

BROKEN

DE #4

Writer #7

BROKEN

FADE IN:

EXT. GHETTO DRAG - NIGHT

An urban nightmare stretches into nowhere, straddling the surreal. Streetlights illuminate empty storefronts scarred with a single gang tag: "RuINATION."

O.S. a FIGHT ECHOES: SHOTS, SHOUTS, BREAKING GLASS. FEET SCATTER, then SILENCE. Except for one pair of POUNDING BOOTS ...

A young man careens around the corner. PILGRIM: Barely 20 but all used up. A walking dead man dressed in black, with a glass PENDANT around his neck. And a wounded BUDDY over his shoulder.

Pilgrim pauses to catch his breath. Glances both ways -- no one. He staggers into a doorway and sets Buddy down.

PILGRIM

Lie still now. You're safe.

As Buddy slumps back, a PENDANT slips out of his own jacket. Just like Pilgrim's -- except it's broken and GOLD MIST is leaking out! Buddy moans.

BUDDY

It's too late, Pilgrim.

PILGRIM

I've lost everyone else to Meph.  
I won't let him take you!

Pilgrim clamps his hands around Buddy's pendant. But the mist seeps through his fingers.

BUDDY

When the glass breaks, you can't  
stop him.

Pilgrim grips harder. But the leak only intensifies.

Resigned, Buddy roots in his coat and pulls out a SACK. He thrusts it at Pilgrim, who tucks it in his own coat. Hauls Buddy into his lap as Buddy begins to fade.

BUDDY

The hood over The Border, the one  
full of Light? They say their  
lord makes people ... unbreakable.  
Completely new.

PILGRIM

They say many things about him.

His knuckles whiten on Buddy's pendant. Buddy gasps.

BUDDY

I should have gone to him. Turned  
my back on Meph and run.

(struggles)

Don't make the same mistake.

The last of the mist dissipates. Pilgrim opens his hand:

The broken glass is empty. And Buddy is gone.

EXT. GHETTO DRAG - MOMENTS LATER

Pilgrim SNAPS the broken PENDANT off Buddy's corpse. A moment of agony, then he trudges down the street.

O.S. a PHONE RINGS. Pilgrim fumbles for his CELL and checks the ID: "MEPH." He answers, guarded.

PILGRIM

Hello?

The voice on the other end could be Death itself.

MEPH (V.O.)

I think you owe me something.

INT. ABANDONED FACTORY - NIGHT

Ghoulish. ROARING FURNACES project shadows on the rusted iron. Guards with submachine guns patrol the floor, all sporting PENDANTS and TATS that read: "RuinATION."

At a large BUTCHER TABLE, Pilgrim fidgets while gang lord MEPHISTOPHELES (40s) counts CASH from Buddy's SACK. He's a wolf of a man, laced with "M"-shaped bling, lost in the smoke of a Cuban cigar. At last he glares up:

MEPH

That's all?

PILGRIM

Isn't that enough?

Pilgrim regards Meph, defiant. Meph's eyes rove over Pilgrim and fix on his hand -- stuck in his coat pocket.

MEPH

Hand him over.

PILGRIM

He was my friend!

MEPH

And he belongs to me. As you do.

Pilgrim hesitates. Then lifts Buddy's broken pendant from his pocket. Meph snatches it, gleeful. He stalks over to the FURNACE and OPENS the DOOR.

Infernal heat smacks Pilgrim in the face. Sweat trickles down his forehead. Pilgrim averts his eyes ...

... As Meph hurls Buddy's pendant into a drum of MOLTEN GLASS! He turns to leer at Pilgrim.

MEPH

All the times we've done this ...  
 (stalks back to table)  
 Better get used to it, Pilgrim.

He waves his cigar at Pilgrim's pendant.

MEPH

Because I do believe you're next.

Pilgrim glances down. Sure enough, the furnace light illuminates a HAIRLINE FRACTURE in his own pendant!

Meph begins to laugh as panic grips Pilgrim. He clamps his hands over his pendant, spins around and dashes past the guards. Meph's O.S. LAUGHTER ECHOES after him.

EXT. BORDER DRAG - NIGHT

Pilgrim skulks in shadow, eyeing the street before him:

On his side, it's all darkness and grime. RuinNation guards pace the sidewalk armed with guns. But the other side is a fairy tale. Light bathes a lush park and homes beyond it -- all completely unguarded.

Pilgrim studies the guards. Counts their steps under his breath until they turn their backs ...

Then he darts into the street. Streaks through darkness into the light. A flying leap. He clears the curb ...

And lands in BUSHES, just before the guards turn again.

EXT. PARK BUSHES - DAY

Behind a leafy screen, Pilgrim lies in the dirt, catching his breath. He glances around:

LEAVES RUSTLE against an azure sky. BIRDS TWITTER and FROLIC in a birdbath. Flowers tickle his cheek.

Pilgrim sits up, enthralled. He scrambles to his knees and prowls toward the birds. But they flap away as an ENGINE FADES IN O.S.

Pilgrim crawls to the edge of the bush. Peeks around:

A white SUV rolls up to the curb with a sign: "ReCREATION NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH." Men and women pile out dressed in spotless white. Sun glints on their dazzling pendants.

To Pilgrim's shock, they unload lawn care equipment and begin to manicure the park! Chatting. Laughing. Stopping to push children on the swings.

Pilgrim watches mesmerized -- until a girl approaches his bush with HEDGE TRIMMERS! Instantly he panics. Whirls around and scuttles the opposite direction, below the hedge line ...

But a pair of WHITE BOOTS step into his path.

All stealth evaporates. Pilgrim rockets up, whips out his PISTOL and FIRES at a magnificent PENDANT against a white coat. But his BULLETS RICOCHET off the glass, graze the fabric and land in white-gloved hands.

Pilgrim drops the gun, stunned.

Before him stands a Man (mid 30s), dressed all in white. He carries strong authority in place of a gun, kindness like a badge. And he holds out Pilgrim's bullets.

MAN

Bit trigger happy there, aren't you, Pilgrim?

Pilgrim accepts the bullets, agape. The Man continues:

MAN

Name's Joshua, by the way. Strong arm of the law around these parts.  
(perceptive)  
And who might you be?

PILGRIM

You ... you already know.

JOSHUA

But do you?

Pilgrim is at a loss. At last he holds up his pendant.

PILGRIM

I'm a broken man looking to be  
made whole. Before it's too late.

JOSHUA

Well, then you're right on time.  
(beat)

My Father is expecting you.

He waves to his gardeners. Then beckons a stunned  
Pilgrim to follow him.

EXT. QUAIN STREET - DAY

Pilgrim follows Joshua past tidy homes. People call from  
their porches, children and pets tumble down the steps.  
Joshua stops to receive them all.

At last Joshua leads Pilgrim to an unmarked CORNER SHOP,  
set back a ways. Rainbows radiate from its windows.

INT. ELI'S GLASS SHOP - DAY

Pilgrim steps into a cathedral of color. Glass pendants  
of every shape and design line the walls.

A clear screen separates Pilgrim from the

WORK AREA

Where ancient ELI plies his craft, silent and steady. He  
manipulates a ROD tipped with MOLTEN GLASS. Rolls the  
glass in colored FRIT, shapes it with TOOLS and blows his  
own breath into it -- until it's a masterpiece.

Joshua joins Pilgrim behind the screen.

JOSHUA

Each of the ReCreation were just  
like you, before they came to Eli.

Pilgrim tries to step around the screen. But Joshua  
stops him.

JOSHUA

First, we negotiate the price.

Payment. Of course. Pilgrim ponders for a moment, then  
holds up his pendant.

PILGRIM

Maybe Eli could just fix it.

JOSHUA

Meph's glass always breaks again.

Pilgrim ponders more. Digs into his pocket and pulls out a few DOLLARS snatched from Buddy's sack.

PILGRIM

This is all I have, but ...

With a cry, Joshua grabs the money and tears it up.

JOSHUA

This reeks of blood and tears and cheap cigars! Do not dishonor Eli with the tokens of Meph's greed.

Joshua directs Pilgrim's attention to the work area, where Eli is opening a large FURNACE and thrusting his rod inside -- into a cauldron of MOLTEN GLASS!

Pilgrim jerks away from the stinging heat. Horrified.

PILGRIM

I did not come to be destroyed!

JOSHUA

Then you cannot be remade.  
(points to Pilgrim's pendant)

This is Eli's price. You must turn over what belongs to Meph -- all of it.

Pilgrim jerks his pendant away.

PILGRIM

Meph will destroy me just as well.

JOSHUA

But my Father promises to make you new.

Pilgrim hesitates. He studies Joshua's earnest face. Watches Eli ply his craft. Runs his thumb over his pendant, down that hairline crack.

At last he grips the pendant. Goes to lift it off ...

But O.S. a PHONE RINGS. Pilgrim fumbles for his cell and checks the ID. Sure enough: "MEPH."

Pilgrim's face fills with dread.

EXT. ABANDONED FACTORY - NIGHT

Meph billows out with an entourage of RuiNation guards.  
Chews his cigar as he spits into his phone:

MEPH

I thought we made a deal, Pilgrim.

A black LIMO pulls up. Tossing his cigar, Meph ducks in.

INTERCUT telephone conversation.

Pilgrim lets the pendant drop back onto his neck.

PILGRIM

I can't afford the terms.

MEPH

So you skipped town.

PILGRIM

Call it a business trip.

MEPH

Trip or not, you owe me something.  
And if you don't bring it to me,  
I'll take it off your dead body.  
When I get there.

END INTERCUT.

The LINE GOES DEAD. Pilgrim glances at Joshua.

PILGRIM

I ... I can't accept your offer.

He tries to run out the door. But Joshua stops him.

JOSHUA

You don't have to belong to Meph.  
(urgent)  
Leave him, and let Eli make you  
new. My strong arm will protect  
you.

He stretches out those white-gloved Kevlar hands.

But Pilgrim is staring past Joshua, at the furnace. His  
fingers caresses his old pendant. Tighter and tighter,  
until his knuckles go white.

Pilgrim spins around and dashes out the door.

Joshua stares after him, sorrowful. Then glances over at Eli, who looks up from his work. Unruffled.

ELI  
Go after him, Son.

He holds up a molten pendant, half-made but breathtaking.

ELI  
This one's for him.

EXT. QUAIN STREET - DAY

Pilgrim tears past the houses. People call from their porches. Pets and children tumble down the steps after him.

But Pilgrim runs on, unheeding.

EXT. GHETTO DRAG - NIGHT

Meph's LIMO SPEEDS down the street dodging potholes. Black SUVs follow, full of gun-toting RuiNation guards.

Their headlights sweep the doorway where Buddy's corpse rots. RODENTS SCATTER as the ENTOURAGE BLOWS past.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Perfect calm. The ReCreation continue gardening as more children gather on the playground.

Suddenly Pilgrim bursts into the park, headed for the border. Havoc follows in his wake. He tramples beds of flowers. Scatters piles of mulch. Grazes a birdbath, overturning the water.

The ReCreation look up, alarmed. Some call to Pilgrim. Others try to head him off. A few even tackle him ...

... But Pilgrim's survival instinct spikes. A roundhouse kick, a few punches and he's free. But as he escapes, his PENDANT SMACKS an opponent's. The CRACK WIDENS.

Oblivious, Pilgrim sprints for the bushes.

The ReCreation pursue, calling for him to take Eli's offer. But Pilgrim just vaults the bushes and dashes into the street.

Darkness looms ahead, seemingly empty ...

But just as Pilgrim crosses into it, TIRES SQUEAL O.S. HEADLIGHTS ILLUMINATE Pilgrim like a trapped deer.

Pilgrim freezes ...

As Meph's LIMO ROARS UP and SCREECHES to a halt. The back DOOR OPENS and out steps Meph.

MEPH

Going somewhere, Pilgrim?

Pilgrim turns to run, but the ReCreation line the curb behind him. A wall of indestructible white.

Behind Pilgrim, the RuiNation guards are piling out of their SUVs and onto the curb. They lift their guns.

Slowly Pilgrim faces Meph. Meph lights a cigar, takes a drag. He blows smoke in Pilgrim's face.

MEPH

Time's up, Pilgrim. Quit playing survivor and faced up to our deal.

PILGRIM

I'm not completely broken!

Meph squints at Pilgrim's pendant. Then laughs.

MEPH

Not yet.

Pilgrim glances down. Sure enough the crack has widened! And now the GOLD MIST is leaking out! Pilgrim staggers back, horrified.

Meph's laughter swells. He holds out his hand.

MEPH

All that rubbish about being remade -- that's not for you.

(beat)

You're broken, Pilgrim. And the furnace is waiting.

Pilgrim stares at himself in agony. He tries to stop the leak with his hands ... But his grip is weakening.

Suddenly a SHOUT ECHOES O.S. Pilgrim glances back:

Joshua bursts through the ReCreation. He leaps the curb, hits the pavement and runs to the edge of the Light.

JOSHUA

Don't listen to him, Pilgrim.

PILGRIM

It's too late.

JOSHUA

Not if you come to me right now.

And give me what is Meph's.

(soft)

That's a promise.

He holds out his hand.

Pilgrim looks between Joshua and Meph, in agony. Two outstretched hands. Two paths. Two destinies.

Behind Pilgrim's back, Meph flashes a hand signal. The RuiNation poise to shoot.

Joshua detects the movement and nods slightly. Behind him, the ReCreation lock arms and plant their feet.

But Pilgrim isn't paying attention to either. He just stares at his pendant. Gold mist swirls faster now, just like another time ...

BUDDY (V.O.)

They say their lord makes people  
... unbreakable.

INT. ELI'S STUDIO - DAY - FLASHBACK

Ancient ELI plies his craft, silent and steady. He manipulates that ROD tipped with MOLTEN GLASS. Rolls the glass in colored FRIT, shapes it with TOOLS and blows his own breath into it -- until it's a masterpiece.

BUDDY (V.O.)

I should have gone to him. Turned  
my back on Meph and run.

(struggles)

Don't make the same mistake.

END FLASHBACK.

The WORDS ECHO as the images swim around Pilgrim.

A beat. Pilgrim composes himself. With new purpose, he slips the pendant off his neck ... and turns toward Meph.

PILGRIM

(to Meph)

You're right. We did make a deal.

(nods at guards)

We all did.

He holds up the pendant.

PILGRIM

But without this, the deal's off.

Meph reaches for it greedily.

MEPH

It's only good for destruction!

PILGRIM

Yes. But not in your hands.

Pilgrim snaps the pendant away. Turns his back on Meph and runs straight toward Joshua. But his strength falters. He stumbles, loses his grip on the pendant. It flies from his hands ...

Joshua dives in and catches it.

JOSHUA

I've got you, Pilgrim.

Joshua's fingers close around the chain, WHIP IT like a lasso. HURL the PENDANT right toward the pavement. CRASH! The PENDANT SHATTERS, triggering an EXPLOSION that RIPS through the street like a bomb.

Panic reigns. Pilgrim collapses behind Joshua. Meph jumps into his limo and SQUEALS AWAY. The Ruination OPEN FIRE on the ReCreation.

But Joshua just stretches out his arms. BULLETS BOUNCE off his white coat and land harmlessly on the street.

The barrage continues for a few moments.

When the smoke clears, the dark side is empty. In the light, the ReCreation are sweeping up bullets and shards of pendant glass.

Joshua scoops Pilgrim off the ground. Examines him:

Pilgrim is unharmed by bullets. But stripped of his pendant, he appears unconscious. Even ... dead.

Joshua just smiles. He heaves Pilgrim over his shoulder and sets off across the park.

INT. ELI'S SHOP - LATER

Colors loop and dive like a kaleidoscope, converging into the wonders of Eli's glass. Pilgrim's eyes open.

He sits up on a corner bed -- freshly washed, dressed in spotless white, gloriously alive. He glances down:

From his neck hangs a NEW PENDANT, a master design filled with Eli's breath. Indestructible.

Pilgrim touches it in awe. Just then, Joshua and Eli appear beside him. Joshua claps Pilgrim on the back.

JOSHUA

Welcome to ReCreation, Pilgrim.

Eli touches Pilgrim's head in silent blessing.

Pilgrim looks a bit overwhelmed. Smiles up sheepishly.

PILGRIM

What do I do now? Cut the grass?

JOSHUA

(chuckles)

I've got a better idea.

EXT. GHETTO DRAG - NIGHT

The same urban nightmare, still surreal. O.S. a GANG FIGHT ECHOES. FEET SCATTER, then SILENCE. Except one pair of POUNDING BOOTS ...

Pilgrim rounds the corner running -- but not for his life. Pulsing with vigor, dressed in white. With Eli's pendant about his neck and a wounded BANGER in his arms.

A black SUV PEELS around the corner and SPEEDS up next to Pilgrim. WINDOWS ROLL DOWN; bangers OPEN FIRE. But Pilgrim runs through the barrage deflecting bullets.

The banger moans, clutching his broken pendant.

BANGER

My life, Pilgrim. It's leaving.

PILGRIM

Actually, it's waiting for you -- just over The Border.

(beat)

And that's a promise.

On and on they run through the bullets, as the light of The Border appears ahead.

FADE OUT.

THE END