

DRIFTER SMILE

Pilot

"And The Devil Is Six"

written by

J. Phillip Wilkins

INT. SECRET LAB

From the POV of a man sitting in an examination chair, WE SEE two scientists, their name-tags announce them as DR. LU (50s) on the left and DR. CHRISTY (40s) on the right.

WE FOCUS on the logo stitched into the breast pocket of their lab coats: an atomic symbol surrounds a hand showing the "sign of the Devil".

Dr. Christy holds a syringe, Dr. Lu straps the subject's arms down to the chair.

DR. CHRISTY

Your work here will put you in contact with various, shall we say, *dangerous* elements. This vaccination should protect you in the unlikely event you are exposed.

DR. LU

Don't worry, it's perfectly harmless, no lasting side effects -

DR. CHRISTY

- as far as we know -

DR. LU

- and it *is* in your employment contract. Just try to relax.

Dr. Christy administers the shot while Dr. Lu slips a gold ring onto the subject's right ring finger.

DR. LU (CONT'D)

This is your Ident-Ring, it gets you into secure areas -

DR. CHRISTY

- all but The Zoo -

DR. LU

- of course -

DR. CHRISTY

- and Level Silver -

DR. LU

- at least for now.

DR. CHRISTY

Oh, and level Go-

DR. LU

Hush.

The subject convulses, strains against the straps.

DR. CHRISTY

Here we go.

DR. LU

Try to relax. Breathe normally. In,  
out. In, out.

The subject begins to hyperventilate, his chest heaves  
against the chest strap.

DR. CHRISTY

Now, now. It's not *that* bad.

The subject's vision blurs and for a moment, sees the two  
scientists as hideous demons. He erupts into hysterics, the  
straps begin to tear away from the chair.

DR. LU

We've got a twitcher!

DR. CHRISTY

Why do they always look at us like  
that? (BEAT) Oh no. The bladder,  
Dr. Lu.

DR. LU

Your shoes, Dr. Christy.

They look down at their feet.

DR. LU & DR. CHRISTY

Ewwwww.

DR. CHRISTY

He's a twitcher *and* a leaker.

The subject finally calms down.

DR. LU

Who had twitcher and leaker?

DR. CHRISTY

Rundgren, in accounting.

DR. LU

Lucky bastard.

The subject mercifully passes out.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. SHERIFF PERU'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sheriff TOPPER PERU (40s) awakes to the ceiling fan above his bed. He turns to the alarm clock and sees it's 2:02AM. An almost-empty whiskey bottle sits next to the clock, the first evidence of his ongoing war against his liver.

Peru swings his legs over the side and buries his face in his hands. He still wears his sheriff's uniform, unbuttoned and wrinkled. He scratches his facial scruff.

He takes the last swig from the liquor bottle, stands and dresses himself in street clothes, grabs his keys and heads out of the room.

EXT./INT. NORTH TEXAS BACKROAD, SHERIFF'S CRUISER - NIGHT

A Rembrandt Township sheriff's car runs over a glass bottle as the cruiser streaks down a dusty, two-lane road until it approaches a battered sign that proclaims:

"WELCOME TO REMBRANDT"

"Home Of The Texas-sized Swedish Meatballs!"

POP. 669

Peru slows down and reaches into his glove compartment to retrieve a pistol. He shoots at the sign as he roars by, the bullet leaves a neat hole in the "O" of the "POP".

He stamps down on the gas pedal. The car lurches forward, fishtails a bit, then continues down the dusty highway.

INT. SHERIFF'S CRUISER - DRIVING

Peru drops the gun onto the passenger seat, rifles through the glovebox and grabs a half-finished bottle of whiskey between his thumb and forefinger and a cassette tape between his ring and pinky fingers.

Peru rams the tape into the car stereo, and tries to open the bottle with one hand. His car drifts onto the gravel at the side of the road before it swerves back to the asphalt.

RICHARD DANFORTH  
 (from the stereo,  
 cheerful, Australian)  
 Welcome to Volume One of Successful  
 Living Through Positive Thinking.  
 Hi, I'm Richard Danforth, president  
 of BioLife International and I want  
 to welcome you to the beginning of  
 a whole new life, or as I like call  
 it, Tragicology 1-oh-1!

The Musak version of Lou Christie's "Lightning Strikes" plays as Peru has trouble getting the cap off the bottle clamped between his legs. He tries unscrewing it with one hand but the bottle turns between his knees. The car drifts to the gravel again, Peru swerves back.

PERU  
 Goddammit.

RICHARD DANFORTH  
 Just 1-hour out of your day is all  
 I ask to help you live longer,  
 happier and most importantly;  
 better.

A black muscle car emerges from the darkness behind Peru and almost rear-end's him, then pulls up alongside for a moment, windows tinted too dark to see through. It keeps pace with Peru's car for a moment. The sheriff notices a California license plate before the muscle car streaks off into the distance.

PERU  
 Dick.

Peru looks at the road for a moment, makes sure he's alone, takes his other hand off the wheel and uses his left knee to steer the car. He loosens the bottle cap and is about to take a swig when he looks up and notices a LOST WOMAN in a see-through nightgown, walk down the middle of the road, her back to him. Peru drops the bottle and slams on the brakes sending the car into a slide.

RICHARD DANFORTH  
 Let's start with what I like to  
 call, the moment of pure love.

The car careens sideways and runs the woman down with a sickening CRUNCH before coming to a halt in a cloud of dust.

RICHARD DANFORTH (CONT'D)  
This is where you take your arms,  
wrap them around yourself, and  
repeat the following; I love  
myself. I love my warmth, my voice  
and my smile.

Peru looks down at the whiskey bottle lying on the passenger seat. He grabs it and takes several, long gulps. He wipes his mouth on his shirtsleeve, grabs the revolver and exits the car.

RICHARD DANFORTH (CONT'D)  
(deeper, menacing voice)  
And I am powerful. I am a god among  
humankind.

ROAD

Peru walks around, looks for the woman. He strolls down the ragged asphalt to find nothing, not even damage to his cruiser.

RICHARD DANFORTH  
(distant, from squad car)  
Contemplate this for a few minutes,  
realizing who you are and what you  
mean to you.

Peru walks back to the car. He is about to take a drink when the Muzak stops and he HEARS:

RICHARD DANFORTH (CONT'D)  
Are you sure you want to do that?

Peru lets the bottle rest against his bottom lip, but doesn't drink.

RICHARD DANFORTH (CONT'D)  
Do you really need that? Wouldn't a  
hug be much better? Hugs are better  
than bugs, and we all know a person  
sees nothing but bugs when they do  
what you do. Like the one on your  
shoulder, I reckon.

Peru slowly turns to look at his shoulder, sees a large nasty-looking beetle crawl from his back over his shoulder. Peru freaks out and smacks at the bug.

Frantic bluegrass banjo music suddenly BLARES from the car's stereo.

RICHARD DANFORTH (CONT'D)  
(with bluegrass banjo)  
That's the spirit! Beat the bug  
blues away, and give yourself a hug  
while you're at it.

PERU  
Fuck! Off!

Peru quick-draws his revolver and fires a single shot into the stereo which stops playing. He throws the liquor bottle down the road, into the darkness.

He stands still, waits for the SHATTER of the bottle on asphalt. When it comes, it sounds different... more like GLASS ON METAL.

The black muscle car that passed Peru earlier suddenly appears down the road, revealed by its brake lights and ROAR of its engine.

PERU (CONT'D)  
Ha! Serves you right, fucker!

Broken glass slides off the top of the roof as the muscle car peels off and disappears into the haze.

Peru calms down, the smoke clears. He slides into his car and rests his eyes. When he opens them, he clears a mountain of tape from beneath the stereo and throws it onto the road. Even so, the stereo appears to be undamaged and in working order.

Peru reaches into the glove compartment and pulls out another tape. He slides it into the stereo and starts the car. The chorus from Lou Christie's "Lightning Strikes" blasts from the stereo as he speeds away.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A HALLWAY, SOMEWHERE

We move slowly down a sterile, empty hallway. The BUZZING from the fluorescent lighting is quite loud. We pass a door marked "CHOICES", directly opposite is a door marked "ORIENTATION". From behind that door we hear a woman's muffled, metallic voice, as if it were coming from a small speaker.

DOMINIQUE OVERTURF  
(O.S., French accent)  
You will see, directly behind you,  
a tray with several items on the  
surface.

We continue down the hallway to a door at a dead-end marked "MONITOR". From behind the door we hear the same woman's voice, this time, more present instead of metallic.

DOMINIQUE OVERTURF (CONT'D)  
(O.S.)  
Place your dressing gown on the  
tray and step into your uniform,  
please.

INT. MONITOR'S OFFICE

DOMINIQUE OVERTURF (French, 30) sits at an antiquated telephone operator's station. Dozens of multicolored cables criss-cross each other, plugged into a hundred sockets. She wears an old headset with a microphone. The back wall of the office is covered by small screens showing different parts of the facility. A larger screen in the center shows the Orientation room where a subject (face unseen) dons a white jumpsuit.

DOMINIQUE OVERTURF  
Once you have finished dressing,  
please proceed out the door. You  
will see, directly across from you,  
a door marked Choices.

A KNOCK. Dominique presses a button on her console and the door BUZZES as it momentarily unlocks.

Dr. Lu and Dr. Christy walk in.

DR. LU  
So, we have-

Dominique holds up her index finger without looking at them, Dr. Lu immediately stops talking.

DOMINIQUE OVERTURF  
(into microphone)  
Don't forget your sidearm. You will  
find it to be essential.

On the larger screen we see the subject, his back to the camera. He grabs the pistol and exits.



## DOMINIQUE OVERTURE (CONT'D)

May the daughters of the cosmos  
 gild your path to the underworld.  
 (in French)  
 Good luck.

Dominique removes her headset and waves the doctors forward.

Dr. Christy sets a manila folder in front of her and the two doctors continue to stand.

Dominique opens the folder and leafs through the pages. Without looking up, she motions for the doctors to sit.

They each move two seats from the wall and sit down in front of the desk, hands in their laps.

Dominique looks at a photo, then places it in front of the doctors.

## DOMINIQUE OVERTURE (CONT'D)

Who is this?

Dr. Lu looks at the grainy photo of a well-dressed, dark-haired woman walking down a city sidewalk. The photo was taken from far away with a telephoto lens. The woman resembles the Lost Woman that Peru hit on the road.

DR. LU

Not sure, Monitor. Our agent -

DR. CHRISTY

- Island, maam, Bill Island -

DR. LU

- has yet to identify her. But it shouldn't be long. I expect to hear from him today.

Dominique sets another photo in front of Dr. Lu.

## DOMINIQUE OVERTURE

And this?

Both doctors lean in to look at the photo of a spray-painted symbol on a brick wall. The atomic symbol for gold inside a circle with a diagonal line through it sits above the phrase "MURDER THE GOLDEN AGE". The same dark-haired woman stands to the side, a can of spray paint in her hand, bandana over the bottom of her face.

Lu and Christy glance at each other, lean back in their chairs.

DR. LU  
The graffiti has been popping up  
around town. Our agent -

DR. CHRISTY  
- Bill Island -

DR. LU  
- has located several more of  
these, uh -

DR. CHRISTY  
Totems?

DR. LU  
Talismans?

DR. CHRISTY  
Symbols. Occult, maybe.

DR. LU  
Truth is, we don't know what they  
mean.

DR. CHRISTY  
Yet.

A red emergency light starts blinking as a soft ALARM rings  
out.

Dominique slides the photos back in the file and drops it  
into a drawer under her desk. She turns back to her operator  
console, places her headset, and plugs into a socket.

DOMINIQUE OVERTURE  
(into the headset)  
I need a team at The Zoo,  
immediately.

The doctors look at each other, then stand and head toward  
the door.

Dominique slams her fist on the desk, again without looking  
at them.

The doctors return the chairs back to their original  
positions at the wall, then exit hastily.

She plugs back into the socket labeled "Choices" and adjusts  
her microphone.

## DOMINIQUE OVERTURE (CONT'D)

The terror you feel is a  
 manifestation of your disbelief in  
 a world beyond. Look into the  
 beast's eyes and say to yourself, I  
 will not burn in the fire of my own  
 blasphemy. I will not be led down  
 the ashen path. I will not be  
 fooled by the clawed fist that  
 cradles the heart.

(in French)

Walk the path, do not look back.  
 Walk the path, do not look back.  
 Walk the path, do not look back.

DISSOLVE TO:

## EXT. REMBRANDT MAIN STREET - DAY

A pair of cowboy boots, walking, slightly unsteady... up to a utility belt, revolver, handcuffs, jangling keys, briefcase... up to a cowboy hat... around to the front, mirrored sunglasses, badge, walkie talkie... Sheriff Peru weaves his way up the dusty street to a liquor store.

A black van with pitch-black windows idles across the street.

## INT. QWIKER LIQUOR STORE - CONTINUOUS

ROGER WYNTER (25), a scraggly wastoid in a too-tight Britney Spears t-shirt, stands at attention behind the register as the sheriff strolls in. The kid manages a stiff salute.

PERU

Don't fucking do that, Roger.

ROGER

C'mon, chief. You know I take the public servant exam next week.

PERU

(sotto)

God help us.

Peru travels down the whiskey aisle, finds his brand and grabs a pair of bottles.

He returns to the counter and sets them down along with his briefcase. Roger stares, slack-jawed.

PERU (CONT'D)

Well?

ROGER

Well what?

PERU

Jesus Christ, are you going to ring me up?

ROGER

Your usual discount, chief?

Peru looks up at the security camera over Roger's shoulder.

INT. SURVEILLANCE VAN

Listening equipment, tape recorders and monitors are stuffed into the cramped van. Three hunched figures stare into a monitor, Sheriff Peru stares into the convenience store's security camera.

Two agents on either side wear dark suits, the man squeezed in the middle, MAXAMILIANO SULLIVAN (40s), relaxes in a seersucker.

MAXAMILIANO

That's it, sheriff. Breakfast of champions, on the house. Take 'em you gratuitist son-of-a-bitch.

INT. QWIKER LIQUOR STORE - CONTINUOUS

Sheriff Peru stares at the camera a moment longer before settling back on Roger.

PERU

Not sure what you mean, Roger. Just ring me up.

ROGER

(salutes)

Aye aye, captain.

Roger scans the bottles. Peru works the combination locks on his briefcase and opens it. He grabs a bottle to place inside. The gold ring on his left hand CLINKS against the glass.

Peru freezes, in a trance. He hears a faint voice call to him.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Chief? Sheriff Peru?

Peru looks up.

PERU

Huh?

ROGER

Bro, you checked out there.

Peru hurriedly places the first bottle in his briefcase. The second slips out of his hand and smashes on the floor.

PERU

Fuck!

ROGER

Dude! Watch the glass.

Roger walks around the counter.

ROGER (CONT'D)

I'll get that, chief. Just grab another bottle.

Peru dazedly walks back down the whiskey aisle. He finds his brand, goes to grab the bottle, hand trembles badly.

His gold ring GLINTS under the fluorescent lights. The flash is unnaturally bright. Peru flinches when it hits his eyes. He stumbles back into the opposite shelves, knocking bottles from their perch, onto the floor, some bursting like a GUN SHOT.

Peru slips on the spilled liquor and falls. His right hand lands on a shard of glass, blood leaks from the gash on his palm.

PERU

Fuck!

Roger runs up with a mop.

ROGER

Bro, this just isn't your day.

Peru carefully avoids the glass and stands. His hand drips to the floor, the blood mingles with the liquor.

ROGER (CONT'D)

Oh man, let me get the first aid kit.

Roger grabs a new bottle and they walk to the counter. He retrieves the kit and sprays the wound with antiseptic, wraps it in gauze and tapes it.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
You might need stitches, chief.

PERU  
Fuck that.

ROGER  
Ohhhhh-kay.

MARTHA APPLEBY (92) hobbles in. Her walker, covered in Beenie-Babies, goes CLICKETY-CLACK against the tile floor.

ROGER (CONT'D)  
Hey, Ms. Appleby. I'll be right there.

MS. APPLEBY  
Just need m'juice.

ROGER  
I moved the schnapps to the back.

MS. APPLEBY  
Now why would y'do something stupid like that? Do I look like Greta Waltz to you?

ROGER  
Is that a porn star?

MS. APPLEBY  
I think your momma fed you paint chips for breakfast and told you they was Fruit Loops.

Peru gathers his briefcase and the new bottle, heads for the door.

ROGER  
You should really get that looked at.

MS. APPLEBY  
(O.S.)  
Where's my goddam juice?!

ROGER  
She loves root beer schnapps. Gross, right?

Peru ignores him and exits.

INT. SHERIFF'S STATION - CONTINUOUS

A few, empty desks fill the small office. A holding cell in one corner, the sheriff's private office in another.

MARJORIE NETTLES (70) sits behind the reception desk. Her complete and full attention is on a scarf she knits, even while addressing the sheriff.

MARJORIE

Stevie's out at the Chigger ranch.  
Donald's over at the diner.

PERU

Where's Gen?

Marjorie jerks her head back toward Peru's office.

PERU (CONT'D)

(sotto)

Goddammit.

INT. SHERIFF'S PRIVATE OFFICE

Deputy GENÉSIS PALAFOX (30) reclines in Sheriff Peru's office chair, reads from pages in a file folder, her feet up on the desk.

For a moment, we see inside the folder, a b&w photo of a younger, clean shaven Sheriff Peru. The Los Angeles Police Department logo at the top.

She glances up at the taxidermy tableau suspended above the door: a mongoose frozen in mortal combat with a cobra.

GENÉSIS

(sotto)

Idiota.

The door swings open and bangs into a cabinet, causes the tableau to come to life momentarily.

Sheriff Peru walks around the desk and stands next to his deputy. He lovingly strokes the back of the chair.

PERU

Took me years to break it in.

GENÉSIS

Your ass print is alive and well.

She notices his bandaged hand, the expanded blood stain.

GENÉSIS (CONT'D)  
Have an accident, Sheriff?

PERU  
Cut myself shaving.

GENÉSIS  
(stares at his scruff)  
Clearly.

Genésis stands, tucks the folder under her arm and heads to the doorway.

GENÉSIS (CONT'D)  
ADA Sullivan will be at the courthouse tomorrow. They're moving a big murder case out of San Antonio. I guess they need a neutral venue.

PERU  
Max? Shit. That's all I need.

GENÉSIS  
You still think Maxamiliano is after you?

PERU  
He hasn't forgotten Antonia.

GENÉSIS  
Neither have you.

PERU  
I live with it. (BEAT) You don't like it here much, do you?

GENÉSIS  
What's not to like?

PERU  
You've got friends in San Antone, that guy at the F.B.I.

GENÉSIS  
Sounds like a lot of paperwork. And I can make a difference here.

PERU  
Bullshit. Are you afraid or something?

Genésis walks away. Peru calls after her.



PERU (CONT'D)  
Maybe you're sweet on me.

Peru plops down in his chair, opens his briefcase, takes out a liquor bottle and places it in an unlocked desk drawer.

PERU (CONT'D)  
Marjorie!

MARJORIE  
(O.S.)  
What?!

PERU  
Hold all my calls, I'm going to lunch!

MARJORIE  
(O.S.)  
What do you want me to put in the press release?!

Peru exits, goes to the reception desk. Marjorie finally looks up at the clock, it reads 6:30PM.

MARJORIE (CONT'D)  
A bit late for lunch.

PERU  
Not in Tibet.

MARJORIE  
Roger that.

EXT. PERU'S CRUISER - DRIVING

Peru cruises down Main Street. Townsfolk wave to him, he ignores them.

He looks around to see if anyone is watching, then takes a quick swig from the whiskey bottle. He wipes his mouth on his shirt sleeve, hides the bottle in his glove compartment.

A cassette hangs halfway out of his stereo. He pushes it in and it plays.

RICHARD DANFORTH

- from the time you commit fully to this program, you will transform into a holy monster, an assertive, fiery phoenix, rising from the ashes of your previous life, to fly and glide and swoop down upon the enemies of independence and courage, to rend the limbs of physical insecurity.

Peru turns off the stereo as he rolls by the courthouse. TV news vans are lined up outside, field anchors prepare for their broadcast.

Peru stops and waves a NEWS PRODUCER over.

PERU

What's going on?

NEWS PRODUCER

The Scary Houdini trial. They had to move it from San Antonio.

PERU

What the fuck is a Scary Houdini?

NEWS PRODUCER

The serial killer, Harry Bullstock. They call him Scary Houdini cause he'd kill his victims with old fashioned magic tricks, the kind magicians and escape artists used.

PERU

Jesus.

NEWS PRODUCER

Yeah, pretty fucked up. How have you not heard about him?

PERU

I hear Max is prosecuting.

NEWS PRODUCER

And during an election year. He wins this, he'll be attorney general.

PERU

That's all we need.

NEWS PRODUCER

He's not so bad.

PERU

Tell your crew to stay off the  
grass.

Peru drives off.

EST. PALAFOX HOME - DAY

A squad car sits in the driveway of a modest house.

INT. PALAFOX HOME, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Genésis and her mother CLAUDIA (80) sit in front of the TV. The deputy feeds her mom oatmeal from a bowl on a TV-table. A newscast about the Scary Houdini trial plays in the background as we slowly move in on mother and daughter.

NEWSCASTER

Sources from San Antonio confirm the trial of alleged serial killer Harry Bullstock will begin in two days at Rembrandt's courthouse. County prosecutor Maxamiliano Sullivan, believed to be the favorite in next month's election for Attorney General, is taking the lead against famed defense attorney Barry Tillbrook, a British ex-pat coming off the successful acquittal of Renn Parquart, the billionaire who faked his death after the mysterious disappearance of his wife Velma. We'll have more on the trial later. Coming up, and back by popular demand, the twins will give a cooking demonstration, but first, a live report from animal control officer Tim Derby with some helpful hints to avoid being killed by a coyote.

Claudia stares blankly at the screen, oatmeal drips from her mouth. Genésis carefully wipes it away.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NORTH TEXAS BACKROAD - NIGHT

A coyote stands in the middle of the road. It stares into the darkness, haunches up, a growl rises from its throat.

Something in the gloom at the edge of the road...  
something...

The beast is suddenly illuminated, it darts into the brush.

A moment later, Peru's cruiser speeds down the dark road, its headlights cut through the dust.

INT. PERU'S CRUISER - DRIVING

The sheriff pops the cassette out and digs in the glove compartment for another. He finds one and rams it into the player.

RICHARD DANFORTH

- and then he drove the scimitar  
into the beast's heart, the  
midnight black blood exploding from  
within. Drink deeply, my friend,  
for this is the nectar of fear, and  
your enemy's terror will fill you  
with power.

In the background, the HOWL of a dying monster drowns out the announcer's voice, louder and louder until it becomes piercing. Peru winces, rips the tape out and throws it out his window.

BACKROAD

The cassette skids along the asphalt, its guts spill out. A coyote darts across the road, grabs the cassette in its teeth and runs into the darkness on the other side of the road.

CRUISER

Peru grabs another tape and jams it in. SPOOKY MUSIC plays underneath a narrator who sounds like Boris Karloff. The production is like an old radio drama.

DR. ZOMBIE

(from stereo)

Welcome, ghouls and goblins, to the  
Nightmare Hour. When monsters and  
demons pass through the veil, enter  
our innocent reality, and drag us  
down into a wicked underworld. Let  
us begin with Chapter One of -

(booming, echo)

- Demons From Heaven!

Peru smiles, turns up the volume, mashes the gas pedal to the floor as the SPOOKY MUSIC blasts from his car.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

The SPOOKY MUSIC fades into the distance as a pack of coyotes surround the cassette tape's innards, tearing at them as black ink pours from the billowing magnetic entrails.

EXT. THE FOUNTAINHEAD LOUNGE - NIGHT

Peru's cruiser is parked in front of The Fountainhead Lounge next to an old tow-truck with a faded logo on the door that reads: WYNTER & SONS SALVAGE.

We slide past Peru's car and move around to the back of the bar, finally coming to rest on a trash dumpster set against the rear of the building.

EXT. THE FOUNTAINHEAD LOUNGE, BACK LOT - NIGHT

Three boys, ROY, BERT and HERBIE, all about ten years old, sit in a circle next to the dumpster. They read a crumpled porn magazine by flashlight.

HERBIE

Lordy, look at them titties.

ROY

I seen better.

HERBIE

On yer momma?

ROY

Fuck you, Herbie.

BERT

Hold the flashlight still.

HERBIE

Climb in the dumpster, Bert, and see if you can find another one.

BERT

If I do, I get to keep it.

ROY

Whatever.

HERBIE

Shit, Bert, you got a boner  
already?

Herbie and Roy whoop it up while Bert scrambles into the dumpster.

Herbie whispers into Roy's ear and the two boys share a sinister smile, then sneak off into the night.

EXT. THE FOUNTAINHEAD LOUNGE, ENTRANCE

The jet-black muscle car from earlier pulls into the open space next to Peru's car. WE HOLD for a moment on the car, the TICK of the cooling engine blends with the CHIRP of crickets.

INT. THE FOUNTAINHEAD LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

The dreary dive bar is punctuated by dim lighting and eerie country music from a jukebox in the corner. DAVID "IAN" RAND, a 50-ish bartender, unpacks a karaoke machine on a small stage. Rand, Peru and CHIGGER WYNTER (70s old codger) are the only people here. Peru makes his way to the bar while Chigger sits at a table, head down, snoring.

RAND

(to Peru)  
Be with you.

PERU

Take your time. Just dying of  
thirst over here.

Chigger suddenly stands, drops a five-dollar bill on the table and walks out, ignores Peru.

PERU (CONT'D)

Nice to see you too, Chigger.

Rand has returned to his place behind the bar. He starts to pour a pint of Guinness. The tap sputters and spits out foam.

RAND

Well, look at that. There goes  
another one.

PERU

Already? Who the hell else is  
drinking my beer?

RAND

Only you and your conscience. And I  
hear your conscience is a drunk.

PERU

My conscience says, fuck off.

RAND

While I'm doing that, I'll grab  
another keg.

PERU

Make it snappy. My conscience is a  
*mean* drunk.

Rand disappears to the storeroom.

The bar's front door opens with a WHOOSH.

Peru looks and sees...

WAYNE SMILE, a drifter in his mid-20s. He wears an olive drab  
ARMY JACKET, a BLACK T-SHIRT and dirty JEANS. Among the  
various patches on his jacket is a skull surrounded by the  
symbol for an atom. His hair is unkempt and a cigarette  
dangles from his mouth.

Smile goes straight to the jukebox without even looking  
toward Peru. He surveys the selections until he decides to  
play "The End Of The World" by Skeeter Davis.

He rests his head against the glass, face dappled by the  
multicolored lights from the juke.

When he finally turns around, he walks over to the bar and  
sits down a stool away from Peru.

SMILE

(to Peru)

Slow night?

The sheriff doesn't respond. He seems lost in the swirls on  
the bar counter.

SMILE (CONT'D)

Is it self-serve, or do I ring a  
bell or something?

PERU

(without looking up from  
the bar)

Bartender'll be back in a second.

SMILE

Great.

SMILE turns and grins at Peru.

SMILE (CONT'D)

(without a hint of  
sarcasm)

How ya doing, officer?

Peru doesn't respond, his thoughts still lost in the wood grain of the bar.

SMILE (CONT'D)

Nice clear night, isn't it? A guy  
could walk for miles and not see  
one car, but see a million stars.  
That's something, isn't it? I bet  
you feel lucky. (BEAT) Hey, they  
got karaoke?

Smile gets up and walks over to the machine on a small stage in the corner. He turns it on and grabs the wireless microphone from its stand.

SMILE (CONT'D)

(through the P.A., reverb)

How is everybody doing tonight? Oh,  
I see we have someone from out of  
town in the audience.

Peru reacts to "out-of-town".

Smile reaches up and turns one of the house lights around to focus on Peru.

SMILE (CONT'D)

Hello, sir. And what is your name?

Peru moves to another stool, Smile follows him with the spotlight.

SMILE (CONT'D)

Cat got your tongue?

PERU

My name is none of your fucking  
business.

SMILE

Well, Mr. Business, or do you  
prefer Fucking?

From the jukebox comes CANNED LAUGHTER.



SMILE (CONT'D)  
And where are you from?

PERU  
Where do you think?

SMILE  
You don't seem like a southern boy  
to me. I'd have to guess-  
(in an exaggerated voice  
like a boxing ring  
announcer)  
Usted debe ser de Los Aaaaangeles!

More CHEERING from the jukebox. Peru's face goes white at the mention of Los Angeles. He finally takes notice and turns toward Smile.

SMILE (CONT'D)  
I must say, you look rather tired,  
sheriff. Did you crawl into town?

The CANNED LAUGHTER is louder, more JEERS are heard.

Peru turns back to the bar.

PERU  
(sotto)  
Fuck you.

Suddenly, Smile's voice sounds very close to Peru's ear, causing Peru to turn around. Smile is right behind him.

SMILE  
What's wrong, buddy? What's got you  
so down?

Smile slides onto the stool next to Peru, lays the mic on the bar.

SMILE (CONT'D)  
Bored? No direction? Life's lost  
all meaning?

PERU  
Something like that.

SMILE  
Sounds like someone has the blues.

The jukebox audience releases a sympathetic AWWWWWW.

Wayne grabs a ukulele from behind his back and sings a Hawaiian lullaby version of "Murder By Numbers" by The Police, acoustic at first, then with accompaniment from the jukebox. As the drifter strums, a gold ring on his right hand glints in the light.

SMILE (CONT'D)

Once that you've decided on a  
killing / First you make a stone of  
your heart / And if you find that  
your hands are still willing / Then  
you can turn a murder into art

There really isn't any need for  
bloodshed / You just do it with a  
little more finesse / If you can  
slip a tablet into someone's coffee  
Then it avoids an awful lot of mess

Now if you have a taste for this  
experience / If you're flushed with  
your very first success / Then you  
must try a twosome or a threesome /  
You'll find your conscience bothers  
you much less

Because murder is like anything you  
take to / It's a habit-forming need  
for more and more / You can bump  
off every member of your family /  
And anybody else you find a bore

Now you can join the ranks of the  
illustrious / In history's great  
dark hall of fame / All our  
greatest killers were industrious /  
At least the ones that we all know  
by name

But you can reach the top of your  
profession / If you become the  
leader of the land / For murder is  
the sport of the elected / And you  
don't need to lift a finger of your  
hand

Because it's murder by numbers,  
one, two, three / It's as easy to  
learn as your ABCs / Murder by  
numbers, one, two, three  
It's as easy to learn as your A, B,  
C, D, E's...

Peru is dumbstruck by the end of the song. He looks away, wipes his eyes as the lush orchestra fades into reverb.

SMILE (CONT'D)

So, what would it take?

PERU

For what?

SMILE

For things to get exciting. For your life to get better. For damsel's in distress. For cat's stuck in trees. For little kids who scrape their knees.

PERU

What the fuck is it to you?

SMILE

Oh, call it curiosity, call it, sticking my nose into someone's business.

PERU

And this is what you do for fun?

SMILE

We all have our hobbies. How about you?

PERU

At the moment, ignoring you.

SMILE

(acts out what he describes)

But seriously. I mean, what if I were to walk over to this table, grab this five dollar bill, and...

Smile stuffs the five dollar tip Chigger left behind into his coat pocket, and bolts out the front door. Peru stares after him, frozen on his barstool as FEEDBACK from the karaoke speaker SQUEALS.

EXT. THE FOUNTAINHEAD LOUNGE, BACK LOT - CONTINUOUS

Bert rummages inside the dumpster.

BERT

I think I found another one.

Out of breath, he peaks out over the edge of the dumpster.

BERT (CONT'D)

Guys?

The shadow of a man appears over Bert's terrified face as DISTANT FEEDBACK echoes.

INT. THE FOUNTAINHEAD LOUNGE

Rand returns from the storeroom drags a beer keg. Peru grabs the microphone and switches it off.

RAND

What're you doing? I haven't set that up yet.

Rand takes the mic and stows it under the bar, then attaches the keg.

RAND (CONT'D)

Here you go, sheriff. Brand spanking new and awaiting the attention of your raging alcoholism.

Rand notices Peru's wild stare at the front door.

RAND (CONT'D)

Did you hear me, Topper?

Peru snaps out of his daze and turns to Rand.

PERU

Uh, yeah. I heard you. It's just that-

RAND

What? Afraid you left the iron on back at the Ponderosa?

PERU

This guy came in here, talked a bunch of crazy shit, sang a song, and then swiped five bucks from that table.

RAND

I didn't hear anyone come in. Was it that fucker T-Bone?

PERU

No. He was just some guy. I never saw him before. Passing through, maybe.

RAND

And he stole five bucks? Why didn't you taze him? You always say how much you want someone to do the dance, the ol' 20,000 volt two-step.

PERU

Well, he made it seem like he was doing me a favor.

RAND

Are you okay, sheriff? Come on man, you don't get goofy 'til your eighth pint. You're disappointing me. (BEAT) Did you go on one of your drives tonight?

Peru turns to Rand.

PERU

What does that have to do with anything?

RAND

(pours a beer)

'Cause you always go overboard on the whiskey when you take these night drives. No wonder you're hallucinating.

PERU

What the fuck do you mean by "hallucinating?"

Both men react to a CRASH from the rear of the building. Peru and Rand run through the storeroom and out the back door.

EXT. THE FOUNTAINHEAD LOUNGE, BACK LOT

They see a form run off into the scrub brush.

PERU

There he goes.

RAND

Are you sure? Could've been a coyote. They usually root through the trash.

PERU

Yeah, right. It was on two legs.

RAND

Then it was Party Joe, lookin' for cans or bottles. Maybe some kids fuckin' around.

Peru stares into the distance for a moment while Rand looks at him, worried.

RAND (CONT'D)

Come on, Topper. How about that pint?

PERU

(sotto)

I'm not crazy.

Rand leads Peru back into the bar as WE DRIFT up over the dumpster to REVEAL Bert hiding under trash, terrified.

INT. THE FOUNTAINHEAD LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

Peru and Rand return to the bar where Rand continues to pour the Guinness, the sheriff slides onto his perch.

RAND

Sure you can handle this crimewave, sheriff? Will I need to be deputized?

PERU

(enraged)

Don't fucking mock me! I know what I saw. I'm not too drunk to know what I saw.

RAND

(annoyed)

You know what, Sheriff, I think it's time for you to go. Get some sleep.

Rand pours the beer from the glass into a to-go cup with a plastic top. Peru takes it and heads to the door.

PERU  
 (sotto)  
 I fucking hate this place.

EXT./INT. PERU'S CAR

Peru slides in, starts it with a roar and pushes the cassette back into the player. He peels out of the parking lot as soothing BOSSA NOVA MUSIC and the announcer's voice blare from the stereo.

RICHARD DANFORTH  
 The drinking doldrums got you down?  
 How about a hug? No, not for that  
 bottle; for YOU!

From a distance WE SEE flashes of light in the car in time with GUNSHOTS.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT./EXT. PERU'S CAR - DRIVING

Peru, on his way home from the bar, drives a little too fast down the desolate country road. His car is surrounded by pitch black on either side. He loudly sings along to Lou Christie's "Lightning Strikes" in a ragged, off-key, drunken voice.

PERU  
 If she's put together fine / and  
 she's readin' my mind / I can't  
 stop / I can't stop myself /  
 Liiiiiight-ning is striiiiiii-king uh-

Quite suddenly, Bert's friends Herbie and Roy emerge from the darkness on the left side of the road just yards from Peru's car. The frightened boys look back over their shoulders into the brush as if they're being chased.

Peru passes them, then watches in his rearview mirror as the boys dash across the road, disappear into the brush on the other side.

A moment after, a pack of coyotes stream across the road after them. One of the mongrels drags a cassette tape behind it.

When Peru looks back to the road in front of him, a severe bend appears. He brakes hard and yanks the steering wheel, careens off the road, mows over a mailbox with the name "Appleby" and rams into a large oak tree.

The airbag deploys as the whiskey bottle smashes against the dashboard.

Peru moans and slumps to one side, unconscious, his car barely discernible in the darkness. We hear the CHIRP of crickets and the HISS of steam as it escapes from the fractured radiator.

INT. THE ZOO

A sterile white room. One wall is dark glass from floor to ceiling. Something large moves beyond the glass wall.

EXT. NORTH TEXAS, BACKROAD - NIGHT

Peru awakens, the airbag of his cruiser deflated in his lap, airbag powder and blood on his face and chest. He checks himself in the rearview. A gash across the bridge of his nose leaks rivulets of blood down his cheeks, smearing the powder like the make-up of a demonic clown.

The whiskey bottle rests on the floor, unharmed. Peru reaches for it and hits a knob on the car stereo. It comes alive and plays the cassette as he grabs the bottle.

RICHARD DANFORTH  
(from the stereo,  
languid)

By now you should be floating on a  
cloud of self-love, of acceptance,  
of disintegration. The swaddling  
clothes that only moral ambiguity  
can stitch together. Let go,  
friend. Accept yourself as the hand  
cradling your world. The hand of a  
god. Now it's time to look inward.  
Raise your head up and gaze into  
the mirror, friend.

Peru looks up at the rearview, his haunted eyes stare back.

RICHARD DANFORTH (CONT'D)  
Those eyes. Your eyes. His eyes.  
Say goodnight, friend.

PERU  
Goodnight, friend.

An arm, clad in olive drab, explodes through the driver-side window, its clawed, demon fist knocks Peru into dreamland.

CUT TO BLACK