

B E W A R E T H E N I G H T

Screenplay

By

Paul Harris Boardman & Scott Derrickson

Revisions By

David Ayer

Bryan Bertino

Bruce McKenna

Current Revisions

By

Paul Harris Boardman & Scott Derrickson

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FADE IN ON:

THE SHADOW OF A BLACK CROW gliding across HOT DESERT SAND...

EXT. IRAQI DESERT - DUSK

TILT UP to see the crow enter frame, flying toward ANCIENT RUINS that dominate the blood-red skyline.

Crumbling walls of mud-brick palaces and temples. Monuments to centuries of human folly, decay, and sin in this land of ancient Babylon.

SUPER: **IRAQ - 2010**

Now BOOTS THUD INTO FRAME. Running. The boots belong to...

PRIVATE MIGUEL SANTINO

U.S. Marine Corps. Tall and sinewy, fierce and focused.

He's following a MARINE CORPORAL, who runs a few yards ahead. Two other platoon members - JIMMY and LT. GRIGGS - follow a few yards behind Santino.

Santino and Jimmy wear sinister-looking camouflage face paint.

A SHOT rings out, and the lead Marine goes down from a bullet to the head.

Dropping to the ground, Jimmy adjusts A SMALL CAMERA that's attached to his helmet - this records his POV during combat.

Then Santino, Griggs, and Jimmy OPEN FIRE on THREE INSURGENTS who RUN through a STONE ARCHWAY and disappear into...

A DENSE PALM GROVE

that has overgrown an ancient stone courtyard.

The three Marines quickly approach the archway and cautiously enter the grove.

It's DARKER in here. SUNLIGHT barely bleeding through the trees. A hundred places to hide. It's like a jungle in the middle of the desert.

Flitting SHADOWS. Buzzing INSECTS. A deepening sense of doom.

The CROW lands on a tree branch directly in front of Santino. Stares him down him with cold, black eyes.

Griggs stops, sensing movement. He slowly looks down to see a HORNED VIPER slithering across the toes of his boots...

As the big snake glides into the undergrowth, Griggs glances over at the palm tree beside him and sees a mass of LARGE SPIDERS skittering up and down the trunk in a frenzy.

Jimmy hears RUSTLING in the bushes to his left. He slowly steps closer, gun trained toward the sound...

Pushing back a palm leaf, he finds TWO DESERT BATS - bleeding, hanging upside down from a vine. They SNAP and CLAW at each other, a vicious and unnatural-looking FIGHT...

Now Santino sees one of the Insurgents up ahead, moving through the trees. Warily, Santino follows him into...

A STRANGE, HIDDEN COMPOUND AT THE HEART OF THE GROVE

The Insurgent darts for cover behind the crumbling STONE STRUCTURE: It's marked with ANCIENT BABYLONIAN SYMBOLS and PAGAN INSCRIPTIONS.

Santino signals Griggs and Jimmy. They all watch as the other TWO INSURGENTS join the first inside the compound.

Santino unclips a GRENADE. Pulls the pin...silently counts to three...then FLINGS IT...

BOOM! As the SMOKE CLEARS, Santino, Griggs, and Jimmy RUSH into the hidden compound.

They FIRE at the THREE INSURGENTS, who lie dazed from the grenade. Two of them are shredded.

The Third Insurgent runs for a HOLE blown open by the grenade in the side of the decaying ruins. As the Insurgent reaches the opening, Santino SHOOTS him in the back.

Santino walks over to the wounded Insurgent, who looks up at him with pleading eyes.

But Santino raises his gun, his menacing, camouflaged face slack with cold indifference. And he shoots the man dead.

Then Santino hears a NOISE. A shriek? A laugh? The WIND MOANING past the BLOWN-OPEN HOLE beside him? He turns and sees a BLACK PASSAGEWAY descending into the earth.

Santino is transfixed. He moves slowly toward the entrance.

LT. GRIGGS
Jimmy. Go with him.

Santino heads into the dark void beyond the blasted doorway. Jimmy follows him down stairs that are worn and cracked - thousands of years old.

Now Santino hesitates. Every instinct tells him not to go down any further. But something is also drawing him in.

He keeps going. Jimmy follows. They descend into the depths, encased by a narrow sandstone passageway.

Their FLASHLIGHTS begin to DIM as they near the bottom of the stairs. Here, the passageway opens into a DARKENED CHAMBER.

Jimmy stops, assaulted by the STENCH coming from the chamber.

JIMMY

Jesus, what's that smell?

He breaks a cigarette in half, stuffs the halves up his nose.

SWITCH TO JIMMY'S HELMET-CAM POV

The washed-out image shows us what Jimmy sees, as he follows Santino down a stone stairway into...

INT. UNDERGROUND CHAMBER - SAME

Santino and Jimmy walk in, guns at the ready - and their FLASHLIGHTS instantly DIE.

IN DARKNESS we can hear their shallow, frightened breathing.

And now we hear ANOTHER SOUND, like rushing wind approaching from a distance.

JIMMY'S VOICE

What is that...? Come on, bro,
let's split.

The rushing sound is getting LOUDER fast..

JIMMY'S VOICE

What the fuck is that...?

The sound escalates into a full-blown ROAR. And then all hell breaks loose. Jimmy starts SCREAMING, and his POV SWINGS AROUND WILDLY.

As the ROARING SOUND and Jimmy's blood-curdling SCREAMS reach a crescendo, we CUT TO A FLOCK OF CROWS taking flight above the EAST RIVER, beneath an overcast sky...

EXT. EAST RIVER (BRONX WHITESTONE BRIDGE) - LIGHT RAIN - DUSK

PANNING off the crows, we see NEW YORK CITY: a modern Babylon with its own priests and kings. Its own weary legacy of sin.

EXT. AN APARTMENT BLOCK - ALLEYWAY - LIGHT RAIN - NIGHT

In the dirty alley between apartment towers, TWO UNIFORM COPS stand next to their PATROL CAR. Smoking, drinking coffee.

In the background, Spec-Ops OFFICER RALPH SARCHIE kneels beside a DUMPSTER close to the building, his back to the others.

His head is bowed, his hands out of sight in front of him. It almost looks like he's praying.

Now an AMBULANCE pulls up, and TWO EMTS get out.

EMT #1
Where is it?

COP #2
Garbage man found it in the bottom of
the chute. It's over there, now...

He nods toward the rear of the building, where Sarchie is kneeling. The EMTs head that way in no particular hurry.

COP #1
(squints)
Is that Sarchie?

COP #2
Yeah, him and Butler was first on
the scene.

Now Sarchie's partner approaches along with the EMTs. BUTLER, an ex-Army Ranger, sports numerous military tattoos and carries multiple knives - his weapon of choice.

EMT #1
Officer, if we could take that...

Sarchie doesn't seem to hear him.

EMT #2
Officer? If we could take that now,
please.

BUTLER
Sarch, c'mon... There's nothin' we
can do...

Slowly, Sarchie turns toward his partner's voice, then looks up as if just noticing the EMTs.

After a moment, he lifts a SMALL BUNDLE toward the EMTs. It's limp, like a broken doll wrapped in cloth.

The first EMT takes the small bundle, then slowly reaches into it and checks for vital signs. Nothing. He walks back toward the ambulance, slipping the bundle into a small body bag.

Sarchie slowly stands, then turns and walks stiffly TOWARD CAMERA, a silhouette of darkness in the rain.

A LOW BASS RUMBLE rises in volume as the image of Sarchie begins to SHAKE - an expression of his erupting inner world.

The shaking and low rumble escalate violently until Sarchie's dark silhouette FILLS THE SCREEN and then we...

CUT TO:

A VINTAGE WOODEN CLOCK

TICKING SOFTLY atop a mantle in an otherwise silent room.

INT. SMALL APARTMENT - BRONX - NIGHT

Sitting alone on the sofa is JOE MENDOZA, a striking Latino man in his 30s with long hair and a razor-stubble beard. He wears clean Nike sweats, a dark t-shirt and socks.

From an OPEN FOLDER, dozens of DOCUMENTS and PHOTOGRAPHS are spread out across the coffee table in front of him.

CLOSE ON THE PHOTOGRAPHS: they're all pictures of the SAME WOMAN in her late 20s. In some of the pics, the Woman looks vibrant and happy, in others she looks tired and careworn.

Mendoza studies a handwritten document entitled "SESSION NOTES." After a moment, he stands up, visibly agitated.

Pacing around the room, like he's trying to shake off bad thoughts or feelings, he takes a few deep, measured breaths.

A SERIES OF JUMP CUTS: Mendoza doing PUSH-UPS, hard and fast/Doing SIT-UPS hard and fast/Pacing around the room again, still agitated/Putting the photos and documents back into the folder/Locking the folder in a desk drawer.

He ties the laces on his running shoes, then hurries out.

EXT. MENDOZA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - BRONX - NIGHT

Mendoza steps out of the building and takes off RUNNING down the wet street. Keyed up, he runs FAST, as if trying to get out in front of something...

CUT TO:

A VIEW THROUGH A WINDSHIELD

A super tough area in the South Bronx. A neighborhood that breathes despair...

INT. SPEC OP MINIVAN - MOVING - NIGHT

Butler drives the black van, radio up, music thumping. His eyes are busy, girl-watching beneath his sweatshirt hood.

Sarchie's eyes are empty, as blank as stones, and his expression is calm. Beneath the surface, he carries an ever-present inner weight.

As always, Sarchie is scanning for bad guys. It's late, but the heat has PEOPLE out on the street.

Their vehicle is pure lo pro law enforcement. There are several radios. A shotgun and M-16 in a rack overhead.

The RADIO CRACKLES and Sarchie turns down the music:

DISPATCHER (OVER RADIO)
Nine-four-one-four. Ten-seventy-five to six-one-one East Boyd. Ten-thirty-four.

ANOTHER POLICE UNIT (OVER RADIO)
Sector Four-Six Adam responding...

SARCHIE
(into mic)
Rodeo Four on.

DISPATCHER (OVER RADIO)
Go ahead, Rodeo Four.

SARCHIE
(into mic)
Run a b.g. on that last address.

DISPATCHER (OVER RADIO)
Ten-four. Gimme a second.

BUTLER

What, you want a domestic call...?

Sarchie says nothing. Waiting.

BUTLER

Oh, shit... *Radar?*

Sarchie's look says it is.

BUTLER

You know, when your radar goes off,
you usually end up with stitches.
You do know that, right?

Sarchie answers with a voice that's pure blue-collar Queens:

SARCHIE

You're an adrenaline junkie.
Without my radar, you don't get
your fix.

DISPATCHER (OVER RADIO)

Rodeo Four, tenant is ten-nineteen.

BUTLER

What, no warrants? Could Sarchie's
radar be off tonight...?

SARCHIE

(into mic)

Do you show a tenant occupation?

DISPATCHER (OVER RADIO)

Yeah, it says...USMC.

SARCHIE

(into mic)

A Marine. Might think he's still
fightin' the war... We'll take it.

BUTLER

Oorah!

Butler busts a U.

EXT. A NEW YORK CITY STREET - NIGHT

The Spec Op minivan pulls up to a crumbling BROWNSTONE that
has been divided into apartments.

As Sarchie and Butler get out and approach, A MAN SHOUTS
inside the brownstone. We hear SHATTERING GLASS.

ON THE FRONT PORCH, Sarchie unsnaps the holster-guard hidden beneath his shirt, then bangs on the door.

SARCHIE
Police, open it.

Pause. Another muffled SHOUT. Then a MAN (JIMMY) yanks the door open: He's not big, but his posture is menacing, like an animal poised to strike. His face is lost in the shadows.

MAN
...What?!

It's a challenge, not a question. Sarchie's voice is calm.

SARCHIE
We got a call. You alone in there?

MAN
My wife.

SARCHIE
We gotta see her.

Beat. Then the Man steps aside, and they enter...

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

All the shades are drawn. Sarchie squints, adjusting to the DIMNESS. The place is a wreck. Overturned furniture. Scattered dishes and clothing. A shattered lamp.

BUTLER
Maid's on vacation, huh?

Sarchie notices SCRATCH MARKS on the hardwood floor.

SARCHIE
(aside, to Butler)
Watch out for a dog...

A WOMAN sits on the couch, her head down.

BUTLER
Ma'am, are you all right?

Now we see that the Man's wearing nothing but a wife-beater t-shirt and boxer shorts. His body glistens with sweat.

MAN
Nothin' happened. She's fine - see?
Now get the fuck out.

The Woman lifts her head: HER FACE is swollen, freshly bruised. Sarchie sees this, and his jaw tightens. He turns on the Man.

SARCHIE

Alright, get your pants on, let's go.

MAN

You ain't lockin' me up.

Sarchie takes a step toward the Man, closing the gap. Gets in his space, and gives him the Look:

SARCHIE

You want to go the hard way? Hands behind your back, right now.

THE WOMAN

He just...he just went crazy...

MAN

SHUT UP!

He RUSHES her - but Sarchie GRABS the Man, YANKS him back. The Man SWINGS wildly. Sarchie slips the punch, catches the Man by the wrist, and TWISTS HIS ARM into a "come-along" grip, forcing the Man to his knees. He winces and GASPS in pain.

A LITTLE GIRL (O.S.)

Mommy...?

THE LITTLE GIRL

was hiding in a CLOSET: Now she peers around the partly-open door. Scared, she has a BLACK EYE from recent abuse. Distracted, Sarchie turns toward the child.

SARCHIE

It's okay, just...stay where you -

BUTLER

-Knife!

With desperate strength, the Man breaks Sarchie's grip and SLASHES at Sarchie with a short, wide-bladed KNIFE.

Sarchie flings himself backwards, and the blade SLICES his forearm. Sarchie GRUNTS in pain.

The Man RUSHES Butler, SWIPING at him with the knife. Butler lunges aside, dodging the blade with practiced skill.

Then the Man rushes past him and out the door.

BUTLER
(to Sarchie)
You okay?

Sarchie squeezes the fresh two-inch GASH in his forearm, his face darkening from pain into rage.

SARCHIE
See to the kid.

And he RUNS OUT THE DOOR.

EXT. BRONX NEIGHBORHOOD - SAME

The Wife-beater is RUNNING down the sidewalk - he's already far ahead. Sarchie hops in the Spec Op minivan and starts the engine, but the van points in the wrong direction.

He turns, looks out the side window, and FLOORS it. The van takes off BACKWARDS down the street, chrome rims spinnin'...

The Wife-beater is RUNNING flat out. Behind him, we see Butler emerge from the brownstone.

Driving backwards, Sarchie ZOOMS past the Man, who glances back and sees Butler coming on fast - but doesn't see Sarchie.

Half a block ahead now, Sarchie hits the brakes and spins the wheel. The van SCREECHES around a corner and comes to a fast stop. Sarchie hops out, POLICE BATON in hand.

Wife-beater, still running, glances back again at Butler, who's gaining on him. Turns back around just in time to see SARCHIE step around the corner, HURLING HIS BATON in a SIDEARM THROW!

THWOCK! The baton catches the Wife-beater across the shins, and the Man goes down hard. Sarchie moves in on him, drawing a heavy MAGLITE police flashlight from his belt.

Sarchie picks up the Wife-beater, spins, and SLAMS him hard against a parked Maxima. The CAR ALARM goes off.

Wife-beater SLASHES and MISSES with the knife - and Sarchie's FLASHLIGHT THUMPS HIM right on the point of the shoulder.

The Man's arm goes numb. The KNIFE falls to the ground.

Sarchie HITS HIM AGAIN with the Maglite, this time in the jaw, SNAPPING the Man's head around. His knees buckle.

Sarchie lays the flashlight across the Man's throat, under his chin, and holds him up with it against the car.

Then Sarchie leans in close to the Man's face, eye-to-eye, so the Man can hear him over the WAILING ALARM:

SARCHIE

You like to beat your wife and kid?

Sarchie PUSHES HARDER with the Maglite, choking the Man.

SARCHIE

Next time you think about doin'
that... Think of me.

And then he starts HITTING him again, with a rage that goes deeper than what this guy just did, a rage born of a thousand calls worse than this one.

BUTLER

(running up to them)

Hey - HEY! C'mon, that's enough!

He GRABS Sarchie and pulls him away from the Man, who slides off the car like an empty sack.

BUTLER

Guy's a veteran, fer Crissake...

Sarchie shakes loose from Butler, shoving him away. He puts a knee in the Man's back, and deftly CUFFS HIM. As he does, he notices the Man's FINGERNAILS: They're broken off, bloody and scabbed-over.

By the time Sarchie stands back up, his calm expression has returned. He looks down, notices the BLOOD from the cut on his arm - it's smeared all over his clothes.

BUTLER

(dryly)

Stitches. Toldja, Radar-man.

INT. BRONX BAR - NIGHT

Noisy PATRONS drink and watch a game on the television. Through the front window, we see MENDOZA pass by, still out on his night run.

He stops, steps back, and looks in through the bar window. After a moment, he decides to walk inside.

The Bartender approaches Mendoza, who stands at the far end of the bar, drenched in SWEAT.

MENDOZA

Double shot, Johnny Walker Black.

As the Bartender pours the drink, the BEAUTIFUL WOMAN sitting next to Mendoza glances up at him. She gives him a once-over with her eyes, liking what she sees.

BEAUTIFUL WOMAN
You're all sweaty.

Mendoza nods, still catching his breath from the run.

BEAUTIFUL WOMAN
You look good sweaty.

Mendoza smiles slightly. The Bartender sets down his drink.

BEAUTIFUL WOMAN
Not every one does, you know?

MENDOZA
Does what?

BEAUTIFUL WOMAN
Looks good sweaty.
(smiles)
I think I do, though.

MENDOZA
I wouldn't doubt that for a second.

He holds out his whiskey. She clinks her glass against his.

Mendoza now notices the WEDDING RING on her finger. Seeing him notice it, the Woman stares at Mendoza unflinchingly, making clear that the ring shouldn't stop him.

Mendoza considers it for a moment, then downs his drink in a few fast gulps.

WOMAN
(laughs)
You can sip that, you know. It's
not *medicine*.

Mendoza smiles and sets his empty glass on the bar.

MENDOZA
It is for me.

He slides a ten dollar bill across the bar for the Bartender, then looks back at the woman.

MENDOZA
You have a good night.

And with that he's out the door, leaving the woman alone.

BACK OUTSIDE on the wet sidewalk, still dripping with sweat, Mendoza lights up A CIGARETTE and takes a DEEP DRAG.

He's calming down now, his inner agitation is subsiding.

He looks back into the bar window, sees that the Beautiful Woman is now talking to another man.

Enjoying his smoke, Mendoza starts walking home.

INT. SARCHIE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

An ALARM CLOCK blares on the night stand. Just returning from his shift, Sarchie enters and shuts off the alarm.

He looks down at his wife, JEN, early 30s - an angular, dark-haired Italian-American beauty.

Her hands drape over her face in an attempt to grab a few more seconds of sleep.

Sarchie glances at his freshly stitched-up forearm. Quietly, he slips on an NYPD sweatshirt to hide the bandaged wound.

Then he slides into bed behind Jen and wraps his arms around her. He gently caresses her cheek.

Eyes closed, she kisses his fingers softly for a moment.

SARCHIE
Mornin', beautiful.

JEN
Mornin', Stinky...

SARCHIE
You're the stink.

JEN
I don't wanna get up.

She places his hand over her eyes.

SARCHIE
Come on. I been up all night.

JEN
...Where's Little Stink?

SARCHIE
Rarin' to go...

EXT. BRONX NEIGHBORHOOD PARK - LATER THAT MORNING

A bunch of KIDS, boys and girls in "AYSO" uniforms, are chasing the ball around...

ONE SIX-YEAR-OLD GIRL, a sturdy little fireplug of a player, drives hard toward the goal and SCORES. Standing next to Jen, Sarchie SHOUTS through cupped hands:

SARCHIE
ATTAWAY, CHRISTINA!

On the field, Sarchie's daughter turns toward him and raises her little fist in triumph.

Sarchie smiles, watching with pride. Here, with his family, Sarchie's inner weight is visibly lifting.

JEN
She got another penalty card,
Ralph. She's rough out there...

SARCHIE
(still grinning)
Yeah, she is...

JEN
Can't imagine where she gets it from.

SARCHIE
(as if thinking it over)
Hmm... Your mother, maybe...?

Off her look, he grins again, puts his arm around her, and gives her a kiss.

INT. SPEC OP MINIVAN - MOVING - LATE AFTERNOON

Butler drives. There's quiet CROSSTALK on the POLICE RADIO. Sarchie sits in the passenger seat, studying the five STITCHES in his forearm. He starts to scratch...

BUTLER
Don't do it. You scratch, it'll get
infected.

Sarchie scratches it anyway.

BUTLER
Wife-beatin' prick... Rat Squad
interviewed me about him today.

Sarchie shoots him a hard look.

BUTLER
They wanted to know if you used
excessive force.

SARCHIE
(flares)
They expect me to be gentle with the
guy?! He cut my goddamn arm open!

BUTLER
(teasing)
Look at you. You're so mad. Why are
you always so mad?

SARCHIE
The hell did you say to them?

BUTLER
(smiles slightly)
You're not gonna hit me, are you?

SARCHIE
I'm serious. What did you say...?

BUTLER
That you're a sadistic fuck who
gets off beatin' up suspects!
(his smile fading)
Jesus, what d'you think I said?

Sarchie nods, and turns away. His expression is numb, almost
blank. A stone in the sea. Now that he's back on the street,
his inner weight has returned.

The police radio CRACKLES:

DISPATCHER (OVER RADIO)
Possible ten-twenty-five at River
Parkway and Fordham Road. Victim is
a white male, approximately two
years old...

SARCHIE
Unbelievable...another fuckin' kid.

DISPATCHER (OVER RADIO)
...Requesting Special Ops Unit.
Rodeo Four, do you copy?

SARCHIE
(into mic)
Rodeo Four, responding.

CUT TO:

A SPOTTED HYENA

SNARLING through its looping, creepy LAUGH...

EXT. THE BRONX ZOO - DUSK

SHADOWS deepen as Sarchie and Butler walk past "natural" ANIMAL HABITATS: no old-fashioned walls, cages, or fences here. Sarchie glances at the OUTDOOR LAMPS - they GLOW DIMLY, running on emergency power.

Finally, he and Butler come to "LION ISLAND," a small grassy veldt with a clump of trees.

TWO UNIFORM COPS stand nearby, along with an anxious ZOOKEEPER who starts to approach Sarchie - but Sarchie holds up one hand, giving him the Look, and the Zookeeper backs away.

OFFICER #1

Hey...Ralph Sarchie, right? I read about you in the paper a few years back, that one case...

Sarchie just nods, looking uncomfortable.

OFFICER #2

What case?

OFFICER #1

Sarchie here took down Marvin the Molester - remember him?

OFFICER #2

(to Sarchie)

That was you? Nice...

SARCHIE

What's the damage here?

OFFICER #1

Happened right at closing time. Some woman flipped out and threw her own kid in there...

He hooks a thumb toward a deep concrete RAVINE that encircles the lion habitat like a moat.

OFFICER #1

...Little boy, two years old.

Sarchie's face shows how this affects him.

BUTLER
(aghast)
Did the lions eat 'im?

OFFICER #1
Nah - they been put up all day.

SARCHIE
Good. I hate cats.

OFFICER #1
But the kid cracked his head pretty good. EMS took 'im to St. Barnabas.
(shrugs)
They think he'll be okay.

SARCHIE
Where's the woman?

OFFICER #2
She split against the crowd, and now we can't find her. Must be hiding somewhere in the park.

BUTLER
Why's it so dark in here?

OFFICER #1
Weirdest thing... Right after the lady tossed the kid, the whole zoo lost power. We got emergency lights only. Can't see shit... That's why we called for Special Ops - we need you guys to find her.

EXT. DEEPER INSIDE THE ZOO - MINUTES LATER

SARCHIE'S NIGHT VISION POV: A CROCODILE slithers and splashes, ten yards away... Walking side-by-side, Sarchie searches with NIGHT VISION BINOCULARS, Butler uses HEAT VISION.

The animals react strangely to their presence. Unseen BIRDS SQUAWK in an angry furor. A BLACK LEOPARD trots silently alongside the cops in its habitat, pacing them, GROWLING...

BUTLER
Place is creepy after hours...

Sarchie nods, watching the leopard move like a liquid shadow, its unblinking eyes staring back at him.

As the two cops move deeper into the zoo, the animals seem increasingly agitated - HOOTING and GROWLING at them.

Sarchie feels his skin crawl. He and Butler keep up their tough cop facades, but the place is putting them on edge.

And now they hear a loud, incessant SHRIEKING. Sarchie and Butler trade a look. Carefully, they approach...

THE MONKEY CAGE

Sarchie lifts his night-vision binoculars and sees VARIOUS PRIMATES - large and small - in a state of extreme agitation. They SCREAM and HOWL, all of them COWERING together at the far end of the cage.

They're badly spooked by something. Sarchie steps closer...

A WOMAN'S FACE SUDDENLY POPS INTO VIEW!

She stares right at Sarchie from inside the cage.

Her hair is matted and dirty, her eyes wild and bloodshot. She's GROWLING and MUTTERING incomprehensible words.

The primates react to the Woman's every move, terrified of her.

She DROPS to her knees and continues what she was doing: COMPULSIVELY CLAWING at the floor of the cage, which is covered with SCRATCH MARKS and streaked with BLOOD.

Sarchie watches her, visibly disturbed. His unease grows when he sees that the Woman's FINGERTIPS are bleeding, and several of her fingernails are ripped out. She's a hideous sight.

EXT. NEAR "LION ISLAND" - MINUTES LATER

Sarchie CUFFS the Woman to a bench in front of the lion habitat.

Here in the light, we can see that this is the same Woman from the photographs in Mendoza's apartment. She's rocking back and forth, still MUTTERING...

SARCHIE

Ma'am...hey. What's wrong with you?
Do you hear me? Huh? Why did you do
that to your boy?

She stares right through him. After a moment, Sarchie turns to Butler and the two Officers, containing his frustration.

OFFICER #1

...What's she saying?

OFFICER #2

It's like some freaky kinda chant
or somethin'...

Sarchie turns back toward the Woman. And now she focuses on him, her words becoming clear - a low, eerie chant:

WOMAN

Day destroys the night, night...
Divides the day... Tried to run,
tried to...hide, break...break
on...through to...to the other
side...

OFFICER #1

See? It's creepy shit, right?

SARCHIE

-It's *The Doors*!
(turns to the others with
a hint of a smile)
She's quoting a song - you know,
Jim Morrison, *The Doors*...?

OFFICER #2

(sheepishly)
Oh, yeah...right...

Sarchie turns back to the Woman, and she smiles at him eerily.

WOMAN

Break, break, break, break, break...

Then her lip curls into a sneer, and she looks right through Sarchie again, her words now just unintelligible MUTTERING.

Still vaguely unsettled, Sarchie stands up, shaking his head.

SARCHIE

Drugs, probably.

BUTLER

Or maybe she's just a big fan.

SARCHIE

You guys get statements from any
witnesses saw her throw the kid?

OFFICER #1

Only two. People got outta here
fast when the power went out.

Now Sarchie walks over to the edge of the ravine, where the Woman stood when she threw her child - and he sees...

A PAINTER

perched on a ladder INSIDE THE LION HABITAT.

Wearing a GRAY HOODIE, the Painter is facing away from Sarchie, and is almost hidden by the darkness and the trees.

He's PAINTING the back wall of the enclosure, which is barely illuminated by the emergency lights.

The Zookeeper hovers nearby, shifting his feet, a nervous geek. Sarchie beckons him over. Points at the Painter:

SARCHIE

Who is that?

ZOOKEEPER

(squints)

Oh...gosh, I thought he was finished - he's been at it since early this morning...

SARCHIE

(to the Officers)

You guys get a statement from him?

OFFICER #2

No...I didn't realize he was even here until just now.

SARCHIE

(calls out)

Hey! HEY, YOU...!

Now the Painter slowly turns around, and we see...

A FREAKISH AND TERRIFYING FACE

covered with FACE PAINT. If the camouflage face paint used by the soldiers in the opening scene was sinister, this face paint is *horrific*. It's like a ghastly death-metal mask.

SARCHIE

Jesus...

A chill goes through everyone watching. Nobody moves or says a word.

The Painter's eyes are fixed on Sarchie. For a moment they stare at each other, a menacing connection being made... Then Sarchie SHOUTS:

SARCHIE

STAY THERE! I WANT TO TALK TO YOU!

The Painter STEPS BACKWARDS instead, melting into the trees.

SARCHIE
(to the Zookeeper)
Get me in there.

EXT. INSIDE THE LION HABITAT - TWILIGHT

The grassy space is cloaked in MOON-LIT shadows cast by the dense, leafy trees. A SINGLE POOL of EMERGENCY LIGHT illuminates the ladder's base.

There's no sign of the Painter.

SARCHIE
C'mon out.

No response. After a moment, Sarchie begins to walk toward the thick trees and bushes where the Painter disappeared.

Hearing RUSTLING in the bushes, he stops. Hand on his GUN.

The canopy of trees is thick, blocking out the sky. Sarchie peers ahead. Glimpses MOVEMENT between the tree trunks.

SARCHIE
Stop right there, goddamnit...

MORE RUSTLING in the underbrush. Sarchie hesitates, then cautiously follows the sound into A CLEARING...

And now he FREEZES in his tracks.

TWO ENORMOUS LIONS

crouch in the clearing, yellow eyes glinting in the twilight. Behind them, a steel-barred CAGE DOOR yawns wide-open. The Painter is nowhere to be seen.

SARCHIE
Shit!

Pointing his Glock 9MM with trembling hands, Sarchie backs slowly away - and the LIONS FOLLOW, padding silently toward him...

Butler and the other cops now see Sarchie backing slowly out of the trees, pointing his gun at a suspect they can't see...

BUTLER
What the hell?

Butler starts toward the habitat. All three cops pull their GUNS... And then they see the LIONS.

SARCHIE

DON'T FUCKING SHOOT! Don't piss 'em
off - just get me outta here...!

The Zookeeper sees Sarchie and the cats. Goes pale.

ZOOKEEPER

Oh dear God...

He runs to a CONTROL BOX, keys in a CODE and...

INSIDE THE HABITAT a SECOND CAGE DOOR SLIDES OPEN in the wall
behind Sarchie. The Zookeeper SCREAMS at Sarchie, his voice
shrill with panic:

ZOOKEEPER

DON'T PANIC! S-STAY CALM, AND JUST
GO THROUGH THAT DOOR!

Sarchie slowly backpedals toward the doorway, eyeing the
lions. As he steps back into the EXIT TUNNEL...

THE LIONS CHARGE baring their TEETH as they LEAP!

THE CAGE DOOR SLAMS DOWN - and both lions SMACK into the
steel bars, ROARING, inches from Sarchie's face.

INT. 46TH PRECINCT - NIGHT

Handcuffed, THE WOMAN FROM THE ZOO who threw her child into
the lions' den is led down a HALLWAY OF HOLDING CELLS, flanked
by a male UNIFORM COP and a female MENTAL HEALTH OFFICER...

Walking behind them is MENDOZA, smartly dressed in a
chocolate-colored suede jacket, jeans, and boots.

They all stop at the STATION DESK. The DESK SERGEANT glances
at their paperwork, then looks over at Sarchie and Butler.

DESK SERGEANT

Arresting officer - sign her out,
an' she's off to Bellevue.

Approaching the station desk, Sarchie looks warily at the
Woman, but she stares right through him - her expression
empty, her eyes half-closed.

SARCHIE

(as he signs)
She drugged?

MENTAL HEALTH OFFICER

She's been sedated.

SARCHIE
(turns to Mendoza)
You know this lady?

MENDOZA
Yes. Her name is Jane Crenna.

SARCHIE
You got a name?

MENDOZA
(hands Sarchie his CARD)
Joe Mendoza. Jane is one of my
charges.

SARCHIE
One of your "charges?" What does
that mean?

MENDOZA
I'm a Jesuit priest.

BUTLER
Jesuits? Ain't they the ones you
always read about, dying in bed
with hookers and shit?

MENDOZA
There are worse ways to go.

SARCHIE
Where's your collar?

MENDOZA
(shrugs)
I work undercover, like you.

SARCHIE
You going with her?

MENTAL HEALTH OFFICER
He's here at the family's request.
They felt she needed a specialist.

WOMAN/JANE CRENNNA
(quietly)
"Ssssspecialist..."

She smiles slightly, still staring at nothing with her drug-glazed eyes. Sarchie glances at her, slightly unnerved, then turns back to the priest.

SARCHIE
What, you're a psychiatrist, too?

MENDOZA

No. Can you tell me exactly how she was behaving when you first saw her at the Zoo?

SARCHIE

Like she was nuts, that's how. She's going to the loony bin where she belongs.

MENDOZA

When you arrested her, did she seem unusually strong?

SARCHIE

No, why?

MENDOZA

No reason that would interest you. If you do think of anything more specific, or if I can be of any help, please give me a call.

The Uniform Cop and the Mental Health Officer lead Jane Crenna away, Mendoza following them. The Woman looks sidewise at Sarchie for an instant, her eyes still nearly shut, and HISSES softly:

WOMAN

Sssssssss...

Then she smiles slightly, and is gone.

CUT TO:

A POLICE REPORT

as someone finishes typing the phrase: "...woman began quoting the lyrics to 'Break On Through' by The Doors"...

INT. 46TH PRECINCT - REPORT ROOM/DESK AREA - LATER

The WIND MOANS outside. Sarchie's at his desk, typing the report. Butler breezes in and plops down at the desk across from him.

BUTLER

No usable prints on the ladder or any of the paintbrushes.

SARCHIE

What about the security cams? The zookeepers can't explain how he let those goddamn lions loose.

BUTLER

Cameras were on the backup genny,
but the lawyers for the zoo want a
written request for the footage.
Should only take a day or two.

SARCHIE

(quietly seething)
I'm gonna find that fuckin' freak
painter, I promise you...

SARCHIE'S PHONE BEEPS. He glances down at the MESSAGE ALERT
ID, which says "HOME." He TAPS the message, and watches...

A SHORT VIDEO CLIP

It's 6-year-old CHRISTINA, climbing into bed, hugging her
SOCK MONKEY. She addresses the camera:

CHRISTINA

Hi, Daddy. I'm going to sleep now
but first I wanted to tell you that
I love you, and I miss you, and I
wish you were home, and good night,
and I love you, and I got a gold
star in class today.

She smiles big, which makes Sarchie smile. The image now
SWINGS AROUND as Jen turns the cell phone camera on herself:

JEN

And I also love you, and miss you,
and if you're home in time, I'll
see you in the morning. Be safe
tonight.

She leans in, KISSES the camera lens, and then the VIDEO ENDS.

Sarchie CLICKS OFF the phone. He takes a deep breath, as if he
really needed that message. He gets up and heads into...

INT. BREAK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sarchie pours himself a cup of coffee, and overhears Gomez
talking to Nadler as he shows him a COMPLAINT REPORT:

GOMEZ

Lady's out of her fuckin' mind.

NADLER

Why? What's it say?

GOMEZ

(hands report to Nadler)
She says nobody's even been in the basement since they had it painted last month, but that's where these "noises" keep coming from...

Sarchie's listening more attentively now. Nadler sips his coffee, skimming the report.

NADLER

I'm so sick of these bullshit calls. Waste of my fuckin' time.

He and Gomez walk out of the room. Sarchie follows.

INT. REPORT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sarchie returns to his desk as Gomez and Nadler cross the room and grab their coats, about to head out.

SARCHIE

Gomez, did I hear you say something about a room being painted?

GOMEZ

Yeah. A basement. Crazy lady out in Belmont says they been havin' "strange disturbances" at her house - noises, things movin' around on their own - that kinda shit... Weird, huh?

NADLER

An' then today, she gets a call from her father, sayin'...
(reads from report)
..."Shut the doors, the doors, shut the god damn doors."

Sarchie looks at his report where he just typed "the Doors."

SARCHIE

That's not so weird...

NADLER

Yeah...but the lady swears it was her Pop - an' that he's been dead for seven years...

GOMEZ

She's a wack job.

SARCHIE
 (nods at the report)
 Can I see that?

Gomez hands it to him. Sarchie stares at it, thinking...

SARCHIE
 You and Nads can skip this one,
 Gomez. We'll take the call.

Sarchie looks over at Butler. Doesn't need to say a word.

BUTLER
 (smiles and nods)
 Radar.

CUT TO:

A STAINED GLASS WINDOW that depicts St. Benedict casting out
 a DEMON...

EXT. BRONX RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

The window is set above the doorway of a CATHOLIC CHAPEL.

The minivan parks down the block from the chapel, and Sarchie
 and Butler get out. Butler looks down at the COMPLAINT
 REPORT, then up at a modest house on the well-kept street.

BUTLER
 519 East Boyd Drive - that's it.
 (they head up the walkway)
 Y'know, the last time we took
 somebody else's call, you almost
 got eaten.

SARCHIE
 Well, if something eats me here,
 feel free to say "I toldja so."

Sarchie knocks on the door. It's opened by a balding MAN in his
 40s. A BOY, 9 years old, stands close to his father's side.

The boy has the blank, bewildered stare kids get after they
 scream themselves awake from a nightmare.

SARCHIE
 Dominick Alberghetti? We're from
 the Forty-Sixth Precinct. May we
 come in?

DOMINICK
 Yes...please.

The man steps aside, blinking behind thick glasses - he looks shell-shocked. The cops enter...

INT. THE ALBERGHETTI HOME - CONTINUOUS

The house is DIM. Piles of clothes and rolled-up BEDDING in the living room. LIGHT FIXTURES are SMASHED. Framed pictures and other household objects litter the floor.

Looking embarrassed, Dominick struggles to speak to Sarchie with broken English:

DOMINICK

Sorry this mess... Is so much trouble here.

(to the boy)

Ottenere la vostra madre.

He gives his son a gentle push, and the boy scurries off down the hallway, throwing a glance back at the policemen.

BUTLER

You all sleepin' in the living room?

DOMINICK

Yes, we... Since is worse, we sleep by door, just in case...

(he trails off; shrugs)

No sleeping alone.

SARCHIE

What exactly is "getting worse"?

DOMINICK

These things happening, I...

(glances toward the HALLWAY)

Please - my English...

He shrugs again, helplessly. He looks dazed. Defeated. Now the boy returns with his MOTHER - a pretty woman of 40 in bright, colorful clothes. Hollow-eyed with exhaustion, she CHAIN-SMOKES, her large silver bracelets clanking together.

DOMINICK

My wife, Gabriela. Boy is Martin.

He will tell.

GABRIELA

Is nightmare!

Her accent is even thicker than her husband's. She SPEAKS IN ITALIAN - talking with her hands, bracelets clanking - and THE LITTLE BOY TRANSLATES in a child's eerie monotone:

MARTIN

Since a few weeks ago...we started seeing...and hearing things...

SARCHIE

What things?

MARTIN

Things moving...and sounds, mostly at night, coming from the basement.

DOMINICK

Come. This way...

As Sarchie and Butler follow the family into the DINING ROOM, Gabriela SAYS SOMETHING IN ITALIAN. Little Martin frowns and ASKS HER A QUESTION, ALSO IN ITALIAN, then turns to Sarchie:

MARTIN

Mama says, it's like the whole house is possessed...

SARCHIE

"Possessed"...?

Sarchie looks at Gabriela - PUFFING away nervously - then leans close to Butler and mutters:

SARCHIE

Gomez called it - she's a wack job.

The woman caught his skepticism, and she quickly RATTLES OFF SOMETHING IN ITALIAN. The little boy tugs at Sarchie's arm. Sarchie looks down at him.

MARTIN

Mama says, she knows you don't believe, but it's okay. She says, let me show you.

Sarchie looks vaguely troubled by that. He glances over at Gabriela, then stares back down at the boy. And nods.

Led by the boy, they all enter...

A LONG HALLWAY

with OPEN BEDROOM DOORS on either side. It's even more dim in here, with BURNED-OUT BULBS in the table lamps and wall sconces. A SINGLE OVERHEAD LIGHT flickers at the end of the hall.

BUTLER

Ever replace a bulb around here?

DOMINICK

No matter how much the times we get new, they burn out - just a few hours... We get holy candles, from priest - but here, they not burn.

SARCHIE

(skeptical)

The candles won't burn?

DOMINICK

No. We all try to light them. Many times.

Sarchie frowns, studying the family for a moment. They all seem so sincere - they don't appear to be making this up.

Now GABRIELA SPEAKS IN ITALIAN, and little Martin translates:

MARTIN

(pointing)

This Jesus...he came down off the wall, and broke...

A CRUCIFIX hangs crookedly on the wall, and the CHRIST FIGURE is MUTILATED - only the top half of its torso remains.

HISSES! Sarchie WHIRLS AROUND to see A CAT, staring at him from a bedroom doorway - its back arched, HISSING and SPITTING.

Sarchie stares back at it, feeling a tingle down his spine...

BUTLER

'The fuck is wrong with it...?

SARCHIE

It's a cat, that's what's wrong with it.

The little boy leads them toward a CLOSED DOOR at the far end of the hall. Above their heads, the SINGLE LIGHT FLICKERS with a slight, uneven electric HUM...

Martin stops, staring at the door with saucer eyes. His parents hang back, SPEAKING VEHEMENTLY IN ITALIAN.

SARCHIE

What are they saying?

Unconsciously, little Martin takes a step backwards, staring at the door. He's terrified, on the verge of tears.

MARTIN

They think that...down there is
where the evil comes from.

Sarchie and Butler trade a look. Less skeptical now. A little more unnerved. Sarchie regards the boy with concern.

SARCHIE

Alright. Take the kid and wait up
here while we check the basement.

DOMINICK

The bulb, it is burn out... There
is no light down there.

Sarchie nods. He and Butler take MAGLITES off their belts.

SARCHIE

Go and wait for us, please.

Dominick takes his boy by the hand and they start to walk away. As they go, Gabriela makes the sign of the cross, looking at the cops like she doesn't expect to see them alive again.

Sarchie frowns. He didn't like that. Once the family is out of sight, he OPENS the basement door: Sure enough, it's PITCH BLACK down there...

INT. THE BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

The STAIRS CREAK as the cops descend, FLASHLIGHT BEAMS dimly lighting their faces from below. Both Sarchie and Butler wince at the FOUL STENCH.

The WALKIE-TALKIE on Sarchie's hip begins to emit SOFT AUDIO STATIC, like background noise or interference. Sarchie adjusts it, trying to clear the line - but the SOUND CONTINUES, so Sarchie turns it off. Then Butler whispers:

BUTLER

Listen...

TAP...TAP...TAP...

Cautiously, they follow this SOUND across the room. A WATER PIPE in one corner seems to be the source.

Sarchie reaches toward it - and just before his fingers touch the pipe, THE TAPPING STOPS.

BUTLER

Missed your calling - should've
been a plumber...

TAP-TAP-TAP - again, this time from a different part of the room. Butler turns quickly toward the sound, his FLASHLIGHT BEAM sweeping wildly...

SARCHIE

-There. Look at that.

Sarchie's BEAM is fixed on a SMALL, DUSTY LAMP on a workshop table. The lamp is JIGGLING BACK AND FORTH on its own.

The two cops stare at this physical impossibility.

BUTLER

Man...this is wrong...

And then it STOPS. Sarchie and Butler stand a few feet away, staring at the lamp, their nerves on edge...

WHAP! A LOUD SNAPPING SOUND makes them JUMP, and scares Butler so bad he QUICK-DRAWS HIS WEAPON like a Western gunslinger!

Also scared half to death, Sarchie notices something. He moves closer to the lamp...closer... Then he reaches behind it...

AND PICKS UP A MOUSE

holding it by the tail: IT'S CAUGHT IN A MOUSETRAP - dying fast, but still wriggling and kicking. Sarchie holds the mouse up to Butler, and smiles.

SARCHIE

You gonna read 'im his rights, or
just shoot 'im while he's down?

Embarrassed, Butler quickly holsters his gun.

BUTLER

Man, I gotta get some air - it
fuckin' STINKS in here!

He stalks away. Sarchie's still grinning slightly as he hears Butler STOMP up the creaking stairs...

Then his grin fades as he hears ANOTHER TAPPING SOUND. Alone, Sarchie slowly turns with his FLASHLIGHT BEAM...

SOMETHING is hanging downward from a slightly open cabinet above the work table - and it's SLITHERING BACK AND FORTH like a SNAKE!

Now Sarchie hears a HISSING SOUND - holy shit, it *is* a snake!

He draws his gun. Heart pounding, Sarchie forces himself to step closer and closer until he sees...

IT'S NOT A SNAKE - AN OLD GARDEN HOSE hangs down from the slightly open cabinet.

The HISSING SOUND comes from a HEATER VENT next to the hose, and warm air is BLOWING against the hose, causing it to wriggle like a snake and TAP-TAP-TAP against the wall.

Sarchie relaxes. He grabs the hose, and the TAPPING STOPS -

But the hose is WRAPPED AROUND SOMETHING - and now that something starts to ROLL OUT of the overhead cabinet.

Sarchie looks up, and for a blurred instant, he sees...

A MAN FALLING from the cabinet, RIGHT DOWN ON TOP OF HIM!

YELLING, Sarchie DROPS THE FLASHLIGHT, and it GOES OUT.

IN PITCH DARKNESS, we hear Sarchie SCRAMBLING AROUND, trying to find it - CLICK! The FLASHLIGHT COMES ON, revealing...

THE DECAYING CORPSE

of a man sprawled on the floor next to Sarchie, wrapped in a TRANSPARENT PAINTER'S DROP CLOTH, the garden hose wrapped around the dead man's waist.

THE EYES of the decaying corpse begin to BULGE and SHIFT SLIGHTLY in Sarchie's direction!

Sarchie steps back, absolutely horror-struck.

THE BODY OF THE CORPSE STARTS TO WRITHE underneath the plastic.

The BULGING EYES move again, now pushing completely out of the dead man's skull, and the bloated corpse SPLITS OPEN, emitting...

HUNDREDS OF FLIES

that SWARM in Sarchie's FLASHLIGHT BEAM.

Gagging at the stench, Sarchie bats at the flies in disgust, trying to catch his breath...

Then he shines his FLASHLIGHT on the WALL beside the cabinet...

It's partially covered with a FRESH COAT OF PAINT.

EXT. ALBERGHETTI HOUSE - LATER

PATROL CAR and AMBULANCE LIGHTS strobe across the CORONERS' CREW as they wheel the BODY out of the house. The crime scene is guarded by UNIFORM COPS and marked with police tape.

Sarchie and Butler stand in the yard, talking to Dominick and Gabriela. Little Martin stands nearby with a FEMALE COP.

SARCHIE

...So these two painters you hired -
did they say anything strange to
you? Tell you to do anything...?

GABRIELA

No... They barely say a word.

Gabriela's hand SHAKES as she smokes, her bracelets JANGLING.
She stares at the COVERED CORPSE as it rolls past.

GABRIELA

...Is one of them, no?

BUTLER

You tell me. Here's his ID.

Butler holds up a transparent EVIDENCE BAG with a DRIVER'S
LICENSE inside. We recognize the PHOTO as the MARINE
LIEUTENANT from the opening scene.

Gabriela looks at the license photo, and NODS.

BUTLER

His name was David Griggs. Had you
ever met him or the other painter
before you hired them?

Dominick and Gabriela both shake their heads.

SARCHIE

As far as we can tell, the other
painter was the last one to see
Griggs alive. Did you get a good
look at him?

GABRIELA

No. He wore hood. All the time.

SARCHIE

A hood. You remember what color?

GABRIELA

Gray. Dark. Was part of jacket.

Sarchie and Butler exchange a look, and we...

CUT TO:

A VENEZUELAN WOMAN, observed by a SUBJECTIVE POV from across the street. The POV watches through her kitchen window as she cooks dinner...

EXT. SMALL SUBURBAN HOME - WEST BRONX - NIGHT

The woman, CLAUDIA, is tall and lovely, in her early 30s. She prepares two plates of food.

The OUTSIDE POV watches her carry the plates from her kitchen into her DINING ROOM.

Claudia sits down across from her TEENAGE DAUGHTER. They chat and begin to eat dinner.

And now, standing across the street, we reveal...

MENDOZA

lurking in shadow, chain-smoking, using the last of his lit cigarette to light another.

He stares at Claudia, his face inscrutable.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

The SPEC OP MINIVAN pulls up to the old low-rent Bronx APARTMENT BUILDING, followed by an unmarked sedan with Gomez and Butler inside...

As Butler and Sarchie exit the minivan, Gomez and Nadler get out of the sedan. Together, the four cops head inside.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Worn carpet. Dingy walls. The four cops walk the LONG, DIM HALLWAY past numbered doors. Sarchie picks a small DEAD FLY out of his teeth. Stares at it in disgust.

SARCHIE

Fuckin' unbelievable. Flies in my teeth. Thought I'd seen everything.

Butler looks at his CELL PHONE: The display screen is a PHOTOGRAPH OF GRIGGS'S DRIVERS LICENSE.

BUTLER

Apartment F-12. Should be at the end of the hallway.

They reach the door. Sarchie knocks, waits, then knocks again. No answer. They all look a little uneasy. Something about the place rattles these cops.

Sarchie puts on his leather gloves and tries the door. It's UNLOCKED. As Sarchie starts to push it open, Nadler gags.

NADLER

Jesus, what's that smell?

BUTLER

Same freaky smell was in the basement where we found the body.

GOMEZ

Doesn't smell like a body, though.

SARCHIE

No. It's something else.

Peering inside, Sarchie sees the room is DARK. The cops unsnap their holsters and click on their FLASHLIGHTS...

INT. GRIGGS APARTMENT - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Sarchie enters first, with the others right behind him. He tries the LIGHT SWITCH - nothing. Their FLASHLIGHTS find bags of garbage blocking their path, just inside the door.

Sarchie shoves one bag with his boot, and a foul gray liquid SQUISHES out. Nadler looks ill. The filth in the cramped apartment is astounding. Roaches CRUNCH beneath police boots.

GOMEZ

And my old lady says I'm a slob.

Butler's FLASHLIGHT BEAM illuminates a small stack of cheap-looking BUSINESS CARDS on the coffee table. They read: "AUGUSTINE INTERIORS & PAINT."

Sarchie's FLASHLIGHT BEAM illuminates tormented DEMONIC FACES staring back at them from every wall.

SARCHIE

Jesus, look at this...

The disturbing portraits are sculpted together from bits of photos torn from magazines, from smears of blood, from food... Months of manic, painstaking work. Extremely creepy.

Now Sarchie sees a FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH on the mantel.

SARCHIE

Holy shit.

CLOSE ON THE PICTURE, SPOTLIT BY THE FLASHLIGHT BEAM: IT'S GRIGGS WITH JANE CRENNNA, THE WOMAN FROM THE ZOO.

A snapshot from happier days: Both are smiling, and Jane is holding a SMALL INFANT.

Butler scans the other photos on the mantel with his FLASHLIGHT.

BUTLER

Sarch.

Sarchie walks over to Butler, and both of them stare at...

ANOTHER PHOTOGRAPH

This one was taken in IRAQ: It features the three Marines from the opening scene - but they aren't wearing any camouflage makeup.

SARCHIE

(points to Lt. Griggs)

Griggs, the body in the basement...

(points to Jimmy)

Jimmy, the wife-beater...

Sarchie leans in and looks closely at THE THIRD MARINE in the picture, next to Griggs and Jimmy. He can't quite make out the name on this third guy's uniform.

Sarchie taps on third guy's face in the picture.

SARCHIE

That's the guy we're looking for.

And now a LOW GROWL is heard, coming from the bedroom... Everyone freezes in place, goosebumps rising on their arms.

The GROWL deepens into a RUMBLE they can feel in their bones.

His GUN trained on the bedroom, Sarchie approaches it slowly. The other cops follow, none of them making a sound.

Sarchie pushes open the door - it's PITCH BLACK inside.

The GROWLING SOUND STOPS. For a moment, it's dead silent.

Very slowly, Sarchie begins to move into the room...

The WALKIE-TALKIE on Sarchie's hip begins to emit SOFT AUDIO STATIC, like background noise or interference - it's doing the exact same thing it did in the Alberghetti basement.

Only now, ANOTHER SOUND layers on top of the static: Strange and distant, it seems like the sound of CHILDREN PLAYING...

Frowning, Sarchie shuts the walkie-talkie OFF.

Then he hears the GROWL begin again. It's beyond human or animal - it seems almost otherworldly.

Sarchie takes another step toward the sound...

A HUGE BLACK DOG

leaps out of the darkness - straight for Sarchie's throat!

SNAP! The dog reaches the end of its leash, which is tied to the foot of the bed.

FLASHLIGHTS illuminates the dog as it STRAINS against the leash, BARKING and SNARLING a foot away from Sarchie's face: It's a giant MASTIFF, rabid, its mouth laced with sticky GREYISH FOAM.

All four cops are badly rattled. Sarchie notices something strange about the dog's collar. He shines his light on it to look at the dog tag, but instead he finds...

A CRUCIFIX

hanging on a chain around the dog's neck. It's a blasphemous distortion: Christ's feet have been replaced with HOOVES.

Scanning the rest of the room with his FLASHLIGHT, Butler stops, his eyes widening with horror and disgust.

BUTLER

Oh sweet Mary, is that sick.

AN INVERTED CROSS

hangs on the wall above the bed, and upon the cross...

A REAL CAT has been crucified, upside down.

The decaying cat's TONGUE protrudes from its mouth, stiff with rigor mortis, and the wall below it is STREAKED with dried streams of the dead animal's BLOOD.

Sarchie stares in horror at this profane cruelty...

INT. SARCHIE'S HOME - KITCHEN - MORNING

Looking preoccupied, Sarchie sits at the kitchen table, tying the PINK BOW on the back of his daughter's white dress.

SARCHIE
There ya go, princess.

CHRISTINA
Thanks, Daddy. But I'm not a
princess, I'm a clock.
(walking in a circle)
Bong, bong, bong, bong, bong...

Sarchie manages a smile, watching his daughter, and we see the deep affection in his eyes.

Jen enters the kitchen, coffee in hand, looking lovely in a conservative dress. Sarchie opens a copy of the *NY Post*.

CHRISTINA
Mommy, why doesn't Daddy go to church with us?

JEN
Legend has it that your father used to go - before we were married.

She sips her coffee, giving Sarchie a mildly reproving look. Avoiding her gaze, Sarchie hides behind his newspaper.

CHRISTINA
(to Sarchie, thoughtfully)
Did your Mommy make you go?

SARCHIE
I go Christmas and Easter - doesn't that pretty much cover it, anyway?

JEN
Christina, go wait for me in the car.

CHRISTINA
Bye, Daddy. Bong, bong, bong...

Christina walks out, the bongs fading away as she goes. Jen sets her coffee down on the counter. Pause.

JEN
I'm pregnant.

Sarchie lowers the paper, stunned for a beat. Then stands.

SARCHIE
Baby...I... Hey, that's great!

They embrace. But her face looks conflicted.

JEN

I need... We need you to be here.
With us. Especially now.

SARCHIE

(still holding her)

I know, I'm sorry... More time at
home...

JEN

(steps back)

I'm not just talking about *hours* -
even when you're here, you're not
here. I mean it, Ralph. We need you
here. Don't make me ask again.

SARCHIE

(nods)

Okay, Jen, I get it. I get it.

Jen nods and walks out, closing the door behind her. Sarchie
sits back down, absorbing the new information.

He turns to look at a small WOODEN CRUCIFIX mounted on the
wall at the base of the stairs, just outside the kitchen -
the kind found in so many Irish and Italian homes.

Remembering the crucified cat, he raises the "Sports" section
of the *Post* to block his view of the cross.

A STRANGE SOUND

makes him lower the paper again. Puzzled, he gets up and
tracks the sound into...

THE LIVING ROOM

where he approaches a fairly large FRESHWATER AQUARIUM. The
sound is a frantic SPLASHING at one end of the tank.

Looking closer, Sarchie sees TWO SMALL RED FISH viciously
ATTACKING a LARGER FISH that hangs motionless in the water,
its eyes frozen wide as the smaller fish tear it to pieces.

Its body leaks tendrils of BLOOD that curl away slowly,
darkening the water. Unable to turn away, Sarchie stares
mesmerized at this small, strangely disturbing violence...

INT. 46TH PRECINCT COMMUNICATIONS CENTER - AFTERNOON

The DISPATCHER works the RADIO, while a DESK OFFICER sits at
the TELEPHONE SWITCHBOARD, taking incoming calls.

Sarchie enters, and takes the walkie-talkie off his belt, hands it to a CIVILIAN P.A.A.

SARCHIE
Gimme another one a these - this
one's full a static.

The P.A.A. takes the walkie-talkie, looks at it dubiously, then hands Sarchie another one.

P.A.A.
Sign here. I also got the
surveillance video you requested.

SARCHIE
Great. Set it up.

INT. PRECINCT HALLWAY - SAME

Sarchie approaches the muster room as Butler walks out with a FILE FOLDER under his arm, holding two fresh CUPS OF COFFEE.

SARCHIE
Zoo clips are in the comm center.

BUTLER
(hands him coffee, grins:)
"Zoo Clips"? Sounds like my
favorite porn site, let's go.

Now Sarchie notices MENDOZA sitting on a bench in the waiting area, near the precinct's public entrance. Looking agitated like he did in the apartment, Mendoza fiddles with his LIGHTER, jonesing for a smoke. He sees Sarchie and stands.

SARCHIE
Go ahead, I'll be there in a sec.

Butler heads to the comm center. Sarchie approaches Mendoza.

SARCHIE
What can I do for you, Father?

MENDOZA
You must be Catholic - that's twice
you've called me Father.

SARCHIE
I was an altar boy at Saint
Ignatius. I was raised Catholic.

MENDOZA
Past tense.

SARCHIE
Yeah. Guess I outgrew all that.

MENDOZA
You outgrew God?

SARCHIE
What do you want?

MENDOZA
I came to see if you've made any progress in Jane Crenna's case.

SARCHIE
What makes you think that's still an open case?

MENDOZA
I asked the Zoo to let me see the security camera recordings of the incident. They told me only the arresting officers had permission for that.

SARCHIE
Why do want to see the recordings?

MENDOZA
To help me determine why Jane did it.

SARCHIE
Let me save you the time - she hurt her kid because she's fuckin' crazy, and now she's in the nuthouse where she belongs.

MENDOZA
Jane Crenna is no lunatic.

SARCHIE
You kiddin' me? I was there.

MENDOZA
And I've known her for years.

SARCHIE
Yeah? How do you explain what she did?

MENDOZA
I believe Jane's problem to be...*spiritual* in nature.

SARCHIE
Oh, boy. Here we go.

MENDOZA

I've experienced two types of evil in this life, Officer Sarchie. Secondary evil, the evil that men do - I'm sure you know all about that...

SARCHIE

I've seen enough.

MENDOZA

And primary evil, which is something else entirely.

SARCHIE

Meaning what?

MENDOZA

In Catholic teaching, there are very specific signs that indicate the presence of the demonic. Jane is demonstrating several of them.

SARCHIE

(incredulous)

You think she's possessed? Sorry, "Padre," but I think it's ridiculous to blame invisible fairies for the bad shit people do. I've seen some horrible things... But nothing that couldn't be explained by plain old human nature.

MENDOZA

Then you haven't seen true evil.

SARCHIE

You know, the only reason you blame that woman's problems on "the demonic" is because your religion says things like that exist.

MENDOZA

No. I believe in what I've seen with my eyes and heard with my ears. Perhaps it's you who won't allow for the possibility, because your belief system says such things don't exist.

Sarchie wants to reject this, to shrug it off - but, staring into Mendoza's eyes, he finds that he can't.

The priest conveys an undeniable sincerity and power.

MENDOZA

Look Officer, I'm only here because I care about Jane... So please, if you see something unusually strange or inexplicable on those recordings, call me. I need to know.

SARCHIE

...I gotta go.

Sarchie turns away and starts toward the comm center. Mendoza watches him for a moment, then turns and walks the other way.

INT. PRECINCT COMMUNICATIONS CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

Sarchie finds Butler seated at an ENCLOSED VIEWING STATION with a large-screen COMPUTER MONITOR. Sarchie sits next to him, sipping coffee. Butler flips through the FILE FOLDER.

SARCHIE

What you got?

BUTLER

Military files. DOD sent 'em over.

Butler pulls out a copy of the IRAQ PHOTO of Jimmy, Griggs, and Santino - the picture they found at Griggs's apartment. The photo image has been DIGITALLY BLOWN UP so that the names on the uniforms are now legible. Butler points to SANTINO:

BUTLER

His name is Miguel Santino. Both he and our wife-beater Jimmy served in Griggs's platoon in Iraq. All three were dishonorably discharged.

SARCHIE

Why?

BUTLER

Attacked the Battalion Chaplain.

SARCHIE

A Chaplain...?

BUTLER

Cut him up pretty bad... They all served time in the brig at Quantico before the Corps cut 'em loose.

SARCHIE

Does the Corps have a home address on record for Santino?

BUTLER

Nope - just an old P.O. box that's no longer his.

SARCHIE

...What about Jane Crenna?

BUTLER

Griggs's girlfriend. The kid she tossed at the zoo was theirs.

(hands him a document)

And look at this - Griggs autopsy report.

Sarchie reads the "Cause of Death" item, and his eyes widen:

SARCHIE

Suicide?

BUTLER

Yep. It says that Griggs guzzled two quarts of paint thinner - and with no sign that he was forced.

(beat)

But he didn't roll himself up in that drop cloth. And Santino was the only one down there with him.

SARCHIE

(absorbs that info, then:)

So Santino watches Griggs kill himself in that basement, then later watches Griggs' wife try to kill her own kid?

BUTLER

(dryly)

He's a bad influence.

Sarchie grabs the COMPUTER MOUSE and CLICKS the on-screen hard drive icon labelled "ZOO SURVEILLANCE VIDEO: CAMERA ONE."

ON THE MONITOR SCREEN, they now see: GRAINY SURVEILLANCE VIDEO FROM THE BRONX ZOO:

A WIDE-ANGLE VIEW shows Santino, his back to camera, PAINTING the back wall of the lion habitat.

VISITORS cross in the foreground, heading for the exit as the zoo begins to close down for the night.

SARCHIE

...What's that on the wall?

Sarchie pauses the image and ZOOMS IN on CRIMSON-COLORED SYMBOLS scrawled on the back wall near Santino. It's blurry.

BUTLER

Looks like graffiti... Maybe he was brought in to paint over it.

SARCHIE

Graffiti in a lions' den?

Now they see JANE CRENNNA enter the frame, along with her TWO-YEAR-OLD SON.

SARCHIE

She knew Santino... So what was she doing there?

As Jane buys cotton candy from a VENDOR for her boy, she seems completely normal.

Then Santino turns toward her. Face obscured by his gray hoodie, he steps toward Jane. Seems to be speaking to her.

Jane Crenna suddenly begins to CONVULSE, her body TREMBLING and UNDULATING with demented-looking spasms.

A few visitors stop and stare, as if they may try to help her. But then, without any warning, she GRABS HER SON and THROWS him across the concrete ravine, into the lions' den.

OTHER VISITORS REACT, stunned and horrified - but in the background, Santino doesn't react at all.

He just calmly returns to painting the back wall of the den. Sarchie swallows hard, sickened by what he's watching.

ON THE SCREEN, visitors rush to the habitat's edge, checking on the kid, while others try to restrain Jane Crenna. She's like a cornered animal: SCREAMING, clawing, and biting at anyone who tries to touch her.

Suddenly, the ZOO LIGHTS GO OUT. For a moment, the video FLICKERS TO BLACK - then the emergency power kicks in, and the image returns as softly-glowing EMERGENCY LIGHTS come on.

It's a fuzzier image now, DIM with a sickly amber tint. Jane Crenna breaks free of the crowd, and RUNS out of frame.

In the background, Santino continues to paint over the crimson-colored writing on the back wall.

SARCHIE

Look at him. He's acting like nothing happened...

Now Sarchie hears SOFT AUDIO STATIC coming from the computer monitor - it's just like the sound of interference he heard over his walkie-talkie.

SARCHIE
You hear that?

BUTLER
What?

SARCHIE
(leans closer)
Static...like a bad connection.

BUTLER
I don't hear anything.

ON THE MONITOR SCREEN, Santino has just finished painting over the crimson symbols - and now the static sound STOPS.

Sarchie rewinds the clip, plays it again. And again, as Santino paints over the letters, Sarchie hears the STATIC.

But now there's ANOTHER SOUND layered on top of the static: Strange and distant, it seems like the sound of CHILDREN PLAYING... Eyes widening, Sarchie stares at Butler.

SARCHIE
Do you hear that...?

BUTLER
Hear what, man? There's nothing.

ON THE SCREEN, Santino paints over the last of the letters - and again, the sounds instantly STOP. Sarchie hits "Pause."

SARCHIE
You didn't hear anything while he was painting over those letters? No static, no other voices...?

BUTLER
Don't get nutty on me, Sarch.
There's no sound here - these clips are silent.

After a moment, Sarchie smiles.

SARCHIE
You're fuckin' with me - I can tell. You're a *bad* actor, Butler.

BUTLER
'The fuck you talking about?

SARCHIE
You're a *bad* actor...

Sarchie reaches for the MOUSE and CLICKS on another icon, which reads "SURVEILLANCE VIDEO: CAMERA TWO."

ON THE MONITOR SCREEN, we now see a VIEW FROM INSIDE THE LIONS' DEN. We are much closer to Santino, watching him on the ladder as he is painting the wall.

Sarchie SHUTTLES FORWARD past the point of the power outage. He stops when he sees Santino slowly turn around.

SARCHIE
There. That's when I called out for him to stay. He's about to move into the trees.

Right then, Santino steps backward into the trees.

And now Santino does something freaky: He slowly TURNS and LOOKS UP, STARING RIGHT AT THE CAMERA.

Seen close-up, the ghastly death-metal paint on Santino's face is even more freakish and disturbing. He SMIRKS, holding the camera's gaze...

BUTLER
...Man, that's just creepy.

SARCHIE
Son of a bitch knew we'd be watching this.

Santino now walks to the opening in the wall behind him, where a HUGE GATE made of SOLID IRON BARS seals off a DARK TUNNEL beyond it.

He reaches down, grabs hold of the bars, and easily LIFTS the massive iron gate!

BUTLER
Bullshit.

SARCHIE
(can't believe his eyes)
I saw one of those gates up close.
They must weigh half a ton...

And now we see the TWO LIONS emerge from the darkness of the tunnel. They calmly walk under the gate that Santino is holding up. As they pass by, one stops right next to him.

Leaning down, Santino seems to WHISPER to the lion - but the image is very grainy, so it's hard to tell.

BUTLER

Is he fuckin' talkin' to the lion?

Now the beast continues forward, as if obeying an order.

Santino slips inside the tunnel, easing the gate down to the ground behind him. He escapes into the darkness.

Sarchie and Butler stare at the screen, thunderstruck. Then Sarchie hears the familiar STATIC again, along with the sound of CHILDREN PLAYING.

He leans closer to the monitor, wanting to hear it more clearly. Wanting to know that the sound is real...

AND A BATTERED, BLOODY FACE FLASHES ACROSS THE SCREEN!

Startled, Sarchie RECOILS from the computer screen. He quickly turns to Butler:

SARCHIE

Don't tell me you didn't see that!

Butler stares at Sarchie, unsure what to say. Sarchie SCROLLS the video BACK, plays the same section again.

This time, the bloody face DOESN'T flash across the screen.

There's nothing there. Sarchie just stares at the screen, baffled and dismayed...

INT. SARCHIE'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Sarchie sits on a flower-print couch in the living room of his modest two-bedroom house. He's in a black mood, brooding. Just as he cracks open a beer...

THE FRONT DOOR FLINGS OPEN

and his daughter Christina barrels in, wearing her soccer uniform. Jen enters behind her.

JEN

We missed you at the game.

SARCHIE

(not looking at her)

I had something to do.

Christina bounces up and down in front of Sarchie.

CHRISTINA
 (downloading in a rush)
 Mommy took me to Grandma's after
 school and I got a new stuffed
 Angry Bird for my birthday!

Sarchie sees a round black ANGRY BIRD head clutched in his
 daughter's little fist.

CHRISTINA
 And look!

She SQUEEZES the head, grinning - and now Sarchie hears the
 bird let out a loud, high-pitched "Ha-ha!" and "Huuuuurrrrrr!"
 She squeezes it again and imitates along with the sound:

CHRISTINA
 Ha-ha! Huuuuuurrrrrrr!
 (BOUNCING again)
 Ha-ha! Huuuuuurrrrrrr! Ha-ha!
 Huuuuuurrrrrrr!

She dances around the living room, squeezing the stuffed
 bird's head, imitating the sound again and again...

SARCHIE
 (to Jen, an accusation)
 Did she eat too much sugar?

Jen leans in the doorway, looking exhausted.

JEN
 Ma gave her some cupcakes.

SARCHIE
 "Some"...?

JEN
Two. It's her birthday, Ralph.

SARCHIE
 Yeah, and the party's Saturday...
 What, your mother can't wait?

JEN
 Why don't you get your butt off my
 mother's couch when you say that.

SARCHIE
 Christina, settle down...

JEN
 What's wrong? Is it still that
 thing at the zoo?

CHRISTINA
Daddy, I wanna go to the zoo.

SARCHIE
(looks up at Jen)
No...I don't know.

CHRISTINA
(still BOUNCING)
Daddy, look at me...
(gets right in his face)
Look at me, look at meeeeee...!

SARCHIE
CHRISTINA! Will you be quiet? Will
you for one minute just shut UP...?!

Startled, Christina stops in mid-bounce. Her eyes well with tears. Immediately, Sarchie regrets it.

SARCHIE
(reaching for her)
Honey - Christina, wait -

She RUNS OUT OF THE ROOM, eluding his grasp, and disappears into the hall. We hear her door SLAM. Jen stares at Sarchie. Her dark eyes are hot with anger.

JEN
What the hell was that? You never
used to talk to her like that.

SARCHIE
Yeah? Well, I'm sorry, Jen. But
I've got a guy, he beats his wife's
face in right in front of their
kid, a week later he's back home. I
got a lady, throws her kid into a
ravine, and I find an ex-Marine's
body rotting away in some
stranger's basement.

He pauses, the memories clenching him up inside...

SARCHIE
You want another one? How's this:
Last week, an alleyway off Buck
Street - we get the first call of
the night...
(breathing harder)
(MORE)

SARCHIE (CONT'D)

I pull this baby out of the bottom of a garbage chute, and I'm giving it mouth-to-mouth, and it's already dead, it's just a little soft wet empty sack in my hands...

He trails off, overcome. Looks at the floor.

JEN

(after a moment)

Well, I'm sorry, too. You didn't tell me.

SARCHIE

No. No, I did not.

JEN

You want to talk about it now?

Sarchie starts to answer, then sighs. Shakes his head.

SARCHIE

I walk through the sewer every day... I don't want to walk through it again with you. Okay?

He's looking up at her, and his eyes plead for her to understand. After a moment, she nods.

JEN

I'll go talk to her... She'll be all right.

Jen reaches out and touches him gently on the arm. Then she turns away, and walks down the hall to Christina's room.

Angry and agitated, Sarchie grabs his jacket and heads out.

EXT. A STREET IN THE WEST BRONX - NIGHT

Sarchie parks his own car at the curb. As he approaches an old brownstone, we recognize it as JIMMY'S HOME, where Sarchie and Butler responded to the domestic violence call.

Sarchie RAPS on the door. After a moment, it OPENS partway.

THE WOMAN

in the doorway shows no fresh injuries, but her face is lumpy and bruised, still healing from her husband's assault.

SARCHIE

Lucinda Morton?

LUCINDA
Yes...I remember you.
(beat)
My husband's gone. Jimmy
hasn't...hurt me again...

Sarchie finds THE PHOTOGRAPH OF JIMMY, GRIGGS, AND SANTINO on his cell phone, and shows it to her.

SARCHIE
Do you know these other two men?

LUCINDA
Jimmy served with them in Iraq. Why
do you ask?

SARCHIE
Lieutenant Griggs is dead.

Lucinda stares off, absorbing that.

SARCHIE
When was the last time you saw
Miguel Santino?

LUCINDA
Two weeks ago. He and Lt. Griggs
started a painting company, and as
a favor to Jimmy, they came over
and painted Jimmy's office.

SARCHIE
Can you show me the room...?

Lucinda nods, then opens the door and lets him inside.

INT. BROWNSTONE - HALLWAY - SAME

Lucinda shuffles down the DIM HALLWAY, leading Sarchie to a CLOSED DOOR. She opens it, steps aside. Sarchie enters...

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The room is small and spare. In one corner a COMPUTER sits atop a small DESK. TWO WALLS were recently painted. A PAINT BUCKET spilled, and BARE FOOTPRINTS track paint across the hardwood floor.

The tracks lead to a HALF-OPEN WINDOW. Sarchie examines the windowsill: It's all SCRATCHED UP, as if an animal had clawed the window open instead of just turning the latch like a person would have done.

There's a FIFTEEN-FOOT DROP to the ALLEY below. The splotchy PAINT FOOTPRINTS continue down the alley, diminishing as the paint wore away.

Lucinda has lingered in the doorway, as if afraid to come in.

LUCINDA

My husband, Jimmy...sometimes he has these...fits where he claws at things, like... One night, I found him in the street, clawing at the asphalt... Sometimes, he digs at the floor until his fingers bleed.

SARCHIE

Does he use drugs? Or have mental problems, hallucinations...?

LUCINDA

No...I don't know. I don't know him anymore. Three nights ago, he started to scare me again, and I left. When I came back the next morning, he was gone - I haven't seen him since.

Sarchie moves toward the desk, and sees several small HARD DRIVES, labelled with DATES from the past several years.

SARCHIE

What's on these drives?

LUCINDA

Jimmy was a combat videographer. It's all footage from the war.

SARCHIE

Mind if I stay a bit, take a look at these...?

She shakes her head, and shuffles off down the hallway.

Before sitting down at the desk, Sarchie takes a closer look at the freshly-painted walls.

He notices something. With a pocketknife, Sarchie gouges into the paint on one wall, and discovers that several new coats have been applied. He digs deeper, scraping the layers back, until he uncovers...

AN INSCRIPTION

under the bottom layer of paint: He can just make out part of a word...

INT. SARCHIE'S HOME - CHRISTINA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A NIGHT-LIGHT casts hard shadows. Christina lies in bed, tossing and turning, trying to fall asleep.

Now the night-light begins to FLICKER. Christina sits up, wide awake, staring at it. And then...

SCRRRITCH

A SCRATCHING SOUND seems to come from beneath her bed.

Christina doesn't move. The night light FLICKERS again.

Mustering all her courage, Christina jumps out of bed. She runs to the light switch on the wall, FLICKS IT ON. Her room becomes reassuringly bright. Then she kneels down, looks under the bed, and sees...

HER STUFFED SOCK MONKEY

crouched in the shadows there, seeming to stare back at her.

She grabs the animal toy, then climbs back into bed. Hugging her stuffed monkey, Christina closes her eyes...

SCRRRRIITCH

That sound again. Christina's eyes SNAP OPEN in fear.

As she LEAPS out of bed and RUNS out of the room, WE TILT DOWN to a low-angle view of the floor next to the bed...

and A DROP OF PAINT FALLS from the ceiling onto the floor below.

INT. JIMMY'S APARTMENT - OFFICE - NIGHT

Sweating, Sarchie scrapes the wall with SANDPAPER. He steps back from the wall, and we CIRCLE AROUND HIM TO REVEAL...

A LATIN MESSAGE

scrawled across the wall in spidery brown letters, surrounded by eerie-looking PICTOGRAPHS.

Suddenly, THE LIGHTS DIM, as if from a power surge, and...

A MUFFLED SOUND seems to come from behind the inscribed wall. It's unclear. Sarchie moves closer to the wall, listening...

Now he recognizes it: a combination of AUDIO STATIC and, barely discernible, the distant sound of CHILDREN PLAYING.

Sarchie listens in wonder to the creepy sound. OVERHEAD, the LIGHT FLICKERS slightly, then stops...then FLICKERS again...

And as it does, the CREEPY SOUND STOPS. The LIGHT continues FLICKERING sporadically as Sarchie steps into...

THE HALLWAY

There's A BEDROOM adjacent to the room Sarchie was in. The sound must have come from in there.

DEAD SILENCE now. Sarchie draws his GUN.

Slowly, he approaches the CLOSED DOOR to the bedroom. He turns the knob, pushes the door open, waits... Then he steps into...

INT. THE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

There's no one. A queen-size bed, unmade. A closet full of men's and women's clothes. And on the bedside table, a small CLOCK RADIO. Soft STATIC crackles from its tiny speaker.

Sarchie adjusts the radio dial, and hears SNIPPETS of a few RADIO STATIONS - but no children's voices.

After a moment, Sarchie CLICKS OFF THE RADIO and turns to go...

AND HE HEARS THE CREEPY SOUND AGAIN

Now it seems to be coming through the wall from the freshly-painted room. Spooked and irritated, Sarchie hurries out of the second bedroom, into the HALLWAY, and back into...

THE OFFICE

Nothing but a paint bucket. Sarchie waits, gun in hand, staring at the INSCRIBED WALL. He waits...and waits...

HE HEARS THE SOUND AGAIN

coming through the wall from the second bedroom: the CRACKLE of static, the LAUGHING CHILDREN...and something new: A WET THUMPING, like a butcher's mallet pounding meat...

What the hell? Quickly, Sarchie steps back out into the HALLWAY - and the unnerving SOUND instantly STOPS.

INT. HALLWAY - SAME

Now the DIM LIGHTS out here are also FLICKERING, and then they GO OUT.

Sarchie CLICKS ON his FLASHLIGHT and stands there, heart pounding, in the middle of the hall - waiting, looking at one door, then the other.

We hear only the TICKING of an OLD GRANDFATHER CLOCK at the end of the hallway: *tick...tick...tick...tick...*

And then...BONG! BONG! BONG!

Sarchie JUMPS as the grandfather clock STRIKES the hour - bonging NINE TIMES before the QUIET SOUND of the SWINGING PENDULUM resumes: *tick...tick...tick...*

Sarchie relaxes a bit, takes a deep breath... He shines his flashlight down the empty hallway, scanning the space.

Above him, his flashlight beam finds AN ATTIC DOOR. It's cracked open about an inch, showing the DARKNESS of the space above.

Sarchie stares at it, thinking he should take a look up there...

But then the TICKING SOUND OF THE CLOCK STOPS. Total silence.

Sarchie turns slowly, shining his light on the old clock at the end of the hall. The PENDULUM has STOPPED MOVING.

Warily, Sarchie starts to move down the hall toward the clock...

AND SOMEONE DROPS RIGHT ON TOP OF HIM

KNOCKING Sarchie to the floor, and sending the GUN FLYING from his hand.

The FIGURE on top of Sarchie is CLAWING at him viciously - Sarchie shields his face with both hands...

Then the figure LEAPS OFF OF SARCHIE with a SNARL, and we see that it's JIMMY - filthy and feral-looking.

Sarchie scrambles for his GUN, grabs it, and rolls up onto one knee. Raising the gun, he sees...

JIMMY'S SILHOUETTE

as Jimmy DROPS DOWN ON ALL FOURS LIKE AN ANIMAL, and MOVES down the hallway with almost inhuman speed and agility...

THEN HE LEAPS THROUGH THE WINDOW

at the end of the hall and is GONE in an EXPLOSION of SHATTERING GLASS.

Sarchie stares in shock and amazement, pointing his gun at the shattered window, GASPING for breath.

Then he looks up and sees an OPEN ATTIC DOOR in the ceiling above him, where Jimmy had been hiding until he attacked - but that doesn't explain Jimmy's strange, bestial behavior.

Sarchie looks back at the shattered window, trying to make sense of it all...

CUT TO:

JIMMY'S HELMET-CAM POV:

It's the same washed out image from the opening scene: Jimmy is following Santino down the stone stairway into...

INT. UNDERGROUND CHAMBER - IRAQ - 2010

Santino and Jimmy walk in, guns at the ready - and their FLASHLIGHTS instantly DIE.

IN DARKNESS we can hear their shallow, frightened breathing.

JIMMY'S VOICE

What is that...? Come on, bro,
let's split.

And now we hear ANOTHER SOUND, like rushing wind approaching from a distance.

JIMMY'S VOICE

What the fuck is that?

The rushing sound gets LOUDER, until it escalates into full-blown ROAR. Jimmy SCREAMS, his POV SWINGING AROUND WILDLY.

As the roaring sound and Jimmy's blood-curdling screams reach a crescendo...

A FLARE SPUTTERS TO LIFE in Santino's hand, casting a RED DEMONIC GLOW over them.

DESERT BATS

are everywhere - hundreds of them WHIP through the chamber toward the exit, while some SNAP and CLAW at Jimmy, who continues to SCREAM.

Eerily calm, Santino waves the red flare around Jimmy's face, fending off the attacking bats. They fly off into the night with all the others.

The bats are gone, and the cavern is suddenly quiet again, except for Jimmy's heavy breathing and his trembling voice:

JIMMY'S VOICE
Fucking bats?! Jesus Christ!

Jimmy gets to his feet. He takes a look around the chamber, and then his breathing slows to a near stop.

Then we hear his footsteps make a CRUNCHING SOUND.

JIMMY'S VOICE
Oh, God...

Jimmy now stares down at THE GROUND: The dirt floor is covered a foot deep with HUMAN and RAM SKULLS. Empty black eye sockets, staring up at him.

Jimmy looks back up now, watching Santino move slowly toward...

A STONE ALTAR

carved to resemble a hump-backed WOLF. The legs end in gnarled claws, beneath a gaping, snarling MOUTH with leering animal EYES.

The surrounding walls are covered with PERSIAN RUNES and PICTOGRAPHS: Leering eyes. Snouts. Gargoyles. Malignant and perverse. This place is horrifying.

JIMMY'S VOICE
We shouldn't be in here. I'm out.

Jimmy backs up toward the stairs, but Santino walks closer, his boots crunching down on the skulls. He takes his glove off...touches the writing...

Jimmy pauses near the bottom of the stairs, still watching Santino - who's mesmerized, staring into the wolf's EYES.

Suddenly, a BLAST OF COLD AIR races through the chamber. That's it for Jimmy - his POV SWINGS AROUND and he frantically RUSHES up the stairs toward the exit.

THE IMAGES FREEZES.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. JIMMY'S APARTMENT - OFFICE - NIGHT

Sarchie sits at the desk, having just finished watching Jimmy's POV helmet-cam footage. He TAPS the keyboard, and the freeze-frame image on screen STEP-FRAMES BACK.

Sarchie FREEZES THE IMAGE again - this time on Santino standing at the altar.

ZOOMING IN on the STONE WALL behind the altar, Sarchie now sees...

THE LATIN MESSAGE

scrawled across the wall in spidery blood-brown letters, surrounded by eerie-looking Persian PICTOGRAPHS.

Astonished, he looks from the computer screen to the Latin message and surrounding pictographs on the office wall.

They are the same.

INT. ALBERGHETTI HOME - BASEMENT - NIGHT

In the room where Griggs' body was found, Sarchie scrapes paint off the wall with one hand, holding his MAGLITE with the other - it's the only source of light in the pitch-black room.

He steps back, and the halo of his FLASHLIGHT illuminates the SAME LATIN MESSAGE from the Iraqi compound and from Jimmy's home - scrawled on this wall in the same spidery brown script.

With his phone, Sarchie takes a photograph of the wall.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE ALBERGHETTI HOME - NIGHT

A STEADY DRIZZLE now falls. Sarchie emerges from the house. He sets out for his car, his boots SPLASHING on the sidewalk.

A GUSTY WIND drives the rain sideways, into Sarchie's face. He hikes up his jacket and bows his head into the wind.

A DOG begins to bark across the street. Then ANOTHER...

Now Sarchie slows down, then stops, as he realizes that...

ALL THE DOGS ON THE STREET are BARKING at him, standing in the yards like sentinels, despite the rain - some STRAINING against their chains.

INT. BELLEVUE HOSPITAL - PSYCHIATRIC WARD - LATE AFTERNOON

SEVERAL VIDEO MONITORS are lined up high on the wall above an OBSERVATION DESK. The numbers on the monitors match the numbers above a series of CELLS in a lower-level HALLWAY.

JANE CRENNNA'S IMAGE is on the last monitor. She stares blankly at the wall, muttering...

Behind the desk, the SUPERVISING PHYSICIAN works on the *Times* crossword. Fills in a word and smiles, pleased with himself.

Sarchie approaches the desk, bearing a scratch on his face from Jimmy's attack.

SARCHIE

Ralph Sarchie, Forty-Sixth Precinct.
I'm meeting someone here...

PHYSICIAN

No one called me about it.

Being a bit of a prick, the Physician doesn't even bother to look up from his crossword puzzle.

SARCHIE

You a doctor?

PHYSICIAN

I'm the supervising physician.

SARCHIE

And the receptionist, it looks like.

Now the doctor finally looks up at Sarchie, not happy about the insult. Mendoza enters the ward and approaches.

SARCHIE

I'm here to talk to her.

Sarchie points to JANE'S IMAGE on the video monitor.

PHYSICIAN

I'm sorry, but that patient is
heavily medicated -

MENDOZA

- It's all right, Doctor. He's with me.

SARCHIE

Hey Father. Thanks for coming.

PHYSICIAN

...Ten minutes - unless I see that
the patient is upset or interfered
with in any way.

MENDOZA

Thank you.

PHYSICIAN

And Officer...?

(points at the MONITOR)

I won't be down there - but I'll be
watching.

INT. BELLEVUE PSYCH WARD - MAIN HALLWAY - SAME

Sarchie and Mendoza walk down the main floor hallway with rooms on either side.

CRAZY PEOPLE shuffle by with ORDERLIES. Others babble in beds. Some stare with hostility, others with despair. But all of them wear the eerie patina of derangement.

They pass a large RECREATION ROOM overcrowded with PATIENTS.

SARCHIE

More young guys in here than I
would have expected.

MENDOZA

Many are veterans. Almost two
million have served in Iraq and
Afghanistan. For them, Post
Traumatic Stress Disorder has
become a psychiatric epidemic...

SARCHIE

My partner was a Ranger during the
invasion. He came back all right.

MENDOZA

Things got much worse after the
invasion. Our troops are strong,
but this war has taken many of them
past the breaking point.

They reach an ELEVATOR and step inside.

INT. BELLEVUE PSYCH WARD - ISOLATION FLOOR - SAME

The ELEVATOR DOORS open. Sarchie and Mendoza step out into a
DIMLY LIT HALLWAY. Sarchie glances up and sees a small
SECURITY CAMERA mounted on the wall. He barely resists the
urge to flip it a bird.

Walking down the hallway, they pass by CELLS with STEEL BARS
that secure the worst of the worst.

SARCHIE

What is this place?

MENDOZA

The isolation floor. Maximum
security. Upstairs is for crazy,
down here is for malevolent crazy.

Sarchie nods. This is where the Hannibal Lecters are kept. From the cells, Sarchie and Mendoza hear MOANS, WHISPERS, and MUTTERED OBSCENITIES. In one cell, all they see is the glint of eyes, peering out... Finally, they reach the last cell.

JANE CRENNNA

lies on the floor, staring up sightlessly. Her head is close to the bars, her arms spread wide.

Sarchie squats to look closer at Jane's catatonic face, staring up at him.

Arching her back, JANE LUNGES BACKWARDS, gripping the bars.

Like a cat, she torques her body upward and twists until she is facing Sarchie, leering through the bars.

The sheer gymnastic physicality of it is almost inhuman.

Jane's body undulates with freakish tremors - small convulsions in her hands, face and torso that seem just a little bit faster than what should be possible.

She begins to PANT, the spittle drooling down her chin as she stares malevolently at Sarchie. He notices the bloody, raw ends of her nail-less fingers.

SARCHIE

Hello, Jane. Do you remember me?

In response, just a guttural MOAN: "Mmmmmmm..."

SARCHIE

Do you know a man named Santino?

JANE CRENNNA

Mmmmm...mmmmiguel...mmmmmm...

SARCHIE

That's right. Miguel. Why did you go see him at the zoo?

JANE CRENNNA

Mmmmm...mmmmmessage...mmmmmm...

SARCHIE

He had a message for you?

Now she just stares, her lips moving soundlessly.

SARCHIE

Jane, what was the message Santino had for you?

She strings several words together in a guttural MURMUR...

SARCHIE

(listens carefully, then:)

Latin...

(turns to Mendoza)

Do you understand it?

MENDOZA

She's quoting Holy Sacraments and sacred writings - not common ones, not something a layperson would know. But she's...changing them.

SARCHIE

What do you mean?

MENDOZA

Changing a word, here and there... Just enough to make it blasphemy.

Sarchie studies Jane thoughtfully for a moment.

SARCHIE

So...you speak Latin, huh? Tell me, what do you think of this...?

He takes out his CELL PHONE, holds it in front of her face.

It displays a PHOTO OF THE LATIN MESSAGE that Sarchie uncovered on Jimmy's wall. Jane stares at it. Her MUTTERING STOPS.

Her PUPILS DILATE, going totally black - then she GRABS HOLD of SARCHIE'S WRIST and starts PANTING again. Sarchie tries to pull free, but her grip is too strong.

SARCHIE

Let go of me, Jane.

She continues to PANT...louder and faster.

SARCHIE

Let go. Now.

Her pants turn into a SCREECHING MONKEY HOWL - and she YANKS Sarchie toward her, SINKING HER TEETH INTO SARCHIE'S ARM!

SARCHIE

AHH! LET GO, GODDAMMIT!!

Mendoza grabs hold of Sarchie and tries to pull him back. Dropping his cell phone, Sarchie puts his leg through the bars and KICKS at Jane, trying to break free.

The priest SHOUTS something at Jane IN LATIN, and she lets go. Sarchie scoots back from the bars, clutching his arm.

Jane is SHRIEKING and SWIPING at the two men, her fingers hooked like claws.

SARCHIE
(looks to Mendoza)
...What did you say to her?

MENDOZA
(a hint of a smile)
Let go.

Now Jane sags back against the wall of her cell and slides down to the floor where she collapses with a guttural MOAN...

JANE CRENNNA
Mmmmm....mmmmarvinnnn....mmmmmm...

Sarchie understood that. He stares at her in shock...

And she grins at Sarchie - an obscene, slobbering leer - her teeth RED with Sarchie's own BLOOD.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC WARD - MAIN HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The ELEVATOR DOORS open. Sarchie and Mendoza step out as the PHYSICIAN storms toward them.

PHYSICIAN
I told you not to upset her!

SARCHIE
(still clutching his arm)
Upset HER?! Where's the bathroom?

PHYSICIAN
(furious, he points)
End of the hall.

As Sarchie hurries down the hallway, various MENTAL PATIENTS seem to sense his presence as he passes by their rooms: The hall reverberates with the EERIE SOUNDS of GROANS, CACKLING, and MANIC GIBBERING...

INT. THE MEN'S REST ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door is YANKED OPEN and Sarchie rushes in, SLAMMING and locking the door behind him. He holds his arm under the hot water, starts soaping the wound.

Glancing up, he sees his face in the mirror: pale, and trembling... Then he frowns, looking higher, at something near the top of the mirror, right above his reflection.

It's a QUOTATION, scratched into the glass:

"PEOPLE ARE STRANGE" - THE DOORS

Sarchie stares at the words, sensing that these recurring references to "Doors" are more than just coincidence...

INT. PSYCHIATRIC WARD - MAIN HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The priest is waiting as Sarchie emerges from the bathroom, angrily studying his injured arm.

MENDOZA
Are you all right?

SARCHIE
I'll need a fuckin' HIV test...

Sarchie looks over at the Physician, who is back behind his desk, YAMMERING angrily into a telephone. The Physician sees him, and covers the mouthpiece.

PHYSICIAN
(to Sarchie)
I'm calling your Precinct! You
won't be back here again!

SARCHIE
Yeah? You're breakin' my heart.

Mendoza holds out Sarchie's CELL PHONE, which still displays THE LATIN MESSAGE scrawled on Lucinda Morton's wall.

MENDOZA
You dropped this.

Taking the cell phone, Sarchie stares down at the photo, disturbed... Finally, he looks up at Mendoza.

SARCHIE
What does this writing mean?

MENDOZA
I'll tell you.
(he smiles slightly)
If you buy me a drink.

EXT. SOUTH BRONX FIREHOUSE - NIGHT

The fire station is quiet. Mendoza follows Sarchie to a side door. Sarchie swipes a magnetic card. Gets a green light.

INT. FIREHOUSE - ENGINE BAY - SAME

They walk past polished pump-and-ladder TRUCKS, down a STAIRWELL and through an empty, quiet CORRIDOR. They cross to another door, and Sarchie opens it and they enter...

INT. FIREHOUSE REC ROOM - SAME

NOISE, life. A BAR has been built beneath the firehouse. Sports news on the muted widescreen. OLDIES on the Rockola. Softball trophies. A pool table. A 9/11 shrine.

A dozen off-duty COPS and FIREMEN have a good loud time. Several smoking hot COP GROUPIES provide feminine energy.

GOMEZ

Sarchie!

Several ad-libs of "Sarchie." He's a big fish in these parts. Sarchie works his way towards Gomez and Nadler, happy to see his brother cops. He introduces them to Mendoza:

SARCHIE

This is Gomez and this is Nadler -
or as I like to call them, Go-Nads.

Now Butler sees them and comes over, beer in hand.

BUTLER

Break out the bingo balls, Sarchie
brought a priest!

SARCHIE

(to Mendoza)
What are you drinking?

MENDOZA

Bourbon. Neat.

SARCHIE

(to the BARTENDER)
Two of 'em.

The bartender, an OLD FIREMAN, pours two glasses of Makers Mark. Mendoza notices his HANDS: scarred from a past blaze.

CUT TO:

THREE PHOTOGRAPHS ON SARCHIE'S PHONE

as he CLICKS from one to the next. Each image is of the same Latin message. The first is from the wall at Jimmy's house, the second is from the Alberghetti home...

MENDOZA (O.S.)

...And this third photograph -
where did you uncover the writing?

SARCHIE (O.S.)

Inside the lion habitat, at the zoo
- I went back there this morning.

INT. FIREHOUSE BAR - A BIT LATER

Sarchie and Mendoza share a booth, each sipping his second bourbon. Mendoza studies the photos...

MENDOZA

These are messages to the "Spirits
of Babylon" - the images are
Persian pictographs, but the words
are in Latin.

SARCHIE

Persian and Latin?

MENDOZA

That's not odd in itself - that
mixture has been around since
before the time of Christ, when the
Romans occupied the Middle East.

(points to the words)

But the Latin here refers to
providing a "gateway" or "portal."

RIDERS ON THE STORM by *The Doors* begins to play. Sarchie looks at the jukebox, then back at Mendoza.

SARCHIE

...So these messages are references
to doors?

MENDOZA

Yes. There must be an invitation
that opens a "portal" or "doorway"
before the demonic can slip into
our world. Some people invite it
themselves by dabbling in the
Occult. Others are the victims of a
curse - like this.

(taps one of the PHOTOS)

(MORE)

MENDOZA (CONT'D)

The message provides a point of entry for the demonic.

One of the hot cop groupies drops off two more glasses of Makers. Mendoza eyes her as she walks away:

MENDOZA

Thank God for confession.

SARCHIE

So you're not all pedophiles, huh?

MENDOZA

(lighting a cigarette)

Bingo balls and altar boy bangers. Any other stereotypes you want to hit while I'm here?

SARCHIE

I have known a lot of priests, and you don't seem the type.

MENDOZA

I've known a lot of cops, and you're exactly the type.

Sarchie smiles at that.

SARCHIE

Seriously, why the priesthood?

MENDOZA

I had a drug problem in college. Bad. One morning I woke up naked in a pool of my own urine in Kenmore Square, a dirty needle still sticking out of my arm. I had a choice: to live or die. It always comes down to a choice. I chose God. I got sober through Narcotics Anonymous, and then joined the priesthood.

Mendoza takes a long pull from his cigarette.

SARCHIE

Your sober but you drink and smoke?

MENDOZA

(shrugs)

I'm in N.A., Not A.A..

He gestures at his cigarette and whiskey.

MENDOZA

These get me by. They might kill me slowly, but they won't kill me fast. Not like the heroin.

(beat)

What about you? When did you "outgrow" God.

SARCHIE

When I was twelve, some meth-head frying his brains out broke into our house. He was in my mom's room where she was sleeping. You know what stopped him? God didn't stop him. I did. With a baseball bat. Father, as we speak, someone's getting hurt, ripped off, raped, or murdered. Where's God when all that shit happens?

MENDOZA

In the hearts of people like you - who put a stop to it. We can talk all night about the problem of evil, but what about the problem of good? If there's no God, if the world is just "survival of the fittest," why are all the men in this room willing to lay down their lives for total strangers?

Sarchie thinks about that. Takes a drink.

MENDOZA

I brought something for you to hear.

Mendoza sets an IPOD with A SET OF EAR BUDS on the table.

MENDOZA

My first year in the priesthood, I met a young single mother named Claudia. I was her sponsor in N.A.. She'd grown up Catholic in Venezuela, and she was convinced there was a demonic presence in her home, here in the Bronx. As her priest, I began a ritual cleansing of the apartment - not because I believed she was right, but because I thought it might put her mind at ease. What happened during that ritual changed me forever. It was the event that started me down the path to becoming...

SARCHIE
A "specialist."

MENDOZA
Right. I now believe there was a
demonic presence in Claudia's house,
because I watched it try to take
possession of her daughter. You'll
hear three voices on the recording:
One belongs to me, one to Claudia -
and one of the voices is coming from
a five-year-old girl.

Sarchie stares at Mendoza for a moment, then puts on the
earbuds and CLICKS ON THE IPOD. ON THE RECORDING, we hear
movement, background noise.

Then we hear MENDOZA'S VOICE:

MENDOZA'S VOICE
Eternal God, Our Father, let not
the enemy prevail against us. For
our faith is in you our God, not
just in the power of our prayers...

Sarchie looks troubled, and is about to say something when...

A NEW SOUND begins - a strange, guttural undercurrent of
unfamiliar WORDS beneath Mendoza's PRAYING VOICE...

CLAUDIA'S VOICE
(ON RECORDING)
Oh my God...Father, what is that?
What is she doing...?

The fear in the young mother's voice is palpable. Mendoza
watches Sarchie, studying his reaction.

ON THE RECORDING, he continues his calm, unhurried prayer:

MENDOZA'S VOICE
Put on the whole armor of God, that
you may be able to stand against
the wiles of the Devil...

THE SOUND RISES NOW, almost overwhelming Mendoza's voice.

Nearly indescribable, it's like the sound some great cat,
maybe a cougar, would make if caged - raging, vicious and
terrified - and JABBED at with a sharp, pointed stick.

The VOICE is SQUEALING horribly, and GROWLING, SNUFFLING,
GNASHING - yet, somehow, forming unfamiliar WORDS... Whatever
it is, it is not a human sound.

CLAUDIA'S VOICE
 OH MY GOD! Father, what's wrong
 with my baby - FATHER, PLEASE! OH,
 GOD, STOP IT, PLEASE, MAKE IT STOP!

The MOTHER'S VOICE ends in a SCREAM. Sarchie feels a bone-deep CHILL run down his spine...

Sarchie reaches out and STOPS the recording.

The two men stare at each other - Sarchie slowly leaving that woman's hellish apartment and returning to the joyful ruckus of the bar...until he finally asks:

SARCHIE
 What did you do?

MENDOZA
 I continued the ritual. Eventually
 it retreated. It let the girl go.
 After that, I devoted myself to the
 study of demonology.

Sarchie regards the man with a deepened respect. He's a warrior.

MENDOZA
 Every religion, every culture since
 humans dropped out of the trees has
 practiced exorcisms. I've witnessed
 the rites all over the world. Not
 just Catholic. The Kel of Nigeria.
 Zar black masses in Cairo, and
 Navajo witch doctors in Arizona.
 Most are bullshit, it's true. But
 maybe ten, fifteen percent...just
 aren't. And I've learned to tell
 the difference. Besides superhuman
 strength, each possessed person
 used an altered voice. And each had
 clairvoyant powers. They knew
 things they couldn't have known...
 (leans closer)
 So who is "Marvin" - the name that
 Jane mentioned to you...?

Sarchie stares back at the priest, giving him the Look - as if to say "no, we're not going there."

MENDOZA
 (nods, then sits back)
 I understand. Perhaps another time.

Mendoza hands Sarchie back his cell phone, which still displays the LATIN MESSAGE.

MENDOZA

I think it's no accident that
you're the man who discovered this.

SARCHIE

...What do you mean?

MENDOZA

I mean, you seem to either be
attracting demonic activity, or
you're uniquely able to detect it.

(beat)

Tell me something. Do you..."sense"
when something bad is happening on
the street? I mean, better than your
fellow officers do?

SARCHIE

I get hunches. My partner calls it
my "radar."

MENDOZA

I see. Perhaps you've been called
into the Work.

SARCHIE

"The Work"...?

MENDOZA

Yes. And if it's true, I pity you.

SARCHIE

I don't know. How can I be sure
this ain't all just bullshit? I
mean, if it's not

MENDOZA

Because some realities can never be
measured or quantified. Some truths
can't be recreated in a lab. I love
science like I love religion - but
I also despise them both.

SARCHIE

Yeah? And why's that?

MENDOZA

Because science and religion are
selling the same lie, making people
think they've got the world figured
out.

(MORE)

MENDOZA (CONT'D)

The truth is, everything that scientists and theologians know are just drops in the ocean of what they don't know... Life is a mystery.

Sarchie stares back at Mendoza for a moment, then LAUGHS.

SARCHIE

You're the fuckin' mystery, Padre.

Then Mendoza also laughs, and they both down another shot...

CUT TO:

A BLACK CROW

perched in the MOONLIGHT atop Sarchie's house - the bird's cold, black eyes staring down at SARCHIE'S CAR as it pulls into the driveway...

INT. SARCHIE'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The door opens, and Sarchie steps inside. Jen is still awake - she's been waiting for him.

JEN

Christina cried herself to sleep tonight.

SARCHIE

What? Why?

JEN

Because she heard scratching noises in the floor under her room. I told her it was just mice.

SARCHIE

...Scratching noises?

JEN

Yes - she was really scared!

After his talk with Mendoza, Sarchie looks especially troubled by this. He turns and heads down THE HALLWAY.

SARCHIE

The room's built on concrete slab - she's not hearing mice in the floor.

JEN

I know that...

SARCHIE

Did you hear the sound?

JEN

No! And I don't think she really did, either.

Earnest and emotional, she stops him next to CHRISTINA'S ROOM.

JEN

Don't you get it? The floor isn't the problem, Ralph, or the noises - you're the problem. She's afraid because she needs you here, at home. And so do I.

(quieter now)

You shut me out, and all I get is the rage...and the silence.

After a moment, Sarchie looks off, shakes his head.

SARCHIE

I don't know... Something's happening to me... Something I don't understand.

She steps closer to him, takes his hand.

JEN

Then *talk* to me about it. I need to know. I can help you, Ralph - but you have to let me in.

Sarchie looks at her. Looks into her warm, dark eyes. Part of him wants to tell her everything. But he just can't...

SARCHIE

It's nothin'. I don't want to talk about it... Not right now.

Jen stares at him another beat, and we see the hurt in her eyes. Then she withdraws her hand.

JEN

So this is it? This is all I get?

SARCHIE

You get the best of me, Jen.

JEN

I hope not. I hope this isn't the best.

She walks off. Sarchie seethes in frustration and anger - much of it directed toward himself. Then he turns and enters...

INT. CHRISTINA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Christina is fast asleep. He brushes the hair back from her face, kisses her gently on the cheek, then looks down and studies the floor.

He tests the floor in different places with an easy stomp of his boot. He shakes his head, then as he starts to walk back out of the room...

The NIGHT LIGHT FLICKERS. Sarchie looks back at it, disturbed. After a moment, he goes to leave again...

CHRISTINA'S ANGRY BIRD makes a NOISE: "HA-HA! HUUUUUURRRRRR!"

Sarchie spins around and looks at the stuffed Angry Bird on a SHELF OF TOYS: it stares back with dark, angry eyes.

And then, a faint sound from the floor... SCRRRITCH... Unsure of what he just heard, Sarchie drops down and presses his ears to the floorboards. He hears nothing.

He looks at Angry Bird, then at the floor, then at Christina asleep in bed. Visibly unnerved, he takes a deep breath, then whispers to himself...

SARCHIE
Jesus Christ...

CUT TO:

JANE CRENNNA throwing her child into the Lion's Den.

INT. 46TH PRECINCT COMMUNICATIONS CENTER - LATE AFTERNOON

Sarchie sits next to Mendoza at the ENCLOSED VIEWING STATION, watching the BRONX ZOO SURVEILLANCE VIDEO.

Mendoza stares at the monitor in amazement...

MENDOZA
The message he painted opened a door for the demonic, which made Jane attempt to kill her own child.

SARCHIE
Why?

MENDOZA
That's the mystery of primary evil - its destructiveness makes no sense. Not to us.

He looks at Sarchie, his expression grim.

MENDOZA

What this man is doing must be
stopped. He can't be allowed to
keep creating these doorways.

Sarchie is struck by Mendoza's intensity. Mendoza looks back at THE SCREEN: Santino leans down, seems to WHISPER to the lion. Then the beast moves forward, as if obeying an order.

Santino then slips inside the tunnel, and eases the gate back down behind him. He escapes into the darkness.

Now Sarchie hears the familiar STATIC again, along with the sound of CHILDREN PLAYING and a WET THUMPING - and a new SCRAPING SOUND, like a heavy sack dragged across rough ground.

Then THE BATTERED, BLOODY FACE FLASHES ACROSS THE SCREEN.

SARCHIE

(pauses the video)
Tell me you saw that.

MENDOZA

Saw what?

SARCHIE

A face flashing across the screen.

MENDOZA

No.

SARCHIE

And you didn't hear the static, or
any other sounds?

MENDOZA

I heard nothing.

SARCHIE

These same sounds - static, and
children's voices, and these other
things - I keep hearing them.

(shuts off the video)
I'm losing my fuckin' mind.

MENDOZA

No, I don't think so.

SARCHIE

No? Then what?

MENDOZA

The man in this video could be sending you messages.

SARCHIE

Yeah? And how would he do that?

MENDOZA

Perhaps he knows your gift.

SARCHIE

My "gift"...

MENDOZA

These "hunches" you get - what your partner calls your "radar." We call it "The Discernment of Spirits" - you can sense what others can't. It's a spiritual gift. But it's also a curse.

SARCHIE

How's it a curse?

MENDOZA

It makes you a target.

As Sarchie processes that for a moment, a female CRIMINALIST from the Forensic Investigation Division approaches, holding a COMPUTER PRINTOUT.

CRIMINALIST

Sarchie, I got something for you.

She hands Sarchie THE PRINTOUT: it has a bar code pattern showing alternating SEQUENCES OF COLORS.

CRIMINALIST

Turns out that Latin message on the walls wasn't written in paint - it was human blood. We ran a DNA test, then searched the data base and got a match.

SARCHIE

Santino's got a police record?

CRIMINALIST

Arrested for violent assault two years ago, when he was home between deployments. Acquitted when the victim disappeared.

(MORE)

CRIMINALIST (CONT'D)
But his DNA sample was in the
felony database - along with a
recent address.

Staring at the printout, Sarchie is clearly energized.

SARCHIE
Holy shit, he's right here, in the
South Bronx... Nice work, Josie.

CRIMINALIST
(leaving the room)
Anything for you, Sarch...

MENDOZA
What will you do now?

SARCHIE
I'll do my job and go arrest him.

He starts walking out. Mendoza follows.

MENDOZA
Don't go. You're not ready for this.

SARCHIE
This is not your call. We're in my
territory now -

MENDOZA
-This is more than a police matter,
and you know it!

SARCHIE
What the fuck do you expect me to
do - NOT arrest him?!

Mendoza thinks for a moment. Sarchie's got a point.

MENDOZA
At the very least, take me with
you. You may need me there.

INT. SARCHIE'S HOME - CHRISTINA'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Christina walks in, pouting, wearing her SOCCER UNIFORM...

Jen follows Christina into the bedroom, sets Christina's
soccer ball and uniform bag in the corner..

CHRISTINA
He said he'd be there...

JEN
(hiding her own frustration)
I know. Daddy's got a lot to do.
(strokes Christina's hair)
I'll run your bath, and then it's
time for bed, okay?

Christina nods. Jen walks out, and Christina shuts the door behind her, then plops down on her knees in front of the shelf of toys that contains her various STUFFED ANIMALS and A VINTAGE JACK-IN-THE-BOX.

She takes them out, lines them up side-by-side on the hardwood floor: purple alligator, plush lion, and sock monkey.

Then she takes the jack-in-the-box, begins turning the handle...

SCRRRITCH

That SCRATCHING SOUND seems to come from beneath the floor, right under Christina. She stops what she's doing. Stares down at the floor, uncertain...

SCRRRRRRITCH

LOUDER this time. Christina JUMPS UP, dropping the vintage jack-in-the-box.

Heart pounding, she backs away from the spot where she was just playing, moving slowly toward the bedroom door.

As she's about to reach the door...

THE DOOR SLAMS BEHIND HER!

Startled, she spins around. And then...

SCRRRRRRRRRIIIIIITCH

The scratching sound MOVES TOWARD HER, as if an invisible force is stalking her from underneath the floorboards.

Terrified, she tries to open the door, but it won't budge.

INT. BATHROOM - SAME

Jen is running the bath for Christina. She frowns, hearing something. Shuts off the water. Now she can hear Christina POUNDING on her bedroom door and YELLING FOR HELP.

Jen BOLTS out of the bathroom.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

WE FOLLOW BEHIND JEN as she rushes down the hallway, Christina's BANGING and SCREAMING getting louder as she goes.

Reaching her daughter's bedroom door, Jen opens it without any difficulty. Christina LUNGES into her mother's arms.

JEN

Baby, are you okay?! What is it?!
What's wrong?!

Christina is SHAKING with terror, tears streaming down her face.

CHRISTINA

(speaks between SOBS)
I heard...scratches...again...

Unnerved herself, Jen strokes Christina's hair and tries to calm her down...

JEN

It's okay, baby. You're okay...

CHRISTINA

...The door...wouldn't...open...

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sarchie and Butler stand on either side of the door. Sarchie BANGS on it, then they wait and listen, HANDGUNS drawn.

A tense moment. There's no response. Butler speaks quietly:

BUTLER

No landlord around, no key... Wanna
kick it in? Go in strong?

SARCHIE

No. We got two entrances to this
building. You watch the south side,
I'll take the north.

Butler nods, and they head off in separate directions.

EXT. STREET - SOUTH SIDE OF THE BUILDING - NIGHT

Butler approaches his pickup truck and gets in. He slumps down in his seat, eyes on the south side entrance to the building.

INT. SARCHIE'S CAR - NORTH SIDE OF THE BUILDING - SAME

Pink-faced with cold, Mendoza sits in the passenger seat of Sarchie's CAR, waiting. Sarchie approaches the car and gets in.

MENDOZA

I'm freezing in here. Can you run the heater again?

SARCHIE

I'm almost outta gas. Don't you guys learn to suffer deprivation and stuff.

MENDOZA

I'm not a monk...

INT. SARCHIE'S CAR - HOURS LATER

Sarchie and Mendoza are both hunched down in their coats amidst empty Chinese take-out boxes.

A LIGHT PATTEN of FREEZING RAIN BEGINS. Mendoza takes out a cigarette and is about to light up.

SARCHIE

Not in here.

MENDOZA

You gonna make me stand out in the rain?

SARCHIE

(annoyed)
...You should quit.

MENDOZA

I have. Lots of times.

Mendoza lights up, cracks the window, and blows the smoke outside. Sarchie's CELL PHONE RINGS. Sarchie glances at the caller ID: It says "HOME."

Mendoza watches Sarchie press "IGNORE" on the phone, then stare back up at Santino's building.

MENDOZA

How long have you been married?

SARCHIE

(darkens a bit)
Nine years.

MENDOZA

How did you meet?

SARCHIE

Bar called Gantry's over in Queens.

(half-smiles)

I was in there a lot, but I never seen anything like her. I did some real drinking then. I guess she sorta turned me around... She's tough, y'know? And a real pain in the ass...like me.

(beat)

Hell, why'm I telling you? What do you know about women?

MENDOZA

Yes, I've only heard them confess their darkest sins a few thousand times.

SARCHIE

She's just a little tense right now, y'know, with the pregnancy - hormones, and stuff.

MENDOZA

Has anything...unusual...happened in your home lately?

SARCHIE

My daughter Christina thinks she heard scratching sounds coming from the floor in her bedroom.

(shrugs)

But that doesn't seem possible...

MENDOZA

I see. Do you have a crucifix in your home?

SARCHIE

Jen's Irish, I'm Italian - what do you think?

MENDOZA

Good. That's a start.

Mendoza opens up a BLACK BAG and takes out a SMALL PLASTIC BOTTLE imprinted with a CROSS, along with THREE DIME-SIZED SILVER MEDALS on thin silver chains.

Sarchie looks at one of the medals: It's stamped with a LATIN INSCRIPTION and the IMAGE of a SAINT.

MENDOZA

Sprinkle the holy water in every room of your home and at the four corners of your property, repeating a prayer that I will teach you. And you, your wife, and your daughter must wear those Saint Benedict medals from now on.

SARCHIE

C'mon, what is all this...?

MENDOZA

If you have been called into the Work, both you and your family are already in danger.

Sarchie looks soberly at the medal in his hand... Then slips the chain over his head, tucking the medal inside his shirt.

MENDOZA

Now. Listen to me. I can't help you any further unless you humble yourself before God, and walk in a state of grace.

SARCHIE

You mean make a confession. Like in church.

MENDOZA

We can do it right here.

SARCHIE

(shakes his head)
Jesus...

MENDOZA

This is spiritual evil - you can't fight it in the usual way.

SARCHIE

I'm doing all right.

MENDOZA

No, you're not. You need mercy. You need to be free of that pain that you carry inside - hidden to everyone but yourself.

Sarchie stares back at him, shocked by Mendoza's insight.

MENDOZA

Whatever your sins, believe me, the demonic will know and will use them against you. It's important that you face them now.

SARCHIE

I don't know, Father...I don't think I can do that.

MENDOZA

(after a moment)

Remember the tape I played you?
Claudia, the woman from Venezuela?

SARCHIE

How could I forget.

MENDOZA

The night you and I first met, I went by Claudia's house for the first time in many years. I watched her cook dinner for her daughter - a teenager now. After seeing Jane Crenna that night, I went to Claudia's home to remind myself that an encounter with true evil, can bring out the evil in me.

SARCHIE

What do you mean?

MENDOZA

Less than a year after my ritual cleansing of Claudia's home, she and I...relapsed together.

SARCHIE

(surprised)

No shit?

MENDOZA

Several times a week, for months, we'd score a few balloons and push off together. Then when we came down, we'd have sex.

SARCHIE

Wow. Guess you do know about women.

Mendoza smiles at the joke, but then his expression darkens.

MENDOZA

Claudia got pregnant. And against my wishes, she had an abortion.

SARCHIE

Jesus. You're no saint, Father - I'll give you that.

MENDOZA

Funny you should say that. When I couldn't take the guilt anymore, I confessed what I'd done. I assumed I'd be defrocked. I certainly deserved to be. But you know what my parish priest told me? He said, "A saint isn't a moral exemplar, a saint is a *life-giver*." He heard my full confession, told me if it happened again I would be defrocked, and I left his office in a state of grace. I've been sober ever since.

(beat)

Like I said, I know how hard it is. But you must make your confession.

SARCHIE

...Don't you ever get tired of telling me what to do?

MENDOZA

(a wry smile)

I get a tired of you not listening.

SARCHIE

Holy shit, there he is...

SARCHIE'S POV THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD: Santino approaches the building, head down, face obscured by his hoodie.

Adrenalized, Sarchie grabs his RADIO, speaks into it:

SARCHIE

He's walking into the building. I'll come around back and we'll enter from your side.

BUTLER (OVER RADIO)

Ten-four. On the move.

SARCHIE

(as he gets out)

Stay in the car.

MENDOZA
Officer Sarchie...

Halfway out the door, Sarchie looks back at him.

MENDOZA
Don't be deceived by his tricks.

Sarchie frowns, as if troubled for an instant - then he shuts the door, and hurries toward the apartment building.

INT. HIGH-RISE APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY - NIGHT

Side-by-side ELEVATORS. One opens, revealing Sarchie and Butler inside. Sarchie hits the EMERGENCY STOP, holding the elevator - it emits a weak ALARM BUZZ.

Sarchie and Butler step out into the hallway. Butler wields a 12-GAUGE REMINGTON SHOTGUN, Sarchie his GLOCK 17. The two cops move quietly down the long corridor, toward...

SANTINO'S APARTMENT DOOR

Sarchie gives Butler a nod, and Butler grins - then KICKS THE DOOR IN. They rush inside. Sarchie looks around uncertainly at the surprisingly bland apartment: minimal furniture, nothing too expensive or cheap. Like an IKEA ad.

They quickly sweep the living room, the single bedroom, and bathroom. Closets. Under the bed. Nothing.

SARCHIE
...He's not here.

The POWER GOES OUT. There's a hint of MOONLIGHT. Butler and Sarchie FREEZE for a moment, guns trained in semidarkness...

Then they CLICK ON their flashlights, and creep back into the living room. A long beat of silence...

LOUD MUSIC begins to play - "PEOPLE ARE STRANGE" by *The Doors*.

Sarchie goes to turn off the stereo - but it's already off.

BUTLER
What is it? What's wrong?

Now Sarchie realizes that Butler can't hear the music. Sarchie shakes his head in frustration...

And now music lowers in volume, and is joined by the SOFT AUDIO STATIC that has been haunting Sarchie.

He looks around. The static seems to be coming from the hallway, outside the apartment.

Sarchie motions to the apartment's front door. Slowly, Butler follows Sarchie out into...

THE HALLWAY

The long, unlit corridor disappears into TOTAL DARKNESS.

Sarchie warily follows MUSIC AND AUDIO STATIC toward the far end of the hall, the SOUND GETTING LOUDER as he goes. Butler trails him, uncertain.

BUTLER

You hear something...?

SARCHIE

Radar...

The MUSIC AND STATIC SOUND rises to FULL VOLUME as Sarchie and Butler reach...

THE DUAL ELEVATORS

The doors are still open to the elevator they rode up in - and the feeble "Emergency Stop" alarm is still BUZZING...

BUTLER

Sarch, that's just the alarm -

The ALARM SOUND STOPS. And then, after a moment of stillness, the elevator doors UNEXPECTEDLY START TO CLOSE...

And SANTINO STEPS INTO VIEW INSIDE THE ELEVATOR.

Wearing his ghastly death mask face-paint and gray hoodie, he's visible only for an instant.

Sarchie LUNGES for the elevator doors, but not fast enough - the doors CLOSE, and the MUSIC AND STATIC SOUND STOPS.

SARCHIE

Son of a bitch!

Sarchie punches the DOWN BUTTON to the second elevator, then watches the numbers above the first elevator door.

The number "34" is illuminated, since they're on that floor. Now the numbers begin to TICK DOWN RAPIDLY - 33, 32, 31 - and Butler takes off RUNNING toward the stairs.

BUTLER

Radio me what floor he stops on...

INT. STAIRWELL - SAME

Butler BURSTS through the door and rushes down the stairs...

INT. BACK IN THE HALLWAY - SAME

DING! The second elevator arrives. Sarchie jams his foot between the doors, holding it in place while he continues to watch the numbers above the first elevator.

SARCHIE
(into radio)
Nineteenth floor...sixteen...

INT. STAIRWELL - SAME

Butler keeps hustling down, taking the steps three at a time, listening to Sarchie call out the elevator floors as he goes:

SARCHIE'S VOICE (OVER RADIO)
Eleven... Eight... Six...

INT. HALLWAY - SAME

Sarchie stares up at the numbers, speaks into his radio:

SARCHIE
Second floor... Lobby... He's in
the basement.

Sarchie quickly steps into the other elevator, presses "B."

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

The ELEVATOR DOORS open, and Sarchie steps out, GUN ready. He pauses, keeping his flashlight off, letting his eyes adjust to the DIMNESS.

The basement is a dark, creepy labyrinth of narrow corridors, filled with trash, torn-up furniture, broken-down appliances and various other junk.

Large PIPES and steel SUPPORT BEAMS criss-cross the ceiling.

A row of DIRTY WINDOWS high on one wall allows a faint GLOW to bleed in from the STREETLIGHTS.

As Sarchie moves slowly into the space, he hears the familiar STATIC, along with the distant sound of CHILDREN PLAYING...

CUT TO SANTINO

He's perched atop an old busted boiler in the DIMNESS. His PUPILS are huge: FULLY DILATED, completely BLACK.

He SMILES SLIGHTLY and speaks with A WEAK AND RASPY VOICE that is not his own:

SANTINO
No, please...help me..

BACK TO SARCHIE, as he hears the voice in the darkness. He stops, suddenly feeling dizzy and disoriented.

And then he hears an animalistic HOWL... Sarchie tracks the sound to the area where Santino was just perched - but Santino is no longer there.

Now Sarchie hears ANOTHER SOUND: WET THUMPING, like a butcher pounding meat...

BACK ON SANTINO, who is moving lithely along the overhead pipes and beams, like a primate moving across tree branches.

He stops, peering down, and SPEAKS WITH SARCHIE'S OWN VOICE:

SANTINO
(IN SARCHIE'S VOICE)
As a cop, I've always had a pretty heavy hand...

ON SARCHIE as he reacts in wonder to the sound of his own voice, like an echo in his head... Shaken, he slows to a stop.

The voice was close. Sarchie holds perfectly still, waiting to hear something else. The SOUNDS he's been hearing FADE.

Silence. And then...

THE HIGH WINDOWS START TO SHATTER right above him, RAINING GLASS DOWN on his head...

INT. SARCHIE'S CAR - SAME

Mendoza, now clutching a ROSARY, hears a HUGE GUST OF WIND and sees the building's row of street-level basement windows as they IMplode, one-by-one. The shattered glass is SUCKED INTO the basement - not a single shard falls into the street.

Seeing this, Mendoza grabs his bag and exits the car.

INT. BASEMENT - SAME

Sarchie RUNS down a corridor between stacks of junk, trying to avoid the FALLING GLASS. Then he slows down, hearing...

MUSIC PLAYING

on an out-of-tune PIANO: It's the familiar nursery rhyme "Pop Goes the Weasel" - but a slow, creepy version in low octave and minor key.

Sarchie tracks the MUSIC as it plays: *Round and round the mulberry bush...*

Now he rounds a corner, and sees...

AN OLD UPRIGHT PIANO

PLAYING by itself: *The monkey chased the weasel...*

Sarchie approaches it, gun trained, as it plays the third verse: *The monkey pulled the weasel's tail...*

Then as Sarchie reaches the piano, the demented MUSIC STOPS.

Silence. Sensing something, Sarchie turns around and sees...

SANTINO

at the end of the corridor: He stands perfectly still in the STAIRWELL DOORWAY, staring at Sarchie with his menacing death-mask face.

And then, as the piano plays the final line -

Pop! Goes the weasel...

A DERANGED FACE

POPS out from under the PIANO LID, right behind Sarchie!

It's JIMMY - he wraps a forearm around Sarchie's neck and YANKS him up and backwards, off his feet - Sarchie's boots CLANK against the piano keys...

Then Jimmy SLAMS Sarchie hard to the floor. Climbing out of the piano, Jimmy is PURE ANIMAL now - a feral beast with impossible strength and speed, a lion attacking its prey.

Sarchie tries to raise his gun, but Jimmy grabs his hand and SMASHES it down hard onto a piece of broken glass.

Sarchie lets go of the gun, CRYING OUT in pain...

INT. STAIRWELL - SAME

Out of breath, gripping the SHOTGUN, Butler eases past the door to the lobby and continues down toward the basement. As he rounds the corner...

A SHARP BLADE SLICES INTO HIS FOOT from underneath the stairs.

Butler FALLS, dropping the shotgun, TUMBLING down the stairs. Reaching the bottom, he looks back and sees...

SANTINO

climbing out from underneath the stairs and over the railing with the unnatural speed and agility of an insect.

He lands on the stairs, a razor-sharp ARMY TOMAHAWK in hand.

Now Butler reaches down into his boot and pulls his Army Ranger COMBAT KNIFE from its sheath.

A horrific, leering GRIN splits Santino's painted death-mask face - and he LEAPS at Butler with a GUTTURAL ROAR!

IN THE BASEMENT

Sarchie pries himself loose from Jimmy, then lands several hard BLOWS to Jimmy's face - none of them having much effect.

Then Jimmy LAUNCHES HIMSELF at Sarchie, knocking Sarchie to the floor again. He wraps his hands around Sarchie's throat, and starts to SQUEEZE...

ANGLE ON ONE OF THE HIGH BASEMENT WINDOWS

as Mendoza lowers himself down into the basement from street level, then DROPS to the floor. Warily, he makes his way into the labyrinth of dark corridors.

BACK IN THE STAIRWELL

Butler and Santino are going at it in a breathtaking KNIFE FIGHT. Both are ultra-skilled, neither one fights with fear.

They exchange punches and kicks, while BLOCKING most swings of the KNIFE and TOMAHAWK. Santino ELBOWS Butler, knocking him off balance enough to create an opening.

THWOCK! He buries the tomahawk blade in Butler's stomach - and for a moment, they both freeze...

Then Butler smiles slightly. His ripped shirt reveals his TRAUMA PLATE - no injury. Butler strikes back hard at Santino, and they continue fighting.

IN THE BASEMENT

Sarchie KICKS at Jimmy with all his might, clawing at Jimmy's vise-grip around his throat - but he can't get loose.

Sarchie is close to losing consciousness...

SARCHIE'S POV: Jimmy looks inhuman. His MOVEMENTS jerky and freakish. Rabid GREYISH FOAM outlines his mouth...

Suddenly, a CRUCIFIX is pressed to Jimmy's forehead - SIZZLING on contact with his flesh.

Jimmy lets go of Sarchie, who GASPS for air, watching as...

MENDOZA

stands over Jimmy, now wearing his PURPLE VESTMENT draped over his shoulders, SHOUTING at Jimmy in Latin. Mendoza appears to be moving in SLIGHT SLOW MOTION, as if in a dream.

Sarchie just lies there, transfixed, as A NEW SOUND now echoes in the silence - the most quiet and eerie of the sounds that have haunted him:

DRIP...DRIP...DRIP...

Like water torture. Sarchie puts his fingers to his ears.

Still holding the wooden cross, Mendoza begins reciting an exorcism prayer - but Sarchie can't hear a single word.

Jimmy is WRITHING and SCREAMING, tortured by HOLY WATER that Mendoza flings at him, and the ritual words of the priest.

Grabbing a piece of BROKEN GLASS from the floor, Jimmy SWIPES at Mendoza's arm holding the crucifix, SLICING IT OPEN - but Mendoza holds firm. He doesn't lower the cross one bit.

IN THE STAIRWELL

Santino and Butler continue their fight. Santino lets out an INHUMAN SCREECH, his mouth opening IMPOSSIBLY WIDE.

Butler stumbles backwards at the freakish sight - and Santino's tomahawk SLICES into Butler's face.

Santino now swings with his left. Blinded by his own blood, Butler instinctively BLOCKS the punch, and Santino BURIES the tomahawk deep into Butler's exposed armpit.

Butler SCREAMS in pain and stumbles back further, BLOOD now gushing down his face...

IN THE BASEMENT

Mendoza is gaining control of Jimmy. As he does, the SURREAL SOUNDS that Sarchie has been hearing start to FADE, and his perception returns to normal.

Sarchie struggles to his feet. Together, Sarchie and Mendoza force Jimmy to the ground, and Sarchie HANDCUFFS him.

SARCHIE
...Where's Butler?

Not having seen him, Mendoza shrugs and shakes his head. Sarchie immediately RUSHES toward...

THE STAIRWELL

He bursts through the doors, sees the BLOOD-SPATTERED WALLS. Slowly, he rounds the corner, and sees...

BUTLER

Lying on the stairs, the TOMAHAWK buried deeply in his SIDE, just above the protection of the trauma plate.

SARCHIE
No, no, NO...!!

Rushing to him, Sarchie feels for a pulse at Butler's throat - then he grabs his radio and calls for help...

SARCHIE
Rodeo Four! Officer down! Repeat,
Officer is down at East 144th and
Rider Avenue!

...as we FADE TO BLACK.

Silence. Then a quiet BEEPING SOUND. We FADE BACK IN ON:

A HEART MONITOR registering a weak heartbeat...

INT. ST. BARNABAS HOSPITAL - ICU - NIGHT

Sarchie sits next to a hospital bed, where Butler lies unconscious and on life-support.

Deep in thought, Sarchie is fingering the ST. BENEDICT MEDALLION that Father Mendoza gave him.

Mendoza appears in the doorway, his wounded arm stitched and bandaged. Avoiding Mendoza's gaze, Sarchie is silent for a moment, struggling for words. Finally:

SARCHIE

I'm sorry, Father. What happened back there...I should have listened.
(looks up)
You were right, I'm not ready for this.

MENDOZA

You didn't do this to him. You can't blame yourself for that.

SARCHIE

This..."gift"...you say I have...

MENDOZA

The "Discernment of Spirits."

SARCHIE

...I don't want it. I just want to go back to being a regular cop.

MENDOZA

You were never just a regular cop. And you don't choose the Work...the Work chooses you.

SARCHIE

Why me?

MENDOZA

Because you're a *life-giver*, Ralph. You want to help people. Protect them. And because God sees what we have in us - even when we don't.

SARCHIE

I can't do it, Father. It's not my fight...I'm not like you.

MENDOZA

It's time for you to face whatever it is that you've been carrying inside for so long... You've got to rid yourself of this weight you carry. And if you don't, the demonic will use it against you - whether you give up the Work, or not.

Sarchie takes a deep breath, then surrenders with a NOD...

CUT TO:

CHRIST CRUCIFIED - the breathtaking 1632 CRUCIFIXION PAINTING by Diego Velázquez.

SARCHIE (O.S.)
Bless me, Father, for I have
sinned. It's been eleven years
since my last confession.

MENDOZA (O.S.)
Continue...

INT. HOSPITAL CHAPEL - PREDAWN

Sarchie and Mendoza sit alone, side-by-side. The copy of the Velázquez painting seems to watch over them from where it hangs near the entrance of the room.

SARCHIE
I've neglected my wife...and my
daughter. For years now. I shut
them out. I put the Job first.

MENDOZA
Go on.

Sarchie takes a deep breath. This is hard for him.

SARCHIE
As a cop, I've always had a pretty
heavy hand...

Sarchie trails off, realizing that he just said the exact same words Santino used when speaking in Sarchie's own voice...

MENDOZA
Go on.

SARCHIE
I killed a man, Father.

MENDOZA
"Marvin"...the one Jane Crenna
mentioned, back in her cell.

SARCHIE
Yes.

As they continue, we CUT TO:

INT. POLICE MUSTER ROOM - FLASHBACK - DAY

During ROLL CALL, a crusty SERGEANT steps up behind the lectern emblazoned with a big NYPD SHIELD and holds up a POLICE SKETCH of a balding, mild-looking, middle-aged MAN.

MENDOZA (V.O.)
Was he a good man?

SARCHIE (V.O.)
No. He was the worst kind of man
there is...

SERGEANT
This is Marvin Sims. Wanted on
eleven counts of child sexual
assault - and now, two counts of
child murder...

Among the COPS listening to the Sergeant is a YOUNGER RALPH
SARCHIE - then still a patrol officer in uniform.

He's reacting with anger and disgust.

SARCHIE (V.O.)
...He was everything I hate. And I
feed off that hate...

EXT. ITALIAN RESTAURANT - FLASHBACK - EARLY EVENING

Sarchie and Jen - both four years younger - leave an Italian
restaurant and start walking down the sidewalk.

Sarchie is off-duty, wearing plain clothes. Jen carries
Christina, then only two years old. As they walk down the
sidewalk, Sarchie reacts, seeing something...

HIS POV: A small group of ONLOOKERS have gathered at the edge
of a NURSERY SCHOOL PLAYGROUND.

Sarchie steps in front of Jen, blocking her view, and sends
her back into the restaurant. Then he RUNS over to the
playground, pushes through the crowd, and sees...

A SMALL PLAYHOUSE

maybe five feet by five. The door is slightly OPEN.

Next to it stands a PATROL COP, talking over his WALKIE-
TALKIE. The cop adjusts the knob, reacting to STATIC on the
line - this is the source for the SOFT AUDIO STATIC in the
sound montage.

Sarchie pulls out his wallet and buzzes the Cop - who, seeing
the badge, steps aside, still talking on his radio...

And Sarchie leans closer to the playhouse, and LOOKS INSIDE:

SARCHIE (V.O.)
 She was six years old. The same age
 Christina is now...

We catch a glimpse of what Sarchie sees: a TINY OUTSTRETCHED
 LEG, a FRILLY DRESS spattered with BLOOD...

SARCHIE (V.O.)
 My blood ran ice cold...

Sarchie RECOILS, looking away from the victim, and sees OTHER
 CHILDREN across the playground. Oblivious to the horror,
 they're riding a small merry-go-round, LAUGHING and PLAYING...

And with this image, ANOTHER SOUND is layered over the soft
 audio static: the distant sound of CHILDREN PLAYING...

SARCHIE (V.O.)
 Marvin, the sick fuck, came back to
 have a second look...

MARVIN SIMS

watches the playground scene from the edge of the crowd.

SARCHIE (V.O.)
 ...And that's when I saw him.

Sarchie locks eyes with Marvin, recognizing him from the
 picture his Sergeant held up during roll call.

Sarchie's expression tells Marvin he's just been made. Marvin
 turns to RUN. Sarchie takes off after him, chasing him into...

A DARK ALLEY

Sarchie CATCHES Marvin, HURLS him into a STAIRWELL. Sarchie
 follows him down and SLAMS his head against the wall.

The two men struggle a moment, then Sarchie HEAD-BUTTS
 Marvin, CRUSHING his nose. Sarchie HITS him again, hard - and
 Marvin goes down. Sarchie lunges after him...

SARCHIE (V.O.)
 I had him under control. But I just
 couldn't stop the rage...

Sarchie is HITTING MARVIN, again and again and again, and now
 ANOTHER SOUND is layered into the audio mix: WET THUMPING,
like a butcher pounding meat...

BLOOD spatters Sarchie's face. He hesitates...

Marvin turns over and tries to CRAWL away. As he does, his body makes a HIDEOUS SCRAPING sound, like a sack dragged across concrete.

SARCHIE (V.O.)
I was like an animal. I couldn't
stop myself. I didn't want to stop.

Now Marvin stops. He can't crawl another inch.

BLOOD DRIPS from his face into a small puddle of DIRTY WATER, and we layer in that quiet and eerie sound:

DRIP...DRIP...DRIP...

Then Sarchie grabs Marvin and flips him back over.

CLOSE ON MARVIN as he looks up at Sarchie: His FACE is COMPLETELY SMASHED IN...

IT'S THE BLOODY, BATTERED FACE FROM THE POLICE STATION VIDEO MONITOR - the one that flashed across the screen when Sarchie watched the surveillance video from the zoo.

Marvin opens his lips to SPEAK, and we hear the same RASPY VOICE that Santino used in the basement:

MARVIN
No, please...help me...

And with that, the nightmare AUDIO MONTAGE is complete.

Sarchie stares down at Marvin, breathing hard, expressionless... Then Sarchie closes his eyes, and we...

FLASHCUT: THE LITTLE GIRL, dead, in the playhouse -

And Sarchie starts HITTING MARVIN AGAIN. As he does, the IMAGE WASHES OVER, the WHOLE SCREEN TINTING RED...

SARCHIE (V.O.)
I kept hitting him. Over and over.
Even long after he was dead...

INT. BACK IN THE HOSPITAL CHAPEL (FLASHBACK ENDS) - PREDAWN

Sarchie slumps, his head bowed. A GROAN escapes his lips.

SARCHIE
I lost myself that night.

MENDOZA
You're certain the man was guilty?

SARCHIE

One hundred percent. His DNA was on all the victims. I've tried to tell myself that he deserved to die. But if that's true, then why does this eat at me every goddamn day?

MENDOZA

Because even if Marvin got what he deserved, what you gave him wasn't justice, it was vengeance - and vengeance destroys the avenger. Justice comes from Heaven, revenge from Hell.

Sarchie nods. He understands. Mendoza offers absolution:

MENDOZA

(in Latin)

Dominus noster Jesus Christus te absolvat; et ego auctoritate ipsius te absolvo ab omni vinculo excommunicationis.

(makes the sign of the cross)

Thereupon, I absolve you from your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

A moment of silence. Sarchie is visibly relieved.

SARCHIE

So what now, Father?

MENDOZA

Go home. Be with your family.

INT. CHRISTINA'S ROOM - PRE-DAWN

CLOSE ON CHRISTINA'S STUFFED ANIMALS in the display case: SOCK MONKEY, PURPLE ALLIGATOR, PLUSH LION, ROUND BLACK ANGRY BIRD...and the VINTAGE JACK-IN-THE-BOX...

Christina is asleep in bed, clutching her sock monkey.

We MOVE IN ON HER SLOWLY, like the POV of an animal closing in on its prey. Until we STOP right next to her face.

AND WE HEAR A TINY CREAKING SOUND

Christine stirs a bit, sensing in her sleep that something's not quite right.

CLOSE ON THE VINTAGE JACK-IN-THE-BOX

as the handle TURNS BY ITSELF, making the TINY CREAKING SOUND, and slowly PLAYING "POP GOES THE WEASEL": *Round and round the mulberry bush...* And then it STOPS.

A PUFF OF WARM AIR

like a brisk exhalation blows upward into Christina's face, blowing her hair gently back.

She opens her eyes - and sees the ROUND BLACK ANGRY BIRD roll forward onto the floor. It stops upright, its angry face staring right at Christina.

Now the jack-in-the-box PLAYS AGAIN, tiny handle creaking: *The monkey chased the weasel...* And it STOPS.

Christina SITS UP in bed, getting scared.

ANOTHER GUST rushes through Christina's hair, making her blink - accompanied this time by a SOUND like a low, mournful SIGH...

The Angry Bird rolls again, as if blown forward by the warm, breath-like wind. It stops in the middle of the room, angry face glaring at Christina.

She stares down at the stuffed toy, wide-eyed with fear.

Then she hears the TINY CREAKING sound again, and watches in horror as the jack-in-the-box handle turns on its own:

The monkey chased the weasel's tail... It STOPS. Silence.

CHRISTINA
(a tiny voice)
Mommy...

POP! GOES THE WEASEL!

The LITTLE CLOWN FACE POPS OUT of the jack-in-the-box - and we immediately see that THE FACE HAS BEEN PAINTED: It has the exact same ghastly death-mask face as Santino.

Christina JUMPS out of bed and RUSHES for the door -

AND THE SCRATCHING SOUND

begins again, MUCH LOUDER than before - but still coming from the floor beneath her.

IT FOLLOWS HER, an excruciating SCRRRITCCCHHHH, as if a giant claw were being dragged across a blackboard.

Reaching the door, Christina grabs the doorknob - and suddenly, there is SILENCE.

Trembling, Christina's hand slowly turns the doorknob.

This time it OPENS...

AND A BLAST OF WIND

hits her with the SOUND of a TREMENDOUS EXHALATION like a dragon's breath, FLUTTERING her hair and clothes.

Closing her eyes, Christina GASPS. When the hot wind subsides, she opens her eyes, and sees...

SANTINO

staring at her from the shadows at the end of the hall, his eyes glittering in the mask of ghastly dark face paint.

He STEPS TOWARD HER - and as she SCREAMS...

CUT TO:

WINDSHIELD WIPERS

rhythmically ticking across Sarchie's windshield like a metronome - *whup...whup...whup...*

INT. SARCHIE'S CAR - DRIVING - EARLY DAWN

At the wheel, Sarchie peers through the windshield into LIGHT SNOW as the wipers sweep it off the glass.

He takes a deep breath, and exhales with relief. The inner-weight he has carried for so long is starting to lift.

Now Sarchie squints as if he sees something ahead...

CRACK! A BLACK CROW flies into the windshield, its sharp beak PUNCHING A HOLE in the glass!

Sarchie SLAMS on the brakes, and the car SWERVES as he fights to keep it on the road.

The crow ROLLS its eyes, FLAPPING and SHRIEKING - TRAPPED, its beak embedded in the windshield...

Finally, Sarchie SKIDS TO A STOP on the shoulder of the road.

He sits there, freaked-out, eye-to-eye with the SCREELING beast - and then the crow DIES. A moment of silence.

SARCHIE'S PHONE RINGS

He glances down at the caller ID, which says "HOME." This time, he picks it up quickly and answers.

SARCHIE
(into CELL PHONE)
...Jen?

Sarchie hears only the familiar STATIC.

SARCHIE
(into CELL PHONE, anxious)
Jen, are you there? Are you okay?

And now, he hears the RASPY VOICE:

RASPY VOICE
(OVER TELEPHONE)
No, please...help me...

Sarchie's face has a look of horrified shock as he realizes what's happening... He clutches the phone tightly.

SARCHIE
(quiet and intense)
Santino... Are you...in my house?

CLICK. The caller hangs up.

Sarchie floors it, and the car PEELS OUT, swerving back onto the road. He tries calling back the "HOME" number, but it goes straight to voice-mail.

Driving, Sarchie thinks for a moment. Dials another number.

GOMEZ
(OVER TELEPHONE)
Yo, this is Gomez.

SARCHIE
It's Sarchie. I need help. Now.

EXT. SARCHIE'S HOME - DAWN

Sarchie's car ROARS up and SKIDS to a stop. He hops out and RUNS toward his house through the FALLING SNOW.

The house is SILENT. GUN READY, Sarchie tries the front door. It SWINGS OPEN. He steps inside.

INT. SARCHIE'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sarchie stops just inside the doorway, astonished to see...

SANTINO

Standing perfectly still in the middle of the living room.

Santino's arms hang casually at his sides. He's like a savage animal confident of the brutality coiled up inside him.

Gun trained on Santino, Sarchie YELLS:

SARCHIE
GET ON THE GROUND! NOW! GET ON THE
GROUND OR I WILL FUCKING SHOOT YOU!

Santino doesn't move. Now Sarchie CALLS OUT in a panic:

SARCHIE
JEN...! CHRISTINA...!

Now we hear Santino speak in his own voice for the first time.

SANTINO
They're not here. And they'll die
if you don't find them.

SARCHIE
(stunned)
Where are they?

Santino just stands there with relentless calm. Sarchie strides forward and HITS Santino in the face with the butt of his pistol - knocking him backwards.

SARCHIE
WHERE ARE THEY?!

Santino just smiles slightly, BLEEDING from a fresh cut on his cheek. ANOTHER BLOW with the gun sends Santino back against the STAIRCASE RAILING.

SARCHIE
TELL ME WHERE THEY ARE!!!

With BLOOD flowing freely from his mouth and nose, Santino smirks at Sarchie, and speaks with a slightly altered voice:

SANTINO
We know. Let us in, we'll tell you.

Full of hot murderous RAGE, Sarchie STRIKES Santino with the GUN a third time, then presses it to his forehead.

SANTINO

Do it. It's the only way you will
ever find them.

Sarchie's finger tightens on the trigger, his gun hand shaking.
Every part of him wants to end Santino, then and there...

SANTORI

Let us in. Then you will know...

Sarchie stops himself. A moment of clarity. And then...

CLICK. Sarchie steps back, and Santino realizes that he's
just been handcuffed to the iron staircase railing...

SANTINO

Then your family dies. As do you.

He begins to PULL against the railing with the handcuffs -
the metal rail BENDING under his unnatural strength...

GOMEZ

RUSHES IN through the front door, along with Nadler and TWO
OTHER UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICERS.

SNAP! The RAILING BREAKS and Santino LUNGES at Sarchie -

But the cops protect their own, GANG-TACKLING Santino.

It takes the strength of all five cops to restrain Santino
and force him outside, and into a waiting SECTOR CAR...

EXT. 46TH PRECINCT HOUSE - LIGHT SNOW - EARLY MORNING

His injured arm bandaged, Mendoza waits outside in the cold.

He lights a cigarette, his hand TREMBLING - he knows the
nightmare that is coming his way. He takes a deep drag from
the cigarette. Solace in the smoke.

The SECTOR CAR and several POLICE SEDANS pull up and park.
Sarchie and the other cops all quickly get out, and Sarchie
removes Santino from the back of the Sector Car.

Sarchie escorts Santino toward the precinct house, along with
Gomez, Nadler, and the other cops.

Hands cuffed behind his back, Santino is calm now - his gaze
lowered, his body almost limp in their grasp...

Staring hard at Santino, the priest isn't fooled by his
passive demeanor. Mendoza turns to Sarchie:

MENDOZA
You ready for this?

SARCHIE
I am now, Father.

CUT TO:

A VIDEO CAMERA

mounted high on a wall for a wide-angle view of...

INT. THE HOLDING CELL - MOMENTS LATER

There's a SMALL WINDOW to the outside on one wall - locked and painted-over. A LARGE MIRROR embedded in another wall.

The camera is pointed at Santino, who sits on a steel-framed chair in the shadows against the far wall. His ghastly face paint has been partially washed off, but his possessed countenance is now even more menacing.

He's wearing a STRAIGHTJACKET - no socks or shoes - and his bare feet are strapped to the legs of his chair.

His EYES are bright and feral. A predator.

Sarchie and Mendoza approach, while Gomez and Nadler hang back and watch, wide eyes betraying their unease.

Santino GROWLS, low and menacing - a warning for Sarchie and the priest not to come any closer...

SARCHIE
Where are my wife and daughter?

Suddenly, Santino LUNGES at Sarchie, but he's stopped by the straightjacket, which is tied firmly to the back of his chair.

Face-to-face with Sarchie now, Santino starts FOAMING AT THE MOUTH, and his jaws SNAP WILDLY at the air. Santino is barely human anymore - he's pure animal.

SARCHIE
(louder now)
Where is my family...?

Santino's EYES suddenly NARROW into feline SLITS, and his short cropped hair BRISTLES. He HISSES at Sarchie.

SARCHIE
(recoiling)
Jesus. He sounds like a fuckin' cat.

Mendoza removes a small bottle of HOLY WATER from his bag.

MENDOZA
(opening the bottle)
May the blessing of the Father, and
of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost
descend upon thee and abide with
thee forever...

As Mendoza is about to splash the holy water on him, Santino suddenly RIPS FREE OF THE STRAIGHTJACKET.

With a FELINE SCREECH, he SWIPES his CLAW-LIKE FINGERNAILS at Mendoza and TEARS into the priest's already-injured arm!

MENDOZA
(cries out in pain)
AHHHH!

Sarchie steps up behind Santino and restrains him with an illegal CHOKE-HOLD. Gomez and Nadler rush over to help, and they all three force Santino back down, cuffing his hands to the chair.

NADLER
This guy's not human! He ripped
through that straightjacket like it
was a fuckin' silk blouse.

Sarchie glances at Gomez and Nadler, then up at the CAMERA.

SARCHIE
Leave us alone - and turn the
camera off. I'll take full
responsibility.

GOMEZ
Sarchie, we can't -

SARCHIE
(gives him the Look)
-Do it. Now.

Scared half to death, Gomez and Nadler don't need to much convincing. They leave, stepping into...

AN OBSERVATION ROOM

Nadler continues walking out into the hallway as Gomez shuts off the video recorder for the camera in the holding cell.

Then Gomez turns to the OBSERVATION WINDOW: It's a two-way mirror that allows a view of the HOLDING CELL while a speaker transmits the SOUND. He lingers at the window, watching...

BACK IN THE HOLDING CELL, Sarchie and Mendoza are alone with Santino. He GROWLS softly, his head slightly bowed, peering up at them as GREYISH FOAM pours excessively from his mouth onto his shirt...

MENDOZA

We need to perform a full ritual exorcism on this man, but...we need time to prepare...

SARCHIE

We don't have any time! I need him to tell me where my family is!

MENDOZA

The demon will never let him do that. Not while it possesses him.

SARCHIE

That's why we can't wait!

MENDOZA

Leave me alone with him...

SARCHIE

I can't do that, Father. Not while he's under arrest... Don't worry about me. Just do what you gotta do. I'll help you...

MENDOZA

All right. We will perform the exorcism now.

IN THE OBSERVATION ROOM, Gomez is still watching through the two-way mirror. He mutters to himself with nervous amusement...

GOMEZ

You're fuckin' kiddin' me.

He closes the door to the hallway, then walks back over to the window and takes up a "ringside seat" to watch the show.

BACK IN THE HOLDING CELL, Santino is quieter now, seemingly lost in the sea of his own internal madness. His breathing is fast and irregular, with each intake of breath sounding like the SNORTING of a pig.

Mendoza's eyes are afire - it's the look of a soldier heading into battle. He takes a small leather-bound BOOK from his bag, and hands it to Sarchie.

CLOSE ON THE BOOK as Sarchie opens it to the title page: Pope Leo XIII Prayer of Ritual Exorcism.

MENDOZA

Read the responses only.

The priest removes a PURPLE VESTMENT, which he KISSES, then drapes it around his own neck.

MENDOZA

There are six stages to exorcism:
Pretense, Presence, Breakpoint,
Voice, Clash, and Expulsion.

Mendoza takes out another copy of the Pope Leo prayer, then turns to Sarchie.

MENDOZA

During each stage you will do
 exactly as I say, and nothing else.
 (indicates Santino)
 Don't talk to it. Don't listen to
 it. Just read, and pray. Do you
 understand?

SARCHIE

Yeah. I got it.

Santino now SPEAKS, quoting *The Doors'* famous line with a voice that's eerily similar to Jim Morrison:

SANTINO

*"Is everybody in? The ceremony is
 about to begin..."*

MENDOZA

Yes. Let's begin.

Mendoza SPLASHES holy water on Sarchie, then on Santino, and SPLASHES him as well. Santino lets out a hideous, ear-piercing SQUEAL like a hog being disemboweled in a slaughterhouse.

The squeal goes on for a full minute, without Santino ever taking a single breath, and the FRONT LEGS of his chair BANG LOUDLY against the floor at a furious pace.

Mendoza reads from the prayer book, raising his voice so he can be heard over Santino's bizarre inhuman squeal.

MENDOZA

"Glorious prince of the Heavenly
 Host, Saint Michael the Archangel,
 defend us now in this conflict
 against the rulers of this world of
 darkness, against the spirits of
 wickedness in high places."

SARCHIE

(also reading from the book)
 "Come to the rescue of men, whom
 God has created in His likeness,
 and has redeemed from the tyranny
 of evil."

The HORRIFIC SQUEAL CONTINUES...

MENDOZA

"I rebuke thee, devil!"

Sarchie's voice seems weaker now as he reads:

SARCHIE

"...In the name of Dominus, depart."

MENDOZA

"The Lord be with you."

SARCHIE

(trailing off)
 "And...also...with..."

Mendoza looks over at Sarchie, who now looks confused and distraught, as though Santino's nightmarish squeal is beginning to dizzy his brain.

But it's more than that - for Sarchie, the sounds in the room are SUBSIDING as if underwater, and they are replaced by other familiar sounds: SOFT AUDIO STATIC...the distant sound of CHILDREN PLAYING... and the grisly WET THUMPING sound...

MENDOZA

(to Sarchie)

What you're feeling is the
Presence, the first stage. It is a
 deep psychological terror. Don't
 give in to it - it will pass in a
 moment.

(back to the prayer book)

"Let God arise! Let His enemies be
 scattered! And let them that hate
 Him flee before His face!"

SARCHIE

(reading, struggling to focus)
 "As wax melteth before the fire
 ...so let the wicked perish at the
 presence of God."

THE OTHER SOUNDS penetrate Sarchie's consciousness - the
 HIDEOUS SCRAPING, and the quiet, eerie DRIP...DRIP...DRIP...

Mendoza glances at him again with concern, but continues:

MENDOZA

"In the Name of our Lord Jesus
Christ, we drive you from us
unclean spirit, infernal invader!"

The horrific sounds of the room now return for Sarchie.
Mendoza holds a WOODEN CRUCIFIX out toward Santino, SPLASHES
Santino with holy water, and continues to read:

MENDOZA

"May you be snatched up and driven
away by the Precious Blood of the
Divine Lamb!"

And now, finally, the CHAIR STOPS BANGING, and Santino'S
HORRIFIC SQUEAL SUBSIDES.

MENDOZA

(sharply, to Sarchie)
Are you all right? Can you
continue?

SARCHIE

I...

SANTINO

What's happening...?

Santino slouches back into his chair, exhausted. Breathing
heavily, he looks up at Sarchie and Mendoza...

His bestial countenance has given way to a normal human
expression of fear and confusion. He looks around, distraught.

SANTINO

Who are you people? What am I doing
here...?

The SOUNDS FADE from Sarchie's consciousness. Sarchie looks
at Mendoza, and speaks quietly:

SARCHIE

Is that it? Is it over?

MENDOZA

No. This is the Pretense. The demon
is attempting to hide behind the
personality of the possessed.

Mendoza removes a small vial of OIL from his shirt pocket as
he reads from the prayer book again:

MENDOZA

"In Jesus' name we refuse and rebuke this evil sent against us..."

SARCHIE

(reading the response)

"O Father in Heaven, so be it."

Making the sign of the cross, Mendoza ANOINTS Santino's forehead with the oil...

SANTINO'S HEAD suddenly SPASMS with disconcerting speed - and his face starts TWITCHING, like the face of an insect.

MENDOZA

What is your name, demon?

Santino leans down and TEARS at his own shirt with his TEETH.

He RIPS the seams of both shoulders, and the shirt falls to his waist, exposing his upper torso.

MENDOZA

You who torment this child of God,
in the name of Jesus and by his
dominant power, TELL ME YOUR NAME!

And now, in a sudden and violent response to Mendoza's goading, Santino RIPS HIS RIGHT LEG FREE OF THE STRAP and SWIPES IT UPWARDS at Mendoza with incredible power and speed!

Mendoza quickly steps back and evades the kick, then watches in horror as Santino SINKS HIS TEETH into his own leg with rabid fury.

He rips out a chunk of leg and SPITS it at Mendoza's face, then quickly rips out another chunk as BLOOD drips down his chin and leg. Mendoza continues the ritual prayer:

MENDOZA

"Oh cursed dragon, and you wicked legions, we adjure you by the living God, whose intercession we now implore..."

As Mendoza continues, Sarchie stares at this monstrosity for a moment - watching Santino chew on his own bleeding flesh.

Then Sarchie removes his own BELT, then steps forward and grabs hold of Santino's bloody leg.

Using all his strength, Sarchie forces the leg back down and fastens Santino's ankle tightly to the chair with his belt.

MENDOZA

"God your creator knows your name,
your number - his mark is upon you.
God beckons you to depart!"

With his own blood now smeared across his face and chin,
Santino's pupils CONTRACT into thin DIAMOND SHAPES, giving
him the cold eyes of a serpent...

With a HISS, Santino STRIKES at Sarchie like an angry cobra, his
head SNAPPING forward. Sarchie jumps back, just out of reach...

AND A DARK PURPLE TONGUE SLITHERS out of Santino's mouth and
FLITTERS BACK AND FORTH at what seems an impossible speed,
inches from Sarchie's face!

Then Santino's FOREHEAD SPLITS OPEN, as if a thorn tears the
flesh. BLOOD DRIPS down his face. Sarchie backs away.

IN THE OBSERVATION ROOM, Gomez comes up out of his chair,
awestruck by what he sees.

GOMEZ

Oh. My. Fuck...

BACK IN THE HOLDING CELL, ALL IS QUIET, except for the sound
of Santino's RAPID BREATHING...

MENDOZA

This is the Breakpoint...

SARCHIE

Yeah? What does that mean?

MENDOZA

It means that we're about to hear
the Voice.

(louder now, to Santino)

YOUR NAME, DEMON! GIVE ME YOUR NAME!

The demon GROWLS, then begins speaking in a brainsick frenzy.
Its VOICE is a blend of both animal and human sounds:

SANTINO/DEMON

Same lame name game, and I know
yours, you fucking sow! Mendoza
been-a sucker! Mendoza been-a
fucker! So hump, hump, hump off,
holy Preeeeeeeeeist!

MENDOZA

In the name of Jesus -

SANTINO/DEMON

-In the name of Jeez-ass! In the
name of Jeez-ass! This animal I
indwell will never ever be
releeeeeeeased...!

The words disintegrate into a bizarre vocal blend of HISSES,
GROWLS, and creepy GLOTTAL CLICKING SOUNDS.....

MENDOZA

(louder now)

By the authority of our Lord and in
His holy name, I command you to -

SANTINO/DEMON

-Oooh, I bring it out of 'em. The
animal side in these eating,
puking, shitting little worms.
Fucking creatures - I bring out the
beeeeeeeeast...!

MENDOZA

SILENCE!!

The demon quiets down for the moment. Eyes on Mendoza.

MENDOZA

I command you, demon, to tell me
what I shall call you.

Now Santino drops his head BACK...and his neck seems to
STRETCH a bit farther than should be possible. His head, now
inverted, faces away from them.

Mendoza walks around behind him, gets right in his face:

MENDOZA

Your name, demon.

And now Sarchie hears a LOUD WHISPER at the back of his neck:

WHISPER

Jungler.

Sarchie SPINS around, but sees only his own reflection in the
one-way mirror.

IN THE OBSERVATION ROOM, Gomez stares back at Sarchie. Both
men look scared.

MENDOZA

(to Sarchie)

What is it?

SARCHIE

You...you didn't hear that...?

Gomez unconsciously shakes his head...

BACK IN THE HOLDING CELL, Sarchie hears it again, but it's all around him now - from everywhere comes HISSING, OVERLAPPING, REVERBERANT WHISPERS mixed with hideous ANIMAL SOUNDS:

WHISPERS

*Jungler, Jungler, Jungler My name
is The Jungler I bring out the
beast, Jungler, I accent the
animal, Jungler, I cultivate the
creature, Jungler, Welcome welcome
welcome to The Junglerrrrrrrrrrr...*

It ends in a CACOPHONY of ECHOES.

MENDOZA

Do you hear the Voice...?

(Sarchie nods)

Is it giving you its name...?

(Sarchie nods again)

What is it...?

SARCHIE

It says it's called...The "Jungler."

Mendoza immediately steps back in front of Santino and holds out the crucifix. The SKIN on Santino's face, legs, and arms starts TWITCHING uncontrollably...

MENDOZA

Jungler! You have been vanquished
by the blood of Christ! By the
authority of that blood I command
you to depart this servant of God!

SANTINO/DEMON

Never, never, ever - this beast
belongs to meeeeeeeeeee...!

MENDOZA

Desist, Jungler! Your peril is
imminent!

(quieter)

...And your end is near.

Santino's body SHUDDERS, and he begins to breathe even more rapidly than before. The hatred in the possessed man's eyes is now mixed with fear and dread.

MENDOZA
 (quietly to Sarchie)
 Get ready.

SARCHIE
 For what?!

MENDOZA
 The fifth stage...the Clash.

MUSIC BLARES: It's the ending section of "BREAK ON THROUGH" by *The Doors*, BLASTING through the room at ear-splitting volume.

Sarchie WINCES and covers his ears. Mendoza - and Gomez(through the window) - both stare at Sarchie, perplexed: They don't hear a thing.

THE WINDOW TO THE OUTSIDE EXPLODES: A GUST of FREEZING WIND blows in dense SNOW, which SWIRLS throughout the room...

MENDOZA
 (returns to prayer book)
 "By the power of the precious blood
 of Christ, we cast you out...!"

Sarchie fumbles to the next page, catching up:

SARCHIE
 (reads the response)
 "We plead the Blood of Christ
 against you, evil spirit!"

SANTINO'S CHAIR begins to RATTLE and SHAKE - all four legs vibrate hard against the floor. The demon lets out an ear-piercing, bestial SCREAM.

MENDOZA
 (shouting over the scream)
 "AND WE COMMAND YOU TO DEPART AND
 GO WHERE THE LORD SENDS YOU!"

THE CHAIR BEGINS TO LEVITATE

slowly RISING just an inch or two off the floor...

MENDOZA
 Hold him down.

Warily, Sarchie steps behind Santino and presses down on his shoulders, forcing the chair back down to the floor.

Sarchie looks down at Santino's SHIRTLESS BACK and sees SANTINO'S VERTEBRAE BULGING slightly out of his back, like they're about to break through his skin.

Mendoza removes a ST. BENEDICT'S MEDAL from around his own neck.

MENDOZA

"The Cross of Saint Benedict, be
the Holy Cross of my light."

Sarchie watches wide-eyed as Santino's protruding vertebrae now SINK DOWN INTO HIS BODY until it looks like he has no spine at all.

Mendoza kisses the St. Benedict medal and moves toward Santino. But as he does, the music reaches the final climax: *Break on through, break on through, break on through...*

SANTINO VIOLENTLY BREAKS FREE OF THE HANDCUFFS! He reaches back cobra-quick, GRABS SARCHIE, and FLIPS HIM THROUGH THE AIR. Sarchie SLAMS HARD against the mirror -

IN THE OBSERVATION ROOM, Gomez RECOILS from the window as Sarchie HITS the glass...

Santino LUNGES at Mendoza, his legs bound to the chair, as Sarchie tries to scramble to his feet...

Then Gomez BURSTS INTO THE HOLDING CELL, joining Sarchie, and both cops move toward Santino. Mendoza waves them back:

MENDOZA

No...!

The MUSIC ENDS. A moment of silence...

Mendoza stares at Santino, his expression fierce with conviction. Santino MOANS like a wounded animal...

MENDOZA

Let him be.

Sarchie and Gomez slowly back away.

MENDOZA

(steps toward Santino)
By the mighty power of God you
shall drink yourself your own
poisons...!

He PRESSES the St. Benedict medal against Santino's forehead.

MENDOZA

BE GONE, DEMON! By the authority of
Christ, and by His power alone, I
CAST YOU OUT!

Stepping forward, Sarchie joins Mendoza in SHOUTING:

SARCHIE & MENDOZA
 I CAST YOU OUT! I CAST YOU OUT!! I
CAST YOU OUT...!!!

BOOM! A THUNDEROUS SOUND SHAKES THE ENTIRE ROOM - and we hear the faint, reverberant ECHO OF SCREAMING ANIMALS FADING into silence.

And then all is calm.

GOMEZ
 (looking around the room)
 What the fuck was that noise...?

MENDOZA
 The Expulsion. It's over. The beast
 is gone.

Santino looks up at Mendoza with the earnest expression of a frightened child - and we hear FAINT MUSIC BEGIN: A soft, beautiful CHORAL HYMN... Sarchie steps up close to Santino.

SARCHIE
 (emotional)
 Where are they...? Tell me. Please.

Santino is so weak he can barely speak. Sarchie leans closer, and Santino WHISPERS SOMETHING to Sarchie that we don't hear...

EXT. A GRIM-LOOKING STORAGE FACILITY - MORNING

Near the Bronx waterfront. Weeds and garbage everywhere. Graffiti snakes across the walls of garage-sized STORAGE UNITS.

The CHORAL MUSIC CONTINUES TO BUILD IN VOLUME, and ALL OTHER SOUND IS MUTED...

INT. ONE OF THE STORAGE UNITS - SAME

The dark interior is full of old paint cans, brushes, drop-cloths - and a battered WHITE VAN with "AUGUSTINE INTERIORS & PAINT" stencilled on the side.

Outside the DOOR, something metal SNAPS - then the DOOR OPENS with a CLATTER, flooding the space with LIGHT.

Sarchie RUSHES IN with OTHER COPS behind him. Frantic, he CUTS THE CHAINS on the double doors of the van, and RIPS the doors open to reveal...

JEN AND CHRISTINA

Haggard with terror, but unharmed and very much alive.

Sarchie and his daughter embrace. Then he locks eyes with Jen... And after a moment, he reaches out and HUGS her tight, like he'll never let go of her again.

All the Cops stand back, watching the family's emotional reunion. And as the CHORAL MUSIC CONTINUES we see...

A MONTAGE OF THE BRONX - SUMMER AFTERNOON

Hopeful images of the city - families in front yards, kids riding bikes, old men playing backgammon in Pelham Bay Park.

MENDOZA (V.O.)
...I spoke this morning to a lady
in West Harlem who described things
that sounded credible to me...

EXT. SARCHIE'S FRONT PORCH - SAME

Sarchie and Mendoza, casually dressed, sip on beers.

MENDOZA
The archdiocese has asked for a
visit to her home tomorrow night.
They think it may be a legitimate
case of infestation.

Mendoza finished off his beer, then pops a piece of GUM.

SARCHIE
Nicotine gum...? No shit?

MENDOZA
For good this time. So, tomorrow
night?

SARCHIE
As long it's okay with Jen, I'll be
there...

From inside, they hear a BABY CRY.

MENDOZA
I think that's our cue...

They turn and enter...

INT. SARCHIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Butler, Gomez, and Nadler stand around sipping beers and snacks on food laid out on the table.

His near-fatal injury healed, Butler sports a new facial scar that makes him look even more like the badass that he is.

Now Christina enters, followed by Jen who carries a SMALL BUNDLE - a FUSSY BABY that's only a few months old.

Mendoza steps up next to a SMALL TABLE covered in white lace. Atop is his vestment and a small bowl of HOLY WATER.

MENDOZA

What child is presented in this
home today for holy baptism?

JEN

Daniella Ann Sarchie.

Jen steps forward and hands the infant to Sarchie. They stand together before Mendoza.

MENDOZA

And who presents this child to be
baptized?

SARCHIE

Jennifer and Ralph Sarchie.

Sarchie looks up at the familiar WOODEN CRUCIFIX on the wall. WARM LIGHT bathes his face, and he wears a look of peace - the inner weight is gone.

He looks over at Jen and smiles, then kisses her on the cheek.

MENDOZA

Do you, Ralph Sarchie, father of
Daniella Ann Sarchie, renounce
Satan and all of his works?

PUSH IN ON SARCHIE as he turns to the priest and answers with conviction:

SARCHIE

I do renounce him. All his works,
and all his ways.

(beat)

I renounce all evil.

CUT TO BLACK.