WHISTLING IN THE DARK

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FADE IN:

INT. ELGAR’S AUTO & BODY SHOP – NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

(There is an unreal quality to the scene, things brighter and more colorful.)

A Rolls Royce is the only car in the cavernous repair bay. Tools of the trade are scattered all around it. The driver’s door is open and a YOUNG THIEF is leaning inside the car. He yanks a whistle on a gold chain off the rearview mirror.

ELGAR (V.O.)
I’d worked late, so I was sleeping in the office, when I heard a noise out in the repair bay...

Suddenly the door to an office opens and ELGAR steps out, a frown on his handsome face, powerful fists clenched at his sides, the zipper to his pristine white coveralls open to the waist, revealing cut pecs and chiseled abs. He points a mighty finger at the intruder.

ELGAR (V.O.)
Stop vandal!

The panicked Thief bangs his head on the car roof as he backs out, then makes a run for the outside door he jimmed open.

EXT. ELGAR’S AUTO & BODY SHOP – NIGHT [FLASHBACK CONT’D]

The facade of the building is all chrome and glass and a huge neon sign atop the roof proclaims ELGAR’S AUTO & BODY. The jimmed door splinters into a thousand pieces as Elgar crashes through it.

ALEXA (V.O.)
(chuckling)
“Stop vandal?”

The FLASHBACK COMES TO A SCREECHING END, FREEZING Elgar in mid-run.

EXT. STREET – NIGHT [THE PRESENT]

Elgar and Alexa stand next to an open manhole that’s blocked off by a barricade. Beyond them, we can see that Elgar’s shop is dark, the paint is peeling, and the rollup doors are graffitied.
In reality, Elgar (early 20s) isn’t as powerfully built or handsome as he is in his own imagination, and his coveralls is grimy with grease and oil.

Alexa (early 20s) is also wearing coveralls, clean, which fail to disguise her shapely build.

    ALEXA
    Just how old is the comic book you’re reading now?

    ELGAR
    It’s a classic.

    ALEXA
    Alright. So you chased this “vandal” away. Then what?

    ELGAR
    I tackled him right about here, and the whistle he stole went flying--straight down this manhole.

Alexa looks around, noting the debris around the opening.

    ALEXA
    You sure he didn’t trip?

    ELGAR
    (shrugs)
    Tackled, tripped, they’re both T words.

He steps over the barricade, pulls a flashlight from a pocket and starts down the dark shaft.

INT. MANHOLE SHAFT - NIGHT

Elgar climbs down the iron rungs with one hand, the other holding the flashlight that illumines the way down. Alexa is above him, constantly testing her footing by placing a foot on top of his head.

    ELGAR
    Hey, stop that.

    ALEXA
    What’s so special about that whistle, anyway?
INT. ELGAR'S AUTO & BODY SHOP - DAY [FLASHBACK]

The imposing Elgar is facing off against SAL “THE WHACKER” PIMENTO in front of the Rolls Royce.

Sal (60s) is tall, lean, scarred on one cheek, wears a ruffled shirt, jodhpurs tucked into riding boots, and carries a riding crop which he cracks against his leg to emphasize each word. And he has a monocle pressed against one eye.

    SAL
    (Colonel Klink accent)
    If anything happens to that whistle--anything!--I will kill you, kill your family, kill your pets, and kill your mailman! Maybe not in that order.

Angered, Elgar finally comes up with the proper retort.

    ELGAR
    Oh, yeah?

ALEXA’S LAUGHTER (V.O.) FREEZES THIS SCENE IN PLACE just as Elgar is about to launch another devastating verbal missile.

INT. SEWER - NIGHT [THE PRESENT]

The round walls of the tunnel and sludgy stream flowing down its middle are illuminated by the flashlights held by Elgar and Alexa.

    ALEXA
    Again I ask, what’s so special about that whistle?

Elgar pulls out a pair of round magnets that have hooks on top, to which is attached a length of cord.

    ELGAR
    You remember Derek?

    ALEXA
    Your jailbird cousin?

He hands one of the magnets to her. They unroll them so that the magnets dip below the sludge.

    ELGAR
    Right. Anyway, I visited him yesterday in jail, and got the lowdown on the whistle.

    (MORE)
ELGAR (CONT’D)
Sal “The Whacker” Pimento took that whistle off the first cop he killed way back when cops still walked beats and carried whistles.

ALEXA
A sentimental killer?

They start walking in opposite directions, swirling the magnets in the “water.”

ALEXA (CONT’D)
It stinks down here!

ELGAR
I thought you’d be used to the smell, what with your father being the “Septic Tank King.” What’s his motto? “We don’t poop around?”

ALEXA
I think it’s cute. Besides, yours is “I poop in your car.”

ELGAR
I was nine! And I was sick! Remember the first time you had your-

ALEXA
Stop! Don’t you dare talk about it. (pause) Why’d you ask me to help you? Oh, that’s right, you don’t have any friends, just cars.

ELGAR
Cars don’t let you down if you treat them right.

ALEXA
It’s the same with people.

ELGAR
Yeah? Maybe for beautiful girls like you.

He gets a “bite” on his line, and pulls up a set of keys.

ALEXA
Why, Alex, that’s the first time you’ve ever paid me a compliment like that.
ELGAR
Mechanics don’t say things like that to each other.

(beat)
But since you’re moving to LA for that fancy new job, “propulsion systems engineer”...

Alexa, smiling, “catches” something and quickly pulls it up. It’s a pistol. Both of them stare at it, dumbfounded. Then their heads whip around when they HEAR a WHISTLING.

A HUGE RAT rounds a bend in the tunnel, opens its mouth, exposing sharp teeth, and emits ANOTHER WHISTLING SOUND. Then it charges them. They scream and dash for the shaft. They look back and scream again when they see a HORDE OF RATS behind the first one.

Alexa starts scaling the rungs, and the pistol, twisting at the end of the cord, hits Elgar in the head. He yanks it free of the magnet and FIRES a wild round at the Rat and misses.

The Rat WHISTLES angrily. Elgar SHOOTS again and the Rat EXPLODES, sending flaming limbs and entrails everywhere--and something else as well, something shiny.

Elgar dives into the muck, sending burning sludge splashing all about, and comes up with the shiny whistle. His smile is wiped out by the sight of the rat pack bearing down on him.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Alexa lends a hand to Elgar as he climbs out of the shaft trailing a column of smoke. She moves away from him, scrunching up her nose as he stands there, dripping nasty sludge and rat parts. He holds the whistle up and laughs.

Their attention is drawn down the street as a MANHOLE COVER goes flying into the air, propelled by flames and smoke. ANOTHER MANHOLE COVER farther down the street does the same, and yet another one even farther off.

ELGAR
So how big are the rats in L.A.?

ALEXA
Huge. Only they walk on two legs.

She smiles.

FADE OUT.