

Five Perfect Faces

Written by

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1 EXT. ST. MARK'S CHURCH RECTORY - PRESENT 1

Two plainclothes detectives, DETECTIVE BRIDGET SAUL (40s) and DETECTIVE ALI HADDAD (30s), hug the brick rectory wall with pistols drawn.

Across the entrance, five UNIFORMED OFFICERS wait in stack formation.

Saul gives a silent nod. The lead officer tests the handle. Unlocked. He eases the door open. The officers disappear into the rectory. The open door hangs behind them.

2 INT. ST. MARK'S CHURCH RECTORY - CONTINUOUS 2

The officers sweep into a modest vestibule.

Empty.

They fan out through adjoining rooms. Doors open. Quick searches.

One by one.

CLEAR.

Saul approaches a closed interior door. She reaches for the knob.

The door swings open.

A PARISH SECRETARY (40s) steps out carrying a stack of files. Her blouse is rumpled. Her face flushed. She fusses with her clothing, oblivious to the officers.

She looks up.

FREEZES.

A scream rips from her throat.

The files explode across the floor.

FATHER WILLIAM O'SHEA (50s) bursts through the doorway behind her, gripping a baseball bat in both hands.

Protective.

He stops dead.

Five pistols snap toward his chest.

POLICE OFFICER
Drop the bat.

O'Shea looks from one armed officer to the next, stunned.

POLICE OFFICER (CONT'D)
Now.

The bat CLATTERS onto the hardwood floor.

Saul steps forward, lowering her weapon slightly.

DETECTIVE SAUL
William O'Shea?

FATHER O'SHEA
Yes.

Haddad circles behind him, handcuffs already in hand.

FATHER O'SHEA (CONT'D)
How may I help you, officers? I
thought...
(beat)
I thought you were robbers.
We've had break-ins.

The cuffs snap shut.

CLICK. CLICK.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
William O'Shea, you're under arrest
for the murder of Sister Mary
McIntyre.

The words hit like a physical blow.

O'Shea stares. Blank. Disbelieving.

DETECTIVE HADDAD (CONT'D)
You have the right to remain
silent. Anything you say can and
will be used against you in a court
of law...

His voice fades into a dull drone.

O'Shea barely hears him.

FATHER O'SHEA
Mary... is dead?

Silence.

Only the rustle of scattered papers drifting across the
floor.

O'Shea searches Saul's face...

...then Haddad's.

Looking for someone to tell him this is a mistake.

FATHER O'SHEA (CONT'D)
You think I murdered her?

SUPER: FOUR WEEKS EARLIER

3

INT. ST. MARK'S CHURCH RECTORY - SUNDAY MORNING

3

Shafts of morning light cut through dust motes. From the sanctuary next door, the distant, muffled echo of a church choir bleeds through the heavy walls.

The heavy oak door clicks open.

A MAN steps inside.

He wears a sharp black Sunday suit and a dark fedora pulled low. Black leather gloves conceal his hands.

His face remains a shadow beneath the brim.

Silently, he pushes the door closed with his elbow. The latch snaps into place with a soft click.

He opens the hall closet and flips through several dark overcoats. He rejects the first few he touches.

He selects one hanging deep in the back of the closet, its shoulders lightly coated with dust. It hasn't been worn in a long time. He holds it by the collar and brings the lining to his face. He smells it. His face contorts with disgust. He drops it over a chair beside the front door.

He moves through the living quarters. Fast. Purposeful.

He doesn't look around. He walks with absolute confidence.

4

FLASHBACK: INT. PAUL'S CHILDHOOD HOME - NIGHT

4

A modest living room. The only light comes from a television playing to an empty room.

TEN-YEAR-OLD PAUL stands in the shadows outside his bedroom door. He is watching. He clutches a small toy hammer to his chest.

His MOTHER kneels on the threadbare carpet. Her blouse hangs open.

A YOUNG PRIEST stands over her. His back is to Paul. He completely dominates the frame.

Paul can see only fragments... his mother's face, her trembling shoulders, the priest's hand resting possessively on the back of her neck.

Her eyes are vacant. Tears run down her face. Resigned.

The priest suddenly grips a fistful of her hair and jerks her head back.

She cries out.

He strikes her across the face. A sharp, brutal crack.

She recoils. The priest leans close.

PRIEST
Stop with the tears. I told you to
obey.
Remember... God rewards those who
serve His most sacred
intermediaries.

The words land like scripture twisted into a weapon.

His mother swallows her fear.

MOTHER
Yes, Father.
Please forgive me.

He pulls her head forward out of Paul's line of sight.

Paul can't see exactly what happens. He doesn't need to.

The priest's ragged breathing and his mother's whimpers and
muffled sobs are jagged cuts to his brain.

The television drones on.

Paul's fingers curl into fists. His nails dig into his palms.
He doesn't blink. He doesn't move.

A little boy watches the world he believed in, collapse
before his eyes.

END FLASHBACK

5

INT. RECTORY - PRIEST'S BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

5

The Man enters. He pauses, scanning the utilitarian space.
Small sink. Medicine cabinet. A cross on the wall.

He crosses to the vanity. Pulls open the top drawer.
Cluttered.

He slides it shut and yanks open the second drawer.

He finds it: a wooden hair brush. The Man lifts the brush to
the light. Entangled in the stiff bristles are several
strands of black hair.

With surgical precision, his gloved fingers pinch the
strands, plucking them clean from the brush.

With his other hand, he slides a small, plastic ZIP-TOP BAG
from his suit pocket. He drops the evidence inside and seals
the plastic track.

He tucks the bag back into his breast pocket. He returns to the front door, picks up the overcoat and eases the door open. Satisfied the street is empty, he crosses to the black van.

FADE OUT.

6 **EXT. ST. MARK'S CHURCH - SUNDAY MORNING** 6

Church bells ring. The late Mass has ended.

Parishioners spill from the front doors and down the stone steps, chatting, laughing, lingering in the morning warmth.

At the top of the stairs stands Father William O'Shea. Beloved, approachable, wearing a rich green chasuble over his cassock.

He shakes hands, offers blessings, and smiles easily, the picture of a devoted parish priest.

The sound of the crowd gradually fades into a low murmur.

7 **EXT. ACROSS THE STREET - CONTINUOUS** 7

A black panel van sits parked at the curb. Ordinary. Forgettable.

A man in a black suit steps from behind the van. He casually opens and climbs in the van's back door.

A single circular opening is cut into its darkly tinted side window. A long telephoto lens set on a tripod, peers through it.

8 **INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS** 8

A high-powered camera on a tripod tracks Father O'Shea as he greets parishioners.

WHIR-CLICK. WHIR-CLICK.

Through the viewfinder, the unseen PHOTOGRAPHER follows his every move.

A young woman approaches. Father O'Shea clasps her hands, smiling warmly. The lens zooms tight. His thumb slowly strokes the back of her hand.

The camera drops into the photographer's lap. He glares through the opening in the tinted window.

BANG!

His fist slams the van wall. He snatches up the camera and resumes shooting.

WHIR-CLICK. WHIR-CLICK.

Tight close-ups. Every smile. Every glance. Every turn of Father O'Shea's head.

9 **EXT. ST. MARK'S CHURCH - CONTINUOUS** 9

The crowd thins. Families drift away, leaving the stone steps empty.

Father O'Shea looks toward the entrance just as SISTER MARY MCINTYRE emerges from the church. She speaks to him.

His expression softens. They share a brief smile. Then they turn to leave.

10 **FLASHBACK: INT. PAUL'S CHILDHOOD HOME - NIGHT** 10

A modest living room.

The only illumination comes from a TELEVISION flickering to an otherwise empty room.

TEN-YEAR-OLD PAUL stands motionless in the darkness outside his bedroom. Hidden. Watching.

Across the room, his MOTHER stands before a MAN wearing a priest's white collar. We never see his face.

Her eyes remain fixed on the floor.

The priest raises two fingers and traces the sign of the cross on her forehead.

PRIEST
In nómine Patris, et Fílii, et
Spíritus Sancti. Amen.

A beat.

He slowly unbuttons the front of her blouse. She doesn't move. Doesn't protest.

MOTHER
Bless me, Father.

The priest gropes her breasts.

Then...

With quiet, deliberate movement, he turns her around and presses on her back until she is bent over the kitchen table with arms spread. Her hands come together. She prays.

He places his hands on her hips.

Paul doesn't blink.

END FLASHBACK

11 INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS 11

The camera pans, tracking them to the threshold.

WHIR-CLICK. WHIR-CLICK. WHIR-CLICK.

The photographs come faster now. Frantic.

The church doors thud shut. Father O'Shea and Sister Mary are gone.

12 INT. DINGY BASEMENT - EVENING 12

A deadbolt throws with a heavy, metallic CLACK.

The door creaks open and a MAN descends the narrow wooden stairs, his face lost in shadow.

We see only expensive leather work boots. Calloused thumbs absently trace the strap of a heavy canvas shoulder bag slung across his body.

The basement smells sharply of acetone and curing resin. A single halogen work lamp illuminates the room.

Everything is immaculate.

Every tool hangs on its designated hook or rests in its outlined place on the workbench. Chisels, surgical scalpels, wire brushes and clamps are arranged with surgical precision. The scarred work surface has been wiped spotless.

Four STYROFOAM HEADS sit in a perfectly straight row, evenly spaced like silent jurors.

A fifth head faces the wall. It wears a mask. We never see the face.

The man removes a plastic lanyard from his bag and arranges it carefully on the workbench.

INSERT - LANYARD

PAUL FRY
Design Artist
The Illusion Foundry - Special Visuals
Photo ID
Studio Logo

Paul steps into the pool of light.

His face remains hidden beyond the edge of the glare. He pauses before the first blank Styrofoam head.

He stares at it.

FLASH CUT:

Headlights carve through rain-slick darkness. A speedometer needle climbs. Paul's hands grip the steering wheel until his knuckles whiten.

A concrete bridge abutment rushes toward him.

IMPACT.

The violent burst of an airbag.

Silence.

Two blood-covered hands press against a face. They tremble.

Slowly the fingers begin to part.

BACK TO SCENE

He sets the canvas bag down, unzips the heavy brass teeth, plunges a hand inside, and withdraws a flesh-colored sheet of silicone.

Paul reaches to set the canvas bag on the workbench. Stops. He examines the dusty bottom. He takes a cleaning cloth from the bag. He wipes the bottom of the bag clean. Then he sets the bag down. He inspects the cloth, folds it neatly and replaces it in the bag.

13 FLASHBACK: THE ILLUSION FOUNDRY - STUDIO - WORK AREA - DAY 13

Whirring ventilation filters the sterile air.

High-end 3D printers hum beside digital sculpting stations. Silicone cures beneath UV lamps while technicians finish hyper-realistic masks by hand. Every surface speaks of manufactured identity.

A pair of skilled hands uses a fine needle to punch individual strands of human hair into an astonishingly realistic, almost breathing silicone face.

MIRANDA PICOT (50s), stocky and sharply dressed in a tailored lab coat, paces the floor.

She rules this high-budget kingdom with ice-cold efficiency. She stops directly behind Paul's chair, tapping a rigid fingernail against his desk.

MIRANDA

Fry. Tell me you have those cheek prosthetics for the director. I need them on the transport truck by two o'clock sharp.

Paul sees her approach in the small array of inspection mirrors on his workbench.

Without looking up, his steady fingers deftly slip the completed, lifelike silicone mask off its fiberglass stand.

Under the shadow of the desk, he slides it perfectly into the open canvas bag waiting at his feet.

Only then does he spin his stool around.

We finally see PAUL FRY. Mild-mannered. A series of ugly scars runs down the left side of his face. Otherwise, he's unremarkable.

A practiced company smile is plastered perfectly on his lips. The scars distort it into something almost grotesque. His eyes remain dead and vacant.

PAUL FRY

I'm just doing the final tinting on the edges now. They will be boxed and logged before lunch.

MIRANDA

(squinting, examining his desk)

Good. Don't disappoint me, Paul. The studio budget can't afford another delay on this feature.

(beat)

And what happened to the silicone duplicate of the actress? The manifest says it was poured yesterday.

She reaches down to his work table. She moves a half full paper coffee cup that is sitting on some specs for a mask. The specs don't match a female face. They look like Father O'Shea.

She points.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

What's this?

He picks up the spec sheet, flips it over, and sets it aside.

PAUL FRY

Forgot to file that.

(Without missing a beat)

Defective batch of catalyst ruined the actress's face. It didn't cure properly. I had to scrap it and throw it in the discard pile this morning. I'm restarting the mold tonight.

MIRANDA

(Sighs)

Then document it. Production's not eating the cost.

She steps forward and stares at Paul. She grunts.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)
 You ever going to get those scars
 fixed?

PAUL FRY
 I don't know. Maybe.

MIRANDA
 Clients notice.
 (beat)
 Just saying.

Paul shrugs and returns to his workbench. His eyes flick to the inspection mirrors. For an instant, the scars seem deeper... more grotesque... as though his face in the mirror is morphing into a monster. He looks away.

Miranda wheels around and marches away. Paul glances up as she retreats, the corporate smile instantly vanishing from his face. He pinches the rim of the coffee cup she touched, carefully lifts it, and drops it in the trash.

END FLASHBACK

14 **EXT. CHURCH PLAYGROUND - MORNING**

14

Behind the rectory, daycare children race between a slide and a swing set. Their laughter fills the air.

MISS HARVEY (20s) catches children as they fly down the slide.

Nearby, a LITTLE BOY sits on a swing, his feet too short to reach the ground.

LITTLE BOY
 Push me, Miss Harvey! Miss Harvey!

She's too busy to hear.

Father O'Shea steps onto the playground. Without a word, he gives the swing a gentle push.

The boy squeals with delight.

LITTLE BOY (CONT'D)
 Wheee! Higher!

FATHER O'SHEA
 Ready? Up you go.

He gives another push.

The boy bursts into laughter. Father O'Shea laughs with him. Across the playground, Miss Harvey notices. She smiles.

Paul pulls the stolen silicone mask from his bag.

It is a masterpiece of deception... individual pores, subtle broken capillaries, a hauntingly familiar expression.

He stretches the face of Father O'Shea over the first blank Styrofoam head. There are three remaining blank styrofoam heads. The fifth is wearing a mask but it is turned to the wall.

He tilts his head, studying the dead eyes. Satisfied.

Behind him a massive cork bulletin board is pinned with a precise red yarn web of surveillance photos, daily schedules, and notes.

To the side is an old photo of a woman. She is smiling. None of the tendrils of red yarn reach her.

Paul steps up and rips down an eight by ten photograph of an ELDERLY NUN.

He marches back and lays the photo flat on the workbench right in front of the newly masked head. He lovingly smooths the wrinkles in the paper.

The mask and the face of the nun stare blankly at one another.

Paul takes the sleek ice pick from the tool rack and inspects the shaft.

The needle-sharp steel tip gleams under the halogen bulb.

He flips it in the air and grabs the handle.

He raises it.

THUD!

The ice pick punches clean through the center of the nun's face in the photograph, burying itself deep into the wood of the workbench.

THUD!

He rips it out and drives it down again.

THUD! THUD!

The punctures rain down in a frantic, terrifying rhythm. His breathing becomes a ragged, animalistic growl.

His posture fractures from a quiet, precise, technician into a feral monster.

Paper tears, wood fibers split as the spike repeatedly pierces the bench, and his hands slick with sweat, but through the entire violent frenzy, that empty, scar twisted smile never leaves his face.

SMASH CUT TO:

SUPER: THREE WEEKS LATER

16 **INT. DINGY BASEMENT - EARLY EVENING**

16

A mirror sits on the table. Makeup kits, adhesive and brushes surround it. Beside them rests a lifelike mask mounted on a Styrofoam head.

There is a series of men's wigs strewn about.

Paul Fry sits before the mirror. His hair is neatly concealed under a stocking cap. He takes the mask and slips his hand inside. He holds it out in front of him.

PAUL FRY
"Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him,
Horatio: a fellow of infinite jest,
of most excellent fancy..."

He lowers the mask. His fingertips trace its cheek. Almost tender. He grins and smacks the nose of the mask with the back of his hand.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)
He wasn't a fuck like you.

He slips on the mask and blends the edges. He chooses a wig. He slips it on his head.

We see the reflection of the face that looks perfectly like Father O'Shea.

17 **INT. PAUL'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

17

The room is immaculate. Sterile. No photographs. No books. No signs that anyone truly lives here.

Paul sits alone on the sofa. A TV dinner tray rests on the coffee table, its meal half-finished. A television commercial flickers across his blank face. The volume is turned very high.

Paul switches off the television.

Silence.

Folded neatly beside him is an old, worn blanket. He picks up the blanket, presses it to his face, and breathes it in.

CUT TO BLACK.

18

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE A HOMELESS SHELTER - NIGHT

18

A lone streetlamp glows through the mist, carving out a small island of light. Beyond it, the fog swallows everything.

Sister Mary McIntyre steps into the glow. She settles onto a bus bench, pulls her coat tight and ties a scarf over her hair.

She waits.

An ELDERLY MAN emerges from the fog and sits at the opposite end of the bench, leaving a respectful distance between them.

A nod.

She nods back.

Cars drift past, their headlights briefly washing over the bench before disappearing into the darkness.

A bus approaches. Both lean forward hopefully. The route number comes into view. Not theirs. The bus rolls on. Silence returns.

Then...

A FIGURE materializes out of the fog behind the bench. Dark overcoat. Dark hat. Motionless.

Headlights sweep across the street. For the briefest instant we see a white clerical collar. The suggestion of a face.

Darkness again. The elderly man notices. His expression tightens.

The stranger leans toward Sister Mary.

STRANGER

Sister Mary.

She looks up. Recognition softens her face.

STRANGER (CONT'D)

May I speak with you privately?

SISTER MARY

Of course, Father O'Shea. Why are you here?

She rises. Together they disappear into the fog. The elderly man watches them enter a narrow alley. Something about it troubles him.

Another bus pulls in. Brakes hiss. Doors fold open. The elderly man heads for it...

...hesitates.

He glances back toward the alley.

ELDERLY MAN

Sister?

Only fog answers. The driver waits. The elderly man climbs aboard. The doors fold shut. The bus pulls away.

The alley remains empty. Swallowed by mist.

19

EXT. DOWNTOWN ALLEY - LATE EVENING - PREVIOUS

19

Rain glistens on cracked asphalt beneath the sickly buzz of a dying neon sign above the Sacred Heart Homeless Shelter. Long shadows climb the crumbling brick walls.

SISTER MARY McINTYRE (60s) follows the priest into the alley. She stops. Uneasy.

The figure stands with his back to her. He remains still.

She forces a smile and steps toward him.

SISTER MARY

Father O'Shea...

He slowly turns. His face remains hidden beneath the brim of his hat.

She hesitates.

Then...

His hands explode forward. Thick fingers clamp around her throat.

She can not breathe. Her eyes fly wide. She claws at his wrist.

His grip only tightens. With horrifying ease, he lifts her completely off the ground. Her shoes scrape uselessly against the alley pavement before dangling free.

He whips her around. He SLAMS her into the wall.

THUD!

The impact echoes through the empty alley.

Mary gasps desperately. Her fingers rake at his sleeve.

He pulls her toward him and SLAMS into the wall.

THUD!

Her grip weakens. Her body goes limp.

He keeps her pinned against the wall. He carefully unlaces his fingers. She remains upright for a brief moment.

She slides slowly down the wall...

...and crumples to the rain-slick pavement. Motionless.

20

FLASHBACK: INT. PAUL'S CHILDHOOD HOME - EARLY MORNING

20

Gray dawn filters through threadbare curtains. The house is unnaturally quiet.

TEN-YEAR-OLD PAUL pads barefoot down the hallway, rubbing sleep from his eyes.

He pauses in the kitchen doorway. His mother sits at the table. Motionless. Her cheek rests against the table-top.

Empty liquor bottles stand around her. An overturned glass has left a dark stain across the table cloth. One pill bottle sits empty.

Paul frowns. Something isn't right. He crosses to her. Gently places a hand on her shoulder.

PAUL FRY

Mom?

No response.

He gives her shoulder a tentative shake.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)

Mom... Wake up.

(beat)

Mom?

Her body slowly slides sideways. The chair tips. She collapses heavily onto the linoleum floor.

Paul jumps back, startled. He stares at her. Frozen. His small chest rises and falls in quick, frightened breaths.

He kneels beside her. Touches her face.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)

Mom?

A beat.

Silence prevails. He reaches for a blanket tossed on the sofa. He drapes it over her.

Paul crawls under the blanket curls up beside her cold body on the cold kitchen floor.

Too young to know what to do. Too frightened to leave her.

END FLASHBACK

21

EXT. A DOWNTOWN ALLEY - MORNING

21

Detectives HADDAD and SAUL stand at the start of the alleyway where the body was found.

The body is covered with a tarp. It is located 30 feet down the alley beside the brick wall of the adjacent building.

The Coroner, Dr. Woodhouse, walks out of the alley.

She's less disheveled than usual. Her once-wild Afro has been trimmed. Her white lab coat, however, is splattered with stains from the various chemicals used in the morgue. She waves at Saul and Haddad.

DR. WOODHOUSE

This is an odd one. Who would want to strangle a nun?

She returns to the body. The detectives follow. She lifts the tarp covering the body.

Saul moves closer to get a better look. Haddad moves back. Dead bodies are not his thing.

The body is of an older woman. Her tongue is a purple mass protruding from a swollen face.

DR. WOODHOUSE (CONT'D)

She was strangled. Someone picked her up by her neck and banged her against the wall.

DETECTIVE SAUL

(muttering)

Holy fuck.

Haddad backs further away from the body.

DETECTIVE HADDAD

Dear God.

DR. WOODHOUSE

He held her there until she expired.

She gently lifts the nun's head to expose the back.

DR. WOODHOUSE (CONT'D)

He slammed her head into the wall. Repeatedly by the looks of the damage. The back of her head is partially caved in.

DETECTIVE SAUL

Jesus... he really wanted her dead.

She looks closer at the body.

DETECTIVE SAUL (CONT'D)
Why the bags on her hands?

DR. WOODHOUSE
I noticed some dark hair in one of her hands. Her hair is gray and her head is covered with a scarf so it's unlikely hers.

DETECTIVE SAUL
I assume you will be checking for DNA.

Woodhouse nods.

22 **EXT. A DOWNTOWN ALLEY - CONTINUOUS**

22

Detective Haddad works his way down the alley, scanning every inch.

He lifts the lid of a trash bin and peers inside. He shifts a piece of cardboard with a gloved hand.

Something makes him recoil.

He drops the cardboard and slams the lid shut.

Haddad notices footprints leading down the alley. He kneels. A thin oily residue glistens in the tread. He follows the trail until it ends at another trash bin. He photographs the prints before opening the lid.

He opens this bin cautiously. He sifts through the garbage, then stops.

A low whistle.

He pulls out a nearly new black overcoat.

Holding it away from his body, he carries it back toward Saul and Dr. Woodhouse.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
Found something.

He checks the label. His eyebrows rise.

DETECTIVE HADDAD (CONT'D)
Burberry. Cashmere. Nobody throws away a coat like this.

His attention shifts to a dark stain on the cuff. He touches it with a gloved finger. Fresh red smears across the latex.

DETECTIVE HADDAD (CONT'D)
Blood.

He looks toward the covered body.

DETECTIVE HADDAD (CONT'D)
 If this belongs to our killer, he
 could've picked the blood up when
 he smashed her head against the
 wall.

Dr. WOODHOUSE steps in. Using gloved hands, she carefully
 lifts the stained sleeve, examining it without disturbing the
 fabric.

DETECTIVE SAUL
 Maybe it's his hair in her fist and
 her blood on his coat.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
 Found some footprints in front of
 the bin where the coat was located.
 Took photos. Maybe we will get a
 shoe size.

FADE OUT.

SUPER: LATER THAT AFTERNOON

23

INT. DETECTIVE SQUAD ROOM - AFTERNOON

23

The room is a chaotic engine of noise. Phones ring off the
 hook. Clerks haul stacks of case files.

Detective Haddad leans into his desk, entirely focused on his
 monitor.

On screen: a catalog of vibrant, multicolored surfboards
 resting against tropical trees.

He clicks a high-performance short board, expands the image,
 and lets out a low whistle at the price tag.

Detective Saul slides her chair over, peering over his
 shoulder.

DETECTIVE SAUL
 You still agonizing over a piece of
 fiberglass?

Haddad hurriedly clicks the window shut, clearing the screen.

DETECTIVE SAUL (CONT'D)
 For God's sake, Ali, just pick one.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
 It's a process, B. And I'd
 appreciate it if you refrained from
 using the Lord's name in vain.

Saul rolls her eyes hard, pushing herself back to her own
 desk.

DETECTIVE SAUL
We're cops, not saints. Get a grip.

NORA (50s), the squad receptionist, strides up and drops a slip of paper onto Haddad's keyboard.

NORA
Got a live one up front. Claims he knows who murdered the nun. Figure that falls in your lap.

Nora walks away before they can argue.

Haddad picks up the note, reading the scribbled name.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
Mr. Keith Dwyer.

He tosses the note across the gap onto Saul's desk.

DETECTIVE HADDAD (CONT'D)
Sounds like a job for Super Detective Saul.

Saul snatches the paper, pushing out of her chair with an irritated groan.

As she crosses the room, she mutters just loud enough for Haddad to hear.

DETECTIVE SAUL
I'm a detective, not a fucking social worker.

24 **INT. SMALL INTERVIEW ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

24

KEITH DWYER (70s) sits at the metal table.

His clothes are shabby, his posture defensive.

He glances toward the door, looking for any excuse to bolt.

Saul sits across from him. Haddad stands near the back wall, fading into the shadows.

DETECTIVE SAUL
What can we do for you today... Mr.
(looks at paper)
Dwyer?

DWYER
I just thought you folks would want to know who murdered Sister Mary.

Haddad steps out of the shadows, his presence suddenly looming.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
Are you admitting to the crime,
sir?

Dwyer flinches, eyes darting between the two detectives.

DWYER
No! No, I didn't kill nobody.
(beat)
I think the stranger did it.

Saul exchanges a quick, sharp look with Haddad.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Stranger? What stranger?

DWYER
The one who took her into the
alley. He cornered her at the bus
stop. Spoke to her.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
A stranger led her into a dark
alley?

DWYER
It's the honest truth! We were
shar'en the bench, waitin' on the
bus.

He pauses, sensing their deep skepticism. He leans over the
table, urgent.

DWYER (CONT'D)
I know what he looks like. A car
turned the corner and the
headlights hit him dead-on. I saw
his face right before she walked
off into the alley with him.

DETECTIVE SAUL
And she went with him willingly?

DWYER
(nodding vigorously)
Yep. She knew him.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Mr. Dwyer, if you saw his face that
clearly, could you pick him out of
a lineup?

DWYER
I reckon so. Yeah.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Great. I'm going to have you step
next door to look at some photos.
Is that alright?

Dwyer hesitates, his stomach letting out an audible, rumbling growl. He pushes himself up from the chair.

DWYER
Miss? I didn't get no breakfast
this morning. You wouldn't happen
to have a sandwich lying around, by
chance?

Saul softens slightly, a professional smile breaking through her irritation.

She grabs the desk phone and dials the front desk.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Hey, Nora. Do me a favor and send
Willy out for a couple of
cheeseburgers and fries.

She looks back at Dwyer.

DETECTIVE SAUL (CONT'D)
You want a Coke with that?

Dwyer nods emphatically, his eyes lighting up at the mention of real food. He relaxes.

DWYER
Thanks. Oh yeah, I just remembered.
I think he was a priest.

Both Saul and Haddad stop and stare. They are skeptical now.

DETECTIVE SAUL
A priest? Why?

DWYER
Well, he was wearing a priest's
collar. You know, the white tab at
his throat.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
A white collar? That's it?

Dwyer snaps his fingers.

DWYER
Oh, Yeah. She called him 'Father
O'Sh... and something else I
couldn't make out. She was old so
he couldn't have been her actual
father. He must be a priest.

25 **INT. FORENSIC LAB - DAY**

25

A bright, sterile laboratory.

A YOUNG FORENSIC TECH stands at a stainless-steel examination table. Spread before her is the black Burberry cashmere overcoat recovered by Haddad.

She swabs the bloodstain on the cuff, transfers the sample onto a glass slide, labels it, and sets it aside.

She turns the coat inside out and begins a methodical search. One pocket after another.

Nothing.

From the inside breast pocket, she removes a small barcode sticker. She studies it for a moment, her brow furrowing.

She seals the sticker inside a clear evidence envelope, labels it, and continues the examination.

26

INT. DETECTIVE SQUAD ROOM - MORNING

26

Fluorescent lights hum above a sea of cluttered desks.

Phones ring. Detectives argue. Printers spit out reports. The bullpen is already alive.

Saul's phone rings. She answers.

DETECTIVE SAUL

Saul.

INTERCUT - FORENSIC LAB

FORENSIC TECH

We traced the barcode on the overcoat.

Black cashmere.

Purchased eight years ago.

Altered once.

Dry-cleaned four times.

Registered owner...

Father William O'Shea.

St. Mark's Parish.

DETECTIVE SAUL

Thanks. Send a hard copy.

She hangs up. Haddad looks over.

DETECTIVE HADDAD

Is it him?

The printer beside the desk spits out a piece of paper. Saul picks it up and looks at it.

DETECTIVE SAUL

It's his coat.

She pulls the murder file across the desk and drops into the chair opposite Haddad.

He opens it before she can.

Saul clutches an enormous, over-frosted bear claw. She takes an unapologetically huge bite. White icing smears across her lips.

DETECTIVE SAUL (CONT'D)
(chewing)
Thanks for picking up my favorite.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
Part of my master plan to make lead
detective.

He grins.

DETECTIVE HADDAD (CONT'D)
How's your cholesterol these days?

Without looking up, Saul raises her middle finger.

She takes another oversized bite before dropping the pastry onto a grease-stained napkin. Licking frosting from her thumb, she spins the file toward Haddad.

Inside is a photograph of Father William O'Shea.

Beside it, the barcode recovered from the coat and the lab identification.

SUPER: FATHER WILLIAM O'SHEA

DETECTIVE SAUL
It's his coat. No question.
Dwyer identified him.
His coat, with her blood on the
sleeve, ended up fifty feet from
the body.

Haddad studies the file.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
If the DNA from the hair comes
back...

DETECTIVE SAUL
I'd bet one of my kids on it.

Haddad looks up.

Saul shrugs.

DETECTIVE SAUL (CONT'D)
What? I've got three. I can spare
one.

Haddad rolls his eyes.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
What about the shoe prints?

Saul scans the report.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Size twelve.
Thorogood American Heritage Moc
Toe.
O'Shea wears a nine.

She turns another page.

An enhanced footprint photograph.

The faint logo.

MAXWEAR WEDGE.

Beside it, a catalog photograph of the matching boot.

Haddad nods.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
Expensive boots.
Not exactly priest issue.

He sips his coffee.

DETECTIVE SAUL
So the footprints are out?

Haddad considers it.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
Probably.
Do we have a motive?

Saul flips another page.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Forensics found Mary's old
investigation notebooks.
Years of notes.
Dates.
Names.
Every allegation against O'Shea.

She hands Haddad several photocopied pages.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
Old?

DETECTIVE SAUL
Looks like she stopped adding to
them years ago.

Haddad studies the pages.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
A jury won't care when she wrote
them.

Saul closes the file.

Haddad studies the crime scene photographs protruding from the folder. The humor drains from his face.

A beat.

DETECTIVE HADDAD (CONT'D)
What does the prosecutor say?
Enough to charge?

Saul reaches for the last third of the bear claw and stuffs the whole thing into her mouth.

She nods enthusiastically.

Haddad winces.

DETECTIVE HADDAD (CONT'D)
Saul...

She grins.

Haddad shakes his head and studies the evidence board.

Victim. Coat. Witness. Hair. Notebooks. Everything points to one man.

He nods.

DETECTIVE HADDAD (CONT'D)
I don't see another way this goes.

Saul gets up and grabs her coat.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Let's go arrest a priest.

27 **INT. DINGY BASEMENT - NIGHT**

27

Paul sits alone at the battered wooden workbench, the glow of a laptop illuminating his face.

Behind him, four Styrofoam heads stare into the darkness. The fifth is turned toward the wall.

The first wears the flawless silicone face of Father O'Shea. A small screwdriver protrudes from the temple.

The second head bears the face of a man in his mid-thirties. The remaining three are blank.

Every tool on the workbench sits in its place. Brushes aligned. Blades parallel. Jars squared to the edge.

Paul notices a screwdriver lying slightly askew.

He straightens it.

His eyes drift to Father O'Shea.

The screwdriver protruding from the temple is slightly crooked.

Paul reaches over.

Straightens it. Admires it.

Only then does he return to the laptop.

Facebook profiles scroll past with practiced efficiency. Paul stops.

SALLY FORESTER (29) fills the screen.

He studies her photographs, then scrolls lower. Family pictures. Vacation snapshots. A smiling man with his arm around Sally.

Paul taps the screen.

PAUL FRY
There you are, Marcus.

A thin smile creeps across his face.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)
(quietly)
You bastard.

He shifts his gaze toward the second Styrofoam head.

It wears Marcus Forester's face.

Paul returns to the laptop.

Post after post documents Tuesday-night karaoke gatherings. Marcus. Sally. Another man.

More photographs.

The same man appears again and again.

Paul clicks the profile.

ROGER WOODS.

A business page opens.

FOREST & THE TREES CPA

We see the big picture... and the details.

Paul chuckles to himself.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)
Clever.

He scrolls farther.

Another karaoke night.

Another.

Every Tuesday.

Paul slowly closes the laptop.

His fingertips drum lightly on the tabletop as he considers the information with a satisfied grin.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)
See you Tuesday.

A beat.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)
And I'll try not to sing out of
tune.

He smiles to himself.

.

28 **FLASHBACK: INT. FOSTER HOME - DINING ROOM - EVENING** 28

A modest dining room. A foster family sits around a worn wooden table. The FATHER presides at one end. The MOTHER sits opposite him. Twin ten-year-old girls sit side by side. Across from them are two boys: MARCUS (13) and PAUL (10).

Every head is bowed.

FATHER
Heavenly Father, we thank You for
the bounty You have placed before
us. Bless this food and this
family. Amen.

FAMILY
Amen.

The father opens his eyes.

FATHER
Mother... girls... Marcus...
Paul...
(beat)
You may enjoy the bounty our Lord
has provided.

Everyone begins eating. The room is unnaturally quiet. Every movement is careful. Measured. No one speaks. No one makes eye contact.

Marcus calmly cuts a piece of meat. Without looking at Paul, he slides his free hand beneath the table. It drifts toward Paul's lap. Paul lifts a forkful of food.

Marcus strikes.

His fist slams viciously into Paul's groin. Paul doubles over with a muffled gasp. His elbow catches the edge of his plate. It flips into the air. Food explodes across the table. The plate clatters on the floor. Paul tumbles backward from his chair.

Silence.

No one looks at Marcus.

The father slowly surveys the mess.

Paul struggles to breathe. He forces himself upright, clutching his groin. He tries to speak. Nothing comes. He points weakly toward Marcus.

The father's expression hardens.

FATHER (CONT'D)
Go to your room.

Paul stares at him in disbelief.

FATHER (CONT'D)
Now.

Paul looks around the table. No one meets his eyes. Marcus quietly continues eating. Paul lowers his hand.

He limps from the room.

END FLASHBACK

29 **INT. NIGHTINGALES KARAOKE BAR - CONTINUOUS**

29

Music pounds through the crowded room.

Paul settles onto a bar stool with a clear view of Marcus, Jane, Roger, and their friends. A mask of his own face conceals the scars.

He orders a beer. Condensation wets his hand. He sets the glass down and wipes his hand on his jeans.

A singer murders an old rock classic. Scattered applause.

Paul never looks toward the stage.

Roger leans toward Jane. She laughs.

Marcus notices. Smiles. Completely unconcerned.

Roger rests a hand lightly on the back of Jane's chair. Jane doesn't move away.

Marcus reaches over and gives Jane's hand an affectionate squeeze. She smiles back.

Paul watches Marcus.

Then Roger.

Then Jane.

A slow smile spreads across his face.

He's found the crack.

30 **FLASHBACK: INT. FOSTER PARENTS HOME - HALLWAY - EVENING** 30

Marcus stands outside the bedroom he shares with Paul. Father approaches.

FATHER
Time for bed, Marcus.

MARCUS
I'm not sleeping in there.

Father stops.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Paul wet the bed. It stinks.

Paul appears at the end of the hallway.

PAUL FRY
I didn't.

Marcus doesn't even look at him.

MARCUS
Yes, you did.

Father pushes past them into the bedroom. He yanks back the blankets on Paul's bed. The sheets are stained yellow. He wheels on Paul.

FATHER
For God's sake, Paul. Strip the bed.

PAUL FRY
But... I didn't—

FATHER
(shouting)
Clean it up. Now.

Paul stares at the bed. Then at Marcus. Marcus smirks. Paul lowers his eyes. Paul looks up at Marcus. No one comes to his defense. He lowers his eyes.

END FLASHBACK

31 **INT. DINGY BASEMENT - NIGHT**

31

Paul sits at his workbench, an anonymous messaging app open on his laptop. His fingers hover over the keyboard.

PAUL FRY
Marcus, you are first.

He types.

ON SCREEN:

"Marcus. Open your damn eyes. Everyone else can see what's going on. Your wife and your business partner look a little too comfortable together."

Paul smiles.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)
Now for the wife.

He opens a second message.

ON SCREEN:

"Had fun tonight. Had trouble keeping my hands off you. Thursday can't come soon enough. He always works late."

He adds a heart emoji. Then another. He saves them. Leans back. Satisfied.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)
That should do it.

32 **INT. NIGHTINGALES KARAOKE BAR - NIGHT**

32

The bar is packed. Laughter. Music. Clinking glasses.

Paul nurses a beer from a shadowed corner, never taking his eyes off Marcus, Jane, Roger and their friends.

The KARAOKE JOCKEY steps away from the booth.

KARAOKE JOCKEY
Back in a minute.

He disappears toward the washroom.

Paul is already moving. He slips behind the booth. Selects a duet. Prints the song slip. On the back he writes:

"For Jane and Roger. From Marcus."

He folds the slip and leaves it beneath the microphone. He's back in his seat before the Karaoke Jockey returns.

Paul props his phone on a small tabletop stand aimed at the stage.

The Karaoke Jockey unfolds the note.

KARAOKE JOCKEY (CONT'D)
 I don't usually do this...
 (reading)
 Looks like Marcus just volunteered
 Jane and Roger for a duet.

He shrugs.

KARAOKE JOCKEY (CONT'D)
 Why not?

He checks the signup sheet.

KARAOKE JOCKEY (CONT'D)
 Sarah, you're next...
 Jane and Roger, you're on deck.

At their table Jane laughs.

ROGER
 Come on.
 It'll be fun.

Jane glances at Marcus. He smiles and gives her a little shrug.

MARCUS
 Go ahead.

A few minutes later Jane and Roger take the stage. They settle in front of the microphones. The music begins.

As they sing, they naturally drift closer together. Roger leans toward Jane during the chorus. Jane laughs. Their faces nearly touch.

Paul casually raises his phone, as if taking a selfie.

CLICK.

The image freezes. A perfect lie.

Marcus applauds politely.

Paul studies the photograph. Satisfied. He lowers the phone.

A faint smile crosses his face.

33 **EXT. NIGHTINGALES PARKING LOT - NIGHT**

33

The evening winds down. Cars begin pulling away. Paul waits in the shadows. Jane's car eases toward the exit. He sends the photograph and the text message to Marcus.

Paul types another message.

ON SCREEN:

"Had fun tonight. Had trouble keeping my hands off you. Thursday can't come soon enough. He always works late."

He types one final line.

"Delete this."

He smiles and presses SEND

Paul removes the SIM card. Snaps it in half. He wipes the phone clean and tosses the phone and SIM card into separate garbage bins.

34 **INT. FORESTER'S CAR - CONTINUOUS**

34

Jane hums the duet they just sang. Marcus's phone vibrates. He opens the message.

ON SCREEN:

"Marcus. Open your damn eyes. Everyone else can see what's going on. Your wife and your business partner look a little too comfortable together."

Below it is the photograph of Jane and Roger. Marcus slowly turns toward Jane. She continues driving. Oblivious.

Jane's purse buzzes.

JANE

Babe... can you grab that for me?

Marcus takes her phone from her purse. He holds it in front of her. Face recognition unlocks the screen. He opens the text. His expression hardens.

MARCUS

What the fuck?

JANE

What?

He doesn't answer. He reads it again.

JANE (CONT'D)

Is it my sister?

Marcus lowers the phone.

MARCUS

No.

(beat)

Apparently you've got a boyfriend.

Jane laughs nervously.

JANE

Seriously?

Marcus drops her phone into her bag and stares through the windshield. The silence is worse than shouting.

35

EXT. FORESTER HOUSE - NIGHT

35

Jane pulls into the driveway and shuts off the engine.

Silence.

Marcus stares through the windshield.

Jane reaches into her purse and pulls out her phone. She opens the text. Confusion. Then disbelief.

JANE

What the hell?

A beat.

JANE (CONT'D)

Who would send something like this?

Marcus climbs out of the car without answering.

He SLAMS the door.

Jane hurries after him.

JANE (CONT'D)

Marcus!

He turns. His face is red with rage. He shoves his phone toward her.

MARCUS

Read it.

She does. Her eyes widen.

JANE

Someone's trying to set us up.

Marcus laughs bitterly.

MARCUS

Really?

He holds up the phone.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
Because that picture says
otherwise.

JANE
It's one song!

MARCUS
You looked pretty damned
comfortable.
Where was his hand?
I couldn't see it.

JANE
He's your partner!

MARCUS
Exactly!

Jane throws up her hands.

JANE
This is insane!

Marcus steps closer.

MARCUS
Then look me in the eye and tell me
the truth.

Jane doesn't hesitate.

JANE
I have never cheated on you.

He searches her face. He wants to believe her. He can't. He
snatches the phone from her hand.

JANE (CONT'D)
Marcus!

He hurls it across the driveway.

CRACK!

The phone explodes against the concrete.

Porch lights flick on. Across the street, JACK, the neighbor,
steps outside carrying a garbage bag. He stops. Watching.

JANE (CONT'D)
What's wrong with you?

Marcus points toward the shattered phone.

MARCUS
You're lying to me!

JANE
There is no affair!

MARCUS
Then explain those texts!

JANE
I can't!
I don't even know who sent them!

Another porch light comes on. A curtain moves. Someone else is watching.

Jack starts toward them.

JACK
Marcus...
Take it easy.

Marcus wheels on him.

MARCUS
Stay out of this!

Jack quietly backs toward his own house, still watching.

Jane backs toward the front door.

Marcus doesn't notice. He's too consumed by anger.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
I trusted both of you!
Both of you!

JANE
Listen to yourself.

Marcus slams both fists onto the roof of the car.

BANG!

The sound echoes through the neighborhood.

JANE (CONT'D)
Stop it!

Marcus faces her. His voice drops. Cold. Dangerously controlled.

MARCUS
If you've been sleeping with him...
I swear to God...
I'll kill...

Silence. Jack stares. Another neighbor watches from a front window.

Jane is stunned. She studies Marcus as though she's looking at a stranger.

Marcus freezes. The words hang in the air.

Jane unlocks the front door.

JANE

I don't even know who you are right now.

She disappears inside. The front door SLAMS.

Marcus remains in the driveway, chest heaving.

Jack quietly retreats toward his own house, unable to take his eyes off Marcus.

Marcus strides to the front door. He throws it open...

...then SLAMS it shut.

MARCUS (O.S.)

I'M NOT FINISHED WITH THIS!

36

INT. FORESTER HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

36

Jane sits alone at the kitchen table, wrapped in an old robe over a faded nightdress.

A mug of coffee has gone cold. She stares into it. Mascara stains her cheeks.

Marcus enters wearing jogging clothes with a hooded sweatshirt. He goes to the refrigerator. Pours a glass of orange juice. Drinks while staring at the ceiling.

Neither looks at the other.

He sets the glass down.

MARCUS

Going for a jog.
I'll be back in half an hour.
Can we talk then?

Jane finally looks up. She's exhausted.

JANE

If there's anything left to say.

A beat.

Marcus nods slightly.

MARCUS

There is.

Jane gives a tired shrug.

JANE

Whatever.

Marcus hesitates. He wants to say something. An apology. He can't.

MARCUS
Jesus, Jane...

He walks out. The door closes. Not slammed this time.

Jane listens. The silence is worse.

37 **EXT. FORESTER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

37

Marcus jogs away from the house. Across the street, his neighbor, JACK climbs into his car for work. He winds down his window. He nods as Marcus jogs past.

JACK
Everything okay?

MARCUS
Couldn't be better.

38 **EXT. FORESTER HOUSE STREET - CONTINUOUS**

38

From the rear of the parked black van, Paul watches Marcus jog past. He checks his digital stopwatch.

Paul pulls open a heavy medical case. Inside, floating in a stabilizing gel solution, rests the Marcus mask.

Using fine tongs, he lifts the silicone flesh. He doesn't just "slip it on." He paints an aggressive line of medical-grade Pros-Aide adhesive along his own deep, jagged facial scars—using the tissue damage as alignment tracks.

He presses the silicone face home.

Paul takes a dual-action airbrush, quickly misting an alcohol-based intrinsic skin tint across his jawline, seamlessly melting the transparent edges into his neck. He fixes a vocal transponder coin directly over his thyroid.

He looks into the glass. Marcus smiles back. Perfect symmetry.

PAUL FRY
Looking good.

He removes two pairs of flesh-colored surgical gloves. He slips on the first pair.

SNAP.

The cuffs seat against his wrists. The second pair disappears into the pocket of his hoodie.

He studies the reflection. Marcus smiles back.

39

EXT. FORESTER HOUSE STREET - CONTINUOUS

39

Paul slips from the van through the side door. He is now dressed in gray sweatpants and a black hoodie identical to Marcus's, but the shoulders are subtly padded internally to mimic Marcus's gym-built frame.

He stops at the front door. He tries the handle. It is not locked. He puts the cloned electronic key fob back in his pocket.

He eases the door open, slipping into the foyer.

40

FORESTER HOUSE - FRONT HALLWAY - MORNING

40

The house is dead quiet. From the kitchen, the faint sound of a coffee maker dripping.

When he speaks, he mimics Marcus's vocal rasp and casual cadence. He has practiced the few words he needs.

MARCUS (PAUL FRY)

Jane?

No response. He takes a few silent, calculated paces down the hall, actively shortening his stride to match Marcus's slightly pigeon-toed walk.

MARCUS (PAUL FRY) (CONT'D)

Forgot my phone.

Jane emerges from the kitchen, her back to him as she walks toward the dining table. She barely glances over her shoulder, completely deceived by the mask and the matching hoodie silhouette.

JANE

That didn't take long. Thought you were going for a full loop today.

Paul answers with a low, grunt-matching Marcus's usual morning mood. His gloved hand slips into the pouch of the hoodie.

He draws out a heavy, embossed leather belt. He drops any effort to mimic Marcus.

PAUL FRY (MARCUS)

Forgot one more thing, too.

In one fluid motion, he steps forward, loops the belt around Jane's neck, and yanks it tight.

Jane gasps. Her hands claw desperately at the belt.

JANE

Marcus, I wasn't having an aff...

Paul tightens the belt. Her words dissolve into strangled sounds. A faint smile crosses his face.

PAUL FRY

I know.
(beat)
I don't care.

He maintains steady pressure. Jane's struggles weaken. She goes limp. Paul eases her to the floor.

Without hesitation, he drags her by the belt around her neck, into the kitchen.

41 **INT. FORESTER HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

41

Paul props Jane in a chair, folding her forward over the kitchen table. He studies the room. A knife block. He selects the largest chef's knife.

One decisive thrust. The blade buries itself deep in her back. He steps aside as blood seeps from the wound.

Paul studies the tableau. Satisfied, he reaches into his hoodie and removes a second pair of flesh-colored surgical gloves.

He deliberately transfers Jane's blood onto them. Then he carries them to the garbage. He buries them beneath a folded takeout container.

The lid closes.

Paul scans the kitchen one last time. Nothing is out of place.

He leaves.

42 **EXT. FORESTER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

42

Paul quietly closes the front door behind him. Across the street, a NEIGHBOR WOMAN waters her flowers. She glances up.

NEIGHBOR WOMAN
Morning, Marcus.

Paul gives a casual wave. She smiles and waves back. He pulls up his hood. For just a beat, he watches her. Then jogs away.

FADE TO BLACK.

43 **EXT. DOWN THE STREET - CONTINUOUS**

43

Paul turns into the alley. Satisfied he's alone, he peels away the silicone face. He folds it carefully, slips it into his pocket, and removes the hoodie.

The gray sweats beneath are ordinary. An unremarkable man emerges from the alley. Paul walks casually toward the black van. Just another neighbor headed to work.

44 **EXT. FORESTER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

44

The neighborhood is coming to life. Cars back out of driveways. A newspaper lands on a porch. Sprinklers hiss to life. Marcus jogs up the walk, drenched in sweat.

He fishes for his key. He has forgotten it. He remembers that he did not lock the door. He pauses. Opens it.

MARCUS

Jane?

No answer. He steps inside.

45 **INT. FORESTER HOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS**

45

Marcus closes the door behind him.

MARCUS

Jane?

Still nothing. He sits on the foyer bench and pulls off his running shoes. He heads for the kitchen.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Jane? Look... I'm sorry.

(beat)

I overreacted.

He rounds the corner and freezes.

46 **INT. FORESTER HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

46

Jane sits slumped over the kitchen table. A large kitchen knife protrudes from her back. Blood has pooled beneath the chair.

Marcus can't process what he's seeing. He takes one tentative step. Then another. His breathing quickens.

MARCUS

Jane...?

He rushes to her. Grabs her shoulders. As he turns her toward him, her body slips from the chair and collapses into his arms. They fall together onto the blood-soaked floor.

Marcus stares at her. His hands tremble. He touches her cheek. It is cold. Reality crashes over him.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Oh God... No... No...

He gathers her into his lap, cradling her against his chest. His forehead rests gently against hers. He breaks. Raw, uncontrollable sobs echo through the silent house.

FADE TO BLACK.

47 **EXT. FORESTER HOUSE - LATE MORNING**

47

Detectives Haddad and Saul pull up to the curb. They get out. Haddad opens the trunk of the car and grabs two packages containing Tyvek Suits. He tosses one to Saul.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
Patrol says it's a messy one.

They dress and walk to the Forester's door. The neighborhood crowd surrounds the crime scene tape. Four officers hold back the crowd. They pull up the tape allowing the detectives through.

48 **INT. FORESTER HOUSE - KITCHEN**

48

The detectives step aside as an officer passes by them and exits. They enter the kitchen. Haddad whistles softly.

Marcus sits alone away from the body. His head is in his hands and he is covered in blood. A white sheet covers the body. A series of stepping plates lead up to the body.

Saul steps carefully on the plates and pulls back the sheet. She exposes Jane. She lies partly on her side. We can see the knife protruding from her back. She looks angelic until we see her cheek pressed against the floor surrounded by her blood. Her neck is black and blue. Her eyes are hemorrhaged indicating strangulation.

Haddad backs away. Saul waves at him to go.

DETECTIVE SAUL
I know. Jesus. Go.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
The neighbors. Yes.

49 **EXT. FORESTER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

49

Haddad removes his Tyvek Suit and takes out his notepad. He crosses to the neighboring house. He knocks. A middle-aged woman answers the door. She only opens it a crack. The chain is still attached.

NEIGHBOR 1
Yes.

Haddad holds up his badge.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
 Good morning ma'am. Could you
 please tell me if you witnessed
 anything odd last evening at the
 Forester house?

Another two faces appear behind the woman as she opens the door.

NEIGHBOR 1
 We were wondering if you were going
 to interview us. We've been talking
 about it ever since the police
 showed up.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
 Us?

He studies the three women as they crowd the doorway.

NEIGHBOR 1
 Yeah. This is Bonny and she lives
 over there, and April lives there.

She points to the houses across the street.

NEIGHBOR 2
 Yeah. We all heard the fight.

NEIGHBOR 3
 Yeah, and boy was it a doozy.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
 Please, ladies, just tell me what
 you witnessed and heard.

NEIGHBOR 1
 Marcus and Jane were screaming at
 each other. I heard her say, "It
 was just one song."

NEIGHBOR 3
 They go to Karaoke on Tuesday.

NEIGHBOR 2
 Maybe she got too friendly with
 someone and he got pissed.

NEIGHBOR 3
 I looked out the window when I
 heard the screaming and that's when
 he smashed her phone. Her phone!
 I'd kill my husband if he did that.
 Well not literally but my whole
 life is on my phone.

NEIGHBOR 1

Right after that my husband got up. He went out to see what all the racket was about. Marcus told him to butt out, so he did.

NEIGHBOR 2

Then Marcus started banging on the roof of his car.

NEIGHBOR 3

Yeah. Then he said, "Have you been sleeping with him?"

NEIGHBOR 1

Then I think he said, "I'll kill the son of a bitch."

NEIGHBOR 2

Yeah. Jane ran inside and slammed the door.

NEIGHBOR 3

That's when he ran inside and yelled really loud. He said, "I'm not finished with this."

NEIGHBOR 2

Things went quiet after that.

Haddad has long since stopped writing.

DETECTIVE HADDAD

Ladies, I'm just going to take your particulars and we'll be in contact if we need to speak with you.

He points at the first woman and writes down her information.

50 **INT. FORESTER HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

50

Haddad returns and puts on his Tyvek Suit. He walks into the house but remains distant from the crime scene.

Saul meets his eyes. She shakes her head.

DETECTIVE SAUL

You're going to have to get used to this at some point, Ali.

She drops the sheet over the body. She speaks to an officer stationed at the door.

DETECTIVE SAUL (CONT'D)

Has Dr. Woodhouse been here yet?

The officer looks at her with a puzzled look on his face.

DETECTIVE SAUL (CONT'D)
The coroner? Has she been here and
done whatever she does?

OFFICER
I think so Ma'am.

DETECTIVE SAUL
It's SAUL not Ma'am.

OFFICER
Sorry. Yes she was here. She left
just before you arrived. She said
she'd call the forensic team after
you saw the body.

DETECTIVE SAUL
What about him?

She nods toward Marcus. The officer shrugs.

Just then a group of forensic specialists in Tyvek Suits
enter carrying cases. Haddad approaches one.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
Bag his clothes and put some
baggies on his hands.

Saul speaks to an officer.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Take him downtown when they're
finished.

Haddad wanders around the kitchen. He pauses beside the
garbage can. Something catches his eye. He steps on the
pedal. The lid pops open. He looks inside.

A beat.

He lets the lid close. Turning to the head forensic officer--

DETECTIVE HADDAD
We have seen enough. You can finish
up here.
(beat)
Bag the contents of that can.

The forensic officer nods. Saul and Haddad leave the house.
They strip off the Tyvek Suit and stuff it in an evidence bag
in the back of their car.

FADE OUT.

51 INT. MORGUE - NEXT DAY

51

Dr. Woodhouse stands beside the stainless-steel autopsy table
as Saul and Haddad enter. She waves them over.

DR. WOODHOUSE
This one's not so bad, Ali. You can
come a little closer today.

Haddad manages a reluctant smile. He and Saul step to the
table. Woodhouse folds back the sheet.

JANE FORESTER lies before them. Even in death she's
strikingly beautiful, except for the deep bruising encircling
her neck.

Woodhouse gently lifts an eyelid.

DR. WOODHOUSE (CONT'D)
Petechial hemorrhaging.

She indicates the bruises around Jane's throat.

DR. WOODHOUSE (CONT'D)
Classic strangulation.

She leans in.

DR. WOODHOUSE (CONT'D)
Interesting... whatever compressed
her neck had a repeating raised
pattern.

She points at the bruising.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Cause of death?

Woodhouse surprises her.

DR. WOODHOUSE
Not the strangulation.

She walks to an anatomical chart mounted on the wall, showing
the human torso from behind.

Picking up a scalpel, she demonstrates.

DR. WOODHOUSE (CONT'D)
Whoever stabbed her understood
anatomy. Most people drive a knife
straight in...

She grips the scalpel vertically.

DR. WOODHOUSE (CONT'D)
...like this.

She rotates it ninety degrees.

DR. WOODHOUSE (CONT'D)
Our killer held the blade
horizontally.
(MORE)

DR. WOODHOUSE (CONT'D)
One precise thrust between the
ribs, avoiding the scapula.
Straight into the heart.

She taps the chart.

DR. WOODHOUSE (CONT'D)
Much better chance of killing her
instantly.

Saul nods, assembling the sequence.

DETECTIVE SAUL
So she was strangled... still
alive... then positioned for the
second attack.

Woodhouse nods.

DETECTIVE SAUL (CONT'D)
This motherfucker is a piece of
work.

Haddad studies the body.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
Not rage. Planning.

Woodhouse nods.

DR. WOODHOUSE
Every step.

52 **INT. FORENSIC LAB - DAY**

52

Saul and Haddad stand at the evidence counter. The forensic
tech opens a case file.

FORENSIC TECH
This is what I found.

He flips to a photograph.

FORENSIC TECH (CONT'D)
The blood on the gloves found in
the garbage can is the victim's.

Saul nods.

FORENSIC TECH (CONT'D)
What's interesting is the transfer
pattern. The blood outlines the
knife handle. Looks like the killer
was still gripping the knife after
the stab.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
Meaning?

FORENSIC TECH
 Usually, after a single stab, the
 hand comes off the knife almost
 immediately...
 ...especially if the weapon's left
 in the body.
 That usually leaves little or no
 blood on the glove.

Haddad studies the photograph.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
 He didn't just stab her.
 He held the knife there.

The forensic tech nods.

DETECTIVE HADDAD (CONT'D)
 Why?

FORENSIC TECH
 I don't know.

Haddad looks again at the photograph.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
 Neither do I.

He suddenly thinks of something.

FORENSIC TECH
 Oh, yeah. Really weird. There was
 no DNA inside the gloves. If he
 wore the gloves I guarantee there
 would be DNA.

The technician closes the file.

FORENSIC TECH (CONT'D)
 That's all I've got for now.
 If anything else turns up, I'll add
 it to the report.

The detectives nod and head for the door.

53 **INT. DETECTIVE SQUAD ROOM - AFTERNOON**

53

The squad room hums with activity. Saul wrestles with an
 absurdly oversized cheeseburger. Across from her, Haddad
 delicately eats sushi with chopsticks while reviewing the
 Forester case file.

He glances up.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
 How exactly do you plan on fitting
 that thing into your mouth?

Saul takes an enormous bite anyway. She chews thoughtfully.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Years of practice.

Haddad immediately raises a finger.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
Don't.

Saul grins.

DETECTIVE SAUL
You knew exactly where I was going.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
And Human Resources doesn't need
another reason to know your name.

She shrugs innocently.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Your loss.

She attacks the burger again.

Haddad returns to the file.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
The neighbors heard quite a fight
after they came home from
Nightingales Karaoke.

DETECTIVE SAUL
The neighbors filled in most of it.
Anonymous texts. Accusations of an
affair. Someone wanted Marcus to
know Jane was sleeping with his
business partner.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
That explains the shouting. The
business partner claims they were
just friends. There's nothing to
indicate otherwise.

DETECTIVE SAUL
You believe him?

Haddad nods. He flips another page.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
One witness saw Marcus leave for
his morning run, then come back
almost immediately.

Saul swallows a bite of her hamburger.

DETECTIVE SAUL
That's our window.

Haddad nods.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
 And Forensics recovered the gloves
 from the garbage.
 Knife-handle impressions were
 preserved in Jane's blood.
 No DNA though.

He closes the file.

DETECTIVE HADDAD (CONT'D)
 It's a slam dunk.

Saul stuffs the last bite of burger into her mouth. She wipes
 her hands on a napkin.

DETECTIVE SAUL
 That concerns me a little. Let's go
 find out.

They grab their jackets and head for the door.

54 **INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - DAY**

54

Marcus sits alone in a windowless interrogation room.
 Handcuffed to the table. A one-way mirror dominates the wall
 opposite him. He stares straight ahead.

Numb.

His prison clothing hangs awkwardly on him.

The door opens. Detective Saul enters carrying a case file.
 Through the glass, Haddad watches from the observation room.

Saul sits. She switches on a digital recorder.

DETECTIVE SAUL
 Interview with Marcus Forester.
 One-thirty-seven p.m.
 Present: Detective Saul.
 State your name.

MARCUS
 Marcus Forester.

A beat.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
 I didn't kill my wife.
 I loved her.

Saul opens the file.

DETECTIVE SAUL
 You and Jane argued the night
 before she died.

MARCUS
 Yes.

DETECTIVE SAUL
The neighbors heard it.

MARCUS
I'm sure they did.

DETECTIVE SAUL
You accused her of having an
affair.

Marcus closes his eyes.

MARCUS
I thought she was.
(beat)
Somebody wanted me to think she
was.

DETECTIVE SAUL
You bought it.

MARCUS
For a while.

DETECTIVE SAUL
You smashed her phone.

MARCUS
Yes.

DETECTIVE SAUL
You threatened to kill her and her
lover. Your business partner.

Marcus looks directly at her.

MARCUS
I never threatened Jane.

DETECTIVE SAUL
No. Just her lover.

Marcus says nothing.

Saul lets the silence linger.

DETECTIVE SAUL (CONT'D)
The next morning your wife was
strangled and stabbed to death.

Beat.

DETECTIVE SAUL (CONT'D)
One witness saw you leave for your
morning run...
...then return a few minutes later.

...he retorts almost immediately.

MARCUS
That wasn't me.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Your neighbors' security cameras
say otherwise.

She slides several surveillance stills across the table.
Marcus, returning to his front door.

Marcus studies them. Confused.

DETECTIVE SAUL (CONT'D)
Recognize yourself?

MARCUS
That's impossible.

Saul slides another photograph across the table. Bloodstained
gloves.

DETECTIVE SAUL
These were recovered from your
garbage.

Marcus barely glances at the photograph.

MARCUS
I've never seen them before.
They're not mine.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Jane's blood is on them.

Marcus says nothing.

Saul studies him.

DETECTIVE SAUL (CONT'D)
Why were you wearing them?

MARCUS
I wasn't.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Then explain the gloves.

MARCUS
I can't explain evidence somebody
planted.

Saul studies him. No panic. No hesitation. Only grief.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Do you know anyone who'd want to
frame you?

Marcus lets out a bitter laugh.

MARCUS
 Yesterday...
 I'd have said no.
 Today...
 I don't know anymore.

A long beat.

MARCUS (CONT'D)
 I want a lawyer.

Saul nods. She switches off the recorder.

DETECTIVE SAUL
 Interview concluded at one-forty-seven p.m.

She gathers the file and leaves.

Marcus remains alone.

Motionless.

55 **INT. HOLDING CELL - CONTINUOUS**

55

Marcus sits on the cot, staring at his wedding ring. He turns it slowly around his finger.

The door unlocks.

He looks up. A man in a dark suit enters.

LAWYER
 Marcus. Talk to me.

He holds out his hand. Marcus rushes to him.

MARCUS
 Harold. Thank God. I didn't do this. You have to help me. I have been set up.

56 **EXT. NANCY BETHEL'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING**

56

A quiet residential street. A black panel van sits unnoticed across from a modest bungalow. Inside, Paul Fry peers through the viewfinder of a high-powered camera trained on the front picture window.

WHIR-CLICK. A crucifix.

WHIR-CLICK. A statue of Saint Michael.

WHIR-CLICK. A framed Sacred Heart.

The house is filled with religious artifacts and icons.

Paul leans across the van to adjust the camera. His leather belt, deeply embossed with an interlocking geometric pattern, is visible beneath his jacket.

Paul makes careful notes. The front door opens. NANCY BETHEL, early seventies, emerges carrying her purse and Bible. She locks the door and walks toward the church six blocks away.

Paul watches her disappear around the corner. He opens his notebook. Beside today's date he writes:

✓ MORNING MASS

A quick succession of images:

- Nancy leaving for Mass.
- Nancy returning home at 8:30.
- Nancy welcoming women into her house for Bible study.
- Nancy carrying boxes into a food bank.

Paul's notebook fills with dates and times.

He closes it.

57 **FLASHBACK: INT. HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - DAY** 57

The office is warm and inviting. Family photographs. Inspirational posters.

A Bible rests discreetly on a bookshelf beside psychology texts.

Fifteen-year-old Paul sits stiffly across from Nancy Bethel (mid-40s). His clothes are clean but obviously secondhand. A foster program backpack rests beside his chair.

Nancy smiles warmly.

NANCY BETHEL
How are things at your new foster
home?

Paul shrugs.

PAUL FRY
Okay...
I guess.

Nancy studies him.

NANCY BETHEL
Just okay?

Paul nods.

Silence.

PAUL FRY
Can I ask you something...
without you telling anyone?

Nancy leans forward.

NANCY BETHEL
Unless someone is in danger...
what we talk about stays between
us.

Paul nods. He can't look at her. He hesitates.

PAUL FRY
Sometimes...
I wonder if maybe...
I'm...

Long beat.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)
Never mind.

She reaches out places her hand on Paul's shoulder.

NANCY BETHEL
What are you wondering, Paul? Tell
me and maybe I can help.

PAUL FRY
If I'm....
...gay.

The word barely escapes.

Nancy lets the silence breathe.

NANCY BETHEL
Thank you for trusting me enough to
tell me.

Paul finally looks up. Searching her face.

PAUL FRY
Does that make me...
wrong? Am I a sicko?

Nancy answers immediately.

NANCY BETHEL
No.
Not wrong.
Never that.

Paul's shoulders relax slightly.

NANCY BETHEL (CONT'D)
But I do think fifteen is a hard
age to know exactly who you are.
(MORE)

NANCY BETHEL (CONT'D)
Especially after everything you've
been through.

Paul listens carefully.

NANCY BETHEL (CONT'D)
Some people know very young.
Others take years to understand
themselves.

PAUL FRY
So...
what do I do?

Nancy chooses her words carefully. She knows this answer
matters.

NANCY BETHEL
I think you should give yourself
time.
Don't decide who you're going to be
because you're frightened...
or because someone else tells you
who you are.

A beat.

Her eyes drift briefly toward the Bible. Then back to Paul.

NANCY BETHEL (CONT'D)
My faith tells me one thing.
My job tells me another.
Neither changes your worth.

Paul absorbs every word.

NANCY BETHEL (CONT'D)
Whatever happens...
you don't have to face it alone.

Paul nods. A small, grateful smile.

END FLASHBACK

58

EXT. ST. MARK'S CHURCH - EARLY MORNING

58

Inside the back of a parked panel van, Paul Fry sits before a
custom-built surveillance station. A chair faces the van's
tinted side window, where a circular section of the tint has
been removed, allowing a camera lens an unobstructed view
outside.

Nancy exits the church. Only a handful of parishioners
attended the early Mass.

Paul peers through the viewfinder. His camera is set to
video. He records her, slowly zooming toward her face.

PAUL FRY
 (under his breath)
 I trusted you.

He lets her get ahead. He starts the van. A short distance away, he parks down the street from Nancy's house and watches as she lets herself inside.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)
 Monday's your stay-at-home day.
 I'll stop by.

A satisfied grin spreads across his face as he drives away.

59 **INT. ST. MARK'S CHURCH - MORNING**

59

Early weekday Mass. Only a handful of PARISHIONERS sit near the front of the church.

Paul Fry, disguised as David Bethel, sits alone near the back. His hair is unwashed. His clothes look slept in. He reeks of stale alcohol and body odor. He quietly uncaps a black felt marker and begins drawing on the pew.

A crude pentagram. Then another. He snickers to himself. Softly at first. Then louder.

An ELDERLY PARISHIONER turns.

ELDERLY PARISHIONER
 Shhh... please.

DAVID (PAUL FRY)
 (giggling)

The woman frowns.

ELDERLY PARISHIONER
 You're in church.

David slowly faces her. His smile disappears.

DAVID (PAUL FRY)
 This is a church?

He points toward the large crucifix above the altar.

DAVID (PAUL FRY) (CONT'D)
 You've got a tortured man hanging
 on the wall. He looks dead.

Silence.

A few nearby parishioners exchange uneasy glances.

At the altar, the PRIEST pauses.

PRIEST
Please show some respect for the
House of God.

David rises unsteadily. He gives the priest a sloppy salute.
Then shuffles toward the exit.

Before leaving, he turns to the congregation.

DAVID (PAUL FRY)
God doesn't live here.

He grins...

...then disappears through the doors.

Silence.

The elderly parishioner walks to the rear pew. She freezes.
Several freshly drawn black pentagrams cover the seat.

ELDERLY PARISHIONER
Oh, dear Lord...

The priest's gaze shifts to the closed church doors. Concern
replaces irritation.

60 **EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - LATER**

60

A weathered roadside memorial stands beneath a maple tree.
Fresh flowers. A wooden cross. A framed photograph.

An ELDERLY WOMAN tends the flowers. Paul approaches, still
wearing David's face.

ELDERLY WOMAN
Morning, David.

Paul nods politely. Then, without warning, he kicks the
wooden cross. It splinters. Flowers scatter across the ditch.
The woman gasps.

ELDERLY WOMAN (CONT'D)
David!

Paul studies the shattered memorial. A faint smile. He walks
away.

The woman watches him go, stunned.

61 **INT. USED BOOKSTORE - AFTERNOON**

61

Dust hangs in shafts of sunlight. The OWNER looks up as David
enters. He is wearing tight-fitting driving gloves.

OWNER
Need some help?

Paul shakes his head and wanders the shelves. His fingers brush the upside-down cross at his neck. He makes sure it is in plain view. He removes a thick hardcover.

DEMONOLOGY THROUGH THE AGES.

He tucks it under one arm. Then quietly slips another book beneath his jacket. His coat bulges noticeably.

He sets DEMONOLOGY THROUGH THE AGES on the counter.

DAVID (PAUL FRY)
I'll take this one.

David reaches for his wallet.

The concealed book slips from beneath his jacket and lands on the counter.

SATANIC RITUALS.
The owner looks at it.

Then at David.

DAVID (PAUL FRY)
Oh. That one too.

He pays in cash.

The owner forces a polite smile, relieved he won't have to confront him.

OWNER
Interesting reading.

DAVID (PAUL FRY)
Researching my beliefs.

Paul pays in cash. The owner watches him leave.

62 **EXT. CHURCH ALLEY - EVENING**

62

A brick wall behind the church. Paul kneels. He shakes a can of red spray paint. Rattle. Rattle.

He depresses the nozzle. Hiss. A crude red pentagram slowly appears. Beneath it, he sprays:

"HAIL SATAN."

Nearby three TEENAGERS emerge from the alley. One raises his phone to take a selfie, accidentally pointing the camera toward David.

TEENAGER
Hey...

Paul hears voices.

Three TEENAGERS emerge from the alley. One raises his phone, accidentally pointing the camera toward David.

Paul notices. He looks directly into the lens.

A beat.

Then calmly walks away.

The teenagers continue filming him.

TEENAGER #2
What the hell...?

TEENAGER
That was David Bethel. I think he
sells cars.

TEENAGER #2
Let's get out of here or they'll
blame it on us.

TEENAGER
Relax dude. I got the whole thing.

The first teenager replays the video. He freezes on David's face. Looks toward the departing figure. Then back to the screen. The three teenagers watch him disappear around the corner.

63 **FLASHBACK: INT. NANCY'S HOUSE - TWENTY-FIVE YEARS EARLIER - EVENING**

A younger Nancy stands in the kitchen, cordless phone pressed to her ear.

NANCY BETHEL
Father...

A beat.

NANCY BETHEL (CONT'D)
I'm worried about one of my
students.

She listens.

NANCY BETHEL (CONT'D)
He asked me if he might be
homosexual.

In the adjoining room, Nancy's teenage SON watches television. He hears her. His attention shifts.

Nancy turns away, unaware.

NANCY BETHEL (CONT'D)
His name is Paul Fry.

She listens.

NANCY BETHEL (CONT'D)
I promised him confidentiality.

A beat.

NANCY BETHEL (CONT'D)
I just don't know if I'm saying the
right things.

The boy slowly mutes the television. He listens.

Nancy continues, unaware she's being overheard.

NANCY BETHEL (CONT'D)
He's a foster child. He doesn't
have anyone he trusts.

The boy's eyes narrow. He smiles to himself.

Nancy turns toward the living room.

The boy quickly unmutes the television.

Nancy sees nothing unusual. She turns back to the phone.

NANCY BETHEL (CONT'D)
Thank you, Father.

She hangs up.

The boy watches her from the other room.

Something has changed.

END FLASHBACK

64 **INT. NANCY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - BIBLE STUDY - EVENING** 64

Bible study has ended. Small groups linger, chatting quietly.

Nancy heads toward the kitchen carrying empty serving plates.

As she passes conversations soften. Smiles become polite. She notices.

Keeps walking.

65 **INT. NANCY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS** 65

Nancy arranges cookies and squares onto a serving tray.

Voices drift in from the living room. Not loud enough to understand.

One word reaches her.

David.

She stops. Another. Laughing.

She quietly sets down the tray and listens.

66 **INT. NANCY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

66

DORIS, MARY and RUTH speak in low voices.

DORIS
Mrs. Henderson swears it was David.

MARY
Laughing in church?

Doris nods.

DORIS
Right in the middle of Father
Asente's sermon.

RUTH
Sister April found pentagrams drawn
on the pew afterward.

The women exchange uneasy looks.

MARY
I never would've believed it if
someone else had told me.

67 **INT. NANCY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

67

Nancy deliberately rattles dishes.

The voices stop. A beat. Nancy waits.

She runs water into the sink.

Still nothing.

She quietly crosses back toward the doorway.

68 **INT. NANCY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

68

The women glance toward the kitchen.

Satisfied Nancy can't hear they continue.

MARY
Mrs. Collins says she saw him kick
over a cross in the cemetery.

RUTH
He bought books on demonology.

DORIS
I heard he tried to steal one.

MARY
Those teenagers filmed somebody
painting a pentagram behind the
church.

RUTH
Everyone says it was David.

Silence.

No one questions it anymore.

MARY
What if he really needs help?

Nancy enters carrying the tray. Every conversation dies. The women force uneasy smiles.

NANCY
Cookies, anyone?

69

INT. DINGY BASEMENT - MORNING

69

Once again, Paul sits at the scarred wooden table. A mirror rests in front of him. Spread across the tabletop are makeup palettes, adhesives, sculpting tools, and facial prosthetics he fabricated at work.

A computer monitor displays a step-by-step reference for transforming a young face into that of an elderly priest.

Behind him, four Styrofoam mannequin heads stare blankly from a shelf. The heads wearing the masks of Father O'Shea and Marcus Forester each have a small, shiny screwdriver driven into the side of the skull.

The third head wears the mask of a man in his twenties. Propped against its base is a photograph of seventy-year-old Nancy. The fourth head is empty. The fifth wears a mask, but it's turned toward the wall.

Paul starts the transformation.

He methodically builds the face: sagging flesh, heavy jowls, puffy eyes, unruly white brows. Dental appliances age his smile.

He blends everything seamlessly into his skin.

The change is remarkable.

Finally, he fits a wavy white wig that perfectly matches the eyebrows.

He studies himself in the mirror, exaggerating frowns and grimaces to test the prosthetics. They flex naturally.

Satisfied, he rises and changes into a priest's black suit and the usual priest garb.

He picks up a cane and paces the room, favoring his left leg as though every step hurts. He stops. Straightens. Raises the cane and raps its handle sharply against the table, as though knocking on a front door.

In a measured voice with a faint Irish accent—

PAUL FRY
Good mornin', ma'am. My name is
Father McKinnon.

He drops the accent.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)
I'd believe it.

70

EXT. NANCY BETHEL'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

70

An ELDERLY PRIEST walks slowly along the quiet residential street, occasionally checking a folded piece of paper before looking up at the house numbers.

He stops in front of Nancy Bethel's home. The paper disappears into his pocket. Leaning heavily on his cane, he climbs the front steps with the measured pace of a tired old man and taps gently on the door.

He scans the neighborhood. A few neighbors are outside tending gardens or collecting mail. No one gives him a second glance. A priest visiting Nancy Bethel isn't unusual.

Just as he raises his cane to knock again, the door opens.

Nancy smiles warmly. She immediately recognizes the priest's collar. FATHER MCKINNON smiles back.

FATHER MCKINNON
Good afternoon, Mrs. Bethel. I'm
Father McKinnon.

He smiles.

FATHER MCKINNON (CONT'D)
I'm on sabbatical while I recover
from some health issues. I noticed
you at Mass this morning and
thought I'd introduce myself. It's
been rather lonely without a parish
to tend.

Nancy beams, visibly flattered.

NANCY
Well, come in, Father. I'll put the
kettle on.
(MORE)

NANCY (CONT'D)
 You picked the perfect day. Mondays
 are my stay-at-home days.

She ushers him inside.

71 **INT. NANCY BETHEL'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

71

The room is neat, modest, and filled with religious artwork.

Nancy sits opposite Father McKinnon.

He hesitates.

FATHER MCKINNON
 Before we begin...
 may I call you Nancy?

She nods.

FATHER MCKINNON (CONT'D)
 I spoke with one of the ladies from
 your Bible study.
 She was concerned about you.
 I'll respect her confidence...
 but she thought you might
 appreciate a visit.

Nancy smiles politely.

NANCY BETHEL
 What did she tell you?

FATHER MCKINNON
 That your son has been behaving...
 very differently.

Nancy's smile fades.

NANCY BETHEL
 Differently?

FATHER MCKINNON
 There have been stories.
 Damage at the church.
 Disturbing things said during Mass.
 Symbols painted behind the parish.

Nancy lowers her eyes.

NANCY BETHEL
 I overheard my friends talking.
 I hoped they were mistaken.

McKinnon leans forward. Gentle.

FATHER MCKINNON
 Rumors grow. If part of this is
 true...
 David needs help.

NANCY BETHEL
You think he's... sick?

McKinnon chooses his words carefully.

FATHER MCKINNON
I think something has happened to
him. Whether that's emotional...
psychological...
or spiritual...
I don't know.

Nancy struggles to hold herself together.

NANCY BETHEL
Can you help him?

FATHER MCKINNON
I'd like to meet him first.
Talk to him.
See where he is.

A beat.

FATHER MCKINNON (CONT'D)
The Church has ways of helping
people in spiritual distress.

Nancy looks at him.

NANCY BETHEL
What kind of ways?

McKinnon chooses his words carefully.

FATHER MCKINNON
There are prayers. Counseling.

Nancy understands.

NANCY BETHEL
An exorcism?

McKinnon doesn't answer immediately.

FATHER MCKINNON
Those are exceedingly rare.
And most people who request one
don't need one.
Let's not get ahead of ourselves.
Invite him to dinner this Sunday.
Don't confront him.
Don't mention the rumors.
Just let me meet him.

Nancy picks up the phone.

NANCY BETHEL
Will you come?

FATHER MCKINNON
Of course.

He offers a reassuring smile.

FATHER MCKINNON (CONT'D)
Let's hope all David needs...
is someone willing to listen.

Nancy nods. Still frightened... but hopeful.

FATHER MCKINNON (CONT'D)
I'll give you some privacy.
Where's your washroom?

NANCY BETHEL
Just off the kitchen.
To your left.

McKinnon leaves the room. Nancy stares at the phone for a long beat...

...then slowly picks up the receiver.

72 **INT. NANCY BETHEL'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

72

Paul slips into the kitchen. He opens the back door. A quick look outside. An alley. His eyes move to the lock. He tests it. It gives slightly. Paul releases it.

From the living room...

NANCY BETHEL
David, it's your mum. I want you to
come for dinner on Sunday. Please
call me back to confirm. I really
want you to come. Love you.

She hangs up the phone. Father McKinnon enters. Nancy is sitting quietly.

NANCY BETHEL (CONT'D)
I left a message. He always
finishes around five. I'm sure
he'll call.

FATHER MCKINNON
Good. I'll see you Sunday. I'll
pray for him.

NANCY BETHEL
Thank you, Father.

FATHER MCKINNON
Well... I should be going.

He crosses to the front door.

FATHER MCKINNON (CONT'D)
 I'm looking forward to dinner and
 meeting David.

He exits. Nancy closes the door. Father McKinnon ambles
 toward the street until he's out of sight.

The kindly smile vanishes. He removes the priest's glasses.

A cold smile spreads across his face. He straightens. The
 limp disappears. He swings the cane almost playfully as he
 walks away.

73 **INT. NANCY'S HOUSE / DAVID'S APARTMENT - INTERCUT - LATER** 73

The house is quiet. Nancy sits alone on the sofa, hands
 clasped tightly in her lap. Dirty cups and saucers remain on
 the coffee table and sideboard. After a long moment, she
 reaches for her phone.

She dials.

David answers.

DAVID BETHEL
 Hi, Mom. Got your message. Was
 about to call you.

NANCY BETHEL
 David. I need to talk to you.
 There are stories going around
 about you.

DAVID BETHEL
 What kind of stories?

NANCY BETHEL
 People are saying you laughed in
 church and drew evil symbols on the
 pew...
 That you kicked over a graveyard
 cross and bought books on
 demonology...
 Even painted those same evil
 symbols on the wall behind the
 church.

David is stunned.

DAVID BETHEL
 Mom... None of that happened. Not
 one word of it.

NANCY BETHEL
 They're saying people saw you.

DAVID BETHEL
 Then they saw someone else.
 Or someone wants them to think it
 was me.
 (beat)
 Gossip has a way of becoming fact
 if people repeat it often enough.

Nancy exhales slowly.

NANCY BETHEL
 I wanted to hear it from you.

DAVID BETHEL
 I'm glad you called.

A gentle silence.

NANCY BETHEL
 You'll still be here Sunday?

DAVID BETHEL
 Absolutely. I wouldn't miss dinner.

NANCY BETHEL
 Good. I'll see you then.

DAVID BETHEL
 Love you, Mom.

NANCY BETHEL
 Love you too.

Nancy ends the call. She sits quietly. She is relieved by David's reassurance, yet unable to forget the certainty in the voices she overheard from her friends at Bible Study.

INT. DINGY BASEMENT - NEXT NIGHT

Once again, Paul sits at the scarred wooden workbench.

A mirror rests before him.

Spread across the tabletop are makeup palettes, adhesives, sculpting tools, and facial prosthetics fabricated at work.

The Styrofoam heads wearing the masks of Father O'Shea and Marcus Forester each have a small, shiny screwdriver driven through the side of the skull.

Another completed mask lies on the table.

One Styrofoam head remains blank. The last wears a mask, but it's turned toward the wall, hiding the face.

The third now wears the face of David Bethel.

Paul lifts the mask with both hands. Almost reverently. He slips it over his face. David Bethel stares back. Paul studies the reflection.

A smile. A frown. Confusion. Fear.

Satisfied...

Paul takes a small hand mirror from beneath the workbench. He raises it beside the larger mirror, carefully positioning both.

For a moment, every angle of David's face is reflected.

He slowly turns his head. Checks each profile. Never allowing a glimpse of the man beneath.

Only when he's certain does he lower the mirrors.

Perfect.

Paul slowly peels off the mask. He carefully packs it into a backpack. Then adds black felt pens... red spray paint... a roll of plastic... and a pair of disposable gloves. He zips the backpack closed.

A faint smile crosses his face. Without another glance at the room... he disappears up the basement stairs.

74

INT. NANCY BETHEL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - SUNDAY EVENING

74

The room is warm, smelling of roast beef. Three place settings are neatly arranged on the dining table. Candles flicker.

Nancy stands at the oven, humming to herself as she bastes the roast.

Behind her, the click of the kitchen's back door latch. It's subtle, but it draws her attention. She doesn't turn around yet, assuming it's her son coming through the alley gate.

NANCY BETHEL

David? You're early, sweetie. I haven't even poured the wine yet.

Paul enters the kitchen. He wears David's face.

He keeps his posture tightly hunched, dropping his shoulders by two inches to artificially compress his six-foot frame down toward David's 5'10" height. He steps heavily, mimicking David's flat-footed gait. He has rehearsed David's voice.

DAVID (PAUL FRY)

Hey, Mom. Alley gate was unlocked.

Nancy hears the voice. It's David's tone, but the inflection is flat. Missing the natural warmth. She begins to turn, a slight frown crossing her face.

NANCY BETHEL

David, is your cold getting worse? You sound a bit...

Before she can fully rotate and inspect him, Paul lunges from the shadows of the doorway.

He doesn't give her a chance to look at his height. One gloved hand forcefully slaps over her mouth, cutting off her breath. His other arm wraps around her waist, lifting her off her feet and driving her backward into the dining room chair.

Nancy thrashes wildly, her eyes wide with terror.

Moments later, she is secured to the heavy wooden dining chair. Paul works with clinical speed, wrapping clear industrial plastic around her torso and the frame of the chair. Layer after layer.

Only her head remains free. Paul tears off a thick strip of heavy-duty tape.

Nancy, hyperventilating, finally forces herself to look directly into his eyes. Up close, in the flickering candlelight, she sees the truth. The iris color is a fraction off. The pupils don't dilate naturally. The skin around the eyes doesn't wrinkle when his expression shifts.

The physical illusion shatters under her maternal scrutiny.

NANCY BETHEL (CONT'D)
(muffled, trembling)
You're... you're not David...

Paul doesn't argue. He doesn't smile. He simply presses the thick tape firmly across her lips, sealing her screams into a dull, hollow hum.

Then crosses to the front window. He waits.

HEADLIGHTS sweep across the curtains.

David has arrived.

75 **INT. FRONT HALL - MOMENTS LATER**

75

The front door opens. David steps inside carrying a bottle of wine.

DAVID BETHEL
Mom?

Silence.

DAVID BETHEL (CONT'D)
Mom?

The front door quietly swings shut behind him. David sees himself standing a few feet away. His mouth falls open.

DAVID BETHEL (CONT'D)
What the...

A heartbeat later Paul strikes. He spins David around and presses a sedative-soaked cloth over his face. David struggles but soon goes limp.

76

INT. LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

76

David sits unconscious in a chair opposite Nancy. Clear plastic tightly secures him to it. Nancy is likewise bound, unable to move.

Paul secures the final layer around David. Satisfied, he steps back.

David slowly begins to stir.

Paul calmly places a sedative-soaked mask over David's face. David inhales involuntarily. His eyes flutter.

Within seconds, he slips back into unconsciousness.

Paul reaches up...

...and slowly peels away David's face.

Nancy stares. Confused. Then horrified. She knows the face but can't place it.

PAUL FRY

Hello, Nancy.

I've waited twenty years for this.

Nancy desperately struggles against the plastic. Her muffled cries fill the room.

Paul removes the tape from her mouth. She gasps for air.

NANCY BETHEL

Why?

PAUL FRY

Twenty years ago, I trusted you. You promised me what I said would remain between us.

It didn't.

You told your son. Then everyone heard.

He points toward David, unconscious in the chair.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)

From that day on...

he made sure everyone else knew.

Every joke.

Every insult.

Every punch.

Every day.

Paul is no longer looking at Nancy. He's reliving the taunts.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)

Gay boy.
Faggot.
Pussy boy.

A beat.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)

Those were the nice ones.

Nancy shakes her head. Tears stream down her face.
Recognition washes over her.

NANCY BETHEL

Paul.
Paul Fry. I didn't recognize you
at first. The scars...
I never knew.
I swear to God...
I never knew.

PAUL FRY

I believe you.

Nancy looks at him, surprised.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)

You aren't the one I want to
punish.
You're just...
a casualty.

He glances toward the unconscious David.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)

He is.

Paul moves to the back porch and returns with a large plastic
storage container.

Inside: disposable coveralls, boot covers, a hood, face
shield, and gloves.

He begins dressing with practiced efficiency.

NANCY BETHEL

What are you doing?

Paul pulls on the hood.

PAUL FRY

Making sure they believe it.

Nancy stares at him.

Paul pulls on the final glove.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)

Tonight they'll find you murdered.

Nancy's eyes widen.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)
And they'll find David beside you.

He looks toward David.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)
He won't remember any of this.

A beat.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)
He'll wake up believing exactly
what everyone else believes.
That somehow...
he killed his own mother.

Nancy breaks down.

NANCY BETHEL
Please...
He's innocent.

Paul meets her eyes.

PAUL FRY
So was I.

Nancy starts to scream.

Paul moves quickly and replaces the tape across Nancy's mouth. Her wrists, thighs, ankles, and head are secured to the chair with plastic wrap.

He tears open the front of her dress. Her bra and bare stomach are exposed.

Paul picks up a knife from the kitchen. Checks the edge. Satisfied.

He calmly approaches Nancy.

77 **INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER**

77

Still wearing the protective suit, Paul works with clinical precision. Nancy's body is carefully arranged on the floor. Her hands and legs are spread to the shape of a pentagram. Candles are arranged at each point.

The plastic used to bind her is removed and placed in plastic storage container.

Blood is used to create ritual symbols. A pentagram is painted across her abdomen. A goat mask is placed partially beneath the sofa. Occult books are left in plain view.

A bloodstained ceremonial robe is pulled over David's clothing.

He puts a set of surgical gloves on David, smears them with blood, removes them and conceals them in the pocket of the robe. He picks up the books on the occult. He presses David's finger to the surfaces in various logical places.

He takes David's wallet. Opens it. Starts to slip a Satanic Temple card inside.

Stops.

He presses David's fingertips against the card. Then slips it into the wallet and leaves it in plain sight on the coffee table.

He arranges David's unconscious body on the sofa.

As an afterthought, he moves the goat mask a few inches so it will be seen. Paul surveys the room.

He lights the candles he placed around her body. He taps David lightly on the forehead.

PAUL FRY
Sleep well, David.

Paul scans the room one final time. Nothing points anywhere except to David.

Paul pulls David's silicone face back over his own. He quietly slips out the back door, carrying the plastic storage container. It was like he was never there.

The house falls silent

FADE OUT.

78

INT. NANCY BETHEL'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

78

Silence. Candles flicker. The living room has been transformed into a grotesque altar. Nancy lies on her back in the center of the room.

A kitchen knife protrudes from her chest. A large pentagram has been painted across her abdomen. Occult books lie open around her. A black goat mask rests near the end of the sofa.

David Bethel lies unconscious. He's dressed in a black ceremonial robe. The front of the robe is smeared with his mother's blood.

A long beat. His fingers twitch. A low groan escapes him. His eyelids flutter open. The room swims in and out of focus. He blinks repeatedly. Slowly, his vision clears. He rubs the back of his head.

DAVID BETHEL
Mom...?

He notices the robe. Looks down. Sees blood and his breathing quickens.

DAVID BETHEL (CONT'D)
What the...?

He pushes himself upright. The room tilts. He steadies himself against the arm of the sofa.

DAVID BETHEL (CONT'D)
Mom?

He stumbles forward. Then stops. He stares at the floor. He sees Nancy motionless with the knife sticking out of her chest.

The candles flicker over the symbols on the walls and over the body on the floor. His mind clears.

DAVID BETHEL (CONT'D)
Mom!

He rushes to her. Drops beside the body. Checks for a pulse. Finds none. He immediately begins CPR.

DAVID BETHEL (CONT'D)
Come on... Come on... Please...

Blood transfers from Nancy onto his hands and on to the sleeves of the black robe as he desperately performs CPR.

His mother does not respond. He stops. He is breathing hard. He scans the room. His eyes pause on the many unfamiliar objects.

The books. The candles. The pentagram. The robe he's wearing. His own blood-covered hands.

Panic floods his face and he scrambles backward, shaking uncontrollably.

He pulls his phone from his pocket.

Dials.

79 **INTERCUT - INT. 911 DISPATCH CENTER - NIGHT**

79

A dispatcher slips on her headset.

DISPATCHER
Nine-one-one. What's your emergency?

David struggles to speak.

DAVID BETHEL
My... My mother...
She's... I think she's dead...
Please... Please send someone.

DISPATCHER
What's your name?

DAVID BETHEL
David - David Bethel.

DISPATCHER
Take a breath. What's the address?

David gives it.

DISPATCHER (CONT'D)
Are you with her now?

DAVID
Yes. I tried CPR.

DISPATCHER
Is anyone else in the house?

David looks around. The room suddenly feels enormous.

DAVID BETHEL
I... I don't know. I just woke up.

The dispatcher pauses.

DISPATCHER
You just woke up?

DAVID BETHEL
Yes. I came here for dinner and the next thing I remember is waking up. I woke up on the sofa. I don't know what happened.

DISPATCHER
All right, David. Officers and paramedics are on the way. Stay where you are. Don't touch anything else. Can you do that?

David stares at Nancy.

DAVID BETHEL
Yes.

DISPATCHER
I'm staying with you until they arrive.

David says nothing. His eyes never leave his mother.

80 **EXT. NANCY BETHEL'S FRONT PORCH - NIGHT**

80

Two patrol cars scream into the quiet neighborhood, lights flashing.

Tires squeal as they stop in front of the house.

OFFICER RICHARDS and OFFICER EVANS leap out.

The front door swings open before they reach it.

David Bethel exits and stands on the front porch, sobbing.
His hands are covered in blood.

A black ceremonial robe hangs open over his clothes.

DAVID BETHEL
I called.
Please...
help my mother.

Richards immediately raises a hand.

OFFICER RICHARDS
Stay where you are!

David freezes.

Richards nods toward Evans.

OFFICER RICHARDS (CONT'D)
Clear the house.

Evans draws his weapon and enters.

Richards never takes his eyes off David.

OFFICER RICHARDS (CONT'D)
What's your name?

DAVID BETHEL
David Bethel.

OFFICER RICHARDS
Is anyone else inside?

DAVID BETHEL
Not that I know of.

Richards notices David's blood-covered hands.

OFFICER RICHARDS
Is that your blood?

David looks down. As if seeing the blood for the first time.

DAVID BETHEL
No...
it's hers.
I tried to help her.

Richards studies him.

OFFICER RICHARDS
Tell me what happened.

DAVID BETHEL
 I came for dinner...
 I don't remember anything after
 that.
 I woke up...
 she was on the floor.
 I tried CPR.
 That's all I remember.

Richards' radio crackles.

OFFICER EVANS (V.O.)
 Richards...
 notify Major Crimes.

Richards doesn't look away from David.

OFFICER RICHARDS
 (into radio)
 Dispatch.
 Send EMS.
 Notify Major Crimes.
 Possible homicide.

He returns the radio to his shoulder.

Officer Evans returns to the porch.

OFFICER RICHARDS (CONT'D)
 I need the robe.

David removes the bloody robe.

DAVID BETHEL
 It isn't mine.

He removes the robe. Richards hands the robe to Evans.

OFFICER RICHARDS
 Here. Bag this.

OFFICER RICHARDS (CONT'D)
 Turn around.

David obeys immediately.

Richards handcuffs him.

DAVID BETHEL
 Am I under arrest?

OFFICER RICHARDS
 Right now...
 I'm securing the scene.

David looks back toward the open front door.

His voice is barely above a whisper.

DAVID BETHEL
I didn't kill my mother.

David is guided into the back seat of the cruiser.

OFFICER RICHARDS
We'll figure out what happened.

The cruiser door closes. Through the window David stares at the house.

Utterly lost.

81 **INT. NANCY BETHEL'S LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER** 81

Richards stops in the doorway. Nancy lies exactly where David found her. Candles flicker. Occult symbols cover the floor. Ancient books lie open around the body. A grinning goat mask peeks out from the edge of the sofa.

Evans stands nearby, avoiding the evidence.

OFFICER EVANS
Never seen anything like this.

Richards surveys the room.

OFFICER RICHARDS
Nobody touches a thing.
Keep EMS off the body until the
coroner gets here. Lock the place
down.

Richard keys his radio.

OFFICER RICHARDS (CONT'D)
Dispatch. Confirm homicide. Notify
the coroner. Major Crimes. We'll
need Crime Scene, too.

82 **EXT. NANCY BETHEL'S HOUSE - TWENTY MINUTES LATER** 82

The neighborhood is now a crime scene. Patrol cars. Yellow tape. Flashing lights. Curious neighbors. A television news crew sets up across the street.

David sits alone in the rear of a patrol car. He is deathly still and staring out the front window.

A black SUV pulls to the curb. Detectives HADDAD and SAUL climb out. Saul scans the crowd.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Word travels fast.

Haddad watches David.

Richards approaches.

OFFICER RICHARDS
Victim's Nancy Bethel. Her son
found her. Called 9-1-1 himself.
Claims he came for dinner... then
woke up on the couch. Says he
doesn't remember anything else.

Saul glances toward David.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Well, isn't that fucking
convenient.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
Let's see the scene.

Richards lifts the crime scene tape. They enter.

83

INT. NANCY BETHEL'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

83

CSI photographers work the room.

FLASH.

FLASH.

Evidence markers surround the body. A videographer records the ritual display. Crime scene technicians move carefully between the evidence. Dr. Woodhouse kneels beside Nancy's body. Disheveled as ever. Her gloves are already stained with blood. She barely glances up.

DR. WOODHOUSE
Watch your step.

The detectives weave through the room. Saul studies the extinguished candles - the symbols - the books - the macabre goat mask.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Well...

He's certainly not subtle.

DR. WOODHOUSE
Neither are Satanic rituals.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Whoever did this wanted us to see a
satanic ritual killing, not the
killer.

Haddad remains silent. He studies every detail. Woodhouse gestures toward the body.

DR. WOODHOUSE
Female. Early seventies. Single
stab wound to the chest. Death
would have been almost immediate.

Haddad kneels beside her.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
Defensive wounds?

Woodhouse examines Nancy's hands.

DR. WOODHOUSE
None. No cuts. No bruising. No
broken nails. Either she never
fought back, or never had the
chance.

Haddad points toward the blood-painted pentagram on her
stomach.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
Before or after?

Woodhouse studies it.

DR. WOODHOUSE
Assuming that's her blood, it was
put there after she was killed.

A CSI TECHNICIAN approaches.

CSI TECH
No signs of forced entry.
Doors and windows were secured.

DETECTIVE SAUL
She let her son in. Problem solved.

Another technician carefully bags the two occult books.

CSI TECH #2
Fresh fingerprints on the books.
We'll compare them.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Looks like David's been studying.

DR. WOODHOUSE
Or someone wanted it to look that
way.

Saul smiles.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Everybody's a skeptic tonight.

Richards enters.

OFFICER RICHARDS
Neighbors saw David arrive around
six. Nobody saw him leave.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Shit. Keeps getting better.

Woodhouse pauses while examining Nancy's wrists. Something catches her attention.

DETECTIVE HADDAD

What?

She rotates the wrist. Faint pressure marks. Barely visible.

DR. WOODHOUSE

Maybe nothing. Maybe she was restrained. Briefly.

DETECTIVE SAUL

You sure?

DR. WOODHOUSE

Not until the autopsy.

She gently lowers the arm. A technician approaches carrying an evidence bag. Inside is David's wallet.

DETECTIVE SAUL

Where'd you find it?

CSI TECH

Centered on the side table. We found this inside...

He holds up a business card. Haddad peers at it. There is a red logo of a stylized goat head. The text below reads, "House of Satan."

Haddad stares at it. It gives him pause.

Outside the front window, another technician photographs David inside the patrol car.

Saul stares at David.

DETECTIVE SAUL

He's going to have a hard time explaining this mess.

DETECTIVE HADDAD

Maybe.

Saul looks at him. Surprised. Woodhouse removes her gloves.

DR. WOODHOUSE

Time of death... approximately seven-thirty to eight-thirty.

She surveys the room.

DR. WOODHOUSE (CONT'D)

Whoever did this spent considerable time staging it afterward.

DETECTIVE SAUL

Putting on a show.

DR. WOODHOUSE
Exactly. The murder took seconds.
This...

She gestures around the room.

DR. WOODHOUSE (CONT'D)
...took patience.

Haddad slowly scans every carefully positioned object. The books. The candles. The symbols. A carefully constructed story.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
Somebody wanted us to believe this.

He picks up the mask and inspects it. He brings it closer to his face and reads some tiny lettering on the inside.

DETECTIVE HADDAD (CONT'D)
"Property of Illusion Foundry -
#2197" Interesting. I know that
place. Every Halloween they have a
giant sale of all their old masks.
I bet that's where this came from.

DETECTIVE SAUL
We can check that later.

She looks around.

DETECTIVE SAUL (CONT'D)
What else?

Haddad doesn't answer. He continues studying the room. He spies the garbage can. He flips open the lid. The can is empty.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
(calling out)
Nothing here.

David sits alone in the patrol car, staring blankly at his house while crime scene personnel move around him like ghosts.

The neighborhood is locked down. Police tape stretches across both sides of the street. Television crews broadcast from behind the barricades.

Neighbors huddle in small groups. Watching. Whispering.

An ambulance pulls away. Nancy's body is gone.

84 INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - LATER

84

David sits handcuffed to a steel table.

He's been processed, but traces of blood remain beneath his fingernails. He's in shock.

He raises a hand to wipe his nose. The cuff chain SCRAPES against the metal bar.

The door opens. Detective Haddad enters. He studies David. He takes a tissue from the side table and hands it to him.

David wipes his nose. Haddad sits.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
Start at the beginning.

David pauses. He is remembering.

DAVID BETHEL
I parked...
Walked to the front door.
Knocked.
Mom answered.
She smiled.

He closes his eyes. Trying to force the memory back.

DAVID BETHEL (CONT'D)
That's all I've got.

Haddad waits.

Silence.

DAVID BETHEL (CONT'D)
The next thing I remember...
I woke up on the couch.
She was...

He can't finish.

Haddad lets the silence linger.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
Do you remember sitting down for dinner?

David slowly shakes his head.

DAVID BETHEL
I don't know.
I don't remember sitting down.
I don't remember eating.
I don't remember anything.

Haddad studies him.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
Do you remember putting on the robe?

DAVID BETHEL
No.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
Lighting the candles?

DAVID BETHEL
No.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
Painting the symbols?

DAVID BETHEL
No.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
Do you remember touching your
mother...
before you found her?

David looks genuinely horrified.

DAVID BETHEL
No.
I only touched her...
when I tried to save her.

Haddad watches him for a long beat.

David isn't evasive. He's searching for memories that simply
aren't there.

85 **INT. NANCY BETHEL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

85

Woodhouse removes her reading glasses.

DR. WOODHOUSE
Preliminary findings. Single stab
wound. No obvious defensive
injuries. Ritual markings appear
postmortem. Time of death
approximately seven-thirty to eight-
thirty. Awaiting autopsy.

The CSI supervisor places several evidence bags on the table.

CSI SUPERVISOR
Victim's blood on David's robe.
Victim's blood on his hands. Bloody
gloves in the pocket of the robe.
No sign of forced entry. The knife,
prints, blood being processed.

Saul folds her arms.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Everything points one direction.

Nobody disagrees. Nobody speaks.

RICHARDS

His story hasn't changed. From the moment he opened the door: "Came for dinner. Woke up on the couch." Word for word.

Saul shrugs.

DETECTIVE SAUL

Good liars rehearse.

Woodhouse isn't convinced.

DR. WOODHOUSE

So do honest people.

Saul looks at her. She simply shrugs.

DETECTIVE HADDAD

Let's get some sleep. Tomorrow we find out what we're missing.

Saul smiles confidently.

DETECTIVE SAUL

Shouldn't take long.

FADE OUT.

86

INT. ILLUSION FOUNDRY - FRONT OFFICE - MORNING

86

Saul and Haddad approach the receptionist counter. They show their badges. The young woman behind the desk smiles.

RECEPTIONIST

Good morning officers. How may I help you?

DETECTIVE SAUL

We are investigating a murder and we would like to ask whomever is in charge, some questions. Please call the manager.

RECEPTIONIST

Ours bodies are fake.

She grins. Saul and Haddad do not smile. The receptionist's tone changes.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Sorry officers. Just a humorous quip.

She picks up the phone and calls the manager. Her voice cannot be heard. Miranda walks into the room.

MIRANDA

Good morning officers. I'm the manager here. How may I help you?

Saul holds up a photograph of the devil goat mask, both inside and outside. The name of the company can be seen clearly.

DETECTIVE SAUL

Do you recognize this? We thought it might be one of the masks you sell at Halloween.

Miranda studies the photo.

MIRANDA

Look up #2197.

She leans over the receptionist's shoulder at the monitor. She reads.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

No, that item is still in stock but it is marked for our upcoming sale. Where did you get it?

DETECTIVE HADDAD

It was found at the scene of a murder.

MIRANDA

That's concerning.

DETECTIVE SAUL

We'll need a list of your employees. It would be a great help.

MIRANDA

Not without a subpoena. The employee contract forbids it.

DETECTIVE HADDAD

Thanks anyway. We will be back with a court order.

The two detectives turn to leave. Haddad spots a wall of employee photographs. He studies it.

FADE TO BLACK.

87

INT. DINGY BASEMENT - NIGHT

87

Once again, Paul sits alone at the scarred wooden table. A mirror stands before him. Spread across the tabletop are makeup palettes, adhesives, sculpting tools, and custom facial prosthetics fabricated at work.

On a shelf behind him, four Styrofoam mannequin masked heads stare blankly into the room. The last stares at the wall.

Three wear the faces of Father O'Shea, Marcus Forester, and David Bethel. A small screwdriver has been driven through the side of each head like a trophy.

The fourth wears the face of DERICK KANT, early thirties.

At its base lie two photographs: SARAH GRANGER and DERICK KANT.

Paul compares the mask to Derick's photograph. One final adjustment.

He leans back. Satisfied.

PAUL FRY
Perfect.

He picks up Sarah's photograph. His thumb gently brushes across her face. He kisses the photo.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)
We could've been...

He sets the photograph beside the mask.

As Paul returns to his work, we finally see what hangs on the bulletin board behind him.

A worn, wrinkled restraining order, carefully flattened and pinned in place.

He has kept it all these years.

88 **FLASHBACK: EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS PARKING LOT - LATE AFTERNOON**

Rain pounds the nearly empty parking lot. College students hurry to their cars beneath umbrellas.

PAUL FRY (20) stands beneath the Student Center overhang, clutching his backpack.

A compact car pulls up. Behind the wheel is YOUNG SARAH, twenty, bright and friendly. She rolls down the passenger window.

SARAH GRANGER (20)
Need a lift?

Paul smiles, surprised.

PAUL FRY (20)
You sure?

SARAH GRANGER (20)
Come on. You'll drown out there.

He laughs and climbs in.

Sarah reaches for a package of gum on the dash. She takes the last piece out and pops it in her mouth.

Paul watches.

She realizes she did not offer him any.

SARAH GRANGER (20) (CONT'D)
Last stick. Sorry.

She giggles and reaches into her mouth, pulling out the partly chewed gum.

SARAH GRANGER (20) (CONT'D)
Unless you want to share. It is
barely chewed.

She laughs at her offer.

PAUL FRY (20)
No thanks.

Paul suddenly feels guilty.

PAUL FRY (20) (CONT'D)
Sorry. I didn't mean that I....

He stops. He realizes he's making it worse.

89 **INT. SARAH'S CAR - CONTINUOUS**

89

The windshield wipers struggle to keep up with the downpour. Sarah adjusts the heater.

SARAH GRANGER (20)
This thing barely survives every
winter.

Sarah turns and studies his face. She recognizes him.

SARAH GRANGER (20) (CONT'D)
I know where I have seen you
before. Stats class. God, I hate
that class. It is required and
totally useless. Am I right?

Paul nods. A hint of a smile.

SARAH GRANGER (20) (CONT'D)
You are acing it, aren't you.

PAUL FRY (20)
Well I...

SARAH GRANGER (20)
(interrupting)
Will you help me next class?

Paul laughs. He nods. He finally relaxes. They chat easily as she drives. She pulls up outside Paul's apartment building. Paul hesitates before opening the door.

PAUL FRY (20)
Thanks. You didn't have to.

Sarah smiles warmly.

SARAH GRANGER (20)
What are ride giving, stats
helping, friends for?

Paul looks at her. For a moment, he seems unable to believe her.

Sarah smiles. She leans over and gives him a quick kiss on the cheek.

SARAH GRANGER (20) (CONT'D)
See you in class tomorrow.

Paul steps into the rain. He watches her drive away. Slowly, he touches the spot where she kissed him. A hopeful smile spreads across his face.

END FLASHBACK

MONTAGE - PAUL DESTROYS DERICK'S RELATIONSHIP

90 **INT. DERICK'S APARTMENT - DAY** 90

Paul stands outside Derick's apartment. He checks the hallway. Picks the lock. Slips inside. Closes the door.

His eyes settle on the key rack.

Steps up and inspects the keys. Sees one with a label attached.

SPARE APARTMENT KEY

He takes out a ball of clay and makes an impression of the key. He slips out of the apartment unnoticed.

91 **INT. SARAH'S APARTMENT - EARLY EVENING** 91

A plain envelope slips through Sarah's mail slot. It hits the floor with a CLICK.

Sarah hears it. Enters from the kitchen carrying a take-out container and chopsticks. She sets the food on a side table and picks up the envelope.

Opens it.

Six glossy photographs.

She flips through them.

Derick entering a downtown hotel with an attractive brunette.
Holding her hand in the lobby. Kissing her goodbye outside.
His hand resting on the small of her back.

Sarah stops.

A typed note:

THOUGHT YOU DESERVED TO KNOW.

Her hands tremble as she dials Derick.

INTERCUT WITH:

92 **INT. DERICK'S OFFICE - DAY**

92

Derick answers his phone.

DERICK KANT
Hey, babe--

Sarah cuts him off.

SARAH GRANGER
Who is she?

DERICK KANT
What are you talking about?

SARAH GRANGER
The woman.

A beat.

DERICK KANT
What woman?

She hangs up. Derick stares at the phone, utterly bewildered.

A burner phone. A text is sent.

HE'S MEETING HER AGAIN TONIGHT. HARBOR BISTRO. WINDOW TABLE.

93 **EXT. HARBOR BISTRO - NIGHT**

93

Sarah watches through the front window. Inside, Derick sits with the same woman. He laughs. Touches her face. Leans across the table. Kisses her.

Sarah fights back tears before turning away.

Inside, "Derick" watches her leave. A faint smile curls beneath the flawless mask.

94 **EXT. DERICK'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY** 94

"Derick" enters the building with an attractive woman. Mrs. Landers, the elderly neighbor across the hall, notices.

Days later "Derick" enters with a different woman. Mrs. Landers notices again.

Later still. Yet another woman. Mrs. Landers watches with growing disapproval.

95 **EXT. DERICK'S APARTMENT - DAY** 95

Sarah stands outside Derick's apartment. Mrs. Landers approaches quietly.

MRS. LANDERS
I probably shouldn't say
anything...
(beat)
...but I've seen three different
women go in there this week.

Sarah fights her emotions. The apartment door opens. The real Derick smiles when he sees her. Her devastated expression stops him cold. She walks away.

DERICK KANT
Sarah? Sarah, what's wrong?

Beat.

DERICK KANT (CONT'D)
Sarah. There is nobody else.

Sarah heads for the stairway and yanks open the door.

Derick watches her leave, completely confused.

END MONTAGE

96 **FLASHBACK: INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY** 96

Several years later.

Paul, now in his early twenties, sits across from Sarah in a quiet corner booth. A neatly wrapped scrapbook rests on the table. Paul can barely contain his excitement.

PAUL FRY
I made something for us.

Sarah smiles politely as she opens it. Inside are photographs of them together, movie ticket stubs, receipts from coffee shops, birthday cards, dried flowers.

Every page meticulously arranged.

Sarah's smile slowly fades. She flips to another page... and another.

Paul watches her face, waiting for her reaction.

He sees what he wants to see.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)
You like it?

Sarah looks up. She stares. Realization hits her.

SARAH GRANGER
Paul...

He mistakes her discomfort for admiration.

PAUL FRY
I hoped you'd love it.

She gently closes the scrapbook.

SARAH GRANGER
This is... a lot.

Paul's smile falters.

SARAH GRANGER (CONT'D)
I think maybe...
you're seeing this relationship
differently than I am.

A long silence. She slides the scrapbook back across the table.

SARAH GRANGER (CONT'D)
I should go.

She stands. Paul remains frozen as she walks away.

END FLASHBACK

97 **EXT. DERICK'S APARTMENT HALLWAY - LATE AFTERNOON** 97

Paul steps off the elevator carrying a small satchel. He scans the hallway.

Empty.

He checks the time. Then unlocks Derick's apartment door with a key and slips inside.

98 **INT. DERICK'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS** 98

Moments later...

The bathroom door opens. Paul now wears a flawless Derick mask. He studies the reflection. Tilts his head. Checks the mask from both sides. Satisfied, he pulls on surgical gloves.

In the kitchen, he selects a large chef's knife and lays it on the counter.

From his satchel, he removes a chemical-soaked mask and a leather sap.

The sap disappears into his pocket. The mask rests within easy reach.

Paul settles onto the sofa...

...and waits.

99

INT. DERICK'S APARTMENT - EARLY EVENING

99

The front door unlocks. Paul melts into the shadows beside the hallway. Derick enters, unaware. The door clicks shut.

Paul steps behind him...

CRACK!

The sap slams into the back of Derick's head. He crumples to the floor.

Paul immediately presses the chemical-soaked mask over Derick's face.

Derick struggles weakly...

...then goes limp.

Paul strips off Derick's coat, drags him to the living room, and props him into a sitting position against the sofa.

A groan.

The chemical-soaked mask goes back over Derick's face until he falls silent.

Working with practiced efficiency, Paul wraps him tightly in industrial cellophane, binding him from the shoulders down.

A gag.

Finished.

He searches Derick's coat, finds his phone, then holds it in front of Derick's face. The phone unlocks. Paul types.

ON THE PHONE SCREEN:

PLEASE COME OVER. WE NEED TO TALK.

I'M BEING SET UP.

THE PHOTOS ARE FAKE.

SOMEONE IS TRYING TO BREAK US UP.

I LOVE YOU. PLEASE TRUST ME.

He presses SEND.

Paul waits.

Derick stirs.

Paul doesn't look at him.

A moment later--

PING.

Paul reads the reply.

ON THE PHONE SCREEN:

I'LL BE THERE IN FIFTEEN MINUTES.

THIS HAD BETTER BE GOOD.

Paul finally looks at Derick. A slow smile spreads across Paul's face.

PAUL FRY
You never deserved her.

100 **FLASHBACK: EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY**

100

Sarah exits the courthouse carrying paperwork. Paul waits near the steps. He smiles, hopeful. She approaches. Stops several feet away.

SARAH GRANGER
Paul...
I never wanted this.

He smiles, believing she's changed her mind.

PAUL FRY
I thought you'd understand.

She gently shakes her head.

SARAH GRANGER
Please listen.
I don't love you. I never did.
You have to stop calling me... stop
following me... stop showing up
where I work.

Her voice is calm. Not angry. Simply final. She holds up the court papers.

SARAH GRANGER (CONT'D)
 This restraining order isn't meant
 to punish you. It's the only way I
 know to make you leave me alone.

Paul's smile slowly disappears. His jaw tightens. His eyes harden. Sarah waits a moment, hoping he'll say something. He doesn't.

Paul stares at her.

He doesn't argue.

He doesn't blink.

For a moment, it seems as though he's trying to understand words in a language he doesn't speak.

His hand slowly crumples the copy of the restraining order. His knuckles turn white.

Sarah raises and lowers her arms. Exasperated. She leaves

He watches until she disappears from sight.

END FLASHBACK

101 **INT. DERICK'S APARTMENT - EARLY EVENING - CONTINUOUS** 101

A key turns in the lock. The door opens. Sarah steps inside, closes the door, then throws the deadbolt and clips the security chain in place.

SARAH GRANGER
 Derick?

She slips off her coat. Derick is standing in the living room...

Or so it appears.

Paul, hidden beneath the flawless mask, steps toward her and opens his arms. His voice is soft. Wrong somehow.

PAUL FRY
 Come here, darling.

Sarah frowns. Something isn't right. She cautiously steps forward. A muffled moan echoes from the hallway.

She freezes. Touches her nose.

SARAH GRANGER
 What's that smell?

Paul lunges. He spins her around and clamps a chemical-soaked mask over her face.

She thrashes. Weakens. Collapses into his arms. He gently lowers her to the floor.

Derick moans.

Without hesitation, Paul kneels beside the bound Derick and presses the mask over his face once more. Derick goes limp. Paul removes the cellophane restraints and stuffs them into his satchel.

He places the knife in Sarah's limp hand. Closes her fingers around the handle. Then drives the blade into Derick's chest.

Derick gasps. Paul lets Sarah's hand fall away. He watches the blood spread across Derick's shirt.

Derick dies.

He stands. Satisfied. He heads for the door... then stops.

A smile touches his face.

He slips behind a wall, hidden from view. Sarah slowly regains consciousness. She blinks. Looks toward the sofa. Sees Derick. Dead. The knife stuck in his chest.

Her face drains of color. A tiny gasp escapes. Paul smiles to himself. He starts to leave. His elbow clips a ceramic figurine. It smashes against the hardwood floor. Sarah spins.

He panics. She must not see him.

He rushes toward the front door. He tries to open it. He fumbles with the locks. He can't get out.

Sarah sees him. She runs toward him. She lunges. She grabs him. She sees Derick's face. Looks at the corpse. Back at the man wearing Derick's face.

Her mind cannot process what she's seeing. She claws desperately at his face. The mask peels away.

She recognizes him.

SARAH GRANGER (CONT'D)

Paul?

Her eyes darken with absolute terror. She rakes her fingernails viciously across his neck, tearing deep into his flesh.

Paul jerks free, staggering backward.

He stares at the blood on his fingertips.

Sarah starts to scream.

For a fraction of a second, panic floods his face. He isn't a ghost anymore. He is exposed.

He forces the chemical-soaked mask over Sarah's face again. She thrashes, fights... then slowly goes limp. He ties her securely to the chair.

Paul paces the floor. Crimson blood trickles heavily from the deep, raw scratches on his neck, tracking down past his collar. A few drops hit the floor - unnoticed.

Paul stares down at the shattered porcelain fragments. He doesn't clean it. He doesn't recover the pieces. His perfect murder scene has become a sloppy mess.

He looks at the unconscious Sarah.

PAUL FRY
Trust you to turn the perfect crime
into a complete disaster.

Paul scans the room. His eyes stop on the chin-up bar in the hallway. He studies it. His breathing slows. His eyes settle. The panic is gone.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)
Not what I had planned, but...

A beat.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)
...it will have to do.

He disappears into the bedroom. Returns carrying a bedsheet. He tears it into long strips. Knots them together. Almost absentmindedly.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)
You caught him cheating.
You confronted him.
Killed him.
Then couldn't live with what you'd
done.

He places a small stool beneath the chin-up bar. Tests its stability.

Satisfied, he lifts Sarah onto the stool.

He loops the makeshift noose around her neck and over the bar. Pulls it taut.

He studies the setup.

A beat.

PAUL FRY (CONT'D)
This'll definitely work.

FADE TO BLACK.

Detectives Saul and Haddad, wearing heavy Tyvek suits and respirators, stand in the stifling, rancid apartment.

A photographer's flash cuts through the dim room. A forensic tech drops yellow evidence markers across the hardwood floor. Markers 4 through 12 cluster tightly around the shattered fragments of the ceramic figurine.

Near the porcelain shards, a tech illuminates the floor with a blue UV light from his goggles. He pauses, leaning closer to a dark smear.

FORENSIC TECH

Hey, Detective. Got some blood here.

Saul steps over, peering down through her tinted goggles.

DETECTIVE SAUL

Derick's blood?

FORENSIC TECH

Maybe. But look at the trajectory. It didn't cast off from the knife wound on the sofa. It's vertical gravity drops. And it's fresh. Someone was standing right over these porcelain shards, actively bleeding.

Haddad glances toward the hallway doorway, where Sarah hangs, her face swollen and purple. He gags under his respirator, visibly pale, and quickly turns his back to the body.

DETECTIVE SAUL

Haddad, you look like a sheet. Get out of here. Go canvas the neighbors. Talk to the old lady across the hall.

Haddad nods gratefully, slipping out the front door.

Saul turns back to the coroner, Dr. Woodhouse, who is examining the knots on the bedsheet noose.

DETECTIVE SAUL (CONT'D)

What's the initial read, Doc?

DR. WOODHOUSE

Based on liver temperature and the odor, they've been here forty-eight hours. At first glance, standard domestic tragedy. She stabs her cheating boyfriend, panics, feels remorse, hangs herself.

Saul walks back to the dust outline on the end table where the figurine once sat, then traces her eyes to where it shattered.

DETECTIVE SAUL
No. It doesn't fit. The staging is meticulous. But this...

She taps her foot against the evidence marker by the smashed fragments.

DETECTIVE SAUL (CONT'D)
This figurine was clutched or clipped in a blind panic. And whoever hit it bled right on top of it.

Saul walks into the bedroom, grabs the corner of the remaining bedsheet, and gives it a hard, violent yank. The cotton tightens, but refuses to rip.

DETECTIVE SAUL (CONT'D)
A girl Sarah's size couldn't tear high-thread-count cotton into uniform, braided strips with her bare hands. Not without a blade, and there's no structural fraying.

She steps back into the living room, her eyes narrowing as she looks from the clean staging on the sofa to the messy blood drops by the door.

DETECTIVE SAUL (CONT'D)
Son of a bitch. Someone worked their ass off to make this a perfect suicide, but they cracked at the finish line. They got sloppy. It's a double homicide.

DR. WOODHOUSE
The autopsies and the blood spatters will tell us.

103 **INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY**

103

Haddad steps away from the crime scene tape, taking a deep, grateful breath of clean hallway air. He pulls down his respirator, his face still slightly pale.

He turns toward the door directly across the hall. Apartment 4B.

He knocks.

A moment later, the door cracks open, held tight by a heavy brass security chain. MRS. LANDERS (70s), wearing a faded floral apron, peers out with deep anxiety.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
I'm Detective Haddad. I'm working
across the hall. May I have a
moment of your time?

She eyes his badge through the gap, her hands trembling.

MRS. LANDERS
Is she... is Sarah really gone?

Haddad's expression softens. He gives a quiet, solemn nod.

MRS. LANDERS (CONT'D)
Oh, dear Lord. I knew something was
wrong. I told her. I tried to warn
her about him.

Haddad pulls out his small notepad, his detective instincts
instantly sharpening.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
Warn her about Derick? What did you
see, ma'am?

Mrs. Landers unlatches the chain, opening the door fully. She
leans in close, dropping her voice to a harsh whisper.

MRS. LANDERS
He was bringing different women in
there all week. Beautiful girls.
But it wasn't just that. Derick has
lived here for two years. He always
says hello. Always asks about my
sciatica.

She shakes her head, her brow furrowing in confusion.

MRS. LANDERS (CONT'D)
But these past few days? He walked
right past me in the lobby. Didn't
say a word. And his posture... he
was slouching, like he was trying
to hide his height. Almost hunched
over. And he moved... heavy. Flat-
footed. Derick is a runner, he
practically floats.

Haddad freezes, his pen hovering over the paper. The physical
description strikes an odd chord in his head.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
Did he say anything to you at all?

MRS. LANDERS
Not a word. It was like he didn't
even know me.

Haddad stares at his notepad. The detail hangs in the air,
bizarre and deeply unsettling.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
Thank you, Mrs. Landers. You've
been incredibly helpful.

He turns back toward the stairs, his mind visibly racing as he tries to reconcile the old Derick with the seemingly new Derick.

104 **INT. DETECTIVE SQUAD ROOM - NOON**

104

Haddad and Saul eat lunch at adjoining desks. Haddad methodically works through a box of sushi. Saul forces down a spoonful of plain yogurt. She grimaces.

Haddad watches.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
You clearly hate that stuff.
Why keep eating it?

Saul pats her stomach.

DETECTIVE SAUL
My husband suggested I lose a few
pounds.

Haddad looks up.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
I've met your husband.
He strikes me as a man who enjoys
breathing.

He smirks.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Smart ass.

She drops the plastic spoon into the yogurt container and tosses both into the trash.

Haddad stops his chopsticks mid-air, leaning over his notes from the canvas.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
The old lady across the hall - Mrs.
Landers. She gave me a statement
about Derick Kant. It makes zero
biological sense.

Saul leans back in her chair, tapping her fingers.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Try me. The whole apartment didn't
make sense.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
Derick's been her neighbor for two
years. She knows his walk.

(MORE)

DETECTIVE HADDAD (CONT'D)
 He's a marathon runner, light on his feet. But the guy she saw entering the apartment forty-eight hours ago was heavy. Shuffling. Slouching to hide his frame.

DETECTIVE SAUL
 People change their posture when they're stressed. Or guilty.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
 He also didn't give any indication that he knew her. They were neighbors for two years.

Saul stops tapping. Her eyes narrow.

DETECTIVE SAUL
 That's odd.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
 Pair that with the fresh, vertical gravity blood drops we found on top of the shattered figurine. Someone went in there looking like Derick, but physically forcing their body to mimic him.

The CHIEF OF DETECTIVES approaches.

Both detectives straighten instinctively.

CHIEF OF DETECTIVES
 It's been a busy month. Bring me up to date on these last four cases.

She sits and stretches out her legs.

CHIEF OF DETECTIVES (CONT'D)
 I assume the charges against the priest are going to stick.

DETECTIVE SAUL
 Yeah. I think it's a slam dunk.

The Chief frowns.

CHIEF OF DETECTIVES
 No such thing. What about the Forester murder? He did in his wife, right?

DETECTIVE HADDAD
 He looks good for it. But the scene was pretty weird.

DETECTIVE SAUL
 They're all weird.

CHIEF OF DETECTIVES
Weird how?

Haddad shrugs.

CHIEF OF DETECTIVES (CONT'D)
Show me the files. Fresh eyes.

Saul hands her the Forester file. The Chief pulls a chair up to the desk and spreads out the photographs.

CHIEF OF DETECTIVES (CONT'D)
Have you found any connection
between the murders?

Saul and Haddad shake their heads.

The Chief reaches for the Nancy Bethel file and spreads those photographs beside the others.

Haddad watches. Something catches his eye. He stands. He pulls out an autopsy photograph of Jane Forester.

Then an image of David Bethel taken by the teenagers as he defaced the back of the church.

He holds them side by side.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
What do you see?

The Chief and Saul study the images. They shake their heads and look expectantly at Haddad.

DETECTIVE HADDAD (CONT'D)
Start with her neck.
Look at the bruise pattern.

They look again.

DETECTIVE HADDAD (CONT'D)
Now look at Bethel.

Saul studies the photograph.

Her eyes narrow.

Then...

DETECTIVE SAUL
Holy... Holy fuck.

She looks at the Chief.

DETECTIVE SAUL (CONT'D)
Sorry.

Haddad takes the photographs back.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
I'd bet my life his belt was used
to strangle Jane Forester.

The Chief looks from one image to the other.

CHIEF OF DETECTIVES
Coincidence?

DETECTIVE HADDAD
I don't believe in coincidence.

CHIEF OF DETECTIVES
You think David Bethel strangled
Jane Forester with his belt?

DETECTIVE HADDAD
No.

He points to the photograph of David.

DETECTIVE HADDAD (CONT'D)
I think someone wanted us to
believe David did.

Haddad picks up another photograph of David Bethel. Then one
of the teenagers' photographs.

DETECTIVE HADDAD (CONT'D)
David Bethel is five-ten.

He holds up the second photograph.

DETECTIVE HADDAD (CONT'D)
This man is at least six feet.

Saul looks between the photographs.

DETECTIVE HADDAD (CONT'D)
So who the hell are they
photographing?

A beat.

DETECTIVE SAUL
You're saying that's not David?

DETECTIVE HADDAD
That's not David Bethel.

Saul studies the photograph again.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Then who is it?

Haddad shakes his head.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
I have no idea.

Saul gathers the files.

DETECTIVE SAUL
I'm going to find out.

The Chief stands.

CHIEF OF DETECTIVES
Stop working four murder
investigations.

(Beat.)

CHIEF OF DETECTIVES (CONT'D)
Start working one serial killer.

She heads away, then calls over her shoulder.

CHIEF OF DETECTIVES (CONT'D)
Get to it. Keep me informed.

DETECTIVE SAUL
We've got Father O'Shea's
preliminary hearing this afternoon.

We'll be back on it as soon as court adjourns.

The Chief nods.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
What if he's innocent?

Haddad calmly pops another piece of sushi into his mouth.

Saul watches him eat.

DETECTIVE SAUL
After court...
I'm getting a cheeseburger. Or I
may arrest the first cow I see.

Haddad doesn't miss a beat.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
That would certainly simplify the
paperwork.

He gathers the files.

DETECTIVE HADDAD (CONT'D)
I'll head to the lab. Maybe I can
find some connections.

Saul laughs.

They gather their files and head for the door.

105

INT. COURT HOUSE HALLWAY - THE NEXT MORNING

105

Haddad sits on a bench just outside the courtroom, waiting for Saul.

Saul steps out of the elevator. Haddad stands and smiles as she approaches.

DETECTIVE SAUL

What are you doing here? Did they call you to testify?

Haddad shakes his head.

DETECTIVE HADDAD

No. The lab isn't finished so I came to give you moral support.

DETECTIVE SAUL

And watch me crash and burn. Damn, I hate giving testimony. Why can't they just read the file? That's what I'm going to say anyway.

DETECTIVE HADDAD

You'll do great. This should be finished in a couple of hours. I will take you out to eat.

DETECTIVE SAUL

Do I get to pick the restaurant?

DETECTIVE HADDAD

Yes. As long as it serves real food and not just pastries.

DETECTIVE SAUL

Agreed.

She opens the courtroom door and they both enter.

106

INT. COURTROOM - CONTINUOUS

106

The prosecutors and defense lawyers are seated. Father O'Shea sits at the defense table in standard priest garb. He looks haggard.

The gallery fills with O'Shea's parishioners. They are supportive. We hear voices mumbling. 'He couldn't have done it' - 'They got the wrong man' - 'He loved Mary' - 'They got along great' More.

Saul sits behind the prosecutor's table waiting to be called. Haddad has taken a seat at the back.

The bailiff stands and speaks.

BAILIFF

All rise.

The judge enters.

JUDGE
Please be seated.

He looks to the clerk and nods.

The bailiff drones the charges.

BAILIFF
... Father William O'Shea did,
feloniously, willfully, and with
deliberate premeditated malice,
kill and murder Sister Mary
McIntyre against the peace,
government, and dignity of the
State.

A low groan swells through the gallery. People shout out.

WOMAN
This is a travesty. He wouldn't
hurt a fly, let alone commit this
crime.

WOMAN 2
Shame on you all. God will not
forgive you.

The judge bangs his gavel on his desk.

JUDGE
Order in the court. I will clear
the court if the interruptions
continue.

The audience quiets.

The door to the courtroom quietly opens. Paul enters wearing
his mask that hides his scars. He slips into a seat at the
back only a few feet away from Haddad. Haddad glances at him.
Paul looks straight ahead.

JUDGE (CONT'D)
The defendant has chosen a trial by
judge.

He points at the prosecutor.

JUDGE (CONT'D)
Mr. Myers, you may proceed.

MYERS shuffles some papers and stands.

MR. MYERS
Your Honor, the evidence will show
the defendant's guilt beyond a
reasonable doubt. We have
irrefutable DNA evidence,
opportunity, and motive.

The crowd murmurs. The judge raps the bench. All become quiet.

MR. MYERS (CONT'D)
The defendant's hair was found
clutched in the victim's hand. The
victim's blood was found on the
defendant's coat that was discarded
in the alleyway where the murder
took place.

He pauses and looks up at the judge. He is looking for approval.

JUDGE
Continue please.

MR. MYERS
The defendant has no alibi at the
time of death that can be
corroborated. The defendant was
previously accused by the victim of
philandering with a number of
female parishioners. We have
discovered a series of written
entries in one of her notebooks to
this effect.

He sets down the folder.

MR. MYERS (CONT'D)
Your Honor, this case is as cut and
dried as they come.

He sits.

The defense lawyer stands and begins to speak.

107 **INT. COURTROOM - CONTINUOUS**

107

Father O'Shea sits beside his attorney at the defense table.
The public gallery is filled with parishioners.

Paul sits near the back, completely isolated. His clothes are
wrinkled, his hair unkempt. A stark departure from his usual
spotless appearance. He barely follows the proceedings.

Instead, he fixates on the defense table, mindlessly mouthing
bitter insults.

PAUL FRY (MOUTHING)
Idiot... Moron... He's guilty. He
raped and killed my mother.
Murderer.

Absentmindedly, Paul digs his fingernails under his jawline,
clumsily scratching at the raw, unhealed fingernail wounds
hidden beneath his collar.

A scab rips open. A dark ribbon of real blood trickles out, oozing over the artificial skin.

He yanks a crumpled tissue from his pocket and presses it hard against his neck. When he pulls the tissue away, a corner of the pristine "Paul mask" lifts slightly from the wet friction.

Detective Haddad, watching from a few feet away, narrows his eyes.

Through the gap in Paul's fingers, Haddad spots it: the edge of the scratch doesn't stop at the skin. It disappears directly beneath a synthetic, razor-thin edge along Paul's jawline.

A prosthetic seam.

Paul pulls his hand down, dropping the bloody tissue next to his boots.

Haddad stares at the seam, then down at the heavy boots. The mental images flash in his mind: the crime scene footwear logs, the flawless profiles, the microscopic anomalies.

The man sitting in the gallery isn't just watching the trial. He's involved somehow.

Haddad leans back. He wants to see where the tissue landed. The man is behaving strangely. He notices the boots that the man is wearing. They are Thorogood boots.

A flicker.

The images of the shoes from the file.

Paul's boots.

The priest's oxfords.

The shoe print found at the crime scene.

A series of flashing faces of Father O'Shea and the man in the courtroom. The last is an image of Paul's boots.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
(quietly)
Size twelve.

A new sequence of images flicker.

Derick. Slumped on the sofa. A knife buried in his chest.

Another flicker.

Jane Forester. The knife handle protruding from her back.

Another.

Nancy Bethel. A knife driven into her chest.

Back to Paul who is muttering again. Someone nearby shushes him.

Paul frowns. His eyes come to rest on Haddad. For a brief moment, their eyes lock.

Paul's expression changes. His breathing quickens. He looks away.

Haddad watches. Beat.

His expression hardens. He catches Saul's eye, nods toward the exit.

Saul excuses herself. She glances toward the witness stand, sighs, and sits beside Haddad.

DETECTIVE SAUL
(whispers)
What the hell is going on?

DETECTIVE HADDAD
I don't know yet. I'll call you
when I know.

He rises without another word and stands at the back of the room beside the doors.

His eyes never leave Paul.

108 **INT. COURTROOM - RECESS - CONTINUOUS**

108

The courtroom empties. Lawyers gather their files. The gallery clears.

Paul heads for the door.

Haddad watches him pass. A series of images flicker through Haddad's mind.

The employee photographs on the wall of Illusion Foundry.

One face after another.

Then...

Paul.

The image holds.

Haddad's eyes narrow.

He slips on gloves and pulls a small evidence bag from his jacket pocket.

He moves quickly but carefully to the tissue.

He picks it up, deposits it in the bag, and pockets it.

Across the courtroom, Saul watches Haddad disappear into the hallway.

She mumbles.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Ali... What the hell are you up to?

She shakes her head and gathers her files.

He's already moving.

Paul is halfway to the courthouse exit.

Haddad falls in behind him.

FADE OUT.

109 **EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - AFTERNOON**

109

Paul enters a modest bungalow. The front door closes behind him.

Parked half a block away, Haddad watches from his unmarked sedan. He watches the house. His eyes drop to the evidence bag. He sees the tissue inside.

Flicker of Paul in the courtroom pressing the tissue to his neck. The blood. The razor-thin seam beneath his jaw.

Haddad's eyes widen. He stares back at the house.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
The fucker is wearing a mask.

He starts the engine.

110 **INT. DETECTIVE SQUAD ROOM - THE NEXT MORNING**

110

Saul nurses a mug of coffee. Haddad strides in with a file. He drops into the chair beside her.

DETECTIVE SAUL
You look pleased with yourself.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
I stopped by the lab.

She sits up.

DETECTIVE SAUL
Already?

He nods.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
 I had them run a rush comparison on
 the blood from that courtroom
 tissue...
 ...against the raw skin tissue
 scraped out from under Sarah's
 fingernails.

A beat. Saul searches his face.

DETECTIVE SAUL
 And?

A slow grin.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
 It's a perfect match. The guy
 sitting in the gallery yesterday is
 our killer.

Silence.

DETECTIVE SAUL
 Holy... No way...

Haddad nods.

DETECTIVE HADDAD
 Paul Fry.

Saul is already reaching for her jacket.

DETECTIVE SAUL
 Let's go get him.

111 **INT. PAUL'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

111

SWAT officers breach the front door with an explosive CRASH,
 flooding the upper levels. Boots thunder over floorboards.
 Room after room is cleared with shouting, tactical
 efficiency.

SWAT OFFICER
 Clear!

SWAT OFFICER #2
 Clear!

Down in the basement, the chaos upstairs feels distant,
 muffled by the heavy subflooring.

Paul sits at his worktable. No mask. His disfigured, severely
 scarred face is completely bare under the harsh fluorescent
 bulb.

He isn't frantic. He is completely calm, methodically wiping
 down his sculpting tools with an alcohol rag. Returning each
 tool to its custom foam insert. Wiping the stainless steel
 surface clean.

The heavy oak basement door upstairs splinters open. Boots thunder down the wooden stairs.

Paul doesn't flinch. He places his last tool into the case and snaps the latches shut.

Heavy tactical shields and assault weapons fill the stairwell, a wall of black nylon and steel tracking down into his sanctuary.

SWAT OFFICER
POLICE! HANDS IN THE AIR! NOW!

Paul turns slowly in his swivel chair. His eyes don't track the red laser dots painting his chest. Instead, his gaze shifts to the far corner of the workbench.

The pristine, unscarred "Paul mask."

His hands hover inches from the silicone flesh. For a fraction of a second, his fingers tremble. The urge to put it on, to hide his true face from the world one last time, is overwhelming

SWAT OFFICER (CONT'D)
I SAID HANDS UP! DON'T MOVE!

Paul's fingers twitch, closing gently around the silicone cheek of the mask. He doesn't lift it. He just feels the smooth, unblemished texture against his fingertips.

The lead SWAT officer steps into his space, muzzle inches from Paul's forehead.

SWAT OFFICER (CONT'D)
NOW! DROP IT!

Paul slowly relaxes his grip. He lets his fingers slide off the artificial skin.

He raises his hands, palms outward, exposing his bare, scarred face completely to the harsh light and the staring officers.

They rush him, throwing him hard against the concrete floor. The cuffs snap shut. CLICK. CLICK.

As they violently drag him toward the stairs, Paul keeps his eyes locked backward.

The pristine mask remains on the table, staring blankly after him

112 **INT. PAUL FRY'S BASEMENT - DAY**

112

The room is a stark contrast of shadows and intense forensic light. CSI technicians in white Tyvek suits meticulously catalog the evidence.

A camera FLASH illuminates the workspace, freezing the chilling artifacts in time.

Saul and Haddad stand by the main workbench, watching a tech carefully lift the four trophy masks into individual evidence bags.

DETECTIVE SAUL

Four pristine framing setups. He spent months planning every detail.

Haddad shakes his head, his eyes shifting to the large corkboard covered in surveillance photos of Sarah Granger.

DETECTIVE HADDAD

Five victims.
The first four were payback. The fifth was Sarah.

He steps closer to Sarah's photographs, tapping a finger against a candid snapshot of her smiling.

DETECTIVE HADDAD (CONT'D)

She wasn't.

DETECTIVE SAUL

Then what was she?

Haddad studies the expression on Sarah's face in the photo.

DETECTIVE HADDAD

The only one he ever loved.

No one speaks. The weight of the tragedy hangs heavy in the damp basement air. A technician picks up the final loaded evidence case and carries it up the wooden stairs. His boots fade away.

Haddad surveys the empty workshop. His eyes come to rest on the shelf where the five empty Styrofoam heads sit. Four are lined up neatly in a flawless, identical row.

The fifth head - the one that held the Paul mask - lies crookedly on its side, facing the blank concrete wall. Half-broken.

Haddad reaches for the light switch.

Darkness.

FADE OUT.