

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 jimmied 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 jimmied 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 coverall 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.