HAPPY AVE.

Pilot

Ву

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FADE IN:

EXT. BACKYARD OF A SMALL ENGLISH CHURCH - DAY

The yard is deserted and quiet. Two boys no older than 12 lean against the church wall and talk quietly among themselves. One of them takes out a bag of weed and rolls a joint. FATHER JACOB, 35, priest, dishevelled, appears behind them.

FATHER JACOB

You little punks! Lovely extracurricular activity you have here! Hand this over! Now, listen carefully. This shit will stunt your growth, render you impotent and most likely reduce your life span and set you on a destruction path to a life of debauchery and abuse, guaranteed to make you burn in hell for eternity. You don't want that. Do you, Billy?

Boys shake their heads terrified and pass the joint to Father Jacob.

FATHER JACOB (CONT'D)

I thought as much. Now get out of here! Go, before I tell your mothers.

The boys run without looking back, the sound of their voices slowly fading out.

BILLY (BOY#1)

What's debauchery?

Father Jacob sighs, takes out a box of matches from his pocket and lights the joint. He inhales deeply and starts pacing, a deep frowning look on his face.

INT. FATHER JACOB'S BEDROOM - DAY

TITLE: EARLIER THAT MORNING

An old record player sits on a table in an otherwise empty austere room. We hear Johnny Cash playing Man in black. The connecting bathroom door is open. A closeshot reveals the tattooed arms of a man shaving with smooth, confident moves. He wipes his face with a towel and returns to the room. All we can see is his back, full of old marks and scars. He whistles and dresses slowly. Finally, he turns to look in the mirror fixing his white clerical collar. He is revealed to be Father Jacob.

EXT. FOOT BALL COURT - DAY

An ongoing football match between rival high school teams. Father Jacob, sitting on the sidelines, yells instructions to CHAZZ, 17, sassy, strong willed, punkish.

FATHER JACOB

Attack the ball! Stay in front of them, Chazz! You're our best man.

CHAZZ

I'm a bloody girl.

FATHER JACOB

That went well.

INT. CONFESSION BOOTH - DAY

A dark and narrow confessional. Father Jacob sits bouncing a small rubber ball in his right hand, patiently listening to a string of parishioners.

FRANKIE, 10, skinny, full of pimples, is an old acquaintance.

FRANKIE

Father, I have a lot of sins to confess today.

FRANKIE

When did you have time to accumulate so many, Frankie? Haven't you been here last week?

SMASH CUT TO:

HAROLD PHELPS, 55, sharply dressed, typical businessman, crouches uncomfortably, dusting his expensive suit.

PHELPS

Father, I'm not a praying man, but I'm desperate.

FATHER JACOB

Of course, my son. As I always say to my congregation...'Thou shall think of God only as a last resort'.

SMASH CUT TO:

MARTHA, 50 voluptuous, maternal, carries a PHOTO of her daughter.

MARTHA

Why can't she find a husband, Father? She's beautiful. Gorgeous! Takes after my side of the family.

FATHER JACOB

Many a long night I laid awake pondering that question, Martha.

SMASH CUT TO:

FRANKIE

I didn't mean to shove her, Father. I really didn't. It's her fault. She told on me to mom and dad.

FATHER JACOB

Relax, Frankie. Younger sisters have always been snitches. Everybody knows that.

FRANKIE

Even God?

FATHER JACOB

God knows everything.

FRANKIE

Shit!

SMASH CUT TO:

PHELPS

She threatened to tell my wife, so I paid the little bitch off. Woman, I mean.

SMASH CUT TO:

MARTHA

She's smart, she cooks. She has her own apartment.

SMASH CUT TO:

PHELPS

I'm the chairman of Phelps Industries I am the Phelps in Phelps Industries. The scandal would ruin us.

SMASH CUT TO:

MARTHA

The stress is ruining my health, Father. My sister, Fiona wanted to fix her up with her neighbour's son...a good boy, a doctor. She didn't want to meet him.

SMASH CUT TO:

PHELPS

Who knows if the child was even mine?

SMASH CUT TO:

MARTHA

How can she not want to meet him?

SMASH CUT TO:

FRANKIE

What should I do, Father?

FATHER JACOB

Don't tell your sister where you keep your Hustler. Just a thought.

SMASH CUT TO:

LIZZIE, 30, energetic, beautiful, youthful, enters the confessional.

LIZZIE

Forgive me Father, for I have sinned. Isn't that what I should say?

FATHER JACOB

We all sin.

LIZZIE

Some consolation that is.

FATHER JACOB

What sort of consolation are you looking for?

LIZZIE

I'm not looking for consolation. I'm looking for redemption.

FATHER JACOB

You've come to the right place then.

LIZZIE

Are you the forgiving type, Father?

FATHER JACOB

I'm not, but God is. Depends what needs to be forgiven.

LIZZIE

Neglect. Selfishness. I'm a bad mother, Father.

FATHER JACOB

I've heard worse in my line of work.

LIZZIE

I've heard worse in my line of work too.

FATHER JACOB

What line of work would that be?

LIZZIE

I'm a lawyer, Father. Lizzie Wish, at your disposal. I specialise in mergers and acquisitions.

FATHER JACOB

I see.

LIZZIE

I suppose you do. Workacholic, unreliable, emotionally dettached. I possess the traits of all exceptional advocates.

FATHER JACOB

You're here fretting about it. That means something.

LIZZIE

That I feel guilty, desperate, burnt out? Have your pick. I used to have a different life. I worked for Legal Aid.

FATHER JACOB

That doesn't sound like emotionally dettachment to me.

LIZZIE

I was underpaid and overworked, crammed in a cold office. My clients' most common middle name was 'The Butcher'. Jackie the Butcher Jenkins. Mickey the Butcher O'Toole.

FATHER JACOB

You know Mickey the Butcher? Was it, I mean, what they said in the paper...

LIZZIE

Of course not. Well, maybe some of it was true.

FATHER JACOB

The pig ear?

LIZZIE

Malicious, unfounded rumour.

FATHER JACOB

The police officer stuffed in the trunk?

LIZZIE

Nobody could prove that.

FATHER JACOB

The human cartwheel.

LIZZIE

Partially true. They only counted two bodies. He wasn't perfect, but I cared for him. I cared for all of my clients. I loved my job and I left it for him.

FATHER JACOB

Boyfriend? Husband?

LIZZIE

Ex-husband, a pretentious bastard.

FATHER JACOB

I gather it was not a happy union.

LIZZIE

It wasn't all bad. We have this sweet beautiful girl together and I hardly see her anymore. The last three months have been the worse. I miss bedtimes. I'm tired and distracted at breakfast. It's this whole Happy Ave. Thing.

FATHER JACOB

Happy Ave.?

LIZZIE

Happy Ave. Co., the coffee chain. It's being taken over by Crenshaw Enterprises. I represent Thomas Pearse, the Happy Ave. Founder. It's a huge deal.

FATHER JACOB

And you can't get around this huge deal? Delegate tasks, take some work home...

LIZZIE

Be a mother instead of busy and absentee?

FATHER JACOB

I didn't say that.

LIZZIE

You didn't have to. I'd do all these things normally.

FATHER JACOB

But not this time?

LIZZIE

They're obsessed with confidentiality this time. If word leaks out, everyone will start buying Happy Ave. stock. Nothing leaves the office. I understand.

FATHER JACOB

What about your daughter? Does she understand?

LIZZIE

It won't last long. We've reached an agreement. They sign on Friday and we make the announcement Monday morning. A week and it will be over. I'll go back to being a real mom to her.

FATHER JACOB

If you feel that, why are you here?

LIZZIE

I can't keep anything from you, Father, can I?

FATHER JACOB

Years of practice.

LIZZIE

I feel guilty, I admit, but I stand to win so much. The experience alone is amazing. Would you let the opportunity of a lifetime pass you by?

EXT. BACKYARD OF A SMALL ENGLISH CHURCH - DAY

Father Jacob paces through the yard. He is restless and nervous. The joint trembles in his hand. He takes out a crucifix from his pocket and caresses it distractedly.

CONT'D

FATHER JACOB

Is this a game for you? Are you fucking toying with me? Do you know how long it's been for me? Do you know how much I miss it? It's driving me insane. I can almost taste the chase. Is this some sick twisted test? Give the alcoholic a glass of vodka? Because I have no willpower. Everybody knows that. You know that.

The joint slips from his hand and Father Jacob crushes it angrily under his shoe.

FATHER JACOB (CONT'D)

You're setting me up to lose, you omniscient bastard! This is the opportunity of a life time. You bet your celestial ass, I will bloody not let it pass me by.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

TITLE: LATER THAT NIGHT

Father Jacob sits at the counter nursing a beer. He's deep in discussion with SAM, 40, rugged, street smart, a renowned go to guy on the black market.

FATHER JACOB

I'm a bad priest and a flawed man, but I used to have a shred of decency left.

SAM

Are you saying you're a complete scoundrel now?

FATHER JACOB

Maybe, I don't know, but somehow my moral compass feels broken.

SAM

I never had a moral compass, just three mouths to feed and a bad leg. It twitches when it's cold.

FATHER JACOB

Close enough, I guess.

SAM

You need to get laid. I'll send one of my regular girls over.

FATHER JACOB

I'm a priest.

SAM

That never stopped you before.
Besides, your morals are all but gone out the window. You've said so yourself.

FATHER JACOB

So I did. Almost, but not completely. I'm not looking for sex.

SAM

What can I do for you then, Father?

FATHER JACOB

I need some information.

SAM

Information?

FATHER JACOB

Happy Ave. Co.

SAM

The coffee shop?

FATHER JACOB

The coffee shop.

SAM

Why do you want to know?

FATHER JACOB

I woke up with a craving for a double espresso. How the fuck is that any of your business?

SAM

Don't get your knickers in a twist. Can't blame a man for asking. Information doesn't come cheap.

FATHER JACOB

Never expected otherwise.

SAM

Can't be too certain these days. I'll need some time.

FATHER JACOB

Tomorrow afternoon will do?

SAM

Tomorrow afternoon? Jesus you're

killing me.

FATHER JACOB

I have faith you'll manage.

SAM

You have faith...how touching! Alright, tomorrow afternoon. Instant fucking gratification. Nobody has patience anymore.

FATHER JACOB

I owe you one, Sam.

SAM

You owe me plenty. Put in a good word with the Man upstairs for me.

FATHER JACOB

Will do. I didn't take you as the praying kind.

SAM

The wife is.

FATHER JACOB

How is the lovely Ellen, by the way?

INT. MANSION - DAY

A large dining room with expensive old fashioned furniture and a fire place. Father Jacob and his MOTHER, an imposing elderly woman, sit at opposite ends at a large table.

FATHER JACOB

The prodigal sun returns mother. I see we're not going to pop open a bottle of champagne and celebrate.

FATHER JACOB'S MOTHER

What do you want Jacob?

FATHER JACOB

Alphabetically? Chronologically? How should I list that for you? Perhaps I just want to see you.

FATHER JACOB'S MOTHER

And perhaps I am the leader of the free world.

FATHER JACOB

You'd do a splendid job mother. I always believed that.

FATHER JACOB'S MOTHER
I got tired of your jokes a long time ago Jacob. You're not welcome here anymore.

FATHER JACOB

I've come across an opportunity. It won't come again and I want, I need twenty grand. Consider it a loan. I'll pay it back next week. It won't be like before.

FATHER JACOB'S MOTHER It's money then. Not a particularly hard guess. Jacob, you won't see anymore money out of me.

FATHER JACOB

You always had a fondness for the word no.

 $\label{eq:father_state} \mbox{FATHER JACOB'S MOTHER} \\ \mbox{I hate to refuse you. It hurts me} \\ \mbox{more than you.}$

FATHER JACOB

If I could go back...

FATHER JACOB'S MOTHER But you can't go back...It's better if you leave now.

FATHER JACOB

Could I stay for lunch maybe? Catch up a bit? I'll tell you all about the parish. Father Matthew did just the funniest thing the other day.

 $\label{eq:father_JACOB'S MOTHER} \mbox{I've got a dentist appointment in half an hour.}$

FATHER JACOB

Please...

FATHER JACOB'S MOTHER
Not this time Jacob. I'm an old woman
with a weak heart and a thin
patience. I don't want anymore
heartache. Let yourself out.

INT. STRIP BAR - NIGHT

A seedy strip bar. Father Jacob and SKINNY BOB, a crooked real estate agent, sit at the bar.

FATHER JACOB

Skinny Bob, time's treated you kindly. You don't look a day over fifty.

SKINNY BOB

I'm thirty five. Screw you, man. So, the rumours are true. You're working for God these days.

FATHER JACOB

Great benefits package and longer life expectancy.

SKINNY BOB

So what brings you to this lovely establishment? I thought the pleasures of the flesh didn't do it for you anymore.

FATHER JACOB

I can cast an admiring eye on the beauty of the female form. I'm here for a little chat between friends.

SKINNY BOB

A chat?

FATHER JACOB

A chat.

SKINNY BOB

Might this chat involve vulgar pecuniary matters?

FATHER JACOB

It might.

SKINNY BOB

You disappoint me. I thought you were above this sort of things.

FATHER JACOB

Skinny Bob, we've known each other for a long time. We went through a lot of ugly shit together. I introduced you to your wife for fuck's sake.

SKINNY BOB

A lot of good that did me. A cheating crackhead who likes to gamble. Thanks for that.

FATHER JACOB

That cheating crackhead is the mother of your children. Now, I've not pressured you about the money. I don't even want it all back. Give me twenty grand and we'll consider this matter closed. You owe me man.

SKINNY BOB

I owe you man. I know I do. You re like a brother to me. I love you. When I heard you were reformed, I wept. I shed honest fucking tears for you man.

FATHER JACOB

I love you too Skinny Bob. That's why I need you to come through for me now.

SKINNY BOB

I sympathize with your plight man, but times are hard. You don't how this business works anymore. The fucking Albanians are bleeding us dry. The bureaucrats are greedier than ever. They all want their lion share these days. I'll have to start paying off the fucking mail boy soon.

FATHER JACOB

Don't tell me this, Skinny Bob.

SKINNY BOB

If there's anything else I can do for you man. I've got this 62 Aston Martin in the drive way. Beautiful car! Your kind of ride!

INT. FATHER MATTHEW'S OFFICE - NIGHT.

Father Jacob enters the empty office of Father Matthew, his superior. He picks the lock of a drawer with smooth, practiced movements. He searches through the contents and takes an envelope. He opens it and counts a stack of bills. He prepares to leave and glances at a photo on the desk depicting a smiling Father Matthew.

FATHER JACOB

Don't look at me like that? It's just a loan. You won't even know it was gone. I'll put it back before you can say dilapidation. Why should the orphans get it and not me? I am an

orphan too, rejected by my mother, ignored by my siblings, emotionally abused by a distant father. I need this money too, don't you understand?

He turns the photo upside down and leaves.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. FATHER MATTHEW'S OFFICE - LATER

Father Jacob enters the office, opens the drawer throws the envelope inside. He closes the drawer door angrily and straightens Father Matthew's photo.

FATHER JACOB

Happy now? You know how often an opportunity like this comes your way? You know what the odds are? Wonderful fucking time to grow a conscience. Oh, quit gloating!

He leaves.

INT. FATHER JACOB'S OFFICE - DAY

A small and messy office. Prayer books mingle with old battered comic strips. A Hellboy poster hangs on a wall. Father Jacob sits on a rotating chair, feet propped on the desk, playing with a small rubber ball. Chazz enters.

FATHER JACOB

Here we are, Chazz...

CHAZZ

Here we are, Father J.

FATHER JACOB

Your mom says you've not been yourself lately.

CHAZZ

That's diplomatic of her. She's pissed off at me.

FATHER JACOB

Any particular reason?

CHAZZ

Oh, you know, the usual. She stepped in on me and Bartok the other day.

FATHER JACOB

A, the dangers of pre-marital sex...

CHAZZ

Please, she's just deeply shocked, repulsed and disappointed in my choice of men and would be grateful if I stopped screwing job stealing, disease carrying immigrants. Direct quote.

FATHER JACOB

The Prescotts don't mingle with the help. I'm sorry, kid. The life of the rich and famous is not a walk in the park.

CHAZZ

Nothing I can't handle.

FATHER JACOB

Never had any doubts. What does your dad say?

CHAZZ

Daddy dearest? He says nothing these days. I showed him some lovely photographic souvenirs of him and his secretary and he's become quite affectionate. I'll be getting a new car soon, I expect.

FATHER JACOB

Blackmailing your own father? I don't know if I should be impressed or terrified.

CHAZZ

I'd stick with impressed. I do come bearing gifts today.

FATHER JACOB

What sort of gifts?

CHAZZ

The illegal sort.

FATHER JACOB

My favourite sort.

CHAZZ

There's just one little detail. I've upped my prices, an unfortunate consequence of the economic crisis and decrease of reliable suppliers.

Chazz rummages through her bag and takes out a bag of weed triumphantly. Father Jacob slips the little bag in

his pocket and hands Chazz a few rolled bills.

FATHER JACOB

Reliable suppliers? Chazz, you're a small fish with a trust fund swimming in a pond full of sharks with bad weapons and no knowledge of English grammar. You don't want to mess with those people.

CHA77

Occupational hazards.

FATHER JACOB

How did you pick up this lovely occupation anyway? All the piano lessons and pottery workshops got too boring? Do you get a kick out of selling pot to your spoiled mates?

CHAZZ

I appreciate the concern Father J. I really do. It just melts my cold cynical teenage heart. How was that saying again? Those who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.

FATHER JACOB

Touché! You could give your father a break then. I hear a lot of bad things everyday, kid. Confession is not a walk in the park either. Men cheat on their wives for all kind of stupid, selfish, ridiculous reasons. It doesn't mean they love their children any less.

CHA77

I'll take that under consideration while I drive my new customised Mini to school next week. Well, lovely doing business with you as always. You're my absolute all time favourite customer. I have to run now. Unfortunately, World History is mandatory for all seventeen year olds, even brilliant criminal masterminds like yours truly.

FATHER JACOB

Hold on, your teenage drug lord majesty, I may have some need of your juvenile delinquent expertise.

CHAZZ

I'm intrigued. Tell me more.

FATHER JACOB

I've come across a compromising piece of information about a member of my congregation and I need a skilful collaborator to help me exploit it.

CHAZZ

Exploit it? You want to blackmail the poor bastard! Wicked! I'll do it of course. You'll tell me all about it after History. Ciao!

Chazz turns to leave. She hesitates before the door, a small smile playing on her lips.

CHAZZ (CONT'D)

Father J.?

FATHER JACOB

Yes?

CHAZZ

You smoke pot and blackmail people. That's not standard M.O. for a man of the cloth. How did you become a priest?

FATHER JACOB

Long story kid and you've got History.

CHAZZ

I'll get it out of you some day.

FATHER JACOB

I'll tell you all about it someday.

CHAZZ

Father J.?

FATHER JACOB

Yes?

 \mathtt{CHAZZ}

Don't call me kid!

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY.

The restaurant is bustling with excitement. Phelps is sitting alone at a small table sipping a glass of red wine. Chazz approaches him, smiling and self assured.

CHAZZ

Mr. Phelps? Chazz Prescott, could I steal a moment of your time? I raise money for the Association of Emotionally Abused Women. Can I count on your generous contribution?

PHELPS

Emotionally abused women? Look kid, I don't care who told you where to find me, but I'm not interested. Whatever you're selling I'm not buying. You don't know me well enough if you think I fall for this sort of crap.

CHAZZ

On the contrary Mr. Phelps, I know you very well. I know you come here every Wednesday, precisely at half past twelve. You always order baked sea bass with romesco sauce, strawberry pancakes and an espresso. I know something else too. I know about a certain Miss Eleanor Nesbitt.

PHELPS

Who the hell are you? How do you know Eleanor? Look, whatever she's told you, it's all a bunch of lies. If I had a penny for every disgruntled former employee with an axe to grind and a story to tell...

CHAZZ

You'd have a lot of pennies. I've heard that story before. Don't get up. I'll sit down. We don't want to attract attention now, do we?

PHELPS

What kind of game are you playing?

CHAZZ

Pay attention Mr. Phelps. I hate to repeat myself. I said I know about Eleanor...all the nasty details. I'm willing to forget everything...for the right amount. You'll find it's very reasonable.

Chazz takes out a pen from her pocket and scribbles some numbers on a napkin.

PHELPS

You're blackmailing me? Crazy bitch, you don't know who you're messing with!

MIRANDA PRESCOTT, 40 tall, sophisticated, elegant, joins their table. Her driver, MARTIN, a large, menacing man, hovers behind her. She studies Phelps with a cold, disdainful stare.

MTRANDA

I'd watch my language if I were you. Who is this wretched man, darling?

PHELPS

Who the fuck are you?

CHAZZ

Mom? What are you doing here? How'd you find me?

MIRANDA

I followed you of course. Martin followed you, actually. It was all rather exciting.

CHAZZ

You followed me?

MIRANDA

I worry about you, Charlotte. You never talk to me.

PHELPS

Listen lady, if you know what's good for your blackmailing, scheming daughter, you'll take her out of my sight. I don't ever want to see you two crack heads again.

MIRANDA

Darling, blackmailing is such a vulgar enterprise.

CHAZZ

But mom, he's a slime bag. Harold Phelps, chairman of Phelps Industries, pillar of the community, renowned benefactor of the Children with Leukaemia Association. What a bloody joke!

MIRANDA

Language, darling. How many times do I have to tell you?

CHARLOTTE

Sorry, mom...Ask him about Eleanor Nesbitt. Stupid girl got pregnant. He paid her off, made her take an abortion.

PHELPS

Look here...

CHAZZ

Guess where Eleanor is now? Locked up in St. Joseph's after she fixed herself a jolly cocktail of sleeping pills and cockroach poison.

MIRANDA

Is that true Mr. Phelps?

PHELPS

It's none of your damn business, lady.

MIRANDA

I am an advocate of forgiveness. I believe people can redeem themselves. However, I feel you are not sufficiently repentant.

PHELPS

That's enough. I'm getting out of here. Waiter!

MIRAND A

I wouldn't advise that, Mr. Phelps. I have a better idea. Martin here will accompany you to the bank.

MARTIN

Certainly, madam.

MIRANDA

You will give him precisely the amount of money written on that dirty, greasy napkin.

Miranda picks up the napkin delicately and dangles it between her fingers with contempt.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

The napkin is very tacky, darling. Perhaps you understand now why I insist on you carrying a little notebook at all times.

PHELPS

You're insane. You dumb broads, I will go straight to the fucking police. We'll see how they like your little scenario?

MIRANDA

Mr. Phelps, your wife is a charming woman and a dedicated member of my fund raising committee. Indeed I couldn't have organised the charity ball for the victims of Addison disease without her. I will draw no pleasure in publicly exposing her husband as a vile, cheating, repulsive pig, with no respect for women, the miracle of conception and the holy institute of matrimony.

CHAZZ

Go, mom!

Chazz CLAPS her hands loudly.

MIRANDA

I will do it in a heart beat however if you ever threaten my child again. You will accompany Martin to the bank. You will give Martin the money. You will visit that poor Miss Nesbitt in the hospital and insure she is well taken care of. Nod if you understand

PHELPS

How do I know you people won't come back again?

MIRANDA

Because I say so. That'll be good enough, I trust. Martin, you will be kind enough to drive Mr. Phelps to the bank. Charlotte and I will wait here. Fancy a spot of lunch darling? The sea bass looks lovely.

Phelps slams his napkin on the table and leaves.

CHAZZ

Nobody drives fear through the hearts of mortals quite like you Lady Prescott! You were superb mom. I suppose I am in loads of trouble. I can explain everything you know...

MIRANDA

We'll talk about it some other time, Charlotte. I just want to know one thing. Do you need the money?

CHAZZ

Mom, of course not. I'm offended. My finances are in an impeccable state. Just a favour for a friend... Besides, I reckon he deserved it. He's a downright wanker.

MIRANDA

I see. You should have dressed better. You can't expect people to take you seriously in a wrinkled shirt and this god awful footwear.

CHAZZ

Converse, mom! They're called Converse!

MIRANDA

Regardless, blackmailing is all about confidence. A sensible pair of shoes, a sharp suit would have made all the difference. We'll have to go shopping.

CHAZZ

Shopping? Just the two of us? Mom, really? Well, I won't be caught dead in any sensible shoes.

MIRANDA

You've obviously inherited your father's fashion sense, darling. We'll see what we find. Perhaps a nice dress would do. You'll wear it next week for dinner. You can invite your friend from the other day, fully clothed this time I hope. I'll instruct Fiona to prepare a special Polish dish. He's not a vegetarian I trust?

INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

The inside of an elegant limousine. Miranda and Martin talk in quiet companionship.

MIRAN DA

I don't approve of Charlotte blackmailing that dreadful man.

MARTIN

Naturally, madam.

MIRANDA

I suppose we should reimburse him, don't you think, Martin?

MARTIN

If madam wishes it so.

MIRANDA

I don't wish it. He's a scoundrel. I have half a mind to tell his wife. I know an excellent divorce lawyer.

MARTIN

Miss Charlotte wouldn't be pleased.

MIRANDA

No, I suppose not. She never could stand a cheater. But blackmail?

MARTIN

Miss Charlotte has her own moral compass.

MIRANDA

It's my own fault. I've been a bad mother.

MARTIN

Madam is a superb mother.

MIRANDA

Rubbish, but thank you, Martin. She takes after me, doesn't she? Wonderful hair, great financial instincts?

MARTIN

The spitting image of you, madam.

MIRANDA

Indeed. Find this Nesbitt girl, Martin. I'm sure she needs a job and I need a guarantee Harold Phelps will not bother us again.

MARTIN

Certainly.

MIRAND A

Teenagers think they are so clever. Don't they? I could teach Chazz a thing or two about blackmail?

MARTIN

Never doubted it. Madam wrote the book on blackmail.

MIRANDA

Mind you, I don't approve of it.

MARTIN

Your moral principles have always been admirable.

MTRANDA

Morals are fundamental, Martin. I dare say, I did a good job teaching this Phelps fellow a lesson in them.

MARTIN

He should be very grateful.

MIRANDA

Your sense of perception is flawless as always, Martin. Alas, gratitude has all but vanished.

Miranda brushes an invisible spec of dust from her skirt and opens a fashion magazine.

MIRANDA (CONT'D)

Good, now that we've settled this...

INT. FATHER JACOB'S OFFICE - DAY

Chazz bursts through the door and throws a thick envelope on the desk.

CHAZZ

Compliments from Mr. Phelps.

FATHER JACOB

I'm bloody impressed. Great job, kid! You've more than earned your 10 percent.

CHAZZ

About that, I've decided to forego my usual fee. Consider this a token of my appreciation, a gift, a kind contribution to the Father J. Fund for Anonymous Blackmailers.

FATHER JACOB

That's uncharacteristically generous of you, Chazz. Are you feeling well? I thought you didn't do favours.

CHAZZ

Oh, I don't. I'd like to renegotiate the terms of our agreement.

FATHER JACOB

Renegotiate? Greed is a green eye monster.

CHAZZ

That's envy. Greed is just financial savvy.

FATHER JACOB

It's hard to keep track of all your sins, Chazz. You've got so many of them.

CHAZZ

Pot kettle black. It occurred to me Father J., that you've not been completely forthcoming in this little enterprise of ours.

FATHER JACOB

I haven't lied to you, Chazz.

CHAZZ

But you haven't told me the whole truth either. You see, my instinct tells me you're interested in bigger things than just making a few grands and putting the fear of God and my mother in poor cheating Mr. Phelps.

FATHER JACOB

Everybody keeps secrets, kid.

CHAZZ

I want to know your secret. Whatever twisted scheme you're plotting, I want in. I won't play the sidekick to your Hellboy.

FATHER JACOB

Hellboy doesn't have a sidekick.

INT. BROKER'S OFFICE - DAY

BRENDAN, broker, young, harried, stumbles through the door, reading a thick file and balancing a coffee in his hand. Father Jacob waits in the seat reserved for clients.

BRENDAN

Good day, sorry to have kept you

waiting. Brendan Rice is my name.

Brendan lifts his eyes from the file and notices Father Jacob's white priest collar.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Holy crap, you're a priest! I'm so sorry. Normally our clients aren't...

FATHER JACOB

Priests?

BRENDAN

As a matter of fact, yes. Not that we have a problem with priests of course. I come from a religious household myself, actually. My dad was a vicar.

INT. LIZZIE'S OFFICE - DAY

A meeting is wrapping up. Representatives of Crenshaw Enterprises and Happy Ave. Co and their lawyers are shaking hands and trading congratulations. Lizzie and THOMAS PEARSE, 35, founder of Happy Ave. Co., sit in a corner. They look tense and exhausted. BILL CRENSHAW, 65 strong and enthusiastic, joins them.

CRENSHAW

We're very pleased Mr. Pearse.

THOMAS

Thomas.

CRENSHAW

Thomas, Happy Ave. will have a great future. In a year you'll drink decaf cappuccino at a Happy Ave. in Tokyo, in Sydney, in...What's the damn capital of Bangladesh called?

THOMAS

Dhaka.

CRENSHAW

That's right. Your life has changed. We'll make the announcement Monday. Your shares will soar.

Crenshaw slaps Thomas on the back and leaves. Thomas turns towards Lizzie.

THOMAS

Could you translate this for me, Lizzie?

LIZZIE

Congratulations Tom. You're a very rich man.

THOMAS

With a morally bankrupt soul.

LIZZIE

You're still CEO of Happy Ave Co., Tom. You're just not the majority stock holder anymore.

THOMAS

Tell me I've made the right decision Lizzie.

LIZZIE

You can do a lot of good with this sort of money.

THOMAS

So everybody keeps saying. Money is rotten Lizzie. Money is a rotten, beautiful, irresistible temptation.

INT. BROKER'S OFFICE - DAY

Brendan stares at a list of stock information on his flat screen.

BRENDAN

Father, are you completely sure? I can recommend other investment opportunities that would be more advisable choices. The market at the moment is very fragile. I strongly encourage you to...

FATHER JACOB

Brendan, may I call you Brendan? I appreciate your concern, but I have faith Happy Ave. won't disappoint me.

BRENDAN

As you wish, of course. The client's wishes are our own. That's it then. Twenty grand worth of Happy Ave. stock. If I'm not too bold, may I inquire what made you take this decision?

FATHER JACOB

Let's just say it was a sign from God.

BRENDAN

Well Father, I hope God is right.

INT. FATHER JACOB'S BEDROOM - DAY

Father Jacob sits on the side of the bed, a beer in his hand, eyes glued to the television, watching the news.

NEWS

The surprise announcement caused an uproar on the coffee market. The price of Happy Ave. shares sky rocketed today and experts predict it will continue to go up. Happy Ave. founder is Thomas Pearse, a Scottish born writer, winner of the prestigious Whitbread Book Award. A mysterious figure in the literary world, Pearse's books met with critical acclaim, but failed to capture the attention of the public. The take over of Happy Ave. is a highly surprising move, due to Pearse's longstanding antiestablishment stance. Happy Ave. began as a single shabby bohemian cafe in Chelsea and expanded to a small chain. Two years ago it went public.

Father Jacob closes his eyes, toasts the air and drains the beer.

EXT. HAPPY AVE. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

A warm, beautiful day. People go in and out of the coffee shop.

FATHER JACOB (V.O.)

We are all sinners. Some of us struggle every day to build a better life.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. HAPPY AVE. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Thomas Pearse watches the financial news transfixed.

FATHER JACOB (V.O.)

But

Some temptations are hard to resist;

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. STRIP BAR - NIGHT

Father Jacob sits at a table watching a girl dancing around a pole. She winks at him and he smiles.

FATHER JACOB (V.O.)

Some bad habits are hard to break;

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Father Jacob's mother sits alone at an empty table, an untouched plate of food in front of her.

FATHER JACOB (V.O.)

And some mistakes are hard to amend.

SMASH CUT TO:

SPLIT SCREEN EXT. PARK - DAY/EXT. HARRODS - DAY

Lizzie and her daughter sit on a swing eating ice cream.

Chazz and Miranda enter Harrods hand in hand carrying huge shopping bags.

FATHER JACOB (V.O.)

In the end we all pray for a slice of happiness, a one in a million miracle, an unbreakable bond and we hope that somebody's listening.

FADE OUT:

THE END