

THE ORDER

"The Sin Eater"

original screenplay by
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FADE IN:

EXT. THE COLLISEUM - ROME - DAWN

Empty as the rising sun begins to paint the upper grandstands. Alone, near the top, the figure of a man.

It's WILLIAM EDEN. Stylish, monied, something timeless about him. As Eden stares off, the age is found in the eyes. World weary, a decayed nobility to them. They're the eyes of a very old soul.

EDEN

(quoting Keats)

Darkling I listen; and for many a
time I have been half in love
with easeful Death, called him
soft names in many a mused rhyme,
to take into the air my quiet
breath. Now more than ever seems
it rich to die, to cease upon the
midnight with no pain.

Eden holds something in his hand: a DANDELION PUFF. Eden considers it a melancholy beat, then holds it to his mouth and blows. The seeds break free, drift off over the ruins of Rome. As the sun rises full...

CUT TO:

EXT. VATICAN CITY STREETS - DAY

5

72-year-old DOMINIC carries a PAPER BAG. Dressed in the ragged robes of his order, but with no collar. Defrocked, but dressing this way is all he knows. Declining verbs in Latin under his breath, he strides along.

He spies two members of the SWISS GUARD ahead. As Dominic passes, he presses the bag to his side. Smuggling some contraband. He passes and the spring returns to his step.

INT. VATICAN BAKERY - DAY

6

Several NUNS are at work kneading dough, baking bread. Skinny SISTER FRANCA attacks a bowl of heavy batter with a wooden spoon as stout SISTER MARIE, waits to add flour. Marie spots something across the room, nudges Franca.

Dominic waits by an oven. He stealthily flashes the bag.

OVENS

Franca keeps watch; Dominic hands Marie the contents of the bag. Looks like a drug deal going down until she pulls out four bars of CHOCOLATE and two bags of CARAMEL twists. She smiles, hands him a paper box in return. She watches sadly as Dominic bows in thanks and then hurries away.

CUT TO:

EXT. NARROW ROME STREET - DAY

7

Box in hand, Dominic makes his way along. He turns up an alley, enters an open doorway and starts up the stairs.

UPPER HALLWAY - DOMINIC'S FLAT - DAY

8

A neglected little BOY & GIRL sit on the floor outside an apartment playing with a kitten. Dominic passes by them.

TIGHTEN ON him as he sticks a key in his lock. About to enter, he looks back on them. He's afraid of them.

BOY & GIRL

They look dolefully back. Their eyes seem to be 1000 years old. As he disappears inside his apartment...

INT. DOMINIC'S MAIN APARTMENT - ROME - DAY

9

The first thing noticed are the crucifixes which ring the walls. Not there for decoration, but for protection.

Musty old books are everywhere, held open to certain pages with more crucifixes but also with rusted old daggers and other icons. An OWL is perched, its head swiveling. 500 years ago, you would have thought it was a wizard's lair.

Dominic sets the box on a counter, takes out a STICKY BUN. As he steels himself for a taste, we see a framed PHOTO: Ten years ago. Dominic, before he was defrocked, with two of his students. Alex and another young priest: THOMAS. On a hill above Jerusalem.

Dominic takes a bite, closes his eyes in pleasure.

EDEN'S VOICE

Brother Dominic.

Dominic opens his eyes. The bun drops to the floor as he sees Eden standing in the shadows across the room.

EXT. ST. ANTHONY'S CHURCH - 104TH STREET - NEW YORK - DAY

Surrounded by graffiti and inner city blight. A shiny black LINCOLN TOWNCAR out of place in front of the sooty, crumbling church. The car's windows are tinted black.

Alex walks briskly around the corner, past a bodega. As he enters the church...

INT. TOWNCAR - PARKED - DAY

A heavy-set MAN with presence sits in the backseat shadows. He watches Alex disappear, then grinds out a cigarette.

MAN

That was him?

The DRIVER looks back over his shoulder. He's a priest.

DRIVER

That was him, Your Excellency.

Your Excellency...?

INT. ST. ANTHONY'S CHURCH - DAY

Alex at the altar in white vestments. Mass. In attendance, a handful of OLDER LATINO WOMEN. Alex holds up a wafer of bread, the Eucharist. Anachronistically, Alex prays his mass in LATIN.

The women step up. He makes the sign of the cross, sets the bread in their mouths, continues the LATIN. Each move on in turn until the last parishioner steps up. It's the man from the towncar. CARDINAL DRISCOLL.

Alex hesitates with the Eucharist. He doesn't necessarily know Driscoll, but he knows Driscoll's a Cardinal.

DRISCOLL

You still perform the Mass in Latin.

ALEX

It's how I was taught.

A moment and then Driscoll opens his mouth. As Alex sets the bread on his tongue...

EDEN
Scholar of the Catholic arcane.

Edgy as a cat, Eden moves around Dominic.

EDEN
Believer in the unsanitized
church. A church that no longer
believes in itself. The church
of stigmata and exorcism and
saints and demons. And me...

Dominic doesn't answer. Eden stops in a shadow, halfway
between the light and the dark.

Dominic masters his fear, stands a little straighter.

DOMINIC
I believe in many things.

EDEN
(smiles)
So do I. And right now, I
believe it's time.

Eden fingers a BLACK POUCH at his belt. As he steps over
and switches off the lights.

EDEN
It's the confession, not the
priest, that gives absolution.
Do you understand that?

Moonlight takes the place of fluorescents. Eden steps
forward, sets his pouch on Dominic's desk.

EDEN
I asked if you understand.

DOMINIC
I thought I would have more
time.

EDEN
Time is my pleasure, not yours.
Do you understand?

Dominic nods. Eden pulls the drawstring of his pouch to
reveal tablets of SALT, wafers of BREAD, a black piece of
CHARCOAL. Also, a small, ancient-looking WOODEN CROSS.

EDEN
Are you ready to make your
confession?

As Dominic nods again, the room seems full of the sinister. Eden reaches into a pocket, pulls out a prescription bottle of pills. He rattles them, holds it out to Dominic.

CUT TO:

INT. UPPER HALLWAY - DOMINIC'S - DAY

10

The boy and girl look up from the shadows as light streams under the door illuminating them. A low moan becomes an impossibly long, agonized scream. Is that coming from a human being? Dominic? Eden? As we wonder...

CUT TO:

A NEW YORK CITY STREET LIGHT

Burning from yellow to red.

ALEX'S VOICE

Go! Go!

NEW YORK CITY INTERSECTION

As a streaking YELLOW TAXI runs the light, just misses broadsiding another cab.

YELLOW TAXI

The passenger looks back over his shoulder at the near miss. This is ALEX, 29. An ascetic, Alex wears simple black pants, shoes and a black shirt. Offsetting it all, a WHITE CLERICAL COLLAR. Alex is a priest.

ALEX

(to Cabbie)

Whatever it takes. Just get me there.

EXT. CITY HOSPITAL - NEW YORK - DAY

Cedars Sinai it ain't. HECTOR, an Hispanic man about 30, stands anxiously running the brim of his baseball cap through his fingers. He looks like he's dying... Inside.

The taxi pulls up and Alex rushes out. Spotting him, Hector waves the hat in the air.

HECTOR

(Spanish accent)

Father Alex!

Alex sees him, rushes up.

ALEX
Is he bad, Hector?

HECTOR
(hushed)
Father, he dies.

The electric doors won't open fast enough as the two men rush in.

INT. ROOM - INTENSIVE CARE UNIT - DAY

A MOTHER'S heart breaks as she sits beside her 10-YEAR-OLD SON. Tubes run in and out. Monitors click and whir. And then Hector's beat-up hands are on her shoulders leading her away.

Alex looks after her a beat, then leans into the boy. His eyes are half-slits, but he recognizes:

BOY
Father Alex...

ALEX
George...

Swallowing hard, Alex looks back over his shoulder at the parents. How the fuck is he going to do this. As they wonder what he's waiting for, Alex reaches into his pocket, pulls out a white silk stole. Kissing the center he drapes it around his shoulders. He takes out a ROSARY, holds the cross between his hand and the boy's.

ALEX
(to George)
Do you... Do you want to make a confession?

BOY
(softly)
Forgive me, father, for I have sinned.

A beat. The next question's almost impossible to ask.

ALEX
Are you sorry for...

The boy stares calmly at Alex. Alex draws strength from him to carry through.

ALEX
For having offended God and for
all the sins of your past life?

BOY
I am...

As the boy's eyes drift shut, Alex begins to pray.

ALEX
Domine, in die illa tremenda
absolvo. In Nomine Patris, et
Filii et Spiritus Sancti, Amen.

ALARMS sound as the boy flatlines. MEDICAL STAFF begin
rushing in. As Alex is pushed aside...

His hand is pulled from the little boy's. The rosary
stretches between hands. As the string snaps and beads
fall to the floor...

CUT TO:

A PAIR OF EYES

Open up. Alert. LUCY'S. Startled from sleep.

LUCY
Alex?

It takes a moment to orient, realize where she is. Lucy's
as enigmatic as Emily Dickinson, her heart a secret garden.

LUCY
(sighs)
Alex...

Sitting up in bed, she's in...

INT. LUCY'S ROOM - THE NICHOLS' INSTITUTE - DAY

Not a hospital, but not a home either. There are bars on
the windows. Lucy sets her feet on the floor, looks across
at her roommate: a YOUNG WOMAN also lying on a bed.

The young woman stares at Lucy. Lucy puts a finger across
her lips, meaning for her to stay quiet. The young woman
looks at Lucy a beat, then covers her mouth with her hands.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - ST. ANTHONY'S SCHOOL YARD - DAY

Adjacent to the church. Cardinal Driscoll sits on a bench watching Alex who paces back and forth.

DRISCOLL

A young priest performing Mass in Latin. A vigorous man in a dying parish. You're a fascinating contradiction, Alex.

ALEX

(stopping short)

What do you want?

It's been so long since anyone's been rude to the Cardinal, he's not sure if Alex is being rude.

DRISCOLL

Excuse me?

ALEX

I'm here because the church stuck me here, because they don't know what to do with me. Send me back into the field, I was happy enough there.

DRISCOLL

The field? You talk about it like it's some sort of military endeavor.

Alex doesn't answer. Maybe to him it is.

DRISCOLL

There are questions in the diocese concerning your faith, Alex.

Alex stops, grips hold of a ratty old tether ball pole like he needs something to hold onto.

ALEX

I believe in God if that's what you want to know.

DRISCOLL

Yes. I'm sure you believe in him. You just don't have any faith in him. And a poor parish like this... They need a rock, not a pile of sand.

1

ALEX
Do you know what I did this morning?

DRISCOLL
No.

Alex opens his hand, looks at the cross, the broken string of his rosary.

ALEX
Neither do I.

Driscoll waits for more, but Alex won't elaborate.

ALEX
How is it a Cardinal has enough time to come down here to see me?

DRISCOLL
(standing)
We're all shepherds. It's how we deal with our lost sheep that we're judged.

Driscoll holds out his hand, the RING of his office to be precise. Alex is supposed to kiss it. He hesitates long enough for Driscoll to read it. His ring kissed, Driscoll lowers his hand.

DRISCOLL
We'll talk again soon, Alex.

Driscoll heads off. Alex watches him go. Finally, he lifts the tether ball, slams it as hard as his fist will allow. As it spins round and round against the sky...

CUT TO:

EXT. ST. ANTHONY'S CHURCH - NIGHT

Alex steps out, locks the front doors, starts down the street. He sticks his hands in his pockets, hunches his shoulders at the sudden chill wind that blows past him.

MOVE WITH Alex as he starts down the street. The wind rises. Was there a voice in it? Did someone say his name? Alex hesitates, continues.

ALLEYWAY

CLANG! Alex jumps as a trash can lid gets picked up by the wind and blown across his path.

Alex continues, then stops short. Ahead, halfway down the block, just standing there waiting for him is Lucy.

Alex stops short, starts to smile then stops himself. Her smile remains unhidden.

ALEX

When did you get out, Lucy?

LUCY

I was released today.

Lucy steps forward. She hugs him, puts her forehead on his chest. As Alex hugs her back...

INT. HALLWAY - ST. ANTHONY'S RECTORY - NIGHT

A long straight shot, doors on either side. Alex unlocks the door, steps through with Lucy.

ALEX

Years ago it was a dorm for all the priests. Now it's just me.

They start down the hall. As they approach Alex's door...

Pounding on the door to the street.

LUCY

I'll wait for you in here.

As Lucy enters Alex's room...

EXT. ST. ANTHONY'S RECTORY - NIGHT

A police DETECTIVE waits with a uniformed OFFICER. Alex opens the door looks out.

ALEX

Can I help you?

DETECTIVE

We're looking for Alex Bernier.

ALEX

That's me. Is there something wrong?

DETECTIVE

Just a heads up, father. You know a...

(checks notes)

Lucy Watters?

ALEX

Yes.

DETECTIVE

She escaped today from the mental health facility where she was remanded by the court.

ALEX

What does that have to do with me?

DETECTIVE

She was locked up for trying to kill you, wasn't she?

ALEX

That was the main reason, yes.

DETECTIVE

Just thought you'd like to know she's unaccounted for. I can have a car drive by once in awhile.

ALEX

I'm fine. Thank you, detective.

DETECTIVE

Like I said, heads up. It says here, I couldn't make it out on the photocopy, she stabbed you at an exercise class?

ALEX

No. At an exorcism.

DETECTIVE

Oh... Call us if she turns up.

INT. ALEX'S ROOM - ST. ANTHONY'S PARISH HALL - DAY

A 7'x14' room. Sparse is an understatement. A crucifix over a single bed, with a plain dresser and a simple desk. Lucy sits on the bed. Alex enters.

ALEX

You lied to me. You said they released you.

LUCY

I said I was released. I didn't say who had done it.

ALEX
Why are you here?

LUCY
I heard you calling me.

ALEX
Don't say that.

LUCY
Do you think I'm crazy?

ALEX
I know you're not.

LUCY
Then don't worry about it.

INT. ALEX'S ROOM - ST. ANTHONY'S RECTORY - DAY

Alex asleep sitting at the desk. Lucy asleep in the bed. .
Somewhere, a thousand miles away, a phone rings. Finally,
Alex wakes. Rising, he stumbles out into...

THE HALLWAY

Alex answers a payphone on the wall.

ALEX
Hello? Yeah this is him. What?
Dead? When? Oh no...

As the bad news sinks in, Alex's eyes lose focus. The
sounds of India bleed in. Sitar and train whistles.
Beggars pleading for rupees and cattle bleating. Drums
join a tambura. Lost in a reverie, he remembers...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CALCUTTA, INDIA - HOSPITAL MORGUE - DAY

14

20 years ago... A harried INDIAN DOCTOR leads a ten-year-
old ALEX and a bored American BUREAUCRAT past a traffic jam
of dead Indian bodies.

Half in shock, Alex barely realizes where he is. The sight
of a bed-ridden, milky-eyed SADHU stops him short. As the
Bureaucrat and Doctor continue, Alex stares into the blind
eyes. Sensing him, the Sadhu turns his head.

Like a cobra, his thin arm lashes out, his bony fingers
grasp Alex's own skinny arm. As he mumbles in Hindi...

The exasperated bureaucrat, steps back to tug Alex along.

A sheet-covered body waits. The doctor matter-of-factly pulls back the top. To reveal a WOMAN'S FACE. Maybe 30, she's American. The doctor and bureaucrat exchange a look.

BUREAUCRAT

Pretty...

(to Doctor)

Husband died in an accident two weeks ago. Missionaries.

(to Alex)

Is this your mother?

The boy doesn't answer.

BUREAUCRAT

Come on, son. There's a lot to be done today.

Finally, numbly, Alex nods. The Bureaucrat goes about signing forms on the clipboard the Doctor holds. As he complains about U.S. Embassy protocol...

10-YEAR-OLD ALEX

Dry-eyed, he stares at his mother's face then reaches up and pulls back the sheet. The blouse, the khaki pants are bloodstained. Then we see why. The wrists of both arms are slashed open flaps. Alex's mother killed herself.

ALEX - UNKNOWN POV

Approaching the boy as he stares at his mother's wrists. The doctor and bureaucrat sign papers in the background.

NEW ANGLE

It's 50-year old Brother Dominic. Alex looks up as Dominic takes the sheet and brings it back up to his mother's chin. He rests the other hand gently on Alex's shoulder.

DOMINIC

Say goodbye, Alex.

Alex takes a final look at his mother.

ALEX

Goodbye...

Dominic pulls the sheet up the rest of the way. Finally, Alex's shoulders begin to shake. But still he doesn't cry. Dominic kneels beside him, gives him a comforting embrace.

DOMINIC
Cry, Alex. Leave your tears
here and then forget them...

As the boy begins to cry.

RETURN TO:

INT. HALLWAY - ST. ANTHONY'S RECTORY - NIGHT

15

Tears trickle down the face of grown-up Alex. He stands in the hall holding the phone which now bleats the off-the-hook sound.

LUCY
Alex?

Alex looks up. Lucy stands a few feet away.

LUCY
What's wrong?

ALEX
Somebody died.

Lucy steps over, wipes a tear from his eye.

LUCY
Good for them...

CUT TO:

EXT. PARISIAN STREET - DAY

16

We see the silhouette of Notre Dame in the background. From one of the flats, we hear a PHONE RING.

INT. THOMAS' GARRET APARTMENT - PARIS - DAY

17

A view out an odd-shaped window. Tools of the trade, books, talismen litter the room. A drawn, careworn WOMAN, sits with a rosary in her hand. An equally drawn and careworn MAN sits beside her wringing his hands.

Neither of them answer the phone ringing on the table. Beyond it is the same photo we saw earlier. Dominic and a younger Alex and another young priest named Thomas.

The woman finally looks to the phone then off down a hall where there's a dull, deep THUMPING. Like someone left the bass all the way up on a speaker.

THE HALL - SUBJECTIVE POV - GARRET APARTMENT - DAY 18

There's a door at the end. That's where the thumping is coming from. The DEEP BASS INTENSIFIES. It also seems to get DARKER. As we reach the door, we see the throbbing is shaking the paint loose, rattling nail heads.

The knob is crusted with ICE. From within we can just make out the sounds of a MAN SHOUTING over a howling WIND.

INT. BEDROOM - GARRET APARTMENT - DAY 19

The room is frozen over, sheeted in ice. A TEENAGE BOY, possessed by demons, is tied to a chair, bloody froth at the corners of his mouth.

FATHER THOMAS stands before the boy, leaning into the wind, an upheld crucifix his only defense. Thomas is a plucky Irish priest and exorcist, the Thomas from the photo.

THOMAS

In the name of God, I command you! Leave this boy and return from whence you came. By Jesus God and the Holy Virgin you are compelled to go!

The teenage boy's body bucks, strains at its bonds. The wind drives Thomas back, his feet unable to find purchase on the icy floor. As the boy looses an unearthly HOWL, Thomas finds himself backed against the wall.

He fishes out the flask of holy water.

THOMAS

In the name of God, I order you back...

Thomas fights his way forward, shakes out a spray of holy water. The boy writhes in pain. Then another. Another as he closes... Suddenly, the wind cuts out and all is quiet. The boy lies unconscious.

Father Thomas gasps for breath, looks back over his shoulder, as the door opens. The woman is there holding the PORTABLE PHONE.

116.

WOMAN
(French accent)
Telephone for you.

Complete absurdity. As Thomas takes it, the woman continues on to tend to the boy who is most likely her son.

THOMAS
(into phone; Irish)
Hullo...? Alex! How are ya,
boyo? Got my hands full at the
moment, but --
(as he sits)
Dead? Ach no...

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - ST. ANTHONY'S RECTORY - NIGHT

Alex on a payphone in the international terminal.

ALEX
I'm going to Rome, Thomas... As
soon as I can get a ticket.
Finish what you're doing and get
your ass over there. Okay...?
I'll meet you at Dominic's.

Alex hangs up the phone, looks over at Lucy. She has that look in her eye.

ALEX
No... You're staying here.

LUCY
You need me. I'm coming with
you.

ALEX
What about the nightingales?
What if the headaches come back?

LUCY
You see me, Alex. I'm a ghost to
everyone else. That means it's
you and me. You and me until the
wheels fall off. Got it?

ALEX
No. I'll be back in a few days.
When I get back we'll...

LUCY
We'll what?

Alex shrugs, doesn't have an answer. Lucy smiles.

LUCY

The next few days might be all
we ever have. Besides, where
else am I going to go?

Alex sighs, takes her hand.

ALEX

Promise you won't try to kill me?

Was that a serious question?

LUCY

Cross my heart and hope to die.

CUT TO:

INT. A BIG DARK SPACE - SOMEWHERE - DAY

22

Right now it's William Eden who's hoping to die. Soaked in sweat, Eden lies fetal across a wooden table. His hands, arthritically twisted, are pulled into his chest. He seems gripped by fever, delirious.

EDEN

Darkling I listen... Darkling I
listen...

A murmur becomes a moan. A moan becomes a scream.

EDEN

Darkling I listen!
(subsiding)
To cease upon the midnight...
To cease upon the midnight...
With no pain... No pain.

He rolls onto his back, starts to laugh at himself, at what he's going through. And then a FIGURE looms over Eden. We sense him much more than see him. Eden looks up, focuses.

EDEN

Prepare the cup...

FIGURE

It will be done, father.

EDEN

What word?

FIGURE

He should be in Rome within the
hour.

EDEN
Deliverance. A fantastic
thought, don't you agree?

CUT TO:

EXT. ROME INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - DAY

23

An AMERICAN 777 touches down. As smoke pinwheels...

CUT TO:

EXT. CAFE - ROME STREET - DAY

24

Bags in hand, Alex and Lucy turn up the alley leading to Dominic's. They disappear into the doorway.

INT. DOMINIC'S BUILDING - UPPER HALLWAY - DAY

25

The neglected little boy & girl sit on the floor. Staring in melancholy at a kitten which looks quite dead.

Alex passes them warily. Lucy hesitates.

ALEX

Lucy...

He shakes his head sternly regarding the 'children'. She hesitates, then follows Alex down the hall.

LUCY

What are they?

ALEX

Orphans. But of what I have no idea.

They watch him, don't like him. For the first time, we wonder if they're ghosts. Or something worse?

DOMINIC'S DOOR

Alex reaches up through a hole in the wall. He pulls out a KEY on a string. As he unlocks the door, Lucy looks back.

UPPER HALLWAY

The children are gone. The kitten remains. Lucy grips Alex by the arm. Alex isn't particularly surprised. As Alex opens the door to Dominic's:

The owl swoops out, just over Alex's head. Alex jumps. Lucy chokes back a cry. The owl wheels around, lands on a banister, swivels his head toward them.

LUCY

Owl?

ALEX

Owl.

Nerves settling, they enter Dominic's apartment.

INT. DOMINIC'S APARTMENT - DAY

26

They step inside. Heavy curtains drawn, the room is dark. The crucifixes loom. A bad vibe.

ALEX

I should check you into a hotel,
then come back.

LUCY

(smiles)

We've been in worse places. It
just needs a little light.

Lucy steps over, throws back one set of curtains, then another. As bright light enters, the bad vibe exits.

Everywhere are books, sheaves of paper scribbled in Greek and Latin. A first class mess.

Alex picks up a stack, flips through it with a thumb.

ALEX

Dominic liked to scribble; I'll
give him that.

Alex steps to the window, looks down to the street below.

LUCY

Look at this.

ALEX

(turning)

What?

Lucy points at a long WOODEN TABLE: completely cleared, piles of books and papers on the floor on either end of it.

LUCY

It's the only clear surface in
the place.

Alex steps over. There are fresh charcoal symbols drawn on either end of the table. Some form of writing.

LUCY
What language is it?

ALEX
Aramaic. The language of Christ.
(points to markings
at one end)
Barath-mae... Blood in.
(at other)
Barath-sec... Blood out.

Lucy watches as Alex frowns.

LUCY
What are you thinking, Alex?

ALEX
It was a ceremony.
(knows)
This is where Dominic was when
they found him.

LUCY
What kind of ceremony?

Alex doesn't have an answer.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL MORGUE - ROME - DAY

27

A very nervous ATTENDANT leads Alex in. There are covered bodies on gurneys and a wall of body drawers.

ALEX
The message I got said suicide.

ATTENDANT
(Italian accent)
Sleeping pills, *Signore*. Quite
gentle really.

Stopping, the attendant grasps the handle of a particular drawer and pulls it open. There's Dominic's face. Somehow very peaceful, very at rest.

ATTENDANT
Is that him?

ALEX
Yes, it's him.

Alex hands over what looks like \$100 US. The attendant shoves it in his pocket, starts to close the drawer.

Alex's hand flashes out, stops the drawer short.

ATTENDANT

Please, I need my job.

ALEX

I didn't pay to look at his face.

As the attendant babbles to himself in Italian, Alex pulls back the sheet covering Dominic's bare chest. There are TWO WHITE MARKS: two milky white, roughly circular marks over the heart. Not on the skin, but rather in the skin, part of it. Alex leans in for a look.

ALEX

(looking up)

What are these?

But the attendant has launched a steady stream of Italian, wagging his finger for emphasis. Alex catches hold of the finger, brings it down till it touches one of the marks.

ALEX

What are these?

The attendant yanks his hand away.

ATTENDANT

Birthmark, loss of pigment, the scar from an old burn. I am not a doctor.

Alex's head spins; these marks can't possibly be what he thinks they may be.

ALEX

When's the body due to be released to the church?

ATTENDANT

(checks clipboard)

It isn't. When we're done, it goes to the state.

(shrugs; guesses)

For burial in a state cemetery.

CUT TO:

INT. VATICAN OFFICES - DAY

28

Alex sits across the desk from an apathetic BISHOP who is pronouncing judgment.

ALEX

His order meant everything to him. Dominic should be buried with his order in the Concezione.

BISHOP

Your order. His former order. The Carolingians. Not many of you left in the world.

ALEX

A dying breed. And when they die: the Concezione Cemetery.

BISHOP

Suicide is a cardinal sin.

ALEX

Dominic did not commit suicide.

BISHOP

It makes no difference. He had been excommunicated, excluded from our society and sacraments. *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus.* There is no salvation --

ALEX

Outside the church. Yes, I know my Latin.

BISHOP

Unlike your manners. Respect what you are!

ALEX

What's that?

BISHOP

A priest!

ALEX

(after a beat)

I need the theosophic council to convene as soon as possible.

BISHOP

(incredulous)

The council? It hasn't convened in years. For what purpose?

ALEX

Tell them I found a Sin Eater.

BISHOP
A Sin Eater? Here at the end of
the 20th Century?

ALEX
I've seen the marks myself.

BISHOP
Where?

ALEX
On Dominic's body.

BISHOP
Your mentor was excommunicated for
rejection of articles of faith.
Heresy. Accept it. He took his
own life because he couldn't bear
that.

ALEX
(fierce)
I have other suspicions.

BISHOP
Then convene the Rome police,
not the council. There will be
no inquiry.

ALEX
Listen to me --

BISHOP
There will be no inquiry!

A beat. Then Alex stands, turns on his heel and exits.

CUT TO:

INT. VATICAN BAKERY - DAY

Alex. Too far away to hear, he's deep in conversation with
the two nuns seen earlier with Dominic: Marie and Franca.

They listen. It looks grave. The two women take a step to
converse among themselves. Finally, they turn back to Alex
and nod. Whatever he was asking, they're agreeing.

CUT TO:

INT. DOMINIC'S APARTMENT - SUNSET

30

Lucy looks down at a mummified hand on a table. She
reaches, is about to poke at it when there's a jiggling of
the front door knob.

She looks over. There's another jiggle, a straining around the door jamb, then nothing. Lucy gets creeped. Grabbing an old, lethal looking kitchen knife, she starts forward. Gripping the knob, knife poised, she throws the door open.

UPPER HALLWAY - DOMINIC'S - SUNSET

31

Thomas stands on his tiptoes, his arm thrust down through the hole in the wall fishing for the key. He nearly jumps out of his skin at the sight of Lucy. She does likewise.

THOMAS

They say a man soils himself
when he dies; I've done it just
prior.

LUCY

Are you Thomas?

THOMAS

Aye. And you?

LUCY

I'm Lucy.

THOMAS

The Lucy? Alex's Lucy?

As she nods, Dominic's owl swoops back into the apartment from the hallway. As they both jump again...

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL MORGUE - ROME - NIGHT

32

Dark. Creepier than any catacomb. A door eases open and someone enters. Whoever it is pads across the floor and over to the wall. Alex.

He pulls open the drawer which holds Dominic's body. An eerie moment as he considers his former mentor. Then, he pulls a gurney alongside the open drawer. Adjusting the height flush, he rolls Dominic's body onto the gurney.

CUT TO:

EXT. CONCEZIONE CEMETERY - ROME - NIGHT

33

Crumbling tombstones, at odd angles in keeping with the rise and fall of the earth. An older part of the cemetery.

A long absent sound echoes between the mausoleums. A shovel turning earth. Someone is digging a grave.

Their sleeves rolled up, burlap aprons on, but still in their habits, Sisters Marie and Franca have been at work for some time. Marie sets down her pick-ax, sits down wearily at the edge of the grave.

As Franca heaves out the last few shovelfuls, Marie begins inching a rosary between her fingers. She turns at the sound of someone approaching.

MARIE'S POV

A figure appears out of the gloom. Alex. Trudging along, a shrouded shape heaved over one shoulder. It's almost surely Brother Dominic's body.

GRAVE

Franca sets down the shovel; Marie stands as Alex nears. Marie helps him ease the body to the ground. Alex climbs down in the grave. Without a word, Franca helps him lower down the body.

Alex takes care to set the head down as gently as possible. He stands there a moment as Franca, with a hand from Marie, scrambles out. They all exchange a long look.

ALEX

Thank you.

A beat. Marie drops her rosary into the grave with Dominic and they turn and go. Alex climbs out. It seems terribly lonely as he stares back down into the grave.

ALEX

Goodbye, Dominic.

(begins to pray)

In Nomine Patris, et Filii et Spiritus Sancti, Amen...

SOMEONE'S POV

Beyond a row of headstones, watching Alex as Franca and Marie disappear to the left. Whoever it is moves forward.

ALEX

Unaware, he continues.

ALEX
...Domine, de morte aeterna, in
die illa tremenda quando caeli
movendi sunt et terra...

SOMEONE'S POV

Stopping close enough to hear.

ALEX
Requiem aeternam dona eis,
Domine. Amen...

A beat before Alex picks up the shovel and begins heaving dirt down into the hole.

INTERCUT THE POV WITH ALEX

Shovel after shovelful. As we cross back and forth, it doesn't take long for the hole to begin to fill up.

ALEX

Pauses to wipe his brow. Suddenly knows he's not alone. He eases the shovel into the earth, leaves it there.

POV

By this time it's becoming apparent that Alex is seen from a lower angle. The watcher is low to the ground somehow.

HEADSTONE ROW

Alex steps up here from out of the hole. He takes a few cautious steps forward, then looks to his feet.

On the ground - a dead kitten, the one that the children had in the hallway of Dominic's apartment. There's a string tied around its neck which trails off to the left.

Alex looks off in that direction...

ANOTHER ROW

The little boy and girl from Dominic's apartment stand staring at Alex. They seem wholly sinister. Alex heads the other way, only to stop short across from them again.

CONCEZIONE CEMETERY

Alex eases out a small crucifix, speaks softly.

ALEX

In the name of God, I command you
to return from whence you came.

Frowning in anger, they step forward. The children lash out. Striking Alex, knocking him back. As a WIND rises, Alex raises the crucifix on the end of the rosary.

ALEX

By Jesus God and the Holy Virgin
you are compelled to go!

An unearthly moan as they lose form and are dissipated by the wind across the cemetery.

ALEX

Sighs. Stepping back to the grave, he throws on the last few clods of earth. Finished, he taps the grave down with the shovel. Suddenly, he stops at movement in the dark. Shouting full force into the shadows:

ALEX

In the name of God! In the name
of Jesus God and the Holy Virgin!
I order you back to Hell!

EXT. CONCEZIONE CEMETERY - NIGHT

34

Thomas steps out of the shadows.

THOMAS

Off to Hell yourself, boyo.
What kind of greeting is that?

Alex smiles, shakes his head. Tired, he sits on the step of a mausoleum beside the grave. As Thomas steps over...

ALEX

You're late.

THOMAS

It's never too late, Alex.
Witness the repentant thief
crucified alongside our Lord
Savior. A quick thinker, eh?

Thomas fishes a pint of whiskey from his pocket, takes a swig. Thomas considers the freshly dug grave, Alex.

THOMAS

So did you bury him? A rogue priest readin' rites over an excommunicado?

Alex nods. Thomas hands him the flask.

THOMAS

Damn dirty job, but someone's gotta do it, eh?

ALEX

(toasts)

To the last of the Carolingians.
You and me.

As Alex takes a drink, Thomas looks about, feels the recent evil hink of the place.

THOMAS

What just passed through here, Alex?

ALEX

Demon spawn in the guise of children.

(priestly braggadocio)

Nothing I couldn't handle.

Alex hands back the pint. Thomas takes a pull.

THOMAS

Who stirred those nasties up?

ALEX

Dominic I think. They were camped outside his apartment.

Thomas lets out a low whistle.

THOMAS

Speaking of the apartment...

(winks)

Met your girlfriend.

ALEX

She's not my girlfriend.

THOMAS

Well she should be. Said you'd be at the Concezione. You told her it was a restaurant?

ALEX

Would've come with me otherwise.

THOMAS
Women. Can't live with' em...
Can't live with 'em.

Thomas smiles, holds out his hand. Alex takes it, is jerked up to his feet.

CUT TO:

INT. DOMINIC'S MAIN APARTMENT - ROME - NIGHT

35

Lit by candles. Thomas reads to Alex and Lucy from a book.

THOMAS
Sin Eater. In ancient times,
one who absolved the wicked of
their sins outside the
jurisdiction of the church.
(looks up)
First, this isn't ancient times.
So this book is wrong. Second,
Extra ecclesiam nulla salus.

ALEX
There is no salvation outside
the church.

THOMAS
That means our religion, our
Catholic Church is also wrong.

LUCY
Not wrong. Just not completely
right. Like anything run by men.

Thomas grins at her, continues reading.

THOMAS
In absolution, the burden of sin
would be transmuted to the Sin
Eater as would the knowledge of
the transgressions.

LUCY
He'd know what your sins were?
The details?

THOMAS
He'd know them and feel the
burden of them. He'd spend
sleepless nights over things he
hadn't himself done.

Alex sees it a different way.

ALEX

He'd have the ascendancy to free
a man's soul.

LUCY

And damn his own.

THOMAS

We are Carolingians. Alex and I.
In a way it makes us responsible.
They say the practice of sin
eating started with banished
members of our order.

LUCY

Come on. That's like saying
sheep are responsible for the
sweaters that get made from
their wool.

THOMAS

Maybe they are, Lucy-girl.

Alex pulls out an ancient document, hand written in Aramaic
on parchment. The bottom of which has been torn out. He
reads and translates the text at the same time.

ALEX

Place the instrument of delivery
over the heart. Must be some
kind of weapon. Then: barath-
mae barath-sec. Blood in, blood
out. And drive into the heart.
(re: torn page)

The rest is missing. Still, you
get the idea.

THOMAS

I'm not sure that I do.

ALEX

They're instructions. How to
kill a Sin Eater.

THOMAS

Dominic trained us both to
dispatch ghosts and demons and
all manner of undead, but this
Sin Eater, he is a living man.

ALEX

Whatever he is, he killed
Dominic.

THOMAS
Maybe. Maybe not.

ALEX
Either way we're responsible.
You said it yourself.

Thomas takes the document from Alex, looks it over.

THOMAS
It indicates we need a specific
dagger.
(a beat; troubled)
I've seen another copy of this
somewhere...

Silence as Thomas studies. Lucy and Alex exchange a look.
Then, KNOCK, KNOCK. They all jump. Someone's at the door.

Alex looks at the others, goes to answer it.

Lucy and Thomas follow, Thomas easing out his holy water
flask. Lucy whispers:

LUCY
You hold it like it's a gun.

THOMAS
In my line of work, it is a gun.

ALEX
(at door)
Who is it?

VOICE
(American)
It's Cardinal Driscoll.

THOMAS
Jesu... The fucking cavalry.

Alex opens the door to reveal Driscoll. Last time we saw
him was at St. Anthony's. He stands here alone.

DRISCOLL
Alex. We meet again.

THOMAS
You know each other?

DRISCOLL
We met two days ago. Had I known
Dominic was already dead, our
conversation would've differed.

THOMAS
Would you like a beer, your excellency? Or something stronger?

DRISCOLL
And who are you?

ALEX
He's Thomas.

LUCY
(a little wave)
I'm Lucy. We're the Catholic Pete, Linc and Julie.

DRISCOLL
I'm Cardinal Driscoll. Head of the Theosophic Council.

CUT TO:

INT. DOMINIC'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

36

The owl watches as the Catholic Mod Squad sit across from Cardinal Driscoll.

DRISCOLL
A Sin Eater. You couldn't have shocked the Bishop more if you'd said you were possessed by a demon, then demanded exorcism.

THOMAS
The exorcism was on Friday.

DRISCOLL
Well this is Monday and I think there may be credence to what you say. In fact, I know there is.

As Alex and Thomas exchange a look, Driscoll muses.

DRISCOLL
A Sin Eater. To provide a path to heaven outside of our church and outside of our savior. If you believe such things, he has the power to allow great evil to go unpunished.

Driscoll considers Alex and Thomas a beat.

DRISCOLL
You were Dominic's chosen; what do you know of his excommunication?

ALEX

Nothing.

THOMAS

He wouldn't speak of it.

DRISCOLL

It was a ruse. Dominic went "undercover" if you will to find this Sin Eater out.

ALEX

What are you talking about?

DRISCOLL

That's what Dominic did. Dispatched demons, the undead and all manner of evil.

THOMAS

(bristling)

Alex and I both know what Dominic did.

DRISCOLL

But not this time apparently.

Driscoll reaches into his jacket, pulls out something wrapped in linen rags.

DRISCOLL

Dominic thought this man, this Other was based in Paris. That's all I know. Do you plan to seek him out?

Alex and Thomas exchange a look, then Alex nods.

DRISCOLL

When you find him, if you have it in you, use this. The instrument of delivery.

He pulls back the linen to reveal an ancient DAGGER. He holds it out. A beat as Alex and Thomas exchange another look. Finally, Alex takes it.

DRISCOLL

Now, if you'll excuse me, there are even more pressing matters weighing on the Vatican tonight.

He nods his farewells and then exits.

LUCY

What could be more important
than this?

ALEX

They say the Pope is ill. That
he's dying.

THOMAS

And that man, Lucy-girl, that
American, is front runner for
the job.

LUCY

That man just asked you to kill
someone.

ALEX

No. Some thing.

THOMAS

Awch, never thought the day would
come when a Yank could command
the church before an Irishman.

(looks to Alex)

Paris?

ALEX

Paris.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLOSE ON WILLIAM EDEN - DAY

A battered ancient looking CHALICE, rests on the table by
his head. He's still lying on the wooden table where he
was last scene, but now he's resting peacefully.

The chalice, the cup has been drunken from. The dregs of
some thick black liquid sit in the bottom.

Over it all we hear the approaching roar of a jet airliner.
And as the landing gear touches down, Eden's eyes open.

CUT TO:

INT. THOMAS' GARRET APARTMENT - NIGHT

39

The door opens and Thomas, Lucy and Alex arrive. Apart
from everything else, they're each hauling a cardboard box
of Dominic's stuff.

THOMAS

Home sweet home.

LUCY
What do we do now?
(re: boxes)
Start going through this stuff?

THOMAS
(yawning)
We go to sleep and start fresh
in the morning.

Alex starts to yawn as well. It's contagious, or is it?

LUCY
You two have been thick as
thieves since we left Rome.

THOMAS
Whatever do you mean, Lucy?

LUCY
I've seen all the nods, all the
looks. If you two think you're
leaving me out of this tomorrow,
you're wrong.

ALEX
You're paranoid. Go to bed.

LUCY
Do you have one, Thomas, or do
you sleep standing up?

THOMAS
I hang upside-down from the
rafters. Gets the blood out of
my ass and back to my brain.

As they all laugh...

CUT TO:

INT. THOMAS' GARRET APARTMENT - NIGHT

40

Thomas and Alex sacked out: Alex under a blanket on the
couch, Thomas just getting in a sleeping bag on the floor.
On Thomas' bare leg, above the ankle, a CRUCIFIX TATTOO.

ALEX
(re: tattoo)
Where'd you get that?

THOMAS
A year ago. Got drunk and woke
up with it.

ALEX

That's strange, Tommy, very strange.

THOMAS

Sailors get anchors. So I'm a priest.

Lucy enters from the bedroom wearing a nightshirt and holding a toothbrush.

LUCY

Where's the bathroom?

THOMAS

I just open a window and lean out.

(pointing)

Through there, Lucy-girl.

Thomas waits till she enters the bathroom, then...

THOMAS

What's strange, boyo, is that you're a priest sleeping on the couch instead of a man in the bed with her.

ALEX

Please, Thomas, two days ago she was in a mental institution.

THOMAS

So she's crazy about you.

(a beat)

Can ya look me in the eye and tell me ya still want to be a priest? Can ya?

Alex looks away. The door to the bathroom is ajar. You can just see Lucy brushing her teeth. A flash of her arm, her hair falling forward, a glimpse of thigh as she leans over the sink to wash her face. Thomas and Alex watch.

THOMAS

There are other ways to serve.

Lucy rejoins them. She's not trying; it's the vulnerability that makes her so sexy.

LUCY

Goodnight.

ALEX

'Night.

THOMAS
Sweet dreams.

Thomas swallows dry as the door closes behind her. They talk in low tones.

THOMAS
I know who she is, Alex, but...
who is she? Tell me something
about her.

ALEX
The first time I kissed her, I
felt like I had let go of this
big weight, this rock I'd been
carrying around. I felt free.

THOMAS
And the second time?

ALEX
There never was a second time.

THOMAS
You picked the rock back up, set
it square on your shoulders and
soldiered on. Is that right?

Alex doesn't answer. Thomas smiles sadly, empathetic.

THOMAS
Ready to go for a walk, brother?

Alex nods. Throwing back his blankets, he hits the floor fully clothed. Thomas pulls on a pair of pants and boots. Quiet as mice, they creep to the front door and exit.

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHT CLUB (STREET) - PARIS - NIGHT

41

Plainclothed, undercover, Alex waits as Thomas slips the BOUNCER two \$100 BILLS, then points emphatically down at the ground. The Bouncer pockets the money, waits. Thomas sighs, hands him \$200 more. As the Bouncer waves them in.

INT. BAR - NIGHT CLUB - PARIS - NIGHT

42

Lights flash. Music pounds. Thomas steps over from the bar, hands Alex a drink.

ALEX
What now?!

Thomas motions toward a HOSTESS who stands staring at them.

THOMAS

Follow her!

She turns, cuts through the crowd. As they follow...

DOOR - BACK OF THE CLUB - NIGHT

43

At the back of the club. The Hostess takes a key from her neck, unlocks and opens it to reveal a staircase. Thomas cocks an eyebrow in that direction.

THOMAS

After you, boyo.

Alex steps through followed by Thomas. As the Hostess closes and locks it shut behind them...

STAIRCASE - UNDER CLUB

44

Nearly pitch black. The music throbs through the door.

ALEX

I hope you're enjoying yourself.
Now what?

THOMAS

There's only one way to go.

Groping, Alex starts down. Thomas reaches overhead, yanks down the string on a lightbulb.

ALEX

I get the feeling you've been
down here before.

THOMAS

Only on business.

As they continue down...

EXT. UNDERGROUND ENTRANCE - BOTTOM OF STAIRS - NIGHT

45

A much BIGGER BOUNCER stands with a WAIF of a girl.

As Alex and Thomas approach from the bottom of the stairs, the bouncer turns a wheel which raises an iron PORTCULLIS. As he does this, the waif stamps an ink pad.

Thomas holds out his hand. She stamps it with a weird looking symbol. She laughs to herself, waits for Alex to hold out his hand. He does, then follows Thomas into:

A TUNNEL - UNDER CLUB - NIGHT

46

Alex considers the back of his hand, realizes:

ALEX
It's the symbol. Barath-mae...
Blood in.

As they walk, Thomas SPITS on the back of his hand, wipes the symbol off on his jeans.

THOMAS
Blood out. Get rid of it.
(explains)
Hallucinogenic. Absorbed
through the skin. I learned the
hard way first time down.

Alex spits on his hand, wipes away. They continue past:

ALCOVE ONE: black but for the ember of a drawn cigarette.

ALCOVE TWO: they catch a glimpse of a couple coupling.

ALCOVE THREE: A tambourine RATTLES once, twice. Then an odd voice: "Mr. Mojo risin'... Mr. Mojo risin'..."

ALEX
(re: three)
I don't even want to know.

It's nothing but creepy as they near an ANDROGYNOUS COUPLE crushed against the wall and each other. Thomas stops across from them. They don't notice. He nudges Alex.

THOMAS
Go on.

Alex doesn't understand.

THOMAS
Ask 'em where we might find
him... Your Sin Eater.

A beat as they stare at each other. Then Alex shakes his head and continues. Thomas LAUGHS, follows after him.

THOMAS
Ya cannot take a joke, can ya?

INT. UNDERGROUND CLUB - NIGHT

47

A frenzy of glassy-eyed pretties on the dance floor.

Thomas and Alex arrive, wade through the crush toward the bar. Finally, they're stymied. It's five deep and not budging. Drinks are passed overhead to those in the back.

THOMAS

Watch my back!

Thomas begins to force his way into the bar, shoving and hauling as he goes. Alex follows, but stops as everything goes blurry for a moment.

Alex looks at the back of his hand. A little of the symbol is still there. He spits, wipes frantically on his shirt.

Ahead, Thomas has incurred the wrath of one LARGE PATRON. As he grabs Thomas by the throat...

Alex snaps to. He coldcocks the patron in the back of the head. As the man goes to one knee...

Thomas reaches the DREADLOCKED BARTENDER. A brief exchange and Thomas produces more \$100s. The barkeep points out a WOMAN sitting in a booth then goes back to work.

As Alex and Thomas start over.

ALEX

Where do you get all the cash?!

THOMAS

Tips! Families after an exorcism can be very grateful!

BOOTH

Without asking, Thomas slides in across from the woman -- beautiful despite multiple facial piercings. Cheeks, eyelids, chin and her tongue is ringed right around.

THOMAS

Hullo, lovey. We were told you could lead us to Chirac.

Without a word she stands starts out. Alex and Thomas exchange a look, follow.

INT. UNDERGROUND PASSAGE - NIGHT

48

The woman leads. Thomas and Alex follow.

THOMAS
In light of her face I've
decided to call her Mildred.
(as they continue)
For Mildred Pierce. Get it?

Alex doesn't answer.

THOMAS
Awch, you're hopeless.

ALEX
How can you joke about all of
it, Thomas?

THOMAS
How can you not?

The stench reaches them first as they step out into...

INT. THE PARIS SEWER - NIGHT

49

An old bricked tunnel. The woman reaches a breach in the wall. She climbs through. They follow.

AN ALCOVE

50

It deadends about ten feet down. Dust sifts down as we hear the dull rumble of the Metro overhead. The woman knocks against the end wall. A bolt slides back on the other side. It's a door.

She steps back as it opens. A GAUNT-EYED MAN stands there. A beat before he steps back to let them through.

THOMAS
(looking back)
After you --

But the woman is gone. As Thomas and Alex enter...

INT. UNDERGROUND CHAMBER - NIGHT

51

A few dozen people mill in the shadows. There's a sense that something has been interrupted here. Lit by fire, Chirac stands in the center of the chamber facing Alex and Thomas. The same Chirac who was with Eden.

Alex and Thomas step up. Above and beyond a FIGURE whose upper body is hidden by a black shadow. We'll call him Chirac. Three shapes hang down along the wall of the

chamber. Even in the gloom we can see they're human forms. We're in the middle of some grisly rite.

And on a pedestal beside Chirac is the cup Eden drank from earlier. Chirac steps into the light, but he wears a monk's cowl.

CHIRAC
(to Thomas;
contemptuous)
Priest.

THOMAS
(big smile)
Don't start posturin', ya pagan
worshipping pig. Ya owe me a
debt.

Chirac bristles; Thomas has him. They have a past. Somewhere in the darkness, a BABY CRIES. Or is it? Before we can decide, it stops.

CHIRAC
What do you seek?

THOMAS
My friend and I are looking for
the Other.

CHIRAC
We'll ask the dying.

ALEX
Come again?

CHIRAC
The dying can do many things.
Answering a question easiest of
all. Of course, the dying can
also call forth the dead.

Chirac gestures to someone beyond Alex and Thomas.

FOUR ACOLYTES step out from the shadows, grip Thomas and Alex, immobilizing them. As they struggle...

Chirac looks up above.

On a ledge a HOODED FIGURE is held on either side by two more ACOLYTES. A THIRD puts a noose around his neck.

ALEX
No!

They shove him over the edge. He jerks to a sudden, suspended stop. As he spasms, twists...

CHIRAC
(resonant)
Molasba divad molasba.
(to Alex)
Ask him. Before he dies.

As the body arches, Alex watches in horror.

ALEX
Good god...

THOMAS
Ask him!

ALEX
Oh, shit... Where, where do I
find the Sin Eater?

Through the silk of the hood, impossible inhalations of breath. A voice from under the hood.

HANGED MAN
Wait above and the Other will
find you. Tomorrow in Notre
Dame. When the choir rehearses.

A twitch and he dies.

CHIRAC
(to Thomas)
I owe you nothing.

The Acolytes hustle Alex and Thomas out through a gap in the far wall.

INT. CATACOMBS - NIGHT

52

Alex and Thomas stumble forward as the door slams shut behind them.

ALEX
They killed him and we don't
even know who it was --

Alex stops short when he finds himself staring at a wall of HUMAN SKULLS.

THOMAS
Catacombs.

They're in the...

PASSAGE OF THE MARTYRS

53

Occasionally broken up by the socket end of a thighbone or two, 1000s of skulls make up the walls. They grin, leer under the moonlight shining down through a grate. Steel rungs are bolted into the wall below.

Footsteps echo somewhere. Alex looks up and down the passage. Nothing there. A shiver runs through them.

THOMAS

Lead or follow, but let's go.

More footsteps. First before them, then behind, then nothing. They start down the passage, pause at the footfalls behind. This time they don't stop.

Then a whisper. In Latin. Another in Greek. One in Persian. The whispers are low, conspiratorial, and as more voices join, cabalistic.

As impossible as it seems, the sounds come from the skulls. Thomas digs out his CRUCIFIX, commands...

THOMAS

In the name of God, I command
you to return from whence you
came.

The footsteps stop, but the whispers grow, rising and falling like a wind. Dust whips up from the floor.

THOMAS

By Jesus God and the Holy Virgin
you are compelled to go!

A piece of skull breaks loose from the wall, strikes Thomas across the bridge of the nose. As blood trickles down...

ALEX

Come on...

As they move at a trot, a skeletal arm reaches out from the wall. Alex breaks through it. Then another.

They continue ducking, weaving, clawing through the bones.

Far away, a MOCKING LAUGH. It closes, hurtling up the passage like thunder. Alex and Thomas and runs.

The throbbing sound shivers the walls. A SKULL vibrates, bursts loose, hits Alex as he runs. Others follow.

Craniums explode! Chasing them like falling dominoes.

ANGLE AHEAD

A doorway at the end of the passage, an iron PORTCULLIS raised above. It drops, grinding its way down.

As Alex stumbles through, Thomas dives, passes just underneath as the portcullis slams to the ground.

All sound cuts out. Alex gasps for air, but there are no whispers, no wind, no footfalls in pursuit. He looks across at Thomas.

THOMAS

All bark. No bite.

A shaft of moonlight shines down through a grate above. Steel ladder rungs are bolted into the wall. A ladder out. They stand. As Alex starts up, Thomas waits his turn.

GUTTURAL VOICE

Thomas... Tommy love...

Chillingly demonic. Coming from a side FEEDER CHANNEL. Alex drops back down beside his friend, whispers:

ALEX

Did I use your name?

Thomas shakes his head. A low echoing laugh sounds. Mocking, challenging.

GUTTURAL VOICE

How long have ye been a priest, Thomas? Certain pleasures are forever outta reach. Denied.

ALEX

Leave it for a sunny day. Come on.

Thomas nods, but the voice stops him.

GUTTURAL VOICE

Remember that girl in Dublin? Meagan was her name.

Alex tries to steer him to a rung, but Thomas won't budge.

GUTTURAL VOICE

Did ye feel foolish, Tommy? In love with a whore?

Thomas fishes out his rosary and a vial of holy water. He starts down, but Alex blocks him. The air throbs.

ALEX

It's personal. Ignore it. The first and only lesson, remember?

Thomas is about to agree when...

WOMAN'S VOICE

(Irish, reverbing)

Oh, Tommy. I love ya, Tommy.

As the throbbing builds, Thomas struggles to get past Alex.

THOMAS

(fierce)

Never give an inch to them. Not one fucking inch.

Thomas shoves Alex aside, starts up the channel.

THOMAS

In the name of God and Jesus
Christ I say to Hell with ya!

Alex recovers, starts after him.

THOMAS

Charging blindly. Alex calling after him.

WOODEN POST

The throbbing shivers the wood. A NAIL vibrates, bursts loose.

THOMAS

Pulls up short as the nail drives into his chest. As he clutches at it, a dozen more dislodge, fly from every different direction. All find their mark.

Arms thrown out, Thomas spirals down till a last nail drives through his left palm and into the wall. It leaves him hanging there. Half-crucified.

WOMAN'S VOICE

(fading)

I'll pray for you, Tommy...

47.
The throbbing fades as Alex rushes up. Looking off the way the voice went, Thomas cries. It's only partly from the actual physical pain. Through it, Thomas makes a half-hearted joke.

THOMAS
Could've been worse, eh?
Could've been balls to the wall.

Thomas cries out as Alex pulls him loose.

THOMAS
(in pain)
You never laugh, Alex. It ain't
good for the soul.

Alex pulls Thomas' arm over his shoulder, starts away. As Thomas legs go out, Alex keeps him up.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARIS - DAWN

54

The city has a ghostly feel as the sun is moments away.

ALEX'S VOICE
Darkling I listen...

INT. BEDROOM - THOMAS' GARRET APARTMENT - DAWN

Lucy sits on the bed, her knees pulled up to her chest, huddled under a blanket. As she stares out the window...

ALEX'S VOICE
Darkling I listen.

Lucy looks over her shoulder to the door.

LUCY
Alex?

There's no answer. Lucy gets out of bed, steps to the door and listens a beat. Silence. She reaches for the door...

But the knob turns by itself. As the door glides open, there's no one on the other side.

LUCY
Alex?

CLOSE ON Lucy as she steps through the door. As she blinks in shock, we arc around behind her TO REVEAL we're:

OUTSIDE IN A PARK

Beyond, past Lucy's shoulder, we see Alex standing by a FOUNTAIN. He watches two children feeding the pigeons. As Lucy starts forward...

ALEX

Seems sad. He looks back, sees...

ALEX

Lucy.

(steps forward; stops)

Lucy?

PARK

She's holding a HANDGUN. Pointing it at Alex.

LUCY

I love you, Alex.

She FIRES. The pigeons take wing, people scream as Alex stumbles back, falls backwards into the fountain.

As blood spreads, Alex doesn't have the strength to fight to a surface that is only a few inches away.

Lucy drops the gun, rushes forward. As she pulls Alex up from the water.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - THOMAS' GARRET APARTMENT - DAWN

Lucy wakes up from her dream crying. She's all alone.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - EARLY MORNING

55

Alex sits. It looks like he's been sitting here all night. He stands as a French DOCTOR steps over accompanied by a POLICEMAN. The doctor holds a steel pan.

ALEX

How is he?

DOCTOR

How would you be?

Rattling the pan are thirteen bloody, rusty NAILS.

INT. THOMAS' HOSPITAL ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Hooked to IVs, heavily bandaged, Thomas is pale, asleep. Alex steps over, looks down at his friend. He lowers his head, starts to pray.

Thomas' eyes flutter open.

THOMAS
(weak; a whisper)
Waste of breath.

Alex takes his friends hand, happy to see him awake.

THOMAS
What time is it? You've got
choir practice.

ALEX
Shhh... Not until later.

Thomas nods, drops back into unconsciousness.

CUT TO:

INT. THOMAS' MAIN GARRET APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING

57

Lucy has gone to work. Sipping tea, she goes over Dominic's papers. Most of it is literally Greek to her.

She finds a handwritten scroll, starts to unroll it. LATIN this time. She's about to roll it back up when something catches in her hand. A PHOTO is curled up in the scroll.

Lucy flattens it on the table: Black & white. In front of Notre Dame. Maybe the 1950's. A group of four. TWO YOUNG PRIEST we may or may not recognize as Dominic and Cardinal Driscoll. Beside them, a strikingly beautiful YOUNG WOMAN, and a man who looks like WILLIAM EDEN. Eden has an arm around the woman's waist. He doesn't mean anything to Lucy, but as we push in on him and the phone RINGS...

It makes her jump all the same. Lucy answers.

LUCY
Hello? Alex? Where are you?

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

58

Carrying a cardboard box full of Dominic's papers, Lucy walks along. She turns a corner, enters...

INT. THOMAS' ROOM - PARIS HOSPITAL - DAY

59

Thomas sleeps. Alex is not here. Lucy sets down the box. Thomas opens one eye; he was awake.

THOMAS

Thought you might be the nurse.

LUCY

(takes his hand)

Thomas, what happened? Where's Alex?

THOMAS

He's off in search of coffee.
As for me, I was hoisted up by
my own petard.

Lucy waits for an explanation, but it isn't coming. Thomas turns her hand over to show the SCAR across her wrist.

THOMAS

Lucy, if I can ask, what happened
between you and our Alex?

LUCY

It's okay. If I was embarrassed
I'd wear bracelets... My brother
was murdered. The police, they
brought Alex in to consult. An
ecclesiastic cop.

THOMAS

The Filmore Murders?

LUCY

(nods)

I started getting headaches.
Blinding. Relentless. I'd hear
imaginary birds singing a few
days before they started.
Nightingales. The last bout
went on for weeks.

THOMAS

And Alex performed an exorcism?

Lucy nods, pained at the memory, but then a brave smile.

LUCY

Alex took away my pain and I fell
in love with a priest who couldn't
love me back... Slit my wrists,
spent a year in an asylum.

THOMAS

Love...

(winces; then smiles)

You traded one pain for another.

Thomas glances at the wrist scars then back to Lucy.
There's something more he needs to know.

THOMAS

But the relationship left him
with a scar as well. A hole in
the chest I believe?

LUCY

I tried to kill him. I thought,
when I did it, that I was saving
him from something worse.

THOMAS

Worse than death? What was
that, Lucy?

The thought still scares her because:

LUCY

I don't know. Crazy, isn't it?

Thomas doesn't answer. He looks quite troubled.

LUCY

Isn't it?

Thomas shrugs; he doesn't know. Then: Alex returns, coffee
in hand. He smiles when he sees her, feels like setting
the rock down for just a moment. Lucy and Thomas let their
conversation go.

LUCY

You see what happens when you
two go off without me?

(re: box)

I brought some of Dominic's
papers so you guys'd have
something to read besides
National Geographic.

THOMAS

Did you bring the parchment?
The one with the torn corner?

LUCY

Yeah, but take a look at this.

Lucy takes out the photo, hands it to Thomas and Alex who
looks along with him.

LUCY
It was rolled up in a scroll.

THOMAS
(re: priest one)
That's Dominic. So young...

ALEX
The other priest is Cardinal
Driscoll. I didn't know Dominic
knew him so long ago.

LUCY
What about the man? And this
woman? They're so beautiful.

THOMAS
The woman seems familiar.

An exclamation as a NURSE enters with Thomas' doctor.

NURSE
Out, out, out!

As the doctor starts a torrent of French...

LUCY
Hang on. We're just trying to
figure out who these people are.

The doctor takes the photo, glances at it.

DOCTOR
Ask anyone in Paris about the
woman. The Countess Levanger.

LUCY
And where would anyone know
where to find her?

DOCTOR
(smiles)
Not far from here.

CUT TO:

WILLIAM EDEN

A rejuvenated Eden sits at a dresser, staring at himself in
a mirror. A CANDLE burns. We hear MOANING, see reflected
a YOUNG COUPLE making love in a bed behind him.

But Eden doesn't even seem to know they're there. He's
practically looking through himself. Eden frowns. Running
his fingers through his hair, he plucks out a GRAY HAIR.

He considers it. As the lovemaking reaches a crescendo, Eden holds the hair over the flame. It burns to nothing.

Eden smells the smoke. Suddenly driven to action, he rises, strides to the door and out.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARIS MANSION (MENTAL HOSPITAL) - DAY

63

Opulent. Like something out of Louis XIV. A taxi pulls up; Lucy and Alex get out.

They step to the impressive entrance. Do you wait for a butler? Ring a bell? But the door opens as a WHITE-JACKETED DOCTOR exits. He holds the door for them:

INT. UPSCALE MENTAL HOSPITAL - DAY

64

It still looks like a mansion, but it isn't. An old man in a bathrobe wanders past. Down the hall we see a nurse's station. As Lucy and Alex exchange a look...

INT. HALLWAY - MENTAL HOSPITAL MANSION - DAY

65

An ORDERLY leads the way as Lucy and Alex walk across a scuffed-up 18th century MARBLE FLOOR. Some of the doors are open. We see glimpses of patients, we'd rather not see. Not a nursing home, a mental hospital.

Lucy shivers at the sight of one WOMAN counting imaginary beans on her bed sheet. As Alex moves her past...

INT. 3RD FLOOR SITTING ROOM - MENTAL HOSPITAL - DAY

66

Lucy and Alex wait. Finally, low French chatter in the hallway. Then the orderly enters supporting the arm of the COUNTESS. Seventy-five years old, impeccably dressed, she's a little Rose Kennedy, a little Queen Mum, a little mad as a hatter. The orderly announces:

ORDERLY

Countess Levanger, your visitors.

She cocks her head. Birdlike. Holds out her hand. Lucy takes it, doesn't quite know what to say.

LUCY

Countess, my name is Lucy. This is Alex.

The Countess just stares at her.

LUCY
It's nice to meet you.

COUNTESS
(correcting)
It's a privilege to meet me.

LUCY
That, too.

The Orderly gets the Countess into a chair, then steps out into the hall. The two women regard each other a moment.

COUNTESS
Did they tell you I was insane?

LUCY
No. Are you?

COUNTESS
(smiling)
We all are, child.

There is definitely a mad glint in her eye.

COUNTESS
But I've seen eternal truth
while the doctors here glimpse
mere phenomena.

For the first time she looks at Alex, asks Lucy.

COUNTESS
Is this your man?

They exchange a look. Lucy doesn't answer.

COUNTESS
Tell him to go get me a flower.

Lucy looks at Alex. Finally, he shrugs, exits the room.

COUNTESS
(almost a whisper)
Where are you from?

LUCY
(whispers back)
The United States.

COUNTESS
I visited the United States in
1934. I was eleven.

Lucy steps over, crouches beside her.

COUNTESS
We flew in an airship.

LUCY
A friend of my friend died. His
name was Dominic Sousa. Do you
remember him?

COUNTESS
Of course. He married my
husband and I.

Lucy shows her the photo, points out Eden.

LUCY
Is this your husband?

The Countess fingers a locket she wears around her neck.

LUCY
(re: the Cardinal)
How about this man? Do you know
this man?

COUNTESS
Have you ever flown in an
airship, Lucy?

LUCY
No, I haven't.

COUNTESS
Some people called them
dirigibles, but that does not
sound as romantic, does it?

Lucy lowers her head. This is not going to go anywhere.

COUNTESS
Of course that was before the
headaches.

Lucy looks up.

LUCY
The headaches?

COUNTESS
I suffered terribly.

Lucy takes her hands, sees the ancient white scars
crisscrossing the old woman's wrist on the hand that holds
the locket. She nearly gasps, then asks...

LUCY

Did you hear birds before the
headaches started?

The Countess doesn't answer. Instead she continues to play
with the locket. Lucy reaches, gently opens it.

On one side is a small b&w photo of the countess: beautiful
and young. The opposite: an of the period William Eden.

LUCY

Was this your husband?

COUNTESS

My dear, dear girl. Forget him.
He would cost you too much.

LUCY

(after a beat)

What did he cost you?

COUNTESS

Everything. I just didn't know
it at first.

INT. 3RD FLOOR HALLWAY - MENTAL HOSPITAL - DAY

Alex waits outside the door, leaning against the wall. He
can see into the room across the way.

ROOM: A middle-aged WOMAN prays fervently, runs a rosary
through her hands, all the while scratching at her own
face, reaching out for something that isn't there.

Finally she looks over at Alex, smiles with rotten teeth.

WOMAN

Forgive me, father, for I have
sinned.

Creepy. All the more so because Alex isn't wearing his
collar.

INT. 3RD FLOOR SITTING ROOM - MENTAL HOSPITAL - DAY

Lucy looks into the Countesses suddenly lucid eyes.

LUCY

What was your husband's name?

The Countess snaps the locket shut.

COUNTESS
Georges! Georges!

Alex looks back in. Then the Orderly (Georges) returns. The Countess holds her arm up. He helps her to her feet and they start out. Lucy watches.

LUCY
Can you tell me anything?

COUNTESS
(without looking back)
They were nightingales, Lucy.
Those were the birds I heard.
The birds he brought to me.

As Alex reacts, Lucy hurries around, gets in front of her.

LUCY
Is he still alive? Where can I
find him?

COUNTESS
You can find him in the Museum
D'Bonaparte. In the Salon Carré.

LUCY
When?

COUNTESS
Anytime you like.

The Countess laughs at some private joke. Laughs until she's suddenly crying. As the orderly leads her out...

CUT TO:

EXT. PARIS MANSION (MENTAL HOSPITAL) - DAY

Both Alex and Lucy are full of their own thoughts. The sky is dark. THUNDER rolls in the distance.

LUCY
She said Dominic married her.
She said her husband brought the
birds. And the Cardinal knows
them all.

ALEX
Go back to Thomas. Wait for me
there.

LUCY
I'm going to the museum with
you.

ALEX
I'm not going to the museum.

LUCY
Then where?

ALEX
I have an appointment to keep.

LUCY
Goddamnit, Alex! Don't be
cryptic now!

Alex finally focuses on her. Rain begins to drop.

ALEX
Two heads are better than one,
right? You go to the museum.
I'm going to Notre Dame. We'll
meet back at Thomas' for full
disclosure. Fair enough?

CUT TO:

INT. SALON CARRÉ - MUSEUM D'BONAPARTE - DAY

77

15th & 16th century painters. Holbein, Brueghel, Clouet and Bosch, among others. Lucy enters, looks about. Of the half dozen people in the room, one is an OLD MAN, his back to her. Holding the photo, Lucy starts forward.

The old man turns. A taciturn face. Not the man she wants. He gives her an odd look as she veers to the right. Lucy stops in the middle of the room feeling like a dope.

CUT TO:

EXT. NOTRE DAME CATHEDRAL - DAY

67

A slate gray Paris afternoon. Rain falls. The gargoyle gutters of Notre Dame spout water. And down it comes.

INT. NOTRE DAME - CATHEDRAL - DAY

68

The silence won't bring you closer to God, but it might bring him closer to you. Alex waits in a pew. Exhausted, he scans the cathedral for "the Other." Finally, he bows his head. Is he praying or trying to rest? Then we see...

He's looking at the Vatican dagger held in his lap.

And the CHOIR takes voice. Beautifully. Hauntingly.

CUT TO:

INT. SALON CARRÉ - MUSEUM D'BONAPARTE - DAY

81

Lucy sits on a bench, watches the people come and go. As a MUSEUM GUARD passes through, she stands, shows him the photo. As he shakes his head and continues on...

LUCY

You can find him in the museum... Yeah, right.

CUT TO:

WILLIAM EDEN - NOTRE DAME

Walks down an aisle, his eyes on Alex ahead.

Eden turns down a pew, walks till he's standing, looming directly behind Alex.

Eden sits, leans his chin on crossed arms. Finally...

EDEN

Am I the answer to your prayer?

Alex looks up, but doesn't look back.

EDEN

My friends call me William.
William Eden.

ALEX

I'm not your friend.

EDEN

(a smile)

That remains to be seen. You found me, Alex. Now what?

CUT TO:

INT. SALON CARRÉ - MUSEUM D'BONAPARTE - DAY

83

Lucy starts to leave, stops short. In front of her: an HIERONYMUS BOSCH. One of his tableaux: birds and mice and demons and guys with flowers sticking out of their ass.

Impressive, but not really enough to take your breath away. Although that's exactly what's happened to Lucy. She leans in to where a GROUP OF CLERICS stand beneath an alabaster egg. One of the clerics looks just like William Eden.

LUCY

Anytime you like...

CUT TO:

INT. NOTRE DAME - CATHEDRAL - DAY

As Alex looks back

EDEN

I know what you're feeling. And
you're right. God exists. He
just doesn't give a damn.

Eden doesn't get an answer. He looks around the cathedral.

EDEN

Magnificent, isn't it? I've
always felt more affinity for
things than people. Flesh rots,
but Notre Dame remains.

(looks up; whispers)

Do you see that wall, Alex? It
was raised by my brother when I
was still a boy.

And as the roof of Notre Dame starts to dissolve away...

EXT. ÎLE DE LA CITÉ - SEINE RIVER - DAY

69

So does much of the interior. The pew that Alex sits on
remains. Eden stands behind him. It's 1178 and Notre-Dame
Cathedral has been under construction for fifteen years.

The foundation has been laid and the walls are up - two
long rows of columns that support the vault and soon the
roof. Wooden scaffolding hangs from the top of the walls.
MASONS stand on platforms hoisting up stones. Using chain
as medieval rebar, MORTAR MAKERS pour cement.

No one sees Alex and Eden. Eden points up at a MASTER
BUILDER supervising. Beside him, his young brother WILLIAM
(the boy William Eden) stirs a bucket of mortar.

WILLIAM

Tell me a story, Philip. A
story of Jerusalem

The Master Builder looks east, like he could see...

MASTER BUILDER

Jerusalem... Did I ever tell
you, William, of the day I sat
in parlay with Saladin himself?

Full of anticipation, the boy shakes his head. A few
others also pause to listen. But as another stone is
hoisted, the weight is too great.

The cords on a rope part. Then SNAP! Men claw and grasp for life as the platform drops away at one end.

WILLIAM
(falling)
Philip!

The master builder catches his brother's hand. Temporarily reprieved, the boy is suspended over nothing. Sways and creaks. An awful purgatory before the inevitable.

MASON
God help us...

William stares up into his older brother's eyes. Amazingly, Philip smiles, then swings William forward. As the boy's hand catches hold of the scaffolding...

The platform gives way. The Master Builder and the others flail for purchase that simply isn't there. Saved, William gasps as they tumble toward the ground far below.

CUT TO:

EXT. GROUND - BETWEEN THE WALLS - DAY

70

"In Nomine Patris..." Eden and Alex stand nearby as families watch, women weep as TWO PRIESTS move about the dead and the dying administering the last rites.

Eden points as one of the priests reaches the Master Builder, who is cradled in the arms of his elderly FATHER as William watches. The priest hesitates.

PRIEST
I cannot give absolution. He
was excommunicated last year for
deserting the Crusades.

FATHER
Good enough to build God's
house, but not to enter his
kingdom. Is that it?

The Priest shrugs, moves on. The father glares after him a bitter beat. As his dying son moans, he looks to the younger, fishes out a GOLD COIN which he hands him.

FATHER
Go. Go and fetch the Sin Eater.

The boy William dashes off. Eden looks sadly to Alex.

EDEN

My brother gave a dying Arab a
drink of water. There was no
well so he gave him holy water.
(watches running boy)
I ran till I thought I would die.

EXT. VILLAGE - ÎLE DE LA CITÉ - SUNSET

72

William leads the SIN EATER through the village toward the building site. Men scowl, woman close their doors at the sight of the man. His pock-marked, weary face belies the twinkle in his dark eyes.

Eden and Alex watch as they pass.

EDEN

Recognize the robes? A
Carolingian. The same as Dominic
was. The same as you are. The
same as I became myself.

A few more strides and they're nearing the cathedral walls.

SIN EATER

Tell me, boy, why do you think
your people build this?

WILLIAM

We are giving thanks to God.

SIN EATER

Thanks? It's a bribe. Nothing
more. And you'll be dead long
before it's even done.

The Sin Eater pauses, reaches to the boy's collar, fingers a small WOODEN CROSS which hangs from his neck. The cross.

William eyes the black pouch at the Sin Eater's belt.

Eden looks ahead to where his brother is dying. To Alex:

EDEN

My brother gave the church his
youth in Jerusalem, his blood at
Notre Dame. But when he lay
dying, they deserted him. When
his soul stretched out, caught
between heaven and hell, it was
the Other who delivered him. The
Other who gave him peace. I
always loved my brother, Alex,
but the church I grew to hate.

The Sin Eater rests a hand on William's shoulder, looks into his eyes, smiles at what he sees there.

SIN EATER

There is the other way. I could teach you. If you're willing.

The Sin Eater turns, heads for the Master Builder and those gathered about him. William watches, then looks back at the cathedral. Eden kneels beside the boy who cannot see him. He reaches out, wipes a tear from the boy's cheek.

EDEN

I was willing. And so I was taught...

DISSOLVE BACK TO:

INT. NOTRE DAME - PRESENT DAY

73

The boy fades away. The roof returns. The cathedral is made whole. Alex faces Eden, the dagger in his hands.

ALEX

Did you kill Dominic Sousa?

EDEN

The church killed him. He died when he was excommunicated. His body continued on awhile, but his spirit was dead.

ALEX

That's a lie. He wasn't really excommunicated.

EDEN

He was. You knew him the last few years. He was ruined, broken. Don't talk to me of lies.

His words ring rue. Eden smiles when he sees the dagger.

EDEN

I lost that in 1602. I had dinner with Caravaggio and drank too much wine... It's a means. An instrument for ridding the world of the other.

ALEX

Those things in the graveyard. Those things that watched Dominic. They were yours.

EDEN

No. They were Dominic's. He brought them on himself.

Something about the way he says it shakes Alex.

ALEX

And underground? What happened to Thomas?

EDEN

I'm not concerned with Thomas.

ALEX

Did you kill Dominic?

Eden throws back his arms to give Alex a clear shot.

EDEN

If you truly think I'm evil, use it. Pierce my heart and watch me pass from this earth.

ALEX

Did you kill him?!

For an instant, it seems like Alex is on the verge. His knuckles are white around the grip.

EDEN

He killed himself. After the church excommunicated and abandoned him. After they took away his reason to live. They did to him as they did to my brother. And do you know what I did?

Eden lowers his arms. Alex is afraid to ask.

EDEN

I gave him absolution. I took on the burden of his sins. I gave him peace. Not the church. I did it.

Alex isn't going to kill Eden.

ALEX

Dominic was like a father to me.

That said, Alex turns and starts away. Exiting into the rain. Eden watches him go.

EXT. PARIS AVENUE - DAY

75

Alex walks, head bowed. A black limo turns the corner, pulls up beside him. The back door opens to reveal Eden.

EDEN

Come with me.

Alex looks down at him, then up at the dark skies. Like it was a choice between heaven and hell. Alex hesitates.

EDEN

Every fear hides a wish, don't you think?

Alex gets in the limo. As it rolls away...

CUT TO:

EXT. EDEN'S CHATEAU - DAY

78

The limo pulls up.

INT. ENTRY FOYER - EDEN'S CHATEAU - DAY

79

Where Eden is met by a MAID and MANSERVANT. Alex stands half in a daze. The maid glances with disapproval at the puddle Alex's wet clothes are leaving on the floor.

EDEN

Get Alex some fresh clothes, a hot bath if he would like and then take him someplace quiet where he can sit. The greenhouse or the library if he'd prefer.

MANSERVANT

Yes, sir... This way, Mr. Alex.

As he leads Alex away, Alex looks back over his shoulder at Eden. Not to say anything, just to look.

EDEN

If you'd like anything, anything can be arranged.

And Alex is gone around the corner. Eden looks at the puddle and then to the maid. As she hurries off:

MAID

You read my mind, sir.

CUT TO:

INT. PRIVATE ROOM - MENTAL HOSPITAL MANSION - DAY

80

The Countess sits by her bed looking through an old photo album. She smiles at a sepia shot of a little girl standing before a dirigible docking tower.

She doesn't notice the beating of wings, but she stops in mid-page turn as a bird sings.

CLOSE ON COUNTESS

As her eyes flutter up, then grow wide with horror.

PRIVATE ROOM

Ringed with NIGHTINGALES. Wherever they can perch. They jockey for position, all the while watching her.

COUNTESS

No...

They begin to sing. She covers her ears screaming. Then they begin to buzz her, peck at her.

CUT TO:

INT. PRIVATE ROOM - MENTAL HOSPITAL MANSION - DAY

82

Under attack, the Countess staggers to her feet. She waves her arms frantically.

CUT TO:

EXT. MENTAL HOSPITAL MANSION - DAY

84

As Lucy walks toward the entrance. She suddenly stops short as a 3rd floor window explodes, the Countess hurtling through the glass, her hands beating at invisible birds.

As she hits the ground by Lucy's feet...

CUT TO:

INT. LIBRARY - EDEN'S CHATEAU - EVENING

85

In dry clothes, Alex sleeps in a chair facing a crackling fire. A loud pop in the fireplace stirs, wakes him up. Sitting up, he tries to orient himself. He looks up, sees Eden standing above at the wraparound rail of the library's upper level. Eden is reading.

ALEX

How long have I been asleep?

EDEN

A few hours.

Eden's finger finds the passage he's been looking for.

EDEN

(reads)

Ash on an old man's sleeve, is all
the ash the burnt roses leave.
Dust in the air suspended, marks
the place where a story ended.
Dust inbreathed was a house: the
wall, the wainscot and the mouse.
The death of hope and despair,
this is the death of air.

ALEX

T. S. Eliot.

EDEN

(closes book)

Yes. He understood dust. Not
many people do.

Eden reaches up, runs a middle and forefinger along an
upper shelf. Standing at the rail, he shows Alex the dust
which coats his fingers.

EDEN

(re: dust)

Who knows what is held here?
Charlemagne? Joan of Arc? A
beggar's dinner. The smoke from
a winter's fire? The last wolf
of Europe? Hope. Despair...

Eden rubs his thumb over his fingers. As the dust drifts
down on Alex...

EDEN

A kiss between lovers...

Alex holds out his hand. The slightest remains settle in
his palm. As he closes his hand around it.

EDEN

Why are you here? What is it
you want?

ALEX

I want to learn the truth.

Eden climbs down a ladder, comes face-to-face with Alex.

EDEN

The terrible thing about
searching for the truth is that
sometimes you find it.

(a beat)

Not to mention it makes you
unwelcome at parties.

Eden laughs. It makes Alex smile.

ALEX

It makes you unwelcome anywhere,
even in church.

Alex laughs as well and it's Eden's turn to smile.

ALEX

Who are you?

EDEN

I'm all that remains when
everything else turns to dust.
To put it simply, Alex, I am
very, very tired.

ALEX

Are you a man?

EDEN

I shit, I fuck and I shave.
Does that make me a man?

ALEX

Can you die?

EDEN

You have the dagger; you tell me.

Alex reaches into a pocket. Indeed, the dagger is there.

EDEN

I laugh, I cry and once I loved.
Does that make me a man?

Without warning, Eden grapples with Alex, grips the wrist
on his knife hand. As they struggle against each other, it
looks like a pretty even match-up.

EDEN

My arm has strength -- but also
my mind.

Eden puts a move on, trips Alex to the floor.

EDEN

Does that make me a man?

He steps back, allows Alex to his feet. Alex is wary, the knife still in his hand. But Eden sits. He doesn't want to fight.

EDEN

And what about you, Alex? Are you a man?

ALEX

I'm a priest.

They look at each other a beat.

EDEN

You understand the difference.
The truth of it. Good... Do
you remember what Keats said
about the truth?

ALEX

(thinks; then...)
I think so. Beauty is truth.
Truth is beauty.

EDEN

(nods)
Keeping that in mind, my
original question. What is it
you really want?

It pops right into Alex's head making him uncomfortable. Embarrassed, he faces the fire. Eden laughs.

EDEN

(mocking)
The truth?
(a beat)
Or something beautiful?

ALEX

(watching flames)
Something beautiful.

Eden laughs. It's a happy laugh. Alex looks back over.

EDEN

Beauty is truth, Alex... Does
she have a name?

ALEX

Lucy. Her name is Lucy.

EDEN

So say it. Say what you want.

It's an invitation, a chance at a little bit of truth.

EDEN

If it's the truth, then why be afraid? Say it.

ALEX

I want Lucy.

Eden smiles. Not a mocking smile, but a gentle one.

EDEN

Then you're a man, not a priest.
And if Lucy's what you want,
then you should go get her.

CUT TO:

SURREALITY-VILLE

A subway tunnel. Thomas strides through the dark in slow motion. He wears nothing but a white hospital johnny and a sword sheath hanging from a belt. SHADOWS loom, swirl out of the dark, reaching for Thomas. His voice is strong.

THOMAS

To dispatch ghosts and demons
and all manner of undead.

Thomas stops, draws the sword with a hiss.

THOMAS

Welcome to the House of
Lamentation, boyo.

The darkness seems to expand and contract, to breath before him. There's something terrible in there.

THOMAS

I am a servant of our savior
Jesus Christ. And by his name,
you cannot pass.

Blood seeps through Thomas' johnny at various points, but his strength is not diminished. The sword's blade bursts into FLAME as he holds it over his head.

THOMAS

Foul dwimmerlaik beyond all
darkness I will hinder you if I
may... You cannot pass!

Back to slow motion as Thomas stands his ground. Behind him, WHITE ANGELS seem to approach. They turn out to be NURSES and ORDERLIES. The sword becomes a flashlight.

They grab hold of Thomas, pull him back. Thomas tries to resist, but they overpower him.

THOMAS

Can't you see it? Are ya blind?!

CUT TO:

INT. THOMAS' ROOM - PARIS HOSPITAL - SUNSET

87

The bed is empty. Alex enters. Just as he starts to think the worst.

LUCY'S VOICE

Alex.

He turns, sees Lucy who's sitting in the corner. There's panic in his voice as:

ALEX

Where's Thomas?

LUCY

He left looking for you. They found him down in the Metro. He opened some stitches, lost some blood. They're closing him up again right now.

Relief as Alex thought we was dead.

LUCY

Where have you been?

ALEX

I found him. I found the Other.

LUCY

I saw the Countess fly. I saw her leave in her airship.

Alex looks at her, sees the cracks that weren't there this morning. He moves gently toward her.

ALEX

What happened?

LUCY

Tell me it's nice where we're going, Alex. Tell me how the sun is going to shine.

72.

Alex kneels beside her. She puts her arms around him, presses her cheek to his chest. As he holds her back.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARIS PARK - SUNSET

Alex and Lucy walk and talk.

LUCY

What about the photo? What about the cardinal? Your Yankee Pope is involved in all this.

ALEX

We know that. But on whose behalf?

Lucy points out the countess.

LUCY

The Countess heard the same birds I did. She said Eden brought them. She said he brought her headaches, too.

ALEX

You had them before we met him.

LUCY

The Countess said he was her husband. That's one hell of a May-December romance. And then I saw the painting in the museum. He's the December and she's the May.

ALEX

I think he was ancient when the Countess met him.

LUCY

Who is he?

ALEX

The Other. One who can give absolution outside of the church, outside the sacrifice of Christ.

LUCY

That's bad, isn't it? You don't say it like it's bad.

ALEX
I don't know anymore.

LUCY
And now he's invited us to
dinner? Doesn't that seem weird
to you? What does he want?

ALEX
Maybe he's just hungry.

LUCY
I bet he is.

ALEX
Come on. What are you afraid
of?

They've stopped by a row of empty swings. Two children
play hopscotch beyond.

LUCY
It scares me that you have to
ask that.

ALEX
You don't have to go.

LUCY
I'm going. It's you and me till
the wheels fall off. I just
don't want tonight to be the
night they fall.

Lucy holds out her hand. Alex takes it and off they go.

Hold on the children. The boy jumps through the squares.
He bends to pick his marker from square four: a BONE. He
and the girl look back to watch after Alex and Lucy.
They're the kids from Dominic's hallway.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARIS COURTYARD BISTRO - NIGHT

91

Under the arch of a bridge with paper lanterns hanging. It
couldn't be more romantic. Alex and Eden sit at a table
set for three. Eden is nowhere in sight.

ALEX
I wonder where he is.

LUCY
Maybe he's still in his coffin.
Even so... it's beautiful here.

A WAITER comes by, sets a tray of OYSTERS down on the table. Sensuously prepared.

LUCY

We didn't order this.

As the waiter is responding that he doesn't speak English, William Eden is there.

EDEN

I did. William Eden.

Eden takes her hand, kisses it. Lucy knows she's looking at the man from the photo, the man from the painting. All the same, it's hard not to be charmed.

LUCY

Um, Lucy...

Eden sits. As Lucy and Alex exchange a look, Eden lifts an oyster, considers it.

EDEN

It was a brave man who first swallowed an oyster.

As he eats it...

LUCY

Was it you?

Eden laughs.

EDEN

The first time I had oysters was in London. I had been to see Romeo and Juliet at the Globe. A wonderful night.

He eats another, sees them hesitate.

EDEN

Go on. They won't bite.

Lucy takes one. Alex follows. Eden watches with pleasure as they eat and enjoy.

The waiter brings over a bottle of red wine. Pours it for Eden. Eden sips, nods. Taking the bottle, he moves to pour for Lucy. She covers her glass with her hand.

LUCY

I don't drink. It makes me foolish.

EDEN

That's the point. Wine is the key that unlocks us. "Vino veritas." In wine there is truth.

Lucy takes her hand away and Eden pours. For her, for Alex and himself. He raises his glass in a toast.

EDEN

Happiness is so simple, don't you think? Good food, a glass of wine, the sound of lovers whispering in the dark.

As Eden drinks, Alex and Lucy exchange a look. Embarrassed, desirous. There's a spell at work here, but this isn't the first time it's been cast. Finally, they drink. As they set their glasses down, he pours more.

EDEN

The foie gras, the mussels, the mushrooms, all excellent.

LUCY

Before we go further, I have something I think is yours.

She holds out her hand. In her palm: the Countess Levanger's locket. Eden takes it, opens it, smiles.

EDEN

I met her, not far from here. She was schooling a Nazi officer who'd had the temerity to ask her for identification. "If you're going to invade my country at least have the decency to know who I am." She went on from there, but the translation won't do it justice.
(looks at photo)
She was magnificent.

LUCY

She's dead.

EDEN

I know.

LUCY

Does it bother you?

EDEN

Many things bother me, Lucy. If you're asking if I mourn, well, the tears I had for the Countess, I cried years ago.

Eden closes the locket.

EDEN

It's between her and myself. All I'll tell you is that I cared for her the best I could under the circumstances.

He puts the locket in his pocket.

EDEN

Alex, you're very quiet.

LUCY

He gets that way when he has something to say.

EDEN

And then he never says it.

Lucy looks at Alex. Yes, that's right.

Eden pours the dregs into his glass, considers the empty bottle. An ebb in the flow of the evening.

EDEN

An empty bottle. Like my friends Lucy and Alex.

Eden smiles warmly at them, becomes a poet.

EDEN

Fill yourselves, little fools. Life is too short to wait empty and dry. Like empty buckets in empty wells, empty hearts in empty rooms, empty words in empty dreams, empty days in an empty world. For no reason except pride and fear.

A tear runs down Lucy's cheek. Eden reaches out, gently catches them on his forefinger. He then wipes the finger across Alex's lips.

EDEN

Drink each other. Fill yourselves with each other.

Alex closes his eyes, struggling mightily.

ALEX
I'm a priest. It's a sin...

EDEN
No. Not being together is the
sin you've committed. Your
confession is love; your penance
is a kiss.

He takes their hands, puts them together, then smiles.

EDEN
Go forth and sin no more. I'll
see you in the morning.

Eden stands, starts out.

They watch him, then turn awkwardly facing each other. And
they lose themselves for a moment in each other's eyes.

HARD CUT TO:

LUCY

Her laughing face filling frame, then dropping away to
reveal Alex pushing her on a swing. They're in...

EXT. THE PARIS PARK - NIGHT

The swing creaks merrily as Alex pushes her higher and
higher. Hands on her hips. The lights of Paris around
them. He suddenly catches hold of her, spins her around.
Then penance as they come together in a sweet kiss.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BEDROOM - THOMAS' GARRET APARTMENT - NIGHT

92

Lucy and Alex making love in the bed. She starts to
silently weep. Alex pauses, wipes at her cheeks.

ALEX
Did I hurt you?

LUCY
You made me happy.

They drink each other in a beat. Then Lucy asks:

LUCY
Did I hurt you?

He shakes his head, then finds the words.

ALEX
I love you.

She reaches up, crosses his lips with her fingers.

LUCY
I love you back...

Then she leans up, covers his mouth with hers.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PARIS STREET - THOMAS' NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT 93

Late. A prowling CAT stops to watch a figure stride silently past. The cat's back arches; it hisses as fear courses through it. The figure is Eden. Moving with purpose. He smiles back at the cat, continues on his way.

CUT TO:

ALEX

Wakes suddenly. Lucy sleeps quietly beside him. Reassured at the sight of her, he reaches out to touch her...

EDEN'S VOICE
(a whisper)
Alex...

Alex looks to where Eden stands at the foot of the bed.
Alex sits up quick.

EDEN
Shhh. You'll wake her.

ALEX
What the hell do you want?

EDEN
I'd like to show you what I do.

CUT TO:

EXT. DEGAULLE AIRPORT - NIGHT 94

As a GULFSTREAM screams off into the dead of night.

INT. CABIN - GULFSTREAM - NIGHT 95

Eden stares at one of a dozen candles which burn around the cabin. Alex sits across the cabin staring back at Eden.

EDEN

Do you really believe, Alex, that it's weakness that surrenders to temptation? Believe me, there are terrible temptations which require strength, strength and courage to surrender to.

Eden laughs mirthlessly at the irony, then with bitterness at the knowledge:

EDEN

How we run from the things we need.

The words are like a knife. As Alex looks out into the darkness...

CUT TO:

EXT. ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL - LONDON - NIGHT

96

The dome of ST. PAUL'S dominates the frame. But tonight is not a night for God. Tonight God is looking the other way. As the Gulfstream streaks by beyond...

CUT TO:

EXT. REGENT PARK MANSION - NIGHT

97

A tough looking ENGLISHMAN grinds out a cigarette, watches as a limo pulls up. Alex gets out nervous, but Eden has known this drill for eight hundred years.

ENGLISHMAN

He's dying.

EDEN

That's why I'm here.

INT. ANTEROOM - REGENT PARK MANSION - NIGHT

98

Alex and Eden wait as the Englishman, from somewhere in the shadows, produces a PAINTING. Eden leans in, looks it over. And just as we recognize the style...

EDEN

Rembrandt did some remarkable things. This isn't one of them. It's a de Gelder. But only I'll know that.

(to Englishman)

Put it in the car.

Motioning Alex to join him, Eden starts in.

ALEX

Your services don't come cheap.

EDEN

No they don't.

ALEX

What did Dominic give you? He had nothing.

EDEN

Not true. He once gave me friendship.

EXT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

99

Where British aristocrat BURNHAM lies in bed knocking on Death's door. He wears a MASK connected to a portable oxygen tank. A DOCTOR hovers. Eden enters with Alex.

EDEN

Christ on the cross. He gave forgiveness to a thief being crucified alongside him. The church would not have allowed it... but Christ did.

DOCTOR

What do you think you can do for him that I haven't?

EDEN

I am the conductor of the night train. I punch his ticket. Heaven or Hell, I decide which stop he gets off at.

Eden's contemptuous smile is what unnerves the Doctor. He tries to step around him, but Eden blocks his way.

EDEN

Science. Medicine. You give people nothing to hold except words they can't pronounce, cancers that act capriciously. You take away. You kill the mystery that makes life mean something. Anything. And you pretend to understand it all when you understand nothing. When you are nothing. When your dust has more value than you do.

The doctor covers his mouth, turns away as he stumbles from the room vomiting. Eden looks to Alex.

EDEN

Keep your eyes open and your mouth closed. Do not touch me or him until it's over.

ALEX

Who is he?

EDEN

A lost sheep. A man full of fear and regret. But the more important question...

Eden slips the oxygen mask from Burnham's face.

EDEN

Do you know who I am?

Burnham nods.

EDEN

It's the confession, not the priest, that gives absolution. Do you understand?

Burnham nods weakly, but understands.

Alex watches as Eden pulls the drawstring of his black pouch to reveal the SALT and BREAD. Then, removing the wooden cross from his neck...

EDEN

From Jerusalem. My brother gave it to me. He said it was embedded with a splinter from the true cross.

(to Burnham)

Are you ready to make your confession?

Burnham licks his dry lips, nods. Eden takes a piece of charcoal, marks the wall at Burnham's head, the floor at his feet. Eden places the cross upside down on his forehead, then opens Burnham's shirt to expose his chest.

A chill shivers Burnham as Eden places a tablet of salt and a wafer of bread over his heart. A final look to Alex...

EDEN

Forgiveness for the unforgivable. An appallingly breathtaking power.

Eden withdraws into himself, then kissing his own hand he reaches out and makes the reverse sign of the cross on Burnham. Then, in guttural reverse Latin.

EDEN

Nema Itcnas Sutirips te Iilif te
Sirtap Enimon ni.

That said, Eden picks up the salt, stacks it on the bread.

As he slowly raises both to his mouth, they leave behind twin wispy vapor trails, milky white circles on the skin. Burnham moans, his chest rising slightly.

EDEN

I forgive you...

His body swaying ever so slightly, Eden places the salt and bread on his own tongue, draws it into his mouth.

Alex leans forward in fascination, anticipation.

Eden swallows. Burnham's body arches. Eden's eyes roll back white in his head. An awful moment passes. He seems to grow in stature. His body arches back almost orgasmically. And then:

The black of Burnham's soul begins to exit Burnham's body and enter Eden's. Connecting them, joining them.

It slams Eden against the wall. Eden's mouth opens in a silent scream, but nothing comes out as black rushes in.

Alex's own mouth drops open as he watches.

Eden's body bucks, spasms at the impact. We hear the horror of it all mix in a howl of spiritual privation.

EDEN'S EYE

We enter the pupil, watch as he falls past us, into the darkness until he disappears from sight. Burnham floats up and past as though the burdens fettering him are leaving.

ROOM

Eden finally finds his own voice. The scream that rips from his throat sounds a thousand years in the making. As the last of the black hits him, is absorbed by him, he drops to the floor, limp.

BURNHAM

I'm free...

Burnham's body relaxes, one arm hangs limply off the edge of the bed. Dead, but a peaceful half-smile on his face.

Alex's breath has been held through it all. He exhales.

Eden gets up on his knees. In obvious pain, he casts about blindly for something. Alex's horror turns to compassion. He goes to Eden's side, tries to help him to his feet.

EDEN

The cross... My cross...

Alex takes it from Burnham's forehead, presses it into Eden's hand. This seems to take the edge off.

The door opens. As the Englishman peers in unimpressed...

EXT. LONDON ALLEY - NIGHT

100

The back door of the Limo is open. Alex struggles trying to keep Eden on his feet, gets him in to the car. As he slams the door...

INT. CABIN - GULFSTREAM - NIGHT

Alex stares out the window. Eden lying down across the way, stirs, looks over at Alex. He's still weak.

EDEN

What do you think of what I do?

ALEX

It's beyond my judgment. Except...

EDEN

Except?

ALEX

Two days ago I had to ask a dying boy if he was sorry for having offended God. I don't know if I did a thing for him, but you sent this man on his way.

EDEN

Sometimes I think if I had my time over, I'd be someone foolish and small. Smile awhile then die a very penitent man. Sometimes... It's not immortality, Alex; you will grow weary, but 500 years? A thousand? Imagine what you could accomplish given that time.

ALEX

What are you saying?

Eden pulls himself closer, intense.

EDEN

I'm all used up. My time is done. But I believe in the legacy of it all. I shouldn't be the last of my kind.

(smiles)

There should be another other.

Alex can't believe what he's hearing. Eden means that he should become the Sin Eater.

ALEX

But last night... I'm not a priest anymore.

EDEN

I don't want a priest. Just a man who understand the abstraction. Good and evil. The redemption and damnation of it all.

ALEX

But why me?

EDEN

It must be a Carolingian. And so few remain.

ALEX

Is that how you knew Dominic?

EDEN

Fifty years ago, he nearly took my offer. In some ways, I think he trained you for what he couldn't do.

ALEX

But why me? Why not Thomas?

EDEN

Indomitable Thomas. Blinded by faith. He cannot see. Only you possess a claim to my place. In the end, like recognizes like.

ALEX

I'm not like you.

EDEN

You buried an excommunicated priest in consecrated ground. After the church had forbidden it. You took matters into your own hands. You went around their authority. The same as I do. You're exactly like me, Alex.

ALEX

I couldn't forgive a man like the one we just saw.

EDEN

You choose who you want. With the gift I offer, you can bypass the church, the sorry, watered-down corruption of it all. You can bring people peace. You can do good. What's your answer?

ALEX

I, I don't know.

This has taken all Eden had. His grip on Alex slackens.

EDEN

(falling asleep)

Take a day, a year. No hurry

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - THOMAS' GARRET APARTMENT - MORNING

102

Lucy sleeps. She stirs as the front door opens and closes. Footsteps across the floor in the other room. She wakes.

LUCY

Alex? Alex?

Then, there he is in the doorway.

LUCY

If we go to bed together, I want to wake up together, too.

He just stares at her a beat. It's impossible to tell what he's thinking.

LUCY

Are you okay?

He steps in and she sees he's holding an armful of cut SUNFLOWERS, the stems wrapped in wax paper. Alex steps over and presents them to her.

ALEX
I hope you like sunflowers.

LUCY
I love sunflowers.

He sits on the bed, loves the smile on her face.

ALEX
Why? Why do you love sunflowers?

LUCY
Well, um, when God was making
beautiful things, he blew it
with sunflowers.
(looks at one)
See? They're like crooked teeth
around a mouth that's too big.
But just when God was going to
start over, he realized that's
what made them beautiful. They
were a brilliant mistake.

ALEX
Like you and me.

They take each other in a moment, then gently kiss. She
looks at him again.

LUCY
Where have you been?

ALEX
William Eden offered me the
world last night, but, when I
saw these...
(re: sunflowers)
I knew.

LUCY
You knew what?

ALEX
That all I want is you.

They kiss again. She leans back, pulls him down on top of
her. After a beat...

LUCY
Tell me what it is.

ALEX
It's you and me. You and me
till the wheels fall off.

And as they kiss again...

CUT TO:

EXT. GARDENS - EDEN'S CHATEAU - DAY

106

Rather formal, but after a gravel riding path, open fields of WILD FLOWERS. Eden stands at the edge, looking out. He turns, see Alex coming down from the house.

EDEN

I hadn't expected you so soon.

ALEX

How are you feeling?

EDEN

Formal. The pain has passed.
All that remains is the
knowledge gained.

Alex reaches into his pocket, takes out the dagger. Eden - looks from it back to Alex.

ALEX

I brought this because I believe
it's yours. And I have an
answer for you.

EDEN

Haste. That doesn't bode well.

ALEX

My answer to your offer is no.
I'm sorry, but I don't want to
be your successor.

Alex holds out the dagger, but Eden doesn't take it.

EDEN

Was I that wrong about you?

ALEX

We're a lot alike; I'll give you
that. Can I ask you something?

Eden nods.

ALEX

Lucy told me about the Countess
Levanger. Was she your wife?

EDEN

Yes.

ALEX

You said yesterday that once you loved. Was it her?

EDEN

No. I was attached to Anne; it wasn't love. I've had many wives over the years, but my love? Why it was centuries ago.

(sighs)

They grow old and they die and I remain.

ALEX

Maybe you'll understand then. Lucy... I love her. I don't want her to get old without me.

EDEN

(shrugs; knows)

You'll grow tired with it. And I'll still be here. And so will my offer.

They regard each other a moment. Eden holds out his hand and Alex hands him the dagger.

ALEX

Goodbye, William Eden.

EDEN

If I've learned anything, Alex, it's that only in death do you ever really say goodbye.

A final look and Alex leaves. For just a moment, Eden's hand goes to his head as some pain passes through.

DANDELION PUFF

Growing skyward. Eden's hand reaches in, snaps it off.

EDEN

Looks from the puff out to Alex who is still seen in the distance. Eden's face as unfathomable as the abyss. Finally, he raises the puff. As he blows the seeds off...

CUT TO:

EXT. THOMAS' ROOM - PARIS HOSPITAL - DAY

107

Thomas sits up in bed sucking on a straw, listening to Alex finish his story.

ALEX

And then I came here. That's the story.

THOMAS

You want to know what I think?

ALEX

Do I have a choice?

For once, Thomas is not in a joking mood.

THOMAS

I think he's evil. I think you shouldn't have given him the dagger. And mostly I think he's not going to take no for an answer, boyo.

ALEX

It's the only answer I got.

THOMAS

Dominic trained us, Alex. For what?

ALEX

I'm not a priest anymore, Thomas. I --

THOMAS

For what?!

Thomas' intensity puts Alex back on his heel for a moment.

ALEX

To dispatch ghosts and demons and all manner of undead.

THOMAS

That's right.

ALEX

But you said yourself, Eden is a living man.

THOMAS

I was wrong. And as soon as I can move...

Thomas holds up the page of instructions with the missing corner.

THOMAS

I go back underground and I see
if Chirac knows where we might
find the rest of this.

ALEX

I'm going to see Lucy. We'll be
back here this afternoon.

THOMAS

I don't think you're taking me
serious.

ALEX

I take you very serious. See
you later.

As Alex leaves, Thomas looks more than serious. As he
starts to painfully get out of bed...

CUT TO:

EXT. PARIS STREETS - DAY

108

As full of life as she's ever going to be, Lucy practically
skips down the street, a basket of groceries hooked over
one arm. As she turns into Thomas' building...

INT. KITCHEN - THOMAS GARRET - DAY

109

Humming to herself, Lucy enters, sets the basket on the
counter. She washes vegetables in the sink.

She grabs a butcher's knife, begins to cut the stems off a
bunch of carrots. As she does, we move around to reveal
Eden is sitting at the kitchen table silently watching her.

EDEN

Is it dark where you go, Lucy?

Lucy wheels around. Scared.

EDEN

Is your pain shapeless? Or does
it take form?

LUCY

What are you doing here?

EDEN

I came to check up on you.

She's still too shocked to quite realize she's still
holding the butcher's knife.

EDEN

Whether you know it or not, you
work for me.

LUCY

How do you figure?

EDEN

Did you know Alex's mother killed
herself? Has he told you that?

LUCY

No.

EDEN

It's part of the attraction you
hold. Though I'm sure he plans
to tell you soon.

Eden's hand goes to above his eye, a headache coming on..

LUCY

How do you know about his mother?

EDEN

I was there. His father died in
a car accident. I was there
then, too. Like me, Alex was
defined by specific events of
his youth.

(stands)

In his case, they were too
important to be left to fate.

LUCY

You killed them...

EDEN

Yes that's right. And Dominic
helped me mold him. Dominic
gave me Alex. That was his sin.

LUCY

Jesus Christ...

EDEN

No... William Eden. You
haven't answered my question.
Is it dark where you go? When
the nightingales sing?

He dismisses his own pain and starts toward her.

EDEN

I brought them to you. I placed
you in Alex's path. Your love
is my creation. Manufactured
like an automobile.

LUCY

NO!

The knife arcs up, slices thickly across Eden's throat. As
he slaps his palm over a blood pulsing carotid, Lucy drives
the blade into his chest. It sinks in several inches.

Eden collapses.

Lucy recoils away. Tap, tap. Lucy doesn't hear it at
first, her eyes on Eden writhing on the floor. Tap, tap.
It's coming from by the window.

Tap, tap... Lucy looks over.

There on the sill, cocking its head at her is a
NIGHTINGALE. Lucy covers her mouth, looks sick.

And Eden rises...

He takes his hand from his neck; the bleeding has stopped.
He pulls the knife from his chest; the wound closes. The
knife clatters to the floor.

EDEN

It's my curse. I couldn't die
if I wanted to. And I want to.

As she blinks in disbelief, something flutters past her
head. She strikes out at thin air, masters herself enough
to turn and start out of the room.

As Eden follows, something else flutters by. Then
something else. Lucy's being buzzed by nightingales.

INT. MAIN ROOM - THOMAS' APT.

110

At least 1000 birds here. All at once, they begin to sing.

Lucy clutches the sides of her head. The headaches are
back. As she staggers out under the onslaught...

The window overlooking the street is open. The curtains
flutter back in the breeze. Eden shoves her back.

In an instant, Eden has Lucy leaning back halfway out the
window. As she gasps, flails at his arm...

One hand snaps loose the pouch on his belt. As it falls to the floor...

EDEN

Stop or I'll let you fall.

Lucy calms, looks back over her shoulder at the ground sixty feet below, then back to Eden who's more than strong enough to hold her between this world and the next.

EDEN

Are you ready to make your confession? Do you even have a confession to make?

LUCY

(hollow; a whisper)

Why...

EDEN

I'm sorry, girl, but this world is too much with me. Believe it or not, my own pain dwarfs any that you may feel.

The birds become a cacophony. As they reach a crescendo, he hauls her in, dumps her on the floor. He watches as Lucy crawls away, groping blindly against the wall.

EDEN

I'm sorry, but it's been a long time since I learned something new...

Eden steps to a mirror, considers himself a moment...

EDEN

Never underestimate the power of love. I'm sorry about that, too.

Then smashes it with his fist. He fishes out a jagged piece of glass. Holding the side of his head, he turns and walks after her.

EDEN

Good God, I am sorry!

As her arm reaches out in blind pain, he grabs hold of it. And as he raises the glass...

CUT TO:

INT. 4TH FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

111

Alex comes up the steps to the door to Thomas'. He sees the door is slightly ajar. Alex pushes it open. It moves and then stops; something's blocking it.

MAIN ROOM - THOMAS' APT. - DAY

112

Alex looks around from the other side. Dead quiet, the ground is covered with DEAD NIGHTINGALES.

ALEX

Lucy?

Alex shoves the door open, starts in and sees a leg sticking out behind the couch. His heart in his throat, he forces himself to continue, comes around to...

ALEX

Lucy!

Lucy's body on the floor. Her eyes open and glassy, wrists mutilated, the piece of glass still in one hand. Eden nowhere in sight.

Alex rushes to her side, lifts her head. Her face still bears the horror and pain of what happened. The slightest sigh escapes her lips. She's alive.

Alex takes her in his arms.

ALEX

Come on, baby, hang in there.

But she's so obviously not going to make it. Finally, Alex makes the sign of the cross, starts in a whisper:

ALEX

In nomine patris et filii...

Alex trails off in a half-choked sob.

ALEX

I can't. I'm not a priest anymore, Lucy.

Then he sees it... Eden's communion pouch. Dropped by the window. Alex grabs it, opens it. It contains bread, salt and the crucifix.

Deciding, hurrying now, he opens the top of Lucy's blouse, set the salt and bread on her chest. An ominous beat before he places the crucifix on her forehead and makes the reverse sign of the cross and...

ALEX
Nema Itcnas Sutirips te Iilif te
Sirtap Enimon ni.

As Alex lifts the bread and salt, vapor trails and...

Lucy gasps, looks right into his eyes.

Alex takes the communion into his mouth.

Lucy moans, her chest rising slightly.

His body swaying ever so slightly, Alex places the salt and bread on his own tongue, draws it into his mouth.

Alex swallows. Lucy's body arches. And then:

Instead of the fist of the black seen with Burnham, what comes from Lucy's body is white and almost lazy as it connects them, joins them.

Alex holds her tighter as it surrounds them both. For a moment they are one. Making gentle, transubstantiated love. And it's over. Lucy goes limp in his arms. On her chest: the two MILKY WHITE MARKS.

The white leaks out, curls from Alex's nostrils and ears. But there's no major ill effects as relatively few sins have been eaten.

He looks down at her. Dead, but a peaceful half-smile on her face. At peace...

Reaching out, he pushes a loose strand of hair from her face. There's almost a smile there and certainly peace. As he holds her...

ALEX
It's you and me, it's you and
me, you and me...

Alex's heart is broken. The wheels have fallen off.

CUT TO:

INT. ENTRY FOYER - EDEN'S CHATEAU - DAY

116

The maid answers the bell, opens the door to reveal Alex.

MAID
Bonjour, Monsieur Alex.

As he strides past her, nearly knocking her over...

INT. LIBRARY - CHATEAU - DAY

No fire burning. No man reading about dust. Just Alex charging in.

ALEX

EDEN!

Turning on his heel he continues to search.

INT. SITTING ROOM - CHATEAU - DAY

116A

Where the manservant is covering a piece of furniture with a dust sheet. Every other piece is already covered.

Alex enters, the maid right on his heels.

MAID

He is not here.

Alex grabs the manservant.

ALEX

Where is he?!

MANSERVANT

Gone. He said goodbye. That he won't return. He said to tell you, that everything is in order. Everything that once was his is now yours.

Alex shoves the manservant aside, turns on her.

ALEX

What the hell's going on?!

MAID

We thought you would know, Monsieur Alex.

MANSERVANT

How can we serve you?

They mean it. Alex turns, hurries out.

CUT TO:

INT. THE PARIS SEWER - DAY

117

The old bricked tunnel. The girl, "Mildred Pierce" turns, waits impatiently for a limping, in pain Thomas to catch up with her. She helps him through the breach in the wall.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNDERGROUND ENTRANCE - DAY

118

The same bigger bouncer and waif of a girl who were here last time. They watch as Alex comes down the stairs.

Alex gestures toward the closed portcullis.

ALEX

I've got to get through there.

They just stare at him. No use. Finally, Alex steps to the portcullis wheel, starts to turn it.

The bouncer grabs his throat, slams him against the wall.

Alex's hands flail as the bouncer chokes him. By chance, one comes down on the butt of a 9 mm tucked in the bouncer's belt. Alex pulls it free, creases the bouncer across the forehead with it.

He stumbles back; Alex takes aim.

ALEX

Open it...

INT. CHAMBER - PARIS UNDERGROUND - NIGHT

119

Thomas stands before hooded Chirac and a few minions.

CHIRAC

I told you before, priest. I owe you nothing.

Thomas reaches into his shirt, pulls out the half-torn parchment instructions of how to kill a Sin Eater.

THOMAS

Have you ever seen a full copy of this?

Chirac smiles to himself, steps over to his altar. A beat later he returns with a torn piece of parchment of his own.

He holds it up. It finishes Thomas' piece. Exactly. It's the missing piece of the instructions. After the initial surprise, Thomas reads to himself.

Thomas' finger stabs down on a particular passage.

THOMAS

Barath-mae... Barath-sec...

Thomas continues reading. He gasps, crosses himself.

THOMAS
Jesus, Mary and Joseph...

CHIRAC
Please, not so loud.

THOMAS
(realizes)
It's a set-up.

The minions grab hold of Thomas. As one jerks his arm up behind his back, Chirac steps up. Chirac holds his hand out. A ring on his finger looks oddly familiar.

CHIRAC
Kiss the ring and I will spare
your life.

THOMAS
Blasphemer!

Thomas spits on the ring. The minion holding Thomas' arm breaks it. Thomas stifles his cry, looks down in agony.

As he looks back up, Chirac removes his hood...

Chirac is Cardinal Driscoll! Thomas blinks in shock.

DRISCOLL/CHIRAC
For the part I've played William
Eden will make me a Pope... I
see the question in your eyes.
Has the whole world gone mad?

CUT TO:

INT. THE PARIS SEWER - NIGHT

Alex scrambles over fallen bricks, walks around the bend to:

THE ALCOVE

121

Alex knocks on the wall. The bolt slides back... The gaunt-eyed man stands there.

ALEX
Chirac.

The gaunt eyed man motions him in.

THE UNDERGROUND CHAMBER

122

Alex takes in the room. The gaunt man behind him, Mildred Pierce and a re-cowled Chirac before him, minions about and above -- a HOODED FIGURE with a noose around his neck.

ALEX

I need to speak to Eden.

CHIRAC

There is no Eden. That name is for check books and real estate transactions.

ALEX

You know who I mean. The Other.

Chirac looks up toward the hooded figure.

CHIRAC

Ask him.

ALEX

No. I'm asking you.

Alex steps forward. The gaunt man blocks him. Two minions come up from behind. They grab hold, turn him.

Chirac gestures. On the ledge, the acolytes shove the hooded figure off the edge. He jerks to a suspended stop, spasms, kicks.

CHIRAC

Divad molasba divad.

The hooded figure continues to kick, but he's slowing down.

ALEX

I seek the other.

Through the silk of the hood, an intake of breath.

HANGED MAN

(resonant)

He ends where he began. In
Notre Dame.

Then Alex spots it: a CRUCIFIX TATTOO on the ankle of the hooded figure. It's Thomas!

Wrenching his right arm loose, Alex draws the 9mm, shoots the gaunt man at point blank range. Then a minion.

Alex aims up toward where the rope is affixed to the ceiling and blazes away. At least SIX ROUNDS.

Rock and splinters ricochet down as the rope gives way.

Thomas hits the ground.

Alex takes off the noose, pulls off the hood. Thomas GASPS for breath; a vicious PURPLE WELT around his neck. Alex gets Thomas to his feet.

The minions begin to encroach. Alex fires a round at them.

Holding his friend up, Alex backs out.

DOOR

Alex shoulders the door open, gets Thomas through and out.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARIS STREET - DAY

.124

Where a PUBLIC WORKS CREW have opened a hole in the ground. There's a sudden clamor among them as...

Alex brings Thomas up through the hole. Alex ignores their shouts, gets Thomas over to a...

BUS STOP BENCH

Alex sits Thomas down. His neck is ugly, but he'll live.

ALEX

Lucy's dead.

Thomas reacts, tries to say something, but is incapable in his present state.

ALEX

Slit her wrists.

Thomas, tears in his eyes, grabs hold of his friend. Alex tries to keep from crying. After a moment...

ALEX

I gotta go, Tommy. I gotta go
to choir practice. Just sit
here and rest awhile.

As Alex tries to stand, Thomas pulls him back down. Gripping him, trying to tell him something.

ALEX

I gotta go!

Alex wrenches free, hurries away. Thomas watches for an exhausted beat, then starts after him. Much slower, but dogged nonetheless.

CUT TO:

EXT. NOTRE DAME CATHEDRAL - DAY 125

A beautiful blue day. The gargoyles watch Alex approach.

INT. NOTRE DAME - CATHEDRAL - DAY 126

Eden waits in one of the pews, his head bowed. It's hard to say if he's praying or trying to rest. Then we see...

He's looking at the Vatican dagger held in his lap.

ALEX

Walks down an aisle, his eyes on Eden ahead. Alex turns down a pew, walks till he's standing, looming directly behind Eden. The exact reversal of how they first met.

ALEX

(echoing Eden)

Am I the answer to your prayer?

Eden looks up, but doesn't look back.

EDEN

You just might be.

ALEX

I performed the ceremony.

Eden turns.

ALEX

I found Lucy dying. I did it to set her free.

EDEN

(rising)

And how did it feel?

ALEX

Like I was God.

Eden smiles, nods. He knows. The dagger is tucked out of sight to his side.

EDEN
And her sins? Do you have
knowledge of them?

ALEX
Yes. There weren't many.

EDEN
(smiles)
She was a good girl.

ALEX
One thing about it troubles me.

EDEN
Don't intellectualize something
so visceral.

ALEX
It's just, in the church suicide
is a mortal sin. And I didn't
feel it at all.

EDEN
Maybe the church is wrong.
He sees the dried blood on Eden's shirt, knows for sure.

ALEX
No. She was murdered.
Eden just stares; Alex holds out his communion pouch.

ALEX
You dropped something.

EDEN
Do you remember your Ezra Pound,
Alex? "What thou lovest well
remains. What thou lovest well
shall not be reft from thee."
Your sin is that you have not
loved Lucy well. And that love
will not remain. That love will
be reft from thee.

Alex drives his fist into Eden's face. Eden tumbles back
over the pew behind him. Alex climbs over after him.

Tourists react. Priests and nuns. All heads turn.

In the close quarters, Alex viciously attacks. Eden knocks
him back. A brief separation between them.

ALEX

Why?!

EDEN

(laughs)

Why not?

Alex is just about around the twist. But as Alex moves in, Eden waves the dagger.

EXT. NOTRE DAME - DAY

127

As Thomas limps his way toward the entrance...

INT. NOTRE DAME - DAY

128

Alex eyes the dagger...

EDEN

I know how you must feel, Alex.

(almost sadly)

I was once in love myself. If you can believe it.

ALEX

I do. I do believe it.

Alex lunges, grabs Eden's around his wrist. They struggle.

Behind Alex, but in Eden's view, Thomas steps around the corner.

Eden releases Alex. Alex has the dagger.

THOMAS

(a whisper)

No...

With a strangled cry, Alex buries the dagger into Eden's heart. As Eden gasps and tourists scream...

Thomas steps up, tries to pull Alex away. Insane, Alex flings Thomas away. He crashes to the floor.

Alex grabs Eden's shoulder for the leverage he needs to send the blade down to the hilt.

ALEX

Barath-mae barath-sec.

Alex and Eden stand, their faces inches away. Incredibly, Eden smiles, a thin stream of blood running from his mouth.

EDEN
Now you'll know what I know.

Eden may be dying, but his eyes are dancing with merriment. He knows something that Alex doesn't.

EDEN
I've worked to this moment for years. Had to make a Cardinal a Pope to get this dagger.

ALEX
What are you saying?

Alex releases the embrace, tries to back away. But they're joined by the dagger. The instrument of delivery. Alex couldn't let go of it if he wanted to. And he wants to.

THOMAS
(a whisper)
The parchment. It's not how you kill the Other; it's how you become the Other.

Alex looks from Thomas back to Eden.

EDEN
You asked me what Dominic gave to buy my services. He gave me you, Alex. Dominic sold you to enter heaven.

Eden's back arches. A wind begins to whirl around him. An unseen current crackles across the dagger between them. Alex's back arches as well. The whirlwind strengthens, grows to envelope Alex as well. As it goes black...

Flattened to the floor, Thomas watches in horror.

Tourists and nuns run screaming from the cathedral.

WHIRLWIND

Filling with the bilious discharge of Eden's soul. Fetid with the sins he carries. Swirling around them till nothing is clear. A writhing, obscene mass. And then...

It's all sucked into Alex.

The scream which howls out of him is astounding.

EXT. ROSE WINDOW - NOTRE DAME - DAY 129

It EXPLODES into a million brightly colored shards!

INT. NOTRE DAME - DAY

130

And it's over. Alex releases the dagger and both men drop to the floor.

Alex and Eden lay across from each other. Alex actually looks closer to death than Eden does. With a final effort, Eden pulls the dagger free, sets it by Alex's chin.

EDEN

Keep it safe. A day will come
when you have need of it.

(sighs)

I feel like I'm ten years old
again. I'm home. Thank you...

With that, Eden dies, a peaceful smile on his face.

And then Thomas crawls over. Alex blinks up at him. Tears stream Thomas' cheeks as he takes the dagger for his own.

THOMAS

I found out too late.

Alex understands him, but is too weak to respond. In complete despair, Thomas strokes his old friend's forehead.

THOMAS

I won't leave you like this,
Alex. There must be another way
for you to die. When I learn
what it is, I'll find you. I'll
find you and kill you myself.

Alex nods his agreement, then passes out.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE DAWN

On some alluvial plain. We're we are, who can say, but STORM CLOUDS are rolling in. At an alarming rate. As a bolt of LIGHTNING splits the sky...

CUT TO:

EXT. VATICAN CITY - SUNSET

A column of GRAY SMOKE rises from an inconspicuous chimney.

VOICE

Once again the College of Cardinals has been unable to name the next Pope. Voting will continue into the night though sources say the man considered the front runner may have dropped out of consideration. Cardinal Driscoll is said to be suffering from ill health...

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY - THE VATICAN - NIGHT

135

Shrouded in shadow, a DARK FIGURE walks. No way in Hell he belongs here. He opens a door, enters...

A BEDROOM - THE VATICAN - NIGHT

136

Cardinal Driscoll sleeps fitfully. The Figure heads toward him, stops in the shadows at the foot of the bed. Sensing the overwhelming presence, Driscoll wakes, looks about disoriented. Driscoll's eyes focus, recognize Alex.

DRISCOLL

I sent for the Sin Eater.

ALEX

I am the Sin Eater. It's my time now.

DRISCOLL

(realizes)

Eden got what he wanted. You and I are left behind. The manuscripts you sent ruined me. It was you, wasn't it.

Alex doesn't answer. He holds up an old-fashioned razor, holds it out to Driscoll. He takes it.

DRISCOLL

This and a basin of warm water should do.

CUT TO:

EDEN'S POUCH

137

A hand removes a tablet of salt, a wafer of bread.

WIDEN TO REVEAL Driscoll in his bed, chest bare. His wrists are slit. They bleed into bowls set on either side of him. He's quite aware as he watches Alex step over.

ALEX

Do you know who I am?

Driscoll nods.

ALEX

It's the confession, not the priest, that gives absolution. Do you understand?

Driscoll nods again. Alex removes Eden's wooden cross from his own neck.

ALEX

Are you ready to make your confession?

Driscoll nods one final time. Alex places the cross upside down on his forehead, then places the salt and bread over his heart. A chill runs through Driscoll.

Alex kisses his own hand, makes the reverse sign of the cross on Driscoll. Then, in guttural reverse Latin.

ALEX

Nema Itcnas Sutirips te Iilif te
Sirtap Enimon ni.

That said, Alex picks up the salt and stacks it on the bread. As he raises both to his own mouth, they leave behind the twin wispy vapor trails, milky white circles on the skin. Driscoll moans, his chest rising.

Then Alex hesitates, his eyes flickering to Driscoll's.

ALEX

She was God's beautiful mistake.

Alex slaps his free hand down on Driscoll's mouth, forces it open.

ALEX

Choke on your own filth.

Alex forces the salt and bread far down Driscoll's throat. The old man tries to sit up, but Alex holds him down, forces his mouth shut.

Finally, reflexively, Driscoll swallows...

The wispy vapor from his chest turns into the horrible stream of black. But instead of hitting Alex, it loops around and into Driscoll's mouth.

Driscoll in wretched agony as he consumes and then his own sins consume him. The jaw locked in a frozen scream. Wherever Driscoll is going, he isn't gone in peace.

As THUNDER rolls...

EXT. GATES - VATICAN CITY - NIGHT

139

The wind is picking up, a stormy night on the way. Lightning flashes as Alex steps through the gates, walks down the deserted cobblestoned street.

He pauses at something growing through a crack by the curb. Reaching down, he plucks a DANDELION PUFF. Alex holds it, slowly turns the stem between his fingertips.

His face is infinitely melancholy. The wind rises, its strengthening currents catch hold, blow the puff clean.

As the rain comes, Alex drops the stem to the ground and continues on his way. Hold as he moves away, no longer one of us. The Other.

And as the darkness finally swallows him whole, we...

FADE TO BLACK.

The End