

CONTRACT

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

VIDA (late 30's) stands motionless, scanning the warehouse.

Shaved head, dressed all in black, looks like he could kill a man with his bare hands. Probably has.

A WOMAN'S SHADOW plays along the first floor windows.

He's found her.

Vida checks his watch. It's counting down: 8 hours, 5 minutes.

Satisfied, he moves toward the warehouse.

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

TIMEA (early 20's) stands tall and slender, her mocha skin soft in the moonlight. Angry tears stain her cheeks.

Bound and gagged on the floor is a YOUNG WOMAN (late teens). She whimpers through her gag at the sight of Timea's gleaming STRAIGHT RAZOR.

TIMEA

Hush now. This will be over soon. I promise.

She strokes her captive's hair with her free hand, grabbing a tuft of hair and tilting the teen's head back. Timea presses the blade against the teen's exposed neck.

VIDA (O.S.)

Let the girl go, Timea.

Timea spins, snarling.

Vida stands across the room, poised for a fight.

TIMEA

Who are you? What do you want?

VIDA

I said, let her go.

Timea releases her grip on the teen and prowls toward Vida.

Vida holds steady.

(CONTINUED)

Timea growls and leaps at Vida, but he's ready for it.

She SLASHES at him with the razor, her movements fluid and catlike. The skill of her attack suggests years of training.

Vida dodges easily, their moves a perfectly choreographed dance.

Vida spins and runs toward the wall. Using it as a springboard, he leaps against it and rebounds into Timea, landing a solid kick in her midsection.

She slides across the floor. The razor tumbles from her grasp. She leaps to her feet, rushing back into the fight.

They exchange punches and kicks, blow for blow.

Timea fakes a roundhouse punch and throws all of her power into a spin kick that sends Vida sprawling. He lands in a pile of junk, stunned.

Timea curls her hands like claws. She turns away from Vida and rushes at the teen, screaming.

Vida grabs the nearest object, a METAL PIPE. He throws it without thinking.

The pipe flies toward Timea, tangles in her legs. She falls to the floor just a few feet from the teen.

Timea turns to stare at Vida, her eyes smoldering with hatred.

VIDA
(to himself)
Aw, hell.

She picks up the pipe and HURLS it at Vida.

The pipe finds its mark, bouncing off of Vida's forehead.

Timea jumps to her feet, towering over the terrified teen. She curls her hands into claws.

Vida shakes his head, trying to clear his vision. He reaches into his belt, producing a DAGGER.

With marksman-like precision, he hurls the knife at the back of Timea's neck.

At the last second, a STARK WHITE HAND reaches out and GRABS the knife in midair. Timea turns at the sound and motion.

The hand belongs to NEMAMIAH.

Nem (late 40's) stands well over six feet, clad in a white suit and white overcoat. His long blond hair is pulled tight against his head and tied back in a pony tail.

Nem admires the knife. He Glances at Timea with disinterest, passing by her as he walks toward the captive teen.

He caresses the girl's cheek, speaking in Latin.

NEM
Dura lex sed lex.

SUBTITLES
The law is harsh, but it is
the law.

He passes Timea again, still ignoring her. He places himself between Vida and the teen.

Timea seizes the opportunity and descends on the girl.

VIDA
No!

Vida LUNGES at Timea, but an IRON FIST from Nem puts Vida right back on the floor.

He scrambles to his feet again, dazed, but it's too late.

Timea rises behind Nem, covered in BLOOD. Her head tilts to one side. A peaceful, intoxicated SMILE settles on her lips.

Behind Timea, the teen's SOUL rises from it's body. A beatific smile covers her face.

Vida watches with sadness as the spirit rises higher and higher, then fades.

In a blur of motion, Nem spins and rushes to Timea, pinning her arms behind her back. He whispers in her ear.

NEM
Perceptum.

SUBTITLES
Understand

Timea's smile vanishes. Dawning horror covers her face as she realizes what she's done.

TIMEA
Oh, God. Oh, God! No, no, no, no,
no! I'm sorry! I'm so sorry!
Forgive me. Please, forgive me.

NEM
Laus Deo.

SUBTITLES
Praise be to God.

Nem slits Timea's throat from ear to ear with Vida's dagger.

VIDA
God dammit.

Nem drops the knife, lets Timea's body fall to the floor. He produces a handkerchief, wipes her blood from his hands.

Timea's SOUL leaves her body and drifts upward, smiling.

Vida storms toward the angel, furious.

VIDA
Dammit, Nem. I needed that one.

Nem regards Vida with disdain.

NEM
Ad summum bonum.

SUBTITLES
For the supreme good.

VIDA
How about, "Liberate me ex
infernus?"

SUBTITLES
Free me from Hell.

NEM
Liberate te tutemet.

SUBTITLES
Free yourself.

Nem drops the bloody handkerchief to the floor.

NEM
Tell Mel I said hi.

The room fills with an overpowering LIGHT. Vida covers his eyes. When he opens them, he's standing alone over two corpses.

He pulls back one of his sleeves, revealing a TATTOO on his forearm. The tat is part ink, but mostly scar tissue.

An unnatural GLOW traces the tattoo. Vida's shoulders slump.

VIDA
Shit.

INT. SEEDY BAR - NIGHT

In the back of a dingy, nearly empty bar, a PAINTED BULB bleeds a SICKLY GREEN LIGHT over a small round table. A slender GHOUL sits in the only chair, his back to the wall.

This is MEL, short for Melchom (thin, early 50's). Mel's a demon from Hell, and he's dressed to the nines: pinstripe suit, tie, wire-rimmed glasses.

His hands are crossed over a LARGE MANILA ENVELOPE in the center of the table, fastened with a WAX SEAL bearing an imprinted letter "R."

Wisps of smoke drift up from the cancer stick between his fingers.

In walks Vida. He shuffles toward the table.

MEL

Vida.

VIDA

Mel.

Mel savors his cigarette.

MEL

I'd ask how it went, but there's no need, is there? You need to work on your poker face.

VIDA

I had her dead to rights, Mel. She was mine.

Mel extends his hand.

MEL

You know the drill. Two marks.

Vida doesn't budge.

VIDA

He let her kill the kid! That's on him, not me.

Mel looks up at Vida over the rim of his glasses.

MEL

This isn't a debate. Two souls, two marks. Now, if you feel the rules aren't fair, you can leave whenever

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MEL (cont'd)
you want. I'm sure your boss isn't
opposed to calling your contract
early.

Mel lets the words sink in.

Defiant, Vida removes his coat. He lays it over the back of the chair, extending his arm toward Mel.

On Vida's forearm is a TATTOO, part ink, part scar tissue. The scar and ink are fighting for real estate, and the scar's winning.

Mel traces the ink with a sharpened fingernail. The action SEARS Vida's flesh. Smoke rises as NEW SCAR TISSUE appears.

Vida doesn't flinch, burying the pain with his anger.

A compassionate expression crosses Mel's face.

MEL
Ink's almost gone, Vida. One more
botched contract-

VIDA
I'm not done yet.

Vida grabs his coat and turns to leave.

Mel clears his throat. Vida stops but doesn't turn around. He doesn't have to. He knows what Mel wants.

Mel holds a new MANILA ENVELOPE in the air, level with his own face.

MEL
I've been holding onto this one
just for you. Might do you good to
jump right back in. Interested?

Without looking back, Vida flips off Mel and storms out.

EXT. CLAIRE'S BACKYARD - DAY

CLAIRE (mid 30's) is entertaining guests at her backyard barbecue. She's radiant, energetic, in her element.

She takes in the party. Men laugh over beers, kids play football, and women whisper about the men, happy to see the kids at play.

Everyone's content. Almost.

(CONTINUED)

PRYCE (13) sits alone, watching the other boys play with their fathers. He doesn't realize he's scowling.

Pryce is clean cut, but he carries himself like a loner. He tries to be a good kid because his mom wants him to be one, but he's still a thirteen year-old boy.

Claire walks over to her son.

CLAIRE

Hey, Pryce.

The silent treatment.

Claire sits down. She and Pryce watch the game together for a moment.

CLAIRE

Looks like fun.

Pryce gives his mom a pained look.

CLAIRE

Maybe Grant will play with you.

Pryce looks at a guy sharing a beer with a few others. GRANT (late 30's) is wearing a police t-shirt. Off-duty, but still flying his colors.

Grant notices Claire and Pryce looking his way. He smiles, raising his beer in greeting. This guy exudes nice.

PRYCE

Grant's a nimrod, mom.

CLAIRE

He's a good man, Pryce. You should give him a chance.

Pryce struggles with his decision. He looks at his mom, then at Grant, then back at his mom.

She smiles at him, and he caves.

Pryce stands and mopes over to where Grant's standing.

CLAIRE

(calling after him)

Hey, Pryce!

Pryce turns.

CLAIRE

I love you.

A grin flickers across his face, but he tries to hide it. He continues toward Grant, his step a little lighter.

EXT. SUBURBAN SIDEWALK - DAY

Across the street from the barbecue, a SINEWY MAN hides in the shade of a tall tree, snapping pictures of the party, of Pryce, of Claire.

EXT. CLAIRE'S BACKYARD - DAY

Claire watches her son drag Grant into the football game. Her smile fades. She senses something odd, out of place.

She turns in the direction of the photographer.

There's no one there.

EXT. SUBURBAN SIDEWALK - DAY

The ground where the photographer stood is LIGHTLY SCORCHED. An OILY SMOKE lingers in the air, barely perceptible.

In the distance, Claire returns to her party.

EXT. GOTHIC CHURCH - NIGHT

Vida storms toward a boarded-up Gothic church, blatantly ignoring the NO TRESPASSING signs.

He walks to the back door and fishes a key out of his pocket. Unlocking the door, he goes inside.

INT. GOTHIC CHURCH - STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Vida strides down worn stairs toward the basement. LIGHT BULBS are strung along the stairwell, lighting the passage.

INT. GOTHIC CHURCH - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Vida emerges into his underground lair, an immense open space beneath the church.

(CONTINUED)

One section has been made into a combination living area / kitchen. Another section is clearly reserved for training and working out, a do-it-yourself home gym.

And against every wall: overflowing bookshelves.

VIDA
(short)
Abe!

ABE (mid 60's) sits at a cluttered desk, hunched over one of his books. His hair, his jacket, his glasses... everything about him screams "scholar."

Abe waves in acknowledgment without looking up.

Vida empties his pockets and walks over to the kitchen. He grabs a BOTTLE OF VODKA and drinks deep.

Abe traces the words as he reads them. He finishes his page, reverently inserts a tasseled bookmark, and closes his book. Only then does he look up.

ABE
So. How did it go?

Vida places the half-empty bottle on the table.

VIDA
Two marks.

ABE
Excellent!

Vida doesn't smile. Abe glances at the tattoo, more scar than ink. Then he gets it.

ABE
Oh. Sorry.

Vida takes another drink before answering.

VIDA
Nem shows up, lets her kill the kid, and leaves me there with my dick in my hand.

ABE
Always the eloquent one-

VIDA
Give it a rest, old man.

Vida puts down the bottle and heads toward his training area: free weights, heavy bag, training dummy, and an assortment of weapons.

He proceeds to beat the shit out of the heavy bag.

Abe stands.

ABE

I heard an interesting bit of news about your friend Gaap today.

Vida continues his assault while conversing.

VIDA

He's not my friend.

ABE

He executed the Ramirez contract. His tattoo is complete. No more scars.

Vida falters. He moves to the training dummy, working through a series of strikes and kicks.

VIDA

Is he going back?

ABE

Word is that he's decided to stick around.

VIDA

Figures.

ABE

Gaap thinks he can consolidate operations, bring all the contractors under one roof. He's clearly making his case to be the one in charge. If that comes to pass, he'll be looking for reliable contractors. He likely make it difficult for any independents.

VIDA

I'd rather go to Hell than work for that asshole.

Vida slows, stops moving. His confidence ebbs, his stance changes. He looks tired.