

FADE IN:

A SHADOW MOVES ACROSS PAVEMENT

The outline of a Man. Running. Sprinting. Pull back to reveal:

THE MAN RACING THROUGH CITY STREETS--

30's, sunglasses, the ruffled, slept-in look of a rich playboy. First morning light glints off the buildings of a downtown that's just waking up. Then we hear it--

THE DISTANT RUMBLE OF AN ENGINE

--it echoes, gets closer. The Playboy BLASTS through sleepy commuters. KNOCKS over a metermaid, coins flying. He turns a corner, spots something. The RUMBLING growls--

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE HI-RISE - MORNING

TWO SECURITY GUARDS emerge from an armored car lugging a METAL BOX. Another GUARD trails toting a shotgun.

SUNRISE SHIMMERS on glass doors as a Guard keys them. All business, they enter with the box. The Shotgun Guard locks the door behind them and turns to the street.

It's quiet, deserted, until...the PLAYBOY stops short, full of steam, wired. He's looking past the Shotgun Guard.

SHOTGUN GUARD

Sir? You okay, sir?

No response. The Playboy suddenly bull-rushes the Shotgun Guard into the glass doors. They SHATTER. The Playboy grabs the shotgun and headbutts the Guard, dropping him cold.

IN THE ARMORED CAR--

A DRIVER/GUARD glances up from the sports pages to see the Playboy attack the Shotgun Guard. He jumps, spilling coffee on the boxscores, fumbling the car door open--

INT. LOBBY - HI-RISE - SAME TIME

The Guards carrying the metal box hear the GLASS BREAKING O.S. A black Guard, RON, turns to his white partner, EDDIE.

RON

I'll go.

Ron pulls his side-arm, backtracks to the entrance. As he edges around a corner, the Playboy slams into Ron.

A forearm to Ron's temple and he's down. Eddie goes for his gun, dropping the box to the marble floor, busting it open as--

DIAMONDS SPRAY EVERYWHERE

Before Eddie can pull the trigger, the Playboy throws him against a wall. The Playboy turns, spots Ron gimping away. Points the shotgun at him. Ron flinches--

RON

I got kids.

The Playboy just stares. Diamonds sparkle on his sunglasses.

SIRENS BLARE. Emergency lights flash. Ron looks down to--

THE ENTRANCE -- where the Driver, gun in hand, has pulled the fire alarm

THE PLAYBOY TAKES OFF, kicking up diamonds, racing to--

A BANK OF ELEVATORS -- its steel doors automatically closing. Too late. The Playboy can't get a hand in to stop them

IN A DOORWAY -- Ron hides, bleeding. He spots the Playboy at the elevators amid flashing red lights. The DRIVER/GUARD arrives on the scene. He spots Ron, who's pointing--

RON

Over there!

The Driver/Guard swings around, his GUN aimed at the elevator bank. But nobody's there--

INT. STAIRWELL - HI-RISE - MORNING

The Playboy is on the run again, taking stairs three at a time. ENGINE RUMBLING bleeds in from somewhere outside. He pauses. Resumes his climb. CHUKKA-CHUKKA. The sound of someone BANGING A LOCKED DOOR--

INT. FIRST FLOOR STAIRWELL - HI-RISE - SAME

A chair jams the twisting door-handle.

INT. EMERGENCY DOOR - EXPANSIVE LOBBY - SAME

On the other side, the Driver/Guard muscles the door. Won't budge. Ron appears, helping Eddie limp over.

DRIVER/GUARD

You sure about the elevators?

RON

Alarm shuts 'em down automatically.
(re: diamonds)
Million bucks on the floor, he just
takes off.

EDDIE

Where? Only way is up.

Spasms of heavy breathing take us to--

INT. STAIRS - HI-RISE - MORNING

Playboy races upwards, desperate, scared.

EXT. FRONT ENTRANCE - HI-RISE - MORNING

POLICE CRUISERS skid to a stop. UNIFORMS stream inside. The
RUMBLING is close now, shaking the ground--

A flame-red DRAG ROADSTER pulls up. Out steps VECK -- an
immense, bearded man wearing motorcycle boots, dingy leathers,
and a patchwork of tattoos. He takes in the Hi-Rise, amused.

EXT. ROOF - HI-RISE - MORNING

THE PLAYBOY bursts through a service door. Golden sunlight
bathes everything. He strips his shirt open. Staggeres to a
ledge. Rips off his sunglasses, revealing piercing blue eyes.

A SLEDGE-HAMMER CLANGS AGAINST METAL -- We're back at:

INT. FIRST FLOOR EMERGENCY DOOR - HI-RISE - MORNING

COPS hammer at the door. MORE COPS crow-bar the elevators.
Veck stands in the bedlam, eyes closed, the picture of
serenity. Police run by him. It's as if Veck isn't there.

EXT. ROOF - HI-RISE - MORNING

The Playboy drinks in sunlight. Tears stream down his face.
Behind, a figure appears -- IT'S VECK, inhaling the fresh air.

PLAYBOY

The gun, it just went off, y' know...

Veck's silence is ominous.

PLAYBOY (CONT'D)

I was scaring him, like you wanted...
how was I 'sposed to know he'd come at
me?...it wasn't my fault...it was an
accident...

VECK

No such thing as accidents, Jones-y.

PLAYBOY

We can turn this around...I mean, you know where this thing's headed, right? We work another ripple--

VECK

We?

PLAYBOY

What's the deal with this guy anyway? He's a bean-counter. Some flunky in a suit. Nobody'll miss him

VECK

Lowell was my flunky.
(beat)

It was a simple job, Jones-y. Get in, get out, walk away clean.

Veck moves towards the Playboy, threatening.

PLAYBOY

You know what it's like down here. Things happen. Don't send me back on account of this. Please--

VECK

The begging...one thing I can't stand, it's the begging...

PLAYBOY

We had a deal. I want my time. Killing I don't deserve.

VECK

I can't kill you, Jones-y. You're dead already.

Veck plants a foot on the Playboy, sticks a hand into his spine, and gives a horrific tug. Another ghostly body emerges whole from within the Playboy, kicking and screaming.

A thin, stubble-faced MAN claws to get back in. Veck's boot sends the Playboy's now-lifeless body OVER THE LEDGE--

EXT. FRONT ENTRANCE - HI-RISE - MORNING

Cops contain a crowd. Suddenly a SCREAM, then a sickening CRASH on top of a squad car.

It's the Playboy's crushed body, his lifeless eyes staring at us. But something's different -- his eyes are now brown.

EXT. ROOF - HI-RISE - MORNING

At the ledge, Veck peers over. Cops gather around him and look down at the grisly scene below. Veck casually turns to--

THE THIN, BEARD-STUBBLED MAN pulled from the Playboy's body. Pale skin, dark suit, gaunt expression, otherworldly. Except for his striking blue eyes. His name is JONES.

JONES

Okay, I fucked up. Lemme make it up to you. Whatever job you got, I'll do it. Gimme another chance.

VECK

Outta' my hands. Your soul's been claimed.

Jones looks stricken.

JONES

You can't do this. It ain't right. The clown freaks because I pull a piece on him? I got to face eternal fires for that? Should be dead of a heart attack anyway, the fat fuck.

Grim-faced, Veck watches Jones sweat.

JONES (CONT'D)

You can't leave me hanging like this. You gotta' do something...Veck, you gotta' help me.

VECK

Whaddo I look like? A miracle worker?

Veck steps away as A HAND appears, stroking Jones chin. The hand puts a choke-hold on his throat. Nobody's connected to the hand. It's disembodied, alive. And pulling Jones down. MORE HANDS grip his head, his shoulders, his arms and legs--

A MASS OF PAWING HANDS drag Jones down, shrieking. He sinks into the roof as if it were quicksand.

Cops retreat from the ledge, return to the stairs. They don't hear Jones' cries. Veck turns away, eyes closed blissfully.

EXT. FRONT ENTRANCE - HI-RISE - DAY

Veck opens his eyes -- he's next to his Roadster. M E. TECHS haul a body bag on a gurney. Veck roars away in the Roadster, blowing past onlookers, who act as if nothing's there. A SCREAMING GUITAR takes us to--

MAIN TITLES

JONES' BODY APPEARS outlined in a ceiling. "Hands" morph into ceiling fixtures, pulling him through the floors--

VECK IN THE ROADSTER, humming with a GRINDING ROCK TUNE. Dark clouds cluster with each passing street, blotting out the sun.

JONES is encased in a marble pillar like a mummified nightmare. He slides down its surface, continues his excruciating descent...

THE HOOD OF VECK'S ROADSTER contorts reflections over its curves. A chrome angel hood ornament rides the wind, a noble expression on her face...

GLASS FRONT DOORS ripple into Jones' form. Cops don't notice the man-blob spit onto the floor, writhing across the lobby...

ROADSTER'S POLISHED SIDE DOOR is a funhouse mirror, warping passing buildings. Veck howls as he zooms into darkness...

A BARE LIGHT BULB in the hi-rise's basement. Jones is taken by a living maze of pipes and air ducts and pulled to a swirling concrete floor. He's sucked away with a deafening lightning crack. Light bulb explodes. Screen goes BLACK.

END MAIN TITLES

SUPER: Somewhere between Heaven and Hell...

FADE IN--

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD BAR - NIGHT

At the corner of a dark, forgotten street.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Drab. Lifeless. A weigh station for tortured souls marking time in Purgatory. A LARGE CLOCK dominates the room -- its TICKING drones, drowning out the tinny MUSIC on the jukebox.

A middle-aged fat man, LOWELL, wrinkled suit and tie, sits apart from the crowd, ranting into his drink--

LOWELL

Something's wrong...I need help...can somebody get me some help?...God, I think I'm bleeding. Somebody help me--

Reveal Lowell's gut -- a bloody GUNSHOT stains his shirt. The barfly next to him, SALLY, 40's, bottle-blonde, raises Lowell's drink to his lips. A cigarette dangles as she talks--

SALLY

You'll get over it. Everybody does.

LOWELL

(sips)

What's wrong with me?...can't taste anything...can't feel...Am I dying?

Chuckles ripple through the room. Lowell's stunned. A RUMBLE outside silences every one. All eyes turn as Veck walks in. BIGGS, a pudgy bartender, springs into action.

BIGGS

Hey, Big Guy, long time no see...

Veck ignores Biggs -- his thousand-yard stare is fixed to the **BACK OF THE ROOM**. Veck steps to the bar, holds out a hand--

VECK

Gimme the good stuff.

BIGGS

Heard about Jones-y. Seen it coming, y'know. Told him once, I told him a million times -- do a job for Veck, I told him, you got to keep your head in the game.

Biggs flips a bottle shimmering with a FLOURESCENT LIQUID. Slaps it in Veck's hand. Veck swipes two glasses.

BIGGS

Got a taste, went straight to his head. Never send a boy, huh, Veck? Ain't some picnic. Not a freakin' party. Down there to do a job. Got to be done right.

(beat)

'S why you need the right man working for you. Ain't that right, Veck?

SALLY throws herself between Veck and Biggs.

SALLY
 Maybe he isn't looking for the right
 man--
 (turns, smiles)
 --that right, sweetie?

Sally smiles seductively. Veck silently brushes her aside.

SALLY
 I'll do what it takes, Veck. Whatever
 it takes.

Every head follows Veck he goes to the back of the bar, where--

A MAN SLOUCHES IN A CHAIR

Rat's nest of hair, beard stubble like uncut lawn, gnawing a
 toothpick -- this is THE STRANGER. His head is buried in a
 crossword. Veck sits, pours two shots of the glowing drink.

VECK
 That any way to treat an old friend?

The Stranger ignores Veck.

VECK
 Came all this way to buy you a drink.

STRANGER
 And if I'm not thirsty?

VECK
 Guess you don't have much of a choice.
 (beat)
 Got a job. Need your skills. Need
 your talents.

STRANGER
 Answer's the same as the last time
 your fat ass was parked at my table --
 I'm not in the market.

VECK
 Things change. That was then, this is
 now.
 (beat)
 Don't you even wanna' hear what I'm
 offering?

STRANGER
 Doesn't matter. I'm never going back.

VECK
 Never's a long time, even for this
 place.

Veck looks to the clock. The TICKING echoes insidiously.

VECK (CONT' D)
 You ought to lighten up. Drink your
 drink. Everybody's happy to see me.

The crowd smiles hungrily at Veck. The Stranger glances at
 the shimmering SHOTGLASS.

STRANGER
 Always the same. Hook 'em with a
 taste, rope 'em into doing your dirty
 work.

VECK
 But what a taste, huh?
 (raises shotglass)
 Two fingers-full of ever-loving
 mortality. Tasting, touching,
 drinking, fucking. As close to living
 as it gets. Maybe you been here so
 long, you've forgotten the feeling.

The Stranger doesn't respond.

VECK (CONT' D)
 Suit yourself.
 (stands up)
 Gig's near your old stomping grounds.
 Did I mention that? Fresh ocean air.
 Water's bathtub warm. Sky a perfect
 baby blue.

STRANGER
 Send me a postcard.

VECK
 Almost forgot the best part -- he's
still down there. Been a few years,
 but you'd recognize him if you saw
 him

The Stranger is rattled -- he tries to cover.

STRANGER
 It's a dead issue.

VECK
 You sure about that?

The Stranger goes mute. Veck walks away. The crowd mobs him, begging, pleading for a chance to take the job.

THE STRANGER EYES THE SHOTGLASS. Picks it up. A tiny patch of light glows on his face. He gulps it. Ecstasy. Euphoria. The Stranger SLAMS the empty shot glass on the table.

Veck turns at the sound. He goes to the Stranger, leans in--

VECK

Why fight it, right? Here's the shot -
- 24 hours on God's green Earth. Cash
to burn, air to breathe, a nice place
near the water, sunlight. There's
even a woman. Oh, you'll like living
in this guy's skin.

(a whisper)

You want it or not?

The Stranger hesitates. SHOUTING erupts from the crowd:
"I'll do it!" "Pick me!" "Screw him, take me!" LOWELL
pushes through and latches onto Veck--

LOWELL

Will you help me? I'm hurt and I need
to see a doctor...I'm bleeding...I
could be dying... please--

Veck's hand clamps onto Lowell's face, disappearing into one
morphed mass of skin. The words choke in Lowell's throat.

VECK

You're exactly where you're 'sposed to
be, flunky. Welcome to the Sweet
Hereafter.

(to the Stranger)

Well, Sunshine?

The Stranger watches as Lowell writhes in Veck's grasp.

INT. VECK'S ROADSTER - STREET LEADING NOWHERE - NIGHT

Passing murky BUILDINGS and flickering STREETLIGHTS -- a
lifeless no man's land. Veck dumps a stack of METALLIC 3-D
PHOTOGRAPHS on the Stranger. The top photo is of a good-
looking, Kennedy-esque JACK HOYLE.

VECK

Guy's all charm. Rich, handsome, body
like an athlete, all the extras.
Smart, too. Some kind of hot-shot
lawyer.

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For the complete script please contact Jennifer Brooks at
info@filmmakers.com