

THE CROW: CITY OF ANGELS

by

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Based on characters created by James O'Barr

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The Crow 2.

FADE IN:

EXT. LIMBO - DAY/NIGHT

A heavy mist hangs before us - endless and impenetrable. And out of that primordial fog a CROW materializes, flying towards the camera in slow motion.

SARAH (O.S.)

I believe there's a place where
the restless souls wander.
Burdened by the weight of their
own sadness, they cannot enter
Heaven...

Presently a second shape materializes - a FIGURE ON HORSEBACK galloping after the Crow - a warrior whose baleful eyes shine behind the familiar irony mask war paint.

SARAH (O.S.)

And so they wait, trapped
between our world and the next,
endlessly searching for a way
to rid themselves of their pain
- in the hopes that somehow,
some day...

The figure on horseback sweeps past us, disappearing once again into the mists of time.

SARAH (V.O.)

...they will be reunited with
the ones they love.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DOCKS, COMMERCIAL WATERFRONT - NIGHT

Present day. The Crow settles on a shipping container, tilts its head, watching...

SUPER TITLE:

"CITY OF ANGELS - OCTOBER 28TH - NIGHT OF SAN LUCAS"

CLOSE ON A PAIR OF HANDS tearing open a tiny glassine envelope filled with white and blue-specked powder.

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The face of the envelope has been stamped with an image - a cartoon imp with a shit-eating grin giving us the thumbs-up sign.

As the hands lift the open envelope up we see a distinctive silver skull ring on one of the fingers. A MAN lowers his face to the envelope, snorts up the powder in a single shot. The man discards the glassine envelope...

FOLLOWING THE ENVELOPE

as it flutters to the ground, landing "imp-side" up. Let the rush begin.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

The end of the known world. A unforgiving moon shines down over garbage-poisoned ocean waters wreathed in fog. Although once part of a thriving shipping industry, decades of decline have seen these docks become a hellish dumping ground. Case in point:

TWO BROTHERS,

are kneeling next to one another at the end of a pier, their arms linked together, then tied behind their backs. DANNY CORVEN (15) is quietly sobbing. ASHE (late 20s), tries to calm the frightened boy.

Throughout this scene we see only fleeting glimpses of Ashe's face. His full "reveal" will occur later, after this awful moment has run its course.

DANNY

I'm sorry, Ashe...I'm sorry...
I didn't mean to look...

ASHE

(quietly)
It's okay, Danny. It's not
your fault.

NEMO (O.S.)

Lights...

A bright light comes on. Ashe and Danny turn their heads to avoid the glare.

NEMO (O.S.)

...camera...

CLOSE ON

a camcorder lens as it auto-focuses, bringing Danny's distorted face into view via the lens' reflection.

NEMO (O.S.)

...action.

CAMERA FINDS Ashe and Danny's executioners - CURVE, KALI, SPIDER MONKEY, and NEMO.

Nemo, a post-modern neo-pagan with a penchant for bowling shirts, circles Danny and Ashe with a camcorder perched on his shoulder. SPIDER MONKEY, lean and gangly, stands at his side.

Spider Monkey crouches next to Ashe, holding a marigold in his hand.

SPIDER MONKEY

Flowers for the dead, Senor?

CAMERA POV (CLOSE ON ASHE'S EYE)

Ashe stares directly into the camera. We see Spider Monkey reflected in the convex surface of his eye.

SPIDER MONKEY

No? Suit yourself, then.

Spider Monkey tucks the flower behind his ear.

Danny is praying now, MUMBLING a Catholic School litany.

SPIDER MONKEY

(patting Danny's
cheek)

You're wasting your breath,
angelito. Nobody's up there
listening.

Kali, a cold-eyed heavy-metal femme with a killer's casual stoicism, waits nearby, methodically loading bullets into her revolver.

CURVE,

master of ceremonies, leans up against his motorcycle a few yards away - big, burly, shaved head, perpetual sneer, a ciggie hanging from his lips. He's got a custom paint-job on the pearl drop gas tank of his bike - a buxom blonde doing the "wild thing" with the Grim Reaper.

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Curve is snapping the head of a Pez dispenser up and down, up and down. There's the skull ring we saw before - he's the one who just dusted himself. He's also bored shitless. Curve checks his watch.

CURVE

Let's get this over with.
Judah's waiting.

Kali flicks her wrist, snaps the revolver chamber shut...

DANNY

I'm scared, Ashe.

ASHE

I know, I know.

Kali walks up to the brothers...

ASHE

(pleading)

Listen to me, please, you don't
have to do this! We didn't see
anything, we don't even know
who you are...

...and puts a bullet through Danny's head. Ashe SCREAMS.

ASHE

NO!!!

Danny's body slumps forward, dragging Ashe down next to him. Ashe stares into his brother's lifeless eyes which are just inches away from his own. Tears stream down Ashe's cheeks.

Curve saunters over, stares down at Ashe.

CURVE

Nothing personal, sport. Wrong
place, wrong time, you know the
riff. See no evil, hear no
evil.

ASHE

(fighting the tears)

You'll pay for this. All of
you.

CURVE

(unimpressed)

Think so?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CURVE (CONT'D)

Big, bad Daddy gonna slap our wrists?

Curve flicks his cigarette butt off into the water.

CURVE

Somehow I doubt it.

Curve lifts his biker boot-clad foot and kicks Ashe in the face. As Ashe crumples...

CURVE

Dump 'em. Let's get this cluster-fuck on the road.

Curve motions to Kali and Spider Monkey. They step forward. Together, the three of them drag the brothers up, heaving them from the end of the pier into the ocean.

CURVE

Bon voyage, shithead.

ON ASHE

as his gasping face is illuminated by Nemo's camcorder light. Ashe thrashes about in the garbage-strewn water, but the dead weight of brother's body is dragging him under...

ASHE'S POV

Curve, Nemo, Spider Monkey, and Kali staring down at him, laughing, then the water closing over his head, obscuring everything, a cloud of escaping oxygen bubbles rising up before his eyes..

Ashe and Danny sink down into the murky underworld, taking their place amongst a thousand other deep-sixed dreams. Down, down, down.

And still, Ashe struggles violently, his muted CRIES drifting through the ocean depths.

ASHE'S POV

falling further and further away from the light of the surface world. Bit by bit, Ashe's struggles subside.. All we hear now is Ashe's ever-slowing HEARTBEAT. Darkness begins to close in around us, womblike, peaceful...

...and out of the darkness, something takes shape - a CROW. Winging its way from the Ashe's dream-like death up through the watery depths into an unfolding smog-bound cityscape..

EXT. CITY OF ANGELS - NIGHT

From the desolate waterfront, the Crow flies over a bridge which spans the city's polluted, man-made river. It rides the thermals above an urban sprawl riven by countless fires, floods, and earthquakes. Smog hangs in the air like an army of ever-present ghosts.

SARAH (V.O.)

They say that time cancels pain. I don't know about that. Seven years and two thousand miles later I find I'm still living in the past...

The Crow sweeps down into man-made caverns of pigeon-shit concrete and grimy glass. Through the bird's eyes we glimpse the city's silent HOMELESS. Automobile hulks littering the streets like insect husks. The shifting searchlights of police helicopters...

SARAH (V.O.)

Every night when I close my eyes the dreams come. That's how the dead talk to us, I guess. In the dark, when our souls are off wandering...

EXT. SARAH'S LOFT - NIGHT

The Crow circles, then lands next to an open skylight. It perches on the edge, looking into the loft below.

SARAH (V.O.)

I suppose the real question is, can we make use of what they tell us?

CROW'S POV

SARAH, early 20s, beauty in repose, lies asleep in bed. She stirs, troubled by uneasy dreams, rolls over, opens her eyes...

INT. SARAH'S LOFT, SLEEPING AREA - NIGHT

As Sarah rises she gets a sleepy glimpse of the Crow before it flits away from the skylight like yesterday's memory. She's not sure whether or not she dreamed the bird. She sits on the edge of her bed, pensive.

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GABRIEL, the cat she inherited from Eric and Shelly, is perched on the end of the bed. It stretches, rolls onto its side.

SARAH

Hey, Gabriel...

Sarah gives the cat an obligatory behind-the-ear scratch, then climbs from bed, making her way across the loft in her T-shirt and briefs.

SARAH'S LOFT

is furnished in thrift-store treasures - a study in whirlwind eclecticism which is dominated by multiple canvases. The artist's loft has a earthy warmth to it, in stark contrast to the urban decay outside. It's an island amidst a sea of unrest, dominated by an arching half-circle window through which she can view the local wildlife on the streets below.

ON THE CANVASES

Turbulent oils reminiscent of Bosch, Bacon, Goya - all the happy campers of art history. Given Sarah's childhood inspiration, though, the subject matter is no real surprise.

CAMERA FINDS a work-in-progress. The painting depicts a woman being cradled in the arms of her pale-faced lover, surrounded by a sea of watchful dead. The woman also bears an uncanny resemblance to Sarah.

SARAH

reaches the shower, strips off her T-shirt and underwear, stands beneath the scalding spray. Her back and upper arms are decorated with graceful tattoo work - the piece de resistance being a pair of black angel wings sweeping over her shoulder blades. She's got a silver ring in her navel, perhaps another in a nipple.

In short, the skate-waif we knew back in Detroit has matured quite since that fateful Devil's Night when Eric came back.

Sarah shuts her eyes, turns her face up into the spray. For a brief second we see...

A FLASH OF

Ashe's death. Plunging into the icy waters, down into darkness.

Sarah's eyes snap open. She holds a hand out to the shower wall, steadies herself. Where the hell did that image come from?

Sarah takes a moment to collect herself, then climbs from the shower, shrugs on some clothes. As she sits in front of her vanity we catch sight of the irony mask that once hung next to Shelly's mirror. Sarah reaches for a necklace...

NECKLACE

Shelly's wedding band is still strung on the chain. Sarah slips the necklace over her head. She fingers the ring a moment, glancing at the irony mask.

SARAH

I miss you guys.

Lots of memories. Lots of ghosts.

Sarah stands, pulls on a jacket. She grabs a bag of empty cans and bottles and heads out. She tears a page off a Chinese New Year calendar, revealing the new date - October 29th.

EXT. SARAH'S PLACE, VACANT LOT - DUSK

On the horizon, the sun's afterglow is quickly fading. As the city goes to sleep, Sarah's "day" is just beginning. The Santa Anas are blowing, kicking up trash and grit. A little dust-devil of paper bits swirls around Sarah's feet. She glances down...

Dozens of the glassine imp envelopes litter the ground like confetti. One of the envelopes has stuck to Sarah's heel. She peels it off, moves on.

Sarah crosses the vacant lot, approaching VIRGIL, an unkempt bag man who's somehow managed to retain a tattered elegance.

SARAH

Morning, Virgil. Brought you some cans.

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CONTINUED:

Sarah hands the sack of cans to Virgil. Virgil smiles, revealing a mouthful of rotted teeth.

VIRGIL

You're an angel.

SARAH

Fallen angel is more like it.

Sarah smiles, starts on her way. Virgil waves her back.

VIRGIL

Wait a minute, got something for you.

Virgil reaches for a battered superhero lunchbox in his cart, pops it open, digs through its contents. He finds what he's looking for - a strip of paper - hands it to Sarah.

VIRGIL

Found it back of the Chinese place, it's a good one...

SARAH

(reading the fortune)

"Life is just a dream on the way to death."

Sarah nods.

SARAH

Well now I can sleep easy, can't I? Thanks, Virgil. I gotta go, late for work. You take care.

Sarah pockets the fortune and heads off for her car - a beat-to-shit vintage Galaxy 500. After a few tries, the engine catches. As Sarah guides the car away from the curb, we RISE UP TO INCLUDE....

THE CROW

perched on a nearby rooftop. It takes flight, following Sarah's car.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAY GARGOYLE TATTOO SHOP - NIGHT

The Gargoyle is an unassuming ink shop - the only sign of life on a desolated block populated by derelict warehouse buildings. A flickering scroll of neon BUZZES in the window.

INT. GRAY GARGOYLE TATTOO SHOP - NIGHT

CLOSE ON a sparking tattoo "gun", the needle WHIRRING as it travels over a patch of Vaseline-smeared skin. MC 900 FOOT JESUS is playing in the background.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL Sarah expertly guiding the needle, wearing surgical gloves, concentrating. She adjusts the needle speed with a treadlight foot switch.

Sarah's buzz-headed CUSTOMER sits in a ratty dentist's chair, his arm resting on a support. Sarah is finishing coloring a Japanese-style dragon which winds its way around the man's forearm.

SARAH

Just about finished. You doing okay?

CUSTOMER

Yeah, stings a little.

SARAH

(wryly)

That's why they call me the Mistress of Pain.

Sarah makes another line of color then sits back, smoothing more Vaseline over the man's arm. She swivels on her chair, picks up a jeweler's loupe, makes an adjustment on her needle...

Behind Sarah we glimpse the cluttered tattoo shop - walls covered with sheets of flash (ready-made art), bookshelves crammed with reference works, Japanese shoji screens for partitions...

Sarah's partner, NOAH, a chain-smoking Brit in a Mighty Mouse T-shirt, consults with a YOUNG GRUNGE COUPLE.

LATER -

Sarah and Noah are alone, closing up shop. Noah turns off the neon sign, locks up, while Sarah sterilizes some needles in an autoclave.

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CONTINUED:

NOAH

(chuckling)

What a pisser - kid wanted me to tattoo "If you're reading this, you're too close" on his butt-cheeks!

Noah grabs another silk cut, fires up, flops down in one of the dentist chairs.

NOAH

Christ, I'm exhausted. Someone stick a fork in me, I'm done.

SARAH

Beats pushing ink in Detroit.

NOAH

That it does, Princess, that it does.

(remembering something)

Oh yeah, almost forgot. Bought you a present...

Noah reaches into his shirt pocket, tosses something to Sarah. It's a hand-made candy sugar skull.

NOAH

Cute, huh? They make 'em for the Day of the Dead. That little Mexican bakery down the way was selling them. Necrophagia, Princess. Eat the dead.

Sarah studies the skull, then pops it in her mouth, nodding.

SARAH

And it helps promote tooth decay.

Noah rises, stretching.

NOAH

Right, then. Want to grab a beer?

SARAH

No, I'm pretty tired. Haven't been sleeping much lately.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NOAH

(grins)

Really, now? And what's the lucky gentleman's name?

SARAH

Not that kind of tired. I've just been having some weird dreams.

NOAH

Define "weird".

Sarah shrugs, a little uncomfortable with the subject.

SARAH

You ever dream that you're someone else?

Noah shakes his head.

SARAH

I keep having this dream where I'm drowning... only I'm not me in the dream, I'm a man...

Noah is staring at her with a cocked eyebrow. Outside we hear a MOTORCYCLE pulling up.

NOAH

You don't need sleep, love, you need psychotherapy.

SARAH

Thank you, Dr. Ruth.

Just then, someone KNOCKS on the front door. Noah ducks his head around the partition...

CURVE,

one of Ashe's killers, stands outside.

NOAH

(calling out)

Sorry, we're closed.

Curve POUNDS harder on the door.

CURVE

Open the fucking door!

Noah stands, moves to the door.

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CONTINUED:

NOAH

Look, I said we're closed...

BANG! Curve kicks open the door and storms in.

NOAH

(reaching for Curve)

Hey!

Curve pops Noah in the nose with his fist. He heads straight for Sarah.

CURVE

(furious)

You remember me? Course you do, you remember good old Curveball!...

Sarah nods, frightened. Curve's eyes are wild, glassy. The man's pumped up on something, that's for sure.

CURVE

You think what you did to me is funny? Some kind of joke?

SARAH

I don't know what you're talking about...

CURVE

I'm talking about the fucking tattoo you gave me! I took off the bandages. Look...!!!

Curve rips open his shirt, revealing his chest. Sarah gasps...

CURVE'S TATTOO

It's a crow, rendered in bold slashes of black. Or is it? Upon closer examination the crow looks like something else - two demons fighting. The design is a classic ambiguous figure - like the picture of the woman in front of a vanity which, depending on your focus, can also be seen as a skull.

SARAH

It's a crow...

CURVE

Damn right, it's a crow.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CURVE (CONT'D)

(drawing closer)

And did I ask for a fucking
bird on my chest? Did I?!

Sarah shakes her head.

CURVE

(exploding)

Then what-the-fuck is it doing
here?!

SARAH

(flabbergasted)

I don't know... I was just
going from the design you gave
me...

SMACK! Curve backhands Sarah across the face.

NOAH

Stop it!

Noah rushes forward, blood still running from his nose.

Curve pulls an automatic from his waist-band and points the
gun at Noah's head.

CURVE

What's it going to be, hero?
Ready to kiss your faggot-ass
good-bye? I think so. I think
you're shitting yourself you're
so goddamn ready.

Noah freezes, raising his hands in the air.

NOAH

Listen, let's all just calm
down...

CURVE

Get on your knees, now!

Noah sinks to his knees, Curve presses the gun against his
forehead.

SARAH (O.S.)

Over here, ass-hole...

As Curve turns, Sarah squeezes a bottle of tattoo ink into
the killer's eyes, blinding him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CURVE

Aaagh!!! SHIT!!!

Sarah plants one of her Doc Marten boots in Curve's groin. He SCREAMS, doubles over. Sarah pulls the automatic from his grasp and trains it on him.

SARAH

Get the hell out of here.

Curve cups his balls, slowly rises, breathing through the pain. His eyes are glowing with hatred and a manic intensity...

CURVE

(quietly)

You'd better pull that trigger, girl. Cause if you don't, I'm going to come back for you. And I promise you, when I do, I will eat you alive.

A tense moment. Sarah's matches Curve's gaze.

SARAH

Just go.

A slow smile creeps across Curve's face. He backs away towards the front door.

CURVE

We'll try this again sometime.

Curve smashes his fist into the neon sign, then ducks out the door. Moments later we hear his motorcycle ROAR to life. He takes off, ENGINE SCREAMING away into the night.

Sarah's resolve evaporates. She lowers the gun, takes a deep breath, looks to Noah.

SARAH

You okay?

Noah rises, wipes the blood from under his nose.

NOAH

Nothing a few vodka tonics won't fix. You?

SARAH

(nodding)

I gotta get out of here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NOAH

I'll see you home...

SARAH

No, no I'll be fine, really.
He's not going to be back, at
least not tonight, anyway.

EXT. GRAY GARGOYLE, ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Sarah hurries to her Galaxy 500 which is parked along the nearby train tracks.

INT. SARAH'S GALAXY - NIGHT

Sarah moves behind the wheel, rests her head in her hands a moment. As Sarah raises her head...

SARAH'S POV (THROUGH WINDSHIELD)

The Crow is perched on the hood of her car. It CAWS.

SARAH

Leave me alone!

But the bird doesn't leave. It continues staring at her. Sarah HONKS her horn in frustration. The crow doesn't move.

EXT. GRAY GARGOYLE, ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Sarah rushes out of her car, screaming at the bird.

SARAH

Get out of here! Go!!!

Sarah picks up a beer can from the street, flings it at the Crow. Finally, the crow flies off into the night. Sarah collapses against the hood of her Galaxy and starts to cry.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITYSCAPE - NIGHT

The Crow soars away from the Gargoyle, toward the distant lights of Downtown.

EXT. JUDAH EARL'S TOWER, STREET LEVEL - NIGHT

The Crow sweeps down an alley leading to the "Tower", Crime Lord Judah Earl's tribute to inequity.

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CONTINUED:

What was once a bustling office building is now a boarded-up, crumbling haven for junkies and predators.

EXT. JUDAH EARL'S TOWER, PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

The Crow settles atop a massive "JESUS SAVES" sign which lights up the night. Across the way, a weather-worn turret crowns the decaying Tower. The turret is a complex arabesque of rusted iron scrollwork, like something Antonio Gaudi conjured up from an art nouveau fever-dream.

INT. JUDAH'S TOWER - NIGHT

Dark, filled with expressionistic shadows. The tower itself is mostly hollow, the upper reaches laced with a spiderweb network of steel girders. If you look close enough, you might see PEOPLE bound to the various supporting pillars, like the half-glimpsed shapes crouching at the foot of your bed in the middle of the night.

The decor is a cross between ruinous palatial splendor and a SoHo industrial art installation. One area features a collection of antique weaponry. Another features a continuous line of antiquated television monitors tuned to various ephemeral images.

Tiny pools of light provide stepping stones of illumination throughout the cavernous main chamber. Within one of these stepping stones we find...

JUDAH EARL

sitting at a small table, cradling a cup of coffee, steam rising up from it in lazy curlicues. Earl is a sinewy, slash-mouthed albino with luminous amber eyes, a guttural voice, and a mordacious wit.

Kali stands behind Earl, keeping watch.

SCRITCH, SCRITCH. At Earl's side is a box containing a stag beetle leashed to a nail with a piece of thread. The beetle strains at its leash, moving in a perpetual circle around the nail.

CAPTAIN BEDNARZ, a slumberous-eyed cop with a nose for Judah's designer-drugs, sits across the table, snorting up a line of the blue and white crystals. He sits back as the drugs kick in, glancing at the shadows about him.

MORE FIGURES

lounge in the darkness on the periphery of his vision - masked, PVC-clad S&M-types of indeterminate sex.

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CONTINUED:

Bednarz can't quite tell what these people are doing and to tell the truth, he's grateful for that.

BEDNARZ

Good stuff, Judah. What are you calling it now?

JUDAH

Trinity. Ten seconds to lift-off and six hours till splashdown. Try hitching a ride like that on morphine or crack.

BEDNARZ

Why Trinity?

JUDAH

Because all good things come in threes...

(enumerating them on his spidery fingers)

First you've got the rush, then the hallucinations, and finally, an extended period of bliss. Here, Captain, have some for the road...

Earl slides an envelope across the table along with a handful of the glassine imp bags. Bednarz checks the cash in the envelope, then studies the cartoon imp printed on the sides of the bags.

BEDNARZ

I can't turn a corner without seeing one of these fucking little elves.

JUDAH

That's the beauty of marketing. It's all in the packaging. Every few months we change the image on the bags, invent a new name - Rip-Cord, DOA, Inferno - take you pick, it's the same old shit we've always been selling.

Earl leans forward, his eyes gleaming mischievously. He picks up another handful of the bags, letting them fall through his fingers.

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CONTINUED:

JUDAH

And you want to know the best part, Captain? The kids are out there on the street corners swapping these things like trading cards. My labs can't even keep up with the demand.

Earl laughs, watches his stag beetle's Sisyphean struggles. Bednarz nods, a little uncomfortable now. We hear a MOAN somewhere off in the darkness.

JUDAH

Now, Captain, what is it you wanted to see me about this evening?

BEDNARZ

It's the money, Judah.

JUDAH

I thought we had an equitable arrangement.

BEDNARZ

Well, my men and I have decided we need more. You know, a cost of living raise.

Judah lowers his chin, resting it on his steepled fingers.

JUDAH

Hmmm. I wasn't aware this point was open to negotiation.

BEDNARZ

Listen, my men look the other way when it comes to your business. For what you're kicking back to us, that kind of security's a bargain.

Judah looks to Kali.

JUDAH

A bargain, he says. What do you think, Kali?

Kali starts circling the table, moving around behind Bednarz. He shifts in his seat, wary...

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CONTINUED:

Kali moves like lightning, placing a stiletto against Bednarz's throat. Bednarz freezes.

KALI

I think he should be satisfied with what he has.

JUDAH

Give me your hand, Captain.

Bednarz reluctantly presents his hand. Judah holds it tightly by the wrist, then deftly snips off Bednarz's pinkie finger with a garden shears!

BEDNARZ

Agh...shit! That's my finger!

Judah holds up the amputated digit.

JUDAH

Was your finger, Captain. Now it's mine.

Captain Bednarz cradles his mutilated hand.

BEDNARZ

(hyperventilating)

fuck, you fuck...

JUDAH

(motioning with the garden shears)

Do you wish to continue this session, Captain?

Bednarz is going pale. Blood is pooling on the table.

BEDNARZ

No, no it's okay.

Judah holds up Kali's Shear, removes her stiletto. Bednarz rises. Judah pushes the envelope of money forward.

JUDAH

Always a pleasure.

(wryly)

It's comforting to know your men are keeping our streets safe.

Bednarz reaches for the money, then backs away from the table...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JUDAH

Captain...

Judah has the Captain's gold shield in his hand.

JUDAH

You forgot your shield.

Judah tosses it to Bednarz, who fumbles with it, almost drops it.

Judah just keeps on smiling, like he's in on a joke the rest of us are oblivious to. A pair of PVC-clad arms emerge from the darkness behind Judah, wrapping around him, caressing his chest. Then a second pair emerge, then a third...

Judah Earl looks like one of those multi-armed Hindu deities. Or better yet, like a spider perched in the center of his web.

CUT TO:

INT. SARAH'S LOFT - NIGHT

Sarah sits alone in bed, a bottle of wine nearby, a half-filled glass in her hand. The mood is sullen, wistful. DEAD CAN DANCE is playing, Lisa Gerard's haunting vocals wafting from the stereo.

Sarah turns out her light, looks to the window and the cityscape beyond - as if the answers were lying out there in the steam-cloaked streets.

CUT TO:

EXT. SECOND COMING FETISH CLUB - NIGHT

The Second Coming is a gender-bending dance-and-bondage club housed within the crumbling remains of an old shopping arcade. A long line of HOPEFULS wait outside, attempting to gain entrance. Even out here on the street the beat of the MUSIC is loud enough to loosen your bowels.

INT. SECOND COMING - NIGHT

SOMEONE'S SPEED-INDUCED POV

Moving through a typhoon of raging hormones. MINISTRY'S "New World Order" is blasting. CROWDS OF SEXUAL LIBERTINES and CUTTING EDGE FETISHISTS writhe as one on the dance floor.

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Lots of rubber, latex strap bodices, Victorian hoop skirts - it's a modern-day De Sade's wet-dream. There are BOY TOYS on leashes, leather-bound SENSUALISTS with ball-gags...

GO-GO DANCERS flaunt their flesh on a raised stage, while an industrial porn film flickers on a screen behind them.

REVERSE ANGLE

on Curve, the one who'd been pushing his way through the tangle of flesh. If anything, his foul disposition has worsened.

Curve pulls up to a bar in the back, takes a seat alongside SPIDER MONKEY, who's amusing himself with a Viewmaster and a set of reels. The BARTENDER, a barrel-chested Samoan, sets a drink down in front of Curve, nods a greeting.

CLICK, CLICK - we see Monkey's POV as the 3-D Viewmaster tableaux rotate into position.

SPIDER MONKEY

What's the story, morning glory?

Curve fumes, chugs his beer.

SPIDER MONKEY

You have a chat with the Toad, yet?

CURVE

I'm on it.

Curve sits back, opens his shirt.

CURVE

What's this tattcoo look like to you?

SPIDER MONKEY

This a test?

CURVE

Come on, man, just tell me what you see.

Spider Monkey inspects Curve's chest.

SPIDER MONKEY

A bird.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CURVE

(annoyed)

Think about it a minute. Don't
you see two demons?

SPIDER MONKEY

(shaking his head)

Nope. I see a bird.

CURVE

Ah, fuck you, then.

Curve lifts up his beer bottle.

ECU from within the beer bottle as the amber liquid rushes
towards us...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. UNDERWATER REALM - NIGHT

Air bubbles escaping, water, blood, and silt churning
violently. Ashe is drowning again, the orbs of his eyes
bulging outwards. Over this we hear a WOMAN'S SCREAM and
we are...

INT. SARAH'S LOFT - NIGHT

Sarah bolts up in bed, knocking the wine bottle to the
floor, SHATTERING it. She's choking, gasping for breath.
Her heart is hammering within her chest.

SARAH

(sobbing)

...ohgodohgodohgod...

Suddenly she catches sight of a shadow on the wall before
her - a GIANT BIRD slowly spreading its black wings.

Sarah turns to the window. The Crow is perched just
outside, awash in moonlight.

SARAH

What do you want from me?!

The Crow CAWS, then takes flight.

CLOSE ON SARAH

Calm now, realization and a sense of purpose dawning on
her. She rises...

EXT. SARAH'S LOFT - NIGHT

Sarah, having dressed, emerges from her loft, car keys in hand.

CAW! Sarah turns, sees the Crow waiting on a nearby telephone wire. Again, it takes wing.

CUT TO:

INT. SECOND COMING, BAR - NIGHT

Curve checks his watch (Mickey Mouse or a likeness thereof) and heads away from the bar. FOLLOWING CURVE as he heads back into the sea of flesh, down into a stairwell, passing a sign marked "GENTS".

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

A series of shots intercutting between Sarah in her car following the Crow and Curve slowly descending numerous flights of stairs. He's got his Pez dispenser out, flicking it up and down, up and down. Meanwhile...

THE CROW

is leading Sarah from the heart of the city back to the outskirts of town. And every time Sarah thinks she's lost the Crow, she catches sight of it once more.

EXT. RIVER STYX BRIDGE - NIGHT

Sarah's Galaxy pulls up in front of the bridge. Down below on the banks of the river HOMELESS PEOPLE huddle around trashcan fires.

SARAH'S POV (THROUGH WINDSHIELD)

We see the Crow disappearing into the heavy mist which cloaks the bridge.

Sarah steels herself, then slowly guides her car into the thickening fog.

CUT TO:

INT, SECOND COMING MEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

TOAD, a runtish man who bears an uncanny resemblance to his namesake, is at a bank of ancient urinals. We hear a TOILET FLUSH. Toad looks back over his shoulder...

Nemo steps out of one of the stalls carrying his camera bag, WHISTLING "What's New Pussycat?". He sets his camera on the counter, starts washing his hands.

Toad hurries to finish...

CURVE (O.S.)

How's it going, Toad?

Curve has slipped up alongside Toad. Toad reaches for his fly, zips up.

CURVE

Now hold on a minute,
partner...

Curve grabs Toad's wrist and snaps the ring of a handcuff around it.

TOAD

Shit, Curve, come on...

Curve snaps the other handcuff ring around the flush handle. Nemo has got the video camera out now. He focuses it on Toad.

NEMO

Smile, Toad. Lemme see those
pearly whites.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOCKS, COMMERCIAL WATERFRONT - NIGHT

Sarah pulls to a stop, climbs out. There's the crow up ahead, flitting away into the shadows. Sarah follows. She makes her way through a maze of scuttled shipping vessels and discarded transport containers, moving with ever-increasing urgency.

CUT TO:

INT. SECOND COMING MEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Toad is sweating bullets. The bathroom door swings open. Kali enters carrying an aluminum equipment case.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She sets the case on the floor, snaps it open, starts assembling something.

NEMO

Camera focuses on Kali, a
sultry mistress of death...

Curve is pacing around Toad.

CURVE

Judah says you've been pimping
on him. Tell me it isn't true,
Toad.

TOAD

Ah shit, Curve, you think I'd
be stupid enough to do
something like that?

CURVE

I do. I think you thought
you'd skim a little cream off
the top. Now how is Judah
supposed to make any money if
his own people are pimping him?

TOAD

Look, I swear...

Curve leans up against the urinal.

CURVE

What we need for you to do now,
Toad, is to say you're sorry.
Pretty please, with sugar on
top, the whole bit.

TOAD

(a whisper)
I'm sorry.

NEMO

Look into the camera, Toad.
Say it like you mean it.
Really try to emote this time.

TOAD

(into camera)
I'm sorry, Judah. I'm really
sorry.

Curve grins, pats Toad on the cheek.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CURVE

There, now don't you feel better?

TOAD

Yeah, yeah, yeah...

CURVE

Cool. One last question, Toad. How do you like your chicken? Do you like it Cajun Style, or do you like it Extra Crispy?

Nemo starts snickering.

TOAD

What...?

CURVE

Your chicken, Toad. Cajun or Crispy? Me? I go for Crispy.

Curve snaps his fingers. Kali steps up, having finished assembling the object - it's a hand-held flame-thrower. Toad sees it and starts jerking against the handcuff, trying to force his chubby hand through the ring.

TOAD

C'mon, man, come on...

CURVE

You snooze, you lose, Toad.

WHOOSH! Kali triggers a burst of flame over Toad. He WAILS like an animal, writhing about.

CUT TO:

EXT. PIER, COMMERCIAL WATERFRONT - NIGHT

Sarah reaches the pier where Ashe and Danny were executed. At the end of the jetty, the Crow waits atop a pile. The sea beyond is still, like glass.

Sarah starts towards the bird, a sense of impending dread growing with every step. And as Sarah draws closer...

IMAGES

from Ashe and Danny's execution assault her. Kali FIRING her gun.

(CONTINUED)

13.
CONTINUED:

Ashe SCREAMING. Curve and the others LAUGHING. For a moment the lines blur - it's as if Sarah herself were present that night. We cut back and forth between then and now, faster and faster until...

Sarah drops to her knees at the end of the pier, overwhelmed by the violent images which are racing through her head. As she stares down into the water, she sees the reflection of her own face intermingling with that of Ashe's sinking beneath the surface.

Sarah gasps. Just then, the clasp of the chain upon which the wedding ring is strung breaks free. It drops into the water below. Sarah reaches for it...

Too late. The ring spins down into black depths...

EXT. UNDERWATER DEPTHS - NIGHT

CAMERA FOLLOWS the ring as it sinks towards the ocean floor, startling a school of tiny fish into motion.

Presently the bodies of Ashe and Danny come into view, drifting in the deep-water currents. They are caught up in a tangle of razor wire, surrounded by the mountains of junk which have been dumped here over the years - car tires, beer cans, assorted machinery - everything down here is covered in a layer of silt.

THE RING

keeps sinking, finally catching on one of the razor-wire barbs surrounding Ashe.

CLOSE ON Ashe's face. His dead eyes suddenly open. Confusion. Pain. Fear. A stream of bubbles rushes from his mouth, obscuring our view.

ASHE'S POV

As the bubbles clear, Danny's face comes into focus just a few inches from his own, drifting in a cloud of his own blood.

Ashe panics, jerks back. The razor-wire barbs cut into his flesh. The more he struggles, the tighter the coils become, slashing his hands and face, shredding his clothes.

Ashe's violent actions are intercut with fleeting images of the hours leading up to their murders, glimpses of places we will revisit later on. We see...

ASHE AND DANNY

in an auto garage. Danny is reading a comicbook, Ashe is working beneath '65 Mustang. We hear a GUNSHOT.

DANNY

What the hell was that?

FLASH! Ashe and Danny outside the auto garage, moving around a corner and witnessing...

FLASH! Curve and his crew executing someone beneath a freeway overpass. Curve's face is spattered with blood. He turns and sees Danny...

ASHE

Run!

BACK TO THE HERE AND NOW

Ashe thrashes even harder, churning up clouds of silt and blood. He's caught in his brother's embrace, the two of them spinning about in a grotesque underwater ballet.

FLASH! We're back in the past again. Curve and his crew have caught up with Ashe in the garage. They're beating the shit out of him as Danny watches on in horror...

DANNY

Ashe!!!

CURVE

Get the kid!

THE PRESENT

Ashe catches the ropes which bind his wrists on the razor-wire, cutting into them. He rips one hand free, then another...

Ashe kicks himself clear of Danny, swims towards the surface. Up and up, towards the dim moonlight above...

EXT. PIER COMMERCIAL WATERFRONT - NIGHT

Sarah sits up, staring at the water below as a cloud of bubbles rises and breaks apart on the surface. The water begins to swirl and churn, creating little eddies...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ashe suddenly bursts from the sea with his arms outstretched, rising up on a column of spinning water like some kind of hellish Venus on the half-shell. He lets loose a TORTURED HOWL.

Ashe digs his fingers into the wood-rot pulp of the pilings and claws his way up to the pier. He crouches there before Sarah, his face hidden from view.

Sarah approaches, frightened, tentative...

SARAH

...Eric...?

CLOSE ON ASHE

as he lifts his head. This is the first time we really see him. Ashe's eyes burn with an unholy fury. Gasping, full of terror and rage, covered from head to toe in ocean-bottom silt. Blood from the razor-wire wounds has smeared across his face in patterns which eerily recall the Crow make-up. Strips of the wire still cling to his arms and chest, some of the barbs buried deep in his flesh:

Ashe opens his clenched fists in an act of supplication. In his left palm is Sarah's ring.

ASHE

I'm...not...Eric.

Sarah and Ashe stare at one another, each haunted by the other's presence...

...and then Ashe starts to shake. His eyes rolls up into his head, the world spins around him, and the lights go out.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

A dream. Equal parts memory and fantasy. It's early in the morning. Mist drifts across the cemetery grounds. Ashe is asleep next to an old Colonial grave. The Crow is perched on the headstone.

Danny, alive and well, is grinning, shaking Ashe's shoulder.

DANNY

Wake up, Ashe. You've got work to do.

Ashe stirs, starts to waken...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASHE

Danny?

CUT TO:

INT. SARAH'S LOFT - DUSK

ASHE opens his eyes. The mud-silt from the ocean floor which covers his face has dried and cracked. It crumbles away in flakes like a second skin as he lifts his head.

CAMERA FINDS Sarah's Chinese calendar. The night is October 30th. A full day has passed.

Ashe is lying on a cot in the corner of the loft. We see scattered images (what his eyes focus upon as he comes to): dozens of candles burning, a religious altar overflowing with trinkets, mirrors, mannequins, canvases, and finally...

GABRIEL

sitting at the end of the bed, watching Ashe intently.

SARAH

sits on the other side of the loft in a paint-smeared work-shirt, brush in hand. She's studying a half-finished canvas, contemplating her next move.

CANVAS

The eerie scene depicting a woman on her death-bed being cradled in the arms of her ghostly male lover.

Sarah tenses, feeling Ashe's eyes burning into the back of her neck. She turns around, sees Ashe lingering in the shadows behind her.

SARAH

Welcome back to the land of the living.

ASHE

Who are you?

Sarah sets her brush aside.

SARAH

My name's Sarah. You're Ashe, aren't you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASHE

You know me?

SARAH

I had a dream about you. I saw
us...

(correcting herself)

...I saw you drowning. I saw
what happened to your
brother...

(beat)

I'm sorry.

The mention of his brother snaps Ashe from the moment, back
to that horrible event.

SARAH

What happened?

Ashe shuts his eyes for a moment as an image of his
brother's murder floats to the surface.

ASHE

I was working late at the
garage one night. Danny was
with me. We heard a gunshot...

As Ashe speaks, we hear ECHOES of the event - the gunshot,
Danny saying "What was that?".

ASHE

We saw something we shouldn't
have, a drug killing...

FLASH! Curve's blood-spattered face turning towards us.

ASHE

shakes his head at the utter randomness of it all. The
tears start to flow again.

ASHE

Jesus, what kind of monsters
would do something like that?

We see Ashe's POV of Kali, Curve, and Nemo laughing. Then
Ashe being pulled underwater...

ASHE

(shaken, confused)
How did I even survive?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH

You didn't.

ASHE

What do you mean?

SARAH

You didn't survive. I realize what's happening now, why I've been dreaming about you. I'm supposed to help you, Ashe. That's why the Crow's been following me.

Sarah moves to Ashe's side.

SARAH

You're dead, Ashe.

ASHE

Are you crazy?

Sarah reaches out to touch Ashe's chest.

SARAH

Try to find a heartbeat. You don't have one.

Ashe rises, stumbling back over the chair, knocking into another of the canvases.

ASHE

This isn't happening...

SARAH

This is happening. You died and the Crow brought you back.

ASHE

No, it's not possible...

SARAH

Listen to me, Ashe...

Sarah tries to reach out to him, but Ashe is beyond reason at this point. He bats her hands aside.

ASHE

(frightened)
Just get away from me...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED--

SARAH
(moving forward)
Ashe...

ASHE
I said get away!

The two of them struggle a moment. Ashe pushes Sarah back, perhaps a bit more forcefully than he intended.

SARAH
(pissed off and fed
up)
Oh fuck it...

Sarah grabs a kitchen knife from the kitchen counter and plunges it into Ashe's chest.

Ashe gasps. He stares down at the incongruous sight of a knife-handle sticking out from his sternum, then Sarah yanks the knife back out.

ASHE'S CHEST

The wound seals itself back up. No blood, no pain, no nothing.

SARAH
Sit down, Ashe. Listen to me.
You're not the first person to be
brought back. I've been
through this before...

CUT TO:

INT. JUDAH EARL'S TOWER, BALCONY - NIGHT

Judah and Kali stand at a balcony, looking out over the smog-shrouded City of Angels. We hear random SIRENS. A helicopter SEARCHLIGHT sweeps past. Judah holds out his hand.

JUDAH
You feel the air? There's a
storm coming.

CUT TO:

INT. SARAH'S LOFT - LATER

We move through a series of DISSOLVES featuring Sarah's canvases - tortured forms wrestling with darkness.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

One of the paintings recalls an image from the prologue - a brooding figure of the Crow warrior atop a horse.

SARAH (V.O.)

I believe there've always been
people like you, running all
the way back through history.
Souls who couldn't rest, people
who were wronged so badly they
had to return...

ANOTHER PAINTING

is a self-portrait of Sarah, half her face dissolving into
the irony mask of the Crow.

SARAH (V.O.)

It's almost like there's a
balance that has to be kept.
When things slide too far the
other way, the Crow brings
someone back to even the
scales...

We end on a final painting - the half-finished scene of the
woman in her last moments.

ASHE AND SARAH

are standing amidst her paintings.

SARAH

You've been given another
chance to put things right,
Ashe.

ASHE

Why me?

SARAH

Some people feel the pull of
the shadows a little more
strongly than others.

(beat)

I know I do.

Ashe looks to the porcelain irony mask which hangs above
Sarah's vanity. He takes it off the wall, stares at it.

We see a speed-rush FLASH OF IMAGES from the first film -
images rushing by so quickly that they're almost
subliminal. The overall impression is one of terrible
violence and horror. It's more than Ashe can bear.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASHE

No!!!

Ashe throws the mask against the wall, SHATTERING it into a hundred pieces. Ashe moves for the door, flinging it open. Sarah tries to stop him...

SARAH

Ashe, wait!

But Ashe pushes her aside, rushing out into the hall.

EXT. SARAH'S LOFT - NIGHT

Sarah hurries out into the street...

SARAH

ASHE!!!

Ashe is running for all he's worth - away from Sarah, away from everything.

EXT. SIDE STREET - NIGHT

Ashe finally slows to a stop. He leans against a wall, panting, his energy spent. Another memory flash of Danny assaults him.

DANNY

I'm scared, Ashe.

ASHE

raises his head, catching sight of his...

REFLECTION

in a store window. There's a display of stage make-up, Halloween masks, and children's costumes inside. One of them is an irony mask.

ASHE

No, no, no...

Ashe SMASHES his hands through the glass, tearing apart the display, sobbing...

CAW! Ashe turns...

The crow is waiting for him on a nearby trash dumpster, its alien gaze burning through his soul like the voice of destiny.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRIDGE/GARAGE - NIGHT

Beneath the arching span of a freeway bridge is a series of sheds constructed out of corrugated iron - one of these is the garage we saw in Ashe's memory flashes.

The Crow lands on a nearby scrap-heap.

INT. ASHE'S GARAGE - NIGHT

Darkness and then moonlight spilling in as Ashe (seen in silhouette) slides the RATTLING steel door open.

CLOSE ON a bare lightbulb hanging from the ceiling. Ashe pulls the string, illuminating the musty garage. The lightbulb swings...

FRAGMENTED IMAGES

Danny's comicbook. The Mustang Ashe had been working on. An auto parts calendar. VOICES of Curve and the others...

CURVE

Curiosity killed the cat.

Ashe slips on a leather cycle jacket...

FLASH! Ashe is being beaten by Curve's crew. He stumbles against a rack of tools, sends them CRASHING to the floor.

WHOOSH! Back to the present as Ashe (seen from behind) sweeps a protective dust cover off a motorcycle - a sleek, black fully-customized BMW K1.

ECU of various motorcycle elements. The fuel valve being turned on. Starter switch being flicked. A hand squeezing the clutch in. Another hand rolling the throttle open. The SPUTTER and COUGH of a dormant engine, then the ROAR of the engine as it finally catches.

PULL BACK

from the darkness of the garage to...

EXT. BRIDGE/GARAGE - NIGHT

Ashe guides the motorcycle out from the storage shed into the moonlight...

CROW'S POV

CLOSE ON ASHE'S FACE as it comes into view, bearing the black and white war-paint of the Crow. Ashe revs the throttle, gunning the bike away from a standing start, his back wheel kicking up a wave of dirt...

Ashe sends the bike lurching forward, then cuts a sharp left, then a right, then left again. He's LAUGHING maniacally, skidding, spinning around in the dirt yard, creating a cloud of ever-thickening dust.

Ashe suddenly speeds away from the garage. As the dust settles, we pull back...

Ashe has used the bike to inscribe a giant Crow symbol in the dirt.

UNDER THE BRIDGE

Ashe races away between the massive concrete support pillars, the harbinger bird flying ahead of him to lead the way.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPIDER MONKEY'S WAREHOUSE LAB - NIGHT

We are flying, drifting down from the night sky towards a nondescript warehouse with barred windows and graffiti-covered exterior walls.

THE CROW

lands on a telephone wire, studying the warehouse.

Presently we hear Ashe's MOTORCYCLE approaching, then we see the front wheel of his bike pulling into the foreground.

INT. SPIDER MONKEY'S WAREHOUSE LAB - NIGHT

The lab is set up in a partitioned-off corner of the junk-strewn warehouse. The walls are stained yellow and red from the toxic fumes. Blacked-out windows sweat with moisture. There are heating mantles rigged with flasks and condensers, vacuum pumps - along with ingredients like battery acid, paint thinner, and Epsom salts. Nearby are dozens of 50-gallon drums containing the finished product.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Spider Monkey is working away in protective gloves and a respirator mask, filling glassine imp bags with newly manufactured Trinity. On a nearby shelf is an old black and white TV playing one of those Mexican masked wrestler films.

OVERHEAD

is a grimy skylight protected by burglar bars. Ashe moves into view above the skylight - death watching from above.

Spider Monkey turns, glances up over his shoulder...

Ashe is gone.

Suddenly the power in the lab goes out, the TV screen sputters and goes dark. Spider Monkey pulls off his mask.

SPIDER MONKEY

(sighing)

Drag...

ASHE (O.S.)

'My mother was accursed the night she bore me and I am faint with envy of all the dead'.

Spider Monkey whirls around, startled. Ashe is sitting cross-legged on one of the tables, grinning like a black leather Buddha.

ASHE

Business been good, Spider Monkey? How many souls have you and your friends sent to Hell recently?

SPIDER MONKEY

(disbelief)

Ashe...?

ASHE

In the flesh.

Ashe jumps down from the table. He dips his hand into one of the 50-gallon drums, scooping up a handful of Trinity, letting it sift through his fingers.

ASHE

How much of this poison are you turning out onto the streets?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SPIDER MONKEY
(backing away)
You're supposed to be dead...

ASHE
Changed my mind.

Ashe throws a handful of the Trinity dust at Spider Monkey. Spider Monkey, terminally spooked, reaches back to the counter behind him, searching for something...

ASHE
Looking for this?

Ashe holds up a pistol. He tosses it Spider Monkey, who fumbles with it, then points it at Ashe, hands shaking.

ASHE
Go ahead, Monkey. Shoot.

SPIDER MONKEY
You're crazy, man. You're
fucking loco!

ASHE
Dying tends to have that effect
on people.

Ashe takes a step toward Spider Monkey. Monkey FIRES...

BANG!BANG!BANG! The bullets sink into Ashe's chest, but he's still standing there with that wicked grin on his face.

SPIDER MONKEY
(terrified)
Aw, Christ, no...no fucking
way...

ASHE
Try again, Monkey.

SPIDER MONKEY
Naw, that's okay...

ASHE
Please...

Ashe takes another step forward. He guides Spider Monkey's hand so the pistol is flush with his forehead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASHE

...I insist.

But Spider Monkey is shaking with fear. He can't even bring himself to pull the trigger.

ASHE

Here, let me help you. We'll do it together.

Ashe presses his thumb down over Spider Monkey's trigger finger and...

ASHE

(an evil grin)

Don't try this at home, kids.

BOOM! Ashe puts a bullet through his own forehead. His Head snaps backward and his body collapses onto the floor. Spider Monkey creeps forward towards Ashe's body, absolutely petrified...

ASHE

Help, I've fallen and I can't get up.

Spider Monkey jumps back, SCREAMING. Ashe springs up from the ground, SLAMMING Spider Monkey against a table of chemicals. Bottles SHATTER on the floor, spilling their toxic contents.

SPIDER MONKEY

What are you, man?! What the fuck are you?!!

Ashe leans in so he's eye to eye with Spider Monkey.

ASHE

I wasn't sure who I was for a while there. Now I know. I'm the boiling man, Monkey. I'm the plague of Darkness and the death of the first-born. The random chromosome, pilot error. I'm all your nightmares rolled into one.

Ashe removes a wooden match from his inside coat pocket. He scrapes his thumb-nail over the head, igniting it.

SPIDER MONKEY

Hey, whoa...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SPIDER MONKEY (CONT'D)
whoa...this shit's flammable!

ASHE
Is it?

Ashe blows out the match.

ASHE
How careless of me.

SPIDER MONKEY
Look, look, what do you want?

ASHE
I'll start with Nemo, then work
my way up the food chain.
Where is he?

SPIDER MONKEY
Nemo? Nemo's an old gash-
hound...

ASHE
(shaking him)
Where?

SPIDER MONKEY
(sputtering)
The Peep-O-Rama! He hangs out
at the Peep on Deacon Street!

ASHE
Congratulations, Monkey. You
just bought yourself a fighting
chance.

Ashe reaches into his coat pocket, pulling out a deck of
cards. He sets them on the table, fans them out, points...

ASHE
Pick a card.

SPIDER MONKEY
What?

ASHE
Pick a card, Monkey.

Spider Monkey slowly extends his hand, half-expecting Ashe
to pounce on him. He pulls a card out.

ASHE
Well?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Spider Monkey tosses the card down, face up. He's got the Jack of Hearts. He smiles tentatively.

Ashe pulls out a card of his own and flips it around - the King of Clubs.

ASHE

Sorry.

Ashe has another wooden match in his hand now. He scrapes his thumb-nail over the head, ignites it. Ashe tosses the match on the table...

WHOOSH! The pooling chemicals instantly burst into flame...

SPIDER MONKEY

Shit...

Spider Monkey tries to bolt away, but Ashe grips his wrist tightly, yanking him back.

SPIDER MONKEY

(pleading)

Come on, man, come on! This whole place is going to blow...

We can see the rising fire reflected in Ashe's carbon-black eyes.

ASHE

You're going to Hell, Monkey.
Look me up when you get there.

EXT. SPIDER MONKEY'S WAREHOUSE LAB - NIGHT

An EXPLOSION rips through the front of the lab, spilling roiling CLOUDS OF FIRE out into the street. The blackened windows SHATTER OUTWARDS in a HAIL STORM OF GLASS...

For a brief moment, the glass particles take the shape of a crow with its wings outstretched - then the shape disintegrates, blowing-past-us.

ASHE

emerges from the raging conflagration within, walking right through the flames, indifferent to the heat. A flurry of the tiny glassine drug bags swirl around him like snow.

THE CROW

spirals down from a telephone wire, landing atop the handlebars of Ashe's motorcycle.

Ashe lifts his head to the night sky, laughing. His clothes are still smoking. He mounts his cycle and screams away into the night.

CUT TO:

EXT. FREEWAY - NIGHT

Ashe ROARS past us on the motorcycle, stirring up a little whirlwind of roadside trash. Amongst the refuse are some of Judah's glassine drug bags. We follow them as they blow out over the guardrail down to...

EXT. FOOD HUT - NIGHT

A grimy sign advertises "SMALL PLACE WITH EXCELLENT FOOD". As we hear the sound of Ashe's ENGINE receding into the night, the imp bags flutter down from the overpass above, one of them landing near...

SARAH,

who sits at an outdoor table, coffee in one hand, sketch pad in the other.

SARAH'S SKETCH PAD

She's working on a rendering of Ashe. After inspecting the sketch a moment, Sarah crumples it up and tosses it aside.

SARAH

(quietly)

Get a grip on yourself, girl.

CUT TO:

INT. JUDAH EARL'S TOWER, PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

TWO ZIPPER-MASKED WOMEN are frolicking on a bed, acting out an elaborate bondage fantasy. Pull back to include...

A VIDEO CAMERA

recording the pornographic act for posterity. Pull further back to include...

JUDAH

lounging on a couch a few dozen yards away, detached and twice removed from the sex play. Judah's watching a live-feed of the women on one monitor and the video documenting Toad's death on another - we're at the point where Toad is being immolated.

Judah leans forward, ejects the tape from the VCR. He hands it to Kali, who waits nearby.

JUDAH

File it away with the others.

CURVE

enters from out of the shadows. Judah looks up to him.

CURVE

Bad news.

JUDAH

Illuminate me.

CURVE

Someone torched the lab on Manchester. Monkey's a fucking crispy critter.

JUDAH

Monkey I could care less about. What about our merchandise?

CURVE

A total loss.

Judah sighs heavily, looks to Kali.

JUDAH

I do believe the storm has begun.

CUT TO:

EXT. PEEP-O-RAMA PORN SHOP - NIGHT

Peep-O-Rama has taken up residence in an old Japanese movie house. A geisha-girl sign flashes over the marquee. Beneath that is a blinking neon eye which opens and closes. Other signs offer enticements like "ONLY 25 CENTS A PEEP!" and "REAL GIRLS WORKING THEIR WAY THROUGH COLLEGE!".

INT. PEEP-O-RAMA - NIGHT

Nemo browses through the porn stacks and sex paraphernalia displays under the watchful eye of ZEKE, Peep-O-Rama's corpulent proprietor. Back by the arcade of video viewing booths we hear assorted MOANS, GRUNTS, and cheesy 70s SURF MUSIC SOUNDTRACKS.

A laconic HINDU with a throat microphone sits at a lectern dispensing tokens, reciting his tired schpiel.

HINDU

Tokens for the buddy booths,
live girls. Tokens for the
buddy booths, live girls...

Nemo hands the man a twenty, receives a handful of gold tokens in exchange. Each of the tokens has an embossed Peep-O-Rama eye logo on it.

Nemo heads down a narrow corridor lined with booths, finds an open door, ducks inside...

INT. BUDDY BOOTH - NIGHT

Nemo enters the cramped booth, clutching a handful of the Peep-O-Rama tokens. There's a seat, a box of Kleenex, a phone, and a grimy Plexiglas window with a metal shutter over it.

Nemo starts popping tokens into the slot next to the window, pockets the rest of them.

With a WHIR the metal shutter rises, revealing a WOMAN in a garter-belt get-up perched on a stool - you know the type, a faded glory ready for retirement at twenty-five.

An LED display starts counting down from sixty - the seconds remaining on the metered shutter. The woman flashes Nemo a nicotine-stained smile.

WOMAN

(by rote)

Hey, baby. What do you want to
see?

NEMO

(grinning, picking up
the phone)

I want to see some sugar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The woman shrugs out of her bra, plants her scuffed-up high heels on either side of the window, and starts running her hands up and down her body. She utters some tired-ass MOANS.

NEMO

Right on, sister...

Nemo unbuckles his belt, drops his drawers...

WOMAN

(eyeing his endowment)

Mmmmm. Is that for me?

NEMO

Yeah, we're gonna celebrate Christmas a little early this year.

WOMAN

Keep doing that, honey, you'll go blind.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPIDER MONKEY'S WAREHOUSE LAB - NIGHT

The demolished building is still burning strong.

A MAN

stands across the street from the fire. We can't see him very well, just a vague impression - well-dressed, a large build. He moves forward, crouches...

CLOSE ON

the man's hand as he lifts some of the shattered glass fragments which are littering the asphalt. The man is wearing a silver finger-cuff on his pinkie finger.

SCENE FROM ABOVE -

The man kneeling, his face hidden from view. Now we see that the glass particles have fallen in an array that is anything but random. The particles have formed a large crow.

CUT TO:

INT. PEEP-O-RAMA BUDDY BOOTH - NIGHT

The woman is still MOANING. Over on the LED display, Nemo's time has just about expired.

WOMAN

Time's almost up, lover.
Better hurry with those tokens.

NEMO

Shitfire...

Nemo fumbles with his pants, scoops out some more tokens...

Too late, the shutter is already closing. Nemo feeds some more tokens into the slot...

Nothing happens. Nemo punches the LED display.

NEMO

Come on, fucker!

The shutter starts rattling up again, only this time...

ASHE

is standing on the other side of the Plexiclas. His mouth splits into an evil grin.

ASHE

"Hey, Baby."

Nemo's eyes just about pop from his skull.

NEMO

You.

ASHE

Me.

CRASH! Ashe slams his fists through the Plexiglas window, reaching for Nemo's throat.

INT. PEEP-O-RAMA, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nemo comes flying out the booth door, courtesy of Ashe. He struggles to rise, but Ashe plants a fist in his face, knocking him to the ground.

Behind the counter, Zeke hits an alarm button...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Up and down the hall, half-clad GIRLS and CLIENTELE are hurrying for the exit. A CHORUS OF ORGASMIC SIGHS drifts out from the vacated video booths, adding color to the mayhem.

Nemo fumbles, tries to pick himself up...

ASHE

Buckle up, Nemo. Time to take that ride in the big black car.

NEMO

(sputtering)

You don't want me! I'm just a nobody. I'm just a fucking nobody!

ASHE

Don't sell yourself short, Nemo.

ZEKE (O.S.)

Hey, ass-hole!

Ashe turns...

AT THE FRONT COUNTER,

Zeke is cradling a sawed-off shotgun. BOOM! He blows a fist-size hole through Ashe's chest!

Ashe staggers forward a step, a quizzical look on his face.

ASHE

Is there a draft in here?

The hole in Ashe's chest seals itself back up. Ashe starts towards Zeke. Zeke moves to fire again...

Ashe snatches the shotgun from the fat man's grasp, flipping it around and smashing him in the face with the butt-end. Zeke falls back into a video display, sending an avalanche of porno tapes raining down on top of him.

Seizing the moment, Nemo rushes past Ashe, trying for the exit...

Ashe spins, pumps the shotgun, blows out one of Nemo's kneecaps. Nemo collapses on the floor, wailing like a child. Ashe strides over to him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASHE

Tell me something, Nobody:
When you watched my brother and
me go under, did it get your
blood running?

Ashe HEAVES Nemo through a glass display booth filled with
sex toys.

ASHE

Did it make you hard?

Nemo starts dragging his broken body across the floor. He
finds himself face to face with an anatomically-correct
blow-up sex doll - the kind with a built-in pre-recorded
memory chip.

DOLL

(tinny voice)
Ooh, oh baby, I like it like
that. You're so good. You're
so good...

Ashe HEAVES Nemo back the other way, sending him SMASHING
into the token lectern. Peep-O-Rama tokens go flying,
bouncing and spinning every which way...

DOLL

(tinny voice)
...you're so good. You're so
good...

ASHE

One crow sorrow, two crows
joy...

CLOSE ON A TOKEN

On one side of the coin the eye is open, on the other it's
closed. The spinning token creates an illusion of the eye
blinking.

ASHE

Three crows a letter, four
crows a boy...

Ashe continues to wipe the place up with Nemo, punctuating
each part of the nursery rhyme with a new assault.

ASHE

Five crows silver, six crows
gold...

(CONTINUED) -

CONTINUED:

Nemo utters a half-sob and rolls over, feebly wiping away blood which is clouding his eyes.

ASHE

Seven crows a secret never to be told.

Ashe is standing over him now.

NEMO

...please, please just stop...

ASHE

You killed my brother. You took away the only piece of light left in my soul.

NEMO

We had to, we had to! Judah's orders. No witnesses! We didn't have a choice!

ASHE

(darkly, moving in on Nemo)

We always have a choice.

CUT TO:

EXT. PEEP-O-RAMA - NIGHT

Curve and Kali ROAR UP on their motorcycles, followed by two car-loads of ENFORCERS. The team grab their weapons, head for the porno shop...

ASHE (O.S.)

Greetings.

The group looks up - Ashe is perched above them atop the porno marquee holding the sawed-off shotgun.

Curve and Kali stare at Ashe, open-mouthed.

ASHE

Tell me, Curve, does the corpse have a familiar face?

CURVE

Son of a bitch...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KALI
(snarling)
KILL HIM!!!

The crew OPEN FIRE on Ashe, unleashing a hailstorm of lead, sending down an avalanche of broken glass, SHOWERS OF SPARKS...

...but Ashe is gone, like a ghost.

CAW! Curve spins...

THE CROW

is sitting atop one of the cars, watching him.

KALI
(gesturing)
Inside!

Kali leads the crew of killers on into the porno shop. Curve keeps staring at the bird, unnerved.

INT. PEEP-O-RAMA - NIGHT

The porn shop looks like a tornado has hit it. Kali and the others work their way towards the back, their feet CRUNCHING on broken glass. Curve takes up the rear. Damaged fluorescent lights SPUTTER and SPARK, creating a stroboscopic effect.

KALI
Nemo?

They hear a NOISE, spin...

It's the woman from the buddy booth, curled up in a corner, quietly sobbing.

INT. PEEP-O-RAMA, BACK CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Kali and Curve move down the dark corridor. The VOICES of the porno starlets on the video tapes continue their ORGIASTIC MOANS.

AT THE END OF THE CORRIDOR,

Nemo's body swings from a water pipe. He's been hung by the deflated sex doll.

There's a folded piece of paper shoved into Nemo's mouth. Curve pries it out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The paper unfolds like one of those snowflake cut-outs we used to make in grade school - only this cut-out is of a crow.

Written across the paper crow are the following words:

"I KNOW WHY JESUS WEPT"

Inside the buddy booth, the phone is RINGING. Curve looks to it. It keeps RINGING.

Curve snatches up the receiver.

ASHE'S VOICE

(filtered)

Do you know what they call a gathering of crows, Curve?

At the sound of Ashe's voice, Curve's eyes widen with fear.

ASHE'S VOICE

A murder. A murder of crows.
Think about it.

CLICK! The line goes dead. Furious, Curve tears the phone from the wall, HEAVING it across the porno shop.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Ashe exits a phone booth, leaving the receiver dangling, swinging back and forth.

Ashe moves down the street where he leans against a wall and closes his eyes. A wave of sadness and despair washes over him and we see...

DANNY UNDERWATER

A cloud of bubbles are clearing to reveal his oxygen-starved face. Danny is dead, but his eyes are open, aware.

DANNY

Keep moving, Ashe.

WHAM! BACK TO REALITY

Ashe opens his eyes. A DOG BARKS nearby. This is followed by the sound of CHILDREN LAUGHING. Ashe moves to the mouth of the alley just in time to see...

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

A GROUP OF CHILDREN

running away, giggling, their FOOTSTEPS receding into the night.

A BLACK DOG trots down the alley. The children have tied a plastic skull mask to the dog's head. The skull dog pauses and studies Ashe, then moves on.

Curious, Ashe follows the dog into the next street...

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

A small, inner-city Latino church sandwiched between two derelict buildings. The doors are open - there's a path of marigold petals leading up the front steps. The skull dog trots up the steps and enters.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Ashe moves into the sanctuary. PEOPLE are scattered amongst the pews, MURMURING their requiescats.

At the altar is a lavish offrenda - an offering of food and drink for the wandering dead decorated with sugar skulls and floral garlands. Amidst the decorations are photos of departed loved ones. There are tiers of candles surrounding these, scores of them - and its the candle light alone which illuminates this sanctuary.

Ashe watches from the rear of the church, entranced.

PRIEST (O.S.)

Have you come far?

Ashe turns. An ELDERLY PRIEST is standing beside him. He turns to light some tapers in a candelabra.

ASHE

I'm sorry, I was just watching...

PRIEST

Our doors were open. You were curious.

ASHE

(looking around)
What is all this for?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PRIEST

Dia de Muertos, the Day of the Dead. We light the candles for our loved ones - so that they might find their way back to earth and share in the pleasures of the living for a short while.

(gesturing)

We offer them food, drink, anything they enjoyed in life.

Ashe watches an OLD WOMAN place a toy car in front of a picture of a child.

PRIEST

Tomorrow night we will celebrate. The people will dance, sing...

(indicating Ashe's makeup)

...many will wear masks.

ASHE

Why?

PRIEST

Some spirits linger here too long. They become confused, mistaking themselves for the living. They have to be frightened away.

The priest nods to Ashe and moves down the aisle to the next candelabra.

A LITTLE GIRL

is watching Ashe from one of the back pews. She is next to her mother, but she's turned around in her seat. She waves to him.

GIRL

Santa Muerte.

Ashe, unnerved by the young girl, backs out of the sanctuary, letting the night's shadows swallow him up once more.

CUT TO:

EXT. SARAH'S LOFT - NIGHT

We are drifting towards the arched window of Sarah's loft. We can see her within, looking at a collection of old photos by candle light.

INT. SARAH'S LOFT - NIGHT

Sarah sits by her paintings. Gabriel suddenly stands, arching his back.

THE CROW

flies in through the skylight, landing in front of Sarah. She reaches out, brushing its feathers. Then she lifts her head, sensing a presence behind her.

Ashe steps from the darkness, quiet as a whisper. Even in the dim light, we can see that he's got blood on his hands.

SARAH

(tense)

You've got blood on your hands.

ASHE

I've been hunting.

SARAH

Why did you come back?

ASHE

I wanted to see you. You seem to understand what's happening to me...

SARAH

I don't understand, not really.

ASHE

Then why did you come to the pier?

SARAH

Because I had to. I wanted the nightmares to stop.

Ashe moves into the middle of the loft, studying Sarah's paintings. He looks at the painting of the Crow-figure on horseback.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASHE
(re: painting)
This one isn't finished.

SARAH
None of them are, not really.

Ashe glances at Sarah, curious.

ASHE
Why?

SARAH
I always leave part of the
canvas unpainted. It's just
something I do. I know they'll
never be perfect...
(shrugging)
I guess if I leave them this
way they don't have to be.

Ashe approaches Sarah. He lifts up her hand, pointing to
the wedding ring which now rests on her finger.

ASHE
Were you married?

SARAH
(shaking her head)
It belonged to some friends of
mine.

ASHE
Where are they now?

SARAH
A better place.

Sarah turns the ring around her finger, fidgeting with it.

SARAH
What about you?

ASHE
(shaking his head)
My brother was the only real
family I had. We were orphans.
We had a pact. We were
supposed to take care of
each other, you know...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH

I'm sorry.

ASHE

What's done is done. No
turning back now, is there?

Sarah looks up at him, sad.

SARAH

You shouldn't have come back
here, Ashe.

(struggling)

I left Detroit because I wanted
to put certain things behind
me. I don't want a part of
this anymore - the blood, the
violence, any of it...

ASHE

Sometimes violence is the
shortest distance between two
points.

SARAH

For you, maybe. But not for
me.

Ashe moves onto the window sill, crouches there like a
gargoyle in silhouette.

ASHE

Do you believe in fate?

SARAH

I never used to...

Gabriel jumps onto the sill. Ashe runs his fingers across
the cat's back.

ASHE

What happens to me when I
finish what I'm supposed to do
here?

SARAH

You go back.

ASHE

And what if I don't want to go
back?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sarah looks away - and for a moment we don't think she's going to answer.

SARAH

(quietly)

Then you're damned.

CUT TO:

INT. JUDAH EARL'S TOWER, PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON a TV monitor. We are viewing the tape Nemo recorded to document Ashe and Danny's deaths. We see Ashe staring into the camera.

SPIDER MONKEY (O.S.)

(on tape)

Flowers for the dead, Senor?

Someone fast-forwards the tape. Now we're watching Ashe's face sinking beneath the water's surface. The image freezes.

CURVE (O.S.)

It was him. It was that son of a bitch we dumped off the pier.

CAMERA MOVES to include Judah, Curve, and Kali gathered around the monitor. Curve is snapping open an envelope of Trinity, sniffing up the contents.

JUDAH

How could it be him? You killed him, didn't you?

CURVE

Fuck yes!

KALI

He's a ghost.

CURVE

There's no such thing as ghosts.

KALI

(pointedly)

Then what killed Spider Monkey and Nemo?

CURVE

I don't know, I don't know...

Curve starts pacing, growing more apprehensive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CURVE

All I know is, he's fucking
with us. I mean look at
this...

He rips open his shirt, baring his chest, pointing to the
crow tattoo.

CURVE

The crow's his symbol, right?
I'm marked! Somehow that bitch
at the tattoo shop marked me.

KALI

That means he's coming for you.
First Monkey, now Nemo - he's
coming for all of us.

CURVE

(agitated)

Don't say that. Don't fucking
say that.

KALI

(baiting him)

What's your problem, Curve? I
thought you said you didn't
believe?

Curve turns on Kali, furious, ready to strike her.

GRANGE (O.S.)

Boo.

Judah and the others spin around, startled. Curve and Kali
pull their guns simultaneously, aiming at...

A MAN

who stands off in the shadows. It's difficult to see him -
he's little more than a silhouette.

CURVE

(rattled)

Who the fuck are you?!

MAN

Relax, trigger man. I'm a
friend.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JUDAH

(wary)
Friends don't arrive
unannounced. How did you get
up here?

GRANGE

Now that would be telling,
wouldn't it?

We see a FLASH OF SILVER on the man's finger as he raises
his hand to light a match - a familiar jointed finger-cuff.
The match's light illuminates his face...

GRANGE,

Top Dollar's immaculately dressed corporate killer stands
before Judah. He lights a cigarette, takes a long drag.

JUDAH

Who are you?

GRANGE

The name's Grange. I hear you
have problems. I've come here
to help.

CUT TO:

INT. SARAH'S LOFT - NIGHT

Ashe moves away from the window, drawing closer to Sarah.

ASHE

There's something I haven't
told you...

(hesitant)

You know how you said you
dreamed about me?

Sarah nods.

ASHE

Before I died... I dreamed
about you too.

SARAH

I don't understand what's
happening here.

ASHE

Don't you see?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASHE (CONT'D)

Fate's brought us together.
You and I are connected
somehow...

(beat)

You're as much a part of this
as I am. It has something to
do with the pain we've both
suffered, the people we've
lost. You can't tell me you
don't feel that.

SARAH

I don't know what I feel
anymore.

Sarah stares at him. Something unspoken passes between
them. She reaches out to Ashe, tentative. It's one of
those moments where things could go either way. They lean
into one another, just a whisper of a kiss...

Ashe pulls back, turns away...

ASHE

You're right.. I shouldn't have
come here...

SARAH

(reaching for him)

No, wait...

ASHE

We can't do this, Sarah. It's
wrong.

SARAH

Why?

ASHE

Because it just is.

She sighs, nodding, trying to convince herself. And yet,
despite their mutual protests, they find themselves leaning
in towards one another.

SARAH

I know, I know...

(a tired laugh)

I'm alive, you're dead...

ASHE

Not dead.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASHE (CONT'D)

Something else, something in-between...

SARAH

It doesn't matter.

ASHE

Keep saying that enough, you'll make it true.

They kiss again, with more conviction this time - two souls starved for another's touch. Ashe's make-up up is smearing onto Sarah's face, almost as if the two personalities were blurring into one.

CUT TO:

INT. JUDAH EARL'S TOWER - NIGHT

Curve and Kali keep their guns trained on Grange. He approaches Judah, takes a seat across from him.

JUDAH

What makes you think we need help?

Grange responds with a DEEP-THROATED CHUCKLE.

GRANGE

A little bird told me.

(beat)

A black bird with a taste for blood...stop me if you've heard this one.

JUDAH

(his curiosity piqued)

You've seen him, then?

GRANGE

Someone like him. I spent a year in a hospital bed because of it.

Grange leans over and inspects the tethered stag beetle.

GRANGE

You won't stop him with bullets or knives. He doesn't bleed like you and me. He's crossed over, you see?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRANGE (CONT'D)

The crow's his link between the land of the living and the land of the dead.

CURVE

(to Judah, incensed)

I can't believe you're listening to this. He's talking total shit!

GRANGE

You want to keep your head buried in the sand, that's your business, little man. But I think your boss wants to hear what I have to say.

JUDAH

Keep talking.

GRANGE

(sucking in nicotine)

If you really want to stop the Crow, you'll have to fight fire with fire.

JUDAH

Meaning what?

GRANGE

Meaning you'll need to bring someone else back.

KALI

A scarecrow.

Grange laughs.

GRANGE

Now you've got the idea.

JUDAH

And I suppose you have someone in mind?

GRANGE

Oh, I've got the perfect candidate.

Grange looks to Curve, gestures to the tattoo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRANGE

In the meantime, you need to find the woman who designed your little..."stigma" here. Her name's Sarah.

CURVE

She works down at the Gargoyle...

GRANGE

Find out where she lives. She's connected to the crow. We can use her as bait to catch him.

Judah studies Grange.

JUDAH

And what do you get out of this?

GRANGE

(cryptically)
Peace of mind.

CUT TO:

INT. GRAY GARGOYLE TATTOO SHOP - NIGHT

Noah is sitting at a drafting table, working on a tattoo design. A bell on the front door JINGLES. He glances up...

CURVE AND KALI

are standing by the door. Curve bolts the door. Kali reaches for the "OPEN" placard and flips it around to the "CLOSED" side.

CURVE

(grinning)

Hey, sport. Catch you at a bad time?

Noah rises, alarmed. In a flash, Kali has a dagger drawn and pressed against Noah's throat.

KALI

Sit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She guides Noah back to one of the dentist chairs, pushing him back down into it. As Kali keeps the knife pressed beneath his chin, Curve approaches with a roll of duct tape. He quickly tapes down Noah's wrists and ankles. When he finishes, Curve steps back to admire his work.

CURVE

There we are. Nice and snug.
You feel comfortable, Noah?

Noah's not doing a very good job of hiding his fear.

NOAH

What do you want?

Curve leans against a counter, perusing through one of the reference books - Yoshitoshi's lurid beauty and violence prints.

CURVE

We want Sarah.

KALI

(circling Noah)
Where is she, Noah?

NOAH

(defiant)
Can't tell you that, love.

Kali sits astride Noah. She runs her long-nailed fingers over his face, then lowers her head and kisses him lightly on the lips.

KALI

Are you anxious to die? Some
people are.

Noah doesn't answer.

KALI

It's okay to be afraid, really.

Kali leans over, reaching for one of the tattoo machines. She motions to Curve, who nonchalantly hits the treadlight foot switch.

Noah eyes the sparking tattoo machine with rising apprehension. Kali moves it towards Noah's face.

CLOSE ON the needle - a vibrating blur just a few centimeters from Noah's blinking eye.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KALI

You know you'll tell us. It's just a question of how much you want to endure, how far you want us to take you.

(moving the needle closer)

I can take you to the edge, Noah. Just say the word and you'll be on your way.

Noah tries to shut his eyes. Kali forces the eye in question open with the thumb and forefinger of her other hand.

KALI

Last chance, "love".

NOAH

Get bent, bitch.

From behind we see Kali lower the vibrating needle towards Noah's eye. His SHRILL SCREAMS split the night as we...

CUT TO:

INT. SARAH'S LOFT - NIGHT

Sarah sits in bed. She's staring into space, her thoughts weighing heavy on her soul. Ashe is by the window, shrugging on his jacket, reaching for the sawed-off shotgun.

ASHE

I have to go.

SARAH

(nodding)

I know. You have to finish what you started. You have to find the others.

Ashe moves to the door, hesitant.

ASHE

I'll come back when I'm done.

But Sarah is shaking her head.

SARAH

You shouldn't.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH (CONT'D)

Let's just pretend this whole thing was a dream, okay? I don't want to have to deal with this when the sun comes up.

Ashe nods.

ASHE

I wish I'd met you before.

SARAH

Me too.

Sarah shrugs, offering a smile, trying to make light of the situation.

SARAH

Oh well...

(tears welling up in her eyes)

Maybe next time.

ASHE

You think there is a next time?

SARAH

I know there is. Find the others, Ashe. Finish it.

Ashe pauses for one last look, then turns and walks out the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. SARAH'S LOFT - NIGHT

Sarah watches from her arched window as Ashe strides to his motorcycle. As Ashe climbs aboard it he catches sight of himself in the...

DISPLAY WINDOW OF A BAKERY

Within the bakery are mountains of sugar skulls, candy skeletons, and soul-shaped pan de muerte (bread of the dead). Ashe's reflection is superimposed over this morbid tableau.

Ashe fires up the bike's engine. He takes off down the street, kicking up a whirlwind of gutter trash. Ashe cuts down an alley, just missing...

A CAR

which pulls around the corner. It cruises to a stop in front of Sarah's building. Grange and Kali step from the car, looking up to Sarah's window. He pulls on a pair of leather gloves.

CUT TO:

INT. SECOND COMING FETISH CLUB - NIGHT

Curve sits at the bar amidst an endless stream of flesh artists, deep in the throes of drug-induced hallucinations. The MUSIC is oppressive, bone-jarring - NICK CAVE'S "The Witness Song". The floor surrounding Curve's stool is littered with empty imp bags.

He studies his Pez dispenser, flicking the head up, pulling out the little candy tablets, lining them up on the bar like dominoes.

NICK CAVE

*Now, who will be the witness?
Who will be the witness when
you're all too blind to see?*

Suddenly Curve clutches his chest, wincing in pain. He opens his coat, looks down at his chest...

THE CROW TATTOO

is dripping blood from its beak and talons.

Time slows to a crawl. The MUSIC fades to a muted echo, like distant WAR DRUMS. As a feeling of inexorable doom settles over him, Curve lifts his head and sees...

ASHE

reflected in the bar mirror, materializing out of the narcotic haze. He's wading through the ocean of bodies. In his face paint and black leather Ashe looks like he's part of the scene. People are stroking him, brushing up against him - like they can leech off some of his morbid angel charisma.

Ashe lifts his hand - he's clutching House o' Peep Zeke's sawed-off shotgun...

Curve DIVES to the floor as Ashe's shotgun blast shatters the bar mirror, taking out his own reflection. Curve rolls, climbs to his feet, starts running...

The Samoan bartender grabs a shotgun, opens up on Ashe...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

And here come a couple of gun-toting BOUNCER-TYPES - steroid gobbling smack-hounds. All of them start FIRING at Ashe...

...but Ashe keeps on coming, trudging through the HAIL OF GUNFIRE. Nothing is going to stop him from reaching Curve. Nothing.

A MASKED DANCER in a posing strap takes a head hit meant for Ashe, another PATRON goes down. Everyone near Ashe is dying...

CURVE

bolts down the stairs leading to the washrooms...

Ashe is not on his heels.

EXT. SECOND COMING FETISH CLUB - NIGHT

Curve comes storming out the back door like a bat out of Hell. He takes the rear stairs three at a time, spilling into a couple of back-alley JUNKIES. He stumbles into a pile of garbage, scatters some rats...

Curve makes for his bike, which is parked nearby. He fumbles with the key, hits the starter switch, wakes the beast...

CRASH! Ashe comes flying from a second story of the Second Coming, landing on all fours in a shower of glass silvers.

Curve jerks his bike towards the street and guns it...

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Curve SHRIEKS down the asphalt, tachometer red-lining. He glances behind him...

THE CROW

plunges down from the night sky, wings flapping madly, quickly gaining on him like the breath of death.

Curve leans in low, trying to urge his bike on by willpower alone. He shoots beneath a freeway overpass...

UP ABOVE,

Ashe appears on the elevated freeway, matching Curve's speed.

(CONTINUED)

71.
CONTINUED:

The crow soars higher for a bird's eye view, tracking Curve's progress as it sweeps past chimneys, swerves around billboards, ducks under laundry lines...

ON ASHE

as he ROCKETS down the freeway. Up ahead is a break in the guard rail due to an accident. Ashe cuts sharply to the right, taking the motorcycle airborne through the break in the rail and...

...landing on the surface street some thirty feet below!
Ashe is now just behind Curve.

EXT. URBAN SPRAWL - NIGHT

Curve is being driven from the heart of the city into a labyrinth of back streets and blind alleys. At every turn Ashe is there, boxing Curve into an ever-shrinking playing field, until suddenly...

CUT TO:

INT. SARAH'S LOFT - NIGHT

Sarah is back at work on the painting of the woman being cradled by her lover. She adds some color to the woman's face.

Gabriel, who's lounging nearby, suddenly looks up and HISSES.

There's a KNOCK at her door. Sarah approaches, looks through peephole...

SARAH

Who is it?

SARAH'S POV (THROUGH FISH-EYE PEEPHOLE)

Grange's grinning, distorted face fills the screen. Kali stands behind him.

GRANGE

A face from your past.

Sarah falls back from the door just as...

INT. SARAH'S LOFT - ENTRY HALL - NIGHT

...Grange BLASTS apart the door lock with a SIG 540 carbine. He kicks open the door, rushing inside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Grange shoves Sarah up against the wall, clamping a hand around her neck, placing the carbine next to her head.

GRANGE

It's been a long time, Sarah.
Guess you thought you'd never
see me again.

SARAH

(confused)

What are you doing here?

GRANGE

You think you're the only
person to have dreams? That's
how the dead talk to us, you
know. In the dark, when our
souls are off wandering...

Grange taps his forehead.

GRANGE

He told me what to do. He told
me to come here.

SARAH

Who told you?

Grange smiles.

GRANGE

Top Dollar.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRIDGE OVER THE RIVER STYX - NIGHT

Curve finds himself at the end of the bridge, not much land left in sight. Curve hits the bridge doing well past 90 mph with Ashe and the Crow hot on his heels.

EXT. ROADWAY - NIGHT

Curve cuts down a roadway which parallels the river. There's a chain-link fence running along it. Up ahead is a hole in the fence leading down to a tunnel spillway. Curve guides his bike through the hole...

INT. TUNNEL - NIGHT

Curve speeds into the dark tunnel, splashing through puddles of water, whipping past graffiti.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As he nears the mouth at the other end, Curve brakes hard, TIRES SQUEALING, almost going down...

CURVE'S POV

We are now beneath the bridge. It's a stone-cold dead-end. The roadway slopes sharply downward, spilling out into the concrete river bed which is filled to capacity with rushing flood waters.

We hear the ROAR of an approaching motorcycle, then an engine cutting out. Curve looks back the way he came...

AT THE OPPOSITE END OF THE TUNNEL

Ashe's silhouette steps into view. He's on foot now, clutching the sawed-off shotgun - a BLACK FIGURE blocking the only possible exit. He lets loose a LAUGH which chills Curve to the bone.

ASHE

"I have a rendezvous with
Death, on some scarred slope of
battered hill..."

Ashe starts into the tunnel. His WET FOOTSTEPS echo off the weeping walls...

ASHE

"God knows, 'twere better to be
deep where love throbs out in
blissful sleep, pulse nigh to
pulse and breath to breath..."

As Ashe draws closer, his death-like face emerges from the gloom - a ghastly visage floating in the ether...

ASHE

"But I have a rendezvous with
Death. And I to my pledged word
am true..."

Ashe stops some twenty feet away, grinning like the Cheshire Cat.

ASHE

"I shall not fail that
rendezvous."

Silence like knives. Ashe and Curve facing one another. Curve is tense, dry-mouthed...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CURVE

You think I'm afraid of you,
you fucking freak?! YOU THINK
I'M AFRAID?!!

Curve SCREAMS and guns his cycle forward, rolling the throttle all the way open - a kamikaze run aimed straight at Ashe...

Ashe stands his ground, lifts the shotgun, FIRES...

MACRO SHOT

following the shotgun load as it rockets into Curve's customized teardrop gas tank. There's the woman doing the wild thing with Death and...

BOOM! Curve's motorcycle disintegrates beneath him, breaking apart into a RUSHING COMET OF FLAMING WRECKAGE. Shrapnel skids along the tunnel walls, SPEWING SPARKS.

CURVE

lies on the garbage-strewn tunnel floor in a spreading pool of blood - burnt, battered, a barb of steel sticking up from his chest. He feebly tries to pull the barb out, but it's lodged in too deep.

CURVE'S POV

as Ashe steps through the gasoline flames, standing over him like some kind of demonic judge.

ASHE

Can you hear me, Curve?

Curve offers a weak nod.

ASHE

You're going to die now.

Curve tries to speak, blood spills from his mouth. Ashe places a finger to lips.

ASHE

Shhh. It's not so bad. Trust me. I've been there.

Ashe drops down, kneeling over Curve's chest.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASHE

People used to put coins in the mouths of the dead. You know why? That was so they could pay the ferryman to take them across the river Styx.

Ashe lifts up one of the gold Peep-O-Rama tokens. The embossed eye logo flashes in the moonlight.

ASHE

Open your mouth, Curve.

Curve shakes his head. His eyes are wide, filled with terror. He MOANS.

ASHE

Do it.

Curve slowly opens his mouth. Tears run from the corners of his eyes. Ashe places the coin on Curve's tongue, like a priest administering a Holy wafer, then gently closes his mouth again.

Ashe stands, grabs Curve by the coat collar. He pulls him back towards the end of the tunnel...

EXT. TUNNEL MOUTH/RIVER - NIGHT

Ashe drags Curve down the sloping end of the spillway to the waters edge.

ASHE

I want to thank you for showing me my pain, Curve. You made me what I am.

Ashe releases him, letting the current carry him away. Ashe stands, tracking Curve's progress.

ON CURVE

as he floats downstream, limbs outstretched, consciousness fading fast.

CURVE'S POV

GHOSTLY FACES stare down at him from the girders - people who have made their home in the underbelly of the bridge which stretches overhead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A WOMAN lets loose a cloud of marigold petals. They flutter down around Curve, swirling in the currents.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

the petals have clustered around Curve's body in the shape of a Crow. Curve continues to float downstream towards an estuary, borne away on the wings of the bird, journeying out to sea.

CUT TO:

INT. SARAH'S LOFT - NIGHT

Sarah stares at Grange - the mention of Top Dollar's name has chilled her to the marrow.

GRANGE

You remember Top Dollar, don't you Sarah? I can assure you he hasn't forgotten you.

SARAH

(unnerved)

He's dead. I saw him die.

GRANGE

Death is only the beginning. You, of all people, should know that.

Sarah's eyes shift to Kali, who is weaving through Sarah's paintings. She stops before the painting of Death visiting the woman.

KALI

(mock appreciation)

Nice.

She bends closer.

KALI

Looks like you missed a spot here...

Kali reaches for a tube of paint, squirts some out, dips her finger into it...

SARAH

Don't...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sarah starts forward but Grange stops her with the gun. She sits there, helpless, as...

Kali paints a smile on the dying woman's face with her index finger. Then she draws two Xs over the woman's eyes.

KALI

That's better...

Kali pulls out her stiletto and stabs it through the canvas, pulling it down, ripping the painting apart.

SARAH

STOP!!!

WHIP-PAN TO...

The crow spying on the action from Sarah's skylight...

CROW'S ANAMORPHIC POV

of Sarah crying out. Her CRIES bleed over into the next scene as we...

CUT TO:

INT. TUNNEL - NIGHT

Ashe is heading back from the river when he's struck by a vision...

BACK TO THE CROW'S POV OF SARAH

Ashe is seeing what the crow is witnessing - Sarah in danger.

ASHE

Sarah!

Ashe starts to run, back towards his bike...

CUT TO:

INT. SARAH'S LOFT - NIGHT

Kali steps back from the slashed painting, admiring her work.

KALI

Perfect.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sarah shuts her eyes as Kali goes to town on the paintings - slashing every one of them to ribbons.

Grange moves behind Sarah, gripping her wrist, lifting her up, and forcing her arm up behind her back.

GRANGE

Let's go, Sarah. I know you wouldn't want to keep Top Dollar waiting.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Ashe is on the motorcycle, racing across the River Styx bridge at break-neck speed. He takes a corner on a skid, zipping past the Gray Gargoyle and the neighboring train tracks.

CUT TO:

EXT. JUDAH EARL'S TOWER, STREET LEVEL - NIGHT

The streets are crowded with PEOPLE as the Day of the Dead festivities get under way. Grange and Sarah approach the main entrance of the tower, passing a number of COSTUMED REVELERS. ARMED GUARDS step aside as Grange guides Sarah up the steps.

INT. JUDAH EARL'S TOWER, ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Grange and Sarah enter the elevator car - one of those old-fashioned kind with the rickety accordion gate. Grange closes the gate with a CLANG.

He reaches for the UP-DOWN lever which controls the elevator and shifts it to the top floor position.

The elevator SHUDDERS and starts to rise.

Shadows play over Sarah's face. Grange studies her.

SARAH

Why are you doing this?

GRANGE

You ever read Dante's Inferno? Dante says that the one true path through Hell lies at its heart. In order to escape it, you have to go further in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The floors between the street level and Judah's penthouse have been sealed off with metal gratings. Beyond them we can see JUNKIES and HOMELESS who have appropriated the abandoned floors for their own use.

GRANGE

Hate's a powerful motivator,
maybe even stronger than love.

(beat)

Seven years I've had Top
Dollar's voice inside my head.
Bringing him back is the only
thing that will silence him.

Grange shifts the lever again, slows the elevator to a stop. He pulls back the accordion gate, gestures for Sarah to move forward.

GRANGE

After you.

EXT. JUDAH EARL'S TOWER, PATIO - NIGHT

Sarah is escorted across the patio towards the tower where TWO ARMED GUARDS wait by a door.

INT. JUDAH EARL'S TOWER, PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Grange leads Sarah up a stairway and out onto a landing...

JUDAH

is waiting at his table, next to his box with the stag beetle. Grange guides Sarah to him. Judah indicates that she should sit.

JUDAH

So you're the celebrated
artist?

Grange hands Judah Sarah's sketchbook. Judah flips through the pages, studying the Crow-like images.

JUDAH

Grange tells me you're
acquainted with our ghost.

SARAH

I've seen him.

JUDAH

Have you now?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JUDAH CONT'D

Then tell me this, Sarah, how
do you kill a dead man? How do
you stop a heart that's already
still?

SARAH

Is that a trick question?

Judah smiles, brandishing a mouthful of predator teeth.
His hand lashes out, SLAPPING Sarah across the face.

SARAH

(reeling from the
blow)

There's no way to stop him.
Not until he finishes what he's
been sent back for.

JUDAH

(looking to Grange)

We'll see.

CUT TO:

EXT. SARAH'S LOFT - NIGHT

Ashe pulls up on the motorcycle, SCREECHING to a stop. He
leaps from the bike, racing into Sarah's building and up
the steps...

INT. SARAH'S LOFT - NIGHT

Ashe enters the dark loft. He drops into a crouch,
scanning the place...

Sarah's loft has been trashed - canvases slashed, furniture
broken, everything of value destroyed.

ASHE

(concerned)

Sarah?

KALI (O.S.)

Sarah's gone, ghost man.

Ashe tenses, ready...

KALI,

who had been standing still amidst the shadows, now moves
away from the wall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASHE

Where?

KALI

Judah's tower. He's waiting
for you there.

ASHE

Why did you come here?

KALI

I'm the messenger.

ASHE

Aren't you afraid of me?

As Kali steps closer we see that she's dressed for war - a
katana secured in a back-sabbard, twin daggers on each
hip, a bandoleer of throwing stars.

KALI

Since the day we're born our
deaths begin their walk. They
walk towards us, without
hurrying. Why be afraid?

Kali unsheathes her katana. The blade edge catches the
moonlight.

KALI

Shall we dance?

CUT TO:

INT. JUDAH EARL'S TOWER - NIGHT

CLOSE ON GRANGE'S HAND

as he uses a piece of charcoal to draw a design on Judah's
floor.

GRANGE

I never used to believe in this
sort of thing - angels, demons.
Now I know better...

SARAH

sits in a chair, her arms tied behind her back. Judah
stands next to her, watching as Grange continues to sketch
out his design.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRANGE

The Crow carried Ashe's soul back to terra firma. That's one way to return, but there are other ways too. Other forces that can be called upon...

Grange finishes his work and sits back.

GRANGE

Forces that are stronger than the Crow.

Grange has worked his way from the center on out. Now we see the design in full - an elaborate spiral configuration not unlike the mazes found on the sanctuary floors of Medieval churches.

GRANGE

The afterworld's a maze. Without a guide, you could wander in it forever.

Grange starts pacing around Sarah. He stops just behind Sarah. He removes something from within his jacket, holding it up for Sarah to see...

A LIQUID-FILLED VIAL

Floating within the liquid are two perfectly preserved eyeballs.

GRANGE

They say the eyes are the windows to the soul. What do you think, Sarah?

Sarah twists her head to the side, refusing to look.

SARAH

Those are...his?

GRANGE

The genuine article. He'll need them to find his way back, without them he'd be lost.

(looking to Judah)

He'll also need a body once he gets here. That's where you come in, Judah.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JUDAH
(stepping back;
Now hold on a minute...

GRANGE
Did I forget to tell you that
part? Must have slipped my
mind...

Grange lashes out with his fist, punching Judah in the face, sending the crime lord reeling. Grange follows that with a blow to Judah's stomach...

Judah GASPS, clutching at his abdomen. He staggers back, bumping against the table, sending it crashing to the floor. The box containing the stag beetle spills onto its side. Judah collapses.

CLOSE ON Judah's eyes as he watches the stag beetle, free at last, scurry off into the darkness.

Grange stands over Judah.

GRANGE
Nothing personal, you
understand. We've all got to
play our part.

Grange picks Judah up, carrying him over to the spiral design. Judah feebly resists, but his he's still stunned by Grange's assault.

Grange lays Judah down in the middle of the spiral. He kneels over Judah, pinning him by the throat with one hand, pulling out a knife with the other.

JUDAH
(choking, terrified)
What are you doing?

JUDAH'S POV (FISH EYE LENS)

Grange leans in with the knife.

GRANGE
Replacing your eyes with his.

And as Judah SCREAMS we...

CUT TO:

INT. SARAH'S LOFT - NIGHT

Kali comes at Ashe blindingly fast. She spins and flips end over end, lashing out with the katana...

WHOOOSH! The sword cuts across Ashe's chest! Kali spins the blade again and again, driving Ashe back. Suddenly Kali fires off a spinning wheel kick, her heel connecting with Ashe's chin...

CRASH! Ashe goes flying out the half-circle window. He manages to hold on with one hand...

Here comes Kali, ready to slice that hand off at the wrist...

THUNK! Ashe stops the sword with his free hand, the blade sinking deep into his palm. He yanks the sword from Kali's hand, swings himself back up through the window.

Kali springs onto a counter, then leaps up towards the skylight. She catches her hands on the edge and flips herself up.

Ashe follows suit...

EXT. SARAH'S LOFT, ROOF - NIGHT

As Ashe emerges onto the roof he catches sight of Kali jumping to the next building, nimble as a cat.

The Crow waits on a nearby air vent. It flies after Kali. Ashe takes up the pursuit.

EXT. ROOFTOPS - NIGHT

A high-speed rooftop chase ensues - Ashe and Kali leaping across man-made canyons, swinging from fire escapes, ducking under weather-worn billboards. Gradually the space between the buildings widens, each leap becoming more perilous than the last.

KALI

takes a flying leap from the ledge of a building, not quite clearing the space between. She manages to catch the opposite ledge with her hands and she hangs there, trying to pull herself back up. She looks down...

KALI'S POV

It's a four-story drop to the alley below.

THE CROW

settles on the ledge next to Kali, tilting its head, watching her with its curious golden eyes.

A silent moment passes between Kali and the crow, then...

ASHE

successfully makes the jump. He crouches alongside the bird, staring down at Kali.

ASHE

You murdered my brother in cold blood.

KALI

Some people are born victims.

Kali renews her efforts to pull herself back up, but her fingers are starting to slip. Ashe makes no move to help or hinder her. He just stares.

KALI

You want me to say I'm sorry?
You want me to beg?

Ashe shakes his head.

ASHE

I want you to fall.

KALI

I'm not afraid of you. Each of us dies the death he's looking for.

Kali lets herself go. Ashe watches her tumble to the alley below, landing amidst puddles of water and refuse.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

Ashe climbs down a skeletal fire escape, dropping down to the alley.

KALI

lies on the ground, her limbs twisted at awkward angles. She MOANS, still alive.

As Ashe approaches, Kali tries to rise. The most she can do is to lift her head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

(gasp)
I...can't...move...

Ashe stares at her, dispassionate.

ASHE
Your neck is broken.

KALI
Kill...me...finish...it...

ASHE
No.

KALI
You...have to.

ASHE
I don't have to do anything.
My job is to send you to hell.
You're in it.

Kali stares at Ashe in disbelief, her stoic warrior's mien quickly evaporating.

KALI
There's no...honor in this.

ASHE
What makes you think you
deserve honor?

KALI
It's my...death. I've won it.

Ashe turns and starts away.

KALI
Where are you going?!

ASHE
(over his shoulder)
To the tower.

KALI
Wait! You can't...do this!
You can't do this!!!

But Ashe doesn't turn back. He leaves Kali in the cold, wet alley, ignoring her pathetic laments.

CUT TO:

INT. JUDAH EARL'S TOWER - NIGHT

Grange crouches at the perimeter of the spiral design. Judah's body lies at its center of the spiral in a pool of blood. Grange flicks on a lighter, touches the flame to the end of the spiral...

WHOOSH! The line ignites, burning its way inward like a coiled fuse.

FROM ABOVE

we watch as the fire traces the path of the spiral, rushing around and around in ever-decreasing circumferences towards the center where Judah's head lies.

ON SARAH

as a sense of impending doom settles within her soul. She averts her gaze.

ON JUDAH'S FACE, SCREAMING

Rushing through Top Dollar's eyes into...

DARKNESS

A fluid, subsurface afterworld. SOMETHING is swimming upwards, moving towards twin windows of light. We can see a world beyond these windows - a glimpse of fire.

We realize that the "windows" are, in fact, the twin convex POVs of Top Dollar's eyes. It's as if we were moving from deep within the skull, using the paths of the optic nerves to guide us back to the external world.

WHAM! Judah bolts into a sitting position within the flames. And as he rises up he...

...morphs into Top Dollar - the demonic villain literally usurping Judah's form from the inside out!

TOP DOLLAR

stands amidst the spiral flames which are now waist-high. He spreads his arms wide, LAUGHING triumphantly, bathing in the fire, impervious to the heat.

He walks through the flames and stands before Sarah, grinning like the Cheshire cat. His eyes seem to glow with an inner fire.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VOICE
Well hell, if I'd known dying
was going to be this much fun.
I would've done it a long time
ago.

Top Dollar approaches Sarah, running a hand from her neck
down her chest. Sarah recoils from his touch.

TOP DOLLAR

My, my, my, Sarah...look how we
have grown.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

The streets are alive with Dia de Muertos CELEBRANTS.
Paper "BIENVENIDOS" banners are strung overhead. CHILDREN
light strings of firecrackers. Masked MUMMERS in garish
costumes dance, MUSICIANS stroll.

There are stalls offering marigolds and cockscomb; black
beeswax tapers, dangling toy skeletons, mountains of
calaveras de azucar. OLD WOMEN tend to roadside offrendas,
offering food and flowers to all who pass.

A PARADE

winds its way towards a local churchyard. People are
holding giant paper mache skulls on sticks, torches,
calavera placards.

ASHE

moves through the revelers, invisible amidst the carnival
atmosphere. In his makeup he's just another face in the
crowd.

A HORSE-DRAWN CARRIAGE

piloted by a man in a devil mask trots by, it's skull-faced
occupants peering out at Ashe from within.

Ashe pushes on against the tide of people until he finds
himself at...

EXT. JUDAH EARL'S TOWER, STREET LEVEL - NIGHT

Judah's tower rises up against the black sky like some kind
of angry god.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Crow circles above Ashe, landing on a ledge a few stories up. It CAWS to him, as if urging him on.

Ashe studies the tower from within the sheltering shadows of a vantage point across the street. The Crow flies on ahead, perching itself on a telephone wire...

CROW'S POV

ARMED THUGS patrol the steps leading up to the front entrance. All the windows are blocked off by burglar bars and razor wire.

Ashe slips into the shadows, quickly scurrying up a rain gutter to the third-story roof of a neighboring building. He takes a running jump, leaping across the alleyway...

Ashe grab a hold of one of the ornamental statues which crowd the building's facade. He glances below...

THE GUARDS

have failed to notice him.

Ashe pulls himself up, starting the daunting task of scaling the tower.

As Ashe climbs, the Crow hovers around him, occasionally settling on a prospective handhold. It taps its beak on each new handhold, guiding Ashe, indicating where he should reach next.

Ashe pauses and looks down...

ASHE'S POV

Day of the Dead CELEBRANTS crowd the streets below.

Ashe continues on, pulling himself past stone maidens and gargoyles, scraping his fingers raw...

...until finally, he reaches the rooftop where the decorative turret stands.

EXT. JUDAH EARL'S TOWER, JESUS SAVES SIGN - NIGHT

Ashe is perched atop the buzzing "JESUS SAVES" sign. The Crow flies from his shoulder towards the turret.

INT. JUDAH EARL'S TOWER, PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

The crow enters through one of the small openings. It settles on one of the rafters, peering down...

CROWLS POV

Sarah sits within one of the pools of illumination far below, hands still bound behind her back.

EXT. JUDAH EARL'S TOWER, JESUS SAVES SIGN - NIGHT

CLOSE ON ASHE as he concentrates, seeing what the crow sees.

ASHE

Sarah.

EXT. JUDAH EARL'S TOWER, PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

TWO ARMED GUARDS stand on either side of the door leading into the penthouse.

ASHE

emerges from the shadows, silencing both of them before a shot can be fired.

Ashe continues on up, climbing the facade of the turret, squirming his way in through one of the small windows.

INT. JUDAH EARL'S TOWER, PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

WHOOSH! Ashe swings in through the turret window. He drops down to one of the steel rafters, then to the floor below.

GRANGE AND SARAH

are on the far side of the belfry. Sarah's hands are bound, her mouth is sealed shut with a piece of duct tape. Grange has one hand on the back of Sarah's neck, the other casually holding a handgun the end of which is resting against her temple. Sarah's been crying. She looks spent, defeated.

Ashe starts toward them. Sarah looks up at him, her eyes pleading. Ashe stops a few yards away from them.

GRANGE

You ever get the feeling we're
all just bit-players acting out
someone else's dream? I do.

All around Ashe, the lines of antiquated monitors come to life. The monitors are offering multiple live-feed views of Ashe's own face as filmed from various angles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

It's disorienting to say the least. As Ashe turns around, so do the dozen other versions of Ashe on the screens.

GRANGE

Welcome to the funhouse.

ASHE

Let her go.

GRANGE

Can't do that, bird man. She's got an important part in this little passion play.

ASHE

Where is Judah?

GRANGE

Judah?

(mock pondering)

Well you might say Judah is otherwise...occupied.

SOMETHING

catches Grange eye for a moment, briefly distracting him. Its the crow, flitting from one of the rafters to another...

Sarah suddenly pulls back, stomping her foot down on Grange's in-step...

Ashe moves like lighting, DIVING in between them and...

...BANG!, taking a bullet meant for Sarah. As Sarah hits the floor, Ashe grabs Grange's wrist, twisting the gun from his hand.

Grange knees Ashe in the gut and the two go at it, hand to hand. Grange is bigger, a trained killer, but Ashe is faster. Grange drives Ashe back...

Grange gets Ashe in a headlock. Ashe twists his body, bending forward, flipping Grange over his shoulder...

WHOOSH! Grange scissors his legs together, sweeping Ashe's feet out from under him. As Ashe goes down, Grange springs back up...

Ashe kicks out with both feet, connecting with Grange's chest, sending the killer stumbling backwards...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ashe rolls backwards, slipping back up into a fighter's stance as Grange recovers. The two men are near the line of video monitors now. Grange slips a wicked-looking knife from an ankle sheath and comes at Ashe swinging...

WHOOSH! WHOOSH! Ashe ducks each of the blows, moving back and back...

Grange stabs the knife forward and Ashe grabs his forearm, redirecting the blow...

CRUNCH! Grange plunges his knife-hand through one of the monitor screens. A SHOWER OF SPARKS BLOWS OUT over the killer as electricity surges through his spasming body. Grange is doing the 20,000 volt jitterbug. Ashe shields his eyes...

ALONG THE OTHER MONITOR SCREENS

we see Grange's contorted face repeated again and again as the voltage runs its course.

The monitor shorts out and the circuit is broken. Grange falls to the floor, smoking - a literal dead-weight. End of Grange.

Ashe returns to Sarah's side, fetching Grange's gun on the way. He peels the duct tape from Sarah's mouth. She sucks in air, gasping...

SARAH

(winded)

...get...out of here...

Ashe moves to untie Sarah's wrists.

ASHE

It's okay, you're safe now...

SARAH

(distraught)

It's not okay...

As Ashe tries to embrace her, Sarah pushes him away.

SARAH

You don't understand... he's
back.

ASHE

Who?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

~~TOP DOLLAR (C.I.)~~
Me.

Top Dollar starts out of the darkness. We see his eyes first, glowing like red-hot coals. then his pallid, ghostly face emerging from the shadows.

TOP DOLLAR

One bright day in the middle of the night, two dead boys got up to fight...

SARAH

(pleading)

Run, Ashe, please.

Ashe rises. Top Dollar circles Ashe, studying him. Now both undead warriors have stepped into the view of Judah's video cameras. Both their faces are replicated on the antique monitors.

TOP DOLLAR

So you're the new boy in town? Ashe, is it? Looks to me like our friends up top are scraping the bottom of the barrel.

ASHE

Do I know you?

TOP DOLLAR

I'm the player on the other side. But I don't believe we've been properly introduced...

(offering a little bow)

The name's Top Dollar.

ASHE

What do you want with Sarah?

TOP DOLLAR

The little lady and I have some unfinished business. If you like, I'll be happy to pass her along to you when I'm through. Least I can do.

ASHE

Go to Hell.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ashe raises his hand, pointing Grange's revolver at Top Dollar.

TOP DOLLAR

Already been there. Liked what I saw. Learned a few things...

As Top Dollar speaks, his voice drops to a lower register. His eyes glow an even deeper red. His features become subtly more demonic and predatory.

TOP DOLLAR

And I must confess, during my trip abroad I managed to develop a deep and abiding hatred for crows.

Top Dollar starts forward...

SARAH

Ashe!!!

Ashe FIRES into Top Dollar's chest - once, twice,, three times...

Top Dollar doesn't even stagger, he just keeps on grinning. Ashe stares at Top Dollar, dumbfounded.

TOP DOLLAR

Well I do believe the boy is speechless.

ASHE

What are you?

TOP DOLLAR

I'm your shadow. Every angel's got a devil, amigo. Didn't you know that? Or maybe you were sleeping in Sunday school?

Top Dollar lashes out with his fist, sending a roundhouse punch crashing into Ashe's jaw. Ashe spins and falters. Top Dollar follows with a series of blows, each more savage than the next, driving Ashe back...

Ashe stumbles, falls to his hands and knees. He reaches to his mouth, spits up blood. He shakes his head to clear it. Incredibly, he finds himself feeling pain.

TOP DOLLAR

You think you're invulnerable?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOP DOLLAR CONT'D
You think you can't feel pain?
I can show you worlds of pain.

Top Dollar kicks Ashe in the face, knocking him onto his back. Ashe rolls, tries to pick himself back up.

TOP DOLLAR
You and I are two sides of the
same coin. I can hurt you
where the others can't. I'm
your fucking kryptonite.

ON SARAH

She struggles to free herself of her bonds, tugging at the ropes. She backs up, managing to get hold of a piece of glass from one of the shattered monitor screens. She starts sawing away at the ropes...

ON TOP DOLLAR AND ASHE

Top Dollar reaches down, grabbing Ashe by his coat collar, dragging him back up from the floor. He spins him around, shoving him back into one of Judah's weapons display cases...

Ashe SMASHES through the glass. Top Dollar reaches for a pair of daggers.

Top Dollar grabs one of Ashe's wrists, pulling him back to his feet. Top Dollar pins Ashe's wrist against the wall and...

...WHAM! He slams the first dagger through Ashe's palm, pinning his hand. Ashe struggles, but Top Dollar succeeds in pinning Ashe's other hand...

WHAM! Top Dollar pounds a dagger through Ashe's other palm, effectively crucifying Ashe.

Top Dollar steps back, winded.

TOP DOLLAR
Isn't that pretty? All we need
is a crown of thorns and the
picture would be complete.

Ashe strains against the daggers, but he can't break free.

TOP DOLLAR
We could go on like this
forever, you and me.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

-CONTINUED:

TOP DOLLAR (CONT'D)

But I suppose all good things
must come to an end.

ASHE

You can't kill me.

Top Dollar reaches out and roughly pats Ashe's cheek.

TOP DOLLAR

Ah, but I know your secret,
amigo. I know how to send you
back. Kill the bird and you
destroy the man.

Top Dollar returns to Judah's weapon displays, pulling down
a bow and arrow. He spins on his heels, scanning the
shadows...

TOP DOLLAR

Now where is that familiar of
yours? Close, no doubt.

Top Dollar stops, smiles...

TOP DOLLAR

There.

THE CROW

sits high above, watching from one of the steel rafters.
It takes flight, soaring even higher...

TOP DOLLAR

Fly away, little wing...

Top Dollar notches one of the arrows onto the bowstring and
draws it back, never taking his eye off the bird. He
raises the bow and lets the arrow fly...

ON SARAH,

helpless as she watches the arrow find its mark...

THUNK! The arrow pierces the bird's chest. As the crow
tumbles downward, we cut to...

THE CROW'S SPINNING POV -

The world is swirling around us...

WHACK! The crow slaps to the floor, feebly flapping its
broken wings. Top Dollar strolls over to it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOP DOLLAR
Everyone's got a weakness.
Even angels.

Top Dollar lifts the struggling bird in his hands. He wraps his fingers tightly around the bird's neck and twists...

ON SARAH

as she finally cuts through the ropes, pulling her hands free.

SARAH
No!!!

...CRACK! The bird goes still Top Dollar's hands.

The effects on Ashe are immediate and catastrophic. He SCREAMS, writhing against the daggers which pin him. Something horrible is happening to him.

Top Dollar saunters over to Ashe, letting the lifeless crow fall to the floor.

TOP DOLLAR
Feeling a little peaked, amigo?
That's cause I just cut your
only link to this world. It's
back to the Land of the Dead
for you. Go directly to jail,
my friend, do not pass Go.

ASHE
(in agony)
Why...?

TOP DOLLAR
Because I'm a monster burning
from the inside.

As Top Dollar watches, BANDS OF BLACK ENERGY begin whipping across Ashe's body, literally erasing him out of existence. They move faster and faster, coiling around his thrashing form. As his body convulses, Ashe's eyes meet Sarah's. In his gaze we see true fear.

SARAH
ASHE!!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

In a manner of seconds, Ashe is nothing more than a three-dimensional shadow. His TORTURED MOANS sound far away now, fading fast...

What's left of Ashe promptly vaporizes, almost as if he were never there in the first place.

Sarah sinks to her knees, sobbing.

Top Dollar turns around and regards Sarah.

TOP DOLLAR
And then there were two.

Top Dollar strolls over to Sarah. As he draws near, Sarah sees Grange's gun which Ashe had held. She scoops it up into her hands. She opens the revolver, checks the chamber - one bullet left.

As Top Dollar draws near, Sarah bolts towards the stairs...

INT. JUDAH EARL'S TOWER, LOWER LEVEL - NIGHT

Sarah comes racing down the steps into the lower level of Judah's penthouse - a vast area housing the now defunct air conditioning and heating systems - a maze of pipes and ducts.

Sarah rolls beneath one of the ducts, hiding as best she can...

TOP DOLLAR

comes down the steps at a lieisurely pace, eyes shining with an infernal energy.

TOP DOLLAR
What are you going to do,
Sarah? Shoot me? You'd be
wasting the bullet.

A cat and mouse game ensues. As Top Dollar moves past Sarah's hiding place, she's crawls out from under the heating duct, heading for the exit and the patio beyond.

EXT. JUDAH EARL'S TOWER, ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Sarah races across the patio to the room housing the elevator. She tries the doors. They're locked. Sarah pounds them in frustration, looks back...

TOP DOLLAR

now stands at the entrance of the penthouse.

Sarah looks about for a means of escape, frantic. But there is none, not unless she wants to throw herself over the side of the building.

Sarah finds herself backing into a corner. She points the revolver at Top Dollar's chest.

TOP DOLLAR

One bullet left, Sarah. Maybe you should use it on yourself, hummm?

Sarah hesitates, uncertain...

TOP DOLLAR

Go ahead. What else have you got to live for? All your friends are dead. Who knows? Maybe you'll even see Ashe on the other side.

MOVING IN towards Top Dollar's inhuman eye. As he blinks, we see Sarah reflected within his burning red iris, gun in hand...

...and then Sarah recalls something Grange had said.

GRANGE'S VOICE

They say the eyes are the windows to the soul... without them he'd be lost.

With renewed conviction, Sarah takes aim...

TOP DOLLAR

(laughing)

What do you think you're doing?

SARAH

Everyone's got a weakness. Even devils.

...and FIRES.

FOLLOWING THE BULLET

as it rockets towards Top Dollar's right eye, bursting through the swirling orb, continuing straight on through the back of his head.

Top Dollar's head snaps back. He SCREAMS IN AGONY, clutching his face.

TOP DOLLAR

(shaking)

...you.....bitch.....

Top Dollar's entire form seems to warp in and out of existence for a moment, switching back and forth between his face and Judah's. His flesh melts from his bones, then reforms, melts and reforms. Top Dollar's own link to this world is now tenuous at best.

Top Dollar sinks to his hands and knees, struggling to maintain control of his appropriated form. After a moment, he raises his head - his ruined eye has yet to heal itself, but his face has regenerated. For the time being, at least, Top Dollar has regained control.

TOP DOLLAR

(in obvious pain)

Close, Sarah. Close. But I've got one eye left...

(rising to his feet)

...and you're out of bullets.

Top Dollar ROARS like the monster he is. He clamps his hands around Sarah's neck, lifting her from the ground up onto the ledge of the building. He forces her back, over, over. Sarah hazards a look...

DOWN BELOW

the Day of the Dead festivities are in full-swing. A costumed procession is making its way down the street.

SARAH

fight to keep herself from falling, but even as she struggles, the breath is being strangled out of her.

TOP DOLLAR

Childhood's over, Sarah. I've looked into the abyss. Now it's your turn.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sarah GASPS. Her vision is starting to go dark around the edges. And as the darkness closes in we...

CUT TO:

EXT. LAND OF THE DEAD - DAY/NIGHT

Fade in from the dark. Ashe is floating on the surface of a black sea which is as still as a mirror. Tendrils of mist languorously drift by. We hear BIRDS, thousands of them, filling the sky with their KEENING WAILS.

Ashe opens his eyes.

THE SKIES ABOVE

are black with crows. An endless army of carrion creatures, swirling about, moving in a huge vortex of flapping wings.

Ashe climbs to his feet, discovering that he can stand on the surface of the water. Never mind the physics of it. He stares up into the sky, turning around and around...

A FIGURE

begins to rise up from the black sea, still bound in fetters of razor-wire. It's Danny, Ashe's brother.

ASHE

Danny?

DANNY

I've been waiting for you,
Ashe.

Although it appears to be Danny speaking, we can hear hints of OTHER VOICES speaking in conjunction with his own. The effect is unsettling.

ASHE

(confused)

Where are we?

DANNY

In between here and there.
It's called the Borderlands.

Ashe looks up at the screaming birds.

ASHE

What are they doing?

(CONTINUED)-

CONTINUED:

DANNY

Crying for their loved ones.
They're the souls of the people
who came before you, Ashe -
everyone who ever suffered pain
and was brought back. You
weren't the first. And you
won't be the last.

Danny holds out his hand.

DANNY

It's time, Ashe. I'm supposed
to take you to the other side.

ASHE

I can't go, Danny, not yet...

DANNY

(shaking his head)

There's nothing left for you to
do, Ashe. Our deaths have been
avenged.

ASHE

Sarah still needs me.

DANNY

You work for the dead, not the
living. There are rules,
Ashe...

Danny's voice drops to an even lower register and for a
moment Ashe begins to wonder if the entity standing before
him is truly his brother.

DANNY

...even in the afterlife.

ASHE

(angry)

Who makes the rules?

DANNY

I can't tell you that. You'll
know when you get there.

Ashe stares at his brother.

ASHE

What if I don't go?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The "other" entity's voice creeps back into Danny's words.
The effect is chilling.

DANNY

If you turn your back on the
dead now, you will be trapped
between the worlds forever.
You will be condemned to walk
the earth until the end of
time.

ASHE

(struggling)

You don't understand, I have to
go back to her. I have to.

A sadness fills Danny's eyes.

DANNY

Somehow I knew you'd say that.

ASHE

Tell me how to go back, Danny.
Please.

Danny looks up into the crow-filled sky.

DANNY

(cryptically)

Call on the other crows. Use
them to take you back.

ASHE

I don't understand.

DANNY

You don't need to.

(beat)

I have to go, Ashe. I've
already stayed too long.

And with that, Danny starts to sink below the surface of
the black sea.

ASHE

Danny, wait...

Danny continues to sink. His head is swallowed up by the
water.

DANNY

Goodbye, Ashe.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: -

Ashe drops to his knees and finds that he can reach down into the water. He grasps Danny's hand, briefly - then their hands slip apart.

ASHE

Danny!

But Danny is quickly disappearing from view, sinking back into the stygian depths. The last we see of him is his pale, mournful face staring back up at Ashe. Then that too is gone.

Ashe stands and turns his head up to the black sky, his eyes filled with sorrow and rage. He SCREAMS out to the heavens. The crows descend on him, their furious wings blotting out everything else.

CUT TO:

EXT. JUDAH EARL'S TOWER, ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Back to the here and now. Sarah claws at Top Dollar's fingers, but his grip on her throat is vice-like.

SARAH'S POV (AS HER HEAD ROLLS BACK)

The night sky, a moon wreathed in clouds. Sounds of the external world drop away as SARAH'S HEARTBEAT comes into focus. Something is moving within the luminous disc of the moon - a black shape descending to earth, drawing closer...

THE SHAPE

resolves itself into a crow.

And Sarah smiles.

The crow settles on the ledge behind Top Dollar.

TAP. TAP, TAP, TAP... The crow is TAPPING its beak on the stone.

Upon hearing the sound, Top Dollar freezes. He drops his hands from Sarah's throat and turns. Sarah rolls free, gasping for breath.

TOP DOLLAR

(unnerved, to the
crow)

Where the hell did you come
from?

A SECOND CROW

sattles down alongside the first, then another crow, and another, and another...

Within moments, a half-dozen of the black birds have gathered along the ledge, all watching Top Dollar.

CAW! Top Dollar wheels around...

MORE CROWS

are descending upon the roof, so many that the moon is being blotted out by them. The FLUTTER of their collective wings sounds like a gathering storm.

Top Dollar spins around, disoriented. The birds are mobbing him, rushing this way and that...

TOP DOLLAR

Get away from me! GET AWAY!!!

THE CROWS

cluster together to form one, seething, fluttering cloud of wings, a cloud which hovers above Top Dollar like the shadow of God...

...and out from the eye of the winged hurricane steps Ashe.

ASHE

drops down from the ledge to the roof proper, slowly approaching.

Top Dollar backs away, his eyes wide with disbelief.

TOP DOLLAR

You're gone. I sent you back.
I sent you back.

ASHE

It's not death if you refuse it.

(moving forward)

Did you really think you could destroy me? I'm not a man anymore. I'm a force of nature. I'm vengeance.

(CONTINUED)

TO REMEMBER:

Ashe comes at Top Dollar swinging, fighting with all the savagery that Top Dollar visited upon him. Ashe drives Top Dollar back and back, towards the end of the roof...

...and with every blow we see a split-second flash of Ashe and Danny's deaths - along with the deaths of Curve, Kali, and Nemo. It's almost as if Ashe is channeling their collective suffering, funneling it straight into Top Dollar.

Top Dollar staggers...

ASHE

Let's finish it.

Ashe dives forward, SLAMMING into Top Dollar, knocking him back over the roof ledge. But even as Top Dollar falls...

...he clutches at Ashe's arm, dragging him down with him!

Sarah rushes to the ledge, looking down...

SARAH'S POV

Top Dollar and Ashe plummet toward the street below - two warring gods locked in a deadly embrace.

EXT. JUDAH EARL'S TOWER, CITY STREET - NIGHT

The Day of the Dead parade marches towards us, Judah's tower rising up behind the celebrants like an unholy ziggurat. The crowd has been worked up into a frenzy. Everyone is singing and dancing, MUSIC blasts from loudspeakers, FIREWORKS light up the night...

ASHE AND TOP DOLLAR

come CRASHING DOWN through a web of power lines, snapping the snake-like SPARKING CABLES. They tear through an awning, landing within one of the crowded vending stalls. Candles, pottery, and sugar skulls go rolling every which way...

EXT. JUDAH EARL'S TOWER, ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Sarah hurries inside the elevator, pulling the security gate shut, slamming the lever into the "DOWN" position.

EXT. JUDAH EARL'S TOWER CITY STREET - NIGHT

The masked celebrants have gathered around Ashe and Top Dollar in a rough circle-- they can't move in too close because the fallen power lines are still SPARKING.

TOP DOLLAR

rises up from the debris. His face is a mask of blood. His eyes are glowing like twin stars and his lips are curled back in a feral snarl.

TOP DOLLAR

(screaming, to the crowd)

What are you looking at?!

ASHE (O.S.)

They've come to see Death get his ass kicked. Let's not disappoint them.

Top Dollar whirls...

ASHE

stands amidst a pile of shattered sugar skulls, his carbon-black eyes shining with a renewed fervor.

THE CROWS

wheel around the sky overhead, CAWING madly, urging their champion on.

Once again, the fight resumes. Top Dollar and Ashe going at it in within the makeshift ring created by the gathering costumed crowd. This surreal battle is both a literal and figurative struggle between the forces of life and death - hauntingly appropriate on this morbidly sacred night.

Top Dollar charges at Ashe. Ashe rolls back, planting a foot against Top Dollar's chest, levering him overhead. Top Dollar goes flying into a rib-cage of a skeletal Day of the Dead float...

The struggle evolves into a whirling dance of violence verging on the stylized choreography of the Hong Kong Cinema fight sequences.

EXT. JUDAH EARL'S TOWER. FRONT STEPS - NIGHT

Sarah rushes down the steps, into the Day of the Dead crowd which has gathered in the street.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Ashe and Top Dollar are tearing into one another. The struggle has moved to a raised stage where musicians had been playing. Ashe and Top Dollar move amidst an elaborate life-size diorama of skeletons and ghostly saints in garish robes.

Top Dollar tears a spear from the arms of a wooden skeleton, brandishing it like club. He swings it at Ashe again and again...

SARAH

pushes through the crowd, desperately trying to fight her way to the stage.

Top Dollar drives Ashe to the floor, pinning him with a foot against Ashe's neck. Top Dollar raises the spear above his head, ready to plunge it down...

SARAH (O.S.)

Get away from him!

SARAH

appears at Ashe's side, clutching Grange's knife. She stabs it at Top Dollar's good eye...

...at the last moment, Top Dollar deflects the blow with the spear shaft. Top Dollar falls back, caught off guard by Sarah's unexpected assault.

Ashe, having been given a moment's reprieve, climbs to his feet...

SARAH

comes at Top Dollar again, slashing the knife, screaming like a hellion. She slices open Top Dollar's cheek...

ASHE

Sarah, get back!

Too late. Top Dollar finds an opening and...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASHE

SARAH!!!

...THUNK!!! Top Dollar drives the spear up into Sarah's chest.

Sarah gasps, drops to her knees, clutching at the spear shaft. She pulls the spear out. Blood begins to well up from the wound. She stares at her blood-covered hands in disbelief, then falls back.

THE CROWS

spin about overhead faster and faster, their plaintive CRIES growing increasingly more shrill.

Ashe races towards Sarah, dropping by her side. He lifts her head...

ASHE

Oh God, Sarah...

Sarah grits her teeth, trying to ignore the pain...

SARAH

His eyes...you have to...

(gasping)

...destroy his eyes.

Ashe slowly turns back to Top Dollar, fueled by a righteous rage that's been burning since the moment of his resurrection.

TOP DOLLAR

(laughing)

We only hurt the ones we love,
Ashe.

Ashe rises. All reason is gone. The only thing that remains is an animal fury. He launches himself at Top Dollar even as the crows descend.

Top Dollar is blinded by the storm of birds - a thousand flapping wings mobbing him.

Ashe flings himself against Top Dollar, knocking him to the stage. He clamps one hand around Top Dollar's throat and raises his other up high, brandishing his ragged fingernails like talons...

ASHE

An eye for an eye!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ashe PLUNGES his fingers into Top Dollar's eye socket ripping the demon's infernal orb from its mooring, optic nerves and all.

A STORM OF AETHERIC ENERGY EXPLODES OUT from Top Dollar's empty sockets, blowing Ashe back across the stage into the skeletal diorama.

TOP DOLLAR

staggers back, clutching his ruined eyes, SHRIEKING uncontrollably. Once again the morphing process takes over him, only this time, the effects are far more devastating.

Top Dollar's flesh liquefies, running from his skull in steaming rivulets. His body seems to shrink and mummify before our very eyes.

Ashe climbs to his feet...

As Top Dollar's ghastly features dissolves and burbles away, Judah's hatchet-faced countenance resurfaces.

Judah teeters on the edge of the stage, stunned, reaching out blindly...

JUDAH

I...can't...see...!

ASHE

(full of loathing)

Here, let me help you...

Judah turns in the direction of Ashe's voice...

Ashe drives his fist into Judah's chest - a killing blow which bursts the mobster's heart.

JUDAH EARL

tumbles down into the dancing crowd below. The bodies of the Day of the Dead celebrants are so densely packed that Judah is buffeted about like a stage diver on a sea of outstretched arms.

Our final image of Judah is this: being passed hand over hand into the darkness, then finally sinking beneath the hopeless tangle of limbs.

ASHE

returns to Sarah's side, lifting her up off the stage and cradling her in his arms.

Sarah looks up at Ashe, tries to level best to smile. Her face is pale, having lost so much blood. Tears start to spill down Ashe's cheeks, causing the war-paint makeup to run.

SARAH

Ashe...

Her voice is little more than a whisper.

ASHE

You can't die, Sarah...

(sobbing)

I came back for you.

SARAH

You shouldn't have...

ASHE

I had to.

Sarah winces as an unmanageable wave of pain washes over her.

SARAH

When you dreamed about me...

(taking a ragged
breath)

Did you see this...too?

Ashe runs a hand over his eyes, wiping them clear.

ASHE

(in anguish)

I can't go with you, Sarah. I
have to stay here now.

(cursing his fate)

I have to stay.

Sarah reaches down, pulling the wedding ring from her finger.

SARAH

Take...this...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ashe takes the ring from Sarah, slipping it onto his own finger. Sarah grips his hand tightly, locking her eyes on his.

SARAH

I'll wait for you, Ashe.
Forever.

She shuts her eyes a moment, riding through another wave of pain.

SARAH

If two people really love each
other...

She inhales sharply. Breathing has become a labor for her now.

SARAH

...nothing can keep them apart.
(her voice fading)
...nothing.

Ashe nods, trying to let this thought reassure him. It's the only thing he has left to cling to.

SARAH'S POV

Ashe's face, surrounded by a nimbus of light, thousand of crows circling overhead. We're falling away from them. Down, down, down. And as we fall, we hear a FLUTTERING OF WINGS.

ON SARAH'S FACE

Her eyes lose focus. Her head goes slack in Ashe's arms. She's gone.

Ashe lowers his lips to her, kissing her one final time.

Ashe cradles Sarah's lifeless body in his arms, gently rocking back and forth, tears streaming down his cheeks. And as we pull back from them, we realize that the scene mirrors the prophetic image from Sarah's own painting - the woman dying in the arms of her lover, surrounded by a gallery of skull-masked celebrants.

Ashe stands, lifting Sarah in his arms. He turns to leave, coming down the steps of the stage to the street below...

THE DAY OF THE DEAD CROWD

slowly part for him, revealing a path of marigold petals leading away down the street. It's almost as if, by some kind of silent consensus, the crowd has come to understand what has happened here this night.

DAWN IS COMING -

We can see its faint glow emerging beyond the cityscape. And for the first time in a long while the ever-present pall of smog seems to have lifted.

ASHE

moves through the crowd carrying Sarah in his arms. The people close ranks behind him and we...

CUT TO:

EXT. INNER-CITY CHURCH - DAWN

The same church we visited the night before. Ashe, still carrying Sarah in his arms, enters the sanctuary.

INT. INNER-CITY CHURCH, SANCTUARY - DAWN

The church is aglow with candles. Ashe lays Sarah's body down in front of the offrenda, folding her arms across her chest, leaving her in a state of repose. He stands, taking in one last look.

As Ashe moves to leave, he sees the elderly priest he had spoken to earlier.

PRIEST

Why are you still here?

ASHE

Because I have nowhere left to go.

Ashe steps past the priest, moving towards the doorway and the daylight beyond.

PRIEST

What will you do, then?

ASHE

(looking back)

This city is filled with shadows.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASHE (CONT'D)

One more won't make it any darker.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOCKS, COMMERCIAL WATERFRONT - DUSK

Ashe stands at the end of the pier, staring down into the silent waters where his natural life ended. He sees his own reflection there, rippling in the gentle current.

Ashe looks to his hand where Sarah's ring now rests.

ASHE

One day.

Ashe removes the ring from his finger, throwing it out into the sea.

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

We track with the ring as it sinks beneath the waves - its golden hue catching the sunlight filtering down from up above. Gradually the ring drops from view, gathered up in the nebulous embrace of eternity.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Virgil, the bag man, pushes his shopping cart across the street. He pauses by a trashcan, rummages through the contents - success - a crumpled soda can.

As Virgil tosses the can into his cart he stops, glancing up behind him.

VIRGIL

(scanning the shadows)

Anyone there?

The night doesn't answer. Virgil shivers and moves on.

VIRGIL

Ghost walking over your grave,
Virgil.

WE RISE UP

from the steam-cloaked city street as Virgil rolls his cart away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Up and up, past soot-coated building facades and grimy windows, past aerial antennae and ulcerated billboards, blinking neon and rusted spires, until we find...

ASHE

keeping vigil from the pinnacle of Judah Earl's tower, surveying the cityscape like an angel from on high.

A crow lands on Ashe's shoulder, joining the watch. And on that lonely image we...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LIMBO - DAY/NIGHT

A heavy mist hangs before us - endless and impenetrable. And out of that primordial fog a CROW materializes, flying towards the camera in slow motion.

SARAH (V.O.)

I believe there's a place where
the restless souls wander.
Burdened by the weight of their
own sadness, they cannot enter
Heaven...

Presently a second shape materializes - a FIGURE ON HORSEBACK, galloping after the Crow.

SARAH (V.O.)

And so they wait, trapped
between our world and the next,
endlessly searching for a way
to rid themselves of their pain
- in the hopes that somehow,
some day, they will be
reunited...

As the dark rider comes towards us, we realize that it's Sarah whose baleful eyes are now shining behind the ironv mask war paint.

SARAH (V.O.)

...with the ones they love.

Sarah sweeps past us, disappearing once again into the mists of time.

THE END