

The Many Deaths of Barnaby James

by

Brian Nathanson

A black screen. A title card reads **LADY LIBERTY**.

LADY LIBERTY (V.O.)
What sins are you sharing with us
tonight, darling?

EXT. MORTECITA SUBURBS - NIGHT

It's the dead of night. Around the sleepy suburban neighborhood, even the trees sag and rest for the night.

LADY LIBERTY (V.O.)
I can tell that you're planning to
pick at least one. If you weren't,
you'd never be out at this hour.

The streets are barren. No one walks down the sidewalk.

LADY LIBERTY (V.O.)
The good people, the happy people --
they're home, tucked in bed.

Every single home has its lights off and blinds drawn shut.

LADY LIBERTY (V.O.)
The only evil they know is from
fairy tales. The monster, hiding
in the closet or under the bed.

EXT. STREETS OF MORTECITA - NIGHT

A few stores are still open for business, although they tend to be low-rent bars and sketchy night clubs.

With the rain and the lights of the bars, the night's sky has a strange purple hue to it, almost otherworldly in nature.

LADY LIBERTY (V.O.)
I know evil. I've met monsters, or
at least, monstrous men.

Among the people out at this hour are swarms of HARAJUKU-INSPIRED YOUTH, in their gothic garb. They wear black and pink clothing, layered and ruffled, along with facial piercings and the occasional top hat.

LADY LIBERTY (V.O.)
And let me tell you, darling, the
last thing they'd want to do is
waste their whole night hiding
under a bed.

A few of the freaky youth puff cigarettes, which produce smoke in a variety of colors, as they pass by THE POUND.

LADY LIBERTY (V.O.)
You see, the night's the only time
they get to enjoy themselves.

The Pound looks the part of a seedy strip club, right down to its half-flickering sign and the wooden boards covering every inch of the windows. It's the opposite of inviting.

Two BOUNCERS, beefy men wearing fishnet shirts and steel chain belts, guard the door.

LADY LIBERTY (V.O.)
The only time when they can indulge
their carnal cravings.

INT. THE POUND - MAIN STAGE ROOM - BOOTH - NIGHT

Music blasts and lights flash on the face of LADY LIBERTY. Not a lady at all, he's merely a frightfully skinny man with a woman's wig and a dash of lipstick. A tiara, made to look like a spiked crown, rests in that blue-green colored wig.

LADY LIBERTY
The only time I'm open for
business.

A half-buttoned shirt exposes every bone in his chest, as well as a tattoo of the Statue of Liberty painted across them. This version has the statue holding up her middle finger instead of a torch. Etched across his arms are the words "Land of the Free," and "Home of the Slave."

LADY LIBERTY
The sins I offer involve flesh.

Liberty sits at a cheap booth, tattered and felt, and talks to CALLAHAN. Callahan's a hulk of a man, but he doesn't look well. He fidgets. He twitches.

LADY LIBERTY
The question with flesh is -- do
you want to touch it...

Liberty strokes Callahan's cheek tenderly.

LADY LIBERTY
Or tear it.

Liberty peels up Callahan's lip to find fierce sets of fangs. There are rows of them, stacked side by side like a shark.

LADY LIBERTY
Can't fight the body's urges, can
we, darling?

INT. THE POUND - MIRRORED HALLWAY - NIGHT

Lady Liberty leads Callahan down a corner and into a hallway. The hall has several doors, including a set of bathrooms with vulgar male and female drawings marked "Poles" and "Holes."

At the end of the hallway, an OBESE STRIPPER leads a DIRTY OLD MAN towards the back room for a private lap dance.

Rather than follow them, Liberty turns to the other end of the hallway. It seems to be a dead end, although a bouncer, MALACODA, stands guard. His steel chain belt coils all the way down to the grimy floor, dragging behind him like a tail.

LADY LIBERTY
Step aside, Malacoda. VIP here.

Malacoda steps away, leaving a hidden hatch exposed. He tugs open the hatch to reveal a staircase leading downstairs.

INT. THE POUND - MALEBOLGE ROOM - NIGHT

The downstairs level is smaller than the dumpy strip club above it, among the other obvious differences.

A stone bridge runs across the room. Ten VIP tables and booths surround the bridge, five on each side. The booths are sunken into the floor. When viewed from above, the room resembles a giant muffin pan.

SERVICE GIRLS and SERVICE BOYS, both dressed in provocative red leather, walk across the bridge and provide trays of drinks to the patrons below them.

Some of those SINNERS slam back the drinks, others jam straws into their noses, all to the sounds of blasting trance music and flashing green and yellow overhead lights.

Lady Liberty leads Callahan across the bridge, giving polite smiles to some as he passes.

LADY LIBERTY
The malebolge room is for my most
esteemed guests.

Callahan, still twitching, catches sight of a pair of well-dressed POLITICIANS arguing over paperwork. A Service Girl and Service Boy satisfy them orally while they bicker.

LADY LIBERTY
I supply them with drugs or sex or
any other cliché pleasure.

The end of the bridge runs square into a large double-locked door. Liberty tosses a smile back to Callahan.

LADY LIBERTY
Lucky for me, you're delightfully
more disturbed than that.

INT. THE POUND - MEAT ROOM - NIGHT

The music gets walled off as soon as Lady Liberty closes the bulky door behind him. He leads Callahan down a steep wooden staircase to the darkened basement.

LADY LIBERTY
This is where I store the meat.

Liberty flicks on the light switch. The lights come on slowly, in stages.

The lights reveal dozens of fearful faces, PRISONERS, all trapped in individual glass cases that stack on top of each other like boxes to make up the walls of the basement. They're on display like action figures at Toys 'R Us.

The sight of the prisoners only increases Callahan's fervor. His eyes turn a shade of yellow. He scratches at his arm, with fingers that start to resemble claws.

Liberty walks by a case containing a TEENAGE GIRL, another with a RAGGEDY HOMELESS MAN. He stops at one housing PLAY-THING, an especially mutilated woman. Her hair's been ripped out in chunks, and scars line every inch of her body.

LADY LIBERTY
To think, this one used to be
pretty. Glamorous looking. She
had a gorgeous head of hair.

While the other prisoners cower, Play-Thing stares at Liberty, not backing down an inch.

LADY LIBERTY
One of my clients -- a sicko, even
by our standards -- lit it on fire.
Tried to piss out the flames.

Liberty taps on Play-Thing's glass cage. Play-Thing hisses back, more animal than woman now.

LADY LIBERTY
People like that'll make a girl
lose her manners.

Callahan's yellow eyes peer in at Play-Thing. His fangs salivate at the thought of ripping her to shreds.

LADY LIBERTY
She's reserved for someone else.
But let me show you a nice plump
brunette. Barely used.

Liberty makes his way across the room to that plump BRUNETTE PRISONER, stacked high enough that Liberty has to stand on his toes when he unlocks the cage door.

LADY LIBERTY
There you go, darling. Chase the
rabbit.

Callahan snarls with hunger as he stalks towards his prey. The Brunette wisely stays put, pushing herself as far back into her box as she can. Unfortunately, it's not far enough.

Liberty watches with delight. The ferocious growl and screaming are music to his ears.

INT. THE POUND - MAIN STAGE ROOM - NIGHT

In the main stage room, HEAVYSET STRIPPERS perform for a sparse crowd. Every stripper in the place must be at least seventy pounds overweight.

Liberty's HANDMAIDEN mans the front desk, acting as maitre d'. She's a fresh-faced, natural beauty, trapped in a corset. She bows demurely when Lady Liberty approaches.

HANDMAIDEN
Did you enjoy the feeder, my lady?

LADY LIBERTY
Indeed. I know they're a cursed
people, but they're damn erotic to
watch in action, if you ask me.

Liberty looks around the room at all the empty tables.

LADY LIBERTY
In fact, I'm in such a good mood, I
won't punish you for all these
empty chairs.

HANDMAIDEN

I apologize. Rumor says, the Black Top is coming to town tomorrow.

LADY LIBERTY

That carnie bastard's got an unfair advantage, hasn't he. He can conjure the dead. I have to replace them. Speaking of, there's a vacancy in the meat room.

HANDMAIDEN

I can check the half-way houses --

Liberty scans the room. He focuses on a grizzled BAR-DWELLER, perched on a stool at the end of the bar.

LADY LIBERTY

No need. I have the man in mind. Tell Malacoda to take him downstairs.

INT. THE POUND - MAIN STAGE ROOM - BAR - NIGHT

The Bar-Dweller, nursing a glass of water, hears a rattling noise. He looks behind him to see Malacoda approach, with his steel chain belt dragging behind him. The Bar-Dweller looks confused when Malacoda slips off his belt.

The reason becomes clear soon enough, when Malacoda whips the chain across the Bar-Dweller's face. The blow causes the Bar-Dweller to crash onto the floor.

INT. THE POUND - MAIN STAGE ROOM - NIGHT

Lady Liberty watches Malacoda slash at the Bar-Dweller's back. The Bar-Dweller's shirt rips. So does his skin.

The Handmaiden can't help but shield her eyes.

HANDMAIDEN

May I ask what he did, my lady?

LADY LIBERTY

He committed the only unforgiveable sin. He's been here for two hours. And all he's ordered is that one glass of water.

The Bar-Dweller coughs blood, but Malacoda keeps beating him.

LADY LIBERTY
People can be so rude.

INT. THE POUND - MAIN STAGE ROOM - BAR

Malacoda wraps the chain around the Bar-Dweller's neck and strangles him. The Bar-Dweller fights against it, but his energy wanes around the same time his face turns bright red.

Lady Liberty approaches. He kneels down to get eye-to-eye with the Bar-Dweller.

LADY LIBERTY
You'll find me to be a charitable
person. I'm friendly to strangers.
I even employ orphans and runaways.

Liberty strokes the man's hair. His face is purple now.

LADY LIBERTY
But, first and foremost, I'm a
businesswoman. And having you
linger here all night? Why, that
doesn't help my business at all.

Liberty tenderly wipes the Bar-Dweller's lip, where a mixture of drool and blood has gathered.

LADY LIBERTY
How about we compromise? You let
me make money off of you. And I
let you linger here. Maybe even
longer than you'd like.

Malacoda uses the steel chain as a leash as he drags the Bar-Dweller across the floor, towards the back room.

The few PATHETIC PATRONS in attendance watch the scene. Horror reads on their faces.

LADY LIBERTY
Nothing to see here, fellas -- just
another night in paradise.

Liberty switches back into perky hostess mode. He saunters over to one of the Patrons with a sweet smile on his face. He tosses a skinny arm around the man.

LADY LIBERTY
So what sins are you sharing with
us tonight, darling?

FADE OUT.

A black screen. A title card reads **BARNABY**.

BARNABY (V.O.)
Nobody wants to be a corpse.

EXT. CHURCH OF ST. NICHOLAS - DUSK

BARNABY JAMES, 20, has his floppy black hair tucked under a newsboy's cap and a large bouquet of flowers tucked under his arm. He's thin and good looking, although a bit pale.

In between his collar bones is a strange mark, a series of tiny symbols, almost like a tattoo.

BARNABY (V.O.)
At the orphanage, they used to take
us to church every Sunday. The
preachers would talk about the
glory of Heaven and God's embrace.

His icy blue eyes dance over the Church of St. Nicholas.

BARNABY (V.O.)
Only, even they were in no hurry to
see it for themselves.

EXT. CHURCH CEMETERY - DUSK

Barnaby strolls down the cobblestone path of the adjacent cemetery. Instead of tombstones, memorial plaques rest in the grass. Barnaby glances over each one as he walks by.

BARNABY (V.O.)
Nobody wants to be a corpse.

He stops at one plaque. The inscription reads, "Music, the greatest good that mortals know, and all of heaven that we have below."

BARNABY (V.O.)
That's why I don't feel bad about
doing what Azlon asks.

After a look around to ensure that the cemetery's empty, Barnaby slides a small shovel out of the bouquet.

He slams the shovel into the grass and starts to dig.

EXT. CHURCH OF ST. NICHOLAS - DUSK

A black hearse rolls up the church driveway.

The driver's side window rolls down. DOKTOR KAHN, late 50s, a small Eastern Europe man with circular spectacles that pinch his nose, peers out.

In the distance, Doktor Kahn sees Barnaby at the grave, with mounds of dirt by his side. Barnaby motions. He's done.

Doktor Kahn steps out of the hearse and opens the back door. A SHADOWY FIGURE slides out.

EXT. CHURCH CEMETERY - DUSK

The Shadowy Figure approaches. He wears a long black coat and uses a cane.

Barnaby utilizes the shovel to crack open the wooden coffin, whose rot has allowed worms to nibble holes in its side.

Barnaby pulls open the coffin cover to reveal a SINGER'S CORPSE. The Corpse's skin has rotted and sagged. A swarm of larvae suckle on the leftover flesh. Despite the look and smell, Barnaby doesn't budge. He's seen this all before.

The Shadowy Figure slaps Barnaby on the back.

SHADOWY FIGURE

Good work, Barnaby, m'boy. As
always.

The Shadowy Figure drags his cane along the Corpse. At the cane's end is a separate attachment, a WAND. About ten inches long, the metallic wand has ancient writing and strange swirling symbols chiseled in its sides.

The Shadowy Figure jams the wand into a specific spot between the Corpse's neck and chest. The wand sinks in, creating a hissing sound and a small puff of smoke as it leaves an imprint, a mark exactly the same as Barnaby has himself.

A purple fluid bubbles up from the mark, spilling over to wash all over the Corpse's body. The Corpse's decayed chest begins to rise and fall, its heart starting to beat again.

As the fluid runs down the Corpse's body, it burns off the larvae, but enlivens the few patches of sagging skin. The skin becomes liquid, spreading and stretching over the entire body. When it cools, it returns to human flesh. The Corpse plumps up, growing from the inside as well.

Barnaby watches, wide eyed. He might have seen this before, but he's never gotten used to this part.

Before long, the Corpse has fully transformed into a living SINGER, albeit a confused one. The Singer's eyes search around frantically before they settle on the Shadowy Figure.

SINGER

Who... who...

The Shadowy Figure -- AZLON -- looms over the man. Azlon's eyes are rimmed in black. His faint purple eye shadow matches the lining in his coat.

AZLON

I know what you're thinking, but
I'm not God.

Azlon's voice is deep, booming, dramatic. He says every word as though he's on stage, reciting Shakespeare.

AZLON

I'm greater than God. I give
second chances.

The Singer scoots backwards on the grass, still unsure of this strange man.

AZLON

And unlike God, I try not to pry in
silly subjects like the state of
your soul.

Azlon reaches out a hand, offering to help the Singer up.

AZLON

I'm simply interested in offering
you this -- a gig, for the night,
and maybe longer.

The Singer looks to Barnaby. Barnaby looks nice, normal. Barnaby nods to him, reassuringly.

EXT. ABANDONED FIELDS - DIRT ROAD - DUSK

Doktor Kahn drives the hearse down a dirt road. He makes a sharp turn, heading straight into decrepit fields.

EXT. ABANDONED FIELDS - DUSK

The tall fields smack against the hearse, which powers through. The wheels track mud behind them.

EXT. BLACK TOP - DUSK

The hearse rolls to a stop next to several train cars and wagons in a cleared out field. The empty area is about the size of a football field, but it's being filled quickly.

Dozens of laborers, known as ROUSTABOUTS, hang wires and ropes to finish construction of the BLACK TOP. Essentially, it's a circus tent, although the curtain is predictably black.

The Roustabouts, all with the same mark on their chests, are ghostly pale, with bags under their eyes. They look as if they haven't seen the sun in ages.

EXT. BLACK TOP - CENTER TENT - DUSK

Azlon and Doktor Kahn lead the Singer past the center tent and towards some smaller ones tucked away in the back.

Barnaby hurries to help the Laborers rig up the Black Top. They don't have long before night fully sets in.

Barnaby catches up with SUDSY, a short and chunky laborer about his age. Sudsy drops off a box of supplies at the edge of the Black Top tent. When Barnaby approaches, Sudsy stops working for a moment.

SUDSY

Hey, Barn. That was quick. You almost broke my old record.

BARNABY

It was just a small church cemetery.

SUDSY

And how's the new guy look?

BARNABY

Scared. Confused.

SUDSY

Sounds like the usual.

BARNABY

Yeah, I hope he pulls it together by show time.

SUDSY

If he doesn't, you'll be back out there digging up his replacement. Another chance to break my record.

Back to work. Sudsy treks over to one of the parked wagon trains, where a BURLY ROUSTABOUT hands him another box of supplies. Barnaby takes one as well.

BARNABY
I wouldn't mind staying in town.
We're in Mortecita right now.

SUDSY
So what? Next week we'll be in
Kerkhoff.

Sudsy and Barnaby carry their boxes back down to the tent.

BARNABY
I know someone in Mortecita.

Sudsy studies Barnaby's face. He knows where his mind is at.

SUDSY
Delilah's dead.

BARNABY
She doesn't have to be.

Sudsy slings his box down on the ground and turns to Barnaby. This warning merits his full attention.

SUDSY
Listen, Barn. Azlon likes you, but
you need to be careful. We're
grave boys. We're replaceable.
Make one mistake and you're dead
again.

Sudsy starts back for the wagon. Barnaby sets his box down. He keeps his head down and follows Sudsy. Back to work.

EXT. BLACK TOP - CENTER TENT - NIGHT

The Roustabouts are nowhere in sight, as the Black Top tent has been fully constructed.

A dozen TOWNERS, the few well-to-do members of the nearby cities, line up at the tent opening. There's a buzz about them as they whisper amongst each other. They have no marks on their chests. They're still on their first life.

INT. BLACK TOP - CENTER TENT - NIGHT

The Towners settle onto folding chairs. When the last takes his seat, the lights shut off, turning the tent pitch black.

A single spotlight shines on Azlon's face. The purple eye shadow has been enhanced, caked over and under his eyes. He's abandoned his coat in favor of a tightly tailored suit.

Azlon takes a dramatic pause before raising a skinny microphone to his lips. His showman voice is in full effect.

AZLON

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Black Top. If you came here expecting to be entertained, please hurry to the exits now.

Azlon strolls around the stage. The spotlight, the only light in the tent, stays with him.

AZLON

For our job, on this evening, is to not let you sit back and watch. You do that enough already.

His finger points at the audience, almost accusatorily.

AZLON

Hours of every day, you sit on your couch, eat potato chips and watch lights flicker on a small screen.

Azlon strolls directly towards the audience now.

AZLON

And then, in that rare instance when you seek out activity... you go sit in a theatre, eat popcorn and watch lights flicker on a slightly larger screen.

His speech speeds up.

AZLON

Our job, on this night, is to give you something else. Something different. We will engage you. Enrage you. Amuse you, confuse you...

Azlon stands at the edge of the stage, balancing on it.

AZLON

We will show you the pageantry of life, the putridity of death, and in between them, a line so fine it would vex even our most agile acrobat.

He leaps off the stage to get on the same level as the audience members.

AZLON
Our only question to you is this --
do I have any volunteers?

A set of dim lights come on over the audience. A middle-aged WELL-TO-DO WOMAN in the front row raises her hand.

AZLON
Ahh, the beautiful ones are always
the bravest.

Azlon escorts the Woman up on the stage.

AZLON
Young lady, do tell us your name.

Azlon holds the microphone to the Woman's lips.

WELL-TO-DO WOMAN
Elizabe --

Before she can finish, Azlon reaches into his back pocket and pulls out an antique Smith & Wesson pistol. He cocks it and blasts the side of her face clean off. Chunks of brain and skull spew into the crowd.

The Well-to-Do Woman collapses in a bloody mess. The Towners gasp and stand to get a look at her.

AZLON
Ladies and gentlemen, please settle
down -- she's still squirming.
Once she stops, we'll bring her
back to enjoy the rest of the show.

The Towners chatter amongst each other, half frightened, half exhilarated. No one dares to leave yet.

Towards the back of the tent, Barnaby watches the show through an opening in the curtain.

An arm grabs him by the collar and jerks him backwards.

EXT. BLACK TOP - CENTER TENT - NIGHT

An AERIALIST rips Barnaby away from the curtain. He stands with the other PERFORMERS, which include MUSICIANS, DANCING GIRLS and various others in Vaudevillian costume.

AERIALIST

Kinkers only. Get back with the worker bees.

The Aerialist shoves Barnaby away. Barnaby stumbles to the ground, eliciting snickers from the Dancing Girls.

Barnaby springs to his feet. He says nothing. He simply heads to the Roustabouts' tent.

EXT. BLACK TOP - ROUSTABOUTS' TENT - NIGHT

Barnaby drudges over to Sudsy, who sits outside the tent and wipes mud off his old boots with a broken tree branch.

SUDSY

Don't worry about him, Barn.

BARNABY

I don't. Besides, Delilah could be a performer.

Sudsy sighs, having hoped this topic wouldn't come up again.

BARNABY

She's pretty enough to be a lead attraction. She's an angel. With porcelain skin and this luscious red hair. I've never seen anything like it.

Sudsy playfully flicks some mud from the branch at Barnaby.

SUDSY

Every year we come to Mortecita, I have to deal with this Delilah talk. I can't wait to leave.

BARNABY

Well I can't wait another year to come back. I need to see her. At least, see what happened to her.

SUDSY

And what's gonna happen to you if you sneak off for the night? If Azlon finds out...

(beat)

Barn, I don't wanna bury my best friend.

BARNABY

I won't sneak off. I'll ask.

SUDSY

You've asked before and he said no.
He's not gonna change his mind, and
he'll get mad at you for bringing
it up.

BARNABY

Azlon's a good man underneath. You
can reason with him.

Sudsy scoffs and shakes his head, frustrated. He starts
picking mud from his boots with the tree branch again.

Barnaby swipes Sudsy's branch to get his full attention.

BARNABY

I'm talking to him tonight. After
the show.

INT. BLACK TOP - CENTER TENT - NIGHT

The audience has cleared out after the night's performance.
The only ones left are the Roustabouts, who clean up.

Sudsy helps fold chairs. Barnaby is on his knees, picking up
chunks of brain and placing them into a bucket.

EXT. BLACK TOP - DINING CAR - NIGHT

The Performers hang outside. Some smoke, while others filter
into the dining car for some drinks.

The MEERS SISTERS, twins EDITH and ENID, head for the dining
car. They're both blond, caked in makeup, and wearing
matching ruffled dresses.

Doktor Kahn steps in front of the Sisters.

DOKTOR KAHN

Azlon wants to see you. On stage.

The Sisters' merry mood ends. This can't be good news.

INT. BLACK TOP - CENTER TENT - NIGHT

Azlon paces on stage, troubled. The Meers Sisters approach
him, fake smiles on.

ENID

Good show tonight, sir.

AZLON
That's precisely the problem. For
you, good is good enough.

EDITH
That's not --

AZLON
The show has been suffering, and
I've solved it.

Azlon stops pacing and turns towards the Sisters.

AZLON
You haven't been practicing.

The Sisters steal a glance at each other. Busted.

AZLON
A performance is like a muscle.
Without use, it dies.

Azlon reaches into his coat and pulls out his pistol.

AZLON
A noble performer goes down with
the ship.

EDITH
Azlon, please...

Azlon considers the frightened faces of the Sisters. He
steps towards Enid first.

AZLON
You've insulted this show and this
stage. Apologize.

ENID
I'm sorry, Azlon. I --

AZLON
To the stage. Apologize to the
stage.

Enid appears confused by the request, but she knows better
than to disobey. She looks down at the stage.

ENID
I'm sorry, stage. I'm so sorry.

Barnaby and the Roustabouts stop their work to steal a glance
towards the argument on stage.

AZLON
Act as if you mean it.

ENID
I'll get better. My kicks, my
footwork, it'll all get better --

AZLON
As if you mean it!

Enid kneels down to talk to the stage. She whimpers and tears up, though probably more from fear than remorse.

ENID
I apologize... I do... with all my
heart and all my soul.

AZLON
Your dancing was bad. Your acting
was worse.

Azlon cocks his pistol.

Barnaby knows where this is going. He looks away. There's a bang, and then the sound of a body dropping.

With her sister Enid dead on stage, Edith tries her best not to cry. She looks back to Azlon, her hands shaking.

EDITH
Azlon... please...

AZLON
Stop your sniveling, m'dear.
(beat)
Your legs I like. And for that,
you've been granted the greatest
gift there is: time in my tent.
Would you like to join me?

Azlon presses his pistol under Edith's chin.

AZLON
Or your sister?

EDITH
(weak smile)
It'd be an honor to join you, sir.

Barnaby watches the pool of blood gather around Enid's skull. Sudsy approaches him and whispers.

SUDSY
Good luck reasoning with him, Barn.

EXT. BLACK TOP - DINING CAR - NIGHT

All the Performers are in the dining car now, as fiddle music pours out the windows.

INT. BLACK TOP - ROUSTABOUTS' TENT - NIGHT

Crammed into a small tent, the Roustabouts settle down for the night on wooden boards. They have generously been granted flea-ridden blankets and pillows.

Sudsy stirs. The board next to him is empty.

EXT. BLACK TOP - AZLON'S TENT - NIGHT

Barnaby takes tentative steps towards Azlon's tent. Unlike the other tents, Azlon's has a strong steel frame.

Barnaby can hear primal grunts coming from inside.

INT. BLACK TOP - AZLON'S TENT - NIGHT

Azlon's tent has luxuries, none more striking than his king-sized bed, which dangles from the ceiling like a bird cage. The bed swings back and forth, rocking the entire tent.

Barnaby takes off his cap as soon as he steps inside. His shoes squash an old pomegranate. Several other half-eaten pomegranates line the floor of the tent.

BARNABY
(timidly)
Azlon?

Azlon, wrestling under the sheets with Edith, throws another pomegranate. It splatters at Barnaby's feet.

AZLON
Go away!

BARNABY
Sorry, sir.

AZLON
(recognizing the voice)
Barnaby?

A shirtless Azlon emerges from under the sheets.

AZLON
Barnaby, m'boy! Do come in.

Edith pops her head out, her hair mussed.

EDITH
Can't you come back --

Azlon shoves Edith out of the bed and onto the floor below. She lands on her neck, cracking it on impact. The shocked expression on her face stays there. She's dead.

Barnaby freezes for a moment at the death. Azlon couldn't care less, as he drops down a rope ladder for the boy.

AZLON
Come up here, m'boy. I want to see
that sweet face.

Barnaby sidesteps Edith's body and grabs hold of the ladder. When he climbs up, the weight of the bed shifts, causing it to rock back and forth once again.

INT. BLACK TOP - AZLON'S BED - NIGHT

Azlon helps pull Barnaby up onto the bed.

AZLON
How can I help you tonight, m'boy?

BARNABY
It's, it's about Delilah.

Azlon grumbles. He picks up a pomegranate and chomps into it. The juices and seeds spill down his chin.

AZLON
You're a hard worker, m'boy, but a
dim bulb at best. We spoke about
this, at this time, last year.

BARNABY
I know, but I wanted to ask again,
sir. Delilah can work the rigs.
Or help with the costumes...

AZLON
Barnaby, if you're looking for
lust, I can help. We'll find you
anything from a dirty old man to a
suitable young girl, hardworking
and hairless, where it matters.

BARNABY
I loved Delilah, sir. I still do.

AZLON
(scoffing)
Love...

Azlon tosses out the half-eaten pomegranate and reaches over to snare another. The sheets in his bed are stained with pomegranate juice. Or, at least, what looks like it.

AZLON
Remember when we had that
children's choir? Worked well, but
only until Christmas came.

Azlon mimics the children's voices.

AZLON
"Azlon, can you deliver this letter
to Santa?" "Azlon, will the sleigh
know where the Black Top will be?"

Azlon pinches Barnaby's cheek.

AZLON
Your problem, m'boy, is that you
died too young to realize that
love's the same myth.

Barnaby wipes the pomegranate remnants off his cheek.

BARNABY
Yes, sir.

Barnaby hangs his head and shuffles to the rope ladder. When Azlon catches sight of his disappointment, he softens.

AZLON
Barnaby, wait... I admire that
innocence. It's your gift. Your
gift to us.

BARNABY
I don't follow, sir.

AZLON
There are two types of gifts. One
you can learn and one you can lose.
Consider the corpse below us now.

Azlon shuffles over the bed to peer down at Edith's body.

AZLON

I'll bring her back because she has a pair of qualities I quite enjoy in a woman -- a twisting tongue and no qualms about where to place it.

Barnaby looks down at Edith's lifeless face. With both of them leaning over, the bed tilts dramatically.

AZLON

No doubt a helpful father or uncle trained her, at an age well before she ought to know how.

Azlon turns back to Barnaby.

AZLON

That's a talent you learn. Like the Fiddler's skill with a bow or a blade. Like my showmanship on stage. But yours, your pure heart, your belief in true love -- that's something we sad souls can never acquire again.

BARNABY

It's not something I'll lose, sir.

AZLON

And that's why you're so special. For you, I'd bring Delilah back, if I could. But even I can't. I looked into the matter myself.

Azlon crawls closer to Barnaby. As he does, the bed shifts.

AZLON

Delilah died, shortly after you. She drank a vial of poison. She couldn't bear being without you, and I don't blame her.

Azlon ruffles up Barnaby's hair.

AZLON

But she was cremated. Her ashes scattered. I'd never be able to find them all.

Barnaby appears surprised by the story, but says nothing.

AZLON

Delilah's gone for good, m'boy.
The Black Top's all you have, but
the Black Top's all you need. We
are your family now.

BARNABY

Yes, sir.

INT. BLACK TOP - ROUSTABOUTS' TENT - NIGHT

Barnaby lies on his board, eyes awake. He's still uneasy
about something.

On the next board over, Sudsy whacks fleas away with the tree
branch he's been hanging on to.

BARNABY

He said Delilah was cremated. Her
ashes spread all over.

SUDSY

Case closed. Unless you want to go
find every speck of her.

BARNABY

She's not cremated.

Barnaby slides closer to Sudsy in order to whisper.

BARNABY

Last year, Azlon said she was
buried at sea.

(beat)

He's lying. Delilah's out there.

SUDSY

Still. There's nothing you can do
about it, Barn.

BARNABY

You've been into town, haven't you?
To the files... it'll tell me where
she's buried.

SUDSY

Barnaby...

BARNABY

I just want to look at her. One
time. That's all I want.

SUDSY

You'd risk getting killed or tortured, all for one look at Delilah? Do you know how dumb that sounds?

BARNABY

Of course I do. But to pass through this city again, to go another year without her? That's torture.

Sudsy whimpers. He's in a lose-lose situation here. This time, he's erring on the side of his friend.

SUDSY

It's a tattoo parlor. I'll give you the address.

EXT. BLACK TOP - ROUSTABOUTS' TENT - NIGHT

Barnaby sneaks out of the tent. The Black Top's quiet, aside from that fiddle music in the dining car.

He looks to the fields behind the Black Top. He can make a clean break for it.

Before he goes, he glances back to Azlon's tent. It's unguarded. Maybe he can do something else.

INT. BLACK TOP - AZLON'S TENT - NIGHT

The sound of Azlon's heavy snoring greets Barnaby as he enters the tent.

Barnaby grabs hold of the rope ladder. As soon as he takes a step onto it, the bed starts to tilt. He has to be careful.

INT. BLACK TOP - AZLON'S BED - NIGHT

Azlon snores loudly. In his hand, he holds onto his cane. In his arms, he spoons the body of Edith Meers. Only, she's still dead. Her eyes are open and her neck's still cracked.

The bed dips as Barnaby climbs the ladder. Azlon grumbles in his sleep and shifts.

Barnaby makes it to the bed top. He sees the cane in Azlon's hand. Carefully, he pries Azlon's fingers off, one by one.

At the third finger, Azlon snorts and his eyes shoot open. Barnaby ducks down, out of sight. Azlon drifts back asleep.

Barnaby works quickly now. He pulls the cane out, and unlatches the wand from its tip.

EXT. BLACK TOP - AZLON'S TENT - NIGHT

Barnaby tucks Azlon's wand into his pants leg. He heads for the fields. He tries to walk casually, but he knows he has to hurry as well.

Doktor Kahn emerges from his tent. He puts his spectacles when he spots Barnaby.

DOKTOR KAHN
What are you doing over here?

Barnaby looks to Doktor Kahn, but makes a break for it. He runs as quickly as he can towards the fields.

Doktor Kahn runs after Barnaby. He's in his 50s though, and in no shape to chase down a young man.

DOKTOR KAHN
Stop him! Stop that boy!

EXT. BLACK TOP - ROUSTABOUTS' TENT - NIGHT

Sudsy sticks his head out of the tent when he overhears the commotion. Other Roustabouts emerge as well.

DOKTOR KAHN
Stop that boy! He's a runaway!

The Burly Roustabout starts after him, but Sudsy sticks a leg in his way. The Burly Roustabout stumbles to the floor, giving Barnaby a good head start.

EXT. BLACK TOP - NIGHT

Barnaby runs into the fields. The momentum causes his cap to fly off. The Roustabouts chase after him, well behind.

INT. BLACK TOP - AZLON'S BED - NIGHT

The shouting outside causes Azlon's eyes to flutter open.

He sits up, groggy. He looks to his hand, where he's still holding something. Only, it's Sudsy's tree branch.

EXT. BLACK TOP - AZLON'S TENT - NIGHT

Azlon hitches up his pants as he confers with Doktor Kahn.

AZLON

Our boy Barnaby, he's a dim bulb at best. He won't last through the night in a town like Mortecita.

DOKTOR KAHN

He won't last an hour. A few roustabouts are chasing him now.

AZLON

Call them back. We don't want our men out in the open. Not when one will do.

(beat)

Find the Fiddler.

INT. BLACK TOP - DINING CAR - NIGHT

The dining car at the Black Top looks similar to one found on a train. The Performers bunch closely together as they dine on small linen tables and drink, mostly bottles of absinthe.

Fiddle music fills the car. Refined, but haunting. More Berlioz's Symphonie Fantastique than Charlie Daniels.

THE FIDDLER sits alone at a table in the back of the room. The other performers would rather cram two to a chair than dare to join him. He concentrates on his tune, allowing his oily, seaweed-like hair to fall in his face.

When the Fiddler finishes his song, the Performers clap. After the applause dies down, the Fiddler starts again, on the exact same tune.

The Aerialist rolls his eyes and murmurs to a Dancing Girl.

AERIALIST

Does he know anything else?

The Fiddler stops. His cold eyes glare up to the Aerialist. He stands, which causes the entire car to go silent.

He approaches the Aerialist, with his bow in hand.

THE FIDDLER

I like playin' me fiddle. Helps me pass the time.

The Aerialist stays quiet and keeps his head down. The Fiddler grabs a fist full of the Aerialist's hair and jerks his head up so he can't avoid eye contact.

THE FIDDLER
If you got other means of keeping
me entertained...

The Fiddler clicks the bottom of his bow. Like a switchblade, a knife springs out its side. A jagged blade.

THE FIDDLER
Do share 'em.

The Fiddler's bow gets dangerously close to the Aerialist's neck. Beads of sweat trickle down the man's forehead.

DOKTOR KAHN (O.S.)
Fiddler...

Doktor Kahn stands at the entrance.

DOKTOR KAHN
I need a word.

EXT. BLACK TOP - DINING CAR - NIGHT

With his fiddle case slung over his back, the Fiddler listens to Doktor Kahn. Or at least, barely. He doesn't make eye contact, choosing instead to lock his eyes on the ground.

DOKTOR KAHN
Azlon needs you to chase down a
runaway. A grave boy. Goes by the
name of Barnaby.

Doktor Kahn can't tell if the Fiddler is even listening.

DOKTOR KAHN
It's extremely urgent.

THE FIDDLER
Sounds awful important for a grave
boy. Just tell Azlon to slam 'is
stick in the mud an' conjure up
another.

DOKTOR KAHN
That's the problem...
(beat)
The boy has the stick.

The Fiddler immediately straightens up and looks to Doktor Kahn. For him, this just got interesting.

THE FIDDLER

I ain't good with names or faces,
but I can find your boy. You want
'im dead or alive? More fun for me
if I can kill 'im.

DOKTOR KAHN

As long as you find Azlon's wand, I
don't see the difference.

The Fiddler smiles. A sick grin.

EXT. ABANDONED FIELDS - NIGHT

Barnaby races through the fields. He breathes heavily.

BARNABY (V.O.)

At the orphanage, they told us to
never lie, cheat, or steal.

The sharp grass cuts against his skin as he runs, but he
doesn't slow down.

BARNABY (V.O.)

But they also said to look after
each other. To look after the ones
you love.

EXT. ABANDONED FIELDS - DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

Barnaby emerges from the fields and comes upon the dirt road.

BARNABY (V.O.)

There's no one that I love half as
much as Delilah.

He digs into his pant leg and pulls out Azlon's wand. He
grips it tightly in his hand.

BARNABY (V.O.)

And she needs me, more than ever.

Lights flash on Barnaby's face -- an oncoming car. He tries
to flag it down.

BARNABY (V.O.)

Nobody wants to be a corpse.

FADE OUT.

A black screen. A title card reads **JAYCE**.

JAYCE (V.O.)
I'm a romantic.

EXT. GRASSY MEADOW - DUSK

JAYCE, 27, is a modern day Don Juan. At least, in his head. In reality, he's more slimy than slick, as evidenced by the sweat that typically coats his palms and forehead.

Tonight, he has a good excuse for the trickling beads of sweat. He's naked, and thrusting.

JAYCE (V.O.)
I'm a believer in courtly love.
Women should be put on a pedestal,
as holy objects, higher than
ourselves.

He moans; his face contorts...

JAYCE (V.O.)
They should be treated as the
precious, fragile, tender beings
that they are.

Jayce rolls off and rests on the wet grass. He takes time to catch his breath.

JAYCE (V.O.)
I would never pressure them to do
anything they aren't comfortable
with. I'll worship and respect
them as long as they live.

He finds his square-framed glasses and puts them back on. He tosses a thankful smile to his partner.

His partner -- a FEMALE CORPSE. It's only a few months old, but it's been dead long enough for its skin to start peeling off and for worms to start crawling in the eye socket.

JAYCE (V.O.)
But when they die, all bets are
off.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - PARKING LOT - DUSK

Jayce, with his muddied clothes back on, treks across the graveyard to the entrance gate. He approaches the night security guard, the only one on duty.

JAYCE
Apologies for taking so long. I
had to say a few words to my
grandmother. A treasure of a
woman. See, she always --

The guard, DESMOND, in his 40s and sinfully ugly, isn't
buying whatever Jayce is selling. Still, he couldn't care
less about his job, or Jayce. He barely glances over.

DESMOND
Dude... Whatever.

Desmond chews on a mouth full of raw tobacco, some of which
trickles down his chin when he talks.

DESMOND
They only pay me to make sure kids
don't come out here to smoke dope.
You can dig up a body or bury one
for all I care.

JAYCE
I appreciate the indifference.

Jayce pulls out a money clip. He slips Desmond five dollars.

JAYCE
For the record though, I have a
girlfriend. Stunning. Absolutely
stunning.

DESMOND
I'm sure.

JAYCE
And religious too! My grandmother
would adore that about her. And as
for myself, I don't mind waiting.
I prefer it, to be honest, because--

DESMOND
Just leave me alone.

JAYCE
Right. Good to see you again.

Jayce awkwardly heads off. Desmond spits out a tobacco glob.

EXT. OASIS APARTMENTS - NIGHT

Jayce enters the Oasis, a towering apartment complex that
advertises itself as "A Little Piece of Paradise."

INT. OASIS APARTMENTS - 8TH FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Cracks spread across the hallway ceiling like a spider's web. Droplets of water drip down onto the stained carpet below. The paint on the walls is chipped.

Jayce walks down the hallway. He wipes sweat from his forehead, and brushes twigs out of his hair.

As he nears his apartment, he tugs off his still-muddy shirt. He kicks out of his muddy pants. He's left in his underwear.

He opens a nearby trash chute. When he pulls open the lid, a label urges him to "Recycle!!". He balls up the damaged clothing and tosses them down the chute.

INT. OASIS APARTMENTS - APARTMENT 8M - NIGHT

Jayce enters and locks the door behind him. The first person who greets him is Jesus -- a decorative wooden replica nailed to the wall.

Jayce sneaks to the bathroom door. He swings the door open too forcefully and it accidentally bangs against the wall.

ELENA (O.S.)
Is that you, Jayce?

Busted. He frantically brushes the remaining dirt from his hair.

ELENA, early 30s, emerges from the bedroom with a smile. Her jet black hair enhances the pop of her bright green eyes. She has a good body, although she hides it under a bulky sweater. In short, she's way out of his league.

ELENA
I didn't hear you come in.

JAYCE
I didn't want to wake you, angel.

ELENA
Where have you been?

JAYCE
I went out. To do some recycling.

ELENA
Aww, aren't you a good Samaritan.

Elena gives Jayce a modest peck on the lips. She wraps her arms around him for a hug and rests her chin on his shoulder.

ELENA

"Let your light shine before men."

JAYCE

Excuse me?

ELENA

"That they may see your good deeds
and praise your Father in heaven."
Matthew 5:16.

JAYCE

(lying through his teeth)
Oh, right. Of course. I was
thinking the exact same thing.

ELENA

I'm gonna get ready for bed. I'm
not feeling that well.

JAYCE

I can make you feel better.

Jayce pulls Elena tighter. His hands lower and grab a firm
grip on her ass. She resists and slips away.

ELENA

Jayce. Not in front of Him.

Elena motions to the Jesus statue. Jayce feigns a smile.

JAYCE

No, of course not. Silly me.

Elena heads back to the bedroom. Once Jayce is alone, he
gestures obscenely at the Jesus statue. Cock blocker.

INT. OASIS APARTMENTS - APARTMENT 8M - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Elena, now in pajama pants and a thin tank top, sleeps in the
shared bed. She must have fallen asleep while reading, as
she still has her reading glasses on and a Bible by her hand.

A freshly showered Jayce slowly crawls onto his side of the
bed, careful not to wake her. He reaches over to gently pull
her glasses off and turn off the side lamp.

As he watches her sleep, he gets an idea. He allows his hand
to slide to the edge of her pajama pants. He even slips a
finger underneath the waist band. It trails downwards.

It's a delicate operation, like an FBI agent diffusing a
bomb. One wrong move and it'll blow up in his face.

He must have hit the wrong button, because an alarm sounds. Actually, it's just the phone, but it wakes her nonetheless. Jayce snatches up the Bible and rolls to his side of the bed.

Elena sits up as the phone continues to blare. She looks over to find Jayce reading the Bible.

ELENA

Want me to get it?

JAYCE

Could you? This is my absolute favorite chapter.

Elena smiles and reaches over to answer the phone. After a few seconds, her smile fades.

She looks to Jayce. He sits up, waiting for word on what the problem is. After about ten more seconds, she hangs up.

JAYCE

Everything all right?

ELENA

One of the kids from the center got in trouble. I'm going to go help.

JAYCE

Do you ever stop being so magnificent? You're straight on your way to sainthood, baby.

Elena slips out of bed and rushes to her closet in order to change. She peels off her tank top.

Jayce stares at her bare back, at the outline of her breasts. He sweats and licks his lips. He can barely contain himself.

JAYCE

Honey? I'm going to head out as well. I might visit my grandmother's grave.

Elena fusses with her hair and then clips on a bra.

ELENA

I thought your grandmother lived up by the coast.

JAYCE

She did, yes. They flew her body out to Riversfield. After she died. So I could visit more.

Knowing his story is awful, Jayce cringes. Elena doesn't seem to catch on to it though.

ELENA
That's really sweet.

JAYCE
Guilty as charged.

EXT. THE POUND - NIGHT

Jayce stands at the entrance to the Pound, wearing his finest fake designer clothes. Although there's no one else in line, he's blocked by one of the Bouncers.

BOUNCER 1
I told you, we're at capacity.

JAYCE
We both know that's not true.
You've let in four other people
since I've been here.

BOUNCER 1
Private party.

JAYCE
Let's stop playing games. Name
your price. I'm a very rich man.

Jayce produces his money clip.

BOUNCER 1
A hundred bucks.

Jayce flips through his wad, mostly singles, and reconsiders.

JAYCE
Perhaps we have different
definitions of "very rich." What
do you say to fifteen?

The Bouncer turns away, ignoring him. Jayce whimpers.

JAYCE
Come on. Please. I need to see a
naked body tonight. A warm one.

BOUNCER 1
Why don't you check out the
Asphodel fields. You can sometimes
find cheap whores out there.

JAYCE

What? Whores? No. Disgusting.
I'm a respectable man. I have a
good job. An amazing girlfriend.
I'm not desperate enough to go the
fields, trolling for hookers.

EXT. ABANDONED FIELDS - DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

Jayce drives down the dirt road, trolling for hookers.

INT. JAYCE'S CAR - NIGHT

Jayce searches for signs of life. Even the fields themselves
are dead, with plenty of rotted tobacco plants.

He finally spots someone -- a DISEASED HOOKER, 40s. Some
sort of green puss coats her entire neck and spirals up to
chin. Her sunken eyes look almost dead.

JAYCE

No thank you...

He keeps driving. Finally he catches sight of someone else
down the road. As he drives closer, he can make out Barnaby,
waving frantically for him to pull over.

A boy's not exactly what Jayce had in mind, but at least he's
good looking and clean. He slows the car down.

EXT. JAYCE'S CAR - NIGHT

Jayce lowers his window as he rolls up to Barnaby. Barnaby's
short of breath, tired from running.

BARNABY

Can you help me?

JAYCE

I think we can help each other.
Come on in.

INT. JAYCE'S CAR - NIGHT

Barnaby climbs in the passenger seat. He's eager to get
moving, but Jayce doesn't start driving yet.

JAYCE

You're a good looking boy, if you
don't mind me saying.

BARNABY

Thanks... my name's Barnaby.

JAYCE

Barnaby. Good alias too. Wouldn't want your mom and dad to find out what you were up to.

BARNABY

It's my real name.

JAYCE

Of course it is. Here in Mortecita, we can be whomever we want. A fresh start, isn't it.

Barnaby studies Jayce. Maybe he picked the wrong car to hop into. Still, he'll have to take his chances.

BARNABY

Do you mind if we start driving? I need to go to a tattoo parlor in the city.

JAYCE

Absolutely. Wherever you prefer.

Jayce revs up the engine and turns the car around. Barnaby buckles his seat belt. He looks nervous, but at least he's moving. He looks behind him for signs of the Fiddler.

BARNABY

Thanks. I'm in a bit of a hurry.

INT. BLACK TOP - LABORERS TENT - NIGHT

Sudsy stirs restlessly on his wooden board bed. He's half asleep, but can't rest comfortably. That's especially true when he starts to hear music. The Fiddler's tune.

Sudsy's eyes shoot open, fully awake now. He looks over to see the Fiddler play, a mere foot away from his bed.

THE FIDDLER

First rule of show business, boy-o: makin' friends is awful foolish.

Sudsy tries to escape, but the Fiddler lunges at him. The Fiddler grabs Sudsy and throws him back down on the board.

The Fiddler holds both of Sudsy's cheeks as he keeps Sudsy pinned down. Sudsy squirms and struggles, but the Fiddler has a look of calm.

THE FIDDLER
Tell me where 'e went, and I'll
kill ya real simple and quick like.

EXT. STREETS OF MORTECITA - NIGHT

Jayce's car waits in traffic, getting set to enter the city.

INT. JAYCE'S CAR - NIGHT

Jayce drives, sweat continually forming and being wiped off his forehead. Barnaby keeps a safe space between them.

JAYCE
So do you know anyone in the city?

BARNABY
One. I hope she's still here, at least. I haven't seen her in a long time.

JAYCE
I know how you feel, in a way. I have a girlfriend myself. Stunning. Absolutely stunning. But she's religious. She even quotes the Bible, if you can believe that.

BARNABY
That's really nice.

JAYCE
Oh sure, that's what I mean. It's wonderful. It's just... I wish I could express how much I like her. Psychically.

BARNABY
She's probably saving herself for marriage. That's what Delilah's doing. In the end, the wait will make things so much more special.

JAYCE
Yes, truly special, these women of ours. Seems we're in the same boat. The question is, what do we do in that boat while we're here?

Jayce sends a suggestive smile to Barnaby, who simply seems confused by it.

EXT. STREETS OF MORTECITA - NIGHT

Jayce drives through the heart of Mortecita, passing the Pound. The Harajuku-inspired Youth are out and about, determining which bar to settle at for the night.

INT. JAYCE'S CAR - NIGHT

Barnaby looks out at the tough-looking crowd. His eyebrows furrow at their nightmarish makeup. Getting in and out of Mortecita might be more difficult than he imagined.

BARNABY

I thought Mortecita was nicer than this.

JAYCE

Don't worry about them. Anyone who's actually dangerous doesn't go around, advertising it.

Jayce also scans the crowd, although his motivations are different. His tongue trails on his lips when he sees a scantily clad girl.

JAYCE

Don't get me wrong -- there's a lot of devious behavior in Mortecita. This town attracts people who got kicked out of polite society.

Barnaby turns back to Jayce. He finally understands him now.

BARNABY

And you're one of those people.

JAYCE

No! Not at all. Not really. I mean, technically yes. I'm what they call a sexual deviant.

BARNABY

Why are you called that? Technically.

JAYCE

Who knows. It's all politics. Semantics. I treat all women with the same respect I do my beloved grandmother. And should one say no to my advances, in an audible voice, then, why of course I'd honor that.

Barnaby nods, becoming more at ease with Jayce.

JAYCE

The question is, naturally, if it's wrong to proceed, should they fail to say no. If circumstances render them unable.

So much for comfort. Barnaby's eyebrows quirk up.

BARNABY

You have sex with women in comas?

JAYCE

What? Comas? No. Absolutely not. I'd never think of such a thing.

(beat)

Hospital security's way too tight for that.

Jayce chuckles lightly at that. Barnaby does not.

BARNABY

I think I should go. I can walk the rest of the way.

JAYCE

I suppose we're close enough.

Jayce pulls the car over to the side of the road. Barnaby unlocks his safety belt.

JAYCE

Of course, there is one last matter to attend to.

Jayce strokes Barnaby's hand with his thumb. Barnaby tries to pull his hand away, but Jayce grabs it.

JAYCE

Please. Just for a bit. So we can go back to treating our women like the angels they are...

Barnaby pries his hand free and opens the car door. Jayce lunges towards him, forcing Barnaby to wrestle him off.

Barnaby manages to kick Jayce's jaw with his boot, bloodying his lip. The blow allows Barnaby to slip out of the car.

EXT. JAYCE'S CAR - NIGHT

Barnaby falls out of the car and splashes into a gutter. He runs away, not looking back when Jayce peeks out the window.

JAYCE
Barnaby, wait! That was a joke! I
have a girlfriend. She's stunning.
Absolutely stunning.

Jayce dabs the blood on his lip and forces a laugh.

JAYCE
Trust me, I'm not that desperate!

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Jayce talks to Desmond, the night guard.

DESMOND
Your grandma again?

JAYCE
We were really close.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - WEST HILL - NIGHT

Covered in mud, Jayce struggles to dump a corpse back into its coffin. He's out of breath, wheezing from the effort.

He covers the coffin and rummages through his pile of clothes. He tugs on his pants.

Then -- he hears a sound. Footsteps. With the wetness of the ground, the suction sound is distinct. And speeding up.

Jayce looks behind him, and sees something worth running from. He only makes it a few feet before he's ripped to the ground. He shields himself, but soon, everything goes black.

JAYCE (V.O.)
I never found out who it was.
Probably some psychopath. But,
perhaps, it was a jealous lover,
upset that I had violated his soul
mate. That's what I'd like to
think, at least.
(beat)
I'm a romantic.

FADE OUT.

A black screen. A title card reads **FIGUEROA**.

FIGUEROA (V.O.)
Tattoos tell a lot about a person.

EXT. STREETS OF MORTECITA - NIGHT

Crowds of people walk down the busy sidewalk.

FIGUEROA (V.O.)
When you chose to burn something
into your own flesh, you're making
a statement to the world.

A MAN IN A WIFE BEATER struts down the street. A barbed wire
tattoo wraps all the way around his bicep.

FIGUEROA (V.O.)
This one says, "I'm not creative
enough to come up with something
better, so I'm probably not someone
you wanna talk to."

INT. POOL HALL - NIGHT

A TOUGH GUY leans over to shoot pool, exposing a small
flaming skull tattoo on the back of his neck.

FIGUEROA (V.O.)
This one says, "Don't even think
about getting in a bar fight with
me, asshole. No, seriously, I have
a low pain threshold, hence this
bitch-ass little tat."

EXT. CLASSY ASS TATTOO SHOPPE - NIGHT

Above the faded yellow awning of the shop is a sign labeling
it as the "Classy Ass Tattoo Shoppe," written in old English.

A SWEET-LOOKING SKANK emerges from the shop and heads down
the street. A colorful butterfly tattoo has been inked on
her lower back.

FIGUEROA (V.O.)
This one says, "I like butterflies
because I'm sweet. And childlike.
And I wanted to give you something
pretty to look at while you fucked
me in the ass."

INT. CLASSY ASS TATTOO SHOPPE - NIGHT

Mannequins decorate the small shop, each wearing only a ball gag and sample tattoos over every inch of their plastic skin.

A bell chimes as the doors to the shop swing open. Barnaby enters, looking tired and nervous.

FIGUEROA (V.O.)
There's no mark more telling than
this one.

Barnaby wipes sweat away, including some on his chest, next to the mark between his collarbones.

FIGUEROA (V.O.)
This one says, "I just got brought
back from the dead and I'm confused
as all fuck."

KAT, 30s, a typical tattoo chick with several piercings and a pinup girl inked on her arm, sits at the front desk and sketches a dragon. She looks up to Barnaby.

BARNABY
Hi... I'm looking... well, I'm
hoping to...

Too impatient to wait for Barnaby to stammer through it, Kat simply pushes an intercom.

KAT
Figgy, another one for you.

INT. CLASSY ASS TATTOO SHOPPE - WORK ROOM - NIGHT

The private work room consists of a dentist-style chair as well as dozens of filing cabinets.

FIGUEROA, 40s, a salty old dog who's seen it all, cleans his tools. Tattoos, primitive and faded, decorate his beefy arms. His gut hangs over the waistband of his pants, which are spackled with stains of various colors.

FIGUEROA
(into the intercom)
Be right there.

Figuerroa heads to the door, where a vintage elevator, essentially a steel cage, waits for him. He shuffles in slowly, in no hurry.

INT. CLASSY ASS TATTOO SHOPPE - NIGHT

There's a click click clicking as the old elevator rises to the top floor. Kat continues to sketch. Barnaby waits, although he continually looks over his shoulder for signs of Azlon or the Fiddler.

When the elevator arrives, Figueroa steps out.

FIGUEROA

I'm Figueroa. I'm the cat you're looking for.

Figueroa wipes his greasy hand on his pants before he shakes Barnaby's hand.

BARNABY

I'm Barnaby. Barnaby James.

FIGUEROA

Nice to meet ya, Barney. So who do you work for?

KAT

Whom. Whom do you work for.

FIGUEROA

Don't mind her. Kat thinks that a sassy personality will make up for the fact that she ain't too cute.

KAT

No, my ugly mug is the reason I work here, Figgy. When I stand next to you, I'm a stunner.

Barnaby ignores their dynamic, too caught up in his dilemma.

BARNABY

How do you know I work for someone?

FIGUEROA

I just can't see anyone taking orders from a nervous shit like yourself. No offense. Plus, that mark means you're undead.

KAT

I think the PC term's "re-born."

Barnaby tries to tug up his shirt to cover the mark.

BARNABY

Azlon. I work for Azlon.

At the mention of Azlon, Figueroa suddenly gets serious.

FIGUEROA
Then fuck, we oughta get to work.

INT. CLASSY ASS TATTOO SHOPPE - WORK ROOM - NIGHT

Figueroa unlocks his filing cabinets. Barnaby paces back and forth, peering over Figueroa's shoulder.

FIGUEROA
Why don't you take a seat and calm down, kid.

Figueroa's laid-back attitude does serve to calm down Barnaby to some degree. He gingerly slides into the dentist chair.

FIGUEROA
So who are ya looking for?

BARNABY
Her name's --

FIGUEROA
Fuck, is it who or whom?

BARNABY
I'm not sure. But her name's Delilah. Delilah Pritchard.

Figueroa digs through the "P" file.

FIGUEROA
What is she, an acrobat or some shit?

BARNABY
No. She's the love of my life.

Figueroa glances back to Barnaby, an eyebrow quirked up.

FIGUEROA
You're not working for Azlon.

Barnaby stays quiet, but says plenty with an uneasy shift.

FIGUEROA
Azlon always calls first. Sends some little fat kid.

BARNABY
I... used to work for Azlon. As a grave boy. I left.

FIGUEROA
You got balls, kid.

Figueroa returns to the files, digging through sheets.

FIGUEROA
Smart money says you get killed by
the end of the night though.

BARNABY
Why do you say that?

FIGUEROA
You ran away from the Black Top.
And you're walking around with that
mark. Might as well be a bull's
eye.

Barnaby hikes up his shirt to hide the mark again. Since
it's on the edge of his neck, it's a difficult task.

BARNABY
What can I do about it?

FIGUEROA
Get a turtleneck. Or a tattoo.

BARNABY
You can cover it up?

FIGUEROA
That's what I do.

Figueroa pulls out a file. He studies it, and scribbles down
some information onto a piece of stencil paper.

FIGUEROA
Your girl Delilah's dead. Buried
at Riversfield.

BARNABY
That sounds like a nice place.

FIGUEROA
Used to be. The river down there
flooded and fucked the whole place
up. Now they only use it to dump
hobos and whores.

Barnaby glares. For the first time, he looks almost
intimidating. Figueroa smiles, softening.

FIGUEROA

Not that your chick was either.
Died a while ago.

Figueroa hands the stencil paper to Barnaby. He's written the gravesite address as well as a Latin phrase.

FIGUEROA

Her name's not on the headstone.
It's this foreign shit instead.

Figueroa goes to slide on some work gloves.

FIGUEROA

No one's touched her grave. Or
reported it at least.

He prepares for Barnaby's tattoo, setting up ink cups. He takes rubbing alcohol and swabs Barnaby's chest.

FIGUEROA

What do you want a tattoo of?

BARNABY

How about Delilah's name.

FIGUEROA

God damn, this chick must be
something special. You're stalking
her from beyond the grave. Maybe
it's time to get back out there.
Find a new girl. One with a pulse.

Figueroa takes a disposable razor and runs it over Barnaby's chest. Although his chest looks hairless, any microscopic hair might mess up the process.

BARNABY

I can't. I still love her. Madly.
We used to sit and just talk, for
hours. I spend even longer on the
poems I wrote to her. I'm not much
of a writer, but she loved them
anyway. She'd even go around,
showing them to her friends and --

FIGUEROA

Listen, Barney...

BARNABY

Barnaby.

Figueroa applies ointment to Barnaby's chest and starts to prepare his needle.

FIGUEROA

I'm sure Delilah was great, but...

Figueroa starts to write Delilah's name. When the needle hits Barnaby's skin, he winces, but stays strong.

FIGUEROA

Talking about your first life's
kinda like asking your girl who she
fucked before you. Most of the
time, it's better not to know.

Barnaby watches Figueroa work. He's moving quickly, not even using a stencil.

BARNABY

She'll love this though. I can't
wait for her to see it.

FIGUEROA

How the hell is she gonna see it?
Azlon's not gonna help you if you
ran away.

Barnaby doesn't answer. Instead, he sticks the stencil paper deep in his pocket.

Figueroa continues with the tattoo, but he notices Barnaby pocket the paper. He spots a bulge in Barnaby's pant leg. It looks right about the same size as Azlon's wand would be.

FIGUEROA

Shit. You're stupider than I
thought, Barney.

BARNABY

It's Barnaby...

Without warning, Figueroa reaches back and slams the needle into Barnaby's neck. Blood sprays everywhere.

Figueroa keeps going, ramming the needle in again and again, even as Barnaby wails and struggles to get away.

Barnaby manages to spring to his feet, but after half a dozen needles to the neck, he's lost so much blood that he falls down, pale and dead.

FIGUEROA

Like it fucking matters anymore.

Figueroa, wet with blood, wipes his hands on his pants.

INT. CLASSY ASS TATTOO SHOPPE - NIGHT

Click click click goes the elevator as it rises again.

Kat continues her dragon sketch. Now the dragon's tail is inserted into an appreciative naked woman.

Kat doesn't even look up as Figueroa steps out, dripping with blood. He doesn't look well. He's pale and queasy.

KAT

Kid screamed like a girl.

FIGUEROA

Could you give me a hand?

KAT

Can you give me a hand...

Kat finally looks up. Her jaw drops.

Figueroa shakes his hands to flick off the blood. In his hand, clenched tightly, is Azlon's wand.

FIGUEROA

We're gonna need a mop.

EXT. CLASSY ASS TATTOO SHOPPE - NIGHT

Figueroa's car is a shabby old thing, an ugly olive green. He stands behind it, staring down into his open trunk, where Barnaby's dead body rests. Pools of blood have gathered around his punctured neck.

Luckily there's no one around the street, aside from Kat. She watches from a few feet away and shakes her head.

KAT

I still can't believe you did it.

FIGUEROA

Me neither. But, something inside me went off.

The sight of the blood doesn't sit well with Figueroa either. He looks like he might throw up.

FIGUEROA

Seeing this kid, risking everything. And me, never doing a damn thing with my life.

KAT
That's a hell of a sob story,
Figgy, but the ending sucks.

FIGUEROA
For him.

Figueroa slams the trunk closed.

KAT
You could use the wand and bring
him back.

Figueroa digs into his deep pant pocket and pulls out Azlon's
wand. He considers it.

FIGUEROA
If I do that, he'd freak out, run
off. We'd have to kill him again.

He starts for the driver's side door.

FIGUEROA
I'd rather sell both of them
together. Group rate.

Kat follows him.

KAT
You have to go find Azlon. He'll
probably give you a reward.

FIGUEROA
I'm not negotiating with Azlon.
(re: the wand)
What kind of man has this power,
but uses it to run some secret
fucking song and dance show?

KAT
The kind of man who knows assholes
like you'd kill him for it.

Figueroa climbs into the car.

FIGUEROA
I'm going to Lady Liberty. At
least he/she's got business sense.
The Lady'd pay a shitload for this.

Kat shakes her head, but Figueroa slams the door closed.
He's made his decision.

EXT. THE POUND - BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Figueroa pulls into a narrow back alley to park. There are no other cars around.

When he steps out of the car, he passes an emaciated cat, licking from a puddle of what seems to be vomit. At least he knows he's in the right neighborhood.

INT. THE POUND - MAIN STAGE ROOM - DUSK

Figueroa whips past a curtain. He enters the main stage room where he's confronted with blaring strip club music.

Only a few drunken Pathetic Patrons sit by the center stage and gawk at the Heavysset Strippers.

Figueroa makes his way to the Handmaiden at the front desk.

FIGUEROA

I need to talk to the Lady.

HANDMAIDEN

My lady's busy at the moment. You can wait by the bar or the stage.

FIGUEROA

If I had a thing for fat naked people, I'd have stayed home and played with myself. Tell the bitch that this is important.

HANDMAIDEN

Everyone has to wait.

Figueroa grumbles, knowing he doesn't have much time.

INT. CLASSY ASS TATTOO SHOPPE - NIGHT

Kat mops down the floor of the shop. When the front bell chimes, she turns to greet the potential new customer.

It's the Fiddler, with his case slung over his back.

THE FIDDLER

I'm lookin' fer a boy.

Kat gives a hard look at the Fiddler, at his cold eyes. She can tell that he's not someone to mess around with.

KAT

No, you're looking for a fat man.

INT. THE POUND - MAIN STAGE ROOM - BAR - NIGHT

Figueroa waits by the bar. His fingers tap impatiently on the bar top. He downs another drink.

INT. THE POUND - MIRRORED HALLWAY - NIGHT

Figueroa steps towards the back hallway. He ducks inside the "poles" bathroom.

INT. THE POUND - POLES BATHROOM - NIGHT

In lieu of urinals, the Pound's men's bathroom opts for one giant public pissing trough, already half filled.

Figueroa finishes his part in helping fill it, and zips up.

The door opens, and the Dirty Old Man enters. He stumbles to the trough, clearly drunk.

DIRTY OLD MAN

Whooo boy...

Figueroa gives a passing nod to the Dirty Old Man as he moves to the sink to wash up. He finds some indeterminate slimy substance on the faucet handle. It's enough to give him second thoughts about the need to wash his hands.

DIRTY OLD MAN

(to Figueroa)

I just had a dance from a fine,
fine piece of woman. Got me harder
than a brick oven. God bless her.

The Dirty Old Man unzips and starts urinating into the trough. Figueroa tries to wrap his hand in his shirt so he can turn on the faucet handle without touching it directly.

DIRTY OLD MAN

I could feel her... her wetness...
up on my leg.

FIGUEROA

Listen, you crazy old coot, no one
wants to hear that shit. I don't
feel like throwing up tonight.

The Dirty Old Man cackles. Figueroa heads for the exit.

DIRTY OLD MAN

Aww hell... I've gone blue.

Figueroa glances back to the trough to see what the hell that means. The Dirty Old Man's urine is bright blue.

FIGUEROA

What the fuck did you drink?

The Dirty Old Man's eyes flutter closed. He collapses head first into the trough, spilling a good deal of the urine onto the floor and Figueroa's pants.

Alarmed, Figueroa goes to check the Dirty Old Man's pulse on the dry arm that's draped over the trough end. He's alive.

Figueroa tries to pull the Dirty Old Man out of the trough. He stops as soon as he gets his head above water. He's had too much piss splash on his pants to do more than that.

He looks sick from the smell.

INT. THE POUND - MIRRORED HALLWAY - NIGHT

Figueroa exits the bathroom, wiping his hands on his pants.

Down the hall, he spots Lady Liberty talking with Malacoda the bouncer. He heads over.

FIGUEROA

Lady, I need to talk to you...

LADY LIBERTY

(not even looking over)

I have priorities, Figgy. You're not one of them.

FIGUEROA

I've got an offer for you.

LADY LIBERTY

What, a free smiley face tattoo?

FIGUEROA

A secondhand item. Used to be Azlon's.

Liberty turns to Figueroa, his eyes lighting up.

LADY LIBERTY

Don't toy with my emotions, Figgy. I'm a sensitive soul.

FIGUEROA

And a greedy one. Which is why I'm letting you make the first offer.

Liberty slides an arm around Figueroa's neck, grinning.

LADY LIBERTY
I severely underestimated you,
darling.

FIGUEROA
You're not the first.

LADY LIBERTY
I'll consider that when we start to
negotiate the asking price.

Liberty's eyes turn to a newcomer to the hallway -- Callahan,
who's led by Liberty's Handmaiden.

LADY LIBERTY
(to Figueroa)
I'm sorry, darling, I have to
attend to him first. He's not the
type to keep waiting.

FIGUEROA
Let's get my shit done right now.
I want to get the hell out of here.

LADY LIBERTY
Patience, darling. Stay, relax.
You're a VIP now. No doubt you've
heard rumors of my private room,
haven't you?

Liberty motions to Malacoda, who tugs up the hidden hatch.
Figueroa peers down the staircase.

FIGUEROA
On second thought, maybe I can hang
out for a bit.

Liberty turns to her Handmaiden.

LADY LIBERTY
Get this man a table. And some
drinks. The good kind.

INT. THE POUND - MALEBOLGE ROOM - NIGHT

The Handmaiden leads Figueroa across the stone bridge. Along
the way, he watches an orgy going down at one of the tables.

The Handmaiden gestures to an empty booth, stocked full of
brightly colored drinks and Service Girls to cater to him.

FIGUEROA
A guy could get used to this...

INT. THE POUND - MEAT ROOM - NIGHT

Callahan's eyes shine bright yellow. Drool drips down from his fangs onto his chin. He snarls, hungry.

Lady Liberty unlocks a cage housing the Bar-Dweller from before. He's only been there for a day, but he's already haggard and bruised. He whimpers.

LADY LIBERTY
Time to check out, darling.

INT. THE POUND - MAIN STAGE ROOM - NIGHT

Liberty's Handmaiden makes her way from the mirrored hallway towards the front desk. She pauses when she sees exactly who is waiting for her there -- the Fiddler.

THE FIDDLER
Fetch me the Lady.

HANDMAIDEN
I'm sorry. My lady's busy at the moment, but...

The Fiddler's stone cold glare causes her to rethink that.

HANDMAIDEN
But I'll get her right away.

INT. THE POUND - MIRRORED HALLWAY - NIGHT

The Handmaiden leads the Fiddler into the mirrored hallway. She motions towards the back room, where men are getting private lap dances.

HANDMAIDEN
Wait there, if you will, sir.
She's with a customer.

INT. THE POUND - MEAT ROOM - NIGHT

Callahan's jaws rip out a chunk of the Bar-Dweller's leg. The Bar-Dweller screams in pain.

By the staircase, Lady Liberty watches in amusement. The door behind him cracks open, and the Handmaiden peers in.

HANDMAIDEN

My lady, there's a man here to see you. He says it's urgent.

LADY LIBERTY

Give me a minute. This will take less than that.

HANDMAIDEN

It's the man with the fiddle.

Liberty whimpers.

LADY LIBERTY

Christ. Can't we get through one night without anyone getting hurt?

Liberty jogs back up the staircase. Behind him, he can hear Callahan growl and the Bar-Dweller wail in pain.

INT. THE POUND - MIRRORED HALLWAY - NIGHT

Malacoda and the Handmaiden help Lady Liberty up from the hatch staircase, handling her like a fragile princess.

LADY LIBERTY

Get the others ready. Malacoda may not be enough.

HANDMAIDEN

Yes, my lady.

LADY LIBERTY

I love your shoes by the way.

(beat)

But they're too nice for a cheap girl like you. They're mine now.

The Handmaiden nods. She begins to slip off her heels.

LADY LIBERTY

And didn't I tell you to get security, you lazy bitch?

The Handmaiden rushes off, her bare feet plopping through the grimy, stained floor.

INT. THE POUND - BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Lady Liberty enters a cheap strip club staple -- the back room for private dances. There are several booths, each concealed with cloth curtains.

The Fiddler's tune pours out of one of the booths. Liberty takes a deep breath as he approaches it.

INT. THE POUND - BACK ROOM - PRIVATE BOOTH - NIGHT

Lady Liberty peels back the curtain to find the Fiddler, seated on the singular chair. The Fiddler concentrates on his song, allowing his hair to fall in his face.

LADY LIBERTY
I take it you --

The Fiddler holds up a finger. Liberty shuts up. He should know better than to interrupt.

The Fiddler finishes the song. Once he does, Liberty claps.

LADY LIBERTY
Bravo. But you know, darling,
you'd never have to audition to
play here at the Pound.

The Fiddler doesn't bother to look up. Instead, he carefully lowers his fiddle into its case.

LADY LIBERTY
We can have a whole show for --

THE FIDDLER
I'm lookin' fer a boy. An' a fat
man.

LADY LIBERTY
A boy *and* a fat man. Why, you're
even kinkier than Azlon.

Not amused, the Fiddler's dark eyes glare up at Liberty.

THE FIDDLER
The boy's run away from the Black
Top. Azlon wants me to fetch 'im
back.

LADY LIBERTY
What's his name?

Silence from the Fiddler.

LADY LIBERTY
Well... how would you describe him?

THE FIDDLER

I ain't good with names or faces.
He's a boy. Teenager, I suppose.
Got the mark on 'is chest.

LADY LIBERTY

You can't expect me to keep track
of every horny boy who comes here.

The Fiddler stands and glares down at Liberty. He's nearly half a foot taller than the diminutive drag queen. Liberty realizes this, and smiles politely.

LADY LIBERTY

But... I'll look around. Why don't
you have a drink and wait --

The Fiddler locks Liberty in an arm bar and slams him up against the wall.

THE FIDDLER

I ain't good 'bout waiting neither.

LADY LIBERTY

I can't tell whether you're trying
to scare me, or turn me on.

The Fiddler grabs a fistful of Liberty's wig and rams his head against the wall. Again. And again. And again.

Around the third crack, Liberty's nose bursts with a bloody explosion. When the Fiddler finally lets go, Liberty collapses to the ground, leaving a red imprint on the wall.

A huddled mass on the floor, Liberty spits out a few loose teeth. He struggles to avoid choking on his own blood.

Liberty tries to lift his head, but the Fiddler pins it back down to the ground with his boot.

THE FIDDLER

Find. The. Boy.

Liberty whimpers, barely able to speak.

LADY LIBERTY

I... I think I have an idea...

INT. THE POUND - MALEBOLGE ROOM - FIGUEROA'S BOOTH - NIGHT

Figueroa watches two Service Girls writhe against each other next to him. He swigs back his fifth drink and grins.

FIGUEROA
Yo, can I get another green one?

INT. THE POUND - MIRRORED HALLWAY - NIGHT

With his fiddle case slung over his back, the Fiddler follows Lady Liberty down the mirrored hall.

Liberty's tense, nervous, but trying not to show it. He checks himself out in the mirror. His nose is broken, and bruises already form around his cheeks. The only thing he can do to help is adjust his wig and pretend to smile.

When Malacoda sees the state of Liberty's battered face, he steps up to confront the Fiddler.

LADY LIBERTY
Don't worry. He's a friend.

Malacoda glares at the Fiddler, unsure about that.

THE FIDDLER
Don't try to fight me, boy-o.
You'll ruin your pretty outfit.

Malacoda grits his teeth and tugs open the hatch.

INT. THE POUND - MALEBOLGE ROOM - NIGHT

Lady Liberty leads the Fiddler across the stone bridge. The Fiddler doesn't recognize a single Sinner in the place.

LADY LIBERTY
He mentioned the wand. I pleaded
with him to give it back to Azlon,
but he didn't listen.

THE FIDDLER
Where's this fat man now?

Liberty quickly locates Figueroa. He's at the last table in the room, with his back turned towards them.

LADY LIBERTY
There he is...

Liberty heads towards Figueroa's table. Out of the corner of his eye, he catches sight of something else -- the bolted door.

LADY LIBERTY
Right down that door.

Liberty comes to the door. He unlocks it and swings the door open. The Fiddler looks suspicious, but peeks inside.

When his back is turned, Liberty shoves him, with all the might his small frame can muster. It's enough to do the trick, as the Fiddler stumbles down the staircase.

Liberty hears the Fiddler tumble down the stairs like a sack of potatoes. And then -- a ferocious growl.

Racing against the clock, Liberty slams the door shut and double locks it. The deed done, he catches his breath.

As he does, Figueroa turns around and spots him.

FIGUEROA

Holy fuck, what happened to you?
You look like shit.

LADY LIBERTY

That's no way to talk to a lady,
Figgy. Especially one who's about
to make you a very rich man.

INT. THE POUND - MIRRORED HALLWAY - NIGHT

A worried Handmaiden stands with Malacoda and two others Bouncers. When the hatch cracks open and Lady Liberty crawls out with Figueroa, the Handmaiden rushes over to help.

HANDMAIDEN

My lady -- I'm so sorry...

The Handmaiden helps Liberty to his feet.

HANDMAIDEN

I couldn't find the guards right
away. They were attending to some
old man who went blue in the --

Liberty gives a swift slap to the Handmaiden's cheek.

LADY LIBERTY

You'll be punished later.

Liberty heads down the hallway, with Figueroa behind him. He pushes open a side door, which leads out into the alley.

The Handmaiden looks like she might cry.

EXT. THE POUND - BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Figueroa and Lady Liberty emerge from that side door and head towards Figueroa's old car. Figueroa pulls out his keys.

FIGUEROA

I want ten grand a month, and
assurance that Azlon doesn't come
after me.

LADY LIBERTY

Don't be scared of Azlon. I just
told one of his men off myself.

FIGUEROA

Yeah, your face looks like it. Can
you guarantee Azlon doesn't trace
this back to me?

LADY LIBERTY

My entire business is built on
keeping clients anonymous, darling.

Figueroa unlocks the trunk. The sight and smell of Barnaby's dead body hits him. His queasiness returns.

LADY LIBERTY

Oooh, I'll pay extra for that.
He's a handsome boy.

Liberty runs his hands over the tattoo on Barnaby's chest.

LADY LIBERTY

And look, he's even got "deli"
written on his chest. He's
destined for my meat room.

Figueroa covers his nose as he fishes through the bloody trunk. He stifles vomit. Finally, he finds the wand.

He hands the wand over to Liberty. He stares at it as though he's found the Holy Grail.

LADY LIBERTY

Oh, darling, I didn't really think
you had it in you.

FIGUEROA

(uncomfortable)
Yeah, me neither.

LADY LIBERTY

You have no idea how much I can do
with this. If it still works.

FIGUEROA

Give it a test run if you want.

Liberty jams the wand into the mark on Barnaby's chest. The wand steams, and purple fluid boils out. When the fluid pours down Barnaby's neck, the puncture marks start to heal.

Liberty's eyes go wide, amazed with the wand's power. He steps back to watch. Figueroa watches as well, although the toxic smell only makes him more nauseous.

Before long, Barnaby blinks. He takes a moment to collect his bearings. He looks around in a state of panic before his eyes settle on Liberty, who smiles down at him.

LADY LIBERTY

Don't be frightened, darling. I'm going to take care of you. For a long long time.

Sicker than ever, Figueroa rushes to the side of the building. He drops his keys, which spill to the ground.

He coughs violently and before long, he vomits. Twice. He wipes his mouth and wipes it on his pants.

LADY LIBERTY

(amused)

You're not cut out for this level of sin, Figgy.

Figueroa notices something. His vomit -- it's bright blue.

LADY LIBERTY

Best to leave it to us professionals.

FIGUEROA

What the fuck was in those drinks?!

Liberty merely snickers as he strokes Barnaby's hair.

FIGUEROA (V.O.)

I should have known better.

Figueroa looks back to Liberty. He focuses on the tattoos on Liberty's arms. "Land of the Free" and "Home of the Slave."

FIGUEROA (V.O.)

Tattoos tell a lot about a person.

Figueroa's eyes flutter. He collapses into his own vomit.

FADE OUT.

A black screen. A title card reads **ELENA**.

ELENA (V.O.)
I know nothing good lives in me,
that is, in my sinful nature. For
I have the desire to do what is
good, but I cannot carry it out.

EXT. CHURCH OF ST. NICHOLAS - DUSK

There are only a few cars parked in the lot next to the quiet little church on this evening.

ELENA (V.O.)
For what I do is not the good that
I want to do; no, the evil I do not
want to do... this I keep on doing.

EXT. ST. NICHOLAS - BASEMENT - DUSK

The church basement is plain, bare. It can serve a variety of event functions. Today, it's allowing Elena to sit on a small wooden chair and spill her guts.

ELENA
Now if I do what I do not want to
do, it is no longer I who do it...
but it is the sin living in me.

FATHER JOHN, 50s, nods solemnly. He's bald, compact. He dresses fairly casually, although the square white collar on his shirt signifies he is indeed a Catholic priest.

FATHER JOHN
Romans. That's a good book for
what you're all going through.

Father John looks around the room, where three other ADDICTS sit with Elena and Father John in a circle. Their faces look tired, exhausted. Some hold onto tissues.

FATHER JOHN
We've done a lot of good work
today. Why don't we stop for now
and pick up here next week.

The other Addicts clear out quickly. Elena stares blankly, teary eyed, frozen on her chair. She's in her own head.

EXT. CHURCH OF ST. NICHOLAS - DUSK

Two of the Addicts drive away in their cars, while the third stays outside and talks with Father John.

Elena walks towards her car, a cherry-red sports car parked at the end of the lot. She digs into her handbag to get the keys. When she looks up, she notices that there's someone sitting on her car's hood. She walks towards him, slowly.

Her curiosity turns to fear when she sees that it's Callahan, the man whom Lady Liberty fed earlier. He's got a shaved head with assorted scars. He's not the type of guy you want to see in a dark alley, let alone camped on your car.

CALLAHAN

Elena Marsdale. Classy name.

Elena stops several feet away. Callahan leaps off the hood and approaches her instead.

CALLAHAN

Not sure it fits.

Elena looks around for help, making eye contact with Father John. Father John says a few final words to the lingering Addict and heads over in her direction.

In the meantime, Callahan circles around her.

CALLAHAN

Little tip: When you skip town and change your name, you ought to think about getting a new car too.

ELENA

I've changed everything else. I'm a different person.

CALLAHAN

What a shame. I liked the old version better.

Father John approaches the pair, with a friendly smile.

FATHER JOHN

A friend of yours, Elena?

ELENA

An old friend.

Callahan produces an obnoxiously fake grin to Father John.

CALLAHAN

Nice to meet ya, Padre. I just came to say how proud I am of our little Elena for turning her life around.

FATHER JOHN

She's an inspiration to us all.

Father John produces a slip of paper with his number on it, and hands it to Elena.

FATHER JOHN

But if you ever have a problem, Elena, please call. Any time.

Elena smiles as she takes the slip of paper. After she gives him a nod, he feels comfortable leaving her with Callahan.

Callahan watches Father John return to the church.

CALLAHAN

Padre smells like he eats a lot of salt. Could be tasty.

ELENA

He can help you. There's no cure for our curse, but we can hold it back with will power and God's grace.

CALLAHAN

How's that working out for you?

ELENA

I haven't sinned in months.

CALLAHAN

You must be bored sick.

Callahan grins. Elena shakes her head, not quite ready to give up on him yet.

ELENA

John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

CALLAHAN

If you stripped away all your unrighteousness, there'd be nothing left, "Elena."

Callahan looms over her, but Elena doesn't back down an inch.

ELENA

Come to a meeting. Please. We can
save you.

CALLAHAN

I'll make you a deal. I'll meet
your friends. But first, you have
to meet mine.

INT. THE POUND - MAIN STAGE ROOM - DUSK

The Heavysset Strippers of the Pound dance for a handful of
Pathetic Patrons.

INT. THE POUND - MAIN STAGE ROOM - BOOTH - DUSK

Callahan and Elena sit in a booth. They've been served water
but nothing else. Elena watches with disgust as the Patrons
hoot and holler at the Strippers.

INT. THE POUND - MAIN STAGE ROOM - DUSK

The Handmaiden escorts Lady Liberty into the main stage room,
and motions towards Callahan's booth.

Liberty's eyes run over Callahan, and this stranger with him.
It's not a nice surprise.

INT. THE POUND - MAIN STAGE ROOM - BOOTH - DUSK

Lady Liberty saunters over to the booth and offers a smile
and a cheek kiss hello to Callahan.

LADY LIBERTY

Sorry you had to wait so long,
darling. My bitch of a handmaiden
is awful at keeping me organized.

Liberty pulls a chair to the end of the booth. He crosses
his legs, very ladylike.

LADY LIBERTY

I swear, pretty girls don't get
slapped around nearly enough to
learn any discipline.

Liberty feigns a smile at Elena. Elena returns the same.

LADY LIBERTY
Speaking of pretty girls, who's
this young-ish lady?

CALLAHAN
Elena. You can trust her.

LADY LIBERTY
Whatever you say, darling. Can I
get you two anything to drink?

ELENA
I'm fine with water.

LADY LIBERTY
(to Callahan)
Fun girl.

Elena glares daggers at Liberty. Callahan senses the tension
between them and turns to Elena.

CALLAHAN
See, this place specializes in sin.

ELENA
I can tell.

LADY LIBERTY
Sins of the flesh. I named it the
Pound for three reasons. For the
voluptuous dancers. For the men
who pay to pound them... does
Callahan pound hard, pretty Elena?

ELENA
I wouldn't know.

LADY LIBERTY
You could probably find out if you
ordered something besides water.
Or changed your hair.

Elena looks to Callahan. She wants to leave. Now.

CALLAHAN
Show her the basement.

LADY LIBERTY
Cutting to the chase. Maybe you're
not that good in bed, after all.

INT. THE POUND - MEAT ROOM - DUSK

Lady Liberty leads Callahan and Elena down the steep wooden staircase and deeper into the darkened basement.

LADY LIBERTY
This is the most important reason I
named it the Pound. I keep these
strays in my meat room.

ELENA
Strays?

LADY LIBERTY
Homeless people, runaways.

CALLAHAN
People who won't be missed.

Liberty clicks on the lights. When they flicker on, Elena is confronted with the walls of Prisoners. The Brunette that Callahan ate the night before is gone, but the Bar-Dweller, looking miserable, has taken her place.

Elena looks around the room, both horrified and excited at the same time. She glances at Play-Thing, who hisses at her.

Elena's uncomfortable. She fidgets and starts to sweat.

ELENA
And you sell them?

LADY LIBERTY
Or rent them. For sex, for
strangulation, for --

CALLAHAN
Dessert.

Elena's lips begin to twitch.

LADY LIBERTY
The only sinners I won't tolerate
are people who bounce the check.

Callahan's going through the same procedure, only he's not fighting it. He points at the Bar-Dweller.

CALLAHAN
I'll eat that one tonight. Elena,
which one do you want?

As Elena looks over the tempting faces of the ragged Prisoners, her jaws lower, drooling with hunger. Hints of fangs begin to poke through her gums.

Then, she makes eye contact with a Teenage Girl. The poor thing looks so innocent. Elena shakes her head, trying to rid herself of the thoughts.

ELENA

None of them.

Elena starts back up the stairs, but Callahan grabs her wrist. She glares back at him, her lips snarling.

CALLAHAN

You know you want to.

LADY LIBERTY

(grinning)

This is how fights start. Or date rapes. Either way, it'll certainly spice up my evening.

Elena rips her wrist out of Callahan's grasp. She turns her glare on Liberty now.

ELENA

"Put to death, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immortality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming."

LADY LIBERTY

Oh, God, not a Bible thumper. The worst kind of scum.

Elena rushes back up the stairs. Liberty calls after her.

LADY LIBERTY

"Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only those who are good and consideration, but also those who are harsh."

Liberty has to shout, as Elena's out the door.

LADY LIBERTY

It's in the Bible, bitch!

Liberty turns to Callahan, miffed.

LADY LIBERTY
I told you I hate pretty girls.
Especially prude ones.

CALLAHAN
When she gets hungry, she makes me
look like a pussycat.

Callahan trots up the stairs, glancing back to Liberty.

CALLAHAN
I'm gonna come back later tonight.
Save me that stray.

LADY LIBERTY
Looking forward to it, darling.

EXT. THE POUND - DUSK

Callahan chases after Elena, who's half a block ahead of him.
She doesn't look well. Sweaty, aggravated. Twitching.

CALLAHAN
Hey, come on... it'll be fun.

Elena spins back to him.

ELENA
I'm not like you.

CALLAHAN
You're worse.

Elena storms towards her parked car. Callahan follows her.

ELENA
I'm different now.

CALLAHAN
You keep saying that, but I don't
see it. No way your little
boyfriend believes it either.

ELENA
He's clueless about my past. He's
harmless, too.

CALLAHAN
Sounds like a winner.

Elena opens her car door and glances back to Callahan.

ELENA
Harmless is good. Harmless is what
I need in my life.

CALLAHAN
I'll show you what you really need
in your life.

Callahan digs into his pockets and pulls out a jewelry box.

CALLAHAN
A present. For old time's sake.

Elena doesn't take it, so Callahan tosses the box into her car. It lands on the passenger seat.

ELENA
Goodbye. For good.

CALLAHAN
Yeah, right. Seeya tonight.

INT. ELENA'S SPORTS CAR - DUSK

Elena drives down the street, focusing on the road. For the most part. Once or twice, she peeks over to the jewelry box on the passenger seat. It's still unopened. For now.

INT. OASIS APARTMENTS - 8TH FLOOR HALLWAY - DUSK

Elena walks down the dingy hallway of her apartment. Before she unlocks her apartment door, she digs into her handbag and pulls out the small jewelry box.

She opens the hallway trash chute. She gets set to toss the box away, but decides to take a quick peek inside first. She finds no necklace, no ring -- just a bloody, severed finger.

She reacts to the finger like a fat girl on a diet would to a bon bon. It calls to her, but angers her at the same time.

Furious, Elena slams the box down the garbage chute.

INT. OASIS APARTMENTS - APARTMENT 8M - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Elena lies on the bed, reading the Bible. Trying to focus. She's flustered though. She holds her head as if she's suffering from a major migraine.

There's a loud bang from the living room that doesn't help.

ELENA
Is that you, Jayce?

INT. OASIS APARTMENTS - APARTMENT 8M - NIGHT

Elena pops out of the bedroom and finds Jayce, dirty and stripped to his underwear. She gives a strained smile.

ELENA
I didn't hear you come in.

JAYCE
I didn't want to wake you, angel.

ELENA
Where have you been?

JAYCE
I went out. To do some recycling.

ELENA
Aww, aren't you a good Samaritan.

Elena gives Jayce a modest peck on the lips. She wraps her arms around him for a hug and rests her chin on his shoulder. She takes a sniff of his skin, savoring the smell.

ELENA
"Let your light shine before men."

JAYCE
Excuse me?

ELENA
"That they may see your good deeds
and praise your Father in heaven."
Matthew 5:16.

A set of fangs start to poke through her gums. Her tongue, several inches longer than it should be, slithers near his neck. Fortunately, Jayce can't see from his angle.

JAYCE
Oh, right. Of course. I was
thinking the exact same thing.

ELENA
I'm gonna get ready for bed.

She forces herself to pull her jaws away from his neck.

ELENA
I'm not feeling that well.

From the pain in her eyes, it's obvious that she means it.

INT. OASIS APARTMENTS - APARTMENT 8M - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Elena, in pajama pants and a tank top, sleeps in the bed with Jayce until she's woken up by a telephone ring.

Every sound is magnified for her. She sits up, pained by the blaring phone, and turns to Jayce, who reads the Bible.

ELENA

Want me to get it?

JAYCE

Could you? This is my absolute favorite chapter.

Elena feigns a smile and reaches to answer the phone.

CALLAHAN (O.S.)

I know how the cravings work, Elena. I've been there. You can resist at first, but it's gonna get worse and worse. Soon you'll bite your boyfriend's head clean off.

Her smile fades. She looks over to Jayce, who sits up. She stares at Jayce's neck, his flesh. It's tempting.

CALLAHAN (O.S.)

When that happens, you can't keep pretending to be the good girl. People will find out who you really are. The only way to stop that is to snack on someone else. Someone no one knows. Come to the Pound, right now. It's feeding time.

She hangs up. She can't wipe the worry from her face.

JAYCE

Everything all right?

ELENA

One of the kids from the center got in trouble. I'm going to go help.

JAYCE

Do you ever stop being so magnificent? You're straight on your way to sainthood, baby.

Elena slips out of bed and rushes to her closet in order to change. Her hands tremble as she peels off her tank top.

JAYCE (O.S.)
Honey? I'm going to head out as
well. I might visit my
grandmother's grave.

Elena presses her hands to her head, fighting her headache.

INT. THE POUND - MEAT ROOM - NIGHT

Callahan growls as he throws the battered Bar-Dweller against the wall. He locks his fangs on the man's ear and tears it to shreds. Blood pours down Callahan's chin as he feeds.

EXT. THE POUND - NIGHT

The Harajuku-inspired Youth stand outside the Pound, puffing on their cigarettes.

Half a block away, Elena watches, wearing a bulky coat. She's too scared to actually enter again, but she's too tempted to go back home.

INT. THE POUND - MALEBOLGE ROOM - NIGHT

Lady Liberty, battered himself, leads the Fiddler to the double-locked down at the end of the bridge.

LADY LIBERTY
Right down that door.

Liberty unlocks the door and swings it open. The Fiddler looks suspicious, but peeks inside.

When his back is turned, Liberty shoves him, with all the might his small frame can muster.

INT. THE POUND - MEAT ROOM - NIGHT

Callahan squats over the dead body of the Bar-Dweller, chomping on his flesh.

He turns when the door opens. The Fiddler crashes down the staircase, sending his fiddle case sliding.

Callahan turns towards the Fiddler and unleashes a growl.

EXT. THE POUND - NIGHT

Elena stands outside the Pound, only a few feet away from the Bouncers now. The closer she gets, the more uncomfortable she becomes.

She breathes heavily. She twitches. She fidgets. She escapes into the back alley.

EXT. THE POUND - BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Elena leans against the wall, trying to catch her breath.

FIGUEROA (O.S.)
What the fuck was in those drinks?!

Elena looks down the alleyway, and sees the source of the voice -- Figueroa. He yells at Lady Liberty, who hovers over a car trunk.

But soon, Figueroa collapses into his own vomit.

EXT. THE POUND - BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Lady Liberty looms over Barnaby, who looks frightened. Liberty strokes his hair, trying to comfort him.

LADY LIBERTY
That bad man tried to kill you,
sweetie. But mama's gonna make it
all better.

EXT. THE POUND - BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Elena lays low, but continues to watch. She sees Lady Liberty help a young man, Barnaby, out of the trunk. Liberty escorts him to the back entrance, a steel door.

Elena studies Barnaby. He looks so innocent. Such a sweet face. Seeing him helps her snap out of her trance.

EXT. THE POUND - BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

By the time Elena hurries over, Liberty and Barnaby are gone.

Elena rushes over to Figueroa and checks his pulse. She gently slaps his cheek to revive him.

ELENA
Sir, sir, wake up...

Elena looks towards the steel back door, slammed shut.

ELENA

We need to help that boy. They're
going to do horrible things to him
if we don't.

With Figueroa still unresponsive, Elena heads to the steel door and tries to pry it open. It won't budge.

INT. THE POUND - MIRRORED HALLWAY - NIGHT

Lady Liberty escorts Barnaby down the mirrored hall, towards Malacoda.

BARNABY

Do you think you can help me?

LADY LIBERTY

I know I can help you.

Liberty makes subtle eye contact with Malacoda, who approaches Barnaby from the side. Barnaby barely notices.

LADY LIBERTY

First things first. We'll get you
a room for the night.

Without warning, Malacoda slides his steel chain belt off and wraps it around Barnaby's neck.

Barnaby kicks and struggles at first, but there's little he can do when Malacoda lifts him off his feet with sheer strength. Barnaby gasps for air, his face turning red.

LADY LIBERTY

Lucky for you, I just so happen to
have a new vacancy in my meat room.

INT. THE POUND - MEAT ROOM - NIGHT

Lady Liberty opens the bulky door and takes ginger steps down the steep staircase. In one hand, he has Azlon's wand. In the other, he drags a steel chain behind him, which runs around Barnaby's neck as if it was a dog's leash.

There's tape over Barnaby's mouth. His wrists are bound with triple knotted rope. He follows without a fight.

LADY LIBERTY

Callahan? Are you done, darling?

The basement's dark, as usual. Both Liberty and Barnaby are cautious as they step down to the end of the staircase.

LADY LIBERTY

I hope you enjoyed your second
course. Use the fiddle as floss.

Liberty comes to the end of the staircase and flicks on the lights. Only, they don't come on. The room stays dark.

Liberty searches around in the limited light. The glass cages are shattered. Play-Thing is nowhere in sight.

LADY LIBERTY

Darling? Did you eat my Play-
Thing? I asked you not to.

Liberty gets closer to confirm that Play-Thing has vanished. He turns for the exit, but runs into someone -- Play-Thing. She's out of her cage and ornery.

LADY LIBERTY

Help!! We need hel--

Play-Thing attacks like a wild dog. She jumps on Liberty and digs her long ungroomed fingernails deep into Liberty's flesh, tearing what she can. Liberty wails in pain.

Liberty drops Barnaby's chain and the wand. Barnaby quickly snatches up the wand and scampers towards the staircase.

Play-Thing leaves Liberty on the ground and chases after him.

PLAY-THING

Staaayy....

After years of abuse, Play-Thing's voice is so scratchy that it sounds like she's been gargling razor blades.

When Barnaby gets to the top of the stairs, Play-Thing grabs a hold of his shirt and spins him around.

PLAY-THING

Staaaaaayyy...

Scared stiff, Barnaby looks back and makes eye contact with her demented, bloodshot eyes.

He shoves her off of him, which causes her to stumble down the staircase. Her neck cracks and she falls down, dead. Barnaby takes the opportunity to escape.

INT. THE POUND - MALEBOLGE ROOM - NIGHT

Barnaby bursts out of the double-locked door and races across the stone bridge, weaving between Service Girls.

He passes the Handmaiden, who watches with concern. Rather than chase after him, she rushes for the double-locked door.

HANDMAIDEN

My lady! Have you been harmed?

INT. THE POUND - MIRRORED HALLWAY - NIGHT

Barnaby climbs out of the hatch. For some reason, Malacoda's on the ground, being tended to by the two other Bouncers.

Barnaby rushes past them. The two Bouncers chase after him.

EXT. THE POUND - BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Barnaby pushes open the steel door and emerges in the back alley. His hands are still tied, his mouth taped. The steel chain around his neck drags behind him.

Elena, tending to Figueroa, sees Barnaby race past her.

ELENA

Wait! Let me help you!

Barnaby's not interested in any more help this evening, but Elena catches up nonetheless. She rips the tape off his lips. He cringes as some skin peels off in the process.

BARNABY

They're coming.

ELENA

Who?

The two Bouncers kick open the steel door. They have their steel chain belts in their hands, ready to act as whips.

Barnaby looks for an escape. He spots Figueroa's unconscious body, and his car keys resting in the puddle of blue vomit.

Barnaby rushes to scoop up the keys and then turns towards Figueroa's car. The Bouncers head after him.

Elena steps in front of them, hoping to block their path.

ELENA

Don't you dare --

Bouncer 1 whips his steel chain at Elena, slashing her across the face. She topples to the ground.

Barnaby runs for Figueroa's car. The Bouncers chase him.

EXT. FIGUEROA'S CAR - NIGHT

Barnaby manages to open the front door of Figueroa's car, but before he can jump in, Bouncer 2 grabs hold of the chain dragging behind him.

Bouncer 2 jerks on the chain, causing Barnaby to snap back onto the ground.

Barnaby writhes on the alley ground, gasping for breath.

Bouncer 1 converges on him and delivers a football-style punt with his boot, right into Barnaby's chin. Barnaby's head snaps back and he collapses again.

EXT. THE POUND - BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Elena pulls herself off the ground and rushes over. Rather than help Barnaby, she picks up the car keys. She hops into Figueroa's car and quickly revs up the ignition.

The Bouncers continue to beat Barnaby. Bouncer 2 whips his steel chain across Barnaby's back, leaving imprints of blood.

Elena manages to turn the car around, slamming right into Bouncer 2 and sending him flying.

She kicks open the passenger side door and looks out to Barnaby, urging him in.

ELENA
Hurry up, get in!

Barnaby crawls off the ground and dives into the open car.

INT. FIGUEROA'S CAR - NIGHT

Barnaby slams the door shut. From the window, he can see Bouncer 1 approach. Bouncer 1 slams an elbow at the side window, shattering it.

In the driver's seat, Elena accelerates the car to get away.

Bouncer 1 grabs a hold of the chain around Barnaby's neck, which nearly chokes him as Elena speeds up.

The speed of the car manages to snap the chain in two, although it leaves a brutal ring of scarred flesh around Barnaby's neck.

EXT. THE POUND - BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

The car zooms off, smashing into trash cans as it goes. Left behind, all the Bouncers can do is watch.

INT. FIGUEROA'S CAR - NIGHT

Elena keeps crashing into garbage cans and dumpsters as she drives through the alley and pulls onto a side road.

Barnaby tries to catch his breath. He rubs the mangled skin around his neck.

ELENA
Are you all right?

BARNABY
Yeah. Although with your driving,
I might be safer back there.

The tension breaker causes Elena to laugh. Even Barnaby manages to smile.

He looks over Elena, noticing that the slash across her forehead is bleeding badly.

BARNABY
We need to get you to a doctor.

ELENA
I don't like hospitals. Seeing
other peoples' blood, their limbs,
bones makes me... uncomfortable.

Barnaby feels his back, which bleeds profusely.

ELENA
You need to get patched up though.
I have a first-aid kit at home.

BARNABY
You don't have to do that.

ELENA
Of course I do. Matthew 10:8 --
"Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers,
raise the dead, cast out demons..."

BARNABY

"Freely you have received, freely give."

Elena and Barnaby share a smile.

INT. OASIS APARTMENTS - APARTMENT 8M - NIGHT

Elena stands by her kitchen sink, soaking a cloth in water. Next to her on the counter is a bottle of alcohol.

Barnaby waits nearby. The ropes around his wrists have been removed now. He examines her apartment, taking note of the Jesus statue on the wall.

ELENA

Sorry the place is a mess. I was going to clean it tomorrow.

BARNABY

Oh no, it's nice. Nicer than where I was staying.

Elena uses the cloth to clean the dirt from Barnaby's neck.

ELENA

Are you moving to Mortecita?

BARNABY

I'm not sure. You know, it sounds stupid, but, I didn't even think that far ahead.

ELENA

That's not stupid. I didn't move here as much as much as I moved away from somewhere else. Sometimes you need a change.

Elena dips the other side of the cloth in the alcohol.

ELENA

Now this might hurt a little.

BARNABY

I'm getting used to that.

She dabs the alcohol around his neck. He winces a little, but allows her to continue.

BARNABY

I didn't get the chance to thank you. For everything.

ELENA

It's the Lord's will. I was lucky to find you. Who knows what I'd have been up to otherwise.

Elena smiles and continues to clean Barnaby's neck. She notices the blood from his back soak through his shirt.

ELENA

Do you mind taking off your shirt?

Barnaby looks uncomfortable with the idea. He freezes.

ELENA

So I can clean your back. Relax. I have a boyfriend.

Barnaby gives an "of course" nod. Silly him.

BARNABY

I do too. A girlfriend, I mean. I'm supposed to see her tonight.

He digs into his pocket and fishes out the stencil paper that Figueroa had given him earlier.

BARNABY

Speaking of, do you know where this address is?

Elena looks over the stencil paper.

ELENA

Yeah, that's the cemetery in Riversfield. My boyfriend's grandmother was just buried there.

BARNABY

I heard they don't use it anymore.

ELENA

According to him, they do. She passed away a few months ago. He's terribly broken up about it still.

Barnaby puts the stencil paper back in his pocket. He turns around and peels off his shirt so Elena can look at his back.

The slash marks in his back are brutal, bloody messes. Now it's Elena's turn to freeze. Those wounds, that ripped flesh, it looks awfully inviting. For her, they might as well be grill marks on a hamburger.

BARNABY

I can understand that. It's hard
to let go of someone you love.

Elena doesn't respond. She rubs the cloth along Barnaby's back, hypnotized by it. Her lip twitches.

BARNABY

I bet it helps him to have you
around. You're such a good person.

She clenches her eyes closed, hoping to block out the sight. But when she opens them again, her eyes have turned yellow.

BARNABY

I'll be honest. I was beginning to
doubt the goodness of people.
Until I met you.

With his back turned towards her, Barnaby has no idea of Elena's transformation.

BARNABY

You helped me, risked your life for
me, and you didn't even know my
name. It's Barnaby, by the way.

Barnaby extends his hand over his shoulder, hoping to shake Elena's hand in a more formal introduction.

Elena's jaws, now filled with sets of fangs, snap down on Barnaby's hand. In one bite, she rips three of his fingers off, bones and all.

Barnaby wails as his hand bursts with blood. He turns back to Elena. The monstrous version of Elena. She snarls.

So much for that friendship. Nursing his hand, Barnaby books it for the door. Elena catches him with her claw-like hands and flings him against the wall with superhuman strength.

Barnaby smashes against the wall, sending a tremor that causes the Jesus statue to crash onto the floor.

Barnaby's used to some punishment by now, so he manages to pick himself up and run out the door.

EXT. OASIS APARTMENTS - 8TH FLOOR HALLWAY - DUSK

Barnaby slams the door behind him. Elena bursts through it, splintering it to shreds with her claws.

Barnaby bolts down the hallway, not daring to look back. Elena staggers towards him, but, for some reason, slows down.

She appears to be containing her urges, or at least fighting against them. She stumbles and falls to her knees. She holds her hands to her head, fighting this awful headache.

She's in a weird in-between state now. Her lips still snarl and twitch, but her eyes are human, and filled with tears.

EXT. STREETS OF MORTECITA - NIGHT

Figueroa's car is back on the road again, this time with Barnaby behind the wheel.

INT. FIGUEROA'S CAR - NIGHT

Still shirtless, Barnaby breathes heavily as he drives. He digs into his pocket to pull out the stencil paper with the address of Delilah's grave site.

He tosses it onto the passenger seat, next to Azlon's wand.

INT. CHURCH OF ST. NICHOLAS - NIGHT

Even at this late hour, the stained glass windows catch some light, which creates a blue tint over the entire church.

Father John enters, peeling off his jacket.

FATHER JOHN

You did the right thing to call,
Elena. This is what I'm here for.
To help fight the cravings.

He walks down the aisle and sees Elena at the pews, her head buried in her hands. She snuffles. She's been crying.

FATHER JOHN

We'll be able to work through this.

Father John takes a hold of her hand. He doesn't notice how bony it's become.

ELENA

No, we won't.

Elena looks up to him. Her eyes are bright yellow. Demonic. Her jaw hangs low, revealing the many fangs in her mouth.

Father John blinks. This is a new one. Exorcisms are not his forte, so he has no idea what to say. He's terrified.

ELENA
Forgive me, Father.

Elena squeezes Father John's hand, crushing it. Her claws burst through his palm.

Blood splatters on the church floor.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The yellow-eyed, monstrous version of Elena staggers towards the burial grounds.

ELENA
Baaarrrrnaby...

She comes upon an unconscious body, Desmond the night guard. His face has been beaten to a pulp.

ELENA (V.O.)
I know nothing good lives in me.

It's curious, but Elena's not going to look a gift horse in the mouth. She kneels down and smells the sweet flesh.

She sinks her teeth into his arm and rips at it, like a hyena picking apart a dead carcass.

ELENA (V.O.)
That is, in my sinful nature.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - EAST HILL - NIGHT

Elena stalks around the graveyard. Blood and chunks of flesh spill down her chin.

ELENA
Baaarrrrnaby... Baaarrrrnaby...

She keeps searching around, but the place seems empty.

ELENA (V.O.)
For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

Her nostrils flare. She's onto a scent. Dessert's coming.

FADE OUT.

A black screen. A title card reads **THE FIDDLER.**

THE FIDDLER
As far as hobbies go, I'd stack
mine up against any.

INT. THE POUND - BACK ROOM - PRIVATE BOOTH - NIGHT

The Fiddler sits on a chair in a private booth, facing a curtain. He plays his fiddle, the same haunting tune.

THE FIDDLER (V.O.)
Folks need hobbies. As means of
keeping voices outta their heads.

He keeps his head down, in complete focus.

THE FIDDLER (V.O.)
Some folks can get by with
somethin' easy. Stamp collecting.
Building model railways. For me,
only two things work to keep the
voices out: Playin' me fiddle.

Lady Liberty peels back the curtain.

THE FIDDLER (V.O.)
And fightin'.

INT. THE POUND - BACK ROOM - PRIVATE BOOTH - NIGHT

The Fiddler grabs a fistful of Liberty's wig and rams his head against the wall. Again. And again. And again.

Around the third crack, Liberty's nose bursts with a bloody explosion. When the Fiddler finally lets go, Liberty collapses to the ground, leaving a red imprint on the wall.

A huddled mass on the floor, Liberty spits out a few loose teeth. He struggles to avoid choking on his own blood.

Liberty tries to lift his head, but the Fiddler pins it back down to the ground with his boot.

THE FIDDLER
Find. The. Boy.

Liberty whimpers, barely able to speak.

LADY LIBERTY
I... I think I have an idea...

INT. THE POUND - MALEBOLGE ROOM - NIGHT

With his fiddle case slung over his back, the Fiddler follows Lady Liberty across the stone bridge.

LADY LIBERTY
He mentioned the wand. I pleaded
with him to give it back to Azlon,
but he didn't listen.

THE FIDDLER
Where's this fat man now?

LADY LIBERTY
There he is. Right down that door.

Liberty opens the double-bolted door at the end of the bridge. The Fiddler looks suspicious, but peeks inside.

When his back is turned, Liberty shoves him, with all the might his small frame can muster. It's enough to do the trick, as the Fiddler stumbles down the staircase.

INT. THE POUND - MEAT ROOM - NIGHT

The Fiddler crashes down the steep wooden staircase. His fiddle case slides off his back and spills onto the floor.

After the hard landing, the Fiddler looks around at all the poor Prisoners trapped in their glass cages. Then he catches sight of Callahan on the other side of the room.

Callahan squats over the dead body of the Bar-Dweller. Chunks of flesh drip of his fanged mouth. His eyes shine bright yellow. His jaw hangs low. He's become a full monster now.

Callahan turns towards the Fiddler and unleashes a fierce growl. The Fiddler looks to Callahan and then to his fiddle case. He scrambles for the case.

He can't make it in time before Callahan springs into the air and latches onto him with his sharp claws. Callahan throws him to the other side of the room like a rag doll.

Before the Fiddler can get up, Callahan bounds towards him and leaps onto his back. Callahan digs his claws deep into the Fiddler's sides.

The Fiddler staggers around with Callahan's heavy weight on him. Like a bucking bronco, he throws Callahan off. Callahan flies into the wall, shattering some of the Prisoners' glass cases.

The Fiddler makes a break for his fiddle case. He nearly makes it before Callahan leaps back at him and grabs hold of his leg. He tugs the Fiddler towards his snapping jaws. The Fiddler's outstretched hand can almost reach the case.

Callahan's jaws inch closer to him. A forked tongue grows and coils around the Fiddler's foot. With his free leg, the Fiddler delivers a kick -- to Play-Thing's glass case.

The case cracks. After two more kicks, the glass shatters completely. Play-Thing leaps out, finally free. She jumps on Callahan and bites his ear. Callahan turns his attention to Play-Thing, ripping her to the ground.

Just before Callahan takes a bite out of her flesh, the Fiddler reaches for his bow, clicks it into a jagged blade, and slams it deep into Callahan's brain. He twists it around. When he pulls it out, Callahan slumps down, dead.

The Fiddler looks at Play-Thing, who hisses at him.

THE FIDDLER

I ain't supposed to kill ya. So
keep yer distance and I won't.

Play-Thing keeps her distance. The other freed Prisoners, including the Raggedy Homeless Man, stay back as well.

INT. THE POUND - MALEBOLGE ROOM - NIGHT

Lady Liberty pulls Barnaby along the stone bridge by the steel chain on his neck. His mouth is taped, and his wrists have been bound.

LADY LIBERTY

I think you'll going to be very
popular here, darling.

Liberty starts to open the double-bolted door.

INT. THE POUND - MEAT ROOM - NIGHT

The Fiddler has had time to catch his breath. He cleans the blood and brains off his fiddle bow.

Play-Thing picks at Callahan's flesh, eating the choice bits. The other freed Prisoners stir uneasily.

Everyone turns towards the door when they hear it start to unlock. The Fiddler smashes the light, leaving the room pitch black.

The Fiddler races up the staircase, and hides behind the door as it swings open. Lady Liberty and Barnaby enter.

LADY LIBERTY
Callahan? Are you done, darling?

Liberty and Barnaby descend the staircase, not noticing the Fiddler hiding in all the darkness.

LADY LIBERTY
I hope you enjoyed your second
course. Use the fiddle as floss.

The Fiddler slips out the door. He leaves Liberty for the Play-Thing and the other Prisoners to enjoy.

INT. THE POUND - MALEBOLGE ROOM - NIGHT

With his case on his back and his bow in hand, Fiddler limps across the stone bridge. Specks of blood trail behind him.

The Service Girls and Boys don't try to stop him, and when one accidentally gets in his way, the Fiddler shoves him down into a sunken booth below.

INT. THE POUND - MIRRORED HALLWAY - NIGHT

The Handmaiden confers with two Bouncers.

At the other end of the hall, Malacoda guards the hatch. He hears rumbling from beneath it. The hatch pops open, and the Fiddler starts to climb out.

The Fiddler looks to Malacoda, and to the two Bouncers down the hall. Each of them slides their steel chain belts off.

Malacoda attacks first, slashing the Fiddler as he climbs out of the hatch. Malacoda strikes again, but this time the Fiddler catches the chain and uses it to tug Malacoda closer. The Fiddler jams his jagged bow deep into Malacoda's stomach. He guts the poor bastard like a fish.

Malacoda collapses to the floor in a bloody heap, his intestines spilling out of his stomach.

The Fiddler glares over to the other two Bouncers. They hold up their hands, essentially waving the white flag. The Fiddler simply walks past them without incident.

Once the Fiddler is out of sight, the Bouncers tend to the fallen Malacoda. The Handmaiden rushes to the hatch.

HANDMAIDEN
My lady! I'm coming!

INT. THE POUND - MALEBOLGE ROOM - NIGHT

The Handmaiden rushes down the stone bridge towards the double-locked door. Still barefoot with now disgusting feet, she nearly trips on a pool of spilled alcohol.

Barnaby, with a gag and handcuffs, rushes past her, escaping. Rather than chase him, she hurries to the end of the bridge and the double-locked door, which is open.

HANDMAIDEN
My lady! Have you been harmed?

INT. THE POUND - MEAT ROOM - NIGHT

Play-Thing's laid out on the floor, dead, but the other freed Prisoners have their fun with Lady Liberty.

The Prisoners thrash at her violently. Liberty's more black and blue than ever, with his wig ripped to shreds.

LADY LIBERTY
Help me!! Help me, you cunt!!

The Raggedy Homeless Man bites Liberty's nose, tearing it half off. Liberty wails in pain.

INT. THE POUND - MALEBOLGE ROOM - NIGHT

With the light pouring in, the Handmaiden can see the gruesome details and hear every scream.

As she watches, her concern fades into a slight hint of amusement. She shuts the door and double locks it.

EXT. STREETS OF MORTECITA - NIGHT

The Fiddler pushes past the Harajuku-inspired Youth on the streets without a second glance. No one dares to respond.

The Fiddler fails to notice the various cars zooming down the streets. One of those cars is Figueroa's, with Elena at the wheel, driving Barnaby away from the Pound.

INT. BLACK TOP - DINING CAR - NIGHT

The mood is somber and silent in the dining car. Azlon sits alone, with a large bottle of absinthe in front of him. There's also a plate of pomegranates, but they're untouched.

The Fiddler enters. Azlon looks up, waiting for the verdict. The Fiddler slumps down at his table.

THE FIDDLER

I ain't found your boy. Yet.

Azlon pours himself a generous shot of absinthe.

THE FIDDLER

He ain't at the tattoo parlor. Or the Pound. Dunno where he went.

AZLON

There's only one other place our boy could be. The grave of his beloved Delilah.

THE FIDDLER

You known all along where 'is girl's buried at?

AZLON

You ask as if to doubt me. There is little in this life that I do not know.

Azlon downs the shot of absinthe.

AZLON

Your performance is not yet complete. And neither of our nights is over yet.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Desmond, with a chunk of chew under his bottom lip, sits on his ass and gazes out at the sky. He couldn't be more bored.

He hears a rumbling engine sound, coming near. He climbs to his feet to check it out. He spits out his tobacco.

It's Figueroa's car, with a shirtless Barnaby behind the wheel. Barnaby speeds, swerving out of control.

INT. FIGUEROA'S CAR - NIGHT

Barnaby applies the breaks. The car screeches and slows, but ends up smashing headfirst into a pole.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Smoke pours out of the hood of Figueroa's car. Barnaby cracks open the door and spills out onto the parking lot.

Barnaby's a bloody mess, although most of that damage was done before. His back still has slash mark scars, and his hand, missing three fingers, still drips blood.

Desmond rushes over to help Barnaby to his feet.

DESMOND

Holy shit, are you all right?

BARNABY

Yeah. Been through worse.

DESMOND

You realize you ain't got a shirt, right?

BARNABY

I don't need one.

DESMOND

Ahh another one of those. Popular thing these days, corpse cunt.

BARNABY

(repulsed)

That's not why I'm here.

DESMOND

Whatever. You can dig up a body or you can bury one. They don't pay me enough to care.

BARNABY

I don't have any money.

DESMOND

I'll make a tab for ya. This business of mine's booming these days. Lot of freaks in this town.

BARNABY

I noticed.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - EAST HILL - NIGHT

The burial grounds are expansive, with several acres spanning all the way down to an overflowing river.

The grounds are split into several sections. The one Barnaby walks around in now is one we haven't seen before.

It seems as though it was gorgeous, at one time. There are fountains and marble statues of angels that suggest as much. Only, the fountains have rusted over, and the statues are all cracked, covered with moss.

Among the statues is a staircase downwards into a man-made catacomb. It doesn't look safe to enter, not anymore.

Luckily, Barnaby gets to stay above ground. Although, as a result of flooding, the ground's wet and marsh-like. With every step he takes, his boots sink into the mud below him.

He slogs his way across several tombstones. The statues tower above him, like titans watching his every move.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - DELILAH'S PLOT - NIGHT

Barnaby stops at a tombstone, labeled only with a Latin phrase he can't understand. He checks his stencil paper, which has the exact same Latin phrase -- "non omnis moriar." This is Delilah.

Barnaby traces his fingers over the lettering. He would cry, but he knows he still has work to do.

Without the benefit of his shovel, Barnaby has to dig by hand. He drops to his knees and sinks his hands into the mud, which is loose and easy to uncover.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Desmond digs his hand into the tobacco tin and shoves more into his mouth. He glances up to the East hill, where he can barely make out Barnaby's frantic dig.

He turns away to give the kid some privacy. Seems like the polite thing to do.

EXT. STREETS OF MORTECITA - NIGHT

The black hearse peels down the street. Doktor Kahn sits at the wheel, expertly weaving in and out of traffic.

INT. HEARSE - NIGHT

In the back seat, Azlon sits with the Fiddler. Azlon looks miserable, but the Fiddler's face is blank, as usual.

THE FIDDLER

When we find your boy, can I kill
'im? In any way I see fit?

AZLON

That depends. On what he's done.
What he's seen. What he knows.

The Fiddler opens his fiddle case and pulls out his bow.

AZLON

If he finds out what I did to his
dear Delilah, he won't be my boy
Barnaby anymore.

THE FIDDLER

(confused)
Who's 'e gonna be?

AZLON

Someone else entirely. Someone
like us.

Azlon watches the Fiddler clean the chunks of blood and flesh
off of his precious bow.

AZLON

Wretched in all our ways.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - DELILAH'S PLOT - NIGHT

Caked in mud, Barnaby scoops out the ground. The flooding
must have shifted the coffin, because he comes upon it only a
few feet deep, half submerged in water.

It's a struggle to tug the coffin out of the ground, but
Barnaby's had experience. He runs his hand over the oak
coffin. It's simple, classic, strong. No worms or larvae
feed on it.

Barnaby pulls Azlon's wand out of his pant leg. He starts to
tug the coffin cover off.

He's nervous. His hand trembles. He closes his eyes. When
he opens his eyes, he finds --

Nothing. The coffin is empty.

Barnaby's face drops. What little color he had in his cheeks vanishes.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Barnaby storms towards Desmond, anger on his face.

BARNABY
She's gone. She's not here.
Somebody took her!

Desmond, having no clue what Barnaby's on about, furrows his brow. He doesn't even spit out his tobacco.

DESMOND
I have no idea what --

BARNABY
The mud... someone's been there.
Two years ago. Maybe three.

DESMOND
I don't know what to tell ya --

Barnaby interrupts again, and even grabs Desmond's collar. He might not be a natural bully, but he's seen enough evil men to know how to intimidate.

BARNABY
Somebody took her, you fucking --

An engine rumbles in the distance. The sound stops both Barnaby and Desmond.

They look up the road to see an approaching car. A hearse.

Barnaby has an idea who's inside. He bolts. He races to the burial ground, like a gazelle with a lion on its tail.

INT. HEARSE - NIGHT

Doktor Kahn says nothing as he drives in the front.

THE FIDDLER (V.O.)
Folks need hobbies. As means of
keeping voices outta their heads.

In the backseat, both Azlon and the Fiddler study the upcoming burial grounds.

THE FIDDLER (V.O.)
As a child, I never 'ad a stamp to
spare. Never saw nothing as fancy
as a model railway.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUND - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Desmond, clueless, walks over to greet the hearse.

When it parks, Doktor Kahn steps out first.

THE FIDDLER (V.O.)
So for me, only two things work to
keep the voices out: Playin' me
fiddle.

Doktor Kahn moves to opens the back door.

The Fiddler bursts out. He's fury unleashed. He slides his
fiddle case off his back and cracks Desmond over the head
with it.

Desmond falls unconscious easily, but the Fiddler doesn't
care. He rears back, holding the case high over his head,
and brings it down on Desmond's face again. And again.

THE FIDDLER (V.O.)
And fightin'.

Azlon climbs out of the car and watches the Fiddler work.
Desmond's face is an explosion of blood, teeth, and tobacco.

AZLON
That's quite enough. Save some
strength for our boy Barnaby.

The Fiddler stops, although he appears disappointed that he
can't continue to thrash the man to a pulp.

Azlon looks towards the East hill. He seems to know
immediately where Barnaby would be.

AZLON
There are plenty of pints of blood
still to be spilled on this night.

The Fiddler smiles. A sick grin.

THE FIDDLER (V.O.)
As far as hobbies go, I'd stack
mine up against any.

FADE OUT.

A black screen. A title card reads **AZLON**.

AZLON (V.O.)
 I know what you're thinking, but
 I'm not God. I'm greater than God.
 I give second chances.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - DELILAH'S PLOT - DAY

Standing next to mounds of dirt, Azlon looks down a grave.

SUPERIMPOSE: Two years earlier.

AZLON
 And unlike God, I try not to pry in
 silly subjects like the state of
 your soul.

Azlon offers his hand to the person deep in the grave.

AZLON
 I'm simply interested in offering
 you this -- a place to call your
 home, for the night, and maybe
 longer. Will you do me that honor,
 my fair Delilah?

In tattered clothes, DELILAH, mid 20s, looks up at him, completely bewildered. She's just as Barnaby described to Sudsy -- angelic, with porcelain skin and luscious red hair.

INT. HEARSE - DAY

Up front, Doktor Kahn drives the hearse. He stays quiet.

In the back, Delilah, now wrapped tastefully in a warm blanket, sits next to Azlon, who clutches his cane.

AZLON
 I'm a man of the world, Delilah.
 There's not a day goes by where I
 don't travel, see new places, new
 faces...

Delilah watches Azlon, not knowing what to make of him. As can be expected, this experience is overwhelming for her.

AZLON
 And I dare say, yours is the first
 beauty that's taken my breath away.
 You're even lovelier than I was led
 to believe.

The flattery helps Delilah warm to Azlon, but it doesn't help her confusion.

DELILAH
Who told you about me?

AZLON
Why, the man we're about to see, of course. The love of your life.

Delilah blinks. She arches a brow. She's not quite sure what he's talking about.

DELILAH
Thomas?

Azlon's friendly smile fades quickly.

DELILAH
Byron?

It's a cold stare now.

Doktor Kahn glances over his shoulder. Maybe they got the wrong girl. Azlon isn't as quick to give up on her.

AZLON
Barnaby. Barnaby James. He worked on the farm for your father.

Finally a wave of recognition hits Delilah. She nods and laughs pleasantly. Azlon allows himself to smile now. Crisis averted.

DELILAH
Oh I remember Barnaby. But the love of my life? That's funny.

AZLON
I hardly see the humor.

DELILAH
Barnaby's probably the only farmhand that I didn't sleep with. He was a silly, stupid boy.

Azlon's icy glare returns.

DELILAH
We all used to tease him. Make a sport of it. I'd have him spend every penny of his pathetic little salary to buy me flowers from the market.

Doktor Kahn looks back to gauge how Azlon will respond. So far, he hasn't moved an inch.

DELILAH

He used to write me these, these
long love letters... poems too.
Terribly misspelled. Like a child.
Every single one talked about how
he wanted to marry me. I used to
show them around, laugh about it.

Delilah laughs at the memory. Azlon does not.

DELILAH

It was funny for a while. Then it
became embarrassing. When I was
engaged to Thomas, he kept writing.
Over and over. I was worried
Thomas might find those letters.

Although he does his best to stay expressionless, there's a
burning fury deep behind Azlon's eyes.

DELILAH

I finally told Daddy. He's the one
who thought we had to do something.
To protect the marriage.

Azlon grips his cane so tightly that his hand trembles.

DELILAH

Daddy knew this man who worked for
the railroads. He said he could
take care of it without --

Before she can finish the story, Azlon erupts. He slashes at
her with the cane.

Delilah screams and holds her hands up to protect herself.
Azlon clubs her, again and again.

Doktor Kahn slows the hearse down to a stop, but doesn't
intervene. He doesn't even watch.

Azlon's cane continues to fly in a fury down on Delilah,
leaving welts and marks of blood. She squeals in pain. That
does little to deter Azlon.

INT. THE POUND - MEAT ROOM - DAY

Azlon's hands lock into Delilah's red hair. He throws her
down on the ground for Lady Liberty's inspection.

Delilah, red marks all over her body, whimpers. She looks up to Liberty, hoping he might provide salvation.

LADY LIBERTY
She's pretty. Glamorous looking.
If you ignore the bruises.

AZLON
I want more bruises, not less.

LADY LIBERTY
What do you want me to do with her?

Delilah looks over the glass cases that line the walls. The Prisoners are different ones, as the turnover rate is predictably high, but their looks are no less fearful.

AZLON
She does not deserve the dignity of death. I want you to keep her alive. Give her to the worst of the worst. The sickos, even by our standards. Make. Her. Suffer.

Liberty runs his hand through Delilah's thick red locks.

LADY LIBERTY
That's what I do best, darling.

INT. THE POUND - MEAT ROOM - DELILAH'S CAGE - DAY

Delilah's shaking hand presses against her new glass prison. Tears roll down her cheek.

INT. THE POUND - MEAT ROOM - DELILAH'S CAGE - DAY

Chunks of Delilah's hair have been ripped out. To go along with her welts, she has bruises all over her body and a severe black eye. She knocks on the glass with her hand, which misses several fingers.

INT. THE POUND - MEAT ROOM - DELILAH'S CAGE - DAY

The progression worsens for Delilah. She's more mutilated than ever. More animal than woman. She hisses and bangs her grimy hands on the glass.

She's virtually unrecognizable. As Delilah, anyway. Now, she's Play-Thing.

EXT. ABANDONED FIELDS - DAY

The hearse rolls through fields.

EXT. THE POUND - DAY

Doktor Kahn and Azlon walk towards their parked hearse.

AZLON

You shall not sniff a word of this
to Barnaby, or anybody else. It
would break the poor boy's heart.

DOKTOR KAHN

It's understood, sir.

Doktor Kahn opens the hearse's back door for Azlon.

AZLON

I'll tell him a tale. Our boy,
he's a dim bulb at best. He'll
never put the pieces together.

Azlon climbs in the hearse and slams the door closed.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BLACK TOP - AZLON'S BED - NIGHT

Naked under pomegranate-stained sheets, a sleeping Azlon
drapes his arm over the dead body of Edith Meers.

There are noises outside. Azlon's eyes flutter open.

Azlon sits up, groggy. He looks to his hand, where he's
holding something: Sudsy's tree branch.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUND - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Azlon climbs out of the back of the hearse and stands next to
Doktor Kahn. He watches the Fiddler repeatedly slam his
fiddle case on Desmond's bloody mess of a face.

AZLON

That's quite enough. Save some
strength for our boy Barnaby.

The Fiddler stops immediately.

AZLON

There are plenty of pints of blood
still to be spilled on this night.

The Fiddler smiles. A sick grin.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - EAST HILL - NIGHT

Barnaby hides behind a giant angel statue. He breathes heavily. He finally gets the courage to peek around the statue to see who's coming for him.

While Doktor Kahn and Azlon stay behind with the hearse, the Fiddler stalks closer. Right towards the same hill.

He knows his hiding spot won't do. He spots another one -- the catacombs. The staircase leads underground. Perhaps there's a tunnel that leads out of the graveyard altogether.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - CATACOMBS - NIGHT

Barnaby stays low, but runs towards the catacombs staircase.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - EAST HILL - NIGHT

The Fiddler searches around the East hill for Barnaby. In the dark, he can just make out an outline of someone scurry towards the catacombs. A shirtless boy. Must be Barnaby.

INT. CATACOMBS - ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Although much smaller than the catacombs in Paris, these catacombs share a similar style. A staircase descends into a grand chamber, where pillars hold up the ceilings.

Every inch of the walls has been lined with bones and skulls. They are arranged so delicately that it's almost artistic. The bones create an outline of what seems to be the devil.

The chamber is flooded, with icy water that looks black in this little light. After the staircase, the water starts at two feet and gets as high as five in the center.

As Barnaby wades through the water, he looks around at the skulls on the walls. It's creepy, to say the least, but a better alternative than enduring Azlon's wrath.

Barnaby finds that the catacombs are split into four smaller chambers, labeled such things as the "Chamber of Antenora" and the "Chamber of Judecca."

INT. CATACOMBS - CHAMBER OF JUDECCA - NIGHT

Barnaby swims into the Chamber of Judecca. To do so, he pushes past several skeletal parts and floating fecal matter.

INT. CATACOMBS - ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The Fiddler steps down the staircase. He stops just before the disgusting lake of water.

He looks around the catacombs for any sign of Barnaby. The darkness makes it impossible to see anything more than a foot or two away.

THE FIDDLER

No use hiding, boy. It only makes things more fun for me.

The Fiddler slides his fiddle case off his back.

INT. CATACOMBS - CHAMBER OF JUDECCA - NIGHT

Barnaby hides behind the chamber's wall. To stay out of sight, he sinks his head low, although he keeps his mouth above the water level, as it looks sewer level quality.

THE FIDDLER (O.S.)

And if you play nice, Azlon might bring your fat friend back.

Barnaby manages to stay quiet, even as a skeletal foot brushes by his chin.

THE FIDDLER (O.S.)

If we can find all 'is pieces.

INT. CATACOMBS - ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The Fiddler opens his case, which has been cracked by now.

THE FIDDLER

Azlon says you ain't never 'ad a daddy. S'why you're foolish and can't follow rules.

The Fiddler pulls out his bow.

THE FIDDLER

'Fore you go, I'm gonna teach you somethin'. A song. A lullaby that my daddy done sung for me.

INT. CATACOMBS - CHAMBER OF JUDECCA - NIGHT

Barnaby pulls a pair of skeletons closer to himself, hoping he might hide behind them.

The Fiddler's tune starts. Not a good sign.

INT. CATACOMBS - MAIN CHAMBER - NIGHT

The Fiddler wades through the water. He holds his fiddle above the murky water to play. He sings to match the tune.

THE FIDDLER
Sheep play in the grass so
merrily...

The Fiddler's voice echoes through the catacomb chambers.

THE FIDDLER
But one ventures off quite
daringly...

INT. CATACOMBS - CHAMBER OF JUDECCA - NIGHT

If Barnaby had any doubts about the Fiddler's insanity before, he's convinced of it now.

He looks around. There's nowhere in the chamber to escape. However, he does still have Azlon's wand. He fishes into his pants and pulls it out.

THE FIDDLER (O.S.)
When that sheep gets too far a-
way...

INT. CATACOMBS - MAIN CHAMBER - NIGHT

The Fiddler passes by the chambers. He still isn't close enough to see much of anything, let alone Barnaby.

He hears something -- splashing, coming from the Chamber of Judecca. He grins.

THE FIDDLER
It's time for the wolves to play.

The Fiddler slides his fiddle back into the case, which he swings over his back.

The bow, he keeps out. As he approaches the chamber, he clicks it into the jagged blade.

INT. CATACOMBS - CHAMBER OF JUDECCA - NIGHT

The Fiddler heads towards the splashing. He reaches under the water and rips someone up by the hair.

Only, it's not Barnaby. It's a WHITE-HAIRED MAN, resurrected and doggy paddling for dear life. The Fiddler studies the scared old man with confusion. Even in this little light, it's obvious that he's got the wrong guy.

The Fiddler hears more splashing and shoots a look over.

INT. CATACOMBS - MAIN CHAMBER - NIGHT

The real Barnaby swims frantically for the exit.

INT. CATACOMBS - CHAMBER OF JUDECCA - NIGHT

The Fiddler grits his teeth, angry that he got duped. He picks up a floating bone near by and cracks it over the White-Haired Man's head. He splinters the man's skull on impact, but he delivers a few more blows just for the hell of it.

Satisfied that the White-Haired Man's dead once again, the Fiddler swims after Barnaby.

THE FIDDLER

Now you gone and done it, boy-o. I
ain't gonna be as gentle with you.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - CATACOMBS - NIGHT

A water-logged Barnaby runs up the catacomb steps. There's no sign of Azlon anywhere. He sprints for the West hill.

The Fiddler emerges from the catacombs shortly after. He's soaked in the black water's grime and severely ticked off.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - WEST HILL - NIGHT

As he nears the West hill, the Fiddler's cold eyes shoot around, looking for signs of Barnaby.

He hears rustling. Someone's walking, near a coffin. Bingo. He runs full tilt, his boots squishing in the grass.

The shirtless young man flees, but the Fiddler catches up and rips him to the ground. It's Jayce.

Jayce is muddy and without his glasses or shirt.

JAYCE
I... I'm sorry... I...

THE FIDDLER
It's time for the wolves to play,
Barnaby.

JAYCE
But, but... I'm not Barnaby...

THE FIDDLER
Don't try to trick me again, boy-o.
I ain't good with names or faces.
But this I do quite well.

The Fiddler clicks his fiddle bow into the blade again. With one motion, he slams the bow deep into Jayce's eye socket.

INT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Azlon waits by the hearse with Doktor Kahn. They can hear the blood curdling screams. These are the first screams that cause Azlon to cover his ears.

INT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - WEST HILL - NIGHT

Barnaby, laying low about a hundred feet away, cringes at the sound of Jayce's screams. The guilt reads on his face, but he's not prepared to take Jayce's place.

INT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Azlon and Doktor Kahn wait by the hearse, somber.

A muddied Fiddler approaches. His bow drips with blood.

THE FIDDLER
Got 'im. Made a mess.

AZLON
And my wand?

THE FIDDLER
He didn't have it on 'im.

AZLON
If he came here to find Delilah, he brought the wand with him. I'll find it myself if I must.

Azlon looks between the Fiddler and Doktor Kahn.

AZLON

The two of you return to the Black Top. Look after everyone until I get back. It's been a long night.

THE FIDDLER

Most fun I 'ad in ages.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - WEST HILL - NIGHT

Barnaby stays low, too scared to breathe. He finally lets a breath out when he sees the hearse exit the parking lot.

Just before he stands up, he sees Azlon in the distance. He drops back to the ground.

He looks around for help. On this side of the hill, there are no catacombs to hide in. There's only muddy grass, and a river in the distance. That's his best bet. He crawls slowly towards the river.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - WEST HILL - NIGHT

With his hands clasped behind his back, Azlon strolls through the burial grounds. He's in no hurry. His eyes comb every bit of the grass for a sign of his wand.

He comes to the body bag, and the freshly dead body behind it. He reluctantly approaches it.

AZLON

Oh, Barnaby m'boy...

Azlon flips the body over. Even with the eyes gouged out and the face frozen in fear, he knows it's not Barnaby.

Azlon snaps to his feet and looks around. Only now, he's not looking for the wand.

AZLON

Barnaby? Where are you, boy?

He pulls out his pistol in preparation.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUND - RIVER BANK - NIGHT

Barnaby stays low, but hurries for the river. He limps along, as he's been severely beaten up all night.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - WEST HILL - NIGHT

Azlon roams the burial grounds, his pace much different than before. He's frantic.

He sees no sign of Barnaby, until he looks towards the river. He spots someone in the distance, and aims his pistol at him.

Azlon fires. The shot rips into Barnaby's leg and tears off a chunk. Barnaby manages to keep moving, although he's limping badly now. He's slowed down enough for Azlon to square up and fire another shot, right into his back.

Barnaby stumbles and plants face first into the ground.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUND - RIVER BANK - NIGHT

The bullet wounds in Barnaby's back and leg ooze blood. He doesn't bother to escape. He's too exhausted to try.

Azlon approaches. He crouches down and helps Barnaby turn onto his back.

AZLON

Oh, Barnaby, look at you... what
happened to that sweet face of
yours?

He examines Barnaby's various injuries, including the ring of tattered flesh around his neck.

AZLON

Don't fight too hard. Don't hang
on to this life.

Of particular interest to Azlon is his wand, which Barnaby clutches in his mangled hand. Azlon pries it away.

AZLON

With this, I can bring you back and
see that sweet face again.

Azlon takes a seat on the soggy grass and props Barnaby up on his lap. He wipes grime and blood from Barnaby's face.

AZLON

I hope you learned a lesson
tonight. To listen to those who
know better.

BARNABY

All I wanted was Delilah.

AZLON

And I tried to give her to you, m'boy. But Delilah wasn't the girl you thought you was. She was a whore in hiding. Happens all the time with women her age.

Moving a single muscle is difficult for Barnaby, but he manages to furrow his eyebrows.

BARNABY

What are you talking about?

AZLON

She made a sport of you and then when she was through, she conspired to have you killed.

BARNABY

That's not true...

AZLON

You act as if to doubt me. There is little in this life that I do not know, Barnaby.

Barnaby gathers his strength to sit up, to face Azlon.

BARNABY

You're lying. You've lied to me this entire time.

AZLON

To protect you, m'boy. Surely even you can see that.

BARNABY

Tell me what you did with her.

AZLON

I punished her for what she did to you. I gave her to a trusted friend in town. In turn, he's given her to his customers. The worst of the worst.

As Azlon continues, tears well up in Barnaby's eyes.

AZLON

She's not the Delilah you knew, not anymore. Her beauty now matches the interior. A mutilated creature, locked in a dungeon...

(MORE)

AZLON (CONT'D)
Stubs for fingers, scars for
skin...

The description triggers a flash of recognition in Barnaby. He did encounter Play-Thing in the Pound meat room. He can't help the tears from trickling down his cheeks now. He tries to talk, but struggles to get out a sentence.

BARNABY
There was a woman... She asked me
to stay... I pushed her down the
stairs...

Barnaby wipes his tears away.

AZLON
Stop your sniveling, boy. It's
unbecoming. If I took the time to
mourn every man I killed, I'd never
stop weeping.

Azlon pulls Barnaby's hand away from his face so that he can regain better eye contact.

AZLON
You should be grateful that I'm
willing to wipe the slate clean.
To let you come back home.

BARNABY
You don't want me to work at the
Black Top anymore...

AZLON
Of course I do. I'm not God. I
give second chances.

BARNABY
No, I mean... you don't want me to
work at the Black Top, because if I
did... I'd kill you in your sleep.

Barnaby's boldness stuns Azlon for a moment. Azlon has to look away to collect himself from the sting of it.

AZLON
Don't look at me like I'm the
devil. You and I, we aren't so
different, after all. In fact, I
did that very thing to the man who
ran the Black Top before me.

Azlon rubs his chin as he recalls it.

AZLON

Only, the things he did to us,
why... they made your night look
like a nice evening out.

He turns back to Barnaby, with a softening smile. He runs his knuckle across Barnaby's cheeks in a loving manner.

AZLON

In a way, I'm proud of you, m'boy.
You've grown up. Betraying the
only man who's ever cared about you
-- that's a wholly adult ambition.

With his other hand, Azlon presses his pistol under Barnaby's chin. His expression turns cold.

AZLON

Unfortunately, it renders you
rather useless to me.

Barnaby has seen this routine before, and knows how it ends. He realizes that he doesn't have the strength to fight Azlon off, so he merely allows his eyes to well up with tears.

BARNABY

Azlon...

AZLON

Yes, m'boy?

BARNABY

Don't bring me back.

Barnaby's eyes wander the graveyard. It may be a flooded swamp of a cemetery, but there's a charm to its serenity.

BARNABY

Let me rest here. Everyone seems
so peaceful.

Azlon looks around, confused, as if the idea of resting in peace never occurred to him. He doesn't see whatever Barnaby does, but he turns back to him with a smile nonetheless.

AZLON

It'll be hard to find another soul
as sweet as yours, m'boy. An
idealist until the end. Which for
you, has been long overdue.

Azlon has to look away again, but he manages to pull the trigger. Barnaby's blood splatters onto his face.

He doesn't bother to wipe his face. He lets the blood trickle down his cheeks, in the way that tears would.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - WEST HILL - NIGHT

Azlon places Barnaby's dead body into a coffin. Although it's a struggle for him physically, he doesn't simply dump it inside. He takes the time to lower it gingerly, with care.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - WEST HILL - DAWN

The first rays of the sun rise over the horizon.

Sweat slides down Azlon's forehead as he continues his burial work. His knees dig into the mud as he hovers over a swell of land that presumably houses Barnaby's coffin.

He doesn't have the luxury of a shovel, so he has to cover the grave with chunks of mud and sod by hand. He pats the mud down, aiming for it to hold true.

ELENA (O.S.)
Baaarrrrnaby...

Azlon stops.

ELENA (O.S.)
Baaarrrrnaby...

Azlon glances back to the top of the hill, where he sees Elena. She heads towards him, which elicits a glare.

AZLON
My dear girl, if I were you, I'd
hurry to the exit now. I'm not the
type to appreciate an interruption.

Elena's eyes run over Azlon. He's not who she was looking for, but he'll do. She continues down the hill.

As Elena nears, Azlon props himself up with his cane, now with the wand re-attached. He stands back, in case she's a threat. However, she simply stumbles to the ground right next to Barnaby's bulging grave.

ELENA
It smells... so good...

Azlon looks over this strange girl. Her yellow eyes and monstrous jaw have faded, but she still looks troubled. She twitches. She fidgets.

AZLON
You're not well, are you, m'dear?

ELENA
No. No, I'm not. I think... I
think I'm lost.

Elena looks around the graveyard with some confusion now, as if she's just recovered from a blackout. The sight of her struggling makes Azlon smile. He steps closer to her.

AZLON
You're lucky you found me then.

Elena twists back to Azlon and studies his face. After all this time looking for God, maybe she's finally found him.

ELENA
Who are you? Are you --

AZLON
M'dear, I know what you're
thinking, but I'm not God.

Azlon holds his hand out to her, offering to help her up.

AZLON
I'm greater than God. I give
second chances.

The words spark recognition in Elena. A second chance is just what she needs.

She looks up at him, her eyes welling with tears. She takes his hand and allows him to help her back to her feet.

Azlon fails to notice how bony Elena's hands are. Or the fact that they're starting to resemble claws.

EXT. RIVERSFIELD BURIAL GROUNDS - RIVER BANK - DAWN

There's a ferocious growl. And then another.

Something rolls down the hill, leaving a trail of blood behind it. The object stops at the edge of the river.

It's Azlon's wand. And his severed hand attached to it.

FADE OUT.

EXT. MORTECITA SUBURBS - DAY

Back in the sleepy suburbs, SUBURBANITES pour out of their homes to work on their lawns and fill up their minivans.

LADY LIBERTY (V.O.)
When the darkness dies, the world
turns back over to the good people,
the happy people.

EXT. STREETS OF MORTECITA - DAY

The streets are clogged full of BUSINESSMEN, chattering on their way to work. There are no signs of the Harajuku-inspired Youth who lurked around before.

LADY LIBERTY (V.O.)
The monsters go back to hiding...

They pass by the boarded-up Pound without a second glance. With its flickering lights turned off and no Bouncers in sight, the club easily blends into the background.

INT. THE POUND - MEAT ROOM - NIGHT

The Bouncers scrub the meat room floor clean of all the blood and guts leftover from the night before.

LADY LIBERTY (V.O.)
Waiting...

The Handmaiden paces back and forth, overseeing them all.

LADY LIBERTY (V.O.)
For they know, that soon enough...

INT. THE POUND - MEAT ROOM - GLASS CAGE - NIGHT

Crammed inside one of the glass cages, Lady Liberty watches with a miserable look on his face. He holds his nose, which has been torn to shreds. His face is battered badly. The only thing that remains is the hateful fire in his eyes.

LADY LIBERTY (V.O.)
It will be their turn again.

FADE TO BLACK.