

T H E R I T E

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SCROLL OVER BLACK :

In 2007 Pope Benedict XVI instructed all bishops of the Catholic Church to appoint an exorcist in every diocese, world wide.

"Whatever the less discerning theologians may say, the Devil is a puzzling but real, personal and not merely symbolical presence . . . On his own, man has not the power to oppose Satan."

- Pope Benedict XVI

What follows is based on truth.

FADE IN:

AN ODD ARRAY OF OBJECTS LAY ON A STAINLESS STEEL SURGICAL TRAY -

A suture, a blade, rubber tubing, a pair of thick contact lenses, a clear plastic mouth guard, a bottle of shampoo, and a hair dryer.

Beside the hairdryer sits a photo of a smiling, pretty, plump TEENAGE GIRL dressed in Goth gear.

Next to the tray, the girl from the photo lays with her eyes closed.

- A FINGER lightly dabs one of the contact lenses making it stick to its tip.

- TWO FINGERS open the girl's eyelid. It's now clear she is dead. The contact is inserted under the lid.

- The mouthguard is placed in the corpse's mouth.

- Sutures sew the lips closed.

- A PAIR OF HANDS rinse the dead girl's hair with a shower nozzle and lathers in shampoo.

- THE HAND switches on the hair-dryer. It WHIRS.

WIDE ON

INT. MORTUARY - DAY

THOMAS BERAN - (24) intelligent with an inscrutable impassiveness - blow-dries the corpse's hair. The girl lays naked, under a green sheet on a mortician's table.

Done, he switches off the dryer.

Reaching into a plastic bag on the floor, he removes some panties and proceeds to pull them onto the corpse.

Bracing himself against its dead weight, he turns the cadaver over.

He looks down at the underwear hitched halfway over the corpse's rump ...

Poking out from the top of the underwear is a tattoo -- A LITTLE CARTOON OF A SMILING DEVIL WITH A TRIDENT.

He stares at it a moment.

Pulling the underwear over the tattoo, he continues dressing the corpse.

CUT TO:

SAME - LATER

The dead girl lays on the slab, dressed and ready for viewing. As a final touch, Tom fastens A BRACELET HUNG WITH TRINKETS around her wrist. The young mortician regards the dead girl ponderously.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Tom exits the mortuary and enters the dark wooden interior of a classic Midwest Craftsman. Hanging his apron on a hook suspended from a picture rail, he walks down the house's wide hall and enters a

DINING ROOM -

His father, IVAN (65), sits eating his pot roast and mashed potatoes with a brooding, European stoicism that thirty years of American living still hasn't washed out.

IVAN
(in a faded Czech accent)
Finished?

TOM
Yeah.

IVAN
Then wash up and come eat.

TOM
I've washed up.

Indicating his meal at the opposite end of the table -

IVAN
Then eat.

Tom takes his seat.

Mopping the gravy on his plate with bread, Ivan stands and takes his plate into the kitchen -

IVAN (O.S.)
When you're done, I'll need a hand
with the casket.

CUT TO:

THE DEAD GIRL'S FACE -

Disappearing beneath the lid of a casket.

WIDE ON:

INT. VIEWING ROOM - NIGHT

Tom and Ivan screw on the lid of the casket. They stand in the silence of the somberly appointed room.

IVAN
Done.

TOM
How did she do it?

IVAN
Do what?

TOM
Kill herself?

Displeased with the question, Ivan stiffens.

IVAN
Thomas, I've told you, don't talk
of the dead until they're in the
ground. Not in front of them.

That said, he busies himself with the floral arrangement on a nearby plinth.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Ivan sits in front of a muted TV, his thumb steadily ratcheting through a string of rosary beads. On the table beside him sits a framed portrait of his wife, KATARINA. The walls are crammed with Catholic paraphernalia.

Tom appears in the doorway -

TOM
I'm heading out for a while.

IVAN
Where?

TOM
Just for a walk.

IVAN
I'll wait up.

TOM
I'm 24, Dad, you don't have to wait up.

EXT. TOM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tom exits his house. A dim neon sign glows in the front window - "Beran and Son. Funeral Home".

INT. "SKINNY'S" BAR - NIGHT

Mounted over the bar, a muted TV - A NEWS REPORT broadcasts the now iconic image of the hooded Abu Ghraib prisoner standing on a box with his arms outstretched.

Below the TV -

Tom and his friend EDDIE (24), play a round of pool while they nurse their beers.

EDDIE
(i ncredul ous)
You're ki ddi ng me.

TOM
No, Eddi e, I 'm not ki ddi ng.

EDDIE
Why?

TOM
So I can get out of here.

EDDIE
Why don't you just tell him you
want to go to college?

TOM
If it was that easy, do you think
we'd be having this discussion? You
think he'd pay for that?

EDDIE
Then join the Marines, let them
pay.

TOM
And come back with one leg?

EDDIE
Fuck man, the Priesthood? `I'd
rather have one leg.

TOM
I took the entrance exam.

EDDIE
What?

TOM
I passed. Don't worry I've looked
into it, it's a four year degree
before you even take your vows.
I'll quit right before.

EDDIE
You're the most cynical bastard I
know. One day it's gonna bite you
in the ass, you know that?

NINA - cute, 20's, waitress - places two beers in front of
them.

TOM
Aren't they gonna can you for
giving away beers?

NINA
No.

EDDIE
How about for fucking the
customers?

NINA
How about fuck you, Eddie?

EDDIE
I love your filthy mouth, Nina.

Tugging a lock of Tom's hair -

NINA
Drink up. I'm off in ten. Lickety-split.

She sexily licks the corner of her lip and walks off.

EDDIE
(envious)
Lickety-split. Make the most of that before they chop your dick off, man.

EXT. SKINNY'S BAR - NIGHT

In the back lot, a car rocks subtly back and forth - its windows fogged.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Rosary beads hanging from the rearview swing back and forth in time to the rocking.

Tom is entwined with Nina in the back seat - Nina on top. Tom looks over her shoulder to see the swinging crucifix.

Disturbed by its presence, he closes his eyes, indulging himself in Nina's coos.

INT. MORTICIAN'S ROOM - DAY

Tom squeezes a thin line of glue into a gruesome gash on a DEAD MAN's cheek. Closing the gash with his fingers, he waits for the glue to dry.

Across from him, Ivan clips the corpse's finger nails. Filing back a rough edge, he blows on the dead hand.

CLOSE ON TOM'S EYES WATCHING HIS FATHER - as a MAN'S VOICE SPEAKING IN CZECH FADES UP.

FLASHBACK

SAME - THE PAST

YOUNG TOM (8) stands in the doorway of the mortician's room. Terrified, he watches his father painstakingly paint the nails of a DEAD WOMAN.

IVAN
(in Czech: subtitled)
<My love ... my flower ... Don't worry, I'll make you beautiful. Beautiful.> Milacku ... zlaticko ... krásný... krásný.

Blowing on the nails, he looks up to see his son in the doorway.

IVAN
Thomas? Come.

The boy remains in the door.

IVAN
Come!

Young Tom edges over to his father, his eyes fixed on the corpse in terror.

IVAN
Don't be afraid. It's just your mother.

The boy quivers.

IVAN
Come on ...

Traumatized, young Tom can barely breathe.

IVAN
You're not a coward are you?

The boy timidly shakes his head - eyes brimming.

Ivan pushes his dead wife's hand up to his son's face - the wet nail polish gleaming.

IVAN
Blow on it. Go on. We want to do a good job, right? The best we can, right?
(in Czech: subtitled)
<Make me proud.>

The boy blows on his dead mother's fingernails.

IVAN
 Good boy. I'm gonna teach you
 everything I know. You're a lucky
 boy, Thomas. You won't ever have to
 worry about what you're gonna be.

He kisses his son's head as Tom struggles to hold back his tears.

BACK TO:

SAME - PRESENT

Ivan looks up to see Tom staring at him.

Tom returns his attention to his work, blowing the glued gash dry.

CUT TO:

THE CRUCIFIX FROM IVAN'S ROSARY BEADS ...

INT. TOM'S HOUSE. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The rosary beads dangle from the edge of the dining table.

Tom and Ivan sit across from each other, silently eating their meals.

TOM
 Dad?

IVAN
 What?

TOM
 I've been doing a lot of thinking.

IVAN
 About what?

TOM
 About ... me.

Ivan takes his time chewing his mouthful of food ... swallows ... looks at his son -

IVAN
What are you talking about?

TOM
I've decided on my vocation.

IVAN
Your what?

TOM
My vocation.

Ivan rests his knife on his plate - eyes his son dangerously.

IVAN
Vocation? In my day it was called a job. Your job's here with me.

TOM
I think God wants something different.

IVAN
God? What the Hell do you know about God?

TOM
Everything you taught me, Pa. "We must obey God, not men" - St. Peter said that, right? ... Right, Pa?

Ivan stares speechless.

EXT. UNIVERSITY OF ST. MARY ON THE LAKE. CHICAGO - DAY

A FIGURE in black DRAWS INTO FOCUS crossing the well kept university commons of Chicago's St. Mary On The Lake Seminary. The grounds are dominated by the campus church spire.

The figure drawing closer is Tom dressed in clericals.

SUPER: FOUR YEARS LATER.

Tom joins a small congregation of seminarians entering the chapel.

INT. CAMPUS CHAPEL - DAY

FR. MATTHEW - (55) stocky with bright Irish eyes - says mass before the tiny congregation of FIVE SEMINARIAN GRADUATES and their families. The optimism in his voice echoing harshly around the empty space.

FR. MATTHEW

This is always a special mass for me, where I look out at our fresh-faced graduates preparing to go out into the world with Christ's message. In a few days you'll face your last assessments and then be asked to take your final vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. These next few days are for contemplation.

PAN ACROSS THE NOVICES. We come to Tom.

FR. MATTHEW

So I'm going to leave you with some words from the Gospel of St. John to consider - "You did not choose me; it was I who chose you and I send you forth to bear fruit that will last".

REMAIN ON TOM.

INT. DORMITORY - EVENING

Tom makes his way down the cavernous corridor past a few dorm rooms. A good number of the rooms are empty. Coming towards him, Fr. Matthew makes heads up the corridor, occasionally slipping an envelope under a door.

FR. MATTHEW

Tom.

TOM

Father.

Holdi ng out an envel ope -

FR. MATTHEW

Exam resul ts.

Tom's face fills with dread as the priest hands him an envelope.

TOM
Thanks.

He tries to pass, when -

FR. MATTHEW
Aren't you gonna look?

TOM
Later.

FR. MATTHEW
You blitzed psych. Congrats.

TOM
Thanks.

FR. MATTHEW
Theology, however.

The priest clears his throat. Tom avoids eye contact.

FR. MATTHEW
I know you know this stuff. What happened?

TOM
I don't know.

FR. MATTHEW
It's like you threw it away.

Tom shrugs "I don't know".

FR. MATTHEW
You've been spending a lot of time off campus, Tom. It's been noted.

TOM
I've been distracted, that's all. End of year.

FR. MATTHEW
Drop by my office some time this week. We'll talk.

Nodding, Tom escapes into his room.

INT. TOM'S DORM ROOM - EVENING

Tom sits on his bed typing at his computer.

Incessant, tinny, music eventually draws Tom's attention across the hall where he sees a NOVICE in his room playing a game of Leisure Suit Larry on his Playstation - he's in the middle of stripping a virtual woman.

Pushing his door closed with his foot, Tom returns to his typing.

CLOSE ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN - we read snippets of what he writes - "after much deliberation ... regrettably ... withdraw my intention to undertake the holy vows of the order ..." Reading over his words he presses "PRINT".

THE PRINTER WHIRS ...

EXT. CAMPUS COMMONS - DAY

It's teeming rain. Tom trundles across the soggy lawns heading for the Administration Building.

INT. ADMINISTRATION BUILDING - DAY

Tom drops his letter in a pigeon hole marked "Fr. Matthew". A drip of water falls from his wet hair - PLIP - onto the letter, smudging Fr. Matthew's name. Tom fusses for a moment then leaves it.

EXT. ADMINISTRATION BUILDING - DAY

Exiting the building, Tom heads across the road when, through the rain, he sees Fr. Matthew across the campus street. Dipping his head, Tom tries to avoid him but he's spotted.

FR. MATTHEW (O.S.)

Tom! Tom!

Tom pretends not to hear. The priest steps off the curb when -

Without any warning, A BICYCLE rattles past, swerves to miss the priest, and runs into the path of an oncoming LAUNDRY VAN. THUD! THE CYCLIST falls to the ground with a sickening SLAP. Her neck and limbs twisted at unnatural angles.

Wheels SKID. A BYSTANDER SCREAMS. Then stillness. RAIN.

People stare stunned at the sight, including Fr. Matthew. In fact the only person moving towards the tangle of limbs bleeding on the wet road is Tom. Reaching the cyclist, he assesses the situation quickly -

TOM
 (to driver)
 Call an ambulance.

The cyclist, a young woman, looks up at Tom, the blood draining rapidly from her contorted face.

BYSTANDER
 She's dying!

Tom quickly and calmly takes his jacket off and bundles it around her. From the gruesome angle of her head, it is clear the woman has broken her neck. The blood vessels around her caved in brow turn blue. Struggling for breath -

CYCLIST
 Bless me, Father.

Tom falters at the request. He turns to Fr. Matthew who has sunk to his knees in the gutter, head in hands, struck dumb and helpless.

TOM
 (to Fr. Matthew)
 Father?

CYCLIST
 (to Tom)
 Father?

She looks pleadingly into Tom's eyes ...

TOM
 I can't.

CYCLIST
 Please ...

Her eyes flutter, trying to stave off death when suddenly she vomits blood and begins to spasm, and instantly words spring to Tom's lips -

TOM
 Through the power vested in me let
 the fire of the Holy Spirit
 descend, that this being might be
 awakened to the world beyond and
 the life of the Earth and infused
 with the power of the Holy spirit.

Frozen with shock at the woman's injuries, Fr. Matthew watches Tom pray over her hideously twisted body -

TOM
 Lord Jesus Christ, I ask that you
 receive this child

Bending his ear to her bloodied mouth -

TOM
 What's your name?

Barely alive -

CYCLIST
 Sandra.

TOM
 I ask that you receive this child
 Sandra into your arms, that she
 might pass in safety from this
 crisis. As you have taught us with
 infinite passion.
 (making the sign-of-the-
 cross)
 By this sign you are anointed with
 the grace of the atonement of Jesus
 Christ and absolved of all past
 error and freed to take your place
 in the world He has prepared for us
 - quid quid deliquisti. Amen.

He looks down at the girl. She is dead.

A bystander SOBS while others cover their eyes and mouths.
 Tom gently closes the girl's eyes. All the while Fr. Matthew
 looks upon Tom with an admiration bordering on awe. Tom seems
 just as shocked with himself.

CUT TO:

SAME - LATER

The rain still teems. Bystanders have mostly dispersed. AN
 AMBULANCE drives off. Tom and Fr. Matthew stand under an
 umbrella. Fr. Matthew stares after the ambulance, troubled.

TOM
 It's not your fault.

FR. MATTHEW
 I'm sorry . . . I wasn't any help.
 Are you OK?

Tom nods.

TOM
I've left something in your pigeon
hole.

Pulling on his blood stained coat, he walks off into the rain.

INT. DORMITORY - NIGHT

Tom sits at the window, disturbed - his mind going over and over his actions that afternoon.

INT. ADMINISTRATION BUILDING - AFTERNOON

Fr. Matthew reads the letter from Tom in disbelief, the water stained envelope wavering between his fingers.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

A photograph of the female cyclist sits on top of a casket. The church is full of mourners.

Dressed in plain clothes, Tom stands at the back of the church, alongside the funeral director.

FR. MATTHEW (O.S.)
Tom?

Fr. Matthew steps out of the shadows.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Tom and Fr. Matthew stand outside the church.

FR. MATTHEW
Thought I'd find you here. Can we talk?

TOM
OK.

Fr. Matthew stomps his feet against the cold - nervous.

FR. MATTHEW
Maybe we should sit down.

They find a bench in a garden to the side of the church.

FR. MATTHEW
Mind if I smoke?

Tom shakes his head - the priest lights up. Across the garden, an ANCIENT NUN shuffles along a path in a walking frame. Fr. Matthew regards her for a moment.

FR. MATTHEW
Do you know what the average age of a nun is these days? 69. Next year it'll be 70. You don't have to be a mathematician to see where things are headed. 3,000 parishes in the U.S. don't even have a priest anymore.

TOM
Do you give this speech to everyone who tries to leave?

FR. MATTHEW
No. Just the ones I believe in.
(puffs his cigarette)
I often ask myself, if I were a young man today would've I still joined the clergy - with all the scandal. In my day police and priests were respected, now . . . You can't tell me Evil isn't winning.

He draws on his cigarette, ruefully. Then -

FR. MATTHEW
What I saw the other day at the accident was extra-ordinary.

TOM
I just repeated a few prayers over a suffering girl. For her benefit, that's all.

FR. MATTHEW
And the words meant nothing to you?

TOM
What difference does it make?

FR. MATTHEW
Well, I've got an instinct for these kind of things.

TOM
What, you can pick a saint?

FR. MATTHEW
No . . . not saints.

He takes his cigarette again.

FR. MATTHEW
I've looked into your history, Tom.
You were a mortician before you
joined us. I imagine you're not
easily scared.
(then)
There's a posting I want you to
consider?

TOM
Father, listen to me, did you
understand my letter?

FR. MATTHEW
I've submitted a formal objection
to your petition. I've asked that a
decision on your case be postponed
for six months.

TOM
(reeling)
Why?

FR. MATTHEW
Because I think you've got
something.

TOM
What are you talking about?

He swallows uneasily.

FR. MATTHEW
Do you know what an exorcist is?

TOM
(incredulous)
Something out of the movies.

FR. MATTHEW
Last year, the Vatican received
over half a million reports of
demonic possession. That's
something of a record. There's been
40 cases in New York City alone
this year.

TOM
What is this about?

FR. MATTHEW
There are only 14 sanctioned Catholic exorcists in the United States. This year Pope Benedict issued a decree to double that number. It takes a particular type of personality. Someone with a good mind and strong stomach. You've just completed your degree in psychology.

Tom can't believe his ears.

FR. MATTHEW
There's a program at the Vatican that teaches the Rite of Exorcism. We submitted you for it.

TOM
We?

FR. MATTHEW
I've discussed your case with Bishop Cartwright.

TOM
Don't you think it's odd to ask a man who has trouble believing in God to believe in the Devil?

FR. MATTHEW
If that's the truth. You explained in your letter that you used the priesthood to run away from things. My response to that is, you could have run in any direction. I think you're just afraid, Tom.

Strangely, Tom doesn't object.

FR. MATTHEW
My feeling is you have a deeper connection than you're willing to admit. Much deeper.

Tom fidgets.

FR. MATTHEW

I wouldn't put you up for this if I didn't think you'd get something out of it.

(standing)

The course is only two months long. If you come back and you're still uninterested, I'll immediately withdraw my objection. You'll be free to leave.

Stubbing out his cigarette -

FR. MATTHEW

Just think it over. Two months in Rome. How bad could that be?

Left alone on the bench, Tom looks across at the weeping mourners following the coffin out of the church.

EXT. BERAN FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Tom heads up the front path and lets himself in.

INT. IVAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Ivan sits in his armchair with his rosary beads, staring out the window, while Tom removes a series of stitches from his father's scalp.

TOM

Why didn't you let the doctor take these out?

IVAN

And pay him another \$200? You know your way around a couple of sutures.

Tom tugs at a stubborn stitch.

IVAN

Careful.

TOM

Thought you would have come to my graduation.

IVAN

Well I got cancer instead.

TOM
 It was a mole, Dad.
 (then)
 I would have come to get you.

I VAN
 Don't they teach you honesty at
 seminary?

TOM
 You kill me, you know that?

Tom places the scissors and stitches on a plate.

TOM
 All I want to do is please you.

I VAN
 You think I believe that? You think
 I don't know why you did it.

TOM
 Did what?

I VAN
 Joined. You wanted to get away from
 me . . . your old man. You may think
 I'm some kind of a kook, but I see
 inside you, Thomas. You're a
 coward, not a priest.

Remain on Tom absorbing the insult.

EXT. SKINNY'S BAR - NIGHT

Nina's car sits in the back lot. Windows fogged, as before.

INT. NINA'S CAR - NIGHT

Tom and Nina lay in the back seat, having just had sex. Tom
 is far off in his thoughts.

NINA
 Tom?

TOM
 Yeah?

NINA
 I just wanna clear something up.

What? TOM

NINA
I haven't been exclusively yours
since you went away. You know that
right?

Hiding his hurt -

Sure. TOM

INT. DORMITORY - NIGHT

Tom lays on his bed holding a letter embossed with the
Vatican Seal - weighing it between his fingers.

Sitting up, he goes to his wardrobe and pulls out a suitcase.

EXT. ROME AIRPORT - DAY

A plane touches down on a rainy tarmac.

INT. ROME AIRPORT - DAY

Tom collects his bag at the carousel. The PLANE'S PILOT lets
Tom pass, giving him a polite tilt of his cap.

INT. TAXI - DAY

Tom looks out the rainswept window of a cab as it speeds past
the Porta S. Pancrazio (The Gates of Rome).

EXT. ST. PETER'S. VATICAN CITY. - DAY

- The taxi enters the arcane walls of the Vatican.

- A DECREPIT MONK leads Tom through the florid, travertine
entrance to the PRIEST'S DORMITORY.

INT. CORRIDOR. PRIEST'S DORMITORY - DAY

Ratcheting through a hoop of keys on his belt, the monk
unlocks a door for Tom.

He looks in -

A typically ascetic Catholic dwelling - a bed, a desk, a crucifix and a statue of the Madonna on a ledge.

TOM

I'm guessing there's no cable.

The monk stares back, pokerfaced.

A MAN'S VOICE BEGINS -

VOICE (V.O.)

By the time an exorcist is called to assess a possible possession, the parish priest would have ensured that all psychiatric explanations have been exhausted.

EXT. PONTIFICAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCE - DAY

Tom heads through another highly embellished 15th Century facade.

VOICE (V.O.)

He would have questioned the possessed himself and forwarded his assessment onto the diocesan bishop.

INT. PONTIFICAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCE - DAY

Tom paces down a grand hall covered in frescoes.

VOICE (V.O.)

With the bishop's permission, an exorcist is then summoned to determine possession.

Pushing through a heavy door at the end of the passage, his eyes widen with surprise as he beholds -

AN ULTRA MODERN WING to the building - it's raw marble walls beautifully juxtaposing their smooth, ancient counterparts. Tom lifts his eyes to the high glass atrium ceiling revealing the heavens - a vision of truly inspired modern architecture.

VOICE (V.O.)

Often early signs of a possession are subtle - social withdrawal, apathy - they can go unnoticed by the family and loved ones until the victim is deep within the demonic spirit's grasp.

Awestruck, he continue through a set of monolithic, modern, wood doors into -

AN AUDITORIUM

The room's sweeping curves ensconce a SMALL GATHERING OF PEOPLE towards the front where we finally put a face to the voice. FR. IGNATIUS, a thin man with a beakish nose, delivers a Powerpoint presentation from his lectern outfitted with the latest technology.

Tom sneaks in from the back of the auditorium - trying to fathom the incongruity of the high tech environment and the arcane subject matter.

FR. IGNATIUS

The longer a demon possesses the body of an individual, the more vehemently it will fight to stay. This puts the possessed in both spiritual and physical peril.

He clicks a button on his lectern. A large video screen illuminates.

ON THE SCREEN -

A SERIES OF IMAGES FLASH

- A WOMAN'S FACE with lips blackened and twisted into an S-shape.

FR. IGNATIUS (O.S.)

This was taken during an exorcism in Turin.

CLICK - THE SAME WOMAN - her arms bent unnaturally behind her back, her eyes blackened like a panda's.

FR. IGNATIUS

The woman survived in this state with no food or water for twelve weeks before the demon released her.

CLICK - THE TORTURED STARE OF AN AFRICAN MAN, his jaw bone dislocated so severely his bottom teeth are literally touching one of his earlobes.

FR. IGNATIUS (O.S.)

This man's jaw spontaneously dislocated while being read the Lord's prayer. He made no physical contact with any object, nor was met with any physical force.

He continues through a series of bizarre photos of contorted faces and bodies -

FR. IGNATIUS

In virtually every exorcism, at a crucial point, the possessing spirit will refer to itself interchangeably as "I" and "we" and just as easily "my" and "our". The exorcist's job is to determine the number of possessing demons and their names - something the demon protects with ferocity. Once the exorcist has the name, he can begin to assert control over the entity and cast it out.

Snapping his eyes up at Tom -

FR. IGNATIUS

Who do we have here?

Tom drags his gaze from the bizarre pictures on the screen -

TOM

Tom Beran.

FR. IGNATIUS

From Chicago.

TOM

Yes. Sorry I'm late.

FR. IGNATIUS

I prefer punctuality to apologies. Take a seat.

Tom slides into a seat towards the back.

FR. IGNATIUS

The aim of any demon is to isolate the possessed and eventually have them commit heinous acts against themselves or others, ultimately culminating in the act of suicide.

CLICK - A PICTURE OF A TEENAGE BOY laying dead with a gun in his hand.

INT. TUTORIAL ROOM - DAY

C.T. scans and MRI cells hang illuminated from lightboxes around a dimmed tutorial room where Fr. Ignatious conducts another lecture - his students taking notes.

FR. IGNATIUS

Multiple Personality Disorders and paranoid schizophrenics with delusions are commonly confused with the possessed. It's your job as exorcist to discern the difference. The most identifiable behavior in the possessed is the subject reacting negatively to crucifixes, the name of Jesus Christ, and to Holy Water.

A WOMAN at the back of the class puts up her hand.

FR. IGNATIUS

Yes?

WOMAN

(American)

Couldn't the subject be suffering from the delusion that he or she is possessed? Wouldn't they react in the same way?

Fr. Ignatious notes the dictaphone she points in his direction ... clears his throat -

FR. IGNATIUS

Yes, it's a common argument made by psychiatrists who don't believe.

WOMAN

So how do you tell the difference?

Ignatious notices Tom barely paying attention.

FR. IGNATIUS
Mr. Beran, what would your degree
in psychology tell you?

Tom looks up, surprised. The class turns to him . . .

TOM
That paranoid schizophrenics are
not aware they are deluded.

FR. IGNATIUS
Correct.

Unable to resist -

TOM
Though, neither are the possessed,
while they're being possessed.

Ignatious considers the unexpected retort.

FR. IGNATIUS
But one cannot suddenly manifest
abilities simply because one is
deluded. How does a young girl in
Germany learn to speak Russian
fluently?

TOM
How does a boy in poor village in
Africa get the notion that aliens
put transmitters in his teeth to
zap his brain? And how could
another boy in America have the
exact same delusion? It's just as
mysterious. But we're willing to
call him crazy and the girl not . . .
because he believes in aliens, not
God.

Ignatious returns Tom's challenging gaze.

FR. IGNATIUS
The idea of this course, Mr. Beran,
is to view science through
religion. We're not here to
scrutinize religion with science.

Tom nods, settles back in his seat, keeping himself in check.

INT. VATICAN DORMITORY/TOM'S ROOM - NIGHT

A bare bulb illuminates the room.

Tom stands with one leg outside the tiny water-closet to make room to pee when he notices, reflected in the mirror above the toilet - the plaster statue of the Virgin Mary staring at him from her ledge with pious beatitude.

He edges sideways to avoid the reflection as he continues to relieve himself. Just then -

CLUNK. THE LIGHT BLINKS OUT. Curfew.

Still peeing -

TOM
Jesus Christ.

EXT. VATICAN DORMITORY - NIGHT

The entire building sits in darkness.

INT. VATICAN DORMITORY - MORNING

Tom wakes slowly from a heavy sleep. The BELLS OF ST. PETER'S PEEL in the distance. Checking his watch, he sees he has slept in. Yanking on his pants, he grabs his bag and shirt and heads out the door.

EXT. VATICAN CITY - MORNING

Tom heads across St. Peter's Square.

FR. IGNATIUS (V.O.)
Dr. Weiss has degrees in both psychiatry and neurology from Johns Hopkins and has several case studies published in the American Journal of Psychiatry. He's here today to share his story.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

DR. WEISS a gaunt man with haunted eyes speaks with conviction from the lectern. Behind him on the screen is a photo of a smiling BESPECTACLED WOMAN.

DR. WEISS

This is Karen. She was referred to me by Bellevue Hospital in New York. Karen was an introverted, studious type diagnosed as suffering from multiple personality disorder. Her split or sub-personality was Alley, who was far more outgoing, witty and always flirtatious - to the point at times of being overtly sexual both in her speech and manner. But whenever I asked Alley about her past, she always avoided the question. This was out of character for a sub-personality as they tend to make up florid and interesting pasts. That was the first sign this wasn't a textbook case. Then one day, halfway through a session, I brought up the idea of religion with her. Her response was to defecate. She did this with a smile. When I asked why she did it, she said "That's what I think of your question. That's what I think of your fucking religion." I never saw Karen, the core personality again. I only saw Alley a few times more. The last time I saw her, she told me my wife would die soon. At the time my wife was a healthy 34 year old woman. Two weeks later my wife was diagnosed out of the blue with a rare form of Leukemia. That could be chalked up as coincidence, except for Alley's parting comment to me. "July 9th" - that's all she said. That turned out to be the date of my wife's death. About two months after the funeral, I resumed seeing some patients. A part of me was anxious to see Alley, to quiz her about her cruel and uncanny comments. But Alley never showed up. After a few attempts to contact her by phone, I decided to break protocol and make a visit to her apartment. What I saw when I got there is too difficult to explain. Here's a video.

ON THE SCREEN, AN AMATEUR VIDEO PLAYS - at first it's hard to see what it is ... A room ... there's a bed and a wardrobe ... and in the corner a dark mass, like a nest of rubbish - twigs, leaves, wrappers ...

And there in the middle of the rubbish, A NAKED WOMAN smeared in filth stares - arms and legs at unnatural angles - hands flat on the floor - elbows arched high above her shoulders, feet pressed up against the wall in the pose of a spider backed into a corner.

The only sound on the video is the ANXIOUS BREATHING of Dr. Weiss and a LOW, RATTLING RASP coming from the woman.

THE CAMERA ZOOMS INTO HER FACE - Her lips are sucked in so tightly her mouth is barely recognizable as human. It's more like a mandible tautly covered with thin skin.

DR. WEISS

She was immovable from that position. Catatonics can remain in one pose for hours, sometimes days, but they have a waxy mobility to them. This was nothing like that. Three New York paramedics couldn't budge her an inch. It was at that point that I had to admit my entire philosophy was ill equipped to deal with what I experienced.

CLOSE ON TOM staring at the disturbing video, thoughts spinning, trying to work it out. The video screen goes to WHITE NOISE.

EXT. VATICAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCES - AFTERNOON

Students file out of the building. Last out is Tom. Avoiding the other students, he makes his way across the garden when he is joined by Ignatious. He gives Tom a brief smile, Tom returns one.

FR. IGNATIUS

I understand you were taught by Fr. Matthew?

TOM

That's right.

FR. IGNATIUS

We studied together at Cambridge.

Tom nods.

FR. IGNATIUS
What do you think of the course so far?

TOM
To be honest, Father, I don't know what to make of it all.

FR. IGNATIUS
You didn't nominate yourself to do this program, did you?

TOM
No.

FR. IGNATIUS
Tell me Thomas, do you believe in sin?

TOM
Yes. I just don't believe the Devil makes us do it.

FR. IGNATIUS
"He that committeth sin is of the Devil."

TOM
Then that would be all of us, wouldn't it, Father? And if we're all of the Devil, then how do we fight him?

Smiling at the provocation -

FR. IGNATIUS
Thomas the Doubter. Fr. Matthew has put a lot of faith in you. To be honest, I was dubious about his recommendation.

TOM
That makes two of us.

FR. IGNATIUS
Unfortunately, this course is designed for the faithful.

TOM
Then what do you recommend?

Producing a small card, Fr. Ignatius writes something on the back of it.

FR. IGNATIUS

Tomorrow I suggest you take your doubts for a walk around Rome.

He hands him the card - Tom reads it - "Via Aurelia Antica, 3." Flips the card over - "Mons. Carmine".

TOM

Monsignor Carmine.

FR. IGNATIUS

(correcting him)

"Carmeenay". He operates independently from our diocese. His methods are a little less orthodox. He'll be happy to provide you with the kind of proof you so obviously need. Excuse me, I have a mass to say.

Tilting his hat, he passes out of the Vatican gates.

Tom stands in the shadows of the great gate, watching the man meld into the pilgrimage of tourists.

EXT. ROME - DAY

Tom dodges the stream of mopeds swarming the roundabout at the Victor Emmanuel monument. Reaching the center island, he consults a map. A tour bus WIPES FRAME.

CUT TO:

A PUBLIC TRANSPORT BUS PULLS AWAY FROM ITS STOP.

Disembarked, Tom looks across the road at A CEMETERY. He checks the address.

CUT TO:

A ROAD SIGN "Via Aurelia". It points down an ancient road of rubble, dividing the cemetery. At the bottom of the road, a crumbling 5th Century church stands its ground against time.

EXT. VERANO CEMETERY CHURCH - DAY

Cats crawl amongst collapsed graves and broken headstones surrounding the old church.

Tom looks around, uncertain, when he sees a short distance away, A FIGURE surrounded by cats sitting on the entrance steps of the church's 18th century rectory.

TOM
Monsi gnor Carmi ne?

The fi gure looks up wi th pi erci ng eyes, at once ancient and ageless.

FR. CARMINE
Si ?

TOM
My name i s Thomas Beran.

FR. CARMINE
The Ameri can.

He speaks wi th a well heel ed European accent.

TOM
Yes.

FR. CARMINE
Do you li ke cats?

TOM
Not parti cul arly.

He stands and li terally brushes the cats from hi s body.

FR. CARMINE
(smiles)
Rome is infested. I try to give them names, but it's pointless. A cat won't come no matter what you call it. They do as they please.

Pushing the cats aside wi th hi s feet, he enters the house -

FR. CARMINE
Make sure they don't come in.

Tom struggles to keep them from slipping past hi s legs, inside.

INT. RECTORY. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The place is run down, last refurbished in the 1940's. Fr. Carmine stirs a coffee pot on the cluttered stove and pours two cups. Proffering one to Tom -

FR. CARMINE
Fr. Ignatious tells me you're
troubled.

TOM
I don't think Fr. Ignatious
explained the situ-

FR. CARMINE
He explained it well enough. You
don't know why you're here. Trust
me, I do.

He gestures for Tom to sit when -

THE DOORBELL GRINDS LOUDLY AND CHIMES - a visitor.

FR. CARMINE
(poker-faced)
Speak of the Devil ...

Tom regards Carmine dubiously, as the old priest lumbers down
the dark hall towards the SILHOUETTE LOOMING IN THE FRONT
DOOR'S FROSTED GLASS INSET.

He opens the door on ROSARIA GIRLANDA - a young Italian girl
no older than 17, thin as a stick except for her protruding
belly - 8 months pregnant. Next to her is her AUNT ANDRIA - a
stolid woman in her 40's with troubled eyes.

FR. CARMINE
Benvenuto. Entrare.

The young girl offers the priest a pannetonne cake -

FR. CARMINE
Grazie.

He points her into the kitchen, while her Aunt Andria sits in
a chair in the hall.

ENTERING THE KITCHEN -

ROSARIA
(to Tom)
Buon giorno.

TOM
Buon giorno.

FR. CARMINE
 (Italian: subtitled)
 <This is Thomas.>

Smiling, she puts the cake on the table. Opening the refrigerator, she pours some milk into a saucer and makes a bee-line for the cats at the door. They all PURR for the girl's attention.

ROSARIA
 (Italian: subtitled)
 <Have you fed them?>

FR. CARMINE
 <No. They're waiting for you.>

Sitting on the back stoop, she CHIRRUPS and PURRS with the cats while her Aunt Andria remains in the hall, her dark eyes ringed with tired circles. She stares suspiciously at Tom -

FR. CARMINE
 (to Andria)
 <Don't worry about him. He's here to help.>

The woman musters a nod for Tom.

ROSARIA
 <The cats are hungry today.>

FR. CARMINE
 <Yes. Very hungry. They're happy to see you, Rosaria.>

ROSARIA
 <Do you remember the names I gave them?>

FR. CARMINE
 No.

ROSARIA
 <Lucia, Gabriella, Dante, Hermione, Federico, Lorenzo. Where's Fellini?>

Tom smiles briefly, charmed by the girl. She catches his smile then coyly turns away to reveal a patch of hair at the back of her head worn thin and balding. Unconsciously, she scratches at it - irritated.

FR. CARMINE
 <Come now.>

ROSARIA
<I want to see Fellini.>

FR. CARMINE
(authoritative)
<After. Come.>

Tom glimpses a dark look flash across the young girl's face, as she scratches her head again. Rising, she brushes past Tom at the table and disappears up the stairs opposite the kitchen door.

FR. CARMINE
(to Tom)
If you want to watch, you'll still need to help, and I'll need to absolve you.

TOM
Help with what?

FR. CARMINE
The exorcism. Otherwise you can stay down here with Andrià.

Off Tom's stunned expression -

CUT TO:

A CLOSET UNDER THE STAIRCASE OPENS ON A PURPLE PRIEST'S STOLE.

Handing it to Tom -

FR. CARMINE
Put this on.

Tom obliges as he follows the Holyman upstairs.

FR. CARMINE
Whatever you do, don't address the girl directly, no matter what she says. If I ask for you to hold her down, it's best to grab her arms from behind and try to keep her kneeling.

Tom just nods, curious, sceptical and trepidatious.

FR. CARMINE
The demon is devious. It hasn't shown itself yet.

TOM
Then how do you know she's
possessed?

Without bothering to answer, the priest continues to the top of the stairs and straight into -

A BARE ROOM -

The only furniture - a night stand with a candle next to a mattress where Rosaria kneels. High on the arched wall, the room's only window is latched shut.

FR. CARMINE
(all business)
We need to stimulate the demon -
bring it forth. The questions need
to be direct and provocative.

Carmine closes the door behind Tom.

FR. CARMINE
If it manifests, don't look into
her eyes. Just bow your head and
pray.

Producing a pocket tape-recorder, he presses PLAY and addresses the girl matter-of-factly -

FR. CARMINE
Come stai?

ROSARIA
(Italian: subtitle)
<The same.>

Her manner is subdued, unexpressive.

FR. CARMINE
<Have you eaten?>

She shakes her head.

FR. CARMINE
<What about the baby?>

She shrugs.

FR. CARMINE
<What's happened since Tuesday?>

ROSARIA
 <It won't stop now. Even when I
 sleep it talks.>

Tom watches intently, unable to understand a word.

FR. CARMINE
 <Is it talking now?>

Nods.

FR. CARMINE
 <What's it saying?>

ROSARIA
 <Disgusting things.>

FR. CARMINE
 <Like what?>

ROSARIA
 <I can't repeat them.>

FR. CARMINE
 <Give me an idea.>

ROSARIA
 <I can't.>

FR. CARMINE
 <It's important to tell me.>

Struggling -

ROSARIA
 <It wants to hurt the baby.>

FR. CARMINE
 <Has it told you its name, yet?>

The girl falls silent.

FR. CARMINE
 Rosaria?

She closes her eyes and trembles.

Tom looks on, curious. Rosaria's breathing becomes heavy and labored.

FR. CARMINE
 <Rosaria? ... Rosaria? ... Answer
 me.>

Her eyes suddenly open, full of torment - she shakes her head violently from side to side and begins to PANT . . .

FR. CARMINE
<Rosaria. Listen to me.>

Her panting quickens. Tom takes a step closer, when the priest gestures for him to stay put.

FR. CARMINE
<Rosaria. Listen to me!>

Suddenly she lays flat out on the mattress and looks dangerously at Tom.

ROSARIA
(In English.)
Who's he?

There's a different quality to her voice - rasping and halted, as if her throat were being squeezed. The tone, testing and sly.

FR. CARMINE
He's none of your business.

ROSARIA
It's all my business.

FR. CARMINE
And who are you?

ROSARIA
Go fuck yourself.

FR. CARMINE
You have no power over me.

ROSARIA
(perfectly mimicking
Carmine's voice)
You have no power over me.

FR. CARMINE
(Italian: subtitled)
<You are tedious.>

ROSARIA
(Italian: subtitled)
<I know.>
(Snickers. In English -)
But time I have.
(MORE)

ROSARIA (cont'd)
 Unlike you, priest. Un-luck you. Un-
 live. Un-good. Un-god.

Her jaw tenses, teeth grinding. Tom watches intently, not knowing what to make of this, when he notices a bracelet hung with trinkets around Rosaria's wrist, just like the Bracelet around the suicide's corpse four years before.

Rosaria, catches Tom looking at it. She flashes a crazed smile and rattles it tauntingly -

ROSARIA
 Like it?

Tom buries his surprise.

ROSARIA
 Your friend gave it to me. She says
 to say hello. Hell-o.

FR. CARMINE
 Ignore it.

The girl snickers. Her brow spasms, making her eyes bulge. Carmine's voice booms across the room -

FR. CARMINE
 (Italian: subtitled)
 <By the authority of Jesus Christ I
 command you to declare yourself.>

ROSARIA
 We are the fruit of her womb.

FR. CARMINE
 Speak the truth, in the name of
 Jesus Christ.

ROSARIA
 In the name of Judas Cross. In the
 name of Judas Cross.

FR. CARMINE
 Your name, demon.

Rocking back and forth, faster and faster -

ROSARIA
 In the name of Judas Chri sssssss.
 Judas chrosssss - chri ssss.
 chrossss. Cri ss-cross! Cri ss-cross-
 cri ss-cross-cri ss-cross-cri ss-cross-
 -crsscrssscrsss-ssssssssssss
 (hi sses)

Fr. Carmine takes the crucifix from around his neck and presses it forcefully onto the girl's head.

FR. CARMINE
Out of her!

Instantly she falls back onto the mattress, like a doll.

Tom drops to her side, and holds her head as she starts to convulse.

TOM
She's having a seizure.

Carmine perfunctorily opens the girl's eyelids to see they have rolled back into her head. Working quickly, he lights the candle, blesses the lace stoles, kisses them and drapes them over Tom and himself all the while fervently whispering a prayer in Latin. Reaching into his pocket, he removes a vial of holy water and speaks in a firm commanding voice -

FR. CARMINE
(Latin: subtitled)
<"God, creator and defender of the human race, look down on this your servant, formed in your own image.">

The girl stiffens and gives up a pained MOAN like a creaking floor. Tom tries to hold her as Carmine douses her with holy water in swift, violent strokes.

FR. CARMINE
<The old adversary oppresses her with violent force, and disturbs her with savage terror.>

ROSARIA
No!

Suddenly, a GURGLING GROWL emanates from the young woman - as if her organs are being made to speak. Carmine continues unperturbed -

FR. CARMINE
<Send upon her Your Holy Spirit, who ...>

ROSARIA
(Italian: subtitled)
<Fuck your Holy Spirit!>

Splaying her legs, she wrenches up her dress, exposing herself to the priest.

ROSARIA
 (In English)
 Fuck. Fuck you! Fuck!
 Shut up! Shut up!
 (as Rosaria)
 Help me.
 (as the voice)
 Fuck your only son. Stick the
 cross in his ass.

FR. CARMINE
 (Latin: subtitled)
 <... who strengthens her. You
 who destined that Tyrant of
 the fires: you who sent your
 only son into this world in
 order that he might crush
 this Roaring Lion.>

As if fighting something inside her, Rosaria pulls down her dress then reefs it up again, exposing the mound of her belly.

ROSARIA
 Shit it out and eat it!

Carmine brandishes the holy water again, dousing her belly. The girl arches her back as the foetus inside her squirms visibly like an animal in a sack.

ROSARIA
 (as Rosaria)
 Get it out of me!

In a strange, unnatural move, she pulls up onto her haunches, squatting.

FR. CARMINE
 Hold her.

Tom holds her arms, trying to calm the girl as she gnashes her teeth and GROWLS, when suddenly A VOICE LIKE A DOG speaks from her -

ROSARIA
 Fottuto! Vaffancule! Vai in culo!

She breaks free -

FR. CARMINE
 Grab her!

- and runs blindly at the closed door - her arms hanging limp like a puppet. Carmine wrestles her back onto the mattress. Holding her head to the ground, he pours holy water into her ear.

Tom falls back against the wall, watching the violent struggle as blood-chilling CAWS and CACKLES spring from the pregnant woman. Carmine repeats the OUR FATHER over her, holding her convulsing body until it slows ... calms ... and is still.

Releasing his grip, Carmine looks into Tom's riveted expression.

INT. CARMINE'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Carmine folds the lace stoles, and packs away the holy water in a leather valise.

Tom sits slumped in a chair, staring at Rosaria laying on the mattress in the room across the landing, asleep - her Aunt Andria sponging her head.

FR. CARMINE
She'll be OK now, for a day or so.
But it's not over.

TOM
I thought you were required to have
a doctor present.

FR. CARMINE
I am a doctor.

TOM
Is there a psychological report?

Fr. Carmine finds it on his desk and hands it to Tom. He opens it. It's in Italian.

TOM
(frustrated)
My Italian's not good enough for
this.

FR. CARMINE
It basically says she didn't
respond to regular counselling.

TOM
Is she on antidepressants?

FR. CARMINE
(shakes his head)
She's pregnant.

TOM
So, she hasn't been medically
treated for her depression?

FR. CARMINE
She wouldn't respond, anyway.

TOM
 (treading cautiously)
 How do you know that?

FR. CARMINE
 I can tell when I look in her eyes.

Off Tom's look -

FR. CARMINE
 When you've done this as long as I
 have, you learn to see when the
 Devil is hiding.

TOM
 So who gave you permission for the
 exorcism?

FR. CARMINE
 I work independently of the diocese
 on urgent cases.

TOM
 Weren't you concerned for her
 health in there today?

FR. CARMINE
 Of course I was.

TOM
 Then how could you let her go
 through that?

FR. CARMINE
 Her life is at risk and her
 child's.

TOM
 She seemed fine until you started
 praying over her. Have you thought
 that maybe you're the one sending
 her into these hysterical states?

FR. CARMINE
 She is suffering. She has thoughts
 of murdering her child.

TOM
 She's also depressed. Depressed
 mothers can have negative feelings
 toward their unborn ch--

FR. CARMINE
 She woke up with a knife in her
 hand. She says she doesn't know how
 it got there. She's afraid.

Silenced, Tom vainly leafs through the pages of the report -

TOM
 Who's the father?

Getting no reply -

TOM
 Do you know who the father is?

FR. CARMINE
 (hesitant)
 She was raped.

The hits keep on coming.

TOM
 By who?

FR. CARMINE
 She won't say.

TOM
 Where are her parents?

FR. CARMINE
 Her mother died years ago.

TOM
 And her father?

FR. CARMINE
 (reluctant)
 He ran off.

TOM
 (incredulous)
 Do you think that could mean
 something?

FR. CARMINE
 I filed a report with the police as
 soon as I found out.

Putting it together -

TOM
 (building indignation)
 Don't you think, the girl's hysterical because she was raped by her father? Doesn't it make more sense that the name she doesn't want to give up is her father's, not the Devil's? She sleeps with a knife out of fear of her father! Don't you think she's had enough trauma without dragging her through all this?

FR. CARMINE
 You don't understand.

TOM
 What don't I understand?

FR. CARMINE
 Her father worshipped the Devil.

Tom has no idea what to do with that information.

TOM
 You're right. I don't understand.

FR. CARMINE
 I'm talking about Satanism. Parents offer their children to the Devil, for their own gain.

Tom stares blankly.

Carmine plucks a newspaper clipping from the noticeboard above his desk and hands it to Tom.

FR. CARMINE
 Read.

CLOSE ON THE HEADLINE - "SATANIC MURDERS."

DETAIL: "Milan, Italy - 24 yr. old Andrea Volpe, jailed yesterday ... 30 years ... brutal killings ... drug-fueled satanic ritual ... Reuters. April 12, 2005".

FR. CARMINE
 Satanism is so out of control in this country, the police have a special task force for occult crimes. This is real. Real lives are affected. People die as a result.

Putting down the clipping -

TOM
This doesn't negate the fact that
she was raped.

FR. CARMINE
Did you hear that voice inside her?
That's not a human voice.

Tom can't disagree.

FR. CARMINE
What do you know about her
bracelet?

TOM
Nothing.

FR. CARMINE
The demon saw you recognize it.

TOM
(containing himself)
I don't know anything about demons.
She saw me looking at her bracelet,
that's all.

FR. CARMINE
If you know something, you must
tell me. It could help us get to
the demon quicker.

TOM
Us? I'm not getting involved in
this.

FR. CARMINE
You already are.

Tom knows he's right. He looks back at the sleeping girl in
the other room.

FR. CARMINE
I will speak to Fr. Ignatious and
request that you assist me for a
few weeks . . . I'll give you
complete access to all my cases.
That way you can see for yourself.
If you agree, come back tomorrow.

Showing Tom the door -

FR. CARMINE
I'm tired. I need to rest.

INT. VERANO CEMETERY - DUSK

Halfway down the winter-lit road, Tom stops and looks back at the old church and rectory as the reality of what he experienced sinks in.

MEOW. A cat rubs itself against his leg. Pushing it away with his foot, he continues through the cemetery.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

In the hard glow of the bus's fluorescence, a lone passenger - A HOMELESS MAN - stares fixedly at Tom with tormented eyes.

The bus pulls to a stop. Unnerved by the man, Tom alights.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

The bus pulls away. Tom looks around, lost. He pulls out his map and starts walking.

INT. VATICAN DOMITORY FOYER - NIGHT

A rickety elevator door rattles open -

Tom steps in. The only other person in the elevator is the AMERICAN WOMAN we recognize from the first day of the exorcism course - (40's) attractive in a homespun kind of way, dressed in jeans and sweater.

AMERICAN WOMAN
We missed you in class today. Have they banned you, or something?

TOM
Sort of. I plea bargained down from being burned at the stake?

AMERICAN WOMAN
Who's your lawyer?

TOM
B. L. Z. Bub and Associates.

AMERICAN WOMAN
 (chuckles)
 You really aren't afraid, are you?

TOM
 Of what?

Holding out her hand -

AMERICAN WOMAN
 I'm Sister Angeline.

Tom shakes it, a little surprised.

SR. ANGELINE
 Don't let the plain clothes fool
 you.

TOM
 Tom Beran.

SR. ANGELINE
 I'm a journalist for the Catholic
 Press Association. I've been asked
 to monitor the exorcism program.

Becoming guarded -

TOM
 Oh. I see.

SR. ANGELINE
 I'm writing an article on its
 validity. There's lots of debate
 around it. If you're ever up for
 it, I'd like to interview you. You
 don't seem ... typical. I'd like to
 know how someone like you ended up
 here.

The elevator doors open. As Tom steps out -

TOM
 Honestly, I couldn't tell you.

As the doors close -

SR. ANGELINE
 Well, good luck working it out.

INT. VATICAN DORMITORY. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Tom enters the little room.

Peeling off his jacket, he sits on the bed, heavy with thought. Outside the window SOPRANO VOICES sing "In Dulci Jubilo" - their faint strains wafting in on the cold breeze.

Across the courtyard the lit windows of other dormitories reveal the lives of others - an OLD NUN asleep in her chair - A MONK on his knees praying.

Chilled by the draft, he shuts the window and pulls on his jacket again when something JINGLES in his pocket. Curious he feels around and removes ...

Rosaria's bracelet.

He holds it up to the light, scrutinizing the TINKLING trinket, his mind shooting back and forth, trying to fathom how it got there.

Placing it on the window-sill, he stares at it, haunted. He goes to touch it again when -

CLUNK - the lights go out. Curfew.

EXT. FR. CARMINE'S RECTORY - DAY

Fr. Carmine opens the door on Tom standing in the day's cold light.

TOM
I want to interview her. No
restrictions.

Carmine considers the proposal ... opens the door wider to let him in.

INT. FR. CARMINE'S EXORCISM ROOM - DAY

Rosaria sits at a desk before Tom and Fr. Carmine. Her eyes are ringed black and her manner subdued. Otherwise she seems normal and in control of her senses.

FR. CARMINE
(Italian: subtitled)
<Rosaria, remember Tom? He wants to
help you.>

TOM
Hello. It was terrible to see you
going through your suffering
yesterday.

Carmine translates. She nods.

TOM
Do you remember any of it?

She replies in Italian.

FR. CARMINE
(translating for her)
Yes. But like it was a dream ... a
nightmare.

TOM
Do you remember any of what you
said?

FR. CARMINE
(translating)
"Help me" ... she says all she said
was "help me".

TOM
You said a lot of other things. You
don't remember?

Addressing Tom with her eyes, she speaks in Italian.

FR. CARMINE
She says, she didn't say those
things.

TOM
Then who did?

Carmine hesitates before translating the question ...

Rosaria looks down at the table, afraid. No answer.

TOM
They came out of your mouth, didn't
they?

Carmine translates. Still nothing from the girl.

Cautiously, Tom removes the bracelet from his pocket and
places it on the table before her.

TOM
This is yours. You showed it to me
yesterday ... do you remember?

She stares at it, puzzled. Still no answer.

TOM
Do you know how it got in my
pocket?

Carmine translates all this, uncertain where this is going.
She shakes her head.

TOM
Did you put it there?

She shakes her head again.

TOM
Who gave it to you?

ROSARIA
Mi o padre.

Tom nods. Reaching over, he carefully clips it back on her
wrist ... and as he does so --

TOM
Who made you pregnant, Rosaria?

Reluctantly, Carmine translates ...

Her eyes remain on the bracelet.

TOM
Was it your father?

FR. CARMINE
(Italian: subtitled)
He says he knows who made you
pregnant.

Not a word or glance from the girl.

TOM
Tell her it was her father.

He does so ...

She remains silent, drawn inward.

TOM
Rosaria?

Her stillness is unnerving ...

Then uncannily, blood begins to drain from her face.

FR. CARMINE

Rosaria?

It's hard to tell if she is breathing. He touches her ...

She's as stiff as death, as if literally petrified ...

Fr. Carmine tries to move her hand, and then her head ...
totally rigid.

Struggling to fathom what he sees, Tom leans closer when A
DARK VOICE with a cunning tone WHISPERS from inside the girl -
though her lips don't move.

ROSARIA

You want to fuck her too?

Chilled by the voice, Tom swallows his fear.

TOM

Who are you talking about?

The voice continues to speak from her frozen body.

ROSARIA

The whore.

TOM

Why do you refer to yourself as a
whore?

ROSARIA

We aren't the whore. We fuck the
whore.

TOM

And who are you?

ROSARIA

I am nothing.

TOM

Is that how you feel? Do you want
to disappear? Were you raped,
Rosaria?

ROSARIA

Admit it priest, you want to fuck
her.

TOM
I'm not a priest.

FR. CARMINE
Don't engage it personally. Don't give it the pleasure.

ROSARIA
Pleasure us, priest! Pleasure us!

Deep, sexual MOANS rise from the girl.

FR. CARMINE
(reacting)
We should prepare.

Rosaria's eyes roll around inside her frozen mask then look straight at Tom -

ROSARIA
Bless me father.

FR. CARMINE
Don't listen to it. He's a deceiver.

ROSARIA
Fuck me. Fuck her womb.

FR. CARMINE
Pray with me!

ROSARIA
(in a deeper voice)
Fuck me. Dig the fucker out of there. Lickety-split.

Tom stiffens - the hair on the back of his neck bristles.

A JACK-IN-THE-BOX LAUGH echoes inside Rosaria.

ROSARIA
Miss Chicago? She sure misses you.

Suddenly her forehead comes smashing down on the table with a sharp CRACK. Then the same invisible force jerks her head up again. Tom grabs her, pulling her away from the table as she begins to RETCH and HEAVE, suddenly released from her frozen state. SPLUTTERING and CHOKING, she falls to her knees frantic - struggling for breath.

TOM
She's choking.

Carmino slaps her between the shoulder blades - she COUGHS violently, her throat taught and bulging. He slaps her again, then with one awful, bloody, retch, SHE SPITS UP A FOUR INCH NAIL ONTO THE FLOOR.

Carmino and Tom step back, stunned.

She RETCHES and CHOKES again -

Another nail. COUGHS. And another.

Covering her face, she collapses in SOBS.

EXT. RECTORY - DAY

A cat scuttles across terra-cotta roof tiles.

INT. EXORCISM ROOM - DAY

Tom stands in the doorway watching Rosaria sleep - her breathing phlegmatic and heavy, like a bear.

Fr. Carmino listens to her belly with a stethoscope.

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Tom sits at the kitchen table staring at the four nails sitting plain as day in a glass dish. Entering -

FR. CARMINE

She's asleep. She needs to rest. We should discontinue. I'll send her home for a few days so she can recover.

TOM

How will her baby survive this?

FR. CARMINE

It may not. You can't predict how this is going to go. Every time I do this, it's different.

TOM

Have you ever lost a patient?

FR. CARMINE

Yes. A boy I once treated went home and committed suicide. I was depressed for months.

TOM
Her di ssoci ati on' s qui te
pronounced.

FR. CARMINE
You' re still not convinced?

TOM
Vi cti ms of i nce st often want to
deny it. Talking about herself in
the third person, calling herself
nothing - it' s clear di ssoci ati on.
It' s easier for her to believe it' s
the Devil that hates her unborn
child and not her.

FR. CARMINE
How does she speak English?

TOM
She' s a teenager. She' s listened to
a thousand songs on the radio.

FR. CARMINE
And the nails?

TOM
It could be she swallowed them
beforehand - to hurt the baby.

FR. CARMINE
And how did she know you were from
Chi cago?

TOM
(Lost/stumped)
I don' t know. My accent.

Carmi ne gi ves hi m a dubi ous l ook.

FR. CARMINE
You need to be careful .

TOM
Of what?

FR. CARMINE
The Devi l l oves to convi nce peopl e
that there is no proof, that there
is no hell, that there is no sin,
just one more experience to live.
He' s l ike a di sease.

(MORE)

FR. CARMINE (cont'd)
 You never know exactly where it
 begins but one day you wake up and
 you're sick. You think you're
 immune, when he's already inside
 your head. He knows your sins -
 your doubts. Trust me.

The conviction in Carmine's eye is too much to stare down.
 Tom returns his attention to the nails.

EXT. VERANO CEMETERY - AFTERNOON

Tom makes his way home when he notices a funeral in progress -
 a HEARSE pulled to the side of the road.

He stops for a moment - observes the ceremony. Amongst the
 mourners, a BOY stands holding his father's hand.

Tom's attention drifts to a CRUCIFIX hanging from the
 hearse's rear-view mirror.

CLOSE ON TOM'S EYES: taken by some memory.

CUT TO:

A TIN CRUCIFIX HANGING FROM ANOTHER REAR-VIEW MIRROR.

TILT UP TO: A COFFIN REFLECTED in the mirror.

We discover this is the POV OF YOUNG TOM. An old memory.

He sits in the front seat of the family hearse, squeezed
 between his father and a PRIEST.

The Priest notices young Tom looking fixedly at the coffin
 through the rear-view.

PRIEST
 (Irish accent)
 You know Thomas, God always takes
 the good one's first. He loved your
 mum that much.
 (pause)
 You listening to me?

Ignoring the priest, Young Tom scowls at the crucifix.

EXT. CHICAGO CEMETERY - THE PAST.

Young Tom watches the burial ceremony with detachment.

Behind his back, he holds the TINY TIN CRUCIFIX.

As his mother's coffin is lowered into the ground, the boy presses his thumb hard into the crucifix, bending it in half.

BACK TO:

EXT. VERANO CEMETERY - THE PRESENT

The mourners watch the coffin being lowered into the ground. Shaking off his memory, Tom continues down the unsealed road.

EXT. ROME - TWILIGHT

Tom wanders down a narrow street, consulting his map. Fed up, he tucks it in his pocket and decides on a direction when he sees A FEW PEOPLE gathered around a newsstand, talking animatedly. In the racks of publications, MOTHER THERESE'S PHOTO is on every newspaper.

Searching the stand for an English headline, he reads the TIME MAGAZINE COVER - "The Secret Life of Mother Teresa - Crisis of Faith". Another headline reads "40 Years Of No Faith".

NEWSAGENT

Mi di ca?

Shaking his head, Tom heads down the street, disappearing into the burgeoning night.

INT. VATICAN AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Fr. Ignatious stands at the lectern, his students all ears. Tom enters the back of the auditorium.

FR. IGNATIUS

As you have all heard me repeat on several occasions this week, the most important skill for an exorcist to perfect is discernment. Knowledge of the unknowable is the most powerful proof of possession. If the following test yields an affirmative result, you will almost certainly proceed with exorcism. Bring a concealed object into the room and ask the victim to guess what it is.

(MORE)

FR. IGNATIUS (cont'd)
 My advice is to make the object
 obscure, such as an heirloom,
 something with a distinct shape, or
 made of a particular material.

He watches Tom take his seat.

Sr. Angeline turns back around to see Tom - smiles.

FR. IGNATIUS (CONT'D)
 For instance, with my last patient
 I hid in my jacket a pair of white
 gloves that were blessed by the
 Pope. When I asked the girl to
 guess what I may have in my pocket,
 she initially protested saying how
 could she know. I insisted she
 guess . . . and she said "A pair of
 gloves blessed by the Holy Father."
 This example also shows that even
 when the demon is not manifest it
 is always present and manipulating.

Suddenly the lights of the auditorium flicker and go out.
 People GASP and TITTER nervously. Ignatious, however, is not
 amused. He flicks the light switch on and off -- no luck.

FR. IGNATIUS
 I had a few more things to say, but
 I'll leave it till the morning.
 Thank you.

Class dismissed - people saunter out.

FR. IGNATIUS
 Tomorrow I'm bringing in four
 people who were liberated through
 exorcism. You'll be invited to ask
 them questions about their
 experience.

Halfway up the auditorium steps, Sr. Angeline gives Tom a
 "welcome back" nod as she heads out.

Tom remains in his seat - eyes fixed on Fr Ignatious who
 heads up the stairs to the back of the auditorium.
 Addressing Tom sitting in the dark.

FR. IGNATIUS
 How is our old friend, Carmine?

TOM
 Unorthodox.

Ignatious gives a wry smile.

FR. IGNATIUS
No exorcism is orthodox. Carmine knows the Devil so well, he wouldn't be afraid to have him over to dinner. He probably does on occasion.

Cutting through the levity -

TOM
He's treating a pregnant girl that I believe needs hospitalization.

FR. IGNATIUS
You believe? Father Carmine has done this longer than anyone I know. He knows what he's doing.

TOM
I'm telling you this because I'm concerned.

FR. IGNATIUS
You're job is to observe.

TOM
I have.

FR. IGNATIUS
It's not uncommon to be overly concerned with the patient in one's first exorcism. You have to see that it is the demon who is in pain. You've obviously failed to be convinced of anything?

TOM
I didn't come here to be convinced.

FR. IGNATIUS
Fate often lays to waste the best made plans.
(thinking)
My father was no intellectual but he taught me one valuable thing - judge slowly.

As Ignatious continues up the stairs -

FR. IGNATIUS
Trust me, Fr. Carmine gets results.

TOM
At what cost?

Ignatious exits leaving Tom in the dark.

INT. VATICAN DORMITORY CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Tom emerges from the old lift and heads down the corridor to his dormitory room when -

SR. ANGELINE (O.S.)
You work it out yet?

Turning around -

TOM
Sorry?

SR. ANGELINE
Why you're here.

He dismisses the question with a polite smile.

SR. ANGELINE
I've been praying for you.

TOM
Why?

SR. ANGELINE
(wryly)
Because I'm a nun.
(genuine)
Something told me you needed it.

Covering his feelings, he opens his door -

TOM
Good night, Sister.

He heads inside, closing the door firmly behind him.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON: A BABY SCREAMING.

INT. VERANO CEMETERY CHURCH - MORNING

At the basilica's baptismal font, Fr. Carmine pours holy water over the baby's head as he chants in Latin above the screaming. The child's family encircle the ceremony.

EXT. VERANO CEMETERY CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Making his way up the stone road towards the BABY'S WALLS, Tom approaches the basilica doors and looks in on the ceremony.

INT. VERANO CEMETERY CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Marking the sign of the cross with his thumb on the SCREAMING infant's forehead -

FR. CARMINE
(Latin: subtitled)
May the cross of Christ always be
between you and all evil powers;
may the cross of Christ always be
between you and all ill will; may
the cross of Christ always be
between you and all shameful
things.

TOM'S POV THROUGH DOORS-

CLOSE ON CARMINE - as he blows three times on the child's head.

Magically the SCREAMING STOPS. The parents smile.

Looking up - the priest glimpses Tom through the doors.

EXT. VERANO CEMETERY CHURCH - DAY

All smiles, the family thank Fr. Carmine profusely as they climb in their car and leave.

Tom stands on the church steps, trying to keep the stray cats at bay.

The gentlemen regard each other.

FR. CARMINE
You keep coming back.

Tom has no retort ... for a change.

The priest disappears into the rectory, and emerges seconds later with a briefcase. As he heads up the road -

FR. CARMINE
Today we do house calls.

EXT. BANKS OF THE TIBER - DAY

Tom and Carmine walk along the broad promenade winding along the ancient river. Across its banks, the proud dome of St. Peter's dominates the skyline.

TOM
You said you work outside the jurisdiction of Rome's diocese. How?

FR. CARMINE
The Vatican is its own state. She is my Queen.

TOM
You exorcise people in the Vatican? Nuns?

FR. CARMINE
The smoke of Satan knows no walls.

He catches a sceptical look in Tom's eye.

Pointing to a fashionably renovated apartment block across the street -

FR. CARMINE
We're here.

Coming to a stop, the old man seems quite out of breath.

FR. CARMINE
I need to rest a moment.

They sit quietly on the low stone wall of the bank.

FR. CARMINE
The Devil is a tiring opponent. Sometimes I pray selfishly for the Lord to take me.

Tom looks at Carmine, his vitality momentarily waned.

FR. CARMINE
Are your parents alive?

TOM
My father.

Carmine regards Tom with a piercing stare as if reading something deep inside him.

FR. CARMINE
The further you run from him, the bigger he'll get.

He heads across the road to the apartment block leaving Tom winded on the wall.

INT. APARTMENT BLOCK HALLWAY - DAY

The door to an apartment opens on a familiar face - it's THE PILOT from the plane Tom arrived on. Tom frowns, unnerved by the coincidence. The pilot doesn't seem to recognize Tom.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

PAN AROUND the living room's well appointed, slightly audacious Italian decor. A framed photo of the pilot and his wife - BENITO and SOPHIE - smiling - Benito dressed in his pilot uniform.

The couple sit on the sofa. In contrast to the photo, their expressions are grim.

BENITO
It's been happening ever since we moved in.

FR. CARMINE
When did you buy the house?

SOPHIE
(French accent)
Three months ago. He needs to sleep. He flies planes.

FR. CARMINE
How is your health otherwise?

BENITO
I have headaches. All the time. Nothing seems to take them away.

SOHP I E
But it's the noises we can't stand.

FR. CARM I N E
Where?

BEN I T O
From the cupboard. It's like -

SOHP I E
Like cats fighting and then the
cupboard bangs from the inside. But
we don't have cats. And when we
check the cupboards of course
there's nothing there.

FR. CARM I N E
Which cupboard is it?

She points to a large, black armoire in the corner. Carmine
opens the cupboard and inspects inside.

FR. CARM I N E
Anythi ng el se?

The couple look at each other ...

JUMP CUT TO:

SAME - MOMENTS LATER

Tom helps the couple push the cupboard to one side revealing
a large stain seeping through the paint on the wall.

SOHP I E
It doesn't wash off.

BEN I T O
Every time we paint the wall, it
comes back.

CUT TO:

SAME - LATER

Fr. Carmine douses the wall with holy water, reciting prayers
in Latin.

Tom stands awkwardly in the hallway, waiting for Carmine to finish when he sees Benito staring at him from the living room. Made uncomfortable by the stare, Tom sidles further down the hall, out of his sight.

EXT. MONTE TESTACCIO. ROME - DAY

A hodgepodge of broken down terraced buildings rake up the side of a hill, overlooking the eternal city.

Tom climbs the steep cobbled street, flanked by a high, stone wall. Behind him, Carmine trails, flushed and out of breath. Grabbing onto the side of a passing fruit vendor's horse drawn cart, he continues his struggle up the hill.

EXT. COURTYARD. APARTMENT BLOCK - DAY

Washing lines pegged full of clothes criss-cross the four storeys of balconies, enclosing a courtyard crowded with toys, garbage and children. Tom and Carmine climb a staircase.

INT. LOW-RENT HOUSE - DAY

A tidy, run down dwelling. Religious paraphernalia cover the walls.

Tom and Fr. Carmine sit opposite FRANCESCA (32) and her son, LUCIANO (9). The old priest speaks in a gentle voice -

FR. CARMINE
(Italian: subtitled)
<What happens in the dream?>

LUCIANO
(Italian: subtitled)
<I'm being hurt.>

FR. CARMINE
<By what?>

LUCIANO
<By a donkey with red eyes.>

Tom struggles to keep up with the meaning of the conversation.

FR. CARMINE
<How does it hurt you?>

LUCIANO
<It kicks me and bites me.>

FR. CARMINE
<And do you try to run away?>

LUCIANO
No.

FR. CARMINE
<Why not?>

LUCIANO
<Because it tells me not to.>

FR. CARMINE
<Why do you listen?>

LUCIANO
<Because he says he is my father,
and I must obey him.>

FR. CARMINE
<What else does he tell you to do?>

LUCIANO
<He tells me ...
(whispering)
... to kill myself.>

FRANCESCA
(Italian: subtitled)
<Show him!>

Pulling the boy to his feet, she lifts up his T-shirt to reveal several large, horse-shoe shaped bruises blackening his back.

FRANCESCA
<He woke up with these!>

She turns him around again to show a painful looking crescent-shaped bite on the boy's stomach.

The priest examines the boy.

FR. CARMINE
<Show me his pillow.>

INT. LUCIANO'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Francesca gives Carmine the pillow.

FR. CARMINE
 <Forgive me. >

He tears it open. There inside sits A FROG. Francesca GASPS.

CUT TO:

THE FROG IS TOSSED INTO FLAMES.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Carmin e prays over the ki tchen's pot-belly stove while Francesca, and Tom look on in silence. Then Tom notices the boy, Luciano, staring at him intensely. Without taking his eyes from Tom, he cups his hand over his mother's ear and whispers something. Francesca seems disturbed by his words. Turning to Tom, she struggles with her English -

FRANCESCA
 They all give me the explanations,
 the doctors, to blame it on my son.
 Calling him mad. I tell them, he is
 not crazy . . . he is just possessed.
 (crossing herself)
 And thank God, Fr. Carmine proves
 me right.

Grabbing her son roughly -

FRANCESCA
 Eccoti .

- she removes a vial of holy water from a shelf and sprinkles him with it as he YELLS and wriggles. Tom regards the strange scene with his inscrutable impassiveness.

TOM
 Scusi .

Rising, he walks out of the kitchen.

INT. TRAIN CARRIAGE - DAY

Fr. Carmine quietly recites the Rosary. Tom sits opposite staring at the Holy beads racheting through the priest's fingers. Distracting himself from the all-too-familiar sight, he looks out at the strobing view of tunnels and pylons.

Opening his eyes -

FR. CARMINE
You've said nothing all afternoon.

Tom gives Carmine a look.

TOM
Do you ever wonder if these people
you help are just mistaken.

FR. CARMINE
Sometimes they are.

TOM
But you still do what you do.

FR. CARMINE
I've never seen a prayer hurt
anyone.

TOM
So you're happy to have them carry
on believing something that may not
be true?

FR. CARMINE
(sharply)
And what is it you believe?

Tom stares back out the window, reluctant.

EXT. VERANO CEMETERY - EVENING

Fr. Carmine and Tom walk down the uneven cobbled road.

Carmine spots a vase of dead flowers on a grave stone.

Heading over to it, he removes the flowers. Inspecting the
headstone, he licks his thumb and cleans the glass plaque
with a photo of the deceased in it.

FR. CARMINE
It's my job to do this. I feel bad,
I never get the chance. It's hard
enough looking after the living.

They both look around at the vast field of graves.

TOM
My father's an undertaker.

Carmine nods attentively.

Picking up a handful of pebbles from the road, Tom rolls them in his palm, contemplating . . .

TOM

I used to help him. One day we had to prepare a whole family who were killed in a car crash. A mother, a father and their three children. It was the saddest thing I've ever seen. We worked straight through the night to get them finished. It was a lot of work. And in the end after all that, they were still just dead. Just . . . all their cuts and bruises were covered up. Then we put them in boxes. People don't want to see the truth -
(definitely)
That's what I believe.

FR. CARMINE

What truth don't they want to see?

Gesturing to the field of graves . . .

TOM

Deficit omne quod nascitur.

FR. CARMINE

"Everything that is born passes away".

Tom lets the pebbles pour from his hand.

FR. CARMINE

Then what's religion?

TOM

Religion is the human response to that truth.

Fr. Carmine nods - thinks.

FR. CARMINE

"Believe those who seek the truth; doubt those who find it".

Touche. Carmine continues up the path towards the rectory when -

HEADLIGHTS flash across his back. A BLACK SEDAN barrels down the road toward them and SKIDS to a halt.

From the passenger window Rosaria's Aunt Andria spouts rapid Italian at the priest.

Opening the door of the sedan, he turns to Tom -

FR. CARMINE
It's Rosaria, she tried to drown
herself.

INT. SANTO SPIRITO HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Fr. Carmine bustles down the hospital corridor, Tom in his wake, as A DOCTOR explains the situation -

DOCTOR
(Italian: subtitled)
<We gave her pethidine and
trazodone but she won't calm down.>

A SHRILL SCREAM echoes up the corridor -

DOCTOR
<Legally, we can't give her
anything else.>

They turn into a WARD where THREE ORDERLIES struggle to keep Rosaria's sopping body in her bed while a FOURTH straps her hands and legs to its bars. Her body bucks against the restraints, back arching and buckling despite her pregnant belly. Seeing Fr. Carmine, she violently lurches forward and spits.

Without a moment's hesitation, he douses her with holy water. She SCREAMS in pain.

FR. CARMINE
(Italian. Subtitled)
Leave!

Doctors, nurses, orderlies all obey. It's just Tom, Carmine and Rosaria.

FR. CARMINE
In nomine Iesu, exorcizo te. In
nomine Iesu, dic nomen tuum. In
nomine Iesu, si es hic, manifesta
te!

Rosaria shakes her head from side to side then spits at the window which provides a clear view of the Dome of St. Peter's Basilica.

Tom goes to draw the curtain -

FR. CARMINE
 Leave it! Let it see, who commands
 it!

(to Rosaria)
 Enemy of the Human Race, Warper of
 Justice! Robber of Life!
 Speak your name!

Rosaria SCREAMS - the veins in her neck bulge like worms -

ROSARIA
 NEVER!!!

The voice is deep and hoarse.

Carmine douses her again with Holy water.

She MOANS then PANTS then LOWS like an aroused steer.

FR. CARMINE
 Why are you living in her?

ROSARIA
 Because her suffering is sweeeeeet.

Her voice squeals high like a sow.

ROSARIA
 Do you know what it's like to
 suffer, priest?

FR. CARMINE
 All humans suffer.

ROSARIA
 Even your Mother Therese?

TOM
 You can say her name?

ROSARIA
 She's no saint.

FR. CARMINE
 What are you planning to do with
 Rosaria?

ROSARIA
 Eat the flies from her rotting
 cunt!

FR. CARMINE
 When did you enter her?

ROSARIA
 (relishing the words)
 With her father's cock!

Interjecting -

TOM
 So you remember being raped?

FR. CARMINE
 (to Tom)
 Do not speak to it!

Focussing on Tom -

ROSARIA
 (in Greek: subtitled)
 When the Devil has nothing better
 to do, he fucks his children.

TOM
 (calmly)
 I don't know Greek.

ROSARIA
 (in Greek: subtitled)
 Malakas!

FR. CARMINE
 Ignore it!

But Tom ignores Carmine.

TOM
 Do you know how to swear in every
 language?

ROSARIA
 (Latin: subtitled)
 <"Therefore let us go down and
 confound their tongue that they may
 not understand one another's
 speech." >

TOM
 (Latin: subtitled)
 <You know the Bible?>

ROSARIA
 <Very well.>

Visibly excited, Rosaria lolls her head from side to side.

FR. CARMINE
 Deceiver!

TOM
You're very clever.

ROSARIA
Don't patronize me, Doubter!

Tom frowns, perplexed.

FR. CARMINE
(praying in English)
Be expelled from this Creature of
God. He who commands you is he who
ordered you into the depths of
Hell!
(etc.)

Rosaria MOANS, tormented by Carmine's prayers.

TOM
Why do you call me Doubter?

ROSARIA
Because it's true. A liar knows a
liar.

FR. CARMINE
Do not address it!

TOM
Are you a liar, Rosaria?

ROSARIA
Fuck you! Coward!

TOM
What is it you want me to believe?

ROSARIA
(in Latin)
"Put on your whole armor that you
might withstand the wiles of the
Devil!"

TOM
Do you want me to believe in you?

ROSARIA
(in a giant voice)
YOU FEAR ME MORTAL!

The sheer power of the voice stops Carmine's praying. The room is silent except for A LOW GROWL stirring within the girl. Tom gathers his courage.

TOM
How can I fear you, if I don't
believe in you?

The girl's face crumples instantly like a prune and turns purple.

TOM
Are you trying to frighten me?

The creased and contorted face speaks in a hideous, shredded voice -

ROSARIA
I'll frighten you when you go home
tonight.

TOM
If I believed in you, you might
succeed at that ... but then if I
believed in you, I'd have to
believe in God.

Her face has now turned the color black, it's almost like the underside of a balled up spider.

FR. CARMINE
(fearing for the girl)
Dear God.

TOM
(persisting)
Wouldn't that mean you failed ...
if you were the reason I found God?

Her head stops swaying. All the sounds within her fall quiet ...

TOM
Why can't you answer me? Rosaria?

Slowly her face uncrumples ... her flesh returns to its pale palor ... her eyes slide from side to side, caught in the loop of Tom's logic.

TOM
Have I stumped you?

Suddenly her body relaxes and slumps back onto the bed, released from the spell.

FR. CARMINE
Rosaria?

ROSARIA
(in her normal voice)
Padre?

She weeps, dazed.

Tom glances at Carmine with a glint of victory in his eye as the priest comforts the girl.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Fr. Carmine sits on a bench in the wide hallway, exhausted by the night's events.

The sound of TOM'S FOOTSTEPS ECHO as he approaches ...

And passes the old priest.

FR. CARMINE
It's not over.

Tom slows to a stop.

FR. CARMINE
He's a deceiver.

TOM
Who are you trying to convince?

Tom stares Carmine down, watching the certainty in the old priest's eyes falter for the first time.

Tom continues down the hall.

EXT. SANTO SPIRITO HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Exiting the hospital gates, Tom looks back up at Rosaria's lit window. He watches the tableau of Fr. Carmine and Aunt Andria comforting the young expectant mother. Rosaria looks out the window in Tom's direction, as if sensing his gaze.

INT. VATICAN DORMITORY. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Tom cleans his teeth, thoughts churning. Reaching into the bathroom cabinet for a glass to rinse, he notices reflected in its mirror, the statue of Mary now faces the wall.

Walking over, he examines it - there's no way it moved itself. He goes to touch it when -

CLUNK. Lights out. Curfew.

Gingerly, he turns the statue around to face the room - stares into the porcelain visage of the Virgin in the dark when -

BEEP! BEEP!

Tom starts! His cellphone. He checks it -

CLOSE ON PHONE: the text message symbol is flashing.

He scrolls to the message -

"Liar. Liar. Priest on fire."

Tom frowns. Texts back -

"Who is this?"

A reply doesn't seem forthcoming ... until BEEP BEEP -

"Eddie. Asshole! ... :)"

Tom smiles, partly out of relief, when the phone BEEPS again -

"Confession: I balled Nina. Forgive me father."

His smile twists into mild contempt.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. MORTUARY - NIGHT

Tom is preparing the same body of the plump, suicide Goth girl. He looks up to see a TALL FIGURE standing in the doorway - A MAN - his face in shadow.

TOM

Dad?

The figure does not move -

Tom steps closer, squinting into the faint glint of the shadow figure's eyes ... when

The figure reaches out his hand, palm down - on his wrist is the Goth girl's bracelet of trinkets. TINKLE, TINKLE.

Tom takes the stranger's hand ... and blows on the fingers 3 times.

CUT TO:

TOM WAKES, STARTLED FROM HIS DREAM.

He looks around the dormitory room, nothing seems out of the ordinary ...

A faint BREEZE WHISTLES through the window's frame.

Tightening its seal, he looks out at the early dawn to see through the veil of mist, A FIGURE sitting in the courtyard below, looking up at him.

There's something familiar about the figure's stillness ...

The mist lifts slightly to reveal Benito, the airline pilot, dressed in full uniform.

Tom pulls back from the window observing the odd visitor ... Benito does not move - just stares.

EXT. VATICAN COURTYARD - DAWN

Zippering his jacket against the cold, Tom steps across the courtyard, and gingerly approaches the lone man. Benito has that strange blank stare in his eyes as before.

TOM
Are you OK?

Getting no answer -

TOM
What are you doing here?

Benito speaks with disarming calm -

BENITO
Hello, Doubter.

TOM
(cautiously)
Why don't you come inside?

BENITO
We are inside.

TOM
What are you talking about?

BENITO
(smiling)
I'm happy to tell you he'll soon be
with us.

TOM
Who?

Benito's eyes roll back and disappear leaving two black
sockets when -

THERE'S A SUDDEN LOUD KNOCKING.

Tom turns around as -

CUT TO:

DORMITORY -

Tom wakes startled from his sleep.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK.

Shaking off the dream, he stumbles across the room and
answers the door -

Before him stands Fr. Ignatious.

FR. IGNATIUS
Sorry to wake you.

TOM
What is it?

FR. IGNATIUS
It's your father.

INT. FR. IGNATIUS'S OFFICE - MORNING

Tom is on the phone. Fr. Ignatious hovers in the doorway with
a cup of tea.

TOM
(into phone)
And he hasn't regained
consciousness?

DOCTOR ON PHONE (V. O.)
No. We're waiting on the CT but
appears the stroke was massive.

TOM
Who found him?

DOCTOR ON PHONE
I'm not sure, I think it was a
neighbor.

TOM
I see.

DOCTOR ON PHONE (V. O.)
There's not much more I can tell
you at this point. He could
stabilize. He could stay like this.

TOM
I see.

DOCTOR ON PHONE
I'm sorry.

Tom nods - hangs up.

FR. IGNATIUS
I'll organize your flight home.

Ignatious places the tea before Tom.

FR. IGNATIUS
I'm sorry, Thomas. I'll include
your father in my prayers.

TOM
(dazed)
Thank you.

CUT TO:

A PHONE RINGING.

INT. FR. CARMINE'S RECTORY - MORNING

Entering the kitchen, Fr. Carmine answers the phone -

FR. CARMINE
Pronto.

OVER A CRACKLING PHONELINE comes A MAN'S VOICE -

VOICE (V.O.)
(Italian: subtitled)
<Father?>

FR. CARMINE
(Italian: subtitled)
<Who is this?>

VOICE (V.O.)
<I'm afraid. >

FR. CARMINE
<Who is this?>

VOICE (V.O.)
<It's coming for me. >

STATIC ROARS out of the phone. The line goes dead.

INT. ROME AIRPORT - DAY

Still dazed, Tom pushes through the throng of travellers. Bags in hand, he hands his passport to the CHECK-IN GIRL when he sees across the departure lounge -

Benito, the pilot, sitting on a leather bench staring plainly at Tom.

CHECK-IN GIRL
Excuse me, sir.

Tom snaps back around.

CHECK-IN
I'm sorry, but your ticket has been cancelled.

TOM
I'm sorry?

CHECK-IN
Your ticket. It was cancelled last night.

TOM
(indicating his ticket)
But I have it here. It's here. I just need to change the return date.

CHECK-IN
It seems strange, yes. It is no longer in our system.

TOM
I need to get home. It's an emergency.

CHECK-IN
I understand. Please, if you will be seated, I will see what the problem is.

She leaves the counter.

Tom turns back around to find Beni to still staring.

Against all good sense, he approaches the unsettling figure.

TOM
It's Beni to, right?

He has that same morbid stare as in Tom's dream - eyelids at half mast.

TOM
Are you OK?

BENITO
It's inside.

TOM
What?

The man seems preoccupied.

TOM
Beni to?

BENITO
We enjoyed your dream last night.

Tom reels - Beni to smiles strangely.

BENITO
(in a twisted voice)
How is your father?

CHECK-IN WOMAN (O. S.)
Mr. Beran?

Backing away from the pilot's unsettling gaze, Tom heads back to the counter.

CHECK-IN WOMAN
We've reissued your ticket.

TOM
(dazed)
We?

CHECK-IN WOMAN
The airline. Unfortunately, the
earliest flight is tomorrow. I'm
sorry.

TOM
That's not fast enough. I'll try
another airline then.

CHECK-IN WOMAN
I'm afraid there are no other
connecting flights to America today
from this airport. Two runways are
already closed.

Tom takes the ticket with no further argument.

Turning back around, he sees Benito is no longer sitting
where he was. He looks around the departure area ...

Benito heads for the customs gate.

Tom runs to catch him.

As Benito goes through the gate -

TOM
Hey!

Glancing over his shoulder - Benito gives a wicked smile and
joins his crew members, disappearing around a corner.

The SECURITY GUARDS at the gate regard Tom suspiciously.

Tom looks on helplessly at the PASSENGERS heading through to
their flights.

INT. CORRIDOR. SANTO SPIRITO HOSPITAL - DAY.

Fr. Carmine, sleeps in a chair in the hospital's corridor.
Opposite him, Rosaria's Aunt also dozes.

INSIDE ROSARIA'S ROOM -

CLOSE ON ROSARIA.

In the shadows of her darkened hospital room - Rosaria writhes in her sleep - eyes flicking back and forth under lids. She MOANS and WHIMPERS - her body twisting and jerking as if her limbs are being pulled. All the while, a SICKENING, SQUELCHING SOUND accompanies her somnambulant struggle.

Suddenly her struggle stops.

There is a small but distinct, truncated CRY.

Rosaria's eyes SNAP OPEN, ALERT, WIDE WITH TERROR and some awful realization.

She sits bolt up, struggling against the leather straps still binding her wrists and ankles.

Looking down at her lap, she SCREAMS.

Rushing into the room, Fr. Carmine gawks -

A NEW BORN CHILD lays caked in afterbirth between Rosaria's parted legs, its umbilical cord knotted tight around its neck - dead.

Carmine falls to his knees as ROSARIA'S SCREAMS ECHO.

INT. DORMITORY - DAY

Tom makes his way down the hall with his bags. Getting to his door, he sees a note pinned to it. He plucks it off -

"Santa Spiritu. Come quickly." Signed "C."

INT. SANTA SPIRITU HOSPITAL. ROSARIA'S ROOM - DAY

Fr. Carmine sits quietly while a POLICE OFFICER questions him.

POLICE OFFICER
(Italian: subtitled)
<No one else was in the room?>

FR. CARMINE
No.

ACROSS THE WARD - Rosaria's Aunt Andri a weeps inconsolably as A NURSE removes the dead infant's bundled body from the room. Rosaria lays huddled in her bed, her back to the scene.

IN THE CORRIDOR -

Tom quizzes the nurse with the infant -

TOM
How in God's name, can a woman give
birth in her sleep?

NURSE
I don't know.

TOM
Has she said anything?

NURSE
No.

TOM
Do you think she killed it?

NURSE
Her legs and hands were tied.

Tom looks shocked.

NURSE
You didn't know?

Tom looks back over at Carmine being questioned.

INT. SAME - LATER

Tom and Carmine sit in the corridor, alone. Carmine looks
totally dejected.

TOM
What happened in there?

FR. CARMINE
I told you, I don't know.

Tom looks at Carmine suspiciously.

TOM
Was there anyone else in the room?

FR. CARMINE
No. I said no.

TOM
Then how did it happen?

FR. CARMINE
I don't know.

TOM
 She gave birth - the child died.
 You're saying you heard nothing or
 saw nothing?

FR. CARMINE
 Yes.

TOM
 Then how do you explain it?

FR. CARMINE
 It was the demon!

TOM
 If you could hear yourself. It's
 arcane. It's sick!

FR. CARMINE
 Then you explain it!

TOM
 I wasn't here!

Carmine turns away.

TOM
 She lost her child!

FR. CARMINE
 I know! That is forever on my soul.
 I'm sorry.
 (near tears)
 We lost.

TOM
 You lost. You dragged me into this.
 She should have had proper care.

He walks away. Carmine sinks back into his despair.

EXT. VATICAN GATES - NIGHT

A line of TOURISTS wait at a taxi stand outside the walled city.

Tom emerges from the gates, bags packed, and heads for the line, when he runs into Sr. Angeline.

SR. ANGELINE
 What was it, the decor? You could
 upgrade to a papal suite.

Moving past her -

TOM
Excuse me.

SR. ANGELINE
Everything OK?

TOM
No ... no ... my father had a
stroke.

SR. ANGELINE
(sincerely)
I'm sorry.

TOM
(catching himself)
It's OK. I just need to get out of
here.

SR. ANGELINE
Your plane's tonight? I could give
you a lift.

TOM
No, it's not tonight.

SR. ANGELINE
Where are you going?

Off his look -

SR. ANGELINE
Sorry, I didn't mean to pry.
Forgive me.

The truth is Tom doesn't know where he's going.

TOM
I don't know. A hotel.

SR. ANGELINE
Please, let me drive you.

Tom looks at the line of tourists shivering at the taxi
stand.

SR. ANGELINE
You'll freeze waiting there.

INT. SR. ANGELINE'S CAR - NIGHT

Amidst a traffic jam - Italians leaning on their HORNS - Tom and Sr. Angeline sit in silence, resigned to the chaos outside. Eventually -

TOM

So why is it you felt compelled to pray for me, Sister?

SR. ANGELINE

You'll think I'm crazy.
(off his look)

Right ... like you don't already.

The traffic inches forward.

SR. ANGELINE

It's interesting you use the word "compelled" because that's what it's like - like I don't have a choice. I get feelings about people -- let's call them feelings -- and they don't leave me alone.
(self conscious)

I never mention this to anyone, ever. Since I was about 12, I've experienced these things that are out of my control. It makes me feel uncomfortable just talking about it. But ... it's the reason I became a nun. No-one knows this ... except you, now ... and my mother.

TOM

I'm not sure I follow.

SR. ANGELINE

I see auras. Yours is black.

EXT. HOTEL. SPANISH STEPS, ROME - NIGHT

It's snowing. Sr. Angeline's car sits parked out the front of a hotel.

SR. ANGELINE (V.O.)

I've always known we have souls.
I'm lucky, my faith has been easy for me.

INT. SR. ANGELINE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Angeline and Tom sit in the car, watching the snow. Tom looks perturbed.

SR. ANGELINE

None of what I experienced had anything to do with Catholicism, obviously. I mean I didn't see angels and saints. But on the other hand, colors are significant in the mass. Priests wear purple for Easter, gold for Christmas. The Virgin Mary is always depicted wearing blue. Auras are like spiritual thermometers. Blue is healing. Red - passion. Yellow - joy.

TOM

And black?

SR. ANGELINE

(covering)

People's auras can change.

Realizing her words have affected him -

SR. ANGELINE

What happened to you?

TOM

I don't know. I grew up seeing things I shouldn't have. Things the average person has nightmares about. Kind of like you, I had no control over it. But it didn't give me faith.

SR. ANGELINE

Wanting faith is having faith.

TOM

Thanks for the lift. Good night, Sister.

He steps out of the car and heads for the hotel.

EXT. VERANO CEMETERY - NIGHT

Aunt Andria's car pulls up outside Fr. Carmine's rectory. Carmine gets out. He taps on the roof. The car drives off.

Left alone in the snow, he looks up at the cross crowning the old church, opposite. His eyes fill with remorse. He tries to make the Sign of The Cross but instead crumbles to his knees, holding his head in his hands and sobs.

INT. TOM'S HOTEL - NIGHT

A drift of snow builds on the hotel's window sill.

Tom is on the phone.

TOM
(into phone)
I'm calling to check on my father's
condition. Ivan Beran. B-E-R-A-N.

OPERATOR (V.O.)
Please hold.

MUSAK plays over the line for what seems forever. The hotel lights flicker - the MUSAK STOPS.

A FEEBLE VOICE SPEAKS -

IVAN (V.O.)
Thomas?

TOM
Dad? You're awake?

IVAN (V.O.)
Thomas?

TOM
Dad, you're OK?

IVAN (V.O.)
Thomas?

TOM
Yes, it's Thomas.

IVAN (V.O.)
I'm scared.

TOM
It's OK, Dad. You're OK.

IVAN (V.O.)
No ... something's happened.

TOM
It's OK, Dad.

IVAN (V.O.)
(tearful)
I'm scared. Where are you?

TOM
I'll be home soon, Dad. Something happened with my flight.

IVAN (V.O.)
(crying)
Where am I?

TOM
You're in hospital.

Ivan can't control his blubbering.

TOM
What is it, Dad? Dad?

IVAN (V.O.)
I'm scared, Thomas.

The line suddenly cuts back to MUSAK.

TOM
Dad?

The MUSAK is interrupted again -

VOICE (V.O.)
Mr. Beran?

TOM
Yes?

VOICE (V.O.)
It's Doctor Vorachian.

TOM
Yes?

VOICE (V.O.)
I'm afraid I've got some bad news.
Your father passed away this
afternoon.

TOM
What?

VOICE (V.O.)
Your father died this afternoon.
I'm very sorry.

TOM
That's impossible, I was just ... I
was just speaking with him, just
now.

VOICE (V.O.)
I'm sorry, sir, that's ... that's
not likely ... he was declared dead
this afternoon at 4:20 p.m. I was a
witness. I'm sorry for your loss.

Tom shakes his head, stone-cold speechless.

VOICE (V.O.)
Mr. Beran? Mr. Beran?

Tom hangs up.

Holding his head in his hands, he cries with grief and
confusion.

INT. SANTA SPIRITU HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Rosaria sleeps deeply - her breathing congested, when a
strange RATTLE takes a hold of her chest. Her eyes open
drowsily and stare comatose at the ceiling.

Uncannily, a thin column of smoke escapes from her mouth,
floats to the ceiling and drifts into the hall.

Her eyes close again.

INT. TOM'S HOTEL - NIGHT

Tom lays on his bed in the dark. His gaze drifts across the
wall opposite and settles on the crucifix hanging over the
TV.

Getting up, he goes to the window and looks out.

Below, in the snow, a line of animal tracks -- hoof marks -- lead across the piazza and up the steps of his hotel. Strange.

Just then, the distinct SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS echo in the hall outside -

CLICK CLOMP CLOMP - CLICK CLOMP CLOMP ...

They stop outside his room ...

Tom stares at the door ... uncertain ...

He moves closer ...

There's a strange SCRATCHING at the door ...

Gripping the handle, he braces and ...

Opens it!

No one there. The hall is dark and empty. Then -

TINKLE ... TINKLE ...

Tom looks down --

ROSARIA'S BRACELET hangs from the door's outside handle.

Swallowing his fear, Tom quickly paces down the hall, peering into the shadows ...

The elevator at the end of the passage RATTLES -

A SHADOW FIGURE stares from its closing doors -

Tom runs for it, craning his neck ...

The doors close too fast.

He bounds down the FIRESTAIRS ...

HOTEL FOYER -

Racing from the stairwell, he checks the elevator - its doors are open - EMPTY.

ACROSS THE FOYER - A gust of WIND WHISTLES through the hotel's entrance doors as they swing to.

He dashes for the doors -

HOTEL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Tom pushes through the doors into the winter night. The piazza is deserted, still as death ... he peers into the pockets of shadow, breath fogging against the cold ... when -

HAAAAW!!!

He spins around -

A BLACK DONKEY stands just feet away - incongruous, alone in the snow. The creature stares fixedly at Tom, then without any fuss it canters off into the dark.

Grabbing the back of his neck, Tom shivers with a sudden chill. Spinning on his feet, he looks around the piazza feeling invisible eyes on him.

INT. BEDROOM. FR. CARMINE'S RECTORY - NIGHT

Fr. Carmine lays in bed, holding his Rosary beads in his hand - unable to pray.

Sitting up, he sniffs the air ... his nose wrinkles with repulsion.

Getting out of bed, he heads across the upstairs landing to the exorcism room. Looking inside, he switches on the light. Sniffs the air. Nothing.

Leaving the light on, he heads downstairs.

DOWNSTAIRS -

Following his senses, he heads across the hall into -

THE KITCHEN -

He switches on the light and grimaces. On the center of the kitchen table a LARGE PILE OF EXCREMENT steams. Stuck up-side-down in the top of the pile is a crucifix.

He looks around the room - empty. Down the hall - deserted. Then CLICK -

The light to the exorcism room turns off.

Carmine looks back up the stairs ... listens ... silence ...

Turning out the kitchen light, he heads back upstairs into the darkness.

EXT. LOW RENT APARTMENT BLOCK. MONTE TESTACCIO - MORNING

Tom climbs the staircase of the familiar crowded courtyard hung with washing.

Coming to a red door, he KNOCKS. Francesca - the mother of Luciano - answers. Without a word spoken, she lets Tom in.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Francesca and her son, Luciano, sit opposite Tom. The boy stares warily at the visitor.

FRANCESCA
He has been very good, since Father prayed.

Tom nods, preoccupied.

FRANCESCA
(sensing something)
Did Father send you?

TOM
No.

FRANCESCA
What is the reason for you coming here?

TOM
The other day, I saw your son whisper something to you. Was it about me?

Francesca looks at her son ruefully.

TOM
Please. It's very important.

FRANCESCA
(with trouble)
He told me your father is going to die.

Holding back his emotion -

TOM
Who told him that?

She translates. The boy answers.

FRANCESCA
He says you know. He says you have
seen it too.

TOM
Seen what?

FRANCESCA
The spi ri t. The donkey.

Hi di ng behi nd hi s mother, Luci ano whi spers i n her ear.

FRANCESCA
After Father bless Luci ano, the
donkey promi se to leave hi m alone.
He say, you bring the bad spi ri t
back today. If it is true, then you
need to pray.

The boy whi spers i nto her ear -

LUCI ANO
(I tal ian: subt i t l e)
<Make hi m leave, Mama. Pl ease! >

FRANCESCA
(sharpl y)
<Be pol i te! >
(to Tom)
I 'm sorry. He i s afraid.

Standi ng from the tabl e, the boy yell s angri l y at Tom -

LUCI ANO
<Get out! Go away! >

The boy spits at Tom's feet and runs from the room. Francesca
takes a swi pe at her son -

FRANCESCA
Luci ano!
(to Tom)
I 'm sorry. Pl ease forgi ve hi m.
Maybe . . . maybe you can go.

EXT. VERANO CEMETERY - MORN I NG

A PREGNANT CAT si ts on a gravestone, MAWI NG.

INT. BATHROOM/FR. CARMINE'S RECTORY - MORNING

Pulling the skin under his chin taught, Fr. Carmine draws a razor across his white stubble when he flinches - cut.

FR. CARMINE

Fanculo.

Grabbing a tissue, he stems the tiny spring of blood as he sucks air through his teeth, hissing -

FR. CARMINE

Tsssssst.

Looking his reflection in the eye, he hisses at his own image.

FR. CARMINE

Tsssssst.

EXT. MONTE TESTACCIO - DAY

Tom stands in a phone booth listening to a RECORDED MESSAGE -

VOICE (V.O.)

(over the phone)

Due to severe weather conditions,
Aeroporto Leonardo da Vinci di
Fiumicino will be closed until
further notice. Please call back.

Hanging up the phone, Tom heads down the icy, cobbled street.

EXT. PIAZZA NAVONA - DAY

Snow is thick on the ground. CHILDREN play excitedly, rolling snowballs.

Windswept icicles hang like jagged, lace from the piazza's frozen fountain. Next to it, Fr. Carmine stands in a stupor.

A YOUNG GIRL approaches the priest with a handful of snow.

YOUNG GIRL

(Italian: subtitle)

<Bless my snowball, Father?>

Carmine looks down at her soft-skinned face. He smiles tenuously, mouth quivering as some great battle rages in his head - darker thoughts threatening.

The bridge of his trembling brow breaks into a frown. With a sudden, vicious swipe, he SLAPS the girl hard across the face, sending her straight to the ground.

The other children stare, stunned.

Stepping over the SCREAMING girl, the priest pushes past the children and heads across the piazza, his pace quickening with every step.

His black figure shrinks into the haze of white.

EXT. VERANO CEMETERY. RECTORY - DAY

On a crumbling grave, the MOTHER CAT licks the slimy afterbirth from her freshly born LITTER -- greasy little satchels of life, blindly SQUEAKING for their first feed.

AT THE RECTORY - Tom KNOCKS on Fr. Carmine's kitchen door. Getting no answer, he leans his ear closer to hear a LOW DRONING SOUND. Pushing the door open, he gags and covers his nose.

INSIDE - The pile of excrement still sits on the table now covered in flies.

Quickly pulling the door shut, he heads around to the front of the house when the bloodcurdling sound of TINY SQUEALS and the CRUNCHING of soft bones breaks the snow-packed silence.

Spinning around, Tom sees the mother cat devouring one of its young.

Looking up from the uncanny sight, he recognizes the BLACK FIGURE laboriously making its way down the snow-filled cemetery road.

CLOSE ON: Fr. Carmine, his countenance drawn as he struggles to maintain control over his frostbitten body.

Slipping on snow, he staggers. Tom grabs his elbow, steadying him.

TOM
Father, what happened?

Barely able to move his frozen lips -

FR. CARMINE
I don't know.

TOM
You must be freezing. Let's get you
inside.

INT. RECTORY - DAY

Tom ushers Carmine down the hall. The priest looks into the kitchen, stares at the filth on the table with peculiar detachment.

FR. CARMINE
I think I should lie down. I'm not
feeling myself.

He heads upstairs - Tom follows, keeping a watchful eye.

INT. FR. CARMINE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Carmine lays himself down. Tom throws two blankets over him.

TOM
Where did you go?

FR. CARMINE
I don't know. I just found myself
walking.

His eyes glaze over with a thousand-yard stare.

FR. CARMINE
I think I did something ... awful.
(tears well)
I forgot myself.

He winces, revisited by a painful memory. Tom glimpses a fear in the old man's eyes he has not seen before.

FR. CARMINE
I've been trying to pray all day,
but I'm no longer in a state of
grace, Thomas. Prayer is your only
salvation. Remember that. It knows
you. Knows all your sins.

His face looks pained to say these words.

FR. CARMINE
You'll need help.

TOM
With what?

FR. CARMINE
 With what must be done. It has to
 be you.

Opening the drawer of his bedside table, he removes A KEY.

FR. CARMINE
 Lock me in. Find someone you trust.

Looking pleadingly into Tom's eyes -

FR. CARMINE
 It's strong. There are many.

Carmen suddenly stiffens with pain. Before Tom's eyes the
 priest's face and hands break out in thorny scratches beading
with blood. Gritting his teeth, Carmen throws off the
 blankets -

His clothes seep with blood.

Pupils the size of nickels, he grabs Tom and shouts -

FR. CARMINE
 Go now!

BOOKS FLY FROM THE SHELF ACROSS THE ROOM.

Struck with terror, Tom grabs the key and bounds out of the
 room, locking the door behind him.

EXT. VERANO CEMETERY - DAY

Stumbling out of the rectory, Tom looks back up at Carmine's
 window to see a SHADOW FIGURE standing calmly behind the
 curtains.

Turning away, he paces quickly across the snow covered ground
 through the gauntlet of tombstones.

INT. FR. IGNATIUS'S OFFICE - DAY

Fr. Ignatious's SECRETARY works at his desk.

Tom enters trying to maintain calm -

SECRETARY
 (Italian: subtitled)
 <Can I help you?>

TOM
I'm looking for Fr. Ignatious.

SECRETARY
He has left for the day.

TOM
It's very urgent.

SECRETARY
It is the weekend.

Tom clearly has no idea what day it is.

TOM
Is there any way of getting in touch with him?

SECRETARY
I'm afraid he is on a train to Civitavecchia as we speak.

TOM
Does he have a cellphone?
Cellulare.

SECRETARY
Si.

The Secretary indolently writes a number on a piece of paper. Tom plucks it from the desk.

INT. VATICAN AUDITORIUM CORRIDOR - DAY

Pacing through the sleek modern section of lecture theaters and tutorial rooms, Tom checks behind doors - the place is empty. During this:

RECORDED VOICE (V.O.)
(his recorded voice)
<Padre Ignatio qui sa comando non
correspondi la telefono. Per favore
lasciare messaggio. >

BEEP.

TOM
(into phone)
Father, it's Tom Beran, I have an
urgent matter regarding Father C--

BEEP - the phone cuts out. He hits REDIAL - the line is dead. He hits redial again when --

A MUFFLED SCREAM comes from behind the closed door of a tutorial room.

Tom stops. Listens at the door - there is RUCKUS and VOICES.

He opens the door -

TUTORIAL ROOM -

A TV MONITOR plays a video of a TEENAGE GIRL being exorcised by Fr. Ignatious. She screams expletives in Italian, spitting and flailing while another priest holds her down.

The room is otherwise empty. It's as if the video is playing for its own pleasure.

Tom turns the video off. The room falls dark and silent. He looks around, spooked.

INT. VATICAN LIBRARY - DAY

Beneath vaulted, filigreed and frescoed ceilings, a hall of bookcases stretches down endless polished marble floors. Vividly painted STATUES OF ANGELS AND SAINTS stand like macabre sentinels at the head of every pillar.

Down a narrow, dimly lit aisle, Tom scans the spines of red and black leather books.

He selects one - "Rituale Romanum".

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON: A 14th Century illumination of a demon - it's hideous head surrounded by six horse's legs like some vulgar catherine-wheel. Beneath, it reads - "Buer - the 10th spirit."

WIDE ON: VATICAN LIBRARY -

Surrounded by stacks of books and manuscripts, Tom sits at a desk reading the first chapter of the "Rituale Romanum"

INSERT - "Instructions for exorcising the possessed".

TOM'S POV - "... the exorcist must have piety, prudence and integrity ... "

TOM
 (reading)
 "...not relying on his own
 strengths, but on the power of
 God."

INT. SISTINE CHAPEL - AFTERNOON

Tom sits in the front row of the quiet chapel, contemplating Michelangelo's master work - THE LAST JUDGEMENT. Before him, Christ judges the souls of the living and the dead - gruesome depictions of the damned suffering at the hands of demons piling people into boats headed for Hell.

He looks down at the "Rituale Romanum" in his hand - despairing when -

JANGLE JANGLE -

A FRIAR stands at the back of the chapel shaking a set of keys, indicating time to close.

FRIAR
 Scuzi .

Tom nods.

INT. VATICAN DORMITORY/NUN'S QUARTERS - AFTERNOON

Getting strange looks from a PAIR OF OLD NUNS walking down the hall, Tom knocks on a door.

Sr. Angelina answers.

SR. ANGELINE
 You don't know whether you're
 coming or going, do you?

TOM
 Not really.

She sees he is truly shaken.

SR. ANGELINE
 You OK?

TOM
 Can I come in?

SR. ANGELINE
 As long as you keep both feet on
 the floor at all times and your
 hands in your pockets, it's
 permitted.

INT. SR. ANGELINE'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The place is as tiny as Tom's room, only cluttered with
 magazines and papers.

TOM
 I need to ask you a favor that I
 don't deserve to ask.

SR. ANGELINE
 Shoot.

TOM
 Someone I know is in spiritual
 distress. I need someone to help me
 ... pray over him.

SR. ANGELINE
 You're talking about an exorcism,
 aren't you?

Tom lets his silence be the answer. Suddenly confronted with
 the opportunity, Sr. Angelina balks -

SR. ANGELINE
 Why me?

TOM
 I trust you.

EXT. VERANO CEMETERY - DUSK

The winter sun has buried itself.

Racing against the night's cloaking darkness, Tom leads Sr.
 Angelina through the cemetery.

Arriving at the rectory's front door, Tom turns to the nun -

TOM
 Whatever you see, don't show your
 fear.

Noting Tom's earnestness, she swallows back a wisecrack.

INT. RECTORY - TWILIGHT

The house is almost dark. The dim light hangs caught in the window drapes. Tom enters ... Looks around.

In the middle of the hallway, RELIGIOUS PICTURES AND STATUES that once decorated the place now sit in a pile smashed and broken.

Sr. Angeline's eyes widen at the sight.

Giving the pile a wide berth, they continue down the hall.

Pulling the door of the kitchen to, Tom heads upstairs followed closely by the nun.

Halfway up, he cranes his neck, peering through the banisters to see the door to Carmine's room splintered and open. He stops ...

Sensing something, he looks back downstairs - the kitchen door is ajar again. Angeline steps closer to Tom.

Summoning the nerve -

TOM
Father Carmine?

Nothing.

TOM
Carmine?

A cold breeze blows up the stairwell. The kitchen door SLAMS shut.

Tom turns to go back down when -

A floorboard CREAKS upstairs. They continue up.

Reaching the landing, Tom hears the CREAKING again. He peers around the doorway of the exorcism room -

A FIGURE sits in shadow on a chair in the center of the space. A gruff, menacing VOICE speaks -

FIGURE
Hello again.

TOM
Father?

The figure leans forward to reveal it is Carmine -

FR. CARMINE
I'm afraid he's out.

His eyes are glazed over in a dead stare - his pallid skin scratched and scabbed, his breathing congested and labored.

TOM
What are you doing in here?

FR. CARMINE
Waiting.

Gesturing -

FR. CARMINE
Come in.

Sr. Angeline stands on the stairs, unseen by Carmine. Tom surreptitiously signals for her to stay put. He enters the room warily.

FR. CARMINE
Shall we begin?

TOM
In time, Father.

FR. CARMINE
I told you, he's not here.

TOM
Then who are you?

FR. CARMINE
An old friend.

TOM
Friend?

Carmine smiles broadly.

FR. CARMINE
I'm looking forward.

TOM
To what?

FR. CARMINE
Being together.

TOM
I'm not sure I follow.

FR. CARMINE
You follow. You always have. "You did not choose me, it was I who chose you." Remember?

Tom recognizes the quote - The Gospel of St. John. Fr. Matthew used it in his sermon.

FR. CARMINE
Did you like our gift?

TOM
What gift?

FR. CARMINE
The one I hung on your door.

Tom masks his surprise.

FR. CARMINE
Are you following, yet?

Indicating the door -

FR. CARMINE
Close that.

TOM
Why?

FR. CARMINE
We don't want to be disturbed.

ON THE LANDING -

Sr. Angeline peers through the crack between the door and its jamb, glimpsing the priest. Suddenly, he looks directly at her through the crack -

BANG. The door slams shut on its own.

INSIDE THE ROOM -

Tom tries to control his fear.

FR. CARMINE
Your father says hello, by the way.

TOM
You don't know my father.

FR. CARMINE
Very well.

He snickers.

TOM
Where was he born?

FR. CARMINE
It's where he ended up that's important.

TOM
Where was he born?

FR. CARMINE
Milaaku. Zlaticko. Prekrasny.
Prekrasny. Prekrasny.

Carmine's words were spoken by Ivan to his dead wife in the mortuary.

TOM
Do you know what that means?

Carmine stares blankly.

TOM
Tell me what it means.

IN A GIANT VOICE -

FR. CARMINE
YOU DON'T COMMAND ME!

TOM
No . . .
(willing himself to say
the words)
. . . God does.

The priest laughs mockingly.

FR. CARMINE
Is that so, Doubter?

Tom can't hold the priest's frightening gaze.

FR. CARMINE
Your father says he enjoyed his
final chat with you. I'm guessing
you didn't enjoy it as much.

Haunted by the words, Tom fights back his distress.

TOM
You're a deceiver.

FR. CARMINE
Your father died at 4:20 p.m. - Chicago time. His last moments were full of panic. He regretted many things in his life - the shallowness of his existence. A man who travelled so far to end up alone in a house of the dead - no family, friends or loved ones around him. He expected you to live in his footsteps. You deserted him. This caused him great pain in the end. You hurt him most.

Smiles -

FR. CARMINE
Need I go on?

Tom clings to what's left of his logic -

TOM
Are you reading my mind?

FR. CARMINE
Yes. No. Yes.

TOM
What am I thinking now?

FR. CARMINE
Don't be so tedious, you prick! You piss-ant.

Carmine stands. Tom bravely holds his ground.

TOM
Stand back.

FR. CARMINE
You don't command me! You are nothing! I will not leave! NEVER!

Suddenly the priest falls to his knees. CARMINE'S REAL VOICE speaks desperately to Tom -

FR. CARMINE
Pray, Thomas!

Suddenly his arms jut out, Christ-like, then bend backwards at the elbow, tendons stretching and CREAKING as if some giant hand manipulates his body -

FR. CARMINE
Aaaarrrggghh! God help me.
(Demon voice)
God is not here, Priest.

Carmine GRUNTS like an ape, as angry MOANS rise from within him like a pit of suffering souls. The sound shivers through the walls.

OUTSIDE THE ROOM -

Sr. Angeline listens by the door, terrified by THE VOICES.

IN THE ROOM -

Carmine's body struggles in some internal battle, as he flails on the floor in pain.

TOM
Father?

FR. CARMINE
(real voice)
Quickly. Tie me.

His eyes roll back in his head. Grabbing the priest, Tom hastily drags him to the chair -

TOM
(calling)
Sister!

OUTSIDE THE ROOM -

Sr. Angeline, hesitates at the door.

TOM (O.S.)
Sister!

Gathering herself, she enters.

Carmine is frothing at the mouth - body convulsing. Tom struggles to lift him back onto the chair. Rushing to his aid, Sr. Angeline joins him.

Taking rope from the corner of the room, Tom binds Carmine's arms flat to his sides.

TOM
Tie his legs!

She balks at the command.

TOM
Help me!

She obeys.

All the while, Carmine makes a GRUNTING COUGH between deep mournful MOANS.

He is tied.

They stand back. Carmine slumps into a stupor in the chair.

SR. ANGELINE
Now what?

Catching up with his thoughts, Tom looks around the room, barely believing where he is and what he's doing.

INT. STAIRCASE LANDING - NIGHT

Tom sits on the top step, deep in thought. Sr. Angeline stands outside the exorcism room, eyes fixed on Carmine who sits passively, not bothering to struggle against the ropes.

SR. ANGELINE
How long will he stay like that?

TOM
I don't know. I'm guessing till we do something.

SR. ANGELINE
We should have a doctor here.

TOM
I know.

SR. ANGELINE
You don't have to do this, you know? We could wait for Fr. Ignatious.

TOM
I don't think so.

SR. ANGELINE
Why?

TOM
You asked me a few days ago, why
I'm here.

Angeline nods. She gets it.

He turns to her.

TOM
If you don't want to do this, I'll
understand.

She shakes her head -

SR. ANGELINE
I'm here.

She looks back at Carmine.

SR. ANGELINE
Why do you think it picked him?

TOM
Because of me. I think I made him
doubt.

SR. ANGELINE
I don't get it. He deals with this
stuff all the time.

TOM
When the faithful falter, they have
further to fall. That's their
burden.

Picking up the Rituale Romanum, he feels its weight.

TOM
I ... I haven't prayed in years.

SR. ANGELINE
It's not the kind of thing you
forget how to do.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON: TOM'S HAND - Placing an assortment of objects on a silver tray - Holy water, salt, oil, a crucifix, two candles and a box of matches. [It is reminiscent of Tom's embalming ritual we saw at the beginning of our story]

He lights the candles.

WIDE ON: THE EXORCISM ROOM.

Sr. Angeline helps Tom bless the lace surplice and purple priest's stole. He dons the Holy garments.

Turning to Carmine, he unscrews the vial of Holy water and opens the book of ritual. Making the Sign of the Cross with the Holy water -

TOM
In the name of the Father, and of
the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

SR. ANGELINE
Amen.

He blesses Sr. Angeline, then anoints Fr. Carmine with the water. Carmine MOANS woefully - head lolling.

TOM
Do not remember, O Lord, our sins
or those of our forefathers.

TOM SR. ANGELINE
Lord, have mercy on us. Lord, have mercy.

FR. CARMINE
Unbeliever!

TOM SR. ANGELINE
Christ, have mercy on us. Christ, have mercy.

FR. CARMINE
Doubter!

TOM SR. ANGELINE
Lord, have mercy on us. Lord, have mercy.

FR. CARMINE
Hell hath no mercy!! I took the
priest, I'll take you!

Ignoring Carmine -

TOM SR. ANGELINE
Holy Mary Mother of God. Pray for us.

Tom douses Carmine with Holy water again - again he MOANS DREADFULLY.

TOM SR. ANGELINE
 St. Michael and all you Holy Pray for us.
 Angels and Archangels.

More Holy water. Carmine makes a CAWING sound like a warning
 bird.

Keeping his eyes on the book, Tom continues as the pitiful
 sounds spring from the priest.

TOM
 Let us pray. Save this man, Carmine
 Giancollo, your servant.

SR. ANGELINE
 Because he hopes in you, God.

FR. CARMINE
Hope is dead!

TOM
 Send him help from the Holy Place.

SR. ANGELINE
 And give him Heavenly protection.

TOM
 Let the Enemy have no victory over
 him. Lord, hear us.

SR. ANGELINE
 Lord hear our prayer.

FR. CARMINE
 He cannot hear you. GOD IS NOT
 HERE!!!

A sudden wind gusts through the room, snuffing out the
 candles. Sr. Angeline stifles a GASP.

As Tom struggles to read in the dark, Angeline relights the
 candles to reveal the dark eyes of Carmine staring directly
 at her. She huddles back over the book. During this:

TOM
 Let us pray. All-powerful Father.
 Eternal God. I invoke your Holy
 Name and humbly request you snatch
 from this Devil this man who was
 created in -

FR. CARMINE
 Created in sin!

TOM
- created in your likeness.

In a GIANT VOICE, seething with hatred -

FR. CARMINE
THE LIKENESS OF SIN!

TOM
We ask this in the name of Jesus
Christ your son who lives and
reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit, as one God, forever
and ever.

SR. ANGELINE
Amen.

The place is silent. Then Carmine's demonic SNICKER creeps into the quiet.

Tom and Sr. Angeline both look up from the book of ritual and shudder.

Carmine's hair stands on end as if electrified - his face contorted into a demonic mask like a joker - brows arched - mouth set in a plastered grin. Framing either side of his pallid face, the two lit candles float magically in mid air.

Strange CACKLES spill out of him.

Gathering all his courage, Tom steps closer to the bound man and grabs the candles out of the air. Placing them back on the table, he takes the vial of Holy oil. Rubbing some on his thumb, he makes the sign of the cross on Fr. Carmine's temples and forehead. Carmine twists and MOANS as Tom recites.

TOM
By the mysteries of the
Incarnation, the Suffering, the
Death, the Resurrection and
ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ,
I command you: Tell me by some
sign, your name, demon.

Handing Sr. Angeline the book, he holds the crucifix over Carmine's head and repeats -

TOM
Your name, demon. Your name, demon.
Tell me your name!

Speaki ng j i bberi sh -

FR. CARMINE
(snarl i ng)
Cumni cul arfungul abashshshsssss
(hi sses)

Carmine' s eyes roll back i n hi s head exposing thei r whi tes.
Suddenly hi s face relaxes, hi s body slumps forward.

Tom watches carefully. Leans closer. Carmine' s breathing
stills. Then from somewhere deep i nsi de the priest, a barel y
percepti ble VOICE languis hes on the breath -

FR. CARMINE
Thomas . . . hel p me . . .

It' s the voi ce of hi s father.

FR. CARMINE
Thomas . . . don' t leave me agai n.

Haunted to hi s core, Tom closes the book and walks from the
room.

Bewi ldered, Sr. Angel i ne fol l ows.

OUTSIDE THE ROOM -

Tom leans over the banni ster, hel pl ess.

SR. ANGELINE
What' s goi ng on?

Tom shakes hi s head, unabl e to answer.

SR. ANGELINE
Let' s keep goi ng - get through to
the end.

TOM
It' s not j ust a matter of sayi ng
the words.

SR. ANGELINE
What' s not to believe i n, Thomas?

TOM
Mysel f.

SR. ANGELINE
God put you here. Believe i n that.

Considering her words -

TOM
I need a few minutes.

INSIDE THE ROOM -

Carmine sits tied to the chair, limp as a puppet - alone.

Tom enters again. Carmine remains staring macabrely at the floor.

Opening the book of ritual, Tom removes a SET OF ROSARY BEADS, kneels and murmurs The Hail Mary to himself.

Slowly, Carmine's head turns in Tom's direction.

FR. CARMINE
(in a normal voice)
Thomas?

Tom looks over to see Fr. Carmine, who suddenly looks normal.

TOM
Father?

He closes the book.

FR. CARMINE
Give up. He's stronger than you.
You don't have the strength. You
don't have the faith.

Turning away, Tom ignores the demon's words and begins preparing the Holy sacraments again, quietly continuing the Rosary -

TOM
Our Father who art in Heaven,
hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom
come Thy will (etc.)

Carmine interjects - his VOICE GRUFF and LOW again -

FR. CARMINE
Who are you praying to, Doubter?
You think I don't know your sins?
Your lies. They go back. I know the
day you pointed at some other man
waiting for his child and told your
teacher he was your father. You were
ashamed of him. You hated him. And
he hated you back.
(MORE)

FR. CARMINE (cont'd)
 How can God love you if your father
 doesn't? It makes sense, Thomas.
 You were never meant for God. You
 were always meant for me.

TOM
 Shut up!

FR. CARMINE
 Have I hit a nerve?

He laughs mockingly at Tom.

FR. CARMINE
 You chose me long ago. Remember?

Suddenly, magically, the tin crucifix on the string of rosary
 beads in Tom's hand bends in half, just as he had bent a
 crucifix years ago as a boy.

More MOCKING LAUGHTER.

A spark of defiance glints in Tom's eyes. With his thumb, he
 bends the crucifix straight again.

TOM
 (calling out)
 Sr. Angelina?

Angelina enters the room. Without a moment's hesitation, Tom
 opens the book, Holy water in hand and begins dousing Carmine
 as he reads with more conviction -

TOM
 I exorcise you most unclean spirit!

FR. CARMINE
 No!

TOM
 Invading enemy!

FR. CARMINE
 Never!

TOM
 All of you!

FR. CARMINE
 Unbeliever!

TOM
 I BELIEVE! I CHOOSE TO BELIEVE! I
 BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER, MAKER OF
 HEAVEN AND EARTH OF ALL THAT IS
 SEEN AND UNSEEN!

The force of Tom's words silences the demon who stares now, warily at his exorcist. Surprised by his own proclamation, Tom continues to douse Carmine with more vigor as the demon WAILS and MOANS.

TOM
 In the name of Our Lord Jesus
 Christ, be uprooted and expelled
 from this Creature of God. He who
 commands you is He who ordered you
 to be thrown down from the highest
 Heaven into the depths of Hell.
 Hear therefore and fear, Satan!
 Enemy of Faith!

At that moment, from outside the room, a LOUD CLOMPING enters the house and COMES CHARGING DOWN THE HALL ... and UP THE STAIRS - HOOVES STOMPING. Scores of them. A Legion. The door suddenly BANGS and splinters, over and over, buckling under the force of BLOWS. Angeline turns to the noise, terrified as Tom prays louder -

TOM
 Enemy of the human race! Source of
 death! Robber of life! Root of
 Evil!

BANG! BANG! Still the blows come, rattling the door in its jamb. Angeline and Tom huddle over the book, the words their only protection.

TOM
 Warp of vices! Creator of agony!
 Fear him who was crucified as man,
 and who rose from death!

Carmine's eyes roll back in his head, as his tongue extends to an unnatural length and engorges with blood taking the distinct shape of a BLACK PHALLUS poking in and out of his mouth. Sr. Angeline averts her eyes as the priest PANTS like a dog.

TOM
 Speak your name! In the name of
 Christ! I command you!

Slicing the vial of Holy water through the air Tom douses Carmine over and over as he commands -

TOM

Speak your name! In the name of The Holy Spirit! I command you! Give me your name! Give me your name! Give me your name! It is God who commands you!

His black pupils rolling back into view, Carmine fixes Tom with his dread stare and YELLS -

FR. CARMINE

BAAAAA' AAAL!

The cry of his name gives way to a long exhalation of air, like a death rattle.

The BANGING on the door has STOPPED dead.

Exhausted, Carmine's head slumps on his chest - his tongue lolling, flaccid and long out of his mouth like a poor, dead animal's. A pale cloud of smoke emerges from Carmine's throat and hovers in his open mouth. Tom once again marks the priest's forehead with Holy oil and continues relentlessly -

TOM

Retire therefore, Ba'al! Depart Ba'al, from this place. It is God Himself who commands you. Surrender now in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, forever and ever.

SR. ANGELINE

Amen.

TOM

Lord hear my prayer.

SR. ANGELINE

And let my cry reach you.

The smoke leaves Carmine like a spirit, rises to the ceiling and escapes through the room's high arched window.

With a gentle hand, Tom closes Carmine's gaping mouth. As he prays the next words, we understand he is praying them for himself as much as for Carmine -

TOM
 Preserve what is within this
 person. Rule his feelings, God.
 Strengthen his heart. Grant the
 grace to this, your servant, so
 that he may worship you with firm
 heart . . . and sincere mind. Through
 Christ Our Lord. Amen.

EXT. VERANO CEMETERY - DAWN

A new sun thaws the bank of fog laying low over the cemetery.

INT. RECTORY. FR. CARMINE'S ROOM - DAWN

In the day's first light, Sr. Angeline prays quietly over Carmine's bed as he sleeps peacefully.

She looks out the window to see Tom in the grounds below, washing the kitchen table clean with a bucket and mop. There is something noble in the way he works.

EXT. VERANO CEMETERY - DAY

Carmine sits on his stoop as he did the day Tom met him, stroking a cat.

Emerging from the house, Tom stands before Carmine, offering him his hand to shake.

TOM
 God bless you, Father.

FR. CARMINE
 God bless you.

Tom turns to leave, when the priest grabs him. With great sincerity -

FR. CARMINE
 Thank you, Thomas.

TOM
 Don't thank me.

Carmine nods.

Tom heads down the road, joining Sr. Angeline.

INT. CAR - DAY

Sr. Angeline pulls her car into the passenger loading zone of Rome airport - Tom riding shotgun.

SR. ANGELINE
Finally getting rid of you.

They sit a moment in silence, unsure exactly what to say to next.

TOM
Well, you've got a story to write.

SR. ANGELINE
Not that anyone would believe it.

TOM
I would.

She smiles.

CUT TO:

A JET PLANE FLIES INTO THE SUN. EVERYTHING TURNS WHITE.

CUT TO:

SUNLIGHT FILTERS THROUGH STAINED GLASS WINDOWS.

TILT DOWN on Tom laying prostrate before the altar in his white ordination gown.

Fr. Matthew stands beside the Bishop who recites -

BISHOP
You cannot bear the weight of this calling in your own strength, but only by the grace and power of God. Pray therefore that your heart may daily be enlarged and your understanding of the Scriptures enlightened.

EXT. CHICAGO STREET - DAY

A suburban street in Tom's home town. It's snowing. Everything is white and quiet.

We follow Tom down the pavement. He enters the gate to a cemetery.

CUT TO:

A TOMBSTONE: "IVAN BERAN - 1939 - 2007"

Beneath, an epitaph:

"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil -- Psalm 23"

CLOSE ON TOM: his expression inscrutable, until a single tear rolls down his cheek.

REMAIN ON: Epitaph.

EXT. HOLY ROSARY CHURCH. CHICAGO - DAY

Bracing himself against the cold, Tom heads into the church.

INT. HOLY ROSARY RECTORY - DAY

Entering his newly appointed quarters, Tom sorts through the mail on his desk. Opening a large envelope, he pulls out a newspaper clipping -

INSERT - The clipping's headline - "The Making Of An Exorcist - by Sr. Angelina Visconti". A brief handwritten note says - "Thought you'd like this."

Tom browses the article. Smiles. Noticing the time, he lays it on his desk and picks up the priest's stole hanging over his chair.

INT. HOLY ROSARY CHURCH- DAY

Dressed in his clericals, Tom enters the priest's booth of the confessional.

INSIDE THE BOOTH -

Tom makes the Sign of the Cross, says a brief prayer and switches on the light, indicating he is ready to take confession.

OUTSIDE THE BOOTH -

The PALE BLUE LIGHT illuminates above the confessional. A YOUNG WOMAN enters the booth.

INSIDE THE BOOTH -

Tom slides the wood hatch open. The woman kneels - her face obscured by the mesh. Tom leans in to listen to her confession . . .

When he hears TINKLE TINKLE -

Through the mesh, he sees the woman's hands joined in prayer, and on her wrist is the BRACELET.

WOMAN

Bless me Father, for I have sinned.

CUT TO BLACK.