

Hero's Journey Analysis – "LA Confidential"

ORDINARY WORLD

Gossip reporter SID HUDGENS (Danny DeVito) tells us about Micky Cohen the underworld crime figure in LA
With Micky C arrested – who's going to take over his patch?

Detective BUD WHITE (Russell Crowe)

3:08

Sits outside a house listening to a domestic dispute
Is told by his buddy, STENZLAND to let it go
Pulls down a santa sled off the roof
Guy takes a swing at Bud and he takes him apart
Looks after the wife

From the beginning, we have established that Bud has some good qualities – if prone to violence.

5:05

Cop Jack Vincennes (Kevin Spacey) works as a consultant on the TV show "Badge of Honour" – he is going to be a SHAPESHIFTER. Initially he seems on the dark side, but he'll surprise us.

Ed Exley (Guy Pearce)

Son of a legendary officer – big shoes to fill
Ambitious

6:48

Dudley Smith tells Exley he finished top of his Lieutenant's exam
Wants to be a detective
Dudley (MENTOR) thinks he's too by the book – REFUSAL
Tells him to get rid of his glasses

8:33

CALL TO ADVENTURE

Kim Basinger walks into liquor store
Bud says hello to her
She says hello officer – REFUSAL
He's offended that it's so obvious
And that she obviously has no time for him

He sees a woman with a nose job in a Rolls
– he thinks someone hit her
He disarms their heavy, Leland Buzz Meeks
Asks if she's OK
David Strathairn says she's fine
Bud ignores her
He's clearly a good Samaritan to women

10:56

Vincennes tips off Sid Hudgens as he arrests a couple of actors on a pot bust — including Matt Reynolds (Simon Baker Denny) — gets a pay off

A Card — Fleur de Lys — falls out

He gets paid by De Vito for giving him access

Bud and Stenzland arrive back with the grog for the Christmas party

Exley won't take a bribe from Vincennes — so at one level Exley is a good guy but he's a brown nose so we don't warm to him.

"Mexicans" get brought in that injured their colleagues
They storm past Exley and start roughing them up

Vincennes tells Bud he needs to put a leash on his partner — CALL TO ADVENTURE
Bud stops Stenzland from attacking the Mexicans — this is a REFUSAL of sorts.
But when the guy says "Go fuck your mother", Bud goes nuts — he crosses a THRESHOLD here that will set him down a path.

Bud says he won't testify against his partner — REFUSAL
Loses his badge and gun
16:46

Exley is happy to testify against his fellow officers
He tells them to let Bud and Stenzland swing
Dudley says that Stenzland is hopeless
But Bud White is a good officer
Exley says he's a thug

They make Exley a detective
Dudley warns him that he'll be hated
Exley doesn't care

Exley says Vincennes will back him up
If they threaten his role on Badge of Honour
20:08

Vincennes rolls as Exley predicted — so Exley is political. He's a straight cop but he'll do anything to get to the top of the pile and match his father's efforts.

Exley testifies
He's got rid of his glasses

Vincennes warns Exley that Bud White will hunt him down
if it takes him the rest of his life

TESTS, ALLIES & ENEMIES

Bud meets with Captain Dudley Smith – a MENTOR
What does he want?
Dudley gives him back his badge and gun
22:30

Stenzland has been sacrificed
He is told that Exley snitched

Dudley wants Bud to work out of Homicide
A muscle job
Do his bidding – ask no questions
Bud agrees

In voiceover from Sid Hudgens we learn that
Two of Mickey C's guys are slain
23:45

Mickey C's lieutenant is killed

Victory Motel
Bud punches the crap out of some crime figure
On the orders of Dudley Smith
25:39

Jack Vincennes comes back from suspension

Sees Fleur De Lys on a portfolio
Makes a call to the number
They won't talk to him
He tries to get a reverse directory

Stenzland leaves the force
Exley comes in with his carton
Stenzland knocks it out of his hands
Bud laughs

28:19
Bud farewells Stenzland
Hot date – hush hush

Exley getting the cold shoulder from his fellow agents

29:24
CALL TO ADVENTURE
Call comes into homicide

The Night Owl coffee shop
 Exley sees his opportunity – no REFUSAL, he wants this

Races down
 Dead cook behind the counter
 Till is open
 Trail of blood
 Leads to a pile of bodies in the toilet
 Exley wants the case
 Dudley won't let him have it – REFUSAL from the MENTOR
 He will lead – Exley will be his second

Stenzland is one of the victims
 Someone comments that one of the victims looks like Rita Hayworth
 Parents look at the body – she was a blonde not a redhead
 Bud sees that she is the girl he saw with the nose job
 Distinguishing mark proves who she was

Stenzland was a regular at Night Owl
 Dudley says 3 negroes were seen discharging guns
 Exley not happy

Bud goes off on his own

Jack Vincennes declines to work a list
 Exley says he'll take it
 Vincennes is forced to follow – a TEAM is formed

APPROACH

36:05

Bud gets a lead on the girl who died
 Goes to Pearce Patchett (David Strathairn)
 Very wealthy
 Bud asks where he was last night
 Buzz no longer works for him
 Patchet says he thinks this is personal
 He explains that these women are made to look like movie stars – he has his own little movie studio of women
 Lyn Bracken (Kim Basinger) is his Veronica Lake

On the screen is a Veronica Lake movie
 She is with a client – councilman
 Bud tells him to piss off
 40:35

Lynn says she didn't know the victim, Sue Lefferts
 Bud says don't ever try to bribe him
 She points out that he likes helping out women

She says he's different
 First guy who hasn't said she looks like Veronica Lake

He says she's better looking than Veronica Lake
 He says he wants to see her
 Client or date?
 He retracts — REFUSAL from fear.

GREAT SCENE***

Typically for an APPROACH, a romantic interest is established. Very important that he baulks at this threshold. Shows he needs to grow.

Vincennes and Exley go to a black guy
 Offers 10 years off his brother's sentence
 Snitches out a guy Sugar Ray Collins
 45:37

They go to his place
 But other cops have beaten them there
 The guns are in their car
 Exley has forgotten his glasses

Exley says they share the collar
 Guy shoots
 But Exley stops him killing him by deflecting shot

48:00
 Bud arrives — convinced they killed his buddy
 Exley says he'll break them in interrogation

Exley puts the interview on broadcast
 To unsettle his cohort
 Gives up their drug dealer

He starts working on Lewis
 Lewis says he didn't kill anyone
 He just wanted to lose his cherry
 Clearly he's talking about something else

Next guy isn't going to give up her name
 Bud explodes
 Breaks in
 Gets the address

ORDEAL

He goes in the back
 54:35
 Finds a girl tied to the bed
 Guy watching the TV
 Bud kills him
 Makes it look like he tried to kill him
 Reinforcements come in
 Covers up the girl

Exley tries to quiz the girl
 Bud intervenes
 They fight
 GREAT SCENE

Suspects have escaped

58:17

ORDEAL

Exley goes with backup to drug dealer's place
 They are there
 Bottle drops
 Gun fires
 Mayhem
 Exley ends up shooting several
 Gets an award

Bud is watching Lynn from the car

Council man says he won't change his vote
 Is showed pictures of himself with Lynn
 Changes his vote

Patchett at the opening of some development

1:02:37

Dudley is working over some crim
 Bud has had enough – he's been altered by DEATH
 Leaves – watched by Dudley

REWARD

Bud goes to Lynn's place

1:03:46

He comes in
 She shows him into a private bedroom
 Not her normal room
 They make love

1:05:14

Danny tells Vincennes that the DA is a "swish"
 Danny is paying Reynolds (Simon Baker Denny) \$100 to
 sleep with the DA so they can catch it on film
 He thinks they've met before
 Forgets Jack arrested him
 Thinks it was a Fleur de Lys party
 Jack acts as if he knows all about it
 De Vito says Jack can get him a part on Badge of Honour

1:08:45

Bud and Lynn watch an Audrey Hepburn film at the movies

Jack looks at his \$50 bribe money

Looks at himself in the mirror
 Not pleased with what he sees
 Leaves the money on the bar
 Races to the motel

1:10:44
 Goes to the room

ORDEAL
 Finds Reynolds is dead
 Feels complicit

THE ROAD HOME
 Exley wheels the raped girl down the hall
 She admits to having lied about her evidence
 So the black guys didn't do it

REWARD
 Bud is in bed with Lynn
 1:12:55
 She says she is going back to her home town to open up a
 dress shop

Scar on his shoulder
 Old man tried to hit his mother with a bottle
 He got in the way
 Then father tied him up
 Made him watch him beat his mother to death

Bud says he wants to become a homicide detective

THE ROAD HOME
 Believes there is something wrong with the Night Owl
 Knows they didn't do it
 Doesn't think he's smart enough — lacks self belief
 She says she is

Bud comes down to the forensic guy
 1:15:37
 He looks at the photos

He goes around to Suzan Lefferts' mother
 Asks about the "boyfriend"
 Mother identifies Stenzland
 Goes downstairs and finds Buzz Meeks' body
 Takes identification

1:18:47

Exley looks at his award
 Knows he doesn't deserve it
 He's altered

Exley comes down to the Foresics guy
 He knows Bud is on the trail
 Goes to the Lefferts house
 They get the body

Exley goes to Vincennes
 Asks about the Night Owl killing
 Vincennes doesn't know why he'd dig around in that
 Given that it's why he made lieutenant

Exley says why he became a cop
 Rolo Tomassi
 His father was killed – they never caught him
 Didn't know his name called him Rolo Tomassi
 Just made it up to give it some colour
 Admits to Vincennes he lost sight of why he became a cop
 Vincennes doesn't remember why he became a cop – tear in
 his eye

They agree to help each other
 Vincennes will help on the Night Owl – Vincennes is
 altered by having WITNESSED DEATH
 Exley will help on the homicide of the young actor

They are both altered from where they started the story.
 Exley wouldn't have done anything to jeopardise his
 career earlier. Vincennes was previously on the dark
 side, but the SHAPESHIFTER has now moved back into the
 light.

Vincennes tails Bud

Bud goes and meets Micky's Cohens' old bodyguard
 STOMPENADO
 1:24:16
 Grabs his balls to get information
 Word was that Meeks had all the heroin

They see Bud with Lynn
 Exley watches with more than professional interest –
 RIVAL

Exley goes to talk to Stompenado
 Makes the mistake of thinking that Lana Turner is just a
 whore cut to look like Lana Turner
 Gets water splashed in his face – equivalent of the face-
 slapping or punching that often happens about here.

They laugh in the car – REWARD

Exley goes to see Patchett

1:28:23

Vincennes asks about Matt Reynolds, the young star who
got killed
They get nothing

Patchett puts in a call
De Vito picks up the call

Vincennes finds out that the body was Buzz Meeks
(Bud had taken the ID)

Exley comes to see Lynn
He thinks that she's thinking fucking Bud for Patchett
But she says she's fucking Bud for all the reasons that
he is different from you
Then he kisses her
She sees that Danny De Vito is taking pics
And fucks him – clearly under orders from Patchett

1:33:01

Jack goes to see Dudley
Meeks and Stenzland arrested Patchett years ago
Dudley was the arresting officer
Charges were dropped
What did her remember?
Does Exley know about this?
No
Dudley shoots him.
Have you a valediction
Rola Tomasi (this was the person who killed Ed's father)

1:35:47

Dudley announces the murder of Vincennes
Takes Exley aside
Asks him about Rolo Tomasi
Exley knows that he must be the murderer

Dudley calls in Bud
Wants him at the Victory Motel now
You don't' seem your old cruel self any more

Exley starts trying to track down what happened to
Vincennes

Dudley is working over Danny DeVito
Bud is there
Helping with the interrogation
Devito says he has pictures of a cop screwing Lynn
Bud goes nuts
Goes to the car
Finds the pictures

They are not of him
But Exley

It was a set up
They did it to get Bud to kill Exley
Devito was in on it
But now they kill him

1:41:52
Exley still on the trail

Bud comes to Lynn's
He is in the rain
You fucked him
He hits her – he's done what he despises

Bud comes in
Shows the picture of him with Lynn
Attacks him
Exley pulls Bud's gun
Says Dudley is the guy
That he wants Bud to kill him

They discuss how it all played out
Dudley planted the guns on the negroes
Bud questions Exley
This will undo his Night Owl citation
Exley agrees

1:47:10
They go see the DA
They want taps on Dudley and Patchett
DA declines

Bud doesn't take no for an answer
Attacks him
Hangs him out of the window

He admits that he is powerless
Dudley has Pictures
They are taking over Micky C's turf

1:50:38
They find Patchett is dead
Dudley is tying up loose ends

They race to Lynn's
She's been worked over
(Bud's work)

Exley interviews Lynn
1:52:18

Bud hates himself for what he did
Lynn says she knows how he feels

Bud finds De Vito dead

Gets a call that Exley wants to meet him at the Victory
Exley is Therese Foster
You wanted to meet here?
You called it.

They've been ambushed
Too late to get out

They go into the Victory
Barricade it

All Exley wanted was to measure up to his father
Now is her chance
The gun fire starts

Furious then quiet
Bud drops under the floor

Shoots guys
One comes in
Shoots Exley
Bud comes in to save him

Dudley shoots Bud
About to shoot Exley
Bud stabs him in the leg
Dudley shoots Bud

Dudley says is he going to shoot him or arrest him?
Dudley thinks he's got away with it
Exley shoots him in the back

Exley is interrogated
Admits that they were wrong about Night Owl

DA says that they can make Dudley Smith die a hero

SHARING THE ELIXIR

Exley gets a medal

Lynn is watching from the rear
Exley comes to her
2:05:54

Bud is in the car
Very patched up

They shake
Nothing said but very moving
2:07:35