

Noble Blood  
by  
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FADE IN:

INT. STOCK FOOTAGE STADIUM WORLD FENCING CHAMPIONSHIPS. DAY

We are looking at a crowded stadium its the world fencing championships and we are watching two athletes fencing in slow motion.

The athletes lunge at each other trying to score the winning pint. Then the buzzer goes confirming a direct hit. A Winner.

INTER CUT

JOHN DASHWOOD the winner, he takes of his mask off, he waves to the crowd.

CUT TO:

On the winning podium JOHN waits as the English National anthem is played and the gold medal is placed around his neck

ROLL OPENING CREDITS:

INT. JOHN DASHWOOD'S APARTMENT. MORNING.

The bedroom is silent except for the moan of the wind outside. The glowing numbers on the face of a digital clock tells us its five minutes to six am.

A FIGURE in the bed tosses in restless sleep. We are unable to see the sleeper under the voluminous duvet. We begin to float above the bed.

INT. LIBRARY. SIR ERIC DASHWOOD'S STATELY HOME.-DAY. 1698.

A portrait of Sir ERIC DASHWOOD hangs above the marble fireplace, gazing up at the painting is SARAH the young and beautiful wife of Sir ERIC.

SARAH'S face is filled with sadness, She looks at the diary in her hand and sighs.

SARAH moves to a window-side-chair, She sits a moment, staring out the window. Slowly She opens the diary.

EXT. WOODS. - DAY. 1698

A gurgling stream weaves its way through a grove of ancient, rustling trees, spiders dangle from the lower branches and forest insects hurry about, on the bark of gnarled oaks, warts and contusions, nature's gargoyles frown down upon the gloomy scene.

EXT. WOODS.-DAY 1698.

CLOSE/UP: Off a sword blade as it is drawn from a gilded scabbard. The sound of steel rings out.

EXT. WOODS. -DAY. 1698

A Birds rise in raucous alarm from the tree tops.

EXT. WOODS. -DAY. 1698.

SEQUENCE OF BOLD CUT'S:

The wheels of the COACH spin breaking the earth.

The COACH HORSES gallop, urged on by the stinging crack of the whip.

The HORSES hooves pound the earth.

The COACH DRIVER is dressed in black cloak and hat, only his bloodshot eyes can be seen just above the scarf.

The COACH DRIVER whips the horses as they zigzag there way through the woods.

END OPENING CREDITS:

EXT. WOODS. -DAY. 1698

We now see a Gentleman. SIR ERIC DASHWOOD and his SECOND CAPTAIN BLAKE Sir ERIC wears a pea-green coat, a large tucker with a diamond brooch stuck in it and a tri-cornered hat with a gold button-loop and tassels, silk stockings a couteau-de-chasse hanging by his side.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD is visibly nervous. BLAKE looks on concerned for his friend.

CAPTAIN BLAKE

For the love of God Sir, I can not think of going any further with this business.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD ignores this plea, removes his coat which he hands to his second.

We establish a distinctive gold medallion about his neck, engraved with his family crest. He fingers the medallion for a moment.

The thundering sound of coach wheels grows louder as the coach approaches.

EXT. WOODS. - DAY. 1698

The coach reins to a stop. There is no movement from within.

The coach stands in a mist of it's own making, like a vision from hell.

The horses, wild eyed and lathered shake their purple plumes and paw the earth.

INT. COACH. WOODS.-DAY. 1698

A figure sits in a pool of shadow, a long fingered right hand, bejeweled and femininely manicured idly drums the knobbed hilt of a walking cane.

EXT. WOODS. - DAY. 1698

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD resolute, stares at the coach. His second has become more apprehensive

CAPTAIN BLAKE

I beg of you Sir, it's not too late to withdraw.

The coach driver PYKE leaps from the coach and swings its door open. PHILIP BRANDAUER slowly steps out dressed in dark finery, Black stein, velvets, leather and lace.

An atmosphere of sheer malevolence radiates from him. SIR ERIC DASHWOOD'S eyes never leave BRANDAUER.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD

(to Blake)

I'll not renege on my word now and be branded a yellow poltroon for the rest of my days, I will rid the earth of this evil creature, once and for all.

BLAKE looks at PYKE who lounges by the coach swigging from a liquor flash, they trade hostile looks.

PYKE is sullen dirty and ragged, while BLAKE carries the poised demeanor of a gentleman's gentleman.

BRANDAUER removes his cloak

BRANDAUER

PYKE.

BRANDAUER tosses PYKE his cloak and cane. He draws his sword and calmly adjusts his clothing with a sly, supremely confident smile.

BRANDAUER (CONT'D)

(Brandauer with a slight bow)

I declare, you do look rather pale this morning. Does something ail you? Perhaps you have neglected to break your fast? No, I have it! Its the horrifying thought of your certain and imminent death, Hmm?

SIR ERIC'S eyes burn with anger.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD

We shall see which of us dies, BRANDAUER.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRANDAUER

Tosh! you have my promise Sir, I will dispatch you forthwith with the greatest amount of pain on your behalf and pleasure on mine.

They stand facing each other, it's only a moment but to Sir ERIC DASHWOOD it seems like a lifetime as he stares into BRANDAUER'S lifeless eyes. Each man waits for the other to make his move

A horse whines sending the two men into battle. The duel that follows is skilful, each man gaining and then losing his advantage.

HALFWAY THROUGH THE DUEL:

By now SIR ERIC DASHWOOD is hurt but is still able to continue. BRANDAUER shows no mercy as he cuts him with each deadly move.

And when BRANDAUER finds himself out-fenced he does not hesitate to use his fists or feet.

THE END OF THE DUEL:

Both men are now exhausted. BRANDAUER lunges at Sir ERIC DASHWOOD, but is disarmed.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD pressing his sword blade against BRANDAUER's throat.

PYKE is quickly to his feet ready to pounce, his hand moves down to his knife.

CAPTAIN BLAKE

(shouting)

Finish him! Finish him!

A small trickle of blood runs down BRANDAUER's neck.

CAPTAIN BLAKE (CONT'D)

For the love of God, have done with him Sir.

But SIR ERIC DASHWOOD lowers his sword.

BRANDAUER

(with a smile)

How very sporting of you Sir.

BRANDAUER pick's up his sword, but as he leans back up he kicks the sword from Sir ERIC DASHWOOD's hand.

BLAKE lets out a roar in horror and runs to help, but is stopped by a knife in his back from PYKE.

BRANDAUER presses his sword blade against Sir ERIC's throat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRANDAUER (CONT'D)

And how very foolish.

BRANDAUER plunges his sword into Sir ERIC'S throat, blood spurts from his mouth.

BRANDAUER grabs hold of the medallion and pulls Sir ERIC'S head towards him.

BRANDAUER (CONT'D)

(maniacally)

Well DASHWOOD, is there something you see? Something you want to tell me? It's not the shining white tunnel that leads you to a place of eternal peace after all, is it.

BRANDAUER plunges his sword deeper.

BRANDAUER (CONT'D)

(with mocking sympathy)

Yes, I know, I know, it comes as such a surprise where you travel to now my dear friend, a fathomless deep of endless torrent. Where souls more numerous than the very stars above scream in everlasting bewilderment.

DASHWOOD is trying to formulate a syllable and appears to be signalling with his terrified staring eyes.

BRANDAUER (CONT'D)

Pardon? What is that you say Sir? S...s...sar...SARAH. Ah, how touching. I will pass on your fond regards, certainly. But now I must bid you farewell and consign you to oblivion.

BRANDAUER with a final plunge skewers the blade on through DASHWOOD'S throat until it's bloody tip appears from the back of his neck.

There is the crunch of bone and gristle. DASHWOOD gurgles.

BRANDAUER (CONT'D)

Bon voyage!

INT. LIBRARY. SIR ERIC DASHWOOD'S STATELY HOME.-DAY. 1698.

SARAH sitting by the window, her tearful eyes stare out the window. A single tear falls on her cheek.

EXT. WOODS. - DAY. 1698

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD stops struggling, he is dead. BRANDAUER rips the medallion from his neck tossing his lifeless body to the ground.

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CONTINUED:

PYKE is leaning over BLAKE's body like a vulture, stealing what he can. A sudden gust of wind blows, sending a cold chill through BRANDAUER's body.

The coach horses jump and kick, then scream with terror.

PYKE looks around in fear. BRANDAUER holds up the medallion with satisfaction.

THERE IS A LOUD BURST OF THUNDER.

INT. LIBRARY. SIR ERIC DASHWOOD'S STATELY HOME.-DAY. 1698.

CLOSE on SARAH'S hands closing the diary. SARAH stands up and walks over to the bookshelf.

She puts the diary in a small metal box and slides the box into a secret hatch, closing over the wooden door, then she covers the latch with some books.

EXT. PRESENT DAY. CAR. COUNTRYSIDE. DAY

We find a sports car open top driving through the countryside. Its a beautiful Sommers day.

INT. CAR. COUNTRYSIDE. DAY

In the car driving is JOHN DASHWOOD 28 athletic, handsome and his girlfriend MARIE 27 attractive. JOHN is taking her on a drive to see his new business venture.

MARIE

Are you going to tell me where we are going?

JOHN DASHWOOD

I told to you its a surprise. My competition days are over now, so its time to think business.

MARIE

What kind of business.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Well you gave me the idea.

MARIE

I did?

JOHN DASHWOOD

After the Championships I was approached by a business man, looking character.

MARIE

What do you mean strange?

JOHN DASHWOOD

He dressed in old style clothes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIE

So how did I give you the business idea.

JOHN DASHWOOD

You were always saying I should teach and write about what I am good at. And that's what I am going to do.

MARIE

In the countryside?

JOHN DASHWOOD

Its going to be an elite gentlemen's club. It will have a fitness centre, an Olympic fencing team teaching the art of the sword, it will all be done old school. Butlers Doormen, you can even stay over.

MARIE

I don't follow?

JOHN DASHWOOD

Just think Downton Abbey.

MARIE totally gets it.

MARIE

Wow...

The stately home comes into view, in fact its SIR ERIC DASHWOOD'S STATELY Now run by a board of investors.

EXT. SIR ERIC DASHWOOD'S STATELY HOME.-DAY.

JOHN car drives up to the main entrance and stops. JOHN steps out then MARIE.

MARIE

You never said what that strange looking man wanted.

JOHN DASHWOOD

He offered me this.

MARIE

What?

JOHN DASHWOOD

Not to buy. He represents a board of investors who control the ownership of the property. He gave me his card and said the house was available. He suggested the elite club Idea and I told what I had in mind and we came to an agreement. Welcome to our new pad.

INT. SIR ERIC DASHWOOD'S STATELY HOME.-DAY.

Inside the house is lifeless. JOHN and MARIE enter and look around in awe.

MARIE

John, what do you mean this is our new home.

JOHN DASHWOOD

We can stay here, well not here we are in the gate house.

MARIE doesn't look that convinced that this is the best idea. JOHN puts his arm's around her.

JOHN DASHWOOD (CONT'D)

Everything will be fine once we get started. This is a great place for me to getaway and start my book.

MARIE

It's a long way from our friends.

JOHN DASHWOOD

It's only an hour from London and Richard will be working with me so Jane will be dropping down all the time.

MARIE

I'm sorry, its, just it's big are you ready for this.

JOHN DASHWOOD

I was born for this. Who know's if things take off we may even buy it.

MARIE smiles then looks up the stairs at a large a portrait of PHILIP BRANDAUER. In the portrait BRANDAUER wears a gold medallion.

MARIE

He doesn't look to happy.

JOHN looks up.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Don't know the full history but he was the last owner. Phillip Brandauer.

At the top of the stairs a woman appears dressed in black her demeanor is very cold, her skin pale almost white. Her sudden appearance startles MARIE.

MISS. DE WINTER

That was the Master of the house.

MISS de WINTER walks down the stairs to greet them.

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CONTINUED:

MISS. DE WINTER (CONT'D)

He disappeared one night after the murder of his wife and was never seen again.

MARIE

Charming.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Marie this Miss De Winter.

MARIE

Pleased to meet you.

MISS. DE WINTER

And you. You wish me to show you around.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Yes. Yes that would be great.

MARIE

How long have you worked here?

MISS. DE WINTER

I was born here. My family go back three hundred years.

MARIE under her breath to JOHN.

MARIE

Geess get a life woman.

MISS DE WINTER opens to large doors to the great hall.

MISS. DE WINTER

I believe you will be using this as your sport room.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Wow this is going to be perfect.

MARIE

How much are you going to charge people to join to pay for this.

JOHN DASHWOOD

A lot, a lot.

MISS. DE WINTER

(these words go unheard)

Welcome home Mr Dashwood.

EXT. STATELY HOME. SPORTS CLUB. - NIGHT.

The DASHWOOD STATELY HOME, now a sports club for wealthy businessmen. The house is well lit, row upon row of expensive looking cars are parked upon the gravel driveway. We slowly move towards a window and go through.

INT. STATELY HOME. SPORTS CLUB.-NIGHT.

From the window we move up the staircase and along paintings hung on the walls.

INT. STATELY HOME. ROOM. SPORTS CLUB. NIGHT.

The sound of swordplay echo's. CLOSE/UP Swords lock in combat and part.

We now see TWO MEN fencing in full competition clothing, It's JOHN DASHWOOD his moves are intricate, quick and decisive.

The second MAN (RICHARD) JOHN'S closest friend and business partner. RICHARD 34 is somewhat the same build but a little overweight, he is sufficient with a sword but is out classed by his partners effortless skill.

The first JOHN disarms RICHARD forcing him to his knees gasping for breath.

RICHARD throwing aside his foil pulls off his mask gasping for breath.

RICHARD BLAKE  
For God's sake JOHN are you trying to  
kill me?

JOHN removes his mask.

JOHN DASHWOOD  
Sorry RICHARD. Don't know what came over  
me.

RICHARD stands up, he looks at JOHN.

RICHARD  
Are you all right?

JOHN rubbing his forehead.

JOHN DASHWOOD  
Dame headaches. There getting worse.

RICHARD  
Not surprised, you must of put away a  
magnum or two, you got rather cosy with  
that young lady from the press last  
night. eh?

JOHN holding his forehead.

JOHN DASHWOOD  
Nothing happened it was about an  
interview for the book.

RICHARD  
So when is this book going to be  
finished?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN DASHWOOD

Soon.

Another MAN dressed in full fencing clothing approaches.

MAN

Mr Dashwood are you teaching the class tonight.

JOHN DASHWOOD

No. Can you get some to cover for me.

JOHN looks at RICHARD.

RICHARD

Don't look at me I have to get back to London and start work on that new membership we talked about.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Right!

MAN

I'll take care of it.

The MAN walks away.

They walk to the locker rooms.

RICHARD

That's not like you. Your students are going to be disappointed.

JOHN DASHWOOD

I think I need to see the Doctor about these headaches.

RICHARD

Hair of the dog that's what you need.

JOHN DASHWOOD

I don't think so. Besides, I've got some work tonight.

INT. LOCKER ROOM. STATELY HOME. SPORTS CLUB. NIGHT

JOHN and RICHARD enter the locker room and start to change.

RICHARD

How are things working out at the gate house.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Its great for working on the book, so peaceful.

RICHARD

I mean how are things going with you and Marie?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN DASHWOOD

She's away a lot with the new job.

RICHARD

Yeah, She's Air hostess with City Jet.  
She's waiting for you to pop the  
question.

JOHN DASHWOOD

I will when the time is right. Now you  
have a long drive ahead of you.

RICHARD

Come on man you two have been seeing  
each other since collage.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Richard go home, tell Jane when the  
time is right you guys will be the  
first to know. And by the way Marie  
love that job.

EXT. STATELY HOME. SPORTS CLUB.- NIGHT.

The house is well lit. People are leaving. A crack of thunder  
can be heard in the distance.

INT. RECEPTION. STATELY HOME. SPORTS CLUB. -NIGHT.

JOHN is leaving as he walks past the RECEPTIONIST She calls  
to him. She hands him a small envelope.

RECEPTIONIST

Mr DASHWOOD. This came for you.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Thanks Rose.

JOHN opens the envelop and takes out a card. He reads it.

CLOSE/UP: of card reads (For Sir JOHN DASHWOOD.)

JOHN looks puzzled because there's no number or address on  
the card, but inside the envelop there is a key.

JOHN takes out the key, which is and old fashioned decorative  
drawer key. He turns to Rose.

JOHN DASHWOOD (CONT'D)

Rose, did you see who left this?

He shows her the key and card.

ROSE

No. I'm sorry. I left the desk just for a  
moment and when I returned it was there.

MISS de WINTER appears.

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MISS DE WINTER  
Is there anything wrong?

JOHN DASHWOOD  
No. No it's alright. Thanks.

MISS DE WINTER  
You look puzzled. May be I can help.

JOHN DASHWOOD  
No, its just someone left this message  
and Key.

MISS DE WINTER  
Can I be of any help?

JOHN shows her the Key.

JOHN DASHWOOD  
Well it just say's to Sir John  
Dashwood and there is this old key.  
I'm sure its just Richard playing a  
joke.

JOHN just stares at the key.

MISS DE WINTER  
You look tired Mr Dashwood. You should  
take some time off you have been  
working long hours every day to make  
this place a success.

JOHN DASHWOOD  
Your right I need a break. Good night.

MISS DE WINTER  
Good night Sir.

MISS De WINTER watches him go.

EXT. THE GATE HOUSE. NIGHT.

Through the curtain-less window we see JOHN at his desk,  
absorbed in his work, lit by his computer screen. We move  
slowly in.

INT. THE GATE HOUSE.- NIGHT.

JOHN works furiously at the key board. We see the screen  
reflected in his reading glasses.

Behind him the walls of the room are covered with  
photographs of an Olympic fencing team, and photographs of  
JOHN DASHWOOD proudly holding a trophy.

JOHN takes up a bottle pills and takes two and washes them  
with a whiskey and gets back to work. He turns on his tape  
recorder and listens to his research notes for his book.

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CONTINUED:

JOHN DASHWOOD'S VOICE

The noble art of fencing is without doubt probably one of the oldest games in man's long and for most part, violent history. Although its origins is unknown, the sword was first documented approximately 3,500 years ago and evidence shows use in Egypt by pyramid drawings depicting bouts similar to those used today in fencing. First used mainly as a weapon, the military replaced the sword with firearms during the late 15th century. Shortly thereafter, interest in fencing as a sport began to grow.

INT. STATELY HOME. SPORTS CLUB. HALL.-DAY

In the brightly lit room two lines of fencers are training. JOHN strides back and forth delivering as a teacher would, a long practised lecture in a half-distracted manner as if he had something else on his mind. From time to time he will illustrate a point with his foil.

Occasionally he winces and puts his hand to his brow, his headache has not left him

JOHN DASHWOOD'S VOICE

The Italians were the first to use the point rather than the edge of the sword for competition, shifting the emphasis from a slashing to a thrusting style. Various changes in fighting style and equipment worked to mould the sport into its it's modern form. During the 17th century, for example, it became fashionable for men to carry a sword. For convenience, a shorter sword was developed. With that shorter sword, fighter needed only one hand during competition, leaving the other for balance, During this period, duels to the death were used to settle disputes.

INT. GATE HOUSE. NIGHT.

JOHN typing his notes.

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CONTINUED:

JOHN DASHWOOD VOICE

The duel, in the way it has reached us through the stock imagery of television and film seem nothing more than theatrics but if you closely and objectively examine what happens within the minds and bodies of two individuals locked in real combat you will be somewhat astonished. None encounters are uncontrolled and unsupervised, often unwitnessed, each fighter attempts to achieve any advantage over the opponent, including control of time and space. Weapons mismatched or coincidentally matched.

INT. HELL FIRE CLUB. - NIGHT. 1697.

A large room with gaming tables and a number of soft cushioned couches arranged in alcoves.

We find Sir ERIC DASHWOOD, WILL CROSBY and COSEY HARRISON sitting around a large polished table.

Huge drunken shadows loom on the walls, which are panelled, book-lined, and hung with oversized portraits of hanoverian greats in gilded frames.

Brass and mellow candlelight are the only highlight apart from that thrown by a cavernous blazing log fire.

The table is strewn with the relics of the evenings entertainment, empty bottles, some broken, heaps of bones, chicken carcasses, pewter plates.

INT. PRESENT DAY. GATE HOUSE. NIGHT.

As he types the last few words " IN THIS DUEL THERE IS ONLY ONE OUT COME, LIFE OR DEATH"

JOHN DASHWOOD VOICE

We are not referring here to some gentlemanly esoteric, aristocratic, or even fanciful art where the opponents attempt to score points or touches. In this duel there is only one outcome. Life or Death.

JOHN stares at the computer screen.

INT. HELL FIRE CLUB. - NIGHT. 1697.

A drunken PIPER sleeps by the fire place, chanter still under his arm, snoring.

Sir ERIC DASHWOOD, CROSBY and HARRISON are very drunk. A bust of KING BILLY hangs near by, twinkling in the candlelight.

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CONTINUED:

CROSBY rises unsteadily, facing the bust, glass raised. Sir ERIC and HARRISON do the same, their glasses raised.

CROSBY

The glorious pious and immortal memory of the great and good King William, not forgetting Oliver Cromwell who assisted in redeeming us from poverty, slavery, arbitrary power, brass money and wooden shoes.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD

May we never want for a Williammite to kick the arse of a Jacobite.

HARRISON

And a shite for the Bishop of Cork.

CROSBY

And he that won't drink this, whether he be priest, Bishop, Deacon, bellow-blower, grave digger, or any other of the fraternity of the clergy. May a North wind blow him to the South.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD

And a West wind blow him to the East.

HARRISON

And a leaky vessel to carry him over the river Styx.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD

May the dog, Cerberus make a meal of his rump.

CROSBY

And Pluto a sniff box of his skull, and may the devil jump down his throat with a red hot harrow, with every pin tear out a gut, and blow him with a clean carcass to hell.

Sir ERIC DASHWOOD, CROSBY and HARRISON gulp back their drink as one.

ALL

Amen.

CROSBY turns, with his raised glass to the portrait of KING GEORGE.

CROSBY

May his brains be full.

ALL

And his balls empty.

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They toss their glasses into the fire place. A moment of silence is interrupted by the drunken PIPER as he snores loudly.

CROSBY kicks the PIPER who's chanter wails like an injured cat.

Sir ERIC DASHWOOD losing his balance crashes down on to an armchair, to drunk to get back up he passes out, leaving CROSBY and HARRISON leaning on each other in helpless laughter.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER THAT NIGHT.

The crackling fire reduced to embers. CROSBY and HARRISON have left. The PIPER too.

Sir ERIC DASHWOOD lies sprawled drunkenly, comatosed in a high backed over-stuffed chair, a half-full bottle of claret dangerously tilts in his sleeping hand.

The first shafts of morning light are weakly fingering through the velvet drapes.

From the back of the matching chair opposite Sir ERIC, a long fingered right hand, bejeweled and almost effeminate manicured, gently drums the brocade armrest.

Sir ERIC DASHWOOD'S face twitches in sleep, like a dog dreaming. His head turns from side to side as if his dreaming self is struggling to surface.

The bottle falls from his hand and rolls across the floor. The figure opposite rises his foot and stops the bottle.

Sir ERIC DASHWOOD awakens with a start.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD  
BRANDAUER!

INT. PRESENT DAY- BEDROOM. GATE HOUSE. MORNING.

JOHN's face lunges forward out of the darkness, covered in sweat. He stares a moment then looks at the key on the table, He relax's when he realizes it was only a dream and lies back.

CUT TO:

JOHN walks into the kitchen and makes himself a coffee.

CUT TO:

JOHN at his computer. He sits in silence a moment, thinking. He takes the envelope from his desk drawer and takes out the key. He looks at it in his hand.

INT. STATELY HOME. SPORTS CLUB. HALL.-DAY

JOHN sits in the Club office. His face strained as he writes repeatedly on a page. The mysterious key is on the table in front of him. There is a knock on the door, RICHARD enters.

RICHARD

JOHN...JOHN what are you doing here your late.

JOHN looks up slowly.

JOHN DASHWOOD

What?

RICHARD

Christ JOHN you look like shit. Didn't you get any sleep.

JOHN DASHWOOD

I kept having this same dream over and over. What am I late for?

RICHARD

We have a meeting with the investors they're really interested in the Idea of the Secret club card they think its a great Idea. There waiting.

JOHN DASHWOOD

You go. It was your Idea.

RICHARD

Me! It's you they want your the world champion gold medals guy.

JOHN looks at the key.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Did you send me this.

RICHARD examines the key.

RICHARD

No. It looks old.

JOHN hands him the card.

JOHN DASHWOOD

This card came with it.

RICHARD reads the card aloud.

RICHARD

For Sir JOHN DASHWOOD. There was no address, no name.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN DASHWOOD

Just the card and this key. Why would someone just send a key, no note, no name.

RICHARD

Maybe it's from MARIE.

JOHN DASHWOOD

No she's away.

RICHARD

Someone just playing a joke on you.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Listen can you cover for me at that meeting, tell them something came up. I'll call you later.

RICHARD

Why? Where are you going?

JOHN pockets the Key and stands up.

JOHN DASHWOOD

I'm not sure.

RICHARD

Sure no problem. I'll tell the investors you got bored and went home.

JOHN as he leaves.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Thanks I knew you'd think of something.

RICHARD looks at the page JOHN was writing on and sees the name PHILIP BRANDAUER written repeatedly. RICHARD looks up and gives a long and somewhat suspicious look.

INT. STATELY HOME. SPORTS CLUB. - DAY.

BIG CLOSE/UP: Of PHILIP BRANDAUER's portrait. JOHN stares at the portrait, slowly he walks up the stairs. He looks at BRANDAUER's eyes, and then at the medallion.

EXT. PARKLAND MORNING. DAY. 1698.

A hand grabs hold of the medallion. BRANDAUER pulls Sir ERIC's head forward, his face covered in blood.

BACK TO:

INT. PRESENT DAY. STATELY HOME. SPORTS CLUB. DAY.

JOHN staring at the medallion.

INT. SMALL TOWN LIBRARY. - DAY.

A LIBRARIAN carrying a pile of books shows JOHN to a table. There are no other people in the Library.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Thank you.

LIBRARIAN

If there's anything else you need, just let me know.

JOHN DASHWOOD

I think this will be fine.

The LIBRARIAN walks back to her desk. JOHN sits down and starts to look through a book entitled (THE HISTORY OF DUELLING)

DISSOLVE/TO:

A large clock over the LIBRARIAN's desk. The hours tick away.

DISSOLVE/TO:

JOHN engrossed in the book. He flicks through the pages, and then suddenly stops on a black and white portrait of PHILIP BRANDAUER. The portrait is an exact copy of the one in the sports club. JOHN reads.

JOHN DASHWOOD V/O

PHILIP BRANDAUER, year of death unknown. PHILIP BRANDAUER was one of the most feared men in Europe. His last recorded duel was in 1698. The reason for the duel is unknown. It is known that PHILIP BRANDAUER survived this duel. He was arrested in 1703 for the murder of SARAH Dashwood, but escaped while on trial.

JOHN looks up from the book, thinking.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Sarah Dashwood.

EXT. SIR ERIC DASHWOOD'S STATELY HOME. - DAY. 1698

We are looking at the vast stately home from a high angle as BRANDAUER's coach arrives at the main entrance.

INT. SIR ERIC DASHWOOD'S STATELY HOME. - DAY. 1698

A YOUNG SERVANT GIRL, (MARY) She hurries up the stairs.

MARY

My Lady, My Lady.

She is stopped by SARAH. The GIRL looks concerned.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH

Be quite MARY.

MARY

Sorry My Lady. He's here. He's waiting  
for you in the library.

SARAH takes MARY'S hand comforting her.

SARAH

Everything is going to be fine. We are  
not leaving this house.

MARY

Yes My Lady.

MARY hurries back down the stairs. SARAH pauses a moment.

INT. LIBRARY SIR ERIC DASHWOOD'S STATELY HOME. -DAY. 1698

SARAH enters the library. BRANDAUER is sitting in a high  
backed chair by the fire-place.

BRANDAUER sits with his back to SARAH. He's hand plays with  
the oak cane.

SARAH walks around the chair to face him. She stands  
nervously. BRANDAUER'S eyes lift up.

BRANDAUER

Sit.

SARAH sits down in the chair opposite.

BRANDAUER (CONT'D)

You are as beautiful as ever.

SARAH

I know why you are here.

BRANDAUER

Then you can understand how I feel.

SARAH

I was not aware you had feelings. My  
husband thought he was doing the best for  
us.

BRANDAUER

Your husband made his decision.

SARAH

A decision you forced upon him.

BRANDAUER

He could have withdrawn at anytime.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH

I have heard you enjoy killing.

BRANDAUER

I do not kill. I defend my honour.

SARAH

I know about the club. I know what you've done. This is my house and my children's. You will never take this from us.

BRANDAUER

He gambled everything he owned and lost.

SARAH

Did he?

BRANDAUER

It's not about this house. You know what I want.

SARAH stands up and moves away. BRANDAUER follows her. He grabs hold of her arm and pulls her to him.

SARAH

I think you should leave.

BRANDAUER, pulls her against his body. SARAH struggles. He pulls her head back.

BRANDAUER

Don't be a fool. I am offering you a life to which you are accustomed, as opposed to squalor. I'll even accept his little brats as my own.

SARAH spits in his face.

SARAH

I would rather die before I'd let you touch me.

BRANDAUER's hand grips SARAH's throat, his long fingers wrap around her neck.

BRANDAUER

You have three days. You know what I desire. You can stay in this house for as long as you want, but I will be living here also.

For a moment SARAH and BRANDAUER look at each other.

SARAH

I would rather live with the Devil.

BRANDAUER smiles at this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BRANDAUER

Then You can be sure of one thing My  
Lady. I will return.

BRANDAUER leaves. SARAH puts her hand to her mouth. She starts crying.

EXT. SIR ERIC DASHWOOD'S STATELY HOME. - DAY.

BRANDAUER's coach drives out of sight. Dark clouds loom above the stately home.

INT. PRESENT DAY. GATE HOUSE STATELY HOME. NIGHT.

The room is littered with books. JOHN sits at his desk, almost hidden beneath a pile of books, unshaven and tired he flicks through a book entitled (FAMILY CRESTS) here he finds the DASHWOOD CREST.

It is exactly the same as the medallion which PHILIP BRANDAUER wears in the portrait.

JOHN sits for a moment thinking. He looks at the key, makes a decision. He picks up the key, takes his coat off the chair and leaves.

The PHONE RINGS: The answering machine switches on, and we hear a beep. It is JOHN DASHWOOD's girlfriend, MARIE.

MARIE

(voice)

Hi, darling it's me. My flight gets in tomorrow at 10:00am. I missed you. Bye.

A book lies open on the page with PHILIP BRANDAUER'S black and white portrait. The PHONE RINGS again.

It's RICHARD.

RICHARD

(voice)

Hey. JOHN, I'm just letting you know I covered your ass again. The old guys love the Idea. Give me a call later.

We are looking at the portrait in the book, the page suddenly flicks over and on the next page we see a black and white drawing of the Sir ERIC DASHWOOD'S HOUSE as it was in 1698. We hear the sound of someone hammering on the door.

INT. STATELY HOME. SPORTS CLUB. - NIGHT.

The sound of someone hammering on the door is much louder now. The shadowy figure of the OLD PORTER glides across the walls. The old wooden door creaks open. The OLD PORTER's face is pale and tin, with wild sunken eyes and bony hands.

MISS DE WINTER

Mr. DASHWOOD!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN enters in a hurry and a little excited.

MISS DE WINTER (CONT'D)

Is there something wrong Sir? Can I help you?

JOHN DASHWOOD

No. I mean yes. You've worked here a long time haven't you?

MISS DE WINTER

Yes, all my life. My Father was the gardener here and his Father before him.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Is there a library here? I mean the old house library?

MISS DE WINTER

Yes. Yes I remember Sir.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Can you show me where?

MISS DE WINTER

Oh, you don't want to go in there Sir. It's been locked for as long as I can remember.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Do you know why?

The MISS De WINTER looks up at the portrait of BRANDAUER.

MISS DE WINTER

The master ordered it. No one knew why, some say it was haunted by the devil himself.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Can you show me the library?

MISS DE WINTER

I couldn't Sir.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Please, it's important. I'm looking for some information and I think I may find it there. Please.

MISS DE WINTER looks away.

MISS DE WINTER

I'm sorry Sir, I...

JOHN DASHWOOD

Please, I need to see inside that room. I can't explain it. I just need five minutes. Please.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Long pause.

MISS DE WINTER  
Very well I'll see if I can find the key.

The MISS DE WINTER leaves.

JOHN waits, he walks to the stairway and looks up at the portrait of BRANDAUER.

INT. CORRIDOR. STATELY HOME. SPORTS CLUB. -NIGHT.

The MISS DE WINTER and JOHN walk down the dark corridor.

MISS DE WINTER  
Here we are. This should be the library here.

INT. LIBRARY. STATELY HOME SPORTS CLUB. -NIGHT.

The door creaks open. JOHN and the MISS DE WINTER enter. He looks around, the library is completely covered in dust and cobwebs.

JOHN strikes a match and lights an oil-lamp.

JOHN DASHWOOD  
You can feel it, The past.

The Paintings on the walls are coated thick with dust and dirt, it is impossible to distinguish any detail on them. JOHN looks at the books hidden beneath a blanket of dust.

JOHN DASHWOOD (CONT'D)  
There must be books here worth a fortune.

JOHN turns to the MISS DE WINTER.

JOHN DASHWOOD (CONT'D)  
How long!

She is gone. The door is closed.

JOHN tries the door, but it's locked.

JOHN DASHWOOD (CONT'D)  
(shouting)  
Miss De Winter open the door.

JOHN looks around, he tries the window but it won't move, resigned to his situation. He begins to look through the books which are littered around the room.

EXT. LIBRARY. STATELY HOME. SPORTS CLUB. -NIGHT.

But for one small light in the old library, the great house stands in darkness.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The lamp light moves around, casting ghostly shadows across the curtains.

INT. LIBRARY. STATELY HOME. SPORTS CLUB. NIGHT.

JOHN sits at the table, opened books everywhere, but the disappointed look on his face tells it's own story.

JOHN continues to search, tired he tosses the book on to the table.

JOHN DASHWOOD  
What am I doing.

Suddenly! One of the paintings on the wall catches his eye. JOHN walks over to the painting. He sees something, but can't quite make it out.

JOHN pulls a chair over and stands up to get a closer look. He brushes away the dust.

To his amazement he sees a gold medallion. He recognizes the medallion as the same one PHILIP BRANDAUER wears in the portrait.

JOHN continues to brush the dust off and reveals a portrait of SIR ERIC DASHWOOD. JOHN'S resemblance to the face in this portrait is uncanny. He can hardly believe his eyes, it is himself in 16th Century clothing, it could be his portrait.

JOHN cleans away the dust covering the name, underneath he finds the name SIR ERIC DASHWOOD. JOHN steps down, his eyes never leave the portrait.

JOHN DASHWOOD (CONT'D)  
SIR ERIC DASHWOOD?

At the same moment he speaks the name, a book falls from the bookshelf. JOHN turns and picks up the book.

He looks at it, then as he is about to replace it from where it fell. JOHN sees what looks like a latch. He removes all the books.

JOHN pulls back the latch, a secret wooden door opens, behind which he finds a metal box.

JOHN removes the box and sits at the table and tries to open it, but it's locked. He remembers the key he was given.

JOHN takes out the key and slowly places it in the lock. It fits perfectly.

JOHN turns the key and the box clicks open. A burst of thunder breaks the silence, inside the box he finds documents and a large book.

JOHN opens the book. He reads the hand writing on the first page.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN DASHWOOD (CONT'D)  
 SIR ERIC DASHWOOD, This day the first  
 month of August in the year of Our Lord  
 1697. Aboard the merchant schooner  
 "Speedwell" somewhere off Gibraltar.

JOHN excited turns to the next page.

JOHN DASHWOOD (CONT'D)  
 (V/O)  
 For three days and nights our gallant  
 Captain and his crew battled to maintain  
 a northerly course.

EXT. SHIP AT SEA. 1697. - NIGHT.

The CREW MEMBERS struggle to hold the ship on course, as the  
 sea lashes against the bow.

A wall of water crashes down. Men and cargo are swept aside.  
 At the ships helm, the CAPTAIN yells out his orders as sail  
 rips and rigging snaps.

Sir ERIC DASHWOOD struggles on deck against the wind and sea.  
 He is thrown back against the rigging, his face stricken with  
 fear as he watches helplessly as four crew members are washed  
 overboard attempting to repair a hatch-cover.

JOHN DASHWOOD  
 (V/O)  
 Frightened talk is heard amongst the  
 seamen. They say there is a jonah on  
 board. All eyes fall upon the tall figure  
 who passes the hours on the fore deck  
 with his grave countenance fixed grimly  
 into the howling darkness as if he was  
 doing nothing less than defying his Lord  
 and Creator.

A burst of lightning illuminates a tall figure standing at  
 the ships bow, the figure turns, the light falls on his face.  
 It's PHILIP BRANDAUER.

A sense of evil radiates from his mere presence.

A wall of water covers the ship. The CAPTAIN suddenly appears  
 and grabs hold of SIR ERIC DASHWOOD.

CAPTAIN  
 Sir, for the love of God get below, get  
 below.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD stares at BRANDAUER. The CAPTAIN turns, and  
 then turns back to him.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)  
 Sir. You'll be safer down below. This is  
 no place for a man like you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD

Who is that?

CAPTAIN

He's a strange one Sir, I've lost six men in this storm and that one stands at the bow of my ship.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD

Strange. How?

CAPTAIN

Look at him. He just stands there. He doesn't move. Strange, that's what I say, strange, It's not right.

The CAPTAIN'S and SIR ERIC DASHWOOD looks at BRANDAUER who as the CAPTAIN said stands in a black cloak as the ship is thrown from side to side BRANDAUER stands still, staring out to sea.

INT. PRESENT DAY LIBRARY. STATELY HOME. SPORTS CLUB. NIGHT.

JOHN TURNS A PAGE, AND STOPS.

JOHN DASHWOOD

(V/O)

I confess that it took me several shots of rum to spite my sense of unnatural foreboding, However curiosity overcame me and I did at last introduce myself into his company. I learned precious little than the facts that were already known about this gentleman. He was Philip Brandauer, a merchant of reputed fabulous wealth who, like me, was bound for Plymouth and thence to London. It was only when I spoke of my fondness for playing at the cards and of my gentleman's club that he looked sharply and sidelong at me. He asked, nay commanded an introduction to my fellows at the fraternity. As the weeks past he became more interested in my business associates, and the hunting club.

INT. CABIN SHIP AT SEA. 1697. - NIGHT.

Sir ERIC DASHWOOD and BRANDAUER have finished a meal. BRANDAUER pours himself a glass of wine and one for Sir ERIC DASHWOOD, who is a little drunk.

BRANDAUER

Tell me. How many members are there, in this club of yours?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD

Well you must understand Sir. There has never been a meeting of all the members, some are away on business, others out of the country. But I would say about one hundred members.

This interests BRANDAUER, to him such an opportunity can not be ignored.

BRANDAUER

And these are all men of wealth and position as yourself?

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD

Of course. It's a club for gentlemen. Men of nobility and power. It has been said the King himself fears the power of the club.

A moment of silence. BRANDAUER thinking.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD (CONT'D)

Are you interested?

BRANDAUER

Yes. I would be honoured to be a member of such a club.

BRANDAUER filling SIR ERIC DASHWOOD's glass with more wine.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD

Leave it to me. I shall have a word with Sir FRANCIS, he is the club master.

BRANDAUER

How does one become a member?

DASHWOOD takes a drink then leans towards BRANDAUER.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD

Does the sight of blood frighten you Sir?

This question to BRANDAUER is like asking a lion does he like fresh meat.

BRANDAUER

The sight of blood. No I can't say it does, as long as its not my own.

They laugh.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD

No. No. Nothing like that. If you are accepted by the club master, you must then pass the test.

BRANDAUER leans forward even more intrigued. Their faces only inches apart.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD (CONT'D)

On the night of the full moon, we meet in the club. The club master will offer up a blood sacrifice to the members, then you must kill an animal, a Dog or sheep. And drink the warm blood and pledge your loyalty to the club. Then you cast the animal into the fire damning it to hell in place of your soul. That's it.

A moment passes. BRANDAUER grins and holds up his glass.

BRANDAUER

How dramatic. To the club.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD does the same.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD

To the club.

BRANDAUER laughs, his laugh gets louder and louder until it's a wild and crazed laugh.

INT. PRESENT DAY LIBRARY. STATELY HOME. SPORTS CLUB. NIGHT

JOHN totally engrossed in the diary. He turns to the next page.

JOHN DASHWOOD

(voce over)

Dry land at last. I vow never to be out of sound of the steeple clock and church bells again.

EXT. HARBOUR. 1697. - DAY.

The HARBOUR is a hive of activity. MEN unload bails of cotton and barrels of rum from the ship.

An open coach arrives CAPTAIN BLAKE and SARAH. BLAKE steps out and helps SARAH. SARAH excited, looks through the crowd.

SARAH

Where is he? Can you see him?

BLAKE looks around, then he sees Sir ERIC DASHWOOD.

CAPTAIN BLAKE

Yes. There he is My Lady.

BLAKE's face strains when he sees Sir ERIC DASHWOOD with PHILIP BRANDAUER, They walk up. Sir ERIC kisses SARAH.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD

I have missed you so. You get more beautiful with each day.

SARAH blushing, looks at BRANDAUER.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD (CONT'D)  
 Oh, forgive me, where are my manners.  
 SARAH this is PHILIP BRANDAUER.

BRANDAUER and BLAKE exchange a cold and uncomfortable look.  
 BRANDAUER turns to SARAH, what ever evil or anger mistrust  
 there was in his face is now completely gone.

BRANDAUER is enchanted by SARAH'S beauty. Like a nobleman he  
 takes SARAH'S hand and kisses it, his eyes never leave SARAH.

SARAH  
 I am pleased to meet you Sir.

BRANDAUER  
 The honour is mine My Lady. Your husband  
 did not jest when he said he's wife is  
 the most beautiful woman in Europe.

SARAH smiles shyly, but pleased.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD  
 And this is my good friend CAPTAIN BLAKE.

CAPTAIN BLAKE  
 Are you here on business or pleasure?

BRANDAUER  
 A little of both I hope Captain.

BRANDAUER looks at SARAH. There is a moment of awkward  
 silence as BRANDAUER just stares at her. Uncomfortable SARAH  
 looks away.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD  
 Can we take you somewhere?

BRANDAUER  
 No, thank you. My coach is waiting. My  
 Lady I hope we meet again. Sir it has  
 been most interesting meeting you.  
 CAPTAIN.

CAPTAIN BLAKE  
 Good day Sir.

BRANDAUER leaves.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD  
 Shall we go home.

DASHWOOD helps SARAH into the coach.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD (CONT'D)  
 (to Blake)  
 Are you coming with us?

BLAKE is still staring at BRANDAUER.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CAPTAIN BLAKE

Oh, yes, I'm sorry.

EXT. HARBOUR. - 1697. DAY.

BRANDAUER's coach sits ready. BRANDAUER walks up as PYKE ties down the luggage. PYKE leaps down from the coach and opens the door for BRANDAUER.

PYKE

Did you have a good trip master?

BRANDAUER turns and looks at Sir ERIC's coach drive past.

BRANDAUER

Good trip. O' Yes. The doorway of power has opened my friend. The doorway has opened.

BRANDAUER steps into the coach. PYKE closes the door and quickly climbs up onto the COACH. He whips the horses and the coach drives away.

EXT. STREET. 1698. - NIGHT.

BRANDAUER's coach drives up and stops. The street is dimly lit, filled with shadows. The cobble stones wet.

It has been raining. On the street corner is the local INN, (THE QUILL.) BRANDAUER leans out the coach window, he hears voices and leans back into the darkness.

SIR FRANCIS is drunk as he leaves the INN, with a BUSTY WENCH clinging to his arm.

SIR FRANCIS and the WENCH walk towards BRANDAUER's coach giggling and laughing. His hand squeezing her breast.

SIR FRANCIS and the WENCH loose their balance and fall against the wall.

They kiss. SIR FRANCIS opens her dress revealing her breasts. Suddenly a hand grabs SIR FRANCIS away and pins him against the wall.

BRANDAUER

Sir FRANCIS, We have some unfinished business.

The WENCH slaps BRANDAUER across the back.

WENCH

Let him go, he owes me half a crown.

BRANDAUER slaps the WENCH in the face. The force of the blow leaves her on the ground unconscious.

BRANDAUER slams SIR FRANCIS against the wall again, this time harder.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRANDAUER

I'm waiting.

SIR FRANCIS

Why don't you crawl back where you came from.

BRANDAUER throws SIR FRANCIS to the ground, he falls beside the WENCH.

BRANDAUER

You're the one that's going to crawl.

SIR FRANCIS scrambles to his feet and tries to run, but his path is blocked by PYKE wielding a knife.

BRANDAUER grabs SIR FRANCIS this time he pins him against the coach, the horses whine.

BRANDAUER (CONT'D)

The club.

SIR FRANCIS

I am not as blind as Sir Eric. I can see you for what you are and I will never admit you to the club.

BRANDAUER looks at the WENCH, moaning as she comes round then at Sir FRANCIS with a knowing smile.

BRANDAUER

Do your powerful friends know you prefer whores. Or should I say does your wife know you prefer a cheap whore to her bed. At the next meeting of the club you will announce my acceptance. I hope you won't be foolish enough to disappoint me. Do you understand me?

SIR FRANCIS

(terrified)  
Yes. I understand.

BRANDAUER

Good. Then I bid you good night Sir.

BRANDAUER throws Sir FRANCIS to the ground. Then without looking back he gets into the coach, Then PYKE. The coach leaves, Sir FRANCIS is left sitting in a puddle of water.

EXT. PARKLAND. - MORNING. 1697

It is a cold grey morning. A thin vapourous mist hangs over a vast expanse of well kept parkland. BRANDAUER stands pistol in hand, legs apart.

Thump hooked in his belt with an attitude as if already in triumph.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

In the nervous group of YOUNG OFFICERS opposite, the most agitated is CAPTAIN MORGAN, He's sure he is about to die.

OFFICER WILLIAMS steps forward, his hand raised, cries out.

OFFICER WILLIAMS  
Ground gentlemen. Ground.

A white haired army surgeon, places the instruments of his trade on an appon nearby.

OFFICER WILLIAMS (CONT'D)  
Come on gentlemen. Proceed, proceed.  
First blood rules.

A cold ruthless look on BRANDAUER's face. On CAPTAIN MORGAN's face, jerking, twitch.

OFFICER WILLIAMS leads MORGAN to the middle of the two assemblies where BRANDAUER has already assumed the about-face position, hand on hip, pistol resting on his shoulder, muzzle skyward.

OFFICER WILLIAMS (CONT'D)  
Ten paces gentlemen. One....Two....  
Three.....

BRANDAUER's pace is a measured stride. MORGAN's is a sort of a hunched stagger as if the ground had turned to rubber.

OFFICER WILLIAMS (CONT'D)  
Four.....Five.....Six....

A coach arrives. It's Sir FRANCIS.

OFFICER WILLIAMS (CONT'D)  
Seven.....Eight.....

Sir FRANCIS leans out the coach window.

OFFICER WILLIAMS (CONT'D)  
Nine..... Ten.

BRANDAUER and MORGAN turn and present their pistols steadily. Their fingers pulling back the triggers.

BRANDAUER is distracted by the presence of Sir FRANCIS. BRANDAUER looks across. Sir FRANCIS nods to him.

MORGAN fires. The bullet rips through the sleeve of BRANDAUER's shirt.

BRANDAUER looks at the shirt, then at MORGAN. A look of horror on MORGAN's face. BRANDAUER calmly aims his pistol and fires.

The bullet hits MORGAN between the eyes with an explosion of blood. MORGAN's body falls to the ground dead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

OFFICER WILLIAMS (CONT'D)  
My God he's killed him.

INT. PRESENT DAY LIBRARY. STATELY HOME. SPORTS CLUB. NIGHT.

JOHN looks around for a moment and then returns to the diary. He turns to the next page.

JOHN DASHWOOD  
(V/O)  
May 6th. Not only has Brandauer insinuated his intimidating presence among my family but has had the audacity to declare himself chairman of the club, which he now calls the Hell Fire Club.

JOHN looks up, thinking. Then continues reading.

JOHN DASHWOOD  
(V/O)  
The meetings of The Hell Fire Club have become uncontrollable, with the burning of local farms, and now the ultimate. A human sacrifice. The words used to describe cold blooded murder. I can hardly believe, that I could take part in such a hideous act. This nightmare began two weeks ago.

EXT. HOUSE. HELL FIRE CLUB. 1698. - NIGHT.

A large country house. The house is lit by the occasional glimpses of moonlight as dark clouds manoeuvre over head. Heavy dark curtains hide any light from within the house.

JOHN DASHWOOD  
(V/O)  
The hunt had gone well. We returned to the club. By midnight we were all the worst for drink.

DASHWOOD. CROSBY. HARRISON. BLAKE. SIR FRANCIS. And other members of The Hell Fire Club, these men are all well dressed. BRANDAUER'S cold dark eyes scan the room with a look of satisfaction.

JOHN DASHWOOD (CONT'D)  
(V/O)  
And like clock-work BRANDAUER takes his position and begins his speech.

BRANDAUER  
Silence. Tonight gentlemen I have a surprise for you.

BRANDAUER's voice fades away as he makes his speech.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN DASHWOOD

(V/O)

BRANDAUER always reminded me when he made those long speeches, of a Preacher in the church pulpit on a Sunday afternoon, preaching convincingly about something he knew nothing about. As I was to learn later. BRANDAUER was nothing more than a sea pirate. Yet here he stood among lawyers, politicians and businessmen, leading them like sheep to the slaughter. Even I had succumb to his mad and evil plans.

BRANDAUER leads his flock down to the cellar. He takes his position behind the table which he uses as a sacrificial alter.

JOHN DASHWOOD (CONT'D)

(V/O)

Just before sunrise BRANDAUER led us to the cellar. I could see his eyes burn with excitement.

BRANDAUER raises his hands, demanding silence.

BRANDAUER

The time has come for us to give our master a gift, a gift that will ensure us eternal life in the realm of darkness. Now gentlemen, the surprise I promised you.

PYKE enters with a beautiful GIRL. The Club members all look around, some in shock, some excited.

The GIRL is led up to BRANDAUER. He takes her hand. The GIRL stares, her face blank, she is already in some kind of trance.

BRANDAUER (CONT'D)

Gentlemen our gift.

BRANDAUER takes the cloak off the GIRL, leaving the GIRL naked.

BRANDAUER lays the GIRL on the table. The others look on frozen with fear and excitement.

BRANDAUER pulls back a cloth on the table revealing a dagger. He lifts the dagger over his head staring at the blade.

BRANDAUER (CONT'D)

Hear me master of darkness, accept this gift as a token of our loyalty to you.

CLOSE/UP: of SIR ERIC DASHWOOD's face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD  
 (to himself)  
 May God forgive me.

BRANDAUER brings the dagger down and drives the blade into the GIRL's heart.

INT. PRESENT DAY LIBRARY. STATELY HOME. SPORTS CLUB. NIGHT.

JOHN leans back in the chair horrified, he continues to read the diary.

JOHN DASHWOOD  
 July 10th. I met with the members of the club last night. We have decided to put an end to the Hell Fire Club, and our association with BRANDAUER.

INT. ROOM. HELL FIRE CLUB. 1698. - NIGHT.

The rain pours down the glass. In the room, Sir ERIC DASHWOOD sits at the table. Across from him is HARRISON and CROSBY. BLAKE stands nearby. Sir FRANCIS sits at the far end of the room.

JOHN DASHWOOD  
 After four long hours BRANDAUER finally arrived. We told him our decision. I can not describe the look in his eyes. He stared at each of us, and then calmly left. It was not what I expected, even though I was happy to see him leave. I feared him even more now.

Other members stand around. PYKE stands by the fire place, occasionally spitting into the flames.

JOHN DASHWOOD (CONT'D)  
 October 9th. As I feared BRANDAUER returned. He gathered together the members of the Club.

BRANDAUER walks around the room, brushing past BLAKE and the others, almost drunkenly grinning, enjoying their fear.

BRANDAUER leans across the table directing his words at SIR ERIC DASHWOOD, his eyes scanning the room.

BRANDAUER  
 Look at you. You call yourselves gentlemen. You gather together like frightened children. I can taste your fear. There's not one man among you. I gave you all what you asked for. It was I who brought you out of your pathetic boring lives. You tasted blood. You killed for your master, and now you want it all to go away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD  
It's over BRANDAUER You are not welcome  
here.

BRANDAUER looks around at the others members.

BRANDAUER  
It's not that easy.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD  
How much will it take?

A pause. BRANDAUER looks down the table at a deck of playing cards and then back at Sir ERIC. A sly smile just touching his lips.

SOME TIME LATER:

INT. ROOM. HELL FIRE CLUB. - NIGHT. 1698

The members of the Hell Fire Club are gathered around watching Sir ERIC DASHWOOD and BRANDAUER.

CROSBY places the deck of playing cards in the center of the table.

Sir ERIC DASHWOOD's face is covered in beads of sweat as he writes. He signs the paper and slides it across to BRANDAUER, who reads it and smiles.

There is an uneasy feeling in the room.

Members whisper to each other as BRANDAUER signs his paper and hands the paper to PYKE.

BRANDAUER with a baleful smile turns to Sir FRANCIS.

BRANDAUER  
Sir FRANCIS. You're a trustworthy soul  
would you care to sign as a witness?

Sir FRANCIS stares. PYKE hands the papers to him. He reads them, shocked look on his face.

Sir FRANCIS turns to SIR ERIC DASHWOOD.

SIR FRANCIS  
Do you realize what will happen if you  
lose this game?

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD  
I know. Sign the paper.

BLAKE  
Listen to him. You don't have to do this.  
Think of SARAH and the Children.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD looks at BRANDAUER.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DASHWOOD

I am. And may God help me.

BRANDAUER's stomach always feels sick when someone refers to God for help.

His face angers, and with almost a growl he snaps at Sir ERIC.

BRANDAUER

Deal the cards.

The game of cards seemed to last a life time. SIR ERIC DASHWOOD has a winning hand. He shows his cards and stares across at BRANDAUER'S lifeless eyes.

BRANDAUER his mouth twitched nervously. He was no longer sure of himself.

Sir ERIC DASHWOOD stares at him. BRANDAUER'S eyes lower to the cards.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD

Play your hand.

As BRANDAUER lowers his cards to the table, one of the cards falls to the floor.

BRANDAUER

(shouting)

Leave it.

BRANDAUER lowers his cards to the table. We see three ACES. But still Sir ERIC DASHWOOD could win. Everything depends on the card on the floor.

BRANDAUER places his boot on top of the card, leans down and picks it up slowly. BRANDAUER turns the card over. It's the ACE OF SPADES. BRANDAUER wins.

The murmurs of disappointment fills the room. PYKE pleased with a toothless grin, spits into the fire. BLAKE closing his eyes.

BLAKE

(to himself)

My God.

BRANDAUER holds out his hand.

BRANDAUER

My papers.

Sir FRANCIS reluctantly hands BRANDAUER the paper.

SIR FRANCIS

Do you realize what you've done?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BRANDAUER

Yes. And I hope you gentlemen will remember this, in our future dealings.

BRANDAUER looks at SIR ERIC DASHWOOD.

BRANDAUER (CONT'D)

I admire you Sir, You are the only man among all these sheep who was willing to gamble everything. It took real courage to do what you did.

BLAKE

For God's sake haven't you done enough.

Sir ERIC DASHWOOD's eyes burn with anger.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD

You cheated.

BRANDAUER turns.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD (CONT'D)

You cheated. I saw it.

PYKE turns quickly, always ready. BRANDAUER stands up. Everyone steps back.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD (CONT'D)

You cheated. I won the game and you deliberately dropped the card so you could change it.

BRANDAUER

Take those words back, or I demand satisfaction.

Sir ERIC DASHWOOD stands up. BLAKE moves quickly to his side, but is pushed back. Sir ERIC DASHWOOD slaps BRANDAUER's face. This time BLAKE and CROSBY grab hold of him.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD

You knew I'd win and you changed the card.

BRANDAUER calmly wipes a drop of blood from his mouth.

BRANDAUER

Very well, Sir. Tomorrow first light.

BRANDAUER and PYKE leave. Sir ERIC DASHWOOD shouting after him.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD

You knew I'd win, you knew it, you knew.  
BRANDAUER.....BRANDAUER....

LATER THAT NIGHT.

INT. LIBRARY. STATELY HOME. SPORTS CLUB. NIGHT. 1698

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD sits at this desk writing a letter to his wife.

SIR ERIC DASHWOOD V/O  
 My dearest Wife. I have failed you and our precious children. Earlier this fateful and terrible night I accused Brandauer of cheating at the cards and was compelled to challenge him to a duel. We are to face each other on the morrow. I pray that you will understand that I had no other recourse in my attempt to rid us of this Evil man. I pray too that you will find it in your heart to forgive me. I will love you across the boundless Eternity. Your husband,  
 ERIC.

INT. PRESENT DAY LIBRARY. STATELY HOME. SPORTS CLUB. NIGHT.

JOHN turns the page but they are all empty. He realizes SIR ERIC'S fate. JOHN, closes the diary.

JOHN looks down at the DASHWOOD CREST which is engraved on the book, angry he slams his fist down on the book. JOHN's fist hits the book with a heavy blow that echoes.....

EXT. A CASTLE RUIN. - NIGHT.

...The sound of JOHN'S heavy blow on the book penetrates the realm of darkness. In the courtyard of the castle the earth begins to move. As if it's been forced up by something below.

INT. LIBRARY. STATELY HOUSE. SPORTS CLUB. NIGHT.

JOHN holds the diary, he stares at it. A ghostly wind blows across the room. Books fall from their shelves. The desk starts to shake.

The diary shoots out of JOHN'S hand and slides across the floor. JOHN is about to pick up the diary when it bursts into flames.

JOHN steps back. There is a cutting sound of an unseen blade, and JOHN is cut across the face. He falls to the floor in pain, his face covered in blood.

JOHN looks up. Standing before him he sees someone or something. Like a battered ghostly edition of PHILIP BRANDAUER.

The FIGURE before him, with distorted features and burning eyes, seems hardly human. JOHN scrambles to his feet realizing the actuality of the presence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRANDAUER looking at the portrait of Sir ERIC DASHWOOD.

PHILIP BRANDAUER  
Sir ERIC DASHWOOD your saintly ancestor.

BRANDAUER's distorted face broadens out in a ghastly attempt at a smile, a hideous mockery, for the broken features and seamed scars take strange shapes and strange colours as the straining muscles press on old cicatrices.

BRANDAUER  
So you would like to know? It would please your pride to feel that you are of such, noble blood?

The FIGURE of BRANDAUER begins to fade.

BRANDAUER (CONT'D)  
You are the key. A saviour to one, a jailer to the other.

The FIGURE disappears.

JOHN feels weak. He tries to walk back to the desk, but his legs give way and he falls to the ground. The room starts to spin faster and faster then black.

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM. JOHN DASHWOOD'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

An old wrinkled face with glasses and crooked smiles slowly appears. As the old man leans back we see that he is a DOCTOR.

DOCTOR  
Ah, glad to see you're still with us young man.

JOHN confused.

JOHN DASHWOOD  
What. Where.

DOCTOR  
Don't try to talk, there will be plenty of time for that later.

The DOCTOR turns to MARIE, and RICHARD.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
He will be fine. All he needs is a little rest.

MARIE holds JOHN's hand.

MARIE  
How do you feel. You had us worried.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RICHARD  
Hey, How's the head?

The DOCTOR picks up his bag.

DOCTOR  
(TO JOHN)  
You'll be fine. Just remember to take it  
easy.

MARIE  
Thank you DOCTOR Don't worry I'll make  
sure he doesn't move. I'll see you out.

MARIE kisses JOHN.

DOCTOR  
I've given him a sedative to help him  
sleep.

MARIE shows the DOCTOR to the door. RICHARD moves around the  
bed to JOHN.

JOHN grabs him by the arm pulling him close.

JOHN DASHWOOD  
What's going on? What happened to me?

RICHARD tries to pull away.

RICHARD  
There's nothing going on. You heard the  
DOCTOR, you've been over doing it.

JOHN DASHWOOD  
The library. The last thing I remember I  
was in the library. I found the diary.

RICHARD  
What are you talking about? What diary?

JOHN DASHWOOD  
He said I was the key.

MARIE returns.

RICHARD  
Who said? MARIE found you here. You were  
unconscious.

JOHN pulls at RICHARD's arm.

JOHN DASHWOOD  
The club. I was in the old library in the  
club. I found papers and the diary of Sir  
Eric Dashwood. He was killed by Philip  
Brandauer. I'm Eric DASHWOOD's  
descendant.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JOHN remembers the cut on his face, but unaware the cut is gone.

JOHN DASHWOOD (CONT'D)  
Look, he cut my face with a sword.

MARIE returns.

RICHARD  
Where? Your face is fine, there's no cut.  
Your over doing it that's all, trying to  
meet this deadline for the book and the  
club.

JOHN feels his face.

MARIE  
It's fine babe, It was probable just a  
dream.

JOHN feeling sleepy.

JOHN DASHWOOD  
(falling asleep)  
I saw him. I saw him. I... saw....

MARIE  
We'll talk about it later. You need rest.

JOHN drifts off to sleep.

RICHARD and MARIE walk to the door.

RICHARD  
I'll call in tomorrow to see how he  
feels, tell him not to worry, I've taken  
care of everything.

MARIE and RICHARD walk over to the door.

RICHARD (CONT'D)  
He needs a break Marie. Why don't you try  
talk him into taking time off.

MARIE  
You know what he's like about work, but  
I'll try. Bye.

RICHARD  
I'll call later. Bye.

MARIE  
Bye RICHARD.

MARIE closes the door and turns leaning back against the door shaking her head and smiles. The room is a mess with papers and books everywhere.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MARIE walks around picking up the books. She leaves them on JOHN's desk.

She looks at the book on the desk which is open on the portrait of PHILIP BRANDAUER.

MARIE walks into the bedroom and settles the blankets around JOHN and rubs his forehead. She moves to the window to pull the blind when she sees the DOCTOR and RICHARD talking. They talk a moment and then shake hands the DOCTOR gets into his car and drives away.

RICHARD watches the car leave and then looks back at the building.

MARIE quickly pulls the blinds closed.

INT. BEDROOM. JOHN DASHWOOD'S APARTMENT. - NIGHT.

JOHN asleep, his head moves from side to side as he falls into a deep sleep.

FADE TO:

LATER THAT NIGHT:

Rain pours down the window. JOHN and MARIE making love. They kiss passionately. Their bodies are silhouetted by an exterior light. MARIE rolls over on top of JOHN. Her body pressing down on him.

JOHN looks up at MARIE. Her face moves in and out of the shadow. Suddenly! The look on JOHN's face changes to a look of horror.

We now see BRANDAUER sitting on top of JOHN. BRANDAUER'S body is half skeleton and half decomposed flesh and clothing, his skeleton hands are choking JOHN. BRANDAUER laughs, his laughter gets louder and louder.

CUT TO:

From darkness JOHN's face covered in sweat lunges forward gasping for air. JOHN turns and looks at MARIE. MARIE sleeps peacefully.

CUT TO:

JOHN pours himself a drink. He walks over to the window and pulls back the curtain.

JOHN looks at the stately Home in the distance.

MARIE walks up behind him and puts her arms around his waist giving him a fright.

MARIE also jumps with fright. MARIE and JOHN fall into each others arms with relief.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

MARIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. Are you coming back to bed.

JOHN DASHWOOD

In a minute.

MARIE

You haven't changed your mind have you?  
You promised me two weeks in the sun.

MARIE runs her fingers through his hair.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Think of all those nights.

MARIE smiles.

JOHN DASHWOOD

There's something I have to do first.

MARIE looks disappointed.

JOHN DASHWOOD (CONT'D)

Don't worry, we're still going. I've got  
to see it for myself. I've got to know if  
I was there, or if I just dreamt all of  
this up.

MARIE

Alright, but I'm going with you. I want  
to see this for myself. Now will you come  
back to bed.

MARIE kisses him.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Please.

JOHN smiles, they kiss.

INT. HALLWAY. STATELY HOME. SPORTS CLUB. - DAY.

JOHN and MARIE walk down a long dark hallway.

JOHN DASHWOOD

The library should be this room here.

MARIE

Are you sure about this?

JOHN DASHWOOD

Yes I know it was late when I got here  
but I remember it was just here. This is  
it.

JOHN tries the door but its locked.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN DASHWOOD (CONT'D)

Locked!

Out of the darkness appears MISS De WINTER. MARIE gets a fright.

MARIE

Gees.. Miss De Winter you nearly gave me a heart attack.

MISS DE WINTER

I'm sorry. What are you doing in this part of the house?

MARIE

We need your help to clear something up John said he was here two nights ago and you let him into this room, It's an old library of some sort?

JOHN DASHWOOD

I was inquiring if there was a family library and you brought me here and let me in.

MARIE

You did show him this room, didn't you?

MISS DE WINTER

You must be mistaken Mr Dashwood. I have never brought anyone to this part of the house.

JOHN DASHWOOD

That can't be we opened this room you..

MARIE

John hasn't been to well lately Miss De Winter, he need to see inside this room. Can you open it so he can see for himself it was all just a bad dream.

MISS DE WINTER takes a bundle of keys from her pocket.

MISS DE WINTER

Of course if it will help.

MISS DE WINTER opens the door.

INT. LIBRARY. STATELY HOME. SPORTS CLUB. DAY.

MISS DE WINTER, JOHN and MARIE enter. The interior of the library is different from JOHN'S last visit. The room is covered in dust and cobwebs, the book shelves are bare, not one book remains.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN can't believe his eyes, even the walls are bare of their paintings.

JOHN DASHWOOD

This room was full of books, paintings.  
What happened? What have you done with  
all the books?

JOHN looks around the room pointing out the way things were.

JOHN DASHWOOD (CONT'D)

The table was here, and here bookshelves.  
And here there was a latch and a wooden  
door.

JOHN scratches at the wall where the latch was. MISS DE WINTER stares at him coldly.

JOHN DASHWOOD (CONT'D)

It was here, right here.

MARIE trying to help.

MARIE

Maybe it was another room. Is there  
another room where the books could have  
been moved too?

JOHN disappointed leans against the wall looking out the window.

MISS DE WINTER

No I'm sorry, but this was cleared out  
after the Master died and the room has  
been closed since.

JOHN looks around the room.

MISS DE WINTER (CONT'D)

Ah, yes. I'll be outside if you need  
me.

MARIE

It's alright, you've been very  
helpful.

MISS DE WINTER steps outside.

JOHN DASHWOOD

How can you find what was only a dream.

MARIE

There could be another room.

JOHN turns to her and smiles.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Thanks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARIE

For what?

JOHN DASHWOOD

For not saying I told you so. No books, no paintings. Even Miss de Winter backs up what you have been saying. I dreamt all of this. I don't understand.

MARIE puts her arms around him.

MARIE

I have a dream.

JOHN DASHWOOD

I think I heard this speech before.

MARIE puts her finger on his lips to keep him quiet.

MARIE

We are sipping champagne on the balcony of our hotel over looking Paris, just you and I for two whole weeks. What do you say?

JOHN DASHWOOD

Your dream sounds better than mine. Who's buying the champagne?

MARIE

You.

They laugh.

EXT. THE CASTLE RUIN. - NIGHT.

There is the sound of a heart beating louder and louder as we move through a mist and find ourselves in the courtyard of the castle.

An evil laugh echoes. The ground begins to move, pumping in time with the heart beat. Suddenly a hand, half bone and half flesh, a large jewelled ring on its four-finger bursts up through the earth, followed by an unearthly scream.

EXT. HEATHROW AIRPORT. PLANE LANDING. DAY.

We see Air-France plane landing.

INT. ARRIVALS HEATHROW AIRPORT. DAY.

We find RICHARD waiting for JOHN and MARIE. RICHARD smiles when he see them.

RICHARD

Hey, JOHN.

RICHARD and JOHN shake hands. RICHARD gives MARIE a warm hug.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD(CONT'D)

MARIE. The break did you two the world of good.

EXT. RICHARDS CAR. DAY

RICHARDS car driving into the countryside.

INT. RICHARDS CAR. DAY

RICHARD looks in the mirror at JOHN and MARIE.

RICHARD

I must say you guys look great, the Paris life style certainly agrees with you.

MARIE

Thank you RICHARD. We've just been talking about that.

JOHN DASHWOOD

I suppose now is as good a time as any.

MARIE

We're getting married.

RICHARD

Well it's about time too. Hey, that's great, The two of you are good for each other.

MARIE

And We've decided to move to France. We have been looking a beautiful house in the country there.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Maybe I'll finally finish my book.

RICHARD

What can I say.

MARIE and JOHN kiss.

EXT. GATE HOUSE. STATELY HOME. DAY.

RICHARD'S car outside the gate house. RICHARD and JOHN are taking the bags from the car.

RICHARD

Everyone at the club has been asking if your coming back. What will I tell them?

JOHN DASHWOOD

I won't be coming back. Its all yours.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RICHARD

John the club is not me it's only doing  
so well because of your name JOHN  
DASHWOOD.

JOHN DASHWOOD

If it helps keep the name but I am  
finished.

(john Looks at the house)

For what ever reason that house drains  
the life out of me.

RICHARD

Look come to the club tonight, One last  
time, what do you say.

JOHN nods.

JOHN DASHWOOD

I'll see you to night.

RICHARD

Good. See you there.

RICHARD leaves.

INT. GATE HOUSE. STATELY HOME. DAY.

MARIE is in the kitchen cooking the dinner.

MARIE

This will be ready by seven don't be  
late.

BEDROOM:

JOHN well dressed for the club.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Don't I will be back in time.

KITCHEN:

MARIE

You better.

BEDROOM:

JOHN DASHWOOD

I owe Richard besides I think he is a  
little shocked that I am leaving the  
club. He's nervous it's not going to  
work without me.

KITCHEN:

MARIE

Are you having second thoughts?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIE looks out the window she see's a figure dressed in black with a hood pulled up. The Figure hold a flaming torch.

JOHN DASHWOOD (O.S.)

No. He's a friend I want to make sure he's ok with this.

She starts to feel scared.

MARIE

John.

MARIE turn to suddenly find a black hooded figure behind her, before she can scream the figure covers her mouth and grabs hold of her.

BEDROOM:

JOHN DASHWOOD

Marie. Marie.

JOHN walks out.

KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM:

JOHN looking for MARIE. He looks in the kitchen shes gone the food on the oven. He looks around the living room.

JOHN DASHWOOD (CONT'D)

Marie.....

EXT. GATE HOUSE. STATELY HOME. NIGHT.

JOHN exits the house. He is starting to panic now.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Marie.....

A black coach and driver, driven by four black horses appear out of the woods and racing towards the stately home.

JOHN DASHWOOD (CONT'D)

What the..

JOHN runs to his car and struggles with the keys but the car wont start. He jumps out and starts running towards the stately home.

JOHN reaches the stately home. He slowly enters.

INT. STATELY HOME. SPORTS CLUB. HALL.-DAY

JOHN enters and looks around but there is no one about.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Marie....

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Out of the shadows MISS DE WINTER appears. JOHN sees her.

JOHN DASHWOOD (CONT'D)  
Miss De Winter. Marie is gone, have  
you seen her.

MISS DE WINTER  
Well come home Sir Dashwood.

JOHN DASHWOOD  
What?

MISS DE WINTER  
We have waited a long time for you.

JOHN DASHWOOD  
What are you talking about where is  
Marie what have you done to her?

MISS DE WINTER  
I have done nothing. But she is in  
danger.

JOHN DASHWOOD  
Where is she?

MISS DE WINTER  
Your club members have joined my  
Master soon he will feel warm blood  
run through his vein, he will be  
reborn.

JOHN grabs her by the throat and pushes her against the  
wall.

JOHN DASHWOOD  
Where is she?

MISS DE WINTER  
The old ruin across the way she waits  
for you there.

JOHN lets MISS DE WINTER go and runs out of the house. MISS  
DE WINTER smiles and slowly her body morphs into PYKE.

EXT. FOREST. STREAM. - NIGHT.

JOHN staggers through the woods.

JOHN walking through the woods. He stops and looks around.  
Something catches his eye. Thunder and lightening then he  
sees it, a Church.

C

JOHN walks up to church. He stands back looking up at the  
church. Lightning strikes across the sky. The door slowly  
opens.

INT. CHURCH. -NIGHT.

JOHN nervously enters to find a large number of men dressed in black and hooded. A black hooded figure is tied to a post where the alter would stand.

Another hooded figure pulls back the hood on the figure tied to the post, its MARIE.

JOHN runs to her but he is held back by two other members. The Figure beside MARIE reveals himself to be RICHARD.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Richard?

RICHARD

Welcome my friend.

MARIE looks drugged.

JOHN DASHWOOD

What are you doing? What is this?

RICHARD

You don't know.

RICHARD pulls a knife and holds it at MARIE'S throat.

JOHN DASHWOOD

No.

Then we hear.

PYKE

(OOS: IN LATIN)

Be careful what you wish for, it well may come true.

JOHN sees PYKE.

PYKE smiles and walks up to MARIE

PYKE (CONT'D)

(IN ENGLISH)

Be careful what you wish for, it well may come true. It's an old saying. It sounds more impressive in Latin.

PYKE looks up at a statue of Christ on the cross, closing his eyes he inhales and then slowly exhales.

PYKE (CONT'D)

Ah, Sweet, sweet the memories you gave me.

He takes a drinking flask from his pocket and takes a drink. He offers JOHN a drink.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PYKE takes another swig, then pockets the flask again.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Who are you? How do you know my name?

PYKE

You are John Xavier Dashwood, middle name a harmless affectation on your parents behalf born on a frosty December night, C-section, nasty business. Bit of a wimp during early boarding school years but surprise-surprise turned out to be a most wonderful athlete. What is it they call you in the sporting circles, the greatest swordsman of the 21st Century. I just bet the women love that!

JOHN DASHWOOD

I don't know what you want.

PYKE walks around MARIE.

PYKE

Ah...The book, the book JOHN. A most compelling central thesis. Two swordsmen, each from different eras, each innately belligerent, each with radically different viewpoints of life and death, confront each-other. There can be only be one outcome. La Mort! Death! The only pure and beautiful conclusion to a great passion.

PYKE pulls a sword blade from walking cane, He cuts through the air.

PYKE (CONT'D)

Back and forth they go swish! swish! Locked in mortal combat what an elegant metaphor man versus superman, superstition versus reason...Come along young man, speak up, no prompting from the back.

PYKE returns the blade to the cane.

PYKE (CONT'D)

Think about it John, just allow yourself for a moment to imagine such a duel. And think of the prize...

JOHN DASHWOOD

Prize?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PYKE

Oh come along now! I'm sure you're familiar with the Faustian Pact, the Deal with the Devil. Your literature is bulging with the stuff, I mean to say! Don't you people read the brochures. The prize is eternal life, and riches beyond compare. And for you, for you alone, a very special offer. A chance for you to duel with an Seventeenth Century master swordsman, especially rejuvenated by my own fair hand for this once-in-a-lifetime never-to-be-repeated offer. So what do you say?

JOHN DASHWOOD

I'd say your mad. Please let her go do what you will with me but please let her go.

PYKE

Think about JOHN, the chance for you to duel with an Seventeenth Century master swordsman. What would you give to take part? Your soul perhaps? That's the invariable bargain in these cases. Or maybe her soul. But of course you think the soul is a redundant concept, don't you? Along with love, morality, virtue. You don't have to even say yes. All you have to do is simply consider. That's good enough for me. Just allow the possibilities to form in your mind. It's an opportunity of a lifetime! If you win this duel you will have the story that will make you wealthy beyond imagination, you have my word on that and of course I will spare her life. Refuse....

PYKE pulls the hooded cloak from MARIE leaving her naked body, lustful sounds from the other members.

PYKE (CONT'D)

....And I will gut her and feed her heart to your fellow members.

JOHN DASHWOOD

No.....

PYKE

That's better the look of reason.

PYKE a faint smile on his lips.

BRANDAUER

May the best man win.

EXT. CASTLE RUIN. - NIGHT.

With a flash of light JOHN finds himself at the castle ruin. A strange mist encircles the ruin. He walks towards the castle.

EXT. CASTLE RUIN. - NIGHT.

JOHN walks through the castle ruin. There is the sound of a heart beating. JOHN walks through an archway which leads to the courtyard. The heart beat gets louder and louder.

JOHN looks down. The earth begins to move, pumping in time with the heart beat. Suddenly BRANDAUER's hand, half skeleton, half rotting flesh and jewelled ring, bursts up through the earth. Then another hand.

THEN:

PHILIP BRANDAUER rises up from beneath the earth and stands before him. JOHN can not believe his eyes. BRANDAUER's body is skeleton, decomposed flesh and clothing, his eyes red pulsating. But for the medallion and the clothing it could be the Devil himself who stands before him.

BRANDAUER looks around at the castle ruin. He takes a deep breath and exhales, enjoying his first taste of freedom from the world of darkness in three hundred years.

BRANDAUER

PHILIP BRANDAUER at your service Sir.

BRANDAUER laughs, and then stares at JOHN.

PHILIP BRANDAUER

(with contempt)  
You have his eyes.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Philip Brandauer.

BRANDAUER

My master has granted you your wish. You have been given a chance to avenge your family's honour, and I a chance to live again, your death will release me.

BRANDAUER's skeleton fingers settle his shirt in place.

BRANDAUER (CONT'D)

I have tried to keep myself in good condition. I hope you are more of a challenge than your ancestor. He was a feeble excuse for a man. He fought like a woman, and never had the stomach for killing.

JOHN walks around BRANDAUER.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN DASHWOOD

He was a better man than you. You were nothing but a pirate, a murderer who preyed off the weakness of others.

BRANDAUER wheels around furious his eyes pulsating.

BRANDAUER

Yes. But I was not alone in what I did. They wanted blood. They were not the gentlemen you think they were. Yes, even your ancestor.

JOHN DASHWOOD

It was your evil mind that forced them. You killed for pleasure.

BRANDAUER

Enough. You babble on like an old woman. I kill for my master. Now prepare to die for yours.

BRANDAUER raises his sword, ready to attack.

JOHN attacks with a flourish of cuts and lunges which are parried effortlessly by BRANDAUER.

Like a madman BRANDAUER returns the attack, his deadly moves cut through JOHN's shirt, then his arm finally BRANDAUER's sword cuts open his left shoulder in an explosion of flesh and bone and blood. JOHN stumbles, wounded and exhausted.

BRANDAUER (CONT'D)

Is this the best you can do? You disappoint me. I waited three hundred years to feel the cold steel in my hand once again, and you fight like a child.

BRANDAUER looks at JOHN with contempt.

BRANDAUER (CONT'D)

Like him, you have no stomach for killing, but would let others do it for you.

JOHN in a rage lunges at BRANDAUER. This time BRANDAUER finds himself struggling to defend. JOHN cuts BRANDAUER's ragged shirt as it was done to him.

PHILIP BRANDAUER

Good. You maybe a challenge after all.

Suddenly! BRANDAUER lunges at JOHN with wild blows. This fight is not only skilful, but also physical, with BRANDAUER finding himself out fenced.

He doesn't hesitate to use fists or his feet, or what ever it takes to overcome JOHN.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BRANDAUER cuts open JOHN's cheekbone, and in the following move disarms JOHN.

BRANDAUER's skeleton hand grips tightly around JOHN's throat and lifts him off the ground. JOHN is choking.

PHILIP BRANDAUER (CONT'D)

Look at me.

JOHN opens his eyes.

PHILIP BRANDAUER (CONT'D)

With your soul I will live once more in the sunlight.

BRANDAUER roars with laughter, then his laughter stops. His eyes, red, begin to pulsate. BRANDAUER stares into JOHN's eyes. We see the pulsating red light extend slowly into two beams from BRANDAUER's eyes and enter JOHN's.

JOHN screams. The red light continues to pulsate as it begins to drain the life from JOHN.

BRANDAUER looks down, his sword hand begins to transform. He sees the blood and arteries appear and then skin, then finger nails extending.

BRANDAUER pleased with himself, lifts up his hand to JOHN who is becoming weaker.

PHILIP BRANDAUER (CONT'D)

Look. It feels good, the feeling of blood rushing through one's veins once again.

JOHN knows he hasn't much time. This is his last chance. So with his last bit of strength and his only option, JOHN kicks BRANDAUER in the groin. BRANDAUER releases his grip and staggers back. No more just a skeleton, he feels mortal pain.

JOHN falls to the ground in an explosion of dust. BRANDAUER's hand returns to its skeleton form. BRANDAUER outraged.

PHILIP BRANDAUER (CONT'D)

No. No.....

JOHN almost unconscious looks at BRANDAUER then at his sword which is just out of reach. BRANDAUER turns sharply staring at JOHN, his eyes death like and lifeless.

PHILIP BRANDAUER (CONT'D)

Enough. Time for you to meet your relatives.

BRANDAUER walks towards him. JOHN looks at the sword again, this time he makes a dive for it, rolling over the sword and at the same time picking the sword up.

Pausing a moment, then JOHN lunges his sword with all his strength through BRANDAUER's chest and back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

BRANDAUER staggers back, his body shaking, screaming he falls into the grave from where he came. JOHN is on his knees exhausted.

JOHN walks over to the grave, looking down all he can see is a strange coloured mist below.

Then, from out of the mist with heart stopping surprise BRANDAUER's hand grips firmly around JOHN's ankle. With a roar JOHN falls to the ground. JOHN is being pulled down the grave. JOHN grabs hold of a headstone. Slowly BRANDAUER appears using JOHN's body to climb out of the grave.

JOHN is determined. JOHN grabs hold of the medallion around BRANDAUER's neck and pulls it, the chain breaks and the medallion is thrown across the courtyard. BRANDAUER helplessly reaches for the medallion. JOHN looks at the medallion then at BRANDAUER.

JOHN DASHWOOD

Fuck you.

JOHN kicks BRANDAUER in the face. BRANDAUER is thrown back into the grave. An explosion of light and flames follows.

JOHN picks up the medallion, looking at it for a moment, and then he looks around. From the grave, a bright meteoric light force. JOHN has to cover his eyes.

Then the ground begins to tremble. What's left of the castle ruin begins to crumble. The ground breaks up. The sky spins over head, changing colour.

The ground beneath JOHN's feet gives way and JOHN is sucked down. He struggles but is helplessly swallowed up. His hand clutching the medallion as he disappears.

EXT. ABYSS.

JOHN falls through the endless space. Falling and falling, his body tumbles over and over, his hand still clutching the medallion. JOHN screaming. Suddenly there's a burst of white light.

INT. BOOK SHOP. - DAY.

A hand rips open a white parcel paper to reveal the glossy cover of a new best selling book titled Noble Blood by JOHN DASHWOOD.

EXT. BOOK SHOP. - DAY.

The SHOP ASSISTANT places JOHN's best selling book in the window. The entire shop window is covered with his book and posters of the book cover. We slowly move back and rise up.

INT. BEDROOM. JOHNS APARTMENT. MORNING.

We rise up to find a wedding photo of MARIE and JOHN by the bed then we find JOHN tossing and turning in his sleep.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As JOHN turns we see the gold medallion around his neck. JOHN grasps the medallion as his entire body contorts in what seems a nightmare. The chain breaks.

JOHN's hand falls over the beside, the medallion falls to the floor. JOHN opens his eyes, and leans over the bed reaching down to pick up the medallion. As JOHN picks up the medallion the floorboards explode and the half bone and half flesh and blood stained hand grips firmly around JOHN's wrist.

**(FREEZE FRAME:)**

**THE END**