

Donnington

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. GOLGOTH MINE ENTRANCE - DAY

Early morning. Dark clouds spread their bleakness over all.

SUPER: "1982"

A rusted yellow school BUS pulls up, stops. The door opens with a desperate SCREECH of hydraulics.

Weary MINERS, rough-hewn men, step off the bus, form a line at the large iron double-doors, underneath an imposing banner stamped in metal: "Golgoth Mine, Town of Donnington. PROUD!"

DUEY, an old man with an extremely care-worn face, takes their punch-cards and feeds them into a machine.

DUEY

Cotlin, in, Metler, in, Vasquez...

A TALL MINER, early 30s, lines up next to a BEARDED MINER, their routine.

We will only see the Bearded Miner from behind.

Tall Miner pulls out a pack of smokes. Searches for a light.

The Bearded Miner carries a conspicuous duffle bag; he's nervous.

Tall Miner nudges Bearded Miner, hoping for a light.

Bearded Miner shakes his head "no."

Something inside the bag moves.

INT. GOLGOTH MINE - DAY

A team of miners, including the Tall and Bearded Miner, rides a rail car down a track, descending into the earth.

As the dark consumes them, all the men but the Bearded Miner flip on their helmet lamps.

Tall Miner looks at him with questioning eyes.

(CONTINUED)

BEARDED MINER

I see better in the dark, now.

INT. CAVERN - DAY

DRILLS assault our ears as the team works at different machines in the dank cavern.

IN A CORNER

the Bearded Miner kneels on the dirt, his eyes bulge underneath fogged up goggles. Sweat pours. He reaches into THE DUFFLE BAG and removes --

a squirming BABY in a diaper --

it wails, but is drowned out by the DRILLS.

The Bearded Miner cradles the baby under his jacket with one hand, and claws at the earth with his other.

He's digging a hole.

Impatient, he grabs a claw hammer, starts to hack at the ground, deepening the hole.

ACROSS THE CAVERN

The Tall Miner looks up from the separator -- his eyes bulge --

the baby's face peeks out of his co-worker's coat.

TALL MINER

Jack, no!

Other Miners look, shocked.

All drills STOP.

The BABY'S SCREAMS echo through the tunnel.

The Tall Miner runs toward the Bearded Miner.

The Bearded Miner's eyes dance crazily under his goggles, his BREATHING at a clip --

his eyes find a narrow tunnel, taped off -- a pale RED LIGHT beckons from inside the entrance.

(CONTINUED)

The Bearded Miner, baby in arms, runs through the entrance of the tunnel, severing the tape. He disappears from sight.

The Tall Miner follows him into the tunnel.

A RUMBLING. Rocks and dirt begin to rain from the ceiling. The other Miners run for cover in vain.

The rumbling becomes a ROAR. SCREAMS.

CUT TO BLACK.

SUPER: "1999"

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Ash grey clouds gather in the sky.

A few figures in black and two uniformed SHERIFF'S DEPUTIES stand around a plywood casket ready to be lowered. "D.O.C." is stenciled in red on the casket.

A MINISTER reads from a bible.

BEN, 17, a lanky coiled spring with dark features, stands stoic, hands in the pockets of his dimestore slacks.

MINISTER

...he said, Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son...

Ben stares at the casket, finding a jagged row of splinters on its wooden surface.

MINISTER

Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.

(lowers the bible)

I understand we have the son of Kyle Danvers here. Is there anything you'd like to say, young man?

BEN

Yes. I'd like to thank the almighty father, Zeus. And his Norse counterpart, Odin. And his Roman iteration, Jupiter.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BEN (CONT'D)
 Oh, and Yahweh, while we're at it,
 he'd be your version, right?

A beat. The Minister considers how to respond.

MAN (O.S.)
 The Lord sends you to hell, you
 son of a bitch!

A MAN in a grease-stained mechanics' jumpsuit rushes up, his obese WIFE trails him. He points to the casket.

Ben is unaffected, like he's seen it before.

Three other PROTESTERS stand off on the nearby road, holding cardboard signs: "God Saves!" and "Man Kills, God Punishes."

The Sheriff's Deputies approach them, hands up, usher them away.

MINISTER
 (to Ben)
 It's okay to be angry, son.

BEN
 I'm not angry. I'm just a pagan.

INT. CAR - MOVING - DAY

Ben slumps in the passenger seat, staring out the window.

Bright, similar homes rush by.

The driver is DOUGLAS BRUNDEL, 40s, a Caseworker in a drab suit.

BEN
 Do I have to stay in this town?

BRUNDEL
 I know you don't remember it, but
 Donnington is where you were born.
 There's a really nice group home
 here run by a clergyman.

BEN
 Great. He'll feed me to the
 lions.

(CONTINUED)

BRUNDEL

(smiles)

I don't think they do that anymore.

The car passes a SMILING NEIGHBOR watering his bright green lawn. Ben scoffs.

BRUNDEL

Your new school is one of the best in the state. Top-notch. It's a great opportunity for a young man who's...

BEN

Officially an orphan, now that his father the con has died in jail?

Brundel takes a turn onto a dirt driveway. They drive toward a house in the distance, looks run-down.

Ben turns to Brundel.

BEN

He wasn't a murderer, just because people say he is.

BRUNDEL

I didn't say that, Ben.

BEN

And I'm gonna prove it. Just watch me.

EXT. JESUIT HOUSE - DAY

On the porch stands an elderly PRIEST in black collar.

The Priest waves.

BEN

This guy's older than Chronos.

Ben gets out of the car.

BRUNDEL

Father Bocc, here's your new tenant, Ben Danvers.

Ben stares at the ground.

(CONTINUED)

FATHER BOCC
He looks like a good kid.
(beat)
But who likes goats, huh?

Fathre Bocc stares down Ben.

Father Bocc LAUGHS, erupts in an infectious smile.

Ben curls a slight smile. He likes this old guy.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

MR. GRABASH, late 30s, soft chin, looks down at a clipboard from the front of the room.

MR. GRABASH
Welcome to the Donnington Lamb of
God Evangelical School for
Christian Leadership Development,
Mr. Danvers.

All the TEENS, in school uniform, turn to look at the new kid. Ben sits in the back corner at a desk, dressed in casual clothes.

BEN
I worship a pantheon of gods. Can
I still be a leader?

Mr. Grabash narrows his eyes, contemplates a reaction.

CASSIE, 16, looks Ben over through a ton of mascara.

A JOCK sneers at Ben.

MR. GRABASH
Any relation to Kyle Danvers?

Ben shifts in his chair.

MR. GRABASH
Son? Are you related to Kyle
Danvers?

STUDENT IN FRONT ROW
Who's that?

(CONTINUED)

MR. GRABASH

Kyle Danvers was the filth that
blew up the mine and caused the
cave-in of '82 that killed 33 men.

(beat)

One of whom was my eldest brother.

Awkward silence.

BEN

(hard)

He's my father.

Mr. Grabash tightens his grip on the clipboard.

MR. GRABASH

What did you say?

BEN

The story goes that my dad blew up
the mine. But I don't believe he
did it. Either way, he just died.
A week ago. In jail.

All eyes on Ben, expressions ranging from sentiment to
fear to confusion.

Cassie cracks a wicked smile, her eyes sparkle from
inside a well of tar.

MR. GRABASH

Well, Ben. To get you up to
speed, we've been announcing
topics for Senior Themes, a term
paper which explores a crucial
faith-based concept. Any
thoughts?

Ben nods for a single beat.

BEN

What about the similarities
between elements of the bible and
other culture's stories? Like the
flood myths, or St. Peter going
down into hell, like Hercules
going into Tartarus to rescue
Theseus from the torture chair-

MR. GRABASH

Okay! Ben...maybe you'll get some
inspiration at today's assembly.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MR. GRABASH (CONT'D)
 See how we do things. Here. Next
 up we have Cassie Harken. Cassie,
 what's your topic?

Cassie brightens, a big smile.

CASSIE
 My topic is vampires in the bible!

Mr. Grabash closes his eyes. Exhausted.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Ben sits in the packed auditorium seats, the entire
 school body in attendance. The lights go out. Silence.

A SPOTLIGHT appears on a MAN, dressed in all black, head
 down in a dramatic stance. Shadows cover his eyes.

This is BROTHER GABRIEL, 40-ish. He lifts a microphone
 to his mouth.

BROTHER GABRIEL
 I want you to imagine darkness.
 Not just the darkness of night, or
 inside your closet. I am talking
 about Outer Darkness. Complete,
 pitch black that envelops you like
 a velvet blanket. So dark you
 can't see your hand in front of
 your face. And I want you to
 imagine this Outer Darkness being
 there, every minute of every day
 of your life...for eternity.

He looks up, a grave look on his angular face.

His eyes find the light, compel any listener, draw us
 in...

BROTHER GABRIEL
 This is hell. Hell.
 (beat)
 And this darkness will never go
 away, and you will have no family,
 no friends, no food, no drink,
 only the piercing terrible wails
 of other souls in torture to
 accompany your foul breathing,
 that sucks in the rancid fumes of
 rotting flesh.
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BROTHER GABRIEL (CONT'D)

And you will have one thought.
And that thought, will be of your
Lord and Savior. You will have a
fleeting glimpse of his loving
embrace, his white light of love
that could have made you feel
bliss every second of eternity.

Gabriel stalks the stage, brooding.

Ben drops his head, rubs the back of his neck.

Other STUDENTS stare listlessly, they've heard it before.

The FRESHMEN are all wide eyes, some terrified.

BROTHER GABRIEL

I thought I knew hell once. Outer
Darkness. I heard a voice and I
saw a light and I began to dig my
way out. I was stuck in the cave-
in of the Golgoth mine of '82...

Ben's head jerks up.

BROTHER GABRIEL

...but God said no, Brother
Gabriel, I have young souls for
you to save. I have a...purpose
for you, my son. To prevent youth
from falling down a bottomless
well, scratching at the walls as
you fall, your fingernails being
torn off. You probably ask how to
escape it? And I can tell you
that the only way is through the
way of love.

Teachers and kids raise up an arm, sway back and forth.

A skater kid sobs.

Ben watches it all, fascinated.

BROTHER GABRIEL

But if you reject that love, hell
will be your home. Because the
Lord in his eternal forgiveness,
knew that the love of God could
not exist without a counter
balance, a punishment for the
wicked.

(CONTINUED)

Ben looks over in his row -- Cassie plays with construction paper thumb puppets. Ben cracks a smile.

MR. GRABASH (O.S.)
Ben Danvers, your topic?

INT. CLASSROOM - NEXT DAY

Ben sits in his chair, now wearing the black and white school uniform. He tries to feign assuredness...

BEN
I am going to disprove the existence of hell. My primary witness will be Brother Gabriel.

The students chatter.

JOCK
Psycho.

Mr. Grabash takes a deep breath.

Cassie's crooked smile threatens to break.

INT. DINING ROOM - "JESUIT HOUSE" - NIGHT

Ben sits at the dinner table. Father Bocc sits at the head seat.

FATHER BOCC
Those born-again freaks wouldn't know guilt if it bit their New Age asses. No one does soul-crushing, mind-numbing guilt trips like us, and don't you forget it.

The two BOYS on the opposite side of the table laugh, including HECTOR, 16.

SISTER EDWINA, 40s, shushes them. She's a plus-size black woman dressed in casual nun's attire.

SISTER EDWINA
Father, hush. Those people run this town.

Father Bocc ignores her, he's on a roll.

(CONTINUED)

FATHER BOCC

Back in my day, we were the big boys around here. A tight sweater wouldn't get a young lady purgatory now, it's a shame. I don't think scripture had a category for that dental floss sticking out of their pants.

He winks at his peanut gallery, they laugh.

BEN

So this type of story, warning the kids not to act up or they'll go to hell...this goes way back?

FATHER BOCC

As old as time, my young man.

Ben studies him.

SISTER EDWINA

Ben, this came for you today.

She hands him an ENVELOPE. "Benjamin Danvers" is written in a disturbing pencil scrawl on the outside.

Ben's eyes bulge.

SISTER EDWINA

It was just sitting on the porch. Making friends already?

She keeps a wary eye on him.

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben sits on his bed, opens the envelope carefully.

Hector sits near an open window, smokes a cigarette.

HECTOR

Father Bocc, he's a trip, huh? Not what you'd expect.

BEN

Yeah.

Ben finds a smaller envelope inside the outer envelope, labeled "my son."

(CONTINUED)

Ben pulls out some withered pages, looks at them -- regimented lines of tiny, indecipherable handwriting fills each page, margin to margin.

STRANGE SYMBOLS, GLYPHS, are mixed in with the text.

A single line of larger text is scrawled in red.

Ben's finger traces the line...

INSERT: "Return back. Mine."

Ben's finger touches the signature -- "Kyle Danvers."

HECTOR

What's with that letter, dude?
You got a girl?

Ben keeps poring over the strange handwriting.

BEN

No, it's from my dad. He was in jail pretty much my whole life. Only thing he ever wrote to me.

HECTOR

Bastard.

BEN

Better late than never, though.

HECTOR

(scoffs)
Let him fry.

BEN

He's dead.

HECTOR

Then let him rot. No offense.

Ben looks back down at the letter, frustrated, unable to decipher it.

A SCHOOL BELL RINGS --

EXT. SCHOOL HALLWAYS - DAY

Cassie catches up to Ben as they walk.

(CONTINUED)

CASSIE

Hey.

BEN

Hey.

CASSIE

Cool topic. Your Senior Theme.

BEN

Yeah, I don't really care about the paper. I just wanted to talk to Brother Gabriel.

CASSIE

What, you into all that hellfire crap?

BEN

(uncomfortable)

No...just...

CASSIE

What?

A beat.

BEN

What's your topic again?

CASSIE

Vampires in the Vulgate. That's the Latin bible. Mr. Grabass won't allow it unless I find at least 3 scriptural references.

BEN

Did you?

CASSIE

I've found 25. Please, half of the apostles were undead.

She giggles, he smiles. They share a moment.

Ben shrugs, looks down.

They walk a bit more. Ben slows his pace.

CASSIE

You found anyone to eat lunch with, yet?

(CONTINUED)

BEN
I gotta go do something.

CASSIE
Oh, where are you go-?

BEN
See ya later...

He takes off, down another hallway, determined.

CASSIE
Oh, yeah, bye...

She watches him walk away.

EXT. BROTHER GABRIEL'S OFFICE - DAY

Ben holds up his hand to knock when the door opens --

Three MEN pour out of the doorway. They all wear white suits and dark sunglasses -- the first is completely BALD, second SKINNY, the third is BIG.

Ben steps aside, and they walk past, suitcases in hand. Ben bristles, a cold breeze on his spine.

Brother Gabriel, a bit tense, appears in the doorway of his office. He smiles when he sees Ben.

BROTHER GABRIEL
Are you searching for Jesus?

BEN
Hell, actually. I'm Ben.

Ben forces a smile.

INT. BROTHER GABRIEL'S OFFICE - DAY

Brother Gabriel sits behind his desk, stares at Ben.

BROTHER GABRIEL
Will this be a serious examination
on the subject of eternal
damnation?

(CONTINUED)

BEN
Certainly. You're an expert, so I
thought you'd be a great primary
witness.

Gabriel nods, proud.

BEN
Plus you survived that mine
collapse, the only one, right?

BROTHER GABRIEL
Well, there was...another.
Survivor. But we all know that
story.

BEN
Did you know him?

A beat.

BROTHER GABRIEL
We all get confronted with
temptation, Ben. We all seek our
path. God made mine apparent on
that day.

Ben shifts in his chair.

BEN
So...do you really think the mine
was like being in hell?

BROTHER GABRIEL
Why are you so interested in the
mine, son?

BEN
Oh, I'm not, it's-

BROTHER GABRIEL
It's condemned, you know. Mercury
poisoning, it's not safe.

A sudden BEEPING makes Ben flinch.

Gabriel rises, turns off his desk alarm.

BROTHER GABRIEL
I have to get lunch. Food is the
lord's gift to nourish our bodies.

(CONTINUED)

Ben stands up and Gabriel ushers him to the door.

BEN
Oh, okay. I could email you.

BROTHER GABRIEL
How 'bout I find you? Write down
your school email here.

Gabriel offers a pen and paper. Ben writes. Hands him the slip of paper.

Ben walks out, the door closing behind him.

Gabriel is frozen, studying the paper.

BROTHER GABRIEL
(sotto)
Danvers.

Gabriel picks up the phone. Dials.

BROTHER GABRIEL
(into phone)
We need to talk. No, don't come
back here. At the flop house.

EXT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Ben steps around a corner. The halls are bare.

He reaches in his pocket and unfolds the LETTER --

One of the pages contains a crudely drawn MAP with an area that is circled, labeled "Golgoth Mine."

EXT. HILL - DAY

Ben walks down the steep hill, away from the school grounds.

A KID in a yellow "hall monitor" vest blows a WHISTLE from behind a chain link fence. Ben ignores him.

He heads for the FOREST...

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Ben hikes up a trail, his shirt damp with sweat, reaches a dirt road.

A rusted SIGN warns "CONDEMNED." Skull and Cross Bones graphic.

Ben walks past the sign, up the road.

UP THE ROAD

A rusted steel GATE blocks the road. Ben steps past it as

a BLACK CAT leaps up to the top of the post!

Ben looks at the cat, smiles. It purrs, opens its mouth-- a bird's head falls out.

BEN

Ugh...

Ben continues walking.

He glimpses over the crest of a hill -- sees a mossy rooftop -- and suddenly --

An OLD WRINKLED MAN in a torn grey uniform stands at the top of the hill. He clutches an ornate walking stick.

He stares silently at Ben.

We recognize him as Duey, the punch-in clerk, impossibly old. His face a topographical map.

BEN

Hello? Sir?

Ben takes a step forward, stops. Duey's ancient eyes study Ben from underneath folds of lids.

DUEY

(hissing)

Let me see your tongue.

BEN

I didn't mean to disturb you.

Ben tries to keep his distance from Duey.

(CONTINUED)

DUEY

Your tongue.

Ben walks a bit closer. Duey's GREEN EYES bore into his. Ben is drawn to him.

Ben slowly opens his mouth...sticks out his tongue.

Duey's gnarled FINGERS approach, the thumb and forefinger ready to pinch --

Ben's eyes show terror but he does not move.

He cannot move. He is held.

The old fingers grasp the TONGUE -- it trembles --

the fingers lift it -- hold it up --

Duey inspects, sneers, showing rotted teeth -- lets go of Ben's tongue.

DUEY

Nothing for me, now is there,
young pup?

Ben rubs his mouth, dazed, as Duey turns and walks back over the crest of the hill.

Ben watches him. Shivers.

Ben sees the rusted "Golgoth Mine" sign, peeking out from overgrown foliage, crowning the imposing mine doors.

Ben takes a step toward the doors, drawn, but then he turns and runs back down the hill.

INT. COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE - EARLY MORNING

Ben looks at microfiche of newspaper articles on the mine disaster -- "Town Devastated by Mine Bomber."

He sifts through folders of town records. He stops, pulls out a folder, studies it.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Ben walks down the hall, as Cassie comes up behind him.

(CONTINUED)

CASSIE
Where do you go?

BEN
What?

CASSIE
You're always going somewhere.
But you just got here. Where are
you going?

A beat.

BEN
Come with me.

CASSIE
We're at school.

BEN
(wry smile)
You look the look, but you don't
walk the walk, huh?

CASSIE
(shocked)
You little bitch.

BEN
C'mon, what could happen?

CASSIE
Getting killed for ditching
school.

BEN
Everyone dies. I'll show you.

He lifts his eyebrows, cocks his head. She smiles.

EXT. CEMETERY - GRAVE OF KYLE DANVERS - DAY

Ben and Cassie stand, staring at the fresh dirt and
simple marker.

BEN
They gave him a blank headstone.
They said it would prevent
desecration of the grave. You
know, he was one of them. A
miner.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BEN (CONT'D)

They're no better than him.

(beat)

He wrote me a letter. So he was thinking about me, I guess.

CASSIE

What does it say?

BEN

I dunno.

(changing topic)

Hey, wanna make some myths?

She smiles, hesitant.

IN THE ROWS OF HEADSTONES

Ben reads from a large headstone...

BEN

Simonsen K. Rawley, accountant and javelin thrower...

(stage voice)

So powerful he drew the ire of Apollo, who turned him into a ceramic lawn gnome. His luck ended one day when a trick-or-treater put her shoe through his misbegotten head.

She laughs, a little too loud.

CASSIE

Good one. Let me try...uhh...

She walks to another headstone, settling on one with a sundial carved on the top.

CASSIE

Here lies Ms. Dreeley M. Vanderflaven, self-made hundredaire...

Ben smiles.

CASSIE

Most people thought her crazy to sell her soul to another, but when she got a buyer in Japan to pony up a cool 200 bucks, no one was laughing then...

(CONTINUED)

Ben forces a laugh, not sure where this is going.

CASSIE

...but once in Tokyo, she slowly realized she was not being loved, she was being used, and that afterwards she felt like gum on the bottom of someone's shoe when they're watching a bad movie. So she became a vampire. Which is why she's not really in this grave.

(looks at Ben)

She's escaped.

BEN

Is that it?

CASSIE

She used the 200 bucks to buy a ridiculous pair of shoes, which a week later she threw in the river in disgust when the assfucks at school said she looked like a street walker.

She looks down in shame.

BEN

That's a lot from a headstone.

(beat)

It's good, though. You're good at it.

Ben takes Cassie's hand, shy. She's interested, but nervous.

She sticks out her tongue, tries to engage him in a tickling match. He stops her.

Ben spies something in the distance.

He walks through the graves, drawn forward...

...comes to a MAUSOLEUM -- a monument to the dead miners. Ben stares. Cassie joins him.

INSERT ENGRAVING: "33 Men Dead in the Cave-In of '82. Heroes, all."

(CONTINUED)

BEN

I went to the County Clerk's office, and I looked up some papers. The same consortium of investors that ran the quicksilver mine also built the school and the church that owns it. They used the \$25 million in insurance money from the cave-in.

CASSIE

Shit. That buys a lot of bibles.

BEN

Buys more than that. Allegiance. Silence. Lies. You just need to maintain the facade, show people what they want to see, and they won't look behind the curtain, ask why.

CASSIE

You gonna pull back the curtain?

BEN

You'll help me?

CASSIE

I'll try.

Ben leans in, hesitates. She pulls him into her.

They kiss amidst the shadowy gravestones. A light rain begins to fall. She pulls away, slightly.

CASSIE

Do you want to touch me?

He nods.

CASSIE

Just, talk to me...tomorrow.

They kiss, sink to the ground, their white tops getting soaked, clinging to their skin.

She begins to pull up his shirt, revealing a patch of skin on Ben's back with a splotchy red birthmark.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - JESUIT HOUSE - NIGHT

Dinner with the crew.

BEN

Have you ever...been with a girl?
You don't have to answer...

Father Bocc smiles, taken aback.

FATHER BOCC

Benjamin, you dirty dog, I could
tell you about this young gamine
by the name of Alexandra
Worshinsky. Stems like the temple
columns that Samson pulled down.
I was 14. But what of your own
chanteuse?

Ben fights a smile. Hector nudges Ben.

HECTOR

I knew you had a skeezer.

SISTER EDWINA

Hector.

BEN

I don't. A chanteuse or a
skeezer. I don't have time.

INT. SCHOOL LIBRARY - DAY

Ben uses his father's letter as a placeholder as he
quickly scans pages of books on mythology and monsters.

QUICK SHOTS OF ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE BOOKS -- Demons,
sarcophagi, tombs, ferrymen with lanterns, a hooded
Reaper with a sickle, a Gargoyle, a Valkyrie.

Ben stops reading, yawns. At the next table --

A pudgy kid with curly hair, NICHOLAS, 15, shows his
still camera to a pretty BLONDE in a cheerleader uniform.

CHEERLEADER

Cool, you want to be a fashion
photographer?

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS

Well, I feel like I've already done that. I'm more into artistic photos, now.

CHEERLEADER

Aren't all photos artistic?

NICHOLAS

I'm exploring the human form. It's Hellenistic, a celebration. Specifically...art nudes.

(awkward beat)

I was hoping maybe I could shoot ...you? For art.

She rolls her eyes, gets up and walks away. Nicholas sniffs, examines his camera.

Nicholas sees Ben watching him.

NICHOLAS

Had to try, huh? You only live once.

Ben gives him a supportive smile and nod.

A PAPER BALL lands on Ben's book. Ben looks over to a table across the study area --

Cassie smiles at him.

Ben smiles back. An awkward moment, as she hopes he'll come over. He doesn't.

She walks over to him, sees the envelope sticking out of one of his books.

CASSIE

Hey, mister sunshine head. Is that your dad's letter?

He reflexively shoves it in the book, hiding it.

She shakes her head, storms back to her table, grabs her bag and walks away.

THE BELL RINGS.

Ben rises, concerned, walks out.

INT. HALLWAYS - SCHOOL - DAY

Ben walks determinedly, letter in hand, sees Cassie from behind, in a crowd of kids.

BEN

Cass! Hey, I'll show it to you-

She walks quicker, away from him.

THE BELL RINGS -- the halls empty out.

Ben watches Cassie as she walks to GABRIEL'S OFFICE, opens the door, disappears inside.

Brother Gabriel peeks his head out, looks around, doesn't see Ben, slips back inside. The door closes.

Ben watches the shut door, confused. He shoves the letter back in his bag.

Ben turns -- THE BALD MAN stands at the end of the hall, hands in the pockets of his white suit jacket, staring at him.

Ben walks away.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Ben stands at the bus stop, head down. He looks up, sees a white blouse with a button missed, approaching...

It's CASSIE.

BEN

Hey.

CASSIE

(whispers)

Hey.

She walks past Ben as the bus pulls up. Ben boards the bus, looking back at her.

She keeps walking. He can't see that her red face quivers from holding in tears.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben lays on his bed, compares the hieroglyphs on the letter and the map to a hieroglyphic alphabet in a book. They don't match up. He rubs his eyes, exhausted, angry.

INT. BROTHER GABRIEL'S OFFICE - DAY

Ben steps in...

BEN

Hello?

No one here.

Ben looks at the papers on Gabriel's desk. One folder sticks out. No label.

Ben opens it...

Architectural drawings of a tall building, a TOWER...

A MAP of Donnington, very similar to Ben's map. A highlighted circle targets an area that reads "Raven Hill."

BROTHER GABRIEL (O.S.)

What are you doing?

Ben jumps. Closes the folder.

Gabriel stands in the doorway.

BROTHER GABRIEL

Looking for something?

BEN

I came by...set up our interview.

BROTHER GABRIEL

Not sure if I have time...

BEN

I noticed you had an appointment with Cassie. Harken?

The air thins in the room.

BROTHER GABRIEL

What's your interest, Ben?

(CONTINUED)

BEN

I'm doing this paper on-

BROTHER GABRIEL

No, not the paper. We know you don't give two shits about that.

Ben is frozen. Gabriel walks over to the desk, looks at the folder, nods.

BROTHER GABRIEL

You think you're smart, huh? Smarter than me. Than all of us, here in this little bible town.

BEN

No, no, I-

BROTHER GABRIEL

Just like your dad. Think you're better.

BEN

Was he, like that? So you knew him?

BROTHER GABRIEL

It's God's grace that saves a wretch like me. And you. We're all wretches, Ben. We need that grace, that forgiveness, or we will sink to the depths and stay there. Like the vermin.

BEN

My father wasn't vermin.

BROTHER GABRIEL

I didn't say that. You're not listening.

Gabriel takes a step towards him. Ben steps back.

BROTHER GABRIEL

I'd just hate to see you turn out like him.

BEN

I went to the county clerk's office. Did some reading.

(CONTINUED)

BROTHER GABRIEL
You're really a curious kid, huh?

BEN
What's at Raven Hill?

A beat. Gabriel smiles, like he's proud of Ben.

BROTHER GABRIEL
There's so many souls out there to save, Ben. It can seem...
overwhelming. So many souls.
(beat; ingratiating)
If I can save, just one, two, a thousand. Can you imagine that? It's not for the small minded. How about you, Ben? Where did you learn it? From your mother?

Ben softens, at Gabriel's tone.

BEN
She died when I was very young. I was living with an aunt, then I ended up in a foster home.

BROTHER GABRIEL
That must have been really hard on you. Being so alone.

Ben sits down, gets quiet.

BEN
Sometimes I felt like I couldn't get any lower.

A beat. Ben hopes for sympathy. Gabriel kneels down, eye to eye with Ben.

BROTHER GABRIEL
That's quite a sob story, kid. Now I'm going to tell you about my story. No one gets in my way. Especially not trash.

Gabriel shocks Ben by grabbing his collar, pulling him up, onto his feet.

BROTHER GABRIEL
Now go back to that no-way house, keep your mouth shut and find another topic for your term paper.

(CONTINUED)

He smooths Ben's collar, turns his back on him.

INT. BEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben stands in front of the open closet door, trembling, as he removes his shirt.

Hector walks into the room, sees Ben.

HECTOR
When'd you get the tat, bro?

BEN
Huh?

HECTOR
On your back.

BEN
Oh, that's a birth mark.

HECTOR
That's no birth mark, dude.

Ben steps to the floor-length mirror, turns around -- on his lower back --

he's shocked to see an intricate web of lines tattooed in black over his red birth mark splotch.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ben charges in, shuts the door.

In a panic, he studies his lower back in the mirror.

He's never seen this on his body before.

He touches it, rubs it. It's not coming off.

He scrubs it with a sponge. No luck. He stops -- remembers the letter in his pants pocket.

Ben unfolds the letter, pulls out the crude map --

He places the map against his back -- adjacent to the tattoo -- looks into the mirror --

the outline of the Golgoth Mine area runs off the page -- and meets up exactly with the lines of the tattoo --

(CONTINUED)

the lines seem to form an arrow pointing at a shape.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Ben rifles through a drawer, finds a MAP of Donnington. Opens it up.

Lays his map over it. They appear to be the same exact scale.

Ben runs his finger off the edge of his map to where it picks up on the Donnington map...where his tattoo would approximately be...

on "Raven Hill," behind the old Golgoth mine.

Ben swallows.

He grabs other pages of the letter -- searches --

INSERT HANDWRITING: "Return back. Mine."

BEN

Back. Back entrance to the mine.
Raven Hill.

EXT. ROAD - OLD MINE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Ben walks up toward the iron double doors, a small flashlight in hand. He takes an abrupt right and cuts into the dense forest.

EXT. BACKSIDE OF MOUNTAIN - NIGHT

Ben reaches a steep HILL SIDE, looks up -- the moon light illuminates winding tree roots escaping from dirt, rocks and moss --

Ben stares, transfixed, at the serpent's nest of foliage.

VOICES from off in the distance break Ben's focus --

Ben creeps around a rockface, looks down, toward the noise, sees...

A CREEKBED --

A lantern outlines THREE SHADOWY FIGURES, hunched over the creek.

(CONTINUED)

Ben strains his eyes to see --

Gloved hands fill up a BEAKER with creek water.

Ben steps on a stick - CRACK!

The figures turn on a dime --

THREE PEOPLE IN YELLOW HAZMAT SUITS, MASKED AND GLOVED,
stare at Ben, frozen. A beat.

They lunge forward, to chase Ben!

Ben turns, runs -- back around the rockface --

Ben reaches the HILL SIDE --

Ben runs up the steep hill, tripping on the exposed
roots, dropping to all fours, crawling up...

a circular pattern comes into view above him.

Ben climbs up gnarled tree roots --

he stops, clears away dirt from the circular pattern --

It looks to be the entrance to a TUNNEL, the size and
shape of a manhole --

Ben pushes aside roots and vines, looks into the tunnel --
only darkness.

Narrow, creepy, foreboding darkness.

Ben thinks twice, stops, looks back toward the
rockface...

Nothing. No Hazmat People in pursuit.

Ben begins to pull away, then...

The CRY of a BABY.

It's coming from inside the tunnel.

Ben cocks an ear, the crying baby becomes more distinct.

Ben pushes his body through, CRAWLS INTO THE NARROW
TUNNEL ON HIS STOMACH --

INT. DIRT TUNNEL - NIGHT

Ben crawls, flashlight in mouth, the tunnel barely wider than his shoulders, the baby's cry drawing him forward.

The moonlight recedes behind him. The soft walls of the tunnel seem to encroach and constrict around him.

It is now very dark.

Ben takes a breath, continues to crawl --

the CRYING BABY getting louder --

Ben crawls faster --

The tunnel looks like it may end, up ahead --

The crying sounds fade out. Ben reaches

a SMALL, CURIOUS, MOSSY, OAKEN DOOR

criss-crossed with iron straps, crude in design.

Ben's fingertips graze the iron ring door handle --

the door CREAKS open, inward --

an almost inaudible gasp emerges from the door and a tiny gust of wind blows past Ben's face -- his nostrils tweek.

He shines the light into the darkness beyond the door -- pitch black, the light is swallowed up.

BEN

Outer darkness.

Ben crawls forward, toward the doorway.

EXT. SIDE OF THE HILL - DAWN

We watch the gnarled roots on the side of the hill that cover the tunnel entrance. Nothing moves.

TIME LAPSE DISSOLVE:

Darkness of night falls.

Light once more covers the forest floor as the sun rises.

(CONTINUED)

PACE QUICKENS -- more sun sets and falls -- animals scurry by and disappear -- vines twist as they grow --

Green turns to brown turns to grey --

DISSOLVE ENDS.

Leaves are gone, replaced by withered branches and frost that glistens in the early morning sun.

THE VINES RUSTLE.

A HEAD POPS OUT -- THEN SHOULDERS -- THEN A BODY -- WRIGGLING -- IN SIMPLE DARK CLOTHING --

He falls out of the manhole, rolls down the hill, caught in a web of roots.

IT'S BEN.

He rises, groggy.

His eyes are ringed by dark circles, patchy beard on his face. He looks weathered by the elements.

He slowly scans the terrain. Shakes leaves and dirt from his unwashed hair.

He holds in his hands a small, lacquered wooden STRONG-BOX, held closed with iron latches. Reminds us of the mossy, circular door in the tunnel.

He begins to walk down the trail, back toward town.

EXT. DOWNTOWN DONNINGTON - DAY

Ben walks around, in a slight daze, holding the BOX. LOCALS see his scruffy countenance and avoid him.

A dog on a leash BARKS at Ben. Its owner pulls it away.

Ben passes a shop window, catches his appearance, stops.

He touches his face, his beard. Confused.

Ben keeps walking.

A sullen MAN in unkempt beard and a threadbare coat sits on the curb behind a liquor store, drinks from a bottle.

Ben tries to pass without making eye contact.

(CONTINUED)

DRINKER

Hey, kid.

Ben stops.

DRINKER

Go inside, get a fatted lamb.

BEN

What?

DRINKER

He once was lost...

BEN

Do you know me?

Ben looks close at the man's hollow eyes.

BEN

Mister Grabash?

Grabash ignores him, looks down.

Ben approaches, hesitant.

BEN

You were my teacher, right?
What...look at you.

MR. GRABASH

Look at yourself. Do you good.

BEN

You said you were a man of God.

MR. GRABASH

God left this town long ago.

Grabash laughs, takes a swig from his bottle.

MR. GRABASH

Where you been, kid?

BEN

I don't...remember.

MR. GRABASH

You know, it all started with that
scumbag dad of yours.

(CONTINUED)

BEN
I'm not him.

MR. GRABASH
I swore I'd never be like my
father. Never turn out like him.
You know what he did?
(raises his bottle)
He was a drunk.

He takes a long pull.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Ben stands and stares at his father's blank white marker.
Crabgrass and weeds have grown in over the gravesite.

He kneels, begins to pull up the weeds, toss them aside.

There's too many. He gives up.

BEN
(to headstone)
I'm not you.

EXT. CEMETERY - DUSK

Ben walks through the manicured pathways, BOX in hand.

He sees a WOMAN, in a crimson coat, the high wind blowing
her hair across her face.

She sketches on a pad as dry leaves dance around her.

She turns, spots Ben. Her tired eyes narrow as she
focuses on him, her dry skin creasing.

Ben's eyes focus --

BEN
Cassie?

It's Cassie. Her face shows shock, confusion. She half-
smiles, lunges for him, crushes him in a hug. He clears
his throat.

BEN
Hi.

She pulls back, looks at him, in wonder.

(CONTINUED)

CASSIE
My god. Look at you.

A beat.

BEN
You, too.

She doesn't hear him, still staring, holding his shoulders.

CASSIE
Where...have you been?

BEN
I...was gone.

She nods. Waits for more, realizes it's not coming.

CASSIE
You look like hell.

Ben feels his face, his scruffy beard.

BEN
Yeah. The beard, you know.

Her eyes turn hard. She lets go of him.

CASSIE
Is that it?

BEN
What do you mean?

CASSIE
Yeah, okay, great.
(beat)

We'll just say you were in Japan,
training to be a ninja, how 'bout
that? If you don't want to talk.
Why would you?

BEN
Slow down. We were just-

CASSIE
Just what?

BEN
...just here. Myths for the dead?

(CONTINUED)

She shakes her head, like he's gone mad.

CASSIE

You're sick. We didn't know what we were doing.

(anger rising)

But you were only at school for like a couple weeks, right? It's amazing how close you can get to someone so fast, then to have them disappear on you, well that's something special.

BEN

Cassie, I don't understand. Please. Tell me what's happening.

CASSIE

No! I won't let you do this to me again.

He reaches for her hand -- she shoves him.

CASSIE

Where the fuck have you been for ten years?!

Ben steps back, looks around. Confused.

He steps towards her, studies her face. Sees the lines for what they are. Panic begins to rise under his skin.

He looks behind him, up to the hilltop toward the school...

...but it's no longer there...

A HUGE MODERN STEEPLE BLOTS OUT THE SETTING SUN -- a sports arena meets a multiplex with a 16-story glass TOWER glinting in the dying rays.

Ben looks at it, confused.

BEN

That was the school, before...

She studies him. Processing.

CASSIE

Things have changed, Ben.

He points a shaky finger at the complex.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

What is that?

CASSIE

That's the mini-mega.

BEN

The mini mega?

CASSIE

Yeah, the Mini Mega-Church. That is our god now. Employs half the town. It's only a "mini" because it seats 15,000 -- the real mega churches seat 50 plus. People drive their fat ass kids from all over the state to go to that big pile of crap. There's work there, you should try for a job. They could use some smart peeps, not more mouth-breathers and kid-touchers.

Ben looks up at it in awe. Overwhelmed.

CASSIE

You know, a lot happened while you were away. If you give a shit, I live at the Pomegranate Palisades. It's a luxury building. Later days, Ben Danvers.

Ben turns to see her back as she walks away.

The dead leaves swirl.

EXT. JESUIT HOUSE - DAY

Storm clouds gather overhead.

Ben stands in front of the weather-beaten house, the BOX under his arm.

INT. JESUIT HOUSE - BOCC'S BEDROOM - DAY

Ben is brought into the bedroom by Sister Edwina, who moves a bit slower. She smiles broad to --

FATHER BOCC, in bed, covers up to his chin, eyes barely open. An oxygen tank rests next to the bed.

(CONTINUED)

SISTER EDWINA

Look who's here, Father. It's our
old boarder, Ben Danvers. He
looks...good, doesn't he?

FATHER BOCC

Come closer.

Bocc sees him.

FATHER BOCC

Oh, my God.

BEN

Forgive me. I remember you
like...it was yesterday.

FATHER BOCC

Closer, my son.

Ben leans in...

FATHER BOCC

Closer.

...his ear to Bocc's mouth.

FATHER BOCC

Be...a good boy. And get us a
glass of Cabernet.

Bocc smiles. Ben hesitantly smiles back.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Ben fills a goblet of wine, stopping halfway.

He grabs a nearby newspaper, looks at the date.

The Headline grabs his eye...

INSERT: "PROPHET GABRIEL: HELL APPROACHES! Our Youth
under fire."

BEN

(sotto)

'Prophet' now, huh?

He looks around, takes a swig from the wine bottle.

INT. BOCC'S BEDROOM - DAY

Ben walks in, toward the bed.

Father Bocc is asleep.

Ben puts the glass down on the nightstand. Looks at him with eyes of pity.

Sister Edwina stands at the door. She smiles.

SISTER EDWINA

Did he ask you to get him that wine? He hasn't done that in years, you never know with him.

BEN

I should sleep. If that's okay.

SISTER EDWINA

You can use the last room on the right. And the shower, door across the hall, case you forgot.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben kneels on the carpet, hair wet, wearing borrowed pajamas, studying the BOX.

The throbbing rhythm of RAIN pelts the house.

Ben pulls with all his might to open the box lid, but it won't budge. He tries to dig his fingers beneath the iron latches, to no avail.

LATER

Ben sleeps, in bed. He twitches --

QUICK SHOTS --

Wooden planks, riddled with splinters...

Rows of NAILS push up through the surface of the wood...

The SHAVED HEAD OF A MAN seen from behind, his neck explodes with veins as he strains against an unseen force.

(CONTINUED)

VOICE (V.O.)

Kill him.

CUT TO:

Ben AWAKES, startled. Catches his breath. It's morning.

The sheets are a shroud of sweat.

The sound of SOBBING from the next room. Ben gets up, runs...

INT. FATHER BOCC'S BEDROOM - DAY

Sister Edwina kneels at Father Bocc's bedside, crying. Father Bocc's lifeless head peeks out from the covers.

SISTER EDWINA

I didn't think he'd finally go.

EXT. CEMETERY - DUSK

Ben stares at Father Bocc's grave as MOURNERS disperse.

He looks up at the hill --

the SPIRE of the Mini-Mega, all lit up.

A caravan of HEADLIGHTS winds its way up the hill toward the gleaming tower.

EXT. HILLSIDE ROAD - NIGHT

Ben walks up the street, on the shoulder, with the box under his arm. Pissed.

Cars whizz by him.

A BLACK CAT

follows him at a distance.

Ben crests the hill. His eyes are drawn up --

EXT. MINI-MEGA CHURCH COMPLEX - DUSK

The foundation of the Complex is the ARENA -- out of which sprouts a 16-story glass SPIRE that reflects light from spotlights onto a modern art CRUCIFIX in the courtyard area below --

the Jesus figure resembles Lego -- blocks of color with an angular face and head --

the base post of the crucifix rises to become a sharpened SWORD, slicing to the sky, drawing the eye upward --

The top floor of the Spire, the penthouse, gleams with a red incandescence.

A BUBBLY GIRL hands out flyers to TEENS as they pass by.

BUBBLY GIRL
Teen Explorers, this Wednesday
night? Gonna be great!

Ben picks up one of the flyers from a stack on a bench --

INSERT FLYER HEADLINE: "Slay Goliath Every Day, Yo!"

INT. MAIN AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Ben sits amongst a packed crowd, on an aisle seat. Sanitized versions of TOP 40 MUSIC blare as spotlights criss-cross the crowd. The young people are buzzing.

The music stops as a THUNDEROUS TRUMPET sounds and the arena darkens to black in an instant.

The crowd hushes to near silence -- Ben watches.

Another TRUMPET BLAST and a SPOTLIGHT BEAM focuses like a laser on CENTER STAGE.

A familiar low voice slips in from surround sound speakers...

PROPHET GABRIEL (V.O.)
Sodom and Gomorrah are burning...
Judas is betraying...our Lord is
being crucified for our sins...

PYRO BLASTS ignite at each of the four corners of the stage -- scattered GASPS erupt from the crowd --

(CONTINUED)

PROPHET GABRIEL springs up from a trap door in the floor and lands two feet strong on the stage!

He poses in a form-fitting black outfit, with a headset mic and makeup that accentuates his features for the back rows. His styled hair now sports grey at the temples.

He throws out his arms and YELLS --

PROPHET GABRIEL
...and the saved souls are
PARTYING ALL THE WAY TO HEAVEN!!

The lights and MUSIC blast back on and the crowd RISES to its feet in a split-second with a ROAR.

PROPHET GABRIEL
Now dance!

Self-conscious kids look around, start to move awkwardly.

THE MUSIC CUTS OFF -- LIGHTS DIE.

PROPHET GABRIEL (O.S.)
You will not dance!

Kids freeze, take their seats, captivated but tense.

PROPHET GABRIEL (O.S.)
You are in...Outer Darkness.

The spotlight kicks back on, hitting Brother Gabriel as he lay on his knees, shattered, his makeup creasing at the corners of his eyes and mouth.

PROPHET GABRIEL
A darkness so penetrating, so
thick, you cannot see your hand in
front of your face.

He raises his shaking hand slowly in front of his face. Looks at it in horror.

Kids in the audience do the same, mirroring him.

PROPHET GABRIEL
It is this darkness that corrupts
the young people in our great
American landscape of temptation.
This is why I've asked so many
parents here tonight...

(CONTINUED)

Ben looks at the crowd around him...

CONCERNED PARENTS join their kids in the crowd.

PROPHET GABRIEL

...and you SHOULD be afraid, I am sorry to say. You watch the news, you see the ads for the filth that Hollywood pumps out to recruit your kids into the armies of sin. And you should be afraid that they, your children, will burn in the eternal fires of hell.

Parents nod.

PROPHET GABRIEL

But we are going to save the youth, tonight! Because the youth NEED you tonight, my good parents. Are you with me?

The parents CHEER, ecstatic to be wanted.

PROPHET GABRIEL

Because we are at WAR! A spiritual war. And your children need to be strong, powerful, adept warriors, to fight off the armies of Satan. Will you help train our spiritual warriors? Will you help build an army for God?!

More CHEERS.

Gabriel adopts a pleading, sorrowful expression.

PROPHET GABRIEL

It won't be easy. But we have a secret weapon. In this very complex in which we sit. The tower. It is a beacon to every weary soul who has the honor to gaze upon it. Now 16 stories, and with your help, we will build it higher...and higher...until I can look out and see over and above the hills, across the towns...to Milltown...Youngsboro...Almaden... and beyond. I will see their youth, their warriors, and we will recruit them.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PROPHET GABRIEL (CONT'D)

And I will see our enemies,
embedded amongst our neighbors.
And they will be led to the tower,
or they will be punished. Will
you build that tower with me?

(huge CHEER)

I can see it, rising, so high the
clouds dance around my penthouse
home, the heavens...so close.

He reaches a hand up, to grasp the vault of heaven
...others do the same.

PROPHET GABRIEL

I only need your dedication. I
only need your strength and your
talent and your passion. But
passion can only be expressed in
the hard realities of our world
through, what? Yes, money. I
don't like it any more than you
do. I wish that man had not
created it aeons ago, like the
bible says man did, starting with
the woman Eve's mistake. Not God,
never God. But it's a reality,
money. And with enough of this
reality, we can save our youth.
Because you can't always be there
for them, to protect them. To
shield them.

(beat)

But I can. To that end I swear to
you.

VOLUNTEERS pace the aisles, holding out white cowboy hats
to collect money.

PROPHET GABRIEL

Now if I can just get one witness,
one dramatic witness of how the
warrior God has vanquished the
jihadist Satan in your own life...

Spotlights scan the crowd. A few hands go up.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Here, prophet!

PROPHET GABRIEL

Yes, young lady, please stand.

(CONTINUED)

Ben strains to see. The spotlight hits the woman --
It's CASSIE.

CASSIE
Prophet Gabriel, I need to tell
you about how I was lost, to
drugs, to the point where I was
selling my body, stealing from my
own mother, how I couldn't have
sunk any lower...

GASPS from the audience.

PROPHET GABRIEL
Until you did what?

CASSIE
Until I accepted the lord into my
heart!

APPLAUSE.

Ben's eyes narrow as he watches Cassie's act.

CASSIE
My life changed overnight. Why
bother with drugs when I can get
the greatest high in the world? I
just open up the good book!

She's really pouring it on thick. Maybe it's the only
way she can get through it. Could she be a convert? Ben
is livid.

PROPHET GABRIEL
Ladies and gentlemen, I have never
met this woman, I have never heard
her story. But what she is saying
is so compelling, so real, that it
splits my skull like the sword of
truth wielded by the archangels
who look over this arena right
now, the ones who come down from
heaven to patrol our very streets
of Donnington. And I see those
angels, sitting next to each and
every one of you...

EXT. MINI MEGA - NIGHT

CASSIE walks out the door, pulls out a cigarette.

Ben charges up, grabs her arm.

BEN

What are you doing?

She pulls away.

CASSIE

My job. Some of us need those.

She moves away from the doorway, to keep it quiet.

BEN

You get paid, to lie like that?

CASSIE

Well, not specifically for that,
but it's a part of the
arrangement.

BEN

What arrangement? With...him?

A beat, as her face fills with shame, bitterness.

CASSIE

You left. While you've been gone,
I've been living my life. And
this is it. This is who I am.

BEN

Why? Why do you do it?

CASSIE

Come by sometime and I'll explain
it to you. Pomegranate Palisades,
remember? Apartment 2G. Where
the fun happens.

She walks away.

A GOTH GIRL, 15, walks up, toward the entrance. Ben does a double take. She could be Cassie ten years ago.

INT. LOBBY OF MINI MEGA - NIGHT

Goth Girl looks around, nervous. She weaves through some stragglers and heads through some doors labeled "Administrative Offices."

Ben follows, discretely.

INT. BACKROOMS - NIGHT

Goth Girl, Ben behind her, passes cubicles, then through a door into a storage area. Ben follows...

He steps behind a metal shelving unit, into shadows.

She walks up to a service door labeled "Superintendent," KNOCKS, nervous.

The door opens. She smiles, hoping to please...

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Christ, what took you so long?

She bows her head, walks in and disappears from Ben's view.

A HEAD PEEKS OUT --

It's Prophet Gabriel. He looks around, scanning the shadows --

Ben shifts, knocks a book to the floor -- Gabriel twitches, tries to find the source of the noise --

BEN'S SHADOWY FIGURE looms behind the shelving unit, one eye piercing inside a slash of light.

Prophet Gabriel squints into the darkness --

PROPHET GABRIEL

Hello?

The silhouette does not move.

PROPHET GABRIEL

(into room)

Alexa, why don't you go. We'll meet up for your consultation next week.

(CONTINUED)

The Goth Girl walks out, head down. She passes Ben, doesn't notice him standing behind the rack.

PROPHET GABRIEL

Who are you?

Ben shifts, his scruffy beard visible in the light for a second, then he springs away.

Prophet Gabriel sees a glimpse of the BOX in Ben's hands.

Gabriel gives chase, around a corner, but...

Ben is gone.

Gabriel steams.

INT. DARK ROOM - NIGHT

Gabriel on his cell phone. Tense.

PROPHET GABRIEL

We've got a problem. He's back.
The boy. I'm almost positive.

(beat)

He has a beard.

(beat)

He had something with him. I've
seen it before.

INT. BEDROOM - JESUIT HOUSE - NIGHT

Ben lays the box on the floor of the closet, covers it with towels.

INT. GABRIEL'S PENTHOUSE LOFT - NIGHT

Gabriel stands at his bay window, wearing a garish silk robe, pondering the scattered lights across town.

PROPHET GABRIEL

A lacquered wooden strong-box.

The three white-suited MEN (THE INVESTORS) sit on the couch, uncomfortably close to one another, their faces look like the result of lifts and botox.

They stare at Gabriel through their impenetrable black glasses.

(CONTINUED)

Gabriel fidgets, nervous.

PROPHET GABRIEL

We need to take it from him.

(beat)

I don't think...we should kill him. Not yet.

(beat)

He may know about what's down there.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Ben walks around the downtown area, past shops and restaurants. There's new money in town.

Ben sees the THREE INVESTORS sitting at an outdoor cafe across the street, in their white suits. They seem to sense his presence, turn and stare at Ben.

They all sport fresh white bandages across their noses.

Ben walks faster. Turns a corner.

A BLACK CAT runs ahead behind a mailbox. Ben jogs ahead, looking for it. It's gone.

Something catches his eye, he turns and looks --

Across the street, a YOUNG MAN lowers a camera from his eye. He was photographing Ben.

BEN

Hey!

The young man disappears behind a building as traffic prevents Ben from crossing the street to pursue him.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Ben walks on the path to the old mine entrance. He stops when he hears commotion.

BEEP BEEP of a backhoe as WORKERS clear brush.

A HARD HAT, 40s, approaches Ben, waving him off.

HARD HAT

Hey, can't hike up here, man, it's still closed down.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

Still?

HARD HAT

Yeah, people think it's safe now with the mercury ban down, but this whole range is targeted for construction. Big contract.

BEN

Who's got the contract?

HARD HAT

Why, you lookin' fer work?

Ben nods -- "maybe so."

HARD HAT

I dunno, I heard they might be in with the church, whatever, but they got the funds and it's gonna be a long one, ya know?

Ben looks past the Hard Hat, to a huge concrete foundation and a framework of steel struts.

BEN

It's big.

HARD HAT

Yeah, it's huge. Whatever it is. They only tell us piece by piece, secretive and shit. It's fucked.

Ben peeks over the hill, sees the old rusted sign for "Golgoth Mine" being taken down.

HARD HAT

Oh, shit.

Across a weed field, Grabash stumbles around, bottle in hand.

MR. GRABASH

Close it down! This is hallowed ground. Good people are buried down there, miles down!

Hard Hat charges toward him.

(CONTINUED)

HARD HAT

Hey, bum, beat it! You heard me
yesterday...

Ben watches as the Hard Hat grabs the bottle from
Grabash's hand, flings it and pushes him back.

Grabash stumbles and rolls down the hill.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Ben looks up old newspapers. He reads an article about
the new development on the old mine site.

INSERT: "...land is owned by an investment consortium,
The Alchemy Group."

EXT. NEWSSTAND - DAY

Ben buys a newspaper, hunts through it...

INSERT: "Obituaries"

Ben scans the page, sees the bio on "Father Bocc, Society
of Jesus."

BEN

(reading)

Bocc led an unsuccessful campaign
in 2004 to turn over the
Donnington mine site to the
National Parks Association.

Ben looks troubled.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ben rustles as a chill runs up his spine.

He twitches --

CUT TO:

QUICK SHOTS --

the planks of wood form what appears to be CHAIR LEGS.

SPLINTERS stick into a hairless human leg --

(CONTINUED)

a FOREARM rests firmly onto sharp nails, pushing into the skin until it's almost to breaking --

The Shaved Head Man, seen from behind, sits on a chair in shrouded darkness --

VOICE (V.O.)

Kill him.

CUT TO:

Ben wakes --

BEN

I'm not a killer!

Ben shakes off the nightmare.

He walks to the closet, opens the door. Flicks on the light. Pulls aside the towels, revealing the box.

His finger brushes the iron enclosures.

One of the latches is loose. UNLOCKED.

He tries to open the box, but the second latch holds. The lid will not budge.

QUICK SHOTS as he jams a paper clip, screwdriver and a kitchen knife in the keyhole to jimmy it -- no dice.

OUTSIDE He hurls the box down on the concrete -- it bounces, skids, unharmed. And the second latch is now locked once more. Ben exhales, frustrated.

He covers the box under towels in the closet.

He grabs a jacket and heads out the door.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - DAY

Ben looks around outside the closed store, where Grabash once sat. No one here.

A SIREN SQUAWK makes him jump.

A POLICE CAR pulls up, across the street...

EXT. LOCAL DIVE BAR - ALLEY - DAY

The police car joins an Ambulance and other vehicle units with flashing lights. EMTS, COPS and a CROWD block the show.

Ben creeps up, attempts to peek over the shoulders of onlookers. No luck.

Ben slips between two people as they part, spots a BODY COVERED IN A WHITE SHEET, on a gurney.

Ben walks up, quietly, seemingly unnoticed by the EMTs. He reaches out to the white sheet that covers the head of whatever's below it...

His fingers clench the sheet, pull it down...

The deceased face of CHARLES GRABASH.

Ben's face drops. He backs away as the body is wheeled off and loaded into the ambulance by an EMT.

GUY

I served him, he looked fine.

A GUY, 30s, heavy stubble on his face, scar near his eye, talks to Ben as if picking up a previous conversation.

GUY

Last night, he was in, drunk as usual, but he's a fuckin' drunk, whattaya want? Next thing I know, they're fishing him out of the bathroom, cold as a codfish. You saw him, right? You were in.

BEN

In...?

GUY

The bar. It's cool, man, I won't tell. You weren't in the only bar in a bible town.

(re: the body)

Now this shit. Should be great for tips. Mutha-humpah.

The Guy drifts off. Ben watches the ambulance doors SLAM.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

Ben stands outside a drab mauve apartment building that looms behind a rusted jungle gym. A frayed sign reads "The Pomegranate Palisades - Welcome to paradise!"

INT. CASSIE'S APT. - DAY

Cassie opens the door to Ben.

BEN
I know you hate me. But I need
your help. There's no one else.

She sighs.

CASSIE
You like coffee?

BEN
I dunno.

CASSIE
It's my fucking god.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Ben and Cassie sit on the carpet, drinking from mugs the size of soup bowls.

BEN
Wow, that's strong.

CASSIE
You know what they say: Once you
go black...

She smiles. Nothing from Ben.

BEN
It's the mine. With both of them.

CASSIE
Ben, it was a 90 year-old and a
drunk. Doesn't look like funny
business to me.

BEN
I'm sure Prophet Gabriel had
something to do with it.

(CONTINUED)

CASSIE

Look, I agree he can be a fucktard, but he's not...

BEN

You've known him for a while. Since...school.

A beat.

CASSIE

He was our minister at school, everybody knew him.

BEN

But you knew him well.

CASSIE

Fuck you.

BEN

Did he hurt you?

She doesn't know how to react.

CASSIE

You can't change the past.

BEN

Why still have anything to do with him?

CASSIE

What about you? Why aren't you concerned about where you were for ten years? If I'm supposed to believe that story.

BEN

It's more about why I'm back here. I think it's to stop that bastard.

CASSIE

This town was dying before the mini-mega. Sometimes I think he actually believes what he says.

BEN

Is that why?

A beat.

(CONTINUED)

CASSIE
I've seen him help people. This kid lost his legs in a motorcycle accident and Gabriel paid to get him new plastic legs. He can even run now. He has good in him-

BOY'S VOICE (O.S.)
Mom?

Ben reacts, surprised.

CASSIE
(to other room)
Yeah, hun?

BOY'S VOICE (O.S.)
My restful nap's not working.

CASSIE
Okay, I'll be there in a minute.

BEN
You have a kid?

CASSIE
Yeah. Guess I didn't...get there, yet.

BEN
Who's the, um...? I mean...

She gets up, walks into the other room.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Cassie tucks in her little BOY. He's about ten.

CASSIE
No more bad dreams, okay?

He's out.

Ben appears at the doorway. They whisper.

CASSIE
He's got an asthma thing, he needs a lot of rest.

BEN
What's his name?

(CONTINUED)

CASSIE
It's Tucker. Like the failed
automobile.

BEN
He looks nice.

CASSIE
Yeah?

BEN
I'm sorry. About before.

Awkward silence. A confession...

CASSIE
Gabriel pays the rent here. And
he gave me a job at the mini-mega.
No one else knows. It is what it
is, and it works. So don't say
anything, okay? Don't ruin it for
us.

She moves closer to him, needing a healing touch. Ben is
frozen.

BEN
Gabriel is the...

CASSIE
Father. Yes. That's what it is.
Please don't judge me.

She reaches out to him, touches his arm. He
reciprocates. They are very close, still whispering.

BEN
Okay.
(beat)
Is there anything I can do?

She nods her head for them to leave the room.

IN THE HALLWAY

CASSIE
Yeah. You can go see my friend.
She does readings. Don't laugh,
she's good. Especially with, you
know, people who've maybe done too
many substances.

(CONTINUED)

BEN
I'm not a druggie.

CASSIE
It's none of my business, bro.
Just go see Simone. Yeah. She's
gonna like you.

Cassie smiles.

INT. SIMONE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Ben sits in front of SIMONE, 40s, a large woman with heavy white powder on her face, black lipstick.

Outside the window, TRAFFIC ZOOMS BY, uncomfortably close to the house.

THE BOX sits on the counter behind Ben.

Simone studies the lines in Ben's palms.

SIMONE
Your life line is...odd.
Interrupted.
(beat)
I need the cards.

She reaches under the table, pulls out a deck of Tarot Cards.

EEEEYYYOOOOOMM! A CAR SPEEDS PAST THE WINDOW.

SIMONE
This is my favorite deck. It's absolutely infallible. Do you have a question for the cards?

BEN
Where did I go?

SIMONE
You mean where are you from?

BEN
No. Where did I go. They'll know.

SIMONE
You're lucky you're cute, we'll let it roll.

(CONTINUED)

She attempts a smile, he doesn't return it. She knocks the deck against the table.

SIMONE

Start her off...

She unfurls the cards, nodding at Ben. Ben touches the back of one card. She smiles, enjoying her work. She grasps the card, starts to nudge it out of the stack --

A DARK SHAPE leaps past her head -- Ben and Simone startle!

SIMONE

Oh, Azrael...

It's her chocolate poodle DOG, now standing uneasily on the Box. It GROWLS.

Simone picks up the dog and drops it to the linoleum. It runs off.

Simone's fingers grasp a card, pull it out, lay it down on the table. A chill runs up her spine.

It's the MAGICIAN, upside down.

SIMONE

Magician, reversed.

BEN

Is that bad?

VROOOM!!! Ben jumps from the truck noise.

Simone puts a finger to her lips.

SIMONE

Relax. I will tell you. The Magician in reverse suggests that you are at a starting point, and yet things are not going well.

She deals a second card...THE STAR.

SIMONE

The Star. That's nice, I get this one a lot. It means gentleness, artistic ability...and also occult protection.

Ben studies her, dubious. She deals another card.

(CONTINUED)

SIMONE

The Lover. In reverse. A relationship is in jeopardy, it is ruled by doubt and fear. You should work on that, listen to your partner a bit more.

BEN

Why do you say that?

She smiles.

SIMONE

You're a man. You don't listen.

BEN

Okay, okay, more cards.

SIMONE

You also have no patience. Typical. Let's see here...

She lays down a new card, draws a quick breath.

WWWHHAAAAAAA!!! A MOTORCYCLE ROCKETS PAST THE WINDOW.

THE DEVIL, upside down.

SIMONE

The devil. Corruption, sadness. Death.

Her hand shakes for the next card.

BEN

What's wrong?

SIMONE

It's all about the combination of the cards, the ordering. I've never seen this order, exactly.

(beat, considers)

It's leading somewhere. That's for sure.

Ben watches her slowly draw and lays down...THE TOWER OF GOD.

BEN

That looks okay, right? Makes sense in this town.

(CONTINUED)

From her side of the table, it's upside down.

SIMONE
Pride, destruction, catastrophe,
the end. Death.

BEN
But not in a good way, then? Ha.

She holds a finger up to her lips. Hands tremble, begin to draw a card...

SIMONE
If it's anything but a Hanged Man,
we'll be okay...

Ben looks at her, a change comes over his face.

BEN
Wait, Simone...

SIMONE
Can't stop now. Disrespectful.

She lays it down on the table. It's a HANGED MAN.

She pushes her chair away from the table and stands, distraught.

BEN
(nervous laugh)
C'mon, it's just cards.

SIMONE
No. Look at me. You may be in
danger. You must consider this a
warning.

BEN
Simone...

SIMONE
No, don't mock me-

BEN
Simone! These weren't my cards.

SIMONE
Denial won't help, man. This shit
is real.

(CONTINUED)

She reaches, gathers up the cards. Ben's HAND shoots out, grabs her wrist. Fear spreads across her face.

BEN

No. Listen. You didn't start with my card. The dog surprised you. And then you took another card.

She pulls away out of his grasp.

SIMONE

So it's a tainted reading. Okay, forget it, the cards aren't yours.

BEN

No. They're yours.

She blinks rapidly. Starts to unravel, fidgeting...

SIMONE

No, no. Who are you? You're wrong, you don't know.

BEN

Listen to me...

She begins to back away, toward the living room.

SIMONE

I had a dream the other night. A man with a beard. He kept handing me cards, but they were on fire...

BEN

I know this will sound crazy, but I have a feeling that you may be in danger. I've had it before, recently, twice-

SIMONE

Azrael! Come to mommy, baby.

She runs into the --

LIVING ROOM --

Ben follows her --

the dog perches on the arm of the couch, BARKS at Ben.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

People are dying. It's connected to the project they're building up in the old mine site...

SIMONE

My father died from the mine.

BEN

From the cave-in? That didn't happen like you think-

SIMONE

No. He had some kind of condition, skin cancer, he got down there. He was in my dream, too. Get away from me.

He steps toward her, too fast. She jumps.

SIMONE

Stay away from me!

SIMONE RUNS OUT THE FRONT DOOR.

The dog leaps down, nips at Ben's feet, detaining him --

A beat as Ben struggles with the dog, until --

A SCREAM and a hideous SCREECH OF BRAKES calls from outside.

Ben goes running --

EXT. STREET - DAY

Ben runs out to the street - a DODGE PICK-UP and DRIVER stopped --

Simone's body lies in the street.

Ben runs up.

Her head is extended further than her neck should allow. Dead.

Ben runs.

EXT. POMEGRANATE PALISADES - DAY

Ben runs up, shocked and wheezing.

INT. CASSIE'S APT. - DAY

Ben walks in the unlocked front door, looks around, frantic.

BEN
Cassie?! Cassie?

He closes and locks the front door.

INT. BEDROOM

Ben walks in, looks around. No one's home.

Ben falls on his back on the bed, hands over his face.

He hears a HUMMING.

He slowly rises to sitting.

His eyes move to Cassie's closet.

He walks toward it.

Opens the double doors -- they SQUEAK open --

HIS HAND -- reaches for a pile of clothes on the floor --
the HUMMING intensifies --

His hand pulls aside clothing --

THE BOX sits there.

Ben jumps back, startled, scared.

QUICK FLASH

the box sits on Simone's counter, where Ben left it.

BACK TO SCENE

Ben backs into the corner, slides down the wall, sits,
stares at the box. Helpless.

The humming has stopped.

A POUNDING on the front door!

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

POUNING continues as Ben jogs to the door.

BEN

Cassie?

The door crashes open!

The three INVESTORS pile in. Ben backpedals -- he's grabbed by the Big Investor.

A concrete fist to the gut sends Ben to the floor.

Ben's hair is grabbed, head wrenched back. The BALD INVESTOR strides forward, stares mutely at Ben's face, into his eyes.

BEN

What do you want?

No answer.

Ben notices the skin on the BIG INVESTOR's wrists and hands are riddled with red welts and lesions.

The SKINNY INVESTOR tosses couch cushions, knocks over a lamp and a bookcase.

The Bald Investor points to the bedroom -- Skinny Investor tears back toward the bedroom.

BEN

I don't know anything, I don't have anything.

Bald Investor SLAPS Ben.

Skinny investor walks back into the living room, shakes his head "no."

Bald investor swats Ben with a brutal backhand to the face. Ben falls to the floor, knocked semi-conscious.

The door SLAMS. All is quiet. They're gone.

Ben rises, in horrible pain.

He stumbles down the hallway, hugging the walls, struggling to stay up.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Ben stumbles in.

OPENS THE CLOSET --

Clothes are everywhere. Towels thrown.

The BOX sits on the floor, undisturbed.

Ben palms the box...

BEN

They couldn't see you.

He breathes deep, new energy coursing through him, like a drug being shot into his system. Color returns to his face.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ben walks out the front door. He hears keys dangling, looks down the hall...

A YOUNG MAN with a goatee walks up to a door, a camera case slung around his shoulder. Puts his keys in the door, glances over to Ben--

It's the guy who was photographing Ben on the street!

BEN

Hey!

The Man scrambles to get in his door as Ben rushes up. Ben gets a foot in the door.

BEN

You were taking photos of me!

The Man is terrified, as Ben's visage is made all the more scary by the marks on his face.

YOUNG MAN

Stop-stop yelling.

Ben pushes open the door, the Young Man stands there, cringing, hoping he won't get punched.

(CONTINUED)

YOUNG MAN

I, I was just shooting stuff for my portfolio. I can give you a few bucks-

Ben pushes him in the apartment, slams the door behind them.

BEN

Bullshit! You were working for those guys, in the suits.

Ben looks around. The apartment is a disgusting mess.

YOUNG MAN

Hey, don't I know you?

He strains to recognize Ben.

BEN

(realizing)

You were at school. You were that photographer kid. The Hellenistic art nudes guy.

NICHOLAS

Yeah! Hey, buddy, good to see you! Nicholas, uh, Nick for my friends-

BEN

We're not friends. Sit down.

Nicholas sits, hugs his Nikon reflexively. Ben wrenches it from him.

NICHOLAS

's a very, expensive, camera...

Ben turns on the camera, looks through digital still images, shuttles through various landscapes...

...underage girls and boys, half naked...

BEN

What's this?

NICHOLAS

It's just a job. Sometimes. They just tell me what to shoot, I do it.

(CONTINUED)

BEN
And if you don't?

A beat.

NICHOLAS
They said that phone books
wouldn't leave marks. They were
wrong...

Nicholas pulls up his sleeves, revealing huge purple
bruises on his arms.

BEN
You're into some shit, here, Nick.

NICHOLAS
It's Donnington.

Ben comes to the pictures of himself from the street. He
shuttles through --

EACH SHOT OF HIM CONTAINS A BLACK SHADOW -- A BLURRY
SMUDGE THAT FOLLOWS BEHIND HIM, ALMOST LIKE A TAIL.

Ben shows Nicholas the lcd screen, confused.

NICHOLAS
Sometimes I get a lens flare or
I'm shooting at too low of a
resolution. That's neither.

Ben curses, starts pacing, frustrated, amped up...

Ben sees a sepia print on the wall of the rusted GOLGOTH
MINE sign.

BEN
The old mine.

NICHOLAS
Yeah. Pretty creepy up there.

BEN
They're building there. You know
what they're building?

NICHOLAS
The only reason I'm still alive is
because I don't ask questions.
And I like it that way.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

You must have seen something.

NICHOLAS

You want answers, go up to the
Mini-Mega. If you can get in.

Ben moves for the door.

NICHOLAS

Buddy?

Nicholas gestures to the wall behind the door --

NICHOLAS

Do you think I could be a real
photographer?

Photo prints in cheap cardboard frames hang on the wall.

The pictures are stirring -- an elderly woman with a
breathing apparatus laughs -- a see-saw on fire -- a high-
fashion-style shot of a boy with Down's Syndrome...

BEN

You're a pro, Nick. A pro.

Ben leaves, slamming the door.

Nicholas sits, stares at the door, beaten.

He reaches for a bowl of mashed potatoes impaled by a
fork, digs in.

INT. CASSIE'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Ben shaves off his beard.

The razor takes off thick clumps of hair.

His finger dabs in a compact --

Puts makeup under his eyes, over the dark circles.

He finishes, looks at himself in the mirror...

He looks 17 years old.

EXT. MINI MEGA-CHURCH - NIGHT

The BUBBLY GIRL greets TEENS on their way in, handing them programs.

She sees Ben. Doesn't recognize him.

BUBBLY GIRL
Your first time at Explorers? I'm
Ashley, your friend in Christ...

She puts out her hand to shake. Ben takes just the program from her other hand.

BEN
I'm looking for the prophet.

BUBBLY GIRL
Oh, he doesn't help out with
Explorers any more.

INT. REC. ROOM - NIGHT

YOUNG PEOPLE sing songs as song leaders strum acoustic guitars. Big-time nerdy.

INT. STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Ben creeps up the stairs, tries a door. It's locked. Keeps walking up.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Ben walks slowly through a dark corridor, past offices...

EXT. OFFICE OF PROPHET GABRIEL - NIGHT

Ben tries the door handle, locked.

GUARD (O.S.)
Hey!

Ben jumps -- a flashlight beam burns out his face. He covers his eyes. A uniformed GUARD, late 20s, appears.

GUARD (O.S.)
Explorers are not allowed to leave
the rec room, you know that.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

I'm sorry. I just got bored and thought I'd look around.

GUARD

Don't move, I'm calling this in. This is what you get for not following the regulations.

The Guard lowers his flashlight and reaches for his walkie-talkie. Ben gets a better look at him.

BEN

Hector?

It's HECTOR, 27, his old roommate from the Jesuit House.

HECTOR

What? Holy shit...Ben? From the house? You don't even look any older.

BEN

I aged well.

HECTOR

Whattayou doing? I mean, dude, you can't be up here, I gotta call this in.

BEN

Hector, Hec, man, how about we forget about this?

Ben takes a step toward him. A chill runs up Hector's spine.

HECTOR

Ben. This is my job.
(beat)
And call me officer.

Hector plays with his walkie-talkie. Before he realizes it, Ben's hand reaches in and turns it off.

BEN

You're not any kind of officer. You're just an angry young man who still doesn't have a father.

Hector looks at Ben...speechless.

(CONTINUED)

Hector can't move, under Ben's spell.

Even Ben is shocked at his power over Hector, but he's driven by an unconscious confidence.

BEN
And this isn't...you.

Ben takes the walkie-talkie from his hand. Puts a hand on his shoulder.

HECTOR
(tortured whisper)
I can't forgive. It's eating me up.

BEN
I know. You can't fight it. Why try?

Hector looks at him, appeased, his burden lifted.

Ben steps aside, offering Hector the door.

Hector pulls out his key ring, opens the door.

INT. PROPHET GABRIEL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Ben rifles through files on a desk as Hector stands at the doorway.

Ben finds a red file...

INSERT: "RAVEN HILL"

Ben opens the file folder...

Contracts, schematics, budgets, nothing clear...

He keeps turning...

PROPOSAL...CONFIDENTIAL...looks promising...

INSERT TITLE ON REPORT: "God's Great Adventure!"

Ben's not sure if he can believe what he's reading...

INSERT TEXT:

(CONTINUED)

Goal: to provide a destination location for family fun for Christians and Christ-seekers of all ages.

GRAPHICS: water slides, rollercoasters, sideshow games.

BEN
(sotto)
A theme park?

Ben turns the page, to...

INSERT TEXT:

Projected Attendance (first 5 YEARS):
1 MILLION PERSONS.

BEN
That's it. They're bringing them to the mine.

Ben closes the file folder.

A beat.

BEN
He did it.

Ben smiles, nods his head. A pleasing revelation.

HECTOR
What else?

BEN
I need some supplies, dude.

INT. CASSIE'S APT. - NIGHT

Cassie slumps on the couch, drinking straight from a coffee pot as she watches television.

A KNOCK at the door surprises her. She gets up...

Opens the door...

IT'S GABRIEL.

PROPHET GABRIEL
Is my son here?

(CONTINUED)

CASSIE

He's at my mother's. What are you doing here? You never come here.

INT. LIVING ROOM

They sit, awkward.

PROPHET GABRIEL

I think it's time we started spending more time together. Me, you...and Tucker.

CASSIE

I've been thinking, too.

PROPHET GABRIEL

I miss my cute little man...

CASSIE

You should.

PROPHET GABRIEL

You could live with me, now.

CASSIE

In the ivory tower? The lap of luxury?

PROPHET GABRIEL

Not exactly. There's some rooms in the west building. We'd still need to be discreet, of course.

CASSIE

Quite an offer.

PROPHET GABRIEL

I can find you better lodgings.

A beat.

CASSIE

No, I mean...I don't think we need you anymore.

PROPHET GABRIEL

(teeth grinding)

It's because of him?

(CONTINUED)

CASSIE

Who?

PROPHET GABRIEL

What about your job? The church employs you. Your rent.

CASSIE

I can find another job. It's time.

PROPHET GABRIEL

What has he told you? Whatever it is, you won't have to worry about him anymore. He won't bother you.

She stands up.

CASSIE

What have you done?

He stands.

PROPHET GABRIEL

I've taken care of your new friend, is what I've done. Old friend, rather.

CASSIE

What have you done to Ben?

He grabs her by the arms, tight.

PROPHET GABRIEL

Where was he all these years?

CASSIE

I don't know. I don't know anything. Either does he. Let me go.

She pulls away. He blocks her path.

PROPHET GABRIEL

(in a rage)

You don't know these people! They won't let you get away. No one can leave here.

He opens the front door, steps out into the hallway, looks back.

(CONTINUED)

PROPHET GABRIEL
I'll give you one more chance.
Bring him to me.

CASSIE
Guess what?
(beat)
He's not yours.

PROPHET GABRIEL
Who are we talking about?

She slams the door on Gabriel's stricken face.

She deadbolts the door.

Her phone RINGS.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Cassie walks up the path toward the old mine entrance.

CASSIE
Ben?

BEN (O.S.)
Where were you?

She startles.

BEN emerges from the shadows of the trees.

CASSIE
Ben. We need to talk.

BEN
He did it, Cassie. All this time,
I've denied it.

Ben picks up a large black duffle bag, begins to trudge uphill through the foliage. Cassie follows.

CASSIE
Ben, what's going on?

BEN
We're here to do something very
important. Just like he did.

CASSIE
Who?

(CONTINUED)

BEN

My father. He knew what he was doing. He was protecting it. He blew it up to seal it. So no one could get in. Go through.

CASSIE

What's in the bag?

BEN

Gifts from an old friend.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - NIGHT

Ben begins to pull objects from the bag, lay them around the struts of the construction on the old mine site.

CASSIE

This is trespassing. I can't afford to go to jail.

Ben ignores her, moves on to the next strut.

Cassie looks closer to see what he's laying down...

A jug full of gasoline, duct-taped at the top with wires sticking out. A homemade fire bomb.

CASSIE

Jesus, Ben! What the fuck are you doing?

He turns, faces her, a fire in his eyes.

BEN

My father died without seeing his life's work come to fruition.

CASSIE

This is a huge crime.

BEN

I remember now. Where I was for 10 years. It's coming back to me. Little glimpses. Knowledge. Teachings. I was learning. I have...skills.

CASSIE

What is it?

(CONTINUED)

BEN

It's beautiful. In its own way.
It is what is. And it's not meant
to be touched by these wretches.
These jackals. They will never
understand.

He continues to place the explosives -- she grabs his
arm.

CASSIE

Ben, stop. This isn't you.

He violently jerks his arm free! She falls to a knee.

BEN

I finally know who I am. And
you're not going to take that from
me.

Ben comes to the edge of the platform...

The OLD MINE ENTRANCE looms ahead.

BEN

It must be sealed. They can never
go inside. Ever again.

CASSIE

Ben!

He doesn't hear her.

He walks toward the massive iron double-doors...

Reaches for the handles of the doors, pulls...

They don't budge. Chained and bolted shut. He nods.

RAIN BEGINS TO FALL. Ben raises his face to the rain,
opens his mouth. Baptism.

CASSIE watches him from the platform...

BEN

Bring me the bag. Please.

She starts to cry. She approaches, touches him. They're
both getting soaked.

(CONTINUED)

CASSIE

Ben, I'm going away. I need you.
We need you. Come with us.

BEN

No one leaves.

Ben begins to lay explosives at the foot of the door.

He suddenly stops, sees something above him. His eyes bulge.

BEN

No.

ON THE DOOR FRAME

a vertical line of tiny GLYPHS, similar to those in Ben's old letter, lay scratched into the rusted iron.

Ben takes off running. She watches him go.

CASSIE

(sotto)

He's your son.

EXT. GRAVE OF KYLE DANVERS - NIGHT

A pick slices under an edge of the flat stone marker, digs in, ratchets it up.

Ben's silhouette against the full moon heaves a shovel over and over and tears up the ground. The rain pours.

The shovel lands with a CHUNK --

Ben in the muddy pit, pries open the CASKET top --

Ben looks down, muddy water stains his face --

his EYES are stone -- it's too dark to see into the shadows of the casket --

LIGHTNING cracks across the sky -- the casket is illuminated --

EMPTY.

Ben's face is stone.

(CONTINUED)

VOICE (V.O.)

Kill him.

Ben looks up, sees --

the spire of the Mini-Mega, up on the hill.

Only the top floor of the tower is lit. Construction scaffolds now burst from the roof.

INT. PENTHOUSE OF MINI-MEGA - NIGHT

Prophet Gabriel fixes himself a cocktail in his silk pajamas at the long bar.

He gazes out the open patio doors to the balcony and beyond to the spectacular view of the entire valley.

BEN (O.S.)

Do you know darkness?

Gabriel looks around, searching for the source of the voice.

BEN (O.S.)

Outer darkness? I've seen it.
And I know you were lying.

PROPHET GABRIEL

Show yourself.

BEN

stands in the doorway, backlit.

PROPHET GABRIEL

Stay away from me!

BEN

Why do you lie to them? You
haven't seen it. You haven't
touched it. I have.

Ben walks slowly toward Gabriel, who tries to evade his path.

BEN

There's no poetry in it. There's
no narrative in it. It's
darkness, and fire. And there's a
chair. Waiting.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BEN (CONT'D)

With your name on it. Your real name. And it waits. And you will not find it comfortable.

PROPHET GABRIEL

I've called security.

Ben knows he's lying. Gabriel backs around the couches. Ben circles him.

BEN

And you will have one thought. Only one. That you should have respected the darkness. Accepted it. As inevitable. Not tried to defeat it. Or deny it. You can't live forever, Prophet. But luckily, for those who think they can, there is a special place reserved for them. And only them.

BROTHER GABRIEL

I am worth more than that.

BEN

No. You're a leech. And your chair sits.

BROTHER GABRIEL

(scared)

Where?

BEN

In the darkness.

BROTHER GABRIEL

Where is it?

Ben smiles.

BEN

Tartarus was the prison of Hades. Reserved for the worst offenders.

Ben picks up a SHARP GLASS TRINKET off the counter top. Weighs it in his hand.

PROPHET GABRIEL

What do you want? I'll pay you.

(CONTINUED)

BEN
Where is he?

PROPHET GABRIEL
Who?

BEN
Where is my father?

Ben approaches. Gabriel steps back.

PROPHET GABRIEL
I...don't know. I don't understand.

BEN
The story goes that my father died in prison, and he's buried out at Silent Bliss Memorial. But he's not. There's nobody in the coffin.

(takes another step)
I dug it the fuck up and there's nothing inside, preacher man.

PROPHET GABRIEL
I can understand you're upset.

BEN
No, you can't. Now you're going to start talking.

Gabriel pulls open a drawer, fumbles out a PISTOL --

PROPHET GABRIEL
You don't know who you're dealing with-

SLAM! Ben bashes Gabriel in the head with the glass item!

The pistol goes sliding across the hard wood floor out the patio door onto the balcony tile.

Gabriel falls to the floor, feels the blood flowing from the side of his head.

BEN
Talk. Now.

PROPHET GABRIEL
Your father went to prison-

(CONTINUED)

BEN
No. Start from the beginning.
The mine.

CUT TO:

INT. MINE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

YOUNG GABRIEL (THE TALL MINER) and YOUNG KYLE (JACK -- the BEARDED MINER) work side by side on large diggers, boring into the ground.

Jack is seen only from behind or his face in shadow.

PROPHET GABRIEL (V.O.)
We called him Jack, he hated the name Kyle. We worked the wrecking crew, the guys who cleared the rock so the chemists could come in, extract the quicksilver...

Gabriel loses control of the digger -- Jack turns off his machine and jumps in to grab Gabriels' digger --

PROPHET GABRIEL (V.O.)
We had each other's backs. The bosses would put one of us on two and three-man diggers, to cut costs. Jack saved my ass more than once.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Jack, his BRIDE, and wedding party, including Gabriel as his Best Man, pose for a photo. FLASH of a lightbulb -- the lens flare burns out Jack's face.

INT. BAR - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Gabriel and Jack both give some cash to the bartender for a pool as they watch a football game.

Jack leaves for the bathroom.

Gabriel, tense, hands the bartender two more hundreds.

INT. CAVERN - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Jack breaks through a wall of rock -- as stones tumble down to reveal a new sub-cavern, Jack's eyes light up --

PROPHET GABRIEL (V.O.)
 But he began to change when we
 broke through to sub-cavern B...it
 wasn't on any of the charts...

Gabriel turns up behind him, looking in the same direction, perplexed --

Jack's face is illuminated by a RED LIGHT, his eyes grow to saucers, a smile of unearthly pleasure curls --

Gabriel shakes him -- Jack snaps out of it -- the red light is gone -- only shadows beyond the broken wall --

The BALD INVESTOR stands next to the FOREMAN, arms crossed, observing.

PROPHET GABRIEL (V.O.)
 He started keeping to himself, he
 got really sullen. I thought he
 was just exhausted from being a
 new father...

Gabriel and other Crew stop their machines, angry, look around, wiping their brows --

They find Jack crouched in the sub-cavern, studying the darkness on the far wall --

A large Crew CHIEF grabs Jack by the shoulders, lifts him, throws him back to the shift --

PROPHET GABRIEL (V.O.)
 ...and then, things just kind of
 accelerated.

MONTAGE --

-The INVESTORS visit Gabriel, finding an underage GIRL in his bathroom in panties and bra. They shove her clothes at her, she runs out and they start pushing Gabriel around. He tries to hand them his wallet as a PUNCH floors him.

-In the subcavern, Jack crouches down, picks up dirt and rubs it all over his face.

(CONTINUED)

-In a back alley, The Investors hand a shaking Gabriel a satchel. Gabriel opens it, revealing TNT.

PROPHET GABRIEL (V.O.)
 It was all set up, just a little insurance scam. I had it worked out so that if the crew just stayed in the usual section no one would get hurt. But Jack had other plans...

INT. MINE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

POUNGING DRILLS batter our ears as the crew works the machines and loaders.

Gabriel sweats intensely as he seals off a door, checks his watch.

Something catches his eye --

GABRIEL
 Jack, no!

Jack kneels in the corner of the cavern, holding up a CRYING BABY.

All drills stop.

The wail of the CRYING BABY overwhelms all sound.

Jack turns and sees Gabriel running toward him, arms outstretched.

Jack holds the baby to his chest and takes off, runs into the sub-cavern, disappearing into the shadows --

PROPHET GABRIEL (V.O.)
 I had to get him and the baby out of there before the sticks blew, there was only a few seconds left. He ran into some tunnel I didn't know was there...

INT. TUNNEL - DAY

Gabriel chases after Jack, who seems oddly casual as he holds the wailing baby to his chest and runs.

(CONTINUED)

Ahead of Gabriel, Jack disappears into the shadows of the tunnel.

A muted BOOM -- the cave begins to RUMBLE --

Rocks fall --

Gabriel stops, SCREAMS, silent...

SLOW MOTION --

smoke hurtles down the tunnel toward Gabriel --

his eyes balloon in horror --

darkness consumes the tunnel --

INT. PENTHOUSE OF MINI-MEGA - NIGHT (PRESENT DAY)

Ben ties a knot in the phone cord that holds Prophet Gabriel to a chair, hands tied behind him.

BEN

I was the baby?

PROPHET GABRIEL

Yes.

(beat)

I don't remember anything after the TNT fired. I woke up outside the mine, a day later, we must of got out through some back entrance...

BEN

We?

PROPHET GABRIEL

Me and your dad.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Jack, seen from behind, slaps Gabriel awake. Gabriel lays on the forest floor, face covered in soot. He COUGHS, blinks his eyes, looks at Jack --

JACK

They must never go inside the mine again. Swear to me.

(CONTINUED)

Distant sound of SIRENS.

Gabriel nods, frightened.

Jack helps him to his feet.

JACK
Now walk down the hill.
(leans in close)
Make them fear it.

Jack walks away.

GABRIEL
Jack, don't go...

VOICE (O.S.)
There's one!

Gabriel looks down the hill...sees a crowd made up of SHERIFFS, NATIONAL GUARDSMEN, TV REPORTERS and CAMERAMEN, rushing toward him --

He looks back up the hill -- Jack wriggles into a circular tunnel on the side of a hill, disappears.

The crowd swarms around Gabriel. He rises, the Reporters spot his uniform, thrust microphones in his face --

REPORTER
Are you a survivor of the mine collapse?

GABRIEL
Yes.

REPORTER
Are you the only survivor of the mine collapse that claimed 33 lives?

He pauses, unsure. The Reporter raises an eyebrow, prompting him.

GABRIEL
Yes. I am the only one.

VOICE (O.S.)
Praise Jesus, sweet Lord, he's alive!!

(CONTINUED)

A group of TOWNSFOLK, bibles in hand, swarm Gabriel, touching him.

BIBLE WOMAN
We've been praying all night.
It's a miracle you're alive.

GABRIEL
(overwhelmed)
Yes, a miracle.

The Reporter signals to her CAMERAMAN, deadly serious.

REPORTER
Doug, get this...

She thrusts the mic back in Gabriel's face.

REPORTER
Tell us again.

Gabriel looks to the townsfolk -- staring at him, wanting him, needing him.

He looks in the camera, steels himself, a change washing over him.

BROTHER GABRIEL
I am alive because of a miracle.

The crowd whips into a frenzy.

INT. BACKROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Gabriel, in his black garb, sits with the three white-suited INVESTORS, looking over architectural plans for the Lamb of God school.

PROPHET GABRIEL (V.O.)
I was set up to be their fall guy when the whole mine was taken out by the extra TNT they packed in there. But when I got attention, they saw an opportunity. A new plan took shape.

He shakes hands with the Bald Investor, the handshake extremely tight. Fear flashes in Gabriel's eyes as he holds a weak smile. The Investor's sunglasses glint, black and impenetrable.

(CONTINUED)

PROPHET GABRIEL (V.O.)
 They re-invested, in me, in
 selling hope to a town that had
 been devastated. And I was good
 at it. But there wasn't room for
 one more.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

JACK is led, head down, in cuffs by the POLICE into a
 squad car as a CROWD of angry townsfolk swarm around,
 shouting epithets to fry the mine bomber.

INT. PENTHOUSE - NIGHT

Ben stands uncomfortably close to Gabriel, rolling the
 sharp object in his hands, making Gabriel nervous.

BEN
 So you set up my dad as the fall
 guy?

PROPHET GABRIEL
 It wasn't me, Ben. It was them.
 They run the show.

Ben grabs Gabriel's jaw, squeezes, raises the glass to
 strike.

BEN
 What about the girls? Don't you
 count your own sins?

PROPHET GABRIEL
 (breaking down)
 I have a sickness. I have an
 appetite. It must be fed. I ask
 for forgiveness every time it
 happens. I cleanse my soul.

Ben lets go of him, turns, thinks.

BEN
 I was wrong. He didn't blow up
 the mine. My father could still
 be alive.

A wave of hope washes over Ben.

(CONTINUED)

He keeps an eye on Prophet Gabriel in the mirror behind the bar.

UNSEEN TO BEN -- Gabriel's hands behind the chair begin to work out of the bindings.

BEN
So why me? Why bring a baby to
the mine?

PROPHET GABRIEL
To kill you!

Ben goes white.

BEN
What?

PROPHET GABRIEL
Like some kind of sacrifice. He
had knives. In a box like the one
you had.

QUICK FLASH -- THE MINE (FLASHBACK)

Gabriel sees Jack remove the oaken STRONG-BOX from his duffle bag, then open it and pull out stone KNIVES with hieroglyphs etched on the blades.

BACK TO SCENE

PROPHET GABRIEL
He said something the week before
about a legend where the son
murders the father in his sleep.
The paternal solution, he called
it. I'm sorry, tough guy, but
your pops wanted you dead.

BEN
Don't say that!

Ben hurls the glass trinket into the MIRROR, shattering it --

BEN
You're going away for the people
you've killed to protect your
little theme park.

(CONTINUED)

PROPHET GABRIEL

What people? What are you talking about?

BEN

Charles Grabash, Father Bocc,
Simone Seidel, who knows who else?

PROPHET GABRIEL

I have no idea who they are.

Ben looks in his eyes, knows he's speaking the truth.

Ben, frustrated, turns his back on Gabriel for just a second...

Prophet Gabriel rips off his bindings, RISES AND RUNS FOR BEN --

BEN TURNS, TOO SLOW --

The BLACK CAT bounds in from the entryway, heading for Ben -- it dodges around him -- leaps --

the Cat lands on Prophet Gabriel's face, claws dig in -- Gabriel SCREAMS -- Ben watches --

Prophet Gabriel struggles, cat stuck to his face, backing toward the open patio door, the balcony -- CLAWS sinking into flesh, jets of blood spraying --

Ben watches, eyes ablaze --

Gabriel stumbles through the patio door onto

THE BALCONY

Gabriel flails, cat on face -- his shoe knocks the pistol away -- he backs into the railing -- tips, falls backward over the railing -- legs disappear over the balcony --

GABRIEL FALLS THROUGH SPACE, DOWN TOWARD --

THE NEO-CRUCIFIX -- SWORD SLICING UPWARD, WAITING --

BEN LOOKS DOWN, EYES WIDE --

GABRIEL FALLS --

IMPALED ON THE SWORD, IT DRIVES STRAIGHT THROUGH GABRIEL'S BACK AND OUT THROUGH HIS CHEST -- tips of bloody ribs sprouting up through his silk pajama shirt --

(CONTINUED)

Ben looks down, emotionless --

THE CAT detaches its claws from Prophet Gabriel's face...

CAT

Mrowr.

...it dashes down the statue to the ground and scampers off into the shadows.

The sword holds Gabriel's body impaled, aloft, as a final moan of breath leaves his mouth...

Prophet Gabriel's head falls back, mouth open, landing on Christ's modern art blockhead, tipped in crucifixion...

Blood drips from Gabriel's mouth, onto Christ's face, forming a tear of blood falling from Christ's eye.

EXT. MINI MEGA-CHURCH - NIGHT

Ben runs.

INT. CASSIE'S APT. - NIGHT

Ben quietly enters the dark apartment.

BEN

Cassie?

He looks around the shadowy apartment. Sees several empty bottles of wine and liquor.

INT. BEDROOM

Empty. Her sketchbook is open on the bed. Ben looks at it...

The sketches are nightmarish cartoons of a black-haired girl surrounded by monsters in a dark cemetery.

INT. BATHROOM

Ben pushes open the door, COLLAPSES --

CASSIE'S LIFELESS BODY SITS AGAINST THE BATHTUB.

(CONTINUED)

Ben crawls to her, frantic, slapping her face, feeling her pulse.

Nothing.

He sees an open PILL BOTTLE on its side on the tile -- PILLS strewn on the floor.

He holds her body, devastated.

BEN

No, no...

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ben walks into the room...numb...

On the coffee table, sits...

THE BOX. HUMMING.

Ben approaches, slowly -

He twitches --

QUICK FLASH --

the wooden chair comes into sharper focus -- the inscription dissolves from Cyrillic to Latin-based letters --

Kvle Danyrs --

BACK TO SCENE

A glazed look has come over Ben's face.

Ben reaches for the box, LIFTS THE LATCHES, easily opens it -- the humming STOPS.

He looks down into it -- gets on his knees --

He reaches into the box --

His hand disappears inside --

He keeps reaching down -- his forearm disappears --

keeps reaching down --

(CONTINUED)

his arm completely, impossibly inside the box -- up to his shoulder --

he stops. Begins to pull out his arm, slowly --

his hand pulls out, grasping something -- a wooden handle -- a lacquered wooden rod --

Ben rises to a crouch, pulling out the handle -- it curves, he compensates to fit it through the small opening of the box --

a BLADE, silver, rusty but sharp, is attached to the wooden handle --

it fully emerges...it is a scythe.

Ben leans it up against the closet door. He reaches back into the box -- down to his shoulder, arm disappearing --

he pulls out a black cloth. He rises and unfurls it -- it is a black hooded cloak.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Ben walks slowly down the middle of the barren, wet street, wearing the hooded black cloak, using the tall scythe as a walking stick.

His eyes are shadowed by the hood.

The blade glints in the street lamp light -- the scythe towers above him, a good eight feet tall.

LIGHTNING cracks in the sky --

QUICK SHOTS --

FATHER BOCC coughs in his sleep. His hacking intensifies, he can't breathe --

THE HOODED FIGURE OF THE REAPER stands next to the bed.

Father Bocc's eyes open as his last breath leaves him.

MR. GRABASH sits on the toilet in a dirty bar restroom stall. He convulses, having a stroke.

THE HOODED FIGURE OF THE REAPER stands in the stall.

(CONTINUED)

SIMONE deals a tarot card in her kitchen. Sitting across the table from her --

THE HOODED FIGURE OF THE REAPER.

PROPHET GABRIEL struggles, cat on his face --

THE HOODED FIGURE OF THE REAPER watches him tumble over the balcony rail.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Ben walks past the WARNING signs on the trail.

Past construction sites.

EXT. OLD MINE - FRONT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Ben walks up to the sealed front entrance.

DUEY

stands resolute, staff in hand.

Ben walks right up to him, faces him.

The old man smiles.

Ben opens his mouth, lifts his tongue --

Duey's gnarled FINGERS reach under Ben's tongue, remove a GOLD COIN.

Duey bites gently on the coin, smiles a toothless grin. Steps aside, bades Ben go by with his staff.

Ben walks forward --

The sound of CREAKING IRON as the giant doors vibrate.

RIVETS unscrew, pop out.

CHAINS slide apart, snap, then fall away.

THE DOORS PART AND OPEN.

Darkness beyond.

INT. ENTRANCE TUNNEL - NIGHT

Very dark. Wet stone walls.

Ben walks slowly down the tunnel. Black on black.

Light flickers ahead.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

Ben enters a large cavern. He stops, lays his scythe down on the dirt floor. He faces --

A NAKED MAN sits on an old wooden chair atop a rise of stones in the middle of the cave, shaved head down.

He sits rigid, his arms on the armrests of the chair, feet forward, on the ground.

His head rises -- he suddenly snaps his neck back, SCREAMS a gut-wrenching wail of horror at the ceiling --

his skin is stuck to the chair -- he wriggles and writhes -- the skin is pulling, stretching, tearing, bleeding --

nails protrude from the chair and stick into his back, buttocks and thighs --

his shoulders riddled with hundreds of splinters --

he completes his wail of pain, catches his breath, smiles a sadistic smile --

Ben watches him -- the man's face comes into focus --

It is the face of every soul sold to the devil.

The face of a thousand impenitent traitors --

It is KYLE DANVERS.

KYLE

Come closer, my son.

Ben takes two steps forward, into the light from the torches that ring the walls.

Ben removes his hood. His sluggish eyes trained on Kyle.

(CONTINUED)

BEN
 (deep voice)
 Who?

Kyle hisses --

KYLE
 It is a glorious day.

BEN
 (deep voice)
 Who?

KYLE
 The last threats to Gateway are to
 be eliminated.

BEN
 (deep voice)
 I will not kill.

KYLE
 Not yet.

BEN
 (deep voice)
 Who?

KYLE
 The Investors...

Ben lifts his hood back on his head, grasps his scythe,
 turns around, walks back into the tunnel.

INT. FLOP HOUSE - NIGHT

The remains of a sordid party in the living room.
 Bottles, syringes, meth kits and razor blades laid out.

The BIG INVESTOR lays shirtless, asleep on the leather
 couch, a new bandage on his chin and a TEENAGE BOY
 snoring on top of him.

The SKINNY INVESTOR squats on the floor, preparing a
 syringe. Flicks it.

He carefully sticks it into his smooth and plump brow.

Botox.

INT. KITCHEN

A METH-HEAD tends the stove, with three gas burners cooking chemicals.

Ben's hooded figure walks past the stove, behind the Meth-Head.

The Meth-Head wanders off.

The flames of the gas burners go out -- the gas HISSES.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Ben walks through the room, navigating the bodies -- the Boy rises, groggy, walks out --

INT. BEDROOM

THE BALD INVESTOR twitches on the bed, shirt off - his upper body covered in red boils.

INT. LIVING ROOM

The Big Investor's eyes pop open -- he struggles to breathe.

The Skinny Investor finishes snorting a line, lays back, passes out. His arm goes limp, knocking over an oil candle, still burning --

the oil spreads, the flame catches it --

the flame spreads to the drapes, the wall --

the gas in the air IGNITES --

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Ben, hooded, walks down the street, scythe in hand.

The windows of the house EXPLODE behind him. Flames consume the house.

He does not look back.

INT. ENTRANCE TUNNEL - NIGHT

Ben walks slowly down the dark tunnel. Black on black.

INT. CAVERN - NIGHT

Ben faces Kyle once again. Ben takes down his hood.

ANGLE ON the chair back -- "Ben Danyrs" burns into the wood.

BEN

stares at his father, his eyes more clear now.

QUICK FLASH --

INT. CASSIE'S BATHROOM (FLASHBACK)

Kyle, naked, his back and buttocks scarred horribly, holds Cassie from behind as she struggles to get free.

He pushes her neck down on the lip of the bathtub. Her face turns purple. She goes limp.

Kyle dumps out alcohol bottles -- opens a bottle of pills, lays it next to Cassie.

BACK TO SCENE --

Ben's face tremors.

Kyle smiles.

KYLE

They let me out for field trips.

Ben's eyes narrow.

KYLE

Oh, come now, I had to. It was the only way to provoke you to claim your birthright-

Kyle FREEZES -- his body goes rigid, tortured -- held by an invisible force --

BEN'S HAND extends toward Kyle --

Ben's EYES -- piercing -- horrific -- ablaze --

BEN'S FINGERS flutter -- Kyle's body spasms, doing a sick dance, as much as the chair will allow --

BEN RAISES HIS INDEX FINGER -- Kyle's arm RIPS off of the chair, taking skin with it.

(CONTINUED)

BEN RAISES HIS PINKIE FINGER -- Kyle's other arm RIPS away from the chair, exposing raw layers of tissue.

BEN'S FINGERS slowly gather -- then close suddenly INTO A CLENCHED FIST --

Kyle SCREAMS -- his chest shoots out, skin rips, back bows in a grotesque arch --

his HEART BURSTS OUT OF HIS BARE CHEST --

the bloody heart rockets through the air --

into Ben's HAND -- he catches it.

Kyle's lifeless head slumps -- his arms slip from the armrests -- he falls forward, collapsing to the rocky cavern floor, a ragdoll in a dust cloud.

Ben tosses the heart aside, into the dirt.

A beat as he stares at the lifeless form of his father.

Ben reaches for his cloak -- pulls it up...

over his head...

until he is naked.

He walks to the chair --

steps on his father's body -- up the stone dais --

sits in the chair -- buttocks and legs on the nails -- plants his forearms on the nails of the armrest --

leans fully back into the chair -- his skin sticks.

A beat.

He rears his head back and releases a terrible WAIL.

The SCREAMS echo across the dark cavern walls.

EXT. OLD MINE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

THE MASSIVE IRON DOUBLE-DOORS SLAM SHUT!

The explosive charges detonate and EXPLODE!

(CONTINUED)

The construction site and the mine entrance are blasted to kingdom come...

buried under dirt and rubble.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOME - DOORSTEP - DAY

AN ENVELOPE rests on the doormat of a modest home.

The front door opens, then the screen door. A SMALL HAND reaches down to pick up the envelope...

Cassie's little boy, TUCKER, 10, looks at the envelope...

INSERT SCRAWLED PENCIL WRITING: "Tucker Danvers."

Tucker looks around...

The street is empty.

His suburban block looks safe, quiet.

He turns and steps back into the home.

The door shuts.

FADE OUT.