

THE EXORCIST

Episode One: *"And Let My Cry Come Unto Thee"*

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Based on characters created by William Peter Blatty

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TEASER

EXT. KORARO, ETHIOPIA - NIGHT

A swollen crimson moon hangs over an impoverished village in rural Ethiopia. The roads are packed dirt, the homes little more than mud huts topped with sheets of battered aluminum.

Someone is SCREAMING. No, *wailing*. The noise goes on and on, an inhuman caterwaul, eerie and unnatural.

The sounds reverberate throughout the village. Terrified VILLAGERS listen from their porches, huddled in fearful groups. Curtains are drawn. Doors are bolted.

The wailing is coming from a single darkened HUT on the outskirts of town. As we drift closer--

The wailing BREAKS OFF. Replaced by an uneasy silence.

The door opens and FATHER MARCUS LANG emerges. Younger than we were expecting. An intense presence, commanding and cold.

We will come to learn that Father Marcus is a holy warrior, a modern day Templar Knight. He is a man without country or identity, groomed since childhood to combat the forces of evil. He's also a bit of a relic in these modern times, an anachronism the Catholic Church would prefer to forget.

He's dripping sweat. Clothes hanging off his gaunt frame. Hasn't slept or shaved or showered in days.

He trudges into the field, pushing through the long grass. Kneels beside a FRESHWATER WELL and draws a cup of water.

He drinks deeply. We note that his hands are trembling.

THE SOUND DROPS OUT OF THE WORLD. Leaving us in a vacuum.

Slowly, Marcus lowers his cup. He's no longer alone.

Several dozen GLOWING GREEN ORBS have materialized in the darkness, forming a loose semi-circle around him.

Marcus lights his ZIPPO and holds it aloft, illuminating--

WILD ANIMALS, standing motionless, like sentries. Two *Simien* foxes, an Ethiopian wolf, and a tribe of *Gelada* baboons.

Predator and prey, drawn to this spot. Gazing past Marcus.

Staring at the hut.

Marcus drops the cup and returns to the hut. As he approaches, the voice resumes its EERIE WAILING.

Plink. Something drops from the sky, lands on the priest's shoulder. He plucks it off, examines it--

A DYING LOCUST. One leg still twitching weakly.

Marcus drops the insect. But now more objects are falling, ricocheting off his shoulders, landing all around him.

A rain of dead insects. Concentrated in this one location, falling in a circle all around the hut.

Marcus stands there, silhouetted in a shaft of red light, watching as the insects continue to fall.

From inside the hut, the wailing becomes choked, delighted LAUGHTER. As the laughter builds to a crescendo, we

SMASH CUT TO CREDITS

THE EXORCIST

ACT ONE

EXT. ST. ANTHONY'S CHURCH - ESTABLISHING - DAY

A low-income neighborhood in downtown Cincinnati. Most of the residents hovering right around the poverty line.

St. Anthony's: once-beautiful, now crumbling into disrepair.

INT. ST. ANTHONY'S CHURCH - DAY

This church may have fallen on hard times, but its former grandeur is still evident in the ornate Gothic architecture. There are perhaps 20 parishioners in attendance.

FATHER TOMAS ORTEGA (mid-30s, warm and compassionate) stands at the podium, delivering the morning homily.

TOMAS

Now Peter, he's not the most humble guy. He sees Jesus walking across the water and he says, *Hey, I want to do that, too.* And so Jesus gives Peter a command. He tells him to get out of the boat. And to his credit, Peter does. He climbs out, he starts walking across the water. Then, because it's Peter, he makes his mistake. He looks down.

His nephew LUIS (12) is sitting alone in the front row. A heavysset, bookish kid. Tomas points to him.

TOMAS

Remember in those old Roadrunner cartoons, when the Coyote would go off the side of the cliff and just keep walking? Luis knows. What happens when he finally looks down?

Luis pantomimes falling. Tomas grins, then continues.

TOMAS

That's right, he falls. And the same thing happens here. Peter starts to sink. And Jesus grabs him, and tosses him back into the boat, and says, *What's wrong with you? I said you could walk on water. Why didn't you believe me?*

We focus on one family in particular:

--HENRY RANCE (58), a tall scarecrow of a man, with thinning hair and a pleasant, slightly befuddled expression.

--His wife ANGELA (55), regal and proud, although the last few months have taken their toll on her natural beauty.

--Their daughter CASEY (20), gentle and good-natured. She's the wallflower of the family, raised in the long shadow of her more successful sister. A shy, sweet girl.

Henry notices a BABY, being held by its mother in the next row. He waggles his fingers at the baby. Angela reaches out, gently lowers his hand again. Henry doesn't seem to mind.

TOMAS

It's okay to have questions. God doesn't want mindless obedience. He wants you to consider the facts. He wants you to search your heart. He wants you to come to him in your own time, in your own way.

(beat)

But sometimes, when God gives you a job to do, you have to put all that aside and just start walking. Even if it's across the water.

(beat)

Because in the end, that's what makes belief powerful. It's not something you're born with. It's an action. Something that you decide.

INT. ST. ANTHONY'S CHURCH - SHORT TIME LATER

Mass has ended. Families gathering their things, filing out.

The Rances are halfway down the aisle when Angela notices--

ANGELA

What happened to your hat? Henry?

Henry's hand goes to his head. He looks around, bewildered.

HENRY

My hat?

ANGELA

Did you bring it in with you, or did you leave it in the car?

HENRY

I don't...I'm not...

Angela can see his frustration mounting. She takes his hands.

ANGELA

It's all right. It's just a hat.

Meanwhile, Father Tomas stands at the doorway, greeting parishioners, switching between ENGLISH and SPANISH.

TOMAS

David, Sarah, good to see you guys.
Gina, *¿cómo está la cadera? Mírate.*
Vas a estar en esa pista de baile
esta noche, ¿no es así?

As he shakes another hand, he happens to glance outside--

Across the street stands a HOMELESS MAN with WILD, UNSETTLING EYES and a shock of unruly ORANGE HAIR. Staring right at us.

Tomas shakes it off. Turns to greet Casey Rance.

TOMAS

Casey, hey. How's school?

CASEY

It's good. Got all my classes on a Tuesday / Thursday schedule.

TOMAS

Nice. Four day weekend.

Tomas glances out the door again--

The Homeless Man is closer. He has crossed the street and now stands at the edge of the lawn. Gazing intently at Tomas. Tomas forces himself to return to the conversation:

TOMAS

How's your sister doing?

CASEY

She's taking the semester off--

Angela and Henry have come up behind them. Angela jumps in:

ANGELA

She's a little under the weather.

TOMAS

Sorry to hear that. Tell her, ahh--

He can't take it anymore. Glances out the doorway again.
 The Homeless Man is gone. The church lawn now stands empty.
 Tomas, possibly a bit relieved, resumes the conversation:

TOMAS
 Tell her that I hope she gets to
 feeling better.

Angela appears on the verge of asking Tomas something important, but she changes her mind. Forces a polite smile.

ANGELA
 We will. Thank you.

INT. ANGELA'S STATION WAGON (DRIVING) - DAY

The Rances driving home. Angela behind the wheel. Casey finds a WOOL CAP on the floor--Henry's missing hat--and cranes forward to fit it snugly onto her father's head.

Henry meets her gaze in the mirror, smiles back at her.

EXT. RANCE HOME - DAY

A modest two-story, located in a comfortable neighborhood.

INT. RANCE HOME - SECOND FLOOR - DAY

Angela climbs the stairs. Knocks on a closed door.

ANGELA
 Char? We're taking Dad out for ice
 cream. You wanna go?

Angela glances down. Notices a faint SHADOW moving beneath the crack of the door. Someone is standing on the other side.

ANGELA
 Charlotte?

The door doesn't open. Angela finally gives up, turns away.

EXT. TOMAS'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

ESTABLISHING. A grungy apartment complex in a lower-income neighborhood. It's nowhere you'd want to call home, but there aren't many options when you're living on a priest's salary.

INT. APARTMENT LOBBY - DAY

Tomas enters the building lobby, followed by his nephew Luis. He unlocks his mailbox, pulls out a stack of envelopes.

TOMAS
You good with pizza for dinner?

LUIS
Can we get no vegetables?

Tomas doesn't answer. He's staring at one of the envelopes. Like it's a bomb that could go off at any second.

TOMAS
(distracted)
No vegetables. Yeah.

INT. TOMAS'S APARTMENT - DAY

A tiny studio apartment, the decorations sparse but tasteful.

We drift past several large BOOKSHELVES overflowing with titles: theology, law, psychology, philosophy, comparative religions. Divinity school certifications and commendations.

Tomas and Luis enter. The priest sets the MYSTERIOUS LETTER on the counter, then heads over to the fridge.

TOMAS
You want something to drink? A Coke or something?

LUIS
Sure.

Luis examines the letter. It's handwritten. The return address lists a **JESS RIDMARK**.

INT. TOMAS'S APARTMENT - LATER

Tomas has dug his PLAYSTATION 2 out of storage and connected it to his tiny television. They're playing an old shooter.

LUIS
You should get a PS4.

TOMAS
I'll get right on that.

LUIS

The PS4 graphics are way better.
And the games are better.

TOMAS

I'm sensing a theme here.

They play in silence for a moment. Tomas glances over.

TOMAS

How's school? The other kids. They
leaving you alone?

LUIS

Sometimes.

TOMAS

Sometimes? What about the other
times?

(Another shrug.)

Those guys get in your face, you go
find a grown-up, all right? Or come
talk to me, let me deal with it.

LUIS

Yeah. Okay.

Tomas watches him for a moment, concerned. It's clear he
loves this kid like a son. He reaches out, ruffles his hair.

TOMAS

You watch. Puberty hits, you're
gonna be a tank, just like your
dad. Remember how big he was?

(Luis nods.)

Ain't nobody messing with you then.

Luis gives his uncle a shy, hopeful smile.

INT. TOMAS'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Later that night. We drift past an empty pizza box. The muted
television. Luis, passed out the couch, covered in a blanket.

Tomas sits by the window, the open envelope at his side.
Reading the handwritten letter for the hundredth time.

*INSERT: Tomas's hands, exploring a woman's naked body. The
curve of her hip. The soft contours of an exposed neck.*

*INSERT: A silhouetted woman, presumably JESS, standing naked
before the window, watching the falling rain--*

INSERT: Tomas pushes Jess up against the wall, kissing her. Attacking each other with an almost feral intensity.

These flashes are subtle impressions. Almost voyeuristic.

A soft KNOCK at the door interrupts Tomas's memories. He reflexively hides the letter and envelope from sight.

He opens the door to reveal OLIVIA (32). His older sister. She's wearing sophisticated BUSINESS ATTIRE.

TOMAS
Hey, Olivia.

OLIVIA
How was he?

TOMAS
Good. Just fell asleep.

EXT. TOMAS'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Tomas carries the sleeping boy downstairs and loads him into Olivia's CRV. He kisses his sister on the cheek.

OLIVIA
Thanks for watching him.

TOMAS
Get home safe.

He stands on the curb, watches as her vehicle pulls away.

INT. TOMAS'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tomas returns the game system to the closet. He surveys the living room. With Luis gone, the place seems small. Empty.

With a final resigned glance around the room, he turns out the lights and climbs into bed.

EXT. KORARO, ETHIOPIA - NIGHT

A dusty Jeep rolls through Koraro. It stops before the hut, where Father Marcus sits on the front porch, calmly breaking down and reassembling a black M11 SERVICE REVOLVER.

BENNETT climbs out of the vehicle. A liaison for the Vatican. Black British, elegant and handsome. Also: kind of a dick.

BENNETT
Father Marcus.

MARCUS
You're a long way from Rome.

BENNETT
I'm glad you noticed, considering
it is your fault. No one's heard
from you in 26 days.

MARCUS
I'm aware.

Bennett makes a sour face when he notices the gun.

BENNETT
Scaring the locals, I see. That's
wonderful. You *do* realize that now
I have to put this in my report?

MARCUS
Have you forgotten Haiti?

BENNETT
I remember Haiti.

MARCUS
Then you remember how they tied a
bedsheet around that girl's neck.
Hung her from a mango tree. While
we did nothing.

Bennett sighs, doesn't have time for this.

BENNETT
I trust you've made progress?

MARCUS
Every day is progress. The power is
in the repetition.

BENNETT
Very poetic, Marcus. Thanks for
sharing that. You smell like shit,
by the way.

Bennett enters the hut. Marcus waits on the porch. After a
long pause, Bennett emerges again, ashen, sickened.

BENNETT
(very quiet)
What have you done?

MARCUS

My job.

BENNETT

Your job? Look at me!

Enraged, Bennett grabs Marcus's shoulders, SLAMS him against the wall of the hut. Marcus doesn't fight back.

BENNETT

That child. Is going. To die.

MARCUS

I can save him.

BENNETT

You're out of your mind. This is so far beyond protocol--

MARCUS

Your protocol. Not mine. Look around you. This is no coincidence. Our order stands on the blade of a knife. The Church has never been weaker. And our enemy knows this.
(points to the hut)

They are sending us a message! So what would you have me do?

Bennett gives him a disdainful look. Turns away wordlessly.

BENNETT

I'm taking that boy to a hospital.

MARCUS

Bennett.

The next sound Bennett hears is the CLICK of a hammer being drawn. He stops, turns. Marcus is aiming the gun at him.

BENNETT

You would shoot me?

MARCUS

Without hesitation. That boy needs my help. I will not abandon him.

BENNETT

You're out of your mind. Rome will not forgive this, Marcus.

MARCUS

It's not their forgiveness I seek. Go home, Father Bennett.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Tell your masters that one soldier
still fights for the glory of God.

Moments later. Marcus watches as Bennett's Jeep tears out of the village. Taillights receding into the distance.

Only then does Marcus enter the hut.

INT. HUT - CONTINUOUS

The hut is simple, barren. Wood floors and unpainted walls.

We hear something BREATHING, a low, guttural sound.

GABRA (O.S.)

I was starting to like him.

The voice is ancient. Inhuman.

Marcus calmly puts on his clerical collar. Washes his hands in a bowl of warm water. Finally he turns.

And we get our first look at 10-year-old GABRA. Naked save for a pair of dirty pajama bottoms, his dark skin slick with sweat. He has been chained to the bed, his wrists and ankles bound with ugly IRON CHAINS. His eyes are bright, feral.

Marcus sits at the bedside and opens an old LEATHERBOUND BOOK. He begins to read aloud, his voice quiet but firm.

MARCUS

*We cast you out, every unclean
spirit, every satanic power, every
onslaught of the infernal adversary-*

GABRA

I have a secret for you, Father.
Would you like to hear it?

MARCUS (OVER)

*--every legion, every diabolical
group and sect, in the name and by
the power of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

GABRA

We have another visitor.

Marcus finally looks up. The boy is grinning at him. Then his bloodshot eyes flicker to one side, over Marcus's shoulder.

Marcus pivots. Surveys the empty corner of the hut. Nothing there. He turns back, resumes his reading.

MARCUS
*We command you, begone and
 fly far from the Church of
 God--*

GABRA
 Oh. That's unfortunate.

MARCUS
*--from the souls made by God
 in His image and redeemed by
 the precious blood of the
 Divine Lamb.*

GABRA
 I don't think he can see you.

As Marcus CONTINUES TO READ ALOUD, we CRANE UP, revealing--

Somehow, impossibly, FATHER TOMAS is standing in the corner
 of the hut. Frozen. His eyes wide with terror.

GABRA
 So nice of you to join us, Father.

TOMAS
 (finding his voice)
 What...what is this? Where am I?

Marcus keeps reading. Gives no indication of having heard.

TOMAS
 Hello? How did I get here?

Still Marcus ignores him. Gabra makes the introductions.

GABRA
 Father Marcus. Not much of a
 conversationalist, I'm afraid.

This doesn't feel like a dream. The details are too real, too
 vivid. Tomas notices a PICTURE hanging on the wall: a wharf,
 brightly colored boats jockeying for position. Then he
 crosses the room, kneels before Marcus.

TOMAS
 Look at me. LOOK AT ME!

Still Marcus continues to read. *He can't hear or see Tomas.*

The possessed boy begins to LAUGH, a low croaking sound.

Up close, the child is a nightmare. Constricted pupils
 swimming in jaundiced yellow eyes. His cheeks and chin caked
 with dried foam. STEAM seems to be rising from his bare skin,
 as if he's boiling alive from the inside.

TOMAS
 What are you?

GABRA

The one who is done and the one who
is yet to come. Would you like to
know my name, Father?

(Tomas NODS.)

Come closer. I'll tell you.

Slowly, as if moving in a trance, Tomas leans toward him--

The boy LUNGES against his restraints, striking like a cobra,
his teeth snapping shut only inches from Tomas's throat.

Tomas leaps backwards with a cry as we SMASH CUT TO:

INT. TOMAS'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tomas bolts upright in bed, panting, drenched with sweat.

He climbs out of bed, stumbles into the bathroom. Drinks
directly from the faucet. His hands are shaking.

He stares at his reflection in the mirror. Trying to convince
himself that it wasn't real. That it was only a nightmare.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. RANCE HOME - EVENING

A car drops Casey off in front of the house. She jogs up the steps, carrying her LACROSSE EQUIPMENT.

INT. RANCE HOME - EVENING

Casey enters the living room, where she finds Angela working on a SCRAPBOOK. Pasting old family photos. The overhead lights are off; her mother is working in near darkness.

CASEY

Mom?

ANGELA

Hi, hon. How was practice?

CASEY

Why are you doing that in the dark?

ANGELA

Oh, you know. The time just got away from me.

Casey realizes her mother has been crying. Her cheeks damp.

CASEY

Are you all right?

Angela stares at her without answering for a moment. Then she smiles. A *not-entirely-stable* smile.

ANGELA

Of course I'm all right.

INT. RANCE HOME - CHARLOTTE'S ROOM - EVENING

The blinds are drawn, the room cloaked in cold blue shadow. A tentative KNOCK on the door. Casey pokes her head in.

CASEY

Char? Oh my God, is everyone in this family allergic to light?

She turns on the light. And we get our first good look at--

CHARLOTTE RANCE (21), laying in bed. A dancer's physique, birdlike, fragile. Her hair is tousled, her eyes glassy and dull. Clearly hasn't bathed or showered in days.

CHARLOTTE
What do you want?

CASEY
Dinner's ready.
(makes a face)
What's that smell? Is that you?

Charlotte gives her the finger. Casey flops down on the bed.

CASEY
I caught Mom crying. That wasn't weird.

CHARLOTTE
And I'm sure it was an accident.

CASEY
You're so mean to her.

CHARLOTTE
No, I just know her little martyr routine. She only climbs up on the cross when she wants attention.

CASEY
Now who does *that* sound like?

Charlotte throws a pillow. Casey bats it away, grinning.

CASEY
I've got a game on Friday. If you wanted to, you know, someday possibly leave this room.

CHARLOTTE
(deadpan whining)
But all my stuff is here.

CASEY
There will be guys in attendance. I should point that out.

CHARLOTTE
Pass.

CASEY
Although I would strongly recommend a shower first--

CHARLOTTE

Hard pass.

CASEY

You *do* realize the pity party thing stops being cute when you're 14...?

CHARLOTTE

I'm not having a pity party.

CASEY

...she said, sitting in the dark.

CHARLOTTE

Why do you care?

CASEY

Because you're my stupid sister?
Also, for real, I'm starving.

CHARLOTTE

So eat without me.

CASEY

That's one option. Orrrr...

She crawls forward across the bed. Charlotte frowns.

CHARLOTTE

What are you doing? Don't. I'm serious, Case, don't--

Casey pounces on her sister, placing her in a HEADLOCK.

CHARLOTTE

Get off! I am not even kidding right now, get off--

CASEY

Unbreakable headlock!

Charlotte attempts to wriggle free. Casey allows herself to fall off the side of the bed, pulling Charlotte with her.

CASEY

(from the floor)
Flawless victory.

CHARLOTTE

(muffled)
You're an idiot.

INT. RANCE HOME - DINING ROOM - SHORT TIME LATER

Charlotte has joined the others. They eat in silence.

Casey meets Charlotte's gaze from across the table, smiles. Charlotte sticks out her tongue. Casey's grin only widens. For the moment, at least, the storm clouds have lifted.

INT. ST. ANTHONY'S CHURCH - DAY

Father Tomas stands over St. Anthony's new DIGITAL ORGAN, trying to placate MRS. FINLEY, the elderly church organist.

MRS. FINLEY
Every morning it does this! **E-R-R--**

TOMAS
"Error." Have you tried a reset?

MRS. FINLEY
I told you we never should have gotten rid of the old one--

TOMAS
Let me grab the instruction manual.

We TRACK AFTER HIM him down the center aisle. He's intercepted by HELENA CARUTHERS, elderly, Hispanic, a bit of a nuisance. They converse in SUBTITLED SPANISH:

HELENA
Padre.

TOMAS
Hola, Helena. Lo siento, estoy realmente muy ocupado ahora--
<Hi, Helena. I'm sorry, I'm actually really busy right now-->

HELENA
Sólo una confesión rápida.
<Just a quick confession-->

TOMAS
(gently cutting her off)
Por favor. Tengo mil cosas en mi plato. Mañana, ¿de acuerdo?
<Please. I've got a thousand things on my plate. Tomorrow, okay?>

He enters the lobby, where the church's volunteer secretary TARA (late 20s, single mom) is chatting on her phone. In the b.g., her six-year-old son J.B. is playing with a YARDSTICK.

TARA
--and it's literally the same picture from his profile--

TARA (CONT'D)
 (calling to her son)
 J.B.! Uh-uh! We do not play with
 sticks in the church!

J.B. HOWLS like a Spartan and smacks the wall with his stick.

TOMAS
 Tara, I need the book that came
 with the new organ.

TARA
 I think they put all that stuff in
 the basement...?

As Tomas turns away, his sister Olivia enters from the side.

OLIVIA
 Hey. You busy?

TOMAS
 You have no idea. Hang on, okay?

He heads back down the aisle, ducking past Helena again.

HELENA
Se acaba de tomar un minuto--
<It would just take a minute-->

TOMAS
Yo te absuelvo de forma preventiva.
Cualquier cosa menos que un
asesinato, que está absuelto.
<I preemptively absolve you.
Anything short of murder, you are
absolved.>

MRS. FINLEY
 (calling out)
 It still says E-R-R!

TOMAS
 I'm on it!

He UNLOCKS a small door in the back of the church--

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Low stone ceilings, supplies piled as far as the eye can see.
 One corner has been partitioned off behind a wooden door,
 forming a SUPPLY ROOM. Olivia follows Tomas down the stairs.

Olivia holds up an old VINTAGE HOLIDAY WREATH.

OLIVIA

Oh my God. I am one hundred percent taking this.

TOMAS

What do you want, Olivia?

OLIVIA

Luis told me you got a letter.

TOMAS

I get lots of letters.

OLIVIA

A letter from Jess.

Tomas stops. Knows he's busted. Olivia sees it, too. Annoyed, she throws a plastic candle. It BONKS off his head.

TOMAS

What the hell!

OLIVIA

Exactly, Tomas, what the hell!

TOMAS

Jess and I are friends. That's all.

OLIVIA

Yeah? And what happens when someone catches you being *friends*? Because I remember what happened last time.

TOMAS

I'm not getting caught, because there's nothing to catch--

Olivia softens, follows him around the next corner.

OLIVIA

I'm just saying, *Abuelita's* not around anymore, you know? You think God wants you to be miserable?

TOMAS

What's that supposed to mean?

OLIVIA

It means you should do whatever makes you happy! There's no shame in saying, *you know what, I gave it a shot.*

TOMAS

Gave it a shot. This isn't some
hobby, Liv. This is my life.
(He stops. Kisses her on
the forehead.)
And I am happy. And you don't have
to worry about Jess.

OLIVIA

(beat)
Can I still have the wreath?

Tomas walks past her, heading for the stairs.

TOMAS

No.

OLIVIA

C'mon!

INT. ST. ANTHONY'S CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

Tomas and Olivia emerge from the church basement. Angela
Rance is waiting for him, timid, unhappy.

ANGELA

Father Tomas? Is there...somewhere
private we could talk...?

Tomas glances at his sister. Olivia nods. *Go ahead.*

INT. ST. ANTHONY'S CHURCH - TOMAS'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Tomas closes the door, invites Angela to sit down.

TOMAS

What can I do for you?

Angela struggles for a moment. Deeply embarrassed.

ANGELA

I don't even really know where to
begin. I guess...you know that
Charlotte's back from college...?

TOMAS

I heard.

ANGELA

And you know about the accident?
(Tomas nods.)

ANGELA (CONT'D)

At first I thought, she's just depressed. I would be, too. But it's more than that. Her entire personality has changed. The way she talks, everything.

TOMAS

That's actually fairly common. The world gets knocked off its axis, we tend to reevaluate things.

ANGELA

That's what I thought, too. Then I thought, maybe she's doing it on purpose. Trying to, to get inside my head, I don't know why, maybe she thinks it's funny--

She's rambling. Tomas attempts to steer her back on course.

TOMAS

Doing what on purpose?

ANGELA

I would wake up and things wouldn't be where I left them. Like they were moved in the night. Then we started hearing things, in the walls, these pounding noises--

TOMAS

I'm not following.

ANGELA

(hesitates, struggling)
I started to think, what if it's not her? What if there's something else in the house?

TOMAS

Something else. Like what?

Angela stares at the floor. Knows how crazy this sounds.

ANGELA

A...presence. Maybe she brought it home with her, or, or *summoned* it, and that's why it's here--

Tomas has humored this for long enough. He leans forward.

TOMAS

I've got this air conditioner, old. Sometimes, for no reason at all, it starts making this banging noise-- *wham! wham! wham!*--like someone's whacking it with a hammer. Doesn't mean my apartment's haunted.

ANGELA

Well, obviously--

TOMAS

Second: you've got a husband with dementia. So if things are going missing around the house, that's probably a good place to start--

ANGELA

I saw it.

TOMAS

...Saw what?

Instead of answering, Angela stares out the window.

ANGELA

Every night, I have the exact same dream. Every detail, exactly the same. Tell me how that's possible.

INT. RANCE HOME - NIGHT - DREAM SEQUENCE

The upstairs hallway. The early hours of the morning.

Angela climbs out of bed. Her movements languid, dreamlike. Everything has a faint sheen of unreality.

She looks at the bedroom window. The glass is frosted with condensation, arranged in strange patterns, loops and whorls.

She exits the bedroom. Starts down the hall. A droning hum of WHITE NOISE building in the background.

Charlotte's door is cracked. We hear sounds coming from within. RENDING SOUNDS, low and terrible.

Angela hesitates. Doesn't want to see what's on the other side. But she's helpless to resist. She opens the door.

And we're struck by a scene of almost unimaginable horror.

Charlotte lies DEAD in her bed, her exposed legs splayed out to either side. Her throat has been savagely torn open.

There's SOMETHING straddling her, a MONSTROUS FORM, its proportions unnatural. Spiderlike limbs and alabaster skin.

The DEMON is eating her daughter. Its mouth full of wet gristle, chewing lustfully, relentlessly.

Angela stumbles backwards. Too horrified to even scream.

The thing's bulbous head whips around. It slides off the bed and darts toward her, slithering along on all fours.

Sobbing, gasping, Angela rushes back down the corridor. The thing is right behind her, GRUNTING eagerly.

She hits the bedroom door. The handle won't turn. Locked.

The creature SLAMS into Angela from behind, pinning her--

We see that it has no eyes or nose, just a wattle of sagging skin. Below this waits a mouth filled with needle-like teeth.

The creature's long tongue darts out, slapping grotesquely against Angela's cheek as she SHRIEKS--

CUT BACK TO THE PRESENT

INT. ST. ANTHONY'S CHURCH - TOMAS'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Angela finishes her story, tears in her eyes, visibly shaken. Tomas regards her solemnly, puzzling over her story.

TOMAS

So...in the dream, this monster--

ANGELA

It's not a monster. It's a demon.

TOMAS

How do you know that?

Angela looks away. Her voice very quiet.

ANGELA

It told me.

(begins to cry)

It told me it wants my little girl!

TOMAS

Angela. Demons don't exist.

ANGELA

How can you say that?

TOMAS

Because it's the truth. Think about when they were invented, back in Biblical times. Back then, demons weren't monsters. They were metaphors. A way for people of that time to understand things like addiction, mental illness. *Why am I depressed? Why is that guy talking to himself?* Because we have demons.

(leans back)

Then, over the years, we get books, and movies, and video games, and pretty soon they're just like vampires or anything else. They're creepy, but that doesn't make them any more real.

ANGELA

What about exorcisms?

Tomas flinches, ever so slightly. We catch a SPLIT-SECOND glimpse of GABRA'S LEERING FACE. Then Tomas recovers.

TOMAS

Doesn't happen anymore. And it shouldn't have happened then. Sometimes good intentions still lead to bad things.

Angela stands, gazes out the tiny window, distracted.

ANGELA

I just feel like I'm losing her.

TOMAS

And we're gonna fix that. I can put you in touch with a good therapist. Charlotte needs someone to help her deal with this very real pain--

ANGELA

She won't go to therapy. You don't know what she's like--

TOMAS (OVER)

She'll go if you make her. I'd also like to meet with her. But we have to treat the symptoms, not the superstitions. I can't help you unless we're both on the same page.

ANGELA

All right. I just hope--

WHAM! Something SLAMS against the window, just behind Angela's head, a small dark blur. She SCREAMS.

EXT. OUTSIDE TOMAS'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Tomas stands, peers out the window. Can't see anything.

ANGELA
What is it?

TOMAS
I don't know.

After a moment, he turns away from the window.

We slowly PAN DOWN...revealing a DYING BIRD lying in the grass, one leg twitching. As we watch, it falls still.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. KORARO, ETHIOPIA - NIGHT

A cold wind rips through Koraro, rattling rooftops, banging shutters. It's the middle of the night. Nothing stirs.

Nothing except Father Tomas. He wanders through the village, barefoot, moving in a dreamlike trance.

He passes empty huts. Open doors. Darkened windows. Everyone has fled. In the distance, a dog is BARKING frantically.

Tomas keeps walking. Drawn inexorably toward--

THE HUT. The front door is open, BANGING on its hinges with each vicious gust of wind. A hungry mouth, waiting.

INT. HUT - CONTINUOUS

Slowly, fearfully, Tomas enters the hut.

Father Marcus stands over the bed, reading from his book. Marcus looks noticeably worse: gaunt, sleep-deprived, hollow.

The boy on the bed, however, has never looked stronger. Gabra strains, his back arched, tendons popping in his neck. We realize the BARKING noise is coming from the boy himself.

MARCUS

*God, by your name save me, and by
your might defend my cause.*

Gabra breaks off suddenly. His head swivels around, and his yellow eyes fix on Father Tomas. His parched lips crack apart in a gruesome parody of a smile.

GABRA

I was beginning to think you had
abandoned me, Father.

As before, Marcus cannot see or hear this new arrival. He continues READING the Rites of Exorcism throughout the scene.

TOMAS

This isn't real. This is a dream.

GABRA

Of course it is. Just an ordinary
dream. God's Penitent, gathering in
the eye of the storm.

The boy grins, and his tongue forks out, sliding obscenely along his lips. The tip has been CHEWED APART, so that it resembles a serpent's tongue.

MARCUS

*Turn back the evil upon my foes; in
your faithfulness destroy them.
Freely will I offer you sacrifice.*

That gets the boy's attention. He turns his attention back to Father Marcus, leering, drool spilling down his chin.

GABRA

Sacrifice? Now there's an idea.

All at once the malice drains from the boy's face, becoming beautiful once more. Gabra blinks, as if waking from a long sleep. The child looks around, his expressive eyes wide and frightened, the picture of innocence. When he speaks again, it's in the voice of a normal child:

GABRA (BROKEN ENGLISH)

Please. Why? Why you do this to me?

The boy begins to CRY. Marcus's concentration breaks. He stares at the floor, shaking, unable to meet Gabra's gaze.

GABRA (BROKEN ENGLISH)

I want my mother. Where is she?

Marcus shuts his eyes tightly. This is agonizing. In the b.g., the boy's sobs turn to CROAKING, EVIL LAUGHTER as the demon takes control once more.

GABRA

Poor Father Marcus. I wonder... how
many children have to die before
your faith turns to ash?

Tomas drifts closer. Unable to help himself.

We hear a brittle CRACKING SOUND, like thin ice giving way. Something flies from the boy's mouth, skids across the floor--

Coming to rest between Tomas's feet. He bends to retrieve--

A SHATTERED TOOTH. He drops it in disgust.

Now we hear more SHARP REPORTS, as the boy's teeth continue to SHATTER, one by one, like popcorn kernels. Marcus fights to ignore this fresh horror. His voice little more than a whisper as he struggles on:

MARCUS

*Glory be to the Father, as it was
in the beginning. Save your
servant. Who trusts in you, my God.*

The boy gives a MOAN of pure ecstasy as another molar POPS. His mouth is now a bloody mess of shattered teeth.

Marcus can take no more. He loses his temper, flinging a vial of HOLY WATER directly into the boy's face--

MARCUS

BE QUIET! IN THE NAME OF GOD OUR
FATHER AND ALL HIS HOSTS, I COMMAND
YOU TO BE SILENT AND SPEAK NO M--

But Marcus's voice CRACKS. Coughing, gasping, he sinks to his knees beside the bed. His entire body trembling with exhaustion. He looks more than helpless. He looks defeated.

The boy stares at Marcus, his eyes bright with malice.

GABRA

Not long now.

INT. TOMAS'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Tomas awakens with a start, heart hammering, sheets drenched with sweat. Another nightmare. They're getting worse.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CINCINNATI - BUS STOP - AFTERNOON

An overcast, miserable day. A cold RAIN drizzling down. Father Tomas huddles beneath a bus stop shelter.

INT. BUS (MOVING) - AFTERNOON

Father Tomas gazes out the window as the bus trundles along.

We pass the same ORANGE-HAIRED HOMELESS MAN that Tomas glimpsed outside his church, standing on the corner, oblivious to the rain. Slowly, he rotates to stare after us.

EXT. RANCE HOME - AFTERNOON

Tomas knocks on the door. Angela answers and ushers him in. We're too far away to hear their conversation.

INT. RANCE HOME - STAIRS - AFTERNOON

Tomas knocks on Charlotte's closed bedroom door.

TOMAS

Charlotte? It's Father Tomas, from
St. Anthony's. Can I come in?

CHARLOTTE (O.S.)

(a pause, then...)

Yeah.

INT. RANCE HOME - CHARLOTTE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Charlotte sits in a swivel chair in front of her computer.
She idly spins around as Tomas enters.

She's wearing a tank top and boy shorts. Tomas averts his
eyes as he picks up a BATHROBE and offers it to her. She
drops the robe into her lap, her expression amused.

TOMAS

Been a while. Your mom invited me
over for dinner, so I just wanted
to say hi, see how you're doing.

CHARLOTTE

I'm fine.

Tomas sits down across from her.

TOMAS

I heard about the accident. I'm
sorry.

The friendliness bleeds out of her face. She says nothing.
But one hand reflexively goes to her knee. Tomas notices.

TOMAS

You want to talk about it?

CHARLOTTE

What do you think?

TOMAS

I think it's probably none of my
business. But I do know what it's
like to pay for your mistakes. To
feel like your whole life just got
taken away from you.

CHARLOTTE

Really? You've got a lot of experience in that area, *Father*?

TOMAS

You'd be surprised. Anyway. If you ever change your mind.

He examines a series of PHOTOS arranged on the wall. Charlotte and Casey in happier times, smiling, laughing.

CHARLOTTE

Look, my Mom clearly put you up to this, so you can tell her I'm fine.

(Tomas waits.)

I'm very aware that everyone thinks I'm this fragile glass ornament, but I'm fine. I'm dealing.

TOMAS

And how are you sleeping?

CHARLOTTE

What?

TOMAS

Any bad dreams?

CHARLOTTE

(hesitates)

I don't dream.

TOMAS

Not ever?

CHARLOTTE

No. What's this about?

Tomas studies her for a moment before answering.

TOMAS

Your mother believes your home has been targeted by an actual demon.

A stunned beat. Then Charlotte bursts out LAUGHING.

CHARLOTTE

Holy shit, I thought this was an intervention. I didn't realize she'd called in the Ghostbusters. Does Casey know?

TOMAS

Yes.

CHARLOTTE

That is hysterical. You know where all this is coming from, right? She went on Facebook and saw that I had Liked my friend's stupid Wiccan craft store. Now she thinks, I don't know, that I'm out drinking ram's blood and dancing naked in the moonlight. You know how embarrassing that is?

TOMAS

She's concerned--

CHARLOTTE

She's losing her mind. You've seen Dad, right? What he's like?

TOMAS

Yes.

CHARLOTTE

Six months ago they were taking ballroom dancing classes. Now she's gotta check his ass every time he goes to the bathroom because half the time he forgets how to wipe.
(shakes her head)
Her entire life blew up, and she's looking for someone to blame. Besides God.

TOMAS

Is that who you blame when things go wrong?

CHARLOTTE

No. I blame myself. Because that's what you do when you're an adult.

EXT. RANCE HOME - SECOND FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Tomas exits the room and nearly collides with Casey, who is wearing pajama pants and a sleeveless tee.

CASEY

Hey, Father T! I didn't know you were here.

ELLIOT

Hey, Casey. How you doing?

He gives her a quick hug. But as he pulls away, he notices something. His arm darts out, gently catching her wrist.

TOMAS

Where did you get that?

SEVERAL UGLY PURPLE BRUISES are running along Casey's upper biceps. The bruises form the shape of a HUMAN HAND.

TOMAS

Whoa, hey. Who did this to you?

CASEY

No one--

TOMAS

Casey. What happened?

Casey's gaze flickers over to Charlotte's closed door.

CASEY

It was an accident. Can you...can you not say anything to my mom?

TOMAS

Charlotte did this?

CASEY

She didn't mean to. She was... I made her angry, and she grabbed me. She's not crazy.

TOMAS

No one said she was.

Behind them, on the stairs, someone CLEARS HER THROAT. They turn to find Angela, smiling brightly.

ANGELA

Dinner's ready.

INT. RANCE HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Tomas has joined the Rances at the dinner table. Trays of food are being passed. Casey now wears a heavy SWEATER.

TOMAS

It's delicious, Angela.

Angela smiles. She's busy cutting Henry's meal into pieces.

ANGELA

It's just boring old meatloaf.

TOMAS

How's the boat, Henry?

HENRY
What's that?

TOMAS
You get it all fixed up?

HENRY
Fixed?

Angela pours herself a generous glass of wine.

ANGELA
He's asking about the boat.
(to Tomas, quieter)
We got rid of it.

CHARLOTTE
You're wasting your time. He's
basically a potato.

ANGELA
Charlotte!

CHARLOTTE
What? It's the truth.

ANGELA
He's still your father.

Charlotte leans forward and waves one hand in Henry's face.

CHARLOTTE
Really? Does that look like Dad to
you? Hello? Anyone in there?

CASEY
Leave him alone!

CHARLOTTE
He doesn't even know.

TOMAS
(clears his throat)
I had an advisor, back in seminary,
he used to tell this story about
getting called in to administer
Last Rites to a young woman in a
coma. According to the doctors, she
was totally brain dead, no hope of
recovery. So. My friend, he
administers the rites, goes home.
The next day, for no apparent
reason, the woman wakes up.

TOMAS (CONT'D)

And she's fine! No cognitive loss.
An honest-to-God medical miracle.

ANGELA

That's wonderful.

He looks around the table. Meeting Charlotte's gaze last.

TOMAS

But here's the thing. She could recall specific conversations that took place in that room, even ones where she was in a coma at the time! Which suggests--to me, anyway --that even when the rest of the body shuts down, there's still some part of the brain that stays aware. Knows everything that's going on.

(to Charlotte, quietly:)

So keep your damn hands out of his face. All right?

Charlotte glares back at him, defiant...then the anger seeps out of her. She looks away, chagrined. Casey gives Father Tomas a small, appreciative smile.

INT. RANCE HOME - KITCHEN - SHORT TIME LATER

The girls have retreated to their respective rooms. Tomas helps Angela with the dishes.

ANGELA

You can say it. Crazy Angela.

TOMAS

I don't think you're crazy.

ANGELA

But you don't believe me.

TOMAS

That there's a demon after your daughter? No. I don't.

She uncorks a bottle of WINE from the fridge, pours herself another drink. Offers Tomas the bottle.

TOMAS

No thanks.

ANGELA

There's bourbon, but that keeps me up.

ANGELA (CONT'D)

The wine puts me right to sleep.
Takes pretty much the whole bottle,
but the plus side is: no dreams.
Just lights out. Not the healthiest
solution, granted...

She realizes she's rambling, laughs nervously. Then takes a long drink. Tomas can't help notice her shaking hand.

ANGELA

(quieter)

I've started giving serious
consideration to the possibility
that I'm losing my mind.

TOMAS

You're not.

ANGELA

The thoughts I've been having? I
know they're not normal. I'm...I'm
afraid of my own daughter!

(a shaky laugh)

I feel like God's punishing me and
I don't even know what I did wrong!

She's edging toward hysteria. Tomas gently takes her hands.

TOMAS

You're not being punished. You're
being *tested*. And I don't know why
either, but I do know this: you're
strong. Your family is strong. And
I'm going to help you get through
this, all of you. That's a promise.

She offers a small, grateful smile. So desperate to believe.

INT. RANCE HOME - LIVING ROOM - SHORT TIME LATER

Tomas tugs on his jacket, preparing to leave. He wanders into the family room. Henry is still watching TV.

TOMAS

I'm taking off, Henry. Thanks for
having me.

(No response.)

All right, buddy, take care.

But as Tomas turns to leave, Henry speaks. His voice a flat monotone. Never taking his eyes off the screen.

HENRY
It's just off the 75.

TOMAS
Oh yeah? What's off the 75?

HENRY
St. Aquinas.

TOMAS
What's at St. Aquinas?

HENRY
Father Marcus.

The name hits Tomas like a thunderbolt. He comes around, kneels next to the old man. Searching his face.

TOMAS
Marcus? Did you say Marcus?
(No response)
Who is he? Henry, who's Father
Marcus?

Nothing. Henry has lapsed back into his usual fugue state.

INT. TOMAS'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tomas at his computer. He runs a search for *St. Aquinas*. Thousands of results come back. He narrows it to Ohio.

Bingo: **St. Aquinas Retreat Center**, located just north of Dayton. Right off of Interstate 75.

Tomas frowns. No idea what to make of this. Next he searches for **FATHER MARCUS, EXORCISM**. Strange...no results come back. He narrows his search to just the word **EXORCISM**.

He clicks through various pages. We see DISTURBING HISTORICAL PHOTOS of suspected possession cases.

He finds an old news clipping: **TWO DEAD FOLLOWING GEORGETOWN EXORCISM**. As he scans the article, select phrases pop out: "...actress Chris MacNeil..." "Father Damien Karras, who fell to his death..." "...believed her daughter was possessed by a malevolent force..."

The article ends with a picture of the iconic "Exorcist stairs," the steps where Father Karras died.

TOMAS
What the hell, what the hell...

He glances at the WOODEN CRUCIFIX hanging on the wall.

TOMAS

Don't suppose there's any point
asking you.

He stares at the computer screen, frustrated, confused.

INT. TOMAS'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tomas in bed, unable to sleep. Suddenly feeling like he has more in common with Angela Rance than he ever could have imagined. Is he also losing his mind?

In the background, a METALLIC POUNDING NOISE, like a hammer striking an anvil. Rising in intensity as we PUSH IN--

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. KORARO, ETHIOPIA - NIGHT

We're back in Ethiopia. Slowly gliding down the dirt path.

Heading right for Gabra's hut.

The door is open, the interior of the hut lit by a dozen flickering candles. It looks like the mouth of Hell itself.

The METALLIC BANGING NOISE INTENSIFIES--**BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!**-- becoming a deafening sonic assault, just as we

SMASH TO BLACK

And in the darkness, SOMETHING LAUGHS.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. TOMAS'S APARTMENT - MONTAGE - MORNING

--Tomas stares into his cereal bowl. Doesn't look like he slept at all. The nightmare still fresh on his mind.

--In the BATHROOM, brushing his teeth, his mind on autopilot.

--Getting dressed in front of the mirror. The usual attire: black shirt, white CLERICAL COLLAR.

--Pacing the HALL, on the phone with his sister Olivia.

TOMAS

How's Luis? Yeah? Hey, I was wondering if I could borrow your car for a couple hours. No, I'll come pick it up. Thanks.

INT. OLIVIA'S CRV (DRIVING) - MONTAGE - DAY

Tomas speeds north along Interstate 75 in the borrowed SUV. Drumming his hands on the wheel. Checking directions. SINGING along to 80's POP SONGS on the radio.

TOMAS

Shot through the heart! And you're to blame!

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Tomas has left the interstate far behind. The SUV winds its way down a series of unpaved GRAVEL ROADS.

EXT. RETREAT CENTER - PARKING LOT - DAY

St. Aquinas is little more than a series of old retrofitted stone cabins, surrounded by miles of untamed forest. A place designed for theological study and quiet introspection, free from the distractions of modern life.

Tomas parks the SUV in the gravel lot and exits the vehicle. There doesn't seem to be any sort of reception area or central office. So he simply starts walking.

EXT. RETREAT CENTER - DAY

Tomas wanders the grounds. Sees MONKS tending vegetable gardens, reading manuscripts, walking in pairs. They wear colorless gray robes. Their heads are SHAVED.

Tomas glances around, feeling foolish and out-of-place. Whatever he was hoping to find clearly isn't here.

ELDERLY VOICE (O.S.)

You look lost, son.

He sees an elderly monk (BROTHER SIMON) wearing dark glasses, sunning himself on a bench. Despite his age--and he must be pushing at least 80--the man is still sprightly, mischievous.

TOMAS

Kinda obvious, huh?

BROTHER SIMON

You could always shave your head.
Put on one of these potato sacks.

TOMAS

Maybe next time.

Tomas smiles. One problem: he still can't figure out whether this guy is blind or not. He waves an experimental hand in front of the old man's face.

BROTHER SIMON

Yep. That's your hand.

TOMAS

Now I just feel like an ass.

BROTHER SIMON

That's all right. Got a name?

TOMAS

Tomas.

BROTHER SIMON

Ahh. From St. Anthony's.

TOMAS

How'd you know?

BROTHER SIMON

Who do you think sends all those wonderful fundraising letters you throw straight in the trash? I can tell you the name of every priest from here to Cuyahoga County.

BROTHER SIMON (CONT'D)
 (waggles a finger)
 But you, I've heard about *you*.
 Father Tomas the rising star.

Tomas grins, both pleased and embarrassed.

TOMAS
 I don't know about that.

BROTHER SIMON
 The Bishop speaks *very* highly of
 you. Says you're exactly the sort
 of man we need right now. So, what
 brings you to our humble home?

TOMAS
 A hunch. A bad one. I guess I was
 hoping for some answers.

BROTHER SIMON
 Gotta have a question before you
 can get an answer.

TOMAS
 I've got plenty of *those*.

BROTHER SIMON
 But do you have the right question?

TOMAS
 What's the right question?

The old man grins, spreads his arms wide.

BROTHER SIMON
 "*What now, God?*" Give me a purpose,
 point me in a direction, make me
 your divine instrument! Once you
 ask Him that, you'll be surprised
 how much the old guy has to say.

TOMAS
 (repeating)
 What now, God?

BROTHER SIMON
 There you go. Just like that.

Tomas exhales, absently scans the courtyard--

And sees a familiar figure crossing the lawn. His head may be
 SHAVED, his beard gone. But we immediately recognize--

FATHER MARCUS. EIGHTEEN MONTHS OLDER than when we last saw him. A thin SCAR trails down one cheek. This isn't the proud warrior we once knew. This man is broken. Beaten.

Tomas just stares, dumbfounded. Here before him, in the flesh, is the stranger from his dreams. He can only watch as Marcus turns the corner and disappears.

TOMAS

Excuse me.

Tomas hurries after Marcus. Brother Simon calmly removes his glasses, revealing eyes occluded by CATARACTS. *He was blind after all*. His friendly smile bleeds away.

BROTHER SIMON

Take care now.

(Note: Although it won't be made explicit until later in the season, the forces of evil are subtly manipulating Father Tomas by preying on his vanity and arrogance, the fact that he is so desperate to believe that he's "special." And it all begins right here, with Brother Simon's careful flattery.)

EXT. RETREAT CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Tomas races after Marcus, zig-zagging through the confusing warren of buildings and gardens.

TOMAS

Father Marcus! Father Marcus!

Marcus doesn't hear him. Keeps walking.

Tomas loses sight of the priest. Reaches an intersection, the path forking in opposite directions. *Where did he go?*

Tomas picks a path at random and takes off again.

INT. RANCE HOME - SAME TIME

Charlotte emerges from her room, makes her way downstairs. We faintly hear NAT KING COLE playing on the family stereo.

She glances through the doorway. In the next room, Angela is BALLROOM DANCING with an imaginary partner, her eyes closed. Reliving happier times. There's something heartbreaking--and perhaps even a little bit disturbing--about the sight.

Charlotte watches her mother for a beat, then slips away.

She encounters her father in the sitting room. Henry is perched in his favorite chair by the window, rocking gently.

Charlotte watches him for a moment. Regretting last night's outburst. Henry blinks, rousing, and smiles up at her.

CHARLOTTE

Hey, Daddy.

HENRY

Hey, Casey.

Ouch. She tries to hide how much that one stings.

CHARLOTTE

I'm Charlotte, Daddy.

HENRY

Charlotte. Charlotte's at school. She's going to be a dancer. Gets that from her mother.

He closes his eyes, settles in. Smiling fondly.

HENRY

All my talented girls.

Charlotte stares down at him, her heart breaking. She leans in and kisses him gently on the forehead.

EXT. RANCE HOME - BACKYARD - SAME TIME

Charlotte slips out the back door. The backyard is tree-lined, overgrown, private. Ancient playground equipment rusting in a tangle of wild grass.

She sits on the steps and opens a Hello Kitty tin, revealing her pot stash. She packs the bowl of her ONE-HITTER.

Her phone VIBRATES. She checks the incoming text message. (We don't see the sender's name.) **"WHY WON'T YOU CALL ME BACK."**

Another buzz, a follow-up message: **"WE NEED TO TALK."**

Charlotte's expression darkens. She sets the phone down, lights her bowl. Angrily exhales smoke through her nose.

Suddenly she realizes she's no longer alone.

STRAY CATS have appeared in the backyard, at least ten of them, possibly more. Sitting on the wooden fence. Lurking in the shadows. All of them motionless. Watching her.

Just like the feral animals back in Ethiopia.

Unnerved, Charlotte grabs her tin. Returns to the house.

EXT. RETREAT CENTER - DORMITORIES - SAME TIME

Marcus glides down the path, walking fast, head bowed, avoiding eye contact. He moves with a slight limp.

He reaches the dormitory building. Opens the door to his ROOM, revealing bare white walls, a simple bed, and piles upon piles of old BOOKS and MANUSCRIPTS. There are no decorations on display, no hints of warmth or personality.

Marcus turns to close the door behind him--

When a hand strikes out, arresting the door! Father Tomas appears in the doorway, panting, out of breath.

TOMAS

Wait.

MARCUS

Can I help you?

TOMAS

You're Father Marcus.

MARCUS

That's right.

Tomas searches Marcus's face. Hoping for some hint of recognition. He has no idea where to begin.

TOMAS

I'm... My name is Father Tomas Ortega. Do you...do you know me? Do you know who I am?

MARCUS

Should I?

TOMAS

Okay. I know how this is going to sound, trust me, but I've been having a...a recurring dream, a nightmare, and you're in it.

Marcus's smile becomes frosty as he scans Tomas. Trying to determine whether this man is dangerous or simply crazy.

MARCUS

What did you say your name was?

TOMAS

Tomas Ortega. I'm from St.
Anthony's, down in Cincinnati--

MARCUS

And this dream you had...?

TOMAS

You were in...I don't know where it
was, it looked like Africa, but
there was a boy, in a hut, and he
was chained to this bed--

(remembering)

There was a picture, on the wall, a
harbor filled with boats--

With unexpected speed, Marcus grabs Tomas by the throat and
hurls him into the room! Slamming the door behind them.

INT. MARCUS'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tomas is flung across the room. Goes tumbling head over
heels. Meanwhile, Marcus calmly strides over to his dresser,
opens the top drawer. Tomas picks himself up--

TOMAS

Are you out of your mind--?

Marcus turns. He's holding the same M11 SERVICE REVOLVER we
saw back in Ethiopia. He advances on Tomas--

TOMAS

Wait, wait, wait! Stop!

Ignoring him, Marcus plants a knee on Tomas's chest, pinning
him to the floor, and places the gun against Tomas's temple.

TOMAS

PLEASENONONOWAITSTOPSTOPSTOP!

MARCUS

Who sent you?

TOMAS

No one, no one sent me--

Marcus speaks calmly, rationally. Like a teacher explaining
an easy math problem to a slow pupil.

MARCUS

Tell me who sent you, or I'll put a
bullet through your head.

TOMAS

No one sent me! I told you, I had a dream! You were in my dream--

MARCUS

How did you know where to find me?

TOMAS

Henry, Henry Rance! He told me to come to St. Aquinas, he told me you were here--

MARCUS

Who's Henry Rance?

TOMAS

He's nobody! Just some guy! Shit!
It's the truth, oh God, I swear
it's the truth, *please!*

Marcus considers this. Finally he decides that Tomas is no threat; *this man obviously wasn't sent here to kill him*. He releases Tomas, who rolls over, coughing violently.

Marcus sits on the bed, keeping the gun loosely trained on the other priest.

TOMAS

The hell is wrong with you?

MARCUS

Tell me about this dream.

Tomas eyes the barrel of the gun and decides not to argue. But much like Angela the day before, he finds himself at a loss when trying to explain the impossible.

TOMAS

I want you to know, I'm not delusional. And I *know* how this is gonna sound, trust me, I've taken more than enough psych classes--

MARCUS

Just the details, please.

TOMAS

It was night. You were performing ...I don't know, some ritual. It sounded like an exorcism--

MARCUS

You're a priest and you don't know the Rites of Exorcism?

TOMAS

I must've missed that day in seminary.

MARCUS

If what you say is true, then you must have seen the curtains by the door. What color were they?

TOMAS

(hesitates, then:)

They were shutters, not curtains. And they were gray.

Marcus nods slightly. *That was the correct answer.*

TOMAS

How did we both have the same dream? How does that happen?

MARCUS

I know the color of the shutters because I saw them, with my own eyes, 18 months ago. In a place called Koraro, Ethiopia.

Tomas stares in disbelief. Can't even begin to process this.

TOMAS

That's impossible. You were *there*?
(Still nothing.)
What happened to the boy?

MARCUS

It's your turn to answer. Who is this Henry Rance?

TOMAS

A parishioner at my church. He has early onset dementia--

MARCUS

Dementia.

TOMAS

He told me I could find you here. I thought...I don't know what I thought. That you had talked to the family. Maybe planted some idea in his head, and that's where the whole demon thing came from. And I could have heard them talking, and that's where I got *your* name from, sort of like a subconscious thing--

MARCUS
You are not good at explaining
things.

Tomas takes a deep breath, starts over.

TOMAS
Henry's wife believes there's a
demon in her house.

MARCUS
(beat)
Is she correct?

Tomas gives him an incredulous look.

TOMAS
Of course not.

MARCUS
You seem sure of that.

TOMAS
I'm sure that demons don't exist.

MARCUS
Ah. And what about Koraro?

TOMAS
I don't know what I saw. I don't
even know what that was.

MARCUS
Then you're one of *them*.

TOMAS
Them?

MARCUS
A fool. There's nothing more
dangerous than a man blind to his
own failings. Demons search for
cracks in the armor. They find
them, exploit them, use them to
break you.

TOMAS
And what's the crack in my armor?

MARCUS
A lack of faith. You have
understanding without conviction.

Anger flashes in Tomas's eyes. He struggles to his feet.

TOMAS

You know what? I don't have to sit here and take this shit.

MARCUS

Sit down, Tomas.

TOMAS

Not gonna happen.

MARCUS

It wasn't a request.

TOMAS

I don't care. The whole PTSD, armed lunatic thing you've got going on here? I don't give a shit.

(points accusingly)

But I saw you in that hut. Whether you believe me or not. I saw you, I saw the boy, I saw the picture with all the sailboats. And unless you've got a better explanation for how something like that is even *remotely* possible, then someone wanted me to find you.

MARCUS

And you believe this *someone* to be God?

TOMAS

That's kind of where I was going with that, yeah.

MARCUS

In my experience, God is not the one who works in mysterious ways.

Marcus leans forward, speaking with a quiet intensity:

MARCUS

So ask yourself: why would they choose *you*, of all priests? Why bring you here to me? What is it they hope to accomplish?

But Tomas isn't impressed by any of this cryptic bullshit.

TOMAS

And who, exactly, are *they*?

MARCUS

An excellent question. One you should consider strongly on the drive home.

TOMAS

We're not finished.

MARCUS

I disagree.

He advances on Tomas. Until they're face-to-face.

TOMAS

What happened to the Ethiopian boy?

MARCUS

Goodbye, Father Tomas.

Tomas stares at him a moment longer, seething. Then he storms out of the room, SLAMMING the door behind him.

Marcus sinks onto the bed, the pistol forgotten in his hand. His expression deeply troubled.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. RANCE HOME - UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - MONTAGE - EVENING

Casey, fresh out of the shower, examines her arms in the mirror. The bruises are fading. Practically gone.

As she towels off, a song plays on her phone. *Running Up That Hill* by Placebo. A driving melody, haunting and ominous.

The song CARRIES throughout the rest of the montage--

INT. ST. ANTHONY'S CHURCH - MONTAGE - SAME TIME

We glide down the center aisle of the deserted church.

Tomas sits alone in the front row, hands clasped in his lap. He began this day searching for answers, but his quest has only left him more hopelessly confused than ever.

EXT. RETREAT CENTER - MONTAGE - SAME TIME

Father Marcus crosses the main courtyard, still troubled after his strange encounter with Tomas..

His gaze falls on an elderly monk, watching him from across the courtyard. It's BROTHER SIMON. The old man has abandoned the dark glasses; his eyes are glassy white marbles.

And we immediately understand two things:

1. Marcus has never seen this fellow "priest" in his life.
2. Brother Simon realizes that his cover has been blown. He turns and starts walking. Fast.

Marcus starts after him. First walking. Then jogging. Then he takes off running.

Up ahead, we glimpse Brother Simon hurrying along, weaving through the gardens, ducking in and out of sight--

Marcus emerges into another courtyard, looks around wildly.

There's no sign of Brother Simon. He must have slipped away.

Marcus turns in a slow circle, panting, reeling with shock.

Because if his enemies have infiltrated this holy place... that means they could be anywhere.

INT. RANCE HOME - MASTER BATHROOM - MONTAGE - SAME TIME

Angela helps Henry with his nightly bath. She dips a sponge in the water, then trails it along Henry's cheek.

Henry closes his eyes with pleasure. Instinctively, he reaches up and takes her wrist, holding it tight.

They remain there, heads bowed, almost touching.

INT. RANCE HOME - SECOND FLOOR - MONTAGE - SAME TIME

Casey leaves a plate of food outside her sister's door. Hesitates, hoping Charlotte will emerge. Then turns away.

INT. RANCE HOME - CHARLOTTE'S ROOM - MONTAGE - SAME TIME

Charlotte sits in the dark. Her eyes dull pinpricks of light, reflecting the streetlights outside. She doesn't move. Doesn't even blink.

INT. ST. ANTHONY'S CHURCH - MONTAGE - SAME TIME

AS THE MONTAGE ENDS, we return to Father Tomas. Gazing up at the large RESIN CRUCIFIX STATUE adorning the back wall.

TOMAS
(softly)
What now, God?

We hold on his face. Waiting for a sign. Some kind of answer.

INT. RANCE HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A sharp KNOCK on the front door. Angela answers it to reveal Father Tomas. Judging from his solemn expression, he has clearly reached some sort of major decision.

ANGELA
Father Tomas. Hi.

TOMAS
I'm sorry it's late--

ANGELA
No, no, come in. Please.

INT. RANCE HOME - CHARLOTTE'S ROOM - SAME TIME

ECU on Charlotte, sitting in her darkened room. Her eyes flashing like blades in the dim light.

INT. RANCE HOME - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Angela has been drinking again; a tumbler of BOURBON sits on the table next to an open bottle. Tomas nods toward it.

TOMAS

You mind...?

ANGELA

Please.

He pours himself a drink, sips it. Deciding how to begin.

TOMAS

Do you believe in fate?

(correcting himself)

Not fate. Fate's the wrong word. Do you believe that God gives certain people a job to do?

ANGELA

Job. Like a mission?

TOMAS

Or a sacred calling. You talk to other priests, they'll tell you they heard God's voice, his literal voice, calling them to serve. I never had that.

(remembering)

After my parents died, Olivia and I went to live with my grandmother.

ANGELA

I didn't know that. I'm sorry.

TOMAS

Abuelita, she had big plans for me. Used to say, *mijo*, someday you will be the first Mexican pope, make us all proud. Olivia says I went into seminary just to shut her up.

Angela smiles. But doesn't interrupt.

TOMAS

But it always used to bother me. That I never heard God's voice.

TOMAS (CONT'D)

I used to think, maybe I'm not supposed to be here. Maybe He never wanted me in the first place.

(he meets her gaze)

I think He spoke to me today.

ANGELA

What did he say?

TOMAS

He said, look at this family. See how they're suffering. I want you to find a way to help them.

(a boyish grin)

And you remember what happens when God gives you a job to do...?

ANGELA

You start walking.

TOMAS

And you don't look down.

Tomas reaches across the table, takes her hands, squeezes them reassuringly. Angela seems nearly overwhelmed with relief. She opens her mouth to thank him, when--

KA-THUMP! The sound comes from the floor above, a jarring impact, making them both jump.

Angela meets Tomas's gaze, her eyes frightened.

INT. RANCE HOME - SECOND FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Tomas climbs the stairs, slowly, listening. Angela right behind him. He scans the darkened hallway.

A soft RUSTLING noise, coming from behind Charlotte's closed bedroom door. Tomas steps closer, focused--

CHAKA-CHAKA-CHAKA! Just behind him, the RETRACTABLE ATTIC STAIRS drop from the ceiling! Damn near taking Tomas's head off in the process. He leaps back, while Angela YELPS.

They share a startled glance. Then Tomas raises his gaze to the ceiling. The ATTIC waits above, a cavernous space.

TOMAS

Anyone up there?

No response. Tomas gives Angela a reassuring smile--*I'll check it out*--then begins to climb the ladder.

INT. MARCUS'S ROOM - NIGHT

Back at the Retreat Center, Father Marcus searches through his old case files. He locates a battered CARDBOARD BOX.

He opens the box and extracts a series of PHOTOGRAPHS. The photos show Gabra, the possessed Ethiopian boy. As he flips through the stack, we can clearly chart the boy's deterioration. His body becoming gaunt, his eyes feverish.

We're TIGHT on Marcus's face as we FLASHBACK TO

INT. KORARO, ETHIOPIA - HUT - NIGHT

Father Marcus kneels, penitent, on the floor, a bowl of water before him. He cups water in his hands and splashes his face, his brow, his neck. Water drips from his ragged beard.

On the bed, Gabra watches the priest intently. Smiling, excited, as eager as a child on Christmas morning.

GABRA

Do you have any idea what you have
set in motion here?

The priest stands, fastens his clerical collar around his neck. Kisses a small GOLD CROSS, slips it over his neck.

Gabra flops back down against the mattress, his voice a low, dreamy singsong:

GABRA

In your arrogance, you have reached deep into primordial waters, and with your hand caught the tail of something ancient, and powerful, and wise, and still you try to drag that form out into the light. And it's only at the last moment that you realize the thing in your hand is not a tail at all. It's a mouth, a pit of barbed teeth, endless and beyond measure, and that even now those teeth are closing, closing around your wrist. Can you feel them, holy Father?

MARCUS

I command you, unclean spirit, along with all your minions now attacking this servant of God, by the mysteries of the incarnation, passion, resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, by the coming of our Lord for judgement, that you tell me by some sign your name, and the day and hour of your departure!

Gabra begins to BARK once more: a low, awful sound. Marcus lays both hands on the child's feverish brow.

MARCUS

(whispering)

They shall lay their hands upon the sick and all will be well with them. May Jesus, son of Mary, Lord and Savior of the world, through the merits and intercession of his holy apostles Peter and Paul and all his saints, show you favor and mercy.

Without warning, the child ERUPTS OFF THE BED! The heavy iron chains SHATTER and give way--

One of the chains LASHES OUT, catching Father Marcus directly in the face! He goes sprawling, blood already welling up, an ugly crimson teardrop running down one side of his face. (*And the source of the scar Marcus bears in the present day.*)

The boy sits up in bed, his eyes bulging from his skull. When he speaks, his voice is an INHUMAN ROAR, impossibly loud, like the sound of a jet turbine spinning up.

GABRA

LOOK UPON ME, MAN OF GOD! THIS!
THIS IS THE PRICE THAT IS PAID FOR
YOUR INTERCESSION!

Gasping, Marcus forces himself to his hands and knees--

But it's too late. He can only watch in helpless agony as--

The boy's head begins to rotate. Slowly. Painfully.

MARCUS

NO! GOD, NO!

Gabra's neck SHATTERS, his spine giving way. The SNAP rings out, sharp as a gunshot. The boy's head wrenches the rest of the way around, rotating a full 180 degrees, a ghastly smile still frozen on his face.

Marcus SCREAMS. An agonized, primal sound.

Gabra's lifeless body topples sideways off the bed, collapsing to the ground with a dull THUD.

Marcus crawls forward, SOBBING brokenly. He gathers the boy into his arms, rocking back and forth.

In the background, a low hum of STATIC begins to build, growing louder and louder until we RETURN TO--

INT. MARCUS'S ROOM - NIGHT

Present day. Marcus returns the photographs to the box.

He sinks onto his bed. Gazing at the blank wall.

He may have left his old life behind, but the past is clearly not yet finished with Father Marcus Lang.

INT. RANCE HOME - ATTIC - SAME TIME

Tomas reaches the top of the retractable stairs, scans the darkened attic. Can't see a damn thing.

TOMAS
Is there a light?

ANGELA
(from below)
I'm not sure.

Tomas pulls out his phone. It's an old model--priests don't get modern iPhones--which means there's no flashlight feature. But the display still emits a tiny flicker of light.

He starts forward across the attic, sweeping the narrow beam from right to left and back again.

The attic is cluttered, overflowing with old boxes and toys from the girls' childhoods. Nothing out of the ordinary.

Tomas pauses, listening--

Someone is WHISPERING. The voice low, difficult to make out.

TOMAS
Who's there?

The whispering CUTS OFF abruptly. Leaving an eerie silence.

Tomas swallows. Suddenly feeling vulnerable. Exposed.

TOMAS
Come on out! I'm serious!

No response. Tomas starts forward again--

He zeroes in on the corner of the attic, where a BLANKET has been casually thrown over what we assume is a stack of boxes.

At least, we *hope* they're boxes.

Tomas takes a moment to muster his courage. Reaches out...grips the blanket...rips it away...

A FAT BLACK RAT, its fur greasy and matted, explodes out of the pile of boxes, racing between Tomas's feet--

He leaps backwards with a CRY of revulsion--

We TRACK the rat as it sprints across the floor--

SSSSSHUNK! Without warning, the rat SLAMS to a halt. As if an invisible blade just dropped from the sky, pinning the creature against the floor.

The rat WRITHES IN AGONY, squeaking--

Without warning, a PALE WHITE ARM SHOOTS OUT OF THE DARKNESS! The fist closing around the rat with a brittle CRUNCH--

Tomas stumbles backwards, too started to even cry out, as--

A FIGURE in a white nightgown emerges from the shadows, crawling on all fours, hair hanging in her eyes--

She examines the mangled rat for a beat. Bones crunching. Fingernails punching through fur and flesh.

Tomas makes a low sound of revulsion, backs away--

The woman's head whips around. Her face hidden in shadow, little more than a silhouette. Eyes flashing.

Then she scurries toward him, spiderlike, terrible--

Tomas trips over a pile of boxes, goes sprawling--

The figure RISES to her feet, seemingly defying the laws of physics, like she's being lifted by an invisible tether--

She regards the priest for a moment, motionless.

And that's when we realize the girl is not Charlotte.

It's CASEY.

Her eyes are glassy, feral. Lips peeled back. But it's the sound of her BREATHING that makes your hair stand on end: a wet, bubbling sound. Like she's choking inside her own body.

TOMAS

Casey. Casey, stop--

She advances on him. Tomas backs away in terror, until he hits the wall. Casey is on him a split-second later, one hand on his THROAT, the other on his CROTCH, pinning him--

Tomas tries to pry her off, but she's fiendishly strong--

TOMAS

Stop it!

She leans in closer, eyes flashing with malicious glee. We can't tell whether she's about to kiss him or tear his throat out. We just know that she's utterly terrifying.

With a tremendous effort, Tomas hurls her aside.

She tumbles to the floor. Her breath HITCHING, coming in ragged gasps...that soon turns to LOW, GUTTURAL LAUGHTER.

Her head swivels around, gazing up at him, that ghoulis smile splitting her features, eyes feverish with hatred--

ANGELA (O.S.)

Father? I found a light.

He whirls to find Angela ascending the ladder, holding a flashlight in one hand. Tomas spins back around--

Only to find Casey standing before him, the picture of innocence once more. She smiles sweetly.

CASEY

Hey, Mom.

Angela approaches. Tomas is speechless, rooted in place.

ANGELA

What are you doing up here?

CASEY

Father Tomas killed a rat! Whacked it with a book. How badass is that?

ANGELA

Is it gross? I don't want to see.

(looks anyway)

Oh, no.

CASEY

We should get some traps.

She looks to Tomas for confirmation. We can't tell whether the demon is playing possum or Casey actually believes this.

TOMAS
...traps. Right.

CASEY
Don't they say, *where there's one
there's probably a bunch?*

Tomas can't find his voice. He simply stares at Casey. His cozy little existence unraveling in the blink of an eye.

EXT. RANCE HOME - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Tomas exits the house, dumps the dead rat into one of the trash bins. Badly shaken by whatever the hell just happened.

As he stands there, familiar MUSIC begins to play. *Tubular Bells*. The iconic *Exorcist* theme song.

Slowly, as the song builds to a crescendo, Father Tomas raises his gaze to the second-floor window.

TOMAS'S POV: Casey stands there, gazing down at him. From this angle, her silhouette is distorted, barely human.

Tomas's expression darkens. His resolve hardens. We can see it in his eyes, in that flinty gunslinger's stare.

He's still frightened--*who wouldn't be?*--but he now knows that he was sent to this house for a reason. And he'll be damned if he's going to surrender this girl to the darkness.

He's going to fight. And he's going to win.

INT. MARCUS'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Marcus has traded his robes for a classic black shirt. He withdraws an old wooden box from his closet, sets it on the dresser. Slowly opens the lid.

Inside we see Marcus's GOLDEN CRUCIFIX. The LEATHERBOUND BOOK containing the Rites of Exorcism. And one more thing.

Marcus takes the WHITE CLERICAL COLLAR from the box. Slowly, reverently, he fastens the collar around his neck.

Preparing for battle.

END OF PILOT