

# "THE BLACK PALACE"

a film noir supernatural action thriller by

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**INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - EVENING**

BLACK AND WHITE

A darkened concrete chamber. A few scattered wooden tables and chairs the only furnishings. A single blazing spotlight dangling from the ceiling.

The outline of a man sits in a chair in the center of its illumination. Two shadowy figures looming over him. The larger of the two cocks his arm, hand balling into a fist.

The fist flies from the shadows, and punches the man in the face. His head jerks. The chair rocks back on two legs. Man and chair hang on the brink of pitching.

His head slumps forward. The chair settles underneath him again. He strains to raise his chin off his chest. Blood oozes from his nose, and runs down his lips.

A smug smile parts his bloodied mouth. His lips warp around clenched teeth as an uppercut catches him flush. His chin snaps up, body sinking into the chair.

A roundhouse flies from the shadows, and blasts into the man's jaw. Blood tinged spittle sprays from his mouth as the impact spins him from the chair.

He crashes to the floor in a heap, hands pawing at the cement surface, handcuffed at the wrists. He struggles to his knees as a pair of cowboy boots step into view.

A bony hand snatches a fistful of thick dark hair, yanking the man upright to be slammed back into the chair.

He raises his manacled hands against the spotlight's blinding whiteness slowly fills the screen.

The whiteness fades to reveal the spotlight.

DITTMAN (O.S.)

I recall you havin' a real showy mouth. Now, you've gone mute?

BAIN (O.S.)

Maybe you figure on staying quiet until some shyster can put in the fix?

DITTMAN (O.S.)

Is that it, boy? You thinkin' some fancy lawyer will beguile us with his forked tongue?

BAIN (O.S.)

Maybe you figure we can't make murder  
stick to you?

Harsh light finally exposes the man's face. ALEXANDER HACKER, thirties, and ruggedly handsome. He wears a soot-covered, and blood stained, white shirt and black satin slacks.

HACKER

Maybe I didn't do it.

The skinnier of his interrogators steps from the shadows. DEPUTY LEROY DITTMAN, a bumpkin of a man in his thirties. He wears a Clark County Deputy Sheriff uniform and cowboy boots.

DITTMAN

Maybe you ain't heard, but we got us  
the gas chamber here in Nevada, boy.  
And, the onliest chance you got at  
the good Lord's sweet mercy is to  
confess your sins.

HACKER

Not to you, Deputy Dittman.

The second figure emerges from dusky anonymity. LIEUTENANT ARNOLD BAIN, a red-faced, sturdy man in his late forties. He is clad in a rumpled suit, and comfortless wingtips.

He grabs Hacker by the windpipe, and begins to throttle him.

BAIN

By God, you're gonna tell me! Where's  
the girl?

Dittman leans in, and half-whispers into Hacker's ear.

DITTMAN

And, the truth shall set you free.

The lawmen react to the sound of a LOCK UNBOLTING.

The door swings open, and a barrel-chested man enters. SHERIFF ELI BABCOCK, mid-fifties. He wears a suit, pearl-buttoned shirt, bolo tie, and custom made silver tipped shit kickers.

The Sheriff shakes his head at the sight of Hacker's bruised and bloodied face, and then he eyeballs his Deputy.

BABCOCK

Leroy? Escort Lieutenant Bain to the  
observation room. I'll be taking  
over from here.

BAIN

What? Escort me? I'm not going  
anywhere! The man's my prisoner!

BABCOCK

No sir, it's my jail. Makes the man  
my guest. Same as you.

BAIN

Look here, Sheriff. I don't know  
what kinda show you're running here,  
but if you think --

BABCOCK

I don't think; I know! I am running  
the show here. A show you can take  
in from the observation room.

Babcock locks eyes with Dittman once more.

BABCOCK (CONT'D)

My deputy will take you there.

Dittman quickly pulls the door open.

DITTMAN

Lieutenant?

Bain stares for a beat before pushing past Babcock to exit.  
Dittman follows. The door shuts, and the Sheriff produces a  
handcuff key, holding it out in front of Hacker.

Hacker holds up his wrists, and the Sheriff removes the  
handcuffs, pocketing them as he speaks.

BABCOCK

It's my understanding you, and the  
Lieutenant, have a prior association.

HACKER

We were partners when I was with the  
department, but we didn't part the  
best of friends.

BABCOCK

You want to tell me why?

HACKER

The coward betrayed me.

BABCOCK

Is that why you turned in your badge?

HACKER

His kind of disloyalty gets a guy killed. After that, the job just wasn't a fit.

BABCOCK

Well, putting that aside, Mister Hacker. I was hoping you and I, could have us a cordial conversation.

HACKER

I'm all for a little civility. Let's start with your name.

Babcock pulls a chair over, and sits. He produces a pack of cigarettes, and shakes one out, offering it to Hacker.

BABCOCK

Name's Babcock, Sheriff Eli Babcock. Maybe you've heard of me?

Hacker takes the offering.

HACKER

Maybe I have.

Babcock produces a Zippo, and lights the cigarette for Hacker.

BABCOCK

Good. Then, we can get right down to talking about the other night's ruckus down at the Black Palace.

HACKER

The boys tell me that I'm a regular two-state crime wave. You see anything in it?

BABCOCK

Enough to trot it by a grand jury in the morning.

The Sheriff fires up his cigarette, and flicks the Zippo closed, tendering his next words as almost an afterthought.

BABCOCK (CONT'D)

Sure would tie a right nice bow on things, if you'd tell your side of the tale before I do.

HACKER

Sheriff Babcock, I'll gift wrap it for you. Would you hold me to the hard truth, or prefer a simple lie?

BABCOCK

Given my druthers, I'd like to hold you to the hard truth. Let's start with why you killed all those men?

HACKER

The Old Man, and his goons aren't men.

BABCOCK

The Old Man is a myth. A fable told by mobsters to keep their more ambitious competitors in line. Moral being, take from us, and the Old Man will butcher you.

HACKER

The Old Man is very real.

BABCOCK

Horse pucky! There's no such thing as vampires.

HACKER

I say there is.

BABCOCK

Cut the hoey, son. Just give it to me straight, and from the beginning.

**INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Bain and Dittman look through the two-way glass, listening as Babcock and Hacker continue.

HACKER

Alright, Sheriff Babcock. Straight. And, from the beginning.

Hacker takes a hard pull off the cigarette, and exhales a rush of smoke rings that sail directly at the glass.

HACKER (CONT'D)

That's going to take us back.

**INT. INTERROGATION CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS**

The Mirror. For a brief instant, only the likeness of the Sheriff can be seen in its reflective glass as a smoke ring kisses the surface, and sinks into its silvery depths.

HACKER (O.S.)

To my little pond.

The lens ripples into a misty swell that blurs the screen.

**EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - TWILIGHT**

Hacker's VOICE OVER starts as the ripples subside and the last seconds of sunset above the backdrop of 1948 downtown Chicago comes into focus.

HACKER (V.O.)  
The City of the Big Shoulders.

The last of the sun's rays duck behind the landscape. The "L" train rumbles past on its elevated track as the city's street lights flicker to life.

HACKER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Kicked off like any other night.

**EXT. HOTEL - CONTINUOUS**

A sign with a flickering letter atop an aging brownstone alternates between reading: HOTEL BELLA and HOTEL BEL A. The "L" clatters by, its flashing cars packed with PEOPLE.

HACKER (V.O.)  
The clatter of sheep bins.

The train passes, exposing a picture window. Block Letters on its glass pane read: ALEXANDER HACKER - PRIVATE EYE.

HACKER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Pushing past my roost.

**INT. LOFT - EVENING**

Through the picture window, a Hunter's Moon reigns in the darkening starless sky.

HACKER (V.O.)  
But, this wasn't going to be like  
any other night.

A telephone rings on a cluttered desktop. A hand grabs the handset off the cradle. Hacker answers. Clean and well-groomed, he wears a pale shirt with dark tie and slacks.

HACKER (CONT'D)  
Yeah... Who...? I know the name.

**EXT. SHORELINE ROAD - MOMENTS LATER**

A pair of headlights cut through the darkness, and Hacker's sedan roars into view.

HACKER (V.O.)

The man on the blower said there was  
a portrait of McKinley in it for me  
for a simple little job.

The sedan begins to motor past a sprawling estate property.

HACKER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

All I had to do was babysit his most  
precious treasure.

The estate's cottage nestled in the midst of finely manicured  
greenery, thick with fanciful decoration.

HACKER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Sounds like the start of a whimsical  
tale, but this is no a tale of whimsy.

The sedan pushes into the ominous starless black night.

HACKER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

No, I was heading for trouble.

Rotating light bounces off the scenery behind. A police patrol  
car flies from the curve, and barrels toward Hacker's sedan.

HACKER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Or maybe, it was heading for me.

With the patrol car on top of it, Hacker's sedan pulls over.

HACKER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Whichever way one would wager.

Hacker's sedan shudders in the wake as the patrol car races  
past, and plows into the drive of an estate a few yards ahead.

HACKER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It was a sure thing that I was in  
for a night of it.

Pulling back onto the roadway, Hacker's sedan turns into the  
estate that the patrol car just blew into.

**EXT. ESTATE - CONTINUOUS**

A granite fence rings the grounds. Hacker's sedan rolls between  
the twin grotesques that guard the archway entrance.

HACKER (V.O.)

And, it's safe to say, I had it  
figured that way.

A nameplate affixed to the archway reads: HALVERSON HOUSE.

HACKER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
The instant I heard the name.

**EXT. COURTYARD - MOMENTS LATER**

The patrol car is parked in the cobblestone courtyard. Hacker's sedan rumbles to a stop. Hacker climbs from the interior, wearing a trench coat and fedora.

**FULL SHOT HALVERSON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

Beneath the moon's eerie glow, Hacker's silhouette stands before a foreboding gothic mansion ringed by untamed foliage and unnaturally contorted fruit trees.

**INT. HALVERSON HOUSE: STUDY - MOMENTS LATER**

In a grand reading room packed with wall-to-wall books, a uniformed policeman pulls a sheet over a body lying on the parquet floor near the foot of a spiral staircase.

He makes the sign of the cross, and strains upright. SERGEANT QUINCEY MULDOON, a stout, pug-faced Irishman in his fifties, with white hair and bushy eyebrows.

Tugging a handkerchief from his tunic. Muldoon looks to his lone reflection in a mirror on the wall, and wipes the cold sweat from his brow when an odd feeling overcomes him.

He wheels around, startled to find Hacker standing behind.

MULDOON  
Ya scared the devil out of me, boyo.  
And, I'm none too pleased to lay my  
eyes upon ya anyway.

HACKER  
No?

MULDOON  
No. Not now, and not ever.

HACKER  
Why Sergeant Muldoon, you're hurting  
my feelings.

MULDOON  
Never mind that bollocks, Hacker.  
Evaporate, make yerself scarce.

HACKER  
Can't.

MULDOON  
Can't, or won't?

He kneels down, studying the twisted form under the sheet.

HACKER

Halverson?

MULDOON

Aye, poor bastard. Stomped dead from  
the look of it.

Hacker lifts the sheet to take a look for himself.

HACKER

Not stomped.

MULDOON

It makes wee difference, it's murder  
all the same.

He stands, and Muldoon shoos him away.

MULDOON (CONT'D)

Now, do me the kindness of  
disappearin' already.

Hacker eyes him. He is not leaving, and Muldoon knows it.

MULDOON (CONT'D)

Oh, get on with it then, ya Bombay  
shitehawk. It's not yer prized plums.

**EXT. COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS**

Muldoon's VOICE OVER continues as a comfortless wingtip steps  
from a four-door Chevrolet to squash a piece of fallen fruit.

MULDOON (V.O.)

He'll step on.

A man in a rumpled suit walks the measure of Hacker's Ford.

MULDOON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

If he finds ya here.

Bain seethes as he glares at the mansion.

MULDOON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The man hates yer guts, ya know.

**INT. STUDY - CONTINUOUS**

With increasing agitation, Muldoon wears out the parquet floor  
as he continues the conversation with Hacker.

MULDOON

Yet there ya stand, acting the maggot.  
And all the while, he'll be arrivin'  
at the quick step.

HACKER

You going to bump gums until he does?

Muldoon stops pacing, and points to the body.

MULDOON

That's Randall Halverson the third.

HACKER

I know the name. And, the story.

MULDOON

Then, ya know that the mad neddy met  
with the inevitable. What with  
dabblin' in pagan orgies, and rubbin'  
elbows with the dubious.

(regarding Hacker)

It brings an element.

HACKER

I had an invitation, Quincey.

MULDOON

Well, it appears that the man had  
more crushin' matters to attend too.  
And, don't ya ever call me by my  
given name again. We should never be  
that, familiar.

HACKER

No?

MULDOON

No. Not now, and not ever. So, on  
yer bike now, Hacker. Before the  
disagreeable son of a --

BAIN (O.S.)

MULDOON!

The Sergeant's eyes bug as Bain enters.

BAIN (CONT'D)

Where is he?

Muldoon looks about the room. Hacker is nowhere to be seen.

MULDOON

Who?

He turns back to find a spittle spewing Bain in his face.

BAIN  
Hacker! That's who!

High atop the winding staircase, Hacker watches.

BAIN (CONT'D)  
I want you to find that no good bum,  
and when you do, clap on a pair  
bracelets, and throw him into the  
back of a squadrol!

MULDOON  
Would ya have me shoot him as well?

Hacker sinks into the shadows.

BAIN (O.S.)  
RIGHT BETWEEN THE EYES!

**INT. HALVERSON HOUSE: CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS**

Hacker's VOICE OVER picks up again as he retreats into the visually impenetrable dark depths of a long corridor.

HACKER (V.O.)  
The whole setup struck me curious.  
Too curious. There was a suffocating  
sense of familiarity with the way  
Halverson had been fitted for a  
Chicago overcoat that had me nosey.  
So, I followed my nose to the end of  
that pitch-black hallway.

He stops, and studies something hidden in the blackness.

HACKER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Hoping I would find that the poor  
sap never saw it coming.

Hacker produces a lighter. He strikes the flint wheel, and the lighter sparks to life.

HACKER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Yeah, I was hoping.

Dancing light reveals an oil lamp hanging beside a fortified wooden door at the hall's end.

HACKER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
But, the door.

A puzzling inscription chiseled into the entry's hardwood surface. It reads: A LIT WICK IS YOUR INVITATION.

HACKER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Said otherwise.

He lifts the globe off the lamp, and touches the lighter's flame to its wick. Fire crawls across its oily tip. He closes the lighter, and lowers the globe back into place.

The door unbolts, hinges groaning as it slowly swings open. The flame inside the lamp quivers wildly as a short BREATHY GUST of wind slices through the corridor.

Hacker looks back in a rueful flash of hesitation.

HACKER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Muldoon was right, Halverson had met  
with the inevitable.

A shadowy figure drops from above to the floor behind him.

HACKER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Funny thing about the inevitable. It  
can sneak up on a guy, when he least  
expects it.

The figure darts past the open door to fade into the shadows an instant before Hacker's eyes swing that way.

**INT. HALVERSON HOUSE: RECEPTION ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Hacker enters the exquisitely furnished reception room. Thin shafts of moonlight filter in from behind curtains draped across every window.

HACKER (V.O.)  
Someone was hiding. I could hear a  
heartbeat, and smell the perfume.

He looks to a shadowy corner.

HACKER (CONT'D)  
You might as well show yourself. The  
Shalimar gives you away.

The hammer of a REVOLVER IS COCKED into firing position.

SHAY (O.S.)  
Then, it will have be enough for you  
to know that I will shoot, if you  
force my hand.

A young woman steps into the moonlight's glow. SHAY HALVERSON, twenties, blonde, and beautiful. Her willowy form wrapped in a silk bodice with a long skirt and high heels.

A single-action revolver in her hands.

SHAY (CONT'D)  
Do you know who I am?

Hacker nods.

SHAY (CONT'D)  
I am afraid that you have me at a disadvantage then.

HACKER  
Name's Hacker.

SHAY  
My father was to have a meeting with a man who terrified him.

HACKER  
Giovanni Malatesta?

SHAY  
Father called him Johnny.

HACKER  
Your father had good reason to be terrified.

SHAY  
Are you with him, Mister Hacker?

HACKER  
No, Miss Halverson. I can give you my word on that.

SHAY  
Do not think me rude, Mister Hacker, but you will have to give me something more than your word.

HACKER  
You have brass. I'll give you that.

SHAY  
A pair, Mister Hacker. But, shall we skip to the real vulgarity of the evening?

HACKER  
Fine by me.

SHAY  
My father is dead, isn't he?

HACKER  
I'm afraid so.

SHAY  
 You are not a policeman, are you,  
 Mister Hacker?

Hacker barely has time to shake his head before she continues.

SHAY (CONT'D)  
 No, at least, not anymore. Such a  
 pity, there never seems to be one  
 around, when you need them.

HACKER  
 Usually, that would be true, Miss  
 Halverson. But, tonight they're right  
 downstairs.

He looks past her to a shrouded window across the room.

HACKER (CONT'D)  
 And, the Lieutenant has called in  
 reinforcements.

CAR DOORS SLAM behind the window curtains. Hacker gestures an  
 invitation for her to go first.

HACKER (CONT'D)  
 Shall we have a look?

An invitation she declines with a wave of her revolver.

SHAY  
 After you, Mister Hacker. And please,  
 do not do anything that would reflect  
 poorly on you.

Hacker leads her to the window.

HACKER  
 Little chance of that, Miss Halverson.  
 Not with Chicago's finest outside.

Moonlight streams past as he pulls the curtain aside.

**P.O.V. ESTATE: COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS**

Six police squadrols are arrayed below, and a dozen uniformed  
 PATROLMEN march on the residence.

**EXT. HALVERSON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

The pair's dark likeness can be seen in the window above as  
 Muldoon meets the Patrolmen at the front steps.

He bristles with disapproval.

MULDOON  
Why? Yer bo jangled.

He eyes a Patrolman. PATROLMAN QUINCANNON, a rail-thin, middle-aged Irishman with the jovial demeanor of a happy drunkard.

MULDOON (CONT'D)  
The lot of ya!

Quincannon clears his throat.

QUINCANNON  
Well ya see, Sergeant.

He places a hand on a young Patrolman. PATROLMAN FINN, a twenty-one-year-old rookie with a fresh freckled face.

QUINCANNON (CONT'D)  
It bein' young Finn's first night on the job, and all. Well, we just thought a wee nip might be in order.

MULDOON  
Just thought, did ya?

Quincannon shrugs apologetically.

MULDOON (CONT'D)  
I'll have yer flask, Patrolman.

QUINCANNON  
Me flask?

The Sergeant holds his hand out, and wiggles his fingers.

QUINCANNON (CONT'D)  
Oh, but Sergeant. Ya can't.

Muldoon eyes him insistently, and Quincannon surrenders. He tugs a flask from his tunic, and hands it over. The Sergeant uncorks it and sniffs the contents, reacting to the smell.

He gives Quincannon a last stare before eyeing Patrolman Finn. The youngster's back instinctively straightens.

MULDOON  
Patrolman Finn.

PATROLMAN FINN  
Sergeant.

MULDOON  
I knew yer father. He was a good man.

PATROLMAN FINN

Yes, Sergeant. He was.

Muldoon raises the flask, a smile on his lips.

MULDOON

It's an honor to know ya, laddy. May  
ya be in heaven a half hour before  
the devil knows yer dead.

He takes a swig, and the men mob the youngster with approval.

PATROLMAN FINN

Thank you, Sergeant.

Patrolman Finn rattles on before he notices the sudden silence.

PATROLMAN FINN (CONT'D)

Dad told me that you were a great  
group of...

The youngster snaps to attention. The Sergeant's disposition  
has swung once more.

MULDOON

Right. Now, that we've dispensed  
with that bit of business.

Muldoon glares at Quincannon as he pockets the flask.

MULDOON (CONT'D)

There'll be no more bendin' yer elbow  
this evenin'.

He turns his glowering focus on the group as a whole.

MULDOON (CONT'D)

The Lieutenant wants this residence  
buttoned up tighter than a frog's  
ring piece. Not a livin' soul gets  
on, or off these grounds without  
bein' cleared by the man himself.

Hacker and Shay's dark outlines watch from the window above  
as the estate's grounds burst into a flurry of activity.

**INT. HALVERSON HOUSE: RECEPTION ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Hacker drops the curtain. Shay lowers her revolver.

SHAY

Why are you here, Mister Hacker?

HACKER

Your father sent for me.

SHAY

Yes, but I'm at a loss as to why he would. Evil follows you.

HACKER

Evil? Following me?

SHAY

It hides in the shadows.

A gusty breath of wind suddenly slices through the chamber. It pushes the door to a close, the bolts locking softly.

HACKER

We don't have time for this anymore.

He steps in front of Shay as a BREATHY VOICE sounds from the shadowy depths of the room.

NICKY NIGHTTIME (O.S.)

Hacker.

A man steps from the shadows. NICHOLAS "NICKY NIGHTTIME" NOTTE, tall, dark and handsome. Attired entirely in black with a tailored suit and patent-leather shoes.

He greets Hacker with a mischievous grin.

NICKY NIGHTTIME (CONT'D)

Longtime, no see.

HACKER

It's not that I haven't been looking.

NICKY NIGHTTIME

I guess if you look long enough.

Shay trains her revolver on Nicky.

SHAY

I assure you, Mister Hacker. This man is not your friend.

NICKY NIGHTTIME

Nah, we're old pals. Ain't we, Hacker?

HACKER

So you say.

NICKY NIGHTTIME

Sure, I say, Hacker. So, why not be sociable like, and make with an introduction?

SHAY

That may be a wise place to start.

NICKY NIGHTTIME

See the skirt wants to be friendly.  
It ain't like we're animals, or some  
such thing like that.

HACKER

At least one of us isn't.

NICKY NIGHTTIME

Hacker, Hacker? I'm trying real hard  
to be gentlemanly here.

SHAY

Yes, Mister Hacker. Introduce the  
gentleman.

HACKER

Alright, Miss Halverson. The gentleman  
is Nicky Nighttime.

Nicky is clearly not satisfied with the introduction.

NICKY NIGHTTIME

The name's Notte, Nicholas Notte.  
The other some people gave me on  
account of what I do.

SHAY

And, what is it that you do, Mister  
Notte?

NICKY NIGHTTIME

What do I do? I guess you can say,  
that I clean things up.

HACKER

Do you understand what he's saying,  
Miss Halverson?

SHAY

Yes, he's a professional killer.

HACKER

And I'd wager, one of the men who  
bumped off your father.

The grin fades from Nicky's lips.

NICKY NIGHTTIME

Now, that last part ain't exactly  
true.

He spins around, unshaken to see a revolver in his face.

NICKY NIGHTTIME (CONT'D)

What's this?

Shay levels her revolver at Nicky's head.

HACKER

I think the lady has a mind to put one between your eyes if you give her half a reason to.

NICKY NIGHTTIME

Yeah, and ain't she something? I'm getting a little worked up here, if you catch my drift?

SHAY

Do not think for one moment that you are intimidating me, Mister Notte. Do you hear me?

Nicky mindfully waves his finger as he slowly backs away.

NICKY NIGHTTIME

Yeah, I hear you, dollface.

HACKER

Alright, Nicky. You've had your fun.

NICKY NIGHTTIME

Yeah, you're right, Hacker. Let's get to business here.

SHAY

The only business you have, Mister Notte, is with the police downstairs.

NICKY NIGHTTIME

Nah, I'd prefer to keep things between the friendly parties.

SHAY

What does that mean?

HACKER

It means Nicky has a proposition for me.

NICKY NIGHTTIME

You're reading my mind, Hacker.

HACKER

All the same, say it out loud. And, make it short, and sweet.

NICKY NIGHTTIME

Okay, Hacker. The short and the sweet of it is that the old man doesn't know you're here. Probably soil himself if he did, on account of the finger you cost him. But I digress, the old man doesn't necessarily have to be told every detail of who was, and wasn't here. Meaning, you could just walk away. Nice, and easy like.

HACKER

I'd like to know what I'm walking away from.

NICKY NIGHTTIME

What can I tell you?

HACKER

I'm assuming that's Nine Lives' handiwork downstairs.

NICKY NIGHTTIME

You know Johnny. He's got that temper. And, Halverson was trying to welsh on a deal with the Old Man. Johnny being Johnny, he put the squeeze on him. Things kind of got out of hand from there.

HACKER

Then, my guess is that you're still around to collect.

NICKY NIGHTTIME

The Old Man wants what he wants.

HACKER

The treasure.

NICKY NIGHTTIME

Halverson's most precious.

SHAY

I have heard just about enough from you, Mister Notte.

Nicky pointedly ignores her.

NICKY NIGHTTIME

So, Hacker? You taking me up on my offer, or what?

Hacker shakes his head.

NICKY NIGHTTIME (CONT'D)  
 Don't be a chump. Walk away while  
 you still can.

HACKER  
 I made a promise.

NICKY NIGHTTIME  
 To a dead man?

He locks eyes with Shay.

HACKER  
 And now, to his daughter.

SHAY  
 Thank you, Mister Hacker.

HACKER  
 Don't thank me just yet, Miss  
 Halverson.

Hacker throws his coat open to reveal dual shoulder holsters  
 that house a pair of .45 caliber Colt automatic pistols.

HACKER (CONT'D)  
 Let's see how it goes from here.

Hacker cross-draws and wheels on Nicky. Two fiery blasts erupt  
 from the muzzle of each automatic.

Nicky ducks the whirling lead in a blur of unnatural speed.  
 The rounds buzz past, and fly directly at the window behind.

**EXT. HALVERSON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

The bullets explode through an upper-floor window. The glass  
 crashes to the ground at the toes of a pair of worn brogans.  
 Muldoon's brow furrows as he looks toward the commotion.

MULDOON  
 Christ on a crutch. What now?

**INT. HALVERSON HOUSE: RECEPTION ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Nicky smiles as he calmly adjusts the cuffs of his coat.

NICKY NIGHTTIME  
 I offer a friendly proposition, and  
 you answer with Chicago lightning.  
 You know what, Hacker?

His eyes turn black, lips pulling back to show just a hint of  
 sharp jagged teeth sparkling in the moonlight.

## NICKY NIGHTTIME (CONT'D)

You're a freaking *stronzo*.

Hacker glances at Shay. She shrugs. He takes aim again, and unleashes a hail of gunfire that hums toward Nicky.

Nicky is chased from the floor as he ducks and dodges the buzzing lead in a blurry display of supernatural agility.

He clings to the wall, its surface cracking under his grip, body contorted in a predatory crouch. Hacker pours it on, his automatics blazing away.

The whirling rounds pound the wall, following Nicky upwards as he morphs into a silhouette, and disappears into the shadowy ceiling. A breathy gust of wind cuts through the chamber.

Hacker hits the catch on his automatics, and the clips clatter to the floor. He sweeps his coat open to slam the empty grips over fresh magazines hanging from the straps of his holsters.

The automatics twirl in his hands as he brings the reloaded weapons to the ready with heroic fluidity.

## HACKER

Stick close to me, Miss Halverson.

She presses her back against his.

## SHAY

Like glue, Mister Hacker.

They stand back-to-back, eyes searching as Nicky drops to the floor. He bulldozes between the pair to send them flying in opposite directions.

Hacker loses his automatics, and fedora as he slams to the floor. He looks up to see, Nicky towering over him.

Nicky grabs Hacker by the neck to hoist him off the floor with one hand. He is on tiptoe, eyes wide, veins distended by the pressure applied by Nicky's inhuman grip.

A GUNSHOT rings out, and a bullet whistles past Nicky's ear. He calmly turns his head to see Shay holding the revolver. Smoke curling from its muzzle.

## SHAY (CONT'D)

Put him down!

## NICKY NIGHTTIME

Whatever you say, dollface.

Nicky hurls Hacker across the chamber. He slams against the door, and drops to the floor.

Shay hurriedly cocks the hammer of her revolver as Nicky strides purposefully toward her.

He deflects the revolver as she fires. Grabbing Shay by the wrist, he squeezes until the revolver falls from her grasp.

She is agape, not reacting as he leans in, and places a hand on her breastbone. A leering look on his face as his fingers caress the silk fabric of her bodice's neckline.

NICKY NIGHTTIME (CONT'D)

Now, I wouldn't want to hurt a fancy little number like you. But I will, if you get my way again. Do you hear me, dollface?

Shay nods numbly.

NICKY NIGHTTIME (CONT'D)

Good.

Nicky flings her into a nearby chair, and pulls an icepick from his coat as he strides away.

NICKY NIGHTTIME (CONT'D)

Sit there until I'm finished with your hero.

Hacker staggers upright, and leans against the door. It jolts inward to hit him in the back of his head. He eyes the door.

HACKER

Muldoon?

**INT. HALVERSON HOUSE: CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS**

Muldoon shines a flashlight on the door. Quincannon and three other PATROLMEN right behind him.

HACKER (O.S.)

Is that you?

MULDOON

Aye, it's me!

He pounds on the door with his fist.

MULDOON (CONT'D)

Open the door, boyo!

**INT. HALVERSON HOUSE: RECEPTION ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Hacker ducks under a punch that smashes into the door, wood splinters as it fractures down the middle.

HACKER

I'm a little busy right now!

Nicky is on him. He brings the lethal icepick whizzing down, pinning Hacker's shoulder to the door.

**INT. HALVERSON HOUSE: CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS**

The sounds of the BATTLE filter through the door. Muldoon wheels on Quincannon and the three Patrolmen.

MULDOON

This door must come down! And, it must come down now!

**INT. HALVERSON HOUSE: RECEPTION ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Nicky relishes the moment as Hacker fights against the pain to raise his arm. A SPRING MECHANISM sounds as a derringer shoots out of his coat sleeve to find his hand.

Hacker fires. Nicky smiles wryly as the round whines wide.

NICKY NIGHTTIME

Close, but no cigar.

He slowly draws the icepick from Hacker's shoulder.

NICKY NIGHTTIME (CONT'D)

Have anything else up your sleeve?

The surrender in Hacker's eyes answers the question.

NICKY NIGHTTIME (CONT'D)

No?

Nicky raises the icepick to deliver the final blow.

NICKY NIGHTTIME (CONT'D)

So long, Hacker!

The REVOLVER COCKING behind him fails to register with Nicky. It is the weak smile on Hacker's face that gives him pause.

HACKER

So long, Nicky.

Surprise washes over Nicky as he spins his head around.

Shay levels the revolver dead between his eyes, and squeezes the trigger. The shot blasts Nicky from view. A sickening WET THUD sounds as his body hits the floor.

She steadies Hacker upright.

SHAY

Still with me, Mister Hacker?

HACKER

Absolutely.

Shay gasps, the revolver slipping from her hand again as a dark presence rises into view.

SHAY

Oh, Mister Notte.

Nicky's blackened soul stands before them.

NICKY NIGHTTIME

What?

He spins around. Swallowing hard as he takes in the gruesome sight of his corpse laying crumpled on the floor. A GOLDEN LIGHT suddenly streams through a window.

The drapery ignites. ORANGE FLAME quickly climbs the wall. The light intensifies, and begins to grow. Everything that is bathed in the light instantly blooms with COLOR.

Nicky backs away as the light washes toward him. Terror paints his face as he locks eyes with Hacker.

HACKER

Don't look at me, Nicky. HE's not here for me.

SHAY

Yes, Mister Notte. God is here for you.

The light fills the chamber, enveloping Nicky in its glow.

NICKY NIGHTTIME

Noooooooooooooooooooooo!

FULL COLOR

His irredeemable soul bursts into flames, and turns to ash, extinguished in an instant by the light of God's own hand.

**FULL SHOT HALVERSON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

The night churns as the light rolls back into the heavens. It vanishes to leave the full moon looking down on the mansion, and the fire leaping from its window.

**EXT. ESTATE: COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS**

Two Patrolmen run past to reveal Bain. He leans on his car, smoking a cigarette. He takes a drag, and flicks the butt to the ground. His angry eyes zero in on the blazing window.

**INT. HALVERSON HOUSE: RECEPTION ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

The window shatters as the entire wall erupts into flames. Paint peels as a fiery finger traces a path across the ceiling that leads to Hacker and Shay.

The door splinters open. Quincannon, and the Patrolmen spill through the breach with a large sofa. Muldoon right behind.

Muldoon looks to Hacker, and sighs his disappointment, before turning to the Patrolmen. They stand, frozen in fear.

MULDOON

Oh, snap out of it, and show me that  
yer Irishmen!

His face flushes with actual satisfaction as the Patrolmen drop the sofa, and snap to attention.

MULDOON (CONT'D)

That's more like it!

Muldoon regards each Patrolman as he issues his orders.

MULDOON (CONT'D)

(to the first man)

You there, get yerself to a squadrol,  
and put the rush on the boys with  
the red hook and ladders.

(to the other two)

And you two, the pair of ya, clear  
the residence. Not one man is to be  
left inside when yer finished.

They signal their understanding on the move. Muldoon waits until they exit, before he puts eyes on Quincannon.

MULDOON (CONT'D)

Quincannon, would ya please escort  
the young lady out of harm's way.

Quincannon takes hold of Shay's elbow.

QUINCANNON

Come on, Miss.

She pulls away.

SHAY

No. I would feel safer in Mister  
Hacker's company, thank you.

Muldoon casts an insistent eye her way.

MULDOON

Then, would ya mind meetin' me half  
way, lass, and waiting with Patrolman  
Quincannon at the end of the hallway?  
I truly need to have a word with  
Mister Hacker, alone.

HACKER

It's alright. I'm not leaving you.

The ceiling ignites. Quincannon pulls Shay toward the exit.

SHAY

Please hurry, Mister Hacker. I still  
feel an evil in this house.

Muldoon waits until they are gone.

MULDOON

Couldn't just go away, could ya? No!  
Ya had to engage in gunplay.

HACKER

There was a young lady involved.

The Sergeant motions to Nicky's body.

MULDOON

Indeed there was, but yer not the  
one who lost his head over her. Now,  
ask me already.

HACKER

I need your help.

MULDOON

Kiss my arse, I say.

HACKER

She's still in danger, Quincey.

MULDOON

And, ya would have me help in makin'  
a clean sneak of it?

Hacker nods.

MULDOON (CONT'D)

Heaven only knows why I'm so fond of ya, boyo.

HACKER

That a yes?

MULDOON

Aye, anything to avoid further commotion. Best we gather up yer belongin's, so we can get to it.

They start to search amongst the burning debris.

Muldoon spots Hacker's fedora lying in an area fast filling with smoke and flame. He drops to a knee, and plucks it up.

Startled to a stand when a rat scurries past. He looks to discover countless pairs of glistening eyes staring at him. Muldoon crushes the hat to his chest, and backs away.

Hacker holsters his automatics as Muldoon backs into him. He follows Muldoon's stare to see that hundreds of rats have massed in front of them.

In their center, the ALBINO, an abnormally large and robust rat with misshapen ears and hellish red eyes. Opening its jaws wide to bare razor sharp incisors, it hisses at them.

MULDOON (CONT'D)

Sweet Mother of God.

Hacker and Muldoon share a wide-eyed moment of agreement.

**INT. HALVERSON HOUSE: CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS**

Shay and Quincannon cast worried eyes the length of the hazy corridor. The only illumination; Quincannon's flashlight.

Hacker, and then Muldoon, mangled fedora in hand, burst from the doorway, and run toward them.

MULDOON

Run, I tell ya! Run!

Quincannon looks to Shay, she's already on the run as Hacker, and then Muldoon, hurtle past him. Bewildered, Quincannon aims his flashlight's beam down the hall to reveal a nightmare.

The plague of rats, clinging to every surface of the corridor, eyes glistening as they claw their way forward in silence. A scuttling shape suddenly leaps at the light.

The color drains from Quincannon's face as the Albino flies at him, jaws wide-open, and incisors bared.

## QUINCANNON

Oh, feck me.

The dull thud of impact sounds as the flashlight tumbles to the floor. Its beam illuminating the growing pool of blood as Quincannon's TORTURED SCREAMS fill the air.

Shay is halfway down the staircase when the heel of her shoe breaks. Hacker comes out of nowhere to catch her, pulling her close before she tumbles. Muldoon catches up with them.

They share a moment of terror. Shay breaks the heel off her other shoe, takes Hacker's hand, and they are on the run again. Muldoon right behind, still clutching the fedora.

**INT. STUDY - CONTINUOUS**

Shay, Hacker, and then, Muldoon race past her father's body to exit the room as the squealing rats pour down the stairs.

**EXT. HALVERSON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

The mansion burns wildly, flames tickling the moon's belly. Rats spew from everywhere as Hacker and Shay, hand in hand, race down the steps. Muldoon trails, ruffled fedora in hand.

**EXT. ESTATE: COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS**

They hit the cobblestone, and stop to cast a wary eye at the inferno behind. The squealing rats raging after them.

MULDOON

Get the young lady to yer heap, and  
be quick about it.

SHAY

What about you, Sergeant?

MULDOON

I'll be fine, lass.

He presses the ruffled fedora into Hacker's chest.

MULDOON (CONT'D)

Now, on your way.

Hacker nods his appreciation. Muldoon returns the gesture, and with that, Hacker tugs Shay to the run.

She determinedly matches his stride. FRENZIED SHOUTS of confusion, and frightened Patrolmen, crisscross their path as they weave their way to Hacker's sedan.

GUN SHOTS ring out. Patrolmen fire at the approaching rats. Their screams fill the night as the rats boil over them.

They reach Hacker's sedan. Hacker jerks the passenger door open. Shay jumps inside, and he slams the door closed. He cocks his head in sudden awareness.

HACKER

You always were the sneaky sort.

Hacker turns. Bain holds a snubnosed revolver on him.

BAIN

I'm cutting in, Hacker.

HACKER

You know, Arnie. Until now, I wasn't sure how deep you were in.

BAIN

Never mind that. Just hand over the keys, and make it snappy.

A Patrolman covered in rats falls to the ground nearby him. Startled, Bain backpedals to trip and fall. He sits up as a car DOOR SLAMS to see that Hacker has climbed into his sedan.

A chill runs down Bain's spine as the Patrolman's ANGUISHED SCREAMS grow silent. He stares in terror as the rats turn on him, when Muldoon's patrol car roars into view.

The door flies open as it skids to a stop. Patrolman Finn emerges from the glaring headlights, and rushes to Bain's aid. He pulls the Lieutenant to his feet.

Suddenly, there is the dull thud of impact as Patrolman Finn catapults sideways. Bain runs, never once looking back at the youngster, whose TORTURED SHRIEKS echo from behind.

**INT. MULDOON'S PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS**

Bain jumps in, and yanks the door closed. He looks to the driver. Muldoon glares furiously at him as he knocks the patrol car into gear, and hits the gas.

**EXT. ESTATE: COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS**

Muldoon's patrol car burns rubber, leaving black smoke in its wake to reveal Hacker's sedan.

**EXT. HACKER'S SEDAN - CONTINUOUS**

Trying to absorb what she just saw, Shay stares out the window.

**INT. HACKER'S SEDAN - CONTINUOUS**

Shay looks on Hacker as he starts the engine.

SHAY

That man? He didn't even look back.

HACKER

No, the Lieutenant's not the sort.

She screams as something SLAMS into the sedan. Patrolman Finn's bloodied face is pressed against the window. He pleads through agonized eyes as the rats tear into his flesh.

Patrolman Finn slides down the glass, and falls from view as Hacker slams the sedan into gear, and pulls away.

**EXT. HACKER'S SEDAN - CONTINUOUS**

The sedan rumbles across the cobblestone. Shay strains through the window looking for the fallen Patrolman Finn.

**P.O.V. ESTATE: COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS**

Patrolman Finn is blanketed in rats. The Albino bursts from the threshing mass to lock eyes with Shay.

**INT. HACKER'S SEDAN - CONTINUOUS**

Shay sinks back into her seat as Hacker shifts gears.

**EXT. ESTATE: COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS**

Hacker's sedan races for the stone archway. Suddenly, a squadrol swerves in front and fishtails to the lead.

**INT. HACKER'S SEDAN - CONTINUOUS**

Looking through the windshield, Hacker and Shay see the rear doors of the squadrol slap open, the interior thick with rats. A lone Patrolman behind the wheel, fighting to gain control.

**EXT. ESTATE: COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS**

The wildly fishtailing squadrol's rear tire loses traction. It catches air, frontend buckling as it smashes to the ground in an end-over-end rollover that heads for the exit.

**INT. HACKER'S SEDAN - CONTINUOUS**

Shay is wide-eyed as Hacker works the wheel trying to avoid the debris that the squadrol leaves in its wake.

**EXT. ESTATE: COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS**

The squadrol slams into a pillar, rocking the archway from its foundation. The stonework crumbles; the archway toppling right above Hacker's sedan.

**INT. HACKER'S SEDAN - CONTINUOUS**

Hacker slams the gas pedal to the floor. Shay braces herself as the speedometer needle jumps.

HACKER

Hold on, Miss Halverson. This is going to be close.

**EXT. ESTATE: COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS**

The squadrol explodes into flames. The archway crashing mere inches from the rear bumper of Hacker's sedan.

**INT. HACKER'S SEDAN - CONTINUOUS**

A flaming tire with attached axle shoots past the windshield as Hacker and Shay hurtle headlong into the fireball.

**EXT. HACKER'S SEDAN - CONTINUOUS**

Hacker's sedan roars out of the flames.

**EXT. SHORELINE ROAD - CONTINUOUS**

Tank slapping through the twin grotesques, Hacker's sedan hits the asphalt, and roars away.

**INT. HACKER'S SEDAN - CONTINUOUS**

Hacker looks in the rearview mirror. Only the chaos left behind is reflected in its silvery glass.

**FULL SHOT ESTATE - CONTINUOUS**

The mansion's roof collapses inward sending sparks and flame shooting into the night. Two squadrols weave through the stone rubble to pass the fiery wreck, and speed away.

**EXT. ESTATE - CONTINUOUS**

The Albino leaps atop the piece of archway. The Halverson nameplate is still affixed. Hellish eyes scanning the horizon before bounding after the squadrols' fast fading taillights.

The hoard of rats follow, silently flooding over the stone to obscure the nameplate from view.

**EXT. SHORELINE ROAD - MOMENTS LATER**

Hacker's sedan roars out of the curve, and hits a straightaway.

**INT. HACKER'S SEDAN - CONTINUOUS**

Seeing the taillights of Muldoon's patrol car in the distance, Hacker hits the gas. Shay eyes him as they pick up speed.

SHAY

Who is this evil? This Old Man?

HACKER

This might be hard to believe. But, he's a vampire as old as time itself.

SHAY

No, I believe you. I can see the truth of it in your eyes.

HACKER

And, that's probably why the Old Man wants you. You have a gift, Miss Halverson.

SHAY

Father called my gift his most precious treasure. Not me, mind you, my gift. And now, it appears that he has given it, and me, to a monster.

HACKER

I wouldn't believe a word that Nicky said. His sort are all born liars.

SHAY

His sort, Mister Hacker?

HACKER

Demons. Men who have pledged their souls in service of evil on earth. In this case, the Old Man.

SHAY

He is never going to stop, is he?

HACKER

I'm afraid not. That's why we need to get you somewhere safe.

SHAY

Where is safe, Mister Hacker?

HACKER

I haven't figured it yet.

SHAY

Well, I'm not much for hiding anyway. So, I know where we are going.

HACKER

Where's that?

SHAY

If there is nowhere safe to hide  
from evil, then we shall bring the  
fight to its doorstep.

They share a moment of single-minded agreement.

**EXT. SHORELINE ROAD - MOMENTS LATER**

Hacker's sedan pulls even with Muldoon's patrol car.

**EXT. MULDOON'S PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS**

Bain glares at him through the passenger-side window as  
Hacker's sedan roars past.

**EXT. SHORELINE ROAD - CONTINUOUS**

Hacker's sedan swerves to the lead and hits a hairpin turn  
full out, skidding into drift, and punching it mid-slide as  
it blasts through the curve.

The headlights of the first squadrol, and then the second,  
appear in the distance behind. Lights and sirens activated as  
they speed to catch up with Muldoon's patrol car.

**FULL SHOT SHORELINE ROAD - CONTINUOUS**

The full moon hovers dark horizon as the sedan roars from the  
hairpin turn and flies down the long winding stretch of road  
that borders the lakeshore.

Several moments later, Muldoon's patrol car squeals out of  
the turn, and then a moment later, the squadrols follow.

**EXT. SHORELINE ROAD - MOMENTS LATER**

Hacker's sedan hurtles down a straightaway. In the distance,  
the sound of ONCOMING SIRENS, getting closer, and closer.

A hook and ladder barrels from the curve ahead, followed by a  
second hook and ladder that drifts into the adjacent lane.

**INT. HACKER'S SEDAN - CONTINUOUS**

Hacker is all concentration, two hands on the wheel as he  
floors it. Shay covers her eyes as they head for the four  
blinding beams of light.

**EXT. SHORELINE ROAD - CONTINUOUS**

The hook and ladders honk repeatedly as Hacker's sedan roars forward in an apparent game of chicken. Miraculously, it knifes between them, and disappears into the curve ahead.

A moment later, Muldoon's patrol car squeals out of bend, and directly in the path of the oncoming hook and ladders.

**INT. MULDOON'S PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS**

Muldoon hits the brakes. Bain's eyes bug as the speeding hook and ladders' horns blare in warning.

**EXT. SHORELINE ROAD - CONTINUOUS**

The squadrols fly from the bend. Braking suddenly and hard, they swerve past Muldoon's patrol car.

The first successfully squeals in front of Muldoon's patrol car. The second fails to hold the road; it clips Muldoon's patrol car to send it into a spin.

The out of control squadrol smashes into the other, sending both careening into the landscape as Muldoon's patrol car comes to rest across both lanes of the roadway.

The grinding of IGNITION FAILURE sounds. Muldoon's patrol car has stalled as the hook and ladders scream closer.

**INT. MULDOON'S PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS**

Bain starts to wail as the headlights stare them down. Muldoon desperately trying to restart the engine, summons a prayer.

MULDOON

Dear Lord forgive me. I have taken  
yer name in vain with careless  
regularity. I've not been to Sunday  
mass in over two fortnights.

**EXT. SHORELINE ROAD - CONTINUOUS**

The hook and ladders are nearly on top of the patrol car.

**INT. MULDOON'S PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS**

The headlights point blank in the face, Bain's wail reaches a crescendo as Muldoon offers up his last sin for forgiveness.

MULDOON

And, I cheated Paddy McFeely at poker.  
Although I'd argue with ya, that the  
stupid bastard deserved it.

**EXT. SHORELINE ROAD - CONTINUOUS**

At the last instant, the hook and ladders veer off road.

**EXT. MULDOON'S PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS**

The patrol car's bumper is torn off, spinning it to face in the direction it was originally headed as the massive fire engines barrel past on the dirt shoulder.

**INT. MULDOON'S PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS**

Bain's wail subsides. Muldoon abandons his effort to restart the engine.

MULDOON

We best look to those wrecked squadrols. The Patrolmen inside could still be alive.

Shaken, Bain watches through the rear window as the hook and ladders fade from view.

BAIN

Nah, let the Jakes take care of them.

MULDOON

How many more poor souls can ya abandon, Arnold Bain?

He points his snubnosed at Muldoon.

BAIN

We could pencil one more in if you'd like, and that's Lieutenant to you.

MULDOON

No. There'll be no need for that, Lieutenant.

BAIN

Good. Now, shut your yap, and get this jalopy rolling.

Muldoon turns the key, and the engine sputters to a start. He knocks the shifter into gear, and they are on the move.

MULDOON

He's long gone by now, or don't you know that?

BAIN

We'll get a bead on him again. You just keep your eyes pointed down the road, and step on it.

Bain grabs the microphone off the two-way radio, and speaks into it with authority.

BAIN (CONT'D)

Calling all cars. Calling all cars.  
This is Lieutenant Arnold Bain. Be  
on the lookout for a murder suspect.  
Last seen fleeing south in a blue  
Ford sedan with a female kidnap  
victim. Suspect is armed and  
dangerous. Repeat, the suspect is  
armed and dangerous. Approach with  
extreme caution, and shoot to kill.

MULDOON

Yer going straight to Hell.

Bain stares out the window as that truth, sinks in.

BAIN

Yeah, I know.

**INT. HACKER'S SEDAN - MOMENTS LATER**

Hacker is in a zone as he races toward an intersection thick with heavy traffic. Shay braces herself as it becomes apparent that he is going to ignore the stoplight in front of them.

**EXT. INTERSECTION - CONTINUOUS**

Car HORNS BLARE and BRAKES SQUEAL as Hacker's sedan roars into the intersection to take a sharp left turn, and power slide across the lanes of two-way traffic.

**FULL SHOT WATERFRONT DRIVE - CONTINUOUS**

Hacker's sedan roars into the heavy traffic toward the moonlit backdrop of the lights of Midtown Chicago.

**EXT. WATERFRONT DRIVE - MOMENTS LATER**

Weaving through traffic, Hacker's sedan banks into a sharp bend, and guns it mid-slide to reveal a pair of MOTOR OFFICERS sitting atop their Harley-Davidson Police Specials.

Motor Officer #1 grabs his microphone, and calls it in.

MOTOR OFFICER #1

Have sighted murder suspect's vehicle  
proceeding southbound on Waterfront.  
Will pursue forthwith.

The Motor Officers roar off in hot pursuit.

**EXT. SHORELINE ROAD - CONTINUOUS**

Muldoon's patrol car races to catch up.

**INT. MULDOON'S PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS**

A worried Muldoon looks on as Bain celebrates.

BAIN

Ha! Hear that? I told you we'd get eyes on the piece of crud. It's only a matter of time before he gets greased by some flatfoot looking to make tomorrow's headlines.

MULDOON

Then, we've time to stop off for a pint.

BAIN

Put a lid on the smart talk, and keep driving. I wanna be there to see the look on his puss when he gets what's coming to him.

**EXT. WATERFRONT DRIVE - CONTINUOUS**

Hacker's sedan and the police specials, roar toward a three-way junction. The traffic light glows green, the intersection clear with only a Nash sedan a few car-lengths ahead.

**INT. HACKER'S SEDAN - CONTINUOUS**

Shay breathes deeply. For a moment it appears they are clear of danger. That relief fades as she turns to see that the look on Hacker's face says differently.

**EXT. THREE-WAY JUNCTION - CONTINUOUS**

A HORN BLARES as the Nash enters the junction, broadsided by a flatbed truck that shoots from the intersecting street.

The Nash explodes, engulfing both vehicles. Hacker's sedan swerves around the fiery collision, quarter panel clipping the truck bed with a force that sends it spinning.

The Motor Officers skid to a stop, and draw their weapons as Hacker's sedan slams into a concrete roadside barrier. The senior officer looks to his partner.

MOTOR OFFICER #1

On my tail, junior.

MOTOR OFFICER #2

Yes, sir.

They glide into the junction atop their police specials. Motor Officer #1 is suddenly propelled from view as a blur of white fur, and bared teeth slams into his side.

Motor Officer #2 stops. He watches the riderless police special wobble toward the fiery wreckage, not fully grasping what he sees playing out at his feet.

He does not have time to scream at the sight of the Albino pinning his dead partner to the asphalt, before the squealing rats overwhelm him from behind.

**EXT. HACKER'S SEDAN - MOMENTS LATER**

Steam hisses from the engine compartment of Hacker's sedan. Hacker pulls Shay from its interior. She looks at the wreck.

SHAY

I'm afraid we'll need another vehicle.

**EXT. THREE-WAY JUNCTION - CONTINUOUS**

The riderless Police Special shimmies past the fiery wreckage, and pitches over in front of them. An AGONIZED WAIL follows as Motor Officer #2 shambles past the flames.

He is covered in biting rats, his pistol wildly discharging in their direction. Hacker steps in front of Shay, instantly spun around by the hissing lead that grazes his ribs.

Motor Officer #2 takes a few more tortured steps. The pistol's hammer striking empty chambers. He falls from view to reveal Hacker, on one knee, and clutching his side.

The rats start to surge Hacker's way. A REVVING MOTORCYCLE ENGINE turns his head to see Shay seated atop the Police Special. She waves him over.

SHAY

Get on!

Hacker jumps on the seat behind her. Shay turns toward the open roadway ahead, and guns the throttle. The Albino flashes past as they roar away atop the police special.

**FULL SHOT THREE-WAY JUNCTION - CONTINUOUS**

The full moon illuminates a junction carpeted in a plague of biblical proportions. Cars crash and PEOPLE flee from the flood of rats that stretch beyond the horizon.

**EXT. WATERFRONT DRIVE - MOMENTS LATER**

Hacker holds on tight as Shay weaves between cars at breakneck speed.

Police vehicles emerge from every intersection to follow as Shay hurtles toward a crowded traffic circle.

**EXT. TRAFFIC CIRCLE - CONTINUOUS**

The Police Special shoots cleanly across the busy lanes of traffic, banks through a turnoff, and disappears.

The congestion is suddenly magnified by the pursuing police vehicles that squeeze into the slow-moving traffic.

**EXT. LAKE AVENUE - MOMENTS LATER**

Shay and Hacker race through an area of prairie grasses, crisscrossed with strolling paths, and thick with cultural monuments, and city landmarks.

Hacker leans into Shay's ear.

HACKER

We're clear for the moment!

Shay scans the road behind, relieved that nothing follows.

**FULL SHOT LAKE AVENUE - CONTINUOUS**

The Police Special soars toward the shimmering lake in the moonlit horizon.

**EXT. TRAFFIC CIRCLE - MOMENTS LATER**

Sideswiping another police vehicle, Muldoon's patrol car plows through the turnoff.

**INT. MULDOON'S PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS**

Muldoon looks into the rearview mirror. His worried eyes scan the reflective glass, relieved to see the police vehicles streaming through the turnoff to follow his lead.

Bain pokes him with the snubnosed.

BAIN

Just keep your eyes on the road.

**EXT. LAKE AVENUE - MOMENTS LATER**

Shay and Hacker glide through the entrance to the park.

**EXT. PARK - CONTINUOUS**

Hacker hangs on tight as Shay suddenly brings the hammer down. Behind them, SCREAMING PEOPLE run to escape the thousands of hungry rats that pour from the grasses.

**EXT. LAKE AVENUE - MOMENTS LATER**

A TERRIFIED WOMAN bolts from the park and runs directly into the path of Muldoon's patrol car. It locks brakes, the following police vehicles, BRAKES SQUEALING behind.

The patrol car's headlights illuminate her face just before she is propelled from view by a blur of white. The Police Special follows, flying from the park to roar away.

**INT. MULDOON'S PATROL CAR - CONTINUOUS**

Muldoon glares at Bain, still pointing his snubnosed.

BAIN

Stop eyeballing me, and get a move on. He's mine now.

MULDOON

If you say so, Lieutenant, it's your funeral.

BAIN

Not if I can put him in a casket for good first.

**EXT. LAKE AVENUE - CONTINUOUS**

Muldoon's patrol car, and the police armada take off in pursuit of the escaping police special.

**EXT. CURB - CONTINUOUS**

Hind foot pinning the Terrified Woman to the asphalt, claws digging into her skull, the Albino watches as the last of the police vehicles blur past.

It dispatches its prey with a bite to the back of the neck.

**EXT. LAKE AVENUE - CONTINUOUS**

The Albino bounds off the twitching body to chase after the fading taillights. The hoard of rats excitedly follow.

**EXT. KURTEN AIRFIELD - MOMENTS LATER**

Shay banks the Police Special into a driveway, and roars under a sign that reads: KURTEN AIRFIELD. Hacker holds on as she blurs past the crossing gate of the private airport.

**EXT. DC-6 - MOMENTS LATER**

A uniformed Private Airline Captain inspects a DC-6 standing on an apron adjacent the runway. JOHN THOMAS RAGSDALE, early thirties, handsome, and a former Tuskegee Airman.

His eyes narrow as Shay and Hacker roar into view.

**EXT. KURTEN AIRFIELD - MOMENTS LATER**

Muldoon's patrol car crashes through the crossing gate. The armada of police vehicles follow in its wake.

**EXT. DC-6 - CONTINUOUS**

Shay dumps the Police Special as they hit the ground running. She yanks John Thomas up the ramp. Hacker follows.

JOHN THOMAS

Miss Shay? What's going on here?  
Where's your father?

SHAY

I've no time to explain, John Thomas.  
We must go, and we must go now!

**EXT. KURTEN AIRFIELD: RUNWAY - CONTINUOUS**

Muldoon's patrol car and the police vehicles fly into view. Followed by the mass of rats that smash into their flank.

The police vehicles fishtail, and spin, crashing into each other in this messy collision of rats and rotating tires.

**EXT. DC-6 - CONTINUOUS**

John Thomas stares at the spectacle playing out before him.

JOHN THOMAS

What in the Sam --

SHAY

John Thomas, please, we must go!

She pulls him through the hatch. Hacker follows.

**INT. DC-6: CABIN - CONTINUOUS**

They duck into the luxurious custom layout of the cabin.

JOHN THOMAS

Close that hatch, sit down, and fasten  
your seat belts.

Hacker slams the hatch closed as John Thomas pushes past Shay, and darts into the cockpit.

**INT. DC-6: COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS**

John Thomas hits the captain's chair, and belts himself in.

JOHN THOMAS

Booker, we've got trouble!

His copilot is already going through preflight system checks. CHARLES "BOOKER" MCKAY, late twenties, and a former Tuskegee Airman. He looks to John Thomas, and motions.

BOOKER

I can see Jay-Tee. Have two good eyes in my head.

John Thomas looks through the windscreen to the Control Tower inundated with rats. The PERSONNEL inside, fight a losing battle. He quickly looks back to Booker.

JOHN THOMAS

We ready?

Booker nods.

BOOKER

Better be.

John Thomas turns to the task at hand. In command, hand on the throttle, his thumb pushes the starter switch.

**EXT. DC-6 - CONTINUOUS**

The twin engines on each wing roar to life. Its wheels roll off the apron, and turn onto the runway.

**INT. DC-6: COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS**

The two men look out at the rat-infested airfield as John Thomas eases the throttle forward.

JOHN THOMAS

Let's get this tin can in the air.

**EXT. KURTEN AIRFIELD: RUNWAY - CONTINUOUS**

The DC-6 quickly taxis down the runway. The patrol car, and surviving police vehicles fall in behind its tail.

**INT. DC-6: CABIN - CONTINUOUS**

Shay sits anxiously as they pick up speed. Hacker looks out the window at the rats that stream from every direction.

**EXT. KURTEN AIRFIELD: RUNWAY - CONTINUOUS**

The DC-6 speeds down the runway, leaving the police vehicles behind. They brake to a stop in its dusty wake.

Bain exits in a blind fury to fire his snubnosed at the fleeing aircraft. Turning to Muldoon and SURVIVING PATROLMEN, Bain goes wide-eyed. He takes a step back, turns tail, and runs.

Muldoon and Surviving Patrolmen spin to see the Albino charging at them, leading a mass of rats that comes from all directions. They draw their weapons, and open fire.

MULDOON

Give 'em your best, laddies.

The Albino easily dodges the gunfire to catch up with Bain. It jumps onto his back, knocking him to the runway's surface.

Bain emits a guttural whimper as the Albino pulls him close, and hisses before it gallops after the escaping aircraft.

It covers the length of the runway with supernatural speed, catching up to the DC-6 as its wheels lift off the ground.

**EXT. DC-6 - CONTINUOUS**

The Albino latches onto the retracting landing gear, red eyes glistening as it vanishes into the underbelly of the aircraft.

**FULL SHOT KURTEN AIRFIELD: RUNWAY - CONTINUOUS**

The DC-6, engines full throttle, takes off over the shimmering lake, and climbs toward the full moon in the starless night.

**EXT. KURTEN AIRFIELD: RUNWAY - MOMENTS LATER**

Bain shrieks, unnerved when a rat scurries at him. Relief washes over Muldoon, and Surviving Patrolmen to see that the rats harmlessly crisscross past their feet.

The excited squealing gone silent as the frightened animals dart back to the shadows from whence they came.

Muldoon holsters his weapon, and watches as a SURVIVING PATROLMAN, a middle-aged man with weathered features, offers a hand up to the Lieutenant.

Bain swats the man's hand away, and scrambles to his feet. Dusting himself off as he struts over to Muldoon.

BAIN

Get me to Chicago Municipal.

Muldoon summons the Surviving Patrolman with an irritated wave of his hand. The man reluctantly jogs their way.

MULDOON

No, I won't be accompanyin' ya on this fool's errand any further.

BAIN

You're gonna take me alright. That's an order, Sergeant.

MULDOON

Ya can take yer order, Lieutenant, and poke it up your arse.

The Surviving Patrolman steps in.

SURVIVING PATROLMAN

Are ya needin' me, Sergeant?

MULDOON

Aye, Patrolman. I'll be needin' ya to take the Lieutenant to the airport.

SURVIVING PATROLMAN

Right this way, Lieutenant.

Bain glares before following the man to a police vehicle. Muldoon catches his eye as he climbs into the interior.

MULDOON

The lad has done ya no harm, Arnold Bain, leave it lay!

The Lieutenant smirks as the vehicle pulls away.

**FULL SHOT THE NIGHT'S SKY - CONTINUOUS**

Muldoon turns his eyes skyward as the blinking lights of the DC-6 grow smaller in moonlit night.

MULDOON

God speed, boyo.

**P.O.V. THE CITY - MOMENTS LATER**

Chicago, and the blazing trail of devastation that leads from the estate to the airfield below.

**INT. DC-6: CABIN - MOMENTS LATER**

Shay stares through a window, her singular reflection superimposed over the glowing destruction. Hacker leans over her shoulder.

HACKER

Now that we're in the air, maybe we should rethink this plan of yours.

SHAY

No, these men must be dealt with.

HACKER

Not men, Miss Halverson, monsters.  
And, I shouldn't have to point out,  
that they're after you.

SHAY

I am well aware of the danger that I  
face. I can feel it everywhere, but  
I have an edge.

HACKER

What would that be?

SHAY

You, Mister Hacker. You are my edge.

HACKER

How's that?

SHAY

These monsters are afraid of you.  
I'm certain of it.

Hacker looks past her to eye the cockpit entrance.

HACKER

All evidence to the contrary.

John Thomas ducks through the opening.

JOHN THOMAS

I wouldn't be so quick to dismiss  
one of Miss Shay's intuitions, if I  
were you. For as long as I can  
remember, the girl can see what's  
inside a man's soul. Momma called it  
a gift from God.

HACKER

You're mother was a smart woman.

JOHN THOMAS

That she was. Miss Shay and I have  
known each other since we were  
youngsters. Some might even call us  
friends.

SHAY

We are friends, John Thomas.

JOHN THOMAS

Then, begging your pardon, Miss Shay.  
I've had just about my fill of feeling  
like a mushroom.

HACKER

I think your friend means --

SHAY

I know exactly what he means.

She looks to John Thomas.

SHAY (CONT'D)

Yes, John Thomas, you deserve the truth. Father has been murdered, and the men who did it, now pursue me.

JOHN THOMAS

Men, or monsters, Miss Shay?

He eyes Hacker.

JOHN THOMAS (CONT'D)

What is it that you were saying, Mister...?

HACKER

Hacker. And, how much did you hear?

JOHN THOMAS

John Thomas Ragsdale, Mister Hacker. And, I heard enough to ask why monsters would be afraid of you?

SHAY

Because, he can expose them to the light of day, that's why.

JOHN THOMAS

And, if he shined a light on these monsters, what would we see? Because, all I've seen is a boatload of rats.

SHAY

There was a big hideous white one with red eyes. It summoned those poor animals, and had them do evil.

HACKER

That would be Jimmy Zinni. The little albino is one of the demons the Old Man commands.

JOHN THOMAS

What kind of monster commands demons? Is this Old Man Lucifer himself?

HACKER

Close. The Old Man is a vampire.

JOHN THOMAS  
Vampire? Like Bela Lugosi, vampire?

HACKER  
That's right.

John Thomas nods.

JOHN THOMAS  
Momma did warn me about them vampires.

SHAY  
They really do exist, John Thomas.  
You must trust me.

JOHN THOMAS  
Oh, I trust you, Miss Shay. But, are  
you sure about Mister Hacker?

SHAY  
I am sure that he is not a demon,  
nor is he evil. And I am sure, that  
I can trust him with my life.

John Thomas takes Hacker's measure.

HACKER  
You're the one who said she could  
see what's inside a man's soul.

JOHN THOMAS  
Okay, I'm in. Tell me about this  
vampire.

HACKER  
I tangled with him before, when I  
was on the job.

SHAY  
I knew you were a police officer.

HACKER  
Detective actually. My partner, and  
I, we got a tip about a protection  
racket being run out of this little  
speakeasy.

SHAY  
By partner, you mean the Lieutenant  
that the young Patrolman saved?

HACKER  
He wasn't a Lieutenant then. Anyway,  
we went to that little speakeasy,  
and started nosing around.

SHAY

Then, your partner betrayed you.

JOHN THOMAS

Good gravy, Miss Shay! Please let the man tell his story.

SHAY

Of course, John Thomas. Please, Mister Hacker, continue.

HACKER

Where was I?

SHAY

You were nosing around.

HACKER

That's right. We were nosing around, asking questions. But, my partner disappeared when the Old Man and his demons showed up, and proceeded to bump off everyone inside the joint. I've been looking for some payback ever since.

JOHN THOMAS

So, what's the plan?

HACKER

That's not a question for me. I work for the lady.

He looks to Shay.

HACKER (CONT'D)

Mind still set, Miss Halverson?

SHAY

In stone, Mister Hacker. There is a party I must attend.

Hacker's VOICE OVER picks up as he reclines in his seat.

HACKER (V.O.)

The girl was stubborn.

He pulls the fedora over his eyes.

HACKER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And, I needed rest.

The lens erupts into foggy ripples that blur the screen.

HACKER (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Especially if I was going to dance,  
with the Old Man again.

**INT. INTERROGATION CHAMBER - MOMENTS LATER**

The ripples recede, and the spotlight comes into focus.

BABCOCK (O.S.)  
Now, I'm going to stop you there.

HACKER (O.S.)  
Alright. But, I haven't finished.

Babcock drops his cigarette, crushing it out as it lands among several spent butts already at his feet.

BABCOCK  
Anything eventful happen while you  
were sleeping?

Hacker sits under the spotlight. His bruises faded.

HACKER  
I wouldn't exactly call it sleep.  
It was more of a punch-drunk stupor.

BABCOCK  
Feeling like you went ten rounds  
with Jake LaMotta the way you did.

HACKER  
So, you've fingered me goofy?

He shakes a cigarette from the pack.

BABCOCK  
Haven't made up my mind yet. Let's  
just say you still have my ear.

HACKER  
I'm curious then. If you haven't  
figured me for a straitjacket, why'd  
you stop me?

BABCOCK  
Just needed a minute to get things  
right in my mind.

**INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Dittman and Bain watch Babcock light a cigarette for Hacker.

BAIN  
I need to get back in that room.

DITTMAN  
Ya ain't needed, Lieutenant.

BAIN  
But I am, I tell you. Your Sheriff  
is being flimflammed.

Dittman shakes his head.

DITTMAN  
Ain't a man alive who could bamboozle  
Eli Babcock. The Sheriff just likes  
to give a man enough rope to hang  
himself.

BAIN  
Yes, yes, I like the sound of that.

DITTMAN  
By the end of the night, the Sheriff  
will know exactly what he's lookin'  
at.

**INT. INTERROGATION CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS**

Babcock fires up a cigarette.

BABCOCK  
Don't suppose the remainder of your  
tale comes in any smaller portions?

HACKER  
The truth can be hard to swallow  
sometimes.

BABCOCK  
That it can, son. That it can.

He nods his permission.

BABCOCK (CONT'D)  
Go on ahead now, pick up your tale  
where it gets interesting again.

HACKER  
Alright, Sheriff. Like I was saying,  
I hadn't walked away with a few minor  
cuts, and bruises. The fact was, I  
had gotten pasted pretty good. And,  
I needed to catch my second wind.

Hacker takes a drag off his cigarette, and exhales.

HACKER (CONT'D)

It wasn't a night's sleep. No, that's something I hadn't had in a very long time.

The spotlight, its intense white slowly fills the screen.

HACKER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Whatever it was, it sure felt good while it lasted.

**INT. DC-6: CABIN - NIGHT**

Hacker's VOICE OVER continues as the intense white fades, and then returns. A beam of light comes into focus.

HACKER (V.O.)

But, it was the hangover when I came to that almost had me convinced I was still alive.

Booker points a penlight in Hacker's eyes.

BOOKER

Best you keep still. Your eyes aren't reacting to light the way they should. Probably got yourself a concussion.

Hacker sits up, and rubs his head. His shirt ripped away, his injuries cleaned and dressed.

BOOKER (CONT'D)

Patched you up best I could. Haven't seen wounds like yours since Sicily when Jay-Tee and me was with the Ninety-Ninth. Now, you sit tight. Miss Shay had me promise I'd fetch her as soon as you opened your eyes.

Booker leans in, and whispers.

BOOKER (CONT'D)

Just between us. She was awful worried about you.

Hacker looks past him, and Booker turns. Shay stands behind.

SHAY

Why, Charles McKay? A gentleman should never tell on a lady.

BOOKER

Meant no offense, Miss Shay.

SHAY

Then, we shall attribute the misunderstanding to nerves.

BOOKER

Appreciate that, Miss Shay.

SHAY

Thank you, Charles. I will see to Mister Hacker from here.

BOOKER

Yes ma'am, bet I'm needed back in the cockpit about now anyhow.

Booker retreats, and Shay turns to a smiling Hacker.

SHAY

Now, wipe that grin off your face.

HACKER

But, you were worried about me. The man said awful worried.

SHAY

You think too much of yourself. I was simply worried about my plan.

HACKER

If you say so.

SHAY

That I do, and we can ill afford any complications.

Hacker swings his eyes to the cockpit entrance.

HACKER

There are always complications.

Booker pops his head out.

BOOKER

Miss Shay, you best come. Jay-Tee says we got us some complications.

Hacker shrugs in reaction to Shay's cross stare.

**INT. DC-6: COCKPIT - MOMENTS LATER**

The radio. Static crackles from its speaker before the voice of the McCarran Field AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER is heard.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER (V.O.)  
 DC-6, November, Charlie, one, three,  
 one, three. You are cleared to land  
 at McCarran where you will be boarded  
 by state police. Do you copy?

John Thomas and Booker sit at the controls. They swing their eyes to Hacker and Shay. They stand in the entryway.

HACKER  
 Seems the Lieutenant made a phone  
 call.

SHAY  
 There must be an alternative airstrip.

Pilot and Copilot look to each other.

BOOKER  
 Thinking what I'm thinking, Jay-Tee?

JOHN THOMAS  
 I believe I am.

John Thomas eases back on the throttle, and the aircraft starts to descend. It breaks the clouds, and the faint glow of the state highway below comes into view.

SHAY  
 Can you do it, John Thomas?

JOHN THOMAS  
 We're going to find out, Miss Shay.  
 You two better get in that cabin,  
 and buckle up. This could get rough.

**INT. DC-6: CABIN - MOMENTS LATER**

The cabin shakes as the DC-6 continues its descent. Hacker and Shay trade tense smiles as her hand finds his.

**FULL SHOT DC-6 - MOMENTS LATER**

Under the full moon the aircraft's landing gear lowers as it descends toward the lightly traveled two-lane highway. Sparks shower the air as a wing slices through a power line.

**INT. DC-6: COCKPIT - CONTINUOUS**

John Thomas and Booker look on as the highway goes dark. The cockpit shakes as both work to stick the landing.

JOHN THOMAS  
 We've got this, Booker.

BOOKER  
Piece of cake.

An odd feeling spins Booker to see the Albino staring at him.

BOOKER (CONT'D)  
Jay-Tee?

The Albino leaps. A DULL THUD sounds. Blood sprays the wall.

**INT. DC-6: CABIN - MOMENTS LATER**

The cabin shakes harder as Hacker and Shay lock eyes.

HACKER/SHAY  
Something's wrong.

The DC-6 rolls sideways, and gravity pulls them to the window. They see the wing skimming over the dark highway below.

**EXT. STATE HIGHWAY - MOMENTS LATER**

The DC-6's wing shears off. The body of the aircraft slams onto the highway. Its nose furrowing through the asphalt. The fuselage breaking apart.

The wreckage coming to rest in a cloud of fire and smoke.

**FULL SHOT CRASH SITE - MOMENTS LATER**

The DC-6's wreckage lies at the end of a fiery debris trail that stretches for hundreds of yards.

**EXT. WRECKED CABIN SECTION - MOMENTS LATER**

Flame and smoke play all around the the battered cabin section.

**INT. WRECKED CABIN SECTION - CONTINUOUS**

A few of the aircraft's emergency lights flicker. Electrical conduit dangles from the ceiling, wires arcing, sparks raining down. Hacker unfastens his seat belt, and looks to Shay.

HACKER  
You alright?

SHAY  
Yes, I think so.

He stands to offer her his hand.

HACKER  
We better get clear of this before  
our luck changes.

**EXT. WRECKED CABIN SECTION - MOMENTS LATER**

Hacker pulls Shay from the wreckage, her skirt tearing as it catches on the jagged opening. She digs in her feet almost pulling Hacker over. Frustration paints her face.

SHAY

That was an expensive skirt.

She pulls off a shoe and tosses it at the wreckage.

SHAY (CONT'D)

And, that was an expensive airplane.

Yanking off the other, she puts everything into the throw.

SHAY (CONT'D)

And, my father is dead.

Momentum spins Shay to her knees. With tears in her eyes, she sees the cockpit section, half a football field away.

SHAY (CONT'D)

Oh, John Thomas?

**EXT. WRECKED COCKPIT SECTION - MOMENTS LATER**

Shay charges to cockpit wreckage. Hacker a step behind. Its nose crumpled, fire burning through its shattered windscreen.

Hacker climbs up the nose to elbow through the broken glass. Fire flares, driving him back. He takes a deep breath, and reaches inside to wrest John Thomas free.

He drops to the ground with John Thomas. Shay follows as Hacker carries him away from the smoke and flame.

**EXT. CRASH SITE - MOMENTS LATER**

The sound of APPROACHING SIRENS can be heard as Hacker props John Thomas up against a twisted piece of landing gear.

His breathing labored as Shay kneels beside him.

JOHN THOMAS

Sorry I let you down, Miss Shay.

SHAY

You could never let me down, John Thomas. Now, sit quiet, we have to go back, for Charles.

JOHN THOMAS

Too late. Stinking white rat done him in.

SHAY

Then, we must get you to a doctor.

JOHN THOMAS

I'll be fine, Miss Shay. Just got the wind knocked out of me. We'll meet up later, once I catch my breath.

Shay fights back tears.

SHAY

I will not leave you.

JOHN THOMAS

You have to. You can't be here when the authorities arrive.

Hacker steps in.

HACKER

Do you know what you're saying?

JOHN THOMAS

Yes, and you know that I'm thinking right too. Now, go do what you came here to do.

HACKER

Alright. Catch up when you can.

JOHN THOMAS

I promise.

Tears stream down Shay's face as Hacker pulls her away.

HACKER

Come, Miss Halverson, we have to go.

**EXT. STATE HIGHWAY - MOMENTS LATER**

Three firetrucks, sirens blaring, race past as Hacker and Shay walk in sad silence. She reacts to the cold. He takes off his coat, and places it over her shoulders.

SHAY

I killed them.

HACKER

You did nothing of the kind.

SHAY

But, I led this evil right to them.

Hacker grabs Shay by the arm, and spins her around.

HACKER

No, that would be your father's sin.

SHAY

God knows my father had his appetites,  
but in the end, he sent me you.

HACKER

And, that may point to my sin.

He looks away, his eyes scanning the highway ahead.

HACKER (CONT'D)

Trouble just seems to find me.

A Sheriff's cruiser roars into view, and races past them.

SHAY

We better get out of sight, before  
he thinks to come back.

The cruiser brakes hard, and reverses to a stop in front of them. Deputy Dittman jumps from its interior, pistol drawn.

DITTMAN

You just keep them hands away from  
those fancy pistols, boy.

Hacker, hands aloft, looks to his automatics.

HACKER

These? They're just for show.

Dittman's grip tightens on his Smith & Wesson.

DITTMAN

Never mind that, either of you got  
anythin' to do with that plane crash?

HACKER/SHAY

What plane crash?

**EXT. CRASH SITE - MOMENTS LATER**

A piece of burning debris shoots into the air, and lands many yards away. The Albino rears from a crater in the blacktop to take a few wobbly two-legged steps, and falls down.

The Albino lies in a fetal curl, writhing in agony. Its hair falls out, pink skin bulging from the inside, tail slapping at the ground as it is absorbed into the body.

Nauseating cracks fill the air, its torso contorting, hands and feet growing from paws as the demon endures excruciating pain to take final human form.

A little man rises into view. JIMMY ZINNI, an albinic dwarf with a cleft lip, misshapen ears and beady crimson eyes. He is dressed in a suit with spats, and a bowler hat.

He smiles impishly at the approach of headlights. A station wagon rolls to a stop in front of him. His eyes dance with evil intent as its door opens invitingly.

**EXT. STATE HIGHWAY - MOMENTS LATER**

The Deputy approaches Hacker. Pistol raised high.

DITTMAN

I ain't goin' to ask, but one more time.

HACKER

Look, I'm just a guy out for a stroll with his best Friday night gal.

Dittman turns a jaundice eye Shay's way.

SHAY

That's right, Deputy.

DITTMAN

You two quit your stallin'. I ain't got all night.

Hacker looks past him.

HACKER

Nor do we.

Approaching headlights cut through the night.

DITTMAN

Don't you move a muscle.

Dittman waves the vehicle through. The station wagon glides past. Jimmy Zinni behind its wheel, the lone occupant. Shay shudders as her eyes meet his.

The Deputy steps closer. His attention so focused on Hacker that he is unaware of Shay circling behind.

DITTMAN (CONT'D)

Keep them hands up hi...

The CONCUSSIVE THUD of impact stifles him. He crumbles from view to reveal Shay. She tosses a rock to the ground, and ducks her head into the cruiser to produce a ring of keys.

SHAY

Well, just don't stand there. Help me get him into the trunk.

Shay jingles the keys.

SHAY (CONT'D)

I just found us a ride into town.

**INT. SHERIFF'S CRUISER - LATER**

Shay is behind the wheel. Hacker next to her. Dittman's MUFFLED PROTESTS echo from the trunk.

HACKER

He's beginning to work my nerves. How much longer?

SHAY

See for yourself.

He turns to see a horizon filled with blinking color.

**FULL SHOT STATE HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS**

The cruiser motors toward the dazzling lights of Las Vegas.

**EXT. WEDDING MOTEL - LATER**

A wedding chapel with an attached motel occupies the furthest corner of the town's off-strip area. Bright lights, and white paint, cannot hide its seedy nature.

Several STREETWALKERS work the corner. They scatter as the cruiser pulls to a stop in front of the motel.

Shay and Hacker step from the interior, and look to the sign atop the building. A pair of dice above neon lettering reads: ROLL OF THE DICE WEDDING CHAPEL AND MOTEL.

HACKER

You sure?

She nods to him with surety.

**INT. WEDDING MOTEL: LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER**

The lobby is furnished with red velvet, and erotic art depicting cherubs frolicking. The woman behind the counter takes a pull off a well-worked cigar.

Half in the bag, she pushes out of her chair. NORA SCHULMAN, an ex-dancer of dubious background with pretty features. She hides her body in a muumuu, and her misery with liquor.

She confronts Hacker and Shay as they enter.

NORA  
Get that cherry top out of here.  
It's bad for business.

SHAY  
As bad for business as being rude to  
the daughter of your benefactor?

Nora squints questioningly.

NORA  
Little Miss Highbrow, that you?

Shay nods, and Nora unapologetically turns up her nose.

NORA (CONT'D)  
Well, can't blame me if I didn't see  
it was you right away. You being  
under all that dirt.

She turns to Hacker, amorously running a finger up his arm.

NORA (CONT'D)  
And, who's this strong man you brought  
with you? Tell me handsome, you two  
here for a room? Or, the guns?

Hacker's eyes dance as he ponders his options.

**INT. WEDDING MOTEL: CHAPEL - MOMENTS LATER**

The chapel is adorned with red velvet pews with red carpeted  
aisles. Erotic paintings on its walls.

Nora throws back a shot. She plucks a bottle off the pulpit,  
and pours another, when something unseen stops her hand. She  
looks to see Shay, watching her intently.

NORA  
Join me?

Shay declines with a contemptuous shake of her head.

NORA (CONT'D)  
Have it your way.

Nora downs the shot, and slams the glass down, turning to  
pull aside the curtain behind to reveal Hacker. He stands in  
a room inspecting the array of weaponry displayed on its walls.

NORA (CONT'D)  
See anything you like?

HACKER

You have yourself a very impressive operation here, Miss Schulman.

NORA

Call me Nora. All my gentlemen friends do.

HACKER

Alright, Nora. What's it going to take to do a deal?

NORA

I can think of an even trade I'd make right now.

She turns, and locks eyes with Shay.

NORA (CONT'D)

But, I owe Little Miss Highbrow here something. And, it isn't too hard to see you're in trouble.

Her eyes swing back to Hacker.

NORA (CONT'D)

So, what else do you need?

**EXT. WEDDING MOTEL: HONEYMOON SUITE - MOMENTS LATER**

Hacker and Shay step past Nora as she opens the door.

**INT. WEDDING MOTEL: HONEYMOON SUITE - CONTINUOUS**

Nora lingers in the doorway. Shay's eyes narrow in disgust as she looks at a painting of cherubs involved in orgy hanging above the large round red velvet covered bed.

NORA

Pretty nice, huh? It's the honeymoon suite.

Hacker offers a polite smile.

HACKER

It'll do fine.

NORA

There's a shower in the bathroom, and some clean clothes in the closet. The couple that was to wear them, broke up before their big day.

HACKER

And, the car?

NORA

Have a yellow heap out back. Keys are in the glove box. I'll make sure that the hardware you picked out is in it before you leave.

HACKER

I have one last favor to ask.

NORA

Just ask.

HACKER

There's a deputy locked in the trunk of the cruiser we came in.

NORA

Say no more. I'll let him out in the morning.

HACKER

Thank you, Nora.

She looks past Hacker to Shay.

NORA

It's the least I could do.

Nora smiles at Hacker as she pulls the door closed.

HACKER

You two must have some history.

SHAY

Just one of my father's many indiscretions.

A newspaper on the dresser catches his eye.

HACKER

She's a bit more than that. I'm guessing more of a partner.

Hacker picks it up, and looks at the front page. Halverson's photo accompanies the lead story. The headline reads: HALVERSON PARTNERS WITH REPUTED MOB BOSS IN VEGAS VENTURE.

SHAY

My father had many partners.

He tosses the paper back on the dresser, front page down.

HACKER

I haven't had a partner since --

SHAY  
The Lieutenant?

Hacker nods.

SHAY (CONT'D)  
I will not let you down like he did.

HACKER  
That's not my worry. My worry is  
that I'll let you down. I may not be  
the man you think I am.

SHAY  
You have the strength to end this  
nightmare. Of this I am certain.

HACKER  
I hope you're right.

SHAY  
You will feel better after you have  
washed up.

HACKER  
Ladies first.

Shay plops down on the bed, and closes her eyes.

SHAY  
No, you go on ahead. I am  
contemplating our next move.

He takes off his coat, and lays it over the newspaper.

HACKER  
Alright, you're the boss.

**INT. HONEYMOON SUITE: BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Condensation fogs the room. Hacker's outline can be seen  
through the shower curtain that surrounds the tub.

**INT. HONEYMOON SUITE: SHOWER - CONTINUOUS**

Hacker washes the shampoo from his hair. He pulls his head  
from the water a beat before he hears the DOOR OPENING.

HACKER  
I'll be just a minute.

Shay steps past the curtain.

SHAY  
That's about all the time we have.

Hacker flinches as her fingers find his cheek. His eyes are unsure as she steps closer.

HACKER

In another lifetime I'd be head over heels. But, given the circumstances?

She caresses his shoulder. His wound has closed.

SHAY

Given the circumstances, we may not have another lifetime.

Shay kisses him. His hands find the small of her back as she presses her body against his.

**INT. HONEYMOON SUITE: BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Their entangled silhouettes are seen through the curtain.

**INT. HONEYMOON SUITE - MORE THAN A MINUTE LATER**

Shay wears a robe, drying her hair with a towel. Hacker, towel around his waist, walks past, and opens the closet.

His eyes narrow.

HACKER

I am not wearing that.

Shay follows his gaze and smiles broadly.

SHAY

Oh, don't be so fussy.

**EXT. WEDDING MOTEL - MOMENTS LATER**

Shay wears a beautiful white satin gown as she walks to the back of the motel. She glances behind, and laughs.

SHAY

You will be the life of the party.

A red-faced Hacker follows, wearing his fedora with a crushed red velvet tuxedo, and black satin-trimmed slacks.

HACKER

I feel like the court jester.

SHAY

Then, you are dressed the part.

She suddenly balks. Her glee fading at the sight of the only car parked behind the motel. A beat-up yellow taxicab.

HACKER

Nora did say it was a yellow heap.

**FULL SHOT LAS VEGAS STRIP - MOMENTS LATER**

Hacker's VOICE OVER picks up again as the Hunter's Moon lords over the Las Vegas Strip circa 1948.

HACKER (V.O.)

Evil had stepped from the shadows.

**EXT. LAS VEGAS STRIP - CONTINUOUS**

The glowing lights of the El Rancho, Last Frontier, Flamingo and Thunderbird flash past.

HACKER (V.O.)

And, into the neon light of sin city.

The sidewalks, thick with TOURISTS going about their night.

HACKER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The wolf in the midst of cattle.

The taxicab pulls to a stop at the curb.

**EXT. TAXICAB - CONTINUOUS**

Hacker steps from the taxicab to look skyward.

HACKER (V.O.)

I had searched for years not knowing the Old Man's name.

**P.O.V. LAS VEGAS STRIP - CONTINUOUS**

A marquee sign towering in the night announces in glowing neon letters: GIORGIO CAPUZZO'S BLACK PALACE.

HACKER (V.O.)

Until the night he arrogantly announced it to the world.

**EXT. TAXICAB - CONTINUOUS**

Hacker scoots around the taxicab to the passenger side, and opens the door. Shay steps to the curb.

**FULL SHOT BLACK PALACE - CONTINUOUS**

Hacker and Shay stand before a monolithic black glass, and granite structure. The neon sign above its entrance reads: BLACK PALACE HOTEL AND CASINO.

**EXT. TAXICAB - CONTINUOUS**

A THRONG OF PEOPLE move about as Hacker pulls a duffel bag from the trunk, and steps to Shay's side.

**EXT. BLACK PALACE - MOMENTS LATER**

A giant man stands at the main entrance. FRANK FRACASSETTI, an ex-professional boxer with a bent nose. His grotesquely over-muscled body stuffed into a linen suit.

He waves off the BELLHOPS as Hacker and Shay approach.

FRACASSETTI  
You guys get da next one.

Fracassetti steps into their path, and regards Shay with a polite nod, before eyeing Hacker, and the bag he carries.

FRACASSETTI (CONT'D)  
Miss... Hacker? What's in da bag ya  
brung?

He drops the heavy bag at the giant's feet.

HACKER  
My hardware. Miss Halverson, and I  
are here to surrender.

FRACASSETTI  
Still gonna have ta frisk ya.

Hacker lifts his arms, and Fracassetti pats him down.

SHAY  
Am I to be searched as well,  
Mister...?

FRACASSETTI  
Fracassetti. And nah, I ain't gonna  
search ya, Miss. Don't look ta me  
like ya could hurt a fly.

Fracassetti picks the bag off the ground.

FRACASSETTI (CONT'D)  
Ya follow me now.

He leads them through the entrance.

**INT. BLACK PALACE: LOBBY - CONTINUOUS**

Crystal chandeliers illuminate a vast lobby built of black marble, and appointed in Italian leather furniture and golden fixtures. The area thick with HOTEL PATRONS.

Hacker and Shay follow Fracassetti. He stops next to a sedan atop a ramp at the mouth of the casino flush with GAMBLERS. The sign above the display reads: WIN A TUCKER TORPEDO.

FRACASSETTI  
Stand here, so I can keep my eyes on  
ya. I gotta make a call.

**INT. BLACK PALACE: FRONT DESK - CONTINUOUS**

Fracassetti takes the bag to the front desk. He places the bag on the counter, and motions to the DESK CLERKS.

FRACASSETTI  
One of ya, give me da phone.

A Desk Clerk hands him a phone. He dials, and brings the handset to his ear. His view of Hacker, and Shay, partly obscured by the crush of HOTEL GUESTS that filter past.

FRACASSETTI (CONT'D)  
He's here, boss... She's with him...  
Got my eyes on da both of 'em.

**INT. BLACK PALACE: LOBBY - CONTINUOUS**

Shay is worried as the giant looks inside the bag.

SHAY  
We may need those weapons, sooner  
than I had anticipated.

She turns to find that Hacker is gone.

HACKER (O.S.)  
Psst, up here.

Shay looks up to see Hacker hugging the sedan atop the display.

HACKER (CONT'D)  
Get out there, and distract the big  
lummo, before he sees me.

**INT. BLACK PALACE: FRONT DESK - MOMENTS LATER**

Fracassetti strains as he loses sight of them.

FRACASSETTI  
I understand. They'll wait here 'til  
Jimmy comes down ta get 'em.

He hangs up. His jaw drops. Shay stands before him, adjusting the garter high on her thigh. She finishes with a blown kiss, and a wave goodbye as pandemonium breaks out behind her.

Fracassetti's eyes widen as the PANICKED CROWD parts to reveal the Tucker headed for him. The Desk Clerks bolt as he takes the sedan head-on, smashing him through the front desk.

Shay retrieves the bag from the rubble, and reaches inside to produce a pair of Thompson Submachine Guns. She tosses one to Hacker as he emerges from behind the STUNNED ONLOOKERS.

He catches it, and steps to her side. Tommy Guns clutched in their hands, ammo sacks slung on their shoulders. They nod in agreement, and turn their attention to the crowd.

SHAY

Ladies, and gentlemen.

HACKER

We're about to pump lead at anything that moves. So, I'd beat feet, if I were you.

Shay's eyes narrow to see the crowd stands frozen in place.

SHAY

Did you hear my friend?

They flee as she lets fly with a firestorm of lead that chips away at the ceiling above.

SHAY (CONT'D)

He said run!

**INT. BLACK PALACE: LOBBY - CONTINUOUS**

The lobby empties of noncombatants, and Shay motions to the elevators embedded in the far wall. Hacker follows her across the lobby with cautious purpose.

Suddenly, he sweeps Shay to the floor as the wrecked Tucker hurtles past to slam into a pillar mid-lobby. It snaps, a huge piece crashes to the floor, missing them by mere inches.

They look up to see Fracassetti. Every muscle rippling.

**INT. BLACK PALACE: FRONT DESK - CONTINUOUS**

Fracassetti's eyes are full of perplexed pain as he stares from the rubble. Tears running down his cheeks.

FRACASSETTI

So, far ya'd have ta rate me polite.  
Then ya go and do a mean thing, like  
runnin' me over with dat car.

His body contorting in agony, clothing shredding, and skin ripping as the hidden demon bursts from within.

A Demonic Behemoth emerges from the remnants of his flesh. Eyes full of rage to see them running for the elevators.

**INT. BLACK PALACE: LOBBY - CONTINUOUS**

Shay hits the call button as the Demonic Behemoth charges. A LOUD DING chimes, their faces going white as elevator doors part to reveal the Albino. It leaps with incisors bared.

They recoil as a SHOTGUN BLAST sounds, and the Albino explodes. An ejected shell lands at their feet as a pink mist settles over their shocked faces.

John Thomas steps in, smoke curling from the muzzle of the Browning tactical shotgun in his hands.

JOHN THOMAS

That was for Booker.

He gingerly steps into the elevator.

JOHN THOMAS (CONT'D)

You two coming?

Hacker and Shay quickly join him.

**INT. BLACK PALACE: LOBBY ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS**

They hold their weapons at the ready. The Demonic Behemoth nearly on top of them, when something halts its charge.

A profound sorrow overcomes its face as Jimmy Zinni's dark soul rises to stand in front of him.

FRACASSETTI

Poor little fella, look at what he done ta ya.

**INT. BLACK PALACE: LOBBY - CONTINUOUS**

Zinni has a shocked second before a golden light burns through the lobby's black glass to engulf him in its fiery embrace.

His corrupted soul extinguished in an instant. The light rolls back into the heavens with a flash, leaving the full moon framed within the glowing orange hole in the window.

Molten glass drizzles downward to ignite the gasoline seeping from the wrecked Tucker. The lobby bursts into flames.

Fire reflected in its angry eyes, the Demonic Behemoth stares at John Thomas. Mouth yawning to inhuman proportions, it roars angrily as the elevator doors close.

**INT. BLACK PALACE: LOBBY ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS**

The ANGRY ROARS sound from the lobby as the elevator starts to climb. John Thomas winces in pain as Shay hugs him.

JOHN THOMAS

Go easy, Miss Shay. Told you that we'd meet up when I caught my breath.

SHAY

Oh, John Thomas, I was worried that I had lost you.

JOHN THOMAS

Leastwise not yet, Miss Shay.

Hacker eyes the shotgun in John Thomas' hands.

HACKER

That's a nice piece of hardware. You follow us to Nora's?

John Thomas nods ruefully.

JOHN THOMAS

Had to make a trade that I wasn't particularly comfortable with. But, I'm here now.

Hacker and Shay have only a few seconds to weigh his *mea culpa*. A LOUD DING chimes, and the elevator doors slide open.

**INT. BLACK PALACE: MEZZANINE - CONTINUOUS**

Flames reach for the ceiling as they step out the elevator. They cautiously make their way past the upscale shops and restaurants that line the walls.

A LOUD DING spins them around. They take aim as the elevator doors open. Puzzled to see that the carriage is empty.

JOHN THOMAS

What the...

The carriage suddenly crumples as the Demonic Behemoth bursts from the shaft below. Hacker sprays lead as the Behemoth rips the carriage from the shaft to hurl it their way.

HACKER

Run!

They run, nearly crushed by the carriage that crashes behind them. The Demonic Behemoth roars as they duck into an opening in the wall. A sign above reads: SOUTH STAIRWELL.

**EXT. BLACK PALACE - MOMENTS LATER**

The inferno at the lobby's center flares wildly. Flames burst from shattering windows, and crawl up the architecture as TERRIFIED GUESTS flee from every exit.

**INT. BLACK PALACE: SOUTH STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER**

The ANGRY ROARS draw nearer. Lettering on the wall reads: 6TH FLOOR as Hacker and Shay climb the stairs to stop on the landing. John Thomas is in discomfort as he joins them.

HACKER

You going to make it?

JOHN THOMAS

Just lead the way.

They both swing their eyes to Shay, and she nods.

SHAY

Follow me.

She leads them through the doorway in the stairwell.

**INT. BLACK PALACE: SIXTH FLOOR - CONTINUOUS**

Shay leads Hacker and John Thomas past the abandoned rooms that flank each side of the floor.

JOHN THOMAS

I don't like it. Way too quiet.

The Demonic Behemoth crashes through the doorway behind. John Thomas holds his ground. Steel pellets explode from his shotgun, and pepper the Demonic Behemoth's face.

The Demonic Behemoth rubs its nose and snuffles, watery eyes clamping shut as it sneezes. It opens its eyes to see John Thomas running a few steps behind his friends.

It slams two fists to the floor. A crack runs up its surface. John Thomas leaps just as the marble crumbles beneath him.

John Thomas sails over the chasm. A foot short, fear on his face, he starts to fall. Hacker snatches John Thomas out of the midair, and pulls him to safety.

The Demonic Behemoth paces at the edge of the breach. Roaring loudly as it retreats the way it came.

HACKER

We better keep moving.

SHAY  
John Thomas, you ready?

John Thomas nods.

SHAY (CONT'D)  
This way then.

The ceiling buckles as she leads them to the exit. A sign above reads: NORTH STAIRWELL.

**EXT. BLACK PALACE - MOMENTS LATER**

The GATHERING CROWD gasps as the mezzanine collapses within. Flames leap from shattered windows as high as the fifth floor.

**INT. BLACK PALACE: NORTH STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER**

Hacker, Shay and John Thomas climb to the landing. Lettering on the wall reads: 12TH FLOOR. Burning embers rush upward, the lighting dims as Shay leads them through the exit.

SHAY  
We are almost there.

**INT. BLACK PALACE: TWELFTH FLOOR - CONTINUOUS**

Shay leads Hacker and John Thomas down the floor lined on one side by suites, and on the other, a black glass that offers an unobstructed view of the city.

The lighting fails altogether. Hacker senses something and turns, his weapon raised. The Demonic Behemoth crashes through the wall behind. It is on him before he can fire a round.

John Thomas and Shay look on as the Demonic Behemoth hoists Hacker above its head to throw him at the black glass.

**EXT. BLACK PALACE - CONTINUOUS**

Hacker blasts through the glass to start his three-story fall.

**EXT. BLACK PALACE: OBSERVATION DECK - CONTINUOUS**

A sign on the wall reads: NINTH FLOOR OBSERVATION DECK. Hacker falls past to slam onto the deck in a shower of broken glass.

**INT. BLACK PALACE: TWELFTH FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER**

Shay's Tommy Gun explodes to life. Whizzing lead pelts the Demonic Behemoth as it turns on her. She fires another burst on the run. John Thomas on her heels.

The Demonic Behemoth confidently stalks after them as they duck into a recess in the center of the black glass.

**INT. BLACK PALACE: ALCOVE - CONTINUOUS**

Shay takes up a defensive position, and fires a burst of lead. She motions to the elevator. A gilded nameplate above its doors reads: PENTHOUSE SUITE.

SHAY  
I'll try to hold it off. You call  
that elevator!

Shay fires another burst as John Thomas runs to the elevator, slams a palm on the button and doubles back to join her. They unleash a hailstorm of gunfire at the Demonic Behemoth.

**INT. BLACK PALACE: TWELFTH FLOOR - CONTINUOUS**

The barrage fails to halt the Demonic Behemoth's advance.

**INT. BLACK PALACE: ALCOVE - CONTINUOUS**

Shay reloads, when the RATTLE of a Tommy Gun rings out, and a stream of hot lead whizzes past. She and John Thomas are slack-jawed at what they see.

**INT. BLACK PALACE: TWELFTH FLOOR - CONTINUOUS**

Hacker advances on the Demonic Behemoth. His submachine gun spewing lead as he strides up to their position.

**INT. BLACK PALACE: ALCOVE - CONTINUOUS**

Shay pulls the charging handle of her Tommy Gun, and steps to Hacker's side. John Thomas steps up next to her.

**INT. BLACK PALACE: TWELFTH FLOOR - CONTINUOUS**

The heroic trio, stand shoulder to shoulder, pouring everything they have into the Demonic Behemoth to send it reeling. It closes its eyes, and flails wildly at the buzzing lead.

The onslaught suddenly goes silent, only the echoes of spent shell casings CLATTERING to the floor can be heard.

The Demonic Behemoth looks to find that the trio has fled. Fury grips its face as it hears the elevator DOORS CLOSE.

**INT. BLACK PALACE: PENTHOUSE ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS**

The tension is thick as they ride the glass elevator up the side of the building. Hacker reloads his weapon as Shay reaches inside her ammo bag to produce a grenade.

SHAY  
If it comes to it, Mister Hacker.

Hacker takes it, and nods stoically.

HACKER

Alright, if it comes to it.

JOHN THOMAS

Comes to what?

A jolt rocks the cabin. Shay screams as the glass implodes. The Demonic Behemoth reaches inside, mouth yawning open, roaring as it hoists John Thomas off his feet.

Hacker bows his head, and pulls the pin from the grenade. Suddenly, his eyes dance with a better idea. He tosses the grenade into the demon's gaping mouth.

It drops John Thomas, and clutches at its throat. John Thomas shoots from the hip. Pellets explodes into the Demonic Behemoth at point-blank range. Its face puckers in pain.

The Demonic Behemoth slips from the elevator, hands cupping its crotch as it falls. A beat later, it erupts into chum.

**EXT. BLACK PALACE - CONTINUOUS**

The CRUSH OF BYSTANDERS, that watch the wildly burning building, cheer the explosion in the night above.

**INT. BLACK PALACE: PENTHOUSE ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS**

The elevator groans to a stop, its doors slide open just as the remaining glass implodes with a concussive shock that blows the heroes off their feet.

**EXT. BLACK PALACE: PENTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

Shay, Hacker and John Thomas fly from the elevator. They slam to the foot of a shadowy penthouse that sits at the center of the sheer-drop, thirteenth-floor platform.

Hacker stirs, his eyes finding Shay. Her eyes find his as she lifts her head. Together, they look to John Thomas. He lies close by, motionless.

Shay scrambles to John Thomas' side, relieved to see his eyes blink open. She waves a scolding finger in his face.

SHAY

John Thomas, you must stop frightening me this way.

John Thomas sits up.

JOHN THOMAS

Believe me, Miss Shay, I'm trying.

Hacker walks up to them, a Tommy Gun in each hand.

HACKER  
You two stay put. I'll go it alone  
from here.

Shay leaps to her feet.

SHAY  
Not a chance.

John Thomas struggles upright to stand next to her.

JOHN THOMAS  
That's right. We're in this together.

Hacker wheels around, his eyes scanning the shadows.

A SOFT APPLAUSE breaks out, and a man steps from the darkness. GIOVANNI "JOHNNY NINE LIVES" MALATESTA, gaunt and sallow with soulless eyes. He wears gold jewelry, and a sharkskin suit.

JOHNNY NINE LIVES  
Dat's touch-en, very touch-en.

HACKER  
Giovanni Malatesta.

JOHNNY NINE LIVES  
Hacker, whaddya doin' here?

HACKER  
I'm here to kill you, Johnny.

JOHNNY NINE LIVES  
I'm Johnny Nine Lives. I'm hard ta  
kill.

Hacker's eyes grow cold.

HACKER  
Let's put that to the test.

He takes aim with both Tommy Guns, when a quake rocks the building. A fissure opens in the platform, and a wall of flame erupts between the two adversaries.

Behind the flames, Johnny grins as Hacker unloads on him. Hacker lowers the smoking weapons, his eyes searching. The sounds of a MUFFLED STRUGGLE swing him around.

Johnny's grotesquely lengthened torso is coiled around Shay, slowly squeezing tighter with each breath she takes. A hand clamped over her mouth, the other gripping John Thomas.

The demon holds him dangerously close to the platform's edge. His eyes wild as he meets Hacker's steely gaze.

JOHNNY NINE LIVES

Da next card ya play de-term-ens how  
this goes for your pal. Say ya  
understand, Hacker?

HACKER

I understand.

Johnny motions with a tilt of his head.

JOHNNY NINE LIVES

Dat's a smart guy. Now, lose dem  
choppers.

Hacker tosses the Tommy Guns over the side of the building, and Johnny's face blooms with evil glee.

JOHNNY NINE LIVES (CONT'D)

Yo, Hacker. Ever seen an eggplant  
fly?

Johnny lets go of John Thomas, and nudges him toward the street below. He teeters on the edge of the platform, arms flailing, the sidewalk only one slip, and thirteen stories away.

Hacker appears in time to pull John Thomas to safety.

Johnny's LAUGHTER turns them. He holds Shay in the penthouse entrance. His suit's fabric gliding over her body as he adjusts his coils with each breath she takes.

JOHNNY NINE LIVES (CONT'D)

Dis is a private party, Hacker. You,  
and da mooli, ain't invited.

A MASCULINE VOICE with an Italian accent countermands him from the darkened interior of the penthouse.

CAPUZZO (O.S.)

Giovanni, it is not necessary to be  
rude. Please show our guests in.

Johnny regards them ominously.

JOHNNY NINE LIVES

You heard da Old Man. Da two of youse  
just made da list.

**INT. BLACK PALACE: PENTHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER**

The failing building GROANS softly as they enter the darkened living quarters.

Johnny uncoils, returning to human form as he deposits Shay at the feet of a shadowy figure.

Countless candles ignite with a wave of his disfigured hand. GIORGIO CAPUZZO, commanding with pale olive skin, deep green eyes, thick silver mane, and clothed in regal black tie.

CAPUZZO

Welcome to my Black Palace.

Capuzzo bends down, and offers his hand to Shay.

CAPUZZO (CONT'D)

Please my dear, Miss Halverson. Let me help you.

She spits in his face.

SHAY

That's for my father.

The vampire wipes his face, and wrests Shay from the ground. He holds her by the neck, studying her with chilling coldness.

CAPUZZO

Yes, I had hoped we would meet under more pleasant circumstances.

Hacker steps forward.

HACKER

If you're finished trying to scare the young lady, maybe you'd like to have another go at me?

Capuzzo pulls her closer.

CAPUZZO

He has the heart of a lion, our Alexander, would you not agree?

HACKER

Didn't know you, and I were on a first-name basis.

CAPUZZO

Forgive me, but it is hard not to feel that I know the one who has pursued me for so long. Is it vengeance you seek, Alexander?

Hacker's eyes narrow.

HACKER

Justice.

Capuzzo manipulates Shay's head, thumb behind her ear.

CAPUZZO

I know nothing of justice.

JOHN THOMAS

Get your filthy hands off her!

Hacker holds John Thomas back.

HACKER

Trust me when I tell you, John Thomas.  
He's not going to hurt her. She's  
already cost him more than he  
bargained for.

CAPUZZO

Yes, the girl has proved quite costly.  
But, I have a lifetime to satisfy my  
investment.

HACKER

Straighten something out for me,  
because I'm confused. The newspapers  
said Halverson was bankrolling this  
clip joint. Why muck that up with  
this nonsense?

CAPUZZO

One's most precious treasure is a  
small price to pay for what he wanted.

SHAY

What would my father possibly want  
from a monster like you?

CAPUZZO

Eternal life.

JOHN THOMAS

He's lying, Miss Shay!

Shay is crestfallen.

SHAY

No, John Thomas. He isn't.

CAPUZZO

Of course not. I never lie.

HACKER

Maybe, but I'd wager that things  
were worded differently when Halverson  
did the deal. The man couldn't have  
known what he was agreeing to.

CAPUZZO

Perhaps.

HACKER

Yeah, just be no thrill in it for you otherwise. From there, it doesn't take a genius to figure the rube got cold feet once he realized you were coming for his daughter.

CAPUZZO

We will never know his mind.

Capuzzo pulls Shay in. His fangs an inch from Shay's pulsating jugular as he smells her neck.

CAPUZZO (CONT'D)

You have marked this girl as your own. Well, it matters not which of us controls her gift.

SHAY

Only God controls my gift.

CAPUZZO

God? I am the only God here.

The light from God's own hand chases Fracassetti's dark soul through the entrance. He looks to his master, his eyes pleading. Capuzzo is dispassionate.

CAPUZZO (CONT'D)

There is nothing I can do, Frank.

The vampire adverts his eyes as the light overtakes the giant, his lost soul burned to ash in a instant. The penthouse trembles as the light recedes, and Hacker makes his move.

He sucker punches Johnny, and charges Capuzzo full-speed, his fist smashing into his face, knocking Shay from his grasp. Capuzzo counters with a punch that sends Hacker flying.

Johnny smiles to see Hacker land at his feet.

JOHN THOMAS (O.S.)

Hey, Johnny? How many of those lives do you have left?

The demon wheels around. John Thomas faces him with a burning candle in his hand. He touches the flame to Johnny's suit.

Johnny is set ablaze. His unholy screams fill the air, morphing back and forth between human, and demon form as he flails about, before falling to the floor in a burning heap.

Hacker leaps to his feet as Shay steps to his side.

SHAY

The monster fears you, Alexander. I am sure of it. He knows that he is not invincible, and he is afraid that you know it too.

He hands Shay off to John Thomas to be instantly bulldozed across the room by a charging Capuzzo. Hacker slams into the wall face first, straining against the vampire's might.

HACKER

The lady says you're afraid of me.

Hacker slips the hold to smash Capuzzo against the wall.

CAPUZZO

Afraid? I am the master. And you?

Capuzzo bashes Hacker with an elbow, sending him to the floor.

CAPUZZO (CONT'D)

You are the pretender.

Hacker springs to his feet to square off with Capuzzo again. Both instantly attack with animalistic ferocity. John Thomas and Shay watch as Hacker seems to be getting the worst of it.

JOHN THOMAS

Looks to me like the man could use some help.

SHAY

No, he will get the best of him, John Thomas. Wait and see.

Hacker turns the tables on the vampire with a well-timed three punch combination that has him reeling.

SHAY (CONT'D)

See? I told --

Her eyes go wide as a badly burned Johnny strikes. He explodes from the shadows, needle-sharp teeth sinking into John Thomas, demonic form throwing coils around his body.

Shay jumps on Johnny. He howls in pain as she claws at his burnt flesh. He drops John Thomas, and turns on her.

JOHNNY NINE LIVES

Broad, or no broad, I'm giv-en you an addi-tood adjustment.

Hacker ducks Capuzzo's haymaker. His hand finding a heavy iron candle holder as he sees Johnny connect with a backhand that sends Shay sailing across the room.

Johnny eyes John Thomas again. Two NAUSEATING CRACKS sound as he disarticulates his lower jaw.

JOHNNY NINE LIVES (CONT'D)

I'm gonna swallow ya whole.

The demon advances, when suddenly a DISGUSTING CRUNCH sounds. His eyes go blank, and he slumps from view to reveal Hacker, bloody candle holder in his hand.

Sprawled on the floor, blood puddling beneath his head, Johnny is already half-dead as Hacker straddles his chest. The demon is defiant as Hacker raises the candle holder above its head.

JOHNNY NINE LIVES (CONT'D)

I'm Johnny Nine Lives. I'm hard ta kill.

HACKER

So you said.

Hacker brings the candle holder down smashing Johnny's head a second time, then a third, a fourth, a fifth, and a sixth before counting off the last three blows.

HACKER (CONT'D)

Seven... Eight... Nine!

The vampire's pitiless laughter turns his head.

CAPUZZO (O.S.)

*Bravo, mio figlio.* Your evil, so gratifying to see.

Capuzzo stands in the entryway, his four-fingered hand holding Shay out in front of him, offering her to Hacker.

CAPUZZO (CONT'D)

Take your rightful place by my side, Alexander, and I will let you keep this girl.

Hacker tosses the candle holder to the floor.

HACKER

I will never serve you.

CAPUZZO

Then, I will keep her for myself.

John Thomas hobbles to Hacker's side.

JOHN THOMAS  
That's not going to happen.

CAPUZZO  
Who is to stop me? You, African?

He eyes Hacker.

CAPUZZO (CONT'D)  
You, Alexander?

John Thomas shivers as Johnny's evil soul slices through him to stumble into the center of the room.

Another tremor rocks the building to open a huge crack above. Johnny looks through the fracture in the ceiling to see that a golden light descends from the heavens.

JOHNNY NINE LIVES  
No.

The demon turns away.

JOHNNY NINE LIVES (CONT'D)  
I turn my back to you!

Capuzzo averts his eyes as a bolt of light seizes Johnny. His flesh vaporizes, bones turning to cinder as his unrepentant soul is extinguished in a blinding flash.

The vampire opens its eyes. John Thomas stands alone.

HACKER (O.S.)  
Yeah, Old Man.

He turns to see a fist flying at his face. The blow sends him crashing to the floor. Hacker steps from the shadows.

HACKER (CONT'D)  
Me.

He breaks off the leg of a shattered table.

HACKER (CONT'D)  
And, as God is my witness. Your curse ends now.

Hacker comes at him with the jagged piece of wood.

CAPUZZO  
No!

Fear paints the vampire's face as Hacker holds the makeshift stake over its heart.

CAPUZZO (CONT'D)

No, you cannot! I am your master!

HACKER

Tonight, I free myself.

Another quake shakes the penthouse, the structural integrity failing as floor crumbles, the evil swallowed by the fiery maelstrom below before Hacker can strike his final blow.

Shay grabs Hacker's hand to pull him to the run. They reach John Thomas to disappear in an avalanche of falling debris.

**EXT. BLACK PALACE - CONTINUOUS**

The structure implodes sending a fiery plume of ash roiling at the PANICKED BYSTANDERS as they run for their lives.

**FULL SHOT LAS VEGAS STRIP - SUNRISE**

Hacker's VOICE OVER finishes as the first rays of sun appear over the Strip, and the smoldering ruins at its end.

HACKER (V.O.)

We had to spend the daylight hours  
buried underneath all that rubble,  
before I was able to dig us out the  
next night.

The sound of APPROACHING SIRENS can be heard as the sun's radiating heat slowly blurs the scene.

**INT. INTERROGATION CHAMBER - EVENING**

The radiations fade, and the spotlight comes into focus.

HACKER (O.S.)

The rest you know. Turned myself in,  
and here we are.

Babcock takes a drag of his cigarette as he looks at himself in the mirror.

BABCOCK

That's quite a tale, son. Quite a  
ta...

The Sheriff's eyes suddenly widen. The cigarette slipping from his lips, and falling to the floor.

HACKER (O.S.)

I gave it to you straight, Sheriff.  
Just like you wanted.

The Sheriff smiles uncomfortably, eyes nervous as he turns.

BABCOCK  
Well, Mister Hacker, there's a few  
traffic violations, and county  
ordinances to make go away, but I've  
seen enough to believe you.

A fully healed Hacker smiles knowingly.

HACKER  
Seeing is believing.

BABCOCK  
Not putting too fine a point on it,  
but I'm hoping never to see you again.

HACKER  
I'll keep that in mind.

**INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Bain and Dittman watch in disbelief.

BABCOCK  
Then, you're free to go.

Hacker stands.

BAIN  
What the hell?

Dittman shrugs his shoulders.

BAIN (CONT'D)  
Get outta my way.

Bain bursts from the room, Dittman follows.

**INT. INTERROGATION CHAMBER - MOMENTS LATER**

The door flies open, and Bain and Dittman enter.

BAIN  
You're letting him go?

BABCOCK  
Yes, Lieutenant Bain, that's exactly  
what I'm fixing to do.

DITTMAN  
But Sheriff, the man locked me in  
the trunk of my car.

BABCOCK  
Been tempted to do that a time or  
two myself, Leroy.

Bain wheels on Hacker.

BAIN

This isn't over, Hacker! You've pushed me too goddamn far!

HACKER

I haven't pushed far enough, but that's going to change.

DITTMAN

What ain't I understandin', Sheriff? I just can't see how ya can believe a word of that man's story?

BABCOCK

It's like the man said.

Dittman follows the Sheriff's anxious stare to Hacker. His REFLECTION ABSENT in the two-way mirror behind.

BABCOCK (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Seeing is believing.

Dittman goes slack, urine running down his pant leg. Hacker walks away, turning to the lawmen as he reaches the door.

HACKER

By the way, Sheriff, the Lieutenant is working for the Old Man. Should be something you can hold him on.

BAIN

Nothing that's gonna stick, Hacker.

HACKER

Yeah, Arnie. Then, I'll be seeing you around real soon.

Hacker nods a polite goodbye to Babcock, and exits. The door swings closed, and the Sheriff turns on Bain.

BABCOCK

You knew!

BAIN

Damn straight I knew. But, I needed to ascertain the whereabouts of the Halverson girl. You let him go, before I could get it out of him.

BABCOCK

Well, pardon me all to Hell, but Mister Hacker is a --

BAIN

I know what he is. And, you heard him. It's either him, or me.

Bain elbows Babcock, and bulls his way past Dittman to make a mad dash from the room.

**INT. STATION HOUSE: LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER**

Hacker passes an OLDER DEPUTY at the night desk. He heads for the exit as a YOUNGER DEPUTY wrestles a CRIMINAL through the doors. Hacker steps aside to let them pass.

He watches for a beat as they make their way toward the night desk before he exits the building.

Bain flies through the door, and slams into the Younger Deputy. Both fall, the youngster's pistol clattering to the ground.

**EXT. STATION HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

A stretch limousine pulls up to Hacker. The window rolls down, and he leans inside.

**INT. LIMOUSINE - CONTINUOUS**

Muldoon is behind the wheel, Nora next to him. John Thomas sits in the back next to Shay. She kisses Hacker.

SHAY

It went well I presume.

They lock eyes, both sensing something.

HACKER

I thought so...

SHAY

But, the Lieutenant isn't quite ready to let it go.

HACKER

No. He's not.

SHAY

We will meet you at the airport then.

He kisses her goodbye.

HACKER

I'll see you there.

**EXT. STATION HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

The limousine pulls away, and Hacker turns back to the building just as the Criminal, and then the Older Deputy, rush past to reveal Bain. He stands in the doorway. Pistol in hand.

Bain fires. The lead hissing past Hacker's ear. Hacker's eyes go blood red with rage.

HACKER

Time to settle up, Arnie.

**INT. STATION HOUSE: LOBBY - CONTINUOUS**

Babcock and Dittman enter. They rush past the Young Deputy cowering behind the night desk to spot Bain standing outside as he starts to unload the pistol into the night.

**EXT. STATION HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

Bain fires wildly into the air. A growing fear on his face as the approaching shadow above gets larger, and larger.

**INT. STATION HOUSE: LOBBY - CONTINUOUS**

He is yanked off his feet to vanish into the darkness above just as Babcock and Dittman reach the doorway.

**EXT. STATION HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

They step from the exit to see a dark object spiraling downward from above. It hits the ground with a thud. The lawmen take in the sight of the comfotless wingtip laying at their feet.

Dittman turns a wide-eyed stare to Babcock.

DITTMAN

How in the heck are we goin' to write  
this one up, Sheriff?

He follows the Sheriff's gaze toward the night sky.

BABCOCK

Write what up, Leroy?

**P.O.V. NIGHT'S SKY - CONTINUOUS**

The Full Moon dominates the starless black.

BABCOCK (O.S.)

None of it ever happened.