

GOD WON'T SAVE YOU

God forgives. He doesn't

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FADE IN:

EXT. SHANTY HOUSE - OUTSKIRTS OF DALLAS - TEXAS - LAST SUMMER
- NIGHT

A brutal summer night. Heat still rising off the dirt.

A worn two-bedroom shanty squats beneath a jaundiced porch light.

From inside: the sultry pulse of "BLACK VELVET."

INT. SHANTY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sweat. Smoke. Whiskey. Cheap sex. Cheap furniture.

MARK DEVON, 36, sprawls on a couch like a bored king.

Fu Manchu mustache. Mullet. Jet-black hair with a blond streak on the right side. Irish blue eyes. Solid, agile, 5'10".

A tattoo on his right forearm reads: GOD WON'T SAVE YOU.

He wears a tank top. A cigarette hangs from his fingers.

HOOKER #1 is draped on his left.

HOOKER #2 leans against him on the right.

HOOKER #3 kneels between his legs, her head below frame. We understand.

Mark barely reacts. Too calm. Too used to this.

The front door opens.

SAM "RUSTY" JORDAN, 45, enters. Middle Eastern. Thick-necked. Heavy. Black hair. Black eyes.

He doesn't raise his voice. He doesn't need to. The room belongs to him the second he walks in.

Rusty grabs HOOKER #1 and flings her aside like she weighs nothing.

HOOKER #2 rises fast and backs away.

Hooker #3 keeps going.

Rusty clocks it. Scowls.

Then- TYRONE, 42, Black, 6'2", thin, terrified, is thrown into the room from somewhere off-screen.

He hits the floor hard. Shaking.

Rusty steps toward him.

RUSTY
My money.

TYRONE
I have it.

RUSTY
Then give it.

TYRONE
I just need a little time. Rent's due. Kids got football camp--

MARK
His kid plays ball with my nephew. Team needs him.

Rusty looks to Mark.

Mark presses Hooker #3 down, using her back as a stabilizer.

Without urgency, he pulls a handgun.

BANG.

Tyrone SCREAMS -- hit in the left foot. He writhes on the floor.

Rusty turns to Mark. A question in his eyes.

Mark leans back. Takes a drag off his cigarette. Hooker #3 keeps working.

Rusty stares at him for a beat. Then pulls his own gun.

BANG.

RUSTY
I--

BANG.

RUSTY
want--

BANG.

RUSTY
my--

BANG.

RUSTY
money.

Tyrone goes still. Silence.

Hooker #3 stops, rises, and exits without a word.

Mark shakes his head. Almost disappointed.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
Blessed are the righteous--
they will be the sons of God.

Mark doesn't look at him.

MARK
It's "peacemakers."

A beat.

MARK (CONT'D)
He got the message.

Silence. Rusty studies him. No reaction.

Then-- He takes out a knife. An orange. He begins to peel it.

Slow. Precise.

The blade slides just under the skin. No wasted motion.

Juice beads on his fingers. He keeps cutting.

RUSTY
We should send pizza.

A beat.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
Locker room. After a loss.

Mark doesn't react. Rusty keeps peeling.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
Keeps them together.

A beat.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
Otherwise, they start blaming each
other.

Mark shakes his head.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
Where are you going?

Mark stands. Crushes out his cigarette. Throws back the
whiskey.

MARK
Out.

Rusty keeps peeling. Doesn't look up.

RUSTY
You don't leave me.

Mark moves to the door.

A beat.

MARK
Watch me.

He opens it.

Stops.

Without turning—

MARK (CONT'D)
And it's "peacemakers."

He exits. The door shuts. Silence.

Rusty finishes peeling the orange.

Perfect.

Unbroken.

He separates a slice.

Eats it.

Still staring at the door.

The door clicks shut.

Behind him, Tyrone quietly bleeds out on the floor.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - STATIONS OF THE CROSS

-- Rain in a Dallas alley. Mark stands over a LOCAL BOOKIE.
No rage. No speech. He calmly snaps the man's pinky finger.
The man screams. Mark looks bored.

-- Inside a stolen Cadillac, a RIVAL GANG MEMBER sits duct-taped in the passenger seat. Mark threads a silencer onto his pistol as he softly recites the Act of Contrition.

-- A rundown parochial school. Mark hands a thick envelope of cash to a NUN.

NUN
God bless you, Marcus.

MARK
He hasn't yet, Sister. Don't hold
your breath.

-- A warehouse floor slick with gasoline.

Mark flicks a Zippo.

Flames ERUPT.

He lights a cigarette off the heat and walks away.

-- A youth football field at dusk.

Mark leans against a chain-link fence, predator stillness,
watching his nephew play.

Nearby -- new jerseys, equipment bags, anonymous donation
banners.

The kids run drills in colors somebody paid for.

END MONTAGE

INT. DALLAS COURTROOM - DAY

A packed courtroom.

Mark sits on the witness stand.

Rusty sits at the defense table, stone-still, a suit wrapped around pure violence.

Mark leans toward the microphone.

MARK

Yeah. I shot him. In the left foot.

A beat.

MARK (CONT'D)

His kid and my nephew played ball together. Seemed worth keeping him alive.

Mark points to Rusty.

MARK (CONT'D)

He shot him dead. Four times.

Rusty's eyes never leave him.

RUSTY

There's nowhere you can hide. No past you outrun.

He leans forward.

RUSTY (CONT'D)

Find God before I find you.

SMASH CUT TO:

HEADLINES SPIN --

"MOB BOSS GETS LIFE"

"STAR WITNESS TESTIFIES"

"FORT WORTH ENFORCER VANISHES"

INT. FBI OFFICE - DAY

A federal office. Clean. Colorless.

MARK sits across from AGENT JENNIFER CONNERS, 45, sharp, Hispanic, all business.

A thick file lands on the desk between them.

JENNIFER

So this is the deal. You get a new life. Because Rusty won't stop coming after you.

MARK

That was the plan.

JENNIFER

Your life as you know it is over. You come back for one second, you're dead. You breathe your past, you're dead. You reach out to anybody--

MARK

I get it. Dead man. Jesus, get on with it.

Jennifer notices the tattoo on his forearm.

GOD WON'T SAVE YOU.

A tiny smile.

JENNIFER

Well. That's funny.

She slides the file to him.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

Meet the man you're going to be.

Mark opens it.

INSERT - WITNESS PROTECTION IDENTITY PACKET

FATHER ROSS WHITE. 37.

-- Orphaned at age ten after his parents were killed in a car accident on their way to church in Billings, Montana.

-- Raised in foster homes.

-- Amateur boxer.

-- United States Marine Corps.

-- Briefly married.

-- Entered seminary at 33 after receiving "the call."

-- Assigned to St. Michael's Catholic Church, Boca Raton, Florida.

Mark reads. His face hardens.

MARK

What the fuck? You made me a priest?

JENNIFER

We made you invisible.

A KNOCK at the door.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

Come in.

The door opens.

SPECIAL AGENT RAFAEL MARTINEZ, 33, steps in.

Broad, smooth, deadly. Impeccably composed.

He takes Mark in with one look.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

Mark, meet your handler. Special Agent Rafael Martinez.

MARK

Handler.

RAFAEL

Try not to make the word necessary.

Jennifer gathers her things.

JENNIFER

Rafael will walk you through the transition.

MARK

I don't need a babysitter.

RAFAEL

Good. I don't babysit.

MARK

Fuck no.

Rafael smiles. Not offended. Amused.

RAFAEL
Oh, you'll want me.

MARK
No. No and no. Hell no.

Rafael steps closer. Leans in just enough.

RAFAEL
Step out of line--
(low)
you do not want me on your ass.

MARK
Damn right I don't.

Jennifer gathers her things, already done with both of them.

JENNIFER
Well. You two seem to have hit it
off.

She heads for the door.

Jennifer exits.

The door closes.

Rafael opens the file. Flips to a flagged page.

RAFAEL
Father Ross White.
Thirty-seven.
Montana.
Foster system.
Boxer.
Marine.
Seminary at thirty-three.

A beat.

MARK
Yeah. I read the brochure.

Rafael taps the file.

RAFAEL
Then read it again.

A beat.

Mark studies him.

Something clicks.

MARK

Wait.

A beat.

MARK (CONT'D)

I'm... gay?

Rafael doesn't react.

RAFAEL

You're whatever the situation
requires.

Mark leans back.

Processing.

MARK

That's not who I am.

Rafael closes the file.

RAFAEL

No.

A beat.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)

It's who you need to be.

Silence.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)

You learned a long time ago not to
explain yourself.

A beat.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)

This just gives it a name.

Mark watches him.

MARK

That's your pitch?

Rafael holds his gaze.

RAFAEL

It's your mask.
You don't have to believe it.

A beat.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
You just have to live it.

Rafael pulls out the chair opposite him and sits.

Calm. In control.

MARK
You don't get to say that.

RAFAEL
I do, actually. It's literally my job.

Mark glares.

MARK
So what, now?

RAFAEL
Now you survive. And Go to confession.

A beat.

He stands.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
Get used to "Father Ross." By Sunday, half of Boca Raton will be saying it with tears in their eyes.

Rafael heads for the door, then stops.

Turns back.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
And Mark?

MARK
What.

RAFAEL
That tattoo is gonna save you.

MARK
How do I find you?

RAFAEL
I will find you. Eyes on you, always.

He hands Mark a card: RAFAEL MARTINEZ, Life Coach, 954-426-3537

Rafael exits.

Mark sits there, alone with the file.

He looks down at the name again:

FATHER ROSS WHITE.

Then at the tattoo on his forearm.

GOD WON'T SAVE YOU.

MARK
(under his breath)
Unbelievable.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - THE MAKING OF FATHER ROSS WHITE - OPENING CREDIT
PLAY

- A barber's cape snaps shut around Mark's neck.
- CLIPPERS tear through the mullet.
- The blond streak falls into a white sink.
- The Fu Manchu disappears under a razor. Down to a stubble.
- A black clerical shirt is buttoned over muscle and old damage.
- His tattoo disappears beneath a cuff.
- Rafael knots a Roman collar into place, straightens it with military precision.
- Mark studies himself in a mirror. Doesn't recognize the man staring back.
- A file photo is stapled: FATHER ROSS WHITE, ST. MICHAEL'S CATHOLIC CHURCH.
- Mark mouths unfamiliar words from a prayer card.
- Rafael watches, arms folded.
- Mark tries again. Less sarcasm. More stillness.

END MONTAGE.

Gun smoke and bullets merge into Incense and church bells.

INT. ST. MICHAEL'S CATHOLIC CHURCH - BOCA RATON, FL - DAY

WHITE.

A wash of white slowly resolves into a PRIEST'S COLLAR.

SUPER: THREE MONTHS LATER

A full congregation.

At the altar stands FATHER GILBERT, 58, warm, seasoned, beloved.

Beside him --

MARK DEVON is gone.

Now he is FATHER ROSS WHITE, 37.

Clean-cut black hair. Cropped beard.

Handsome in a way that turns heads without trying.

Black short-sleeve clerical shirt. Roman collar.

Black pants.

His physicality still visible beneath the uniform.

A fighter forced into the costume of a shepherd.

Father Gilbert addresses the parish mid-farewell.

FATHER GILBERT

...and it is with a heavy heart,
and hope for the future, that I bid
farewell to my parish family here
at St. Michael's, where I have
found a home these past twenty
years.

The congregation listens, emotional.

FATHER GILBERT (CONT'D)

I have been assigned as ship's
pastor for Bliss Cruise Line.

That gets a warm laugh.

FATHER GILBERT (CONT'D)
And I am quite sure I will see some
of you out there yet. Wear your
sunscreen.

A bigger laugh.

He gestures to Ross.

FATHER GILBERT (CONT'D)
Let me introduce your new pastor...
Father Ross White.

Applause.

Father Gilbert steps aside.

Father Ross approaches the microphone.

He forces a slight smile.

The church goes still.

Ross looks out at his new flock.

For a second, his eyes drift.

Then, in his head--

RUSTY (V.O.)
You're a walking dead man.

Ross grips the lectern.

FATHER ROSS
My new family. Today we begin a new
journey together. I am here to--

His voice catches.

Silence.

A few parishioners exchange looks.

WOMAN #1
(whispering)
Father, what a waste.

WOMAN #2
(whispering back)
I want to go to confession now.

Ross hears them.

A beat.

Then he steadies.

FATHER ROSS
...and so we look back... and say
goodbye to the past.

He scans the room.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
Today is the only truth we have.

The congregation leans in.

Ross stands there -- trapped, exposed, reborn.

FADE OUT.

INT. STATE PRISON - CHAPEL - DAY

A cheap crucifix. Folding chairs. Fluorescent hum.

RUSTY sits alone in the last pew, immaculate in prison khaki.
A guard waits at the door.

Across from him: a frightened YOUNG RUNNER, 24, on a legal
visit.

The runner slides over a folded note.

Rusty reads it.

No reaction.

RUNNER
They moved him fast. Federal. No
trail yet.

Rusty folds the note with surgical precision.

RUSTY
There is always a trail.

The runner says nothing.

Rusty looks up at the crucifix.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
Men don't change.

He rises.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
Find what they dressed him as.

INT. ST. MICHAEL'S RECTORY KITCHEN - DAY

Daylight. Monday.

Father Ross stands over a coffee, eyes bloodshot, smoking slowly and long.

MRS. ELAINE LYONS, 63, the church secretary, enters.

The kind of woman who has kept the parish functioning through six pastors, three scandals, and one roof fund.

She clocks the cigarette.

ELAINE
That'll kill you.

Ross exhales slowly.

FATHER ROSS
So I've been told.

ELAINE
Your nine o'clock is here. George Miles.

She turns to go.

FATHER ROSS
Who's George Miles?

Ross draws deep on the cigarette.

Smoke slips out through his nose.

ELAINE
Your Parish Life Coordinator.

A beat.

ELAINE (CONT'D)
Try not to let him coordinate you.

She exits.

Ross watches the smoke curl through the kitchen.

INT. ST. MICHAEL'S RECTORY - MEETING ROOM - DAY

GEORGE MILES, 47, thick white hair, a little overweight, eager in the way men get when they've survived by being useful, stands as FATHER ROSS enters.

George offers a hand.

GEORGE
Father Ross. Good to meet you.

Ross looks at the white hair.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
Premature white. Happened when I
was twenty-three. Car accident.
Scared the devil out of me.

Ross says nothing. Sits.

George slowly lowers his hand.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
George Miles. Parish Life
Coordinator.

A beat.

FATHER ROSS
Meaning.

GEORGE
I handle what you don't.

Ross opens a ledger on the table.

Scans.

Stops.

FATHER ROSS
Why did you pay yourself twenty
thousand dollars last month?

George blinks.

GEORGE
There must be some mistake--

FATHER ROSS
No. The mistake was thinking no one
would look.

George shifts.

GEORGE
It was temporary. A bookkeeping
issue. I can explain--

FATHER ROSS
You can return it.

George stares at him.

GEORGE
Father, that may not be possible.

Ross looks up now.

Still. Direct.

FATHER ROSS
Today. Three o'clock.

A beat.

Ross takes out a cigarette. Lights it.

Draws in. Lets the silence work.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
You're sweating, George.

George wipes his forehead, realizing too late that he is.

George glances down -- sees the edge of Ross's tattoo at the
cuff.

GOD WON'T SAVE YOU.

Ross notices George noticing.

FATHER ROSS
Put it back by three. Then we can
discuss confession.

Ross stands.

George panics.

GEORGE
Father Ross--

Ross turns.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
What's your background?

Ross studies him for one cold beat.

FATHER ROSS
The kind that notices.

Ross exits.

George sits there, breathing hard.

Then snatches out his phone.

GEORGE
(into phone)
I need thirty grand by this
afternoon. Cash.
Don't ask questions.
We have a problem at church.

INT. RECTORY KITCHEN - DAY

Father Ross pours coffee.

Elaine enters with a clipboard.

ELAINE
Father Ross, you have the noon
Mass.

FATHER ROSS
Already?

ELAINE
It happens every day around then.

Ross looks at her.

FATHER ROSS
Every day?

ELAINE
Weekdays at noon. Saturday at four.
Sunday at eight-thirty, eleven, and
six.

Ross absorbs that.

FATHER ROSS
That's a lot of guilt.

Elaine smirks.

ELAINE
We prefer "guidance."

Ross nods, looks around, thinking.

FATHER ROSS
How far is Gulfstream?

Elaine clocks him.

ELAINE
The casino?

FATHER ROSS
Do I look like I gamble?

ELAINE
You look like you used to.

A beat.

Ross almost smiles.

FATHER ROSS
I'm looking for lost souls.

Elaine studies him for a moment.

ELAINE
Father Ross... we're all betting on
you.

Ross looks at her.

FATHER ROSS
Long shot.

Elaine takes his coffee cup and his cigarette. Disposes
them.

ELAINE
Gulfstream fifty minutes. Noon Mass
is in ten.

She exits.

Ross stands there with the coffee.

FATHER ROSS
(under his breath)
Christ.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - MID-AFTERNOON

Father Ross sits with a large iced coffee.

Sweat on the glass.

Rafael enters.

Clocking the room.

He orders.

Comes over.

Sits.

A beat.

They look at each other.

Silence.

RAFAEL
You adjusting?

Ross nods.

Sips his coffee.

Doesn't break eye contact.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
You playing by the rules?

Ross doesn't answer.

Just watches him.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
You gonna make me do all the
talking?

A beat.

FATHER ROSS
I let the sinner confess.
(then)
Then we decide what to do about it.

Rafael studies him.

Not amused.

RAFAEL
How's celibacy?

Ross leans back slightly.

Takes another sip.

FATHER ROSS

Long fast...

A beat.

He sets the cup down.

Condensation ring forming.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)

For a man who used to eat well.

A beat.

They lock eyes.

Something shifts.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)

I'm getting used to the hunger.

Silence.

Rafael glances at the cup.

The condensation slowly drips down the side.

He reaches out- wipes it with his thumb. Not looking at Ross.

RAFAEL

Careful.

A beat.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)

That kind of hunger doesn't stay quiet.

Rafael stands.

A beat.

Then-

He leaves.

Ross watches him go.

Doesn't move.

Ross reaches for the glass.

Stops.

Doesn't touch it.

The glass sweats.

INT. RECTORY - EVENING

A knock.

Father Ross opens the door.

MIAMI ARCH BISHOP THOMAS KELLY, 60s, silver-haired, warm-eyed, expensive in a modest way, stands there with a soft smile and a hard gaze.

BISHOP KELLY

Father Ross White. I thought I should come see for myself what Providence dropped into my parish.

FATHER ROSS

Your Excellency.

Ross steps aside.

The Bishop enters, taking in everything in one sweep: the room, the order, the man.

He extends his hand -- expecting the ring kiss.

Ross looks at it. A beat.

Then gives him a firm handshake.

The Bishop registers that.

BISHOP KELLY

I do apologize for the surprise. Sudden transitions make me uneasy.

FATHER ROSS

They make everybody uneasy.

A beat.

The Bishop smiles at that.

BISHOP KELLY

Father Gilbert spoke warmly of the people here.

(MORE)

BISHOP KELLY (CONT'D)
 He did not, however, tell me I'd be
 inheriting a mystery.

FATHER ROSS
 I wasn't aware I was one.

BISHOP KELLY
 Late vocation. Billings. Marines.
 Boxing. Boca Raton.

A pleasant smile.

BISHOP KELLY (CONT'D)
 Forgive me. I do admire God's
 imagination.

Ross holds the smile, just barely.

FATHER ROSS
 In my experience, Bishop, powerful
 institutions prefer patterns. God
 is usually the one blamed when
 something doesn't fit.

Now the Bishop really looks at him.

BISHOP KELLY
 St. Michael's is a generous parish.
 Generous people can become...
 possessive.

FATHER ROSS
 In my experience, people don't give
 for free.

The Bishop lets that sit.

BISHOP KELLY
 Foster care.

No reaction from Ross.

BISHOP KELLY (CONT'D)
 I said, you were raised in foster
 homes?

FATHER ROSS
 Yes.

A beat.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
 We all come from somewhere.

Ross stands.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
I have evening prayer.

BISHOP KELLY
Really. I'd love to see my new
priest in action.

FATHER ROSS
Another time.

Ross heads for the door, opening it for him.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
Elaine will find a place for you on
the calendar.

The Bishop doesn't move yet.

BISHOP KELLY
You're not what I expected.

Ross meets his eyes.

FATHER ROSS
Neither is St. Michael.

A beat.

The Bishop smiles again -- this time smaller.

He exits.

Ross closes the door.

EXT. BOCA RATON ALLEY - EARLY EVENING

Dim service lights. Humid air. The distant wash of traffic.

FATHER ROSS rounds the corner and stops.

WILL, 16, a kid from the parish, is pinned against the wall
by an OLDER THUG, 20s, wiry, mean, one fist twisted in Will's
shirt.

Will's fear is trying hard to look like defiance.

THUG
You think you can steal from me and
walk?

FATHER ROSS

(easy)
Let him go.

The thug turns. Sees the collar. Laughs.

THUG

Ain't your business, Father.

Ross clocks everything:

the hand position, the angle, Will's split lip,
the twitch in the thug's jaw.

FATHER ROSS

It is now.

Father ross starts to roll up his sleeves.

THUG

Who the hell made you the boss?

FATHER ROSS

Last time. Let him go.

2nd sleeve rolled up.

THUG

Go back to your church. Bet you're
like the rest of them.

FATHER ROSS

Watch your mouth.
(to Will)
Go.

Will hesitates.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)

Go.

Will slips free and backs to the mouth of the alley --
but doesn't leave.

THUG

Kid owes me.

FATHER ROSS

Then you can take it up with me.

The thug grins. Starts toward Ross.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)

Back off.

The grin fades.

THUG

Or what?

FATHER ROSS

You don't want this.

A SWITCHBLADE glistens.

The thug lunges.

Fast. Ugly.

Ross redirects the arm, shoves him off-line, locks the wrist -

The thug comes again.

Rafael enters the alley.

RAFAEL

Mark!

Ross sweeps him back.

The thug stumbles, slams hard against the metal edge of a dumpster --

the back of his skull CRACKS.

Stillness.

Will freezes.

Ross freezes too.

Then drops to his knees beside the thug.

FATHER ROSS

Hey. Hey.

He checks for a pulse.

Nothing.

Rafael steps in.

Takes control.

RAFAEL

What did you just do?

Ross doesn't answer.

Still trying to revive the thug.

FATHER ROSS

Come on—

Nothing.

Rafael looks down.

Then at Ross.

A beat.

RAFAEL

He's gone.

Ross freezes.

Then he senses someone watching.

He turns.

Will stands at the mouth of the alley, pale, stunned.

Ross and Will lock eyes.

In Will's face: fear, awe, confusion, and gratitude.

In Ross's: a warning. A plea. A secret.

No words.

WILL

Father Ross.

FATHER ROSS

You okay?

WILL

Yeah. Yeah, I'm fine.

FATHER ROSS

No, you're not. Try again.

RAFAEL

Kid.

Will looks at him.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)

You didn't see anything.

WILL
I called 911.

A beat.

Rafael exhales.

RAFAEL
Of course you did.

Sirens in the distance, getting closer.

Ross keeps his eyes on Will.

He motions for Will to go.

Will doesn't move.

Ross snaps his fingers once -- low, urgent.

Will finally backs away and disappears.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
I'll handle this.

Ross looks at him.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
You don't get to walk that back.

Rafael watches Ross.

Really watches him.

This isn't new.

This is familiar.

INT. STATE PRISON - COMMON AREA - NIGHT

Muted chaos. Cards. Shouting. Metal tables.

On a mounted TV -- LOCAL NEWS.

NEWS ANCHOR (ON TV)
This just in out of Boca Raton -- a local priest is being hailed as a hero after stepping in during an assault involving a teenage boy in a downtown alley.

Rusty looks up.

On screen: shaky cell footage. Flashing lights. POLICE TAPE.

NEWS ANCHOR (ON TV) (CONT'D)
The alleged attacker later died at
the scene from blunt force trauma.
Witnesses say the priest attempted
to render aid before officers
arrived.

A photo flashes up:

FATHER ROSS WHITE in collar, half-turned.

Then --

A zoomed shot of his forearm.

The tattoo.

GOD WON'T SAVE YOU.

Rusty goes very still.

A beat.

He reaches into his tray.

An orange.

A small, dull plastic knife.

He begins to peel it.

Slow.

Precise.

The blade slides just under the skin.

NEWS ANCHOR (ON TV)
The phrase, now spreading across
social media, has already sparked
debate --

Rusty doesn't blink.

Peel spiraling.

Unbroken.

RUSTY
(quietly)
Leave it on.

A beat.

The peel grows longer.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
There you are.

He finishes the peel.

Perfect.

Holds it in his hand.

Then—

drops it.

Stands.

The room shifts.

No one speaks.

Rusty turns and walks toward a PRISON GUARD near the exit.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
I need a phone.

GUARD
Get in line.

Rusty steps close.

No rush.

RUSTY
Wrong answer.

The guard smirks—

Rusty drives a brutal punch into his gut.

The guard folds.

A vicious uppercut splits his lip.

Rusty catches him before he hits the floor.

Still controlled.

Still calm.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
I won't ask again.

The guard nods.

Rusty releases him.

They head out.

Behind them—

the orange peel rests on the metal table.

Long.

Unbroken.

Like a signature.

EXT. ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH - COURTYARD - DAY

Mass has just let out.

Parishioners stream through the courtyard, greeting FATHER ROSS, who stands at the doors shaking hands, offering smiles, blessings, and practiced warmth.

Then he sees him.

RAFAEL MARTINEZ -- linen shirt, tailored slacks, expensive loafers, Ray-Bans, Boca ease with federal eyes underneath.

Rafael steps into line.

RAFAEL

I'd like to make a donation.

GEORGE, 60s, parish bulldog in a polo shirt and church badge, appears instantly.

GEORGE

I can take care of that.

Ross looks at George.

FATHER ROSS

It's all right, George.

A beat.

George doesn't love it, but backs off.

Ross leads Rafael toward the side courtyard, out of earshot.

RAFAEL

You were supposed to stay quiet.

Ross says nothing.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
You killed a man.

FATHER ROSS
I told him to walk away.

Rafael studies him.

RAFAEL
That isn't what I said.

FATHER ROSS
He was working over a kid from my
parish.

RAFAEL
So now we're freelancing?

FATHER ROSS
So now I'm doing the job.

That lands.

Rafael takes off the sunglasses.

RAFAEL
Your job is to disappear. Not make
the six o'clock news with a dead
body and a tattoo.

Ross holds him there.

FATHER ROSS
Then stop putting me in rooms full
of the desperate and acting
surprised when I notice.

A beat.

That one hits Rafael.

RAFAEL
You don't get heroic on me. Heroes
get remembered.

FATHER ROSS
He was sixteen.

Rafael stares at him.

No easy answer to that.

INT. SACRISTY MOMENTS LATER.

DAVID MILLER (14) Alter boy putting away his cassock and hanging up the other priest's gowns.

Father Ross enters.

FATHER ROSS
(corrective not
embarrassment)
David, you were late on the bells
at the consecration.

DAVID
Sorry, Father, I was thinking of
something else.

Father Ross studies him.

FATHER ROSS
I can see that. What's going on?

David doesn't answer. Continues to clean up.

DAVID MILLER, SR (45) firm, direct, Military background. He opens the door.

DAVID SR.
(authoritative)
Junior, you ready?

Father Ross clocks this.

FATHER ROSS
(to David Sr)
What tour did you do?

DAVID SR.
Iraq 2007.

FATHER ROSS
Marines, right?

David Sr. looks, his guard drops. He nods. He snaps his fingers.

DAVID SR.
Junior.

FATHER ROSS
Mr. Miller/

DAVID SR.
Father Ross, call me David.

FATHER ROSS

David. I think your son wants to talk a bit, can I take him for a burger at Chili's then I can drop him off?

DAVID SR.

Junior talks? News to me. Good luck. And tell him to get his grades up. He's slacking. I don't like it.

David SR. leaves.

Silence. Father Ross observes.

FATHER ROSS

David, are you hungry?

DAVID

When did you know?

FATHER ROSS

Does it matter? Do they know?

DAVID

God, I hope not. He would kill me.

Fade.

INT. RECTORY KITCHEN

ON SCREEN: SATURDAY 2 PM

Elaine enters. Father Ross stands with his back to her in a faded black T-shirt.

ELAINE

Father Ross?

He turns.

Across his chest:

LEAVE THE GUN, TAKE THE CANNOLI

-- THE GODFATHER

Elaine just looks at him. Father Ross looks, doesn't break his gaze.

ELAINE
They're waiting.

He checks his watch.

FATHER ROSS
It's 2 PM. Mass is at 4.

ELAINE
Confession is at 2.

FATHER ROSS
Jesus. All you people do is sin
around here.

Elaine doesn't blink.

Ross mutters to himself and grabs a half-eaten pastry off the counter.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
Fine. Though your sins are like
scarlet, they shall be white as
snow.

ON SCREEN: Isaiah 1:18

He heads for the door.

ELAINE
Father Ross?
(gesturing to the shirt)

Ross takes another bite.

FATHER ROSS
(mouthful)
Relax, Elaine. It'll be under the
alb. They won't see a thing.

He disappears into the hall.

INT. CONFSSIONAL - CONTINUOUS

The room is tight. Smells of old wood and Lorraine's aggressive perfume.

Ross sits, his stole barely covering the "Leave the Gun" logo on his chest. He looks at Lorraine. She's un-kneeling, legs crossed, a stiletto dangling.

LORRAINE

Forgive me, Father. It's been... a very long time.

Ross leans back. He doesn't look like a shepherd; he looks like a man scanning for a wire.

FATHER ROSS

I'm sure. Skip the preamble. Why are you here?

LORRAINE

(A feline smile)

Direct. You look like you've handled more than rosaries.

FATHER ROSS

State your sins, Lorraine. We got a line outside.

LORRAINE

My sin? I have... impure thoughts.

She leans forward. His gaze is a dead-bolt.

FATHER ROSS

Lust is a lack of imagination. It's boring.

LORRAINE

Is it? Or is it the only thing that makes you feel alive under that collar?

Ross leans in, his voice dropping to a gravelly threat.

FATHER ROSS

The man you're looking for died a long time ago.

LORRAINE

So what's it going to be? Ten Hail Mary's?

FATHER ROSS

Careful, Lorraine. Go home.

Lorraine stands, smoothing her skirt.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)

And stop cheating at Bingo. You don't need the money.

LORRAINE

But I do like to win, Father. I'll
take it off the list.

FATHER ROSS

One down.

Lorraine exits, the click of her stilettos echoing like a
countdown.

Ross lets out a breath he didn't know he was holding.

He tugs at the Roman collar—it looks like it's choking him.
He glances down, adjusting the stole to better hide the
"Cannoli" line on his shirt.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)

(Sotto voce, to himself)

Face-to-face. Might as well put a
target on the back of this chair.

He hits the buzzer for the next "penitent."

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)

(Voice raised, back to
'Priest' mode)

Next. Come in.

A man enters. VINNY "THE VULTURE" CAPUTO (50s). Cheap silk
suit, smelling of menthols and desperation. He doesn't sit.
He paces the three feet of available space.

VINNY

Forgive me, Father. It's been...
since I got out of Rahway.

Ross freezes. Rahway. New Jersey. He doesn't turn around, but
his posture shifts—shoulders square, chin down. He's not a
priest anymore; he's a predator listening for a tell.

FATHER ROSS

(A voice like cold
concrete)

You're a long way from the Jersey
Turnpike, Vinny.

The man stops pacing. He looks at the back of Ross's head,
squinting through the dim light.

VINNY

How'd you—? Never mind. Look, I did
something. Something bad. I was
supposed to 'collect' from a guy in
Highland Beach. A jeweler.

(MORE)

VINNY (CONT'D)
 He didn't have the "donation." I... I
 lost my temper.

FATHER ROSS
 You lost your temper or you did
 your job?

VINNY
 (Voice trembling)
 I did both. He's in a dumpster
 behind a Publix. But that ain't the
 problem. The problem is I think I
 was followed. By guys who don't
 wear badges.

Ross closes his eyes. This is exactly what he can't have: a
 Jersey loose-end bringing a "war" to his front door. His
 "mobster" instincts aren't just triggered; they're screaming.

FATHER ROSS
 (Leaning in, dangerous)
 "The wicked flee when no man
 pursueth: but the righteous are
 bold as a lion." Proverbs 28:1.

VINNY
 What's that mean?

FATHER ROSS
 Lions are coming for you. You
 didn't come here for forgiveness.
 You came here for a place to hide.

Ross turns his head just enough for Vinny to see the sharp,
 lethal edge of his profile.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
 Get out. Use the back servant's
 entrance. If I see you back hear,
 this Lion is gonna roar.

Vinny doesn't argue. He bolts.

Ross stands up, ripping the stole off. He looks at his watch.
 2:15 PM.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
 (To himself)
 Jesus, give me strength. Because if
 the Romans don't kill me, the
 neighbors will.

INT. CONFESSIONAL - MOMENTS LATER

The door clicks shut. DAVID SR. sits. He doesn't kneel. He sits like he's in a briefing room. The silence is heavy, mechanical.

DAVID SR.

Forgive me, Father. It's been... a month.

Ross doesn't answer immediately. He's looking at his own hands, scarred and steady.

FATHER ROSS

A month. A lot can happen in thirty days, David. How's the boy?

A beat of silence. David Sr. shifts. The wood creaks.

DAVID SR.

He's soft, Father. I'm trying to forge something there, but the metal... it's flawed. I find myself losing my patience. Disciplining him. Harder than I should.

FATHER ROSS

(Cold, level)

"Harder than you should" is a wide zip code. You leaving marks, David?

DAVID SR.

(Sharply)

I'm trying to make him a man. The world out there? It eats kids like him. I'm just preparing him for the fight.

Ross leans forward. The "Leave the Gun" logo is inches from the screen, hidden only by the thin mesh. His muscular chest and biceps are visible under the shroud of the T-shirt.

He speaks with the authority of a man who has actually seen the "lions" he warned Lorraine about.

FATHER ROSS

The kid wants your attention.

David stands.

DAVID SR.

(Defensive)

I'm doing my best. He's... different.

(MORE)

DAVID SR. (CONT'D)
He's heading down a path I can't
follow.

Father Ross looks at David. Ross nods to the chair. David
sits.

FATHER ROSS
(A dangerous whisper)
Right now, you're the only monster
he's afraid of.

DAVID SR.
You don't understand. You're a
priest. You have no idea what it's
like to try to straighten a bent
nail.

FLASH of the silencer twisting and the Act of Contrition.

BANG.

FATHER ROSS
I've seen what happens when you hit
them too hard.
They don't get straight.

Ross leans even closer, his face shadowed, his eyes like
flint.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
Your penance isn't prayers. It's
silence unless you are speaking of
love and support.

You go home.
You take an interest.
You just sit there and realize that
if you break that boy, you're not a
soldier anymore.
You're just a bully.

DAVID SR.
(Stunned)
Father.

FATHER ROSS
Go. Before I decide the
"Instruction of the Lord" needs to
be delivered by hand.

INT. CONFESSIONAL - CONTINUOUS

Dim light through wood slats.

Ross sits still.

A beat.

He reaches into his pocket.

Pulls out a card.

RAFAEL MARTINEZ

Life Coach

954-426-3537

He turns it between his fingers.

Studies it.

A faint smirk— then gone.

The door opens.

Rafael enters.

No prayer. Just presence.

He sits.

A beat.

RAFAEL
Forgive me, Father.

Another beat.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
(low and gravel)
For I know *exactly* what you've been
doing.

Ross doesn't turn.

FATHER ROSS
This is for confession. Not
surveillance.

RAFAEL
Then call it disappointment.

A beat.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
Brightline to Miami. Brickell.
Tables you shouldn't be near.

Ross exhales.

He loosens the collar slightly.

Just a fraction.

FATHER ROSS
A man needs air.

RAFAEL
The collar is the only thing
keeping you breathing.

A beat.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
And Vinny?

Ross turns now.

Eyes sharp.

FATHER ROSS
He brought heat to my door.

RAFAEL
You're not a boss anymore.

A beat.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
You're a shepherd. Not a lion.

Silence.

Rafael leans closer.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
Start acting like one.

A long beat.

Rafael taps the divider.

Once.

Twice.

He stands.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
Clean it up.

Moves to exit.

Stops.

Turns back.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
I'll be out there.

A thin smile.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
Let's see what you have to say
about mercy.

He exits.

The door THUDS.

Silence.

Ross sits there.

Breathing.

FATHER ROSS
You and I-

A beat.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
same train.

Silence presses in.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
(quiet)
Deliver me from the violent man.

A beat.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
Problem is-

He looks down.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
I'm both.

INT ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH a little later.

Ross scans the room. His eyes land on the Miller family. David Sr. is stone-faced. Beside him, David Jr. slowly unzips his windbreaker.

Underneath, the boy isn't wearing a Sunday polo. He's wearing the black T-shirt with the jagged white text: GOD WON'T SAVE YOU.

The boy's eyes are wide, terrified. He's looking at Ross like a plea for help—or a warning.

Ross's heart hammers against his ribs. The "Leave the Gun" shirt beneath his vestments pumping and burning his skin.

Lorraine's hungry gaze, and Rafael in the back, arms crossed, a shark in a suit.

Ross grips the edges of the lectern. His knuckles are white.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
"Lazarus, come out."

He lets the command hang in the air. His voice is low, carrying the gravel of a Jersey cigarette.

FLASHBACK: Tyrone's blood seeping on to the floor.

BACK TO PRESENT

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
Imagine being that guy.
Four days in the dark.
Wrapped in burial clothes.
Probably starting to smell like the
end of the road.

The congregation looks around. This is different.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
Then you hear a voice calling you
back.
Back to the light.
Back to the "living."

He locks eyes with Rafael.

RUSTY (V.O.)
You can't outrun your past.

FATHER ROSS
Everyone thinks the miracle is that
he lived.

(MORE)

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
I think the miracle is that he
didn't run back into the cave.
Because coming back from the dead
isn't a gift... it's a sentence.
You're back, but you're still
wearing the clothes you died in.
You're walking around, but you've
still got the dust of the grave on
your shoes.

He glances at David Jr., then back to the congregation.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
The Gospel doesn't tell us what
Lazarus did the next day.
But I'll bet you he didn't sleep.
I'll bet you he spent every night
looking over his shoulder,
wondering when the Stone was gonna
roll back into place.

He leans in, his shadow stretching over the front pews.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
Because once you've been on the
other side... you realize the only
thing harder than dying... is
staying "forgiven" in a world that
never forgets a debt.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
(He holds up his forearm, the ink
stark against the white fabric)
You see this? It was written by a
man who didn't believe in exits.
Who thought the cave was the only
home he'd ever have.

He looks directly at David Jr.—a silent promise of
protection.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
But the miracle isn't being saved.
The miracle is having the guts to
save someone else.

He looks to Rafael.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
God help you if you don't try to
save each other.

FADE TO BLACK.

SFX THE SOUND OF THE HEAVY CLICK OF A HANDGUN.

EXT. ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH - RECEIVING LINE - CONTINUOUS

Father Ross shakes hands as parishioners file past.

DAVID JR. and DAVID SR. step up.

Ross clocks the GOD WON'T SAVE YOU shirt under David's jacket.

FATHER ROSS
Interesting shirt.

David Jr. freezes.

David Sr. smiles, oblivious or pretending to be.

DAVID SR.
Father, we're doing a little
cookout tonight.
Nothing fancy.
You should come by.

Ross looks from father to son.

FATHER ROSS
Sure. I'll bring a watermelon.

David Jr. glances up -- grateful, worried.

They move on.

Rafael steps into line.

RAFAEL
Strong sermon, Father.

Ross shakes his hand.

SFX: Church bells ring, bleeding into prison bells as the "yard" is open.

SFX: CHURCH BELLS bleed into the metallic CLANG of the prison yard.

EXT. PRISON YARD - DAY

Rusty racks dumbbells. Sweat. Veins. Control.

A GUARD approaches.

GUARD

Jordan. Warden wants you. Now.

Rusty sets the weights down. Around him, his men go still.

He follows the guard.

INT. WARDEN'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

WARDEN JEFF STONE, 60s, hard-built, green-eyed, stands at the window overlooking the yard.

Rusty enters. The guard remains at the door.

The Warden does not turn.

WARDEN

I don't like you, Sam Jordan.

RUSTY

It's Rusty.

Now Stone turns.

WARDEN

In here, it's Sam.

A beat.

WARDEN (CONT'D)

Somebody thinks you're worth moving. I disagreed. Then I saw the number.

Rusty says nothing.

WARDEN (CONT'D)

You're being transferred. Paul Rein. Pompano Beach, Florida. One week.

The first flicker in Rusty.

WARDEN (CONT'D)

Fifty thousand. Two days.

RUSTY

For what.

WARDEN

For grass. Air. And the chance to keep breathing long enough to enjoy Florida.

A beat.

WARDEN (CONT'D)
 You pay me, you travel.
 You don't, you disappear in Texas.

Rusty walks out. Fluorescent lights hum. Screen fades to dusty white.

INT. ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH BASEMENT - NIGHT

Fluorescent lights hum over a folding table.

Half-eaten donuts. A FUN FAIR poster with a badly drawn chicken.

At the table: MRS. GABLE, 70s, iron-fisted;

TONY, 40s, tracksuit contractor energy;

and SARAH, 30s, frantic, buried in clipboards.

SARAH
 The choir girls want to know if
 Father White is doing the dunk
 tank.

TONY
 Of course they do. God, I would
 throw a ball at that target.

MRS. GABLE
 He is a priest, Tony.

TONY
 He's a priest with a tattoo that
 says God Won't Save You.

Sarah freezes.

SARAH
 I thought it was a cross.

TONY
 It's a warning label.

A beat.

MRS. GABLE
 The children adore him.

TONY

Yeah. And every time a car backfires, he checks the exits like he's got enemies.

SARAH

The Bishop's office said he came from Orlando.

TONY

My cousin says he comes with a sealed file and a lawyer.

MRS. GABLE

Rumor is a sin.

TONY

So is lying, and one of those is definitely happening.

Sarah looks toward the door, lowers her voice.

SARAH

Mrs. Higgins says she saw a man leave the rectory at three in the morning.

MRS. GABLE

Mrs. Higgins sees the devil in low lighting.

The door CLICKS open.

Father Ross stands there, taking in the room.

FATHER ROSS

I hope I'm not delaying the Fun Fair. I'd hate to think I'm more interesting than chicken.

A faint smile.

In the distance, a CAR BACKFIRES.

Ross's eyes flick instantly to the exit.

Tony sees it.

Clocked.

TONY

Father Ross, will you be dealing at the card table.

FATHER ROSS
My son, you can't let the devil
play alone.

FADE OUT.

INT. LOCAL APARTMENT - BOCA RATON - NIGHT

Low light. Quiet hum of the AC.

RAFAEL sits at the kitchen table in a black T-shirt and shorts, barefoot, a file open in front of him.

A half-empty bottle of vodka.

A rocks glass with lime and melting ice sweats onto the wood.

STEVE, 35, tan, thick through the chest, shirtless, a PUERTO RICO star tattoo on his left pec, leans in the doorway.

He knows this mood. Hates this mood.

STEVE
Papi. You need to relax.

No response.

Steve crosses to the table, glances at the paperwork, reaches for the file.

Rafael takes it from his hand without looking up.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Who is this guy?

Rafael says nothing.

STEVE (CONT'D)
Because I already hate him.

A beat.

RAFAEL
Maybe we call it a night.

STEVE
Good. Come to bed.

RAFAEL
No.

That lands.

Steve studies him. Message received.

He grabs a shirt. Pulls on sneakers.

Then sunglasses -- at night.

STEVE

Fine. I'm gonna go find trouble.

He heads out.

The door shuts.

Rafael sits there one more beat, staring at the file.

Then he throws on a shirt, grabs his keys, and goes.

MONTAGE - THE DISTANCE CLOSES

-- INT. WARDEN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A duffel bag opens.

Stacks of cash.

Warden Stone says nothing.

Just counts.

-- EXT. PRISON TRANSFER BAY - PRE-DAWN

Rusty is shackled hand and foot.

Escorted by ARMED OFFICERS in body armor.

He moves with eerie calm.

-- INT. ARMORED TRANSPORT - MOVING

Rusty sits caged behind reinforced mesh.

Expressionless.

Like a king.

-- EXT. TEXAS INTERSTATE - DAWN

The transport tears down the highway.

ON SCREEN: 1267 MILES TO BOCA RATON, FL

-- INT. WARDEN'S OFFICE - LATER

Stone at his desk.

Phone buzzes.

A text:

PAID.
NO LOOSE ENDS.

Stone looks up.

The same guard enters.

Gun already drawn.

A suppressed POP.

Stone slumps forward onto the desk.

-- EXT. BOCA RATON - NIGHT

Rafael's car sits across from the rectory.

Engine off.

Watching.

-- INT. RECTORY - FATHER ROSS'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ross drops for pushups.

Slow. Controlled. Punishing.

-- A row of saint cards on the dresser.

St. Michael.

St. Jude.

St. Sebastian.

-- Ross at his desk, sweating through a white undershirt,
writing in a legal pad: "Forgiveness is not forgetting."

He crosses it out.

-- Outside, in the car, Rafael watches the lit window.

-- Inside, Ross stops writing.

Looks up at the saints.

Like he's waiting for one of them to answer.

Flashback to Mark the silencer threading on a gun.

END MONTAGE

INT. MILLER HOUSEHOLD KITCHEN - MORNING

David, Sr. Making breakfast.

DAVID SR.
David, Lois, breakfast.

David, Jr and LOIS MILLER (44) blonde, aware of everything, enter.

Dad puts pancakes on plates. Kitchen towel on his shoulder.

Mom and son are confused. They look at each other.

DAVID SR. (CONT'D)
(easy)
Dave, can you grab the OJ? Lois, I didn't get the napkins. We are eating outside by the pool.

Dad picks up all three plates and backs out of the kitchen to the pool.

Mom and son are dazed.

DAVID SR. (CONT'D)
(easy)
Chop. Chop. We have a whole day planned.

Dad is seen through the door, setting plates down by a table at the pool.

DAVID
Who is that?

LOIS
The man I married. Your father.
Guess he came home.

They head out.

DAVID SR. (O.S.)
 So I thought we would take the
 Brightline to Miami/

DAVID (O.S.)
 The Science Museum?

LOIS (O.S.)
 The beach?

DAVID SR. (O.S.)
 (laughs)
 All of it..and a few surprises.
 Now eat up. These are protein
 pancakes; you'll need your energy.

He claps David on the back and kisses Lois.

DAVID (O.S.)
 Ok Ok, you two, let's not start
 that.

Fade to Florida Sunshine glistening off the pool.

EXT. REST STOP I-10

The sun glaring off of Rusty's sunglasses.

Rusty smiles.

Looking down. Handcuffs. Leg chains.

CLINK. He get's back into the security vehicle.

ROAD SIGN: FLORIDA State Line - 40 miles.

Tires spin, wheels turn.

FLASH CUT

Roulette wheel turning at FUN FAIR.

INT. ST. MICHAEL'S GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

The "FUN FAIR" is in full, humid swing. A sea of expensive
 linen and parish-branded polo shirts. The air smells of
 popcorn, overpriced Merlot, and desperation.

A neon sign over a curtained-off corner hums: "FATHER ROSS'S
 CASINO NIGHT - TEXAS HOLD 'EM."

Behind the curtain, FATHER ROSS (38) stands alone at a green felt table. He's back in the "uniform"—black clerical shirt, Roman collar. He looks less like a priest and more like a pit boss awaiting a raid.

He picks up a fresh deck of Bicycle cards. The plastic seal snaps like a bone.

FATHER ROSS

(Sotto)

"For where your treasure is, there
your heart will be also."

(Beat)

ON SCREEN: Matthew 6:21.

He fans the deck. One-handed. Perfect. The cards blur into a waterfall. The sound is rhythmic, mechanical—the sound of a man who used to count money in backrooms, not collection plates.

He starts a one-handed shuffle. It's too fast. Too professional.

ELAINE (O.S.)

You do that any faster, Father, and
people will start asking for their
tithes back.

Ross doesn't stop. He doesn't even look up. ELAINE is carrying a metal cash box. She clocks his hands.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

Father Gilbert used to struggle
just to deal Go Fish at the senior
center.

FATHER ROSS

Father Gilbert had the benefit of a
clean conscience, Elaine. My hands
remember things my soul is trying
to forget.

He drops the deck. It hits the felt with a dead thud.

ELAINE

(Setting the box down)

The "High Rollers" are waiting.
George Miles is out there with a
group of developers from Brickell.
They think they're coming here to
buy some easy absolution with a big
pot.

FATHER ROSS

(A cold smile)

Good. I've always found that the easiest way to get a man to tell the truth is to take his money.

Ross's hands go still. He glances toward the curtain.

She exits.

He looks at his forearm, where the cuff of his black shirt hides the "GOD WON'T SAVE YOU" ink.

He buttons the cuff tight.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)

(To the empty room)

Let's see who's betting on a miracle.

He pulls back the curtain. The roar of the fair hits him like a physical blow.

A low-hanging industrial lamp casts a harsh cone of yellow over the green felt.

Outside the curtain, the Fun Fair is a muffled cacophony of organ music and children's screams. Inside, it's all smoke and the surgical click-clack of clay chips.

FATHER ROSS deals.

He doesn't look at the cards.

He looks at the men.

The players:

DAVID SR. -- eyes bloodshot. Hands steady. Jaw tight.

The "recovery" breakfast didn't take.

GEORGE -- sweating through his polo. Every bet sends his eyes to the cash box like it's a ticking bomb.

RAFAEL stands in shadow against the back wall.

Father Ross burns a card.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)

Check or bet, George? You've been remarkably generous with the surplus lately.

George flinches. Pushes out a stack of reds.

GEORGE

I'm in for five hundred. It's for
the roof fund, right?

FATHER ROSS

(a whisper like a razor)
The roof's been paid for three
times over, George. I'm starting to
think you're building a second
church in your basement.

He turns:

ACE OF HEARTS.

Father Ross locks eyes with David Sr.

FATHER ROSS

David. You're holding a pair of
Jacks.

DAVID SR.

(voice cracking)
You don't know what I'm holding,
Father.

FATHER ROSS

I know exactly what you're holding.

David Sr. stares at him.

For a second, the priest is gone. He folds. Stands.

His chair screeches against the linoleum as he stumbles out.

Father Ross deals the RIVER:

ACE OF DIAMONDS.

Three Aces on the board.

He leans over the table, Roman collar catching the light.

Reaches out and flips George's cards face up.

FATHER ROSS

Nothing, George. King high. Pay up.

He sweeps the pot into the box. George leaves.

Rafael steps forward.

RAFAEL

You're showing your hand, Ross.
People are starting to see the ink
under the sleeve.

FATHER ROSS

Let them look.
Maybe they'll see something
they're actually afraid of.

EXT. ST. MICHAEL'S PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The parking lot is a graveyard of luxury SUVs and minivans. The distant, tinny music of the "Cake Walk" feels like a taunt.

FATHER ROSS stands near the rectory back door. He leans against a brick pillar, shadowed. He strikes a Zippo—the metallic clink sounds like a slide racking. He lights a cigarette, drawing in a long, slow drag. The cherry glows, illuminating the jagged scars on his knuckles.

DAVID SR. (O.S.)

(Muffled, feral)

You think you're a man? Wearing
that trash in a church?

DAVID JR. (O.S.)

(Choking back a sob)

It's just a shirt, Dad. Father Ross
said—

DAVID SR. (O.S.)

I don't care what that fake-ass
priest said! You're soft. You're a
disgrace to the name.

SFX: A sharp, meaty SLAP.

SFX: A heavy THUD as a body hits the side of a parked Tahoe.

DAVID SR. (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Now get up. Get up and look at me!

Ross doesn't hesitate. He doesn't "run"—he moves with the predatory efficiency of a man who has cleared rooms in North Dallas. The cigarette stays clamped in his teeth, smoke trailing like a fuse.

He rounds the corner of the Tahoe.

DAVID JR. is on the pavement, curled in a ball, the "GOD WON'T SAVE YOU" text on his shirt smeared with oil and road grit. DAVID SR. is looming over him, belt already unbuckled, his face a mask of alcoholic "recovery" rage.

FATHER ROSS
 (A voice like sliding
 gravel)
 The boy's right, David. God won't
 save you.

David Sr. spins around, startled. He sees the collar, but the man wearing it has dead eyes.

DAVID SR.
 Stay out of this, Father. This is
 family business. Discipline.

ROSS
 (Taking a final drag,
 dropping the cherry)
 I know the difference between
 discipline and a beating. One is
 for the student. The other is for
 the coward who's afraid of his own
 shadow.

Ross steps into the light. He starts unbuttoning his clerical cuffs, folding them back with surgical precision.

DAVID SR.
 (Squaring up, Iraq '07
 reflexes kicking in)
 You're gonna lay hands on a
 parishioner? You'll lose your
 career, Ross. The Bishop will—

ROSS
 (Leaning in close)
 The Bishop handles the soul. I
 handle the trash.

David Sr. lunges—a desperate, amateur haymaker.

Ross doesn't even flinch. He parries the blow with a forearm shiver that sounds like a car crash. He slips inside David's guard, hooks his hand behind the man's neck, and drives a knee into his solar plexus.

SFX: The air leaving David Sr.'s lungs in a pathetic wheeze.

Ross doesn't let him fall. He pins him against the Tahoe, his forearm across David's throat. Ross's sleeve is pushed up now. The ink is screaming: GOD WON'T SAVE YOU.

ROSS (CONT'D)
 (Whispering in his ear)
 You ever touch him again... you
 ever even look at him with that
 bottle in your eyes... I won't give
 you penance. I'll give you a
 permanent residence in the
 Everglades. Do you understand me,
 "Soldier"?

David Sr. can only nod, his face turning purple. Ross lets
 go. David collapses into a heap next to his son's feet.

Ross looks down at David Jr. He reaches out a hand—not a
 priest's blessing, but a fighter's assist.

FADE OUT.

INT. ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH - RECEIVING LINE - DAY

Father Ross greets parishioners as they file past.

Smiles. Handshakes. A baby in his arms for half a beat.

DAVID SR., sporting a black eye, steps up with LOIS and DAVID
 JR.

He gives Ross a small nod.

DAVID SR.
 Father Ross.

FATHER ROSS
 How about you all join me for
 dinner?

Lois smiles politely.

LOIS
 Thank you, Father, but we're
 staying in. Bringing back game
 night.

FATHER ROSS
 Let me guess.
 "Sorry?"

LOIS
 That obvious?

FATHER ROSS
 Come on, Lois, I'm a priest.

They move on.

Father Ross smiles, hands the baby back to its mother, keeps the line moving.

A BLACK SUV rolls slowly past the curb.

The passenger window lowers just enough.

A pair of sunglasses glint in the sun.

Watching.

Then the window slides up.

The SUV keeps moving.

Ross clocks it.

Then turns back to the next parishioner.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
Good to see you, Mrs. Gable.

MONTAGE - FATHER ROSS BECOMES ST. MICHAEL'S

-- Ross officiates a wedding. The bride beams. Ross clocks the groom's shaking hands.

-- A FUNERAL. Ross at graveside. Wind catches the stole. He speaks with unexpected authority.

-- CHURCH BINGO NIGHT. Old women laugh too loud. Ross calls numbers deadpan. They adore him.

-- CONFESSIONAL. A teenager cries behind the screen. Ross says nothing at first. Then: "Start where it hurts."

-- Parish council meeting. Ross says little. Everyone else reveals themselves.

-- The Bishop at the back of the church, observing.

-- Rafael across the street in sunglasses, unseen by most.

-- Will lighting a candle. Ross notices.

-- Ross opening a drawer full of saint cards and handwritten names.

-- Communion line. More and more people.

-- George watching from the rectory window.

EXT. BOCA RATON MIDDLE SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

Kids spill out.

DAVID walks with LESLIE and CARL.

A BLACK SUV idles down the street.

LESLIE
This is my turn.

CARL
I'll walk you. You need help in
math. That isn't his strong suit
anyway.

DAVID
Yeah, yeah.

They split.

David puts in earbuds.

Head down.

The SUV rolls slowly.

A SHADOW falls behind him.

David turns—

BLACK OUT.

INT. SUV - MOVING

Dark interior.

DAVID, mouth taped, panicked.

RUSTY sits across from him.

Still.

Calm.

Two men in front. Silent.

A beat.

Rusty flicks a switchblade open.

SNAP.

David flinches.

Rusty sees it.

Says nothing.

Then—

He reaches into the console.

An orange.

Turns it in his hand.

The blade rests just under the skin.

Not cutting yet.

RUSTY

Easy.

David freezes.

Rusty holds up a photo:

David. Lois. David Sr.

A beat.

Rusty studies the kid.

Then—

RUSTY (CONT'D)

Look at me.

David forces himself to.

Rusty leans in—

not aggressive.

Certain.

RUSTY (CONT'D)

You're going to help me.

A beat.

Rusty slices into the orange.

Clean.

Juice beads instantly.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
Blessed are the righteous...

A beat.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
...for they shall be called sons of
God.

Silence.

David tries to repeat—
shaking.

DAVID
Blessed are the righteous—

Rusty watches him.

Not correcting.

Not helping.

Just watching.

Then—

a hand from the front seat.

Needle.

David doesn't even see it coming.

He goes limp.

Rusty keeps peeling.

Slow.

Precise.

The spiral begins.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. RECTORY KITCHEN

Father Ross is having a coffee. Talking with Elaine. A Text
comes in.

PHONE TEXT

You need to get to confession now.
You can't outrun your past, Mark.

Father Ross sets the coffee down.

FATHER ROSS

Elaine, if I am not back in 15
minutes, call this number.

He pulls out his wallet and takes out Rafael's card.

He exits quickly.

INT. CONFSSIONAL

Father Ross enters. Scans. There in the corner is David slumped over.

FATHER ROSS

Jesus, what have I done?

He goes to David. Shakes him gently.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)

Come on buddy. Come on.

David is groggy and wakes a bit. He mumbles.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)

David who did this to you? What
happened.

DAVID

(weak, drifting)
Blessed are the righteous...
they will be called the Sons of
God...

Ross freezes.

The words hit him.

A memory flickers.

Ross leans in. Quiet. Controlled.

FATHER ROSS

Blessed are the peacemakers...

A beat.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
They will be called the sons of
God.

Ross looks up.

Not at David.

At the room.

Like someone else is already inside it.

INT. RECTORY - DAY

Ross SLAMS the door shut with his heel. He lays David on the sofa. The boy is a ghost-pale, eyes fluttering.

ELAINE
Oh my God. David.

FATHER ROSS
Call that number.

ELAINE
I already did.

He looks at David's arm. Nothing. His neck, he sees the needle prick.

FATHER ROSS
Shit. David, buddy talk with me.
Come on.

ELAINE
Should I call his parents.

FATHER ROSS
No. No nothing yet till I sort this
out.

ELAINE
Who did this? Why?

EXT. RECTORY - MOMENTS LATER

A nondescript sedan screeches to the curb. RAFAEL. He scans the street, hand near his holster.

INT. RECTORY - CONTINUOUS

Rafael bursts in. He immediately goes to David, checking the boy's pulse. Ross watches him, chest heaving. The priest's collar is tucked into his pocket; he looks more like a mercenary than a man of God.

FATHER ROSS

He was in my church, Rafael. Inside the sanctuary.

RAFAEL

(cool, professional)

Ok.

FATHER ROSS

Ok? How is Rusty here?

ELAINE

What is going on, Father?

FATHER ROSS

Elaine, this just stays here with us, this is confidential.

RAFAEL

Stay put.

Rafael steps into another room and makes a call.

FATHER ROSS

David. Come on now. You're my soldier.

RAFAEL (O.S.)

Well he's here. Transferred? How? Who authorized?

INT. RECTORY MOMENTS LATER

RAFAEL

Transport breach.
Warden was paid off.

(a beat)

He didn't survive the payout.

Ross focused on David.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)

Elaine. I need you to look at me.

She does. She is trembling a touch.

FATHER ROSS

This is like confession. You can't repeat anything that you see here.

Elaine looks off. Tears fall.

RAFAEL

Elaine. Stay with me. Ross you sure it was him.

FATHER ROSS

He quoted the Sermon on the Mount.

A beat.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)

He got it wrong.

Rafael looks up.

Now he understands.

ELAINE

Mark?

FATHER ROSS

He used a child to deliver a signature.

Rafael steps closer.

RAFAEL

Low profile. You went public. This is the result.

Ross snaps.

CRACK.

Rafael hits the floor.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)

(harder than him)

And it worked, didn't it? Until you show up on the news. Low profile. Low fucking profile. This is on you.

CRACK. Father Ross lays a solid right hook on Rafael. He hits the floor.

ELAINE

Boys. Stop.

They both look at her.

ELAINE (CONT'D)

I don't know what happened before.
I don't know what happens tomorrow.
I do that that God help both of you
if we lose this child.

Sobriety has hit them both.

Ross scans the room.

RAFAEL

Rusty isn't coming for the priest.
He's coming for the man who left
him in that courtroom.

FATHER ROSS

(quietly)
I'm not that man anymore.

RAFAEL

Then the boy is already dead.

Rafael checks his watch and heads for the door.

FATHER ROSS

What do I tell his parents?

RAFAEL

Lie. You're good at that.

Rafael exits.

Ross stands in the silence of the rectory. He looks at the crucifix on the wall, then at the groggy, innocent boy on the couch.

Ross pries up the floorboard.

The Glock.

He stares at it.

Then takes it.

Elaine watches.

ELAINE

Father Ross?

He looks down at his tattoo. He looks at David.

FATHER ROSS
Faith without works is dead.

ON SCREEN: James 2:26.

INT. BLACK SEDAN

Father Ross Driving, David now awake, still a little groggy.

FATHER ROSS
David you are my soldier. I am not
asking you to lie. Just let me do
the talking.

EXT. MILLER HOUSE

Father Ross pulls up. David, Sr and Lois burst out.

Young David gets out of the car. Lois runs to him.

LOIS
Oh my boy. What happened.

DAVID
Mom, I am ok.

CRACK. David, Sr., hits Father Ross and he flies across the hood of the sedan.

LOIS
David. Stop.

DAVID SR.
What did you do? Who the fuck are
you?

FATHER ROSS
Ok, Calm down. Let's get inside.

David, Sr. picks up his son. They all head inside.

INT. MILLER HOUSE CONTINUOUS

David, Sr. eases his son into a chair. He starts to lunge at Father Ross, Lois blocks him.

LOIS & FATHER ROSS
Stop.

FATHER ROSS
Let me explain.

Time lapse. The adults move around the room. Shouting.
Quiet. Tears from all. David, Jr. more awake.

INT. MILLER HOUSE CONTINUOUS

DAVID
...it is my fault.

LOIS, DAVID SR., FATHER ROSS
No.

Father Ross kneels down.

FATHER ROSS
No. This is not your fault. It
couldn't be.

DAVID
He said, "I'm a bad man."

FATHER ROSS
He is. Don't ever forget that.

DAVID
Father Ross, are you a bad man?

Silence.

Ross looks at him.

FATHER ROSS
I was.

A beat.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
I'm trying not to be.

LOIS
Could you be that man again? Will
he come back? If we need him?

Ross breathes out.

FATHER ROSS
If he does. Stay away.

INT. APARTMENT - BOCA RATON - NIGHT

Low light.

RUSTY sits at a small table.

TRAVIS across from him.

A bottle between them.

TRAVIS
The kid can identify us.

RUSTY
He won't.

A beat.

TRAVIS
So what happens?

Rusty takes a sip.

RUSTY
Mark will show himself.

A faint smile.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
He always does.

TRAVIS
I can take the kid. His family too.

Rusty looks up.

Still.

RUSTY
Not yet.

A beat.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
You understand?

Travis nods.

Rusty's phone BUZZES.

Unknown number.

TRAVIS
Who has this number?

Rusty answers.

RUSTY
I'm not buying.

RAFAEL (O.S.)
Check your door.

Rusty doesn't move at first.

Then—

He rises. Walks to the door.

Opens it.

A plain envelope.

He takes it. Closes the door.

Back to the table.

Opens it.

Inside—

A photo.

His MOTHER. His SISTER.

Rusty's face changes.

Just a flicker.

RAFAEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Family's everything, right?

A beat.

Then—

A woman's voice, trembling.

MOTHER (O.S.)
Rusty?

Another voice, younger.

SISTER (O.S.)
They're taking us—

Rusty's jaw tightens.

RUSTY
Whoever this is—

A beat.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
you're already dead.

CLICK.

Silence.

Rusty stands there.

Still.

Then—

He smiles.

Black.

INT. MILLER HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

David Sr. packs a cooler. Military precision.

LOIS
What are you doing?

DAVID SR.
We're leaving.

LOIS
Where?

DAVID SR.

DISNEY.
Lose ourselves in the crowd.

David Jr. enters.

DAVID
We don't do that.

DAVID SR.
We do now.

A beat.

DAVID
When are we coming back?

Lois and David Sr. exchange a look.

LOIS
Get dressed.

Rusty takes a photo.

FLASH.

INT. RECTORY KITCHEN

Ross. Rafael. Elaine.

Phones buzz.

They look.

The photo.

Elaine gasps.

ELAINE

Oh my God...

Rafael answers.

Speaker.

RUSTY (O.S.)

Now I have your attention.

Ross steps forward.

FATHER ROSS

Let them go.

RUSTY (O.S.)

No.

A beat.

RUSTY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I'm not done with you yet.

RAFAEL

I have your family.

A beat.

Silence.

Then—

RUSTY (O.S.)

Do what you want.

The call shifts to VIDEO.

The Miller family.

Terrified.

Ross leans in.

FATHER ROSS
David. Stay with me.

David Jr. nods, crying.

Rusty steps into frame.

RUSTY watches them.

No smile.

No rush.

Then-

He raises the gun.

BANG.

David Sr.'s body jolts.

Silence.

Then-

screams.

Father Ross gets the gun, puts it in his back belt.

RAFAEL
Where are you going?

FATHER ROSS
To find him. Elaine, morning Mass
is off.

Father Ross heads out. The lightning cracks and rain
thunders down as the door opens and closes.

ELAINE
Do something.

Rafael sighs and heads out after him.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT (EMPTY)

No lights except votives.

Ross enters alone.

Still. Silent.

He walks to the altar.

Rafael enters unnoticed by Father Ross. He watches.

Ross has blood still on him.

He doesn't kneel.

He just stands there.

A long beat.

Then.

He pulls the Glock out.

Sets it on the altar.

Next to the crucifix.

FATHER ROSS
You don't get both.

A beat.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
So pick.

Silence.

Nothing happens.

No sign.

No miracle.

He takes the gun.

Turns. Walks out.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
You're not answering.

INT. SEDAN - NIGHT

Rain hammers the windshield. Ross and Rafael. Ross driving.

Visibility-zero.

Ross grips the wheel too tight.

RAFAEL
Mark-pull over.

No response.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
(quiet)
Stop the car.

A beat.

Ross pulls over.

The engine idles.

Rain engulfs them.

FATHER ROSS
I did this.

A beat.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
He's dead because of me.

Rafael watches him.

Doesn't interrupt.

RAFAEL
You don't have to be him in here.

A beat.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
Not with me.

Ross shakes his head.

Breathing uneven.

FATHER ROSS
What's the plan?

RAFAEL
We wait.

Ross looks at him.

Almost laughs.

FATHER ROSS
He's not waiting.

Silence.

Rain.

RAFAEL
(quiet)
Then what do you want?

Ross looks at him.

FATHER ROSS
You look at me and see a file. You
see "Ross White."
(He grabs Rafael's jaw,
hard)
Tell me who you see. Not the
handler. Not the agent. Tell me my
name.

RAFAEL
(Whispered)
Marcus.

Really looks.

A beat.

He pulls off the collar.

Drops it.

It lands between them.

The space between them disappears.

It's not clean.

It's not romantic.

It's need.

Desperate.

Human.

The windows fog.

Rain pounds harder.

CUT TO:

INT. SAFEHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Door slams.

Wet clothes hit the floor.

They don't stop.

Not priest.

Not agent.

Just two men-

Trying to breathe.

CAMERA HOLDS on the window-

Rain streaming down.

Breath inside.

Rising.

Falling.

INT. SAFEHOUSE - MORNING

Rafael in bed. Ross on the side. He gets up, naked and pulls his pants on. Rafael stirs.

FATHER ROSS
We're done waiting.

Rafael checks his phone. A message.

RAFAEL
We have a 20 on Rusty. Mother and son are alive.

FATHER ROSS
Then let's go.

RAFAEL
You are a criminal. A stand-in man of the cloth, sexy as hell- and you're NOT the FBI.

A beat.

FATHER ROSS
Three out of four. Close enough.

Ross grabs the gun. Tucks it into his back waistband.

Shirt on. Collar on. He's already moving.

RAFAEL
Jesus—wait.

FATHER ROSS (O.S.)
I need iced coffee. You're buying.

RAFAEL
(to himself)
Once you put that collar back on,
I'm the only one who knows it's a
lie. That's the real debt you owe
me, Marcus. Not the FBI. Me.

ENGINE TURNS OVER.

Rafael scrambles into his clothes—

CLICK.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. ST. MICHAEL'S RECTORY - DAY

Blinding Florida sun.

RAFAEL'S black SUV idles at the curb.

INT. RAFAEL'S SUV - CONTINUOUS

Cold air. Engine humming.

FATHER ROSS sits in full collar, staring at the rectory.

He looks like he's suffocating.

RAFAEL
Rusty pinged a tower near the
Glades. I'm heading to the
substation to scrub traffic cams.

A beat.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
 You have three hours to be Father
 Ross. Then we move on Rusty.

Ross doesn't respond.

Ross looks at his hands, "the "bent nails" he spoke of in the
 sermon. He looks at Rafael.

FATHER ROSS
 I'm not "being" him, Rafael. I am
 him. Scrub the cams. Find Rusty. Do
 your job so I can do mine.

Ross exits. He walks toward the Rectory with a new,
 terrifyingly righteous gait.

RAFAEL
 Hey.

Ross turns. He looks. They both know it. Lock eyes.

FATHER ROSS
 One step at a time.

Rafael watches him go.

He touches the passenger seat where Ross sat. It's still
 warm.

RAFAEL
 (To himself)
 God help us.

Rafael pulls away.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

QUICK MASS.

Ross stands at the altar.

The room feels off.

FATHER ROSS
 Today's word is silence.

A few confused looks.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
 Job lost everything and sat in ash.

A beat.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
Sometimes God doesn't speak because
there's nothing left to say.

A beat.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
Amen.

In the back-

BISHOP KELLY watches.

Still. Measuring.

INT. SACRISTY - MOMENTS LATER

Ross rips off vestments.

Down to undershirt.

The door swings open.

BISHOP KELLY enters.

BISHOP KELLY
That was barely a Mass.

Ross keeps moving.

BISHOP KELLY (CONT'D)
People are already talking about
what happened outside your gates.

Ross grabs his shirt.

FATHER ROSS
I have a family in crisis.

The Bishop steps in front of him. Blocks the exit.

BISHOP KELLY
And a parish.

A beat.

BISHOP KELLY (CONT'D)
Sit.

Ross steps closer.

Quiet. Dangerous.

FATHER ROSS
Not today.

A beat.

Ross brushes past him.

The Bishop stands there.

Watching him go.

Ross's phone BUZZES.

TEXT: HE'S ON THE MOVE. NORTH ON 27. MOVE.

Ross doesn't stop.

EXT. RECTORY - MOMENTS LATER

GEORGE approaches, sweating.

GEORGE
Father Ross—

Ross keeps moving.

FATHER ROSS
George, not now.

George grabs his arm.

Instinct—

Ross pins him to the car.

A beat.

They both freeze.

Ross releases him.

GEORGE
I just... I need—

Ross exhales.

Looks at him.

A decision.

FATHER ROSS

Come on.

INT. RECTORY KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Elaine pours coffee.

George sits. Shaking.

Ross stands. Tension coiled.

FATHER ROSS

What happened?

George doesn't answer.

Ross snaps his fingers.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)

George.

George breaks.

GEORGE

They know.

FATHER ROSS

Who knows what?

A beat.

GEORGE

I took money.

Ross doesn't react.

FATHER ROSS

From the fund?

George shakes his head.

GEORGE

The casino.

A beat.

FATHER ROSS

How much?

George whispers.

Ross freezes.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
Two hundred and fifty thousand?

George nods.

GEORGE
They're going to kill me.

Ross runs a hand over his face.

FATHER ROSS
Where is it?

GEORGE
St. Lucia.

Ross looks up.

FATHER ROSS
Who's in St. Lucia?

A beat.

GEORGE
Desiree.

Ross clocks it.

FATHER ROSS
Marion know?

GEORGE
No.

A beat.

Ross exhales.

FATHER ROSS
You're done.

George looks up.

GEORGE
What do I do?

Ross looks at him.

Direct.

FATHER ROSS
You tell the truth.

A beat.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
Lawyer first. Then your wife. Then
the police.

George shakes.

GEORGE
What about Desiree?

Ross almost smiles.

FATHER ROSS
Give her two weeks.

Elaine exhales—half laugh, half disbelief.

Ross's phone BUZZES again.

He answers.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
I'm coming.

He hangs up.

Ross sits.

Takes George's hand.

Elaine joins.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
Heavenly Father, you see all. Lead
him in truth.

A beat.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
Give Marion strength.

A beat.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
Give Desiree two weeks.

Elaine almost cracks.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
Amen.

Ross stands.

Already moving.

He's out the door.

Elaine and George sit in silence.

FADE OUT.

EXT. RECTORY - MOMENTS LATER

Ross steps outside.

The Florida heat hits him.

Rafael's sedan pulls up.

Ross catches his reflection in the darkened window.

He buttons his shirt.

Slow.

Precise.

Then—

He lifts the collar.

Snaps it into place.

In the glass—

For a flicker—

The image shifts.

A halo.

Then—

horns.

Then—

both.

Rafael lowers the window.

The reflection disappears.

RAFAEL

So which one are you? Devil or
Saint?

Ross opens the door.

Gets in.

No answer.

The car pulls off.

INT. RAFAEL'S SEDAN - MOVING - NIGHT

AC blasting.

Still not enough.

Ross stares at his knuckles.

Pale. Steady.

RAFAEL

The Glades. Old citrus plant off
27.

A beat.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)

He wants an audience.

FATHER ROSS

Lois. David?

RAFAEL

Alive. For now.

A beat.

FATHER ROSS

(low)
He wants Mark.

RAFAEL

And who's he getting?

FATHER ROSS

Someone he remembers.

EXT. CITRUS PACKING PLANT - NIGHT

A rusted skeleton.

Rotting fruit. Swamp air.

Rusty's SUV.

A beat-up pickup.

Above—

TRAVIS paces the catwalk.

Shotgun ready.

INT. FOREMAN'S SHACK - CONTINUOUS

Lois tied to a chair.

Blood on her lip.

David crouched under a desk.

Rusty peels an orange with a knife.

Slow.

Controlled.

RUSTY
How's my messenger?

No answer.

Rusty drags David out.

Brings him close.

RUSTY (CONT'D)
You scared?

DAVID
Yes.

A beat.

DAVID (CONT'D)
For you.

Rusty studies him.

RUSTY
Kid, I could help you.
(a beat)
But then I'd have to keep helping.
And that's how men like me
disappear.
(then, softer)
Just like him..
you don't understand that yet.

Then—

drops him.

David scrambles to Lois.

Rusty sits.

An orange in his hand.

A knife in the other.

He starts the peel.

Slow.

Precise.

A thin spiral forms.

Unbroken.

Then—

FATHER ROSS (O.S.)

Rusty.

The blade stops.

Mid-peel.

A beat.

Rusty looks up.

The spiral dangles.

Incomplete.

EXT. PLANT - CONTINUOUS

Silence.

Wind through metal.

RUSTY (O.S.)

Travis.

Up top—

Travis freezes.

Peers into the darkness.

Hand tight on the shotgun.

TRAVIS
I got movement.

EXT. PACKING PLANT - CONTINUOUS

High grass sways.

Rafael moves through it—
silent, precise.

A suppressor clicks into place.

Ross walks straight down the dirt road.

No cover.

No hesitation.

The collar bright against the dark.

Up above—

TRAVIS on the catwalk.

Shotgun up.

TRAVIS
That's far enough, Father.

Ross keeps walking.

Not fast.

Not slow.

Deliberate.

FATHER ROSS
(quiet, steady)
Though I walk through the valley of
the shadow of death...

A beat.

Ross never breaks stride.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
I will fear no evil.

Travis tightens his grip.

TRAVIS

Stop-

THWIP.

A suppressed shot from the grass.

Travis's body jerks.

He drops-

CRASHES through rusted metal.

Silence.

Ross keeps walking.

INT. PACKING PLANT - CONTINUOUS

Rusty yanks Lois up. Knife at her throat.

RUSTY

Now we get the party started.

Ross steps inside.

Sweat. Blood. Stillness.

FATHER ROSS

Lois... close your eyes.

A beat.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)

David, eyes on me.

Rusty studies him.

RUSTY

You came back.

A beat.

He studies Ross.

RUSTY CONT'D)

Not for them.

(gestures to Lois, David)

For me.

Ross doesn't answer.

RUSTY

Say it.

A beat.

RUSTY (CONT'D)

Say who you are.

Silence.

Lois bleeding. David shaking.

Everything waiting.

Ross looks at them.

Then back to Rusty.

FATHER ROSS

I'm the man who's going to end you.

Rusty smiles.

RUSTY

I was starting to think you'd
stayed buried.

A flicker—

Rusty drives the knife into Lois's side.

She collapses.

David screams—rushes to her.

Rusty pins him with his boot.

Then—

He moves.

Fast.

The blade catches Ross's shoulder.

Ross absorbs it—

Rusty grabs David.

Locks him in a chokehold.

David thrashes.

Air gone.

RUSTY (CONT'D)

Easy...
(to Ross)
He goes first.

Ross freezes.

For the first time— he doesn't move.

Calculating.

Rusty tightens the hold. David's eyes start to fade.

FATHER ROSS

David—look at me.

David tries.

Barely there.

Ross looks at Rusty.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)

Take me.

A beat.

Rusty studies him.

Something new.

Something real.

He loosens his grip—

just enough.

A test.

A mistake.

David gasps—

Ross explodes.

Drives into him. David in the crossfire.

CRACK.

They slam through a wall.

EXT. BENEATH THE PLANT - CONTINUOUS

They crash into black water. Ross, David and Rusty.

David pops up, coughing.

FATHER ROSS
David. Out. Now.

David scrambles away.

No form. No style.

Just survival.

Rusty slashes blindly.

Ross takes it—closes the distance.

Hands on Rusty's throat.

Forcing him under.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
(quiet, steady)
O my God...

Rusty thrashes.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
I am heartily sorry...

Water churns.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
I detest all my sins...

Rusty weakens.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
because they offend Thee...

The water begins to still.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
who art all good...

Rusty stops.

One last bubble.

Silence.

An orange drifts into frame.

Half-peeled.

The spiral trailing behind it.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)

(barely)

Amen.

Ross holds him there.

A long beat.

Then—

He lets go.

Rusty sinks.

Gone.

Ross rises.

He steadies himself.

Then—

He sees it.

The orange.

Turning slowly in the black water.

He watches it.

A beat.

He reaches out.

Stops.

Doesn't touch it.

Lets it drift past him.

Into the dark.

DAVID (O.S.)

Father Ross?

Ross doesn't turn.

Breathing slows.

A decision settles.

FATHER ROSS
(quiet, grounded)
Stay with your mother.

He turns.

Leaving the orange behind.

EXT. PACKING PLANT - LATER

Paramedics are attending to Lois.

Rafael is sitting on the bumper of the sedan. He's using a wet rag to wipe the blood off Ross's knuckles. Ross is staring at the sky, his shirt shredded, his skin a map of bruises and cuts.

RAFAEL
You look like hell.

FATHER ROSS
I think I'm just visiting.

Rafael hands him a fresh, white Roman collar.

RAFAEL
The FBI is waiting at the field office. Jennifer wants the file closed.

Ross looks at the collar. David looks back. He sees Ross. He doesn't see a federal witness. He sees the man who saved them.

The sun blazes behind Ross's head to create a halo. Ross's eye glow and pierce the daylight.

FATHER ROSS
The file isn't closed, Rafael. It's just being rewritten

INT. FBI OFFICE - SOUTH FLORIDA - DAY

Jennifer. Rafael. Ross.

Ross carries the bruises of the final fight.

Not just the black eye -- all of it.

Jennifer closes the file.

JENNIFER

With Jordan gone, witness
protection is terminated. You're
free to resume your life, Mark.

A beat.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

Rafael will walk you through
reentry.

She rises. Heads for the door.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

For whatever it's worth... I liked
what I saw in Father Ross.

She reaches the door.

FATHER ROSS

I'm not going.

Jennifer stops.

Turns.

RAFAEL

Fuck no.

Rafael already knows where this is headed.

Hates it.

JENNIFER

That's not how this works.

FATHER ROSS

Maybe not. But it's how *this* works.

A beat.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)

Mark Devon was good at surviving.
Father Ross is good at something
else.

No one speaks.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)

They need a priest. I'm staying.

RAFAEL

Mark.

JENNIFER
You are not a priest.

Ross holds her gaze.

FATHER ROSS
I know.

That lands.

FATHER ROSS (CONT'D)
But I buried their dead. I blessed
their children. I listened when
nobody else would. And whether you
like it or not, they know my voice.

Jennifer studies him.

JENNIFER
If this blows back--

FATHER ROSS
It won't.

RAFAEL
You don't know that.

JENNIFER
I need to call the Bishop.

A beat.

FATHER ROSS
But for the first time in my life,
I know where I belong.

Silence.

Jennifer looks to Rafael.

Then back to Ross.

No blessing. No approval.

Just a decision.

JENNIFER
If Father Ross White remains in
Boca Raton... then Mark Devon never
existed.

Ross says nothing.

RAFAEL

Jennifer--

JENNIFER

That's the only version of this
that leaves this room.

A long beat.

Ross gives the smallest nod.

Silence, they all look. Ross smiles like a Devil with a
Halo.

WHITE.

A wash of white slowly resolves into a PRIEST'S COLLAR.

SUPER: THREE MONTHS LATER

INT. SACRISTY - ST. MICHAEL'S - DAY

Quiet. Vestments laid out.

The low murmur of the congregation beyond the wall.

FATHER ROSS adjusts his collar in the mirror.

The door opens.

BISHOP KELLY. Measured. Observant. Not easily impressed.

He closes the door behind him.

A beat.

He studies Ross.

BISHOP KELLY

You've caused quite a stir, Father.

Ross doesn't turn.

FATHER ROSS

Wasn't my intention.

BISHOP KELLY

No? News. Brightline. *The Sexy
Fish.*

FATHER ROSS
Great sushi.

A beat.

BISHOP KELLY
But it seems to be your effect.

Ross turns now.

They face each other.

BISHOP KELLY (CONT'D)
I received a note.

A beat.

BISHOP KELLY (CONT'D)
From Rome.

Ross says nothing.

BISHOP KELLY (CONT'D)
Do you know how rarely that
happens? That my boss, His
Holiness, contacts me about a
priest?

FATHER ROSS
I imagine it depends on the
circumstances.

A flicker of something in the Bishop.

Not quite approval.

BISHOP KELLY
The Church is... aware of you.

A beat.

BISHOP KELLY (CONT'D)
And for reasons I won't pretend to
fully understand—

He looks dead on at Father Ross.

BISHOP KELLY (CONT'D)
—you are to remain here.

Ross absorbs that.

FATHER ROSS
At St. Michael's.

BISHOP KELLY

For now.

A beat.

BISHOP KELLY (CONT'D)

(leaning in, quieter)

Just remember what you are.

A long beat. Ross looks in the mirror.

He holds his own gaze.

Like he's testing the answer.

FATHER ROSS

I do.

The Bishop studies him.

Not convinced.

Not entirely unconvinced either.

He moves to the door.

Stops.

BISHOP KELLY

Mass is about to begin.

A beat.

BISHOP KELLY (CONT'D)

Try not to make Rome regret it.

He exits.

Ross stands alone.

A beat.

He looks at himself in the mirror.

Collar.

Face.

Something behind the eyes.

He turns.

And heads out to the altar.

INT. ST. MICHAEL'S CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

A full congregation.

At the altar: FATHER ROSS WHITE.

Warmer now. Seasoned.

Lois in the front pew. A small smile.

Elaine mid-center. Nods.

Rafael in the back. Watching.

Ross glances right—

David, altar boy. A wink. A nod.

The congregation rises.

Soft chatter. Life returning.

Ross turns to reset the altar.

His hand stops.

There—

An orange.

Whole.

Uncut.

No one reacts.

No one notices.

Ross freezes.

A beat.

He looks out—

The congregation.

David.

Rafael.

Normal.

He looks back at the orange.

A long beat.

Ross picks it up.

He turns it in his hand.

A beat.

FATHER ROSS
(under his breath)
Blessed are the peacemakers.

His thumb hovers—

Then presses.

It gives.

A faint release.

Rafael watches Ross. He sees the thumb press. (Beat) He understands.

The beginning of a peel.

Ross looks up— hold.

CUT TO WHITE.