

"SON OF THE DEVIL'S DAUGHTER"

written by

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Final draft

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1. EXT. VERANO CEMETERY - ROME - DUSK

A winter sky the color of wet pewter. Crows stitch the air.

MOURNERS cluster under black umbrellas around a freshly dug grave. A simple wooden cross bears a brass plate:

FATHER PIETRO LOMBARDI (1936-2025)

At the fringe stands a BLACK DOG—lean, motionless. It does not blink.

A PRIEST (60s) completes the rite.

PRIEST

Into your hands, O Lord, we commend

—

The wind lifts, a low organ note. The umbrellas shudder. The black dog turns and slips through the iron gate.

A YOUNG SEXTON (20s) watches it go, shivers.

Sexton (quiet)

Sempre loro...

He rubs his arm like it aches from old scars, then returns to his shovel.

HOLD on the grave as dirt spatters wood. The organ note lingers long past natural.

CUT TO BLACK.

A lullaby hums—familiar, off-key.

2. INT. ART THERAPY ROOM - ROMAN PSYCHIATRIC CLINIC - DAY

A light-filled room. Plants in chipped pots. A kettle breathes steam on a cart of teacups. Long tables are smeared with paint, charcoal, glue.

REGAN MACNEIL (27)—soft-spoken, alert eyes, hair tied back with the practicality of someone who's been through the wars and no longer dresses to apologize—sets down a box of pastels.

Five PATIENTS scatter around the room. Ages, histories, pharmacologies. One, MARCO (19), keeps his hoodie up, sketching feverishly.

On the whiteboard: "Today's Prompt: A PLACE YOU DO NOT SPEAK ABOUT."

Regan circulates. She does not push. She lets silences breathe.

She crouches by LUISA (40s), who has drawn a house with too many windows.

REGAN
Who's inside?

LUISA
(thinking)
The curtains.

A dry laugh. Regan nods like that makes perfect sense.

A VOLUNTEER sets a clipboard on Regan's desk.

VOLUNTEER
New intake observing today. Donor type. Polite shoes.

Regan smirks despite herself. She stands.

REGAN
Tell Polite Shoes this isn't a gallery. If they stay, they paint.

VOLUNTEER
He brought espresso.

REGAN
(beat; practical)
Then he can stay.

As the volunteer goes, Regan pauses by Marco. He shades a spiral with a crown of thorns around it—intricate, deliberate.

REGAN (CONT'D)
That's... detailed.

MARCO
Found it in my head. You know when a song gets stuck? It's like that. But an image.

Regan's face flickers—a ghost of recognition. She masks it.

REGAN
What's the place?

MARCO

The stairs under my grandmother's church. Smells like coins. You can hear the pipes whisper.

Regan considers, an old chill brushing her skin.

The door clicks.

She turns.

A MAN (late 20s) enters with a paper bag of pastries and a carrier of espresso. Tailored coat. Too ordinary to be ordinary. Beautiful in a way that feels designed by a committee—clean lines, kind eyes, a scar at the hairline visible when the light hits.

This is DANIEL MOORE—the name on the visitor badge. The world will know him by many names. We will call him DAMIEN when the mask slips, but for now—

DANIEL

I come bearing bribes and a healthy respect for the paint-splattered.

A few patients laugh. Regan clocks his posture: neither predatory nor timid. The kind of ease born of never being told "No" in a way that stuck.

REGAN

You brought espresso to a psychiatric unit. You planning to outrun the night staff?

DANIEL

(offers a cup; playful)
I was told the art therapist is a tyrant who cannot be appeased by decaf.

Regan considers whether to accept anything from anyone today. She takes the cup. She's human.

REGAN

We use first names here. I'm Regan.

DANIEL

Daniel.

Their hands touch around the cardboard tray. Something tiny arcs across the air—a static nip. He blinks. She does too.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Sorry. Dry air.

REGAN

Winter in a building that hates the living.

He smiles. Not the smile of seduction. The smile of recognition, like they've shared an inside joke he can't remember telling.

REGAN (CONT'D)

If you're staying, you'll need an apron and an opinion about glitter.

DANIEL

I have many opinions. Most of them unpopular.

REGAN

Perfect. You'll fit in.

He rolls up his sleeves without asking who's watching him. On his wrist, a woven red thread. A charm. Or leash.

Regan clocks it, stores it.

He moves among the tables like he's done this forever. Not performative. He listens. He asks small, clean questions.

A moment: Marco looks up at Daniel's shadow falling across his spiral. His pupils dilate.

MARCO

You're loud.

DANIEL

Pardon?

MARCO

In here.

He taps his temple, goes back to shading.

Regan files that, too.

3. INT. HALLWAY - CLINIC - LATER

Class over. Brushes in jars like drowned flowers. Patients drift toward meds, naps, cigarettes.

Regan scrubs palettes at the sink. Daniel dries.

Quiet, comfortable. The kind you don't get with strangers unless something underneath is arranged.

DANIEL

You run a good room. You don't
force conclusions. Rare in Rome.

REGAN

I'm new here. Still learning where
the ghosts like to hide.

DANIEL

You're not new to ghosts.

It hangs there. He regrets the line even as it leaves his
mouth—too intimate. He shapes an apology—

REGAN

I used to be. New to them. Then I
wasn't.

She says it like she's tired of apologizing for existing. He
nods like he understands that exact weight.

DANIEL

I fund restoration projects.
Frescoes. Altarpieces. Stone that
remembers being touched. I wanted
to see how the living restore
themselves.

REGAN

And?

DANIEL

Paint is honest. People... less so.
But you knew that.

REGAN

People are honest. They just don't
speak the same language as
questions.

He looks at her. The red thread at his wrist glints.

DANIEL

Do you paint?

REGAN

No. I... write sometimes. Lists.
Things I'd say if it mattered.

DANIEL

It matters.

REGAN

Not to the past.

A beat. She almost tells him something, then decides against it.

REGAN (CONT'D)
Why the thread?

He glances down, amused at being seen.

DANIEL
Superstition. My—
(corrects)
—mentor. He insists. For
protection.

REGAN
From what?

DANIEL
(too light)
From me.

He means it as a joke. It lands like a confession. Regan doesn't flinch.

REGAN
We do volunteer screenings.
Background checks.

DANIEL
Then I'm already a liar. My
background is... complicated.

REGAN
You'll find we specialize in
complicated.

The kettle hisses. The sound is too close to a whisper. They both glance instinctively to the corner. Nothing there. Just steam.

DANIEL
May I come back?

Regan studies him like a painting: layers, repairs, places where the varnish pooled.

REGAN
If you bring decaf next time. For
the nurses.

DANIEL
Deal.

He leaves with the lightness of someone who can always return.

Regan exhales as if she's been holding her breath since she was twelve.

4. INT. STAIRWELL - CLINIC - SAME

Daniel descends alone. The fluorescent ballast hum becomes—subtly—a Gregorian interval. Two NOTES that taste of old stone.

He pauses, hand on the rail.

His fingers twitch. The smallest ache blooms in his palm. He flexes. A translucent crescent of pink appears near his lifeline. Not blood. Not yet.

He wraps the red thread tighter. The ache recedes.

At the foot of the stairs waits a MAN in a suit the color of aftershave. Late 40s. A haircut that costs more than most cars. A polite smile that shows no teeth.

This is MR. CARROW.

CARROW

How was arts and crafts, "Daniel"?

DANIEL

Civilizing.

CARROW

Your whereabouts are always of interest. Some of our friends become nervous when you are... unaccompanied.

DANIEL

Tell our friends to learn to breathe without a rosary.

CARROW

(smiles, professional)
We have the Lombardi matter to discuss. And the journalist.

DANIEL

Let them write. We are fiction until we aren't.

CARROW

We are witnesses until we're
indicted. And Father Lombardi died...
theatrically.

A flicker in Daniel's eyes. The funeral. The black dog. He
tips his head, listening to a music only he hears.

DANIEL

I asked not to be followed inside.

Carrow's smile holds.

CARROW

Forgive me, sir. Consider me your
thread.

The word "sir" is quiet. Ritualized. They step into the city
together, the gulf between master and steward wide and
invisible.

5. INT. REGAN'S APARTMENT - TRASTEVERE - NIGHT

Small, honest. Plants climbing the window like they're trying
to escape. A secondhand turntable. A stack of notebooks
arranged by color like a private code.

Regan stands at the kitchen sink, hands in hot water, staring
through the glass at the cobblestones below.

Her phone vibrates where it sleeps in a drawer—the only place
it's allowed at home.

She ignores it.

On the table: a patient's drawing left behind. The spiral
with a crown of thorns.

She takes a pencil and, almost without willing it, mirrors
the spiral on scrap paper. Muscle memory of a hand that
learned it somewhere she can't recall.

She stops herself. Tears the page out. Folds it smaller and
smaller until her fist hurts.

She opens the drawer for her phone. A news alert blooms even
before she touches it:

VATICAN PRIEST FOUND DEAD IN "RITUAL POSE." INVESTIGATORS
SEEK "ART WORLD DONOR" WHO ATTENDED FUNERAL.

She doesn't click. She has learned to eat before she feeds ghosts.

She turns on the faucet. A pipe in the wall moans. The tone slides into a familiar two-note figure—half lullaby, half liturgy.

Regan's face goes very still.

REGAN

No.

The sound stops as if it heard her.

Her phone vibrates again. She takes it out. No name. Just:

UNKNOWN: Do you still dream of a stairwell?

She stares, pulse climbing.

Another message, before she can type.

UNKNOWN: I do too.

She kills the screen. Turns the phone facedown. Walks backward away from it like from a snake.

Her breath fogs in the apartment that is not cold.

She goes to the turntable. Puts the needle down.

Not Tubular Bells. Something else. A cheap Italian pop record she bought from a street stall because the cover was a woman feeding pigeons in sunglasses. She plays it when she needs the present to be louder than the past.

The chorus is ridiculous and human. She lets it be.

6. EXT. PIAZZA DEL POPOLO - ROME - DAY

A crisp blue noon. Tourists cluster like birds. Vendors hawk scarves and counterfeit history.

Daniel sits at an outdoor table with a small plate of almonds. He watches the obelisk as if it could answer questions.

Opposite him sits a WOMAN 50s, all angles, café black—LADY ELARA VANS—old money that learned the new tricks. She's one of the keepers. She stirs her espresso like she's winding a clock.

ELARA

The Congregation of Twelve met last night. They prefer their enemies old and their allies older. You make them nervous.

DANIEL

Because I'm fond of air.

ELARA

Because you are fond of curious girls with difficult pasts.

DANIEL

You all promised me choice. You built a universe around me and called it freedom.

ELARA

We saved you from worship. There are worse cages.

DANIEL

There are also better keys.

She smiles thinly. Taps the obelisk with her spoon.

ELARA

We did not kill Lombardi.

DANIEL

I did not ask.

ELARA

But you wondered if I wanted you to think we did. So that I could watch what you'd do next.

He almost smiles. Almost.

ELARA (CONT'D)

You cannot push them too far, Daniel. You are the winter for which they knit. But they fear spring. You, of all beings, understand cycles.

DANIEL

We're in Rome because the past refuses to rot properly.

ELARA

We're in Rome because you chose to be near her.

A beat as if the air pressed closer.

DANIEL
She is... ordinary.

ELARA
No one ordinary hears you in a room
and thinks "dry air."

DANIEL
She lived through something the
world mistranslated and monetized.

ELARA
As have you.

Elara slides a small envelope across the table.

He doesn't touch it.

ELARA (CONT'D)
A journalist. American. Vatican
stringer. Elena Reyes. She wrote to
Father Lombardi for years about
connecting two events he would not
discuss. The Woodhouse case in New
York. The MacNeil case in
Georgetown and Rome. She believes
in patterns the way zealots believe
in altars.

DANIEL
Let her believe. Belief is a kind
of love.

ELARA
Belief is a kind of knife. And
she's at your clinic today.

Daniel's gaze flicks without moving.

ELARA (CONT'D)
Control the story, or it will
control you.

DANIEL
It already does.

ELARA
Then pick the ending.

She leaves him with the almonds and the obelisk and the
weight of a world weaponized by prophecy.

7. INT. CLINIC - LOBBY - DAY

ELENA REYES (30s), hair pinned back like she might need to run at any moment, signs in at the desk. She wears a laminated press badge under a scarf as if she knows when to hide it.

Regan approaches, clipboard in hand.

REGAN

You must be the visitor from La Repubblica?

ELENA

Freelance, on loan. I emailed about shadow programs for cult recovery—patient anonymity strictly protected. I'm just trying to understand—

She stops. Regan already knows that hunger.

REGAN

We protect the living. Not your angle.

ELENA

My angle is sunlight. Places that develop mold when the priest coughs.

Regan almost smiles.

REGAN

We have an open studio today. You can observe quietly. No names. No recordings without consent. If a patient asks you to leave, you leave. If you see something that feels like a secret, you pretend you didn't.

ELENA

Deal.

As they sign paperwork, Daniel steps in with a crate of decaf and a sheepish half-bow toward the nurses.

Regan clocks him, then Elena clocking him.

You can feel the threads knotting.

ELENA (CONT'D)
Your volunteers always look like ad
campaigns?

REGAN
He brought decaf. He's already
forgiven.

ELENA
What's his name?

REGAN
Daniel.

ELENA
(quiet; registering)
Of course it is.

Regan glances up. That sounded like a story Elena didn't mean
to tell.

8. INT. ART THERAPY ROOM - DAY

A different prompt on the whiteboard now:

"SOMETHING YOU LOST THAT STILL WANTS YOU."

Patients sketch. Music low. Brushes talk.

Daniel sits opposite Marco, who pushes charcoal so hard it
snaps.

DANIEL
You okay?

MARCO
Charcoal doesn't like me.

DANIEL
It doesn't like anyone. That's why
it's honest.

Marco grunts, almost a laugh.

Across the room, Elena pretends to check her phone while
photographing a corner of the whiteboard. She zooms in on the
spiral sketch pinned from last class. The crown of thorns.

Regan sees the lens. Crosses to Elena, not unkind.

REGAN

If you want to know what that is,
ask him. Otherwise it's theft.

ELENA

You're right. I'm sorry.

She pockets the phone. The apology is real. So is the
compulsion behind the theft. Regan recognizes both.

ELENA (CONT'D)

Do you dream in symbols?

REGAN

I dream in maintenance schedules
and whether the kettle was left on.

ELENA

That's an answer without being a
lie. You're good at those.

Regan holds Elena's gaze long enough to establish boundaries,
not so long she becomes a door.

At Daniel's table, Marco scratches the spiral deeper, darker.

MARCO

When I look at you, it gets louder.

DANIEL

What does?

MARCO

The place that wants me.

Daniel softens.

DANIEL

You don't have to go anywhere you
don't choose.

Marco snorts, teenage and ancient.

MARCO

That's cute.

He jams his finger into his own drawing, smearing the
charcoal crown like bleeding.

Daniel's fingers twitch again. The ache returns in his palm.
He hides it under the table.

Regan notices the movement. Moves toward them.

REGAN
Break? Fresh air?

Marco nods, grateful for the out. He slips past Daniel, past Elena's storm-watching eyes, out into the hall.

Regan watches Daniel flex his hand like it cramps.

REGAN (CONT'D)
You okay?

DANIEL
Charcoal. It gets under the skin.

She doesn't buy it. She also doesn't push. Not yet.

9. EXT. CLINIC COURTYARD - DAY

Marco smokes under a fig tree that refuses to die.

Elena sidles up, keeps respectful distance.

ELENA
I owe you an apology. I was going to ask about your drawing without asking you about your drawing.

MARCO
It's not mine. It's... rented.

ELENA
From who?

He taps ash onto cobblestone.

MARCO
The place under the church. My grandmother's. When I draw it, I can breathe after. When I don't, I get headaches and I say mean things.

ELENA
You're allowed to say mean things.

MARCO
Not to myself. That's her job.

He stubs the cigarette, self-policing. Looks at Elena.

MARCO (CONT'D)

You're here to see him, right? The pretty man with the glued-on name?

ELENA

I'm here to see what happens when pretty men with glued-on names meet women who survived history.

Marco barks a laugh that belongs to someone 50.

MARCO

We're all survivors of history. Some of us just have better lighting.

He flicks the butt into a bin with surgical precision.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Don't make her into a story. She hates that.

He heads back in. Elena watches him go—a reporter who didn't take notes because she knew she'd remember.

10. INT. BASILICA OF SAN CLEMENTE - LOWER LEVEL - LATE AFTERNOON

Stone upon stone. Church under church. The lower level smells like iron and coins and the kind of cold that knows your name.

Daniel walks alone, a donation receipt folded in his pocket.

He's moving through the Mithraeum, carved bull and altars half-eaten by time. He stops at a spot where the floor dips. Listens.

Water runs under the city. He hears other things riding it.

A FOOTSTEP. He turns.

A MAN in a cheap overcoat, a PRIEST's collar slightly askew—FATHER VALENTE (30s), alive in the way overcaffeinated people are alive.

VALENTE

You're early.

DANIEL

I didn't know we had an appointment.

VALENTE

We do now.

He fishes a rosary from his pocket. The cross is iron, not silver. A choice.

VALENTE (CONT'D)

You're him.

DANIEL

Today I'm Daniel Moore, who writes checks for leaks and fresco mold.

VALENTE

And when you aren't?

DANIEL

When I'm not, people like you ask questions as if the answers will grant absolution.

Valente's grin is inappropriate and honest.

VALENTE

Nothing absolves. That's the trick. Only work distracts. You frighten the old ones. I wanted to see if you frighten me.

He gets close enough to smell whatever clean thing Daniel smells like.

VALENTE (CONT'D)

You smell like a church after it's been empty a long time.

DANIEL

You should go, Father.

VALENTE

That's what they call me. I'm more of an archivist. I read what the others won't. I know about the Woodhouse apartment. The neighbors. The crib with the eyes painted on the canopy. I know about a girl in Georgetown who woke up with her voice borrowed. And I know the names behind the names. The Congregation of Twelve. The Thorn men. The hedge funds disguised as churches, and the churches disguised as hedge funds.

DANIEL
Do you want something?

VALENTE
A story I can survive telling.

DANIEL
You won't.

Valente nods like he assumed that.

VALENTE
And yet. We keep digging under
churches, don't we?

He offers the iron cross.

VALENTE (CONT'D)
For the leaks.

Daniel takes it—not because he needs it, but because refusing
would make Valente louder.

The iron is warm. His palm aches where it meets the cross.

He closes his hand. When he opens it, the crescent of pink is
darker.

Valente sees. Files it.

VALENTE (CONT'D)
There's a woman at your clinic
whose file is full of black ink.
The kind redactors use when the
truth isn't polite.

Daniel's face does nothing. His eyes do everything.

DANIEL
You came to a man you think is a
bomb to tell him where the
schoolchildren are?

VALENTE
I came to tell the bomb it has a
fuse made of silk.

A beat. Something old moves under the stones like an idea
waking.

VALENTE (CONT'D)
You scare the men who profit from
your throne. Scare them more.
That's my ask.

DANIEL

Why?

VALENTE

Because if you love anyone, you'll
do damage anyway. Choose where it
lands.

Daniel steps past him. Leaves the iron cross on the ledge by
the Mithraic altar.

DANIEL

Stay away from my clinic.

He does not look back.

Valente watches him go, crosses himself with a hand that
trembles, then laughs at himself for crossing at all.

11. INT. CLINIC - ART ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Empty now. The late light is the color of apricots and
sacrilege.

Regan cleans. It's ritual. Sponges. Rags. The kind of work
that keeps the present in your hands.

She finds a scrap of paper trapped under a table leg. Unfolds
it.

A child's hand has drawn an EYE. Not a pretty one. An old one
that knew fire. Around it, a crib canopy. Decorative eyes
painted on fabric.

Her mouth goes dry. She closes her eyes.

A memory flickers where she cannot stop it-

FLASH:

-A younger REGAN (12) sweating, eyes rolled white. Latin
reversing itself in her throat. A window buckles inward as if
the night were hungry.

-Her MOTHER screaming someone's name down a hallway. A
PRIEST's hand-gentle, terrified.

-A LULLABY hummed by a woman who isn't there.

BACK TO SCENE.

Regan opens her eyes and places the drawing in a metal drawer. Locks it. She has learned to curate her own ghosts.

The door opens. Daniel, a silhouette against the bruised sky.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I know it's closing time. I... meant to drop this earlier.

He sets a small stack of blank sketchbooks on her desk. Quality paper. Unbranded.

REGAN

Bribery is a theme with you.

DANIEL

I'm trying out for redemption arcs.

He leans on the doorframe. Not entering. Asking without asking.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

There's a coffee bar that pretends to be a library. They stack books no one can afford to steal. Would you—

REGAN

I don't... date.

He nods, absorbs it without flinching.

DANIEL

Coffee as colleagues, then. Two people who've read too much and slept too little.

She studies him. The honesty with which he absorbs her no. The lack of flinch triggers some flinch in her.

REGAN

I don't do colleagues either. Boundaries look better from far away.

DANIEL

Then I'll go.

He does not turn it into a puzzle she must solve.

He takes a step back... stops.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Do you ever... hear music in places
that shouldn't have it?

Regan's mouth opens and closes. He doesn't watch her too closely.

REGAN
Like what?

DANIEL
Like... two notes arguing. Like a
hymn that forgot the words.

She swallows. The room tilts a degree.

REGAN
Sometimes. Old buildings sing. It's
nothing.

DANIEL
Maybe.

A RUMBLE. The kettle on the cart trembles though it's off. A
cup rattles. They both look.

Silence again. As if the room flinched, too.

Daniel's palm flares pain. He hides it in his pocket.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Good night, Regan.

REGAN
Good night, Daniel.

He goes.

Regan stands until the light is nearly gone, as if darkness
is something she should greet, not back away from.

12. EXT. TIBER RIVER WALK - NIGHT

Elena Reyes walks fast, voice-memoing more to keep herself
company than to record facts.

ELENA (V.O.)
—Woodhouse case: 1968. Apartment
7E. Black bassinet. Neighbors too
kind. Names changed every year in
archives like they were laundering
them. MacNeil case: 1973.
(MORE)

ELENA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Georgetown. Priest death filed as
 accident until it wasn't. Rome
 records: redactions. The
 Congregation of Twelve: never in
 writing together but everywhere
 apart. The man with the glued-on
 name: Daniel Moore—registered as a
 donor to four separate restoration
 foundations that are all the same
 foundation. The girl with the
 boundary voice: Regan—file says
 trauma, not possession; science
 hates poems; priests hate science—

A shadow falls across her path. She stops.

Two MEN step from an alley—not thugs, exactly. Clean.
 Forgettable. The kind of men who get into rooms because they
 never looked like they wanted to.

MAN #1
 Signora Reyes?

She holds her phone like a talisman.

ELENA
 If I don't text my editor in sixty
 seconds, a scheduled email goes out
 with names you don't want printed.

It is a lie. It works.

MAN #2
 We'd like to ask you to be careful
 about the conclusions you draw. For
 your sake.

ELENA
 I never draw conclusions. I ask
 better questions.

MAN #1
 Ask them somewhere else.

They step back into the alley. Gone.

Elena breathes. Laughs once, brittle. Keeps walking. The
 river mutters old stories until you decide which ones to
 believe.

13. INT. DANIEL'S APARTMENT - ROME - NIGHT

Not ostentatious. Curated. Books. A half-finished oil on easel but no brushes—like he paints with patience.

Carrow stands by the window, uninvited but always expected. He pours a drink.

CARROW

Father Valente has curiosity and no brakes. Shall I apply some?

DANIEL

He brought me an iron cross like a child gives a wolf a leash.

CARROW

Wolves don't wear leashes. They wear skin and walk among sheep.

DANIEL

Sometimes they marry them.

Carrow watches Daniel, a man watching a god pretend to be a man.

CARROW

You saw her again.

DANIEL

We share a building, not a sentence.

CARROW

And yet you finished her line for her. Be careful. Love is a solvent. It weakens the seal.

DANIEL

Which seal?

Carrow smiles like a coin landing on its edge.

CARROW

Pick one.

Daniel's phone buzzes. He doesn't look. He knows who obeys his numbers.

DANIEL

No one touches her. Not the Twelve. Not the Vatican. Not us.

CARROW

We don't touch anything you tell us not to. We are caretakers. Of you.

(MORE)

CARROW (CONT'D)

Of the idea of you. Of the investments that accrue around your shadow. But ideas don't stay ideas when journalists get screenshots and priests grow consciences.

DANIEL

Elara will keep the Twelve sedated with their own perfume.

CARROW

And the girl?

DANIEL

Regan is not a girl.

Carrow registers the name as if hearing a password whispered.

CARROW

Then what is she?

Daniel doesn't answer. His gaze drifts to the half-finished oil.

It is not a landscape. It is a crib canopy with painted eyes. His hand has been painting it without memory again.

He turns the canvas to face the wall like you do when you catch yourself confessing in the wrong room.

DANIEL

She is someone who survived a story. I am someone who refuses to be one.

CARROW

The world does not grant refusal. It grants headlines.

DANIEL

Then I will write my own.

He opens his palm, looks at the shallow crescent. It has darkened, not bled. He presses his thumb to it, testing.

A whisper in the room, too low to be words. Like a mother humming through a wall.

Carrow feels the hairs on his neck lift.

CARROW

You haven't asked what killed Lombardi.

DANIEL
You haven't asked why I didn't.

Carrow smiles without joy.

CARROW
Because if you had, there'd be no
body to bury.

He sets down the drink, leaves Daniel with the painting and the quiet that is not.

14. INT. CLINIC - NIGHT

Empty corridors. Security lights. A cleaning woman sways her mop to a rhythm from a small radio.

Regan sits alone in the art room, a cup of tea going cold. A notebook open. A pen uncapped.

She writes in tidy, stubborn handwriting:

I DO NOT INVITE ANYTHING IN.
THIS ROOM IS ONLY THIS ROOM.
MY BODY IS ONLY MY BODY.
MY NAME IS REGAN.

She stops. On the next line, her hand writes without permission:

MY NAME IS—

She yanks the pen up. Breath like stitches.

She closes the notebook. Stands.

Out in the hall, the cleaning woman's radio skitters, catches static, then—two notes. Old. Inescapable.

Regan steps into the hallway.

REGAN
(signs to the cleaner)
Radio?

The cleaner shrugs, bangs it with her palm, embarrassed.

The notes stop. The cleaner smiles, relieved, crosses herself without thinking, goes back to mopping.

Regan leans against the doorway until she feels the world settle like a table with a shim under it.

She goes back inside. Locks the door.

15. EXT. VERANO CEMETERY - NIGHT

The grave of Father Lombardi under a moon that looks like a question.

The black dog sits at the foot of the grave—patient, sentinel, in love with something no one else can see.

After a time, it stands. Pads toward the gate.

At the gate stands Elara Vans in her coat, as if she has been there a long time. She reaches down. The dog allows itself to be touched.

ELARA
Stay near him.

The dog trots into the dark, a moving shadow among immobile ones.

Elara looks at the grave.

ELARA (CONT'D)
We warned you not to make a
spectacle.

A whisper of wind. The brass plate rattles.

She leaves flowers—real ones that will die like promises.

16. INT. CLINIC - ART ROOM - MORNING

Bright, ordinary. The kettle sighs. The volunteers gossip. The smell of plaster and impatience.

Regan stacks paper. Daniel sets out brushes like silverware.

DANIEL
I brought decaf. And biscuits no
one likes until they run out, then
they crave.

REGAN
You're learning institutional
psychology fast.

DANIEL
I grew up in institutions.
Different kind. Same echo.

She looks up. He lets that hang without fishing for a question.

REGAN
Today's prompt is... tricky.

On the whiteboard:

"A TIME YOU WERE CHOSEN."

Daniel huffs a laugh he didn't expect.

DANIEL
What if I prefer not to be?

REGAN
Then draw a door. Or a window
that's painted shut.

DANIEL
You teach the art of leaving.

REGAN
I teach the art of staying until
leaving is an act, not a collapse.

Elena slips in, less reporter today, more student of atmospheres.

Marco arrives late, eyes rimmed red, hoodie up. He sits, stares at the blank page like it owes him money.

Regan slides a red pastel toward him.

REGAN (CONT'D)
Try a color you hate.

He smirks, takes it. Drags a hard red door down the page. No handle.

Daniel, across from him, draws a staircase. Not the broad, Baroque kind. A narrow service stair with plaster flaking, pipes breathing.

Regan watches their pencils finding the same building from opposite ends.

ELENA
(to Regan, low)
Do you dream of a stairwell?

Regan's eyes flick to her, then to Daniel's drawing. The line between the three of them tightens like a wire.

REGAN

Sometimes.

Elena nods. That small. That enough.

A SHADOW crosses the glass in the door. Not someone. Something. The light stalls, then restarts.

Regan feels it pass through her—like standing up too fast.

She grips the edge of the table. Daniel's hand flares pain. He inhales, barely.

Marco looks up. For a second, his irises are so wide they eclipse everything.

MARCO

He's here.

The room continues as rooms do when only some people heard the thunder.

Regan crouches beside Marco.

REGAN

Who?

MARCO

The man from the door. He's always smiling. But his smile is just teeth.

REGAN

Is he in the room?

MARCO

He's...
(he points, unsure)
—behind him.

His finger, shaking, indicates Daniel without landing on him.

Regan's eyes meet Daniel's. A simple human glance loaded like liturgy.

DANIEL

(to Marco, gentle)
Sometimes when I draw stairs I want to climb them. Sometimes I want to set them on fire.

Marco laughs, grateful for a joke that isn't about him.

MARCO

You should draw a handle on your door. Otherwise the fire will be bored.

He adds a handle to his red door. The act feels like victory, small and savage.

The shadow is gone. The light is just light.

Regan exhales. Daniel flexes his hand until the ache becomes background.

Elena writes in a notebook for once—not because she needs notes, but because she needs to look like she's only taking them.

17. INT. CONFESSIONAL - SMALL CHURCH - AFTERNOON

Valente sits in the priest's side. The screen is splintered; you could cut yourself on the edges of privacy.

A VOICE behind the screen—feminine, educated, unafraid.
ELARA.

ELARA (O.S.)

Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been—oh, what is time to a professional—since my last confession.

Valente rolls his eyes for God's benefit.

VALENTE

Confession is not performance.

ELARA (O.S.)

Everything is performance. That's why you're in a box.

VALENTE

State your sin.

ELARA (O.S.)

I have raised a god like a greenhouse raises orchids. I have trimmed his roots and watered him with rumor. I have made him safe for donors and dangerous for enemies.

(MORE)

ELARA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
And now he has looked at a girl and
remembered that we lied when we
said he could choose anything.

VALENTE
And your sin?

ELARA (O.S.)
I am delighted for him.

Valente almost laughs, catches the sound like a fly.

VALENTE
Why are you telling me?

ELARA (O.S.)
Because you're going to help me
make sure the men I answer to don't
kill the girl first.

Silence. The screen breathes.

VALENTE
If I say no?

ELARA (O.S.)
Then they'll kill you for asking.

A coin clinks into the slot as if this were a vending machine
for absolution.

ELARA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Consider this charity.

Her scent lingers expensive and old. She leaves.

Valente stares at the crucifix above the kneeler. It looks
especially wooden today.

VALENTE
(quiet, to the empty)
Are you enjoying this?

Nothing answers that he can translate.

18. EXT. ROOFTOP - EVENING

Rome exhaling into night. Laundry strung between buildings
like flags of surrender.

Daniel stands at the parapet, hands in pockets. The black dog appears at the stairwell door, trots over, sits like it has always belonged here.

DANIEL
Who sent you?

The dog pants, not humble. Loyal to a concept, not a man.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
If you're a metaphor, I'm sending
you back.

The dog blinks slowly. Accepts the joke. Lies down, head on paws, watching the same city.

Footsteps. Regan emerges onto the roof, hugging her sweater to herself. She didn't expect anyone—and then she expected him.

REGAN
I come up here when the kettle
won't stop singing after I unplug
it.

DANIEL
It sings to you too.

REGAN
Maybe we're just tired.

They stand shoulder to shoulder but not touching, the way strangers do when something is looking at both of them and they refuse to look back first.

DANIEL
I lied to you. About the thread.
It's not superstition.

REGAN
I assumed. It's too pretty to be an
accident.

DANIEL
It hurts when I take it off. A
little. Like breaking a habit. Then
it hurts a lot. Like the habit
breaking me.

REGAN
So don't take it off.

DANIEL

I might. Choosing is a habit I
can't seem to break.

Regan stares at the horizon like she can keep the night from
taking the last line of orange.

REGAN

When I was twelve, a man I'd never
met wrote books about me. People
read them at dinner parties and had
opinions about whether my mother
did the right thing. I grew up in
strangers' mouths. I came here to
get small enough to fit in my own.

He turns to her. The dog lifts its head, interested in the
honesty.

DANIEL

Does it ever work?

REGAN

On Tuesdays. Between four and
seven. If I don't look at
stairwells.

He laughs. It isn't a possession; it's relief.

DANIEL

I know a lot about being in books I
didn't write.

REGAN

Are you famous?

DANIEL

Only to people who like to collect
names and put them in basements.

She watches him choose each word. He watches her choose not
to ask the questions that would open doors she's nailed shut.

The kettle in the art room below them clicks-off then on then
off-though no one is there.

Regan and Daniel stand until the last orange line gives up.

REGAN

Tomorrow's prompt is easy. "A place
you go when you don't want to go
anywhere."

DANIEL
Do roofs count?

REGAN
Every roof is a floor for someone
else.

They stand in that for a beat, a philosophy dressed as
banter.

The black dog puts its head in Regan's palm like a
benediction.

She freezes—not from fear. From contact that feels chosen by
something not her.

REGAN (CONT'D)
He's warm.

DANIEL
He came to the funeral.

REGAN
Whose?

DANIEL
A priest. I didn't know him well.

REGAN
You go to funerals for people you
don't know?

DANIEL
When the dead are busy, the living
need attendance.

She turns that over like a coin.

REGAN
Good night, Daniel.

DANIEL
Good night, Regan.

She descends. The dog watches her go. Then looks at Daniel
like: we're doing this, then?

Daniel rubs his palm. The crescent mark throbs once in
answer.

He doesn't look at the stars. He has never trusted them.

He looks at the stairwell door instead.

HOLD on him as the city exhales into full night.

19. MONTAGE - THE WEEK THAT FOLLOWS (TIME WIDENS)

- Regan leads art sessions. New prompts. New silences. The patients' drawings shift from spirals to rooms with doors. One door is always a little too tall.
- Daniel volunteers. He is careful not to be perfect. He misplaces tape. He forgets where the chalk lives. He asks for help. People like him for reasons that don't feel like worship. It confuses him.
- Elena collects names no one will say on record. A janitor who once cleaned a floor under a church no one admits exists. A banker who gives communion to shell companies. A nun who keeps a ledger of missing girls written in embroidery.
- Valente reads in the archive until the lights go off automatically. He takes notes on his hand when the guards forbid notebooks.
- Carrow audits accounts that don't exist. He moves money like oxygen to fires he cannot admit are holy.
- Elara stands in a museum before a painting of a mother and child. She tilts her head as if listening for a lullaby trapped in varnish.
- The black dog appears wherever Daniel stands too long and wherever Regan's hand trembles just once.
- Regan and Daniel speak on the roof three nights out of seven. Not about the past. They describe the city like reporting to someone who has never seen it. They are, in a way, doing exactly that.
- Daniel's palm bruises a shade darker. He never bleeds. He never quite heals.
- The kettle sings. Sometimes Regan sings back, just two notes, tired of being rude to ghosts.

20. INT. CLINIC - ART ROOM - LATE WEEK - DAY

On the whiteboard:

"DRAW THE THING YOU'D SAVE IF THE BUILDING BURNED."

Papers fill with pets, grandparents, a single shoe, a chipped mug.

Daniel draws a BASSINET. He doesn't know he's drawing it until it's nearly done. He freezes. The canopy with painted eyes stares at him from the page.

Regan, circulating, stops beside him. She has learned not to startle the wounded.

Her voice is very soft.

REGAN

Is that... a family thing?

He looks at her, about to lie.

He doesn't.

DANIEL

It's a place I never stood but
somehow remember leaving.

The room hums. Not the kettle. Not the pipes. The air itself deciding whether to keep a secret.

Regan's hand rises. She almost touches his wrist, the red thread.

She doesn't.

REGAN

My mother hated lullabies. She said they were manipulative. Singing "go to sleep" is just a nice way of saying "go away." She used to hum advertisements instead. It was funny. And sad.

DANIEL

I never met my mother.

REGAN

Me neither.

They look at each other with the clarity of two people who understand that sentence in all its implications.

Elena, across the room, pretends to tie her shoe while recording three seconds of silence that is anything but.

Marco draws his red door again. This time the handle is on the inside and the outside. He smiles, small and dangerous.

MARCO
 (to no one)
 Fire won't know what to do with me.

Regan hears it. Decides to take that sentence apart later, gently.

Daniel flips his page over. Draws a roofline. Safer.

Regan writes today's date on the whiteboard and underlines it twice.

21. INT. VATICAN ARCHIVE ANNEX - NIGHT

A fluorescent cave. Rolling ladders. Dust like fine confession.

FATHER VALENTE flashes his badge at a GUARD and slips into an aisle marked SUPPRESSED CORRESPONDENCE: 1965-1975. He palms a key-borrowed, not blessed.

He pulls a carton labeled CONGREGATION OF TWELVE: PRIVATE APPEALS. Inside: letters in many hands, same terror.

He finds two bundles tied with medical tape:

R. WOODHOUSE (NYC) - cramped, sleep-starved handwriting.

CH. MACNEIL (GEORGETOWN / ROME) - clean, actress-sure, fraying at the edges.

Valente works fast, phone camera off (he's not stupid), pencil to notecard.

He freezes at a phrase that appears in both stacks, years apart: "LULLABY THROUGH THE WALL."

He copies it, underlines twice, whispers, "oh," like a man who's just seen the shape of the knife.

A shadow falls across the shelf. He pockets the notecard-casual, too casual.

ELARA (O.S.)
 Archivists are worst at hiding
 theft. They love what they steal.

Valente turns. Elara stands framed in aisle light, an elegant problem no one filed properly.

VALENTE
 You put this here for me to find?

ELARA

If I had, it wouldn't be here.

She plucks a different carton—FINANCE: CULTURAL RESTORATION—
and sets it beside the letters.

Inside, shell foundations orbiting a single silent star:
THORN INTERNATIONAL TRUST. Quiet money. Ancient patience.

ELARA (CONT'D)

If a story is too heavy, put wheels
under it.

She closes the lid.

ELARA (CONT'D)

You have three minutes before the
guard remembers he doesn't like
you.

She is gone. The aisle smells briefly of cold perfume and old
paper.

Valente copies faster.

22. INT. CLINIC - ART ROOM - MORNING

On the whiteboard: "DRAW A MAP WITH NO NORTH."

REGAN writes the prompt; her hand shakes once; she steadies
it, small victory.

DANIEL lays out paper. He's careful, slower today. The
crescent bruise in his palm has shadows now.

ELENA signs in as a "volunteer"—no camera today, just eyes.

MARCO scowls at his page, then draws a stairwell that runs in
circles like an Escher joke told by a drunk priest.

Regan checks on a NEW PATIENT (mid-30s), sleeves too long.
She's drawn a hospital bed floating in black water, IV lines
like veins of a city.

REGAN

What would you call that place?

NEW PATIENT

Home.

(beat)

I don't want it to be.

Regan's "mm" means I heard you; we don't have to open it wider yet.

Across the room, Daniel picks a thick charcoal and begins a map that is only corridors—no rooms, no doors. A maze where the point is motion.

Regan drifts to him.

REGAN

Dead ends?

DANIEL

Never dead. They just... want you to think they are.

REGAN

That's generous of you, toward walls.

DANIEL

I'm learning generosity.

She watches him draw an arrow that points to nothing. It moves her in a way she refuses to name.

23. EXT. SIDE STREET NEAR CLINIC - LUNCH

ELENA eats standing, a reporter's posture: quick, always half-ready to run.

A MAN (late 30s, hairline of a bureaucrat, eyes of a believer) materializes at her elbow—BROTHER ILIAS, one of the Twelve's errand monks.

BROTHER ILIAS

You've been asking questions about doors that were nailed shut for a reason.

ELENA

I like drafts.

BROTHER ILIAS

Places with drafts slam unexpectedly.

ELENA

So do interviews.

She flips her notebook, already on a fresh page.

ELENA (CONT'D)

The Woodhouse letters—how many got answered?

He blinks. She's inside the house already.

BROTHER ILIAS

None that saved her.

ELENA

And the girl?

He considers something like pity—decides against it.

BROTHER ILIAS

The Church does not recognize... narrators that compete with ours.

ELENA

Neat trick, calling survivors unreliable.

He steps closer, offers a prayer card. The saint's face has been rubbed smooth by thumbs that needed a stone.

BROTHER ILIAS

You carry a matchbook in your pocket and call it journalism. Be careful what you strike in God's library.

He leaves. Elena pockets the card, grim smile: men who threaten politely are always the ones with keys.

24. INT. ROMAN CAFÈ THAT PRETENDS TO BE A LIBRARY - EVENING

Lamp-warmth. Shelves of books no one will ever finish.

Daniel and Regan sit across a tiny table. Not a date. A truce. Steam ghosts from their cups.

REGAN

I googled you. Which is to say, I googled the foundations that keep pretending they're not the same one.

DANIEL

Do I pass?

REGAN

You fail interestingly.

He almost laughs—grateful she didn't pretend to know less than she does.

DANIEL

I fund repairs. Paintings. Organs.
Things that used to sound like God.

REGAN

Why?

He searches for a sentence that won't leak.

DANIEL

Because neglect is a religion. I
try to practice the opposite.

She studies him openly now. A woman who grew tired of stories still wants the true one.

REGAN

Did you ever meet her?

DANIEL

My mother?

A nod.

He thinks, then chooses the less cinematic truth.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Sometimes I dream her as a smell.
(beat)
Cigarettes and clean sheets.

Regan's eyes go glassy and then clear.

REGAN

Sometimes I dream mine as a
hallway. If I walk fast enough
she's always just turning the
corner.

(beat)

I never catch up.

Silence that is full, not empty.

He notices her napkin, edges shredded into lace. Her tells are small.

DANIEL

Tell me something boring about you.
Something no one asked because
other questions were louder.

REGAN

I alphabetize spices and refuse to explain why to anyone. You?

DANIEL

I iron socks.

She laughs, the clean kind. She doesn't ask for the origin story of that compulsion. She lets it be human.

Their hands both reach for sugar. Fingers brush. The static nip again—sharper. Daniel winces; reflex opens his hand under the table. The crescent bruising pulses darker.

Regan's face stills but she looks away; a boundary honored is an intimacy.

REGAN

That black dog that sits by the gate? He followed me last night to my street, like a memory.

DANIEL

He follows anyone who's not afraid to be seen.

REGAN

I'm afraid all the time. I just got tired of looking like it.

He nods. He understands that particular heroism.

25. INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

ELENA's war room: photos taped to a mirror, thread she swore she'd never use, a flowchart without north.

Two images side by side: Black bassinet with painted eyes (archive still) and Regan's room—curtains, crucifix askew (news photo, 1973).

She draws a line between them labeled "LULLABY THROUGH THE WALL."

A knock. She tenses. Opens on the latch.

FATHER VALENTE stands like a man who used to be charming and is trying to remember how.

VALENTE

You don't know me. I'm a friend you will not want in public.

ELENA

I don't have friends in public. It gets them killed.

He holds up the prayer card Brother Ilias gave her—snagged from her pocket a magician's way or a pickpocket's.

VALENTE

When this saint shows up, it means your questions have found the right enemies.

He steps inside; she lets him, against better judgement.

He unfolds his notecard. Two phrases:

LULLABY THROUGH THE WALL

SAVE THE EYES

ELENA

Save... the eyes?

VALENTE

A note in the Woodhouse bundle. Smudged. Could be "save the eyes." Could be "save the lies." Could be both.

ELENA

Or "save the I's."

They lock eyes—both language sickos. They grin in spite of the apocalypse.

VALENTE

I'm going to die for this.

ELENA

We all are. Let's pick a good page.

They start to map together, two sinners who prefer ink to prayer.

26. EXT. ALLEY BEHIND THE CLINIC - NIGHT

DANIEL lights a cigarette he won't finish. He never does; it's about fire, not smoke.

CARROW steps out of the dark, immaculate as an invoice. The black dog watches from the end of the alley.

CARROW

The Twelve are skittish. You have too many witnesses to your ordinary.

DANIEL

Get them a sedative. Or a mirror.

CARROW

Regan MacNeil is not a hobby. She is a lit match near a nursery.

Daniel's jaw tightens.

DANIEL

No one touches her.

CARROW

You are asking men addicted to outcomes to respect a process. They will try to instrumentalize. Or erase.

Daniel leans close enough to fog Carrow's immaculate glasses.

DANIEL

If anyone lifts a hand, I will take it from the elbow.

Carrow believes him. He bows slightly—the old choreography of power.

CARROW

There's a simpler path: let us bring her inside. Cloistered. Protected. Curated.

DANIEL

You mean caged.

CARROW

Everything beloved is caged. Ask any museum.

DANIEL

Not this time.

Carrow looks past him to the dog.

CARROW

You called him, didn't you?

DANIEL

He came.

CARROW
They always do.

Carrow disappears into the city like it opened its mouth for him.

Daniel stares at the ember, dying. He crushes it, clean.

27. INT. CLINIC - SUPPLY CLOSET - LATE NIGHT

Regan inventories brushes. It's meditative—counting clean things.

A faint HUM bleeds through the wall—the two-note shape again. She closes her eyes, breathes through her nose like she's fighting off a wave.

A whisper surfaces—not Latin, not a voice. More like memory learning to speak.

WHISPER (V.O.)
save the eyes

Regan freezes. Her hand moves without permission—she grabs a marker and scrawls on a cardboard box: SAVE THE EYES.

She stares at it, horrified, furious, laughing at herself a little, because what else can you do.

Her phone buzzes. UNKNOWN: Open stairwell door. Two minutes.

She should ignore it.

She goes.

28. INT. CLINIC - STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

Cool concrete. The hum louder, like pipes remembering a song.

Regan opens the door onto the landing. No one.

Then: a child's lullaby, hummed wrong. Her face drains.

REGAN
No.

She steps backward—collides with a body. She spins, fists up.

DANIEL catches her wrists, gentle, instantly releasing when she tenses.

DANIEL
I texted. It was wrong of me. I
wanted to see if—

REGAN
If I'd obey a voice with no name?

DANIEL
If you'd trust me where it echoes.

She steadies her breath. Anger drains into a more dangerous
thing: recognition.

REGAN
Don't do that again.

DANIEL
I won't.

They stand in the low thrum. It makes teeth ache.

REGAN
Do you hear it?

DANIEL
Since I was old enough to lie about
hearing it.

REGAN
What is it?

DANIEL
A rehearsal.

REGAN
For what?

DANIEL
Choosing.

He turns his palm up. The crescent mark has split-pinpricks
of blood now, neat as punctuation.

Regan stares. She reaches—stops herself—then doesn't. She
takes his hand.

Her thumb touches the bruise; the hum spikes into a CHORD
that rattles the bulb.

They both gasp.

The light pops. Darkness. Only their breath.

REGAN
(whisper)
Let go.

They do—like breaking surface from deep water. The chord collapses back into hallway night.

A distant door slams. The building remembers to be ordinary.

DANIEL
I'm sorry.

REGAN
Me too.

They stand, two people with a live wire threaded through both, trying not to catch fire.

29. INT. BASILICA OF SAN CLEMENTE - LOWER LEVEL - NIGHT

Valente descends with a flashlight and a cheap bravery.

He kneels at the Mithraeum ledge where Daniel left the iron cross. It's gone.

In its place, a scrap of torn paper weighted by a coin. He lifts it.

On the scrap—handwriting not quite human, not quite not: SAVE THE EYES.

Valente laughs once (terrible idea), then pockets it.

A FOOTSTEP. He swings the beam.

The black dog sits at the far end of the corridor, looking at him like he's late.

Valente lowers the light.

VALENTE
All right. Show me.

The dog turns, pads into dark. Valente follows.

30. INT. VANS FOUNDATION SALON - NIGHT

Elara hosts the Twelve's local contingent in a room built to flatter donors into obedience. Men in old suits talk like cathedrals.

CARROW stands by a mantel, the only one here who knows which way the air is moving.

ELDER #1
He's fraternizing with the MacNeil girl. The optics—

ELARA
—are exquisite. He looks human.

ELDER #2
He is not human.

ELARA
He is more than. Why are men always so afraid of "more"?

ELDER #1
Because more burns.

Carrow intervenes, soft.

CARROW
The question before us is not "what is he?" It is "what is our role when he departs the script we rehearsed for five decades?"

Silence. The word departs lands like a siren no one admits to hearing.

ELDER #2
We remove distractions.

ELARA
If you move against her, he will end kingdoms—yours first.

ELDER #1
He needs shepherding.

ELARA
He needs privacy.

ELDER #2
He needs a bride.

The room stills. Even Elara doesn't smile.

CARROW
We will not decide that in a room that smells like old money and fear.

He meets Elara's eyes: hold them back. For now.

31. INT. REGAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Regan sits on the floor amid notebooks, old articles, and a closed bottle of wine she won't open because it's a bad idea to drink near doors that knock by themselves.

A soft scritch at the door.

She freezes.

Opens—to find the black dog. Silent. Expectant.

Regan blinks. It trots past her like she invited it.

REGAN

No pets. Landlord's a tyrant.

It sits, gazes at the wall where she once taped a child's drawing she couldn't remember making. There's nothing there now, but it stares like there is.

REGAN (CONT'D)

What are you?

It lays its head on her knee. Heat. Weight. Proof.

She exhales a laugh she didn't know she had stored.

REGAN (CONT'D)

Fine. You can stay until you start shedding theology.

It closes its eyes, a benediction.

Her phone buzzes.

ELENA (TEXT): I think I found your mother in someone else's archive.

Regan's throat works.

REGAN (TEXT): Bring it. Tomorrow. After hours.

She scratches the dog's ear. It thumps its tail once—like thunder far away.

32. EXT. ROOF - LATE NIGHT

Daniel and Regan again. Rome's nighttime lung.

They stand closer now because distance is dishonest after stairwells.

REGAN (CONT'D)
What happens if you take it off?

She nods at the red thread.

DANIEL
I get louder.

REGAN
To who?

DANIEL
To everyone who taught me how to be quiet.

Beat.

REGAN
Take it off.

He studies her. No performance, just request.

He unwinds the thread. Each loop loosens a pressure in the air. The city sounds sharpen, then smudge; lights halo; the distant bells ring a fraction off, like teeth chattering.

Daniel flinches. The crescent in his palm darkens, but the pain spreads—wrists, temple, sternum: a crosshairs.

Regan steps closer, not touching.

REGAN (CONT'D)
Breathe.

He does. The roof feels smaller, then infinite.

A sudden gust. The thread leaps from his fingers, skitters across the tiles like a live thing. The black dog bolts from the stairwell, pins it with a paw, looks up: Really?

Regan laughs, startled, grateful for the break in the ritual.

Daniel takes the thread back, wraps it—not all the way. Enough to muffle.

He looks... younger. Or more dangerous. Or both.

DANIEL
Thank you.

REGAN

For what?

DANIEL

Witnessing.

She nods. She understands the specific holiness of that.

They almost touch and don't. The night doesn't need the help.

33. INT. CLINIC - ART ROOM - AFTER HOURS

Elena sets a thin folder on the table. Regan locks the door. Daniel stays near the window, posture relaxed, ready to cut the world in half if necessary.

Elena opens the folder: photocopies of letters—Rosemary's, Charis MacNeil's—and one receipt: THORN TRUST → CATHOLIC RELIEF FUND (ROME) dated within a week of the MacNeil case transfer to Rome.

ELENA

Someone paid to move a problem from
one language to another.

Regan's face: there it is, the thing she always felt but could never grip.

Daniel reads a line, lips moving because the handwriting demands sound.

DANIEL

(reading)

"Sometimes I hum to him through the
wall and he stops scratching.
Sometimes I think the wall hums
back."

(looks up)

Woodhouse.

Elena nods.

ELENA

Now Charis.

(reads)

"I can't sleep without the radio
on. It covers the song that is not
from here."

Regan's hands tremble. She tucks them under her thighs like a child on a too-big chair.

REGAN

Why would any of this be...
connected?

Silence. Then Daniel, quiet:

DANIEL

Because some stories have gravity.

He closes the folder. The room feels crowded—with history,
with attention.

ELENA

I think the Twelve... or someone near
them... kept you alive, Regan.
Protected, leashed, whichever word
buys you the most oxygen.

(beat)

I think they also kept him alive.

Daniel's eyes sharpen. Elena holds his gaze—respect without
deference.

ELENA (CONT'D)

If I print any of this, people will
die wrong. If I don't, people will
die anyway.

Regan, small voice she hates, honest anyway:

REGAN

What are we?

Daniel looks at her a long time. Picks words like stepping
stones.

DANIEL

Two people who didn't get to pick
the first sentence.

(beat)

But we can pick the next one.

Regan breathes. That sentence gives her back her hands.

The lights flicker. Not electricity—attention.

A low creak behind the wall. The three of them go still.

ELENA

What's back there?

REGAN

Storage. Pipes.

They listen. The creak becomes a lullaby. Not nostalgia—summons.

Daniel steps toward the wall. Puts his palm against it.

The bruise lights—blood dark, almost black now.

Elena swallows a blasphemy and chooses journalism instead.

ELENA

If something wants in, we need a
rule: we don't invite.

Regan nods. Daniel keeps his hand on the wall one beat too long.

The lullaby stops.

Somewhere in the building, a door opens by itself.

34. EXT. SIDE STREET - NIGHT

Carrow strides with purpose. A shadow peels from a doorway—HUNTER (40s), one of the Twelve's unbadged solutions.

HUNTER

Say the word.

CARROW

No.

(then)

Not yet.

HUNTER

She's leverage. Everyone has a
pressure point.

CARROW

He doesn't. That's what you don't
understand. He is the pressure.

Hunter smirks.

HUNTER

Everything bleeds.

CARROW

Some things make bleeding.

Hunter shrugs, fades, patient as disease.

Carrow looks up. On a fourth-floor balcony, Elara watches him like a chess player counting ahead.

He shakes his head once: Not. Yet.

She nods—puts the pieces back for now.

35. INT. SAN CLEMENTE - CATACOMB TUNNEL - NIGHT

The black dog leads Valente to a door that isn't a door—masonry patched badly, like a lie.

Valente runs his hands along mortar—finds a symbol thumbed into the soft lime: the spiral with the crown.

He laughs, half-mad with vindication.

He presses. The patch crumbles. Behind it: a narrow space with relic shelves and a small wooden cradle canopy, torn from its crib, eyes painted on the fabric—aged, cracked, familiar.

Valente goes very still.

VALENTE

Oh, holy—

He stops himself. He does not complete the sentence.

On the canopy's edge, in faded thread: "S T A R E —" (a half-stitched word, or command, or both).

He lifts it, reverent and terrified.

The black dog sits, tail thump once: Save the eyes.

Valente folds the canopy into his coat like a man smuggling fire.

36. INT. CLINIC - ART ROOM - DAWN

Regan dozes in a chair; Elena on the floor; Daniel awake, watching the wall like it might blink.

The black dog lies across the threshold, a furry barricade.

A phone vibrates on a cart—Regan's. She snatches it, checks the text:

VALENTE: I have an artifact. From under Saint Clement's.
Meet? Not alone.

Regan shows them.

ELENA
He's reckless.

DANIEL
He's essential.

REGAN
We go together.

They stand. The dog stands too, brisk and businesslike.

37. INT. SMALL CHURCH VESTIBULE - MORNING

Valente, adrenalized, unwraps the canopy on a pew before them.

Regan's breath leaves her. Daniel's hand opens on reflex; the bruise blooms—a perfect eye-shaped mark now.

Elena reaches to photograph—stops herself—asks first with her eyes. Regan nods.

VALENTE
It was walled up near the
Mithraeum. Someone hid it where
gods go to wait.

ELENA
Why hide a crib canopy?

VALENTE
Because relics amplify faith. And
faith is an accelerant.

Regan reaches to the painted eye. It's not iconographically right; it's personal, a mother's hand trying to teach luck.

Her finger lands on a cracked iris. She flinches.

REGAN
It's... warm.

Daniel's body shifts, like the room tilted toward him.

From the nave: a click—the sound of a door locking.

They look back. The vestibule door's handle turns—won't.

Valente tries it—no good.

A whisper slips under the wood: two-note lullaby.

Regan's eyes glass with memories that never announced themselves politely.

ELENA

Not an invitation. Not an
invitation.

Daniel puts his palm to the door. The eye-bruise burns dark.
The lock pops—metal fatigued by attention.

They spill out to the street, blinking in morning sun, spines
iced.

Valente clutches the canopy like contraband grace.

VALENTE

We need to decide whether to put
this back in the wall or put it on
a table and let the world eat
itself.

ELENA

There's a third choice.

All eyes on her.

ELENA (CONT'D)

We tell him first. Before we tell
anyone else.

She nods at Daniel. It is both trust and a dare.

Daniel meets her stare. Nods, once.

38. EXT. TIBER EMBANKMENT - DAY

They walk, city noise covering the conversation like a
merciful choir.

REGAN

If all this is real—I hate that
word—if it's happening, what do you
want?

DANIEL

To choose. To let you choose. And
to burn down anything that confuses
those two.

ELENA

Men have said that and built
empires on the loopholes.

He accepts the sting.

DANIEL

Hold me to it.

The dog trots ahead, joyful in a grave way.

VALENTE

There's a rumble in the Curia.
They're talking about containment.
Of you. Of her. Of the narrative.

DANIEL

They can contain a press release.
Not a person.

REGAN

They contained me for years with
headlines and silence.

ELENA

We'll write a better sentence.
Slowly. Precisely. Or not at all.

They reach the middle of the bridge, pause. Rome reflects
wrong on the river for a second—angles that don't exist. Then
it's fine again. No one screams. People rarely do at the
right time.

39. INT. VANS FOUNDATION SALON - NIGHT

Elara alone, reading a ledger that is not money. Margins full
of births, deaths, comets.

Carrow enters without knocking. She likes that about him; it
saves time.

CARROW

They have the canopy.

ELARA

Good. Let the story look at itself.

CARROW

The elders are moving pieces. If
they can't own her, they'll break
her.

Elara closes the ledger, finally dangerous.

ELARA
Touch the girl and you will
discover how many ways I know to
unmake a century of men.

Carrow believes her. He still worries.

CARROW
He is... different with her.

ELARA
He is the same with her. And that's
what makes him rare.

40. INT. CLINIC - ART ROOM - NIGHT (STORM COMING)

On the whiteboard: "DRAW THE THING THAT LOOKS BACK."

Patients draw mirrors, eyes, phones, oceans. Marco draws a red door with a window. He draws himself on both sides.

Regan circulates; Elena observes; Valente hovers near the exit with the canopy hidden in a tote like sacrilege from a thrift store.

Daniel stands at the back. He doesn't draw. He watches Regan.

A low roll of thunder. The lights dip.

A figure in the doorway—BROTHER ILIAS, hat in hand, smile all teeth.

BROTHER ILIAS
Apologies. We're evacuating the
floor above. Burst pipe. We need to
move your patients.

Regan looks to the ceiling. No spots. No stain. Still—she's been in buildings when things failed.

REGAN
Okay, everyone—grab your drawings.
We're going to the—

Daniel's hand finds Regan's without meaning to. The bruise-eye pulses. The black dog lifts its head and growls low.

Brother Ilias's smile tightens.

BROTHER ILIAS
And you, sir, are expected
elsewhere.

Carrow appears behind Ilias, immaculate, composed, a man
holding a door and an era open simultaneously.

CARROW
Daniel. A word.

Regan steps half in front of the patients without dramatics.
Elena slips her phone—recording, pocket muffled. Valente
fingers the tote.

Daniel squeezes Regan's hand, releases.

DANIEL
Whatever happens, do not invite
anything in.

He steps toward Carrow. The dog stands between Daniel and
Ilias, deciding whom to bite first.

CARROW
Please.

Daniel goes—chooses to go. That matters.

The door closes.

The lights die.

Children of trauma do not scream. They count. Regan counts
them by voice, by breath, by smell.

REGAN
Everyone with me. No one alone.
Marco? Elena? Father? Dog?

VALENTE
Present.

ELENA
Present.

MARCO
...present.

The lullaby rises—not through walls now. In the room.

Regan's voice cuts it like a wire.

REGAN

This room is only this room. Our
bodies are only our bodies. Our
names are our names.

The lullaby falters. Then—a bang on the far wall, like a door
with no handle asking to be born.

Valente yanks the canopy from the tote. The eyes, cracked and
kind, drink the dark.

The lullaby splinters into feedback, ugly and human—breaks.

The lights snap back.

Brother Ilias is gone.

Outside the window: rain straight down, like a curtain.

Regan meets the painted eyes. They do not blink. Neither does
she.

SMASH TO BLACK.

41. INT. THORN FOUNDATION COMPOUND - SUB-BASEMENT - NIGHT

Concrete chapel under the city. Wax candles. The Twelve
chant around a sigil drawn in salt and blood.
At the center, DANIEL, wrists bound, head bowed.
ELARA watches—part priest, part mother.

ELDER #1

The prophecy cannot be paused for
sentiment.

ELARA

Prophecies are drafts.

A door SLAMS open. CARROW, rain-soaked.

CARROW

You bring him here and expect
silence? Half the city hums his
name.

Thunder answers.

The candles bend inward. A low, distant laugh rolls through
the room—ancient and very tired.

42. EXT. CLINIC ROOF - SAME

REGAN, ELENA, VALENTE, and the BLACK DOG watch lightning claw the skyline.

Valente grips the canopy.

VALENTE
They'll use him to open something
they can't close.

REGAN
Then we close it first.

She looks at the dog. It rises, as if understanding command.

ELENA
How?

REGAN
By finishing the song.

43. INT. ROME STREETS - NIGHT

Rain like needles. Regan drives Valente's battered Fiat through traffic that forgets how to obey lights.

Elena films through fogged glass—instinct, not journalism.

ELENA
If this ends badly, tell whoever
writes the story we were sane till
the third act.

REGAN
We'll edit it ourselves.

44. INT. THORN FOUNDATION CHAPEL - CONTINUOUS

Daniel kneels. The circle pulses. The mark in his palm opens into a glowing eye.

ELDER #2
Bride or nothing. Bring the
vessel.

Two acolytes drag forward a figure under a black veil—not Regan. A poor substitute. Daniel laughs, hoarse.

DANIEL
You built me a mirror and forgot to
polish it.

The eye in his palm turns upward—staring at God.

Chains SNAP. Wind tears scripture from walls. The candles explode.

45. INT. FOUNDATION HALL - SAME

Regan and company breach the side entrance. The black dog leads, silent as shadow.

They descend marble stairs lit only by emergency strobes.

VALENTE

He's below. It's a cathedral
pretending to be a basement.

REGAN

So are we.

She shoulders open the last door.

46. INT. SUB-BASEMENT CHAPEL - CONTINUOUS

The Twelve chant louder to drown the storm. Daniel stands unbound, haloed in wrong light.

Regan enters. Everything stops.

He looks at her—relief, terror, recognition.

ELDER #1

She completes the circle.

REGAN

No. She breaks it.

She lifts the canopy, spreads it between them. The painted eyes catch the glow and throw it back, blinding.

The lullaby begins again—but this time in her voice, steady, human.

REGAN (CONT'D)

Sleep now, child. We're not afraid
of you.

The walls bleed light. The sigil dissolves.

Elena records until the lens burns white.

47. MONTAGE - THE UNDONE RITUAL

Valente hurls salt water across runes; they hiss like serpents dying.

Elara shields her eyes, whispers "Good."

Carrow kneels, choosing a side mid-prayer.

The black dog circles the ring, barking once—a command word older than Latin.

Daniel reaches for Regan; their hands meet over the canopy. The eye between them closes, finally at rest.

48. INT. CHAPEL - MOMENTS LATER

Silence except rain. The Twelve lie unconscious or gone. The circle is just ash.

Regan collapses; Daniel catches her.

REGAN (CONT'D)
Did we stop it?

DANIEL
We started something else.

He presses her palm to his chest. The bruise transfers—half of it to her skin, half remains on him.

Two halves of a seal.

REGAN
What happens now?

DANIEL
Choice.

He kisses her forehead. The world exhales.

49. EXT. FOUNDATION ROOF - DAWN

Fire crews swarm below. Police tape flutters uselessly.

Elena sits on the curb, phone ruined, footage melted. She smiles—some stories choose privacy.

Valente leans on the dog, smoking.

VALENTE
So much for containment.

ELENA
Containment's a myth. We just keep
rewriting the margins.

50. INT. REGAN'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Sun through cracked blinds. Two mugs, one chipped.

Regan wakes to find Daniel at the window, alive, quiet.

REGAN
You're still here.

DANIEL
Until I learn how to live like it.

He turns; the red thread rests on the table, cut clean.

REGAN
You're free?

DANIEL
No one is. But I'm not owned.

He looks at her hand—the twin mark faint but pulsing with
heartbeat.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
You carry the better half.

REGAN
Then we're even.

They share a small, exhausted laugh that feels like sunrise.

51. EXT. VERANO CEMETERY - DAY

Fresh grave beside Father Lombardi's. Headstone unmarked.

Elara leaves flowers. Carrow waits.

CARROW
What now?

ELARA

We let them live. The world
prefers its devils hidden in
daylight.

CARROW

And if he remembers what he is?

ELARA

Then maybe he teaches us what we
were supposed to be.

They walk away. The black dog follows, wagging—keeper of
balance.

52. INT. ART THERAPY ROOM - DAY

Regan again among patients. The board reads: "DRAW SOMETHING
NEW."

Marco draws sunlight through bars. Regan smiles.

A knock. Daniel, in plain clothes, steps in with coffee.

REGAN

Decaf?

DANIEL

Always.

The patients barely notice—just another visitor bringing
caffeine and quiet.

He sits, sketches. When Regan glances down, she sees he's
drawing a spiral that opens outward, not in.

She nods, approving.

The kettle hums once—gentle, in tune—and stops.

53. EXT. TIBER BRIDGE - SUNSET

Elena's voice over:

ELENA (V.O.)

They said the Antichrist walked
among us. Maybe they were right.
Maybe the miracle wasn't that he
lived—but that he learned mercy.

(MORE)

ELENA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Maybe salvation is just two damaged
 people refusing to repeat the same
 song.

Camera drifts across the river—Rome gold and forgiving.

Far below, two figures walk hand in hand, followed by a black
 dog.

54. FADE OUT / EPILOGUE SHOT

A hospital nursery. Newborns asleep behind glass. A nurse
 hums Rosemary's Lullaby.

One infant opens eyes—amber, then soft brown. A faint spiral
 reflection in each pupil.

The nurse smiles, unaware.

FADE TO BLACK.

TAGLINE

"Love was never part of the prophecy."

55. INT. VATICAN PRESS ROOM - DAY

Cameras click. Reporters swarm beneath marble saints.
 At the podium, MONSIGNOR DELLA TORRE reads from a paper that
 might as well be scripture.

DELLA TORRE
 ...a gas explosion beneath the Thorn
 Foundation complex. No fatalities
 beyond the responsible parties.
 The Holy See grieves for all
 victims of fanaticism.

At the back, ELENA REYES, arm in sling, watches, not raising
 her recorder. She already knows the quote that won't be
 printed.

A whisper from beside her—VALENTE.

VALENTE
 They bury truth the way they bury
 saints. Deep and labeled private
 relic.

ELENA

Then we dig different graves.

She pockets her press badge. She's done pretending to be neutral.

56. EXT. ROME STREETS - DUSK

Rain-clean cobblestones. Posters of the disaster peel from walls.

A figure in black walks opposite the flow of traffic--ELARA. No entourage now.

She stops before a toy shop window: dolls, mobiles, a lullaby box tinkling faintly.

Reflected in the glass: CARROW, hands in coat pockets.

CARROW

He's gone to ground.

ELARA

He's gone home. Same thing.

CARROW

The elders will regroup.

ELARA

Let them. Every prophecy needs a sequel.

She walks off. Carrow watches her go, uncertain who's writing whose gospel anymore.

57. INT. REGAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The table is cluttered with sketches--patients' drawings mixed with Daniel's spirals, all radiating outward like breaths.

Regan types slowly on an old laptop. A document title: "FIELD NOTES ON SURVIVORS OF FAITH."

Knock at the door. She opens. DANIEL.

He's carrying a stray cat, soaked and indignant.

DANIEL

It followed the dog.

REGAN

Then it's already smarter than us.

She takes the cat; it purrs instantly. Domesticity, absurd and holy.

DANIEL

They'll look for me again.

REGAN

Then we teach you to hide in daylight.

DANIEL

And you?

REGAN

I already do.

They share a look that's not salvation, but it's a start.

58. MONTAGE - WEEKS PASSING

- Regan painting walls of the art room a warmer color.
- Daniel helping Marco apply to art school under an alias.
- Elena publishing a thin, anonymous book titled *The Lullaby Through the Wall*. Critics call it "mythic journalism."
- Valente tending a small parish, refusing donations, teaching kids that prayer is just breathing with manners.
- The black dog aging in reverse; its coat darkens, eyes lighten.
- Elara boarding a plane with a diplomatic passport marked "No Inspection."

59. INT. SMALL CHAPEL - NIGHT

Valente locks the doors, kneels, opens a shoebox. Inside—the canopy, folded neat. He presses his forehead to it.

VALENTE

Keep sleeping.

When he lifts his head, the painted eyes have closed.

He smiles, almost believes in rest.

60. INT. CLINIC - ART ROOM - DAY

Spring. Children from a nearby school visit for a workshop.
 Regan moves among them. Daniel—now “David”—helps mix paints.
 A little girl hums the lullaby under her breath, wrong notes
 and all.
 Regan stops, listens.

REGAN
 Where'd you learn that?

GIRL
 My brother sings it to the baby.
 Says it keeps the bad dreams out.

Regan forces a smile. Daniel meets her eyes across the
 tables. Neither speaks. The hum fades into chatter.

61. INT. NEWBORN WARD - EVENING

The same ward from the epilogue of Act III. A month later.

The nurse from before adjusts IVs. The radio plays faint
 news of political unrest somewhere far enough to ignore.

The camera finds the same child.
 His eyes flutter open—human brown. He laughs, bubbles.

Then, reflected in the window glass: another infant in the
 next crib, mouth forming the beginning of a hum.

Two notes.

The radio crackles—feedback identical to that hum—and dies.

The nurse looks up, uneasy.

62. EXT. TIBER RIVER - SUNSET

Regan and Daniel walk the bridge again, hand in hand. No dog
 this time. Quiet.

REGAN
 If they ask who we were—

DANIEL
 Tell them we tried.

They stop mid-bridge. She looks west, he east—sunset and moonrise balanced.

A bell tolls—ordinary, merciful.

He leans his head to hers.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
No more lullabies.

REGAN
No. Just living.

They keep walking as streetlights blink on one by one.

63. EXT. ROME SKYLINE - NIGHT

City lights flicker into constellations that resemble eyes closing.

Thunder in the distance, or maybe applause.

The screen darkens until only two sounds remain:
a heartbeat, steady.
then a newborn's soft laugh.

FADE OUT.

END.