

INT. WILLAQ UMA'S ALCOVE - NIGHT

An old, wrinkled hand holding a rugged gold pen and writing slowly on flesh-colored papyrus. Two small bright FIGURES are in the background. *

One figure is a small bare chested BOY gazing longingly over towards the other figure - a naked, curled up young WOMAN, positioned vertically in between two granite rocks.

WILLAQ UMA (80), the Incan High Priest, stops writing and looks up, directly into the camera. He wears a collar with an emblem of the Incan Sun that radiates a sublime golden light.

A sharp, ceremonial golden knife, TUMI, lies next to the papyrus.

WILLAQ UMA

(in a Quechua language) *

There is a song lost and forgotten
 / A song of Hanan Pacha / an
 overworld where celestial gods
 dwell / There is a love song of
 childhood / Brought up from the
 depths of the Uqhu Pacha / Where
 the dead and the unborn wait /
 There is a song known to all, but
 yet unheard off.

Willaq Uma raises Tumi.

INSERT - THE GOLDEN KNIFE.

The Golden Knife's blade reflects the Sun.

EXT. MACHU PICCHU RUINS - DAY

A delicate vicuña stares motionless, her wool exceptionally white, the reflection of the Golden Knife in her eyes.

Willaq Uma forcefully thrusts Tumi into the vicuña.

INT. WILLAQ UMA'S ALCOVE - NIGHT

The blood splatters all over the papyrus and burns it.

EXT. ANDES MOUNTAINS - DAWN

The papyrus burns to the ashes. An image of the magnificent Cordillera Blanca mountain range, shining in white, FADES IN and imposes itself over the screen.

The baronial, black Andean CONDOR, in sharp contrast to the white mountains of the Cordillera Blanca, glides through the air. *

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MANHATTAN ISLAND - ESTABLISHING - SUNRISE

A bird's-eye view of Manhattan. The sun rises over the Brooklyn Bridge.

EXT. NEW YORK PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL - MORNING

An empty sidewalk on Riverside Drive.

INT. NEW YORK PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL - EARLY MORNING

ANDREW TEMPLE-BLACKWOOD (30), good-looking, unshaven and exhausted, grimaces when a cute young NURSE takes the bandages off his shoulder.

NURSE

Here you are. Like new.

She glances at him, hopeful. Andrew flashes her a sorrowful smile in return.

He leaves.

INT. ANDREW'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Unpacked luggage and film equipment crams a darkened room.

Andrew enters and glances at his answering machine - it blinks "99" and "maximum."

He takes a 16mm film reel out of his worn out camera bag and puts it in a Bell & Howell 16mm Projector. A shaky 16mm projection starts.

EXT. PLAZA DE ARMAS OF CUSCO, PERU - DAY

Andrew waves to the camera in front of the colonial baroque Church of Jesus. He radiates joy.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Come on, stop fooling around. It's your turn.

Andrew nods, and warmly recites into the camera.

ANDREW

I always thought it would be impossible to be loved by someone like you.

WOMAN (O.S.)

The word impossible does not exist in a dictionary of a smart man.

INT. ANDREW'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Andrew stops the projection.

The frame freezes, showing the extreme close up of a woman's smiling face flashing slightly crooked, impeccably white teeth.

Andrew gazes at her face, in longing and in grief.

Then he smiles at the picture.

ANDREW

You're right, my love, like always.
Impossible is nothing.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. ANDES MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

El Condor glides over the Andes and then plunges down towards the narrow streets of Cusco.

EXT. CUSCO - NIGHT

Heavy fog. Andrew walks towards a small house. Only a feeble gaslight casts a shadow on its bright red door.

EXT. MAGYAR THE PRIEST'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Andrew looks around anxiously. The door opens before he knocks.

MAGYAR THE PRIEST (50's) appears. He has a huge head, is nearly as wide as he is tall, and is oily and remarkably ugly. One eye is black, the other blue and blind.

MAGYAR THE PRIEST

Came for a hug?

ANDREW

I came to ask you for help.

MAGYAR THE PRIEST

Save your prayers. She probably burns in hell already.

(chuckles)

I find it peculiar how many people sought refuge from the damnation. In the Andes, of all places.

ANDREW

Help me get her back. Please. I implore you.

MAGYAR THE PRIEST

Begging's always a nice touch.

(whispers)

But, let me show you something.

INT. MAGYAR THE PRIEST'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Andrew follows Magyar the Priest into a small, adjacent room.

A perfect reproduction of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's "The Triumph of Death" hangs on the wall, illuminated like an altar with flickering candles. Magyar the Priest points at it.

MAGYAR THE PRIEST

See here, armies of skeletons kill the living in many creative ways - slitting throats, hanging, drowning, smothering - but there's no God here, no haven, no hope.

ANDREW

It's only a painting.

Magyar the Priest tilts his good eye towards the painting.

MAGYAR THE PRIEST

Is it really?

Andrew follows his glance and jumps, jolted. The painting is alive!

INSERT - THE PAINTING

Armies of SKELETONS chase the LIVING, who flee in terror. A slaughter of the innocent, with distant SCREAMS.

O THE PRIEST (O.S.)

See now? No romantic notions should have a place in real life.

BACK TO SCENE

Andrew gazes at Magyar the Priest, who cackles.

MAGYAR THE PRIEST

It is cold, it is lonely and it lasts forever, the old friend Death.

(MORE)