

UNDERWORLD

by

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TEASER

EXT. HOLLYWOOD-- NIGHT

We float over the urban sprawl of Hollywood, over sirens and screams, over night clubs and homeless kids, over limos and wannabees, headed towards a blown out bar:

The Ninth Circle Pub.

INT. NINTH CIRCLE PUB-- NIGHT

In the darkened bar, we find ten happily drunken guys in the midst of a roast. A banner reads:

"Happy 35th, Smythe!!"

A cherubic guy named ORSON has the floor, as the audience jeers him.

ORSON
(quieting crowd)
We're getting towards the end, pipe down,
already.

On the wall behind him, the slide projector projects the image of some guy with shaggy hair, a wide tie and buck teeth.

ORSON
Now take a look at this guy.

The crowd explodes with laughter-- they've been at it awhile.

ORSON
Front and center, Smythe. So we can get
a comparison.

The crowd cheers as CHANDLER SMYTHE rises off a bar stool. There's been quite a change since his high school photo. Today, he's mid-30's, rough, unshaven. Wearing a beaten leather jacket and old-school cords. Almost cool.

ORSON
(comparing the two)
Notice the feathered butt-cut has been
swapped for a kind of refugee look. The
interstate-sized tie is out; the casual
open collar is in.

SMYTHE
Your girlfriend seemed to like it.

The crowd laughs. They're wasted.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ORSON

Listen to this guy, the class clown.
Enough outta you.

Orson clicks the slide: we see Smythe is naked and handcuffed, wearing only a St. Patrick's day hat. Behind him, the remnants of a parade.

ORSON

Oh yea. This one. Ever the political activist, here's Smythe being arrested. Notice the respect for authority, the straight-laced demeanor....

The slide clicks again. We see the header on a newspaper column: it's Smythe's.

ORSON

...which is often echoed in his scathing investigative journalism.

The headline reads: "Headless Body Found in Topless Bar".

SMYTHE

Hey. Those were the facts.

The crowd laughs again.

Orson clicks: we see a slide of Smythe with his 8 year-old son Ben. Beside him is the family cat, Dingo.

CROWD

BEN!!!!

Clearly, the crowd loves the kid.

ORSON (cont'd)

We all know Ben. A great kid, against all odds. Lucky for him, he got his mother's looks.

SMYTHE

Yea. Reminds me of her.

Something about the picture saddens Smythe. The crowd seems to pick it up.

ORSON

On a serious note, I'd like to propose a toast:

(sarcastic)

To Chandler Smythe. A guy without a cynical bone in his body. A man deeply in touch with his inner child.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Guffaws from the peanut gallery.

ORSON

(continuing)

A man who believes boxing is a depraved and violent sport. Who finds the idea of killing animals for food abominable. A kind, gentle poet.

(beat)

Just feel free to chime in any time, fellas.

Nobody says a word. The crowd is totally silent.

ORSON

Well, that's it then.

The crowd cracks up.

ORSON

Happy Birthday, Smythe. We love you in spite of yourself.

The crowd all raises their glasses, and Smythe cracks a slow smile.

SMYTHE

I love me too.

He pulls a cigarette, fumbles for a light. Can't find one.

Some guy with an earring through his right eyebrow throws him a matchbook.

ANGLE ON:

The matchbook. It's for a hotel called 'The Overlook Hotel'.

EARRING GUY

Keep 'em, bro.

(smiling)

It's your birthday.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREET-- NIGHT

It's later. Smythe waves goodbye to Orson and leaves the bar, headed for his car. Behind him, the neon light of the Ninth Circle cuts off for the night.

Smythe reaches an old Ford Bronco, fumbles in his pocket for his keys.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Suddenly from down the street, Smythe 'hears a NOISE. Something like a cry. Smythe strains to see.

Suddenly, we hear the sound again. Smythe looks down the forlorn block. Something is lurking in the shadows.

SMYTHE
Somebody down there?

No answer, but a SHADOW slithers across the wall of a tenement. We hear the MUFFLED CRY again.

Smythe takes a few cautious steps towards the sound.

The CRIES grow anguished, filled with pain.

SMYTHE
Hey, buddy!! You need some help down there?

Still no response, and as Smythe walks forward, he can make out two distinct bodies for the first time.

One man attacking another. Probably a mugging.

Smythe looks nervously over his shoulder. This is Los Angeles, no need to be a hero. Two blocks away, we see a police cruiser intersect the street.

Smythe yells for the cruiser's attention, but it rolls away unawares.

SMYTHE takes a few more steps, cautiously. He kicks over a trash can, trying to make noise.

He whistles loudly, but the attack only intensifies.

We hear what sounds like BONES BREAKING.

Smythe pauses, and we dolly in to see the concern on his face. This is serious.

Smythe reaches down picks up a trash can. He hoists it over his head, and throws it from twenty feet-- it crashes to the ground, echoing down the lonely street.

For the first time, the attacker acknowledges Smythe's presence. He looks up with a start, and the two lock stares.

The attacker is backlit and silhouetted- we can't make out his face.

SMYTHE
Lay off him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Something like a laugh comes from the darkened man.

The attacker takes a step forward, and then, with no warning, *turns abruptly and flees*. His footsteps echo off the buildings.

Smythe approaches the victim, but stops because he has stepped in something:

BLOOD.

An expanding pool around the victim. He has been stabbed. A lot. He looks to be in his mid-thirties, Hispanic.

SMYTHE

Ohhh, jeezusss.

VICTIM

Go, amigo. Quickly.

SMYTHE

Right. Gotta go. To a hospital. Gotta get you to a hospital....

VICTIM

It is too late for me, Chandler Smythe.

Smythe looks up, surprised.

SMYTHE

What'd you say?

The victim grabs Smythe's hand, and presses a small trinket into his hand.

Some strange piece of jewelry. A NECKLACE, containing a reddish crystal in the center.

VICTIM

Take this. Whatever you do, don't let them have it. Promise me.

SMYTHE

Look, I'm gonna run down to that phone over there, get you an ambulance--

VICTIM

Vamos, Chandler, vamos! They will return soon...

SMYTHE

What are you talking about? They who?

Suddenly there is a commotion down the street.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Rounding the corner is not one dark figure, but six.

VICTIM

Los diablos. They will kill you. Run.

Smythe looks to the stranger, unsure of what to do.

VICTIM

Run, Chandler. For God's sake, RUN!!!

There seems to be no choice. Six to one are lousy odds. Smythe is torn, but the assailants are closing. He turns, and begins running down the alley.

As he does, he glances over his shoulder:

The thugs are attacking the Hispanic guy on the ground. Something wet is happening. Smythe slows, knowing they are killing him, as one of the thugs looks up. He begins towards Smythe.

Smythe turns, starting to run. Footsteps fall in behind him.

Smythe trips on a bag of trash, falls. He gets up, starts running harder.

The footsteps are closer now.

Suddenly, Smythe feels a hand on his shoulder.....and he's tackled from behind.

He has time to get a quick look at his pursuer:

It's the guy who gave him a light in the bar. But different.

Eyes with no pupils. Sharpened teeth.

Something *other*.

FADE TO BLACK:

ACT ONE

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM-- TIME UNKNOWN

We are a non-descript white room. Clinical almost. Smythe is seated at a table, looking like hell; across from him are two empty chairs.

After a beat, two men in plain grey suits enter. Their names are FORD and DECKER. Both look to be about 35, both seem serious.

The taller one, FORD, lays a dossier on the table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FORD
Morning, Smythe.

SMYTHE
(holding head)
Where the hell am I?

DECKER
Think of it as headquarters.

SMYTHE
How'd I get here?

DECKER
Little angel brought you.

Decker smiles.

SMYTHE
You get the license plate on that truck
that hit me?

FORD
Dunno yet. This guy ring a bell?

Ford shows him a PHOTO of a skinhead. He has a golden EARRING through his right eyebrow. *It's the guy that gave Smythe a light in the bar.*

SMYTHE
That's the truck, alright.

The two look at one another for a beat, then back to Smythe.

FORD
Not gonna mince words, Mr. Smythe. What I'm about to say is gonna come as a shock. Take a moment to take a deep breath and collect yourself.

SMYTHE
I'm collected.

FORD
First the bad news.
(beat)
Fact is, you were murdered last night.
Dead on arrival at Cedars Sinai Hospital.
Time of Death: 3:14 A.M.

Ford slides the death report to Smythe. Smythe reads it and reacts the only way you can when someone tells you you're dead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SMYTHE

Well. That's a relief.

DECKER

This is not a joke, Smythe. You got killed, plain and simple. Nothing too unusual in that. But, you were witness to something that might be called, well....peculiar.

SMYTHE

You guys....are the worst actors I've ever seen.

(beat)

Orson put you up to this?

Decker's seen this reaction before. Ford pulls out some photos that show a mortally wounded Smythe lying on a deserted street corner.

FORD

You left a pretty grisly corpse, Smythe.

(beat)

Don't you think?

SMYTHE

Impressive. Orson's outdone himself with this one.

(laughs to himself, playing along)

Well, let's see...do I get a phone call?

DECKER

You want to talk to your lawyer?

SMYTHE

No, I wanna talk to my son. Tell him I'm okay.

DECKER

You're not okay.

(beat)

You're dead.

Smyhte looks at them for a moment. Are they insane?

SMYTHE

You guys won't give it a rest, will you?

FORD

This is not a joke, Mr. Smythe. Come with me.

FORD shows Smythe the door.

INT. MORGUE-- TIME UNKNOWN

The two suits follow Smythe into a morgue, the kind with the big filing cabinets of dead bodies.

Ford goes and stands by one of the cabinets. It's marked with a name: Chandler Smythe.

Smythe looks at him quizzically.

FORD

Go ahead. See for yourself.

Tentatively Smythe pulls open the filing cabinet. Inch by inch.

The corpse looks like it was mauled by a pack of wolves. But it's definitely, irrefutably Smythe.

DECKER

Looks like you put up a pretty good fight.

Smythe looks down at his own dead body. He reaches out to touch the face:

Smythe's hand passes through his own face.

FORD

You'll notice you've lost your corporeal form.

DECKER

You're in the spirit world now, kid. Poltergeist.

Decker smiles and shuts the cabinet. On the slam, we...

CUT TO:

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM-- TIME UNKNOWN

Back in the interrogation room. Smythe is strung out, looking totally fragged. Much less confident than he did.

FORD

Now you see, Mr. Smythe, in the process of dying, you saw something you shouldn't have.

SMYTHE

(holding his head, upset)
Is it hot in here to you? I'm not feeling so great...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FORD

Just try and think back to last night.
What do you remember?

Smythe looks at the guy, swallows hard.

SMYTHE

I remember...that kid...the mugger. It
seemed like he turned into something.
Some kind of animal...

FORD

A more accurate term would be *demon*.
That's what he was, in point of fact. A
demon.

SMYTHE

A demon. Check.

DECKER

Right. And the guy you saw getting
mugged was one of our operatives.

SMYTHE

Uh-huh.

FORD

See, Mr. Smythe, beneath the facade of
everyday life, a battle is being waged.
A clandestine war.

SMYTHE

You mean back on Earth.

DECKER

Correct. On Earth. Now this isn't some
petty gang battle, it isn't about
corporate greed, it isn't about survival
of the fittest. This is a different kind
of battle, Smythe.

DECKER

The battle of good and evil, to put it in
layman's terms.

FORD

Light versus dark. Us versus them.

DECKER

Essentially, what you saw was a skirmish
in that larger conflict. Something few
mortals ever see.

Smythe cracks a smile.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SMYTHE

I take it back. You guys are good actors.

Suddenly Smythe makes a *break for the door*.

FORD and DECKER just let him go.

As Smythe moves towards the exit, the door begins to recede. The faster he moves, the faster it pulls away from him. He turns back to Ford and Decker to find them only a few feet away. Freakiness.

Smythe isn't going anywhere.

DECKER

Finished?

SMYTHE

With you two.

FORD

Look, Smythe, we've looked into your file, and you didn't exactly lead an exemplary life. Right now you're on the bubble. So I'd sit down and listen up if I were you.

SMYTHE

What do you mean, I'm on the bubble?

DECKER

He means you might not get in upstairs.

SMYTHE

Upstairs? You mean heaven, right?

DECKER

It has different names.

FORD

C'mon, Smythe-- who you trying to kid? You were a type-A workaholic. Obsessed with being a reporter. Granted, you were good at it-- but it cost you in other areas.

DECKER

Like being a father.

FORD

You were totally self-involved, Smythe. It was a good thing your wife--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SMYTHE
My wife? My wife is dead.

DECKER
We know. She cruised right in.

FORD
Great gal, fantastic Mom, if I remember. You'd think you'd of picked up the slack with Ben after she died. But you didn't, and that makes things a little dubious upstairs. They just might hit you with the reject stamp.

DECKER
Which would mean life in hell, Smythe.

Smythe looks down, dejected.

DECKER
So we're here to offer you a deal, Smythe. Give you a chance to redeem yourself.

SMYTHE
What kind of deal?

FORD
We'd like you to become an operative for the Corp.

DECKER
(ironically)
Fight evil. Save souls. Be a hero.

Smythe eyes them for a long moment. They seem totally serious. Slowly, he sits down.

SMYTHE
Why me?

FORD
Let's just say you got the tenacity to pick on guys bigger than you.

DECKER
And you have a certain... willingness to see things through. We could use a guy like that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

FORD

You put in a couple of years as an operative, you could make things right with Ben. Maybe up your chances of getting in upstairs.

Smythe looks at them like they're loopy.

DECKER

C'mon, Smythe. We're giving you a chance here. You get to return to the world of the living. Watch out for your kid. Not many people get the chance to do it over.

Smythe thinks a beat. This is a lot to process.

SMYTHE

(almost to himself)
I gotta watch out for my kid.

Decker pulls out a golden PEN. Smythe takes it uncertainly.

FORD pulls out a parchment scroll and unfurls it. Hands it across the table to Smythe.

DECKER

You're making the right call.

The letterhead carries an Insignia of an Ankh-- the symbol of the Corp.

SMYTHE

(to himself)
Can't just leave Ben.

Smythe signs beneath a chunk of fine print, on a single line marked "Candidate".

DECKER

The sentimental call. Welcome back, pal.

Smythe hands the paper back to Ford, who folds it into an envelope and puts it in his jacket.

Smythe leans over and signs the paper.

SMYTHE

Happy? OK, when do I--

SMASH TO:

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD--EARLY MORNING

SMYTHE
 (still in mid-sentence)
 ---start....

Smythe is standing in front of an antiquated bookstore, back in the land of the living. Smythe puts his hand to his face--he's tangible again.

He looks up to the shop, its window filled with creature-feature movie memorabilia. He looks up to the signage: CREATURE FEATURE BOOKSHOP AND CURIOS. There is an Ankh insignia in the window.

INT. BOOKSHOP-- DAY

Smythe enters the store, filled with tall stacks of musty books. They have creepy titles: "Book of the Dead", "Osiris", "Primitive Mythology", "Religion and the Decline of Magic."

SMYTHE
 Hello? Gandalf?

Nothing. There is a blue glow coming from behind the stacks, giving the darkened bookstore an eerie feeling. Coming around, Smythe sees the source of the illumination: a large fishtank, filled with odd aquarium life. And through it, a man in shadow, distorted by the water.

VIRGIL
 Be with you in a second.

Smythe comes around the fishtank and does as told, sizing the guy up. He's mid-thirties, rugged, and has his head engrossed in a book.

VIRGIL
 I'd forgotten how nasty some of this stuff is.

The man points to a ceramic statuette of the egyptian god of war. A man with a jackal's head.

VIRGIL
 They used to do that, you know.

SMYTHE
 Do what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VIRGIL

Turn people into dogs.
 (smiling)
 I'm Virgil.

SMYTHE

Chandler Smythe.

VIRGIL

I know. I'm assigned to walk you through the training process. Make sure you chew your food and floss. Throw some of that fish food in there, will ya?

Smythe nods, feeds the fish. He puts his finger in the water, playing with them.

VIRGIL

Careful, though-- those ain't goldfish.

Smythe yanks his finger out of the water.

VIRGIL

As I guess you've figured out by now, the world ain't exactly as it seems. There's...a conflict...over souls...hey don't overfeed them. They'll bloat. They hate it when they bloat.

Virgil goes over and pulls down a copy of PARADISE LOST by John Milton.

VIRGIL (cont'd)

Now you've been assigned to LA, where it'll be your job to keep the citizenry from signing on with the Morlocks.

SMYTHE

I assume that's the bad guys.

VIRGIL

Exactly. We prevent people from selling their souls, try to get back those who have, and eliminate a few lost causes. Pretty simple.

SMYTHE

So I'm part guidance counselor, part bounty hunter.

VIRGIL

Yeah. You try to talk people off the ledge, and if you can't, you push 'em over. You'll catch on fast, trust me.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VIRGIL (cont'd)
 (pulling out a packet)
 Here's your regulation book! It'll give you a give you a feel for the basics. And here are some fake ID's, aliases, etc. Last but not least, a little per diem.

SMYTHE
 They give us money?

VIRGIL
 Still accepted in LA, last time I checked.

SMYTHE
 I just thought that it might be something....a little more....

VIRGIL
 Magical? Look around, Smythe. You're in Hollywood. All the usual rules still apply.

SMYTHE
 So if everything's the same-- how do I know who these Morlocks guys are?

Virgil smiles.

VIRGIL
 That's the bad news.
 (beat)
 You don't.

INT. VIRGIL'S 1969 EL CAMINO-- NIGHT

Smythe and Virgil cruise Hollywood in Virgil's vintage El Camino.

The car stops in front of a blown out hotel on Wilcox: The Mark Twain. A homeless guy is out front mumbling about judgement day.

VIRGIL
 OK. First assignment. Gonna start you with a bang.

Smythe nods.

VIRGIL
 Now I want you to go in there, third floor. Apartment C. Knock. A Latino guy'll come to the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SMYTHE

Who is he?

VIRGIL

Luis Rivera. Utter hairball. Haunts LAX, waiting for the farm girls to get off the el cheapo airlines from Kansas. Gives 'em the usual Hollywood tap dance: tells them how talented they are, gives 'em bread and water and then converts them into Satanists.

SMYTHE

Like Helter Skelter?

VIRGIL

No. Manson was actually just nuts. Take this.

Virgil gives him a snub-nosed .38. Smythe takes it.

VIRGIL

(explaining)

That's the safety. All you have to do is-

SMYTHE

I know how to use it.

VIRGIL

Just checking. I should warn you, though-- can't kill a Morlock with a gun-- it'll just knock 'em down.

SMYTHE

You want me to kill somebody?

VIRGIL

Not somebody. *Something*. Not that it's standard practice, but this guy Luis is a lost cause. There's no talking him off the ledge. So just go up there, pull your weapon-- I'd aim for the head if I were you. That'll stun him pretty good. Now to finish him off---

Virgil pulls out a small, ornate DAGGER, and hands it to Smythe.

VIRGIL (cont'd)

--you're gonna need one of these.

SMYTHE

Why this?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

VIRGIL

It's been soaked in the blood of an innocent.

Smythe looks at the dagger.

VIRGIL

Don't sweat it, kid. It was no one you knew.

INT. TENEMENT-- NIGHT-- CONTINUOUS

Smythe is reluctantly making his way up the stairs of the decrepid building. He eases down the hall, approaching Apartment C. Someone has drawn a smiley face with the caption, "Abandon all hope, ye who enter here" onto the wall next to the door.

He knocks. A young girl, maybe 17, answers, dressed in a Rush 2112 t-shirt. Her name's JEANNIE O.S. we can hear the shower running.

SMYTHE

Luis around?

JEANNIE

He's asleep.

SMYTHE

You must be his girlfriend.

JEANNIE

Don't make me gag. He's just letting me stay here for awhile until I get on my feet. I just moved here, you know.

SMYTHE

From Kansas, right?

JEANNIE

How'd you know?

SMYTHE

Lucky guess.

Suddenly LUIS appears from the back of the room. He's wet, at towel draped around him. Smythe squints at him....the guy looks familiar.

Then Smythe realizes.

It's the same guy who killed him in the alley.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUIS
You the cable...guy?

Trailing off, Luis puts it together even as Smythe does.

Luis tosses his towel to the ground, and hightails it into a back hallway.

Smythe shoves Jeannie out of the way, and draws his gun.

The girl begins to scream a little.

INT. HALLWAY-- DAY-- CONTINUOUS

Smythe enters a darkened hall. At the end of it, steam pours from a softly lit bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM-- DAY-- CONTINUOUS

Smythe throws opens the door, heavy steam billowing out. It's impossible to see. He moves in, gun raised, the hot steam condensing on his face. An opaque shower curtain stands ahead.

Smythe's hand grasps the curtain; he counts off a beat, and rips it back.

Nothing. Totally empty.

Smythe backs up, feeling he's been had. He runs into the hallway, where...

INT. HALLWAY-- DAY

BAM!!!! He's met head on with fire poker. The blow knocks him off his feet, and sends his gun flying. Above him stands Jeannie the farm girl.

JEANNIE
Run, Louie!!! He's packing!!!!

Smythe sweeps his leg, driving his boot into the girl's shin. She goes down, as Smythe rises, lunging to retrieve his piece.

Suddenly a BOOT comes down on his HAND. Smythe looks up to see Luis standing over him, and we get our first close up look: he looks a little feverish, kinda deranged. Sweat is beaded on his forehead.

LUIS
(almost delirious)
Blanca es negro, mi amigo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Smythe ignores him, pulls his DAGGER, 'and jams it into LUIS' foot.

Luis screams and falls backward, and Smythe quickly grabs his piece, as Luis limps back into....

INT. BEDROOM-- DAY

...the back bedroom. Smythe rushes in, just in time to see Luis hightailing it out the window onto the fire escape. Smythe rushes forward and leans out the window, weapon aimed.

Rivera is scaling down fire escape. It's an easy shot, but Smythe hesitates, unsure.

Behind him, Virgil enters the bedroom, drawn by the commotion.

VIRGIL

You got a shot?

Smythe nods. Luis is a sitting duck.

VIRGIL

Take it. What are you waiting for???

Smythe is hesitating. Something is bothering him, strain on his face....

FADE TO BLACK:

ACT TWO

INT. LUIS RIVERA'S APARTMENT-- DAY

Smythe is hesitating as Rivera escapes. Virgil shoves Smythe out of the way, and leans out of the window.

Rivera has reached the bottom of the fire escape and is dropping to the ground. Virgil UNLOADS his weapon.

The shots slam into the pavement, but none of them find the mark. Rivera makes a clean get away.

Virgil pulls back in the window, as Smythe puts a hand to his brow, which bleeding profusely from where the farm girl hit him.

VIRGIL

You know how long it took us to make that guy?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SMYTHE

Could I get a towel or something? I'm bleeding all over the place.

VIRGIL

Two years, Smythe. Two years to get this guy.

SMYTHE

Why didn't you tell me I was mortal, Virgil? I didn't think I could get, you know, wounded or anything.

VIRGIL (cont'd)

I told you all the usual rules apply Smythe. You get smacked by a bus, nobody can save you.

SMYTHE

So what woulda happened if that freak had shot me?

VIRGIL

You'd be dead. Which begs the question--
(shaking his head)
--why didn't you take the shot?

SMYTHE

The overt homicide aspect, I guess.

VIRGIL

Luis ain't a person, he's a Morlock.
It' ain't murder.

SMYTHE

You coulda told me it was the guy who...

VIRGIL

Whacked you? Ignorance is bliss, Smythe. If you had taken care of business when you had the chance, everything would have been fine. Now let's fleece the place before the police show.

SMYTHE

What am I looking for?

VIRGIL

Contacts, addresses, photographs. Links to anyone Rivera may have corrupted.

Smythe nods, listless. He stumbles to Luis's desk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

In the background, Virgil starts to ransack the place. Smythe pauses, disconcerted at his manic energy.

VIRGIL (cont'd)
 You find any jewelry or anything,
 talismans or whatever, don't touch it.
 Just give it to me. OK?

Smythe nods, and returns to looking at Luis' desk. There is a copy of 'LA Weekly' on it. A notice for a concert is circled in red ink:

"New Matrix recording artist CHARLOTTE DEVANE at the HELLFIRE CLUB. First area appearance"

On Luis's desk, we see more photos of the same girl. An attractive red-head: CHARLOTTE DEVANE.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. VIRGE'S EL CAMINO-- NIGHT

Virge and Smythe are back in the car, driving through blinking yellow lights. They pull up to a curb.

Smythe looks up to see an ominous art deco apartment building. A red neon sign proclaims "Ravenswood" on its roof.

SMYTHE
 What's this?

VIRGIL
 Safe house. Impenetrable to Morlock assault. Also known as your new digs.

INT. RAVENSWOOD-- NIGHT

Smythe and Virgil enters a creepy old Hollywood Apartment building-- the Ravenswood. A Hop-Frog-looking bellhop looks up from watching the Lakers game.

VIRGIL
 Sup, Mace. Got you a new tenant.

MACE
 Not another one.
 (to Smythe)
 How you doing, Millicent Washington,
 friends call me Mace. Glad to have you
 at the Ravenswood, Mr. Smythe.

Mace gives a strange giggle, and throws Smythe a key.

INT. HALLWAY-- NIGHT

A doddering OLD WOMAN in a nightgown slinks down the hall, as Virgil delivers Smythe to his room.

Smythe forces a smile as the old woman looks up. She has a cataract in one eye. It's milk white. Virgil notices Smythe ogling.

VIRGIL

That's Ellie. Future Alzhiemer candidate. Take everything she says with a pound of salt. Isn't that right, Ellie?

Ellie grunts, and shuffles away into her apartment.

INT. SMYTHE'S ROOM--NIGHT

A neon sign reads RAVENSWOOD flickers outside the window as the two enter.

VIRGIL

Laundry is in the basement. Your rent is taken care of. If you have any problems, buzz Mace-- he'll come if the Lakers aren't playing. Something wrong?

Smythe nods.

SMYTHE

Yeah. I had a question.

VIRGIL

What is it.

SMYTHE

I was wondering if I could go to my funeral.

VIRGIL

Contact with those from your previous life is forbidden.

SMYTHE

I can't see my kid?!?

VIRGIL

He won't recognize you. Nobody will.

SMYTHE

(getting upset)
But Ford and Decker gave me this whole line about being a better---

(-CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VIRGIL

They said you could watch over Ben. In a guardian angel kind of way. But no direct contact.

SMYTHE

But that's not--

VIRGIL (cont'd)

Smythe, the bad guys make you for an agent, they send a hit squad to whack your family. So contact ain't worth it.

Smythe paces around, really annoyed.

SMYTHE

I just wanna see my son. I won't make contact. I just wanna see him.

Virgill considers this for a moment. It's clear Smythe really wants to do this.

VIRGIL

Long as you don't talk to anybody, I guess it's alright.

(beat)

It's your funeral.

Virgil smiles and exits. Smythe is finally left alone.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SMYTHE'S ROOM--LATER

Smythe lies on his bed, absentmindedly watching an old episode of "Bewitched". He suddenly kills the tube and looks to his bedside table.

There lies the Corp handbook.

He slowly reaches over, and picks it up.

DISSOLVE TO:

HANDBOOK MONTAGE

The cover page of the Handbook, from Smythe's point of view. It is an ornate book, with Gothic lettering.

We see Smythe's hands turn the page, and watch as Smythe's finger traces the opening sentence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As he does, a deep voiced narrator begins to read the words we see on the page, almost like the opening of a fairy tale. Very dramatic.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 (extremely melodramatic)
 The battle has raged since time immemorial, and has come to be known as the UnderWar. You are now a soldier in this, the greatest of all conflicts: the battle of Good against Evil.

CUT TO:

Smythe, reading skeptically.

SMYTHE
 (to himself)
 Who writes this crap?

DISSOLVE TO:

Durer-like etchings of great battles throughout history; of demons and magic talismans; of bizarre pagan rites and strange-looking animals.

Lastly, we see a striking rendering of four riders, each upon a black steed. The caption reads:

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

Smythe takes a lingering look at the ominous drawings.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
 Our darkest hour occurred in 1353, when a group of Frenchmen defected from the Catholic church and began practicing Black Magic, led by a powerful warlock named Montailou. It was Montailou's hope to resurrect evil incarnate-- known to history as the Four Horseman of the Apocalypse. The Black Death came with them, and more than 20 million perished. When all appeared lost, a single warrior rose to stop them. This soldier, known as Agat, succeeded in capturing the souls of the dark riders in four gilded amulets, which he hid before taking his own life. Thus securing the location of the amulets forever.

The amulets are depicted in rough hewn drawings, and we...

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

INT. UNKNOWN SPACE-- NIGHT

...the same AMULET, now seen around Luis Rivera's neck.

NARRATOR (cont'd)
Whosoever may unite these stones,
decides the destiny of man.

We recognize the amulet as part of the NECKLACE that Smythe was given at the beginning of the show.

We pull out further, finding ourselves in a drab room, lit by an exposed bulb. Luis lies shivering on a steelframed bed.

He's definitely looked better.

LUIS
Mas agua....mas agua...

Luis keeps shaking like a leaf, covered in sweat. Jeannie enters carrying a glass of water.

JEANNIE
You just caught one of those nasty Asian bugs that makes your digits swell.

LUIS
(mumbling incoherently)
...he waits for me....he waits...

Luis is rubbing the AMULET like it's the Hope Diamond.

JEANNIE
You know, ever since you got that little trinket, you been acting like a smack junkie. Give me it--

Jeannie reaches for it, and Luis recoils violently. He clutches his temples, his heart pounding. His eyes look as if they might pop out of his head.

LUIS
You are... no longer... safe with....me.

JEANNIE
I coulda told you that a long time ago.

Luis lunges for Jeannie, grabbing her with both hands and sending the glass flying.

Luis rises, his bare feet stepping on the shards of glass.

He doesn't play the pain, but instead looks to Jeannie with the eyes of a madman.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUIS

I...will hang you from...meathooks.
Peel the flesh...from...your...face.

That's a hell of a statement. For the first time, a hint of fear washes over Jeannie's face. She takes a step back.

JEANNIE

You know Luis, there's no need for that macho bullshit. There is really something wrong with you.

As Luis takes a step forward, we pan off the two of them, to their SHADOWS on the wall.

Luis' shadow begins to change: dark wings spring from his back; a reptilian tail extends from his hindquarters.

Jeannie's screams rise into the night, and becomes....

INT. SMYTHE'S ROOM-- MORNING

.... someone screaming outside Smythe's window. He's still in bed, and groggily looks at his clock. It says 10:22-- Smythe has slept late.

Smythe goes to his window, looks out. Virgil is on the lawn.

VIRGIL

Jeezus, Smythe!! You're gonna be late for your own funeral!! Heh heh heh.

Virgil just kills himself.

EXT. RAVENSWOOD-- DAY

Smythe exits, tucking in his shirt, headed for Virge's idling El Camino.

INT. EL CAMINO-- DAY

Virge is nursing a coffee.

VIRGIL

See this?

Virgil shows Smythe a NEWSPAPER. A HEADLINE reads:

"Girl Found Murdered in Alley"

We see a photo of JEANNIE, the farm girl.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VIRGIL

Luis has been busy. That's what happens when you don't take the shot. You get a bigger body count.

SMYTHE

Are you saying it's my fault she's dead?

VIRGIL

If the shoe fits, Smythe. Let it be a lesson to you.

(beat, softening)

How'd you sleep?

SMYTHE

Lousy.

VIRGIL

Handbook'll do that to you. Give you nightmares. Some agents take the thing literally, I swear to God. You read the rules of Engagement?

SMYTHE

Uh-huh. Protect your eyes. First thing a Morlock'll go for.

VIRGIL

Yeah. That kills me. Like you wouldn't protect your eyes anyway. There's only one thing you really gotta know.

SMYTHE

What's that?

VIRGIL

The Virgil 60% rule.

SMYTHE

Musta missed it.

VIRGIL (cont'd)

You never get a clear indication of when you're dealing with a Morlock. My rule of thumb is to get 60% sure. Then pull the trigger.

SMYTHE

Right.

(nodding, trying to convince himself)

50 percent.

EXT. CSMETARY--DAY

Virgil and Smythe walk up on Smythe's funeral service, already in progress.

They keep their distance from a gathering of about 40 people stand around the headstone, as a preacher delivers last rites.

VIRGIL
Decent turnout.

Smythe musters a weak smile.

We recognize many of the faces from the bar in the first scene. His best friend Orson is there, in the best suit he could muster, wearing shades. The sight of his pal wiping tears from his eyes chokes Smythe up a bit.

The preacher finishes and the crowd parts slightly.

Smythe catches sight of a grieving woman holding the hand of a young boy. We recognize it as BEN.

He steps forward, and lays a ratty looking BASEBALL GLOVE on the grave. Ben is wearing his-- so it must be Smythe's mitt.

BEN
Bye, Pop.

We push in on Smythe. Instinctively he steps forward to comfort his son, but Virgil catches his arm in warning. Contact with the former life is forbidden.

Smythe mists up as he watches his son scooped up by his sister Elizabeth, and taken back to the car.

We zoom in on the BASEBALL GLOVE, leaning up forlornly against the headstone.

INT. VIRGIL'S CAR-- NIGHT

Virgil and Smythe get in. Smythe is visible upset, as he watches the mourners disperse.

SMYTHE
(sotto)
I shouldn't have gone.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HELLFIRE CLUB-- NIGHT

Hot swing music pours out of a crowded Hollywood watering hole. Virgil and Smythe hop out of the El Camino, approach the bar.

INT. HELLFIRE CLUB-- NIGHT

The fellas scoot past the bouncer, and enter the crowded bar. On a small stage some roadies are setting up. "Hell" by the Squirrel Nut Zippers is playing on the P.A.

VIRGIL

Alright. Keep your eyes peeled for Rivera.

Smythe rubbernecks looking around the bar. Virgil tugs his sleeve.

VIRGIL

In a cool way, Smythe.

SMYTHE

Sorry. Gotta be subtle.

VIRGIL (cont'd)

Right. Key word for today.

Smythe nods, tones it down.

VIRGIL

Alright. I'm gonna take a lap and scout the joint. Order me a beer.

Virgil disappears through the crowd, eyeing Marcus Stein as he goes.

Smythe bellies up to get a beer. As he waits to get the bartenders' attention, he absentmindedly flicks his lighter.

BLOND

You shouldn't play with fire.

Smythe turns to see a gorgeous blond at his elbow. Smythe decides to play tough.

SMYTHE

You shouldn't bum cigarettes.

BLOND

You shouldn't be rude to a lady.

SMYTHE

You shouldn't be rude to strangers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The blond can see his pack of cigarettes.

BLOND

You shouldn't smoke unfiltered.

Smythe gives her a cigarette, and she lights it from her own lighter.

SMYTHE

You shouldn't play with fire.

ANGLE ON: Virgil, coming through the crowd, arriving back with Smythe, now alone.

Smythe gives him his beer.

Up on the stage, the band is getting ready to start.

VIRGIL

Alright. Here's our girl.

The crowd parts and we get a look at the singer.

It's the girl who bummed cigarettes off Chandler earlier. She has taken off her leopard skin and is wearing only a baby T-shirt and stretch pants. She put on lipstick, too. A total knockout.

Charlotte Devane has arrived, and Smythe looks on in admiration.

VIRGIL

Think you can chat her up?

Smythe holds up a napkin and shows it to Virgil. It reads:

I'm usually home by 3. Come by for
a nightcap. The El Royale- Apt.
7D.

Charlotte.

Virgil smiles.

VIRGIL

You might do alright in this business,
Smythe.

INT. VIRGIL'S EL CAMINO--NIGHT

We come off of Virgil's watch, which reads 2:47. The El Camnino is idling outside Charlotte's apartment building.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VIRGIL
(quizzing him)
Alright. What's the goal?

SMYTHE
To find out if she's a Morlock, and if
she knows Rivera.

VIRGIL
And if she knows him, how to find him.

SMYTHE
Check. OK, last thing. Just for me.
This is about one of the Cathar amulets,
isn't it?

This catches Virgil off guard.

VIRGIL
You been reading your Handbook. Good,
Smythe. I'd give you a gold star but I'm
fresh out.

SMYTHE
So I gotta be super cool with Charlotte.

VIRGIL
Yep. You think she's a Morlock, smile
politely and leave. No heroics until we
know more. It may cost us another shot
at Senor Luis.

SMYTHE
Gotta be subtle.

VIRGIL
Right. Word for the day.

EXT. EL ROYALE APARTMENT BUILDING-- NIGHT

The El Royale is a stately deco building. We see Smythe hop
out of the El Camino, and look to the seventh floor.

INT. HALLWAY-- NIGHT

Smythe gets out of the elevator and heads down the well
appointed hallway to Charlotte's apartment. He knocks. The
door rolls open.

INT. CHARLOTTE'S APARTMENT--NIGHT

Smythe wades through some door beads into what seems like an
opium den. Low red light.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

There are huge Indian-style silk pillows thrown everywhere, but the dominating choice are the twenty or so stuffed animals in the room. It's like the museum of natural history.

SMYTHE

You shouldn't invite strangers over to your house.

Charlotte appears from the bedroom, out of her heels, futzing with her dress. Her features highlighted in the red light.

CHARLOTTE

Why not.

SMYTHE

LA is a big city. I could be a serial killer.

CHARLOTTE

Or possessed by the devil.

Charlotte walks forward, stepping out of her high heels, fiddling with the clasp at the back of her dress.

CHARLOTTE

Unhook me, will you.

Charlotte turns the clasp to Smythe. As she does, she sweeps her hair back, and Smythe can see a small TATOO of a HAWK on her hairline. Egyptian looking.

As the clasp is undone, Charlotte catches her dresses seductively and looks back over her shoulder at Smythe.

CHARLOTTE

(pointing to liquor tray)
Drinks are over there. Fix me a scotch and water. Merci.

Smythe fixes the drinks as Charlotte goes to the bedroom to change. Smythe, of course, can catch a glimpse of her changing in the reflection of the living room mirror.

SMYTHE

(re: scotch)
I make mine pretty stiff.

CHARLOTTE

I know you do.

SMYTHE

You haven't tasted it yet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CHARLOTTE

I can tell just by looking at it.

Charlotte returns in a mini T-shirt and some tight grey sweats. Her hair is up in a ponytail. All this only makes her more sexy. Smythe gives her the drink.

SMYTHE

You're not looking at it.

CHARLOTTE

(taking a big swig)

I wasn't talking about the drink.

You can cut the innuendo with a knife. They sit on the couch together.

SMYTHE

Are you always this forward? Don't you think we should get to know each other first? As people?

CHARLOTTE

If you insist. You're an actor, right?

SMYTHE

Journalist.

CHARLOTTE

(rolling her eyes)

You're too handsome to write! You should be an actor.

SMYTHE

Can't act.

CHARLOTTE

That never stopped anybody. You just have to want to be famous.

SMYTHE

That what you want?

CHARLOTTE

Of course.

As she leans forward, the heel of her palm is directly in the candle flame, but she doesn't flinch. It's as if she can't feel it.

Charlotte smiles, and moves closer to Smythe on the couch.

CHARLOTTE

You want to kiss me, don't you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SMYTHE

What's the right answer?

CHARLOTTE

Well, you could say yes, and I'll think you're a pushover, get bored and move on, or you can lie and say no and it'll keep things interesting.

SMYTHE

No then.

CHARLOTTE

You're a bad liar, Chandler.

Charlotte smiles, and leans in, planting a huge KISS on Smythe. He can't help but kiss her back.

SMYTHE

Wow...I've never kissed anyone like that before...my head is...

CHARLOTTE

(pouring it on)

Spinning? Mine too. Don't stop.

Charlotte is going out of focus. The walls are beginning to close in, the room spinning.

CHARLOTTE

I'm not like other girls, Chandler.

Charlotte leans in and kisses Smythe again, this time deeper. He tries to resist, but she's like a morphine IV. When she lets him go he's like a limp noodle.

Charlotte starts to undo his shirt.

CHARLOTTE

I can take you places you've never been. Don't you want that?

Charlotte is kissing Smythe's neck. He get weaker and weaker.

SMYTHE

Yes...yes.

CHARLOTTE

(whispering in his ear)

Now...first...tell me where you put the amulet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

SMYTHE
(slurring his words)
What amulet?

Charlotte nibbles on Smythe's ear.

CHARLOTTE
Don't play dumb, Smythe or I won't give you what you want. You were the one Luis killed. I knew it the moment you walked in with Virgil. You've got the amulet, honey. Now be good and tell me where it is.

SMYTHE
(getting worse)
I don't have it. I swear.

Suddenly Charlotte digs her nails into Smythe's chest. His eyes widen for an instant with the pain.

CHARLOTTE
I can get rough, Chandler.

SMYTHE
That's how I like it.

CHARLOTTE
You wouldn't like this, Chandler. Where'd you put the amulet?

SMYTHE (cont'd)
I don't have it. I'm a bad liar, remember?

Smythe can barely keep his eyelids open, much less have the werewithal to lie.

Charlotte gradually realizes this. She goes stone cold towards Smythe, pushes him away on the couch.

CHARLOTTE
(talking to herself)
Then Luis lied to me. Quel beast!! He LIED to me!!

Smythe is on the verge of blacking out. The room is spinning.

CHARLOTTE
I'm sorry to do this Chandler. But you don't want to get involved with a girl like me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

She leans in to kiss him one more time. It's like an opium addict getting a hit. Chandler's whole body seems to relax.

Then suddenly, his face registers extreme pain. He tries to push her off, but she's biting him...

Everything starts to go dim...

FADE TO BLACK.

ACT THREE

INT. ALLEY--EARLY MORNING

We pull out of Smythe's face. He's shaking like he has the DT's, lying in a alley littered with trash.

A few pedestrians stop to marvel at him, thinking he's a bum. He's coughing like crazy.

A figure approaches him: Virgil.

VIRGIL

Jeezus, look at you. Here. Take this.

Virgil produces something wrapped in silver. Smythe takes it.

SMYTHE

(eyes widening)

What is it?

VIRGIL

It's a cough drop, Smythe.

The seizure abates, and Virgil sits down next to the shivering Smythe.

SMYTHE

Well, one thing's for sure. She's definitely a Morlock.

VIRGIL

Figured that out didja? It's lucky you're not dead.

SMYTHE

Funny-- I don't feel lucky.

VIRGIL

You are. Only two reasons you got a pulse right now-- either she liked you-- which is doubtful-- or you're worth more alive than dead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SMYTHE

She thought I had the amulet. I bluffed, told her I didn't know what she was talking about. But she was on to me the whole time. She knew who you were, Virgil.

VIRGIL

Then what.

SMYTHE

Didn't you hear me? She knew who you were.

VIRGIL

The amulet Smythe, what else did she say about the amulet?

SMYTHE

She said something about how Luis lied to her.

VIRGIL

Then what.

SMYTHE

Then she left.

(beat)

In a hurry.

Virgil doesn't look so good.

SMASH TO:

EXT. OVERLOOK HOTEL--DAY

Tight on Charlotte, getting out of the cab and looks up at the spotty neon signage: OVERLOOK HOTEL.

INT. OVERLOOK HOTEL ROOM--DAY

We hear a couple of knocks, then hear the lock get jimmied. The door opens towards us, revealing Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

Luis? Where are you Luis?

She takes a step into the apartment: trash litters the hallway. There is an overpowering smell. The entire place looks as if it's inhabited by pigs for about fifty years.

CHARLOTTE

Come out, come out Luis. I want to play.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Charlotte eases her way into the kitchen. The refrigerator door is open, contents spilled onto the floor. Raw meat is on the counter, spoiling, a feast for the three thousand flies that buzz upon it.

Suddenly, something drips on Charlotte's shoulder. Something icky.

Slowly, she casts her eyes upward.

There, hanging from the ceiling like a bat, is Luis. Charlotte doesn't even blink an eye.

CHARLOTTE

Didn't you hear me knocking?

SMASH TO:

INT. RAVENSWOOD APARTMENT BUILDING--NIGHT

Smythe makes his way through the lobby of the Ravenswood, dejected and preoccupied.

Mace watches Smythe crossing to the elevator, and starts to hum a creepy tune, trying to freak Smythe out:

MACE

*And there's no way of knowing...
Which way the river's flowing....
And it shows no signs of slowing...*

Smythe cuts Mace a look and gets in the elevator.

INT. HALLWAY-- DAY

Smythe futzes with his keys in his lock. He's frustrated, can't get the door open.

She smokes from a long cigarette holder.

ELEANOR

I wouldn't force that if I were you.

Smythe turns to find Eleanor in the hall behind him. She has on long fake eyelashes and too much rouge. Like Betty Davis in HUSH HUSH SWEET CHARLOTTE.

She smiles languidly and takes the key from Smythe. She turns it in the lock. Slowly. Like an opium addict.

ELEANOR (cont'd)

If you need any more help, you just let Aunt Eleanor know. She's here to help.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SMYTHE

Tell her thanks for me, OK?

She smiles at him with a bemused detachment. Smythe is a little uncomfortable-- she's weird.

ELEANOR

They haven't told you, have they?

SMYTHE

Told me what?

Eleanor ignores him with a smiles and floats back into her apartment. Leaves the door open.

Smythe follows.

INT. ELEANOR'S APARTMENT-- DAY

Smythe enters the ornate apartment: kites of every size and description fill the living room. They hang from the ceiling like stuffed birds, quavering from the fan.

SMYTHE

What haven't they told me?

ELEANOR

That you can fail the training. You're not guaranteed to make the cut.

SMYTHE

And what happens if I fail?

ELEANOR

Nothing.

SMYTHE

Define nothing.

ELEANOR

I mean exactly that. If you fail your training, *nothing* will happen to you.

(beat)

Don't you know what the Ravenswood is, Mr. Smythe?

SMYTHE

Other than a lousy hotel, no.

ELEANOR

It's Purgatory. The home for lost souls.

(mustering a weak smile)

Like the agents of the Corp.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELEANOR (cont'd)

It's where you'll go if you fail you're training, except you'll be here forever.

SMYTHE

Right here? Forever?

ELEANOR

Yes. Right here.

SMYTHE

Is that why you're here?

ELEANOR

No. I killed myself in 1934.

Smythe nods, a litte freaked.

SMYTHE

(to himself)

Oh boy. How'd I ever get into this?

ELEANOR

Because of your parents.

SMYTHE

Did my mother copulate with the devil or something?

ELEANOR

No, no, nothing like that. Did either of you parents die early?

SMYTHE

Yes. My mother. When I was six.

ELEANOR

Corps members are recruited because this kind of ability runs strong in certain families. Your mother must of had the mark. As did you.

This is too much. Smythe reaches into his pocket for a cigarette.

Then into his coat for a light.

SMYTHE

You make it sound like my death was part of some master plan.

ELEANOR

There are no accidents, Chandler.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Smythe nods, pulls out a matchbook. He starts to light it, but then takes a closer look. Smythe flips the matchbook over.

On it's cover, we read: 'OVERLOOK HOTEL'.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM--FLASHBACK

The guy with the earring through his right eyebrow flips Smythe a matchbook. It's Luis Rivera.

LUIS

Keep 'em bro. It's your birthday.

On the catch of the matchbook, and seeing it's name "Overlook Hotel", we...

CUT TO:

INT. ELEANOR'S APARTMENT-- PRESENT

Smythe has a look of recognition on his face.

ELEANOR

(offscreen)

Things happen for a reason.

SMASH TO:

EXT. STREET-- NIGHT-- PRESENT

....the facade of the OVERLOOK HOTEL, a decrepid 1920's building.. Smythe is approaching.

INT. OVERLOOK HOTEL-- NIGHT

Smythe enters. A couple of Mexicans are playing pool on a dilapidated table in the lobby. Smythe sidles to the front desk and addresses the night manager, a Slavic looking woman.

SMYTHE

Looking for Luis Rivera.

NIGHT MANAGER

What's he look like?

SMYTHE

A little like Ben Franklin.

Smythe lays a Franklin on the table.

NIGHT MANAGER

Oh yeah. Room 4F.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The manager takes the cash, and points to a staircase at the back of the lobby.

INT. STAIRCASE-- NIGHT

Smythe walks up, exiting on the fourth floor. He gets to 4F, pulls out a LOCK PICK, and silently picks the lock. The door falls open.

INT. HOTEL ROOM-- NIGHT

Smythe enters the filthy apartment, just like Charlotte say it, only now, it's a little worse.

He moves off towards a swinging door on the left.

INT. KITCHEN

Smythe eases into the kitchen, to find the same scene Charlotte did: fridge open, meat rotting. Something drips from the ceiling.

He looks up.....but nothing is there.

By the counter, the knife drawer is open, and Smythe notices a long knife scratch leading back to the hall. He begins following the knife gouge towards another room.

He gets to the door, trying to open it. It seems like it's been barricaded. He braces himself for a kick.

INT. BACK ROOM

The door flies open from thrust of Smythe's kick, knocking over a dresser that had blocked the door.

He enters, alert, gun drawn.

There is a form under the bed covers. Moving slightly. Smythe touches it with the barrel of his gun.

No reaction. Smythe moves forward and pulls off the covers.

It's a SNAKE. A python. It wiggles off the bed back over to its glass cage, which lies smashed in a thousand pieces on the hardwood floor.

As Smythe exhales, the bedroom door behind him swings shut.

And there sits Luis Rivera.

He's been lashed to a chair. Tortured for a while. He won't be long for this world.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He's trying to speak, mouthing words, 'but nothing is coming out. He's losing consciousness, but it's clear he's trying to tell Smythe something. Luis jerks, wrenching one of his hands free, and lays it on Smythe's shoulder, pulling him closer....

....when suddenly, a BLAST from a .38 rips through the room. Luis is hit in the chest.

Smythe wheels to find Virgil, his gun smoking.

VIRGIL

Back up.

Virgil takes aim again.

SMYTHE

Virgil, no---

He's cut off by another blast. Then another. Luis isn't gonna be giving up any secrets anytime soon.

SMYTHE

Jeezus, Virge!!! He was trying to tell me something!

VIRGIL (cont'd)

Yea. Vaya con Dios.

Virgil unsheaths his dagger, and moves quickly to Luis body.

Luis' body stiffens and convulses for a beat; then finally lays still.

Virgil grabs Luis' hand, and opens the palm, revealing a RAZORBLADE.

VIRGIL

He was gonna pull you in, slit your throat. Good thing you're easy to follow.

Virgil cuts Luis' cords, kicks his body to the floor and onto the rug. He begins to roll it up.

Something about Virgil seems a little hurried. A little nervous.

Smythe hesitates, as Virgil glares a him.

VIRGIL

You gonna help me or what?

EXT. BACK OF THE 13TH STREET BAR-- NIGHT

Smythe and Virgil struggle with the body-filled rug. In silence, they throw it into the back of the El Camino.

INT. EL CAMINO-- NIGHT

The El Camino comes back from East LA, under a lonely string of streetlamps. Virgil rounds a corner on two wheels, bumping the body around in the trunk.

SMYTHE

I can't believe Charlotte would do that to Luis.

VIRGIL

Believe it.

SMYTHE

But they're both Morlocks. Why'd she torture him?

Virgil turns to Smythe.

VIRGIL

Luis Rivera wasn't a Morlock.

SMYTHE

What?

VIRGIL

(slower)

Luis Rivera wasn't a Morlock.

SMYTHE

Then what was he?

VIRGIL

He was a mole. Working for us.

SMYTHE

But...he killed me.

VIRGIL

He participated in your death. It was my call.

SMYTHE

Participated in my death?!

VIRGIL

I was going to tell you sooner or later. Luis was in deep cover, close to getting his hands on one of the amulets.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VIRGIL (cont'd)

He participated in your murder to avoid being exposed. Not the first time it's happened. Won't be the last.

SMYTHE

You orphaned my kid!!!

VIRGIL

Your life, Ben's life-- they mean jack to the Corp, Smythe. Everything, everyone, is secondary to the cause.

SMYTHE

But you wanted Luis dead!! If Luis was a mole, why didn't you bring him in?!? He had the amulet, right? Why did you want me to kill him?

VIRGIL

These amulets aren't like class rings, Smythe. It takes a strong person not to get sucked in. These things will corrupt you. After Luis got hold of it, he started to lose it a bit. You saw his pad-- he was totally half-cocked. We had no choice but to take him out and recover the amulet.

Smythe is still fuming. He looks down at his hands, which are covered in Luis Rivera's BLOOD.

What has he become?

SMYTHE

I'm out, Virgil.

Smythe throws the car into park, wrenching the gears, and slamming Virgil's head off the steering wheel.

The car skids to a halt.

SMYTHE

Find another sucker.

FADE TO BLACK.

ACT FOUR

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD-- NIGHT

Smythe get out of the car, starts walking. Virgil yells after him, but it's no use. Smythe has made up his mind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As Smythe storms away, he begins to examine the faces of Hollywood: street-walkers, hustlers, homeless, skate-rats, faux starlets.

All unaware of the UnderWar.

As he walks, the faces begin to blur into a series of FLASHBACKS:

We see Orson; we see the two Suits; we see a still photo of Bonnie. We see Luis Rivera, dying; we see Eleanor, trapped in Ravenswood. We see Virgil, giving council. Charlotte, singing in a smoky bar.

And then we see the demon. The face of the darkness itself.

Smythe is suddenly jolted from his reverie by the sound of a CAR HORN.

He looks up, finding himself outside El Cadiz. His old apartment.

He moves up towards Ben's window, concealing him in the heavy shrubbery.

Looking in, we can see tons of opened PRESENTS strewn around the room.

Smythe's sister, Elizabeth, is tucking Ben in for bed. Smythe eavesdrops on the conversation.

ELIZAEBETH

Did you have a good birthday, Ben?

BEN

(flatline, staring at the wall)
It was just like any other day.

ELIZABETH

Well, look at all the cool presents that your friends brought you-

Ben is unimpressed. All the joy, all the mirth has been wrung from the kid.

BEN

They're just toys, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth tries to comfort her nephew.

ELIZABETH

I know you miss your father, Ben. But he's up in heaven...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BEN
 (yeah, yeah)
 Looking down on me right now. You told
 me.

This chokes Elizabeth up. The saddest thing in the world to see such hoplessness in a kid so young. Smythe, outside the window, ain't doing so hot either.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)
 Well I love you honey. I love you very
 much.

Elizabeth kisses him on the head, as Ben sits there lost in his own tiny head.

She shuts off the light. Ben's tiny voice pipes up from the dark.

BEN
 Elizabeth. Will you cut on the
 nightlight?

When the nightlight comes on, she sees that Ben's cheeks are wet with tears.

Outside, Smythe takes out a new BASEBALL.

He lays it on the windowsill, missing his kid.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SMYTHE'S APARTMENT, THE RAVENSWOOD--NIGHT

Smythe unlocks the door and enters his apartment. A silvery light bathes his tiny room.

Smythe freezes. Someone is sitting in the chair by the window. Crying.

Smythe pulls his gun and approaches the sobbing figure from behind.

It's Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE
 (hiccupy sobs)
 You've gotta help me, Chandler.

SMYTHE
 Call 911.

Smythe turns away from her, from what she is.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHARLOTTE
They're going to kill me.

SMYTHE
Lot of that going around.

CHARLOTTE
(blubbing, at wit's end)
Please, I didn't know it would be like
this. I swear I didn't.

SMYTHE
Shoulda thought of that before you made
the deal.

CHARLOTTE
I just wanted to sing.

SMYTHE
You're breaking my heart.

CHARLOTTE (cont'd)
Chandler, when I first got here, I didn't
know anybody. It just seemed impossible
to break in. All I did was try to get
into parties, and hang out with these
horrible people...I hated my life, but I
couldn't go back home. Then I got
offered a chance, and I took it. I was
so happy, Chandler. It was like I was
reborn. I was somebody else, somebody
that I liked. But then they started
asking me to do things, terrible things.

She breaks down crying for a moment.

CHARLOTTE (cont'd)
At night, I lay there and think, "if it's
this bad now, what's it going to be like
when I'm dead?" After they really got
me? And then I met you. You seemed like
such a decent guy, you made me want to,
you know.....

Smythe is moved by this confession. He thinks for a moment.

SMYTHE
Why should I trust you?

CHARLOTTE
(getting sexy)
I can give you what you want Smythe.

She runs her hands through his hair.

(CONTINUED)

SMYTHE

I'll pass.

CHARLOTTE

No. Not that. I can give you something else. Something better.

SMYTHE

Like what.

Charlotte unwraps the AMULET from a cotton bandana.

CHARLOTTE (cont'd)

Like this.

Smythe's eyes bug out.

SMYTHE

That's a start.

CHARLOTTE

I thought if I got it, I'd have an angle you know? A way I can make a deal, get someplace safe. The Corps can protect people, can't they? Tell them, Chandler. Tell them I want to be safe, and....

(beat)

....to get this away from me.

SMYTHE

Makin' you feel a little weak in the knees, isn't it?

CHARLOTTE

It weakens you. Like an addiction. It's evil, Chandler.

Smythe nods, thinking.

SMYTHE

It's gonna take more than this, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

Anything.

SMYTHE

I want the Morlock that corrupted you.

Charlotte is surprised.

CHARLOTTE

Why?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Smythe eyes her.

SMYTHE
 Because....
 (leaning in)
it's my job.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOLLYWOOD-- NIGHT

Sunset over the LA basin.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD--NIGHT

The WALK of FAME. We steadicam past the names of long forgotten stars, their memorials dirtied by the grime of the city, and pick up Charlotte and Smythe.

SMYTHE
 OK. One last time. The meeting is set for nine. Pool of the Roosevelt. Your contact thinks your gonna do your Morlock duty and turn over the amulet: so all you do is walk up, give it to him, walk away. Don't linger, don't make small talk. I'll be watching the switch the whole time.

Charlotte nods, thinking.

SMYTHE
 You OK?

CHARLOTTE
 I'm just gonna miss being famous, that's all.

SMYTHE
 It's not all its cracked up to be. All that fan mail to answer.

Smythe on the cheek and heads inside the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel. Home of the first Academy Awards. The Grand Dame of a bygone era.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOLLYWOOD ROOSEVELT POOL--NIGHT

Tight on Smythe's watch. It's five to nine. He's anxiously watching the scene at the Cabana style patio. He has a low riding hat on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Then, he sees Charlotte. She crosses to a table at the other side of the pool. The only figure on the patio.

A shadowy FIGURE in a hat enters, and sits down next to her.

We see Smythe finger his piece.

ANGLE ON: Charlotte and her contact.

CHARLOTTE

Here's your rock.

Charlotte very coolly presents an object wrapped in silk.

CHARLOTTE

Now gimme my soul back.

The stranger takes the object.

STRANGER

It's already done.

CHARLOTTE

I need proof. I don't wanna croak in my sleep and wake up in a lake of fire.

STRANGER

Well....

Then he stands, and something glints in the low light.

STRANGER

...there's only one way to find out.

The glint is a Dagger. A weapon to kill Charlotte with.

Charlotte recoils, upending the table and sending it crashing into the pool.

In the background, Smythe draws his gun, taking aim. He squeezes one off, hitting one of the Tiki torches and sending sparks everywhere.

The stranger pull a weapon of his own. He fires at Smythe, and lights out for the exit.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAYS-- NIGHT

Smythe chases the stranger through the hallways of the hotel. He's about to get a shot, when a maid enters the hall, spoiling his aim. Smythe crashes into her towel cart, falling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He regains himself, and dashes through the lobby, and onto the street.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD--NIGHT

Smythe emerges on the Hollywood walk of fame, swimming through tourists, Latin teenagers, garden variety Hollywood freaks. Ahead, we can see the stranger dart into:

THE HOLLYWOOD WAX MUSEUM

INT. WAX MUSEUM--NIGHT

Smythe burst into the museum, running through the hall of starlets, of royalty, of members of the Jackson family.

Smythe sees the shape of the stranger dart into the hall of horror.

INT. HALL OF HORRORS--NIGHT

Bela Lugosi, the Werewolf, the Mummy, the creature from the black lagoon play witness as Smythe moves into the Hall of Horrors.

Smythe looks around warily, as a cheesy Bela Lugosi recording starts to play over the loudspeakers.

BELA LUGOSI

Welcome to the house of horrors...the last place you want to be.

Suddenly a hand grabs him by the neck.

He wheels and shoots...

....an animatronic robot of the Mummy. It begins to malfunction. The gunshots have given away his location, and Smythe moves quickly, hoping to catch the stranger off guard.

He passes Dracula and the Werewolf. Nothing.

Suddenly, the lights go out-- it's part of the show.

Everything is now swathed in BLACK LIGHT. Smythe now in garish, strange colors.

As he inches forward, we can see a shape rising behind him.....Smythe is hit from behind. It's a brutal blow, and Smythe falls to the ground, his revolver flying from his hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

His attacker begins to kick him brutally, driving him into the Dracula installation, where the coffin of the villain lies open on a table.

Smythe quickly rolls underneath the table, away from his attacker, and rights himself on the other side.

He kicks the table, and the whole thing-- coffin, Dracula, everything-- comes crashing down on the stranger.

Smythe leaps on top of the wreckage, and draws....

.....his dagger.

He reaches down, and yanks the fedora off the man to reveal....

Virgil.

Virgil can't believe it's Smythe; Smythe can't believe it's Virgil.

VIRGIL

Jeezus, you gotta be kidding. You're the one trying to kill me? My trainee?

SMYTHE

You're the contact?!?

VIRGIL

Will you relax, already? And put that thing away for God sakes. You're gonna hurt somebody. I got the amulet, so take it down a notch, OK?

Virgil wriggles out from beneath the debris, and the silken cloth that Charlotte had given him.

He unravels it, revealing....

....a rock

SMYTHE

You been duped, Virge. I wish it was different.

Smythe raises his dagger.

SMYTHE

Remember what you told you me. 60% sure. Then pull the trigger.

Smythe brings it down, striking Virgil in the chest.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He lets out a blood curdling yell, and starts to convulse wildly. Smythe is thrown backward, struggling to right himself.

Virgil clutches his chest, blood from the wound leaking through his fingers. He gives Smythe a look of pure hatred, and begins immediately begins to change. Evolving. His true nature revealing itself:

A DEMON.

In his case, a creepy extra: he has a long spiked tail.

The tail wraps around Smythe's neck like a python. Virgil jacks him up against the wall.

He's choking Smythe, who gamely tries to bring up the dagger for another blow.

The demon intensifies his efforts, and Smythe is starting to black out, his grip on the dagger loosening....

....when with a final effort, Smythe brings the dagger home to the demon's chest.

The creature falls backward, bleeding, desperate.

Smythe is shaken, panting, as the creature recoils, his yellow eyes locking with Smythe's.

VIRGIL/DEMON

See you in hell.

It writhes for a moment and lies still, and then slowly becomes to become human again.

In the background, the animatronic robots keep on their daily round:

BELA LEGOSI

Welcome...to the house...of horror.....

Smythe stands there, dazed and listless, as the two POLICEMEN come bursting into the museum, guns drawn, and take up positions behind the Creature from the Black Lagoon.

POLICEMAN

(overly formal cop voice)

Hands in the air, buddy. Step away from the body.

Smythe drops his dagger. One of the policeman comes forward to cuff Smythe, as the other grabs the weapon.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SMYTHE

I'm not a murderer...he's a dem--

Smythe drifts off, realizing the futility of the situation.

POLICEMAN (cont'd)

Save it, pal. I'm sure the judge will be
real interested.

INT. COP CAR, OUTSIDE WAX MUSEUM-- NIGHT

Smythe sits in the back of the paddywagon, looking at the
gawking crowd of onlookers as the body of Virgil is wheeled
out and placed into an ambulance.

A cop knocks on the window, a signal to get Smythe downtown.

As they pull away, Smythe turns his attention to the two cops
in the front seat.

COP #1

Not bad, kid. For a rookie.

Smythe doubletakes. It's DECKER and FORD in the front seat.
They turn around and smile.

DECKER

What tipped you off?

SMYTHE

I started suspecting Virge when he shot
Luis. He planted a razorblade on him,
made it look like he was gonna kill me.
Then Charlotte showed at my place last
nite, and confirmed it.

FORD

Yea, but how'd you know you could trust
Charlotte? Specially after what happened
to Luis?

SMYTHE

There's this thing, see-- I call it the
Smythe rule. Goes back in my family a
long way.

(beat)

Get 60% sure, then pull the trigger.

FORD turns to his partner.

FORD

This guy might do alright in this
business.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DECKER
 (reaching back to unlock the
 cuffs)
 Welcome to the Corps, Smythe. You earned
 your it.
 (beat)
 We got some powdered donuts up here if
 you want any.

Smythe smiles, and takes a jelly filled donut.

DISSOLVE:

EXT. THE EL CADIZ-- MORNING

We pan off the facade of the El Cadiz.

Smythe stands across the street, where his sister Elizabeth
 is pushing Ben out the door to catch the bus.

Elizabeth kisses him, gives him his lunch. She turns away,
 waving to him every three feet or so.

When she's gone, Smythe approaches his son.

SMYTHE
 Hiya, Ace.

BEN
 (pulls a toy gun)
 Bang, Mister. You're dead.

SMYTHE
 True enough. How's tricks?

BEN
 My daddy died.

SMYTHE
 I know. But he's looking out for you,
 you know that. Up in heaven. He loves
 you very much and he's proud of you.

BEN
 How do you know?

SMYTHE
 An angel told me.

Ben smiles as the school bus honks for the kid to get on.

BUSDRIVER
 Gonna be late!!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ben turns to Smythe.

BEN
See you around.

Smythe smiles.

SMYTHE
Count on it.

Ben jumps on, waving goodbye from the bus. Smythe watches him go. He turns to see Charlotte, sitting in a car on the corner.

CHARLOTTE
Cute kid.

SMYTHE
Yeah. The guys upstairs let me talk to him, long as I don't tell him who I am.

A beat. Charlotte looks beautiful in the late afternoon L.A. light.

SMYTHE
They got you taken care of?

CHARLOTTE
Yea. I'm in rehab, but I'll make it. Someday I'll be good as new.

Smythe smiles.

SMYTHE
I don't doubt it for a minute.

Charlotte doesn't know quite what to say.

CHARLOTTE
I'm not too good at saying thank you, you know.

Smythe nods and smiles.

SMYTHE
Why don't you put it in one of your songs.

Smythe turns and walks away, towards Sunset Boulevard, into heart of Hollywood

THE END