.)
Praise thee from ever-lastin' to
ever-lastin'... Somebody say Amen.

LORREDO
You then acquired my name and
address from the Receptionist.

As Lorredo shoves wallet back inside Graham's front pocket,
Graham turns his head and bites Lorredo in the biceps.

LORREDO
Oww -- shit!

Lorredo pulls free, turning him, readying to punch Graham.

GRAHAM
Indeed, that was how I acquired
your whereabouts, my brother.

Lorredo lowers fist. Graham wipes blood from nose. Despite
Lorredo's aggressiveness, Graham keeps happy-go-lucky manner.

LORREDO
So why were you nosing around?

GRAHAM
Thought you might be in need of
some might-dandy Life Insurance?

Graham again KNOCKS three times on table.

LORREDO
No, but you're going to need some
unless you fade fast out of here.

Lorredo opens door, motioning Graham out. Graham holds out BROCHURE. Lorredo refuses it.

GRAHAM

So be it, kind sir -- as it is well within your constitutionality to reject my fine offer.

Graham starts out.

LORREDO

Go back home or do whatever. Missing persons is a line of work where people seldom get saved.

Graham reaches entry and turns back to Lorredo.

GRAHAM

It's the lost ones who've given up searching for themselves who need saving the most.

Graham exits. Lorredo closes door.

EXT. LORREDO'S HOTEL ROOM

Graham slides Guiding Light brochure under door, and then strolls off whistling, When Saints Come Marching Home.

INT. LORREDO'S ROOM

Lorredo retrieves brochure, contemplates it,

ON BROCHURE

"FIND YOUR SALVATION." Illustration depicts lighthouse light shining down on a person. Below that is, "GUIDING LIGHT."

Lorredo notes two small inlet holes on back of brochure where an object has been removed. His eye catches a faint glowing

RAINBOW OF LIGHT

Tiny bands of multi-colored light illuminating across dark room. He approaches it, inserting hand into path of beam so rainbow projects onto his palm. He traces path of beam over to object plugged into an electrical socket on opposite wall.

A NIGHTLIGHT

put there by Graham, in the shape of a colorful rainbow. On it are the orange glowing words, "G U I D I N G L I G H T." Breaking glass outside alerts Lorredo. He peers out drapes.

IN PARKING LOT

a BUM rummages through dumpster on other side of lot. It's none other than MR. HAPPY. He shoves food scraps into his mouth, watching Lorredo out of corner of his suspicious eyes.

Lorredo exits, glancing over at Mr. Happy as he proceeds off down sidewalk. Headlights on older-model Chevvy light up. Chevvy quietly pulls out of parking lot and follows Lorredo.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Lorredo walks down sidewalk. In b.g., Chevvy creeps toward him. Lorredo pretends he's not aware of advancing Chevvy

INT. CHEVVY

Two shadowy DISCIPLES watch Lorredo as they proceed after him.

EXT. CITY STREET

Lorredo turns corner and starts sprinting. Chevvy turns same corner, sees him running away and squeals after him. As headlights find Lorredo again, he quickly ducks into alleyway.

IN ALLEYWAY

Lorredo reaches a dead-end. He looks for way out. None. Chevvy comes at him in reverse. He leaps into DUMPSTER.

Chevvy continues back... SMASHING into dumpster. Denting it.

Lorredo gets half-way out -- ducks back inside as Chevvy RAMS dumpster in reverse again. Crushing it like a soda can.

LORREDO INSIDE DUMPSTER

is tossed around violently amidst heaps of trash. He raises up, FIRES twice at Chevvy... BLOWING OUT back window.

CHEVVY

unstoppable -- relentlessly PLOWS into dumpster.

LORREDO INSIDE DUMPSTER

is slowly being compacted.

Amidst trash, he spots TWO CANS OF SPRAY PAINT. Grabs one, shakes it, empty. Grabs the other, noting irony of label

ANGEL WHITE

with illustration of angel with wings.

He shakes can, finds a little inside. He tears strip from his overcoat to use as a fuse, wraps it around can.

CHEVVY

reverses... BASHING in sides of dumpster.

LORREDO

blood spurting from cut above eye, lights fuse with butane.

Lorredo raises up, hurls BURNING CAN like grenade into Chevvys's shattered rear window. Ducks down again as

CHEVVY

continues ramming dumpster. CRUNCHING more metal. Lorredo raises, FIRES at burning can lodged in back window... missing.

LORREDO

(reloading)

C'mon goddamnit.

Lorredo aims, SHOOTS again -- hitting burning can, setting off chain-reaction that EXPLODES Chevvys's gas tank into a

TIDAL WAVE OF FLAMES

Lorredo ducks into dumpster out of firestorm's wake.

HIS GUN

flies from his hand, hits pavement.

CRUSHED DUMPSTER

is catapulted by explosion over Chevvys. It somersaults -- THUDDING down on car's hood, then roll-tumbles down to ground. Flaming Disciple Driver jumps from car and collapses into pile of snow several feet away, extinguishing himself.

A beat. Chevvys and dumpster burn. We hear movement...

Lorredo squeezes through dumpster's crushed opening, removes smouldering trash clinging to him. He reaches for his gun, and burns his hand on hot metal, then uses coat to grab it up.

He then looks back up with alarm as...

BURN-CHARRED DISCIPLE

passenger of Chevvy topples over onto him.

Lorredo dodges it, looking down at person burned beyond all recognition. Eyes darting up at him from charred sockets.

LORREDO

Who are you -- why were you
following me -- answer me!

Charred Disciple opens mouth to speak... emitting only smoke. Lorredo sees movement out of the corner of his eye and turns to see Disciple Driver stumbling to his feet and racing away.

Lorredo chases him back out into street and stops, searching around. Disciple's gone. Then Lorredo spots Disciple racing down stairs leading to subway. Lorredo proceeds after him.

INT. SUBWAY BOARDING PLATFORM

Waiting COMMUTERS mill about. BUMS sleep on heating vents. Lorredo draws his gun as he descends stairs, but keeps it concealed from view as he searches crowded area for Disciple.

FURTHER DOWN BOARDING AREA -- DISCIPLE

bleeding from cut on forehead, reaches a secluded area blanketed by shadows and hides in doorway with gun ready.

LORREDO

gun poised, reaches same shadowy section of tunnel. He passes by Disciple concealed in darkness. As he does, Lorredo kicks an empty beer bottle that clamors off in the darkness.

A PAIR OF EYES

belonging to same miserable SANTA CLAUS who was after Lorredo earlier -- snap awake, alerted by bottle. He sits up on his mattress still wearing his soiled red suit and tangled beard.

LORREDO

stops, turns, sensing danger, then continues forward.

DISCIPLE

steps out of the doorway and takes precise aim on unsuspecting Lorredo from behind. Just as...

SANTA CLAUS

half-drugged, lunges out of darkness behind Lorredo with a switchblade -- stepping directly into Disciple's line of fire.

SANTA CLAUS

Time to pay the piper, Ranowski!

BLAM! -- Santa's chest explodes as he's hit from behind by Disciple's bullet meant for Lorredo. Santa falls dead.

Lorredo turns and fires on Disciple, hitting him in right-side of chest, throwing him violently backward, causing

A SMALL BOOK

to fly from his possession to the ground several feet away. Disciple continues backward, stumbling over edge of platform and down into pitch-blackness, landing on subway tracks.

SUBWAY TRAIN

approaches far-off down tunnel, sounding its horn.

LORREDO

appears above Disciple, struggling to climb onto platform.

LORREDO

Why were you following me?

Disciple refuses to answer, keeps trying to pull himself up.

A BEAT COP

several yards away, sees predicament, races toward them.

LORREDO

Tell me godamn it -- who are you?

SUBWAY TRAIN

approaches. Headlights illuminate terror on Disciple. As Disciple reaches, Lorredo sees something that frightens him --

THE KERN SYMBOL

that's been branded into Disciple's left arm.

DISCIPLE

Help me... please!

Disciple just can't pull himself onto platform.

LORREDO

Tell me and I'll save you.

Disciple firmly shakes his head. He tries more than ever to pull himself to safety. Hopeless. He knows he's going to die.

SUBWAY TRAIN

exits tunnel getting closer... headlights sweep through area.

DISCIPLE

looks up at Lorredo. He smiles defiantly.

DISCIPLE

You can't stop the Awakening.

Disciple releases side of platform, yelling as he pushes himself out directly into the path of speeding train.

SUBWAY TRAIN

catches Disciple's body in mid-flight, dismantling him. Screams and whistles. Guts and graffiti. Become one.

Lorredo looks on in disbelief as train rushes past him. As light from inside train strobes surrounding area, Lorredo turns to locate the SMALL BOOK that Disciple dropped. He retrieves it, tucking it into his overcoat, as a

A HAND

grabs his arm, restraining him.

Lorredo turns to see Beat Cop, gun drawn, holding him.

BEAT COP

Let's go, fella.

INT. PRECINCT HOUSE, INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Lorredo sits at table, smoking cig, staring into the large two-way mirror at RANOWSKI'S JUNKIE FACE that now has a few bruises and a bandage that covers a cut above his right eye.

Fancy sits beside Lorredo. Phaelon paces with determination.

LORREDO

Do I look like a killer to you?

PHAELON

Put it this way, your face meets all the necessary requirements.

FANCY

Stand in front of mirror lately?

PHAELON

Frankly, Lorredo... you look like one of them vampires on a day pass.

LORREDO

If you're trying to pin a murder rap on me for that train jumper --

Phaelon gives Lorredo a pat on shoulder to reassure him.

PHAELON

Relax. We saw the guy powder his own nose. Didn't we, Fancy?

Fancy tediously spins Lorredo's forty-five that lies on table.

FANCY

Yeah, saw the whole show.

Phaelon holds up Lorredo's I.D.

PHAELON

Says here Lorredo, you're employed by the Pinkerton Detective Agency?

LORREDO

That's right.

PHAELON

Didn't think there were any of you Pukes -- I mean, Pinks, still workin' the mean streets?

Phaelon tosses Lorredo back his wallet. He puts it away.

LORREDO

We like to keep a low profile,
unlike most of you Two-plys.

Phaelon and Lorredo lock eyes.

PHAELON

Pinks were nothin' but vigilantes.
Thinkin' they're above the law
when they weren't.

FANCY

So what's a Two-ply?

Lorredo stares at Phaelon as he says this.

LORREDO

It's what we used to call cops
who's idea of fighting crime was
sitting around wipin' their asses.

Phaelon restrains himself from hitting Lorredo.

LORREDO

Well, if I'm not a murder
suspect -- I got better things to
do then keep flies off doughnuts.

Lorredo starts to get up. Phaelon pushes Lorredo back down.

PHAELON

Sit down. We're not through yet.

Phaelon brings out book that Lorredo took from Disciple and
tosses it down on table. It has the KERN SYMBOL on cover.

PHAELON

We got one question for you:
Where did you get this book?

LORREDO

Bought it in a used book store.

Phaelon punches Lorredo, knocking cigarette out of his mouth.

PHAELON

(displaying his fist)
Sorry. Just does that on its own
whenever it detects a wrong answer.

Lorredo retrieves cig. from floor, now bent in half, putting it back in mouth, rubbing jaw, eyeing Phaelon angrily.

LORREDO

Look, it would make it a lot easier for me to cooperate if you'd tell me what this is about?

FANCY

Don't you read the papers?

LORREDO

Not lately. Why?

PHAELON

Maybe this'll refresh your memory.

Phaelon tosses down the front page of the City Times newspaper. Headline reads: "Killer Cult Discovered" accompanied by photo of subway where bodies were found.

FANCY

This look familiar?

Fancy tosses down several 8x10 b/w photos taken of mummified victims. One photo shows Kern Symbol on tunnel wall. Lorredo studies each one closely, concealing his surprise.

LORREDO

There's more to this than you think. It's bigger than you know.

FANCY

Somethin' big, huh? What exactly do you know about it?

LORREDO

Probably just as much as you. I'm still putting together the pieces.

Phaelon grabs Lorredo's arm, pulls up sleeve to expose small needle tracks -- remnants of Ranowski's past drug addictions.

PHAELON

And I s'pose this is the map to the buried treasure -- and the "X" marks the spot. Real big alright.

Lorredo pulls back his arm, lowering his sleeve.

LORREDO

Didn't your mother tell you to
never judge a book by its cover?

PHAELON

Yeah. But you being a junkie
makes it a whole different story.

LORREDO

Look, we're after the same people
who did this -- and right now you
need all the help you can get.

PHAELON

I don't partner up with vigilantes.

LORREDO

That fine. I work alone.

Phaelon kicks chair out from under Lorredo, sending him
CRASHING to floor. Phaelon grabs Lorredo, goes to punch him,
but Lorredo counters -- throwing Phaelon up against the wall.

FANCY (O.S.)

Hold it!

Lorredo turns to see Fancy.

Phaelon wipes blood from mouth.

PHAELON

Put it away, Fancy. Now.

Fancy does. Phaelon grimaces, grabbing his stomach like the
whole incident has given him indigestion.

PHAELON

Damn. Know what Trichinosis is?

Lorredo shakes his head. Phaelon pours some liquid medicine
into his coffee, stirs it.

PHAELON

A godamn tapeworm. Take my wife
over to Haiti for a second
honeymoon. This is my souvenir.

Phaelon drinks it down with a sour face. It tastes bad.

PHAELON

How do you like them penguins --
a goddamn worm imbeddin' itself in
my diaphragm. A fuckin' worm.

Phaelon touches the middle of his chest.

LORREDO

Wanna keep at it, or do you want
to find out who killed these
people?

Lorredo holds up the newspaper, pointing to the photo.

Phaelon rub his sore jaw, letting his meanness subside.

PHAELON

What kinda deal you talkin'?

Fancy nervously straightens his tie as he watches them.

LORREDO

No deal. Just let me walk.

PHAELON

You better not be holding out on
me -- or so help me --

LORREDO

I'm not. Believe me. You want to
bring these people to justice, you
let me do what I have to do. Give
me twenty-four hours. That's all.

Phaelon scrutinizes Lorredo, not sure about him.

FANCY

Don't trust him, Phil.

PHAELON

Let me handle this, Fance.

Phaelon thinks it over another few seconds, then he decides.

PHAELON

Flake and there won't be a place
in hell where you can hide from me.

Lorredo smirks out of the corner of his mouth as he grabs his
forty-five off table, shoves it back in his shoulder holster.

LORREDO
Ain't that the truth, Lieutenant.

Lorredo nods, opens door, starts out.

PHAELON
Hey, Pretty Boy...

Lorredo turns back, the subdued light in the outer office area catches the demonic orange-amber glow in his eyes.

INT. HALLWAY

Phaelon exits after Lorredo.

PHAELON
Got an address -- a place here in
the city where you can be reached?

Lorredo continues walking, not turning back.

LORREDO
415 Parkview.

PHAELON
Never heard of it -- nice place?

Lorredo then turns back.

LORREDO
Rent's cheap.

Lorredo proceeds out. Phaelon watches him go suspiciously.

PHAELON
Hey, Fance -- run an I.D. check on
him, well ya? He looks familiar.

Fancy nods, goes to work. Phaelon scratches his head, then heads back into his office. HOLD on bulletin board. MOVE IN closer to see Ranowski's familiar face on a Wanted Poster

INT. EMILY'S LOFT - NIGHT -- A GIANT HUMAN EYE

belonging to Landlord, looks through a round magnifier, studying Disciple's open book that Lorredo retrieved.

LANDLORD

It's written in ancient Akkadian.
A substrate language -- a
combination of dialects that's
been extinct since 2500 B.C.

Landlord adjusts magnifier, bringing ancient wedge-shaped letters, or cuneiform characters, into focus.

LANDLORD

If I had to venture a guess, I'd
say this book is at least a couple
hundred years old. Maybe more.

Landlord then switches to looking at book under a microscope.

LANDLORD

And it's a copy -- a duplicate.

Landlord raises up from microscope and turns to Lorredo.

LANDLORD

Now, I have a question for you:
Where on earth did you find this?

LORREDO

Let's just say I found it lying
around. Can you translate it?

LANDLORD

Heavens no. This is way out of my
league, I'm afraid. But a good
friend of mine probably could.

Landlord gets up from his desk and places the book open and face down on a computer scanner. Light quickly scans it. He goes to desk and types in a few commands on laptop computer.

LANDLORD

From what little of it I can
understand -- it says something
about an Eighth Seal Gethsemane.

Computer screen comes to life and begins translating ancient. Displaying Akkadian letters beside corresponding Latin text.

LORREDO

My Bible skills are a little rusty.

Landlord goes to bookshelf containing hundreds of books and selects a large reference book, sets it on his desk, and thumbs through it until he finds the page he was looking for.

LANDLORD

What we're talking about is something that predates the Bible by nearly two-thousand years.

PAGE IN BOOK

Illustration of four nightmarish figures riding horses. First Horseman on white horse holds a bow. Second on red horse brandishes sword. Third riding black horse holds a pair of balances. Forth rides a pale horse and holds a sickle.

LANDLORD

The Book of Revelations in the Bible mentions Four Horsemen: Death. Disease. Famine. War.

LORREDO

Opening of Seven Seals that begin Judgement Day. That sort of thing.

Landlord nods in agreement, watching more translated data from book scroll down his laptop computer screen in Latin.

LANDLORD

(reading screen text)

Well, this Book also includes a Fifth Horseman -- a Dark Messiah. Who will open an Eighth Seal and herald in some kind of Dark Resurrection called the Awakening.

LORREDO

You mean like the end of the world?

Landlord is silent as he reads through more of the text.

LANDLORD

No. Not an apocalypse, but a great transformation. A time when humanity will fall into darkness.

LORREDO

What exactly is this Seal of Gethsemane?

Landlord prints out an enlargement taken from page of book.

LANDLORD
See for yourself.

Lorredo takes paper, studies it closely.

ON PAPER -- THE SEAL OF GETHSEMANE

Not really much to see. The size of a fifty-cent-piece. It's Oval. Muddy- brown in color. But there's a mystical quality about it. Pressed into the middle of Seal -- by the very hand of God -- is same KERN SYMBOL branded on every Disciple's arm.

LORREDO
This was branded on the arm of the
person who was carrying this book.

Lorredo stares at Seal, something else about it troubles him.

LORREDO
And I've seen this same symbol
someplace else before that. But
I can't remember where exactly.

LANDLORD
Where?

LORREDO
I don't recall exactly -- but I
have. I'm positive about that.

He folds up paper and puts it into his pocket.

LORREDO
You think any of this is
authentic -- any truth to it?

LANDLORD
That's like asking a person if he
believes in God. From a purely
empirical point of view -- I have
my doubts. But there's one thing
I believe without any uncertainty.

LORREDO
What's that?

LANDLORD
 (handing back book)
 What you have here is a lost
 chapter missing from the Bible.
 Why it was removed is a mystery.

EXT. GUIDING LIGHT BUILDING - CITY STREET - DAY

Dawn. A decaying building nestled between a tattoo parlor and a beauty supply store. Painted in black is, "GUIDING LIGHT."

LORREDO

stands across street holding up Guiding Light brochure.

INT. GUIDING LIGHT

Lorredo enters dark, windowless hallway with soiled carpeting. Stark light filters in through the front door.

Off to his immediate right:

A THRIFT STORE

HOMELESS PEOPLE dig through boxes of used clothing. The same CABBIE with the voice box who gave Lorredo a ride earlier greets Lorredo. Lorredo recognizes him.

CABBIE
 (via voice box)
 End of hall. First door on left.

Lorredo eyes him suspiciously, then exits down dark hallway.

A HOMELESS MAN

stops digging in box, turns to reveal himself to be the same Disheveled Bum who asked Lorredo for spare change. It's --

MR. HAPPY

his ever-smiling, but menacing face watches Lorredo exit.

IN DARK HALLWAY -- LORREDO

advances. He stops at doorway that looks in on a cafeteria where a handful of HOMELESS sit at tables eating food.

FIRST DOOR ON LEFT

Lorredo opens door to a dark room. In the middle of the darkness stands A FIGURE beneath a ray of light like a shrouded apparition. Lorredo draws his gun and enters.

As Lorredo approaches, gun poised, coming closer... he sees that this seemingly brightly glowing figure is, in fact --

EMILY WHARTON

facing him with outstretched arms, palms up in supplication.

Lorredo stops in front of her, staring at her in disbelief, his gun still aimed at her. Emily stands firm, making no effort to run -- as if she were expecting him to arrive. A glimmer of fear shows in her eyes as she sees gun.

EMILY

You going to shoot. Then shoot.

Lorredo is suddenly aware that he's pointing his gun at her.

EMILY

Finish the job.

Lorredo starts to pull trigger -- to carry out his assignment -- to kill. He grimaces. Gun trembles in his hand as he fights against himself. It takes every ounce of his will, but Lorredo finds the strength to lower gun.

LORREDO

I've already killed you once.
I'll be damned if I do it again.

EMILY

I've missed you.

Emily steps forward to embrace Lorredo, but he steps back into the shadows, not allowing her to touch him.

EMILY

What's wrong?

Emily advances toward him. And again he steps back, raising his gloved hand to force a distance be kept between them.

LORREDO

Nothing. Nothing is wrong. Just
the man you once knew... is dead.

EMILY

I don't believe you. He may think
that he is. But somewhere deep
inside him... that man still lives.

Lorredo steps half-way out of shadows.

LORREDO

Why did you come back, Helen?

(READER'S NOTE: For purposes of clarity, from this point
onward in the script, Emily will now be referred to as Helen.)

EMILY/HELEN

For you.

Lights come on, flooding room with brightness. Lorredo
turns, aiming gun at

ESSER GRAHAM

standing inside doorway with Cabbie. Both unarmed.

GRAHAM

We mean you no harm, Mr. Lorredo.

MR. HAPPY steps out of shadows where he's been watching
Lorredo all along, aiming gun at the back of Lorredo's head.

MR. HAPPY

You're not thinkin' ya found
Helen on your own, are ya? We led
you right to her. All ya had to
do was follow a few bread crumbs.

Lorredo spins around, aims gun at Mr. Happy. A standoff.

LORREDO

Who are you?

GRAHAM

I believe people in your
profession refer to us as Joy Boys.

Lorredo sizes them up.

LORREDO

Didn't think Joys were violent --
that they attacked or hurt people?

CABBIE
(via voice box)
We don't.

LORREDO
No? Then why did you attack
Nichols on the subway train?

GRAHAM
Your friend Nichols was getting
too close to discovering our
whereabouts. We had to intercede.

HELEN
Both of you put down your guns.
They don't. Lorredo turns to Helen in surprise.

LORREDO
Are you with these people?

HELEN
Yes.

Lorredo reluctantly reholsters his gun. Mr. Happy does the
same, still keeping a watchful eye on Lorredo's every move.

LORREDO
Why did you bring me here?

Mr. Happy shakes his head in disgust at Lorredo.

MR. HAPPY
You poor dumb bastard -- you
really have no idea what you're up
against, do you?

HELEN
Come. I'll explain everything.

Helen and Lorredo start out. Mr. Happy steps in front of
them, stopping them.

MR. HAPPY
We don't even know yet if we can
trust this Sifter -- until we find
out if he's with us or against us.

HELEN
We don't have much time. He has to
be told now. It's our only chance.

A beat. Mr. Happy nods, steps aside, allowing them to exit.

INT. ANOTHER ROOM

Helen leads Lorredo into smaller room. Graham and Mr. Happy follow them as they approach two ancient paintings. Dark. Macabre. Forbidding. The nightmarish work of a madman.

HELEN

Man named Giotto painted them just before the renaissance period.

FIRST PAINTING

depicts the earth between heaven and hell and shows the Prince of Darkness exchanging places on throne with God. Hideous demon-like creatures symbolic of the Damned arise.

HELEN

He conceived them over a fifty year period, during which he was driven insane by what he called "waking dreams" of revelation.

SECOND PAINTING

Aftermath: Countless armies of DARK CRUSADERS, wearing black suits of armor, some riding black horses, charge out into the world brandishing weapons like a scourge of black death.

HELEN

According to Giotto's prophecy, hell will send a Dark Messiah to herald in the new Awakening.

Helen hands Lorredo a photograph of ROBERT SKINNER.

HELEN

This messiah is ROBERT SKINNER.

Lorredo studies photo, then looks back up at paintings.

LORREDO

This Awakening has happened before?

Graham steps forward.

GRAHAM

Every one thousand years an attempt is made to start the Awakening. But each time that attempt was defeated.

LORREDO

So how does this involve me?

Graham, Mr. Happy and Cabbie refer that question to Helen.

HELEN

We need your help to stop Skinner from starting the Awakening.

LORREDO

There's nothing I can do to help.

GRAHAM

Unless Skinner is expired before midnight tomorrow -- all of humanity will suffer an age of darkness for the next millennium.

LORREDO

(to Helen)

Why did you wait until now to tell me about this?

GRAHAM

We are forbidden to interfere. You must find your own way.

MR. HAPPY

That's right. Sifters have rules to obey -- and Joys have theirs.

GRAHAM

We can only provide guidance. Nothing more. The choice ultimately has to be made by you.

LORREDO

If Skinner is doing what you say, then my Employers will send someone to deal with him.

GRAHAM

Your Employers want Skinner to succeed. That's been their plan all along -- and you're their pawn.

HELEN

It's true. Why else do you think they sent you to kill me-- because they knew I was a threat to them.

Graham places old wooden box on table, opens it to expose

THREE RELIGIOUS DAGGERS

SARDIS DAGGERS. Ancient. Graham removes one, displays its long, twisted blade, polished iron handle. He offers it to Lorredo.

GRAHAM

You're the only person who can get close to Skinner. He won't suspect an attack from one of their own.

Lorredo turns away, declining to accept Dagger.

LORREDO

I can't.

MR. HAPPY

Told you, didn't I -- that a man who took his own life would never have the guts to help anybody.

Lorredo turns back to Mr. Happy, locks eyes with him a beat, then turns and exits down dark hallway, becoming a silhouette.

MR. HAPPY

(calling after him)

Should've read the sign out front before you came in here, Sifter -- It said: "No Cowards Allowed."

Helen follows Lorredo out.

EXT. 415 PARKVIEW CEMETERY - DAY

A white landscape covered by snow. Sign on front of gate reads: 415 PARKVIEW. PAN DOWN to reveal panoramic view of

CEMETERY HEADSTONES

Cold. Final. Faceless. Age-worn rock extending forever.

Lorredo and Helen stand at Helen's gravestone. Helen removes rose placed there by Lorredo. She smells it, closes her eyes.

HELEN

This is how it all ended for us.

LORREDO

No. It's how it all started.

Lorredo kneels at grave beside Helen's, scrapes away snow to expose:

LORREDO'S MEMORIAL -- AN ETERNAL FLAME

burns in front. A tireless tiny flame burning through the ages. Engraved on stone is: SALVATORE LORREDO: 1894-1926. Died In The Line Of Duty. May He Rest In Peace Forever.

HELEN

You were supposed to forget me.

LORREDO

I could never forget you, Helen.
Even if I died a thousand times.

Lorredo removes glove and holds hand over eternal flame.

LORREDO

That's why my Employers offered me
the pardon -- they were using my
own past against me to get to you.

Flame begins to burn Lorredo's hand. He doesn't care.

HELEN

Sal, there's something else that
you need to know about us. We
were chosen to be here right
now -- from the moment we met.

Lorredo continues to hold his hand over flame. It hurts him.

LORREDO

But when you first got sick, I
made the promise to take your
life -- to end your pain -- I
alone pulled that trigger, Helen.

Unable to tolerate pain -- Lorredo retracts hand. Makes fist.

HELEN

How could we have known back then that the choices we made -- the promises we kept... were all just part of the plan for us to be here right now. It's our second chance.

Lorredo gets slowly to his feet, carrying the weight of eternity on his shoulders. He replaces glove on burned hand.

LORREDO

There are no second chances. My Employers made me an offer I couldn't refuse. They gave me a pardon to expire you. But that doesn't matter now. Because I'm not going to finish my assignment.

Lorredo's beeper SOUNDS. He looks at it with doom.

LORREDO

I've got something I need to take care of. We better be getting back.

INT. GUIDING LIGHT - DAY

LORREDO

(into phone)

Give me an hour.

Lorredo hangs up. He turns to Helen standing beside him.

HELEN

What will you do now?

LORREDO

Tell them I failed to locate you. That'll give you time to escape.

HELEN

I'm not leaving.

LORREDO

You don't have a choice. This is how it will happen: They'll send a Sifter to expire me first. Then that same Sifter will come for you.

Fear passes over Helen's face. But she stays determined.

HELEN

Why don't you help us stop Skinner?

Lorredo hits the wall with his fist.

LORREDO

Damnit, Helen. This is a lost cause. A fools parade. You have no idea of the kind of people you're dealing with. We've already lost. And there's nothing we could ever do to change that.

HELEN

Yes there is, Sal -- you have a choice. You just need to make it.

LORREDO

It's already been made for me.

HELEN

No. The man I knew before would not go so easily into that dark night without putting up a fight.

LORREDO

Leave the city -- Godamn it, Helen -- I'm begging you.

Helen shakes her head. No. She locks eyes with him.

HELEN

We both have our obligations.

LORREDO

So I guess this is good-bye then.

Helen looks away, fighting back tears.

HELEN

I wish you'd change your mind.

LORREDO

I'm sorry, Helen. But I can't. No matter what you say, there's no choice for me. Not now. Not ever.

Lorredo turns and walks off down hallway. Helen follows.

INT. FRONT ENTRANCE

Lorredo stops at door. Helen reaches him.

LORREDO
If I had it to do over again,
Helen -- if I could change the way
things turned out for us --

Helen puts her hand to Lorredo's mouth, silencing him.

HELEN
You'd keep your promise again.

Helen lowers her hand from Lorredo's mouth. He turns and exits into the cold wind. He looks back to her one last time.

LORREDO
Forgive me.

HELEN
Always.

Lorredo turns, trudges off in snow. Helen watches him go

INT. ELMO'S VIDEOS - DAY

Lorredo stands before Doghead at cage. He holds up pager.

LORREDO
Why did you page me?

DOGHEAD
I wanted to know the status of you
completing your assignment.

LORREDO
Here's the status: I want off this
assignment -- get somebody else.

DOGHEAD
You know the rules, Lorredo: Once
you choose to accept an
assignment, there's no going back.
Either you finish it, or you burn.

Lorredo grabs side of chicken wire, shaking it furiously.

LORREDO

You knew the real reason why The Company offered me that pardon to do this assignment. Didn't you?

Doghead smirks.

DOGHEAD

And what reason might that be?

LORREDO

Don't play stupid with me, you dumb sonuva-bitch -- you knew!

DOGHEAD

We must all be held accountable for our actions -- you alone must understand that better than most.

Lorredo flies into a rage -- knocking over everything. Doghead laughs at Lorredo's pathetic display of emotion. Lorredo stops, approaches cage and stares in at Doghead.

DOGHEAD

The strength of your convictions has always been your downfall, Lorredo. Why should this life be any different for you? Accept it.

Lorredo starts out.

LORREDO

If I can't get out of doing the assignment. Fine. Then I quit.

DOGHEAD

If you step foot outside that door -- you can kiss that pardon good-bye, Lorredo. And they'll be sending somebody to expire you.

LORREDO

(not turning back)

I'll be waiting.

Lorredo exits.

INT. LORREDO'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Dark. Drapes closed. Bed unmade. Lorredo looks like shit. He sits in a chair in the middle of the room. Cool. Calm. He smokes a cigarette. Drinks from his flask. He waits.

FOOTSTEPS approach outside. Lorredo hears them and remains seated. Resigned to his fate. A key fits into the lock. The door slowly opens... a SHADOWY FIGURE stands in entry.

SHADOWY FIGURE cautiously steps into room. We'll call him a SIFTER because that's what he is -- death carrying his weapon of choice -- a sawed-off twin barrel 12- gauge shotgun that he now brings out from his black over coat. We never see Sifter's face. His identity. Only his menacing presence.

SIFTER

I've been sent by The Company.

Lorredo nods expectantly, not looking up. He smokes cigarette.

LORREDO

I've been expecting you.

Sifter turns head -- sees Lorredo's gun is inside holster resting over back of a chair safely out of Lorredo's reach.

Sifter enters, stops before Lorredo, hunched forward, resting elbows on his knees, staring at floor, resigned to his fate.

SIFTER

You should've completed your assignment. After this, they may never allow you to come back.

Lorredo smokes cigarette. Drinks from flask. A condemned man fulfilling his last request before his own execution.

LORREDO

Just get it over with.

SIFTER

After I'm finished here, I'll be paying your lady friend a visit.

Lorredo keeps silent, staring down at floor, into darkness.

SIFTER

Any last requests?

Lorredo sips from flask. Takes a last drag on cigarette, drops it to floor, extinguishes it with shoe. And that's when Lorredo suddenly becomes aware again of that faint

RAINBOW BEAM OF LIGHT

penetrating through the darkness. He looks over at that seemingly far-away object glowing on opposite wall. He squints at it, and remembers -- it's that fucking NIGHTLIGHT!

ON NIGHTLIGHT

blazing out in this dark moment like a lighthouse beacon.

Sifter raises shotgun, taking point-blank aim at Lorredo.

SIFTER

Guess that's it then. Your mind's made up. Pity.

Lorredo focuses on rainbow beam of light, as if feeding on it. That tiny spark of humanity of compassion deep inside Lorredo, now begins to swell inside him. Tears fill his eyes.

SIFTER

Such a terrible waste of talent.

Lorredo looks over at his gun, hopelessly out of reach. And in that last second before Sifter pulls trigger, Lorredo does something he never thought possible... he changes his mind.

BOOM! Sifter FIRES -- just as Lorredo takes flight, hurling himself through the air to grab for his gun -- the Sifter's shotgun blast instead blows Lorredo's wooden chair to bits.

All the skills. All the training. That have made Lorredo into the ultimate killing machine. All these things, Lorredo now summons for the near-impossible task of reaching his gun.

Sifter now realizes Lorredo's intention and corrects his aim.

Lorredo grabs his forty-five out of holster and, mustering every bit of his ability and reflex -- turns his body in mid-flight with amazing agility to fire off one shot at Sifter.

LORREDO'S BULLET blows out Sifter's left kneecap. Blood spurts. Sifter falls to his knees as he FIRES another blast from his shotgun that misses Lorredo and blows a hole in the mirrored ceiling, sending down a shower of reflecting glass.

Lorredo touches down, rolls onto his side... and FIRES a second dead-aimed shot -- that hits Sifter square in chest, folding him over backwards, his knees still bent under him.

Then it's over. No more gunfire. All is silent. A thin layer of gun and cigarette smoke hangs in the air. Lorredo walks over to Sifter lying on his back in a puddle of blood.

Sifter's face remains in shadow, except for the rainbow beam that reveals his eyes that now register one big question mark.

SIFTER

Why?

LORREDO

I changed my mind.

Blood gurgles in Sifter's throat as he strains to speak.

SIFTER

You're going to burn for this.

Lorredo stares deadpan down at Sifter. A long beat.

LORREDO

Probably so.

BLAM! -- Lorredo shoots Sifter dead. Blackness.

INT. GUIDING LIGHT CAFETERIA - DAY

Homeless people sit at tables eating food. Others stand in the serving line receiving a bowl of soup from Mr. Happy.

Without warning, Three Disciples burst through side emergency exit door and open fire with assault rifles. Chaos erupts as Homeless scatter in all directions. A few are hit by bullets.

Mr. Happy ducks out of kitchen and runs down hallway.

MORE DISCIPLES

crash down through skylights. Glass pours. Disciples land on carpet and chase after Mr. Happy down hallway.

INT. ROOM AT END OF HALLWAY

Mr. Happy enters just ahead of them, closes and locks door.

MR. HAPPY

Quickly!

Helen and Graham help Mr. Happy barricade door with table.

MR. HAPPY
Skinner has found us.

Disciple continue to pound, slowly pushing door open.

MR. HAPPY
There's too many of them -- we'll
have to evacuate.

Graham grabs up the box containing the three Sardis Daggers.

HELEN
They've probably got all exits
surrounded, we'll have to get out
through the basement.

Helen, Graham and Mr. Happy start toward rear hallway door that leads to stairwell. As they do, Disciples break through barricaded door and rush into room behind them.

MR. HAPPY
Go -- I'll hold them off!

Helen and Graham proceed down stairwell. Mr. Happy closes door and wraps an electrical cord around handle tying it off.

INT. BASEMENT LEVEL

Helen exits door only to encounter more Disciples. Graham and Helen are forced to separate in order to make an escape.

INT. BASEMENT LEVEL HALLWAY

Dark. Helen proceeds alone. She freezes in her tracks as she sees somebody approaching her in the darkness.

HELEN
Graham?...

As person nears, we see that it's not Graham, but a Disciple. And he's holding a gun on her. Helen backs away. Skinner steps into view behind her accompanied by two more Disciples.

The moment Helen sees Skinner, she grabs for the closest Disciple's rifle, wrestling away from him. Before she can point it at Skinner, she finds two rifles pointed at her head.

SKINNER

Not a chance. You'd be dead
before you could pull the trigger.
And that would defeat your purpose.

Helen surrenders rifle. Skinner steps up to her, smiles with
indignation. Helen stares wrathfully at him. Her eyes burn.

SKINNER

It's over for you. You've lost.

Helen is trapped. No way out. She stands solid, determined,
strong to the last. Facing death with tough-minded courage.

HELEN

You'll get yours, Skinner.

Disciple squeezes back on trigger... BLAM! Disciple falls
dead. Skinner looks on in puzzlement as we see...

LORREDO

appearing out of darkness, running toward him at top speed.

SKINNER

Kill him.

Second Disciple and Lorredo open fire on each other at the
same time. Disciple takes two hits in chest and drops dead.
Lorredo reaches Helen and stops. Helen smiles at him.

HELEN

I knew you'd come back.

Third Disciple shoves rifle muzzle against Lorredo's head.

DISCIPLE

You're finished.

Disciple takes away Lorredo's gun. Skinner steps up to
Lorredo. Both of them lock eyes with each other.

SKINNER

I'm disappointed in you, Lorredo.

Lorredo looks at Skinner with surprise.

LORREDO

How did you --

SKINNER
I read your profile.

Skinner examines Lorredo's forty-five.

SKINNER
And if I'm not mistaken, I believe
this is the gun you used to take
the life your your loving wife.

Skinner gently touches Helen's face. She pulls back.
Lorredo moves toward Skinner, but Disciple restrains him.

SKINNER
But I'm a fair man. I'll give you
a choice. Who wants to die first?

Skinner hands Lorredo's forty-five to Disciple. He cocks it.
Then aims gun first at Helen, then at Lorredo. Back and forth.

LORREDO
Kill me first.

HELEN
Don't do it, Sal -- please.!

Three more Disciples approach them down hallway.

SKINNER
You heard the man.

Lorredo doesn't even flinch as Disciple squeezes back on
trigger CLICK!... Empty. Disciple's jaw drops in puzzlement.

LORREDO
Never keep a round in the chamber.

Lorredo grabs back his gun -- shoots Disciple dead.

LORREDO
Because once you pull the trigger,
it's too late to change your mind.

Approaching three Disciples raise their rifles. As Lorredo
pushes Helen out of line of fire and spins to shoot Skinner --

Skinner grabs one of the approaching Disciples and uses him
as a shield -- just as Lorredo fires -- BLAM! Disciple takes
hit in chest. Skinner drops him and disappears around corner.

Lorredo fires on two advancing Disciple, taking them out.

LORREDO

Is there a back door to this place?

Helen nods. They proceed off down hallway.

EXT. PROMENADE AREA - NIGHT

Tree lighting ceremony. Crowds of PEOPLE. Carolers sing.

LORREDO AND HELEN

push past crowds, desperate now to get away from advancing Disciples, growing in number, who seem to be everywhere.

LORREDO

Keep going!

DISCIPLES

overtake them from all sides, surrounding them, throwing Lorredo against a solid object and grabbing Helen away.

LORREDO

shakes stars from his brain, regains his senses, looking up at solid object that he hit to see that it's in fact

A CARVED ICE STATUE OF ANGELS

One of them is MICHAEL brandishing a long ICE SWORD.

Three Disciples attack Lorredo as he stumbles to his feet, trying to get his head together to continue the fight. His attention locked on one, single object -- getting that sword.

Disciples converge on Lorredo, punching and kicking the shit out of him. Lorredo summons all his strength to pull on ice sword. It won't budge. Disciples continue punching him.

Until...

ICE SWORD

crumbles and breaks free from ice statue Michael's hand.

LORREDO

thrusts blade under his left arm -- impaling Disciple standing directly behind him. He retracts sword and spins around with his new weapon. Ready, willing and able to fight them. It may be only ice, but the blade is still razor sharp.

LORREDO
Start prayin'.

Lorredo uses both hands as he swings slippery ice sword at remaining Disciple, who lunges at Lorredo with a knife. THWACK! -- Disciple falls dead with his chest spurting blood.

HELEN

fighting and punching, holding her own against Disciples.

ICE SWORD

comes down hard on back of one Disciple's head -- he bites cold "steel" between his teeth as he collapses over dead.

LORREDO

kills another Disciple. But there's just too many. Lorredo grabs Helen and they run off with Disciples in hot pursuit.

DISCIPLES

converge on them from all sides. Pandemonium. People are everywhere, getting in their way, interfering with Lorredo and Helen's escape. There's no way to outrun Disciples.

ELYSIAN CAB

skids to a stop in front of Lorredo and Helen.

CABBIE
(via voice box)
Need a lift?

Lorredo double-takes, smirks upon recognizing Cabbie.

LORREDO
Nice to see a friendly face.

Lorredo and Helen jump into cab. Cab speeds off, making an escape, just as Disciples converge on the area.

CABBIE
Where to, Mister?

LORREDO
Someplace safe.

INT. ELMO'S VIDEOS - NIGHT

Skinner pounds on counter in rage.

SKINNER
You assured me Lorredo would not
interfere.

Doghead calmly sits back in wheelchair.

DOGHEAD
We took every precaution -- even
offered him a pardon. Evidently,
Lorredo must've changed his mind.

SKINNER
The wheels of this operation have
been turning longer than you could
possibly imagine -- and I will not
fail now because some Sifter had
a change of heart! Is that clear?

DOGHEAD
You have my sympathies. We'll send
somebody to rectify the problem.

SKINNER
No. You've already failed to stop
him. I'll deal with him myself.

EXT. OLD TWO-STORY HOUSE - NIGHT

A large place situated directly on top of a vintage DINER.
Lorredo KNOCKS on door. Small peep window opens. A severely
wrinkled man, FRANK ANGELINE, 90s, looks out at them.

LORREDO
It's me, Frank. Open the door.

FRANK
Prove it.

LORREDO
It's cold, Frank. Let us in.

FRANK
Show me first. I want to see it.

Lorredo fishes into pocket, brings out PINKERTON BADGE, holds it up to window. Frank runs his fingers over it, feeling it.

LORREDO

Okay?

Frank unlatches chain, opens door. They enter.

LORREDO

We need a place to hold up.

Frank wears bathrobe and slippers. He lets out a raspy COUGH.

FRANK

Mi casa, tu casa.

He stares curiously at Helen, strangely captivated by her.

FRANK

Have we met? I can't place the face -- but the eyes look familiar.

Frank looks to Lorredo for the answer.

LORREDO

A long time ago, Frank.

Frank exits kitchen carrying serving tray with two cups and a decanter. He sets it on table and begins pouring coffee.

LORREDO

I need you to help me find something in the archive.

FRANK

What in particular?

Lorredo takes out folded up copy of Kern Symbol that Landlord gave to him and holds it up. Frank squints to see, taking it.

LORREDO

Ever see this before?

Frank continues to study symbol. His face becomes serious.

FRANK

Some things are best forgotten.

Lorredo proceeds down hall, opens far door and switches on light to illuminate

THE ARCHIVE ROOM

Helen enters. Photos and other memorabilia. Several stacks of old newspapers. Piles of old documents. A time capsule.

HELEN

What is this place?

Lorredo runs his hand along the smooth, hard surface of

IRON SALLY

a relic from prohibition days. This steel reinforced rig resembles an armored car with V-shaped battering ram.

LORREDO

Good ole' Iron Sally. A real ball-breaker. Wonder if she still runs?

Helen inspects wall-mounted display of period-piece guns used during early part of century. Mannequin wears old-fashioned BULLET-PROOF VEST with a ammo belt of old-fashioned GRENADES.

LORREDO

Where I spend my off-time.

Helen moves to glass display case. Inside she finds

FIVE TARNISHED PINKERTON BADGES

with old photo showing Lorredo with four other Pinkerton Men mugging for the camera. Having the time of their lives. One of the men is a much younger version of Frank Angeline.

HELEN

You can't forget the past, can you?

Lorredo mournfully shakes his head. No.

LORREDO

It's the only thing I have left.

INT. BATHROOM

Lorredo flicks on light, removes coat and shirt, exposing his badly bruised chest, caused by being kicked by Disciples.

Helen enters to find him trying to wrap bandage around chest.

HELEN

Here, let me help you.

LORREDO
I can do it.

Pain causes Lorredo to drop bandage roll. Helen retrieves it and begins bandaging up Lorredo.

HELEN
You might need a doctor to look at this.

LORREDO
Doctors can't heal what I've got.

Helen ties off bandage like a trained professional.

HELEN
There. That ought to hold.

LORREDO
Once a nurse. Always a nurse.

Lorredo slowly puts on shirt, wincing from pain. Helen touches his chest. He pulls away suddenly uncomfortable.

LORREDO
Don't.

HELEN
What's wrong?

Lorredo rubs his ever-tired eyes, sighing heavily, trying to relieve the aching, burning feeling building inside of him.

LORREDO
Nothing's wrong. Just don't.

HELEN
You're not attracted to me?

Lorredo locks eyes with Helen.

LORREDO
Of course I'm attracted to you.

Helen steps closer to Lorredo. Lorredo takes a step back.

HELEN
Then touch me.

He hesitantly reaches out to Helen, his fingers touch her skin -- he instantly pulls back like he'd burned his hand.

LORREDO

I c-can't.

Lorredo puts on his leather gloves and then looks down mournfully, a man beaten. Lost.

HELEN

You must be able to feel something?

She reaches out, touching his face. He doesn't react. Just sits there, expressionless; a mannequin in a store window.

LORREDO

Nothing. Not anymore.

HELEN

Close your eyes.

He does. Helen disrobes, letting her dress fall to ground. She steps out of it, takes Lorredo's hand and removes his glove, and then delicately places his hand on her chest.

HELEN

What do you feel now?

Lorredo trembles as if having withdrawals. Something hurts deep inside him. Something he hasn't felt for a long time. They move closer. Both craving. Their lips slowly touch... igniting the eternal fire burning between them.

INT. SHOWER

Lorredo, no longer the voyeur he was at marathon when he watched Emily/Helen shower -- now is with her. They embrace as warm, steamy water rains down on their nude bodies.

BLACKNESS

INT. OLD DINER "PINKS" - NIGHT

Nostalgic. Warm. Inviting. A place untouched by time. Jukebox plays vintage tune. In front of three half-eaten plates of food sits Lorredo dragging on cigarette. He exhales, recycling smoke back through nose. He picks up

CUP OF COFFEE

closes his eyes as he breathes in aroma. He sips it, sloshing it around like mouthwash, swallows it -- Mmm good.

LORREDO
Damn good cuppa joe.

Lorredo sips his joe again. Closes his eyes. Smiles with joy.

LORREDO
Best I've ever had.

Helen sits across table watching Lorredo, smiling as she views the transformation taking place inside Lorredo. Lorredo looks up, aware of Helen watching him.

HELEN
First time I've seen you smile.

He sips more coffee. In heaven. He takes another drag on cigarette, examining it curiously, perhaps to locate the source of the miraculous pleasure that it's providing him.

LORREDO
Come with me.

Lorredo reaches out, gently touches Helen's face, feeling the smoothness of her skin, like a tailor feeling the finest silk.

HELEN
To where?

LORREDO
A special place.

HELEN
Now? It's freezing outside.

LORREDO
Now's the best time.

Helen takes Lorredo's hand from her face, kisses it.

LORREDO
No matter how things turn out, we
have this short time together.
Let's use every second of it.

Helen strokes his cheek lovingly.

HELEN
I'll get my coat.

Helen exits up back stairs to Frank's apartment. Lorredo drags on cigarette. Graham slides into booth with him.

GRAHAM

I'll guarantee you without a doubt -- you will never find better Life Insurance than I am heretofore about to offer thee.

LORREDO

That's the last thing I need now.

Graham fastens rubber band around thumb and forefinger, making a makeshift gun. He squints as he aims carefully at

A HOUSEFLY

perched atop half-eaten bagel, cleaning its wings.

Graham fires rubber band gun -- hitting housefly dead-on.

GRAHAM

Let the punishment fit the crime.

Lorredo watches curiously as Graham picks up fly, inspects it like a trophy, inserts it into a matchbox with a dozen others.

LORREDO

Make it quick. We're leaving.

Graham opens cluttered briefcase, takes out documents.

GRAHAM

Now then, sir. Are you what they call one of them habitual smokers?

Lorredo blows smoke in Graham's face. He coughs.

GRAHAM

That to me indicates a yes. Any history of excessive drinking?

Lorredo takes a big swig from his flask, sighs with ecstasy.

GRAHAM

(checking box)

That to me indicates a yes.

LORREDO

Tell me something, Graham. If Skinner succeeds in starting the Awakening, what happens to Helen?

GRAHAM

You and Helen share the same fate.

Lorredo freezes as he extinguishes his cigarette in ashtray. Evidently, this is the last thing Lorredo expected to hear.

LORREDO

Helen can't return to Heaven?

GRAHAM

None of us can. If Skinner wins, there's no hope for any of us.

Lorredo tries to swallow the huge lump in his throat.

LORREDO

Did Helen know about this -- I mean, was she told before she came?

GRAHAM

Yes. She was told. But she chose to come anyway. To be with you.

Lorredo is speechless. Graham holds out contract and a pen.

GRAHAM

Now, sign here. If you please.

Lorredo takes pen, hesitating as he suspiciously eyes the insurance document. He then looks back at Graham.

LORREDO

Life Insurance, huh?

GRAHAM

What else?

Lorredo signs. Helen approaching down the stairs.

LORREDO

Helen and I want to be alone now.

GRAHAM

Consider me gone, my brother. Life is precious, don't waste it.

Graham tears off copy, hands a copy to Lorredo.

GRAHAM

Take care, Lorredo.

Graham extends his hand to Lorredo. Lorredo shakes it.

LORREDO
Where you headed?

GRAHAM
Oh, I've still got some unfinished
business I need to take care of.

Graham taps the Life Insurance policy in Lorredo's hand.

GRAHAM
And remember: Miracles do happen.

Graham exits.

EXT. WATERFRONT - NIGHT

Alone in the darkness, Lorredo and Helen huddle together,
keeping each other warm, staring out at the sparkling
reflection of skyscraper lights dancing on the water.

ON WATER

a thousand pieces of light. Brilliant and radiant.
Shimmering off the pitch-black impenetrable depths.

HELEN
It's beautiful. Like diamonds.

They stand in silence, mesmerized. Lorredo turns to Helen.

LORREDO
Regardless of the outcome of all
this -- whatever happens to us,
Helen... I've got no regrets.

HELEN
Neither do I.

A dark figure approaches behind them. On instinct, Lorredo
reaches for his forty-five. But it's Mr. Happy who appears.

MR. HAPPY
Serenade for a dollar?

Lorredo relaxes, holds out a dollar to Mr. Happy. Mr Happy
takes it and begins snapping his fingers, singing a slow tune.

Lorredo and Helen embrace and begin to dance. And for that
dollar, they buy themselves a moment of happiness together.

HELEN

What we've got can't be taken away.

As they turn, we see that they are both holding back tears, their expressions reflecting the fear of losing each other.

LORREDO

Maybe in another life, a different place, we'll find each other again.

Helen nods, embraces him tighter, not wanting to let him go.

LORREDO

They can't take it away.

They hold each other tighter now, as if some invisible force were trying to pull them apart.

LORREDO

I won't let them, Helen.

They look at each other. Trembling in each other's arms.

LORREDO

I'll never let them.

This kiss passionately, as if this were the last kiss they would ever share. Mr. Happy sings on in the cold night.

INT. ARCHIVE ROOM - DAY

Lorredo, Helen, Frank look through numerous piles of old yellowed and tattered newspapers from the 1920's and '30's.

LORREDO

Must be here someplace.

FRANK

Over here.... think I found it.

Across the room, Frank holds up a stack of old, yellowed, tattered newspapers. Lorredo and Helen approach. Lorredo takes them and places each one side-by-side on a table.

LORREDO

In 1922 there were a series murders committed in this city. All the victims were killed the same peculiar ritualistic way.

The succession of front page headlines detail several mysterious murders, accompanied by not-so-pretty black and white photographs of the grisly murdered victims.

LORREDO

It was determined during the investigation that these slayings were actually ritualistic sacrifices. Devil worshiper stuff.

Lorredo plops down the last newspaper that has a close-up photo showing the branded kern symbol on one of the victims. He matches it with copy of symbol given to him by Landlord.

LORREDO

Each victim had this same symbol branded on them. Recognize it?

Helen looks at it and nods in shock. Frank also looks at it.

FRANK

I remember. After looking into it --- we discovered that these same type of homicides had been occurring all over the entire world for the past several centuries.

Frank goes to closet across the room and searches through it, pulling out an old 16mm reel-in-case. He approaches with it.

FRANK

I think you need to see this.

INT. ARCHIVE ROOM -- 10 MINUTES LATER

Lorredo, Helen and Frank view an old b/w 16mm film projected onto a tiny screen at the front of the archive room.

IMAGE ON SCREEN

we see the Pinkerton Detectives, wearing their trademark suits, as they The camera is hand-held and therefore jerky. They are storm-trooping a large commune in the country outside the city. Pinkertons break down the doors to the main facility and rush inside to round up all the inhabitants.

FRANK

They were called the "Devil's Brigade" -- they made the Manson family look like the Waltons.

IMAGE ON SCREEN

Different footage taken at a later date showing Pinkertons and several uniformed policemen gathering up more Disciples.

FRANK

Evidently, this Brigade had secretly existed for nearly a thousand years spread out over different parts of Europe. And they'd all migrated to the states at the beginning of the 1900's.

LORREDO

I recall they planned to release nerve gas into the subway.

FRANK

They almost succeeded, too -- if we hadn't located the plant where they were manufacturing the gas.

IMAGE ON SCREEN

More Pinkertons with rifles poised and baseball bats, burst into manufacturing warehouse and discharge tear gas canisters into crowd of Disciples, who scatter in every direction.

Lorredo pays special attention to particular warehouse where Disciples are placed inside police transport vehicles outside.

FRANK

Ten years later, we finally apprehended the leader of the Devil's Brigade. Right here --

Frank hands Lorredo newspaper. A photo shows a menacing man being led away in cuffs by Pinkertons. Frank is with them.

FRANK

His name was Robert Skinner.

HELEN

My God.

FRANK

He was convicted of murder for the human sacrifices, and sentenced to death. He got the gas in '38.

Lorredo is unable to take his eyes off of Skinner's photo -- a face that seems to be staring straight out at him. Film ends. Frank switches off projector. Room goes dark.

HELEN

What became of the Devil's Brigade?

FRANK

They disappeared. Rumor has it that they were in the old subway tunnels. But we never found them. We just presumed they disbanded.

Frank switches on light.

FRANK

I guess we were wrong. They've been hiding their victims in the subway tunnels all these years.

LORREDO

And it looks like Skinner came back to finish the job he started.

Lorredo picks up another newspaper that has a follow-up story on the front page about the Pinkerton's raid on the warehouse. Headline reads: "Devil's Nerve Gas Plant Raided."

LORREDO

This warehouse still exist?

FRANK

Yes. I believe it does -- on old Pier 58. But the facility itself was dismantled. You don't think --

LORREDO

I don't know. It's just a hunch.

Lorredo stares back at newspaper front page photo. Thinking.

ANGLE ON B/W PHOTO OF WAREHOUSE

as actual warehouse slowly superimposes over photo.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Even more dreary looking and dirty than it looked in the old photo. Abandoned. Dark. Gloomy. Soot coats the windows.

Graham approaches cautiously and enters through a side door.

INT. WAREHOUSE

Graham draws out one of the SACRED DAGGERS and proceeds down the dark hallway. All is quiet. Nothing stirs. Graham's footsteps echo-off into the blackness as he advances deeper.

Suddenly, lights come on -- blinding Graham, who shields his eyes. Before him Skinner approaches out of the brightness and stops twenty feet in front of him. He crosses his arms.

SKINNER

They say never shoot the messenger
who delivers you bad news. But in
your case I'll make an exception.

Several dark silhouettes close in around Graham, surrounding him. You can't readily see who they are, but you know they're Disciples. Graham knows he's outnumbered. He raises dagger and charges Skinner, yelling at the top of his lungs.

Less than ten feet before Graham reaches Skinner -- Skinner raises a gun into view and shoots Graham repeatedly. Dead.

Skinner kneels beside Graham's lifeless body and retrieves the Sacred Dagger, prying it loose from Graham's iron grip.

SKINNER

Only two daggers left.

INT. PRECINCT HOUSE- NIGHT

The desk and walls are cluttered with photos of the subway crime scene. Phaelon pours through a stack of homicide files. Fancy enters carrying a computer printout.

FANCY

Got back the info on Lorredo's
I.D. search you wanted-- you're
not going to believe this...

Phaelon tosses down a file in frustration, rubs his tired eyes.

PHAELON

Right now, I'm ready to believe my
own grandma did these killings.

FANCY

Apparently there was a Sal Lorredo
working at the Pinkerton Detective
Agency.

Phaelon gets up and empties the last of the pot of coffee into his mug.

PHAELON

Okay -- so?

Phaelon dumps a ton of sugar into his stale coffee, sips it.

FANCY

So the guy's been dead since 1926.

Phaelon pours the coffee down the front of himself.

PHAELON

What are you talkin' about?

Phaelon grabs data sheet, reads it over, look at Lorredo's black and white photo taken of him back in 1926 wearing his Pinkerton Badge and uniform. Phaelon looks up, confused.

PHAELON

What the hells goin' on here?

INT. FRANK'S HOUSE

Helen converses with Mr. Happy. We don't hear them, but judging by their sorrowful faces, it must be bad news. After a beat, Mr. Happy turns as exits back through front door.

Lorredo approaches Helen.

LORREDO

What's wrong?

HELEN

Graham's dead.

LORREDO

Skinner still alive?

HELEN

Yes.

Helen sighs mournfully, nearly fainting. Lorredo grabs her.

LORREDO

When was the last time you rested?

HELEN

I can't rest until this is over.

Helen nearly faints again. Lorredo picks her up in his arms and carries her down hallway toward one of the back bedrooms.

INT. FRANK'S PLACE - GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lorredo strokes Helen's hair. She sleeps peacefully. Like an angel. He traces his index finger around her lips, making the shape of a ghost smile. Still sound asleep, she smiles.

INT. FRANK'S KITCHEN

Now fully clothed, wearing his trademark black overcoat, Lorredo pauses to peer in on Frank, who looks ancient, frail, extinct, as he sleeps in chair beside percolating coffee pot.

LORREDO

Look after her, Frank.

Lorredo switches off the light, putting shadows into the kitchen, then exits out the front door into the cold night.

EXT. OLD PIER NEAR SKINNER'S WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Ships are at their moorings. A foghorn SOUNDS in harbor. Lorredo approaches alone, smoking a cigarette.

INT. OLD WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Lorredo enters with caution. Candles burn. Lorredo makes his way through the darkness. Something moves out of the corner of his eye --

A DISCIPLE

charges out of darkness, candlelight briefly illuminates his insane expression as he lunges at Lorredo with large knife.

Lorredo turns and FIRES -- killing Disciple.

ANOTHER DISCIPLE

comes at Lorredo from the other side and tackles Lorredo. They struggle. Lorredo grabs him and snaps his neck.

Lights come on and flood warehouse with brightness. The place is empty. Cleaned out. Only item here is a table on which sits a laptop computer. Screen flickers to life.

ON COMPUTER SCREEN

Skinner's face appears transmitted via remote video link.

SKINNER

We meet again, Mr. Lorredo. Nice
of you stop in for a visit.

Lorredo approaches table.

SKINNER

But you're too late... my
Disciples have already vacated.

LORREDO

I'm going to hunt you down,
Skinner. You can't hide from me.

SKINNER

They say there's a moment in every
person's life that defines who
they are and the life they've
lived. Do you know when that is?

LORREDO

I never cared to think about it.

SKINNER

Ironically, it's the point just
before death. They say our own
lives flash before our eyes.

LORREDO

Too bad.

SKINNER

Why is that bad?

LORREDO

Not for everybody -- but for some.
For the ones who have nothing good
to show for the life they've lived.

Lorredo lights up a cigarette. Skinner sniffs at it in jest,
as if he could actually smell smoke over the monitor.

SKINNER

The smell of smoke always brings
with it such unpleasant memories.

LORREDO

Why don't you enlighten me,
Skinner. Why start the Awakening?

Lorredo looks at opposite wall where the name: LUCIFER has been painted. The "C" has been turned into an "S" -- and a "T" has been inserted in middle, spelling the word: SIFTER.

SKINNER

People tend to forget their surroundings -- tune things out. Because they're used to them. Bored with them. It's human nature. Until they're deprived.

LORREDO

Deprived?

SKINNER

Yes. And after that, they gain appreciation. Look at it this way -- without death, life would be meaningless.

LORREDO

(sarcastic)

How profound. And I suppose the Awakening is their wake-up call?

SKINNER

Indeed it is. Too bad you won't be around to see it happen, Sifter.

Skinner holds up what appears to be a miniature car alarm clicker. He clicks it once. It SQUAWKS causing...

ALUMINUM SLATTED SECURITY SHUTTERS

to clamor down, closing off exits. Lorredo is trapped.

Skinner clicks clicker a second time. It SQUAWKS twice. A winch engine comes to life, lowering something down...

SKINNER

You were a valuable resource to The Company, Lorredo -- it's too bad you chose to work against us.

GRAHAM'S DEAD BODY

lowers into view hanging upside-down... and then stops ten feet about the table. Strapped to Graham's body are semtex plastic explosives and a detonator with a digital readout.

Skinner clicks clicker a third time. It SQUAWKS three times...

A DIGITAL READOUT

on Graham begins counting down: 1:00... 00:59... 00:58...

SKINNER

Give my regards to your Employers.

Lorredo tries to raise shutters, but they won't budge. He POUNDS fists on them furiously, then turns back to Skinner.

LORREDO

I'll see you in hell.

Skinner laughs.

SKINNER

Have a nice trip.

Lorredo fires his gun at computer screen -- blows it to bits.

Lorredo throws off laptop, slides table underneath Graham's hanging body, and climbs onto table to attempt to reach detonator. But it still remains just a foot out of his reach.

Lorredo, refusing to give up, searches for a way to escape. His eyes take in everything. He looks up at catwalk and sees

A ROW OF LARGE INDUSTRIAL-SIZED WINDOWS

DIGITAL READOUT

... 00:14... 00:13... 00:12...

Lorredo leaps off table, runs to the far side of the spacious warehouse and climbs stairs as fast as he can.

DIGITAL READOUT

...00:05... 00:04... 00:03...

Lorredo reaches top level of catwalk and stumbles to floor. He gets up and sprints the final distance toward window.

DIGITAL READOUT

... 00:01... 00:00

BOOM!

A blinding explosion gives birth to an immense

A WALL OF FLAME

that incinerates the entire place.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL WINDOW -- LORREDO

SMASHES through it -- glass stabs his flesh. He bleeds.

HE FLIES

Momentum carrying him several feet out through dead air.

HIS HANDS

extended. Fingers outstretched as far as they can reach. His eyes focus on the only hope in his immediate future...

THE LEDGE OF A CATWALK

attached to the next building. An impossible distance.

THE FIERY SHOCKWAVE

from explosion blows out all windows and catapults him several more feet outward...

LORREDO

only inches shy of his goal, loses momentum and plummets...

INTO THE ICY RIVER

Lorredo is swept along by swift current. He fights to stay afloat. But exhaustion overtakes him. And he sinks.

BENEATH WATER

Into darkness. Into death. But as he loses consciousness...

A HALO OF RAINBOW COLORED LIGHT

appears over the surface of the water directly above him.

BLACKNESS

Lorredo snaps awake groggily aware that he's suspended on his back, spread-eagle, being transported up to virtuous light.

As Lorredo nears, the SOUND explodes into the deafening ROAR of rotors. And we now realize that he's being raised aboard

A COAST GUARD RESCUE HELICOPTER

Two CREWMEMBERS bring Lorredo, now delirious and freeze-trembling, aboard and begin to resuscitate him with oxygen.

CREWMEMBER

(into helmet mic)

Harbor View, this is Guardian
Angel One-Charlie. We have a Code
Blue in transport to your location.

Lorredo falls unconsciousness. Sound FADES.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Dark. Lorredo lies unconscious in bed with various life-support tubes sticking out of his body. His face is bruised and battered. A heart monitor BEEPS continuously nearby.

A heavy-set dark figure stands at the foot of Lorredo's bed in profile. Smoking a cigar. Working a crossword puzzle.

Lorredo opens his eyes and takes focus on this man in his 50's, wearing a tweed suit and tie. Meet Lorredo's EMPLOYER.

CLOSE ON A CROSSWORD PUZZLE

being worked with a pencil. Nearly complete.

EMPLOYER

(to himself)

A double-bind situation in which
one factor invalidates or makes
impossible other factors. One word.

Employer pencils in the word: "CATCH 22." He then looks up to see Lorredo, very groggy but awake, watching him.

There's something menacing about this Employer. He seems to look right through you. A man of infinite patients -- like he's got an eternity to wait. And doesn't mind doing so.

EMPLOYER

Allow me to introduce myself,
Mister Lorredo. I am your Employer.

Lorredo says nothing. He's too weak. Heart monitor BEEPS.

EMPLOYER

You think there's nothing worse we could do to you -- that not even a stay in one of our finer plague resorts could've kept you from defecting to the other side?

Employer chuckles.

EMPLOYER

I'm here to tell you that nothing could be further from the truth. People still think in black and white. But the world has gotten much more complicated than that.

Employer puffs slowly, enjoying his fine Cuban cigar.

EMPLOYER

Archaic words like good and evil no longer apply. They've lost their significance in a sea of grays. Personally, I prefer to the term: Checks and Balances.

Employer leans close to Lorredo, holding a cup with straw out to Lorredo for him to drink. Lorredo declines with a stern shake of his head. Employer shrugs, setting down cup.

EMPLOYER

Here's a little bed-time story: You get no pardon. No freedom. Basically, you're finished. And since you failed to carry out your assignment, I will take from you the only thing left that matters...

Employer leans closer and whispers into Lorredo's ear in the coldest, most menacing tone of voice you've ever heard.

EMPLOYER

Your memory of ever loving Helen.

A genuine look of fear crosses over Lorredo's face.

EMPLOYER

Imagine going through eternity without that life preserver called love keeping you from sinking in the flames of damnation.

Employer puts out cigar. It singes.

EMPLOYER

So, as you can see... there are far worse things that can happen to you than simply having to wear an albatross around your neck.

Employer calmly folds up crossword puzzle and inserts it into the breast pocket of Lorredo's hospital pajamas. Pats it.

EMPLOYER

Enjoy the last few precious minutes of freedom, Mister Lorredo.

Employer exits. With a trembling hand, Lorredo reaches over and yanks out the wires and tubes hooked into him. But that's about all he can manage before he falls unconscious.

A menacing-looking NURSE enters with a tray of medication. She sets tray on bedside table and looks at Lorredo lying unconscious. She removes from tray a syringe. And that's when we see that she has a KERN SYMBOL branded on her arm.

As she goes to inject Lorredo... Lorredo grabs her arm. They struggle. Lorredo, still very weak, slowly forces needle into Nurse, injecting the poison into her. She collapses to the floor, convulses for a few seconds, then lies dead.

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Lorredo, far past the point of exhaustion, stumbles along through driving snow. Streets are empty. The dark figures of Two DISCIPLES appear like shadowy ghosts behind him.

Lorredo turns, shoots one Disciple, but can't get off another shot before other Disciple punches him, knocking his gun out of his hand. Lorredo grabs Disciple in a strangle hold.

A SNOWPLOW APPROACHES

its headlights cut through darkness like eyes of demons.

LORREDO AND DISCIPLE

continue struggling. Disciple punches him in side repeatedly, Lorredo grimaces but hangs on tight. A moment later, Disciple stops fighting and lies still. Lorredo releases.

SNOWPLOW

comes straight at Lorredo through blinding snow.

Lorredo clumsily gets to his feet, fighting to stay conscious. Before he can move out of the path of Snowplow --

FIRST DISCIPLE

barely alive, grabs Lorredo's leg, preventing him from moving. Lorredo stretches out to reach his gun lying only inches out of his reach in the snow -- his fingers touch the cold steel -- but he just can't quite grab it with his hand.

SNOWPLOW

head straight at them -- less than ten feet away from them. Certain death. Lorredo is out of strength. He's going to die.

MR. HAPPY

pushes Lorredo out of harm's way just in nick of time. Snowplow hits Happy instead, catapulting him away.

SNOWPLOW

loses control, collides into side of parked car -- EXPLODES into fiery flying metal, throwing Lorredo back down to ground.

Lorredo crawls to Mr. Happy lying in blood-soaked snow.

MR. HAPPY

You must hurry...

With a trembling hand, Mr. Happy extends to Lorredo

THIRD SARDIS DAGGER

Lorredo takes it.

MR. HAPPY

It's the only way to destroy him.

Mr. Happy dies.

INT. FRANK'S PLACE - NIGHT

Lorredo enters freeze-trembling, gun drawn. His brain scrambled. Bleeding from a cut in his forehead. The place has been turned upside-down. A battle has been waged here.

IN ARCHIVE ROOM

Three Disciples lay dead. Presumably shot down by Frank.

CABBIE

lays dead with SECOND DAGGER protruding out of his chest.

Frank moans nearby. Lorredo locates Frank under fallen cabinet, lifts it away. Frank's badly wounded and dying.

LORREDO

Frank...

(shaking him)

Frank, where's Helen?

Frank looks up, trying to focus on Lorredo. He coughs.

FRANK

Tried to stop them, Sal --

(coughs)

T-tried real hard.

Frank lapses, coughing, clinging to his last moments of life.

LORREDO

You did good, Frank -- real good.

Tell me. What happened to Helen?

FRANK

They took her.

Frank opens his clenched hand where he holds an old map of the subway tunnels. He holds it up to Lorredo.

FRANK

I found 'em, Sal -- they're in the tunnels. I knew it all along.

Lorredo takes map from Frank and looks at it. Frank's eyes take focus on Lorredo one last time as the light behind them slowly dims. He smiles.

FRANK

Had good times, didn't we, Sal?

LORREDO

God knows we did, Frank. Plenty.

Frank lets out a final sigh, then dies. His body goes lifeless. Lorredo closes his eyes, laying him to rest.

LORREDO

You get some rest now, Frank.

Lorredo stands. And we see a transformation take place within him -- a fire like none other igniting in his eyes.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Lorredo straps on gear: puts on bullet-proof vest, then long belts holding ammo and grenades. He removes special issue 12 gauge SHOTGUN, a gun made to stop tanks, and attaches to it a reloading canister. He cocks it -- Ka-Chunk.

Lorredo douses place with gasoline, then takes out his butane lighter, flicks the flame, ignites fuel -- KA-WHOOSH!

FIRE SPREADS

rapidly engulfing walls, archive room, furniture, everything.

LORREDO

Angel of darkness. Of destruction. Austere face. Galvanized eyes. Hell hath seen no fury. He stands in front of the fiery blaze, watching his entire past burn before him.

ON OLD PHOTOGRAPH

showing Lorredo posing with other Pinkertons. It ignites, curling up as flames burn through center of Lorredo's body.

BLACKNESS

EXT. OLD ENTRANCE TO SUBWAY TUNNELS - NIGHT

Quiet. Still. Three Disciples patrol perimeter. One Disciple turns, alerted by something approaching.

INT. IRON SALLY -- MOVING

Lorredo hits headlamps, blinding

DISCIPLES

as they OPEN FIRE on Iron Sally with assault rifles.

BULLETS

ricochet off vehicle's reinforced metal body.

INT. IRON SALLY -- LORREDO

grits teeth. Stomps down on gas.

LORREDO
Run for your lives, assholes.

FRONT V-SHAPED WEDGE

picks up one Disciple who locks eyes with Lorredo as he FIRES at bullet-proof windshield at Lorredo without making scratch.

IRON SALLY

speeds ahead -- PLOWING through giant garage doors into

INT. LABYRINTH OF TUNNELS

SMASHING Disciple up against wall, impaling him on beam.

LORREDO
'Cause Hell's just come callin'.

A DOZEN DISCIPLES

surround Iron Sally -- FIRING at her with assault rifles.

IRON SALLY

loses control and drives into wall. Lorredo reverses, pulling out large chunks of concrete with front wedge.

- DISCIPLES

advance, FIRING rifles through side and rear ports.

INT. IRON SALLY -- LORREDO

ducks as bullets ricochet past him, striking interior. He pulls pin on GRENADE, inserts it down rear port chute.

LORREDO
Make a hole.

REAR PORT -- GRENADE

PLINKS at feet of Disciples... DETONATES -- catapulting them ass over ears, clearing path for Iron Sally to back out and proceed into pitch-dark complex, headlamps navigating its way.

INT. ANOTHER TUNNEL -- IRON SALLY

RUMBLES past -- throwing more Disciples against both walls, treads trampling a few more who didn't move away fast enough.

INT. IRON SALLY

Lorredo grabs assault rifle, slinging it over left shoulder, with a length of coiled rope on right, plants kiss on dash.

LORREDO

Give 'em hell for Frank.

Lorredo jumps, tumbles several feet, coming to rest, watching

IRON SALLY

disappear over side of balcony down into darkness.

LOWER LEVEL

countless Disciples CHANT. Stillness. That uncomfortable kind of feeling just before something really big happens.

ONE DISCIPLE

looks up into headlamps that illuminate his sudden terror as

IRON SALLY

plummets straight down toward him... CRASHING right in the middle of Disciples -- EXPLODING into flames upon impact.

DISCIPLES

scatter as fiery pieces of metal, tire and still-rotating machinery fly out in every direction, like a swarm of angry bees exiting a hive.

THE ENGINE MOUNTED PISTONS

churning still as they CRUNCH down on two fleeing Disciples.

And then out of the darkness above comes...

LORREDO

OPENING FIRE on fleeing Disciples with his assault rifle as he swings down by a long rope tied around his ankles.

DISCIPLES

take position and return fire. Bullets fly.

LORREDO

slices himself free from rope with knife. The momentum carries him several feet and he hits floor in a lifeless heap.

DISCIPLES

with rifle-mounted flashlights close in. They spot figure laying face down wearing Lorredo's trench coat and OPEN FIRE.

They cease fire, approach, turning him over to find instead

DEAD DISCIPLE

that Lorredo has disguised in his trench coat -- the shifting weight of Disciple's turning body releases another surprise.

HANDLES OF THREE LIVE GRENADES

Ka-Chink. BOOM.

LORREDO

eyes blazing, moves stealthily along through darkness.

DARKNESS

Impossible to tell where they are. But Lorredo has come prepared. He takes out FLARE GUN. Aims up. And FIRES --

FLARE

shoots up -- EXPLODING into bright flash, illuminating area. Now he can see Disciples. All of them. Sitting ducks.

LORREDO

charges on blinded Disciples, yelling as he OPENS FIRE on them, killing several before they even knew what hit them.

SPENT SHELL CASINGS

clatter to floor.

Lorredo grabs one Disciple after another, interrogating them, screaming into their faces as he moves, using them as shields.

LORREDO
Where is she?

DISCIPLE

is riddled by bullets. Lorredo drops him, proceeds on, keeping his finger squeezed back on trigger as he fires a deafening round of artillery in every possible direction.

Chaos and confusion erupt as

DISCIPLES

shoot other Disciples -- falling by their own bullets.

Finally the shooting stops as Lorredo's rifle clicks empty. Pitch-blackness. Unseen wounded and dying Disciples moan.

Lorredo stands traumatized, shell-shocked. He looks down at himself to see that his entire left arm is soaked in blood from where a bullet passed through his shoulder.

He discards empty rifle. Draws out forty-five. Proceeds.

LORREDO
(calling out)
I'm coming for you, Skinner!

NETHERWORDLY SMOKE

from wreckage and gunfire fill area. Nothing stirs.

A DISCIPLE

surprises him from rear. They FIRE at same time -- killing Disciple as Disciple's bullet hits Lorredo, throwing him down.

LORREDO'S BULLET-PROOF VEST

exposed under Lorredo's clothing blown away by blast. Lorredo coughs, catching air. He stands painfully.

LORREDO
You got something I want back.

FIRE SPREADS

from Iron Sally's wreckage. Tank EXPLODES making more flames. Dead Disciples are strewn across floor. Others moan.

LORREDO

approaches Skinner, a silhouetted figure kneeling in front of a dead Disciple, closing his eyes, laying him to rest.

LORREDO

You better pray she's unharmed.

Skinner stands to confront Lorredo. He steps away from burning Iron Sally wreckage into view, approaching Lorredo.

SKINNER

Back from the dead I see.

LORREDO

That's far enough, Skinner.

Skinner halts, remaining calm, defiant. He shrugs, crossing his hands patiently behind his back. Waiting.

SKINNER

Ever notice how a wasp, after you smother it to death in a killing jar -- just keeps on buzzing for hours... hours, Sal. Know why?

Lorredo scornfully shakes his head, eyes filling with rage.

SKINNER

Because that stupid bug doesn't have sense enough to know when to call it quits. That's you, Sal.

LORREDO

You and this insane "crusade" of yours is finished, Skinner. Over.

Skinner looks around at his dead and dying Disciples, sighs, then stares back at the fire, losing himself in the flames.

SKINNER

We all need to make sacrifices.

Skinner strolls closer to burning Iron Sally wreckage, carefully stepping over his dead Disciples lying everywhere.

LORREDO

Either you tell me where she is, or I'll kill you where you stand.

A thick black cloud of smoke sweeps over Skinner, transforming him into a shadowy ghost.

SKINNER

Like I said before... without death, life would be meaningless.

As smoke lifts, Lorredo discovers that Skinner is missing. Lorredo steps forward, aiming rifle as he hunts for him.

SKINNER (O.S.)

Of course, by the time we come to that realization -- it's too late.

Lorredo inches up alongside burning Iron Sally -- Skinner voice stronger and closer now. He's close. Very close.

LORREDO

And I suppose they offered you a pardon for your role in all this?

Skinner laughs heartily, still hidden in surrounding smoke.

SKINNER

More than that -- much, much more.

Skinner steps out into view, aiming rifle at Lorredo's back.

SKINNER

Pity only one of us will be collecting our little prizes.

LORREDO

Ain't that the truth.

Without turning, Lorredo covertly pulls pin on grenade and tosses it over his shoulder at Skinner, then dives for cover.

GRENADE

lands at Skinner's feet. He freezes with fear as he looks down at it. Moments tick... nothing happens. No explosion.

Skinner's terrified expression becomes a laugh of amusement. He stoops, retrieves grenade, inspects it. Then shrugs.

SKINNER

Don't make 'em like they used to.

Lorredo steps out into the open aiming at Skinner.

LORREDO

Told you I'd hunt you down.
There's a bounty on your head,
Skinner. I'm here to collect it.

Two wounded Disciples surprise Lorredo from behind with rifles aimed at his head. He surrenders, raising his hands.

SKINNER

Words to live by, or rather... die
by. Am I right about that, Sal?

Skinner approaches Lorredo, taking away his forty-five, looking at it, then aiming it directly at Lorredo, cocking it.

SKINNER

So predictable. Your Employers
dangled hope in front of you like
a carrot in front of a horse.

Lorredo grimaces with hate as he locks eyes with Skinner

LORREDO

What are you waiting for,
asshole... send me to hell.

SKINNER

What for? You'll send yourself
there soon enough. Bring him.

Skinner proceeds off down a small corridor leading to another area. Disciples follow Skinner keeping Lorredo at gunpoint.

CEREMONIAL ROOM

A menacing, spacious room dominated by a large alter table in the center, the contents of which can not yet be seen. This part of the old subway tunnel as undergone a transformation. Gothic fixtures. Industrial steel walls. A place of worship.

SKINNER

The moment of truth has arrived.

Several spotlights switch on from high above -- their bright beams crisscrossing down through blackness to illuminate

HELEN

with her arms and legs tied to alter table. Her eyes dart around in fear as she looks at both Skinner and Lorredo.

Skinner strokes her hair, puts his face close to hers, sniffs with glee, as if smelling the sweet aroma of her perfume.

SKINNER

She's mine now.

Lorredo, filled with rage, steps toward Skinner, only to have one of the Disciples rifle-butt him, sending him to his knees.

LORREDO ON KNEES

eyes his forty-five that Skinner holds in his hand. He concentrates, thinks hard... he's got to get that gun.

SKINNER

Almost midnight. An end of a millennium... and the beginning of a new Awakening.

SIX DISCIPLES

wearing ceremonial gowns approach Helen out of the surrounding shadows, drawing out their sacrificial KNIVES.

LORREDO

Not quite...

From a kneeling position, Lorredo sprints toward Skinner.

SKINNER

sees Lorredo coming, and calmly, almost as if toying with him, aims at him, and pulls trigger... CLICK! Empty chamber.

Shock fills Skinner's face. That precious second is all Lorredo needed to reach Skinner and grab back his gun.

LORREDO

Never keep a round in the chamber.

Lorredo smacks Skinner in face with gun.

LORREDO

Because once you pull the trigger
it's too late to change your mind.

Lorredo aims to kill Skinner. Skinner grins defiantly.

SKINNER

You're too late to save her.

Helen cries out. Lorredo looks over at her to see the SIX DISCIPLES converging on her, raising the sacrificial knives.

SKINNER
Five bullets left and six
Disciples... what will you do?

LORREDO

hesitates, then takes dead-aim on Helen with his forty-five.
Tears well in his eyes.

LORREDO
I'd rather she die by my hand,
then by yours.

Lorredo and Helen locks eyes.

LORREDO
(to Helen)
Forgive me for what I must now do.

LORREDO'S FINGERS

squeeze back on trigger... BLAM! Blast echoes like thunder.
And the deed is done.

Lorredo holds the six Disciples at gunpoint as he goes to
Helen, freeing her arms, legs, embracing her lifeless body.

LORREDO
I had no other choice.

Lorredo buries his head beside her. A man lost. Again.

HELEN

opens her eyes, a look of understanding on her face as she
touches Lorredo's face, then whispers her last dying breath.

HELEN
Forget about me.

Helen goes lifeless. She dies. Lorredo holds her tight,
trembling now as tears begin to well inside his burning eyes.

Silence is broken when Skinner starts to LAUGH, applauding.

SKINNER
You must realize now, Sal -- that
the irony here staggers the mind.

The realization hits Lorredo. Without looking up from Helen, Lorredo speaks out with his tired, nearly inaudible voice.

LORREDO

So where does that leave us?

SKINNER

There's one item of business that still needs to happen before The Awakening can actually begin.

Lorredo lays Helen down, strokes her hair one last time. Then, with an expression of overwhelming grief and grim determination, puts forty-five to his head, cocks trigger.

Skinner opens a metal case and removes the

SEAL OF GETHSEMANE

Skinner grasps Seal with both hands, twists -- severing it.

SKINNER

The Awakening now begins.

Lorredo turns his forty-five, aiming instead at Skinner.

LORREDO

Not quite...

Lorredo's eyes narrow as he pulls back on trigger -- BLAM!

Skinner takes bullet, stumbles backward, locking eyes with Lorredo one last time, then falls over dead onto his back. His deep eyes reflecting the surrounding growing flames.

LORREDO

Now it is time.

THE FLAMES

climb walls, spreading across ceiling, consuming everything. Giant fiery pieces of this burning house of cards rain down.

Lorredo outlines Helen's lips with his fingers.

LORREDO

It wasn't supposed to end this way.

Lorredo picks up Helen and carries her away in his arms. Flames cut off all exits. Lorredo and Helen approach

BURNING WALL OF FLAMES

BOTH OF THEM

becoming silhouettes as they approach.

Lorredo halts before the fiery furnace a moment before entering -- radiating heat outlines their bodies nimbus-like.

LORREDO

Only death awaits us now.

Lorredo starts into flames, but then halts as the deafening SOUND of grinding metal is heard. Lorredo turns to see

PART OF CATWALK

CRASH down, forming a sideways V-shape -- the front part touching ground at a 45-degree angle with rest of structure that extends over the flames like a drawbridge to safety.

Lorredo climbs onto catwalk carrying Helen, inching across it, using the twisted railing to balance himself. The structure grinds, shifting down a few feet under his weight.

AT OTHER END OF CATWALK

Skinner steps into view. He stands in the thick clouds of rising smoke, unhurt, as if his wound had miraculously healed.

SKINNER

(calling out)

You'll never make it out alive.

Lorredo halts, looking ahead at Skinner. He frowns, perplexed by the fact that he's still somehow alive.

LORREDO

Neither will you.

Lorredo climbs back down catwalk, lowers Helen to ground, retrieves two assault rifles from two dead Disciples lying nearby. He checks the action on both, slinging them on his shoulder as he climbs back onto catwalk to confront Skinner.

AT OTHER END OF CATWALK

Skinner stands ready for attack.

LORREDO

I'm sending you back to hell.

LORREDO

yells out in rage as charges toward Skinner.

SKINNER

screams out as he sprints toward Lorredo.

BOTH LORREDO AND SKINNER

open fire simultaneously moving at top speed toward each other -- exploding into blaze of gunfire and flying bullets.

HAIL OF BULLETS

fly in both directions -- ricocheting off catwalk and walls.

SKINNER

gets hit first -- bullet penetrates his right shoulder. Blood spurts. He keeps running.

LORREDO

gets turned sideways as bullet passes through left arm. But he keeps coming -- his rage and fury giving him strength.

Just before they collide in a frenzy of gunfire...

CATWALK

gives way -- splitting in-half as front part pulls free of wall supports and clamors down in ROAR of grinding metal.

LORREDO

is thrown backward, sliding down steep catwalk. He grabs desperately onto railing with his left arm, his gun-shot arm, stopping his fall as he cries out from intense pain.

SKINNER

steps to edge of connected part of catwalk, looking down the steep runway at Lorredo clinging helplessly to railing, trying to raise his one remaining rifle to shoot Skinner.

SKINNER

Do yourself a favor. Give it up.
End this misery. Call it quits.

Lorredo pulls himself up catwalk toward Skinner, hand-over-hand, inching himself along, holding onto railing for support.

LORREDO

Don't know the meaning of the word.

BLAM! -- Skinner shoots Lorredo through top of left hand.

Lorredo lets go of railing, sliding back down... grabbing railing with his right hand, struggling now without the use of his left hand to pull himself up toward Skinner by railing.

SKINNER

What can you possibly hope to achieve? War's over, you've lost.

BLAM! -- Skinner shoots Lorredo through right hand.

Lorredo tumbles down... jamming his right leg between the bars, halting his slide.

SKINNER

The only way to stop the Awakening now is to expire me. And you're in no position to do that, are you?

Lorredo grimaces, refusing to acknowledge pain as he awkwardly starts up catwalk, without the use of hands, pulling himself by his forearms and legs.

SKINNER

Which part of you should we dispose of next? A leg perhaps?

BLAM! -- Skinner shoots Lorredo in right thigh. Blood spurts. This time Lorredo can't help but CRY OUT in agony and pain.

SKINNER

So Sifter does feel pain afterall?

LORREDO'S FINGERS

without the strength of hand muscles behind them, grab into the metal grating, stopping his descent -- sharp edges cutting deeply into his hands and fingers, drawing more blood.

SKINNER

You can't kill me. Immortality was my reward from The Company.

BLAM! -- Skinner shoots Lorredo in left thigh. He cries out again as he continues pulling himself up toward Skinner. He grits teeth. Fighting pain. Fighting death to reach Skinner. Not much further to Skinner. Almost there. Got to get there.

SKINNER

Nothing can kill me... Nothing.

Blood fills Lorredo's eyes, blinding him, trickling down his arms from his numerous wounds, threatening his grip on the grating. Almost to Skinner. He'll live long enough to do it.

SKINNER

Any last words?

Skinner smiles as he points rifle directly at Lorredo's face.

Lorredo reaches edge of platform where Skinner is kneeling less than an arms reach in front of him. He looks up at Skinner, squinting up at him through blood-filled eyes.

LORREDO

I believe this belongs to you.

With a burst of strength, Lorredo thrusts up at Skinner with

THE THIRD DAGGER

THE BLADE penetrates deeply into Skinner's stomach. He lets out a hellish-sounding howl, as if an eternity of growing untold misery had suddenly been released from within him.

SKINNER

falls to his knees, face contorted into a sinister anguished grin. He laughs with both pleasure and pain.

SKINNER

I'll save you a place in hell.

Still holding tightly onto handle of Dagger, Lorredo crawls up onto the leveled catwalk, collapsing on his back. He smiles through clenched teeth, his rage now realized.

LORREDO

You do that.

Lorredo pushes Dagger deeper into Skinner, twisting blade using both broken hands, then pushing Skinner over railing.

SKINNER

plummets several feet... the menacing smile still visible on his face as he bursts into flame, laughing as he falls like a burning meteor -- then EXPLODING just before he hits floor.

ON CATWALK -- LORREDO

with last dying strength, carries Helen rest of the way up the precarious catwalk, pulling himself along by the railing.

OTHER SIDE OF CATWALK

As Lorredo climbs down the ladder... the remaining part of the catwalk COLLAPSES in a mass burning heap of twisted metal.

EXT. BURNING WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Lorredo fights off death as he carries Helen out of the building and away from the raging inferno.

BLACKNESS

INT. ST. ROCH CHURCH - SANCTUARY - DAY

The final moments before dawn. We look down from a bird's-eye view in darkness at two SILHOUETTED FIGURES far below.

LORREDO

kneels before dead Helen, holding her lifeless body as close to himself as he can, squeezing tight, refusing to let her go.

LORREDO

I'm sorry.

Lorredo reaches out, takes Helen by the hand, fighting off death to be with her with his last precious moments of life.

LORREDO

releases Helen's hand as death finds him.

Lorredo and Helen remain there together. Lifeless.

A RAY OF LIGHT

penetrates clouds and shines down through stained glass, covering their bodies in a glowing rainbow halo of brightness.

Lorredo's body twitches. He awakes, taking a breath and raising up, looking down at himself to discover that his numerous bullet wounds have miraculously been healed.

And then, a nearby quiet voice speaks out.

HELEN

Sal...

Lorredo looks over to see...

HELEN

now alive. The pillar of light dissipates into a warm glow.

INT. ELMO'S VIDEOS - DAY

Lorredo plops down Pinkerton Badge on counter in front of Doghead, who looks up from magazine in utter amazement at seeing Lorredo still alive. If he could stand, he would.

LORREDO

Sorry to disappoint you, Doghead.

Doghead glances down at badge, then up again at Lorredo.

DOGHEAD

Is there something you need?

LORREDO

Hand it over.

DOGHEAD

Hand what over?

LORREDO

The pardon.

DOGHEAD

There is no pardon. You forfeited your pardon when you failed to complete your assignment.

LORREDO

Things have changed. I've completed my assignment. And now I want my pardon. Give it to me.

Doghead grumbles.

DOGHEAD

Very well.

Doghead reluctantly slides envelope through opening in wire. Lorredo takes it, tearing it open to reveal

THE PARDON

a 5 x 7-inch orange card that resembles a Monopoly game GET OUT OF JAIL FREE CARD -- showing a Keystone Cop butt-kicking a Convict in a striped prison uniform out of the bighouse.

Lorredo's eyes light up as he looks at it.

DOGHEAD

You'll be back.

LORREDO

Never.

Lorredo carefully inserts pardon into pocket and starts out.

DOGHEAD

Nobody quits The Company.

LORREDO

I just did.

DOGHEAD

Actually, you didn't. You didn't read the fine print. The pardon only means that you're on hiatus.

Lorredo considers this a beat. Then he points at Doghead.

LORREDO

If I ever see that ugly mug of yours again... it'll be too soon.

Just as Lorredo reaches door... CLICK. Door locks. Lorredo tries it but it won't open. He turns back to Doghead.

LORREDO

Open the door.

DOGHEAD

Should the need of your services ever arise in the future... Your Employers reserve the right to call you back into active service.

LORREDO

Don't hold your breath, Doghead.

DOGHEAD

We'll see each other again. And
that you can count on, Lorredo.

Doghead release lock on door. It CLICKS open.

Lorredo steps out and stops, breathing in the cold air, happier than he can ever remember being, like a man who has just been released from prison after serving a life sentence.

FADE WHITE

EXT. BEACH JETTY - DAY

Devoid of people. Endless and timeless waves crash. It's still winter. A cold wind blows. But for the only two people walking arm-in-arm along this beach, that doesn't matter.

LORREDO

holds Life Insurance document, looking at name Helen Lorredo.

LORREDO

Guess that's what Graham had meant
when he said miracle can happen.

Lorredo lets the wind take document from his hands, and it flutters away, moving on its own, momentarily hanging in the air, before drifting into the surf, floating on the surface.

Lorredo and Helen watch as tide carries document away.

A DISHEVELED BEACHCOMBER

loafs by them, patrolling the sand with his metal detector. He kneels, digging in sand, retrieving a gold watch. As he places it on his wrist, he gives Lorredo a sly, knowing look.

LORREDO (V.O.)

But who's to say where it will end?

Lorredo and Helen kiss. As they do, the orange burning orb of the sun halos around them, giving them an eternal glow.

FADE OUT

THE END