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 <u>senses</u> 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 <u>research</u>.

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 <u>their</u> 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 <u>unique</u> 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.