

THE LAST WITCH HUNTER

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FADE IN:

EXT. GERMAN COUNTRYSIDE (**DARK AGES**) - DAY

A ROLLING FIELD dotted with CROSSES...

We PUSH though...finding A LONE FIGURE clad in armor.
Haunted. Mournful. He kneels before TWO FRESH GRAVES.

KAULDER (V.O.)

*Most thought rats bore the
sickness, others God himself.
But there were a select few who
knew the REAL truth...*
(beat)
It was them.

A DISTANT HORSE approaches -- The man looking up: Handsome.
Steel grey eyes. This is KAULDER (27). Captain of the BLACK
WATCH.

Stepping from the horse, a grizzled monk, GROSETTE. He
carries a scarred battle shield...Kaulder's shield.

GROSETTE

(in German, subtitled)
Captain Kaulder, his Excellency
calls. The plague's spread further --
We've already assembled the full
brigade...But they need their leader.

A beat. Kaulder stares, stricken.

Grosette watches as he pulls a CHILD'S VELVETEEN BIRD from
his pocket. The warrior's thick fingers caress the toy.
With renewed strength -- He rises, taking his shield as...

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

The PROW of a boat BURSTS through CHURNING WATER. Kaulder
stands at the head, eyes searching the horizon. In the
distance...an ICY LAND.

KAULDER (V.O.)

*They thought they could hide...but
they couldn't. Not from us.
(pointed)
Not from me.*

EXT. FJORD (NORWAY) - DAY

Kaulder disembarks from the ship, one of a SMALL BATTALION OF
HUNTERS. Badass. Think Medieval Special Forces. Dogsleds
are quickly loaded with EQUIPMENT.

KAULDER (V.O.)
*Iron...Salt...Phosphorous light.
 The only weapons that could kill our
 enemy...*

EXT. SNOWSCAPE - DAY

The brigade forces its way through a blinding snowstorm, ICE CRYSTALS dangling from beards. One Hunter brushes away a patch of snow, revealing a CLUSTER OF PRIMORDIAL MUSHROOMS.

KAULDER (V.O.)
*The men obeyed my orders...but I was
 no longer the Captain they knew. It
 wasn't duty that drove me. Or
 honor. I longed for only one thing:
 (beat)
 My own death.*

Kaulder studies the fleshy spores with cold eyes, seeing in them a sign.

KAULDER (CONT'D)
 (subtitled)
We're close.

The men strap on specially designed armor, Kaulder *pointedly does not* -- The brigade exchanging looks as he strides toward the horizon.

EXT. FROZEN TUNDRA - DAY

The brigade approaches an icy plain, everything shrouded in FRIGID MIST, it finally parts revealing...

A DISTANT STRUCTURE

THOUSANDS OF BRANCHES entwined into an IMMENSE EARTHEN MOUND. Organic. Alive. *The wood seemingly grown through the permafrost.*

KAULDER
 (subtitled)
A witch nest.

EXT. THE NEST SHELL - DAY

The SHARP SOUND OF WOOD SPLINTERING! The hunters HACK their way through nest limbs with BROAD IRON SWORDS and SHIELDS, Grosette behind them, whispering...

GROSETTE

(subtitled)

Remember your training, every man to
every angle. A witch knows no
remorse, no hesitation, more beast
than human...

His lessons carry them forward, the brigade finally emerging
into...

INT. NEST - SAME TIME

A different environment completely. Humid. Warm. SINGULAR
GRITS OF POLLEN float in the air, the men faced with the last
thing they'd expect --

A DENSE FOREST

Ice and snow melt from their armor as they move through the
strange trees, branches brushing like fingers -- Suddenly,
they stop...hearing something...A HISSING SOUND. *Eerie.*
Otherworldly.

One hunter listens, realizing, the trees...are *whispering* to
each other.

This is new for the brigade, looks exchanged -- But Kaulder
PLUNGES on, driven by great purpose, emerging into an OPEN
CIRCLE...

A WOODEN 'MACHINE'

THUMPS and CHURNS as if alive, COMPONENTS SNAPPING and
CLICKING, CONICAL SYMBOLS etched in the wood.

Kaulder steps forward, examining this marvel, a NEXUS OF
ROOTS AND VINES entwined through its central WOODEN BOX,
entrenching it to the earth. *This is the HEART. SIGILS*
etched on the two separate pieces.

Grosette steps beside Kaulder, makes the sign of the cross --
The following all spoken in German, subtitled.

GROSETTE

It is 'Goetia' -- A Plague Box.

(pointing to its heart)

It taps into the planet's root
system, from here they can spread
disease to any corner of the world.

Kaulder stares at the box, stricken.

KAULDER

This 'thing' is what killed my wife
and daughter?

MONK

And thousands more...the crafting
skill to operate a Plague Box is
incredible.

(beat)

It must be a Queen.

Kaulder pulls his sword, about to drive it through the Plague Box...but before he can...

A GUTTURAL CRY SPLITS THE CHAMBER

He stops short, the brigade quickly emerging into the circle, pulling weaponry: CROSSBOWS, SWORDS, MAKESHIFT PISTOLS, TORCHES that bloom with GREEN PHOSPHORUS LIGHT -- Their eyes study the forest, ready for anything.

Except what comes.

SHAPES drop from the roof of the nest!

WITCHES

No broomsticks. No pointy hats. These things are a separate SPECIES. Akin to man but horribly *different*: Limbs long and ribbony...alabaster flesh...slithering claws. CREEPY.

WITH A BANSHEE SHRIEK...

A WITCH unfolds from the grass, clawed nails CLICKING in a strange pattern, unkitting a PATCH OF AIR between its fingers as it fires off a 'SPELL'.

TRACK THE SPELL THROUGH THE AIR

It SLAMS into one warrior. CONCUSSIVE. He CHOKES, suddenly unable to breathe! *Water spilling from his nose and mouth. He's drowning on dry land!*

A WAR-PAINTED WITCH

Launches a SPELL, CAMERA SLINGSHOTTING behind as it FLIES across the nest --

WHAP! The spell FLATTENS a knight. With a GROAN of metal, he COLLAPSES! His armor now IMPOSSIBLY HEAVY! The witch LEAPS atop him, CLAWING his breastplate, tearing flesh.

Quick FLASHES of combat as...

WHAP! WHAP! WHAP! IRON ARROWS are LAUNCHED in a fusillade! The war-painted witch goes down, dead, liquefying into a BLACK SLICK! Uncanny and unearthly.

PISTOLS of ROCKSALT are QUICKLY FIRED, the witches SHRIEK, caught mid-leap, bodies now just an oily film as they SPLASH the ground!

FLAMING ARROW BOLTS target the nest, FIRE SPREADING through the trees, everything bathed in hellfire.

Where's Kaulder in all this?

In the boiling heart of combat, a WHIRLING, CHURNING force, IRON SWORD splitting the air! He SLASHES at the attacking coven, a spell ROCKETING towards him, but at the last second --

HE DIVES

Without the encumbrance of armor, he moves nimbly, combat sweeping him through the forest -- We see he fights differently than the others! A man with nothing to lose.

KAULDER
(subtitled, to his men)
What's the matter -- You want to
live forever? -- Charge on!

With a WAR CRY, he HURTLES forward in a suicide-run, a WHIRLING MURDER MACHINE, each dead witch liquefying into an oily mass at his feet.

Suddenly...he SPINS, a LONE FIGURE standing before him. Kaulder FREEZES.

THE FIGURE

She's DIFFERENT than the rest -- Aquiline -- Skin GLISTENING with a milky lysergic fluid. A Witch Queen.

Time slows to a crawl, flames spreading across the nest. She studies Kaulder, intrigued, *able to read his soul like braille from a book.*

QUEEN
(heard, not spoken)
'You're different than the others
...you want to die.'

Kaulder grips his temple, the Queen's voice RINGING in his mind -- A commingling of ancient inflections.

KAULDER
What abomination is this?

QUEEN
 (heard, not spoken)
'I've taken from you...A wife. A daughter...your sorrow...I can taste it.'

A FLASH OF IMAGES

Kaulder, heartbroken, feverishly clutching the bodies of his wife and child...behind him, a PLAGUE CART piled high with corpses.

BACK TO SCENE

With SUDDEN FURY, Kaulder LAUNCHES, catching the Queen off guard -- The two of them CRASH through the nest, locked in STRUGGLE, fire RAGING all around!

THE QUEEN

Clicks her talons, unleashing a SPELL -- The attack misses Kaulder, a tree VIOLENTLY FRAGMENTING behind him, EXPLODING INTO PARTICLES! Epic. Concussive.

She CLAWS into him from behind, Kaulder PLUNGING through PLUMES OF FIRE, FALLING to the nest floor on his back atop her --

He SCREAMS in pain from its feral attack...and then *Kaulder does something shocking*:

He THRUSTS his sword into his OWN CHEST! The iron blade going through his body, KNIFING straight into the Queen's heart!

The Queen SPUTTERS black blood -- Kaulder grimaces, managing to pull the blade from his chest -- He turns and grins savagely, welcoming onrushing death.

KAULDER
 Today...we BOTH die.

The Queen holds on, stronger than the others, doing the last thing we'd expect...She grins back. A horrible rictus.

QUEEN
 (spoken now)
 No. Only me.

Her palm reaches up, CLUTCHING Kaulder's chest, the skin above his heart beginning to BLACKEN. He WRITHES IN AGONY.

QUEEN (CONT'D)
Everyone you love will die before you.

And with that final act, her lifeforce drains, body deliquescing slowly into a muddy slick -- Dead.

A HAND

Grabs Kaulder, pulling him from the nest.

It's Grosette.

EXT. WITCH NEST - DAY

Grosette drags Kaulder onto an icy bluff as the Nest collapses, the last thing Kaulder seeing before he blacks out an ASHEN PALM MARK now emblazoned across his heart.

KAULDER (V.O.)
*That day, the tide of battle turned
...our world was never the same.*

The VAST JIGSAW OF ICE and MOUNTAINS DISSOLVE to become...

AN OCEAN

Swells rising to meet a line of WOODEN SHIPS.

KAULDER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*Churches of the world united in a
singular cause, seeking out the
covens, subjecting them to our will
...pilfering their technologies for
the better of man.*

Scrawled into the ships hulls we read: NINA, PINTA, SANTA MARIA...until we see a FINAL SHIP...unmarked...mysterious.

KAULDER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*No one would ever know a fourth
boat trailed Columbus' ships with
the sole purpose of a first strike
on the New World. Spain claimed
the land...but the church claimed
so much more: A global policing of
our unclean brethren.*

The waves darken, becoming SWELLS OF TIME...we see INVENTORS from DIFFERENT ERAS studying WITCHSCRIPT DOCUMENTS... experimenting with MECHANICS and ALCHEMY...

KAULDER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*Galileo...Edison...Ford. Geniuses.
But also beneficiaries of an
efficient and secret subjugation.*

The CASCADE OF IMAGES harden into shapes, becoming...

EXT. NEW YORK CITY (**PRESENT DAY**) - DAY

The GLITTERING ROOFTOPS and GLEAMING SPIRES OF MODERN-DAY MANHATTAN...

KAULDER (V.O.)
*As for the witches, they scattered
 into the cracks of our world...
 breeding with humans, weakening the
 bloodline. In order to subsist they
 formed a truce with the Church: No
crafting against humans.*

The CAMERA drops to the GRITTY STREETS, entering --

MAGNOLIA BAKERY

Bedlam and chaos. A MOB OF CUSTOMERS rabidly fighting over a SELECTION OF CUPCAKES -- A SVELTE WOMAN stands behind the counter, *bladed witchnails* dispersing a GRANULATE POWDER into the latest batch of batter.

KAULDER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
*They live in secret. They're your
 mailman...your dry cleaner...your
 baker...tiny stabs of magick
 unfurling around us while we go
 about our day. Unaware.*

THE CAMERA PLUNGES through the city, streets and sidewalks ZIPPING past -- We find LORRE. A DAVID BLAINE-TYPE working the shell-game, ball sliding between cups *impossibly* fast, everything a BLUR.

A GORGEOUS CLUB KID watches in amazement. She's beautiful. WILD STREAKS OF HENNA in her hair.

CLUB KID
 (loudly)
Nobody can beat this guy.

A MALE TOURIST steps up, slaps a Fifty down. Wants to impress this stunning girl.

TOURIST
I can.

Lorre glides the ball between cups, a dizzying display -- Tourist points to a cup, Lore lifts it up. No ball.

TOURIST (CONT'D)
 Hey -- I *know* it was under that one!

He's right, it was. Lorre gives him a seedy smile.

LORRE
The lesson? Don't trust your eyes.

Tourist looks around from the Club Kid...but *she's gone*.
Lorre POCKETS the Fifty, already working the next sucker...
but he looks up to see --

A GROUP OF HAITIAN THUGS

Watching from across the street, BAROQUE EMBLEMS spidered
across bladed fingernails -- *Witchmarks*.

Unnerved, Lorre quickly packs up his gear, grabbing up a
LACQUERED WOODEN BOX. He heads out, looks to see if he's
being followed.

He is.

EXT. ALLEYWAYS - DAY

We're mid-chase now.

Sweating, Lorre DARTS through obscure alleyways, the Haitians
hot on his tail -- *They move unnaturally fast*...but Lorre's
faster. A master sleight of hand...

HIS IMAGE TRIPLES

Lorre #1 banking left, Lorre #2 banking right, both drawing
the Haitians attention. At the same time, the real Lorre
ducks down a hidden stairway leading into

A MAINTENANCE ROOM

Decrepit and musty. Filled with old boxes. Lorre watches
from below as the Thugs storm past. He's safe...for now.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
Hey...

Lorre turns to find the Club Kid. *They know each other*. This
is CHLOE -- She's *exquisite*, brewing with restless fire.

CHLOE
How much did we make -- ?
(sees something's wrong)
What is it?

LORRE
The Haitians. Don't worry, I lost
'em...for now.
(offering her the box)
I need you to hold onto this, hide
it somewhere safe.

Chloe hesitates, lacquered wood catching the light.

CHLOE

What is it -- ?

LORRE

A delivery I need to make. Take it to your sister's and wait for me... at least until I lose the Haitians...

(off Chloe's reaction)
I'll pay you.

HATIAN LEADER (O.S.)

Pay her? You can't even pay us.

Chloe turns to see FIVE SHADOWS unspooling from an open window into the room. The Haitians -- The LEADER looks to her.

HAITIAN LEADER

This is Lorre's mess...you can go --
We just want what we're owed.

He grips an EERIE DOLL made of ragged claws, Chloe noticing the doll's strange resemblance to her friend -- Lorre flashes a look to her, terrified.

LORRE

Don't go, Chlo. Please.

A TENSE BEAT -- Finally, Chloe shakes her head...and turns to leave -- The Haitian Leader grins. Wicked. Cold.

HAITIAN LEADER

My kind of witch...cute -- But no heart.

At this...Chloe stops, the words seemingly registering...but all she does is snatch up Lorre's Mystery Box, taking a last look at Lorre.

CHLOE

I'm sorry.

THE LEADER

JAMS an OVERSIZED NEEDLE into the chest of the doll -- Lorre COLLAPSES, hands going to his own chest, liquefying before Chloe's horrified eyes!

Shaken, Chloe backs into the door frame, quickly heading out.

CUT TO:

EXT. HARLEM (ESTABLISHING) - DAY

Sunlight plays across a series of run-down tenements and brownstones...

EXT. STREET - DAY

A DELIVERY TRUCK pulls up before a market -- The DRIVER gets out, busy talking into his cell phone.

DRIVER
(into phone)
Can you believe it, seventh kid to
go missing in two weeks? They're
calling him the Pied Piper. Sick,
huh?

He unloads a palette filled with cartons of milk, IMAGES OF MISSING BOYS AND GIRLS emblazoned across the boxes -- As the Driver continues into the market the CAMERA stays behind, now finding...

A LONE BOY (8)

He stands on the sidewalk, TWILIGHT BACKPACK slung across his shoulder, waiting for the bus -- Suddenly, *something* falls near his foot. He looks down.

It's a GUMMI BEAR.

Another Gummi RATTLES off his shoulder, the Boy looking up, seeing the tree above *flush with Gummi Bears*. Excited, he eagerly scoops up the candy, stuffing his backpack -- Not noticing he's now in the PRIVATE YARD OF A BROWNSTONE.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
Excuse me, little boy...those are
my gummi's.

The Boy turns to see a KINDLY OLD WOMAN (75) in the Brownstone doorway. She smiles. Warm and inviting.

WOMAN
You're a special young boy, aren't
you? I can tell. You see things
other children can't. I'll tell you
what, would you like to see what
grows in the *back* garden...?

She pulls out the LARGEST JAWBREAKER the Boy has ever seen.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
Picked fresh just this morning...
and there's plenty more.
(MORE)

WOMAN (CONT'D)
Whatever you can fit in your
backpack is yours. Would you like
that?

She opens the doorway, motioning for the Boy to come in. A MEASURED BEAT -- This is a city kid, he knows better...but one look at the Gummi Trees and his resolve crumbles.

The Boy heads inside, door closing shut behind him.

ANGLE ON: THE YARD

The candy-colored gummis now just common acorns.

INT. BROWNSTONE - DAY

Bright and big. Filled with the things nine year-olds dream of, the Woman leading the Boy past ROBOTS and VIDEO GAMES.

WOMAN
You're welcome to come by and play
anytime...Now, the garden's just
back there, don't be shy about
helping yourself...

She motions toward a door, the Boy heading forward -- *With each step, the technicolor surroundings behind him CRUMBLE into reality, the toys now nothing more than MOLDERED JUNK.*

The Woman pulls *something* from a nearby bureau...she CREEPS behind the Boy, slowly EDGING forward. Finally, she raises her hand, revealing --

A WHITE HANDLED RITUAL KNIFE studded with SIGILS, curved like a sickle. We call it a Boline.

Her fingers coil around the Boline's hilt, ready to do something unspeakable...but, at the last second, a SOUND makes the Woman turn --

A FIGURE now stands framed in the front doorway.

KAULDER

He hasn't aged a day! -- But time's ravaged him in other ways. Thousand yard stare. Long coat fluttering in tatters. Slob chic. In his hand, a MODERN-DAY TECHNOLOGICAL MARVEL HAND-CANNON. The '*PURIFIER*.'

KAULDER
(to the Boy)
Get out.

The Boy doesn't waste a second, running past Kaulder to freedom. Kaulder looks back to the Woman...STUBBLE now poking through her flesh, TUFTS OF SPIKY HAIR lurching from her skull...the witch manifesting her *true* form --

A FERAL-EYED YOUNG MAN (24)

This is ELLIC. A witch. Sinewy muscles. Piercings.

KAULDER (CONT'D)
Hello, Ellic.

He raises his gun and FIRES, an IRON-FRAGMENTED BULLET blasting from the chamber -- Ellic DIVES behind the bureau, moving SURPRISINGLY FAST. *His speed otherworldly.*

Kaulder FIRES A SERIES OF ROUNDS *into* the bureau, BLASTING FIST-SIZED HOLES, the sound ECHOING through the brownstone.

He steps forward, gun trained. Slowly, he edges past the bureau, gun leveled but --

Ellic's not there.

The witch SPRINGS up from another spot entirely. He lets the ceremonial Boline FLY! Kaulder nimbly dodges at the last second, blade THUNKING into the wall. Inches from his head.

When he looks back, Ellic is gone. A BACK DOOR leading downstairs now open!

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

Kaulder THUNDERS down the stairs, giving chase.

INT. BENEATH THE BROWNSTONE - DAY

Kaulder BURSTS through a door, finding himself in a SERIES OF UNDERGROUND CHAMBERS. Lots of wooden doors, SKITTERY HIP-HOP blaring from somewhere.

A modern-day witch lair.

Kaulder tries the knob on the first door. It's locked.

INT. CHAMBER ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

WHAM! The door BURSTS inward from Kaulder's kick, the witch hunter entering to find...

A RITUAL SYMBOL

Scrawled along the wall like a gang sign. Kaulder *stares, he's seen it before.*

KAULDER
Belial...

At his feet, a SACRIFICIAL PENTAGRAM...STRANGE WEEDS sprout in clusters along the edges, some kind of ceremonial root.

Hearing a sound -- he SPINS as -- WHAP! A GARDENING SHEAR SWIPES the air, cleanly *slicing the weed next to Kaulder's head.* He twists to find...

ELLIC

Garden Shears SPINNING deftly in each hand! Kaulder FIRES three shots, the witch DEFLECTING each easily with his blades. A WHIRLING FAN. He LUNGES! Tackling Kaulder, Ellic surprisingly strong.

ELLIC
Our kind. Pushed. Hunted. Second-class citizens. But no more.

A BLADE

PINS Kaulder's coat to the floor. He's trapped. Ellic looms, raising his other shear for the death blow. At the last second...

KAULDER

Pulls a PHOSPHORUS-LIGHT WAND, SNAPS it on -- WHOOSH! *The room EXPLODES with green light.* The witch SCREECHES, body instantly liquefying into a pool of black.

Kaulder recovers. Steps outside.

EXT. UNDERGROUND CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

A LITTLE GIRL (9) now stands, face smeared with grime -- She shakes, clutching a HELLO-KITTY doll.

LITTLE GIRL
Is the bad man gone?

Kaulder looks to her, not a trace of emotion.

KAULDER
Where's Belial?

The girl looks to him, sniffles. Not comprehending.

LITTLE GIRL
Belial?

She seems so lost...so innocent. A BEAT. Kaulder crouches, something in him momentarily softening...

A *QUICK FLASH OF IMAGES*

The VELVETEEN BIRD spreading its wings...a FIELD OF LONG GRASS...a BLUE SKY.

BACK TO SCENE

Kaulder's eyes go cold.

Fast as anything, he pulls out an iron dagger, SLICES the skin across his own arm, clearing his senses...

...When Kaulder looks back, the Little Girl's gone, revealing her true form --

A SCRAGGLY MALE WITCH

The doll in his hand is a BUTCHER KNIFE already VIOLENTLY SLASHING towards Kaulder!

The witch-hunter DODGES, gifted in all techniques of defense and combat. Scraggly looks to him. Grins through yellowed teeth.

SCRAGGLY

You'll never find Belial, witch hunter.

He LUNGES, butcher blade gleaming -- Kaulder PIVOTS, deftly flipping his dagger across his hand, letting it fly! THUNK! The blade HITS the witch square in the chest -- *But nothing happens.*

Scraggly pulls back his frayed jacket, revealing a THICK STEEL-LINED VEST.

He LAUGHS creepily. Kaulder's response? He pulls his gun, FIRES one round. BLAM! The bullet SPARKS off the hilt of the blade, HAMMERING it in a notch further through the protective steel until --

The witch's body liquefies into a SLICK. Dead.

CUT TO:

EXT. UPPER EAST SIDE - DAY

The nicest part of the city -- Where big money comes to get coddled, scrubbed and tucked in.

A HOMELESS MAN

Walks the sidewalk, a RAGGED TWINE hanging from his waist, tied to it a series of COMMON EVERYDAY OBJECTS. Totems. *We don't get a look at his face.*

Up ahead, a STOCKBROKER IN A PINSTRIPED-SUIT walks a powerful Bullmastiff named RODERICK.

PINSTRIPES
(to the dog)
Don't eat that!

He brutally SMACKS the dog with its leather leash -- The Homeless Man approaches, interrupting him. He pets Roderick, a TINY BELL jangling along the Bullmastiff's collar.

HOMELESS MAN
Magnificent creature...The Mastiff.
Once a regal breed. Bred for
greatness -- But look at him now...
Tethered. Broken. Living off
scraps.

Pinstripes could give a shit, pulls a five from his wallet.

PINSTRIPES
Just...please...take it and go.

Ignoring the handout, the Man rises, heading down the street ...we see he grips something in his hand: *The dog's tiny bell.*

HOMELESS MAN
(in witchtongue)
Voltai nikomo nerendus.

Behind him, the dog VEERS on his owner -- GROWLING, *surprisingly feral!*

PINSTRIPES
Roderick?

We don't SEE what happens next, only hearing as: Roderick ATTACKS his master with a SNARL!

The Homeless Man looks back with a grin...*We see his face for the first time* -- He's magnetic. A striking mix of ethnicities, a creature of the streets with a heart full of anthrax. This is BELIAL (30).

The dog pads after Belial -- savage-eyed -- joining its new master, both heading around the corner, moving past A LINE OF YOUNG BOYS AND GIRLS waiting to enter...

INT. TOY STORE - DAY

Upscale. Exclusive. Everything handcrafted, no cookie-cutter Fisher-Price stuff here -- A GRAY BEARDED PROPRIETOR works behind the counter, cheerfully helping the children with their purchases.

PROPRIETOR

Don't worry, there's enough here
for everyone...

But now he looks up, seeing Belial standing before him. The man nods grimly, revealing a set of bladed witch nails.

PROPRIETOR (CONT'D)

(to the children)
Sorry...we're closed.

GROANS as the children disperse, the Proprietor rummaging through a SAILOR'S CHEST filled with TOY CARS AND WOOD BLOCKS ...finally finding what he's looking for...

A PLASTIC BUCKET OF CHALK

He places it on the counter, each piece multicolored, made of the finest limestone, sandstone and shale -- He picks one out, hands it to Belial.

BELIAL

You like wasting your magicks on
children's playthings? You think
this is our true calling?

PROPRIETOR

I've seen your kind before...brash
upstarts who think they're
Witchkind's future -- Every last
one met their end at the witch
hunter's wrath...you'll be no
different.

At this, Belial's eyes gleam...

BELIAL

You're forgetting one thing, old hag
...He's never seen a witch like me.

His fingers coils tightly around the piece of chalk...heading out the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - DAY

A carnival crush of humanity, everything awash in electric lights. CLUSTERS OF TOURISTS take photographs. Glass and steel structures all around.

Kaulder moves through it. Alienated. Abandoned to the lonely dance of things which don't pass away.

He stops in front of

A TINY SHOP

Quaint. The window adorned with CRUCIFIXES and VIRGIN MARY STATUES. Everything weather-beaten. Nobody would give this place a second look...*and that's the idea.*

Kaulder steps inside.

INT. RELIGIOUS SHOP - DAY

Dusty. Shelves filled with HOLY CARDS and JESUS REPLICAS. An OVERWEIGHT MEXICAN WOMAN sits behind the register.

Kaulder heads through BEADED CURTAINS, entering --

INT. RELIGIOUS SHOP (STORE ROOM) - CONTINUOUS

Lots of SHIPPING BOXES, CLEANING SUPPLIES -- Kaulder stops before a WOODEN DOOR.

A METAL PLATE slides from the wall, revealing a SCANNER, L.E.D light playing across Kaulder's face as a HERMETICALLY SEALED DOOR opens with a HISS...

INT. PHOSPEROUS CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Kaulder steps into a STERILE-WHITE room, door SNAPPING shut behind him. He closes his eyes just as -- WHOOSH! -- A BLINDING BURST OF GREEN PHOSPHOROUS LIGHT fills the chamber.

As fast as it appeared, ANOTHER DOOR HISSES open, revealing...

A RICKETY ELEVATOR

Kaulder steps in. Closes the grate. Heads down.

INT. LOWER HALLWAY - DAY

Kaulder steps off the elevator and into a stone hallway, obviously an OLDER, HIDDEN STRUCTURE lying beneath the city -- Along the wall, TAPESTRIES, PAINTINGS, ANCIENT ARTIFACTS.

Kaulder moves past it all, heading into...

INT. ARMORY - NIGHT

A WIDE RACK filled with weapons of all shapes and sizes: guns, blades, grenades, explosives, throwing implements... you name it, it's here in some kind of modified design -- Hand-smithed by Kaulder himself.

He unburdens himself of his arsenal, stepping into...

INT. WORKSPACE - NIGHT

A YOUNG PRIEST pours through a PILE OF LEATHER TOMES -- This is TRAVIS (20's). A live-wire of juvescent energy.

Kaulder peels off the last of his Kevlar, revealing FRESH BRUISES. Travis frowns, face lined with concern.

TRAVIS

You've got to be careful, Kaulder.
Just because you can't die...
doesn't mean you can't get hurt.

Kaulder all but ignores him, going to a set of BRASS INSTRUMENTS -- Travis used to it.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

Okay, let's see...We left off in
1899...

(reading to Kaulder)

*"In the opinion of this Cardinal,
the witch coven's assassination
attempt on President McKinley was
prevented only by the tactful
efforts of hunter Captain Kaulder."*

(looks to Kaulder)
What'd you use?

KAULDER

A salted metal container. Rigged
to impact explode.

TRAVIS

(impressed)

America's first grenade...armed
with a cooking spice. Not bad.

Travis' attention shifts to the project the witch hunter's working on: A WALL OF GLASS JARS filled with POISONS, POWDERS and MISSHAPEN THINGS -- The young priest picks up a vial labeled *Box Jellyfish Venom*.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

When will you agree to stop this
ridiculous quest?

(MORE)

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

Whole centuries wasted trying to find
something that'll help you die...Just
so you can find a way back to your
family...

Kaulder doesn't reply.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

Did you ever think there was a
reason for what happened to you?
Maybe it's a part of His plan.
Maybe you were *chosen* --

KAULDER

I wasn't 'chosen'...
(beat)
I was cursed.

TRAVIS

'Cursed'. Let's see. You don't
grow old. You don't get sick.
And you call that a *curse*? You
sailed point on the Mayflower.
Fought the frontlines in Salem.
How many people alive can say
that? You. You're the only one.
You ever think about that?

A beat.

KAULDER

Every day.

He heads out, infinity echoed in his eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. ST. JOHN'S CATHEDRAL - DAY

Pigeons roost in the cracks of the basilica masonry.

INT. ST. JOHN'S CATHEDRAL - DAY

Shafts of light reveal a LONE FIGURE kneeling before a LIT
CANDLE. Kaulder. An old man in florid robes appears behind
him. This is CARDINAL DOLAN (76). Kaulder's 'boss'...and
the closest thing he has to a friend..

DOLAN

Travis tells me you're troubled.

KAULDER

Travis talks too much.

DOLAN

When I was his age, was I any
different around you?

A SUDDEN COUGH wracks his body -- He kneels delicately beside his charge, sensing Kaulder's loneliness. His isolation.

DOLAN (CONT'D)

Travis' faith is unshakable. He'll make a fine replacement...we both know my time's almost at hand -- Our faces may change but your service in our name does not.

Kaulder stares.

KAULDER

The situation with Belial disturbs me, his movements...his abilities ...He's mastered twelve crafting signatures when other witches merely have one --

DOLAN

-- I've taken it up with the Council. They're assisting in the matter.

KAULDER

(with disdain)

The *Witch* Council.

DOLAN

Would you have things different? Imagine our world without the benefits of the their knowledge: No polio vaccine...the atom unsplit.

(off Kaulder's silence)

Look. You did a fine job today. Take solace in that.

He rises with a struggle, rheumy eyes fixed on Kaulder.

DOLAN (CONT'D)

At our age...every victory's to be savored.

He exits, Kaulder now alone. *The ragged warrior pulls out the VELVETEEN BIRD from our opening. It's a tattered mess. Stitched together, faded and worn.* He pulls the string.

Its wings beat the empty air.

CUT TO:

EXT. HISTORICAL SOCIETY HEADQUARTERS - DAY

The oldest Museum in New York. Gothic Columns. Old world charm.

BELIAL

Stands at the front steps, Bullmastiff at his side, watching a LINE OF SCHOOL CHILDREN enter -- He strides down a SERVICE ALLEY, heading unseen toward the back of the museum, the edifice covered in DENSE GRAFFITI.

It's quiet here. No one around. Belial's hand runs along the wall, upon closer inspection the graffiti's a curious make-up of strange symbols and sigils: WITCHSCRIPT.

He pulls the CHALK PIECE, SCRAWLING the outline of a small doorway on the wall...he pushes against it, the door opening to reveal

A STAIRWAY

Made of rotted roots and dirt. The Bullmastiff GROWLS warily. Belial quiets it, motioning for the dog to stay.

Belial steps through, the door closing behind him as he treads downward beneath the foundation of the building... finally emerging into...

INT. COUNCIL SANCTUM - CONTINUOUS

A giant earthen structure.

BIZARRE SYMBOLS and COMPLEX SEALS carved into the walls, Middle Earth meets the Grimm Brothers -- He arrives at an arched gateway composed of BLACK ROSARY, THORNS AND BONE.

A WITCH SENTINEL

WITCH SENTINEL
(in Witchtounge)
No casssts allowed...

A taloned finger removes Belial's twine of totems, the Sentinel whispering his hands in front of Belial, 'scanning' him for any weapons.

He's clean.

Only now is Belial granted passage by the Sentinel.

INT. WITCH COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CONTINUOUS

Lit torches cast everything in a flickering light, an IMMENSE TREE rising through the center of a large wooden table, gnarled limbs stretched wide.

FIVE ELDER MEN AND WOMEN

Sit at the table. Amongst Manhattan's elite, they're the classiest socialites, the most generous philanthropists.

But down here...They are the Witch Council: A GRAY-HAIRED WOMAN with a Pomeranian, a EUROPEAN BARON-TYPE, TWIN AFRIKAAN ALBINO BROTHERS and an OVERWEIGHT GENTLEMEN sucking on a HOBBIT PIPE.

Their leader sits amongst them, A DISTINGUISHED MALE WITCH named GLAESER. Head of the Untouchables, the Elders of Witchkind. *How old is he? Older than you can imagine.*

Belial looks to Glaeser, kneeling according to custom.

BELIAL

With honor, I greet the Great Council...

GLAESER

Belial. We've been tasked by the Church to deal with your agitations ...in accordance with the truce your sentence should be execution.

(beat)

But your hand in brokering peace between the covens buys you deliberation.

BELIAL

I appreciate the Council's mercy ...but surely you must be tired of taking cues from the very institution that's oppressed our kind for centuries?

The Council shifts, uneasy -- Belial noticing the leaves of the Great Tree TREMORING slightly.

GLAESER

The truce was a means of saving Witchkind from extinction in darker times. It's served us well --

BELIAL

-- It's served you well. The rest of us...We're a beaten tribe.

(MORE)

BELIAL (CONT'D)
 Barely scraping by.
 (stands)
*What would you say if I could give
 us the ability to turn the tide?*

At this, the Council exchange looks -- BLACK BUDS opening and closing excitedly along the tree.

BELIAL (CONT'D)
 Your conditioning says no...but the Great Tree betrays deeper feelings.
 (bows)
I'll take the display as a temporary vote of confidence. When I next come before you, it will be to herald a new dawn.

And with that, he heads out -- We HOLD ON GLAESER watching the young radical, touching an EBONY RING along his finger, troubled...as we CUT TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON STREET BRIDGE - DAY

A sprawling TENT CITY beneath the shadows of the bridge. The city's homeless -- Belial navigates his way through the lost and forgotten, blending in perfectly...

INT. SHANTY - CONTINUOUS

Belial enters his tent, making sure the entrance flap is tightly secured -- He spreads a CIRCLE OF YELLOW SAND across the floor, kneeling before a CONICAL SYMBOL.

BELIAL
 (in witchtongue)
Notos slatai therondo...

The atmosphere darkens like a shroud, air thickening into primordial tendrils around him...

We are in the TRANSOM...the space between space -- A FACE is summoned from the ether, eyes gleaming with a veiled madness. Belial nods to the spectral figure. This is MARBAS.

BELIAL (CONT'D)
 Marbas. I've met with the Council and done as you instructed.

MARBAS
Did they suspect you of anything?

BELIAL
 Everything...but that's not my concern. You promised me delivery.

MARBAS

*Unforeseen complications. You'll
find the artifact in the possession
of a helpless witch named Chloe.*

(beat)

*But why have you not done as YOU
promised...why have you not
released me from my prison?*

BELIAL

You have my word it'll happen
shortly...But only after I have the
artifact in my possession.

MARBAS

(angered)

You dare make demands, I MADE you --

Before he can continue, Belial's hand LASHES forward,
breaking the circle of sand -- Immediately the transom with
Marbas is severed, sunlight flooding back into the shanty.

Belial stares, a thin smile playing across his lips.

BELIAL

Chloe.

TENDRILS OF STEAM rise from his body, a byproduct of time in
the transom -- We hear a distant ROARING SOUND, growing
LOUDER as it BECOMES...

INT. KAULDER'S SANCTUM - DAY

The RUMBLE of a SUBWAY TRAIN.

It's dark. We're not sure where we are -- This is a hidden
place.

Finally, a door opens, a WEDGE OF LIGHT illuminating a
shrouded space. Hard to make anything out. Kaulder steps
through, lights a candle.

As he moves through the chamber we see DOZENS OF ANTIQUES,
any of these would fetch a fortune on the open market.
There's a bed here, a table. Not much else. A place stuck
in another time.

Finally, he stops, standing before --

TWO LARGE PORTRAITS

16th Century. Exquisite craftsmanship. One shows a
BEAUTIFUL WOMAN, the other a LITTLE GIRL.

Kaulder stares. Taking in the silence.

He pulls out a METAL FLASK and unscrews the top, raising it. AN AMBER LIQUID spills out, a scant few drops landing on his lips.

Kaulder eagerly licks them off...we hear a DISTANT SOUND ...a CHILD LAUGHING...soft, melodious...Kaulder's chest hitches, experiencing a brief flash of precious relief.

And then it's over.

Kaulder stares at the now empty flask. Lost. Alone.

KAULDER
In my time of need...strengthen me.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY (ESTABLISHING) - DUSK

The New York skyline -- Sun falling behind the buildings.

EXT. CITY BLOCK - DUSK

Kaulder walks the street, pedestrians moving out of his way. Wary of the strange man in the tattered coat -- He stops before one of New York's most iconic buildings...

INT. FLATIRON BUILDING - DUSK

Kaulder enters the building, steps through an UNMARKED SERVICE DOOR, it leads to an old CAGED ELEVATOR. He takes it up.

INT. FLATIRON BUILDING (TOP FLOOR) - DUSK

Kaulder SLIDES open the grate, stepping out. The hallway filled with empty offices and a single window.

THROUGH THE WINDOW

A SINGLE RAY OF SUNLIGHT SHINES, New York's last of the day -- It ALIGHTS on a SMALL GLASS GLOBE affixed to a WOODEN DOOR at the end of the hall.

Kaulder approaches the door. Stands before it. From inside the glass globe, an IRIS opens, SNAPPING into place.

The door swings open...

INT. PARLOUR LAST LIGHT - SAME TIME

Dark and murky. Everything lit by hazy gaslight. LOW TABLES are flanked by CRUSHED VELVET PILLOWS, clutters of GLASS GLOBES sitting atop.

The few PATRONS eye Kaulder. Suspicious. A RAVEN-HAIRED HOSTESS leads Kaulder to a CIRCULAR BAR backlit by rows of COLORED BOTTLES.

HOSTESS

I'll let Dür know you're here.

She seats Kaulder at the bar. Walks off. The place is bustling with a bizarre kind of nightlife, otherworldly vice and back door dealings.

The clientele? A curious mix of the coolest hipsters and the über wealthy -- An OLDER STOCKBROKER lies prostrate, GIGGLING like a little girl...A SOHO PAINTER dances in the corner with his eyes closed. EAGER HOSTESSES refill their glasses.

Finally, a RAVISHING WHITE WITCH with frosted hair emerges, approaching Kaulder from behind the bar. This is DÜER (34).

KAULDER

So...Serving humans. Again.

Despite his demeanor, we can see they have an affinity for each other -- She flashes him a smile. Dark and flirty.

DÜER

C'mon. If you wanted to bust me, you would've years ago...but where would be the fun in that?

No other witch could get away with that...but Dür's different. These two have history -- A SUDDEN GLINT makes Kaulder turn, it comes from a girl alone in the corner, a LONE DAGGER dancing nervously across her hand. Chloe.

KAULDER

What's she doing here?

DÜER

Chloe? Visiting her big sister for a few days, I'm teaching her the family trade.

KAULDER

Does big sister know little sister's ripping off Belladonna dealers in Washington Square?

DÜER

Chloe has a gift for bad decisions
 ...but...what's the phrase?
 'Privilege of youth'.
 (getting to business)
Now...We both know why you're
 really here --

She goes to a BOX kept on a special shelf, wood like sweet polished chocolate. She pulls out an ANTIQUE BOTTLE with a faded label, swirling the DARK AMBER LIQUID within.

DÜER (CONT'D)

Every memory's distilled to its essence. Add a crush of flowers, stir in leaves of wormwood. What do you get? Memories the color of rainwater, hot inside the ribs like a firebrand...

(points to a client)

For *her* -- It's vanity. She comes to remember the way men looked at her when she still had her looks.

(points to another)

For him? Innocence. A chance to recapture the world through five-year-old eyes, unsullied by cruel experience.

(looks to Kaulder)

But you? You're unique.

KAULDER

Why's that?

Chloe finishes MUDDLING the elixir with WORMWOOD, placing a curved glass before him.

DÜER

For you...it's about pain.

She smiles sadly, pouring the concoction, the smell of PEPPERMINT and CANDLE WAX wafting up.

DÜER (CONT'D)

This one's on the house.

A BEAT -- Kaulder stares at the liquid, riveted like a junkie. Finally, he picks up the glass, downing it in one gulp.

The effect is immediate.

The air around him goes DARK at the edges, a muffled INSECT HUM rising, Kaulder seemingly PLUNGED backward...but instead of hitting the floor, he lands...

IN A GRASSY MEADOW

Tall and lush. The MURMUR OF CICADAS all around. He sits up, hearing the sound of a LITTLE GIRL GIGGLING.

KAULDER
Elisabeth...

He catches sight of a MOP OF CURLY HAIR bouncing through the grass, coming towards him. He ducks back down, reaching out with his hand, grabbing up a NAKED FOOT.

Kaulder pulls his daughter towards him.

ELISABETH (7) laughs with abandon, struggling playfully against her father's chest.

ELISABETH
Daddy...you're supposed to be
hiding.

She rests her head against him. A lot of love here -- She reaches into her pocket, pulling out SOMETHING WRAPPED IN CLOTH.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)
I made this for you...

Kaulder opens the present, revealing the *Velveteen Bird*.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)
It'll keep you safe -- Promise to
keep it with you?

Kaulder stares at the toy, heart swelling.

KAULDER
Always, honey.

In the distance: A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN waves from a cottage doorway. Breathtakingly beautiful. Kaulder's wife. ANGELIKA (30).

Kaulder grins widely, scooping Elisabeth over his shoulder, heading for her...but suddenly -- He STUMBLES. FALLING TO HIS KNEES. His daughter steps off, concerned.

ELISABETH
Daddy?

Kaulder lays back in the grass, stricken, staring up at the sky. His hand grasps out, trying to reach his daughter... but she CRUMBLES at his touch, the entire meadow sweeping into DUST as we CUT TO --

EXT. PARLOUR LAST LIGHT - NIGHT

Kaulder's eyes FLASH open. He tries to sit-up, can't. His eyes bloodshot. He looks like shit.

Finally, he manages to stand. Lurches.

Something catches his attention --

CHLOE

Steps out a door in the back, acting suspicious, talking with a MALE WITCH clad in a BROCADE COAT.

CHLOE

-- It has to be worth *something*,
Worm. Make me an offer.

She stops, seeing Kaulder rapidly approaching. Worm quickly leaves, Chloe doing her best to gather herself. She can tell the witch hunter's hungover.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

I don't think my sister would be
happy with you being back here.

She tries to gently lead him away...but Kaulder's not buying it, heading for the door. Chloe tries a different gambit, talking fast --

CHLOE (CONT'D)

-- She likes you, you know.

An obvious diversion -- But Chloe has a knack for it. Kaulder stops, hesitating.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

I see how she looks at you...and I
think you like her too.

KAULDER

She's a witch --

CHLOE

-- And you're a witch-hunter.
'Romantic'...when you think about
it.

She stares, her contempt for Kaulder momentarily shining through -- Kaulder's had enough, looks back to the door.

KAULDER

Enough stalling...

WHAM! He SLAMS the door open with a SHARP KICK, heads inside...

INT. PARLOUR LAST LIGHT (BACK ROOM) -- NIGHT

A room usually reserved for V.I.P.'s. Draped fabrics and dark furniture. But right now, it's empty...except for one thing -- CHLOE'S MYSTERIOUS BOX sits on the table. Beckoning.

Kaulder goes to it, flips open the lid, finding something he hasn't seen in over four hundred years -- the AGED WOOD, the CONICAL SIGIL...

KAULDER
The Plague Box.
(beat)
Impossible...

Kaulder spins on Chloe with a renewed ferocity, full-on Hunter mode, gripping her throat.

KAULDER (CONT'D)
-- Where'd you get this?

CHLOE
A friend. He was scared. Asked me to keep it safe --

KAULDER
What friend?

Before Chloe can answer, something in the doorway catches Kaulder's attention. It's Dürer. Her face darkened.

DÜER
You want to rough up a girl? I'm right here.

A BEAT -- Kaulder and Dürer lock eyes...Chloe sees her chance, she grabs the artifact, DARTING past her sister...Kaulder doesn't have time to explain. He races after Chloe.

INT. PARLOUR LAST LIGHT -- NIGHT

Chloe makes it to the front door, barreling straight into --

BELIAL

Standing in the doorway.

BELIAL
Leaving so soon, Chloe? I wouldn't recommend it.

He grabs Chloe, entering the bar along with his GENERALS: DIFFERENT ETHNICITIES: SERBIAN, MEXICAN, TURKISH, ARMENIAN AND ABORIGINAL. *Five in all.* Each subtly bedecked in the dress and style of their mother culture.

He shoves her forward, *only now seeing Kaulder emerge from the back with the Goetia* -- A sense of inevitability, two opposing forces finally crossing paths.

BELIAL (CONT'D)
Witch hunter...

Kaulder's already going for his gun, *but he's slower than usual, almost clumsy, he's still in rough shape from the memory drink* -- Belial's got the advantage, PINNING Kaulder to the bar with a SAVAGE FURY.

BELIAL (CONT'D)
How many of my kind have you
slaughtered? The Crusades? The
Blight? Salem?

CLIENTS and WORKERS race for the door, Belial PUMMELING Kaulder with a series of BRUTAL KICKS -- Kaulder reels in pain as the Generals converge around Chloe.

BELIAL (CONT'D)
Do you know witch children tell
your stories? You're our
boogeyman. Our monster...

With every word he offers another PUNCH, the witch's wrath palpable.

BELIAL (CONT'D)
I grew up hearing every single
one...and I vowed to give your story
my own ending.

Kaulder struggles but Belial's too strong. *The witch's hand brushes his twine of totems* -- He clicks his nails, the air between his palm BLURRING, about to LAUNCH a spell...but at the last second --

A MEMORY BOTTLE

SLAMS over his skull, Belial caught off guard. Kaulder looks up to see Duer! She saved him.

KAULDER

Drives his forehead into Belial's chin. Hand grabbing up his gun -- Kaulder FIRES, PEPPERING the room, nailing Mexican and Albanian witch, bodies SPLASHING as they hit the floor!

BELIAL

Easily DODGES, rolling up on a dime to grab Dürer, using her as a shield! Kaulder hesitates, if he fires he'll kill her. A BEAT -- Belial clutching Dürer, *whispering* in her ear.

BELIAL (CONT'D)

Let me show you how I deal with
traitors.

He pulls a RITUAL DAGGER, *slices it across Dürer's neck* -- Dürer collapses, her body dissolving to an ebony slick as she hits the ground! Dead.

Time SLOWS...Kaulder's eyes flicking to Chloe...seeing the horrified look in her eyes...and off her PAINFUL WAIL --

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! Kaulder unleashes a BOOMING FUSILLADE, but Belial's too fast -- He LUNGES, Kaulder finding himself FIGHTING a witch with the strength of a tiger, the battle BRUTAL, spilling throughout the bar.

THE THREE WITCHES

Move in on Chloe, dark grins curling across their faces, *time RAMPING into SYRUPY SLOWNESS as...*

THE SERBIAN

Uncoils his hand, a mixture of gas and oil EMITTING from his palm pores -- PLUMES OF LIQUID FIRE BLOSSOMING toward Chloe.

CHLOE

DIVES atop a table at the last second, helpless to watch as a CARPET OF FIRE spreads across the floor.

Oh wait...did I say helpless?

My mistake.

Like quicksilver, her hand FLASHES UP, revealing a SERIES OF FIVE KNIVES between each finger -- THRACK! She lets one FLY, blade HISSING through the air!

TRACK THE KNIFE

WEAVING through the witches like a heatseeker, homing in on the Serbian as it EMBEDS smack dab into his fire-casting palm.

OIL AND GAS

SPUTTER wildly as WHOOSH! -- The mixture DOUSES his arm, flame FEVERISHLY SPREADING up his body, quickly consuming the witch in his own fire until he's nothing more than ashes.

THE REMAINING TWO WITCHES...

Spring into action, HURTLING toward Chloe. Turkish spits an IMPOSSIBLY LONG BLACK LINE of BETEL, SIZZLING as it hits the floor, barely missing her.

CHLOE

Lets fly TWO KNIVES, spreading her hands, blades STREAKING through the air -- *As if on command, the knives SPLIT apart at a ninety-degree angle, one going right, one going left.*

Both find their targets.

Aboriginal and Turkish go down, blades embedded in their necks -- Dürer's entire bar now SHROUDED IN FIRE as...

KAULDER AND BELIAL

BATTLE it out, two dark figures amongst swirls of orange flame -- With a ROAR, Belial manages to GRAB UP the Witch Hunter, SPIKING him into the shelves behind the bar with LETHAL FORCE!

THE MEMORY BOTTLES SHATTER

Colored Glass SPLINTERING! Countless memories now lost forever in time as Kaulder lies on the ground, crumpled in pain.

KAULDER'S P.O.V.

As he looks up...Woozy. Barely conscious. Flames all around. Through the fire, he sees one bottle CRACKED and SHATTERED...HIS BOTTLE...

Grasping, he reaches, the bottle just out of reach, dark liquid dribbling to the floor. He can almost touch it, but --

A BOOT SLAMS across his chin! It's Belial. He LOOMS over Kaulder. In his hand? The Plague Box.

BELIAL (CONT'D)
Tonight we're going to finish what
the Queen started --

WHOOSH! Sudden flames RISE UP around the witch, DRIVING him back -- Rampaging fire enclosing around Kaulder, the witch hunter too exhausted to get up, his body about to be consumed ...but at the last second --

ARMS

Reach around him. Chloe! She pulls him from the fire.

CHLOE
Belial's getting away.

Kaulder LURCHES, stumbling from Chloe's grip, both of them making it out the doorway in time to see --

INT. FLATIRON BUILDING (TOP FLOOR) - SAME TIME

Belial as he CRASHES out the window, Kaulder and Chloe racing to it...

ANGLE OUT THE WINDOW

As Belial hits the roof of the next building, rolling into a cool crouch. Looks back at Kaulder with a feral grin.

BELIAL
I'd keep an eye on your girlfriend
...she's a marked witch now.

Kaulder's about to go after him, but before he can --

ABORIGINAL AND TURKISH WITCH

YANK him back with a HORRID SHRIEK, Chloe's blades still in their necks! Kaulder GRABS onto the daggers. Twists! The witches writhing in pain.

Chloe steps in front of them. Eyes dark.

CHLOE
This is for my sister.

She KICKS, sending both witches FLYING backwards into the CAGED ELEVATOR -- Her hand comes up with her one last blade.

CHLOE (CONT'D)
And...this is for her bar.

She FLINGS the dagger, blade SLICING through the elevator cable -- WHOOSH! The cage PLUMMETS, CRASHING to the floor in a pile of twisted metal!

She goes to the window, joining Kaulder as he stares.

Belial's gone.

CUT TO:

INT. PARLOR LAST LIGHT - NIGHT

The smoldering ruin of Dürer's bar.

Kaulder SLAMS Chloe against a wall, walnut wood panel simmering inches from her face -- She struggles, but Kaulder's grip is too strong.

CHLOE

-- It was Lorre. I worked witch-cons with him. Nothing big. He went away for a week, came back with the box. I had no idea he was involved with Belial. It's true, why would I lie?

Kaulder can think of a hundred reasons.

KAULDER

Where's he now?

CHLOE

Storage Room. Eldridge and Division...the black stain on the floor.

A SOLEMN BEAT, finally Kaulder releases his grip -- Chloe rummages through the debris, finds her sister's ring, she stares. Mournful.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

Dürer didn't know anything about any of this, she was always trying to keep me out of trouble.

(gazes around)

Look how I pay her back.

Her eyes start to mist -- But she refuses to cry in front of the witch hunter, watching as Kaulder snaps the 'Purifier' up from the floor, heading for the door.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

Where you going?

KAULDER

To clean up your mess.

Chloe stares, something new blooming inside her: Purpose

CHLOE

I can help you.

Kaulder shoves past her.

KAULDER

This isn't a game. The plague
takes everyone.

He strides for the door -- Chloe stops him, a jolting flash
of anger in her face.

CHLOE

Belial *marked* me. Every witch in
the city's gonna be after me by
daybreak --

KAULDER

(holstering his gun)
Your problem.

CHLOE

She was my *sister*, asshole --

Kaulder ignores her, heading out into...

INT. FLATIRON LOBBY (STAIRS) - NIGHT

He strides down the cavernous stairway leading to the first
floor -- Chloe chases after him.

CHLOE

Wait!
(beat)
I can lead you to Belial.

At this, Kaulder stops.

Now she's got his attention.

CUT TO:

EXT. HISTORICAL SOCIETY - NIGHT

A FULL MOON

Rises behind the Gothic structure...Belial clutching the
Goetia as he SCRAWLS chalk along the wall. Tonight is his
appointment with destiny.

He heads inside.

INT. COUNCIL SANCTUM - NIGHT

The Witch Sentinel's clawed nails remove Belial's totem
twine. Studying the Goetia, its hand whispers across the
air, 'reading' Belial for weapons.

All clear. The Sentinel nods, granting Belial passage.

INT. WITCH COUNCIL CHAMBER - NIGHT

The Council sit at the table, already engaged, the Female Elder hunching over a SET OF BROWN LEAVES spread before her. She studies their withered flesh, mysteries only she can read -- The Council in mid-debate on the Belial situation.

FEMALE ELDER

-- The Portends are dire if we align with Belial: Chaos. War. Death.

GLAESER

Then we're all in accord...the time to stop him has come.

He girds himself as Belial enters the chamber, stopping at the opposite end of the long table -- As according custom, a GOBLET OF NETTLE WINE awaits, Belial taking a ritual sip.

BELIAL

I come not in war...but in solidarity. I ask for your hand in bringing Witchkind back to its former glory.

Glaeser's face registers his disgust.

GLAESER

You know nothing of our true past.

BELIAL

No...?

He unwraps the oilskin, placing the Plague Box on the table.

BELIAL (CONT'D)

I come before you with a link to our history and the way to our future.

(beat)

The Goetia will live tonight.

The Council stare at the artifact, Glaeser allowing himself a tight smile.

GLAESER

Your actions only show your limits. You do not possess the Goetia...you only possess a single piece.

Belial stares, now that we get a good look at it...we see Glaeser is right...*it is, in fact, only one half of the heart of the box* -- Belial's face distorts with anger, realizing his mistake.

BELIAL
I was misled.

GLAESER
No...you're merely a foolish witch dabbling in magicks beyond your understanding.

BELIAL
And you're betrayers of your own kind! You've kept us in bondage long enough --

GLAESER
-- Don't go too far, Belial -- Even you can't harm us in this chamber, the walls are lined with protective sigils...casting is impossible.

Belial grins.

BELIAL
Whoever said I need to cast?

He BACKHANDS the cup of Nettle Wine, AMBER LIQUID splashing across the entirety of the table...and from the folds of his right palm he reveals --

A SINGLE MATCH

He STRIKES it with his nail, tossing it onto the table -- WHOOSH -- The flame catches the wine, sending a RIPPLING WAVE OF FIRE across the ancient wood, the Great Tree quickly consumed!

THE COUNCIL

BURST INTO FLAMES, *their link to the ancient tree their only weakness* -- As the last of the tree is consumed, the Council's flesh petrifies into knobby bark, CHARRING and BLACKENING.

BELIAL

Watches, clutching the Goetia piece, flames reflected in his eyes.

HOLD ON THE ELDERS

As their forms lie immobile, bodies forever frozen in horrible twisted shapes, open mouths now ROTTED KNOTS, fingers GNARLED BRANCHES.

The last line of Ancients is no more.

Hearing a noise, Belial SPINS, to now see --

THE SENTINEL

Its pale, stark face stares. Silent. Ominous.

And then it does something surprising...

The Sentinel bows before its new Master.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRIGHTON BEACH - NIGHT

Little Odessa. Home to the Russian enclave.

Kaulder and Chloe head down a derelict street, boarded up stores and empty alleyways.

Ahead, their destination: A CRUMBLING STRUCTURE. The kind you'd walk past a hundred times without noticing -- The distant sound of PULSING MUSIC.

Kaulder heads for it. Chloe stops him.

CHLOE

Hey. I have to go in alone. The Russian coven own this place. What do you think would happen if they saw your face in there --

KAULDER

I'm not letting you go into Konstantin's club by yourself.

CHLOE

Why not?

KAULDER

I don't trust you.

A beat. Chloe can't blame him.

CHLOE

You think, Konstantin, the leader of the Russian coven's going to be happy to see you?

(thinks it over)

(MORE)

CHLOE (CONT'D)

Okay, fine. Play it your way --
But keep in mind one thing: I'm
not my sister. To me, you're not
even a man. You're a murderer.
Head down until I say so -- And no
matter what you see in there, no
hunting.

She turns up the collar on Kaulder's coat, musses his hair a bit.

KAULDER

What're you doing?

CHLOE

Trying to make you look cool.

She looks at him. Frowns. It'll have to do. She takes his hand, leading him down

A STAIRWELL

To the lower depths -- She approaches a DOOR, speaking to a BOUNCER out front. A HAMMER AND SICKLE TATTOO spiders down the side of his face, the hint of LOUD MUSIC creeping through...impossible to hear what they're talking about.

While the Bouncer is distracted, Chloe opens the door wider, Kaulder's head down as she leads him through...

INT. BANYA CLUB - NIGHT

It's dark, cavernous. Hundreds of people in here. The MUSIC is ear-splitting. Pulsing. Lights flash. The floors and walls completely tiled, this place used to be a bathhouse.

An empty pool is now a dancefloor -- Chloe steps into the shallow end, talking to one of the DANCERS as Kaulder stands at the lip. Watching.

Kaulder has to forcibly restrain himself from putting his hand on the 'Purifier', TATTOOED RUSSIAN WITCHES moving through the mostly human crowd around him.

Across the pool, a stunning WITCH IN A STRAPLESS DRESS eyes Kaulder. *Does she recognize him? Maybe.*

Chloe comes back.

CHLOE

You're drawing attention.

(pulls him close)

They're finding Konstantin for me.

He hates Belial.

(MORE)

CHLOE (CONT'D)
They had a falling out years ago.
He talks about it when he
drinks...and he drinks a lot.

KAULDER
So...we just stand here and wait?

Chloe notices Strapless watching them. *Chloe moves against Kaulder, pretending he's her date, attempting to blend in.* The beat THROBS between them. Relentless. Pounding.

CHLOE
I hear stories about you...must be
nice, not having to be afraid of
dying.

She looks to see Strapless losing interest, walking away -- Chloe keeps up the charade anyway, studying Kaulder's face.

CHLOE (CONT'D)
So...what happens when you get
stabbed? Shot? You just heal?
You're invincible...

KAULDER
Nobody's invincible. I bleed like
any man...I just can't die.

His eyes flick away, the music THROBBING louder, filling the silence that follows.

Chloe stares, struck.

CHLOE
I bet you've had to say a lot of
goodbyes.

Kaulder forces himself to harden, Chloe catching a glimpse of the sadness within. The moment holds. Intimate. Fragile. Beams of light SPLITTING around the two of them until --

A HAND

Lands on Chloe's shoulder. It's her friend, laughing, pulling Chloe away. Not wanting to arouse suspicion, she allows herself to be taken away.

Kaulder is alone.

INT. BANYA CLUB (ICE ROOM) - NIGHT

FEMALE WITCH BARTENDERS clad in fur coats of mink pour vodka shots on a bar made of a GIANT BLOCK OF ICE -- Kaulder walks through the crowd. Tries to keep his face hidden.

He catches A BEAUTIFUL FEMALE WITCH (Tattoos/Piercings) leading TWO MEN through a doorway, Kaulder's "spidey-sense" going off. He heads toward the door.

UNSEEN BY HIM...

Strapless watches from across the room.

INT. BANYA CLUB (STEAM ROOM) - NIGHT

A vast space, shrouded in WHITE STEAM. The music in here is different. Low. Droning. Somewhere lights STROBE. Everything dreamlike.

Kaulder walks through the murk, seeing DISTANT SHAPES shrouded in the steam. He steps forward. Finding --

MEN

Naked, lying in tiled tiers, staring at the lights -- A DISTANT SMILE plays across all their faces, locked in some kind of blissful trance.

SWEAT

Drips from their bodies, pooling into a HIDDEN SLUICE lining the floor...Kaulder follows it, tracing a SYMBOL in the grooves...

The sweat fills up a BASIN on the opposite side of the room -- Kaulder watching as the FEMALE WITCH dunks a shotglass inside, drinking her victim's precious bodily fluid like Absolut.

Before he knows it --

STRAPLESS

Emerges through the steam...but she's not alone: TWO MALE WITCHES are with her -- They have Chloe. EDGED WEAPONS pressed against her neck. Kaulder freezes.

Strapless looks to one of the Male Witches, speaks with a thick Russian accent.

STRAPLESS
(spits)
Take this piece of shit to
Konstantin.

CUT TO:

INT. BANYA CLUB (TEA ROOM) - NIGHT

Elegant and refined. Air smoky with cigarettes and cigars. MEMBERS OF THE RUSSIAN COVEN having a 'damn good time. Lots of laughter. Drinking.

Kaulder and Chloe are brought in, drunken cheers all around. Chloe looks to Kaulder, pissed.

CHLOE

You were supposed to keep your head down. I was handling it.

A door opens to reveal a rock 'n roll looking Russian Witch, Strapless draped over his arm. This is KONSTANTIN. Leader of the Russian coven -- He looks to Chloe.

KONSTANTIN

Chloe. You don't return my calls. Refuse to see me. Then I hear you're at my club. I think how nice -- But you don't come alone.
(beat)
You know how jealous I get.

He SPINS, throwing a WICKED PUNCH into Kaulder's stomach, the witch hunter collapsing to the floor -- The rest of the coven ROARS.

KONSTANTIN (CONT'D)

(wheels on Chloe)

What makes you think you can bring the *witch-hunter* into my club and get away with it -- ?!

CHLOE

It was stupid. I know...but give me a chance to explain. We need your help --

KONSTANTIN

Does the mongoose help the *snake*? Does the sheep help the *wolf*? No? Why would I help my sworn enemy?

WHAM! He LAYS into Kaulder, knocking him on his ass -- Again, the coven eats it up.

CHLOE

As much as you hate Kaulder... you hate Belial more, no?

At Belial's name, Konstantin spits.

KONSTANTIN

Belial. He a pig. What does girl like you know about pigs?

CHLOE

I know the same thing everyone else knows. He's gaining power everyday, moving in on other covens, including yours. He's the new King Shit...has to make you nervous.

KONSTANTIN

Nervous? He's *nothing*. I *made* that witch-rat and he turns on me.

CHLOE

Exactly. So *why not* lead the witch-hunter to him? What's the Chinese proverb?

(in his ear, seductive)
'The enemy of my enemy is my friend'.

Kaulder has to admit it. She's *good* -- Lots of MURMURED VOICES, Konstantin motioning for silence. A beat as he considers, looks to Kaulder.

KONSTANTIN

So. You take care of Belial...or Belial take care of you? I figure ...Either way, I win.

He pours a shot of vodka, knocks it back.

KONSTANTIN (CONT'D)

We grew up together. He was orphan. A mutt. But he impress me. I take him in...we do everything together.

(beat)
 But then everything change.

CHLOE

How?

KONSTANTIN

Belial met a man. Someone who knows more about Witchkind than witches. He teach Belial things, ways of the Ancients. Put funny ideas into his head. Suddenly, Belial think he different. Knows better than rest.

(beat)

(MORE)

KONSTANTIN (CONT'D)
This man very important to Belial.
You find him. You find Belial.

CHLOE
Who is he?

KONSTANTIN
I think witch-hunter must know who
I talk about.

KAULDER
Marbas.

Konstantin nods -- Chloe surprised by this turn. The Russian looks to Kaulder, hand holding up a shotglass of vodka.

KONSTANTIN
So now that you know -- Join me.
One drink.

Kaulder ignores the invitation, Konstantin visibly bristling as the witch hunter rises to go.

STRAPLESS

Leans to Konstantin, *whispering something in his ear* -- The Russian leader's expression suddenly shifts -- Chloe turns to go but -- WHAP! -- KONSTANTIN'S HAND AXE THUNKS into the floor at her feet, stopping her.

KONSTANTIN (CONT'D)
(to Kaulder)
You go. But your friend? She
stays with me.

CHLOE
That wasn't part of the deal.

KONSTANTIN
Let *me* tell you deal. I just learn
you have mark on your head. A mark
is money...and everyone know...I
never turn down money.

The coven pull SHARPENED BLADES, training them on Chloe. This is serious -- Konstantin grins, a predator playing with his food.

KONSTANTIN (CONT'D)
Of course, I could reconsider. But
only on one condition.

CHLOE
What?

KONSTANTIN

I challenge Kaulder. If he win...
you go free. If I win...I get you.

A long moment -- Chloe's eyes tick to Kaulder.

He stands, framed in the doorway -- All he has to do is walk right out.

But he doesn't.

KAULDER

What's the challenge?

Off Konstantin's devilish smile we CUT TO:

EXT. TEA ROOM (MOMENTS LATER) - NIGHT

A SMALL TABLE plopped between Konstantin and Kaulder, the entirety of the coven gathered around -- Chloe standing next to Kaulder.

KONSTANTIN

(looks to Kaulder)

I wonder...have you ever had
Mandrake...?

Chloe's face falls, Vladimir coming from behind the bar holding a DARK BOTTLE with a FADED LABEL. He places it on the table, inside an AMBER MIXTURE.

KONSTANTIN (CONT'D)

It's very rare breed of compound.
My father spent years scouring the
earth: Deserts...mountain regions.
Nothing.

(beat)

But then he heard reports of a
village. Not dead...but not alive.
Their minds gone. Something got
into the drinking supply. Mandrake.
He found the root, dug it up...and
nurtured his own stock. Why?

(louder)

Because it tastes so damn' good!

The coven laughs uproariously -- Konstantin uncorks the bottle, pouring the dark liquid into a shotglass before each of them.

KONSTANTIN (CONT'D)

Every year, on my father's
birthday, I drink one glass to
honor him. Guess what tonight is?

(MORE)

KONSTANTIN (CONT'D)

(beat)

Only one problem. Any other witch
who drink with me ends up a
vegetable. Mad with visions. I
think maybe I drink with the wrong
type. Instead of a witch...maybe
this year I drink with witch-hunter.

He holds the shot up, admiring the way it catches the light.
Then he downs it, smacks his lips.

KONSTANTIN (CONT'D)

Keep up with me. Chloe goes free.

A long moment, tension gathering amongst the coven...finally
Kaulder picks up the shot before him, FLECKS OF TAPROOT
floating in the mixture.

He eyes Konstantin.

KAULDER

I knew your father.

(beat)

He was an asshole.

And with that, he downs the shot. For just a moment, he
wavers -- *his WIFE appearing within the coven for just an
instant* -- But then regains himself. Places the shot down.

KAULDER (CONT'D)

Your turn.

Konstantin's impressed. Vladimir pours another round as the
coven MURMURS -- Eyes locked on Kaulder, Konstantin downs his
next shot.

Chloe's growing increasingly wary. She leans down.

CHLOE

(whispering to Kaulder)

You don't have to do this, my
sister taught me Mandrake. It's
evil shit --

Konstantin silences her with a wave. He sees the way she
looks at Kaulder. Doesn't like it. A long moment. The room
goes quiet...Closing his eyes, Kaulder raises the shot to his
lips. Swallows it down.

And when he lowers his glass? His eyes open to see...

INT. KAULDER COTTAGE - DAY

It's 1648.

Kaulder's now sitting at a wooden table, a plate before him. Freshly cooked meat and fruit. He looks around: A cozy fire burns in a stone hearth, his armor and sword hung along the wall in the corner.

He's home.

The front door opens. Kaulder spins, a wedge of golden light spilling through the doorway as --

ANGELIKA

Enters. Eyes sparkling. Full of joyous life.

ANGELIKA

You cur -- The brigade came back
early and you didn't find me?

She rushes to Kaulder, embraces him -- A long moment. Kaulder staring. He smooths his wife's hair, warmth radiating between them.

KAULDER

I've missed you.

ANGELIKA

And, I you.

He scoops her up, Angelika laughing blissfully. He takes her toward the bed...and as they both FLOP down they're now...

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Lying on a rock next to a BURBLING STREAM. He stares into her eyes. It's a beautiful day. Kaulder's horse is nearby.

ANGELIKA

What are you thinking?

Kaulder doesn't answer, Angelika sensing his mood.

ANGELIKA (CONT'D)

You've heard from the Church. The Brigade's leaving again, isn't it?

KAULDER

(nods)

The Taurus mountains. Grosette hears rumors of a roving tribe of Hussites. There's stories, nobody's seen a people such as this.

ANGELIKA

Grosette. I don't trust that monk --
He's always taking you away from me.

A SUDDEN SPLASH OF COLD WATER interrupts their conversation.
Kaulder looks up: Elisabeth stands in the middle of the
brook. Big smile on her face.

ELISABETH

I snuck up on daddy, the great
Captain!

Kaulder splashes through the water after his daughter.
Angelika watches, cheering Elisabeth on as Kaulder playfully
grabs her up, PLUNGING them both underwater...but when
Kaulder BREAKS THE SURFACE he's now...

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Walking through a MARKETPLACE with Angelika. It's bustling.
Filled with life. Angelika looks to him, BELLY SWOLLEN WITH
CHILD.

ANGELIKA

She'll be beautiful.

KAULDER

Ah, so she's a girl? You know this
for sure?

ANGELIKA

Of course, it's a girl. She'll
have her mother's fire. And her
father's stubbornness...

Kaulder notices a FIGURE walking through the crowd, following
them...It's Chloe...he doesn't seem to recognize her as she
steps in Kaulder's way, confronting him.

CHLOE

Listen to me. You need to wake up.

Angelika turns to him, confused.

ANGELIKA

You know this girl?

Kaulder stirs, as if trying to remember a strange dream.

KAULDER

I'm not sure...

CHLOE

Listen. You're caught in a dream trap. You need to wake up. Konstantin tricked you. He's built up a tolerance to Mandrake.

Kaulder looks at her, starting to remember.

KAULDER

What if I want to stay here?

CHLOE

You can't -- If you do, you'll be here forever. Tumbling through moments of your past.

KAULDER

...And what's wrong with that?

CHLOE

None of this is *real*. They're just memories.

Kaulder looks at Angelika, the marketplace. The smells. The sounds. It *feels* real. In fact, it feels perfect.

KAULDER

I'm staying.

Fast as a flash, Chloe PLUCKS a knife from the market stall, LUNGES at the Kaulder -- Kaulder's faster. He grabs her arm, the two of them TUMBLING over a table. Grappling.

CHLOE

I cut you with this knife, the shock will bring you back.

Kaulder FLINGS her off, Chloe springing back up, our two heroes going at it in a no-holds barred fight SPILLING not only through the marketplace but through Kaulder's memories...

He SLAMS her against a wall, now back at the cottage...

She fights back, both of them rolling across the stone floor, SPLASHING into the brook... It continues on like this...both gifted at combat, neither able to get the upper hand.

Until, they're back at the marketplace.

And this time, Chloe has a plan.

She snatches up Angelika, POINTING the edge of the knife into her neck. Draws a pinprick of blood -- Angelika looks to her husband, scared.

ANGELIKA

Andreas?

Kaulder freezes, time slowing to a heartbeat -- Chloe keeps the blade poised.

CHLOE

Time to wake up.

She lifts the blade as if to use it against Angelika...but at the last second, she FLINGS it at Kaulder, the knife BURYING in Kaulder's chest! He GASPS, overcome -- And as he PLUNGES to his knees --

INT. TEA ROOM - NIGHT

Kaulder's eyes FLASH open. He's back with Konstantin. He recovers fast -- SMASHES the Mandrake Bottle, FLINGING aside the table, pressing JAGGED GLASS to Konstantin's neck.

Despite himself, the Russian's impressed.

KONSTANTIN

A man who can hold his drink.

(grins)

I like that.

The rest of the coven edge forward, weapons drawn -- But Chloe blocks Kaulder, a HOST OF KNIVES fanned between each finger.

Konstantin holds up his hand.

KONSTANTIN (CONT'D)

Enough!

(looks to Kaulder)

You go find Belial. Use one of your iron bullets to tell him I say hello.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE CLUB - NIGHT

Kaulder and Chloe head out the door, the smoke and stink of the club still on their bodies. Chloe looks to him.

CHLOE

Hey.

(not easily said)

Thanks for what you did up there.

She means it...but Kaulder ignores her, keeps on walking.

CHLOE (CONT'D)
So...you know this 'Marbas'?
You know where to find him?

No reply, Kaulder staring ahead.

CHLOE (CONT'D)
What the hell's WRONG with you --

Kaulder turns, SLAMS her up against the wall. His voice sharp as a razor.

KAULDER
My memories are my own. Stay out of my head.

CHLOE
I'm sorry. It was a trick my sister taught me. Memories... they're more permeable than everyone thinks.

Kaulder stares -- Like it or not, the dynamic between them's altered now, she's seen his secret self.

He lets her go, more calm. When he speaks, his voice just above a whisper.

KAULDER
They're all I have left.

CHLOE
Okay. But I have to tell you something...
(beat)
I saw the way you looked at your daughter. You loved her. I never had that. Our parents left when Dür and I were little.
(beat)
It was nice to be in it with you.
Even if it was just a memory.

A beat. Silence stretching between them, two lonely figures on an empty street.

KAULDER
If I'm going to get to Marbas, I need your help.

The witch hunter needs help? Instead of reassuring Chloe, this confession makes her nervous.

CUT TO:

INT. WITCH COUNCIL CHAMBER - NIGHT

FOUR FIGURES enter the chamber. Muscular. Iron gazes. Leaders of the oldest covens in the city: Asian, Brazilian, Hispanic and Afrikaan. All clad in clothes of their culture.

BELIAL (O.S.)
The wheel turns, my brothers...

They look to see Belial standing amongst the petrified bodies of the Council, the Mastiff at his feet, teeth gnawing sharply on the gnarled wood of Glaeser's leg.

ASIAN LEADER
So it's true...the Council is no more.

BELIAL
The Council protected their own interests. *"There's no slavery but ignorance."*
(beat)
I ask for your solidarity.

He pulls out a ritual blade called an ATHAME, placing his hand on the scorched remains of the Great Tree.

BELIAL (CONT'D)
Man's greatest accomplishments are OUR accomplishments. Vaccines. Medicines. We gave them nature's secrets. The power to harness the sun. What do they give us? Rules!
(gazing to each)
We were keepers of dark woods, gods of African veldts, ghosts of black mountains. We can be again.

AFRIKAAN LEADER
What about Konstantin -- Why's the Russian contingent not present?

BELIAL
I'm afraid Konstantin is a lost cause.

A BEAT -- The Leaders exchange looks -- finally the Afrikaan places his hand atop Belial's...soon joined by the others, the five coven leaders pledging their allegiance.

BELIAL (CONT'D)

Our names will be inscribed beside
Aethal in the pages of witch history
forever.

And with that, he PLUNGES the Athame *through* their hands, the blade BURYING in the skin of the Great Tree! Blood FLOWERS from their wounds, the dry bark drinking up the fluid.

Belial pulls the knife back out, the Leaders watching as --

BLACK BUDS

Blossom across the dead branches, the Great Tree blooming back to life -- And for the first time in over a century...a new Witch Council is born.

The Bullmastiff growls, guttural and low.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

The slums of Little Ethiopia.

Kaulder and Chloe stand in the shadows of an alleyway, looking at SOMETHING UNSEEN across the street.

CHLOE
We find Marbas...here?

Reveal: An imposing stone building, almost medieval, slats for windows. The only touch of modernity the myriad SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS -- A building designed to keep those inside from ever getting out.

A METAL SIGN reads: BATTERY PRISON

KAULDER
Marbas was the only human I ever hunted. He learned the truth about witches. It drove him insane, he wasted his family's fortune buying every scrap of witch lore the Church didn't have their hands on.

CHLOE
Why?

KAULDER
He wanted to *become* a witch.
(beat)
(MORE)

KAULDER (CONT'D)
He sacrificed five women, thinking it would do the trick...but it only made him a serial killer. Just before I caught him, Marbas burned his whole collection...so the Church wouldn't get it. He's dangerous. Knows more about crafting than most witches.

CHLOE
I've heard of him, what's he want with Belial?

Kaulder doesn't answer, pulling out a WIRELESS EARPIECE, jamming it in his ear.

KAULDER
(into earpiece)
Travis, you ready?

INT. CONTROL ROOM - SAME TIME

Travis sits before a bank of monitors, disappointed -- ON SCREEN: Battery Asylum. *He's hooked into their camera feed.*

TRAVIS
(into microphone)
Yeah, but you do know you're supposed to break OUT of prison, not into it --
(looking at camera, surprised)
Wait. Who's the girl!?

KAULDER (O.S.)
Not now...

EXT. BATTERY PRISON - SAME TIME

Kaulder and Chloe move toward the prison entrance.

TRAVIS (O.S.)
All cameras on the west face are under my control. You're ghosts.

Using the PASSING TRAFFIC as coverage from a watchful ARMED PEDESTRIAN GUARD, our heroes move from car to car, staying out of his eyeline.

Finally, they make their way to the front door, heading inside...

INT. BATTERY PRISON (FRONT LOBBY) - SAME TIME

FOUR GUARDS sit behind a WALL OF GLASS. A YANKEES GAME plays on a nearby television -- One guard approaches, surprised he didn't notice anyone on the surveillance monitor.

GUARD #1
Visiting hours are one to four.

Chloe ignores him, studying the bulletproof glass wall.

CHLOE
Lead-lined.

KAULDER
...Do it.

Chloe touches her fingers to the glass, *lead metal inside liquefying into GREY GLOBULES, SPREADING in shifting RORSCHACH PATTERNS* until --

THE GLASS SHATTERS

CRASHING down like rain, showering the startled Guards. They go for their guns but Kaulder and Chloe move like lightning. Fast. Precise. Spectacular. It's over in a flash.

KAULDER (CONT'D)
(into earpiece)
Travis?

TRAVIS (O.S.)
No units alerted -- At best, you got fifteen minutes. That's when the next shift comes on.

Chloe heads to the nearby door. It's locked. Chloe touches the MECHANISM, the CAMERA following her fingers INSIDE as --

THE METAL LOCK EXPANDS

Tumbler SNAPPING like cardboard -- The door POPPING open.

KAULDER
(into earpiece)
We're in.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - SAME TIME

Travis studies the monitors.

TRAVIS
A Metal Witch. Okay, now I see why you brought her to the party.
(MORE)

TRAVIS (CONT'D)

Head to the upper stairwell...watch out, two guards around the corner.

(beat)

I'm taking over the east cameras.
You'll be off the grid.

INT. STAIRWELL - SAME TIME

WHAP! WHAP! TWO GUARDS fall unconscious on the stairs, Kaulder grabbing a BATON as he and Chloe CHARGE upwards. Everything happening fast.

TRAVIS (O.S.)

Good. One more and you're on Marbas' cell block.

They hit a door. Try it. Locked. Chloe steps up, touching her hand to it...but nothing happens.

KAULDER

What's the problem?

CHLOE

Tungsten steel...tricky alloy.

(focusing)

Give me a second --

Do they have one? Kaulder tightens, looking around. Finally, we HEAR a SATISFYING CLACK, the door SWINGING open.

INT. BATTERY UPPER LEVEL - SAME TIME

Kaulder and Chloe stalk through the corridor, the mood's different down here. Hushed and darkened. A LAZY GUARD watches a PORTABLE TELEVISION. Behind him the CELL BLOCK DOOR.

Seeing our heroes, Lazy springs up, about to set off the alarm -- At the last second, Kaulder WHIPS the baton through the air, TARGETING Lazy, the man going down with a THUD.

Chloe does her 'thing' at the door, both of them entering --

INT. CELL BLOCK - SAME TIME

It's just plain creepy in here -- Lots of HAUNTED FACES and CREEPY GRINS emerging from darkened cells. *The prisoners of this block are not of sound mind and body.*

Kaulder stops before one particular cell, walls covered in SCRAWLED GLYPHS and SYMBOLS.

MARBAS (54)

Steps from the shadows, bearded and bald, we recognize him as the mysterious figure with Belial in the transom -- He's not some kind of 'God', he's only a man. And a crazy one at that. His eyes alight with oily lunacy.

MARBAS

Well...After four hundred years the
witch-hunter finally has a new
ladyfriend...and she's a *witch*.
How sweet.

He mutters under his breath, strange musings. Fast and impenetrable -- Kaulder twitches, this guy gets under his skin.

KAULDER

You've been keeping secrets.

MARBAS

Secrets are all I have...thanks to
you.

KAULDER

You never told me about Belial.

Marbas grins, he's imagined this moment many times, revealing his greatest accomplishment to the one man who can understand its magnificence.

MARBAS

When I found him he was so raw.
Unspoiled. I took him under my
wing, taught him everything: The
ways of the Ancients, the secret
names of Solomon -- I made him
unique, taught him the ways of the
totem...air, water, fire, light, any
witch signature can be his...as long
as he holds the right possession.

(beat)

He thinks he's outgrown me. But
he's wrong.

KAULDER

You hired Lorre...you're the one
who told him where to find the
Goetia.

MARBAS

Of course. The job required
Lorre's gifts...it was buried
within the church catacombs in
Tunisia.

This catches Kaulder by surprise.

KAULDER
A church?

MARBAS
(knowing)
Yes. *Odd, isn't it?*
(beat)
But all this dancing around, why
don't you ask me what you really
want to know...where you can find
the Goetia's other half.

Kaulder looks to him, not understanding -- Marbas lets out a gleeful sing-song, bouncing up and down. Eyes his nemesis.

MARBAS (CONT'D)
...For a man with over four-hundred
candles on his birth cake, you're
not very *bright*...

With sudden violence, Kaulder GRABS Marbas, PRESSES him against the bars.

KAULDER
Belial only has *half* the Goetia --
Where's the rest?

Marbas gives Kaulder his creepiest grin, the keeper of secrets holding onto his trump card.

MARBAS
Closer than you think.
(beat)
I have no allegiance to Belial.
Break me out of this cracker box,
I'll personally escort you to the
other half --

He's interrupted by an ELECTRIC HUM, the lights around them starting to FLICKER...

MARBAS (CONT'D)
Interesting.

He looks up, an OMINOUS POPPING SOUND cascading as...

THE LIGHTS GO OUT ACROSS THE CELL BLOCK ONE BY ONE...
everything now lit solely by slats of SILVER MOONLIGHT.

An ERIE BANSHEE WAIL pierces the cellblock. Bone chilling.

Kaulder touches his earpiece.

KAULDER
(into earpiece)
Travis, what's going on?

INT. CONTROL ROOM - SAME TIME

Travis stares at the monitors...they've all gone blank -- He flips a SERIES OF SWITCHES, tapping into the city's grid.

TRAVIS
(transmitting)
You tell me. The whole prison's gone dark -- Power outage?

INT. CELL BLOCK - SAME TIME

Chloe peers into the blackness, shakes her head.

CHLOE
It's them.

FIVE SHAPES

GLIDE through the darkness, CLOAKED IN BLACK, cadaverous faces wreathed in LEATHERED GAS-MASK DEVICES...as fast as they appear, they're gone, *slipping back into SHADOW*. Icelandic Witches. The LANDNÁMABÓK.

KAULDER
The Landnámbók...
(beat)
Shadow shifters.

The coven move through the block like sharks, FLITTERING between POOLS OF DARKNESS, hints of GREY MOTTLED SKIN beneath their masks. Eerie stuff -- Marbas chilled with sudden fear.

MARBAS
They're coming for me.

ONE LANDNÁMABÓK

APPEARS beside Kaulder, CURVED BLADE in its hand! It attacks, Kaulder DODGING and SPINNING to counter -- But the witch is already gone, MELTING back into shadow.

IT'S LIKE FIGHTING GHOSTS, CHLOE kicking off the cell bars, DIVING as TWO LANDNÁMABÓK SWIPE THEIR BLADES where she was just standing. Fast. Lethal. Skittery.

KAULDER
Get behind me.

Chloe dives behind him and...in one swift move, Kaulder throws his coat over her, SNAPPING a PHOSPHOROUS GRENADE from his belt, THROWING it to the ground.

The air before him IGNITES WITH GREEN LIGHT, two Landnámabók SLICKING into pools of black with a SCREECH! The Phosphorous EVAPORATES, plunging the block back into night as --

A CURVED BLADE

SLICES Kaulder's side, drawing blood, Chloe looking to see Kaulder's attacker emerging from a shadow in Marbas's cell.

CHLOE

Kaulder!

Kaulder looks, the Landnámabók already pulling Marbas into darkness, both of them DISAPPEARING and REAPPEARING two cells over, FLITTERING in and out of the moonlight, always EMERGING further down the cell.

CHLOE

Runs, doing a quick calculation -- She touches a cell's bars, DISSOLVING the metal, stepping through just as --

THE LANDNÁMABÓK

Appears with Marbas, Chloe having anticipated their next emergence. She RIPS the gas-mask from the witch's face -- It SHRIEKS horribly, unable to breathe our atmosphere, quickly SLITHERING back into the safety of shadows.

Chloe GRABS Marbas, throws him to Kaulder, PRISONERS now SCREAMING and JABBERING all around them. Complete bedlam. Kaulder studies the darkness.

KAULDER

We have to get him out...

He wavers a moment, Chloe seeing BLOOD pooled to the floor around him -- She opens his coat, revealing a BLADE WOUND in his side.

CHLOE

You're hurt.

KAULDER

I'm fine.

CHLOE

No, you're not -- The Landnámabók coat their blades with a paralyzing poison --

Kaulder ignores her warning, charging forward with Marbas -- Chloe follows, the three of them threading through the cell block door, making it out into...

INT. BATTERY UPPER LEVEL - NIGHT

A FUSILLADE of BULLETS!

BLAM BLAM! Rounds CHEW up the wall next to their heads!
It's THREE PRISON GUARDS -- Our heroes duck behind the guard desk, Lazy Guard still lying where he went down.

Kaulder touches his earpiece.

KAULDER
Travis...we're pinned down here.
Anything you can do?

TRAVIS (O.S.)
(transmitted)
I'm still dead in the water.

Kaulder looks to the Guards, nods to Chloe.

Chloe lets three knives fly, the blades BURYING in the Guard's shoes, PINNING them to the floor! They HOWL, Marbas leering to Kaulder, clapping his hands together like a child.

MARBAS
Makes you wonder who's side you're on, huh?

Chloe looks to Kaulder, sees a sheen of sweat coating his face. He stumbles, Chloe having to support him now.

CHLOE
The poison's taking effect...If we don't get you out of here soon, you have a serious problem.

She help him forward, the three of them heading out --

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Chaotic. Frenetic. Barrelling down the stairs, BLURS OF MOVEMENT in the dark around them. Is it the Landnámbók?

Suddenly, the lights flicker to life, the HUM of electricity echoing through the stairwell.

KAULDER
Travis?

INT. CONTROL ROOM - SAME TIME

Travis watches as the monitors bloom before him, catching our heroes on one screen.

TRAVIS
I tapped the grid. Got it running.

His eyes flick to the other monitors, quick blurs of GUARDS running around, trying to make sense of things.

TRAVIS (CONT'D)
Okay...the good news is everyone's distracted. Keep heading to the main level.

INT. STAIRWELL - SAME TIME

Kaulder tumbles, Chloe drags him to his feet. He staggers on -- It's all up to her now.

INT. BATTERY PRISON (FRONT LOBBY) - SAME TIME

A COLLECTION OF GUARDS work to get the operations back up, broken glass littering the floor around them.

The stairwell door BURSTS open. WHAP! WHAP! WHAP! Chloe's a BLUR, taking the Guards down, before they even know what hit 'em -- Kaulder can only spectate, pressed against the wall near Marbas.

VOICE (O.S.)
Freeze!

All eyes turn. FIVE OFFICERS block the front door, guns trained -- Chloe raises her hands, Kaulder sagging, sliding down the wall. *He's running out of time.*

Chloe's helpless, the cops moving in, weapons pointed.

What happens next happens fast:

ACROSS THE FLOOR

The Landnámabók RISES from a pool of shadow, *SNATCHING Marbas away in the blink of an eye, flittering back into ebony. An apparition.*

The cops blink, did they just see that? They exchange looks, momentarily distracted.

A moment is all Chloe needs.

Chloe spins, WHIRRING and KICKING, taking the men out with a few TARGETED KICKS. Beautiful.

In the distance, the sound of APPROACHING SIRENS.

EXT. BATTERY PRISON - CONTINUOUS

Chloe makes her way down the steps as best she can, trying to support Kaulder, eyes rolling up in his head.

KAULDER

Leave me here.

She shakes him, Kaulder doing his best to hold on as --

POLICE CARS

WHIP around the corner, SIRENS blaring.

CHLOE

I have to get you somewhere safe.

She supports his weight, the two of them ducking down an alleyway, disappearing into the night.

CUT TO:

EXT. HELL'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

The CHATTERING BABEL of a MIDNIGHT MARKET.

Belial, Bullmastiff and two of his generals at his side, heads through the maze, VENDORS hawking their wares. Clothes. Spices. Lots of pirated DVDs.

BELIAL

Bring Marbas in when he arrives.

He strides into a darkened storefront, Bullmastiff following...

INT. THORN APPLE FLORIST - NIGHT

This place is stunning. Chic. Magical. Bushels of IMPOSSIBLY COLORED FLOWERS, BOUQUETS entwined into INTRICATE ORGANIC SHAPES. The only people who can afford these creations have Park Avenue addresses.

RÅUM, an OLDER SLOVAKIAN WOMAN, stands behind the counter, counting up the day's ample proceeds -- She looks up to see Belial standing before her.

RÅUM

So...it's time.

INT. THORN APPLE FLORIST (BACK ROOM) - NIGHT

There's no floor here, *only dirt*, DOZENS OF SMALL PLANTS growing from the soil. In the center, an OLEANDER TREE spreads its branches, gnarled wood cramped tight across the ceiling. Beautiful.

As they talk, Råum waters the plants, leading Belial through a rat's nest of GLASS TUBES and BEAKERS, ROOTS AND VINES.

BELIAL

It's dispiriting...the great Råum reduced to decorating socialite parties just to survive...

RÅUM

In times such as this a witch does what one has to, no?

BELIAL

Not for much longer.

Råum stops -- Eyes Belial.

RÅUM

I wonder if you understand the complexities of the earth you trifle with.

(pointed)

It's taken my family over two hundred years to grow what you needed...What you're asking for, it's our crowning achievement.

She unrolls a COVERED TARP off a LARGE EARTHEN OBJECT in the corner...revealing --

A WOODEN MACHINE

We recognize it, *the harness for the Goetia* -- An EMPTY OPENING in its heart, awaiting the Plague Box itself.

Belial's hands caress the wood, eyes alight.

BELIAL

It's perfect.

THROUGH THE DOORWAY

General #1 enters, clutching Marbas. He's trembling, wet with a *viscous sheen*, still recovering from his time with the Landnámabók -- Belial grins warmly.

BELIAL (CONT'D)

Marbas.

(embracing him)

In the flesh. At last.

Marbas doesn't notice that -- while they embraced -- Belial plucked *something* from his shoulder.

MARBAS

I don't appreciate you sending the Landnámabók...the human mind can only handle so much.

BELIAL

What? You didn't enjoy your trip through the Shadow Realm? You left me no choice, forcing my hand like that --

MARBAS

-- You think I'm the type to just rot in prison, waiting for you to deliver on your word?

BELIAL

But in the end I *did* deliver. You're a free man. So...now it's your turn: Where can I find the other half of the Goetia?

A beat. Marbas silent...hands fidgeting across each other.

MARBAS

I don't have a clue...It was all a bluff.

But one look and Belial can tell the real truth: *Marbas knows, but he's not willing to risk the fate of humanity.*

Belial's jovial demeanor quickly fades.

BELIAL

I see. So you *are* human after all.

(beat)

That's a pity...

His hand reveals a SINGLE HAIR taken from Marbas's shoulder.

BELIAL (CONT'D)

I presume you know what this is...

Marbas touches his head, realizing -- And as Belial says the following, his fingers play with the hair, Marbas growing more nervous by the second...

BELIAL (CONT'D)
 And...what did you teach me about
 matter...personal matter?
 (recalling)
 Over time a piece of that person
 becomes *one* with the matter --
 Which means when I *take* your matter
 ...a piece of you becomes *mine*.

And with that, *he pulls the hair into a knot* -- Marbas
suddenly grabbing his chest in pain, seizing up.

BELIAL (CONT'D)
 Now...old friend, you're going to
 show me where I can find the rest
 of the Plague Box.

And off the SCREECH OF A RAILWAY we...

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBWAY ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Chloe shouldering Kaulder, a feverish sweat covering him as
 they head into a subway station.

INT. SUBWAY - NIGHT

Our heroes cross the station, at this hour it's deserted --
 Chloe noticing Kaulder's RAGGED BREATHING.

He lurches, going to the edge of the platform, Chloe helping
 him down.

INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL - NIGHT

The DISTANT RUMBLE of a train, Chloe shouldering Kaulder
 through the darkness. Swirls of rail dust cover every
 surface. They come to a SCUFFED METAL DOOR, above it a sign
 reading: KNICKERBOCKER

KAULDER
 Old speakeasy entrance to the
 Knickerbocker Hotel.
 (rasping)
 It's home.

His fingers fumble, pulling an ORNATE KEY, opening the door.

INT. KAULDER'S SANCTUM - NIGHT

It's dark. The two of them head down a set of stairs,
 Kaulder flipping a mechanical switch, GAS LAMPS illuminating
 a CAVERNOUS CHAMBER. Spectral. Beautiful.

CHLOE
My God...

Her eyes take in the collection of artifacts: BOTTLES OF SPANISH RUM, STONE BUDDHA HEADS, ARTISAN WOOD BOXES, CIVIL WAR MUSKETS, the treasures go on and on -- Anywhere else? Priceless. Here? Keepsakes from a life gone by.

She stops, staring at the 16th-Century Portraits of Kaulder's wife and child -- This is a sacred place.

Kaulder strips off his shirt to reveal a RAILROAD OF SCARS across his body -- He stumbles, Chloe reaching for him... Kaulder pulls away.

KAULDER
I'm okay --

CHLOE
Eternity trapped in a paralyzed body's a lot of things. 'Okay'? Not on the list.

She quickly looks through the chamber, hunting for something that could help -- Kaulder wavers, poison coursing through his body -- But then...suddenly --

He stops...Eyes alighting on a rusted metal cross. Struck by a realization.

KAULDER
(slurred)
-- the second piece...

But before he can finish -- WHAM! -- His limbs go numb and foreign, collapsing to the stone floor, overcome...the SOUND OF CRASHING WAVES and SEAGULLS as --

EXT. FREIGHTER (**DARK AGES**) - DAY

Kaulder's eyes FLASH open, he's aboard the *Black Watch* freighter, the grime of battlesmoke still on his face -- His hand clutches the tattered remains of the Velveteen Bird.

GROSETTE
Don't talk...

Grosette appears before him, relieved to see Kaulder awake, the monk pouring water down Kaulder's forehead and throat.

GROSETTE (CONT'D)
-- You've been unconscious for three days.
(MORE)

GROSETTE (CONT'D)
 Even still, we couldn't pull that
 'damn toy out of your hand.

KAULDER
 (weak)
 I saw a Queen...

GROSETTE
 I know...Never have I seen such
 selfless bravery in battle, when we
 reach shore no less than the Pope
 himself will demand your
 appearance.

Kaulder manages to glance down, seeing the Black Scar above
 his heart...and *something even more amazing* --

GROSETTE (CONT'D)
 Yes. The wound from your sword
 ...its healed into a scar. God's
 will be done --

Kaulder shudders, knowing 'God' had nothing to do with it.

KAULDER
 The Plague Box. What happened to
 it?

A BEAT, waves CRASH against the side of the freighter --
Grosette's eyes glance toward the lower deck of the ship.

GROSETTE
 We destroyed it.
 (beat)
 Come now, you must rest...The Great
 Sickness is no more! The Brigade
 has triumphed --

Kaulder's suddenly beset by a WRACKING COUGH -- His hand
 CLUTCHING the Velveteen Bird, eyes SQUEEZED SHUT in pain...
 and when he opens them again he finds himself --

INT. KAULDER'S SANCTUM (**PRESENT DAY**) - NIGHT

-- Lying on his bed. The chamber now lit by candlelight.

He sits up, a wrapped MOIST POULSTICE now spread over his
 wound. He looks healthy, the poison gone.

CHLOE (O.S.)
*Old witch remedy -- Something my
 sister taught me.*

Kaulder looks over to see Chloe kneeling in front of a candle -- She's clutching Duer's ring, the first chance she's had to mourn.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

She wasn't scared of dying, she
used to say it just meant
'nothingness'...and who could be
scared of *nothing*?
(beat)
She was frightened of something
else...

She turns, her voice barely a whisper.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

The feeling you'd get at the last
second...when you realize your
chance of becoming who you wanted
to be is gone forever...and the
broken person you were? That's all
anyone'll remember.

She looks to Kaulder, vulnerable in a way we haven't seen
before, the moment strangely intimate -- She reaches forward,
touching the black scar over his heart.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

I'm tired of who I am...I want to
be better.

HER TOUCH...

On his bare skin is like a firebrand. Hot. Alive. Sensual --
An intense beat, the two of them staring.

CHLOE (CONT'D)

Who were you...before you became a
witch hunter?

KAULDER

A farmer.

She likes this, smiles, her hand sliding to his face. She
leans in closer...but, at the last second...Kaulder stops her.

Chloe looks to him.

CHLOE

Is it because of my sister? Was
there something going on?

It's obvious the question's been on her mind. A long moment, Chloe forcing Kaulder to hold her gaze...finally, he shakes his head.

KAULDER
She was a witch.

This seems to hurt Chloe even more -- He stares, unsure what else to say, not used to the intimacy of the moment.

KAULDER (CONT'D)
Marbas said the first piece of the Goetia was buried under a church.
(beat)
There's somewhere I have to go...
But I have to do it alone.

The way he says this, not so much the usual Kaulder order... it comes out softer. Chloe nods -- And with a last look at her, Kaulder rises, strength returning.

CUT TO:

EXT. ST. JOHN'S CATHEDRAL - NIGHT

The structure framed in moonlight...

INT. CATHEDRAL - NIGHT

Dolan kneels before a FIELD OF LIT CANDLES. The old man looks enfeebled, obviously troubled.

KAULDER (O.S.)
Praying for your sins?

Caught off guard, the Cardinal turns to find Kaulder.

DOLAN
Where have you been? You break
into a *federal prison*, unleashing a
known killer into the city? Have
you gone mad --

He stops, his frail body suddenly wracked with a VIOLENT COUGH -- Kaulder stares. Defiant.

KAULDER
The Church sent my brigade into the
witch nest to *posses* the Plague Box
...not to destroy it.

A beat -- The Cardinal glancing back at the altar, looking for strength.

DOLAN

If you knew the thing's done in God's name --

KAULDER

-- Men died that day. Good men.

DOLAN

The Church's influence was fading, it was thought if an affliction targeted the Church's human enemies it'd be proof of our divine sovereignty.

Kaulder stares, stricken by this information.

KAULDER

The Church attempted to use witch technology against our own *kind* --

DOLAN

-- The greatest minds were brought in to unlock the Goetia's mysteries ...but, in the end, none could.

(beat)

The Archbishop determined the Plague Box should be separated and buried -- Half in the reaches of the Middle East...and half in a Dutch colonial settlement in the new world...New Amsterdam.

(beat)

You remember how glorious the first cathedral in the settlement was, don't you? It was destroyed years ago...but the well beneath it remains intact.

(beat)

That's where you'll find the second piece.

Kaulder takes in his baroque surroundings, eyes piercing.

KAULDER

As of this moment...I no longer hunt in His name.

He turns to leave, Dolan stopping him.

DOLAN

You'd be wise not to judge harshly, witch hunter. We all have demons ...some haunt more than others.

KAULDER
 Everything that happened to me
 ...happened because of that day.
Everything.

He exits, the old man left standing alone in the cavernous chamber.

EXT. CATHEDRAL - NIGHT

Kaulder heads down the stone steps, finds Chloe waiting for him astride a *DUCATI MOTORCYCLE* -- She stops, struck. Sees the pained look in Kaulder's eyes.

CHLOE
 You okay?

Kaulder nods, looks to the cycle.

KAULDER
 How'd you get this?

Chloe's nails CLICK the throttle -- The motorcycle PURRING to life.

CHLOE
 These fingers do amazing things.

Kaulder nods, taking one last lingering look at the cathedral ...And with the ROAR of an engine...

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Kaulder and Chloe HURTLE down the street atop the cycle. Beautiful. Sculpted. The city BLURS past, the Ducati KNIFING beneath a METAL SIGN reading: CHINATOWN

CUT TO:

EXT. CHINATOWN STREET - NIGHT

A midnight 'Ghost Market'.

We TRAIL a BEAUTIFUL GIRL carrying an open case as she PUSHES through a CROWD OF MEN -- Lots of NOISE and CHAOS, money exchanging hands.

BEAUTIFUL GIRL
 Rice cakes...cigarettes...

As she passes, we see SMALL CAGES on pedestals, the men SHOUTING as HORNED BEETLES fight each other to the death. Combat on an insect-sized scale.

The CAMERA moves through the cacophony, cutting past STALLS selling ROAST DUCK, TEXTILES and FIREWORKS, until finally we find...

AN ABANDONED TENEMENT

Old and crumbling -- FOUR ASIAN GANG MEMBERS loiter in the doorway, WITCHMARK EMBLEMS telling us they're not your usual street trash.

INT. ABANDONED TENEMENT - NIGHT

A hive of activity.

What was once a derelict lobby is now an *excavation site*, the foundation ripped up, MOUNDS OF EARTH dug into massive piles.

DOZENS OF WITCHES of all stripes toil...Asians, Afrikaans, Haitians, Brazilian...all working shoulder to shoulder.

We MOVE to the BUSTLING CENTER, Belial and Marbas are there, standing beside a SWARTHY WITCH wielding a shovel. He THUNKS it down -- STOPS -- Hearing a SHARP SOUND.

SWARTHY
I hit something.

Belial brushes away dirt, revealing a STONE COVERING -- He SHOVES the heavy stone aside, revealing --

A DEEP WELL

Murky and black. Too dark to see how deep it goes.

Marbas moves to the edge, looks to the diggers.

MARBAS
Magicks would've set off a trap --
But you still need a human to go
down with you...the Church wouldn't
bury anything without a defense
mechanism.

Belial nods, looks to a Guard.

BELIAL
Make sure no one else gets near
this well.

Marbas offers himself a slight grin. Up to something.

CUT TO:

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - NIGHT

Across from the tenement, a large construction area filled with heavy equipment. At this hour it's deserted...except for TWO SILHOUETTED FIGURES nestled in a cement pipe.

Kaulder and Chloe study the building, watching as more witches enter and exit through the front door.

KAULDER
Any sign of Marbas?

Chloe nods, spotting two Tattooed Witch Guards on the roof.

CHLOE
And at least eight different covens
inside and out. How the hell we
going to get in...and even better --
How we going to get out?

Kaulder eyes an INDUSTRIAL LIGHT RIG. An idea forming -- He unclips two of his Phosphorous Light Wands, unscrewing the tops, *green fluid SLOSHING* about.

KAULDER
(looks to Chloe)
Count to five hundred.

CUT TO:

EXT. TENEMENT - NIGHT

The CAMERA DRIFTS ALONG THE TENEMENT WALL to find:

KAULDER

Shadowed in darkness, *deftly crawling up the side of the building*. He works fast, every crevice a handhold...we see a CLOCK strapped to his wrist COUNTING UP: 27, 28, 29

Suddenly, the Velveteen Bird drops from the folds of Kaulder's coat! He catches it at the last second, DANGLING nosily by one hand! Below him, a sheer ten story drop as --

EXT. ON THE ROOF - SAME TIME

An Asian Guard hears the NOISE, heading over to take a look --

ON KAULDER

Gripping the building with one hand, 'Purifier' now clutched in the other, gun barrel aimed directly above --

ON THE GUARD

About to look down, right at Kaulder...but at the last second -- THE SOUNDS OF HEAVY MACHINERY distract him --

ACROSS THE STREET

A construction crane LURCHES to life, EXHAUST SMOKE billowing.

THE GUARD

Watches, distracted momentarily by the machine -- Finally, he heads back to his post, the original disturbance forgotten.

KAULDER

Still dangling, looks to see Chloe manning the crane. She gives him a look -- Coast now clear, Kaulder sheathes his gun, CLIMBING upward.

Finally, he makes it to --

THE ROOF

He climbs over, quietly approaching the two Guards from behind -- Before either of them have a chance to cast, he takes them both out.

CUT TO:

INT. WELL - NIGHT

Belial and Marbas lower themselves on coils of rope, FLICKERING TORCHES splitting the gloom.

They touch down amidst a COLLECTION OF ARCANE ARTIFACTS: *Tapestries, ancient armaments, tomes.* A small assembly of items that haven't seen daylight for a very long time.

MARBAS

It's a storehouse for the Church's most private secrets...things they didn't want Kaulder to know about.

His eyes light up, if you didn't know any better you'd think Marbas won the lottery.

He finds a GLASS JAR filled with POWDERS and TINCTURES -- Making sure Belial's not looking, he quietly unscrews the lid, carefully pulling out...

TWO TINY VIALS

One filled with an AMBER LIQUID, the other a RED LIQUID. Acting fast, he pockets both as, from across the chamber, he hears Belial calling out --

BELIAL

I found it.

Marbas advances to see Belial crouched before a LACQUERED WOODEN BOX (identical to Chloe's). He reaches forward, but Marbas stays his hand.

MARBAS

I should open it...stand as far back as you can.

Belial shoots him a dark look, nodding toward Marbas' hair now affixed to his totem twine.

BELIAL

If you're playing some kind of game, unleashing the Plague will be the least of your worries.

Marbas nods solemnly -- Crouching before the wood box as Belial watches from a safe distance...coiled with excitement.

BELIAL (CONT'D)

All these years, deep in the earth...quietly awaiting my arrival.

Marbas snaps up a chunk of limestone, CRASHING it atop a chain surrounding the box. The chain SNAPS, Marbas slowly opening the box...

INSIDE THE BOX

AN ANCIENT WINCH rigged to smash open a GLASS GLOBE filled with WHITE POWDER. Marbas was right -- *The box was rigged.*

Moving deftly, Marbas breaks the winch, carefully pulling the globe out. Holds it up.

MARBAS

Salt.

Now safe, Belial crouches to the box...

INSIDE

An OBJECT wrapped in cloth -- Belial grins, carefully folding the fabric back to reveal the Goetia.

BELIAL

At last...it's mine.

Marbas takes advantage of his distraction, raising the glass globe above his head as --

WHAM! He SMASHES the globe to the ground -- A CLOUD OF SALT filling the chamber -- Belial WRITHES in agony, the substance striking his flesh like acid!

Marbas acts fast, grabbing up the Plague Piece and tearing his hair from Belial's twine, quickly heading back up the rope -- Belial's AGONIZED SCREAMS swallowed in the caverns as...

INT. TENEMENT (STAIRS) - NIGHT

Kaulder's inside now, quickly moving down the stairway, now wearing one guard's cloak and hat, CHINESE GRAFFITI scrawled across the walls around him. He looks to the CLOCK: 112, 113, 114...

INT. TENEMENT (FIRST FLOOR)

Kaulder emerges onto the main floor, witches are everywhere. The mood's uneasy, covens not used to working side by side like this.

He wades his way forward, surrounded on all sides by his enemies, head down at all times.

Finally, he makes his way close to the well. A CIRCLE OF WITCH GUARDS around it, one BURLY GUARD shoves Kaulder back.

BURLY GUARD
What you doin' -- Stay BACK!

Kaulder steps away, a group of witches eyeing him...a TENSE BEAT...will he be recognized?

Suddenly, a COMMOTION from the other side of the guard line -- Marbas emerging from the well with the Plague Piece. Lots of jostling, everyone moving forward to grab a look.

BURLY GUARD (CONT'D)
Everyone stay back! Belial's orders!

But the witches are hard to contain, becoming feverish, Kaulder seeing an opportunity -- He SLUGS Burly in the face, Burly PROPELLING Kaulder into a group of PUERTO RICAN WITCHES.

PUERTO RICAN WITCH #1
Hey!

It's akin to lighting the fuse of a powder keg, the Puerto Ricans SURGING forward, air crackling with witch energy.

Insults in *witchtoung* get bandied back and forth, guttural and nasty: *Colombians taunting Jamaicans, Asians pushing Mexicans, Vietnamese spitting at Samoans.*

We've got us a WITCH RIOT brewing here.

The guards are distracted, having trouble keeping things contained -- Kaulder uses it to his advantage, slipping through the line unnoticed. He glances at the CLOCK: 411, 412, 413...

Marbas finishes pulling himself up from the well, gripping the second half of the Plague Box -- He looks up, startled to see Kaulder stomping towards him.

MARBAS

Kaulder, wait. Don't do something you might regret --

KAULDER

Wouldn't dream of it.

WHAM! He floors Marbas with a SHARP KICK, snapping up the Piece, quickly DARTING into the crowd -- *But he's no longer covered by a hat, his face plain to see.*

And one SKINNY WITCH does.

He stops, points.

SKINNY WITCH

(calling out)

The witch-hunter!

His voice cuts through the din -- Everyone stops, stares, as if the very tenement itself were holding its breath.

Our hero stands. Surrounded. One versus dozens.

KAULDER

Pulls the 'Purifier', light gleaming off the barrel. He focuses it across the space, willfully keeping the witches at bay, steadily moving backwards until he arrives at...

The tenement wall.

The covens slowly move in, hundreds of witch nails CLICKING ...Kaulder keeping his eyes trained at all times, making a quick calculation, stepping over just a smidgen.

The tension finally breaks with a YELL, Swarthy Witch BRUTALLY TACKLING Kaulder, CATCHING A LOOK AT THE WATCH FACE --

AS IT READS: ...499, 500

WHAM! The wall next to Kaulder EXPLODES INWARD, a ONE-TON WRECKING BALL SMASHING ITS WAY THROUGH, Swarthy sent FLYING across the atrium like a rag doll!

A GIANT SHAFT OF PHOSPHOROUS LIGHT

Pours through the hole, KNIFING through bodies like a radioactive laser, witches SCREECHING and SLICKING into black ooze by the dozen!

The survivors edge away from the line of light, moving toward Kaulder, ready to attempt another attack but --

BOOOOM! *The wall to the left of Kaulder FRAGMENTS into thousands of pieces -- the ball releasing another BLINDING SHAFT OF LIGHT into the atrium, Kaulder now protected from both flanks!*

Not wasting a beat, Kaulder DARTS outside --

EXT. TENEMENT - CONTINUOUS

He's forced to shield his eyes from the GREEN GLARE of phosphorus light blaring from the construction rigging, barely able to see Chloe in the cab of the swinging crane.

And then it all goes to hell.

With a POP and HISS, the rigging SHORTS OUT, bulbs not engineered for this purpose -- Out of tricks, Chloe emerges from the construction crane. Yells to Kaulder.

CHLOE
You have it?

He shows her the Piece, witches already pouring out the building behind him...Acting fast, our heroes jump atop the waiting Ducati -- It GUNS to life with a THROATY ROAR. They race away.

THE COVENS

Already amassing to pursue, Asians jumping onto tuned motorcycles and into muscle cars...but at the last second...

BELIAL (O.S.)
Stop!

Belial emerges from the folds of the tenement, salt scars now lining his flesh...they have a strange beauty...more like tribal scars.

BELIAL (CONT'D)
I'll take care of it.

He smiles darkly...hand touching an UNSEEN OBJECT on his totem twine, striding forward.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Kaulder and Chloe ride past industrial warehouses, silhouetted in the night.

CHLOE
So, what now? Take it to the Church?

Kaulder shakes his head.

KAULDER
We do what they should've done a long time ago.
(beat)
Destroy it.

CHLOE
How?

Kaulder nods toward a PLUME OF SMOKE rising in the sky ahead, the exhaust of a MANUFACTURING PLANT -- He GUNS the throttle to head toward it, but before he can...

A BLUR OF MOVEMENT

VAULTS from the darkness...The Bullmastiff LEAPS at Kaulder, canines catching, Kaulder THROWN from the Ducati, ROLLING across the pavement locked in struggle.

ON THE CYCLE

Chloe SNATCHES the handlebars but its too late -- The Ducati SLIDES along the asphalt, SMASHING through the glass of a MARKET STOREFRONT!

ON THE STREET

The Bullmastiff's jaws SNAP inches from Kaulder's neck, teeth CLAMPING around Kaulder's hand! Kaulder SCREAMS in pain, *the dog's powerful grip forcing him to drop the Plague Piece*.

He looks up to now find...

BELIAL

Hand brushing past his totem twine, revealing Glaeser's Ebony Ring as he picks up the Plague Piece.

BELIAL

I've got the power of the Ancients
behind me now.

His fingernails CLICK, time slowing to a crawl as...

*All luminescence is SUCKED from nearby molecules...
Orbits of moonlight SWALLOWED...
The street now ENGULFED in veils of midnight.
Complete darkness.*

A SPELL UNLEASHES

SLICES OF AIR ripple through the void, HURTLING toward --

KAULDER

He PIVOTS at the last second, asphalt beneath him FRAGMENTING and EXPLODING into hundreds of shards...

Kaulder pulls the 'Purifier' with blistering speed, FIRING A BURST OF ROUNDS, the ensuing battle continuing down the street as...

INT. MARKET - SAME TIME

Everything quiet. BITS OF GLASS litter the floor, a single wheel of the overturned Ducati slowly spinning.

Chloe lies unconscious beneath it.

A FIGURE

Enters through the broken window, a pool of light revealing ...Marbas! He goes to Chloe, kneeling before her prone body.

MARBAS

Wakey, wakey...

He grins darkly as...

EXT. STREET - SAME TIME

FAST AND FURIOUS COMBAT sweeps through an empty street, Kaulder's eyes locked on the Plague Piece still gripped in Belial's hand.

Brick and cement SHATTER on impact, Kaulder barely able to keep it together as Belial attacks with a combination of muscle, spells and speed.

WHAM! A concussive blast SLAMS into Kaulder, his body SPIKING across the pavement, knocking the fight out of him -- Kaulder lies on the ground. Beaten.

Belial steps forward, looming.

BELIAL

In your story you're the hero:
Captain Kaulder. Vengeful warrior.
Hunting to protect his own kind
...but what if your kind are the
real monsters? What would that
make you?

He raises his palm, nails poised to click...

A WHITE-HOT SPOTLIGHT

Lands on Kaulder. Is it a spell?

No...The ROAR OF A ROTOR splits the gloom, Kaulder looking up to see a POLICE HELICOPTER circling above.

Belial gazes upward.

BELIAL (CONT'D)

And *these* are the people you fight
for? They see you as the enemy.

POLICE CARS SCREECH before Kaulder, OFFICERS leaping out, guns drawn.

OFFICER #1

(into mic.)

-- *Suspect from Battery prison in
sight, request backup.*

Kaulder glances back to find Belial now gone...and so is the Plague Piece -- But what can he do? He lies on the ground, gripped in the spotlight, a dozen guns pointed right at him as...

INT. MARKET - SAME TIME

Marbas' fingertips spider across Chloe's face. With a grin, he leans in close, smelling her. He MOANS, his touch starting to slide delicately down her body, until...

Chloe's eyes FLASH open.

Fast as anything, she SPRINGS up, hand GRABBING Marbas' throat, pinning him to the cycle.

MARBAS

-- Wait! It's not what it looks like -- I came here to *help* you. You actually think I want Belial to use the Plague Box...?

Chloe uses her craft, the wheel of the Ducati suddenly BLAZING to life, SPINNING lethally fast, *a mere inch from Marbas' head* -- Marbas sweats.

MARBAS (CONT'D)

(straining)

Listen. You want to take Belial down? All you have to do is cut his totem twine...without it, he's nothing. Helpless. Practically human.

CHLOE

And I should believe you 'cause --

MARBAS

I'll show you...

(hand fumbles to his pocket)

I was using Belial to get what I really wanted....things buried with the Plague Piece...things the Church didn't want Kaulder to know about.

He pulls out the AMBER COLORED VIAL retrieved from the well.

CHLOE

What is it?

MARBAS

A cure...

Chloe blinks, the Ducati wheel coming to an abrupt stop.

CHLOE

For the plague?

MARBAS

No....*To all Kaulder's sufferings.*
The one thing he wants most.

Chloe studies the swirling mixture, realizing its importance as...

EXT. STREET - SAME TIME

Kaulder stares down the phalanx of police officers, revolvers leveled, the SOUND OF APPROACHING SIRENS.

OFFICER #1
(calling out to Kaulder)
Release your weapon and slowly
raise your hands in the air!

A TENSION BEAT, white-hot spotlight HOVERING, the cops unsure what Kaulder's going to do -- Then slowly...agonizingly slow... Kaulder starts to comply, carefully releasing his grip on the 'Purifier'...

And then...he's in motion.

KAULDER

SPINS...FIRES UPWARD...Shooting out the spotlight...plunging the street back into darkness.

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! Kaulder PIVOTS, unleashing a fusillade of SUPPRESSING FIRE toward the officers feet, ROLLING across the asphalt!

With his other hand, he unleashes an EXPLOSIVE BOLT, targeting the strut of a nearby building, the device HUNKERING in.

BOOOOM! A BURST OF SUPERNOVA LIGHT from the device splits the darkness, *blinding the officers!*

The cops cover their eyes...and when they finally manage to open them again...

Kaulder's gone.

INT. MARKET - SAME TIME

Marbas remains locked in Chloe's tight grip.

MARBAS
(straining)
Think of it. Kaulder can finally have the release he's always wanted, he can join his family on the other side...

He stops, looking to Chloe's eyes -- Surprised by what he sees there.

MARBAS (CONT'D)
You...care for him.

Chloe doesn't reply...she doesn't have to.

MARBAS (CONT'D)
Then I guess...you'll have to make a choice.

With a grin, he tosses the vial in the air!

Time slows...the glass vial WINKING in the light.

Chloe DIVES, fingers grasping the vial just before it hits the ground... She spins, looking for Marbas but...he's disappeared.

Chloe grips the vial as --

KAULDER

Stumbles into the market -- Defeat etched across his eyes.

KAULDER

Belial got away with the Plague
Piece...

He stops, noticing the vial, sensing Chloe's reluctance.

KAULDER (CONT'D)
(re: the vial)
...What is it?

A BEAT, Chloe torn -- Hesitating.

CHLOE
It came from Marbas...

She looks to Kaulder, knowing she has no choice but to tell the truth.

CHLOE (CONT'D)
It's something he pulled from the
Church Well -- He said it's a cure
...for you.

Kaulder stares at the amber liquid, innately understanding --
He snatches it out of Chloe's hand...

CHLOE (CONT'D)
Kaulder, wait --

But he doesn't. He opens the vial...putting it under his nose to smell it. The effect is immediate: A LINE OF CRIMSON BLOOD leaks from his nose, his body consumed with apyrexias.

Kaulder manages to shut it. He stands, holding in his hands the one thing he's craved all these years...

Oblivion.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITYSCAPE - NIGHT

A red moon high above the skyline...

BELIAL (O.S.)
*Tonight's herald isn't just a call,
 it's a message...*

EXT. BRONX - SAME TIME

FIGURES gather in the darkness. Faces caked in TRIBAL MAKEUP...

BELIAL (O.S.)
For the desperate...

EXT. QUEENS - SAME TIME

A TIGHT WAVE OF SLEEK MOTORCYCLES ripple down the street...

BELIAL (O.S.)
For the forgotten...

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - SAME TIME

DARK SHAPES move between the trees.

BELIAL (O.S.)
For the battered...

EXT. HISTORICAL SOCIETY - SAME TIME

And finally...a STREAM OF FIGURES head into the chalk doorway leading to the Council Chambers...The covens of New York.

BELIAL (O.S.)
For the mad.

INT. COUNCIL CHAMBERS - NIGHT

BELIAL

Stands amongst the other Council Members, they now wear florid robes according to the ways of the Ancients. Noble. Timeless.

BELIAL
 But most of all...It's for
 Witchkind everywhere.

He kneels before a STONE BATH, revealing the two Plague Pieces soaking in PRIMORDIAL SULPHURIC WATERS --

BELIAL (CONT'D)

Covens aross the globe will
witness our first strike...Dutch
Toverheks...Spanish Brujas...Hindi
Jadoogarni...the Revenants in the
sands...the Jadis in the mountains
...all will be called...

He stares...his ultimate plan revealed.

BELIAL (CONT'D)

And once they see...they will join --
And the time of our *true* rising will
begin.

THE WATER

BOILS with grim intensity...as if the pieces themselves can't
wait for their big moment...Belial PLUNGES his hands into the
blistering water...and off his messianic expression we...

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

TIGHT on Kaulder and Chloe. *Impossible to tell where they are.*

CHLOE

Are you sure you want to do this?

Kaulder nods, sure. Face etched with grim intensity.

He pulls out his transceiver, places it in his ear.

KAULDER

(touching his ear)

Travis...we're coming in. Both
of us.

TRAVIS (O.S.)

(transmitted)

*Alright. Initiating system
override...I sure hope you know
what you're doing.*

We PULL BACK, revealing Kaulder and Chloe are standing in
front of...

THE RELIGIOUS SHOP (CHURCH FAÇADE)

The two of them head inside.

INT. CHURCH CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Kaulder and Chloe race off the elevator and into the stone walls of the Church stronghold -- Travis is waiting, uneasy.

TRAVIS

Allowing a witch into Church
sanctuary? They'll kick me out of
seminary for this --

Kaulder just blows right past him, the vial gripped tightly in his palm.

KAULDER

Where's Dolan...

He stops, now seeing the Cardinal at the end of the corridor, waiting -- Kaulder advances, barely able to restrain himself from assaulting his longtime confidant.

KAULDER (CONT'D)

All these years. You KNEW -- And
you never told me...

DOLAN

We've all known. Every overseer
you've ever had.
(beat)
Even Travis.

Kaulder freezes, his world tilting from its axis -- He shoots the young priest a look.

KAULDER

How long?

TRAVIS

Centuries. It was developed by Pope Benedict himself, a chemical agent powerful enough to destroy any enemy. Human or witch -- But when the Church realized it could be used to kill its greatest weapon ...it decided to lock the formula away forever.

Kaulder reels, SLAMS his fists into the stone wall, as if wanting to destroy the Church itself -- His movements frenetic, emotions building into a firestorm...until finally...

He stops.

Kaulder slumps to the floor. Staggered by the betrayal. Everything he's believed in...a lie -- In the frigid silence that follows, Dolan steps forward.

DOLAN

I would do it all again if I had to
-- Think of the lives you've
saved...hundreds? Thousands?

(beat)

Go ahead. Drink it. End your
'curse'. You have every right.
But where's the strength in that?

TRAVIS

Swallow it and you doom not just
yourself...but everyone else. Are
you willing to make that sacrifice?

Kaulder stares, eyes locking on the amber liquid.

KAULDER

In a heartbeat.

Dolan kneels before his charge...now neither Cardinal nor
confidant -- But a friend.

DOLAN

I came to you first as a child.
Innocent. Naive. Back then,
everything seemed simple. Good lay
on one side. Evil on the other.

(beat)

The vial is the easy way...but its
not the right way.

HOLD ON KAULDER, Dolan's words registering as...

THE CHAMBER RUMBLES

Ominous. Low. *Tiny fissures* erupting along the stone
walls -- Travis runs over to a BANK OF MONITORS, feverishly
crunching data.

TRAVIS

(studying the screens)

...Deep level seismics emanating
from Council Chambers, the entire
root structure of the city...it's
moving.

DOLAN

Belial must be tapping into the
root matrix --

Chloe stares at the flickering screens, lost.

CHLOE
What's it mean?

KAULDER
Belial's activating the Plague Box.

A BEAT -- Dolan turns to Kaulder. Imploring.

DOLAN
We need you Kaulder. You're the
last witch hunter.

A long moment, Kaulder's expression unreadable...until,
finally...he places the vial within the folds of his coat.

KAULDER
One last hunt.

And off his look we CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH ARMORY - NIGHT

A reinforced door SLIDING back, light hitting a DAZZLING
DISPLAY OF KICK-ASS WITCH WEAPONRY.

Kaulder looks to Chloe, her eyes wide.

KAULDER
Take whatever you want.

A QUICK SERIES OF SHOTS:

Kaulder strapping on his strongest WITCH ARMOR...

Chloe secures a series of TWIN-BLADED KNIVES...

AMMO CARTRIDGES click...

ROUNDS are loaded...

And last...but not least -- Travis and Chloe watch as Kaulder approaches the stone wall, snapping open a WROUGHT-IRON PLATE...he punches in a BRASS KEY...

With a CLICK, a HERMETICALLY SEALED DOOR POPS open...

INT. HIDDEN CHAMBER - SAME TIME

Old. Earthen. Obviously hasn't been opened for a long time -- Kaulder stands framed in the doorway...before him lie two pieces of ancient weaponry:

Kaulder's sword and shield. Battle-tested. Emblems of time. He takes them up. A bringer of war.

CUT TO:

EXT. MANHATTAN STREET - NIGHT

The CAMERA plunges through the canyons of the city, finding *two lone figures* on a windswept street:

KAULDER AND CHLOE

Longcoats rippling behind them, bristling with weapons -- Kaulder's sword and shield catching light from a sodium-arc. A knight in the wrong era.

EXT. BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Kaulder and Chloe step before a door, Kaulder about to knock ...but before he can -- It opens -- Revealing the Toy Shop Proprietor.

PROPRIETOR
It's about time...

He stares, obviously drunk, a boozy graybeard with a DARK BOTTLE OF NETTLE WINE in his hand.

INT. TOY STORE (BACK AREA) - NIGHT

The Proprietor rummages noisily through stacks of entrancing handmade toys...hunting for something.

PROPRIETOR
I gave Belial the Gremory Chalk...
(beat)
But there are other ways...not that I'd let Belial know...alchemy's a part of my lineage, an all but lost art...

And now he stops, looking to our two heroes. Tired.

PROPRIETOR (CONT'D)
To think it would come to this: A
witch-hunter who knows only to fight
...and a witch who knows only to run.
(to Chloe)
If you could stop all this with one
unselfish act, would you, my dear?

CHLOE
I...think --
(considering)
Yes. I would.

PROPRIETOR
Why?

Chloe finds Kaulder's gaze.

CHLOE
I don't want to die...like I lived.

PROPRIETOR
Unfortunate...For its not you who
gets to decide.

He finally finds what he's looking for, reaching to pull an
OBJECT out...A GREY STEEL SPRAY CAN with a WHITE NOZZLE top

PROPRIETOR (CONT'D)
I distilled the base elements into
a different form -- Just don't let
the cops catch you...Vandalism in
this city. A hefty fine.

And off the familiar METALLIC RATTLE of a Street Tagger
applying his trade we CUT TO:

EXT. HISTORICAL SOCIETY - NIGHT

Kaulder and Chloe standing before the massive wall. The
structure impenetrable -- A beat -- Chloe running his hand
along the graffittied sigils and seals.

Kaulder spray-paints the black outline of a DOORFRAME onto
the surface of the wall.

For the first time, we see hesitation in Chloe's eyes...
Kaulder presses on the brick, doorway opening as they step
inside...

INT. HISTORICAL SOCIETY (STAIRWAY) - CONTINUOUS

The jagged stairway lies before them, roots and branches
entwined into the soil, twisted by eons of roiling rock.

CHLOE
After you...

Kaulder heads down, Chloe following, every step growing
increasingly treacherous...

INT. CAVERN - NIGHT

The stair finally bottoms out into a fetid cavern, *its surface lined with ancient markings* -- Chloe runs her hands over the witchscript, unable to fathom their meaning.

CHLOE
What's it say?

KAULDER
A warning...
(reading)
'*The sightless one'*...'*The Sentinel*'.

From somewhere in the darkness...a SCUTTLING SOUND -- Chloe spinning to glimpse

A PALE VISAGE

We recognize it as that of the Witch Sentinel -- *It looks different, markings and shape now transformed for battle* -- More like its ancient brethren.

The witch recedes back into the darkness, the PROWLING SOUND OF ITS MOVEMENT surrounding them -- Chloe peers into the murk, terrified.

CHLOE
...You ever go up against something like this before?

Kaulder pulls the 'Purifier', eyes hunting the darkness.

KAULDER
Been a while.

He fingers the trigger...ready to squeeze off a round when -- WHAP! The terrifying form of the Sentinel splits the gloom with a GHASTLY SHRIEK!

NAILS CLICK

The Sentinel LAUNCHING A SPELL, WHIPSAWING through the air toward Chloe!

Kaulder LEAPS, blocking her with his shield. The spell *bouncing off the protective material*, hitting the cavern wall, the surface *rotting* centuries before our eyes, writhing with MEALY INSECTS AND WORMS.

Chloe's a whirlwind, blades SAILING though the air as Kaulder FIRES the 'Purifier' in contained bursts.

The Sentinel HOWLS, nimbly dodging the onslaught, SMASHING atop Kaulder, KNOCKING the gun from his hand, jaws CHATTERING mere inches from his neck!

CHLOE

Sees a fallen object lying on the cavern floor, she SCRAMBLES across the cavern to grab it as --

THE SENTINEL'S TALONS

Rake across Kaulder's armor, lunging in for another attack... but before it can --

A BLACK SPRAY

Coats its face, the creature SCREECHING! Kaulder ROLLS, managing to snap up his gun -- BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! He lets loose a BLISTERING FUSILLADE, the sound DEAFENING!

WITH A FINAL WAIL

The Sentinel collapses in a heap, liquefying before it even touches the ground.

Chloe steps next to Kaulder, hands him back the spray can.

CHLOE

Had no idea my ancestors were so ugly.

The Sentinel's nothing more than an ebony slick staining the earth -- Together, they step past the muck...heading deeper into the cavern as we CUT TO:

INT. RITUAL TEMPLE - NIGHT

The innermost recesses of the Council Chambers.

It's beautiful. Earthen walls carved from the bowels of the earth, lined with ELABORATE SIGILS and STATUES.

BELIAL

Steps into the vast space, around him the four members of the New Council -- The Afrikaan moves toward him, a RATTLING BOX OF DRIED BONES clutched in his hand.

AFRIKAAN

I've rolled the bones...they speak of an infiltrator in the Sanctum.

BELIAL

Kaulder.

(beat)

It doesn't matter...he's too late --

In his hands, he grips the two separate halves of the Goetia.

BELIAL (CONT'D)

For every key there's a locked
door...this one, we open together.

With much ceremony...he *interlocks the two pieces of the Goetia together...and from within the wood --*

AN EERIE CALLIOPE

The artifact SHUDDERING to life with a SERIES OF CLICKS, revealing SLIDING PANELS OF AGED WOOD and HIDDEN CHAMBERS. It's alive. A masterwork of ORGANIC TECHNOLOGY.

Belial grins...

BELIAL (CONT'D)

After over four hundred years, it's time to fulfill your destiny...

He steps forward...and it's only now we see --

THE GREAT WOODEN MACHINE

It looms before Belial, its base already buried in the chamber soil...a SINGLE EMPTY VACANCY in its center -- Belial approaches, SNAPPING the Plague Box into the waiting heart of the machine.

WOODEN PLUGS

THRUST from the Box, a GROAN echoing through the chamber as the machine WHIRLS to life...the base begins to CHURN through the dirt, dredging up TANGLES OF ROOTS, *weaving them like a giant loom as we CUT TO:*

INT. CAVERN - SAME TIME

Kaulder stops before a steep crevasse leading to hidden chambers...From below, a DEEP RUMBLING.

Kaulder and Chloe stare, knowing it can only mean one thing.

CHLOE

The Goetia.

Kaulder unspools a zip-line, anchoring it to the cavern wall, the two of them THREADING down...

INT. CREVEASSE - CONTINUOUS

Cool and quick, they make their way down, stop just above a hidden alcove -- Dropping quietly into it.

INT. ALCOVE - CONTINUOUS

KAULDER'S P.O.V.: Belial's followers, they are legion, awaiting outside the Temple Chamber for the private ceremony to complete -- Too many different types of witches to track.

Kaulder senses Chloe's apprehension.

KAULDER

You don't have to do this.

Kaulder squeezes her trembling hand. From anyone else this would be a simple gesture -- But from the witch hunter? Chloe manages a soft smile, relishing his touch.

The moment holds.

INT. CHAMBER OUTSIDE ALCOVE - MOMENTS LATER

A TALL WITCH looks over, sees a SMALL BLACK OBJECT roll out from between the elevator doors. Unnoticed by the others.

The witch goes to it, picking the object up, it looks like a hockey puck. He puts it next to his ear, shakes it.

BOOOOOM! The GRENADE explodes, unleashing a POWERFUL CLOUD OF SALT and IRON-FRAGMENTED SHARDS!

EMERGING FROM THE ALCOVE

Kaulder opens fire with the 'Purifier', SPRAYING the room. The Witches SHRIEK, confusion and chaos everywhere!

And that's what our heroes want.

He WHIPS into the chamber BLASTING, Chloe now clad in SLEEK ARMOR and a pair of PHOSPHOROUS PROTECTIVE GOGGLES tossing THREE MORE GRENADES -- The EXPLOSIONS rip through the chamber like white noise.

It goes on like this, amidst the carnage and mayhem, our heroes taking down dozens of witches.

But the good times can't last forever.

A PALE FIGURE

Looms up from a SHADOW on the floor. A Landnámabók.

Its talons reach, SNATCHING Kaulder...

Chloe SPINS in time to see him --

VANISH

Into the floor...

And that's when things get weird...

WE'RE IN THE WORLD WITHIN SHADOWS

Pools of darkness bursting to light...

And then...only DARKNESS. Endless. Stretching forever.

A distant figure... growing LARGER...becoming...

KAULDER

PLUNGING through the VOID.

Until suddenly...there is no void...only blue sky, the sound of WIND GENTLY BLOWING THROUGH LONG GRASS...

Kaulder's eyes FLASH open...finding himself --

EXT. GRASSY MEADOW - DAY

Kaulder sits up...sees SOMETHING in the distance.

A COTTAGE

His cottage. He heads for it.

INT. COTTAGE - DAY

Kaulder opens the door, steps in. Finds a PLATE OF COOKED LAMB waiting for him. It's perfect.

Too perfect.

A SMALL FIGURE now stands famed in the doorway, STREAMS OF SUNLIGHT making it impossible to see who it is.

FIGURE

...Daddy?

It's Elisabeth. She SQUEALS, running happily to her father, burying her head in his stomach -- *Kaulder unable to get a good look at her face.*

KAULDER

What is this?

ELISABETH

Mommy and I made it for you. You
can stay here.

Kaulder looks, now seeing the lamb meat's infested with MAGGOTS -- Elisabeth quickly pulls him toward the door, excited...he's still unable to see her face.

ELISABETH (CONT'D)

C'mon. Mommy's waiting for you...

And off her PEALS OF LAUGHTER...

EXT. STREAM - DAY

Elisabeth guides Kaulder down to a bubbling brook.

ELISABETH

You can stay, daddy. It's what you
always wanted.

Kaulder look to see --

ANGELIKA

Sunlight shadowing a part of her face -- She looks radiant. Beautiful -- But then she steps forward, revealing half her visage rotted away.

ANGELIKA

Isn't this what you want, my love?

Kaulder steps back, turning to look at Elisabeth -- *White bone sits where his daughter's mouth should be, a permanent skeleton grin.*

KAULDER

No...Not like this.

ANGELIKA

No?

(beat)

We're dead, my love. How did you
think it would be?

She looks to him, one eye inert...glassy.

ANGELIKA (CONT'D)

Everybody else is scared of dying --
Not you. You're scared to live.

A long moment, Kaulder staring at her face. He realizes... it's true. He reaches out, slowly drawing his fingers through his daughter's hair, strands straying to his palm.

She leans forward, speaking in a whisper.

ELISABETH

Don't be afraid, daddy. We can help you.

KAULDER

Help me?

ELISABETH

Move on. Escape.

ANGELIKA

The shadow realm's tricky...Just remember to swim as hard as you can.

Puzzling advice. But Kaulder nods...and now Angelika pulls him close, one last embrace. Kaulder's face creases, his eyes wet. Elisabeth joins in, Kaulder holding them both tight.

KAULDER

Goodbye.

The moment holds, the three of them together like this -- And then...Elisabeth GIGGLES playfully, SPLASHING SUDDEN COLD WATER at Kaulder as --

EXT. THE ETHER - NIGHT

Kaulder's eyes SNAP open, he COUGHS, choking on a BRACKISH LIQUID...he's swimming in an endless void of black water.

But he's not alone.

A PALE HAND

Clamps onto his leg, pulling him under.

It's The Landnámabók...Unmasked in its own element, this thing is terrifying. Rictus-grin. Pasty flesh. In its hand a CURVED DAGGER, poison coating the blade.

The witch pulls him deeper.

Frigid liquid fills Kaulder's lungs, the curved dagger drawing closer, practically brushing his cheek. This is it.

KAULDER

DIGS his teeth into the Landnámabók wrist, making the witch lose its grip.

Acting fast, he snatches the blade from the water, STABBING right into the witch's chest.

EBONY BLOOD flows out in a stream and...with an UNDERWATER SCREECH the Landnámabók disappears into the depths.

Kaulder's exhausted, armor weighing him down. He struggles. Feet kicking. Not getting anywhere.

With one final desperate surge, he gives it all he's got, HEAVING upward, lungs ready to burst, until finally...

He BREAKS the surface! He swallows a GULP of precious air, now finding himself --

INT. CHAMBER OUTSIDE ELEVATOR - NIGHT

Bobbing on the surface of the very same shadow he was pulled into, its consistency pure liquid! *In our world, only a split-second has passed.*

CHLOE

Stands right where we last saw her -- She can't believe it.

CHLOE
I've got you.

She pulls him out -- Kaulder FLOPPING onto the floor. There are no witches present anymore...all killed or fled.

He looks to her, picking up his sword and shield -- The moment interrupted by a MAD ROAR now coming from the other side of the closed Ritual Temple doors...

KAULDER
We're out of time.

INT. RITUAL TEMPLE - SAME TIME

The GREAT CLATTER of the Goetia is DEAFENING -- Belial and the rest of the Council watching as KNOTS OF ROOTS are THREADED through the heart of the machine, Belial having to yell to be heard.

BELIAL
It's working...

We FOCUS on the wood machine, pulling LIGAMENTS OF ROOTS from the earthen floor as...

THE CAMERA

PLUNGES through the soil below, WHIPSAWING across a VAST NETWORK of shoots and tendrils existing under our feet, extending throughout the world...

BACK TO SCENE

Belial stares at the magnificent display before him.
Awestruck.

But his moment to enjoy it passes as...

WHAM! -- The massive temple doors EXPLODE OPEN revealing...

KAULDER AND CHLOE

A BEAT...the chamber holding its breath as...

Kaulder DIVES one way, Chloe ROLLING the other -- They're familiar with each others techniques now, able to anticipate their partner's moves -- Playing off each other...

KAULDER

Whips between the three remaining Council Witches -- He STRIKES with his sword, goading them.

KAULDER
Open season, boys.

Seeing their prey right in front of them, the witches can't help themselves, launching spells, Kaulder DROPPING at the last second --

The Council Witches ABSORB their own CONCUSSIVE BLASTS, FLYING against the EARTHEN WALLS!

CHLOE

SPINS, looking for Belial...but all she finds is --

DÜER

Standing before her. Chloe stares, can't believe it. Dürer's face a mask of spiteful hate, hand coming up with an ORNATE RITUAL KNIFE, lunging at Chloe...but at the last second --

KAULDER

Grabs Dürer's wrist, wresting the knife from her grip!

Acting fast, he uses the blade to slice a simple cut across Chloe's arm -- Chloe blinks, the spell broken to reveal Dürer's true form:

BELIAL

Kaulder SPINS with the blade, attempting to cut away Belial's totem twine -- But the witch is too fast, nimbly DARTING away...for the moment.

Kaulder turns to Chloe, her eyes wet.

CHLOE

...I thought it was her.

Kaulder looks back to Belial...but he's gone -- The MASSIVE RUMBLE of the wooden machine building behind them.

KAULDER

I'll keep Belial busy...you stop the Goetia.

CHLOE

How?

WHAM! Belial SLAMS into Kaulder like a bullet train, the witch-hunter's body CRASHING into a stone statue, cracked armor and shield absorbing most of the blow.

Kaulder recovers, knowing if he wants to beat Belial he needs to stay close to the witch, preventing him from launching a spell -- He rises, defiant. Locks eyes with his nemesis.

And just like that...it's on.

Kaulder LAUNCHES at Belial, the combat erupting mere inches between them, the witch hunter attempting to grab the dangling totem twine.

Belial's a whirlwind -- Kaulder using every ounce of training and experience just to keep up -- Guillotine kicks. Heel thrusts. Faints. Blows.

A blizzard of moves SWEEPS the two opponents across the chamber and into...

INT. COUNCIL CHAMBERS - SAME TIME

The combat now framed in the sprawling branches of the Great Tree -- Belial managing to grip Kaulder, TOSSING him -- Kaulder's body CRASHING noisily along the length of the Council table.

Belial grins, fingers brushing the strange totems along his twine -- Preparing to cast.

BELIAL

The Council had an impressive array of craft signatures, things even I hadn't seen before...

His nails CLICK as --

AIR...

SYRUPS in a SLO-MO BLURRED STREAK toward Kaulder, the witch hunter barely SPRINGING away at the last second as the spell SLAMS into the table!

BLAM! SHARDS OF ANCIENT WOOD blast OUTWARD in *slow-motion* all around Kaulder as he moves at *normal speed*, wood painfully razoring his skin as --

INT. RITUAL TEMPLE - SAME TIME

Chloe steps before the LOOMING WOODEN MACHINE.

She pulls a dagger, trying to jam it into the CHURNING COMPONENTS but all it does is CHEW the blade up -- WHAP! A SHARP CHUNK OF METAL *spits* dangerously past her head as...

INT. COUNCIL CHAMBERS - SAME TIME

WHAP! Kaulder's HIT with a CONCUSSIVE BLAST to the chest, squeezing the breath from his chest.

HIS BODY

SCRAPES across the stone floor toward Belial, seemingly pulled by invisible wires -- Belial clutches him close, talons TEARING armor, Kaulder letting him...as if he wants to be torn to bits.

Finally, with one last BRUTAL HIT, Kaulder collapses to the floor -- Belial only now understanding his true intentions:

THE TOTEM TWINE

Lies in Kaulder's grip, the ragged string broken, objects SCATTERED in pieces across the floor -- Kaulder's taken away Belial's conjuring abilities.

Belial looms, undaunted.

BELIAL

I don't need *magicks* to hurt you.

WHAP! With a powerful SWIPE, Belial DIGS his talons *into* Kaulder's chest, the witch-hunter REELING in pain as...

INT. RITUAL CHAMBER - SAME TIME

CHLOE

Studies the innerworkings of the Goetia, the SLIDING PIECES, the SNAPPING COMPONENTS...and all at once she sees it -- A HIDDEN CHAMBER at the heart!

She pulls her last dagger, gives it a kiss.

And with that, she JABS the blade into the heart of the machine! The components LOCK and SHIFT -- A TRIUMPHANT BEAT, Chloe certain her trick worked!

Until...

The gears GNASH back to life.

The machine is unstoppable.

INT. COUNCIL CHAMBERS - SAME TIME

BELIAL

Hungrily PUMMELS Kaulder, the witch-hunter's face a mess of bruises now -- Victorious, he draws Kaulder's sword, placing the singular blade to the witch hunter's neck.

BELIAL

I wonder if even an immortal could survive without his head.

(beat)

Imagine eternity...broken in two.

He raises the sword to strike, Kaulder exhausted, helpless to stop him -- But at the last second, a FIGURE rises behind Belial:

CHLOE

She KNOCKS the sword away with a BRUTAL KICK, but Belial grabs her foot, TWISTING it.

BELIAL (CONT'D)

I have something special for you.

His hand slides hungrily over Chloe's body, finding what he's looking for: *Düer's ring.*

BELIAL (CONT'D)

No object has more meaning to you
...I hold your very soul in my hand.

Gripping Chloe close, his fingernails CLICK -- *BLUE VEINS beginning to blossom across Chloe's face. Belial's draining her.* Chloe CRUMPLES to the stone floor, lifeforce leeching painfully from her body.

BELIAL (CONT'D)
You can't stop the Plague Box...

He thrusts forward his palms revealing the flesh branded with the TWIN SIGILS of the Goetia.

BELIAL (CONT'D)
The box and I are joined...*my heart
is its heart.*

At this, Kaulder's eyes focus.

He knows what he has to do.

He reaches into the folds of his coat, a sense of destiny to the moment...using every last ounce of energy, he LAUNCHES up as...

THE VIAL

PUNCHES through Belial's teeth, glass SHATTERING inside his mouth, dark liquid FLOODING his tongue!

Belial's skin BLACKENS, poisoning from the inside, the chemical agent BLISTERING its way through his body!

A SCREECH

Unleashes from Belial's mouth, the sound cutting off as his body SHRIVELS, sickness traveling through him at unprecedented speed, his body becoming nothing more than a DRIED HUSK as --

INT. RITUAL CHAMBER - SAME TIME

THE WOODEN MACHINE

Begins to COLLAPSE IN ON ITSELF, *tendrils of roots UNCOILING from its base as the ground gives way*, OPENING UP, a QUAKE echoing through the temple!

INT. COUNCIL CHAMBERS - SAME TIME

KAULDER

Kneels to a slowly recovering Chloe, an odd stillness taking hold -- *Chloe stares at the vial's broken shards on the ground, knowing what Kaulder just gave up.*

A SOFT NOISE makes her turn.

It's the Great Tree. The branches are TREMBLING, leaves RATTLING in a falling rain-like pattern.

KAULDER
We have to get out of here.

A DEEP RUMBLE

Rocks the chamber, the ground giving way! The Great Tree GROANS, the whole thing DISAPPEARING into a MASSIVE SINKHOLE caused by the destruction of the Plague Box!

Stirred by the rumble, the Velveteen Bird drops from the folds of Kaulder's coat -- The witch hunter watching helplessly as the earth SWALLOWS it along with the Great Tree.

Kaulder grabs up his fallen sword.

KAULDER (CONT'D)
C'mon...

He helps Chloe to her feet, battered and bruised, MASSIVE CHUNKS OF EARTH falling from the ceiling behind them, barely making it out in time...

INT. FRONT CHAMBER AREA - CONTINUOUS

The ground SHAKES beneath them, Kaulder pulling her into --

INT. ALCOVE - CONTINUOUS

Kaulder helps Chloe toward the dangling zip lines, racing up the rope...

INT. CAVERN - CONTINUOUS

They climb up the jagged stairway, everything RUMBLING, making it even more difficult...

EXT. HISTORICAL SOCIETY - MOMENTS LATER/DAWN

ANGLE on the brick wall...Everything quiet -- WHAM! -- Kaulder and Chloe BURST out the spray-painted doorway, racing away as...

THE ENTIRE STRUCTURE

Collapses behind them, ENGULFED by the earth.

A RECOVERING BEAT

Kaulder and Chloe standing across the street, dwarfed by a cloud of debris -- The morning sun casting everything in an ethereal haze. It's beautiful.

KAULDER
Four-hundred-fifty-seven.

Chloe looks to him, not understanding....

KAULDER (CONT'D)
You wanted to know.
(beat)
I'm four-hundred-fifty-seven years
old.

It could be a trick of the light...but Chloe could swear
there's a renewed glimmer in Kaulder's eyes, a grim spark of
life as we hear the SOUND OF APPROACHING SIRENS.

CHLOE
Alright, old man.
(beat)
See if you can keep up.

And with a final shared look, our heroes head into the
netherworlds of the city.

Together.

THE CAMERA PULLS BACK ALONG THE HUDSON...

Manhattan skyline now spread before us, jumbled structures
reaching up to greet the morning sun.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD IN THE MIDWEST - DAY

A rippling field of wheat.

The stalks frame a lonely roadway -- A SOLITARY STRUCTURE the
only sign of man's hand.

INT. BUS DEPOT - DAY

AN UNSEEN FIGURE feeds coins into a VENDING MACHINE --
Styrofoam cup RATTLING down, quickly filling with a brown
liquid that could charitably be called coffee.

A T.V. MONITOR broadcasts the news.

NEWSCASTER (O.S.)

(transmitted)

Updating top stories: Authorities in New York are still sifting through the collapsed remains of one of the city's oldest buildings, believed to be the work of a hidden sinkhole...

The Figure drinks his coffee, watching the monitor, *we still don't see his face.*

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

(transmitted)

And officers still have no idea as to the whereabouts of known serial killer Anthony Marbas. Marbas escaped captivity two days ago, successfully eluding a nationwide manhunt.

(beat)

In other news...

The Figure turns, revealing --

MARBAS

Clad in TRUCKER HAT and COAT, he blends in nicely -- With a grin, *he pulls out the 'OTHER' VIAL recovered from the well, the glass containing only a last few dollops of red liquid.*

He opens it, pouring the remaining tincture into his coffee and drinking it down.

COWBOY (O.S.)

Hey, mister...

Marbas turns, a BRAWNY COWBOY eyeballing him from a nearby seat.

COWBOY (CONT'D)

-- You mind moving that fat head of yours? Other people like to watch the news too.

A TENSE BEAT -- Marbas taking the man in...then, surprisingly, he nods good-naturedly.

MARBAS

My apologies.

He turns to go, *hand absently brushing the Cowboy's shoulder when he passes.*

ANGLE ON MARBAS:

As he heads toward the door, it's only now we see he's actually REMOVED something from the Cowboy's shoulder: A single strand of hair.

He plays with it, entwining the hair between his fingers... until finally...

He PULLS it into a knot. Tight.

THE COWBOY

Suddenly CLUTCHES HIS CHEST, breath CRUSHING from his body. He's having a heart attack -- A moment of alarm, PEOPLE racing to help, the man crumpling to the depot floor.

EXT. BUS DEPOT - CONTINUOUS

Marbas exits...and with one last patented Marbas grin...

FADE OUT