

PENNY DREADFUL

Pilot

by

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EXT. SPITALFIELDS, LONDON - EARLY MORNING

The flies are buzzing around the carcasses hanging in the famous open-air meat market. As they always do.

The butchers, bone collectors, and carcass-venders go about their business.

But then one of the butchers notices something peculiar...

Some of the flies are being drawn across the street toward a particular building in the row of decaying tenements that face the market.

The flies buzz in and out of a half-open second story window, covering the glass.

The butcher is intrigued enough to cross the street and approach the building.

It is Wednesday, July 8, 1891.

INT. SPITALFIELDS FLAT - LATER THAT MORNING

The walls are still dripping with blood.

The butchered corpses are splayed in the sordid little sitting room of the sordid little flat.

Scotland Yard Inspector ALEC GALSWORTHY (40's) supervises the investigation. He's dogged. A serious professional.

His eyes scan the room ... past the three butchered bodies: a husband, wife, and young daughter ... past the scattered body parts ... past the tidy knickknacks on the mantle: a little ivory comb; a family Bible; dented candlesticks ... past the blood on the ceiling, on the walls, pooling on the floor.

The tiny sitting room is crowded with CONSTABLES, busy with what then passed for crime scene investigation.

GALSWORTHY

He took his time.

CONSTABLE

Sir...?

GALSWORTHY

No fear of discovery. Second story, no one across the way ... He enjoyed it.

CONSTABLE

He took a few. Body parts that is.

One of the other Constables steps outside to the hallway and wretches. This is too much, even for hardened policemen.

FLASH -- an EXPLOSION of phosphorous illuminates the dark corners ... The blood shines suddenly crimson in the flash ... A police PHOTOGRAPHER is exposing pictures of the crime scene.

The Photographer prepares another plate.

PHOTOGRAPHER

You want it all?

GALSWORTHY

Everything.

PHOTOGRAPHER

(re: the young girl's
body)

Even her?

GALSWORTHY

Especially her.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Doesn't seem right ... Where's the dignity in that?

GALSWORTHY

Do your job.

He spots one of the Constables stepping in the blood.

GALSWORTHY

Watch your step! ... Oh for heaven sake, take off your boots and carry them out ... All of you -- watch your bloody feet! -- No, no, get out, all of you get out!

The Constables file out.

The Photographer is ready.

PHOTOGRAPHER

You sure about this, Inspector?

GALSWORTHY

Expose your plate.

The photographer prepares and -- FLASH -- a sudden, quick view of the butchered girl -- flesh flayed, bones exposed, body parts theatrically displayed--

The flash fades from Galsworthy's eyes. He blinks.

He looks at the sad corpses for a moment in silence.

PHOTOGRAPHER

May I go, sir?

GALSWORTHY

Go on.

The Photographer prepares his things.

GALSWORTHY

We'll get her dignity back when we've caught this monster.

The Photographer goes.

Galsworthy stands in silence.

The blood drips from the ceiling ... drip ... drip ... drip...

EXT. SPITALFIELDS FLAT - DAY

Meanwhile, a crowd has gathered outside.

It's a collection of the denizens of London's East End. Whores, sailors, beggars, tradesmen, mongers of every sort crane for glimpses inside. Whispering.

Across the street, one man stands out. He doesn't belong here.

We slowly move in on him.

He's rich. Silver-tipped cane. Pearl gloves. Impressive fur-lined coat. Impeccable clothing. Handsome beard flecked with grey.

SIR MALCOLM MURRAY.

 He's a physically impressive man ... August and intense, craggy face creased with recent and on-going troubles.

He watches the events unfolding across the street with singular, unblinking interest.

He is a man on mission.

... CREDITS...

EXT. PALACE GROUNDS - DAY

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

The young man fires his Colt revolvers with skill and daring.
Like lighting. BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

ETHAN CHANDLER.

Shatters the china targets spinning ahead of him. Polite
applause.

We're on the sculptured lawn of one of the lesser palaces of
London.

"Colonel Brewster's Wild West Show and Emporium of American
Curiosities" is in full swing. Colorful banners and American
flags. Novelties for sale. A few Indians in regalia. Thin
horses.

It's one of the countless imitators of Buffalo Bill's Wild
West show that toured the globe in this period. Not the best
show, but not the worst either.

The lawn is filled with the elite of London society.
Elegantly dressed. Sipping champagne as they watch the show.
Some bored.

Ethan is the show's marquee sharpshooter. Dressed in a
theatrical "cowboy" outfit.

He's a handsome young American of around 30. Amazing with all
kinds of firearms but a rebellious and dark spirit. He's been
drinking too much as well; plagued by ghosts from his past.
On the verge of self-destruction, which he might welcome.

He narrates his tale with indifference:

ETHAN

Why just about then I seen big old
Crazy Horse himself riding up with
a band of his bloodthirsty Sioux
killers. General Custer gave the
word, his blond hair flapping in
the breeze like something from
myth.

(MORE)

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Says he: "Stand here and fight,
boys, fight for your very lives!
They shall eat our lead and may the
devil take 'em."

Ethan spins his revolvers back into their holsters with dazzling panache -- and whips out the Winchester rifle he keeps strapped to his back--

ETHAN

So fight I did!

More targets are sent spinning and he jerks up the Winchester, fanning off shots -- BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!
BLAM!

Targets explode--

The crowd watches the plates disintegrate--

All except for one woman.

Like a spectator out of sync at a tennis match, her head is pointed the other way. She just watches Ethan.

VANESSA IVES.

She's beautiful. Almost strangely so. Pale, pale skin and raven hair. She's in her late 20's. Enigmatic, haunted eyes, and utterly composed. She will prove herself a force to be reckoned with.

Our heroine.

She watches as Ethan recklessly fires -- shattering targets -- missing a few -- become more erratic -- one bullet ricochets wildly -- he doesn't care.

Polite applause.

COLONEL BREWSTER, Ethan's boss, watches Ethan a bit nervously as the young man concludes his oration:

ETHAN

And thus did I fight that famed day
alongside our gallant but doomed
General Custer, one of the few
survivors who lived to bring this
tale of pluck and daring to you.

He notices one RICH WOMAN yawning. Bored by his tale.

ETHAN

Thank you.

He bows. Some applause.

But his eyes go back to the Bored Woman. No applause from her. She's chatting sourly to her neighbor.

Colonel Brewster looks at Ethan. Catches his eye. Don't you dare.

Vanessa watches all this closely.

Ethan begins walking away.

But he can't help himself. Doesn't want to help himself.

He spins around fires again -- BLAM!

Shredding the Bored Woman's hat.

She faints. Others scream.

Pandemonium.

EXT. PALACE GROUNDS - DAY

The show is packing up and moving on.

Colonel Brewster is with Ethan, angry.

BREWSTER

I can't have it no more! You understand me? You're out! Get your things and be done. We're putting on a respectable show here for fine ladies and gentlemen and--

ETHAN

Give me my passage money.

BREWSTER

Hell with you and hell with that.

ETHAN

We had an arrangement.

BREWSTER

Void after your antics, boy. Void!

ETHAN

How am I to get home?

BREWSTER

You should have thought of that before you went off!

(MORE)

BREWSTER (CONT'D)

But you just can't help yourself.
You're damned lucky I don't turn
you over to the law right about
now.

Ethan looks at him, simmering.

Some of Colonel Brewster's men move into position. He knew better than to confront the volatile young man without muscle.

BREWSTER

One parting word of advice ... Quit
the fighting the world. You ain't
gonna win, son. The world always
wins ... Leave the costume.

INT. DARK PUB - DAY

Ethan is slouched at a corner table. Drinking whatever money he has left.

His few belongings at his side.

He removes his pocket watch. Very expensive. Engraved. Clicks it open. Moon phase and calendar dials.

Inscription: "To Ethan, From his Father."

He clicks it shut and turns it over and over in his hand. Thinking.

A voice:

VANESSA

You did not tell the truth.

He looks up.

Vanessa stands before him.

VANESSA

By my reckoning you were a boy when
General Custer died. And 'tis well
known there were no survivors.

ETHAN

What we call a tall tale.

VANESSA

Exceedingly tall.

ETHAN
Vice of my nation. We're
storytellers.

Beat.

VANESSA
May I join you?

He pushes back a chair with his boot.

She is amused at the brusque gesture.

She sits.

He is intrigued by both her extreme beauty and her strange poise.

ETHAN
You saw my exhibition.

VANESSA
Highly impressive. Especially your finale.

ETHAN
Temper always does me in. Once I get my hackles up there's nothing for it ... Maybe one day I'll calm down, fatten up, and become one those proper gentlemen with soft hands that ladies like you always favor.

VANESSA
Oh, that would be a shame.

Beat as he considers her.

VANESSA
I have a need for some night work.

His turn to be amused.

ETHAN
Oh, honey, don't we all?

VANESSA
I have a need for a gentleman who is comfortable with firearms and not hesitant to engage in dangerous endeavors ... Or was all that a tall tale as well?

ETHAN

What do you think? How do you read
me?

VANESSA

Expensive watch, but thread-bare
clothes. Sentimental about the
money you used to have. Your eye is
steady but your left hand tremors,
that's the drink, so you keep it
below the table hoping I won't
notice. You've a contusion healing
on your jaw, the result of a recent
brawl no doubt. Your valise is good
quality leather and your initials
are in gold filigree; but your
boots have been re-soled more than
once ... I see a man who has been
accustomed to wealth but has given
himself to excess and hooliganism.
A man without employment in an
alien land bereft of prospects but
for those currently sitting before
him.

He looks at her.

He slides the bottle over to her. Drink?

She shakes her head minutely, her eyes never leaving his.

ETHAN

So it's a job, this "night work?"

VANESSA

Yes.

ETHAN

Some kind of criminal set up?

VANESSA

Would it matter?

ETHAN

Not much.

VANESSA

Then why ask?

Beat.

ETHAN

What's the pay?

VANESSA

Enough to book passage back to your
land of tall tales.

ETHAN

Is it a murder?

VANESSA

Would it matter?

He looks at her evenly. Takes a drink.

Beat.

ETHAN

One smile and I say yes.

She appreciates his boldness.

She smiles, but even that is mysterious.

She slides a card across the table and stands:

VANESSA

Meet me at this address at 11
o'clock.

ETHAN

I don't know London.

VANESSA

Then ask a policeman.

ETHAN

Do you have a name?

VANESSA

Yes.

She goes.

He watches her.

Deeply intrigued.

It's been like this Ethan's whole life. Something leading him
from one fateful encounter to the next, one tragedy to
another, like fate.

EXT. EAST END - NIGHT

Fog shrouds everything.

A thick, rolling miasma like a living thing it undulates around the corners, filling the narrow lanes and twisting alleys of Whitechapel and Spitalfields and the Docklands and this place, Limehouse.

Inadequate gaslights flicker, sporadically illuminating the many taverns, whorehouses, shops and tenements.

Ghostly whispers and drunken voices echo alongside the occasional clatter of a horse-drawn cart or carriage.

Ethan makes his way through the fog.

A rich carriage is waiting. The coachman, a burly Cockney man named BURKE, sits hunched in an old shawl.

ETHAN

I'm here to meet a lady.

Burke raps on the coach with his heavy stick.

Vanessa emerges with Sir Malcolm, who we met outside the Spitalfields crime scene.

SIR MALCOLM

This is the individual?

VANESSA

Yes.

SIR MALCOLM

Did you bring your weapons?

Ethan shows them he is wearing his revolvers under his long coat.

SIR MALCOLM

Then come. When we are inside, say nothing.

Sir Malcolm leads them down the street. Burke with them.

A whore and her client emerge from the blinding fog. Staggering past.

They turn a corner and arrive at a small door marked with a Chinese character.

Sir Malcolm raps on the door with the silver top of his cane. A small window slides open. A Chinese face peers out.

The door is unlocked and they enter...

INT. OPIUM DEN - NIGHT

Crowded opium house.

Tiers of cramped cots filled with smokers. The minutia of preparing the pipes. Thick clouds of noxious opium that match the fog outside.

Ethan blinks. His eyes getting accustomed to the stinging vapor of opium.

He glances to Vanessa. She is poised, glacial.

Sir Malcolm and Burke go to speak with the MANAGER of the place, an ancient Chinese woman.

ETHAN

This I didn't expect.

Vanessa shakes her head. Don't speak.

Ethan sees Sir Malcolm giving the Manager some money. Then he nods for them to follow.

Ethan and Vanessa move deeper into the opium house. Past the huddled, drugged figures.

They stop outside another door.

Sir Malcolm looks to Ethan:

SIR MALCOLM

Do not be amazed at anything you see ... And do not hesitate.

A quick glance to the others. Ready?

He nods to Burke.

Burke pushes open the door and they enter...

INT. OPIUM DEN-WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Inside...

Three MEN and one WOMAN are standing.

Just standing, in the corner of the chamber. It's a large room, like a warehouse, light filtering down from a filthy skylight covered in smoke and oil.

Animal bones scattered around the edges of the place.

The occupants turn as one and consider the new arrivals ... There is something bizarre about the quartet that Ethan tries to figure out ... They're pale, sickly-looking, thin, bones almost showing through tightly muscled arms. Long, cracked fingernails.

Eyes almost completely filled with dark pupils, very little white showing. Are they drugged? Is this what too much opium does? It is one of the only vices Ethan has not explored.

The air is dead. Nothing stirs.

A threatening silence.

Ethan's hands instinctively move and rest on his guns.

Sir Malcolm steps forward.

Stops.

The WOMAN leans forward slightly, tilting her head. Peering at him.

SIR MALCOLM
That which you serve, we seek.

The Woman finally speaks, in FRENCH.

Sir Malcolm answers in French.

The Woman seems grimly amused.

Sir Malcolm is not.

Beat.

The Woman takes a step. Sir Malcolm steps slightly back. She chuckles quietly and speaks in French again.

The Three Men move as well. Slowly moving through the shadows. Here and then gone.

Moving into position.

Vanessa's eyes dart, trying to follow them. Ethan steps closer to her.

The Woman speaks again. Sir Malcolm answers. Firmer now. Insistent.

The Woman takes another step.

Ethan sees Burke tighten his grip on his stick.

The Woman's head lolls this way and that, like a serpent, as she looks at Sir Malcolm.

He shouts a harsh command in French.

It echoes.

The Woman does not respond. Instead she looks up at the dark skylight and begins to sing an unnerving lullaby in French.

Her voice is lovely and lost.

The eerie lullaby echoes.

Ethan glances to Vanessa again.

Then--

With no warning--

Almost too fast to know what's happening--

The quartet ATTACKS.

Moving with almost inhuman speed they launch themselves at Ethan and the others -- long nails scratching ferociously, teeth snapping--

Ethan does not hesitate--

He pulls his revolvers and fires -- BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

The gunshots illuminate the terrible battle--

Burke swings hard with his cane -- bashing wildly -- the attackers spring forward relentlessly--

Sir Malcolm instantly pulls a hidden weapon from under his cloak, an ingenious Victorian wonder, like cross-bow pistol, he fires a bolt--

The bolt strikes home and sends one of the attackers flying back -- but the attacker almost instantly leaps up and attacks again -- the attackers contort and fall but do not die easily--

One of them slams Burke to the side brutally, he flies and crashes against a wall--

Ethan shoots this attacker repeatedly -- BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! -- Sir Malcolm finishes him off with a perfectly-aimed bolt--

Even in this horrific maelstrom of violence, Ethan notices something fantastic--

Vanessa has not moved a muscle.

The Woman screeches to attack her -- but then suddenly STOPS.

Something about Vanessa's cold gaze and sheer unmoving presence stops her cold -- she senses something terrible in Vanessa--

The Woman snarls and darts away into the darkness, through a fissure in the wall--

SIR MALCOLM
After her!

They race after the retreating Woman -- through the fissure in the wall--

INT. TUNNELS/SEWERS - NIGHT

Sir Malcolm leads fearlessly as they chase the Woman through a maze of decaying tunnels--

Ethan snaps open his revolvers and the shells clatter away. He reloads as they splash through sewer channels--

They can hear the Woman ahead, taunting and singing insanely in French--

Glimpses of her as they run--

Ethan glances to Vanessa as they twist and turn through the increasingly tight corridors. She is as pale as ever. But her eyes are burning with the hunt.

They finally pursue the Woman through a final crumbling entrance to...

INT. CATACOMBS - NIGHT

A high, vaulted chamber: an ossuary.

Undisturbed for centuries perhaps but for the few candles sputtering on the floor, casting ghoulish shadows and flickering lights on the mounds of interred bones.

The Woman stands in the center of the room.

Just waiting for them.

They stop.

As his eyes become accustomed, Ethan sees that round the edges of the chamber are a three reclining figures. Tucked into the crevasses alongside the skeletons. THREE WOMEN, seemingly asleep, in a strange somnolent state.

The Woman they were pursuing pays the somnolent figures no mind. She just stands, looking at Sir Malcolm and the others. Exultant.

She whispers something in French.

Then...

Far above, at the black top of the vaulted chamber...

Something stirs.

Unfolds itself like a great spider. Gradually limbs becoming visible ... Like a man, but strangely luminescent ... Chalky and white. Almost seven feet tall. Ectomorphic thinness like a Masai warrior, lean muscles coiled.

Not human entirely.

The CREATURE lurks above. Awe-inspiring in its monstrous stillness and predatory, blazing red eyes.

The Woman turns up and speaks to her master.

Beat.

Then--

A blaze of glowing luminescent motion--

The Creature vaults down and with one terrible swing of its talons--

RIPS the Woman in half and flings her away--

Instantly--

The Creature springs to Burke and its jaws SNAP--

TEARING his throat out and killing him--

Ethan has both guns out -- BLAM!BLAM!BLAM!BLAM!

The shots are deafening--

Ethan is stunned to see his bullets ricochet and bounce wildly off the Creature, seemingly doing it no harm--

The Creature spins to Sir Malcolm and coils to attack--

But--

Vanessa steps in front of Sir Malcolm with superhuman courage as--

Her whole spine writhes violently as she snaps into a kind of trance, her limbs convulsing suddenly and then shooting straight like iron, her eyes rolling up into her head--

And from deep within her comes a low, horrifying VOICE.

Not hers, not human, intoning words of a long dead language.

Issuing a ferocious command!

The Creature suddenly STOPS -- her dark power terrifying it.

Sir Malcolm uses the Creature's momentary hesitation to attack--

He rips off the silver head of his walking stick, exposing a lethal wooden stake--

And lunges forward, DRIVING the stake deep into the Creature's chest.

The Creature recoils back. Twisting and contorting in agony. Finally dying as--

Vanessa collapses.

The exertion from her bizarre psychic effort has defeated her. Ethan races to her.

Sir Malcolm pays her no heed at all. Nor the dead Burke. He strides to the three somnolent women and turns them over one after another, dragging them into the light, looking at their faces.

He's increasingly desperate.

Looking for someone.

Someone he does not find.

He roars in anger as the women begin to STIR from their sleep.

Sir Malcolm doesn't pause. He stakes each one of them brutally. Blood sprays. His face is a cruel blood-soaked visage now, no longer the refined gentleman.

Ethan watches in horror as he cradles Vanessa.

She begins to come around.

He helps her stand.

ETHAN
We have to go.

She shakes her head.

Ethan watches in disbelief as Sir Malcolm finally strides to his coachman. He drives a final stake into Burkes' body.

Now he is done.

He cleans the blood from his face as he returns to Ethan and Vanessa.

SIR MALCOLM
Can you go on?

Vanessa nods.

ETHAN
I'm taking her out of here.

SIR MALCOLM
No, sir. You are not ... This night
is not over.

He goes to gather his things.

Vanessa turns to Ethan.

VANESSA
Please ... Help us.

There is such need in her eyes.

Ethan turns one last time and takes in the carnage. He walks over and looks down at the dead Creature.

Like this, inanimate and cold, it looks more human than he had remembered.

INT. RESURRECTIONIST'S MORTUARY - NIGHT

Busy night for the body snatchers.

An old stable, off the major streets. It's an illegal slaughterhouse and morgue, dealing in the brisk trade for cadavers and body parts.

Sir Malcolm, Vanessa and Ethan move past doctors working over cadavers, dismembering and negotiating with their particular resurrectionists.

ETHAN

... What is this?

SIR MALCOLM

Where the Resurrection men ply
their trade. The surgeons must
supply their students with amply
subjects. When the legal channels
are exhausted, they are forced to
resort to other measures. Thus do
our notions of morality require
science to bend to depravity.

They arrive at the establishment's BOSS. A fat man in a leather apron, busy cleaning lime off a fresh body.

SIR MALCOLM

I've need of your services, sir.

BOSS

(doesn't look up)

Tisn't from the river? They're
useless once them fish get 'em.

SIR MALCOLM

Not the river.

BOSS

(doesn't look up)

Well, that's a blessing. But I got
three stacked up here. Bring it
round back, see if my assistant can
take you. Watch the lime.

INT. RESURRECTIONIST'S MORTUARY-BACK - NIGHT

The YOUNG DOCTOR does not look up from his task.

From a rear door, Sir Malcolm and the others wheel in a cart containing the Creature's body under a canvas sheet.

The Young Doctor is handsome, in his late twenties. Long hair and fine, brooding features; more like a Romantic poet than a surgeon.

Currently he is bent over his work, his delicate artist's hands carefully dissecting a dismembered right arm.

SIR MALCOLM
Your master said you might assist
us?

YOUNG DOCTOR
I have no master.

SIR MALCOLM
The proprietor out front, I mean.

YOUNG DOCTOR
Go away ... (snaps to Ethan) ...
Get out of my light.

Ethan steps aside, he was blocking the lantern.

SIR MALCOLM
I will pay you for your time.

YOUNG DOCTOR
You could not afford it.

VANESSA
You're very proud.

The Young Doctor glances up, noting her for the first time.

YOUNG DOCTOR
I am extremely busy.

SIR MALCOLM
And I am extremely rich.

He places money on the table.

The Young Doctor is unimpressed.

YOUNG DOCTOR
Take it to a slaughterhouse. I'm
not a medical practitioner, I'm
engaged in research.

ETHAN
You're a man with a bloody knife
like everyone else out there, so
why don't you quit putting on airs?
I have had a hell of a night, son,
and I'm at about the end of my
tether.

The Young Doctor stops. Looks at Ethan.

YOUNG DOCTOR
American?

ETHAN
You are clever.

YOUNG DOCTOR
Do you know anything about electrical currents? Your country is making such strides as we labor in the dark ages of coal and peat, of superstition and unreasoned fears of anything beyond that which we have always known. Have you experience with the principles and applications of Galvanism?

ETHAN
(shrugs)
Oh, the usual.

SIR MALCOLM
Sir, I have urgent need of an necropsy. Will you assist us?

YOUNG DOCTOR
(returning to his work)
If you did not comprehend my previous words let me be clear: I am occupied solely in research, I will not bore myself with explanations you could not possibly understand. I do not take commissions for medical work for any reason whatsoever. Now kindly stop wasting my time and get out.

Sir Malcolm and Ethan are about to go.

But Vanessa has another idea.

She simply pulls back the sheet covering the body, exposing it.

The Young Doctor looks at the strange, pale body.

Beat.

He cannot resist ... he steps to the body, insatiably curious...

YOUNG DOCTOR
My God ... who is he?

SIR MALCOLM
(improvising)
A lascar off a ship from Bengali.
(MORE)

SIR MALCOLM (CONT'D)

I hazard the pigmentation is a form
of albinoism.

YOUNG DOCTOR

You are misinformed or mendacious
... This is no lascar and that is
not albinoism.

The Young Doctor's agile hands roam over the ashen body,
obsessed now.

YOUNG DOCTOR

Lividity null. Rigor mortis null.
Autonomic reflexes null. Ocular
reaction null...

(probes the chest wound)

Trauma and penetration of the chest
cavity through the manubrium seems
the likely cause of death, but I
expect you know that...

(pulls open the mouth and
probes the sharp teeth)

Dental malformation, I think not
naturally occurring due to the
isotropy. Nature is rarely so neat,
nature abhors symmetry. Perhaps a
tribal ritual? Tooth-sharpening as
they do in Africa ... The age of
the subject is impossible to
determine, the teeth seem barely
used, which seems unlikely given
his muscular development.

He runs his hands along an arm, quickly studying the talon-like nails then flipping the arm over to study the thin blue veins.

Then he grabs a magnifying glass and studies the skin more closely.

YOUNG DOCTOR

The dermis is ... unusual ...
impossible even ... seems to lack
the normal cutaneous eccrine
pores...

A curt order to Vanessa:

YOUNG DOCTOR

Hand me that.

She hands him a bloody scalpel.

He sets to work making an autopsy incision in the chest. Ethan notes that Vanessa does not turn away from the grisly business.

The Young Doctor leans close, carefully studying the incision as he works.

YOUNG DOCTOR

Well, I know why the skin seems
peculiar.

SIR MALCOLM

Why?

YOUNG DOCTOR

Because it's not skin ... Well, not
as we know it ... It's more like a
tensile exoskeleton. Along the
lines of an insect or crustacean.
He must have been a hearty devil
... Hold on ... What's this? ...
Fascinating.

(curt order to Vanessa)
Forceps.

She hands him forceps and he firmly grips the edge of the incision he's made.

Then he pulls back the "skin" to reveal an oily black membrane beneath. They all turn away from the dreadful smell for a moment.

ETHAN

This night just gets better.

YOUNG DOCTOR

(order to Vanessa)
Second little bottle and that rag.

She hands him a small bottle and rag.

YOUNG DOCTOR

Cover your mouths, do not inhale.

He wraps his own scarf around his mouth.

Then carefully pours the liquid from the bottle -- an acid -- on the membrane.

Noxious wisps float up from the acid.

When they have dispersed he pulls off the scarf and wipes the membrane clean with the rag.

Then he just stops.

Stares.

The others lean closer.

The skin below the exoskeleton is completely covered in Egyptian hieroglyphics. Like a bizarre full-body tattoo.

ETHAN

What in God's name are those?

SIR MALCOLM

Hieroglyphics.

YOUNG DOCTOR

Egyptian?

SIR MALCOLM

Undoubtedly.

The Young Doctor cleans his hands.

YOUNG DOCTOR

Well ... It would appear you have an Egyptian man of no particular age who at some point in his indeterminate life-span decided to sharpen his teeth, cover himself with hieroglyphics, and grow an exoskeleton ... Or ... You have something else altogether.

EXT. MAYFAIR STREET - MORNING

Beautiful, clear morning.

Ethan strides down a street filled with gorgeous mansions. This is the other London. Wealth, ease, luxury. A world away from the congested alleys and fetid shadows of the East End.

Ethan finds the address he is looking for, climbs the steps and rings the bell.

He waits. Glances at the discrete golden name plate:

"Sir Malcolm Murray."

The door opens.

Ethan is surprised to see the butler is a large African man in livery, named SEMBENE. He has ritual face scarring.

ETHAN

Ethan Chandler to see Sir Malcolm.
I'm expected.

SEMBENE nods and ushers Ethan inside...

INT. SIR MALCOLM'S MANSION - DAY

SEMBENE

Wait here, please.

He goes.

Beyond the marble entry foyer, this place is not what Ethan expected. At all.

He glances into the Great Room. It's incongruously filled with totems of supernatural lore and occultism ... as well as the most cutting edge devices of Victorian science.

We will discover the whole sprawling mansion is a collection of stately rooms that have been given over to an uneasy balance of science and the supernatural.

A strange cabinet of curiosities, this place.

Then a voice behind him:

VANESSA

Not what you expected?

He turns, surprised to see her here.

ETHAN

You've a light step, miss ... or is it ma'am?

VANESSA

Miss ... Vanessa Ives. Come this way won't you?

INT. SIR MALCOLM'S MANSION-STUDY - DAY

Vanessa leads Ethan into the impressive study.

A dark, curtained room with an octagonal table in the center. Occult symbols on the wall, old tomes in the floor-to-ceiling bookcases.

Tarot cards on the table. A steaming cup of tea next to them.

She sits at the cards.

VANESSA

Sit down. May I offer you some tea?

ETHAN

No thanks ... (re: the cards) ...
You're a fortune reader?

She aimlessly shifts through the cards.

VANESSA

The term is inadequate.

ETHAN

Spiritualist?

VANESSA

If you like.

ETHAN

Rapping on the table? Voices from
the great beyond?

VANESSA

Not precisely ... You're a skeptic.

ETHAN

Not about everything ... Last
night, for example.

VANESSA

Ah.

ETHAN

That's some kind of "night work,"
lady.

VANESSA

And you want an explanation?

ETHAN

I think I should see Sir Malcolm.

VANESSA

I can speak for him.

Ethan is trying to figure her out. Is she Sir Malcolm's
daughter? His lover?

Vanessa begins to lay out the tarot cards, face down, almost
lazily.

VANESSA

Do you believe there is a
demimonde, Mr. Chandler?
(MORE)

VANESSA (CONT'D)

A half-world between what we know
and what we fear? A place in the
shadows, rarely seen, but deeply
felt ... Do you believe that?

ETHAN

Yes.

Her eyes flick up to him. Surprised by his answer.

VANESSA

You do?

ETHAN

I've learned to.

VANESSA

That's where we were last night.
That half-world. Where some
unfortunate souls are cursed to
live always ... If you believe in
curses that is.

He does not answer. But something about her words is making
him uncomfortable.

She begins to put the cards into a particular geometric
pattern.

VANESSA

Are you a wise man, Mr. Chandler?

ETHAN

Not especially.

VANESSA

A wise man would take his wages,
walk away from this house, and make
a concerted effort to forget
everything that occurred last
night. He would not look back.

ETHAN

That sounds like a warning.

VANESSA

It's an invitation ... Should you
be so unwise as to entertain the
idea, we may have continued use of
a man of your skills. Your kind of
man.

ETHAN

And what kind's that?

VANESSA

One of great violence and little
conscience.

ETHAN

(terse)

My conscience is my own business.

She is mildly surprised by his tone.

Beat.

She continues to move the tarot cards around the table, face down.

VANESSA

The occasional employment would be
remunerative, Mr. Chandler. It
would also be adventuresome. Both
things, I think, welcome to you.

ETHAN

And judging from last night,
dangerous.

VANESSA

Also something that's welcome to
you.

ETHAN

And to you?

VANESSA

To me, it's ... necessary. I did
not choose it.

ETHAN

Did I?

VANESSA

I cannot tell ... Which of us can
choose our demons?

Beat.

The question lingers in the air for a moment.

ETHAN

Tell me what this is all about.

She shakes her head minutely.

VANESSA

The circumspection is for your
benefit, believe me.

He looks at her. She's particularly beautiful in the light.
Almost bewitching him.

In the silent room it's as if he can suddenly hear his heart
beating. And her's.

But...

ETHAN

I've been a hired gun before, it
doesn't suit me. There's no
exaltation in killing for gold ...
I just want what you promised me
and be clear of this murderous
business.

VANESSA

A wise man after all ... Sembene
has your money at the door, he'll
show you out. Good day, Mr.
Chandler.

ETHAN

Miss Ives.

He stands.

VANESSA

Before you go ... one last task, if
you'll indulge me ... pick a card.

He reaches to pick up one of the tarot cards--

VANESSA

No, not like that. Not impulsively,
not without thought ... Let them
work on you, have a care for them
and they shall have a care for you
... Look into my eyes ... Be guided
... Believe.

A long beat as he gazes into her eyes.

Again there's that eerie sense of enchantment.

Then he slowly reaches forward and touches one of the cards.

He flips it over.

"The Lovers." Two erotic figures entwined.

He looks at her.

Her perfect composure never falters, but there is the ghost of a smile in her eyes.

EXT. SCOTLAND YARD - DAY

The home of London's Metropolitan Police. A pleasant building in Whitehall.

News vendors crowd the front of the building, hollering and hawking the latest editions with news about the awful Spitalfields murders.

INT. SCOTLAND YARD-GALSWORTHY'S OFFICE - DAY

Inspector Galsworthy is in his cluttered office, sorting through case files, keenly focused. Maps and case files everywhere.

There are a great number of clocks as well, some in various states of repair alongside clock-making tools.

An ASSISTANT pokes his head in:

ASSISTANT

Inspector ... Sir Malcolm Murray is outside.

GALSWORTHY

You mean here? Now? ... God, show him in.

Galsworthy quickly straightens his suit and nervously moves some files so the other chair in his office is clear.

Sir Malcolm enters.

GALSWORTHY

Sir Malcolm, how do you do? Sit down, sit down.

SIR MALCOLM

(shakes, sits)

Inspector Galsworthy, pleasure to meet you. I don't mean to take up too much of your time. I know you are, hmm, otherwise engaged.

Sir Malcolm's understatement is killing.

GALSWORTHY

No, please ... How can I ... ah ...
be of service?

SIR MALCOLM

Not to put too fine a point on it,
sir, those I speak for have
expressed some concern.

GALSWORTHY

Oh?

SIR MALCOLM

An entire family slaughtered in the
heart of the metropolis, how could
they not be?

GALSWORTHY

Of course.

SIR MALCOLM

I am not of the government, you
understand, but I can be said, on
occasion, to speak in its voice.
Best to regard me as a mere
interlocutor for those exalted
persons who shall go unnamed.

The power that shrouds Sir Malcolm is vast and making
Galsworthy unfamiliarly anxious.

A beat as Sir Malcolm considers him, taking his measure. He
notes the many clocks.

SIR MALCOLM

You've an affection for clocks?

GALSWORTHY

Oh yes ... I apprenticed as an
horologist. Still rather a hobby,
helps me think. Figuring out the
complications.

SIR MALCOLM

Then you're in the right job ...
Are those photographs?

GALSWORTHY

They're not for the faint-hearted.

SIR MALCOLM

My heart has never fainted.

Galsworthy slides a file of the crime scene photos to Sir Malcolm. Sir Malcolm flips through them.

GALSWORTHY

Family was Welsh. Both in the vegetable trade, had a stall over Charing Cross. Not an enemy in the world we know of ... He took an arm from the man and some of the internal organs.

SIR MALCOLM

Which arm?

GALSWORTHY

Right.

SIR MALCOLM

(flipping through photos)
And you've no suspects.

GALSWORTHY

A hundred, and none. Now that the newspapers and Penny Dreadfuls have taken it up we have lunatics coming out of the woodwork to confess. Every man-jack in the East End pointing the finger at everyone else: today it's a Russian anarchist, tomorrow it's a demented medical student ... All resources available to us are being exploited you can be assured.

SIR MALCOLM

I have no doubt.

He looks at the photograph of the family's belongings on the mantle ... It seems to touch something personal in him.

SIR MALCOLM

A little comb, pot of makeup, dented candle sticks ... Sad legacy of lost family.

Beat.

SIR MALCOLM

A life should be worth more.

GALSWORTHY

Yes, sir.

SIR MALCOLM
Which organs?

GALSWORTHY
Oh ... Liver, heart and some of the reproductive matters.

Sir Malcolm finally sits back.

Looks evenly at the Inspector and asks the question on everyone's mind:

SIR MALCOLM
Is it the Ripper back again?

GALSWORTHY
No.

SIR MALCOLM
How can you be certain?

GALSWORTHY
I was a junior officer in Whitechapel. He never did more than one, and only whores. They were sordid little crimes of opportunity for all their brutality ... This is not that.

SIR MALCOLM
Will there be more?

GALSWORTHY
Yes ... This one takes to it too well. It's his trade.

SIR MALCOLM
Or their trade ... Every now and then you'll be good enough to report on your progress, yes?

GALSWORTHY
Of course, Sir Malcolm.

SIR MALCOLM
And perhaps I can even be of use to you. I am not without my own unique sources of information ... Perhaps we can work out some of the complications together.

Sir Malcolm hands back the photos and looks at Galsworthy, dead serious.

SIR MALCOLM

I'll tell you one thing, sir, and
you can take it to heart ... If you
don't change your tactics you'll
never stop him ... You see, you're
hunting for a man. You need to
start hunting for a beast.

INT. PUB - DAY

Ethan is back in his old haunt, perched at the bar this time.
It's lunchtime and place is pretty crowded.

Ethan catches a glimpse of himself in the mirror over the
bar. Doesn't like what he sees; the brooding expression, the
dark eyes.

And, as always, the lack of a future ... What is he going to
do with his cursed life now?

Then he sees two men approaching in the mirror. They are
WARREN ROPER and MR. KIDD. Both in their 30's. Roper is lean
and angular. Kidd has Native-American features.

Behind a veneer of joviality, they are dangerous men.

They sit on either side of him at the bar, effectively
flanking him.

Ethan takes a sip of his drink, ignoring them.

Roper orders:

ROPER

Beer, thanks. And one for my
friend.

American.

Ethan is instantly wary.

Roper turns easily to Ethan:

ROPER

This goddamn country, right? What I
wouldn't give for an ice chip.

KIDD

Or a cherry phosphate.

ROPER

Yeah. What if?

The barman brings two beers. The two men sip quietly.

ROPER

You miss the cherry phosphates,
Ethan?

Now Ethan knows he was right to be wary.

ETHAN

Who are you?

ROPER

Name's Warren Roper. Friend here is
Mr. Kidd, no actual first name so
far as I know.

Mr. Kidd finds this amusing.

ROPER

'Course he's was raised Chiricahua
Apache before the Carlisle School
Americanized him; made him the
proper Christian gent you see
before you. Those Indians do things
differently. But of course you know
that, given your particular
history.

ETHAN

What do you want?

ROPER

Your father's eager to see you.

There's ominous weight to this that registers on Ethan's face.

KIDD

Don't you miss your Daddy?

ROPER

(nicely)

You see, we're employed by the
Pinkerton Agency and we've been
charged to bring you back to the
land of ice chips and phosphates
... You left some tears behind you,
son. And a whole mess of blood.

KIDD

Whole mess.

ROPER

Now there's two ways you're gonna
make the passage back. The first is
alive, the second less so. We're on
a salary, so it's no never-mind to
us ... Show him, Mr. Kidd.

KIDD

Think I oughta?

ROPER

Hell, us being fellow countrymen
and all.

Kidd removes a heavy iron chain with arm and legs shackles
from under his coat. Plunks them on the bar.

ROPER

You come along easily and we'll
smoke dime cigars and play canasta
the whole trip back. I'll even let
you win. Give us any vexation and
we drag you back like an animal ...
Dead or alive, as the saying goes.

Ethan shakes his head, smiles.

ROPER

Come along now, Ethan. You can't
run forever.

ETHAN

(sighs)

I do miss the ice chips ... (re the
shackles) ... You won't need those,
Mr. Kidd.

He starts to stand then--

SMASH!

He grabs a beer glass on the bar and SMASHES it across
Roper's face -- and in the same motion snatches up the
shackles and swings them -- CRASH! -- around Kidd's neck--

He JERKS the chain and Kidd goes flying--

Ethan instantly VAULTS over the bar and runs out the back--

Roper and Kidd are up and after him, pushing aside patrons,
pulling revolvers--

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Ethan sprints down the alley behind the pub, weaving in and out of hanging laundry--

Roper and Kidd pursue and fire! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!

The hanging sheets are sheeted -- but Ethan dodges -- dives down another alley, disappearing--

Roper and Kidd follow--

Screeching to a stop at the mouth of the new alley. Clothes lines. Garbage. A network of alleys shooting off in other directions.

Ethan is gone.

Roper glares after him.

Wipes the blood from his face.

ROPER

Mr. Kidd ... We have underestimated our prey.

The cold fury in Roper's eyes is chilling.

ROPER

You're a damned Apache. Track him.

EXT. PALLMAL - DAY

The illustrious street in Westminster.

Fine carriages, well-heeled ladies and gentlemen, splendid buildings.

The Young Doctor moves down the street. He seems out of place here, among the elite, away from his scalpels, in the daylight.

He arrives at his destination: one of the magnificent gentlemen's clubs that line the street. He considers whether or not to enter.

He finally climbs the stairs.

A shining silver name plate:

"The Explorer's Club. Established Major-General Robert Clive, First Baron Clive, KB. MDCCLII. Members exclusively."

The Young Doctor sees his reflection in the name plate.
Smooths back his long hair. Arranging his threadbare clothes,
hiding his frayed cuffs.

Rings the bell.

INT. EXPLORER'S CLUB - DAY

A Servant leads the Young Doctor through the club.

The Doctor's eyes take in the many mounted animal heads and mementoes of African and Polar exploration. Life-sized portraits of the giants: sainted Livingstone; neurotic Speke; flamboyant Burton; controversial Stanley.

This was the golden age of British exploration and commercial conquest.

The Servant leads the Young Doctor to a secluded table where Sir Malcolm is reading the Times.

Sir Malcolm glances up. Smiles.

LATER:

Sir Malcolm and the Young Doctor are seated comfortably.

Or as comfortable as the young man can feel in this majestic chamber, alongside these intrepid men who assure the sun never sets on the empire.

YOUNG DOCTOR
So you're an explorer?

SIR MALCOLM
I've travelled a bit. Made a few modest discoveries. There's a Murray Mountain in the eastern regions of Belgian Congo if you're ever in the vicinity. Not the tallest mountain, to be sure, but not the smallest either.

An unfamiliar smile from the Young Doctor.

Sir Malcolm is putting on the charm. Something he can do with silky ease when he chooses.

SIR MALCOLM
I've spent much of my life in Africa, beholding wonders. To be an explorer is to be constantly amazed.

YOUNG DOCTOR
You were there for trade or
exploration?

SIR MALCOLM

I went for exploration, which quickly turned to exploitation ... You might be surprised how easily pure science can become pure ambition when confronted with the untold riches of the ivory or rubber trade. Or slaves once upon a time. I've held the whip-hand in my day, which I will have to live with ... There are no pure scientists in Africa, sir. Everything's occluded.

The Young Doctor appreciates that Sir Malcolm did not dodge the question.

YOUNG DOCTOR

I was surprised to get your note ... You seem a man who holds his secrets fast.

SIR MALCOLM

As do you.

YOUNG DOCTOR

I wasn't going to come.

SIR MALCOLM

But you were curious.

YOUNG DOCTOR

My only virtue.

SIR MALCOLM

It will be your undoing, Doctor.

The Young Doctor looks at him, surprised at the provocative statement.

SIR MALCOLM

You cannot resist. If you see a river you must follow it to the source, no matter the peril, no matter those comrades who fall along the way. You must know how things work. You must unlock. You are dissatisfied always.

YOUNG DOCTOR

Are you dissatisfied?

SIR MALCOLM
... I am seeking.

YOUNG DOCTOR
What?

SIR MALCOLM
Perhaps the same thing you are.

YOUNG DOCTOR
I seek the truth.

SIR MALCOLM
Ah ... You are a very young man ...
I have long since learned the truth
is mutable.

YOUNG DOCTOR
Perhaps we view science
differently.

SIR MALCOLM
Do we?

The Young Doctor starts quietly, but is quickly lost in his subject; his passion, even obsession, taking over:

YOUNG DOCTOR
I would never chart a river or
scale a peak to take its measure or
plant a flag. There's no point.
It's solipsistic self-
aggrandizement. So too those
scientists who study the planets
seeking astronomical enlightenment
for its own sake. The botanist
studying the variegation of an
Amazonian fern. The zoologist
caught up in the endless
fascination of an adder's coils.
The paleontologist obsessed with
the wonders of a trilobite fossil.
The cartographer delighting himself
in the tributaries of an uncharted
river. The meteorologist literally
lost in the clouds. And for what?
Knowledge for itself alone? The
elation of discovery? Plant your
flag on the truth?

He leans in:

YOUNG DOCTOR

There is only one worthy goal for scientific exploration: piercing the tissue that separates life from death. Everything else from the deep bottom of the sea to the top of the highest mountain on the farthest plant is insignificant. Life and death, Sir Malcolm. The flicker that separates one from the other, fast as a bat's wing, more beautiful than any sonnet. That is my mountain. That is my river. There I will plant my flag.

The Young Doctor realizes his passion has carried him away. He sits back.

Sir Malcolm looks at him.

SIR MALCOLM

You've the soul of a poet, sir.

YOUNG DOCTOR

And the bank account to match.

Sir Malcolm smiles and summons a waiter.

SIR MALCOLM

(to waiter)

Whiskey and soda ... And for my friend?

YOUNG DOCTOR

I don't drink spirits.

SIR MALCOLM

Branch water.

The waiter goes.

YOUNG DOCTOR

I did not mean to offend. I'm not made for polite conversation.

SIR MALCOLM

I take no offense. On the contrary, I take heart I am sitting across from the man I need.

YOUNG DOCTOR

And for what purpose?

Beat.

SIR MALCOLM
You tell me.

YOUNG DOCTOR
Last night of course ... The body
you brought was ... unique.

SIR MALCOLM
You are a master of understatement.

YOUNG DOCTOR
It was not, strictly speaking,
human.

SIR MALCOLM
No.

YOUNG DOCTOR
Is there a name for it?

SIR MALCOLM
Oh, many ... many ... but only you
might know ... Vampire.

He says the word almost blandly, without affect.

Beat.

The Young Doctor looks at him.

YOUNG DOCTOR
Vampire?

SIR MALCOLM
Or perhaps I've misjudged you.
Perhaps we should have a
comfortable chat about an Egyptian
man of an indeterminate age with a
fondness for tattoos, after which
we would part ways and never meet
again. Which is it to be?

The question is a challenge.

YOUNG DOCTOR
As you say, I'm curious ... What
did you do with the body?

SIR MALCOLM
Incinerated it to ash.

YOUNG DOCTOR
You're lying.

SIR MALCOLM

Am I?

YOUNG DOCTOR

It was too rare. Too valuable to you. You have secreted it away. I would say packed in salt and ice for future investigation.

Sir Malcolm smiles. Nods. Well done.

YOUNG DOCTOR

Did you kill him, Sir Malcolm?

SIR MALCOLM

Yes.

The Young Doctor's eyes don't show a flicker of concern at this.

There is a more intriguing question on his mind.

He leans in.

YOUNG DOCTOR

Are there more?

SIR MALCOLM

At least one.

The waiter returns with their drinks.

SIR MALCOLM

I'll serve.

The waiter goes and Sir Malcolm serves the drinks:

SIR MALCOLM

I am in the position to offer you occasional employment. You seem to be a free-thinker who might imagine a world less constrained by what we think we know of as "truth."

YOUNG DOCTOR

You mean the supernatural.

SIR MALCOLM

I mean that place where science and superstition walk hand-in-hand ... An anatomist of your skill would be invaluable to my work.

YOUNG DOCTOR

I'm engaged in important research,
Sir Malcolm. I've no interest in
joining an amateur Occultist
society.

SIR MALCOLM

Nor I in forming one ... Is your
research funded by a hospital, or
university perhaps?

YOUNG DOCTOR

No.

SIR MALCOLM

You have a patron then?

YOUNG DOCTOR

You know I don't.

SIR MALCOLM

So the nature of the work is
controversial, I take it?

YOUNG DOCTOR

The nature of the work is private.

SIR MALCOLM

As you say ... For the occasional
services I speak of you would be
handsomely paid, of course,
allowing you to pursue your
personal investigations without
constraint ... No more inhaling
lime in the back room of an illicit
charnel house, Doctor.

YOUNG DOCTOR

First you must tell me why.

SIR MALCOLM

Why what?

YOUNG DOCTOR

What is it you're seeking, Sir
Malcolm?

SIR MALCOLM

The nature of my work is private as
well.

YOUNG DOCTOR

Then we have nothing more to say.
Good day, sir.

He moves to go.

SIR MALCOLM

Wait.

A beat.

Finally...

SIR MALCOLM

I'm looking for something dear that
was lost to me ... When I have
found it I will stop. As will you,
when you have found what you are
looking for. In that at least we're
the same.

Beat.

SIR MALCOLM

Will you consider my proposition?

YOUNG DOCTOR

Yes ... I've only one other
question ... There are a hundred
better trained and more experienced
surgeons in London ... Why me?

SIR MALCOLM

Because you were unafraid to pull
back the skin and look beneath.

EXT. LONDON MANOR HOUSE - EVENING

A series of coaches and their attendant coachmen, waiting
outside a lovely manor house. Lights and music from inside.

Sembene, Sir Malcolm's African servant, is waiting by his
coach.

The other coachmen glance over, intrigued by the black face
and facial scarring, whispering among themselves.

By this time, Sembene is used to the curious and hostile
looks. He is monstrously alien to most Londoners.

He ignores the other coachmen, lights a clay pipe. Waits.

INT. MANOR HOUSE-DINING ROOM - EVENING

The Young Man is preternaturally handsome.

Almost unnerving in his beauty.

Exquisitely dressed. Luxurious dark hair. Effortless smile. Even his skin seems to radiate a golden glow of intoxicating youth and promise.

He is DORIAN GRAY.

He will soon play an important part in our story.

Dorian is currently embroiled in conversation with his HOSTESS, an older woman ... As she speaks his deep brown eyes move around the table, finally settling on...

Sir Malcolm.

We're at a dinner party. The candles in the chandelier glow down on a perfect dining table, lavishly set ... Liveried musicians play in the next room ... Twenty guests, the easy hum of conversation. The clink of crystal and fine china.

Sir Malcolm is in evening clothes, seated next to an OLD GENTLEMAN in a wheelchair. Although the gentleman is in his seventies, and frail, his eyes still spark with wit and vivacity.

Sir Malcolm sees that the Old Gentleman's plate is filled with vegetables. Makes polite conversation:

SIR MALCOLM
I notice you practice
vegetarianism, sir.

The Old Man smiles and responds in a DUTCH accent:

OLD GENTLEMAN
No, not by choice at any rate ... I
keep a ritual Jewish diet. It is a
challenge sometimes in "polite
society."

SIR MALCOLM
And in a nation enamored of sausage
and mash.

OLD GENTLEMAN
(smiles)
Yes ... But it is a challenge to be
absolute in anything, don't you
find?
(MORE)

OLD GENTLEMAN (CONT'D)

Even the law of Kashruth makes exceptions. For example, while one cannot consume any creeping thing that crawls upon the earth, one can happily eat a worm born inside an apple, as it has never crawled on the ground.

SIR MALCOLM

Well, there's hope for dessert anyway.

The Old Gentleman laughs, his eyes dancing with merriment. Sir Malcolm likes him immediately.

OLD GENTLEMAN

Generally, I try to avoid those foods considered unclean and presume God will forgive my missteps.

SIR MALCOLM

If we could only easily tell the clean from the unclean. The worm from the apple.

OLD GENTLEMAN

Precisely. In my line of work, things are so rarely what they seem on the surface. I am in the scientific disciplines, you see.

SIR MALCOLM

Doctor?

OLD GENTLEMAN

Hematologist. I make a study of rare blood disorders. The pathogens within, the creatures that lurk beneath the rosy pink skin. Take our hostess...

They look to the end of the table ... Their hostess is still entranced by the dazzling Dorian Gray.

OLD GENTLEMAN

... Now, she's a healthy looking specimen to be sure. But note the malaise in her gestures, and the pallor at the base of her fingernails. Normocytic anemia.

SIR MALCOLM

I could have used such insights in
my travels.

OLD GENTLEMAN

You have the aspect of worldly
gentleman.

SIR MALCOLM

I've seen some things to be sure
... Sometimes I think too much.
Both the clean and the unclean, as
you might have it.

The Old Gentleman is sympathetic.

OLD GENTLEMAN

Which of us has not? ... But to me
you are still a young man. There
are travels ahead for you?

SIR MALCOLM

None that I seek, but life compels.

OLD GENTLEMAN

It does indeed ... What strange
wonders fate has in mind for us.
Who can foretell? But is that not
the joy of living?

SIR MALCOLM

Perhaps you'll teach me your
dietary strictures and I can
emulate your vigor.

The Old Gentleman smiles.

OLD GENTLEMAN

I cannot speak for the rabbinical
authorities, but there is only one
stricture that truly guides me.

SIR MALCOLM

Yes?

OLD GENTLEMAN

The life force in all is precious.

SIR MALCOLM

Life force?

OLD GENTLEMAN

The blood.

Sir Malcolm looks at him.

OLD GENTLEMAN

"Consume not blood, nor let it pass
your lips. For the life of the
flesh is in the blood..."

SIR MALCOLM

"... and I have given it unto you
upon the altar to make an atonement
for your souls."

Beat.

The Old Gentleman smiles.

OLD GENTLEMAN

How pleasant to find a kindred soul
here, so far from my home. To be
frank with you, I was dreading an
evening of highly-polished social
chatter.

SIR MALCOLM

As was I.

He offers his hand:

SIR MALCOLM

Malcolm Murray ... Doctor...?

OLD GENTLEMAN

Professor ... Abraham Van Helsing.

The Old Gentleman smiles, his eyes twinkling with mischief
and secrets.

EXT. SIR MALCOLM'S MANSION - EVENING

Ethan sits in the park across the street from Sir Malcolm's
mansion.

He gazes across at the illuminated windows.

What options does he have? He is on the run, trying to escape
from both Mr. Roper and something more deeply personal. Could
this house be his escape?

He sees Vanessa passing by an upper window.

Could she be his escape?

Then he notices something else.

Over the rooftops, the full moon is just rising.

The moon seems particularly large and luminous tonight, almost unnaturally so.

Ethan gazes at the full moon for a moment, his expression gradually settling into a sort of sad acceptance ... He seems more vulnerable than we could have imagined. A sensitivity we did not expect.

Then he rises and slips away into the foliage of the park. Into the trees.

Into darkness.

INT. VANESSA'S ROOM - EVENING

Meanwhile, Vanessa is in a dressing gown, preparing to take a bath. The water runs in the adjoining bathroom.

She goes into the bathroom.

Preparing for her bath, she puts her hair up in the mirror. Catching sight of herself ... The pale, pale skin. The haunted eyes...

Then turns to the tub, slipping the dressing gown off her shoulders...

And we see...

Three small numbers.

Like a scar, emerging from the skin of her back.

666.

The sign of the Devil.

EXT. EAST END - NIGHT

He is alone in a crowd, the Young Doctor.

His long cloak wrapped around him, carrying a valise, he moves through an especially busy night. Whores, drunks, swells and soldiers weave in and out of the many taverns, opium dens and whorehouses on the narrow lane.

Their laughter and desperate, drunken revelry seems to mock the Young Doctor.

He glances down a dank alley as he passes ... A child stares back at him ... a child holding the hand of her mother, who is being pressed up against a wall by a man as he mounts her...

The Young Doctor continues on...

Past a brutal fight, two mad sailors cutting each other with knives, as a crowd cheers them...

Past a gang of homeless children rifling though the clothes of a fallen drunk, or is the man dead? ... One of the children pries open the man's mouth and yanks brutally for gold fillings...

A whore approaches the Young Doctor. He hunches deeper into himself as he pushes past her...

He is a strange figure amidst this depravity, wrapped in his cloak, his intense eyes taking it all in, almost Byronic in his lonely isolation.

He finally arrives at his destination.

A squalid tenement. Unloved baby on the steps, crying, barely cared for by a drunken mother.

The Young Doctor enters...

INT. TENEMENT STAIRS - NIGHT

He climbs the endless stairs, up, up, up.

The sound of the baby crying, the brawls, the drunken singing...

He arrives at the very top of the building. Unlocks a door and enters...

INT. DOCTOR'S ROOM - NIGHT

The Young Doctor's room is claustrophobic and crowded with medical books, notes and experiments.

He tosses off his cloak and takes the valise to another tiny doorway in a corner. He keeps this door locked as well.

He unlocks the door and ducks to enter...

INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

A twisting spiral staircase up to a final doorway. Also locked, this one bolted.

He unlocks and unbolts the final door and stoops to enter...

INT. ATTIC - NIGHT

The building's attic. Slanting ceiling. Cracked skylight.

The Young Doctor's makeshift lab.

All manner of scientific equipment, some cobbled together; a cluttered mouse-trap of gears, levers, coils, wires, tubes, vials, batteries. Surgical equipment, leather-aprons, jars filled with solutions and acids and specimens and body parts.

He sets down the valise and takes off his coat. Rolls up his sleeves and turns to face his work.

There.

On an operating table under the skylight.

A pale, hideous CREATURE.

Stitched awkwardly together from a dozen different bodies. Dead, grey face.

The Young Doctor looks at his creation sadly, tormented by that thin tissue separating life from death.

And VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN goes about his work.

The End.