

F.

a screenplay
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The screen is BLACK.

A few long moments of SILENCE.

Now we hear the voice of a YOUNG WOMAN (whose name, we shall soon come to learn, is NORA):

NORA (VO)

Father.

As she says the word, an ornate letter

F.

emerges from the darkness, purple against black, as Nora continues to speak:

NORA (cont'd) (VO) (cont'd)

Father in his dressing gown. Leafing through an old book. Father, staring out the window in our modern little house.

FADE TO:

EXT. HOLLYWOOD HILLS - WELL AFTER MIDNIGHT

It's a crisp February night. The house- and street-lights glitter enchantingly. Everything is still. Everyone is asleep.

Almost everyone. We PICK UP and FOLLOW a car, swiftly rounding the curves of Nichols Canyon, up towards Mulholland.

NORA (cont'd) (VO)

That's-- Who my father is, now. Wool, and leather, and shaving soap...

FEATURING THE CAR

A 1961 Lincoln convertible, in concours condition. Sixteen coats of hand-rubbed ebony lacquer glisten in the moonlight.

ON THE DRIVER

A handsome man of, perhaps, sixty years, driving with casual assurance as the cool night air ruffles his hair.

NORA (cont'd) (VO) (cont'd)

But what was he like-- Before?

(beat)

What was he like, before he was my father?

What he-- Did. Who he-- Was.

Like the car he drives, this man is a classic. His name is CHARLES SWANN. There are lines in his face, marks of character, of a life well lived.

NORA (cont'd) (VO) (cont'd)
How can a girl know? How can a girl ever know?

EXT. SUNSET BOULEVARD - LATE NIGHT - THE CONVERTIBLE

rides the crest of the Hollywood Hills, its sleek mass silhouetted against the lights of Los Angeles below.

NORA (cont'd) (VO)
There's what he tells me-- Which is nothing.
 (beat)
What he shows me-- Which is nothing.

And we begin to be aware of ANOTHER CAR, a white Rolls Royce, following the Lincoln at a discreet distance.

NORA (cont'd) (VO) (cont'd)
Then, every once in a while, there's-- A look on his face, when someone, something, reminds him of the past...

CLOSER ON SWANN

as he distractedly toys with the buttons on the car radio. Now he finds an all-night college radio station playing loud, fast rock'n'roll. It's not the kind of music you'd expect a man of his age, his bearing, to like.

RADIO (VO)
There are many ways to get what you want/ I use the best/ I use the rest/ I want to destroy all passersby...

He turns it up, loud. And, at the top of his lungs, SINGS along:

SWANN
...and I wanna be...
 (beat)
Anarchy!

EXT. NEUTRA HOUSE - NIGHT

A house by Richard Neutra: spare of line, elegant of proportion. In one of its curtain-glass windows we see a

YOUNG WOMAN

looking out into the night. It's dark; her face is indistinct; but even now we sense her beauty, and the intensity of her focus. Though we've no real way of knowing, something tells us that this is the woman whose voice we've been hearing-- That this is NORA.

We hear the SOUND of an approaching automobile.

EXT. MULHOLLAND DRIVE - NEUTRA HOUSE - NIGHT

Swann's Lincoln pulls up the long driveway of the house, into its space in the open carport. As pulls to a stop, we make note of the license plate, which bears one simple, centered letter:

F.

A hundred yards back, on Mulholland, the white Rolls Royce slows down to observe Swann pulling into the driveway. Then stops, turns around, and begins the trip back downhill. We HOLD on the Rolls as it heads toward

THE CITY BELOW

Pinpoints of light, by the thousands, articulating the grid of streets, avenues, boulevards. And, here and there, the white gleam of headlights, the green of traffic lights, the red of tail lights. In Century City, and in downtown LA, buildings still aglow, gleaming with nocturnal activity.

EXT. FIRST STREET - LATE NIGHT

Little Tokyo, on the edge of downtown LA's business district. One- and two-story shops, bars, restaurant nestled among the skyscrapers. A multicolored neon sign sputters and buzzes, flashing out CAFÉ KARAOKE in English and Japanese.

The white Rolls Royce glides to a stop in front of the Café. It's a 1967 Silver Shadow, the vanity plate of which reads:

ME IN MY

We hear--filtered, echoic, from inside the Café--the sounds of a Japanese girl group singing Burt Bacharach.

The DRIVER, liveried in black, quits the car. He holds in his hand an oversized, ceremonial ENVELOPE: addressed, in copperplate script, to Monsieur Juve...

...which he slides, under the Café door.

INT. CAFÉ KARAOKE - EVENING

A small Japanese restaurant with a large projection video screen on the front wall. There's a

YOUNG MAN

in a Thrasher T-shirt is stacking chairs, upside down, on the tables. His name is Edouard Jean-Paul Juve, but that's misleading, because by speech, by affect, he's just another American kid named EDDIE.

In the front of the room, seated on the edge of the stage, is the café's owner

THEOPHILE JUVE.

He's a man of about 65-- And though, twenty-odd years ago, Eddie sprang from his loins, the two could not be less alike. Juve's toupee comes low over the forehead and the large floppy shirt collar is worn outside the jacket. He sports a thin black moustache of the type that must have been quite the mode.

He's polishing the barware, looks up, to see

THE ENVELOPE, WITH ITS RED SEAL

sliding under the door. And turns white.

JUVE

F-- F--
(beat)
F--

EDDIE

You okay?

When Juve finally is able to speak, it's an accent so thickly French it sounds almost Yiddish. The voice is thickened by years of absinthe and nicotine.

JUVE

Fantômas. I chased him across three continents. Make that four. Always one step behind. I'd arrive by carriage, in time to find-- The latest corpse.

He walks to the door, never taking his eyes off the white paper, the red wax.

JUVE (cont'd)

Then I caught him, red-handed, in Paris, the rue de l'Estrapade. Monsieur le Ministre, his hacked body in a steamer trunk. Headlines:

(MORE)

JUVE(cont'd)

Juve apprehends Fantômas. My name first.
Inspector Juve. Big Promotion. Deputy Chief
of the Department.

ON EDDIE

as his father drifts into an all-too-familiar reverie. He divides his attention between his work and a full-pint can of Sapporo. The Sapporo is winning.

JUVE (cont'd)

Trial: quick. Jury: unanimous. A month later, they put the hood over the head of this fiend. March him to the guillotine. The guillotine blade comes down.

He illustrates: a quick, loud CHOP of ashtray against bar that captures Eddie's attention.

JUVE (cont'd)

They take off the hood, and it's:

(beat)

Not him, not him at all. It's the magistrate who pronounced sentence. Whose head, alas, could not be re-attached.

As he touches the envelope:

JUVE (cont'd)

Fantômas: gone. The next day, he robs the Galleries Lafayette-- I was there. I was-- Half a step behind. Almost--

(beat)

Almost--

(beat)

The very next day he kills Lord Halifax. In a room locked... From the inside.

Eddie takes another pull of beer and puts and glances up his father...

...who TURNS his body adroitly to conceal the envelope from his son.

JUVE (cont'd)

I could never understand it. Fantômas, Mabuse, Fu Manchu, the men were fiends! Still the poets raised their glasses, in tribute! Fantômas! And yet Picasso paints his portrait, top hat, white tie, black mask. Like some kind of-- Hero.

THE ENVELOPE

in Juve's small pudgy hands. The flap is sealed in magnificent red wax, with the signet **F** stamped in intaglio.

JUVE (cont'd)
 Hero, fuck! Pablo goddam Picasso was lucky
 and didn't even know it. Lucky Fantômas
 didn't kill him. In his sleep!

His eyes drift off, to another land... And when he speaks, it's
 the voice of reverie, different in every respect from the
 screaming we've just heard: soft, dreamy, almost tender.

JUVE (CONT'D)
Fantômas, could it be you?

Then:

JUVE (cont'd)
 C'mere.

Eddie walks towards his father.

Juve stuffs the envelope, still unopened, into his breast
 pocket, before his son can see.

EDDIE
 Pops--
 (beat)
 You tired, pops?
 (beat)
 You want me to lock up?

JUVE
 In the Event. In the Event that something.
 Should happen, you understand?

EDDIE
 Nothing's going to "happen."

JUVE
 I made some introductions last week. A
 business deal. I'm going to get a finder's
 fee. So. In the Event--

EDDIE
 Pops--

Juve shoots his son a look which, despite everything, creates a
 long moment of silence.

JUVE
 In the Event that something should--
 (beat)
 Happen.
 (beat)
 I would like the proper burial. With
 ceremony. As befits a Chief Inspector,
 retired.

His head moves, an inch and a half, to the left, to the right.

JUVE (CONT'D)

My only son. You, you son of a bitch.
Whatever's left over, you can keep.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD HILLS - SUNSET

FOLLOWING a battered Citroën DS-19 up Outpost toward Mulholland. The driver is Theophile Juve, freshly barbered, dressed in his best blue double-breasted gabardine, a ribbon in the buttonhole. You can almost smell the aftershave.

Juve PULLS his car into the driveway of Swann's Neutra house.

INT. SWANN'S HOUSE - LIBRARY - DUSK

Swann, as Nora depicted him: in his Pierre Chareau reading chair. Leafing through a leatherbound, letterpress book. He HEARS the sound of Juve's car in the driveway...

...finds, and inserts, a bookmark.

EXT. SWANN'S HOUSE - DUSK - JUVE

With as much dignity as he can muster, rings the bell.

Swann opens the door. His eyes dart quickly about, as if checking for exits, possible weapons-- But that's the work of a moment, and when that moment ends, quick as it begun, the two just stare. Taking each other's measure.

Then:

SWANN

Inspector Juve?

Juve nods.

SWANN (CONT'D)

Please come in.

Juve, speechless, follows Swann inside.

INT. SWANN'S HOUSE - DUSK - SWANN AND JUVE

The living room, sparsely furnished in continental (Chareau, Frankl) moderne, offers up a head-on view of the city and hills below.

SWANN
What may I offer you?

Juve shakes his head.

SWANN (CONT'D)
(finally)
Have you come to arrest me?

Juve just laughs, bitterly.

SWANN (CONT'D)
(softly)
What, then?

From his inside breast pocket, Juve extracts the envelope, hands it to Swann for his inspection.

SWANN (CONT'D)
I'm having a whiskey. May I fix you one?

Juve says nothing, but accepts the offered drink.

SWANN (CONT'D)
You are, Monsieur, a welcome guest in my house. But on my fullest honor, I have never seen this invitation before.

Swann raises a glass. The gesture is not reciprocated.

JUVE
(regaining his speech)
F-Father in heaven.

Swann sits slightly behind Juve, in the manner of a psychoanalyst.

SWANN
Go on.

JUVE
F-- F-- For thirty years.

SWANN
You have seen me eight times since then. But you did not know it.

Juve drains his drink, gathering the courage to say the word he almost cannot speak.

JUVE
F-Fantômas.

SWANN
Charles Swann. My friends call me Charley.

Swann pours him a refill, which Juve downs in one gulp.

JUVE
This is not right.

SWANN
You may recall my late wife, Céline. But you have not met my daughter. She's outside now, and should be done with her work in an hour or so.

(beat)
I would be honored if you would stay for dinner. Should you join us, I would ask one courtesy, only one. My daughter. She knows nothing of my past.

JUVE
(flatly)
You ruined my life.

SWANN
You did your best to ruin mine, as I recall.

JUVE
(brightening)
I can only hope so.

SWANN
Be that as it may. The invitation you received, my dear Monsieur Juve, was not of my hand. Someone wanted you to come here. Someone--is there any other reason?-- Wanted one of us dead.

Juve takes this in.

SWANN (cont'd)
One of us, perhaps--

Swann offers Juve a cigar, which Juve declines. With precise, elegant motions, Swann picks up a sterling knife, and, with a small flourish, nips the very tip of the Montecristo.

SWANN (cont'd)
--or both of us.

Swann lights up. Looks reflectively out the window.

HIS POV

There, in the garden: NORA, an apparition in white. Covered, head-to-toe. Bent low, as if gardening, or studying something close to the earth. A floppy suit, a loose white helmet: what one might wear, out for a stroll, on the moons of Saturn.

SWANN

consumed in thought. He's contemplating the prospect of danger, of death. Yet, behind his eyes, we can see something...

...come to life.

EXT. DESERT PASS WIND FARM - DUSK

Some 20 miles outside of Palm Springs, a forest of high-tech wind-driven generators, each on its own steel tower. There are perhaps two hundred of them. The wind is quite gentle now, and the blades, as they turn lazily, emit a smooth, soothing *whup whup* sound.

The white Rolls Silver Shadow pulls off the highway, drives across an unpaved road to one of the nearer towers. The DRIVER gets out of the car, gun in hand, followed by two CAPTIVES, both Asian businessmen in suits and ties; one young, one somewhat elderly. The captives have been blindfolded, their hands are bound with black silken cord.

Next comes LEMUEL HARDT, a tough guy with a Harvard MBA. And finally, the boss: VICTOR HOLLYWOOD, a vigorous man in his sixties, tanned, fit, pampered, sporting a trim white beard. He is wearing white shorts, a Lacoste shirt, and a Rolex as big as the Ritz.

The Driver places the captives up against the cross-braced steel tower. The younger man, GONDO KEN, is visibly nervous; the older, GONDO HIDEKI, a model of detachment.

Lem addresses the elder man.

LEM

(Japanese; subtitled)

Gondo-san. Mr. Hollywood wishes to give his permission for you to remove your blindfold.

HIDEKI

(in English)

Only if we both may do so.

Lem looks at Hollywood, who nods.

LEM

(in English)

Your pleasure is our desire.

The captives undo the blindfolds. Hollywood paces back and forth in front of them. Abruptly, he reaches into his pocket and extracts a gleaming compact disc. And begins to speak, his casual American accent betraying, in the Ws and Ts, just a touch of the Continent.

HOLLYWOOD

Do you know why a compact disc has sixty-five minutes of play time? Because Mr. Akio Morita, of Sony, decided it must have the capacity to hold Bach's cello suites, without interruption.

He hands the disc to Lem, who inserts it in the Rolls' player. The cello suite, number 6, D minor, Pierre Fournier's rendition: haunting, poignant, elegiac.

HOLLYWOOD (CONT'D)

(over the music)

The technology of the compact disc was not held in the tight fist of one Zaibatsu. It was licensed. There is greater profit, by many orders of magnitude. And glorious music encircles the world.

Hollywood's hands move in time with the music, as if he were conducting.

HOLLYWOOD (cont'd)

No one owns the wind.

We see, close the tall, eerily majestic machines

HOLLYWOOD (cont'd)

But these generators make electricity, bringing power--

(beat)

--at a profit--

(beat)

--to Palm Springs, to Rancho Mirage...
Jewels in the desert.

A gesture from Hollywood, and the Driver, pointing with his gun, binds Ken to the tower with silvered gaffer's tape.

HOLLYWOOD (cont'd)

Now you, Gondo-san, are in possession of an extraordinary technology. The Novium chip is, if I may be so bold, a device for which the inventors are fully deserving of the Nobel. And if our business had a Nobel, Ken and yourself are fully deserving of it, for spirited the chip from its inventors, and offering it to us.

HIDEKI

Offering it for sale.

Ken's wrist and ankles are fastened, one by one, each with its own gleaming chrome handcuff. The Driver then slathers Ken's

body with a gelatinous glop. [It's electroconductive, the stuff they use for EKGs in hospitals.]

HOLLYWOOD

I do not want to own it; I want to borrow it.
Reproduce it.

(beat)

I would like your chip to find a place in every personal computer, every web browser-- In every household in the developed world.

The Driver takes a sharp-bladed shovel from the trunk of the Rolls and begins to dig a ditch a few feet from the tower.

HIDEKI

If we might talk price.

HOLLYWOOD

What I offer, Gondo-san, is an equitable royalty structure, with a real back-end participation. When we make money, you make money. All you have to tell me...

The Driver does not have to dig long. He hits a length of cable, cuts it in two, fastens the "live" end to the tower's metal superstructure with more tape, more "glop."

HOLLYWOOD (cont'd)

...is where you've hidden the chip.

Hideki, watching the Driver, listening to Hollywood, keeps his face impassive.

HOLLYWOOD (cont'd)

In this season, the valley cools dramatically just after sunset. The drop in temperature creates a low pressure zone; and the winds start to blow. At thirty-five miles per hour, through the pass. Enough for each of these puppies-- To generate some eighteen thousand volts of electricity.

(beat)

Impressive-- Yes?

Hollywood extracts a business card from his jacket pocket.

In gorgeous raised-letter printing on crisp Bristol board, it reads, quite simply:

FANTÔMAS

Hollywood stuffs the business card in Hideki's breast pocket.

HOLLYWOOD (cont'd)

I'd like an answer.

Hideki stands tall, motionless, radiating dignity.

HIDEKI

You need not wait for an answer.

(beat)

It is immaterial to me, whether you make the world's largest fortune, or whether you drop it down a sewerpipe. I don't want to be your partner. I want-- All I want-- Is for you to meet my price.

(beat)

And since you are unwilling to do this, I have only one answer. Which is...

(beat)

...that you may fuck yourself.

ON THE TOWER - KEN

immobilized, beginning to shiver.

KEN'S POV - THE WINDMILL FOREST

as the blades' lazy rotation begins, almost imperceptibly, to quicken. The rise in pitch of the fans can be heard now over the plaintive solo cello.

TIGHTER ON KEN

as he feels the first trembling effects of the electricity. We hear a single piercing scream.

KEN

Father!

Hideki keeps his eyes straight ahead.

HOLLYWOOD

You're a man of honor, Gondo-san. I will not insult you by asking you to change your mind.

Hollywood reaches into his jacket and comes out holding a .25 calibre Beretta. It is what's known, in professional circles, as a "ladies' gun"; and it's what James Bond used, before he traded up to a Walther.

Hollywood looks at Hideki imploringly. Hideki is completely motionless, almost tranquil.

Ken, twitching uncontrollably, watches as Hollywood takes aim at his father.

HOLLYWOOD (CONT'D)

I'm sorry we couldn't do business.

The Bach suite builds to a crescendo. The cello is truly angelic. And over the music, the sound of a single SHOT.

Hideki goes slack, falls to the ground. Immediately the desert sand begins to lick at his now-lifeless body.

The music is quieter now; and we can hear the whine of two hundred wind-driven generators, the whistle of their blades.

HOLLYWOOD (CONT'D)

(to Ken)

Last chance. Where's the chip?

Ken stares defiantly, his face aglow with pre-sunset roseate light. He says nothing.

Lem comes very close.

LEM

Now or never.

Ken's facial muscles are in spasm. But he summons up enough control to spit, hitting Lem smack in the face.

With the calm befitting a Harvard MBA, Lem wipes himself clean. As he tidies up Lem begins to whistle, with extraordinary derision, along with the music.

Lem, without missing a note, gives Ken a small wave of farewell. Then, as Lem holds the door, Hollywood climbs into his Rolls.

FULL ON KEN, ON THE TOWER

as the Rolls glides away, back toward Los Angeles.

VARIOUS ANGLES - THE ROLLS

climbing the notch between two barren hills. The wind, now, is beginning to howl.

THE WIND-DRIVEN GENERATOR

spinning rapidly.

ON GONDO KEN

his hair standing on end, sparks flying from his wrists, performing some extraordinary acts of contortion, until he can just about--but not quite--reach the power line.

The sun, now, is almost fully down, and against the amazing pinks and magentas of the desert sunset, we can see the generators spinning ever more rapidly. And hear their *whup whup* sound rising in pitch.

Amazingly, Ken manages to reach, with his feet, the power cable. On the third try, he pulls it away from the tower, grounding it safely away from himself.

Hair on end, wrists charred, extracts a yellow map pin from the notch of his lapel--the insignia, if it matters, of membership in Mensa--and goes to work picking the locks.

In the very last light, the locks spring, and a weakened Ken crawls across the desert floor to the body of his slain father. He manages to extract from his father's breast pocket the business card which Hollywood had placed there.

Racked by sobs, shock, exhaustion, Ken clutches the card as he collapses across the lifeless body of his father.

FANTÔMAS

There is a neat .25 calibre bullet hole through the center of the Ô. And a red stain, spreading outward from the center.

The sun SETS. We watch an ANT.

Then another. Then a third. Then-- A column of ants, crawling up the sticky trail of blood, up the back of the calling card...

...and OUT the bloody HOLE.

From ANTS to...

EXT. SWANN HOUSE - DUSK

...SPIDERS.

A dense, thick swarm. So many, in fact, that it takes quite a few moments to realize that this writhing palette is composed of hundreds of individually sentient creatures.

Peering over the horizon of arachnids we see a flap of WHITE. Which, as we PULL BACK, we now see as:

The floppy white suit, the loose white helmet. Through the woven mesh, we see a pair of EYES. Belonging to NORA.

What Nora sees:

An excited WOLF SPIDER, making circles around the Queen in the web's center. He crawls, first to the right, then to the left. He raises his front legs in a small, tremulous dance. Another spider crawls up, interrupting. The first spider STINGS him.

NORA

makes notations on a pad of finely ruled graph paper. The pen is a blue Waterman with medium oblique nib. We see her write, and hear her voice in accompaniment:

NORA (VO)

The wolf spider lives alone, works alone. But not really. Like most arachnids, he has an alarm pheromone. When he stings his enemy, he releases a scent, which tells other male wolf spiders--

HER POV

The queen spider, in the center of her web. Watching, without affect, as a tangled CLOT of spiders converge on the victim.

NORA (cont'd) (VO) (cont'd)

--to join in the attack.

From the QUEEN SPIDER to...

INT. SWANN HOUSE - EVENING

...a QUEEN, among a cluster of other pieces, at the center of a chessboard.

JUVE

This French man walks into a bar, says, "Ah excuuuse mahself, but what ees zees seeng one calls a polar bear, yes?" Bartender says, "It's big, and white, and slides around, and eats a lot of fish. Why do you ask?"

SWANN AND JUVE

across the table. Swann is waiting for Juve to move. Finally Juve fingers his rook.

JUVE (CONT'D)

Frenchman says, "Beecause, someone he ask me to be a polar bear at a funeral, but eef zees is what he mean, I not do eet, you know?"

He laughs at his own joke. Swann is not amused.

SWANN

You interpose the rook, I check, you retreat to Knight Three, I check with the pawn, mate.

(beat)

A foolish mate.

The sound of a key in the door.

WOMAN'S VOICE (VO)

Hello?

It's NORA SWANN. Charles's daughter, his only child. Still dressed is the white entomologists' suit.

Juve stares at this pale apparition.

JUVE

(to himself)

Polar bear?

SWANN

(ignoring them)

What you could have done, back here, was bishop takes knight. I block with the pawn, mate in three--

(beat)

A more honorable mate.

Nora removes her helmet, shakes out her hair. But still Swann does not look up. Finally:

SWANN (CONT'D)

May I present my daughter, Doctor Nora Swann. Nora, Monsieur Theophile Juve. Dinner was an hour ago. I'm glad I did not wait.

NORA

I'm sorry.

Juve stands, kisses her hand, doing his best to be courtly. And discreetly brushes the dandruff from the shoulders of his gabardine suit jacket.

JUVE

You are the image of your mother.

SWANN

(interrupting)

I saved you some of the *gigot*. If you want to come home late, that is your own business, but tell me first?

She looks at her father; then looks away.

NORA

Of course.

(to Juve)

You knew my mother?

Before Juve can respond, Swann swiftly, adroitly, interposes his body.

SWANN

Nora. What ever kept you so occupied? You lost track of time.

She responds, her eyes only on Juve.

NORA

I've been working on signal chains.

JUVE

Excuse me?

NORA

The round dance. The waggle dance. The symbolism of the web-- Where to search for food. How far. In what direction.

(beat)

The queen substance, and its fluctuation, as the seasons change.

Juve blinks.

NORA (cont'd)

Arachnids.

(When he doesn't respond:)

Spiders.

As Nora leaves for the kitchen:

JUVE

Ahh.

Swann moves in, close.

SWANN

(whispering)

For the past twenty years, Monsieur Juve-- since Céline's accident--I have devoted my life to doing exactly nothing. I like it that way. I have known what it is to lose a wife. I do not ever want to know what it is like to lose a daughter. If you can accept that, we will not have any problems. If you bring trouble to this house, I will extinguish you as certainly as the sun, each night, slips into the Pacific. And with about as much noise.

Juve reflects. We hear, from the kitchen, the clatter of dishes.

Finally:

JUVE

Call me Theo.

As Nora returns, carrying a plate of lamb and vegetables, Swann resumes moving the chessmen. His speed is blinding.

SWANN

You had an even better option. Back here. Decline the knight. Instead, pawn to bishop's pawn three, opening up the diagonal.

NORA

(to Juve)

My mother. How-- How did you know her?

JUVE

(guarded)

Not as well as I would have wished--

NORA

(to Juve)

Here or in France?

JUVE

In France. Well before you were born.

NORA

What was she like?

JUVE

In a word, radiant. I knew your father-- through business, rather than socially, so I regret not having had the opportunity to make your mother's fuller acquaintance.

SWANN

(ignoring them)

I bring my other knight out, we exchange, you deploy the bishop.

JUVE

He cherished her. And was very-- protective.

NORA

I don't doubt.

SWANN

(still moving the pieces)

Ultimately, I still win of course. But your loss would not have been without its dignity. I would term that--

Casually, Nora reaches for the envelope with the red wax seal. With his left hand, Swann grabs the envelope before she can get to it; and with his right, brings his queen down on the board with a solid thump.

SWANN (cont'd)
 --a tragic mate.

Swann's face is turned toward Juve; but his eyes are looking at something--or someone--far more distant. We hold on

NORA

as she contemplates her father. Wondering--not for the first time--just what her mother was like; and what she must have meant to him.

EXT. MALIBU MANSION - DAY - TO ESTABLISH

Mr. Hollywood's home and headquarters. A stately pleasure dome, complete with large minaret and four flanking onion towers, which Hollywood picked up for a dime on the dollar from an heir to the peacock throne who found himself having to leave the country on short notice.

The security--from fierce, coiled concertina wire to an elaborate electronic surveillance system--is very serious.

EXT. REAR LAWN - DAY - VICTOR HOLLYWOOD AND LEMUEL HARDT

A huge, manicured lawn, the size of a couple of football fields. Smack in the center, Vic Hollywood and Lem Hardt in adjacent deck chairs. The mansion is a hundred yards behind them and the ocean cliffs a hundred yards in front. The only other object in view is a large, curved piece of Cor-Ten steel--a Richard Serra sculpture--off to one side.

Hollywood has white zinc sunblock on his nose and various other spots on his face. Lem sips from a bottle of Vichy water. Hollywood is reading from a leatherbound copy of Machiavelli's The Prince. In the space between the two deck chairs are a pair of cell phones, one for each.

In the distance, the seemingly endless expanse of the Pacific Ocean. We can hear the soothing crash of waves on the cliffs below, and the occasional cry of an ocean gull.

Now Hollywood is speaking on the phone.

HOLLYWOOD
 (into phone)
 --What do you mean she's not available?
 Amber. What's her name. The one with the
 hands. That's right.
 (beat)
 You forget who you're talking to. This is
 Victor.

(MORE)

HOLLYWOOD(cont'd)

(beat)

Make her available.

While Hollywood is talking, Lem's phone rings, and he picks it up.

LEM

(into phone)

No problem. Call me when you hear something.
Ciao.

He hangs up.

LEM (CONT'D)

(to Hollywood)

That was Schmuckface. Desert, yes, generator
yes, but-- No dead father. No dead son.

(beat)

Vanished. Shazam.

HOLLYWOOD

Machiavelli speaks of the lion, and the fox.
The lion is the man of action, the fox the man
of cunning.

LEM

He says to me, "shall I call every hour, sir?"
Fucking sycophant.

HOLLYWOOD

When people think of Machiavelli, they think
of the fox: cleverness, games, stratagems.
But to Machiavelli, the prince is a man of
virtue. The fox and the lion.

Lem waits him out.

HOLLYWOOD (cont'd)

The fox:

(beat)

Gondo Ken has just witnessed his father's
death, has come close to dying himself. His
next three moves:

Hollywood counts on his fingers.

HOLLYWOOD (cont'd)

To find a woman. To avenge his father's
death. To make sure the chip--the family
jewel, so to speak--is in a safe place.
Libido, phallic aggression, castration
anxiety, in that order.

An bottle-blonde WOMAN in the Pamela Anderson mode walks, with
small steps, towards them. She is carrying a folding massage
table and a mesh sack full of various unguents.

LEM

We keep watch on the woman, on Fantômas. He visits one, then the other. We follow. He leads us straight to the chip.

HOLLYWOOD

Too much fox, not enough lion.

Hollywood pulls a face.

HOLLYWOOD (cont'd)

I remember reading once, in a novel. The line, "What kind of country is this, where a man becomes your enemy only when his back is turned." Will you track that down for me?

Lem makes a note.

LEM

We're assuming, yes, Ken takes his revenge against Fantômas, yes?

HOLLYWOOD

Exact.

LEM

Then what?

HOLLYWOOD

Then, presuming he survives, Fantômas comes after us.

LEM

Which is what we want?

HOLLYWOOD

Which is what we want.

The MASSEUSE walks towards them, taking tiny steps. Still fifty yards away.

LEM

Does he know about his wife?

ON HOLLYWOOD

his face a mask of brown skin and white ointment.

HOLLYWOOD

Not yet.

Hollywood coughs--a dry, hacking cough he can't seem to get rid of. The Masseur sets up her table. Hollywood stands up, slips out of his shorts, and lies down upon it, belly up. The Masseur rubs oil into her palms, and starts to work.

HOLLYWOOD (CONT'D)
 (to the blonde)
 A little lower, please.

The phone begins to ring again. And again, Hollywood ignores it.

HOLLYWOOD (cont'd)
 France. "What kind of country is this, where a man becomes your enemy only when his back is turned." I think they were talking about France.

Once more, he begins to cough, harshly.

EXT. MULHOLLAND RESERVOIR - DAY - FOUR PARKED CARS

Swann's Lincoln convertible. Juve's Citroën. Nora's brown Volvo station wagon. And Eddie's primer-gray vintage Pontiac Trans-Am, beat to shit, with a license plate which reads:

SXRXRNR

Swann, Juve, Nora, Eddie, poking about in the damp underbrush which borders the walking path. Juve, a step behind Swann, is carrying a wicker basket under his arm. Eddie and Nora bring up the rear.

JUVE
 Maldoror's nightclub. Fourteen February, 1967. The place surrounded by a dozen of my finest. And yet--

Swann says nothing.

JUVE (CONT'D)
 Okay, okay.

Juve holds his tongue for a few moments. And then cannot restrain himself.

JUVE (cont'd)
 Of all your deeds. There's one I could never--
 Figure out.

Swann lifts one eyebrow.

JUVE (CONT'D)
 Lord Halifax.

SWANN
 Surely, Monsieur Juve, you don't expect me to--

JUVE

The windows, locked. The door: locked. From the inside.

SWANN

(teasingly)

It is a classic problem.

Swann bends down, picks up a pair of mushrooms.

SWANN (CONT'D)

Amanita muscaria. Amanita phalloides. The one is instant death. The other, sautéed in a little butter, is sex on a plate.

TIGHT ON THE MUSHROOMS

Almost identical.

EDDIE AND NORA

some steps behind. They walk along in silence. On the face of it, they're an unlikely match. Nora, in a Lacoste shirt, chinos, and topsiders, hair pulled back. Eddie, in a Pizzicato 5 T-shirt.

The silence becomes quite awkward. Finally:

EDDIE

Couches.

NORA

Excuse me?

EDDIE

Couches. I bought couches. From the Salvation Army.

(beat)

Do you know what happens when you buy couches?

She says nothing.

EDDIE (cont'd)

It gives you a license.

(beat)

You put the couches, the older the better, in an old storefront. Then you buy an espresso machine. You need a cook to open a restaurant, but anyone with a right arm can make espresso. So the couches give you a license.

(beat)

To charge a dollar fifty, for a thimble full of dirty water.

A beat. Then:

NORA

Oh.

EDDIE

We were artists. Going into wild parts of town. Living in factories that no one else wanted. We wanted places, where people could sit, and talk, and argue, and fall in love-- And never, never sleep.

NORA

Did it work.

EDDIE

No.

His smile is more disarming than she'd counted on.

EDDIE (cont'd)

We thought we were making a revolution. What we were doing was-- Making the world safe, for Starbuck's.

She looks at him.

EDDIE (cont'd)

You know what an artist is? An artist is just the person who goes there first. The person who civilizes.

He takes a branch, uses it as a walking stick.

EDDIE (cont'd)

An artist is to a real estate developer--
(beat)
What a missionary is, to a slave trader.

He flashes what he thinks of as his best smile.

EDDIE (cont'd)

That's why I don't make art anymore.

Now, without foreshadowing, he slings his jacket over his shoulder, and begins to dance, and sing:

EDDIE (cont'd)

When I fall in love/ It will be forever...

(Then:)

I'm sorry.

NORA

No need to apologize.

EDDIE
I can't really sing.

NORA
It's okay.

EDDIE
It's just that sometimes, I have emotions too large for words to contain.

A beat. Then:

NORA
I see that.

They walk for several steps. Then:

NORA (CONT'D)
There was a man once. He was a journalist. Doing a piece for one of the women's magazines. "What We Can Learn from the Birds and the Bees." Looking for an entomologist. Went to UCLA. Found me-- Then the light bulb went on over his head.

EDDIE
Light bulb?

NORA
Killer Bee Honey. He'd put up the money, I'd put up the expertise. A partnership. He thought it would be the next Pet Rock. The next-- Tamagotchi.

EDDIE
What happened?

NORA
He got stung.

EDDIE
I wouldn't want to get stung. Or--
(beat)
Bit.
(beat)
But I would like--
(beat)
To see you.

NORA
You are seeing me.

EDDIE
No, no-- Like--

Nora studies this strange young man.

NORA
Like you and me and the spiders?

EDDIE
You and me and your spiders and my guitars and
maybe my surfboard.

NORA
And maybe my bear.

EDDIE
And maybe your bear. Real bear?

NORA
Stuffed bear. I'm still a child, you know.

EDDIE
Ah.

NORA
Tell you what. Why don't you ask my father if
you can go out with me. We'll give him twenty
four hours--

ON EDDIE

taking this in.

NORA (cont'd)
--and if you're still alive, we'll talk.

SWANN AND JUVE

pausing, now and then, to add mushrooms to Swann's basket.

JUVE
When you--*comment dit on?*--"disposed" of Lord
Halifax. The body was still warm. You
couldn't have gotten out of the room. And you
weren't still in it. How, in God's good name--

SWANN
That life is over for me. When Céline died.
When I had a daughter to raise. A daughter
innocent of my evil.

JUVE
If you won't tell me how, at least tell me
why. Damn it. I mean, what did Lord Halifax
ever do to you?

Swann, as if recalling a cherished memory, permits himself a
smile.

SWANN

Nothing.

INT. HOTEL MONDRIAN - DUSK

Gondo Ken and a beautiful Asian woman, named EMORETTA, on the large bed in the very best suite in the trendiest hotel in town. Outside the window is the glittering cityscape which, on nights like this, extends all the way to the sea.

Their thin, supple bodies, moist with exertion, gasp and writhe, beneath the huge Keith Haring print--encased in Plexiglas--which looms over their bed.

INT. SWANN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DUSK - SWANN AND JUVE

Swann is sautéing a bunch of mushrooms in a copper pan. He's humming to himself. Juve, looking on, takes frequent gulps from a large glass of cabernet.

SWANN

(almost inaudibly)

"...across Paris and across the world... Could it be you..."

JUVE

It's the song. The Fantômas song.

SWANN

I forget the words.

Juve, proud of his memory, swells his chest and sings, in a strong baritone.

JUVE

"Stretching his immense shadow, across Paris and across the world, who is this grey-eyed spectre, rising from the mist? Fantômas, could it be you, lurking among the rooftops?"

Swann, one hand on the frying pan, one hand on the shoulder of his lifelong nemesis, joins in on the last line. Abruptly, Juve freezes.

JUVE (CONT'D)

(almost to himself)

At the prefecture. They used to hum that song when my back was turned. To mock me. In my favorite *bistro*. The lyrics, scraped into the paint, eye level, above the pissoir. I told *le Patron* to do something about this wall. His reply: "The work of Monsieur Picasso is not for sale."

SWANN

A squeeze of lemon, a dash of cognac, and never, never overcook.

JUVE

(suddenly)

I like you.

Astonished by what he's just heard himself say, Juve stops.

JUVE (cont'd)

Why did you become Fantômas?

SWANN

Why did you become a cop?

Swann continues to chop, to pour, to sauté.

SWANN (cont'd)

I was very young. Dien Bien Phu. Saw more killing than a seventeen-year-old knows what to do with. And then a door opened in front of me. I could go through it. Or: home, college, suburbs, wagon, ulcer, favorite chair at the club, cigar ashes dribbling down the vest of my three-piece suit.

Juve, very quiet, not having expected the intimacy.

SWANN (cont'd)

Right or wrong. Maybe wrong. But I went through that door and I never looked back.

Swann gestures toward the table.

SWANN (cont'd)

Sit. The first of us will await the other.

ON JUVE

Who's spent half his life tracking the man...

..with whom he's about to dine.

INT. SWANN DINING ROOM - DUSK

Eddie and Nora are already seated at the table, nursing beer and wine respectively. Juve sits cautiously. Then Swann enters, bearing a pan full of the best sautéed mushrooms anyone has ever tasted.

As they eat:

NORA

I always worry. Amanitas are so delicious.
But one error, one wrong identification--

EDDIE

I'm in a discussion group? On the net? It's
called-- Alt dot urban dot disasters. And
somebody posted about this guy, he ate the
wrong mushrooms, okay? There goes the liver,
right? So they harvest a good liver. Slit
him open, out with bad, in with the good--
And the next morning he's fine. A little, you
know, yellow-- But fine.

He takes a big swig of beer.

EDDIE (cont'd)

No big deal.

Oblivious to her reaction, he goes on.

EDDIE (cont'd)

Went out, the very next night, to celebrate--
(beat)
By eating blowfish.

Swann brings the pan to the table.

JUVE

(to Eddie)

Pops? Don't get too drunk. We have a bar to
open tonight.

SWANN

May I propose a toast?

He looks directly at Juve.

SWANN (cont'd)

To those no longer among us.

Glasses clink.

NORA

Father?

(beat)

Isn't that a little morbid?

SWANN

On the contrary.

Eddie consumes his portion in record time, helps himself to
seconds.

EDDIE

Anyway. Mr. Swann. May I have your daughter's hand in marriage?

Juve breaks into peals of laughter, followed by Nora, followed by Eddie--

But not, of course, Swann-- To whom the matter is not funny, not funny at all.

EXT. SWANN'S HOUSE - THE DRIVEWAY - DUSK

The duck-nose of Juve's Citroën DS-19. Lifting, as the Citroën's pneumatic suspension kicks into gear.

NORA (VO)

When the male of a web-building spider is ready to mate, he begins to wander. If he runs into the web of a female, he can recognize it as such by her odor.

The car pulls away.

EDDIE'S POV - THROUGH THE CAR WINDOW

as Swann, Nora, the Neutra house, recede in the distance.

NORA (cont'd) (VO) (cont'd)

He then plucks at the threads with a special "Morse code" signal. If the female is not ready to mate, her reaction is aggressive, and the male leaves.

NORA

watches the car depart, holding her gaze, for a bit longer than truly necessary. A fact which does not escape the notice of

HER FATHER

Tall, well-dressed, proper, in the manicured driveway.

NORA (cont'd) (VO) (cont'd)

If she is ready, she is either passive--

INT. HOTEL MONDRIAN - AS BEFORE

Ken and Emoretta, exhausted, collapsed in a heap on top of each other.

NORA (VO)

--or signals back.

Ken, his body bruised from the ordeal in the desert, coated with sweat and funk, slips on an immaculate white shirt. And places, over it, a shoulder holster of perfect black leather, containing a 9mm Heckler & Koch P-13. Squeezing the grip to feed the first round into the chamber. The metal is, of course, matte black and matches his oversize suit jacket, by Comme des Garcons.

Emoretta stirs.

EMORETTA

You mustn't leave.

KEN

I must.

EMORETTA

Then you must come back.

He ties his shoes.

EMORETTA (cont'd)

Where are you going?

KEN

To visit a dead man.

Emoretta looks at him.

KEN (cont'd)

He's dead. He just doesn't know it yet.

EMORETTA

What will you do when you come back?

Ken practices his fast draw, several times, in front of the mirror, pausing each time to brush the hair back from his forehead, Alain Delon-style.

KEN

Put my head between your legs until I can no longer see. The taste of you in my mouth. And just when we both think we can't bear any more, we go on. Our sex obliterating the world outside, all of it, until the dawn.

And he's out the door. Emoretta waits for his footsteps to disappear, and, her silk-robed body silhouetted against the outsized Haring print...

...reaches for the designer phone.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD HILLS - NIGHT - SWANN

in his gleaming black Lincoln, driving rapidly toward downtown. Once again, there's a song on the radio; and once again, Swann joins in. This time, though, the song is slow, almost mournful.

SWANN

(singing along)

*"...Here as I sit in this antique café
thinking of you... Notre Dame casts its long
lonely shadow... The world is my oyster but
I'm only a shell full of memories..."*

EXT. CAFÉ KARAOKE - NIGHT - SWANN

pulls to a stop beneath the buzzing neon, which reflects its harsh colors off the Lincoln's well-polished fenders.

INT. CAFÉ KARAOKE - NIGHT

The joint is hopping. In the audience: suit-and-tie Japanese executives, a few grave teenage couples, a handful of Anglos. At the front, on the giant projection video screen, is a soft-core rock video, two teenagers gazing with great languor at each other's semi-nude bodies. The words to the song appear, bouncing-ball style, on the bottom of the screen.

In front of the screen, a shy Asian BUSINESSWOMAN sings into a microphone. To her right, Eddie plays with knobs and sliders. He's mixing her live voice into the prerecorded rock video backing track, adding reverb, adjusting EQ.

The businesswoman sings the final chorus in a sweet thin voice, staring demurely downward into the monitor/prompter. The teenage girl on the video screen, naked from the waist up, is singing, too.

The audience listens politely. There is a figure in dark suit and dark glasses, head down, seated against the far wall.

INT. KARAOKE BACK ROOM - NIGHT - SWANN AND JUVE

at a small table. Light is from an overhead bulb, swinging in small arcs above the table. There is, above their heads, a television monitor on which can be seen a view of the main room.

JUVE

Charles. I can't begin to tell you how glad I am you could come.

SWANN

Then don't.

JUVE

Your presence honors my establishment.

The flattery is out of character. Swann just stares at him.

JUVE (cont'd)

I need your help.

SWANN

You said as much on the phone.

Juve begins to sweat. Calmly, Swann extracts a roll of large bills from his pocket, begins peeling them off, one by one. But Juve waves him away.

ANGLE ON THE MONITOR

A view of the main room. The Asian businesswoman finishes her song. The next singer is a man in a black suit-- *Who looks very familiar...*

Juve and Swann, talking intently, pay no attention to the screen.

JUVE

They're going to kill me, Charles. I--

(beat)

--I know it.

INT. KARAOKE MAIN ROOM - AS BEFORE

The man on stage is none other than Ken. Doing a version of Heartbreak Hotel. A predictable montage of urban streets at night playing behind him on the oversized projection screen.

INT. BACK ROOM - AS BEFORE

JUVE

I wanted a little money. To retire on. For my old age. Not that I'm not old already. Do you know what it is to be my age and not have money, and not know how you're going to live?

ON THE MONITOR

Ken continues to sing.

SWANN

So you did something.

JUVE

So I did something. I introduced a Japanese, um, businessman. Used to come by the club. To someone whom, like yourself, I'd been pursuing for years. The Japanese man had something very small, very cold, which was very hot. The "someone" has a lot of money, and would know what to do with such a thing. Me, I was to get the finder's fee.

ON THE MONITOR

Ken and an accomplice, a hard guy named SHOEI: guns drawn. The things which Ken is saying into the microphone are not song lyrics, but instructions to the audience. They respond, burying their heads on the counters, like nap time in kindergarten. No one peeks-- Especially not Eddie, who covers his entire head with a large cloth napkin.

Swann looks at Juve, gazes distractedly at the video monitor. And then, in one smooth motion, no hesitation, smashes the overhead light and pushes Juve to the floor, covering the fat man's body with his own, just as

THE DOOR

splinters, bullets ripping through the plywood, shafts of bright neon club light thrusting into the darkened back room.

INT. CLUB MAIN ROOM - KEN

throws his shoulder at the door. Shoei hangs back.

INT. BACK ROOM - ON SWANN

his faced pressed against Juve's cheek.

SWANN

I am too old for this shit.

Ken breaks through. Covered by Shoei, he casts a quick look around the room. Not quick enough-- Because Swann's arm snakes out, grabs his ankle, and down he goes.

Swann and Ken grapple on the floor. Swann is amazingly agile; but Ken is 35 years younger, and does this sort of thing for a living. Juve piles in.

Shoei, afraid to shoot into the tumble of bodies. Just behind him, the karaoke video continues to play, young lovers staring into each others' eyes, ideograms bouncing along the bottom of the screen to a supple pop backbeat. No vocal save the screams of the audience, peeking at the action.

Swann, Ken, Juve roll into the main room, a flail of limbs. Shoei backs up, holding the room at bay while keeping his eye on Swann and Juve.

Swann rolls out toward the sushi counter, grabs the chef's knife. Next thing we know, the knife SAILS through the air.

We see Shoei's gun hand, pinioned to the wall.

EDDIE

peeks briefly from beneath his napkin. What he sees looks to make him sick, and he buries his head once more.

Juve gives Ken a good knee to the groin, grabs the Heckler & Koch, and runs to the stage. The insipid video continues behind him.

JUVE

(into the microphone)

No problem, no problem.

His voice, thickened with delay and reverb, echoes comically. Ken groans, doubled over on the floor. Shoei has fainted. Swann makes for the door, pausing only to shoot contemptuous glances at both Eddie and Juve.

JUVE (CONT'D)

(much reverb)

Wait!

Swann mimes dialing a telephone, as in "call me." Much noise and confusion as the shambled restaurant comes back to life. Eddie looks around, and takes a long pull on a premium beer.

EXT. KARAOKE BAR - NEAR DAWN - SWANN

dusting himself off, walking toward his car. Juve bursts out the door, running clumsily. He grabs Swann's arm.

SWANN

(counting on his fingers)

One, you set me up. Two, you did it badly. Three--

JUVE

When I got that note. Which you say you didn't send. I could have turned it over to the FBI-- Interpol--

(softly now)

I didn't.

(beat)

You owe me one.

SWANN
I just paid you.

A streetsweeper drifts lazily up Alameda in the pre-dawn glow.

JUVE
Charles, I swear I didn't set you--

He stops, mid-sentence. Because blood is pouring out of his mouth.

He looks down. And there, just to the left of his sternum, is a small bullethole.

JUVE (CONT'D)
(matter of fact)
Oh my god. I'm going to die.

Swann puts an arm around Juve, gently cradling the man who hunted him for forty years.

JUVE (CONT'D)
(softly)
Halifax-- How?

SWANN
I mailed him a note perfumed with amaryllis. The scent rubbed off on his hands. I lowered a black widow spider, a fine silken cord, down the chimney. It went for the amaryllis, and bit. I hauled it back up, gently--

Juve is smiling.

SWANN (cont'd)
--so as not to break the thread.

Juve pulls Swann close.

JUVE
Mon ennemi-- Mon frère--
(beat)
Mon semblable...

Swann puts a finger to Juve's lips. Hushes him.

SWANN
The first of us will await the other.

And just over Swann's shoulder, Juve catches sight of the man driving the streetsweeper. It's Ken. Juve

TUGS

Swann's arm.

Swann turns, to see the streetsweeper bearing down on them.

With his last strength, Juve throws himself in the path of the sweeper, giving Swann time to escape. Which he does, nimbly turning the corner into a narrow alley.

Even as he runs, it registers on Swann's face that Juve has just saved his life.

Swann runs down the alley. It's a cul-de-sac, nothing but a high bricked-up wall on the other end.

The sweeper turns the corner-- And just fits. Ken grins like a maniac.

Swann sees Juve, at the mouth of the alleyway, bloodied, staggering. And just behind him: the streetsweeper.

SWANN (CONT'D)

The buyer! His name!

Juve runs out of breath and falls, face down, into the muck and cobblestone ground. The streetsweeper, its engines echoing loudly in the walled-off space, bears down on him, slowly, implacably.

THE STREETSWEeper - VARIOUS ANGLES

The oversized wheels. The blade-like wire brushes--one rotating clockwise, the other counterclock--gobbling everything in their path. Which, right now, means Inspector Juve, retired.

Starting with his shoes.

Juve flashes Swann a desperate "V" with his outstretched right arm-- The last of him to go.

Ken stops the machine. Silence.

KEN'S POV - THE ALLEYWAY

No Swann.

Ken moves, with cat-like grace, down the alleyway, inspecting the trash-bins, the sealed-up windows, tapping the mortar on the back-wall bricks.

Buildings on two sides. A brick wall at the rear. And the massive streetsweeper, sealing off the entrance. There is no way that Swann could have escaped.

The streetsweeper backs out. Ken's deadpan nearly screens all trace of his frustration. We FOLLOW the streetsweeper as it heads west on First Street, away from the dawn.

THE ALLEYWAY

No noise, no movement, no trace of life. A few trash bins, a discarded automobile fender, a drainpipe which casts a slim shadow. The shadow is perhaps three inches at its widest, not enough to hide an alleycat, let alone a man.

It is from this shadow that Swann emerges, treading softly toward daylight.

FEATURING THE CLUB - THE BACK DOOR

open, just a crack. Where

EDDIE

hidden, trembling, peers out, watching this man, Charley Swann, materialize...

...from thin air. And walk away.

Eddie ventures into the alleyway. And only now sees

THE BODY

of Juve. In name, in blood, in other ways Eddie has spent his life trying not to acknowledge-- His father.

Eddie bends down, low. Presses his head into Juve's chest. Listening for a heartbeat. Listening for something...

...that's not there.

EXT. TEMPLE STREET - DAWN - THE LINCOLN CONVERTIBLE

heads home. Swann passes the Western Exterminating building, neon rats blinking their way clockwise around the facade. We FOLLOW as Swann heads north, toward the hills.

This time, there is no music on the radio, no singalong, just silence, as Swann realizes that like it or not, his early retirement has come to an abrupt end. That he can no longer continue, as he has for the past 25 years, the life he's been living.

Or perhaps, he realizes now-- The life he's been pretending to live.

EXT. SWANN'S HOUSE - DAWN

as Swann pulls into the driveway, lining his car up beside Nora's Volvo.

INT. NORA'S BEDROOM - DAWN

The room is half a child's, half an adult's. On the shelves, stuffed toys vie for space with hundreds of books, most of them on entomology.

Swann bends down, gently kisses her cheek. Nora smiles a little in her sleep. Fussily, Swann adjusts the covers on her bed. Then goes to the shelf, retrieving an ancient stuffed bear, which he places in the bed with his daughter.

INT. SWANN'S STUDY - DAWN

At the bookcase, Swann pulls out a volume--the hardcover of William Irish's The Night Has a Thousand Eyes--and reaches into the empty space with his right hand. The entire bookcase begins to rotate, 90 degrees, opening into a small room beyond.

INT. HIDDEN ROOM - NIGHT - SWANN

turns on a dim overhead bulb, which casts melodramatic shadows on the bare walls. There's a chair, a simple table, and a stand-up steamer trunk. That's it.

Swann sits down, his head bowed, hands clasped as if in prayer. And, after a few extraordinarily silent moments, speaks in a low, private tone.

SWANN
Forgive me, Céline.

And then, doubts resolved, he moves swiftly toward the steamer trunk, blowing years of accumulated dust from the old-fashioned padlock.

ON THE LOCK

as Swann inserts the key.

Swann's face is very solemn, very still. But his eyes betray emotion: now fear, now the excitement of a small child on Christmas morning.

SWANN'S POV - THE TRUNK

The lid swings open. One by one, Swann pulls the slide on the trunk's interior drawers.

The top one contains an amazing array of jewels: diamonds, emeralds, rubies, most of them in art deco settings.

The second one contains newspaper clippings, yellowed now, some in English, some in French, all bearing headlines which contain the word **FANTÔMAS**.

The third contains a variety of well-machined brass tools, some of which appear to be lock picks, some of which seem to be grapples and pitons for climbing. Some rope, some pulleys, some optical devices with lenses and mirrors, the purpose of which we can only guess at.

The fourth--somewhat larger--contains a dress suit: boiled white shirtfront, cutaway tails, black trousers, silken top hat. And a slim, black, elegant mask, of silk moiré, covering the top of the face, two perfectly placed slits for the wearer's eyes.

Awash with poignance, Swann fingers the mask he's not worn in nearly a quarter-century. Re-folds it with care. And extracts in one neat motion

THE RING

from the tailcoat's breast pocket. It's a large signet ring, of the type one uses for stamping one's marque in sealing wax. It's platinum surface gone slightly dull now, the ring features an ornate, rococo

F.

engraved, right-to-left, dead-center.

SWANN'S LEFT HAND - FOURTH FINGER

as he removes his plain gold wedding band and replaces it with the ring of Fantômas.

INT. EDDIE'S PLACE - DAY - TO ESTABLISH

The converted garage which serves Eddie's home. The place is filled to the brim with two of everything. There's a couple of electric guitars (one Fender, one Gibson Les Paul); an IBM PC and a Macintosh; two surfboards, one long, one short. There's a stretched canvas of large proportions on the easel. Everything is piled on top of everything else and Eddie is on a mattress on the floor, pillow pulled over his head. The television blares. Once again, Eddie is sleeping with the TV on.

ON THE TELEVISION

the anchorwoman is narrating a story.

ANCHORWOMAN

The slain clubowner, according to police, was retired French police detective Theophile Juve. An obscure figure, Juve was known in

(MORE)

ANCHORWOMAN(cont'd)

Europe, sources report, for his unsuccessful pursuit--

Someone is pounding at the door.

ANCHORWOMAN (cont'd)

--of such legendary arch-criminals as Fantômas, Mabuse, the insidious Fu Manchu. The three, who sometimes worked together in a gang called The Spiders, were the scourge of several continents in the years after World War II.

He pads to the refrigerator, across the hundreds of sheets of crumpled newspaper which cover the floor.

EDDIE

Cool it, I'm coming, I'm coming.

ANCHORWOMAN

Mabuse, raised as a child within the Nazi ministry of propaganda, killed himself in an insane asylum in Germany in 1957. Doctor Fu Manchu, who would now be one hundred twenty years old, is believed dead. Fantômas, still officially at large, has not been heard from since the seventies.

Eddie pulls the handle on the corrugated metal garage door. Standing there is Swann, backlit by daylight.

SWANN

Surf's up.

EDDIE

It's Sunday.

SWANN

All day.

Swann takes a step to the side, allowing the sunlight to hit Eddie full in the face.

SWANN (CONT'D)

We need to talk, young man.

Eddie covers his eyes. Swann pushes him backwards, the newspaper-lined floor crackling loudly with each step. Swann puts one foot behind Eddie's ankle and, with the tip of one finger, sends Eddie sprawling.

ANCHORWOMAN

Last night's killing at the Café Karaoke may have closed the book on a colorful chapter in the history of crime.

Swann grabs the dropcloth which cover's Eddie's desk. With a conjurer's deft flick of the wrist, Swann YANKS the dropcloth free. There is a great clatter-- But each and every one of the objects on Eddie's desk lands in place.

SWANN

I could just as easily snap your neck.

Eddie, surveying the room, is forced to agree.

SWANN (CONT'D)

What happened last night?

EDDIE

You were there.

Swann takes a can of beer, pours it into the airvents on top of the Macintosh. Fumes arise from within as the thing shorts out.

SWANN

Don't make me repeat myself.

EDDIE

I don't know anything more than you know.

SWANN

Nice stick.

He picks up one of the surfboards, hurls it through the nearly finished painting.

EDDIE

This kind of shit's supposed to make me trust you?

(beat)

Juve was doing fine-- Until you sent him that note.

SWANN

I was doing quite well myself. Until your Mr. Juve showed up on my doorstep.

EDDIE

All he wanted was a decent burial.

SWANN

And where was he going to get the money for his decent burial?

EDDIE

He'd made an introduction.

SWANN

I know that.

EDDIE

Between a Japanese guy with a hot piece of silicon.

SWANN

I know that.

EDDIE

And some rich guy was going to buy it.

SWANN

I know that.

EDDIE

That's all I know.

SWANN

You think I am fucking around?

All restraint lost, Swann storms and hurls, turning the rooms into a complete shambles. His rage is terrifying. When nearly everything in the room is broken, he picks up the Fender, preparing to smash it, Pete Townsend-style. Something makes him stop. He puts the guitar down, and backs Eddie up against the wall.

The two, inches apart, breathe into each others' faces.

SWANN (CONT'D)

I am sorry. But I could have been killed last night. I need some answers. And now some-- *Slacker*-- Can't remember what he ate for breakfast.

Swann picks up the Fender telecaster once more, examining it carefully. It's a classic.

SWANN (CONT'D)

What year?

EDDIE

Sixty-two.

SWANN

Nice.

Swann places the guitar gently against the wall.

Eddie looks at Swann: a man who threatens to break necks, but who stops at damaging an old guitar.

He's impressed.

Finally: Eddie reaches into his pocket, comes up with a piece of paper. It's a call slip from the karaoke bar.

EDDIE

The first time he came 'round the club to talk to Juve, he filled this out. Gondo Ken. The song he requested was J-9.

SWANN

What is that?

EDDIE

"Heartbreak Hotel."

Eddie points to the newspapers on the floor. Smiles. Attempts a bravado he can't quite carry off:

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Burglar alarm. Anyone tries to sneak up on me in my sleep, I hear 'em: crunch crunch crunch.

Swann just...

...looks at him.

INT. SWANN'S HOUSE - DAY

Nora, ironing a shirt.

Swann, emerging from the bathroom, wrapped in a thick Turkish robe.

SWANN

You didn't have to do that.

NORA

Someone has to look after you.

SWANN

Are you forgetting?

She looks at him:

SWANN (cont'd)

If you know how to iron a shirt--

(beat)

It's because I taught you.

He studies her work.

SWANN (cont'd)

Placket first.

NORA

Where have you been?

SWANN

Then the cuffs. The sleeves, inside out. The collar--

NORA

How did you get yourself so dirty? What have you--

(beat)

Done to yourself?

SWANN

--the front with the buttonholes, the back, the front with the buttons.

NORA

Where are you going?

SWANN

You did a good job, on the collar.

Now, only now: he smiles.

SWANN (cont'd)

Thank you.

EXT. CHINATOWN - DAY - SWANN'S LINCOLN

glides up Alameda to the Chinatown gate.

EXT. THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Swann--elegant once more--enters an elaborately carved door done up in Han Dynasty style.

INT. THE DOCTOR'S RECEPTION AREA - DAY

The waiting room of a man known simply as "The Doctor," a specialist in herbal remedies and, from time to time, other more violent cures. There are perhaps 15 Chinese--old and young, men and women, mostly quite poor--waiting their turn.

RECEPTIONIST

Do you have an appointment?

SWANN

Tell him a man calling himself Mister Charles Swann is here to see him. Tell him that man said, "it is urgent."

Swann sits down, leafs through an ancient copy of Argosy.

RECEPTIONIST

Mr. Swann?

Swann stands up, enduring the stares of 15 pairs of eyes.

INT. THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Three walls are lined with jars and boxes of herbs and medicaments, labeled in a variety of foreign languages. The fourth wall looks out onto the Chinatown mall. There is a leather examination table, and a desk.

In contrast to the general clutter, the massive teak desk is absolutely bare, with the sole exception of a clear glass APOTHECARY JAR, in which what seems to be a PICKLE floats in formaldehyde.

Behind the desk is a Chinese MAN with wrinkled skin and a wispy white beard. It would scarcely be possible to imagine anyone older.

SWANN

I am looking for a Japanese gentleman by the name of Gondo Ken.

THE DOCTOR

Patience.

The Doctor leans back in his chair.

THE DOCTOR (cont'd)

In my office we observe certain formalities. Beginning with, "Hello."

SWANN

Forgive me. Hello, Doctor. It gives me great pleasure to see you once more, and I am grateful that you could fit me in on such short notice.

THE DOCTOR

The pleasure, Mr. Swann, is mine.

The Doctor reaches under his desk and pulls out two water tumblers, and a brown glass bottle of something very old. He pours.

THE DOCTOR (cont'd)

So. You are looking for the man who killed Inspector Juve.

SWANN

Word gets around.

THE DOCTOR

I suppose you want to thank him for the favor?

Swann permits himself a smile.

THE DOCTOR (cont'd)

The man disposes of a particularly irksome inspector. Yet you act as if the inspector were your friend; and his assailant your enemy. Why, Mr. Swann? The world has so many inspectors.

He lifts his glass.

THE DOCTOR (CONT'D)

And so few of us.

SWANN

(toasting)

May there never be fewer.

Swann takes a sip of the pungent cordial, pulls a face. The Doctor gestures toward the window.

THE DOCTOR

The Chinese were brought here to build the railroad. We were useful because we worked hard, and were fungible. Do you know what that means, Mr. Swann? That one of us was the same as any other. When there were obstacles in the course of the railroad, most often they would lower a basket with a Chinaman and several sticks of dynamite. If the dynamite went off prematurely, well, the fine for killing a Chinaman was fifty dollars.

Swann realizes that The Doctor is leading up to something.

THE DOCTOR (cont'd)

We settled in what is now downtown. But there was great racial feeling against us. Many were killed on the street, for the simple crime of being who we were. We built elaborate tunnels, under what is now downtown LA, to hide from our pursuers.

The Doctor points out the window.

THE DOCTOR (cont'd)

This part of town, this theme park Chinatown, was built after World War Two by real estate speculators. White speculators. And yet we moved here, into this travesty, because there was no place else in town they would let us live in peace.

Swann sips his drink.

THE DOCTOR (cont'd)

In the 1950s, when the whites of Los Angeles began to realize how much they hated the blacks, and the Hispanics, they forgot to pay such close attention to those with yellow skin. And so the Japanese, so recently our enemies, were allowed to move into downtown. "Little Tokyo." Occupying the very land that had been ours.

(with great and terrible derision:)

"Infiniti." "Lexus." "Miata."

(beat)

Forgive me, Mr. Swann, if I snort.

Swann seems to sense, with relief, where all this is leading.

THE DOCTOR (cont'd)

Normally, Mr. Swann, the code would insist I protect any soul brave enough to eliminate a policeman. But I cannot bring myself to care, one way or another, what happens to this Japanese gentleman, this Gondo Ken. Who is in residence at the Hotel Mondrian, room 313.

SWANN

I do not know how to thank you.

THE DOCTOR

It seems, Mr. Swann, that I may live forever. So there will be time and time for you to express your thanks. Provided, of course, that you are around to express them. Which you might be, if you avoid acts of stupidity.

SWANN

Is that a threat?

THE DOCTOR

To avenge the death of a policeman is an act of stupidity.

(beat)

It is almost the definition of stupidity.

Swann heads for the door, whose frame has been built somewhat low.

SWANN

You would not happen to know who Gondo Ken has been doing business with?

The Doctor stares at the apothecary jar. Its contents: a long, thin object, beyond recognition.

THE DOCTOR

Patience, Mr. Swann. Patience and irony. For a longer life.

EXT. HOTEL MONDRIAN - DAY

Several police cars, an ambulance, sirens, blaring horns, much commotion, in front of the hotel's (very hip) entrance.

In the center of the chaos: the silk-robed body of Emoretta, Gondo Ken's paramour, splayed out at odd, broken-doll angles in the middle of the boulevard.

Police CRIMINALISTS are marking, with yellow paint, the position of her lifeless body. The Coroner's MEN lift her onto a stretcher, leaving a familiar outline, white paint on black asphalt, reminiscent of nothing so much as the Keith Haring print which loomed above the bed, where she and Ken made love.

EXT. SUNSET BOULEVARD - DAY - SWANN'S LINCOLN

caught in traffic. As he turns the curve toward La Cienega, the traffic narrows into one lane, and Swann is able to see why: the blocked-off area in front of the Mondrian.

SWANN

(to himself)

I'm like Juve now.

(beat)

Always one step behind.

Swann pulls his car to the curb, strides toward the hotel.

He contemplates the painted white outline. Watches as Emoretta's body is lifted into the ambulance. And overhears the Duty Officer speaking into his radio.

DUTY OFFICER

APB for Ken Gondo. George Orange Nostril Dog Orange. Japanese, five foot seven, slim, black hair. Must be considered armed and dangerous.

INT. HOTEL MONDRIAN - THIRD FLOOR HALLWAY

The entrance to the best room in the house, now cordoned off with yellow "crime scene" tape. Guarded by two buff COPS.

Swann, now sporting a thick moustache and horn-rimmed glasses, walks directly up to them without breaking stride.

SWANN
 (with immense authority)
 Coming through.

COP
 Hold it. Crime scene.

Swann gives his best "don't-you-know-who-I-am" stare.

COP (CONT'D)
 Coroner's orders.

In one seamless gesture, Swann coughs, raising his left hand to his mouth. As his right hand darts behind him to extract the wallet of a cop striding down the corridor.

Swann flips open the wallet, presenting the gold badge, as if it had been in his hand all along.

COP (CONT'D)
 Sorry, sir. Didn't recognize you.

INT. HOTEL MONDRIAN SUITE - DAY - SWANN

navigates his way unobtrusively between various detectives and forensics experts, busy dusting for prints, putting evidence samples in zip-loc bags, etc.

Swann heads straight for the closet and, covering with his back, goes through the pockets of Ken's jackets and trousers.

VARIOUS ANGLES - CLOSE

Swann's haul. Some loose change. A set of keys. And an Olympus 35mm autofocus pocket camera.

INT. ONE-HOUR FOTO - DAY

A photo shop in a pod mall on Sunset Boulevard. Swann is pacing back and forth, the now-empty Olympus swinging from his left hand.

ON THE PHOTOS

as they emerge in a strip from the print machine:

- Ken and Hideki in front of the Gamble House in Pasadena.
- Ken and Hideki at Clifton's Cafeteria.
- Emoretta, in bed, wearing a diaphanous negligee.

EXT. LAUREL CANYON BLVD. - DAY - SWANN

in his Lincoln, paused at the light as he heads steeply uphill from Sunset. He shuffles through the deck of photographs.

- More cheesecake shots of Emoretta.
- Ken and Hideki in front of Mann's Chinese Theater.
- Hideki in front of the Watts Towers.
- Hideki in front of the Watts Towers, another angle.
- Hideki, his arm wrapped around one of the Towers.

FULL ON THE LINCOLN

As Swann executes a serious high-speed U-turn, across three lanes of traffic, pointing his car back downhill. As he floors the accelerator, he steers with one hand, using the other to remove the false moustache.

EXT. WATTS TOWERS - DUSK

Sam Rodia's magnificent, homemade monument. Glittering spires fashioned of smashed crockery, pot shards, bottlecaps, small mirrors, all embedded in cement around an armature of rusted structural steel.

Swann, some distance away, by the abandoned railroad tracks, keeping a low profile. Using an old, comfortable pair of binoculars, he scans the towers patiently, as if he's been waiting a long time, and is prepared to wait a lot longer.

A solitary guard locks the gate, locks the door to the shedlike Towers Museum, gets into an old, battered Camaro.

Now it's just past sundown.

Abruptly a black Honda Prelude SI with tinted windows, black bumpers, black wheel skirts, slides to a halt in front of the entrance.

Gondo Ken, in a black karate outfit, gets out of the Honda, scales the fence with a practiced ease, disappears over the top. Within moments, Ken is scaling Tower 2.

Swann gets out of his Lincoln, closes the door quietly.

Swann looks at the fence, deciding whether to duplicate Ken's agile leap. Thinking the better of it, he extracts a thin piece of metal from his breast pocket, and goes to work on the

padlock. As he works the lock he glances up, from moment to moment, at the Tower.

SWANN'S POV: what seems to be Ken, still atop the Tower.

The lock spans open. Swann carefully opens the gate-- Only to find himself staring at a barechested Gondo Ken. Staring, in fact, down the barrel of the matte black Heckler & Koch.

Looking up, to the top of the tower, he realizes that what he's been looking at is Ken's karate shirt, flapping in the wind.

Ken throws Swann a pair of handcuffs.

KEN

A taste, if you will, of your own medicine, yes? Fasten yourself to the tower please.

Carefully, Ken takes two steps forward, cuffs Swann's other wrist to the iron armature.

KEN (CONT'D)

My apologies. I killed that smarmy Frenchman when the person I should have killed is you. I should have done it years ago. In fact, if my father had killed your parents before you were born, it would have spared the world a great many tears.

SWANN

I think you are making a mistake.

KEN

Your men kill my father. They leave me for dead. They throw my lover out the window. There's a warrant out for my arrest and my best Matsuda sport jacket is in a hotel room I can't go back to. Some kind of mistake? I don't think so.

SWANN

I wish I had known. I would have brought your jacket.

KEN

In the old days, when a man behaved as you had, we would show him photographs of an arousing nature. And then, when his penis was erect, jam a thin glass rod down the slit. A couple of blows with a hammer was sufficient to shatter that glass rod into hundreds of small, painful fragments. Of which the man would be aware, for the rest of his life, every time he'd urinate. Unless, of course, he chose to end the agony by cutting off his own cock.

Swann, listening.

KEN (CONT'D)

These are not the old days. I will content myself, quite simply, with your death. And with the pleasure that you will never get your hands on the chip, Mr. Fantômas.

With his left hand, Ken holds up a small object, no larger than a tie pin.

SWANN

My name is Charles Swann. The person you call Fantômas retired, twenty-five years ago. I am sorry about your father, whom I never had the pleasure of meeting, and about your woman friend. But I had nothing to do with their deaths, nothing at all.

With great contempt, Ken flings, at his feet, the bloodstained FANTÔMAS business card with the "0" shot through.

KEN

I had thought you were evil. Now I see what you really are. Which is: a coward.

Squeezing the grips, he cocks the automatic, pumping a round into the chamber.

KEN (CONT'D)

In the name of my father.

Ken takes steady aim. Swann gazes implacably into the face of his assassin.

We hear someone whistling: the syncopated triplets of the main theme, Bach's Sixth Cello Suite. A shot rings out. A ricochet's nasty whine, as a section of the Tower's fragile mosaic explodes into dust.

Abruptly Ken falls to the ground, dead-- As Swann stares in amazement.

Swann looks up to see Lem Hardt, smoke wafting upward from the muzzle of a CZ-75. Lem walks over to the felled body of Gondo Ken, and prizes from the lifeless left hand the small object which cost the lives of Gondo Hideki, Juve, Emoretta, now Ken.

Taking his time, Lem turns his gun toward Swann. For the second time in less than a minute, Swann faces the end of the line.

LEM

Look at it this way. If I hadn't shown up, you'd already be dead.

Lem takes aim. But before he can fire, a figure, backlit by the headlights of a white Rolls Royce, calls out to him.

HOLLYWOOD

Hold.

Hollywood walks over to the foot of the tower.

SWANN'S POV - A BEARDED FIGURE

his features half-seen in the harsh backlighting.

Swann, squinting, finds the face tantalizingly familiar.

HOLLYWOOD (CONT'D)

Not yet.

Hollywood chokes: a paroxysm of coughing. Covers his hand with his mouth.

Swann watches them walk away. Something in Hollywood's voice-- and gesture--is frighteningly familiar.

FOLLOWING LEM AND HOLLYWOOD

LEM

We take it down to the lab, have the guys dissect it, draw diagrams, put it into production--

HOLLYWOOD

With our own, um, "improvements," of course.

LEM

Of course.

They get into the white Rolls.

SWANN

watches as it turns away, north, leaving the ghetto. And then he gazes at his own manacled hands.

SWANN

(to himself)

I should be dead. Why am I not dead?

He gazes at the damage to the tower, where a section of the crockery mosaic has been blown away by Lem's hollow-point bullet.

SWANN (CONT'D)

Vandals.

And then Swann, who's been holding his thin lockpick in his mouth, goes to work on the handcuffs.

INT. SWANN'S KITCHEN - MORNING - SWANN

pouring water through a coffee filter full of freshly ground beans. We hear the sound of water running somewhere else in the house. Swann continues pouring with a gentle circular motion, quite rapt.

Nora enters, hair wet. Swann takes a second bowl from the shelf, heats up some milk.

SWANN

These were your mother's bowls. She and her father used to drink out of them, every morning, on the Rue Mouffetard.

Nora begins to read the newspaper.

SWANN (cont'd)

It is a street with cobblestones, a market street, very old, in the fifth arrondissement. You should go there some day, take a look.

NORA

It's Monday. You always said that the flannel cakes at Musso's were at their best on Mondays.

SWANN

I am little tired today. I think I will stay in and read.

Swann pours the milk and coffee, twin-handed. And reaches for the paper.

SWANN (cont'd)

The young man Eddie. More spunk than Mr. Killer Bee, but still, too young I think. Throw him back. Here. Your mother's bowl.

NORA

I am twenty-four years old. I make my own living. I have a postdoctoral fellowship--

SWANN

--and you do not want me running your social life.

She looks at him.

SWANN (cont'd)

What you do not understand-- How fragile life is. How vulnerable. Your mother, may she rest in peace--

Nora flings her coffee bowl across the room.

NORA

You sit in that goddam chair and all I hear about--

(beat)

Mother. Mother.

She walks quickly about the room.

NORA (cont'd)

This is America! You can breathe! You can--
Walk outside!

(beat)

It's not Sarajevo! It's not--

(spat out:)

Dien Bien Phu!

Calmly, deliberately, without any fuss at all, Swann picks up the shards of the broken bowl, places them on a sheet of newspaper, trying to make them fit. He's good with his hands-- But the fragments are just too small.

SWANN

If something were to happen to you. I would never rest.

NORA

Oh, Jesus.

SWANN

A father's duty is to protect his family. Someday, you will understand this.

NORA

Someday, when I have children of my own?

Swann's eye is caught by something in the newspaper.

SWANN'S POV - THE NEWSPAPER, BUSINESS SECTION

A story about industrialist Victor Hollywood, conglomerateur extraordinaire. Hollywood, the article says, has just tendered an offer for another company, this one called Infotech, a microchip manufacturing plant in Carson. The photo features Hollywood smiling broadly, waving his raised right hand arm in a "V" of victory.

ON THE PHOTO - CLOSER

The smiling, bearded face. You can almost see it silhouetted by the white Rolls headlights, uttering offhandedly the words that spared--*for that moment*--Swann's life.

NORA (cont'd)
And now am I supposed have those children, if
you won't let me leave the house?

CLOSER ON THE PHOTO

of Victor Hollywood. His gesture: V for victory. V for Victor.

NORA (CONT'D)
I have to get to work.

SWANN
I can fix breakfast for myself, thank you.

We watch Swann's face as he recalls where he last saw that particular gesture. A few days back, in a downtown alleyway, the final silent words of Theophile Juve.

On the television monitor, the anchorwoman is introducing a story. Last night's murder, it seems. With live coverage from the Watts Towers.

SWANN (cont'd)
Just worry about yourself.

INT. HIDDEN ROOM - DAY - SWANN

Once again among his Fantômas objects. The opera cape. The cane. The classic paraphernalia.

We watch him finger the objects, one by one, as if each one held its own special poignance.

And then, like a Samurai preparing for battle, Swann takes up the black moire silk mask. He wraps it around his face, for the first time in 25 years. It fits, exactly: the mask's slits coinciding perfectly with his steely eyes, slightly moist now, gazing into the middle distance.

On a high shelf: the fragments of Céline's broken bowl, not quite fitted together-- Something from another time.

EXT. VICTOR HOLLYWOOD'S ESTATE - MALIBU - NIGHT

The pleasure dome, main entrance. The formal gate, of wrought iron, has, dead-center, Hollywood's monogram: a Bauhaus-style

H

Behind a topiary hedge is a very serious electrified fence, topped with concertina wire, surveilled by video cameras. We see Swann's Lincoln convertible, top down, empty, largely concealed by the dense cliffside shrubbery. A little further along: a small hole dug beneath the chain-link. And just beyond, a bowing of the electrified wire, just wide enough for person to squeeze through.

On the mansion, one wall of which is being scaled by a just visible figure. All in black, Fantômas mask wrapped tightly around his face, Swann moves from handhold to handhold, slowly upward. His body is sixty-odd years old; but as if the ring and the mask granted him a special grace he moves without hesitation.

We begin to hear the sound of VOICES from inside the mansion.

INT. HOLLYWOOD'S BOARDROOM - NIGHT

The room from which Hollywood conducts his business. One entire wall is filled, floor to ceiling, with television monitors. In the middle of the room is a large circular desk of ebony and rosewood, equipped with built-in phones and terminals. We begin to get a sense of the reach of Hollywood's empire.

Around the circumference: three of Hollywood's most trusted associates, all eyes directed inward, to the circle's dead center, in which is a large red leather chair. The dealer's spot. At the moment occupied by Victor Hollywood, in a nylon jogging jacket, terrycloth sweatbands around his wrists, like any Beverly Hills mogul working from home.

On his right hand, in the power spot and not by accident, is LEM HARDT. To his left is a smarmy yes-man, ELLIOT WEST. Across the table: WARREN SIROTA, chief wonk, technical division.

HOLLYWOOD

It would be possible, in this situation, to get something for nothing. To use the weakness of others to our own clever advantage. That would be the way of the fox.

West grins, perhaps a bit too smugly, thinking he's won.

HOLLYWOOD (cont'd)

The times, however--

Lem, triumphant.

EXT. MANSION - NIGHT - SWANN

hanging from a rope as he works his way up to a partly open third-story window. There is a light mist of sweat on his face, as he starts to show exertion for the first time.

HOLLYWOOD (VO)
--call for the lion.

INT. HOLLYWOOD'S BOARDROOM - AS BEFORE

SIROTA
What we have in the vault upstairs is four generations beyond current Intel product. Let's call it an 80986: a Novium.

WEST
Forgive me-- but we can't be the only people who'll be manufacturing this thing.

HOLLYWOOD
Just the first. And the only ones to implant, within the CPU itself, some rather special features.

One of the video monitors along the far wall is now displaying a shot of the exterior of the mansion. There is a slight disturbance in the video picture, barely discernible, just at the threshold of what we can perceive.

EXT. MANSION - NIGHT

A black-clad figure against the black night, lifting himself, feet-first, through an upper-story window.

INT. BOARDROOM - AS BEFORE

HOLLYWOOD
We can hide a gigabyte of ROM--our ROM-- invisibly, within.

He begins to pace

HOLLYWOOD (cont'd)
It tells the CPU to use the sound card as a microphone. To monitor the static deflection caused by light falling on the CRT. In short: this chip transmits. An eye and ear in every office-- Some bedrooms too, I would imagine.

Obligatory laughter.

HOLLYWOOD (cont'd)

We have a pilot program in place. We've put the ROM in some five thousand television sets, mostly hotels. Mr. Sirota, if you will--
Could you access number One one three one?

The number clearly was not picked at random. Because on the video monitors, we can see the picture (blurry) and hear the sounds (quite clear) of a fat, middle-aged man, tied to a bed, being whipped by a young woman in a black lace bustier.

HOLLYWOOD (CONT'D)

Each installation currently costs us eighteen thousand dollars. With the chip, twenty-three cents apiece. "At certain points, a change in quantity becomes a change in quality."
Unquote Karl Marx. Or was it Scary Spice? I get them confused.

Obligatory laughter, led by West.

INT. HOLLYWOOD'S MASTER BATHROOM - NIGHT

Somewhat smaller than Dodger Stadium. Clean white tile, floor to ceiling, exercise machines, sauna, steam, a sunken bathtub you could do laps in. Swann treads the tiles with an extraordinarily light step, making no noise whatsoever.

Along the ceiling, at various points, are sound sensors, part of the alarm system-- Which, one by one, Swann plugs with silly putty.

On the wall is a framed Salvador Dali oil painting: melting watches in a surreal landscape, encased in Plexiglas against water damage.

Swann notices a video camera in the corner trained directly on the painting. And turns on the shower, hot, full blast.

INT. BOARDROOM - AS BEFORE

The video display. One of the screens shows the Dali, which BLURS TO GREY as the condensation from the shower mists up the lens.

INT. THE BATHROOM - AS BEFORE - SWANN

notices a thin beam of laser-light, at eye level, crossing the room inches in front of the Dali. Swann thinks for just a moment, then picks up a hand-mirror from the sink, and a small compact disc player from the bathtub's edge.

Swann's elegant, capable fingers locate the laser arm, bend it upward. He places the CD player in front of the portrait, positioning it with supreme care. With one confident flourish, Swann pulls the hand-mirror down into the alarm-beam at a 45° angle.

The electric eye at the end of the tiled wall is now receiving not the alarm-beam, but the laser-light from the CD, bounced off of the mirror.

The Dali now unprotected, Swann slides it upwards, to reveal the dial of a sunken wall safe.

INT. BOARDROOM - AS BEFORE

HOLLYWOOD

There's another feature within the chip which bears some mention. It's the one which flashes subliminal messages to anyone watching television, or working at a personal computer. You know: EAT AT JOE'S. Or maybe, VOTE FOR VICTOR.

ASSISTANT #2

Contraindications?

Lem shrugs.

ASSISTANT #2 (CONT'D)

Downside?

HOLLYWOOD

Well, this wouldn't exactly be the best time for the newspapers to be looking into my past.

INT. BATHROOM - AS BEFORE - SWANN

has attached an electromagnet to the outside of the safe door. Now he reaches into his black coat for a vial of iron filings, which he throws at the safe. The filings stick. Now, as Swann's practiced hands work the combination lock, the filings re-align in complex moire patterns. Swann is all concentration, gazing intently at the patterns as they tell him which way to twist the dial.

ON SWANN - TIGHT

just his eyes, through the Fantômas mask.

INT. BOARDROOM - AS BEFORE

HOLLYWOOD

The only people who might talk about that, ah, part of my history are in this room. With two exceptions. The one, as you know, is the Chancellor, of, what's that country?

The laughter comes more easily now.

HOLLYWOOD (cont'd)

The other is an old, old friend. And in a manner of speaking--

On the video monitors: as the bathroom condensation evaporates from the camera lens, we see, quite unmistakably, the figure of Charles Swann, black clothes and black mask, bent before the wall safe.

INT. SECURITY ROOM - NIGHT

The alarm lights begin to flash. At the big desk PROCTOR GEORGE, Hollywood's white-haired head of security, whispers orders into his phone handset.

George's security team--three GOONS in 3-piece pinstripes, with gold "VH" medallions pinned to their pockets--pick up their Uzis and begin to fan out. (It's what the Secret Service would look like, if Bijan were elected President.)

INT. BOARDROOM - AS BEFORE

HOLLYWOOD

--I've already sent for him.

The progress of the security team, as followed on four different monitors.

Hollywood is standing now, speaking into a hand-held mike, in front of the wall of video monitors, like a rockstar, or a karaoke singer.

HOLLYWOOD (CONT'D)

(into the microphone)

Silence, gentlemen. Speed, order, silence. No one shoots, no one gets hurt.

EXT. CORRIDOR - JUST OUTSIDE THE BATHROOM DOOR

An Uzi, separated from Swann's head by six inches and a wooden door. Two more guns, cocked with a thin, metallic "click," trained on the door.

INT. BATHROOM - AS BEFORE - SWANN

working the safe. We watch his fingers, and the almost abstract display of iron filings, shifting this way and that.

Swann is a model of composure. He is staring at the safe, as if he could open it by the force of his gaze alone.

Then, as if in response, the safe opens! Inside: A thick stack of yellowing envelopes (love letters?) bound in wine-red ribbon. An exquisite diamond and platinum necklace. And a small black chip--the Novium--the size and shape of a tie tack.

Swann grabs the necklace.

And changes posture entirely, as if the air had been let out of him. One moment before, he was a man of pride and elegance; now he seems old, and defeated. There is a tremble in his reach as he takes the chip.

With what's left of his energy, Swann reaches up, pulls the putty from one of the "hidden" microphones. Unties his silk mask, uses it to wipe the condensation from the monitor camera. And looks directly into the lens.

INT. BOARDROOM - THE MONITORS

all of them now carrying the same image. Swann, repeated and repeated, 24 pairs of eyes staring balefully down.

SWANN

You son of a bitch.

We see him turn his back on the camera in a gesture of utter contempt.

INT. BATHROOM - AS BEFORE - SWANN

walks away from the camera. And then, in one swift, elegant sweep, grabs the electromagnet from the safe and clamps it to the videocamera which has been monitoring him.

INT. BOARDROOM - THE MONITORS

Complete pointillist static.

HOLLYWOOD
 (into the microphone)
 Hold him!

INT. UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR - NIGHT - THE SECURITY SQUAD

breaks the bathroom door.

INT. THE BATHROOM

No Swann. They rush to the open window.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD'S MANSION - NIGHT

Swann, slowly lowering himself by rope down to the lawn. A spotlight hits and holds.

Above him, the three security guards, guns trained. Below: Proctor George, his Uzi trained steadily on the descending figure.

Hollywood emerges from the mansion.

PROCTOR GEORGE
 "No violator lives to talk." Your rule, Mr.
 Hollywood.

HOLLYWOOD
 Don't be an ass.

George looks at Hollywood. Lowers his gun, walks away. Signals his men to do the same.

Swann takes his time; then, with a flourish, drops the last six or so feet to the ground, landing like a cat.

CLOSE ON SWANN AND HOLLYWOOD

It's just the two of them now.

HOLLYWOOD (CONT'D)
 Fantômas.

SWANN
 Mabuse.

HOLLYWOOD
 Friends call me Victor.

Swann says nothing.

HOLLYWOOD (cont'd)
 Climbing up the sides of buildings. At your
 age.

(beat)
 You could have gotten yourself--

Swann just stares. His face has never been more full of hatred
 than it is at this moment.

Finally:

SWANN
 The necklace is the one I gave to Céline on
 our anniversary. You have no right to it.

HOLLYWOOD
 "Right"?

SWANN
 She was wearing it the night she died.

Hollywood says nothing.

SWANN (cont'd)
 When the police pulled her car. From the
 bottom of the lake. It was never found.

HOLLYWOOD
 I guess I got there first.

SWANN
 What could it possibly mean to you?

HOLLYWOOD
 The necklace for the chip.

Swann holds the chip in his palm, contemplates, then hands it
 over. Hollywood gives him the necklace.

SWANN
 I owe you nothing now.

They look at each other.

HOLLYWOOD
 I miss her too.

The remark is too much for Swann to bear. All control gone, he
 leaps on Hollywood, hands around the other's neck.

We have never seen Swann with so little restraint. It is truly frightening.

SWANN

How did she die? Dammit! How did she die?

Within moments, the GUARDS have separated them.

Hollywood stands there, slightly bruised, breathing heavily, suppressing his cough. Swann's hair disheveled, and his impeccable starched white shirtfront is missing a stud.

HOLLYWOOD

You tell me.

Swann is frozen.

HOLLYWOOD (cont'd)

You wouldn't let her go. You wouldn't let her live. She was dying inside and you didn't even see. And when she made her choice--

SWANN

I don't want to hear this!

HOLLYWOOD

You never have.

The two men stare at each other for the longest while. Proctor George walks slowly up to Hollywood.

PROCTOR GEORGE

My turn?

HOLLYWOOD

No.

Hollywood brushes the grass and dirt off his shoulder. His face is thin, drawn. He's been triumphant in presenting the news to his associate, victorious against Swann-- But you wouldn't know it from his face, which registers no joy.

Just a dry cough.

HOLLYWOOD (cont'd)

Leave him his dignity.

FOLLOWING SWANN

as, courtesy of Hollywood, he walks back to his car. He's limping slightly. And his shoulders have a stoop we've not seen before. As if, for the first time, he's been defeated.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD MANSION - NIGHT - SWANN

Guns the motor of the '61 Lincoln and zooms off, heading south, down the Pacific Coast Highway.

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - TOWARD DAWN

The Lincoln turns inland, up the winding roads, toward Mulholland.

INT. SWANN'S SECRET ROOM - DAWN

Swann, taking from his watch pocket the microchip-- The real Novium, not the dress-shirt stud he handed to Hollywood. He puts it in the drawer. And lets his fingers run, listlessly, across the necklace...

His reverie is interrupted by the high whistle--from the kitchen upstairs--of a teakettle.

EXT. NORA'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Swann and Nora, having tea and pastry, eating off a breakfast-in-bed tray that Swann has carried into his daughter's room. He's dressed; she's still in bed, in a long white flannel nightgown. Outside the window the sky is blue, the clouds fluffy and white, the air transparent. One of those days, you understand why someone might want to live in Los Angeles.

She sips at her tea. Then:

NORA
How did you meet?

SWANN
"How"?

NORA
Just-- Just, the "how."

SWANN
Ahh. Well.
(beat)
There are many ways of telling the story--

NORA
Tell this one.

SWANN
More tea?

Then:

SWANN (cont'd)

It starts with a book. An extraordinary book. Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea. The first Hetzel edition. Leather, and gold leaf, and each signature sewn by hand. You have never seen such beautiful work. You look at the cover, and you know, that the world is inside, just waiting to be opened up.

ON NORA

Taking this all in.

SWANN (cont'd)

I saw it at a bookstall, a *bouquiniste*, on the left bank of the Seine. I would visit-- Many times. It was priced fairly, for what it was, but well beyond the means of someone such as I.

Nora takes a cube of sugar, lifts it with delicate silver tongs, drops it carefully into her tea.

SWANN (cont'd)

Then I could stand it no more. I went back one day, at closing time to--
(Choosing his word carefully:)
Obtain the book. And--
(beat)
It was gone. The book to the right, the book to the left, and in between-- Air.

He leans back, his eyes lost in reverie.

SWANN (cont'd)

All the bookseller could tell me, is that it had been purchased, a scant hour previous, by a beautiful, intelligent charming young woman. The most enchanting woman, he'd ever met in his life.
(beat)
He knew not where she lived, or what she did-- Nor her last name. Just-- That she called herself Céline.

He puts his hand on that of his daughter. A small, fugitive gesture: *but it's the first time we've seen them touch.*

SWANN (cont'd)

Céline. Six letters. All I had to go on.
(beat)
I wandered the city of Paris, my mind on fire. Céline. Céline. At dawn, scanning the lines
(MORE)

SWANN(cont'd)

at the boulangeries. The museums, the parks,
by day. Twilight, haunting every bohemian
café a woman who loved Jules Verne might go.

(beat)

Nothing.

A beat. Then:

NORA

You looked all your life. Circled the globe.
And never found her.

(beat)

"The end."

Swann actually laughs.

SWANN

Of course I found-- Of course we found each
other.

(beat)

Quai Henri IV, on the île de la Cité. Where
the Seine splits in two. You look up, and you
see the Pont Neuf. You look out, and you see--
The world. I was there, beneath the bridge on
my way from-- An appointment. It was July.
The skies, as they will, opened up. From
bright sun, to conflagration, in the blink of
an eye.

He looks out to the canyons, the city beyond.

SWANN (cont'd)

A young woman, about to get soaked. Me, with
a green umbrella, large enough for two. Just
that--

(beat)

Simple.

As her father talks, Nora's eyes begin to gleam-- To glisten.

Swann's gaze is elsewhere:

SWANN (cont'd)

We walked. I introduced myself. She
responded in kind. And when she said, just
like that, I still hear it, when she said--

(beat)

Moi, je m'appelle Céline.

(beat)

Well, I knew it was her.

He fusses with his cloth napkin. Wiping, with great delicacy,
every last crumb from his mouth.

SWANN (cont'd)

And, of course, it was.

He looks up. To discover that...
 ...in a restrained and utterly silent way...
 ...his daughter is crying.

SWANN (cont'd)
 Nora. Nora.

She says nothing.
 The tears fall, silently, down her face.

SWANN (cont'd)
 More tea?

A beat. Then:

SWANN (cont'd)
 I can-- Show you the book?

ON SWANN

not realizing that of all the things he could have said...
 ...this offers, by far, the least comfort.

ON NORA

staring, at her father; and then, past him--
 --as, head down, he walks out of the room.

EXT. SAN JUAN BAUTISTA - DAY

A Catholic mission in the old style. From the adobe tower, a bell tolls sonorously.

INT. SAN JUAN BAUTISTA - DAY

An old-style Mission interior, dark light streaming in through stained-glass windows. At the altar, an aged priest, FATHER BARRAGAN, is reading from a typed manuscript.

In the audience--perhaps five people. Among them: Eddie, in a second-hand black-on-blue sharkskin suit, Kennedy-era.

BARRAGAN
 --to the rank of Chief Inspector. Not an honorific given lightly. And what did Theophile Juve do with this lofty position? Did he accept the quotidian graft which, in
 (MORE)

BARRAGAN(cont'd)

that day, was the daily bread of the inspector? Did he look the other way?

He shakes his head balefully: *no*.

BARRAGAN (cont'd)

Instead, he selflessly devoted his life to the pursuit of those spidery criminals too dangerous, too evil for others to pursue. The insidious Fu Manchu. The heinous Mabuse. And perhaps blackest of all, Fantômas.

Nora, dressed in black, enters the church tentatively. And seats herself in the back row.

BARRAGAN (cont'd)

Many times he came near to meting out the justice these archcriminals so richly deserved. In 1961, he did what no other policeman, before or since, has ever done: he apprehended Fantômas. That villain's subsequent escape--from the very neckrest of the guillotine--in no way casts shadow upon Theophile Juve's unique achievement.

Barragan takes a hasty gulp from a glass of "water." Eddie looks back to see Nora.

BARRAGAN (cont'd)

After his retirement from the Sûreté Nationale, Theophile Juve made his home in Los Angeles, where his generosity and sunny disposition brightened the day of all those with whom he came in contact. Never one to dwell on the past, this man, this father, this citizen--

EXT. SAN JUAN BAUTISTA - DAY

As eight hired pallbearers carry the coffin containing the remains of Theophile Juve down to the cemetery. Behind them, the mourners, all three of them: Eddie, Nora, and Father Barragan.

NORA

I came because my father wouldn't.

Eddie says nothing.

One of the pallbearers, a frail old man, seems to stumble. Eddie taps him on the shoulder, takes his place. As he steps aside, we see that the frail old man is, in fact, THE DOCTOR.

NORA (CONT'D)

These priests are always so-- Florid.

Eddie hands Barragan an envelope full of money. Barragan hands Eddie the typescript.

EDDIE
I wrote it.

NORA
(genuine:)
I'm sorry--

EDDIE
The way I look at he-- He should get the kind of speech he would have wanted.

NORA
What was all that arch-criminal stuff? All that-- Mabuse? Fantômas?

EDDIE
You don't know, do you?

Nora shakes her head.

They walk, three steps, in silence. Then:

NORA
Are you okay?

EDDIE
I'm fine.

NORA
Are you--

EDDIE
I'm fine.
(beat)
You know how they say, he was like a father to me? Well, my father--
(beat)
He wasn't.

She looks at him. Takes his hand. Presses it.

EDDIE (CONT'D)
Do you ever miniature golf?

As he talks, we notice the pallbearer directly in front of Eddie.

EDDIE (cont'd)
There's a really great course out at Oxnard. One side is castles--

An old man, with a fully white beard and a black flat-brimmed hat which covers most of his face.

EDDIE (cont'd)
--the other: windmills.

We can see what Eddie can't: that the pallbearer is Mr. Charles Swann.

EXT. GRAVESITE - DAY

By the side of the grave is Mr. Victor Hollywood, thin and pale. He's surrounded by three bodyguards and a video crew. As the funeral cortege approaches, Hollywood is making good eye contact with the local news reporter.

HOLLYWOOD
When I came to this town, I did not know a soul in California. And thanks to the kindness of ordinary citizens, like Mister Juve, may he rest in peace, I was able to begin to do business. When there was no reason to give me the time of day, Mister Juve paid attention. Today, it would be just as easy to stay home, gaze at the Pacific. But he was there for me, and now it's my turn to come through for him...

The pallbearers approach. As he catches sight of Hollywood, Swann's face, beneath the false beard, tightens with tension.

The Doctor whispers in Swann's ear.

THE DOCTOR
We have our rules about funerals. Always have. You know that.

Swann says nothing.

THE DOCTOR (cont'd)
Besides, it would be suicide.

ON THE GRAVE

As they lower the casket into the ditch. Father Barragan takes another gulp from his flask, recites his prayers in Latin. Hollywood bows his head. Swann throws a small bouquet of red roses on top of the casket, which is quickly covered up with a spadeful of dirt. Soon nothing is visible of the remains of Theophile Juve.

Hollywood lingers with the news reporters.

HOLLYWOOD

Hey, Larry. Here's one. Frenchman walks into a bar. He says, "What eez eet, ze polar bear?" Bartender says--

Swann, hearing Hollywood, misses a step.

One by one, the mourners walk off. Except for Eddie and Nora, who walk off together.

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - DAY

Nora's Volvo, heading south.

INT. NORA'S VOLVO - DAY

Nora driving, Eddie, feet up on the dash, looking for a good station on the radio. He finds one--loud rock'n'roll--but it's clear, from the expression on Nora's face, that she doesn't like it. Eddie listens until the chorus, then turns it down.

EDDIE

You don't like it.

NORA

No.

Finally:

EDDIE

He chopped up everything in my goddam place--

NORA

That's father.

EDDIE

--except for the guitar.

NORA

Good thing you both like music.

INT. CLIFTON'S CAFETERIA - DAY

A cavernous cafeteria in downtown LA, complete with indoor waterfall, a stuffed moose, and a fairy-tale cottage overlooking the imitation forest. The customers have seen better days. Swann and The Doctor fit right in.

SWANN

You call me sentimental? What were you doing there?

THE DOCTOR

Paying respects. And protecting an old friend.

SWANN

I can take care of myself just fine, thank you.

THE DOCTOR

Can you? Can you scale walls? Do you speak Japanese? Would you know what to do with a Novium chip were one to fall into your hands?

SWANN

I can scale a wall.

The Doctor stirs his tea.

SWANN (cont'd)

And if the Novium were to fall into my hands, I would know what to do with it.

THE DOCTOR

Which is?

SWANN

I would enfold it within the petals of the reddest rose I could find. And I would take that rose and place, it, with others of its kind, on the grave of the only man I have ever been able to trust.

THE DOCTOR

You mean police-man.

The Doctor rises with the help of a bamboo cane. He walks swiftly towards the door.

THE DOCTOR (cont'd)

In my office. When you came to consult me. I gave you a warning about stupidity. I give it to you again. A third warning is something I would not give, not even to my mother. Not even to my grandmother, who was the most talented, intelligent, gracious woman who ever walked the face of the earth.

EXT. SWANN'S HOUSE - DAY

The garden, in bright sunlight. One of those days, when you understand why people moved to Los Angeles.

NORA

in her white entomological garb, watching a wolf spider spin a web, segment by segment, around a dual octagonal armature.

NORA (VO)

Spiders may crawl quite a distance, several miles, before finding food. The successful forager returns, and spins a new kind of web, very specific. It's a figure eight, a diagonal run with a loop to either side.

She makes notations, in her notebook, captioning her drawings in lucid, Palmer-method script.

NORA (cont'd) (VO) (cont'd)

A web of-- Direction. Enabling his brothers to locate the prey. Enabling them-- To survive.

(beat)

But how? How does the special web tell them which way, and how far to go?

NORA'S POV

The largest WOLF SPIDER, in the center of the web.

NORA (cont'd) (VO) (cont'd)

I once said to my father, I asked him, "Why are you retired?" I said, "Most men, at sixty, are still working." He looked at me. And he said:

The spider spins out his signal.

NORA (cont'd) (VO) (cont'd)

"Most men, at sixty, are dead. Have been. All their lives."

Nora. Watching.

NORA (cont'd)

Then he stopped, as if he'd--

(beat)

Heard his own voice.

EXT. EDDIE'S ALLEYWAY - DAY

Eddie's car, the primer-gray Trans-Am, is propped up on concrete blocks: one very cool paperweight. RUBEN GONSALVES, 6'2", 270 pounds, has a friendly but authoritative arm around Eddie's shoulders.

EXT. DELONGPRE STREET - DAY - RUBEN'S PICKUP TRUCK

cruises slowly down a run-down residential street, just below Sunset, between Highland and Cahuenga, in the heart of Hollywood's random murder district. Ruben is driving, Eddie's riding shotgun. The back of the pickup is filled with wire-mesh grocery carts. A bumper sticker reads:

**HOW AM I DRIVING?
DIAL 1-800-EAT-SHIT**

Ruben scans the sidewalks for bounty. Seeing something, he slams on the brakes.

RUBEN
Let's make money.

With a great show of reluctance, Eddie drags his tired ass out of the cab. He grabs a shopping cart that's sitting idly on the sidewalk, hoists it up into the back of the pickup, gets back in the cab.

EDDIE
How come you always drive?

RUBEN
Because it's my truck. How come you always so lazy?

Ruben stops the truck again, waiting for Eddie to notice another Ralph's cart. It takes a while.

RUBEN (CONT'D)
You slow today, dude.

Ruben extends his arm magisterially to the cart Eddie seems bent on ignoring. Ruben stares him down. Finally Eddie jumps out of the cab, and wrangles the cart.

EDDIE
(shouting)
Ruben? Can I borrow the truck tonight, my car's a little out of tune you know--

Ruben, in the cab of the pickup, has heard this before. Many times.

RUBEN
(to himself)
Fucking white boys with their fucking muscle cars.

The truck turns left on Las Palmas, past a bunch of run-down Hollywood bungalows. There are some little kids playing in the

street. They have captured a large spider, put it in a zip-loc sandwich bag. Now they are performing a science experiment, attempting to fry the imprisoned spider with a magnifying glass.

EXT. EDDIE'S STREET - DAY

As the pickup turns down the alleyway.

EDDIE

And then we play miniature golf, right? She's never even played before. Must have been beginner's luck or something, because--

Eddie sees something at the end of the alleyway. A black 1961 Lincoln convertible, top down.

EDDIE (cont'd)

--Shit!

RUBEN

'S'matter, dude?

EDDIE

Her father.

Eddie leaps from the truck. Runs down the alley, away from the car. And smack into the waiting Mr. Swann.

Ruben expertly backs the truck out toward the street.

RUBEN

(to himself)

In all probability--

(beat)

--didn't even get laid.

INT. EDDIE'S PLACE - DAY

A mess, as usual.

EDDIE

You remember something you forgot to smash?

Swann shakes his head.

EDDIE (cont'd)

I didn't touch her! I swear!

SWANN

You understand computers?

EDDIE

Yeah.

Swann throws him a roll of silvered gaffers tape, fast. Eddie catches it, one handed.

SWANN
Can you handle a roll of tape?

EDDIE
You bet.

SWANN
I got some work for you. Pays better than
wrangling grocery carts.

EDDIE
How much better?

EXT. SAN JUAN BAUTISTA - NIGHT - SWANN AND EDDIE

crouched behind an adobe buttress. Eddie is dressed in black denims and a black Nine Inch Nails T-shirt; Swann in his black evening tailcoat.

Eddie looks at his watch.

EDDIE
I feel like an asshole.

SWANN
Patience. The most difficult art, as my
friend The Doctor keeps reminding me. But
he'll show. And when he does--

Swann hands Eddie a matte black automatic pistol.

SWANN (CONT'D)
You know how to use this?

EDDIE
Of course.

SWANN
It's a Heckler & Koch. You squeeze the
handgrips to put the first round into the
chamber.

EDDIE
Absolutely.

SWANN
Its owner was the man I believe you met,
briefly, in the Café. The one who sang
"Heartbreak Hotel."

EDDIE

Did you kill him?

A beat. Then:

SWANN

He lived by the Yakuza code, and was not without honor. Your obligation is to use his handgun with respect.

The sound of an approaching car. Swann and Eddie stare down the roadway; and soon enough, the white Rolls Silver Shadow pulls up in front of the mission colonnade.

The driver, as Swann expected, is Lem Hardt. He is alone. He gets out of the car, a shovel in his right hand, and makes his way to the cemetery.

Swann waits until Lem starts to dig. Then he and Eddie approach. Eddie trains the gun.

SWANN (CONT'D)

The handgun that's pointed at you belonged to Gondo Ken. I'm sure that the bullet in the chamber has your name on it.

LEM

Let me get on the phone. I'm very liquid. One call to Geneva and you walk out of here with a truly astonishing fortune.

SWANN

Keep digging. A couple feet to your left.

LEM

You need an assistant? Ditch the kid. I'm ten times better than he'll ever be. I know it and you know it.

(gesturing towards Eddie)

He knows it.

The look on Eddie's face as he realizes that Lem is right, on all counts.

SWANN

A little deeper, please, and more to the left. Juve's grave is big enough for two. But it would hardly be right to ask him to share it, with you, for the rest of eternity. Hardly right at all.

LEM

You want to kill me? Okay. Kill me.

SWANN
That comes later.

A cruel smile plays across Swann's face. And he begins to whistle the theme, from Bach's Sixth Cello Suite.

SWANN (CONT'D)
Let us walk.

INT. HOLLYWOOD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Victor Hollywood, in his dressing gown, propped up in an adjustable hospital-style bed. He presses the volume control on the remote, and the room is filled with sounds: Swann's rendition of the cello suite. And three sets of footsteps.

LEM (VO)
(filtered)
I die? I die. Fuck you.

SWANN (VO)
(filtered)
One foot in front of the other. That's all you have to think about.

INT. MISSION TOWER STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Lem's hands are taped behind his back. Swann is holding the gun now, and leading Lem up to the top of the tower. Eddie follows.

They push open the hatch to the belltower crawlspace.

INT. BELL TOWER - NIGHT

At Swann's direction, Eddie is behind Lem, upside down, to the clapper of the large bell. Eddie, showing a giddy enthusiasm, crisscrosses Lem with gaffer's tape, as if lacing a sneaker.

LEM'S POV - THE TOWER, THE CLEAR NIGHT SKY, UPSIDE-DOWN

And the massive wall of the bell, just feet in front of him.

SWANN
(to Eddie)
I want you to go downstairs. And grab hold of the rope.

Eddie, carried away by the moment, bounds enthusiastically down the crawlspace hatch. Swann and Lem are quite alone.

SWANN (CONT'D)

I have not bothered a soul for twenty-five years. I want to know why you would not let me continue to live my life in peace.

LEM

Victor's decision.

SWANN

Why?

LEM

We're about to embark on something ambitious. The world in a bottle. The stopper in Victor's right hand. You know Victor. Know who he is. Could ruin it for us.

SWANN

(yelling down to Eddie)

Pull!

Lem starts to swing.

SWANN (CONT'D)

(to Lem)

If that's all you'd wanted, I'd be dead by now. The truth, Mr. Hardt.

LEM'S POV - THE BELL

coming nearer, farther, nearer, landscape streaming dizzily in the background.

LEM

He wanted you to come out and fight.

SWANN

(to Eddie)

More!

LEM

He said to me, "The trouble with Swann is, you can't defeat a broken man."

SWANN

(to Eddie)

Hold!

Lem continues swinging, in smaller arcs.

LEM

Let me go and we'll talk.

Swann shakes his head: *no*.

LEM (cont'd)
Victor wanted to make you pay. For what you did to Céline.

SWANN
I don't understand.

LEM
For not letting go. 'Til she had no room to breathe. 'Til the only place she could drive was off the edge of a cliff.

SWANN
What business of fucking Victor's?

LEM
Are you blind? You were married to the woman and you didn't know a thing about her, did you!

With a terrible, ferocious glee:

LEM (cont'd)
They were lovers!

SWANN
(to Eddie)
Pull dammit! Pull hard and don't stop!

LEM
Kill me, but it will not change a thing.

SWANN
You are a liar and a dead man.
(to Eddie)
Harder!

The clapper gazes the edge of the bell, which rings, somewhat tentatively.

LEM
You saw the letters!

The bell rings again, a little more loudly. And then the arcs seem, once more, to diminish. Silence.

LEM (CONT'D)
(intimately)
You're lying. You're lying to yourself.
(beat)
And you know it.

SWANN
(to Eddie)
Pull, dammit! What's the matter.

EDDIE

Unable to pull the rope.

SWANN

gives Lem one last contemptuous glance. And makes his way down the staircase.

INT. BELLTOWER BASE - AS BEFORE

As Swann arrives.

EDDIE

He'll die.

SWANN

That is the idea.

EDDIE

I've never killed anyone.

Swann's rage--at Lem, at Eddie, at himself--cannot be contained. He grabs Eddie, shoves him aside, sending him brutally across the stone floor. Then grabs the rope, pulling up, and down, with all his weight.

Swann is riding the rope now, gripping for life, face frozen in a wild grimace.

The bell rings. A long wait. Then a rhythmic clang, louder this time. And then a dull, sickening thud.

And another.

SWANN'S SHIRTFRONT

gleaming white, abruptly stained with the blood of Lem Hardt.

Another thud.

Swann tumbles to the floor, spent. Eddie, still winded, catching his breath a few feet to Swann's right.

EXT. SAN JUAN BAUTISTA - NIGHT

The white Rolls Royce Silver Shadow, license plate **ME IN MY**. Covered now with a fine spray of red.

The black 1961 Lincoln, two passengers, pulling out, heading back toward LA.

EXT. MULHOLLAND DRIVE - NIGHT - THE LINCOLN

navigating the curves. From time to time there is a break in the road frontage, and they turn a curve to see, sudden and unexpected, the nighttime city laid out before them.

Swann, driving. Eddie, in the passenger seat. Spattered with dirt and blood. And nothing to say to each other.

On impulse, Swann punches the radio button. The music comes up, loud, and a vocalist is howling.

VOICE

(on the radio)

*When there's no future, how can there be sin?/
We're the flowers in your dustbin/ We're the
poison in your human machine/ We're the
future: NO FUTURE!*

Swann's black mood begins lift a bit, and he gently taps his hand against the steering wheel, keeping time. Eddie cannot help but be charmed.

ON EDDIE

watching this well-dressed older man, mouthing the words faintly as he drives.

INT. HOLLYWOOD'S BEDROOM - AS BEFORE - NIGHT

Hollywood, propped up in bed, playing with the remote to his digitized sound sampler. Shuttling backward and forward, isolating a phrase here, a phrase there.

LEM (VO)

(filtered)

*Victor wanted to make you pay. Make you pay.
For what you did to Céline. To Céline.
Céline.*

SWANN (VO)

(filtered)

*What business of fucking Victor's? Of fucking
Victor's? Fucking Victor's.*

LEM (VO)

(filtered)

Lying to yourself. Lying. Lying.

Strangely, a faint smile flickers across his face as he listens to the last words of his right-hand man.

Hollywood reaches for the phone. He lifts it up with great effort, as if the receiver weighed several pounds.

HOLLYWOOD
 (into the phone)
 Call West, call Sirota. Tell them that Lemuel
 Hardt, like a son to me-- Tell them Lemuel
 Hardt, his work is done.

Hollywood barely manages to hang up before he is racked with a paroxysm of dry, painful coughing. The light of day is just beginning to filter through the window.

INT. SWANN'S SECRET ROOM - DAWN

Swann in his silk dressing robe, Eddie still in T-shirt and denims. Both inhaling Calvados from huge crystal snifters.

SWANN
 You were born-- when?

EDDIE
 May '77.

Swann grins.

SWANN
 Twenty-three years before you were born.
 Dien Bien Phu. You've seen-- Nothing quite
 like it.
 (beat)
 I was amazed, stunned, just to be alive. And
 not the slightest fucking idea what to do with
 that fact.
 (beat)
 Back in Paris, they sent me to La Santé
 prison, told me to prepare it for the arriving
 prisoners. It was, in theory, deserted. But
 down in the sub-basement, in the very last
 cell, was an old man. Name of Fantômas.

Swann hands Eddie a cigar, which Eddie lights, and makes the mistake of inhaling. When the coughing subsides:

SWANN (cont'd)
 Taught me things. Quite a lot, really. How to
 walk. How to climb.
 (beat)
 Disguise.
 (beat)
 How to get in and out. How to be seen, how
 not to.

Swann lights up, drifts into reverie.

SWANN (cont'd)

He showed me another life that could be mine.

Swann looks into the middle distance.

SWANN (cont'd)

Died in my arms. Gave me his ring. Rest is history.

EDDIE

(softly)

Wow.

SWANN

Found myself working, time to time, with an outfit called The Spiders. Me. The Doctor. Viktor Mabuse. Calls himself Victor Hollywood now. Appropriate. Sold everyone out, saved his own skin. Doesn't really matter. When we were together-- The brother I never had.

EDDIE

Mabuse. Is he going to kill us now?

SWANN

Everyone dies, Eddie. And the fear of death-- It is a terrible thing. If I teach you nothing else. Look what that fear did to your father. To Viktor. Even--

With his eyes, Swann follows the cigar smoke. Up to the shelf, to the fragments of Céline's bowl, not quite repaired.

SWANN (cont'd)

--to me.

Eddie says nothing. Finally:

EDDIE

Now we sit here and-- Wait? Tin ducks? Tin fucking amusement park ducks?

SWANN

I am close to those things which comfort me. Near my books. Among my memories. You are a young man with your life, it seems, in front of you.

Swann gestures toward the door.

SWANN (cont'd)

It's me he wants. You'll be safe.

Eddie just stares, not understanding why this sixty-year-old man, who scales walls, who likes rock'n'roll, who kills people, has become so sullen, so passive, so-- Defeated.

EDDIE

Great. Nora comes home. "Dad?" No dad.
Just a body, one the floor.

(beat)

That is how you show your love for your daughter?

SWANN

If she is my daughter.

Eddie almost doesn't know what Swann is talking about. He stares at Swann, not getting through.

There is nothing he can do to break the mood. Finally:

SWANN (CONT'D)

Go.

Eddie stands up.

SWANN (cont'd)

And take her with you.

Swann doesn't move. He stares off into space. It doesn't look as if he will ever move.

EDDIE

What the fuck is wrong with you?

SWANN

Every once in a while, you see too much.
Cannot forget. Cannot go home.

(beat)

It will do something to a man.

EXT. WOODROW WILSON DRIVE - DAY

Eddie, driving Ruben's pick-up, forty Ralph's carts in the back. Nora, in a flannel nightgown, still half asleep, still clutching her stuffed bear, is in the passenger seat.

EDDIE

He's given up. He doesn't want to live anymore.

NORA

He hasn't wanted to live for twenty years.

EDDIE

Maybe. But now-- They're going to kill him.

They? NORA

Hollywood. EDDIE

Hollywood? NORA

Viktor Hollywood. EDDIE

We know this? NORA

We know this. EDDIE

He looks at her.

She stares straight ahead.

NORA
It's not one of those things, where we can--
(beat)
Call the police?

INT. SECRET ROOM - DAY

As Swann stares off into space, something seems to brighten behind his eyes. Slowly at first-- And then he smiles, as if he's made a decision.

He gets up from the chair and, rummaging through his drawers, gathers material.

Singing to himself, an expression of weird contentment on his face, Swann pours gasoline on the floors, on the walls--

SWANN
(singing; to himself)
*"Stretching his immense shadow, across Paris
and across the world, who is this grey-eyed
spectre, rising from the mist? Fantômas,
could it be you, lurking among the rooftops?"*

Pouring deftly, from the wrist, as if sautéing mushrooms.

INT. TRUCK - AS BEFORE

NORA
Will you just tell me what's going on?

Eddie puts his arm around her shoulders, takes a deep breath.

EDDIE

Your father used to be a-- A jewel thief.
Named Fantômas. The one my father never
caught.

NORA

Your father--
(beat)
Was chasing my father.

EDDIE

More than half his life.

NORA

But they were friends--

Eddie just shakes his head.

NORA (CONT'D)

Who's Hollywood?

EDDIE

Hollywood used to be Mabuse and Charley used
to be Fantômas and Hollywood killed my father
and wants to kill your father and probably me
too-- And your father seems to have just
given up.

At once, Nora feels very far from home.

NORA

We have to help him.

Eddie thinks about this for a long time. Finally he seems to
have made up his mind; and he swings the truck around in an
abrupt, screeching U-turn.

They are on Woodrow Wilson, heading back toward the Swann house.
They head up a steep incline, the hill just before the house.

At once the sky seems a bright, an unnatural orange. A second
later, they hear the roar of flames.

Eddie slams on the brakes.

He and Nora jump out of the truck, scramble up to the top of the
incline.

They see the house, afire, completely out of control.

An explosion slams them back toward the truck.

The explosion rocks the ground, rocks the truck. Its rear gate pops open. And, one by one, the forty Ralph's carts begin making their way downhill.

Eddie grabs one, then another; Nora piles in; but there are just two people, and so many carts--

They stare helplessly at the explosion and reflexively--because it's the only thing they can do--grab for the carts. As if it would change anything.

And then Eddie and Nora grab each other, embrace, hold.

And eventually turn away from the flames, still licking the sky, to the procession of carts, making their noisy way down Lookout Mountain Pass, to the city below.

EDDIE

It's going to be all right.

He does not sound as if he believes what he is saying.

They cling to each other, and do not let go. Both of Nora's arms are tightly around Eddie. One hand grasps his shoulder; the other, her stuffed bear.

EXT. INFOTECH - NIGHT - TO ESTABLISH

A form-follows-function manufacturing plant, all ducts and piping, in Orange County. On the horizon: oil refineries, pipes, smokestacks.

INT. INFOTECH - NIGHT

Hollywood, Persol sunglasses on a string around his neck, walking with Elliot West. As they make their way along the nautical-railling catwalk, they look down at the silicon chip assembly line. Some fifty employees, mostly Asian, mostly women, working the lobster shift.

HOLLYWOOD

Get me Nora Swann.

WEST

Do you think she knows where old Charley hid the chip?

HOLLYWOOD

I'm sure she doesn't.

WEST

I don't follow.

HOLLYWOOD

Bring me the daughter, Elliot. If we have her, Swann'll do what we want. Put money on it.

WEST

What if he's dead, sir?

Hollywood shrugs.

WEST (cont'd)

I suppose we should make arrangements for Lem.

HOLLYWOOD

Did Lem have any family?

WEST

No he did not.

HOLLYWOOD

Call Forest Lawn, money no object, but tasteful, stress tasteful. And make a donation in my name to the County museum. Substantial donation. What we want: The Lemuel Hardt Collection. Let the museum make the announcement. Also full-page obit in the trades, name and dates, plain black border, less-is-more.

WEST

Yes, sir.

HOLLYWOOD

How many two-ways do we have online?

WEST

Five thousand ten. Covering some fifty hotels.

HOLLYWOOD

Scan them all. I want the daughter.

WEST

Yes, sir.

HOLLYWOOD

Forget "sir." Victor. You should call me Victor.

WEST

Victor. Well. I wanted to express my personal condolences. Lem was always--

HOLLYWOOD
 (cutting him off)
 It could happen to you.

INT. THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY - THE DOCTOR

is with a patient: a thin Chinese man who is sitting, shirt off, on the crunchy white paper of The Doctor's old leather examination table. The Doctor holds a stethoscope to various points on his chest.

THE DOCTOR
 (in Chinese)
 Deep breath. And out. And in. And out.

A man with a shaven head and a powerful build, wearing a striped seaman's jersey, bursts through the door, followed closely by The Doctor's Secretary.

SECRETARY
 (in Chinese)
 I am sorry and ashamed. I could not restrain him.

THE DOCTOR
 (in Chinese)
 In no sense is this your fault.
 (to the patient)
 My deepest apologies for the interruption of your examination. If you would indulge me while I attend to a matter of urgency, I would be eternally in your debt.

The secretary and the patient leave. The wrestler closes the door behind him. The Doctor sits behind his teak desk, again impressively bare, save the mysterious apothecary jar.

Though the disguise is a good one, we can tell, now that the deckhand is none other than Charles Swann.

THE DOCTOR (CONT'D)
 The last time you were in this room. Did I not say something about patience? And when we met in that cafeteria-- What did I say to you then?

SWANN
 About the chip. You, my friend, you betrayed a confidence.

THE DOCTOR
 You meant me to.

Swann realizes that The Doctor is, once again, absolutely correct.

SWANN

I have this problem, doctor. I've been walking around for twenty years with a desperate need and I only just realized it this morning.

THE DOCTOR

I believe I warned you, repeatedly, about stupidity. I was stupid once. It was in the International Settlement of Shanghai, when the Japanese invaded, and my stupidity caused me to be captured.

He lights his pipe.

THE DOCTOR (cont'd)

They had way of dealing with enemies. It involved a man's private parts, and a thin glass rod--

Swann looks at him.

THE DOCTOR (cont'd)

You are familiar, then, with the choices presented to man upon whom this has been practiced.

Swann nods.

THE DOCTOR (CONT'D)

I have never been good about physical pain. Even with the opium, it was not something I could bear. A week later, in a basement in the French Concession, I surgically removed my own penis.

SWANN

I am genuinely sorry.

THE DOCTOR

I have not missed it. It is an amazing thing what one can accomplish, once one decides to leave one's pain behind.

He taps the apothecary jar. The object within moves fractionally, floating within the formaldehyde.

THE DOCTOR (cont'd)

I keep this here, as a reminder of what has been taken from me. And what has not. It has become, for me, quite a source of inspiration.

Swann tries not to stare at the jar.

SWANN
Still. Stupid or not. I need your help. And
your protection.

The Doctor relights his pipe.

THE DOCTOR
Anything else?

INT. THE SAHARAN MOTEL - AFTERNOON - EDDIE AND NORA

fully dressed, on the bed of a tacky economy hotel room on the
ass end of Sunset Strip, near La Brea.

There is a television set in the corner, its tube facing
directly toward the bed.

EDDIE
It's not fair. You have your stuffed bear. I
don't even have a guitar.

NORA
Are you in a band?

EDDIE
Was.
(beat)
Went on tour once.
(beat)
Third on the bill to a power trio. Old guys,
in tights and eyeliner.

NORA
What made you stop?

EDDIE
I didn't want to move up.

NORA
What'd you do then?

EDDIE
Computer stuff. Hacking.

NORA
Any good at it?

EDDIE
Enough.

NORA
Why'd you stop?

Eddie says nothing.

NORA (CONT'D)

Then?

Eddie gets up from the bed, and starts lining the floor with sheets of crumpled newspaper.

EDDIE

Tell me about your-- Spiders.

NORA

Signals. Webs. Hieroglyphics, really. Where the food is. Where danger lurks. Near, far. Which direction.

Eddie leans back. They are almost touching.

EDDIE

Anyway.

Nora says nothing.

EDDIE (cont'd)

Anyway what are you thinking?

NORA

I'm thinking that you're just as pigheaded as my father.

Eddie leans over.

NORA (cont'd)

But--

(beat)

--maybe--

They kiss.

NORA (cont'd)

Cuter.

Slowly, they begin to make love.

Within moments:

Nora's clothes are off and Eddie's clothes are off and they slide against each other in a tangle of limbs, bodies, intuitions. Discovering each other-- Discovering parts of themselves long kept secret.

In their heat, Eddie and Nora are so fully absorbed that they do not hear--as we do--the opening of the door...

...or the crunching of the newspaper.

EDDIE TURNS HIS HEAD

to see Elliot West and three of Hollywood's security GOONS. They're pointing their silenced Czech automatics.

WEST

"Mister and Mrs. Smith." Original.

Nora pulls a sheet over her body. Eddie moves to protect her.

WEST (cont'd)

I'd bet you could not produce a marriage license.

The goons guffaw.

EDDIE

You touch her and you're dead.

More laughter.

EDDIE (cont'd)

Leave her alone and I'll tell you where you can find the chip.

WEST

I don't do business with assholes.

(to Nora)

Get dressed, lady. You're coming home with us.

NORA

Could you-- turn your backs?

WEST

Not a chance.

Eddie CHARGES him. One goon gives him a clout with the butt-end of the pistol. Like a maddened bull, Eddie rises, charges, head first, at West. Two of the goons knock him back to the ground, kicking him viciously, in the kidneys, and in the head.

Nora looks on in horror.

NORA

You don't have to do that.

WEST

We don't have to. We want to.

(beat)

Put your clothes on.

Beneath the sheet, Nora wriggles into her clothes. Eddie, out cold, lies on the floor, curled up into a ball. His blood

stains the carpet. One of the goons gives him another kick for good measure...

...but Eddie does not respond.

INT. YEE MEE LOO RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A nondescript downtown Chinese restaurant: Formica tables, fluorescent lights. A few diners, all Chinese, are eating rice and sipping soup when: BANG! through the doors come three goons, West, Hollywood, three more goons. All carrying Uzis.

The goons charge through the restaurant, through the kitchen, down a flight of stairs, into the men's room. The goons shove against one of the stalls, which opens, revealing another down staircase.

We FOLLOW them down three flights, along a dark, narrow corridor. Down a steep spiral staircase. Down into:

INT. UNDERGROUND CITY - NIGHT - VARIOUS ANGLES

The subterranean city built by Chinese immigrants at the turn of the century. Complete with stores, restaurants, housing. All along the sides of four-foot wide tunnels.

With an abrupt snap, one of the goons finds himself hanging upside down from a hemp ankle noose. They leave him there.

There is a gunshot, and another goon drops to the ground. A third goon fires at a dimly seen moving figure, who drops from his niche carved into the tunnelside. It marks the beginning of a full-scale gun battle between Hollywood's security goons and the young Chinese who work for The Doctor.

When the smoke clears, The Doctor's troops have been out-gunned. Hollywood, West, and the two remaining security goons stand outside the large wooden door to the room where Swan is holed up.

HOLLYWOOD

It's over, Charley. Come on out.

No reply.

HOLLYWOOD (cont'd)

I've got something I want to show you.

Still no reply.

HOLLYWOOD (cont'd)

A television show. Starring your daughter.

INT. SWANN'S HIDEOUT - NIGHT

The door opens slowly. There's Charles Swann, still shaven-headed, in a rumpled white-tie formal suit, in a room scarcely larger than a prison cell. There is a canvas cot, a small table, one wooden chair, a bare light bulb. That's it.

Hollywood enters. West and the goons remain outside.

Hollywood places on the table a battery-powered 8mm VCR, wired to a color Watchman. He switches on the tape.

NORA

(on the videotape)

I don't want you to worry about me. I'm all right--

SWANN

That's enough.

Hollywood turns it off.

HOLLYWOOD

Do I get the chip?

Swann reaches into the watch pocket of his white formal vest, pulls out the chip. As he hands it over:

SWANN

You have gotten what you came for. Why don't you kill me?

HOLLYWOOD

You're better than me, Charles. Always were. And I guess there's always been a hope-- The Spiders. You, me, The Doctor. It's not too late.

SWANN

Fuck yourself.

HOLLYWOOD

What happened, Charles? You used to be a pretty evil dude.

SWANN

Still am.

HOLLYWOOD

Il faut plonger le monde dans un abîme... "We must plunge the world into an abyss of terror." Your words. Remember, Charles?

Hollywood laughs. The laughter becomes a spasm of coughs. We sense that Hollywood is quite ill.

HOLLYWOOD (cont'd)
When times changed. I changed with them.
You're still the anarchist, running across the
rooftops.

Swann says nothing.

HOLLYWOOD (cont'd)
You're sixty years old. This town has no
rooftops.

SWANN
Viktor. Look at yourself. You're not evil.
You're just-- Corrupt.

HOLLYWOOD
Why don't we say, "well-networked."

SWANN
You used to know better, Viktor.

HOLLYWOOD
Why are you so afraid of-- The big time?

SWANN
That's not crime. That's organized crime.
(with great disgust:)
Work. Business. Civilization.
(beat)
You know what civilization is?
(beat)
War, without all the noise.

Hollywood just tosses the chip in his palm. Up, and down.

HOLLYWOOD
I'll have Sirota check it out. If it's real,
nothing will happen to your daughter.

SWANN
I cannot believe that you would bring my
daughter into this. Céline's daughter.

HOLLYWOOD
It's the real world, Charles. You can't
protect people from the real world.

Hollywood stands up.

SWANN
I worked for more than twenty years to keep
her away from this. Now you have shown her
(MORE)

SWANN(cont'd)

things she should never have seen. For that alone, you are dead.

Hollywood opens the door. He holds up the chip; and his gunmen smile.

EXT. SUNSET BOULEVARD - MORNING - THE LINCOLN

sweeping lazily around the curves of Sunset, out toward the beach. It's a bright, sunny morning; and there's no other traffic.

Swann, still dressed in his rumpled cutaway, is singing along with a Bob Dylan song on the oldies station.

VOICE

(on the radio)

"--When you ain't got nothin', you got nothin' to lose/ You're invisible now, you got no secrets/ To conceal. How does it feel?"

In the back seat of the open-topped convertible are seventy sticks of dynamite, taped up, fully wired.

Swann is smiling.

EXT. PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY - DAY

Swann takes the turnoff for Hollywood's estate.

With one hand, he pulls the black silk moire mask over his head, aligning the slits with his eyes.

He FLOORS the accelerator. By the time he reaches the gate to the estate, he's doing ninety.

He plows right into the gate, which smashes open. Immediately, the sirens start to wail. Swann, heading straight for the house, picking up speed, pokes away the shards of shattered windshield with his right hand.

From one of the onion towers, a security goon, fully Bijan'd out, OPENS FIRE.

THE WHITE ROLLS

with Hollywood at the wheel, pulls out of the garage. As the black Lincoln heads for the house, the white Rolls angles in, aiming to intercept.

Swann realizes who's driving the Rolls, and veers away from the house, directly towards his nemesis. The black and white cars approach each other at frightening speed.

Hollywood executes a swift, full-power U-turn, forcing Swann to circle, coming once more within range of the tower gunman. Just when he seems directly in the line of fire, Swann swerves behind the massive sculpture; and we hear the bullets ricocheting off the thick, sinuous steel.

But as Swann emerges from behind the Serra, slowing for the turn, his side is presented directly to the Rolls. Hollywood pulls out a pistol and takes careful aim.

A SINGLE SHOT

from Hollywood; another from the onion tower.

We see Swann's head SNAP BACK. His hands fall from the steering wheel.

The Lincoln, uncontrolled, accelerates mid-turn, heading straight for the Serra.

Collides.

There is a great explosion. The sky is bright white, then orange, then full of dark, acrid smoke. Pieces of the automobile drift lazily downward, as if in SLOW MOTION...

...forming a new sculpture--Serra meets John Chamberlain...

...on the manicured lawn.

EXT. CREMATORIUM - FOREST LAWN - DAY

The simple Greek Revival building which houses the crematorium.

NORA (VO)

Something he read to me. Once. A long time ago. The end of a story. Edgar Allen Poe.

Parked outside, in the lot: Eddie's muscle car.

NORA (cont'd) (VO) (cont'd)

I was in the crook of his arm, it was bedtime. Usually I fell asleep there, in the crook of his arm, before the story's end; but this night I stayed awake.

INT. FIRE ROOM

Eddie takes a piece of cloth, and places it near the head of a plain pine box. Just before he closes the lid, we catch a glimpse: torn, frayed, black moire silk...

...the mask of FANTÔMAS.

NORA (cont'd) (VO)

*It was about a man who'd done something bad,
something very bad. Now he was in jail,
awaiting execution.*

The box, on a conveyor belt, heads toward the oven, where two-dozen butane flames are waiting to consume it.

NORA (cont'd) (VO) (cont'd)

*I still remember what he said, in my father's
voice:*

(beat)

"Today I am in chains-- But here."

Eddie holds Nora very close. Eddie, Nora, Nora's stuffed bear, silhouetted against the intense white light of the crematorium...

NORA (VO) (CONT'D)

"Tomorrow I shall be free--

...as the plain white pine box disappears.

INT. CREMATORIUM - FOREST LAWN - DUSK

The harsh late-afternoon sun. A thin tendril of smoke, wafting, straight up, in the still, windless air.

NORA (cont'd) (VO)

"But-- Where?"

Eddie, Nora, holding each other, looking out:

The freeway, it's traffic, the valley, the mountains...

...the darkening world beyond.

INT. EDDIE'S PLACE - DAY

Sunday morning sunlight streaming in through the windows.

The place looks neater, and cleaner, than we've seen it. The surfboards, the computers, all in the back now. In the front: an easel, a stretched canvas. Nora is curled up in a large chair while Eddie primes the canvas, singing softly to himself.

EDDIE

...The eensy weensy spider crawls up the water spout...

Now Eddie notices something out of the corner of his eye. An envelope: white, protruding, almost beckoning, just beneath the door.

A white envelope with a red wax seal.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

Oh my god.

NORA

What is it?

Eddie takes a few light steps, carefully hiding the envelope from view with his foot.

EDDIE

Nothing.

EXT. MILLION DOLLAR THEATER - DAY

Eddie's battered muscle car parked outside of a boarded-up moviehouse, downtown LA.

INT. MILLION DOLLAR THEATER - DAY

A once-magnificent moviehouse, now shut down. The ornate ceilings and proscenium surround an auditorium of worn, faded velvet seats.

We FOLLOW Eddy across the empty stage, in front of the screen. At once he is silhouetted by a shaft of light from the projectionist's booth.

VOICE

Up here!

Eddie squints into the light. There is a metal cable dangling from the booth.

He grabs the cable and starts upward. The cable is slippery, he's not used to this kind of activity. For every three feet up he slips back two.

INT. PROJECTIONIST'S BOOTH - DAY - SWANN

in black, reading an old almanac. It's a bare room--one cot, one chair--of the type Swann seems to favor. The room is lined with 35mm film reels and spare projector parts.

Eddie--sweating, breathless--climbers through the rectangular opening.

SWANN

(without looking up)

We have work to do.

INT. HOLLYWOOD'S OFFICE - DAY

A fireplace. An oversized bureaucrat's desk from the British Raj. A couple of comfy chairs, done up in well-worn red leather. Nothing high-tech at all, in fact, nothing twentieth century, except for a telephone, and a modest television monitor built into the rolltop taboret.

Hollywood, behind the desk, emaciated, just flesh and bones now. Idly flicking the television remote.

Image after image of bedrooms, living rooms. Mostly blurry. Mostly of families, zombied out, staring directly at the tube.

HUSBAND

(on the screen)

Honey, have you seen the orange juice?

Hollywood changes the channel. Two men in a business discussion. Click. A couple fucking. Click. He flicks again, and again, looking for something to hold his interest.

There is no intimacy which Hollywood cannot access. More than anything, he seems painfully bored.

Hollywood clears his throat, punching up another bedroom. And tried, quite hard, to avoid another coughing fit.

INT. MILLION DOLLAR THEATER PROJECTIONIST'S BOOTH - NIGHT

There is a floor plan of Hollywood's mansion projected on the screen. Swann gestures with his pointer, narrates.

SWANN

This is office. Locked door, locked windows. According to The Doctor, nobody enters, nobody leaves. Once a day, West brings the mail on a tray. That's it.

EDDIE

So how to we get in?

SWANN

We don't.

EDDIE

Good. Let's go home.

SWANN

Did I ever tell you...

He leans back. As if about to settle in, for a bedtime story.

SWANN (cont'd)
 ...about Lord Halifax?

INT. UCLA ENTOMOLOGY LABS - NIGHT

Nora is carrying a large cage, covered with a black dropcloth, and a metal thermos. She passes the SECURITY GUARD, a young black woman, with whom she is apparently on friendly terms.

GUARD
 Dr. Swann.

NORA
 Evening.

GUARD
 I've got another six hours.
 (pointing to the thermos)
 Mind if I borrow some coffee?

NORA
 Actually it's not coffee. Actually it's a horrible, disgusting black widow spider, its sac full of deadly venom.

GUARD
 Well then...
 (beat)
 ...never mind.

INT. MILLION DOLLAR THEATER - NIGHT

Swann and Eddie, in the rear of the orchestra section.

EDDIE
 One more time.

SWANN
 He gets the note. Opens it. Smells his hands. Smells amaryllis. Screams.
 (beat)
 You, you're up here, you lower the spider. He runs down the hall, around the corner, the nearest place he can wash the scent off his hands. The bathroom...
 (beat)
 ...where, of course, I'll be waiting.

EDDIE
 What if he doesn't know the saga of Lord Halifax?

SWANN

He knows.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD ESTATE - NIGHT

The dark, looming castle behind the iron gate. Again, the

H

logo, dead-center. But now the gate has been repaired, augmented with welded steel cross-bracings; and a machine gun nest, behind an embankment of sandbags, lies just beyond.

INT. HOLLYWOOD MANSION - NIGHT

Security goons patrol the corridors. There are far more of them than we've seen before. A trio of them stand at dress attention outside the door to Hollywood's office.

INT. HOLLYWOOD'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Hollywood, propped up in his chair, behind the colonial desk. Still flicking the television remote, but too listless, now, to pay attention. There is a knock on the door. Elliot West arrives with a sterling tray of mail, places it on the desk.

WEST

Everything okay, sir?

Hollywood makes no reply. Doesn't even notice when West leaves.

Numbed by the television but unable to stop watching, Hollywood distractedly opens envelope after envelope, considers the contents, tosses. Then stops.

An envelope with a blood-red seal. An intaglio'd

F.

stamped deeply into the wax.

Slowly, Hollywood tears the flap. The card is written in impeccable Copperplate:

For Céline,
for Juve,
for everyone on television.

Hollywood is toying with the card when his nose starts to twitch. Abruptly, he leaps up.

HOLLYWOOD

Amaryllis!

Then sits down again. A smile flickers across his face, grows. For the first time in a long while, Hollywood seems--At peace.

Glancing toward the fireplace, with Zen-like calm, Hollywood awaits the arrival of a black widow spider.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD'S MANSION - NIGHT

A FIGURE--black jeans, black shirt, black hood--perched atop one of Hollywood's minarets. Holding a large black metal box. And now: dumping its contents down the chimney.

INT. HOLLYWOOD'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Spiders, tumbling down the chimney, out the fireplace. Not one elegant spider on a silken cord, but hundreds of spiders, thousands of SPIDERS, crawling across the floor, up the wainscoting, all deadly. And like all black widows, with the congenital reflex that responds to the odor of amaryllis.

Hollywood starts to cough.

There is a spider crawling up his tweedy leg. He tries to stay motionless, but at the last moment gets the willies, and crushes it.

Another spider attaches itself to his jacket.

We watch Hollywood trying, with all his might, to stay put in the chair. Then, screaming like a terrified child, he can take it no more, and runs full-tilt for the door.

INT. MANSION CORRIDORS - NIGHT

Hollywood bursts through the door, scattering West and several goons. As he runs down the hall, they try to follow.

HOLLYWOOD

Get back! Get back! My office! Spiders!
Kill them! Kill them all!

He turns a corner, runs down another corridor, past several more guards, through his bedroom, into his bathroom. Inspects himself for bugs. Locks the door frantically, all three locks. Turns on the shower, hot.

Hollywood, scrubbing himself down with brown soap. Pausing to sniff his hands, then scrubbing some more. After a while, the panic seems to leave his body.

He wraps himself in a towel. As the condensation clears from the glass shower door, there seems to be something moving, white against white. Then, at once, the door is flung open. And a dripping, towel-wrapped Hollywood finds himself face to face with Fantômas.

We have never seen Swann in anything but black. Now, for the first time, he is white, head to toe. White trousers, white starched shirt, white tie, white formal vest, white tailcoat.

SWANN

You thought I was dead. Well.

(beat)

These things happen.

Swann produces a flat white silk disk, snaps it against his forearm. It pops open: into a tophat.

SWANN (CONT'D)

I am the polar bear at your funeral.

Swann dons the tophat and, in the same motion, produces as if from nowhere a white pearl-handled straight razor.

It is Swann's moment of triumph: the plan, the surprise, the punch lines, the tophat and the razor, perfect details, perfectly chosen, perfectly played.

One thing wrong: Hollywood. Whose reaction is not at all what it should be.

HOLLYWOOD

(calmly)

Sit down.

Swann looks straight at him and does not move.

HOLLYWOOD (cont'd)

You are alive for only one reason: because time and time again, I did not kill you. In your home. At the Watts Towers. In that little room in old Chinatown. In your clever little renovation of the Million Dollar Theater. Sit down, Charles.

Swann sits.

HOLLYWOOD (cont'd)

When the child was a child-- He has many choices. What he's going to be when he grows up. A fireman, a policeman, a cowboy. You

(MORE)

HOLLYWOOD(cont'd)

get old, the world shuts down on you. All of a sudden your life is what it is. You have very few choices at all... Until, finally-- Just one. The manner and method of your own death.

Swann, beginning to see the light.

HOLLYWOOD (cont'd)

I did not kill you because I wanted something. A proper death. Not this-- this cancer.

(he thumps his chest)

Not "died in his sleep." Not "following surgery at Cedars of Lebanon." Something elegant, something fitting, something with a bit of marvel.

Hollywood, in complete control, exhibits an energy we've not seen from him in quite some while.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD MANSION - NIGHT

Elliot West, perched precariously on the windowsill, three stories up. He takes a large step to the next sill, the one beneath the bathroom window. Looks inside.

Sees Swann and Hollywood talking, Swann with a blade in his hand.

West extracts his CZ-70. Draws a bead on Swann.

Hollywood is in the line of fire. But as Swann stands up, there is nothing between Swann and the tip of West's automatic. Then Hollywood moves again, blocking the shot.

INT. BATHROOM - AS BEFORE

HOLLYWOOD

The kind of death only Fantômas could provide. My only problem: Fantômas was asleep. Had been for twenty years.

SWANN

Dear sweet Lord..

HOLLYWOOD

So I had to wake him up. Put Juve on his tail. I-- I forged some letters, tied 'em with red ribbon. Told Lem Hardt a bunch of stuff I knew you'd force him to spill. And still it did not work. So I borrowed Nora.

SWANN

All-- To bring me to this room.

Hollywood nods: swiftly, solemnly.

SWANN (cont'd)
Me, with a leash around my neck. And I never
saw it.

We can hear the alarm sirens.

HOLLYWOOD
I should tell you while I still can. Céline
meant something to me. I meant very little to
her. I think she wanted your attention.
That's all I was, a way to catch your eye.
I'm sorry it didn't work. For all of us.

The two men regard each other for the longest time.

HOLLYWOOD (CONT'D)
I'm ready now.
(beat)
So are you.

The guards, now, are banging at the door. But the room, of
course, is locked from the inside.

EXT. MANSION WINDOW - WEST'S POV

Hollywood still blocking the target.

INT. BATHROOM - AS BEFORE

Swann begins to realize just how deeply Hollywood has wished for
this particular death. In a strange way, it's very moving.

SWANN
You leave me no choice.

HOLLYWOOD
I mean not to.

SWANN
My brother.

HOLLYWOOD
My killer.

With absolute calm, Swann runs the straight razor across
Hollywood's pale white neck. A perfect arc, from which blood
begins to bloom. In small rosettes at first. Then a thin
sheet, like burgundy swirled in a crystal goblet...

...then torrents.

Hollywood clutches his neck, falls to the floor, his blood charting its course, across the white tiled floor, to the shower drain.

EXT. MANSION - WEST'S POV

As Hollywood falls to the floor, West has a clear shot. He draws his bead. Begins to squeeze the trigger.

Suddenly Eddie--clad in black, from head to toe--is swinging from a rope, Douglas Fairbanks-style, sweeping from the top of the onion tower, across the side of the mansion.

EDDIE

J'arrive.

He lands on the bathroom window ledge, knocking West's arm aside.

The two grapple for the gun.

As Eddie, for the moment, gains control of the gun:

EDDIE (CONT'D)

(softly)

I don't have to. I want to.

Just below, another black-clad FIGURE climbs, spider-style, up the craggy wall from the window below. Zigging, and zagging, in uncanny emulation of the figure-eight web, the signal web.

Now the second black-clad figure REACHES UP...

...and PULLS West by the ankle.

The gun falls, in a long arc, to the manicured lawn below.

WEST

You son-of-a-bitch.

He flails out--

--and FALLS--

--in a long arc, following his gun...

...all the way down.

I/E. MANSION - NIGHT - SWANN

strides toward the window, opens it, lifts himself out.

Eddie and Swann embrace, and Eddie swings them, by rope, back to the top of the onion tower. Three stories below, the lifeless body of Elliot West.

What Swann doesn't see: the other black-clad FIGURE, just below the window ledge. The figure--as we've by now figured out--of NORA SWANN.

SWANN
 (to Eddie)
 Get out of here. Now.
 (beat)
 Somebody is going to have to pay for this.
 One will do as well as two.

ON NORA

listening to her father.

ON SWANN

unaware that his daughter, hanging by her fingers, inches below...

...has just saved Eddie's life. And, perhaps, his own.

SWANN (CONT'D)
 Nora needs you. More than she needs me.

Abruptly, without warning or hesitation, Swann

LEAPS

off the ledge, sliding rapidly down the rope to the side of the building...

...right into the circle of the carbon-arc police SPOTLIGHT.

The POLICE draw up, surrounding Swann, their attention distracted-- Not looking at all toward the roof...

...where two black-clad figures now make good their escape.

ON EDDIE AND NORA

NORA
 He must never know.

EDDIE
 He won't.

NORA
 He must never--

EDDIE

Our secret.

The reach the side of the building. Away from the guards, the spotlights, the police.

NORA

If he knew I was out this late--

Eddie holds her.

She looks directly into his eyes.

NORA (cont'd)

He would kill me.

INT. LA COUNTY JAIL - DAY - SWANN

in prison denims, in a holding cell with ten other prisoners. A guard approaches.

GUARD

Swann. Visitor.

INT. JAIL VISITOR'S ROOM - DAY

Prisoners on one side of the reinforced glass, visitors on the other.

Swann is escorted to his booth. He sits down, to find himself facing-- His daughter.

They speak via telephones.

SWANN

No lawyers.

NORA

F- F-

(beat)

Father.

Her eyes are wet.

NORA (cont'd)

Why?

SWANN

To go on living. It's-- Something you have to earn. He didn't deserve to live. And I hadn't been-- Earning my way, either.

(beat)

(MORE)

SWANN(cont'd)

Two problems, solved, with one stroke of the blade.

Nora just looks at him.

SWANN (cont'd)

I know what kind of a husband I was to Céline. What kind of a father I must have been to you. I was trying to protect you. From the world. From what I had learned about it. What I didn't--

NORA

(interrupting)

I love you.

He straightens up.

SWANN

Are you going to marry that--
(spat, as an epithet:)
Policeman's son?

NORA

Yes.

SWANN

You don't need my permission.

NORA

No.

SWANN

But you have it.

Her face, his reflection, superimposed on the pane of bulletproof glass.

SWANN (CONT'D)

No lawyers. You must promise. My room is spare, but comfortable, and I believe I will be able to get some reading done.

There are tears, probably Nora's, possibly Swann's.

SWANN (cont'd)

I love you too.

ON SWANN'S FACE

As we realize that these are words--however improbably--he may never have uttered before...

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS CITY HALL - DAY

On the steps of City Hall, a Justice of the Peace, a small crowd.

Among the faces: a black-suited JUSTICE; Father Barragan; Ruben; The Doctor...

...and in the center, waiting expectantly: Eddie, in a suit and tie.

Two motor vehicles pull up from opposite directions. The one to the left is a stretch limousine. The one to the right is a guarded paddywagon. From the first steps Nora Swann, radiant in a white dress. From the second: Charles Swann, hands cuffed in front of him, bookended by two LAPD escorts.

Charles walks up to Eddie, shakes his hand. In cuffs, under the watchful eyes of his jailors, he embraces his daughter.

We see that he is handing something to her. We do not see what.

Now Eddie and Nora step up to the altar.

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE
Who gives this woman away?

Swann nods solemnly. The ceremony proceeds.

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE (cont'd)
Do you, Nora Swann, take this man to be your
lawful wedded husband?

NORA
I do.

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE
Do you, Edouard Jean-Paul Juve, take this
woman to be your lawful wedded wife?

EDDIE
I do.

He reaches into his pocket. Takes out a band of gold, which he fits, on her finger.

She, in turn, produces a ring. A silver ring, with the rococo, right-to-left

F.

The ring of Fantômas. Which her father just handed her.

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE

By the power vested in me by the State of California, I now pronounce you husband and wife. You may kiss the bride.

Eddie and Nora embrace. A cheer from the crowd. Ruben and The Doctor both throw large handfuls of rice...

...which EXPLODE, into dense white smoke.

Seconds later, when the smoke disperses, everything is as it was. With the exception of The Doctor, gone; and Charles Swann...

...nowhere to be seen.

EXT. WATTS TOWERS - NIGHT

A masked FIGURE in a black dinner jacket scales the chainlink fence. He approaches the middle tower, the one at whose base Gondo Ken expired.

The figure--and we can see, now, that it is Charles Swann--inspects the tower. There is a damaged area, where Lem's bullet struck. A bare spot, where the crockery has been blown away.

SWANN

(to himself)

Vandals.

From a black satchel, Swann removes a jar of water, a jar of cement. With the careful, deft movements of a safecracker--or, perhaps, a chef--he mixes the water and cement into a paste of just the right consistency.

We hear Nora's voice:

NORA (VO)

*I think I know now, who my father was. Father--
- And, just perhaps--*

(beat)

Maman. Ma mère--

(beat)

Mother.

Swann reaches into the satchel to extract the shards of Céline's coffee bowl, the one he could never quite fit back together. And, one by one, affixes the shards to the northern Watts Tower.

NORA (cont'd) (VO) (cont'd)

The names, the places-- The facts.

(beat)

*I've seen-- The web. The signal. The song a
spider sings, when he finds his mate.*

(MORE)

NORA(cont'd)

(beat)

Every thing we need to know.

We PULL BACK, to see Rodia's baroque, glittering spires.

NORA (cont'd) (VO) (cont'd)

Everything except--

And PULL BACK still further, until the entire night city is beneath us.

NORA (cont'd) (VO) (cont'd)

What quickens the heart. What makes it stop.

(beat)

And-- Every once in a while--

The white glow of a thousand pairs of automobile headlights, like the eyes of a thousand strange insects.

NORA (cont'd) (VO) (cont'd)

On the île de la Cité-- Or even here--

We PULL BACK still further, watching people go about their lives, streaming in and around the flat, blighted city.

NORA (cont'd) (VO) (cont'd)

--What makes it go.

The lights grow faint, as we

FADE TO BLACK.

(MORE)