

ROBBING THE GRAVE

by

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FADE IN:

INT. LUCAS'S APARTMENT, ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

LUCAS (early 30s) enters and opens the front door. His face is pale with dark lines under his eyes. He zips up his leather jacket.

MEL (early 30s) appears behind him in a bathrobe. Her face is equally marred with stress.

LUCAS

Don't wait up for me.

She nods. He embraces her and rubs her back gently.

LUCAS

Thanks for sticking by me. I know I've put you through a lot.

MEL

I hope this works out tonight. If not, I don't know... I just don't know.

LUCAS

That's fair.

Lucas releases Mel. He leans in to kiss her but stops himself and gives her a mere nod.

MEL

Be careful.

INT. LUCAS'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

A door slams off in the apartment as Mel enters. She takes a seat at a table cluttered with bills and envelopes.

She lights a cigarette and drags a nearby ashtray toward her. It exposes an eviction notice on the table.

EXT. LUCAS'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lucas emerges. His eyes lock on a beat-up pickup truck standing nearby. It's beige with peeling paint.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Lucas takes a seat beside the driver, SMITHY (late 40s). He resembles a homeless man with his sunken eyes, unshaven jowls and nicotine-stained teeth. His hair is long and greasy. His clothes are dirty and worn.

Smithy swiftly snatches Lucas's hand in a firm handshake.

SMITHY

Smithy. Pleased to meet you. It's Lucas, right?

LUCAS

That's right. Where's Reggie? Are we picking him up?

SMITHY

I'm afraid not. Reggie finally got his ass pinched on account of those light bulbs of his. Looks like one too many people figured out his lifetime guarantee is anything but. So it's just you and me tonight, padron.

Smithy slaps Lucas on the back and starts up the truck.

LATER

A cigarette dangles from Smithy's mouth as he drives down a deserted city street.

SMITHY

So Reggie tells me you're hard up for cash. You unemployed?

LUCAS

Temporarily. Something will come up. Schools always need teachers-

SMITHY

Fuck that! There's always ways around the system. Fuck the system! All you do in the system is wait in line. And for what? To be a cog in a machine that spits you out when you're all used up? Let me guess. Budget cuts?

LUCAS

Some rich parents thought they could bribe me into giving their son passing grades so he could graduate. I don't want to put a damper on a kid's future—

SMITHY

So you took it. The school found out—

LUCAS

The school found out I refused. This kid wasn't even trying. He expected to be bailed out. I just couldn't do it. After that, it gets complicated.

SMITHY

That's not right, man. If it's not budget cuts, it's political. How do you put up with that shit?

LUCAS

There was a time I believed in teaching.

Smithy nods and slaps Lucas's thigh.

SMITHY

I'm proud of you for coming out tonight. I respect for people who take chances. You're not nervous, are you?

LUCAS

Maybe a little. But all I have to do is wait outside, right?

SMITHY

I guess Reggie didn't get the chance to tell you. We're not going to the antique store anymore. We're going to the graveyard.

LUCAS

I don't mean to be rude but I'm not really in the mood for jokes right now.

SMITHY

I'm far from joking.

Lucas gives Smithy a suspicious look.

SMITHY

Grave robbing does take a little more time and elbow grease but on the bright side, your job doesn't entail looking out for cops anymore.

LUCAS

Antiques are still a lucrative option, aren't they?

SMITHY

What are you trying to say? You'd rob an antique store but you wouldn't rob a grave? Hell, graves are about as antique as they come.

LUCAS

I'm saying I didn't sign up for this.

Smithy stops the truck and locks the doors.

SMITHY

Getting cold feet, padron?

LUCAS

What—

SMITHY

Listen. I know Reggie's your cousin and all but I don't know a thing about you. How do I know you're not gonna tell anyone what I just told you?

LUCAS

Why would I tell anyone? I only know because I came to help you and Reggie loot a place.

SMITHY

That ain't good enough. You got a criminal record, Lucas?

LUCA

I've got a degree in Shakespearean literature. I'm a nerd.

SMITHY

Well, I have a record. Don't think just cuz I shook your hand and related to you in a personable manner means I trust you. What I need you to do tonight is make an appearance. That's all. Otherwise, we've got a problem—

LUCAS

There's no problem! Listen. Normally, I wouldn't be up for any kind of stealing. But I need the money. That's that.

Smithy pats Lucas's shoulder.

SMITHY

It's cool. If you're not feeling up to it right now, you've got the rest of the way there to feel better about it.

EXT. GRAVEYARD GATES - NIGHT

The headlights of Smithy's truck illuminate the iron bars of the gates as it stands before them.

Smithy stands before a padlocked cluster of chains securing the gates. He picks the lock and removes the chains. The gates swing open with a metallic screech.

Smithy tosses the chains into the truck bed and reenters the driver's seat. The truck proceeds through the gates.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

The graveyard is still and dark. Only the headlights of Smithy's truck bring objects into view as it bumps down a cobblestone path.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Smithy regards a crudely drawn map as he navigates through the graveyard.

LUCAS

So what happened to the original plan?

SMITHY

Reggie's a small time crook. He just got a hot tip about this one place. I've got a client base. They can't go through the usual channels to get what they want so they're willing to pay a little extra. Take our present client for instance. He's one ruby gem short of reuniting an old collection that's worth more than you and me, only it just so happens to be buried in the grave of Phyllis Leblanc. So he calls me and he's way more loaded than some rinky-dink antique store.

LUCAS

You mean he knows it's buried in someone's grave?

SMITHY

All too well. Hell, he's probably an ex-husband. Or an estranged relative.

EXT. GRAVESITE - NIGHT

The headlights of Smithy's truck illuminate a towering stone monument adorned with dead flowers. PHYLLIS LEBLANC is written on the headstone.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Lucas hyperventilates with his eyes locked on the gravesite as the truck rolls to a stop.

SMITHY

Check the glove box. I got something that'll take the edge off.

Lucas opens the glove box. Smithy nods toward a leather pouch. Lucas takes it and unzips it. A glass pipe and half a bag of crystal meth lie inside. Lucas's state worsens.

SMITHY

Not your thing?

Smithy reaches into the glove box and drops a brown paper bag into Lucas's lap. He reaches further into the glove box and removes a black and yellow Walkman.

SMITHY

Here's my drug of choice.

Smithy inserts a pair of earphones into his ears.

SMITHY

Autopsy. Mental Funeral. I always listen to "Robbing the Grave" before... well, before I work.

Smithy rewinds a section of tape and presses play. He turns the volume up until the music can be heard without the earphones and places the Walkman into his pocket.

EXT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Smithy steps out. He proceeds to the back of the truck and collects assorted shovels and tools from the truck bed.

SMITHY

Chris Reifert gave me one of the first copies back in 1991. Helluva guy.

Smithy proceeds toward the gravesite.

EXT. GRAVESITE - NIGHT

Smithy lays the tools against the monument.

SMITHY

Haven't spoken a word since though. Sorta had a falling out.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Lucas watches as Smithy heads back toward the truck.

SMITHY

You know people. One minute, they're your pal. The next, they stick it right between your shoulder blades.

Smithy appears next To the driver side door and peers into the truck. Lucas tenses.

Smithy stops his Walkman.

SMITHY

You're killing my buzz, man.

LUCAS

I just had a full-blown panic attack.
What do you want from me?

SMITHY

A little help would be nice?

LUCAS

I thought you just wanted me to make an appearance.

SMITHY

Don't you know the story of the Little Red Hen? Of course, you do. You're a reader. If you don't help bake the bread, you don't get to eat it. You want in on the loot or no?

LUCAS

I just need a minute is all.

SMITHY

It's your first time so I'll cut you some slack. But I need you to get your shit together ASAP.

Smithy restarts his Walkman and returns to the gravesite.

Lucas looks down at the paper bag on his lap. He reaches inside and removes a bottle of airplane glue. He picks up the meth pouch and compares the two.

EXT. GRAVESITE - NIGHT

Smithy plunges a shovel into the earth. He bites his lip and shudders in the wake of the impact then hurls a clod of dirt over his shoulder.

He continues to dig as he turns toward the truck. He squints through the headlights and sees Lucas holding the paper bag over his nose and mouth.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Lucas sucks in. The bag implodes. He lowers it and blinks.

EXT. GRAVESITE - NIGHT

Lucas approaches the gravesite. Smithy stops his Walkman, removes his earphones and shoves them into his pocket.

Lucas takes a spot across from Smithy on the other side of the grave. He looks down at a shallow cavity.

Smithy chuckles and points at him.

SMITHY

It's a trip, right? Man, you talk about a warped mind, you got one.

Smithy reaches down and tosses Lucas a shovel. He lights himself a cigarette and takes his own shovel in hand.

He thrusts his tool back into the grave and extracts a shovelful of black soil. He tosses it into a small pile behind him and starts back into the ground with vigor.

Lucas watches Smithy's wild eyes flick back and forth as each thrust of his shovel becomes harder than the last. The earthy chasm proliferates.

SMITHY

What are you waiting for? Dig!

Lucas takes up his shovel and thrusts it into the dirt.

The truck's headlights cast the shadows of the two grave robbers across the tombstones beyond.

EXT. GRAVE - NIGHT

Six feet underground, Smithy digs like a man possessed, covered from head to toe in black filth.

Lucas digs sluggishly at the other end of the grave. He's flushed and sweaty. After a moment, he tosses his shovel aside and slumps into the corner.

Smithy utters a primitive grunt with each swing of his shovel. He digs faster and faster. His grunts turn into barks. Spittle flies from his mouth.

Lucas retreats deeper into his darkened corner. A clump of dirt strikes his shoulder, full of slimy earthworms. Lucas yelps and shakes them off.

Metal strikes wood. The sound rings out into the night.

LATER

Lucas sits on the edge of the grave with a flashlight pointed down.

Smithy scrapes dirt off the surface of a white coffin with his shovel then casts it aside.

SMITHY

Gimme the crowbar.

Lucas hands Smithy a crowbar from above. Smithy takes it.

SMITHY

She's not too old but things might look a little... interesting.

Smithy slams the crowbar into the side of the coffin and pries open the front compartment. It's pitch black inside.

SMITHY

I can't see. Shine it here.

Lucas shines amber light straight into the coffin to reveal the corpse of PHYLLIS LEBLANC.

Her flesh is shriveled and greasy. Behind her blackened teeth and hollow eye sockets, frenzied maggots gorge.

A jeweled necklace hangs around her neck with an oval-shaped ruby at its center. Smithy snatches it away and hands it up to Lucas.

EXT. GRAVESITE - NIGHT

Lucas stands and looks down at Smithy.

SMITHY

I want you to leave me now.

LUCAS

What?

Smithy flips open a switchblade. Lucas drops the flashlight.

SMITHY

If I catch you over here, you're dog
meat. Wait in the truck. I'll be back.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Lucas enters the passenger's seat and slams the door.

EXT. GRAVE - NIGHT

Smithy leans over the edge of the coffin. He turns his ear toward it and listens to the maggots feast inside. He turns his head and sniffs the air over the corpse.

After a moment, he stands and picks up the crowbar.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Lucas flinches as he hears the crowbar strike the side of the coffin.

EXT. GRAVE - NIGHT

Smithy lifts up the lower compartment to reveal the coffin interior. It's lined with red velvet.

Phyllis wears an elegant white dress. More maggots twitch and writhe on top of her.

Smithy climbs gently inside the coffin.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Lucas shakes some dirt out of his hair. He removes his shoes and empties out some pebbles.

A faint whine, like the sound of the wind blowing, presents itself. Lucas perks up. It persists but remains indistinct. Lucas rolls down the window. Silence... then it resurfaces.

He sticks his head out the window. Someone cries in the distance. It sounds like a child.

Lucas scans the darkness. The crying drops in pitch. It's a man's voice. Smithy's.

Lucas glances toward the grave. In an instant, the crying turns into an animalistic growl.

EXT. GRAVESITE - NIGHT

A muffled groan. A moist cracking sound. The hiss of escaping gas.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Lucas shakes his head.

LUCAS

Fuck this.

He bursts out of the truck.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

Lucas scrambles into the darkness far away from the truck and gravesite. He falls to his knees and vomits on a tombstone. He looks up and watches digestive remnants trickle down the marble and obscure the inscription.

LUCAS

(quiet)

I'm sorry.

Lucas scoops the vomit into his hands and wipes it on the surrounding grass.

Something stirs in the darkness beyond. Lucas looks up. A DARK FIGURE shambles toward him.

Lucas scrambles backward on his hands and feet. The figure gets closer with each awkward step.

EXT. GRAVESITE - NIGHT

Smithy climbs out of the grave, even dirtier than before. He sniffs and rubs his eyes.

He runs his fingers through his messy hair and opens his hand. Maggots wriggle in his palm. He tosses them back into the grave and proceeds toward the truck.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

Lucas whimpers as the figure looms over him. It jabbars incoherently. A glistening strand of saliva drips onto Lucas's jacket.

The figure freezes as amber light shines upon it. It's a HERMIT (60s). A mess of scraggly red hair obscures his face. Food particles cling to his bushy beard.

Lucas turns. Smithy stands several feet behind him holding the flashlight.

SMITHY
(to hermit)
Don't move, cocksucker.

The hermit shrieks and runs away. Smithy runs after him. He reaches out and grabs a handful of the hermit's rags. The hermit falls to his knees.

Lucas gets to his feet.

Smithy puts his switchblade to the hermit's throat. The hermit babbles and screeches.

SMITHY
I'm sorry I have to cut your head off
but I didn't bring my gun.

The hermit squeals as Smithy opens a wound on his neck.

LUCAS

Stop!

Smithy stops and looks at Lucas.

Tears stream from the hermit's beady eyes as blood trickles down his neck.

SMITHY

He's been watching us! We can't let-

The hermit slaps Smithy's hand away and takes off into the darkness.

SMITHY

Shit!

Smithy runs after the hermit and attempts to stab him in the back. The blade tears through his ratty threads.

The hermit speeds up and disappears into the darkness.

Smithy growls. He turns and runs up to Lucas. He shoves him to the ground and swoops over him with switchblade in hand.

SMITHY

You fucking mongoloid-

LUCAS

He's not gonna say anything! He couldn't even talk!

Smithy groans. He stands up and puts away the switchblade. He grabs Lucas's hand and pulls them face-to-face. A translucent film glistens on the side of Smithy's face.

SMITHY

I hope for your sake you're right.

Smithy rubs the film off.

EXT. GRAVE - NIGHT

The shell of Phyllis's corpse lies in the coffin below. It's split from the top of its skull to its nether regions and completely hollowed out. Its ravaged dress lies in tatters smeared with decayed innards.

A clump of dirt lands between the two halves of its cloven head with a wet splat.

EXT. GRAVESITE - NIGHT

Lucas and Smithy shovel dirt back into the grave.

Smithy glances at Lucas. Lucas shies away from his gaze. Smithy shrugs and returns his focus to the grave.

Lucas digs halfheartedly. He hangs his head and allows tears to fall from his eyes.

LATER

The grave is filled. Lucas and Smithy pat the loose soil down with their shovels.

After a moment, they gather their tools and proceed O.S. The sound of the tools hitting the truck bed follows.

EXT. FOREST ROAD - NIGHT

Smithy's truck speeds down the road surrounded by abysmal black forest.

INT. SMITHY'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Lucas stares out the window.

LUCAS

I have to get home.

LUCAS P.O.V.

Trees pass by in an unchanging pattern.

BACK TO SCENE

Smithy guzzles a bottle of Old Crow as he drives. It trickles from the corners of his mouth.

SMITHY

First things first. We gotta meet the old fart. It's time to get paid.

LUCAS'S P.O.V.

A whisp of white dress appears for just an instant before it vanishes behind a tree.

BACK TO SCENE

Lucas retracts his face from the window in shock.

SMITHY

What's the matter, padron? Don't you like getting paid?

LUCAS

I thought I saw something.

SMITHY

It's your first time. Some people say you see things. Not me though. I think that's bullshit.

INT. CLIENT'S APARTMENT, STAIRWELL

Lucas and Smithy arrive at the top floor and proceed toward an ajar door. The wood around the handle is damaged, full of tiny holes. Smithy remarks it as they pass by.

INT. CLIENT'S APARTMENT, ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Lucas and Smithy enter a chandelier-lit hall with black-and-white tile floor and approach the edge of a darkened hallway.

A nearby door creaks open. Light spills into the hallway from within.

INT. CLIENT'S APARTMENT, OFFICE - NIGHT

A single desk lamp lights the cavernous room. Jeweled eggs adorn towering shelves.

The CLIENT (80s) sits at the desk hunched over in a massive armchair. He's bald, bespectacled and decrepitley old.

Lucas and Smithy enter. Smithy hops into an armchair on the other side of the desk and makes himself comfortable. Lucas takes a seat with considerably less nerve.

The client doesn't react to their presence.

SMITHY
Salutations.

The client doesn't react.

SMITHY
(to Lucas)
Where's the necklace?

Lucas drops the necklace on the desk. The client doesn't react.

SMITHY
Hmm... People tend to make noise when
they're sleeping, right?

Lucas gets up and rounds the desk. He leans in toward the client's face and examines him. He hears a faint crunching noise and recoils.

LUCAS
He's dead.

SMITHY
He was an old fucker.

Smithy stands.

SMITHY
Not that it puts a damper on our
compensation situation.

Smithy claps his hands and rubs them together.

SMITHY
In fact, I think I'm about to loot the
fuck out of this place.

Smithy takes the necklace and stuffs it into his coat.

LUCAS
Shouldn't we get out of here?

SMITHY

Are you kidding? This guy was an old school recluse. You could call him a real Mr. Scrooge. It'll be weeks before anybody finds him and nobody's gonna give a shit when they do.

Smithy rounds the desk and proceeds to rummage through its drawers.

LUCAS

Well, you can count me out then. I'm taking my cut and leaving.

SMITHY

You know, if you were a real moralist, you'd take nothing.

LUCAS

If I took nothing, this would all be for nothing. I came out here to help my wife and I out of a shitty situation. I've crossed a lot of my own lines doing so but there's still one line I won't cross and that's taking more than I need.

SMITHY

Suit yourself. You take cash or check?

Smithy produces a checkbook from the desk drawer. He tosses it on the desk and guffaws.

SMITHY

If you want cash, you gotta help me find the safe.

Smithy proceeds past Lucas and starts to grab eggs off the shelves, stuffing them into his coat.

Lucas gets up and turns to Smithy.

LUCAS

Well, what are we waiting for?

Smithy nods and snatches one last egg. He and Lucas exit and shut the door behind them.

The crunching noise presents itself again. Several maggots fall out of the client's mouth and convulse on the desk.

UNDER THE DESK

Huge clumps of maggots are piled up around the client's ankles. More pour out of his pant legs in a sluggish flow.

INT. CLIENT'S APARTMENT, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Lucas and Smithy proceed down the hallway.

Smithy turns a corner. Lucas starts to follow him but stops dead in his tracks as a door at the end of the hallway swings ajar.

A brief flash of white fabric appears behind it.

Smithy turns around.

SMITHY

What are you doing?

LUCAS

I think I'm seeing things again.

SMITHY

Well, quit it.

LUCAS

I don't know if I am or not.

Smithy arrives at Lucas's side and peers down the hallway. The door sways in a quiet wind. The room behind it is dark.

Smithy groans. He grabs Lucas by the collar and jerks him forward. He casts open the door and shoves Lucas inside.

INT. CLIENT'S APARTMENT, LOUNGE - NIGHT

Smithy enters and flips a switch.

Dim lights mounted on chandeliers illuminate a lavish but somber lounge adorned with cushy armchairs, framed artwork and white silk curtains in the windows.

Smithy slaps Lucas on the back and points to one of the windows. It's ajar. Its curtains flutter in the wind.

LUCAS

I'm gonna need a few minutes. I think I'm starting to lose it.

Lucas turns to the door. Smithy grabs his shoulder.

SMITHY

You know what I was thinking on the way over here? I still don't know you all that well-

LUCAS

I'm an accomplice now! I'm not going to tell anyone-

SMITHY

Then why are you trying to run off? I thought we were looking for-

LUCAS

I'm not trying to run off-

The lounge door squeaks on its hinges. Their eyes dart toward it in unison. Silence.

Smithy turns back to Lucas.

SMITHY

You best un-lose it quick. Cuz I'll be checking up on you.

Smithy releases Lucas. Lucas brushes himself off and exits.

Smithy approaches a box on a table beside one of the armchairs. He opens it. It's filled with cigars. He takes one and runs it under his nostrils.

Smithy bites down on the cigar. He lights it with his own lighter and turns toward a gaping stone fireplace. Its mantel is laden with baubles. Smithy proceeds toward it.

The open window lies directly behind him. Earthworms squirm on the windowsill.

INT. CLIENT'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

A vast bedroom adorned with more artwork and decorative trinkets that cast shadows on the walls. A single window looks out onto a fire escape.

Lucas enters and shuts the door behind him. He produces a cell phone.

INT. LUCAS'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A cell phone sits on a coffee table next to half a bottle of vodka. It rings. Somebody stirs in the background.

INT. CLIENT'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lucas paces back and forth with the phone held to his ear.

MEL (V.O.)

Lucas? Are you okay?

LUCAS

I don't know.

MEL (V.O.)

Well, are you safe, at least? You're not in jail, are you?

LUCAS

No, no. Nothing like that.

MEL (V.O.)

Then what's wrong?

LUCAS

Am I a good person, Mel?

MEL (V.O.)

What are you talking about?

LUCAS

Am I a good person?

MEL (V.O.)

Why are you doing this to me, Lucas?
You think I'm not a fucking mess right—

LUCAS

I'm not asking you for anything, Mel. I wouldn't dare. I just need an answer. That's all. I promise.

INT. LUCAS'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mel sits on a ratty couch with a glass of vodka in her hand. She sighs.

MEL

You're naïve, Lucas. I hate that about you. And sometimes, I think you're a fucking idiot. But as much as I hate to admit it, we wouldn't be in this situation if you weren't a good person.

LUCAS (V.O.)

Thank you.

INT. CLIENT'S APARTMENT, LOUNGE - NIGHT

Smithy clenches his cigar between his teeth as he yanks some golden candlestick holders off the mantel and shoves them into his coat.

He removes the cigar and blows some smoke rings. He watches as they float toward a fissure in the far wall.

Smithy returns the cigar to his mouth and proceeds toward the fissure for a closer look. It's part of the outline of a door. Smithy approaches it and feels around its crevices.

He turns to a desk beside the hidden door and fingers behind it. His fingertips land on a small button. A click. The door swings open.

HIDDEN CHAMBER

A single lamp illuminates the pentagonal chamber from above. Five glass display cases line the walls surrounded by decorative wallpaper.

Smithy steps inside. He examines the cases. Each contains a collection of different gemstones encased in velvet. Smithy arrives at the center display case and notices an empty niche in its center.

Smithy reaches into his pocket and removes the necklace. He examines the ruby. It's the same shape as the niche.

Smithy licks his lips and returns the necklace to his pocket. He bends down and looks under the display cases then stands up again.

SMITHY

You must've done some bad shit to get your hands on these. That or you've never heard of a glass-break alarm.

Smithy smashes his elbow through the glass and proceeds to loot the gems from the display case.

The lounge door creaks behind him. Smithy whirls around. He shakes his head and marches into the lounge.

LOUNGE

Smithy approaches the open window and slams it shut.

A thump in the hallway. Smithy whirls around.

SMITHY

Is that you, padron?

No response. Smithy tosses his cigar on the floor and puts it out with his foot. He approaches the lounge door and peers into the hallway. It's empty.

SMITHY

You better not be sneaking off.

Smithy produces his switchblade.

SMITHY

Smithy is not one to be fucked with.

Silence... then another thump.

Smithy flips open the blade.

INT. CLIENT'S APARTMENT, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Smithy creeps down the hallway with switchblade in hand. The office door sways open ever so slightly.

SMITHY

Who's there?

The sound of shattering porcelain. Smithy jolts upright and hastens toward the office.

INT. CLIENT'S APARTMENT, OFFICE - NIGHT

Smithy enters. His eyes fall on a shattered egg in the center of the room. It's filled with earthworms.

Smithy looks up at the dead client. A single drop of blood trickles down his forehead from a small hole. Several maggots tumble out of it and strike the desk.

An open window behind the client sends a draft into the room. Smithy sneers as the wind lifts up his greasy hair.

SMITHY

You ain't getting it back, bitch.

Smithy backs away.

SMITHY

You can go straight back to the grave I left you in.

A violent gust of wind blows dead leaves into the office. The client's body keels over and strikes the desk. A vile mixture of blood and maggots gushes out of his mouth.

INT. CLIENT'S APARTMENT, HALLWAY - NIGHT

Smithy bursts out of the office and hastens toward the lounge.

INT. CLIENT'S APARTMENT, LOUNGE - NIGHT

Smithy bursts in and slams the door behind him. He thrusts his hand into his pocket and produces his Walkman. He shoves the earphones into his ears and presses play.

He backs away from the door toward the far end of the room. A loud thud causes the door to tremble.

Smithy retreats into the hidden chamber.

Another thud. Shadows at the foot of the door indicate someone on the other side.

INT. CLIENT'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lucas stands beside the door with a marble sculpture raised above his head, ready to strike.

LUCAS
Smithy?! I think I found-

A faint shout. It's Smithy. Lucas presses his ear against the door.

SMITHY (V.O.)
Take me! I want you to!

INT. CLIENT'S APARTMENT, HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE LOUNGE

Lucas approaches the lounge door with the sculpture hidden behind his back.

SMITHY (V.O.)
Come to Daddy!

LUCAS
Smithy?!

Smithy cackles behind the door.

SMITHY (V.O.)
Yes! YES!!

Lucas stops beside the door. He presses his back against the wall and raises the sculpture to strike.

SMITHY (V.O.)
Take me! You beautiful... No! NO!!!

Lucas lowers his weapon.

SMITHY (V.O.)
OH GOD!!! PLEASE HELP ME!!!

Smithy's screams turn high-pitched. Lucas backs away from the door in horror.

SMITHY (V.O.)
HELP ME!!! NO!!! NOOO!!!

Smithy's voice reaches an inhuman pitch. His vocal chords seem to stretch and tear until they reach a gurgling crescendo.

INT. CLIENT'S APARTMENT, HIDDEN CHAMBER

The chamber is drenched in a blood-red light.

A dull thud O.S. Smithy's Walkman lands in a pool of blood. The music still plays.

Blood envelops Phyllis's necklace nearby. A decayed hand reaches down and picks it up.

INT. CLIENT'S APARTMENT, HALLWAY - NIGHT

OUTSIDE THE LOUNGE

The door swings open to reveal the lounge, just as it was before. The window ajar once again.

Lucas drops the sculpture. It shatters on the floor. He takes off down the hallway.

He stops dead in his tracks before the entrance hall.

The ghost of Phyllis Leblanc stands before the front door with her back turned. Her restored white dress flutters in a silent breeze. It's drenched in blood.

Lucas stands frozen in fear for a moment then whirls around and darts back down the hallway.

INT. CLIENT'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lucas bursts into the bedroom, slams the door and locks it behind him.

He runs to the window. The door shudders violently behind him. Lucas shoves his fingers under the base of the window and pries it partially open.

The door bangs loudly.

Lucas struggles to open the window.

Beetles spray out from under the door.

Lucas yelps. He pounds at the wood under the window frame with his palms.

Wood cracks around the doorframe. Its hinges bend.

Centipedes wriggle out from under the door and scurry across the floor.

With a burst of strength, Lucas shoves the window all the way open. The commotion at the door ceases in an instant. Lucas stares at it expectantly.

After a moment, he places his hand on the windowsill and attempts to climb onto the fire escape beyond.

In an instant, the window comes down and crushes his hand. He cries out in agony. Blood spurts from his shattered knuckles.

Lucas grabs his wrist and attempts to pull his hand out from under the window. Flesh peels back over his fingers. Tears of anguish stream down his face.

He turns to the door. The sound of feeding maggots fills the room. A plume of sawdust rises from the keyhole.

Lucas tugs hard at his wounded hand. The flesh on his fingers stretches and tears.

He watches in horror as the wood around the door handle swells and cracks. Maggots pour out of the fissures.

Lucas frees his hand from the window and scrambles toward a nearby bathroom.

BATHROOM

Lucas shuts the door and locks it behind him. He climbs into the bathtub and casts the shower curtain closed.

INT. CLIENT'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

The wood around the door handle disintegrates in a swarm of maggots. The door swings open and casts Phyllis's shadow across the floor.

INT. CLIENT'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM

Lucas clutches his wounded hand and sobs as he listens to Phyllis's footsteps traverse the bedroom.

INT. CLIENT'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Phyllis's shadow traverses the wall. Critters on the floor tremble in her wake.

INT. CLIENT'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM

Phyllis's footsteps stop at the bathroom door. Lucas quivers uncontrollably.

The sound of feeding maggots returns. It persists for a moment until the doorknob falls out of its socket and lands on the tile. Maggots spill out of the hole.

The bathroom door creaks open.

Phyllis's silhouette appears behind the curtain beside Lucas. He breaks down into a sobbing fit devoid of any dignity. Snot gushes from his nose as tears flood his eyes.

LUCAS

I'm sorry... I didn't want to... I had no choice... I know that doesn't make it right... I know I deserve this...

Lucas lets out the rest and takes a deep breath.

LUCAS

But please... Don't hurt Mel... She doesn't know...

Lucas looks up at the silhouette. It doesn't move.

He grabs the side of the curtain, takes a deep breath and casts it aside.

Phyllis stands before him just as rotted and revolting as she was in the grave. Maggots swarm in her eye sockets. They appear to form eyes that bore into Lucas with a penetrating stare.

INT. CLIENT'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lucas screams as Phyllis enters the bathtub. The bathroom door swings shut.

INT. CLIENT'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM

The sound of thrashing ensues. Flesh ripping. Lucas's screams turn high-pitched. Blood pours down the tub drain.

INT. LUCAS'S APARTMENT, ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

A knock at the door.

Mel enters and opens the door. She stares out into an empty hallway.

She takes a step forward. Her bare foot lands on a white envelope with frayed edges. She picks it up.

She examines it for a moment then opens it. It's filled with hundred dollar bills. She gasps.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

Lucas's ghost stands amongst moonlit graves. His decomposed flesh teems with maggots. He looks up at the moon. It reflects in his two healthy, living eyes.

Smithy's ghost appears behind Lucas, even more worm-ridden than he is. His eye sockets are glazed over with fatty brown wax.

Smithy makes his hand into a claw and slams it through Lucas's back with a sickening crunch. Lucas opens his mouth to scream. No sound comes out.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END