

SOMEWHERE INBETWEEN

"Excuses"

by
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TEASER

FADE IN:

1

INT. TRAIN CARRIAGE - DAY.

1

We're inside a standard, economy class train carriage as it rattles across the Texan desert, bright sunlight playing across any windows that don't have the blinds pulled down.

A few passengers sit around tables, some dozing lightly as others read, play cards or just chat, passing the time.

The scene is tranquil and relaxed for a few beats - until with a SLAM, the door to the carriage is kicked open and a frantic looking TWIST and DANYAEL race inside, the two vampires weaving and ducking between any rays of direct sunlight.

TWIST

Is it still out there?

DANYAEL

(looks over shoulder)

Uh...

TWIST

Danyael! Not a difficult question!

He opens his mouth to reply - and then there is a terrifically loud SCREECH from somewhere outside the carriage, and a huge black SHADOW buzzes past the windows.

TWIST (cont'd)

(beat)

I'm guessing that's a 'yes.'

DANYAEL

C'mon, we need to keep moving!

The duo hurry on again, skipping over stray pieces of luggage and pushing past startled passengers, as the train's occupants press themselves against the windows to get a better look at whatever the heck just flew past.

TWIST

What's the plan, exactly? We can't really go outside to help, can we?

DANYAEL

I don't know! Just do what Chris always does.

TWIST

Tell us off for being stupid?

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED:

1

DANYAEL

No, think of something!

There's a loud CLUNK as something hits the roof of the carriage, and the whole train cart rocks violently from side to side, throwing people from their seats.

The SCREECHING sound rings out again, and Twist and Danyael exchange a look before racing towards the door at the end of the carriage.

DANYAEL (cont'd)

Where is Chris, anyway?

TWIST

Where do you think?

Danyael glances upwards again, as we cut to:

2 EXT. TRAIN CARRIAGE - ROOF - DAY.

2

Hanging on for dear life as the train rockets through the wilderness is CHRIS, one hand grabbing a hand rail running across the roof of the carriage, his other holding his katana.

He manages to pull himself forward a few steps, but as we hear the SCREECH again he throws himself flat against the roof - and a huge, winged CREATURE swoops past him, missing him by an inch.

Chris looks back up, and we get a brief glimpse of the thing as it circles round for another run - it resembles an oversized vulture, its skin grey and mottled and its beak SNAPPING as it sizes up its next meal. Which would be Chris.

He narrows his eyes and lines up his katana as the beast divebombs towards him, and as it SCREECHES again and opens its jaws, he SLASHES across it with his sword.

The flying beast HOWLS and flaps up and away, feathers shaking loose and spiralling away as it climbs.

Chris grins, pleased with himself - then his eyes widen as he sees the creature line up for a kamikaze run, soaring at full speed towards him.

CHRIS

Oh dear...

Chris tries to steady himself, his katana ready, but the creature's at terminal velocity - if it hits, it's going to spread them both across the roof and he knows it.

He stares the beast down as it closes in, gripping his sword tightly and preparing to strike.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED:

2

The creature opens its jaws and SCREECHES one last time, and Chris gets ready to swing...

BLAM! A loud GUNSHOT rings out, followed by five more in quick succession.

The creature HOWLS, swooping up and over the carriage, missing Chris by inches and SLAMMING into the desert floor in a cloud of dust.

Chris blinks and turns round - and sees JULIE, a smoking, large bore shotgun in her hands, having finally made it up onto the roof. She looks across at Chris and smirks.

JULIE

You always gotta do things the old fashioned way?

Chris exhales gratefully, and we cut to:

3 INT. TRAIN CARRIAGE - NEXT.

3

Chris and Julie step back into the carriage as Twist and Danyael hurry into frame.

TWIST

Hey! You're back! Did you get it?

CHRIS

We-

JULIE

(interrupts)

I got it. Chris here was about to go one on one with a two hundred pounds vulpek doing about seventy miles an hour. Head on.

Twist SLAPS Chris on the arm, and he winces.

TWIST

What have I told you about doing that?

Chris rolls his eyes and sits down, grimacing and clutching his left arm.

DANYAEL

You okay?

CHRIS

I'll be fine. Hitting that thing felt like punching a very feathery sack of concrete, I think I've fractured a bone or something.

(CONTINUED)

JULIE

We can fix you up when we get to our next stop. Which should be...

The train's brakes SQUEAL as it starts to slow down, and a train platform scrolls into view through the windows.

JULIE (cont'd)

... right about now.

TWIST

Well, yee-fricken-haw.

DANYAEL

Uh, what are we going to do about the sunlight?

CHRIS

I had someone drive the van over once it'd been repaired, it'll be waiting in the parking lot for us. I'll bring it round to the station.

JULIE

How the hell did you manage to flip it driving down a straight road, anyway?

Twist looks very guilty all of a sudden, squirming as Chris glares at her.

TWIST

Um... speed bumps?

CHRIS

Never mind that now, it's fixed. Again. Just don't forget those books, or our meeting with the magus is going to go south quicker than we have.

TWIST

(salutes)
Spokey dokey.

The train comes to a stop, and the team start to gather their luggage, Twist retrieving a battered leather satchel from the overhead rack.

The team disembark, the shadow of the station giving Twist and Danyael the freedom to scoot indoors, as we stay inside the carriage for another beat.

A tall, thin man steps into frame, watching Chris and his team head into the station through the windows, smirking to himself about something.

He reaches into his jacket pocket and retrieves a cell phone, flipping it open and letting it dial a number.

MAN

(into phone)

It's me. They're here.

(listens)

Yeah, I'll get the merchandise,
don't worry. I'll call you when
it's done.

He SNAPS the phone shut, and as a sinister smirk creeps across his face, we:

BLACK OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

4 INT. BLACK VAN - DAY.

4

Chris drives with Julie in the passenger seat, as Danyael watches Twist playing on her GameBoy Advance in the back half of the van.

JULIE

You really think this guy we're meeting has got what we're looking for?

CHRIS

That's what he led me to believe.

JULIE

Yeah, but still - trading off three of your spell books for one piece of that healing device? Seems like a bit of an uneven trade to me.

CHRIS

I'd have to agree with you. But we're not really in a position to negotiate. He has something we need, and he named his price so we have to honour that.

TWIST

Can't we just give him the books, get the doobrie and then kill him and get the book back?

Chris and Julie both turn to give Twist a surprised look, and she rolls her eyes.

TWIST (cont'd)

Joke! Jeez... Jules, you know I love you, but I think Chris' lack of a funny bone is starting to infect you too.

JULIE

Hey, I can still do funny, thank you very much! Remember that story I told you about the guy, with the thing, and...

She trails off as twist deadpans her, and Julie settles back in her seat with a sulky look. Chris grins to himself.

DANYAEL

So what's this magus like?

(CONTINUED)

CHRIS

His name's Warwick Burke, he's a mid-level magic user who prides himself on excavating and collecting magical items and selling them on to fund his chief interest.

JULIE

Which is?

CHRIS

You'll find out when we get there.

Julie raises an eyebrow, and as Chris glances across at her, we cut to:

5 EXT. PEPPERMINT RANCH - EVENING. 5

It's later in the day as the van drives up a dusty dirt road towards a tall black building, standing alone against the backdrop of the desert.

The front of the building is lined with red neon, and a large, stylish sign displays its name in ten foot high letters - 'Peppermint Ranch.'

The winking bunny girl next to that hints at what kind of a place this is. The car park is fairly full, and lights flash out from the dance floor downstairs.

6 INT. BLACK VAN - EVENING. 6

Twist stares in disbelief at the building as Chris heads for a parking space.

TWIST

It's a skin joint!

CHRIS

Not all of it, there's-

TWIST

You've taken us to a strip club!

CHRIS

Well, not really, there's-

TWIST

(mischevious)

Alright, Chris! We're gonna finally make a man out of you!

Julie LAUGHS as Chris sighs and shakes his head.

DANYAEL

So this is the place that Warwick
guy runs?

TWIST

Selling magic goodies and trinkets
to run a strip club? Sounds like a
good business to me.

CHRIS

We're just here to make the deal,
not take part in any...

JULIE

(sly)
Fun?

CHRIS

You know what I mean.

JULIE

(teasing)
Actually, no, I don't. What were
you going to say?

Chris struggles to find the right word, saved when Twist
nudges Danyael and slides the van doors open.

TWIST

C'mon, Spook, let's go look at the
chicks in there and make sure none
of them are prettier than me.

CHRIS

Hang on just a minute!

Twist pauses, half in, half out of the van.

TWIST

What?

CHRIS

The books. You do have them, don't
you?

TWIST

(pats satchel)
'Course I do! What, you thought I'd
forget them?

Chris doesn't need to answer that one, and Twist huffs as she
steps outside.

CHRIS

Twist, you're with me. We'll go meet Warwick, make the switch and come back out.

JULIE

What about me and Danyael?

CHRIS

Wait at the bar for us, we shouldn't be long.

Julie looks at Danyael, who doesn't look too upset at the dual prospect of beer and dancing ladies to look forward to.

Chris opens his door and exits the van, and as Julie does the same we cut inside to:

INT. PEPPERMINT RANCH - MAIN FLOOR - EVENING.

'Trick Me Twice' by Kelis blasts out through the club's PA as the foursome step inside.

The main floor splits into two sides around a central raised platform, with the customary pole and customary long haired STRIPPER gyrating round it. There's a bar on either side of the platform, and a selection of tables and chairs arranged round the platform. The club's half full, a few more scantily-clad girls patrolling the tables for clients.

CHRIS

(to Julie)

Just get a drink and sit tight. There's no need to talk to anyone.

JULIE

(to Danyael)

That means 'no private dances.'

CHRIS

Absolutely not.

DANYAEL

Not even-

CHRIS

No.

TWIST

No.

DANYAEL (cont'd)

(scowls)

Fine.

Julie leads Danyael towards one of the bars, as a WAITRESS heads over to Chris and Twist.

WAITRESS

Howdy, and welcome to the Peppermint Ranch. Can I get you folks anything?

CHRIS

We're here to see Mr. Burke. My name's Chris Berkeley, we have an arranged appointment.

TWIST

(taps nose)
We brought the stuff.

The Waitress eyes her, then nods to Chris.

WAITRESS

I'll go tell him you're here.

Chris nods a thanks to her as she heads off, then rounds on Twist, who is peering round at the various girls.

CHRIS

Do you have to do that?

TWIST

Do what?

CHRIS

Make everything we do sound like a bad gangster movie!
(mimes tapping nose)
'The stuff'? What does that even mean?

Twist grins and pats him on the chest.

TWIST

Oh, sweetie, you just don't let yourself have any fun at all, ever, do you?
(points)
Is she prettier than me?

Chris follows her gesture to see the girl dancing on stage - currently hanging upside down from the pole, about eight feet up in the air. Chris' jaw hangs open.

CHRIS

Blimey...

TWIST

Hey! Stop looking at her boobs and answer the question.

CHRIS
Er, well, she's...

WAITRESS (O.S.)
Mr. Berkeley?

Chris quickly turns to the waitress as she steps into frame.

WAITRESS (cont'd)
Mr. Burke will see you now, follow
me please.

She heads off towards a staircase leading up behind one of the bars, and Chris reaches back to take Twist's arm, making sure she follows him.

We move over to pick up Danyael and Julie at the opposite bar, Julie watching Chris and Twist head upstairs as Danyael pays for two beers, handing one to Julie.

JULIE
Thanks. So what do you make of this
place?

Danyael takes a swig of his beer, then grins at a passing dancer as she strolls by, allowing himself a moment to check her out.

DANYAEL
I think this is the kind of place
guys lie me go to when they die.

JULIE
Makes a change not having Twist
around to keep you in line, huh?

DANYAEL
She doesn't keep me in line... does
she?

JULIE
(smirks)
Don't play dumb, Danny. I've seen
the way you look at her.

DANYAEL
(guilty)
Uh... you have?

JULIE
Are you going to say anything to
her?

Danyael SIGHS heavily, taking another gulp of his beer.

DANYAEL

I wouldn't know where to start. I mean, I'm not even sure what I'd say to her.

JULIE

Do you like her?

Danyael nods, and Julie smiles as she nudges him.

JULIE (cont'd)

That's where you start.

DANYAEL

I doubt it'd be that simple.

JULIE

You won't know till you give it a shot, will you?

Danyael raises an eyebrow at her, and as a still-grinning Julie sips her drink, we cut upstairs to:

8 INT. PEPPERMINT RANCH - BACK ROOM - EVENING.

8

Chris and Twist are shown into a dimly lit, velvet-walled lounge area, slower, more ambient music piping out and three more girls dancing on small podiums at points across the room.

Sitting at a table, watching one of the nearby girls with a sleazy grin, is WARWICK, an overweight man with stubble and long, greying hair.

One of the sharply-suited bouncers shows Chris and Twist over to Warwick's table, Chris pulling a chair back for Twist to sit before joining her.

WARWICK

Hey there. Chris, right?

CHRIS

That's me. This is my associate, Twist.

Warwick leans forward to shake her hand, quickly looking her up and down.

WARWICK

Pretty appropriate name. Bet you could twist all night long!

He laughs, a deep, throaty rasp born of years of cigarettes.

(CONTINUED)

TWIST
 (innocently)
 Why, Mr. Burke, I'm sure I don't
 know what you could mean.

CHRIS
 We're here about the artefact.

WARWICK
 You bring the books?

Twist lifts the satchel and nods, and Warwick gestures to another of the bouncers. He leans down as Warwick whispers into his ear, then the bouncer nods and walks away.

Twist is staring at the dancing girls, and Warwick notices her attention with a grin.

WARWICK (cont'd)
 You know, you ever consider a
 career change, I could hook you up
 with some real classy business, no
 problem.

TWIST
 (scoffs)
 Please. I am way too pretty to end
 up in a place like this.

Chris clears his throat, trying to hint to her that maybe she should be a bit more diplomatic about their environment.

TWIST (cont'd)
 (covering)
 But... I'm sure this place'd manage
 just fine without me!

She laughs nervously, and Warwick chuckles as he sees Chris' weary expression.

WARWICK
 She's a handful, ain't she?

CHRIS
 You have no idea!

TWIST
 Hey! Sitting right here!

The bouncer returns with a small wooden box in his hands, and he passes it to Warwick.

WARWICK
 Alright, Chris, let's talk
 business. Let me see the books, and
 then you can take this.

He turns the box round, and inside its cushioned interior is another small brass component, this one looking like a long, thin pencil with nails sticking out from each end.

Chris' eyes light up at the sight of it, and he motions for Twist to pass him the satchel.

CHRIS

I think you'll find that everything
is in...

Chris trails off as he opens the satchel. There are books inside, but they're not the spell books he was expecting. There's an 'Essential Spider-Man' comic book collection, a 'CSI' graphic novel and a copy of 'Prozac Nation.'

CHRIS (cont'd)

Er... just excuse us a moment.

Chris quickly tries to cover his surprise, leaning across to whisper into Twist's ear.

CHRIS (cont'd)

What the hell is this? Where are
the books?

TWIST

Whaddya mean? They're in there!

He shows her the satchel's contents, and Twist's hand goes to her mouth in shock.

TWIST (cont'd)

Friesacher!

CHRIS

What the bloody hell happened?
Where are my three very rare,
irreplaceable and priceless spell
books?

TWIST

(beat)
Somewhere else?

WARWICK

Is there a problem, folks?

Chris and Twist exchange a look, then turn back round to face Warwick. More bodyguards seem to have appeared from out of nowhere to stand behind him.

CHRIS

(deep breath)
I'm afraid we may have a little
problem.

8 CONTINUED: (3)

8

Warwick raises an eyebrow, as we SMASH CUT to:

9 INT. PEPPERMINT RANCH - MAIN FLOOR - EVENING.

9

CRASH! The doors leading to the private rooms at the top of the staircase fly open, and Chris and Twist come flying out of them.

Quickly scrambling to their feet, they race down the stairs as five of the muscular bouncers chase after them.

Danyael and Julie exchange a look, then quickly make their way towards the next set of doors. Luckily for them, nobody pays them any attention.

Danyael BUMPS into a dancer on his way out. He turns to apologise, but she's already gone, and Julie quickly pulls him out of frame.

One of the bouncers catches up to Twist as she passes the dancing platform, but a quick SPIN KICK knocks him over. She SLAMS her palm into the nose of the next, but Chris drags her away before she can take on any more.

TWIST

What're you doing? Lemme at 'em!

CHRIS

Never mind that! Let's just get out of here!

The duo shove through the swing doors and out into the foyer, and as the bouncers follow, we cut to:

10 EXT. PEPPERMINT RANCH - PARKING LOT - EVENING.

10

Chris and Twist burst through the entrance and race across the lot, as the black van swings round to stop before them.

Danyael slides the side door open, and the duo dive into the van as Julie hits the gas and it speeds away in a cloud of dust.

The bouncers come to a stop, watching the van tear off into the distance before readjusting their shirts and ties and walking back into the bar.

11 INT. BLACK VAN - EVENING.

11

Chris and Twist are in the middle of a furious argument as Julie drives on.

CHRIS

You could've gotten us all killed!

(CONTINUED)

TWIST

Me?!? They're your books, when did they become my responsibility?

CHRIS

When I told you to look after them!

TWIST

I did!

CHRIS

So where are they?

He upends the satchel, and Danyael reacts as the very non-spell book like books drop onto the floor.

DANYAEL

Woah, what happened?

CHRIS

(darkly)
Twist lost the books.

TWIST

(protests)
I didn't!

CHRIS

So where are they?

TWIST

I don't know! Maybe somebody took them?

CHRIS

When could they have done that? I told you not to let them out of your sight!

Twist thinks for a beat - then bites her lip as she remembers something.

CHRIS (cont'd)

(groans)
Oh, no...

TWIST

Er, thing is...

CHRIS

When did you leave them?

TWIST

On the train, when that big flying bird thingy attacked us. Spook and I went to help.

CHRIS

I told you I had it under control!

TWIST

Big flying bird thingy! Almost took your head off! That's not saying 'under control' to me!

CHRIS

That's not the point, I told you not to leave them, even for a second! Do you have any idea how valuable they are?

Chris and Twist continue to argue as Danyael shuffles towards the back of the van, reaching into his leather jacket for his cigarettes.

He frowns as he finds something unexpected in there, and removes his hand to reveal a napkin from the strip club. He turns it over to see there's a message written on the back in big, bold letters - 'Please help us!'

Danyael frowns, then looks back up Chris and Twist as they continue to yell bloody murder at each other.

Deciding now's not the time to interrupt them, he discretely tucks the napkin back in his jacket, and as he finds his cigarettes at last and lights one, we:

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

12 INT. MOTEL ROOM - MORNING.

12

We're close on Danyael lying in a sleeping bag on the floor as he wakes up, hearing the sounds of two voices talking quickly somewhere within the room.

He sits up, ruffling his bed head hair as the voices come into focus - and it's Chris and Julie, both of whom look pretty worried about something.

DANYAEL

What's up?
(look round)
Where's Twist?

Julie and Chris exchange a look, then Chris heads away to grab his coat and Julie steps over to Danyael.

JULIE

Twist isn't here. We think she left not long before the sun came up.

DANYAEL

What? Why?

Chris' dark look says it all, and Danyael groans, rubbing his eyes and standing up.

DANYAEL (cont'd)

She took off, didn't she.

CHRIS

It's my fault. I shouldn't have gone off on one at her the way I did.

JULIE

We can talk about blame later, right now we need to concentrate on finding her.

DANYAEL

Where would she have gone?

CHRIS

She's most likely gone to try and find those books, so I'm going to start at the train station and work out from there.

JULIE

What about us?

(CONTINUED)

CHRIS

You two stay here for now.

Chris tosses his cell phone to Danyael.

CHRIS (cont'd)

Her phone's switched off, but keep trying it. I'll be in touch via Julie's phone if and when I find anything.

Chris opens the door and steps outside, hurrying across the parking lot to the van.

Julie sits back down on the bed, running a hand through her hair as Danyael types Twist's number into the phone. He listens, but gets a 'Your Call Cannot Be Completed' message and cuts the call off.

DANYAEL

(sighs)

Damn it.

JULIE

Is this like her? Has she taken off before after those two have had a fight about something?

DANYAEL

Not that I know of, but knowing her I'd say it's pretty likely.

Julie gets up and switches on the small electric kettle as Danyael goes back over to his jacket. He takes out his cigarettes, then remembers the note from last night. He takes it out, glances at Julie, then walks over to her.

DANYAEL (cont'd)

Uh, Julie?

JULIE

Yeah?

DANYAEL

What do you make of this?

He hands her the note, and she peers at it.

JULIE

Where did you get this?

DANYAEL

I found it in my jacket after we left the club last night.

JULIE

Why didn't you say anything?

DANYAEL

I didn't think it was the right moment. You know?

Julie nods, looks at the note again and hands it back.

DANYAEL (cont'd)

I remember one of the dancers bumping into me just as we were leaving. Struck me as odd, 'cause they normally only come near you when they want to ask you for a dance, you know? So I'm thinking she might have been the one who slipped this to me. Should we go check it out?

JULIE

What about Twist?

DANYAEL

Twist'll be found when she wants to be found. I think Chris knows that.

JULIE

Yeah, but we can't just drop everything and go back to the scene of the crime just because somebody handed you a vague cry for help! What if it's a setup? Or a joke?

DANYAEL

I don't think it is.

Julie stares at him, torn between the two plans of action, distracted by the CLICK of the kettle as the water boils.

DANYAEL (cont'd)

So?

JULIE

(beat)

Alright. You're right, wherever Twist is, she's smart enough to stay out of the sun and not get herself caught.

DANYAEL

Well, except for this one time when she-

JULIE

Not helping.

DANYAEL

Sorry.

JULIE

We can swing by the club again, take a quick look round, then we're straight back here to wait for Chris. Okay?

DANYAEL

Okay.

JULIE

Now, how are we going to get back in there? We'd better not try going back in until later, we'd look too obvious going in at this time of the day. Plus, they might have us on camera arriving with Chris and Twist from last night, so we might be recognised.

DANYAEL

Well, I did have an idea about that...

Julie raises an eyebrow at him, and we cut to:

13 INT. PEPPERMINT RANCH - MAIN FLOOR - EVENING.

13

We're back inside the club, eager clients starting to fill the bar and tables up again, as the swing doors are pushed open - and in step Danyael and Julie.

They're almost unrecognisable - Danyael has dressed himself up in a bright white suit, garish Hawaiian shirt and shades, while Julie has curled her hair and is heavily made up, looking for all the world like a gangster's moll.

DANYAEL

Alright, alright! Check this place out! Time to get things moving, right, toots?

Danyael's obnoxious high roller act has already attracted the attention of some of the dancers, who know an easy mark when they see one. Fake smile still in place, Julie whispers into his ear.

JULIE

What are you doing? We're meant to be undercover!

DANYAEL

We are. Have you got any idea how many guys like me these places see every day? It's a lot.

JULIE

How would you know?

DANYAEL

(beat; grins)

It's always the quiet ones.

Julie rolls her eyes as two blonde, leggy dancers in skimpy outfits step over, and he lets them lead him away with a filthy chuckle. He turns and nods back to Julie as they take him towards one of the tables, and she heads for the nearest one of the bars.

We stay with Danyael as the two girls sit him down, one taking a place either side of him as he makes a big show of lapping up the attention.

DANCER #1

So what can we get you tonight, sir?

DANCER #2

A drink? Maybe two?

DANCER #1

How about a dance to start off your evening?

DANYAEL

Well, you girls are real flattering and all, but I always like to ease myself gently into the evening. I like to pick out just one girl and have a dance with her first, then see how the rest of the evening takes me.

The two dancers fluff themselves up, beaming at him as they try to win his attention, but Danyael is carefully scanning the floor for the girl who bumped into him last night.

He spots her at last, standing over by the bar opposite him, and without a word to the other two girls he stands and makes his way over to her.

Julie keeps a watchful eye on him as he steps up to the girl. She's the same height as him, with a perfect figure and long, bottle blonde hair.

DANYAEL (cont'd)
 Good evening, miss. Couldn't help
 but notice you from way over
 yonder.

DANCER
 Is that a fact?

DANYAEL
 (grins)
 Sure is. Would you do me the
 pleasure of being my first and
 possibly only dance of the evening?

DANCER
 It'd be my pleasure, sir.

She takes him by the arm and starts to lead him towards a
 staircase, that heads up to a floor above the main dancing
 podium. He glances back at Julie again as he's led away, and
 we stay with her as one of the waitresses steps over to her.

WAITRESS
 What'll it be, miss?

JULIE
 Just a small glass of white wine to
 start with.

The waitress nods and takes a bottle from one of the row of
 fridges behind the bar, giving Julie a chance to look around.

JULIE (cont'd)
 So how's business been round here
 recently?

WAITRESS
 Oh, you know, can't complain. We're
 kind of out in the sticks here so
 things could be a lot busier, but
 we make enough to cover all our
 wages so it could be worse.

JULIE
 I see. Anything new going on?

WAITRESS
 'New'?

JULIE
 Well...
 (leans closer)
 My boy over there always likes to
 know of any new arrivals to this
 place.

(MORE)

13 CONTINUED: (3)

13

JULIE (cont'd)
 Prides himself on being one of the
 pathfinders, if you know what I
 mean.

WAITRESS
 Oh, you mean the guy you came in
 with? I thought I recognised him.

Julie grins - looks like Danyael's disguise did the trick! We
 cut away from the duo to:

14 INT. PEPPERMINT RANCH - PRIVATE ROOM - NIGHT.

14

Danyael is sitting on a curved leather couch in a small,
 intimately lit room. 'Teardrop' by Massive Attack plays over
 the PA as the dancer struts seductively towards him.

DANCER
 So how would you like me to start,
 sir? Take it a little slow, maybe?
 Or do you want it-

DANYAEL
 (holds up napkin)
 You could start by telling me why
 you gave me this last night.

The dancer stops and takes a cautious step back. Danyael
 takes off his shades and ruffles his hair up, quickly
 returning to his normal appearance.

DANCER
 It's you!

DANYAEL
 It's me.

The dancer looks over her shoulder, then gestures for Danyael
 to shuffle along the couch, so that they're both out of sight
 of the bouncers who patrol the corridor outside.

DANYAEL (cont'd)
 Are you going to tell me what this
 is about?

DANCER
 Look, I'm sorry I dragged you into
 this, Mr...

DANYAEL
 Danyael.

DANCER
 (nods)
 Karina.

(CONTINUED)

DANYAEL

What made you single me out?

KARINA

(shrugs)

I don't know, I guess... I guess something about your aura just told me I could trust you.

DANYAEL

My aura?

KARINA

Oh, yeah, my mom was a reader, I picked a bit of it up. Helps me when I'm with a client, you know? Makes it easier to know what they're gonna want me to do.

DANYAEL

(awkward)

Uh... okay...

KARINA

Something bad's going on here, Danyael.

DANYAEL

Bad how?

KARINA

Vampires.

DANYAEL

(beat)

Oh.

KARINA

About half a dozen of them, they work for Mr. Burke, but he keeps them up in his office suite so no-one ever sees 'em.

DANYAEL

What for?

Karina checks over her shoulder again, then sits next to Danyael, the confidence now all gone to leave just a scared young girl.

KARINA

It's the way he runs this place. The vamps, they... they do stuff for him. Take care of his business, you know?

DANYAEL

Yeah, I think I know.

KARINA

In return, he lets 'em feed on the clients here sometimes, the ones he knows nobody'll miss, and sometimes...

DANYAEL

What?

KARINA

If one of the girls here starts earning less than he'd like 'em to each week, Burke has this habit of serving the girl up to the vamps to remind the rest of us to work harder.

DANYAEL

(shocked)

He does what?!?

KARINA

Ssh! Quiet, they're always listening along here.

DANYAEL

Man... what can I do to help?

KARINA

I was hoping you could tell me that part, Danyael. We're all out of ideas here. The last girl who tried to warn somebody ended up as dinner.

The song comes to an end, and Karina quickly gets back to her feet, going through the motions of the end of her dance as a bouncer strolls past outside.

DANYAEL

I've got some friends here, this is the kind of thing we do.

KARINA

You help people out?

DANYAEL

Well... yeah, most of the time.

KARINA

Even people like me?

DANYAEL

What do you mean?

KARINA

I know I ain't exactly a high class of citizen, Danyael, so I'd understand if you didn't-

DANYAEL

(serious)

You're in trouble. Me and my friends help people in trouble. End of story.

She smiles, relieved, and offers a hand to help him back to his feet.

KARINA

My shift finishes at two a.m. Any chance you can meet me out in the parking lot? We can go somewhere so you and your friends can figure out what we're gonna do here.

DANYAEL

Yeah, no problem.

KARINA

You'd better head back, else I'm gonna have to charge you again.

Danyael blinks - then realises he still has to pay her! He grins and takes some crumpled notes out of his suit trouser pocket, which she packs into a small black purse.

KARINA (cont'd)

Two a.m. in the parking lot. Okay?

DANYAEL

I got it.

He leaves the room, and Karina takes a seat, letting out a deep breath as she tries to calm her nerves, and we cut to:

Julie and the Waitress are deep in conversation now.

WAITRESS

And then, a few days ago, this new girl shows up. Tall, black hair, kinda pale, waltzes straight past the bouncers and into Mr. Burke's office. I was sure she'd get thrown out on her ass, but she stayed in there for an hour.

JULIE

Who was she?

WAITRESS

Beats me. All I know is I keep seeing her up in Mr. Burke's suite, so I figure she's pretty important, whoever she is.

Julie looks up as Danyaël walks back into frame.

JULIE

(acting up)

Oh, hi, honey! How was your dance?

DANYAEL

All good, all good. Uh, listen, kiddo, mind if we grab some air?

(to Waitress)

Kind of on the hot side right now, if y'all know what I mean!

The Waitress grins as Danyaël leads Julie back towards the swing doors, and through into the:

16 INT. PEPPERMINT RANCH - FOYER - CONTINUOUS.

16

There's a reception desk, a cloakroom, a cashpoint and two more doors leading outside. There's no-one around, so the duo can speak freely.

JULIE

Well? Was that her?

DANYAEL

That was her. She said Warwick's got a pack of vampires in his pocket, feeds them clients and some of the girls so they'll do what he wants.

JULIE

What are we going to do?

DANYAEL

We need to find Chris and let him know, maybe he can-

CHRIS (O.S.)

Maybe I can what?

They turn round to see Chris has stepped inside the foyer. He looks their unusual outfits up and down, curious.

CHRIS (cont'd)

Dare I ask?

(CONTINUED)

DANYAEL

Chris! Man, good timing, we-
 (beat)
 Wait, what are you doing here?

Chris holds up a flyer for the club.

CHRIS

Twist left me this back at the motel, along with a note saying to meet her back here because she was on to something.

JULIE

Did she say what?

TWIST (O.S.)

Give me a second and I will.

The trio turn round - and Twist has stepped into the foyer, but she's also in disguise! She's wearing a wig that gives her straight, black hair, and with a pair of thick-lensed glasses and a waitresses uniform, you wouldn't even know it was her.

TWIST (cont'd)

What's with the outfit, Spook? Did I start off a new fancy dress craze or something?

CHRIS

What are you doing here?

TWIST

Yeah, good to see you too.

CHRIS

(beat)
 Twist.

TWIST

Didn't any of you guys see me? I walked past you, like, three times?

Danyael and Julie shake their heads, and Twist sighs as she walks over to them.

TWIST (cont'd)

Never mind that. We need to get out back and talk. There's this side entrance to the room where they keep all the beer we can use, nobody ever goes in there.

DANYAEL

Wait, wait, back up. How'd you know all this? And where'd you get the uniform?

TWIST

There's an unconscious waitress out back who'd love to answer that for you.

Chris and Julie don't look too pleased by this.

TWIST (cont'd)

(shrugs)

What? I had to go all Machiavelli, it was the only way to get inside! Come on, before somebody sees us.

CHRIS

So why did you want us to meet you here? Have you found something out?

TWIST

Oh, I found something all right.

(beat)

Truh. Buh. Ul.

The group exchange looks before we:

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

17 EXT. PEPPERMINT RANCH - BACK ENTRANCE - NIGHT.

17

Twist pushes open a side door, and checks that the coast is clear, then waves for the others to follow her outside. They're by the waste bins, stacks of empty beer crates making a handy seat as Twist sits down, scratching her scalp beneath the wig.

JULIE

Are you okay?

TWIST

This thing itches worse than Chris' black sweater!

CHRIS

What did you do with that, by the way?

TWIST

Er... I sold it.

CHRIS

You... sold it.

DANYAEL

Guys!

CHRIS

Right, sorry. So what's this 'trouble' you found out about?

Twist doesn't answer. She stares back at Twist, lips pursed and arms folded.

CHRIS (cont'd)

Twist?

JULIE

(nudges him)

She wants you to apologise.

CHRIS

Oh, don't be ridiculous. Twist, this is serious! We've still got to find those books, and...

He trails off as he realises he's getting nothing until he apologises. He lowers his head and takes a deep breath.

CHRIS (cont'd)

I'm sorry I shouted at you.

(CONTINUED)

TWIST

(beat)
Nope, don't buy it.

CHRIS

Oh, for goodness sake!

TWIST

Hey! You were the one who told me I was, quote unquote, 'always making a mess of everything,' and that I 'caused mayhem wherever I went,' and that I was 'going to get us all bloody chopped up if we weren't careful.'

JULIE

(to Chris)
Wow. You really said all that?

CHRIS

(darkly)
That's not the point. Twist, stop messing about and tell us-

She turns away from him, and with a sigh Chris nods.

CHRIS (cont'd)

Twist, I am truly sorry that I yelled at you the way I did. It just made things worse, and I apologise.

TWIST

(beat)
Okay, we're good again.

Chris steps forward - and Twist KICKS him in the shin.

CHRIS

Ow! What was that for?

TWIST

And now we're even.

He glares at her, but her cheeky smile tells us she's already moved on.

TWIST (cont'd)

I think the books are still here in Texas.

CHRIS

Here in the club? How do you know?

TWIST

I managed to sneak upstairs and nose around that Warwick guy's offices, heard someone talking to him about making an exchange for them in a few hours time. Said she had one of her 'boys' take 'em off me while we were on the train.

(smug)

See, I told you I didn't lose them.

JULIE

Who was it? Did you see them?

TWIST

No, sorry. Woman, though. That's all I could tell. Oh, and there are vampires here too, I think they're working for Warwick.

DANYAEL

We know.

JULIE

We know.

TWIST (cont'd)

You do? Who told you?

Danyael glances at his watch, then back up at Twist as we cut over to:

The team are gathered in a booth inside a cheap roadside cafe. Karina, wrapped up in a thick coat, SLURPS the last of a tall milkshake as Danyael sits opposite her. Twist sits a few places away, scowling at Danyael before leaning over and whispering to Julie.

TWIST

You let him go talk to one of the strippers?

JULIE

Seemed like the thing to do.

TWIST

(disgruntled)

Hmph.

She continues to pout as Chris steps back over to the table, a healthy portion of fries on a plate in his hands. He passes it to Karina, and with a grateful smile she starts to dig in.

DANYAEL

Don't they feed you at that place?

KARINA

A little. I'm just flat broke, so I tend to eat light. Keeps me in shape. I mean, if I had the money to eat well, I wouldn't be a stripper, right?

Danyael grins, which just makes Twist scowl even more.

CHRIS

So what else can you tell us about what goes on at the club?

KARINA

Nothing that you folks don't already know by now. Mr. Burke lets his vampires take their pick of the clients to keep 'em sweet, and if the girls don't keep the cash coming in then they go missing too.

JULIE

That's awful...

KARINA

(shrugs)
Way of the world.

Danyael is clearly taken with this tragic young girl, and he reaches across the table to take one of her hands.

DANYAEL

Not any more.

She smiles up at him, the moment broken as Twist noisily stands up.

TWIST

Well! While you guys are all getting on so fricken well, I'm gonna go to the little girl's room. That okay with everyone?

CHRIS

Er... yes.

She stomps away, and Chris looks as confused by her behaviour as ever.

CHRIS (cont'd)

What was that all about?

JULIE

(grins)
I'll explain later.

KARINA

So, do y'all have a plan yet?
Danyael told me you guys help
people out when they're in trouble.

CHRIS

(eyes Danyael)
He did, did he?

KARINA

(nods)
Mm-hmm, and he said you'd find a
way to get us girls out of there so
no more of us end up as lunch for
them darn vampires.

CHRIS

(beat)
Danyael, a word?

Danyael shuffles out of the booth and joins Chris over by the
cafe's counter.

CHRIS (cont'd)

Why did you tell her all that?

DANYAEL

Uh, because it's true? I mean, this
is what we do, right? When we find
people in trouble, we help them
out?

CHRIS

Danyael, we have a job to do. We
have a mission. Did you forget
that?

DANYAEL

No, I just-

CHRIS

I had to say this to Twist once, so
now I'm going to have to say it to
you. We don't help the helpless.
That'll only slow us down.

DANYAEL

(taken aback)
'Slow us down'? That's kinda
heartless, don't you think?

CHRIS

I'm sorry for this poor girl, I really am, but our priority here is to get those books back before whoever took them sells them on to Warwick, and we lose our chance to get that piece of the healing device.

DANYAEL

No, that's your priority. I promised Karina we'd help her.

Chris eyes him - did Danyael just stand up to him? The duo stare each other down for a beat as Twist walks back over. She still doesn't look too happy with Danyael's latest acquaintance.

TWIST

So. Did Hugh Hefner here figure out what we're going to do with his new girlfriend yet?

Chris and Danyael keep up their stare for a beat, before Chris turns to Twist.

CHRIS

We did. And I think I know how we can do this.

(to Danyael)

So everybody's happy.

(off Karina)

We'll need to bring your friend along too. I think I've got a plan.

TWIST

Works for me.

CHRIS

However, we'll need to maintain the element of surprise.

TWIST

(groans)

You mean...

CHRIS

You need to be a waitress again.

TWIST

Aw, man! What's so damn important about the element of surprise, anyway?

As soon as she's said that, we cut to:

19

INT. PEPPERMINT RANCH - WARWICK'S OFFICE - NIGHT.

19

Warwick is leaning against his desk, lazily smoking a big, fat cigar. We can hear the faint sound of somebody WHIMPERING, and as we pan across to the left, we see the Waitress Julie was talking to - she's been bound to a chair and is covered in ugly cuts and wounds, shivering with fear.

WOMAN (O.S.)

And that's all you know?

WAITRESS

(terrified)

That's all I know, I swear! She was asking all these questions, and I told her about you and she seemed really interested, and then...

WOMAN (O.S.)

Ssh.

A pale HAND reaches into frame and caresses the Waitresses cheek, and she starts to SOB.

WAITRESS

Please... I didn't tell her anything else, I promise! I just want to go home...

WOMAN (O.S.)

Home? You're already home.

WAITRESS

(blinks)

Wh-what?

The Woman suddenly LUNGES into frame and sinks her teeth into the Waitresses' neck. The girl SCREAMS out in pain as the Woman drinks from her - we see black dreadlocked hair but can't see her face.

The Waitress falls still, her head slumping forward, and the Woman straightens up with a satisfied GASP - and we see at last that it's Chris' old partner, VIVIAN TAYLOR! Her red, vampiric eyes burn with energy as she licks the blood from her lips, panting a little with the exertion of the kill.

Warwick walks into frame, turning the Waitresses head to the side and grimacing at the red bite mark.

WARWICK

Damn! You vamps sure know how to make a mess of a pretty face, don'tcha?

(CONTINUED)

VIVIAN

Necessary evil. Oh, and remind me to thank you later for having so many CCTV cameras in this place. Saved me a lot of potential hassle.

WARWICK

Not a problem. You find out what you needed to know?

VIVIAN

Oh, yeah. Sounds like Chris and his little gang of musketeers are still here in town, so chances are he's gonna be coming back for those books.

WARWICK

But I'm getting 'em first, right?

VIVIAN

Sure you are, Warwick.

She pushes up against him seductively, running her hands round the back of his head.

VIVIAN (cont'd)

I mean, a girl has to keep some of her promises, doesn't she?

Warwick grins, and Vivian pushes herself away, strutting back towards the door to the office, where two tall men are waiting, both with the red eyes and fangs of vampires.

VIVIAN (cont'd)

(off Waitress)

There's still a little left in there. Knock yourselves out.

The vampires exchange a gleeful look, then rush forward and descend on the unfortunate body of the Waitress as Vivian leaves the room. We cut from that to:

Chris pulls the van to a stop at the edge of the Peppermint Ranch parking lot, the team back in their disguises.

CHRIS

Does everyone know what to do in there?

TWIST

I'm gonna get back upstairs and hide out in the offices, try to intercept the drop before Warwick gets the books.

DANYAEL

Julie and me go back in and request a dance off Karina, who's gonna let us into the back rooms so we can start getting the girls out and into the van.

CHRIS

And I'll be waiting out back to first help you and Julie get the girls in here, then I'm going back in to help Twist get both the books and the piece of the healing device.

TWIST

Pretty ambitious. You really think we can pull both parts of this off at once? I mean, we're talking MacGyver versus The A-Team kind of complexity here.

CHRIS

We'll be fine. As long as everyone sticks to the plan and doesn't get distracted.

Chris throws a meaningful look at Danyael, who backs down and slides open the van's side door, and we cut to:

21 INT. PEPPERMINT RANCH - MAIN FLOOR - NIGHT. 21

Danyael and Julie stroll back into the club, Danyael back in his loudmouth act as Karina makes a beeline for him, intercepting another dancer on her way over to take him by the arm and lead him off upstairs.

Julie follows them, glancing across the bars and frowning as she notices the Waitress she was talking to earlier is missing.

22 INT. PEPPERMINT RANCH - OFFICE SUITE - NIGHT. 22

Two bouncers walk past us, heading back downstairs, and after they've gone we see Twist, back in her waitress disguise and carrying her backpack, open the door of the caretaker's closet and peek out, checking that it's all clear before stepping out.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED:

22

She tiptoes towards the door of Warwick's own office, listening at the door as she hears Warwick laughing with someone on the other side.

Twist steps back and looks around for another place to hide, settling on another nearby door which she opens and steps inside, as we cut outside to:

23 EXT. PEPPERMINT RANCH - BACK ENTRANCE - NIGHT.

23

One of the bouncers stands out by the back doors, finishing off a cigarette before stepping back inside. As he exits, we see Chris stand up from behind the cover of the large garbage bins by the door, his katana at the ready.

He looks up towards the windows of the office suite overhead, the curtains drawn, as we cut back to:

24 INT. PEPPERMINT RANCH - TOP FLOOR - CORRIDOR - NIGHT.

24

Karina leads Danyael and Julie along a winding, darkly painted corridor, passing other private dance rooms and keeping a watchful eye out for any more patrolling bouncers.

She comes to a pair of swing doors, and with a final glance round pushes them open and leads the duo through, into:

25 INT. PEPPERMINT RANCH - CHANGING ROOM - CONTINUOUS.

25

The group step into the dressing room for the girls. There's about ten girls here, all in various stages of undress, and Danyael freezes as his natural shyness makes a sudden and unwelcome reappearance.

DANCER #3

Karina? Who are these people?

KARINA

They're here to help? Danyael here, well, he knows about what goes on here, and he's gonna help get us all out of here.

The girls start to congregate around him - and Danyael looks even more flustered as the bevy of half-dressed beauties surround him.

DANCER #4

Is that true?

DANCER #5

You can really take care of those vampires and get us the hell away from here?

(CONTINUED)

DANYAEL

Uh...

JULIE

Yes, we can. Come on, follow us,
we've got a van waiting out back.

DANCER #3

What about the guards?

JULIE

There's two more of us, they're the
ones taking care of the guards.

KARINA

C'mon, girls, we can use the
staircase out back to get
downstairs.

With thankful smiles all round, the girls quickly grab shawls, shirts and jackets and follow Karina, Danyael and Julie as we cut to:

INT. PEPPERMINT RANCH - OFFICE SUITE - NIGHT.

Vivian and her two vampires walk past, one of them carrying a briefcase, and she knocks on the office door.

WARWICK (O.S.)

Who is it?

VIVIAN

It's me. I've brought the books.
You ready to do business?

Warwick opens the door, cigar in his mouth and shot of whiskey in his hand.

WARWICK

You bet your pale little tush I am,
darlin! Come on inside.

Warwick steps aside to let Vivian into the office, closing the door after her.

Another door opens and Twist steps out, unzipping her backpack and retrieving her trusty baseball bat. She kisses it once, for luck.

TWIST

(to bat)

Time to knock 'em out of the park,
Duggan.

She marches up to the office door and KICKS it open, stepping boldly into:

27 INT. WARWICK'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS.

27

Twist freezes.

Four bouncers, five vampires, Warwick and Vivian are all waiting for her. The vamps and bouncers are armed (guns for the bouncers, swords and axes for the vamps), and Vivian CLAPS slowly as she steps forward.

VIVIAN

Great entrance, fantastic. If I hadn't been expecting it for the last half an hour, I might actually have been just a little bit frightened by it.

TWIST

Who the hell are you?

VIVIAN

Oh, I'm Vivian. You must be Twist.

Twist raises her bat defensively, and Vivian allows herself a little chuckle as she steps back, and the bouncers and vamps step forward.

VIVIAN (cont'd)

(to vamps)

Kick the crap out of her for me, will you?

The vamps advance on Twist with a grin, and she just has time to mutter:

TWIST

Ah, *crap*.

And then we:

BLACK OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

28 INT. PEPPERMINT RANCH - CORRIDOR - NIGHT.

28

Karina leads Danyael, Julie and then the other ten dancers as they leave the dressing rooms and head for an emergency exit door at the end of the corridor. A series of bay windows overlook the nighttime desert landscape beyond.

KARINA

There's a staircase just past here that'll take us right down to the back doors, so if Chris is where he said he'd be, we can just pile on into that van of yours and be on our way!

DANYAEL

We can't leave without Twist, Karina.

KARINA

Oh, that blonde girl? She your girlfriend or something?

DANYAEL

What? No, she-

KARINA

(grins)
Oh. Good.

Flummoxed, Danyael turns to Julie, but she's not about to help him dig himself back of this hole.

KARINA (cont'd)

(to girls)

Alright, quiet now! We want to get downstairs without anybody-

The emergency exit doors are suddenly THROWN open, and as the group clatter to a step, they react with horror as three VAMPIRES step into the corridor.

VAMPIRE #1

Now where d'you girls think y'all are going?

Karina looks petrified, but Danyael grits his teeth as we cut down to:

29 EXT. PEPPERMINT RANCH - REAR ENTRANCE - NIGHT.

29

Chris paces impatiently up and down by the bins. He pauses, checks his watch, then starts pacing again.

(CONTINUED)

His cell phone starts to RING, and he quickly fumbles into his jacket to retrieve it.

CHRIS
(into phone)
Twist? Where are you?

VIVIAN
(filtered; through phone)
Hello, loverboy.

CHRIS
(frowns)
Vivian?

We cut from Chris' confused expression to:

Vivian has Twist's phone to her ear as she leans against the desk, examining her fingernails.

VIVIAN
I was wondering when we'd get a chance to meet up again. But I'm disappointed in you! You never introduced me to your feisty little sidekick here.

TWIST (O.S.)
Go cram it up your hole, you spider-eating she-bitch!

VIVIAN
(chuckles)
She's got quite a mouth on her, doesn't she?

Vivian nods to someone off screen.

We see that a bruised and bloodied Twist has been tied to the same chair the waitress died in, and she glares up at one of Vivian's vampires as he heads over. He CRACKS his fist against her jaw, and she takes a beat to recover, spitting a mouthful of blood onto the floor.

TWIST
(defiant)
Oh, you're gonna regret that later when I'm feeding you that hand, baumgartner!

The vampire LAUGHS, and Vivian joins in with a grin before she talks back into the phone.

VIVIAN

Here's the deal, Chris. I've got your books and I'm about to walk away with that little machine part you're so desperate to get your hands on. You try to stop me, Twist dies. Extremely slowly. I hear she's not too keen on fire.

Twist looks up at that remark, and one of the vamps, armed with a lighter and a can of deodorant, makes a few BURSTS of flame with a sickening grin.

We cut from her horrified look to:

EXT. PEPPERMINT RANCH - REAR ENTRANCE - NIGHT.

Chris, phone pressed to his ear, hears a commotion somewhere else in the building.

He jogs a few steps back and looks up to see into the corridor where Danyael and the others have been cut off, and sees that Danyael and Julie are battling against the three Vampires.

Two of the dancers are already dead on the floor as Danyael and Julie struggle to fight back - they're losing.

Getting increasingly frustrated, Chris looks from the corridor to the offices and back.

CHRIS

(into phone)

I'm already going to kill you for whatever you've done to her so far, Vivian, so please, give me another reason to make it last a few more hours when I finally get my hands on you.

VIVIAN

(filtered; through phone)

I'm sorry, was that you tough talking me? I got all confused for a second, you know what us womenfolk are like.

(beat)

We walk. You stay. End of conversation.

The line goes dead.

CHRIS

Hello? Vivian! Damn it!

31 CONTINUED:

31

He THROWS the phone away and races towards the rear entrance, disappearing inside as we cut to:

32 INT. WARWICK'S OFFICE - NIGHT.

32

Vivian drops the phone to the floor and STAMPS on it, to a cry of anguish from Twist.

TWIST

You...

(furious)

My mom gave me that phone, you two-bit Marilyn Manson groupie!

VIVIAN

Maybe Chris'll buy you another one if you ask him nicely?

TWIST

(cold)

I'm gonna make sure I get plenty of popcorn ready when he kills you, whoever the frick you are. Something tells me it's gonna be worth watching.

SLAP! Vivian lays a backhand to Twist, who takes another beat to shake the cobwebs clear.

VIVIAN

Let me tell you a little something about dear old Chris, 'wouldn't hurt a fly' Chris, 'always does the right thing.' He left me to die.

TWIST

You probably deserved it. Were you wearing that outfit when he did it? 'Cause, damn, I know I'd rather be dead than be seen in-

THWACK! Another slap, but this just makes Twist laugh.

TWIST (cont'd)

Oh, I get it. You're, what, The One That Got Away? His one big mistake? Come back to seek your vengeance on him?

VIVIAN

Better than that, you little airhead. I was his first partner.

Twist is lost for words. Vivian grins as she paces back across the room.

(CONTINUED)

VIVIAN (cont'd)
Never told you about me, did he?

TWIST
Not as such.

VIVIAN
Can't say I'm surprised. I'm his dark little secret. The girl he couldn't save, so he took her in and trained her up. The Robin to his Batman, if you like.

TWIST
Funny, I was thinking more the Zeppo to his Marx Brothers.

Vivian steps over to Warwick, and with a grin he hands her the box containing the healing device component. Vivian takes it out and steps back over to Twist, waving the small brass piece in her face.

VIVIAN
Want to know what I'm going to do with this?

TWIST
An attractive yet stylish ear piercing? Oh, no, wait, I've got it - letter opener.

VIVIAN
I'm going to beat Chris to making that damn machine. I'm gonna use it to make me back into what I was before he came into my life and ruined everything.

TWIST
(sly)
A size ten?

SLAP! Vivian is getting increasingly angry now.

VIVIAN
Human! Not this... this thing that I was turned into! I'm gonna make myself what I was, and then I'm going to destroy it right in front of him, so he can't ever get what he's spent so many years so desperately looking for.

TWIST
Doesn't matter. We'll find something else.

VIVIAN

Maybe. Maybe there isn't anything else. Point is...

(off component)

I win this round.

She turns and strides victoriously away from Twist, gesturing to her vampires.

VIVIAN (cont'd)

Take her out back, have some fun with her and then kill her. A lot.

(grins at Twist)

And make sure Chris finds her when you're done.

Vivian spins on her heel and takes one more step towards the door, before:

CRASH! The office door EXPLODES inwards, flying off its hinges as Chris charges into the room.

The vampires and bouncers spring to the attack, but Chris moves with lightning speed, his katana slicing through the air and taking one vamp's head off and a bouncer's arm away at the elbow.

The vampire's body drops to the ground as the screaming bouncer crumples to the floor, and Chris wastes no time in racing across the room.

TWIST

Well, it's about damn time! Are you gonna-

Twist's eyes bulge as Chris doesn't stop - he runs straight into her and the chair she's tied to, and with a YELL they both fly towards one of the office windows.

With a SMASH and a shower of broken glass, the duo sail straight through the window and down to the dusty ground below.

VIVIAN

(furious)

Get after them!!

Vivian quickly tucks the component into her top, then heads for the door, passing the startled Warwick as we cut to:

Winded from the fall, Twist coughs as Chris quickly slices away the ropes tying her down.

TWIST

What the hell was that?

CHRIS

The best I could think of.

He grabs her by the hand and pulls her to her feet, running back towards the back doors.

TWIST

Uh, Chris? Shouldn't we be going?
Like, motion away from the scene?

CHRIS

We need to help Danyael and Julie!
Come on!

Twist snaps to action, following Chris as we cut to:

INT. PEPPERMINT RANCH - CORRIDOR - NEXT.

As a third dancer SCREAMS in pain as one of the vamps sinks his fangs into her neck, Danyael and Julie stand between the other two vamps and the eight remaining girls. Julie has a small, bulky gun in her hand and Danyael just has his fists.

VAMPIRE #1

Alright, let's do this the
civilised way. Goth boy, you and
me. Right now.

DANYAEL

What?

VAMPIRE #1

Straight fight, you and me. You
beat me, the girls can go. We can
always get more.

DANYAEL

And if you win?

VAMPIRE #2

Then it's buffet time.

Danyael glances at Julie, who shakes her head, but with a brave look in his eyes, Danyael steps forward. The vamp cracks his knuckles, shrugging off his jacket and gesturing for Danyael to come for him.

Danyael swings but the vamp ducks it, landing two heavy PUNCHES to Dan's gut.

Julie is trying to get a clear shot, but Danyael and the vamp are moving too much. The two other vamps rush her as she tries to aim, and she struggles to push them back.

Danyaël lands a KNEE to the vamp's chest, then two strong LEFT HOOKS which send the vamp staggering back.

KARINA

Go on, Danyaël!

He hesitates for a beat - and SMACK! The vamp floors him with a mighty uppercut.

The vamp glances to his right, then KICKS out, his boot splintering a door next to him. The vamp scoops up a stake-shaped chunk of wood and reaches down, grabbing the stunned Danyaël by the shirt and lifting him up.

VAMPIRE #1

Too bad, squirt. You got a couple of good hits in there, but my advice? In your next life, spend more time down at the gym.

The vamp raises the stake - and Twist's hand shoots into frame, grabbing the vamp's wrist. He turns to her, and she shakes her head at him.

TWIST

Hands off my boy.

POW!

She floors the vamp, and the distraction causes the other two vamps to hesitate - allowing Chris to steam into frame and RAM a stake into one's chest, and Julie to get a shot off at last, pressing her gun against the third vamp's ribs.

He staggers backwards, clutching his chest - then, with a GULP - he EXPLODES, showering the corridor with wet chunks of meat.

The girls recoil in horror as they're splashed, and Chris looks up at Julie as if to ask 'what the hell was that?'

JULIE

(off looks; shrugs)

Kay gave me this gun. Two words.
'Hot bullets.'

She grins, and Chris manages a smile as he gets to his feet.

CHRIS

Is everyone alright?

TWIST

Does 'covered in vamp guts' count as 'alright'?

CHRIS

(beat)

Yes.

TWIST

Well, in that case, we're just peachy.

Twist brushes off some stray bits of redness as Chris marches back down the corridor.

JULIE

Where are you going?

CHRIS

To reclaim my property.

Twist jogs after him as we cut to:

35 INT. WARWICK'S OFFICE - NIGHT.

35

Warwick downs a last shot of JD with shaking hands, before reaching into a cash box on his desk and taking out several wads of green banknotes and stuffing them into his pocket.

He grabs a fresh cigar and turns to the door, freezing when he sees Chris standing there, katana resting on his shoulder.

CHRIS

I believe you have some things of mine.

WARWICK

(backing up)

I don't know what you're talking about, Chris.

Chris paces casually into the room as Warwick keeps his back to the wall, circling back round towards the doorway.

CHRIS

Why did you do business with Vivian?

WARWICK

She made me a better offer.

CHRIS

Which was?

WARWICK

Hey, a man's business is his own! I can't tell you that.

(CONTINUED)

CHRIS

I think you're forgetting which one of us has a sword and much better reflexes in here.

WARWICK

All I'll say is, that girl's got a lot of things going for her. You'd be doing yourself a favour by joining her team, you know.

Chris fixes Warwick with a cold stare. Warwick glances over his shoulder and sees he's close to the door - so he makes a break for it. Chris doesn't try to stop him.

Warwick gets to the door - and straight into Twist. She's been reunited with her baseball bat, and smirks at him as he takes a step back.

TWIST

I don't think so.

BOP! She hits him on the head, and he falls back to the floor with a heavy THUD.

CHRIS

Did you have to do that?

TWIST

Yes, I think I did.

CHRIS

(beat; grins)
So do I.

Chris walks over to Warwick's desk and retrieves his three spell books, scooping them under one arm.

TWIST

Looks like Vivian got away.

CHRIS

Yes, I'm afraid so. I have a feeling we'll run into her again before too long, however.

TWIST

Yeah, me too.
(beat)
Now who the frick is Vivian?

Chris turns, and Twist doesn't look like she's in any mood to hear anything but the unadulterated truth. Off the stern look on Twist's face, we cut to:

36

EXT. PEPPERMINT RANCH - PARKING LOT - NIGHT.

36

The surviving dancers are standing around, a plain grey minibus waiting to take them to wherever they need to go.

Karina stands by Danyael, Chris and the others waiting over by the black van.

KARINA

So...

DANYAEL

Yeah.

KARINA

You did it.

DANYAEL

(scoffs)

I got my ass kicked right in front of you, Karina. I'm not really in the running for a 'hero of the day' badge this time.

KARINA

But you stepped up to the plate when it counted, Danny. You could've turned and ran from that guy, but you didn't. You took him on for us. For me.

She smiles and steps closer to him.

KARINA (cont'd)

That makes you my hero.

She reaches out for him and pulls him close, KISSING him. He returns the embrace, as we pull over to the van, where Twist's jaw is hanging open in shock. Chris grins.

CHRIS

I think somebody just earned his stripes.

TWIST

She... he...

JULIE

It's just a good-bye kiss, Twist.

TWIST

(beat; yells)

With a stripper!!

Everyone turns to look at her. She fidgets in the attention for a beat.

(CONTINUED)

TWIST (cont'd)
Well, she is!

Chris nudges her and she climbs into the van as we pull back over to Danyael and Karina.

KARINA
So, I, ah, guess this is goodbye.

DANYAEL
'Fraid so.

KARINA
Thank you, Danyael.

DANYAEL
No problem.

KARINA
Am I ever gonna see you again?

DANYAEL
Maybe. Hopefully with a lot less trauma next time.

KARINA
(giggles)
Yeah, I hope so.

They stare into each other's eyes for a beat, before:

KARINA (cont'd)
Danyael?

DANYAEL
Yeah?

KARINA
When were you gonna tell me you're a vampire?

Danyael blinks, stuck for an answer, and we:

BLACK OUT:

END OF SHOW