

Seraphim's Miracle

By: J.B. Storey

Based On:

A tall tale told to me by my father

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INT. BAGRAM AIR BASE - DAY

Afghanistan.

Early morning.

A makeshift civilian PRESS OFFICE.

Desks cluttered with paper, BEER cans, and VODKA bottles.

On a small, scratchy COUCH sleeps BEN CHAMBERS, (early-40s). Rumpled, sleep deprived, and a smidge hungover.

Ben's PHONE rings, waking him up. A small sliver of light behind a curtain pierces his eyes.

Ben looks at his phone. Smiles. He answers, triggering a video call.

On the other side of the screen is Ben's wife, BETH CHAMBERS (early-40s). Pretty. Bohemian-chic.

Beth's sitting in a classroom.

BETH
Morning, Dummy.

BEN
Hey, Dopey. How was school?

BETH
Well, one of my girls glued her hand to a desk and one of the boys crapped his pants. So, business as usual! How's the Ranger Unit?

BEN
About the same; but instead of glue and poops my kids have guns and grenades.

BETH
Wanna swap?

BEN
Uh, no. Much safer here, and less explosive.

Beth rolls her eyes at Ben's terrible pun.

Ben hears footsteps in the hallway approaching the room.

BEN
Shoot. Gotta jet. Same Bat-time tomorrow?

BETH
(Nods, smiles)

(CONTINUED)

Same Bat-channel. B4B?

BEN

B4B.

Beth hurriedly blows Ben a kiss, he grabs it and puts it into his heart. He blows her a kiss and she repeats the gesture, before they both hang up.

The DOOR to the press room swings open.

Standing in the doorway is SELINA RICHARDSON, (late-40s) a tall, elegant, and steely woman who clearly runs the show.

Next to Selina is JON (early-50s). A tall, bald, strapping man from Northern England.

JON

Ah, there's our wee Laddy.

BEN

Ma. Pa.

JON

(Grinning)
Cheeky bastard.

BEN

What's up?

SELINA

You're rolling with Alpha today.

BEN

The SEALs? Thought that was Jon's assignment?

SELINA

Arab Spring's in full bloom. So, 007 here is off to Syria. Which means you're next off the bench.

JON

What's it you Yanks like to say?
(Fakes American accent)
Go hit a touchdown, Slugger!

BEN

Seriously. Worse accent ever.

JON

Aye, but you're an ugly bastard. And I can switch back to the Queen's any time I want.

Ben chuckles, as does Jon and Selina.

(CONTINUED)

BEN
Anything else I need to know?

JON
It's a garden variety intel op. Click
and observe.

SELINA
Piece of cake, Sparky.

JON
Took time to earn their trust, so
don't cock it up!

SELINA
And don't be late.

Jon grins and winks at Ben, turns to leave.

Selina nods to Ben and follows Jon. She wraps her PINKY
FINGER around Jon's as they walk down the hallway.

Ben goes to his desk. Pulls a KEVLAR VEST from his chair,
with the word PRESS scrawled across the front.

EXT. BROOKLYN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - NIGHT

SUPER: Brooklyn, New York

Early evening. The school is closed for the day.

Beth walks outside.

She sees a nine-year-old GIRL sitting on a stoop, waiting.

Beth looks down at her.

BETH
Hey, Sweetie. Your Mom late again?

The girl looks up at Beth, and nods her head sadly.

Beth looks at her watch. She decides to wait with the girl.

She sits down next to the girl, who in turn smiles. The girl
then opens a little LUNCH BOX. She takes out a small CUPCAKE,
splits it in half, and gives one half to Beth.

GIRL
I made it myself.

Beth smiles back at the girl and takes a bite.

INT. RAMSHACKLE HOUSE - DAY

Afghan village. Dust. Gunfire. Chaos.

Six members of ALPHA TEAM, under intense FIRE, take refuge in a cramped, battered SHACK, in the middle of a dusty village.

The SEALs hold positions by the windows, firing back.

Amid the CHAOS is Ben, taking PICTURES.

BEN
(Under his breath)
Piece of cake, my ass.

In the middle of the room is Master Chief, Al KING (late-30s), African-American. He's communicating to HQ.

KING
Paradise. Repeat, Alpha Team under heavy contact. We're stranded and surrounded. Request QRF, over.

PARADISE (VO)
Copy. Standby for orders, over.

KING
(To his men)
QRF incoming.

Chief Petty Officer, ANSON (mid-30s), fires rapidly through a broken window.

ANSON
Can't see shit, Boss.

Petty Officer, JARVIS, scraggy beard, (late-20s), fires from a different window close to Anson. He has a sniper rifle.

JARVIS
Looks like a *Tally* street parade.

ANSON
And we're the entertainment.

Jarvis looks out the window. He sees a MAN on a roof on a large building 200-yards away. He's holding an Rocket Propelled Grenade launcher (RPG).

JARVIS
Shit! RPG, RPG!

Jarvis takes a shot and hits the enemy in the head. They still fire the RPG, but it flies in another direction.

Ben covers his head when he hears the explosion.

ANSON
Whooooo... Helluva shot, boy!

BEN
(To Anson)

(CONTINUED)

Thought this was an intel op.

ANSON
Welcome to Alpha, Kodak.

KING
(To Jarvis)
Any more?

JARVIS
Will be.

KING
Copy that.
(Goes back on the radio)
Paradise, this is Alpha One. Stand
down QRF request, LZ's too hot. Advise
on another exfil plan, over.

ANSON
Like scorched Earth, hot!

PARADISE (VO)
Copy that, Alpha One. We'll work the
problem from our side, over.

KING
Copy that, over.

Enemy GUNFIRE ramps up.

KING
Ok. Options?

ANSON
They got us pinched in a *Little Big
Horn*. So, no matter what, we gotta
fight.

JARVIS
Lay down smoke. *Butch* and *Sundance* our
way out the front?

KING
Negative. That's a last resort.

Jarvis looks out at the big building again where most of the
enemy combatants have massed.

JARVIS
What if we make a new path?

KING
What do you mean?

(CONTINUED)

JARVIS
We could frag their building and punch
a path straight through.

ANSON
(Nods)
Fire mission'd get it done.

JARVIS
Even then... It's danger close.

KING
I'll take those odds.

The soldiers turn their attention to the increasing level of
ENEMY FIRE coming from outside. King gets back on comms.

KING
Paradise. Request fire mission on our
vector, over.

PARADISE (VO)
Roger that. Standby, Alpha One. Over.

Mortar fire shakes the windows. The enemy fighters are
getting closer to their position.

The SEALs continue to fight harder, and harder. Ben is
starting to get worried.

PARADISE (VO)
Alpha One, closest Eagle is twenty
mikes out, over.

KING
Crap.
(Turns back to the radio)
Paradise, copy that.

King looks over his men.

KING
Looks like it's gonna be *Butch* and
Sundance after all.

Another mortar explodes, even closer this time.

PARADISE (VO)
Alpha One. Change of plans. We have an
Eagle fifty clicks out from your
vector. Coming in hot. Advise you tag
the target for fire mission, over.

KING
Copy that, over.

(CONTINUED)

PARADISE (VO)
Patching you through to the Eagle,
call sign *Seraphim*. Paradise out.

KING
Anson, light it up.

Anson grabs a LASER TAGGER from his backpack. Points it at a BUILDING 200 yards away.

ANSON
Laser designator, 754.322.Echo.

KING
Copy that.
(Switches on the radio)
Seraphim, this is Alpha One.

SERAPHIM (VO)
Copy Alpha One, this is Seraphim.
Twenty clicks out, over.

KING
Copy, Seraphim. Request fire mission,
laser designator 754.322.Echo, over.

SERAPHIM (VO)
That's danger close, Alpha One.
Confirm order, over?

King looks at his men.

KING
Order confirmed, Seraphim. Over.

SERAPHIM (VO)
Copy that, Alpha One. Splash down in
thirty seconds. Seraphim, out.

KING
Roger that, Seraphim. Do us proud.
Alpha One out.

All of the men stare at King, including Ben.

KING
Ok boys, shit's about to go BOOM.

The sound of a JET FIGHTER approaches. Louder and louder. The men take cover on the floor. Ben snaps a few more pictures.

Then... King grabs Ben and DRAGS him to the ground.

A small LEATHER-BOUND BOOK with 'B4B' embossed on the cover, falls out Ben's pocket.

KING
(To Ben)

(CONTINUED)

We're not gonna make Mrs. Kodak a widow today. Not on my watch.

Ben nods. Looks for his book. Grabs it. Holds it tight.

The whistling sound of a MISSILE cuts through the noise. Ben looks up at a window.

Everything flashes like a white flare, he covers his eyes.

EXT. BROOKLYN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Beth shades her eyes from the lights of a car, as it pulls up to the curb, to pick up the Girl.

The Girl gets into the car. Her MOTHER mouths 'Sorry' to Beth as they drive away.

Beth glances at her WATCH, frowns. She decides to WALK.

She carries a LEATHER SATCHEL over her shoulder. She turns down a QUIET STREET, it starts to SNOW.

Twenty-feet in front of her is a CREEPY MAN (early-20s). He appears to be attempting to break-in to a CAR.

He stops, sees Beth. She pauses, unsure of what to do. His eyes dart around crazily. He's hopped-up on something.

The man looks at her. Reaches into his coat pocket.

Pulls out a GUN.

BETH

Please... you don't have to-

BANG.

The guns goes off in his trembling hands.

INT. AIR PLANE HANGAR - DAY

Back in Afghanistan.

Ben sits at a table with King, Anson, Jarvis, and some other soldiers. They're laughing as they drink BEER and play CARDS.

Ben shades his eyes from a bright ray of sunshine blazing over Corporal Anson's shoulder.

ANSON

Hot damn, that was a doozy!

JARVIS

Anyone else's ears still ringin'?

(CONTINUED)

ANSON
From the explosion or you screaming
for your mama?

JARVIS
No, brother. I was screaming out for
YOUR mama!

All the guys laugh and throw down a few more gulps of beer.

BEN
(To King)
Level with me... how bad was it?

KING
We were one hundred percent *fubarred*.

ANSON
Just the way a frog man likes it.

JARVIS
Always in the fight, baby!

Ben just shakes his head in disbelief at their craziness.

King smiles, notices Ben is holding his 'B4B' booklet.

KING
(Points to the booklet)
So, what's with the book?

BEN
My wife made it for me. Sorta a good
luck charm, I guess.

King reaches into his pocket, and pulls out a small book.

KING
Got me one of those too.

Ben notices it's a mini-Bible.

KING
Goes where I go. So, the Big Guy's
always got my six. You feel me?

BEN
(Rolls his eyes)
So, it was the 'Big Guy' who got us
outta that jam?

KING
Wouldn't be the first time he's worked
a miracle for Alpha.

Anson, Jarvis, and the other SEALs around the table nod.

(CONTINUED)

JARVIS
Somalia.

ANSON
Uh-huh... Somalia.

KING
And many more.

BEN
(Facetious)
So, it wasn't the pilot who saved us?

KING
Mysterious ways, Kodak.

ANSON
Shit. Didntcha ya'll hear? Pilot's
dead.

BEN
Dead? How?

A YOUNG SOLDIER arrives at their table and salutes King.

SOLDIER
(To Ben)
Sir. Your boss'd like a word.

BEN
Right now?

The soldier nods. Ben reluctantly gets up. He's still holding his Kevlar vest.

As he follows the Soldier he notices a tall Asian-American WOMAN (late-30s) in a pilot's jumpsuit talking to an Officer. She glances at Ben. She seems sad, melancholy.

For a moment they lock eyes. Then she continues talking to the Officer. Ben follows the Soldier out the hangar.

INT. PRESS OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ben bundles into the hot, claustrophobic office, smiling and enthusiastic.

Selina, sits at one of those desks. In front of her is a placard that reads:

'Selina Richardson, Chief War Correspondent, Reuters'.

BEN
It was crazy. Oh, and for the record,
you can tell Jon to shove that so-
called piece of cake up his Royal
Crown! I didn't expect...

(CONTINUED)

Ben's voice trails off as he notices Selina's bloodshot eyes and sad countenance.

SELINA
Benji, you should sit.

BEN
What... what's goin' on? Something
happen to Jon?

SELINA
It's Beth.

Ben freezes.

BEN
What... what do you mean, 'Beth'?

Selina tries to hold back her SOBS.

SELINA
Benji. She was shot.

BEN
Shot? But she's not here. She-

SELINA
In Brooklyn.

BEN
Is... is... is she okay?

Selina shakes her head. Starts to cry.

Ben's world flips on its axis. Everything goes blurry.

The Kevlar vest he was holding, slips from his fingers and hits the floor with a lifeless thump.

It begins to RAIN heavily outside.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

SUPER: Upstate New York - The Incident

A humble and spacious paragon of evangelical Americana.

A ferocious STORM rumbles outside.

Anxious PARISHIONERS huddle together to stay safe.

Mid-way up the aisle, sits NORM (mid-50s), a Marines Corps veteran. He stares at a PICTURE in a LOCKET of a woman.

Norm pulls out a HIP FLASK and takes a SWIG. A few women stare at him, with pity. Norm lowers his head.

(CONTINUED)

Toward the back is GEORGE (mid-20s), African-American. He sits next to his Mother, LILLIAN (late-40s).

George holds a biker club VEST. Lillian looks at it with distaste.

Further up, is FRANKIE (mid-20s), a marginally-sober junkie.

Frankie glances nervously at a young CHOIR BOY (dressed in black), as he hands a COLLECTION BOX to an elderly PRIEST.

The Priest places the box down near the ALTAR.

LIGHTENING followed by loud THUNDER elicits frightened gasps.

Frankie stays focused on the Collection Box. She notices the Choirboy staring at her. She smirks.

The STORM comes to an abrupt stop.

The church is eerily silent. The parishioners are confused.

DANTE (early-50s), a big, burly red-headed SHERIFF, stands.

DANTE

I do believe she's done a-huffin' and
a-puffin', folks.

EDITH ROGERS (mid-50s), devout and pious, also stands:

EDITH

Thank the Lord, for our salvation.

Norm rolls his eyes, contemptuously. Stands. As do others.

Frankie rises, takes a step toward the Collection Box.

George sits up, starts to put on his MC vest. Lillian silently pleads for him to stay. George looks away.

Norm nudges toward the aisle, when-

The BACK DOORS BURST OPEN.

A MYSTERY MAN, in silhouette, stands between the doors.

A bright LIGHT behind this MYSTERY MAN, forces the surprised parishioners to cover their eyes.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET ALLEY - [BEN'S DREAM]

Night.

CLOSE IN:

(CONTINUED)

On Beth. Her pale face is turned to the side. Her head, resting on her brown, leather SATCHEL.

Small snow flakes fall and rest in her hair.

Ben's face is opposite hers. She stares into Ben's eyes.

BETH
Where's my miracle?

Ben tries to say something...

INT. BEN'S BROOKLYN APARTMENT - DAY

SUPER: Eight years later

Morning. The bedroom.

Ben LURCHES AWAKE, covered in sweat.

He squints his eyes, as bright morning light pierces through a crack in the CURTAINS.

He wipes his face. Looks over at the bedside TABLE. Notices something missing. He frantically looks around.

Sees his B4B booklet is on the floor, scattered among a gaggle of BOOKS about MOUNTAIN CLIMBING and K2.

Ben grabs the book, holds it tightly to his chest and sighs.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Ben sits on a park bench facing a large CHURCH. He holds two paper cups filled with COFFEE.

SARGENT VOGEL (early-40s), a plain clothes detective, with a graying goatee, sits next to Ben on the bench.

Ben hands Vogel a cup. A familiar gesture.

BEN
Anything?

VOGEL
'Nother dead end.

BEN
Thought as much.

VOGEL
(Heavy sigh)
Listen, Ben, the Chief ordered me to permanently ice the investigation.

(CONTINUED)

BEN
So, it's a cold case now?

VOGEL
(Shrugs apologetically)
It's been eight years of questions
without answers.

INT. NYPD STATION - DAY [FLASHBACK]

Six weeks after Beth died.

Floor to ceiling glass conference room.

Ben is sitting at a small table with Vogel. In front of them
are files.

Outside of the conference room is Selina. She's on the phone.

VOGEL
All we can say for certain, is that
the shooting was random. None of the
evidence suggests it was pre-
meditated. So, our working theory is
that Beth might've walked into a
tweaker trying to steal a car. He
likely panicked and...

BEN
Shot her.

VOGEL
Yes.

BEN
Wrong place, wrong time. That's all
you got? No more leads? Witnesses? A
weapon?

VOGEL
Not yet.

BEN
What about the hotline?

VOGEL
We got a half-lead the other day, but
it's... it's a non-starter.

BEN
Why?

VOGEL
Caller heard a guy in a church
confessional ranting 'bout a woman he
killed. But...

Vogel shakes his head as his voice trails off.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

But what?

VOGEL

Look, I grew up in a Catholic home. Sunday school, the whole nine. So, lemme tell ya, it'll literally take an act of God to get a Catholic priest to break the confessional seal.

BEN

So, you gave up?

VOGEL

That's not a hill worth dying on. Besides, most tips are-

SELINA (OS)

(Screaming)

Nooo!

Startled, Ben and Vogel see Selina outside the conference room, staring at her phone in abject horror.

Selina's hand is clamped to her mouth, stifling another scream. Tears pour down her eyes.

END FLASHBACK

INT. PARK - DAY [CONTINUOUS]

VOGEL

Wish I coulda done more, but it's outta my hands now. I'm sorry.

BEN

You got nothin' to be sorry for.

(Sighs)

Truth is, you went above and beyond.

Ben huffily dumps out his coffee. Glares at the Church.

BEN

If only others cared as much.

Ben gets up, as does Vogel. He notices Ben staring angrily at the church. Changes the subject.

VOGEL

By the way... I love the take-downs you been writin'.

BEN

Thanks.

(CONTINUED)

VOGEL

The old lady thinks you should just live and let live. But she doesn't see the real world out here on the streets. She doesn't understand that fantasy tales about ghosts, miracles and other mumbo jumbo doesn't pay the bills or put food on the table.

BEN

Or save lives.

(Glances at his watch)

Speakin' of, I gotta go see a guy about a lie.

Ben nods to Vogel who walks the other way. Ben takes one last venomous look at the church before he walks away.

INT. LARGE BOOKSTORE - NIGHT

RAVI SHARMA (late-30s), sits in FAUX LIVING ROOM, facing an audience. He's charming and charismatic.

On a TABLE, is a pile of BOOKS with a picture of Ravi on the cover, in MOUNTAIN CLIMBING GEAR.

The book title reads: 'Surviving K2'.

Behind Ravi, a screen plays a SLIDE SHOW of related images.

Somewhere toward the back of the room, is Ben.

Ravi reads to the audience.

The slide show projects an image of Ravi with his DAD.

RAVI

My father and I were estranged when he died of heart failure. We never reconciled our differences. In a way, that's what prompted my desire to tackle K2. I figured if I could touch the heavens maybe he'd hear me.

Slide show projects an image of K2.

RAVI

I reached K2's magical summit five months later. And once there, I made an offering to Krishna and my father.

Slide show projects an image of Ravi at the summit.

RAVI

(Pauses to sip water)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RAV (CONT'D)

During our descent we were hit by a lethal ice storm. It wiped out the sherpas and climbers, one by one.

The audience is enraptured.

RAVI

After two days I was alone and it was only a matter of time before I died.

(A beat)

But then, the incredible happened; My Papa appeared before me. More than just an apparition. He felt real.

The audience are on the edge of their seats.

RAVI

He urged me to get up and go.

(Takes another sip of water)

I had no oxygen, no water, no food. Yet, somehow his spirit pushed me to move. And it was he who led me down to the base camp. It was... a miracle.

Ravi bows his head and holds his hands in prayer, a gesture of 'thanks' to the audience, who clap enthusiastically.

RAVI

Ah, you're too kind. Any questions?

Ravi looks around... sees Ben waving his hand.

RAVI

Yes?

BEN

The name '*Dowa Pamu*' ring a bell?

RAVI

Perhaps. Who are they?

BEN

Dowa's a Nepalese sherpa. He helped you up K2. Ding dong?

RAVI

Oh, you mean DP? That's what we called him. Great guy. Couldn't speak English, but was an awesome sherpa. He was... uh, one of the last to go.

BEN

You saw him die?

RAVI

Sadly, I saw all of them die.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

So, there's no way you stole Dowa's oxygen, and that of the other surviving climbers as they slept?

RAVI

That's completely crazy and untrue.

BEN

Not according to Dowa.

RAVI

Impossible.... he's dead.

BEN

Is he? Or maybe, unlike you, he really did make it down K2 without any oxygen, after being left for dead. Maybe, just maybe there were four of you still alive on the Northeast ridge. But none of you had enough oxygen to make it down. It required at least three canisters each. So you resolved to stay together. Any of that sound familiar?

RAVI

This isn't funny. People died.

BEN

Correct. Ann Wright and Joe Dean, were the other climbers you killed.

COLLEGE GIRL

Is it true?

RAVI

Lies. All lies.

BEN

Dowa's alive, Ravi. In fact, he's super-eager to share his story.

Ravi notices that the audience is aghast.

RAVI

Where's your proof?

BEN

Go to YouTube and search for 'Dowa's K2 Story.' See for yourselves.

The audience watch the VIDEO on their phones. They're shocked. Ravi is fuming.

RAVI

(To Ben)

You SON OF A BITCH!

(CONTINUED)

Ben puts on his jacket, starts to head out.

BEN
Enjoy the rest of your book tour.

Ben smiles, smugly. Snaps a picture of Ravi silently raging.

INSERT

Cover of a magazine entitled: 'Scuttlebutt'. The cover features Ben's snapshot of Ravi raging in the bookstore.

It reads:

"Killer Climber Caught" - Best Selling author's miraculous story about surviving a disaster on K2 was a murderous lie.

Underneath the snapshot of Ravi in the bookstore, are pictures of the climbers he left for dead.

END INSERT

INT. 'SCUTTLEBUT' OFFICE - DAY

New York City. A few weeks later.

INSERT

The 'Scuttlebutt' magazine cover featuring Ravi.

END INSERT

A bedraggled-looking Ben holds up the cover of the magazine as he gets off an elevator.

On a wall opposite the elevator is a placard for 'SCUTTLEBUTT MEDIA'(think, *Huffington Post* meets *National Enquirer*).

Ben heads toward a conference room abuzz with WRITERS.

Ben enters discreetly. Throws the magazine into the TRASH.

At the head of the table is Selina, now (mid-50s), managing editor and founder of 'SCUTTLEBUTT'.

SELINA
Ok kids, it's go time.

Selina points to SARAH, a young woman to the left of her.

SARAH
Sarah, any update on the Pornstar turned kindergarten teacher?

(CONTINUED)

SARAH

Took a while, but we dug up some of her videos from the early-80s. And let's just say Ms. Cantor, AKA: *Bobbi Blows*, lived up to her stage name.

SELINA

Hot for Teacher. Nice work.

Selina points to MARK (early-30s), sitting to the right of her.

SELINA

Mark, Wall Street?

MARK

Rumor has it, the CEOs from Sachs, Morgan, and Stanley, are *Illuminati*. And they've been colluding for years to manipulate the markets.

SELINA

Cash Cult. That'll play.

Mark nods, pleased with himself.

SELINA

(Sips coffee)

Tech?

Nobody replies.

SELINA

Wait a sec... Where's Jacob?

Selina looks down the TABLE.

SARAH

Um... he's on family leave.

Selina rolls her eyes.

MARK

They had a little girl. She's-

SELINA

Who's covering for Jacob?

Clicks her fingers trying to remember. Points to a young ASIAN MAN at the end of the table... RONNY (early-20s).

SELINA

Donny? You're on Jacob's team, right?

Ronny's mouth is full with a half-eaten bite of BAGEL. He SPITS it out into a napkin.

(CONTINUED)

RONNY
Uh, yeah. I write his blogs. My name's
Ronny, by the-

SELINA
What was Jacob working on?

RONNY
Um, yeah it's a piece about Facebook
secretly working on an AI robot
that'll become self-aware by 2025.

SELINA
That's right... Terminator meets the
Social Network.

RONNY
I can write the-

SELINA
Slow down, Nancy Drew. We need a real
journalist. Not a blogger.

RONNY
(Under his breath)
Actually I have a masters from
Stanford in media-

SELINA
(Points to Sarah)
It's all yours.

Sarah nods back to Selina.

RONNY
(Under his breath)
I also have a masters in computer
science from MIT, but whoopdeedoo!

Selina notices Ben standing next to a window.

SELINA
Okay. That's a wrap.

Selina gestures to Ben to follow her out.

INT. 'SCUTTLEBUT' OFFICE - [CONTINUOUS]

Ben walks with Selina through the office hallways.

BEN
Pornstars and Illuminati? Really?

SELINA
"All the news unfit to print"? That's
'Scuttlebutt's DNA, lest you forget.

(CONTINUED)

BEN
Oh how the mighty have fallen.

SELINA
Speak for yourself.

BEN
I was. Anyways, why'd you call me in?

SELINA
Some folks I want you to meet.

They arrive outside Selina's office. Ben peaks through the glass door at two MEN in the room.

PHIL KNOX (mid-60s). A wealthy businessman in a three-piece suit. And MONSIGNOR VARONE (early-40s) in black papal robes with a purple CASSOCK. He has a snake-like demeanor.

BEN
Phil? What does he want?

SELINA
You're about to find out.

They enter Selina's OFFICE.

Varone and Phil turn to greet them.

SELINA
Ben, you know Phil. Our chairman. And-

VARONE
Monsignor Varone. It's a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Chambers.

Selina takes a seat behind her desk.

Ben looks at Varone suspiciously as they shake hands.

PHIL
The Monsignor is a family friend and spiritual adviser. He wanted to meet.

BEN
About?

SELINA
The Ravi Sharma article.

Ben bristles.

BEN
The church doesn't approve of me questioning a so-called miracle?

(CONTINUED)

SELINA

Slow your roll, Benji. They come in peace.

VARONE

We fully support your agenda and only wish to amplify the work.

BEN

The Church supports it's own agenda.

VARONE

I can assure you, our objectives are mutually aligned.

BEN

I doubt it.

VARONE

As an esteemed journalist, I'm sure nothing irritates you more than fake news, yes?

BEN

Uh-huh.

VARONE

Likewise, the Church opposes counterfeit tales that undermine the Pope, and therefore, God.

BEN

In other words... only the Church can ordain a miracle?

VARONE

As God wills it.

Ben rolls his eyes and sighs.

SELINA

They have a proposal, Benji.

Phil pulls out a thick FILE from a BRIEFCASE.

PHIL

The Sharma piece was a home run. Just like all the other articles you've written about ghost hunters, snake-oil psychics and so-called miracles.

BEN

Let me know when you get to the point.

VARONE

We'd like you to consider investigating these cases.

Ben picks up the file. Glances through it.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

Seriously? You want me to be the Church's miracle slayer? Don't you have a team at Vatican for this shit?

VARONE

We do. But times are changing and so must we. Now, all it takes is a click of the mouse to spread rumors and innuendo. It doesn't so much matter what the church finds, if the seed of the story has already taken root.

BEN

I agree. But you forgot to mention the other reason.

VARONE

Which is what?

BEN

You have a brand problem. You can't throw a stone without hitting a priest accused of diddling young-

SELINA

Put a lid on it, Benji.

VARONE

That's okay. He's right. Which is why we need an objective but highly-respected harbinger of truth to break through the noise.

SELINA

(To Ben)

Meaning, if you're the one deep frying these miracles, there's a stronger likelihood people'll pay attention.

VARONE

Correct. Besides, given the pieces I've read, I think you'll find our suggestions compelling.

Ben looks over at Selina. She gives him a slight nod.

BEN

Fine. I'll think it over.

Phil gets up. Looks at Selina, and then back at Ben.

PHIL

Don't think too hard, buddy.

Varone also gets up and reaches out a hand to Ben that he reluctantly shakes.

(CONTINUED)

LATER

Phil and Varone have left the office. Ben is sitting on the couch facing Selina. He flips through the files.

BEN

Well, these have merit. But, we're not gonna do this, right?

Selina bites her lower lip and looks away.

BEN

Right?

SELINA

Phil's the majority shareholder.

BEN

So, he says jump? That's not us. And don't forget... I'm a freelancer. I don't work for you. Or, Phil.

SELINA

Look, you've every reason not to trust them. But you can trust me.

Ben looks earnestly over at Selina.

BEN

How bad is it?

SELINA

Everything's hunky-dory.

BEN

C'mon Lina. We've dodged figurative and literal bullets together. So, tell me... how bad is it?

SELINA

Bad enough that I shouldn't nip at the hand that feeds. Fact is, if not for your articles, we'd be up the creek. So I need you to do me a solid with this one. Fair?

BEN

Fair. Just... just gimme a minute to think it over.

SELINA

Let me know by the AM.

Ben nods in agreement. Picks up the FILE and starts to leave. He pauses and turns back to face Selina.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

What was it Jon used to say? 'You can
take the girl outta the fight-'

SELINA

'But not the fight outta the girl'.

Ben smiles sympathetically, and then exits the office.

Selina looks at a PICTURE on her desk of her, Jon and Ben all wearing their Kevlar vests, with the word PRESS on them.

In particular, one face; Jon. She frowns... ashamed.

INT. BEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ben sits on a STOOL at his kitchen counter. He's flicking through the FILE Varone gave him.

He goes over to the FRIDGE to grab a BEER.

When he slams the fridge door shut, a PICTURE falls off the face of the door to the floor.

Ben bends over to pick up the picture.

It's a SONOGRAM.

Ben gently places the sonogram pic back on the fridge door, alongside other PICTURES of him and Beth over the years. Including a WEDDING pic of Ben, Beth and Selina all laughing.

He takes a deep breath. Grabs his PHONE off the counter. Makes a call.

BEN

It's me. I'll do it. Just don't let
the clerical collar become a noose.
Fair?

Ben ends the call. Grabs the FILE. *Time to get to work.*

EXT. OMAHA COURT HOUSE - DAY

A MORMON PASTOR (mid-40s) - anxiously gets into a CAR, surrounded by REPORTERS - including Ben.

The Pastor hides his face. But he sees Ben and glares at him, angrily. Ben then takes a snapshot of the embattled Pastor.

INSERT

'Scuttlebutt' magazine cover featuring Ben's snapshot.

The magazine cover reads:

(CONTINUED)

*"Immaculate Deception" - Mormon Pastor's so-called
'Immaculate Conception Miracles' fueled by Rohypnol and
Hypnosis.*

Underneath the image of the Mormon Pastor is picture of five
YOUNG WOMEN holding kids aged 6-months to 3-years old.

END INSERT

Ben smiles and WAVES to the Pastor as his car drives away.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

A dozen saddened people stand close to a large OAK TREE.

The tree trunk seems to have a face. Not clearly carved, but
not fully natural. The eyes of the face cry BLOOD.

Next to the tree is a Native Indian SHAMAN, (early-60s).

On the other side of the tree are two FOREST RANGERS.

They've dug a small hole from which they've pulled out an
electrical HOSE contraption, attached to a BLOOD BAG.

Ben stands off to the side, impassive. Snaps a picture.

INSERT

'Scuttlebutt' magazine cover features Ben's snapshot.

The cover reads:

*"Shameless Sham-Man" - 'Weeping Face of God', nothing more
than a callous carving infused with bison blood.*

END INSERT

Ben's smug smile is starting to wane.

INT. CAFE - NIGHT

George, Norm, and Frankie from the Church (where the storm
took place eight years ago), sit around a table together.

They all appear to be much healthier and happier.

On the table are a few copies of 'Scuttlebutt' magazine.

Norm holds an ENVELOPE, with an address written in
calligraphy. The recipient's name is covered by Norm's thumb.

Norm taps the edge of the envelope against the table.

FRANKIE

So, you've all been having the dreams?

(CONTINUED)

GEORGE
Every night for the past week.

NORM
Me too.

Frankie nods.

NORM
It's time.

Frankie and George look at each other, then nod in agreement.

EXT. SAN SOLEDO PARK - DAY

A sunny day in the New Mexico town of SAN SOLEDO.

A crowd of TOWNSFOLK have gathered for a celebration.

The FUENTES family: GUSTAVO (early-50s), ELDORA (mid-40s) and OSCAR (17-years old), stand on a PODIUM facing the crowd.

A BANNER reads: 'SAINT SAN SOLEDO ANNUAL FESTIVAL.'

Behind the podium is a gated ROSE GARDEN. The gate is wrapped in a RED RIBBON.

Ben sits in his CAR (late-1960s BLACK FORD MUSTANG), and watches as Gustavo finishes addressing the crowd.

Eldora takes a pair of SCISSORS and cuts the ribbon with a flourish. The crowd celebrate.

Ben looks at a FILE in the passenger seat. The cover reads: '*Soil Analysis Report*'.

Ben looks at the HAPPY Fuentes family. Takes a deep breath.

EXT. PARK ROSE GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Ben walks with the FUENTES family through the rose garden. He carries a brown leather SATCHEL over his shoulder.

They arrive at a set of BENCHES at the center of the rose garden. Gustavo gestures for Ben to sit with them.

BEN
Tell me about Anna.

GUSTAVO
She was a special girl.

ELDORA
Touched by the Angels.

(CONTINUED)

OSCAR
She was loco.

ELDORA
Oscar... please.

Eldora and Gustavo both GLARE at Oscar.

BEN
Exactly how did she earn the '*Saint of San Soledó*' moniker?

GUSTAVO
She believed God wanted her soul in return for ending a terrible drought.

ELDORA
So, she sacrificed herself to save the town and the people she loved.

OSCAR
She slit her wrists right where you're sitting.

GUSTAVO
(Irrked at Oscar)
It was a virtuous sacrifice; Her blood nourished the soil, and bought life back to our land.

ELDORA
A divine miracle.

Oscar eye-rolls and shrugs his shoulders.

OSCAR:
(To Ben)
Tell them.

ELDORA
Tell us what?

BEN
After Oscar contacted me I did some research and enlisted help from a Geological professor. He got back to me yesterday with his findings.

Ben reaches into his SATCHEL, pulls out a set of FILES, hands them to Eldora and Gustavo.

GUSTAVO
What's this?

BEN
At the time of Anna's death, an explosion at a mineral mine fifty
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BE (CONT'D)
miles away, uncorked a dormant aquifer
under your town.

ELDORA
What does that mean?

BEN
Her blood didn't nourish the soil. It
was water. It wasn't a miracle. It
was... nature.

GUSTAVO
(Rattled, to Oscar)
You said he'd tell Anna's story.

OSCAR
He's here to tell the truth.

ELDORA
The truth?

OSCAR
Yeah, Mom. He tells the truth about
fake miracles.

ELDORA
No, no, no. My girl gave her soul to
God. She saved us. That is the truth.

BEN
Believe whatever you want. But you
can't argue with science.

GUSTAVO
Do you have a kid?

BEN
(Annoyed)
Not in the traditional sense.

GUSTAVO
If you did, you'd know it's wrong to
defile the memory of a child and then
trash the beliefs of the parents who
lost them.

ELDORA
What kind of heartless man are you?

Eldora sobs. Gustavo comforts her.

GUSTAVO
(To Ben, angrily)
You should leave... NOW.

Ben nods, gets up to leave. Oscar looks at Ben sheepishly.

Ben walks away, but looks anything but smug.

(CONTINUED)

INT. BEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ben arrives home after travelling. Wheels his carry-on BAG through the front door.

He's also holding a small batch of MAIL.

He puts everything down. Puts the mail on the kitchen counter, and grabs a BEER from the fridge.

Ben flips through the various envelopes. One in particular, catches his attention.

His name has been written in calligraphy on the envelope.

Ben opens the letter. He starts to read through it. Shakes his head in bewilderment.

BEN
Well... that's ballsy.

Ben walks out of the kitchen.

The SONOGRAM picture on the fridge falls to the floor.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Ben is sleeping.

BEN'S DREAM

Ben is back in the same ramshackle HOUSE in AFGHANISTAN that he was trapped with ALPHA TEAM, eight years ago.

Unlike last time, there's just one SOLDIER with Ben.

This soldier is steadily SHOOTING out of a window.

The soldier is SHOT. They FALL to the FLOOR in front of Ben.

Ben kneels down to remove the soldier's HELMET.

It's BETH.

Her chest is hemorrhaging BLOOD. She can barely speak.

Ben desperately tries to staunch the bleeding.

BETH
Where's my miracle?

BACK TO SCENE

Ben abruptly awakens to his PHONE RINGING.

He sees it's Selina calling. Frowns and then answers.

(CONTINUED)

INTER-CUT

Selina in her office, back in NYC.

SELINA
Morning, Sparky. Where are you?

Ben peers outside from his room's window.

BEN
(Sheepish)
Uh... upstate New York.

Ben picks up the hand-written LETTER addressed to him.

SELINA
I thought you were going to Maine?

BEN
I am. Had to make a pit-stop first.

SELINA
What the hell's going on, Ben?

BEN
Look... Some category five moron
invited me to check out their so-
called '*miracle*'.

SELINA
Why give 'em the time'a day?

BEN
I dunno. Morbid curiosity. Anyways, it
shouldn't take a minute.

SELINA
Not the time for freelancing, Benji.
Not with Phil halitosing down my neck.

BEN
Two days. Trust me. Fair?

SELINA
Grrr. Ok. Fine. Fair. But make it
quick, make it good, and make it to
Maine, lickety-split.

BEN
Copy that, Chief.

Outside, Ben sees a DAD with his 10-year old DAUGHTER
walking, holding hands, as they eat ICE CREAM.

SELINA
Ok, one more thing... Sheep don't
invite the wolf to supper, unless
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SELIN (CONT'D)
certain they're off the menu. So, keep
your head on swivel. Fair?

BEN
Fair.

The call ends. Ben shakes his head in frustration.

Selina looks down at her phone and then at Phil outside the office. She takes a deep breath and waves him in.

BACK TO SCENE

Ben looks again at the Father and Daughter outside.

The scoop of ICE CREAM she's eating falls off the CONE. She looks back at her Father in tears.

Ben rubs his bloodshot eyes. Looks down at a set of Manila FILES on his DESK. Opens one to a picture of a Church.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Early morning.

Same church where the '*Incident*' took place.

Ben sits on a pew. He shades his eyes from a ray of light piercing through a window.

PADRE (OS)
You must be the journalist?

Ben swivels to see a man, PADRE (mid-20s), standing in the aisle. Padre's dressed in black. He's tall and graceful.

BEN
Pardon the interruption, Padre.

PADRE
Quiet reflection in peaceful solitude,
does not an interruption make, my
friend.

Ben nods, musters a tiny smile.

PADRE
So you're here about the '*incident*'?

BEN
Uh, yeah. How'd you know?

PADRE
It's a small town; Whisper a myth in
the morning, it'll be a legend by the
afternoon.

(CONTINUED)

BEN
So, all eyes on me?

PADRE
Yes, I suppose so.

BEN
Why?

PADRE
Perhaps they're curious about your intentions.

BEN
Just here to seek the truth.

PADRE
What kind of truth?

BEN
I don't understand the question.

PADRE
A practical truth? An emotional truth?
A spiritual truth? A universal truth?

Ben sighs, slightly irritated, then looks Padre up-and-down.

BEN
Ah... I see what you're doing; Aren't you a little young for confessional?

PADRE
(Deprecating)
You know what they say; wisdom comes in all shapes and sizes.

BEN
Do they? Haven't heard that before.

PADRE
Well, you learn something new everyday.

BEN
That one I have heard.

PADRE
And perhaps you'll learn even more while you're here.

BEN
That's the idea.

Ben stands up.

BEN
Best be on my way, Padre.

(CONTINUED)

Padre smiles, as Ben starts to walk away down the aisle.

PADRE
I hope you find what you're looking
for, Ben.

Ben stops in his tracks. Turns to Padre with a smug smile.

BEN
Looking for? What do you mean?

PADRE
Just that, sometimes, what we intend
to seek isn't what we're hoping to
find.

Ben slightly shakes his head incredulously.

BEN
Thanks for the pearls, kid.

PADRE
See you soon.

BEN
(Walks away)
Oh, that's highly unlikely.

Ben shields his eyes from a piercing white light coming
through a window at the back of the church before he exits.

EXT. HORSE STABLES - DAY

SUPER: Norman 'Norm' Clancy

NORM sweeps a HORSE STABLE, as Ben watches.

Outside of the stable are field enclosures with various
people riding or grooming HORSES.

BEN
So, you were in the Marines for
fifteen years as an NCO and medic. A
veteran of Iraq war one?

NORM
Affirmative.

BEN
And six years ago, you converted this
ranch into a sanctuary for wounded
service men?

NORM
(Nods)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NOR (CONT'D)

All you see, from pillar-to-post, was inspired by our Jimmy.

Ben looks over a nearby pasture where a MAN in a large COWBOY HAT teaches a YOUNGER MAN with a PROSTHETIC hand to ride.

NORM

As a war correspondent, I bet you've met plenty'a wounded vets. So you know how badly they need places like this to help them heal within, and without.

BEN

Former war correspondent.

Norm nods back. Ben wipes sweat from his forehead.

NORM

Whaddya say, Ben... Time for a cold drink?

BEN

Whatever you want. This is your show.

NORM

Follow me.

Ben and Norm head out of the stable. Ben takes another look around... seemingly suspicious of his surroundings.

EXT. NORM'S FARM HOUSE - DAY

Ben and Norm sit on the porch, as they drink ICE TEA.

Ben contemplates his question.

BEN

Your son was an only child?

NORM

Cynthia and I couldn't conceive. So, we turned to adoption. But even then, we struggled. And right about the time we were ready to surrender, God saw fit to bless us with a rare angel.

BEN

(Grins)

An angel?

NORM

I know how it sounds. But figure you pray for a child, year-after-year... but your prayers go unanswered.

(Sips his ice tea)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NOR (CONT'D)

And just when you start losing faith.
Boom. Outta the blue, our wishes come
true. Wouldn't you consider that a
divine gift?

BEN

I'd consider it a commendable act of
perseverance.

NORM

(Chuckles)

Ha! I suppose you would. But if
Cynthia were here... she'd have you
convinced Jimmy was the second comin',
in no time at all!

BEN

I don't break so easy.

NORM

I'm a cynical, old Grunt. So neither
do I. But she was a dreamer. To her,
the world was a happier place if you
believe in a little bit'a magic.

QUICK FLASHBACK

Ben is in a large BATHTUB with Beth, making love.

CANDLES and CRYSTALS surround them.

Ben runs his fingers tenderly down Beth's back.

Covering the majority of her back, is a TATTOO of an ANGEL.

Beth kisses Ben. Deeply. Passionately.

END FLASHBACK

BACK TO SCENE

BEN

She died, right?

NORM

Um. Yes. She died saving her angel.

Norm sips his ice tea, looks out at the horizon.

EXT. LYME RIVER - DAY [FLASHBACK]

SUPER: Twenty-Three Years Ago

Norm and CYNTHIA, (late-30s), and a younger JIMMY (11-years
old), are having a picnic by a ROARING RIVER.

Ten-year-old Jimmy plays on a SWING, hanging over the water.

(CONTINUED)

Norm walks over to the CAR, parked two-hundred feet away.

When Norm reaches the car, he opens the GLOVE COMPARTMENT, and gathers two prescription PILL BOTTLES.

He then goes over to the trunk and finds a flask of ICE TEA... and grabs a couple of BEER bottles too.

JIMMY (OS)
HELP! HELP ME! HELP!

Norm pauses. Hears Jimmy's screams. Drops the ice tea and beers. Sprints down to the river embankment.

He sees Jimmy has fallen into the water and is being dragged downstream by the current.

He also sees Cynthia going into the water after Jimmy.

NORM
No! Wait! Don't-

Norm continues to run down to the embankment, as he watches Cynthia get dragged under the current.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. FARM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Norm smiles, ruefully.

NORM
She saved him. But I was too late to save her.

BEN
Must've been difficult for you both.

NORM
More so the boy. You see, not only did he lose his Mama that day, but his Dad went AWOL too.

INT. FARM HOUSE - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

SUPER: Twenty-One Years Ago

The home is dusty, unkempt. Unloved.

Norm sits slouched on the couch. BASEBALL plays on the TV.

Half-a-dozen empty BEER BOTTLES sit on the coffee TABLE.

Norm stares at his old Marines SERVICE GUN on the table.

(CONTINUED)

He holds a PICTURE in a LOCKET, of himself with Cynthia on their WEDDING DAY. Both full of vitality and love.

Norm takes the GUN. Holds it under his chin. He cries.

He stops... hears the FRONT DOOR being unlocked.

He puts the GUN back on the table. Clears his eyes.

Jimmy (12), walks in. Places his BACKPACK next to the couch.

JIMMY

Hey Dad.

Norm grunts a salutation. Jimmy see the BEER and the GUN.

JIMMY

You uh... You hungry?

NORM

Uh, sure. Order some pizza.

Jimmy notices FAST-FOOD PACKAGING scattered around.

JIMMY

I, uh, I can make something...

Norm grunts something indistinguishable back.

Jimmy goes into the KITCHEN.

LATER

Jimmy returns with PASTA and a brave attempt at a SALAD.

Jimmy timidly places the plate in front of his father.

JIMMY

Uh, I used to watch Mom make it. I think it's okay.

Norm smells the food and frowns.

NORM

Whaddid you cook it with? Ketchup?

JIMMY

I-

NORM

Just go get me a beer.

JIMMY

Maybe...

NORM

I gave you an order, boy.

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY

Yes, sir.

Jimmy retreats, as ordered.

Norm looks back at the plate of pasta with guilt.

Jimmy returns with a beer. Gives it to his Dad. He then quietly sits, as they watch the game.

Jimmy, again notices Norm's service GUN. He frowns.

JIMMY

Uh... George's Dad had his funeral today.

Norm doesn't respond.

JIMMY

George didn't wanna go. He was frightened, I think. It was like when Grandma died. I didn't wanna go to her funeral, so I hid in the attic.

Jimmy faces his Father.

JIMMY

Mom found me. We spoke about why I was scared. She said I felt like that 'cos it's frightening not knowing what happens to someone when they die.

Norm slurps his beer, barely paying attention.

JIMMY

She told me about this quote she liked. I think it was something about how love always beats death. So, we shouldn't get too sad when someone we love dies, 'cos they stay with us if we keep loving them.

(Smiles to himself)

It helped me feel less scared. So, I told it to George. I think it made him feel a little better.

The 'words' strike a chord of familiarity for Norm. His eyes fill again. A brief smile...

NORM

'Love always triumphs over what we call death. That's why there's no need to grieve for our loved ones, because they continue to be loved and remain by our side.'

(CONTINUED)

JIMMY

Oh, that's it! That's the quote. Who said it?

NORM

Her favorite writer.

Norm looks at the locket, smiles. He tentatively pats Jimmy on the knee.

Norm picks up the plate of pasta and takes a few bites. Jimmy matches his Father. They look at each other, and frown.

JIMMY

Pizza?

NORM

Yep.

As Jimmy gets up, he looks at his Father's GUN.

He carefully picks it up and walks it over to a DESK under a window. Places it in a DRAWER.

From a different drawer, he pulls out two PRESCRIPTION DRUG containers, walks them over to his Father.

He places them softly on the coffee table.

Norm looks at the drugs and then at Jimmy. Finishes his beer.

JIMMY

'Nother?

Norm pauses, shakes his head.

NORM

How about a glass of ice tea...
please.

Jimmy nods. Walks away with a small grin on his face.

Norm, looks at the LOCKET. He nods to Cynthia, as though she is speaking directly to him.

END FLASHBACK

INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

SUPER: Francesca 'Frankie' Hernandez

Frankie is in her mid-30s now. She looks healthy.

She cleans the room, while speaking to Ben.

(CONTINUED)

FRANKIE

I wish you could've come earlier; My kids'd get a real kick outta meeting a big city reporter.

BEN

I'm not exactly 'show-n-tell' material.

FRANKIE

Sooo true... We should be aiming way higher than a Pulitzer journalist for 'show-n-tell'!

Frankie winks and grins at a deadpan Ben.

BEN

Tell me about Jimmy.

FRANKIE

Hmm, ok... where do I begin? Well, it goes like this; I grew up in the system. Bounced around a few homes before I was eighteen. There were a few hard lefts along the way, but by-n-large I got through it ok. Though... sometimes you don't know, what you don't know, right?

(A blissful smile)

Then I met, Jimmy and he found something in me I had no idea was missing; A black-hole of sorts.

BEN

Let me guess... love and family?

FRANKIE

Ah, I see why they gave you a Pulitzer!

BEN

So, what happened?

FRANKIE

Jimmy was my constant flame. Always there to light my way home -- even when I deserved the dark.

BEN

Deserve?

FRANKIE

Full disclosure: I'm a recovering addict.

(CONTINUED)

BEN
Oh? I see. How, um, how'd it happen?
The addiction?

FRANKIE
It started with a broken leg and
thirty little pills.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

Frankie enters a disgusting apartment.

Frankie is in WITHDRAWAL. She wears a backpack.

Various JUNKIES mill about aimlessly.

FRANKIE (VO)
A year later, I was a card carrying
citizen of Junkie-ville.

Frankie approaches TONY (early-30s), DRUG DEALER.

Tony, sits at a small CARD TABLE.

Frankie reaches into her backpack. She pulls out a large
BOOKLET. Hands it over to Tony.

Tony opens the booklet, flicks through the pages. It's a
stamp collection.

TONY
What the fuck? Stamps? For realz?

FRANKIE
It's my boyfriend's stamp collection.
It's worth a few thou... at least.

Tony looks suspiciously at Frankie.

TONY
Tell ya what... you can't afford the
Oxy, so here's some Special K.

Frankie takes a BAGGY with white powder, from Tony. Looks at
it with a hint of trepidation.

Tony points to a guy on the couch. BAMBAM, (mid-30s).

TONY
BamBam'll show ya what's what. I'm
gonna see if this shit's legit.

The Dealer takes the BOOK to a room at the back.

Frankie sits next to BamBam. Gives him the BAGGY.

(CONTINUED)

BAMBAM
Ohhh, *Kit Kats!* You done dis before,
baby? Oh, you in for a treat!

Frankie notices a small, ASIAN GIRL (early-20s), passed out,
in a fetal position at the end of the couch.

Frankie looks back to BamBam, as he organizes a hit for her.

FRANKIE (VO)
And it just got worse from there.

INT. HOUSE - DAY [FLASHBACK]

SUPER: Ten Years Ago

Jimmy enters after going for a run. Removes his SNEAKERS.

His head is covered by a HOODIE... his face in shadow.

FRANKIE (VO)
No matter my sin, Jimmy would forgive.
But... even a saint can lose patience
with a sinner.

MUSIC plays in his ears; *'Ain't No Sunshine'* by Bill Withers.

He slowly walks up a set of STAIRS.

(SONG)
*"Ain't no sunshine when she's gone/
It's not warm when she's away/ Ain't
no sunshine when she's gone/ She's
always gone too long/ Anytime she goes
away."*

He opens the BEDROOM door. He stands, silhouetted in the doorway. Face in shadow.

Frankie is in bed, NAKED, with BamBam and the Dealer.

BamBam sees Jimmy, points at him... giggles.

Frankie sees Jimmy. Her face is vacant. She says something,
but Jimmy can't hear her over his music.

(SONG)
*"Ain't no sunshine when she's gone/
Only darkness everyday/ Ain't no
sunshine when she's gone/ This house
just ain't no home/ Anytime she goes
away"*

Jimmy disappears from the doorway.

(CONTINUED)

FRANKIE (VO)
Goodbye, self-esteem. Hello, self-disgust.

END FLASHBACK

INT. CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

BEN
Sure. I can see. That was-

FRANKIE
I know. And you'd think a moment like that would be a wake up call. But... not so much. And then when Jimmy deployed... that was my final curtain call.

BEN
Addiction is a disease.

FRANKIE
No. Addiction's a symptom. The disease is grief. And until you get help, it'll tear your life into a million pieces of toxic regret.

BEN
Clearly you got better.

FRANKIE
I did. But it took something totally insane to put me back together again.

Frankie smiles warmly back at an indifferent Ben.

INT. CAR - AFTERNOON

SUPER: George Parker

Ben drives with GEORGE, as they weave through town. George is in his early-30s now. He wears a DEPUTY UNIFORM.

GEORGE
Thanks for taggin' along. May be a sleepy town, but with a small department, we're busy, even when we ain't so busy.

Ben nods. Looks out the window at two YOUNG BOYS laughing as they jump over a water sprinkler.

BEN
So... You and Jimmy were '*Thick as thieves*', according to Frankie.

(CONTINUED)

GEORGE

Since preschool. Man, if we weren't playing *LEGO*, we'd be on our Big Wheels. Always goofin' off. And as we got older, *LEGOS* turned into video games, *Big Wheels* into bikes, games into girls and bikes into cars. So yeah, we were thick as thieves and twice as *'Thelma & Louise'*.

(Smiles to himself)

Or, that's what I thought.

BEN

What changed?

GEORGE

When I was eighteen, my cousin Pico got outta the joint after a five year bid.

BEN

What was he in for?

GEORGE

Being a badass outlaw.

EXT. DINER - DAY [FLASHBACK]

SUPER: Fourteen Years Ago

George is eighteen.

He's outside the DINER, washing a car. Next to the car is a cardboard sign that reads: 'Car Wash - \$10'.

George looks through the diner window, sees his Mother, Lillian waiting tables. They smile at each other.

George looks across the street at a GAS STATION.

A GAS STATION ATTENDANT, (early-60s), services a car. The attendant waves at George, who waves back, halfheartedly.

The sound of rumbling MOTORS catches George's attention.

He sees five men on *Harley-Davidson Hogs*. They all wear vests. With: 'LEAGUE OF LUCIFER' scrawled on the backs.

George's in awe of their CHROME STEEDS, as they pull-up outside the diner. Some have riders on the back.

The biker who arrives last, pulls off his HELMET. The front of his vest has a patch that reads: 'PRESIDENT'.

PICO, (late-30s), strongly built, with eyes like daggers.

He nods to George.

(CONTINUED)

George notices his mother at the diner door. She fiercely glares at Pico. And shakes her head at George. *Don't you do it, Boy.*

Pico walks over to a WOMAN on the back of one of the bikes.

She takes off her helmet and unzips her leather jacket, to reveal the full extent of her VOLUPTUOUSNESS.

She WINKS provocatively at a blushing George.

Pico goes to his bike. Takes a HELMET and a leather VEST from the back.

George takes in everything... his mom, the bikes, the girl, Pico, the helmet, the vest, and a dirty bucket of water.

He also looks over at the GAS STATION. Watches the older man HOBBLING as he services another car.

PLOP. George drops the SPONGE.

Pico hands George the vest and helmet. George glance over at his Mother, one last time. Tears well-up in her eyes. She continues to shake her head. Powerless.

George puts on the helmet and vest.

George straddles the back of Pico's bike and rides away with the 'Legion of Lucifer', as Lillian stands outside the diner, in tears.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. PARK - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

The police cruiser's parked.

George and Ben lean against the hood, while they eat HOT DOGS and drink SODAS.

BEN

So, how'd Jimmy fit into this chapter?

GEORGE

Man, it was one thing lettin' down my Mama. But no way could I join the MC without Jim. So, Pico made him a Prospect too. And ya know... Jim dug it at first... Maybe 'cos he liked the open road. Or maybe 'cos it was just his way of keepin' tabs on me. But after a spell, the club's extra-curriculars stuck in his craw.

BEN

Specifically?

(CONTINUED)

GEORGE
Mosta the crap was harmless. But as we
got in deeper, we were exposed to the
darker shit.

BEN
Such as?

GEORGE
Dealing. Smuggling. Theft. And that
didn't sit well with Jimbo.

BEN
He quit?

GEORGE
He tried to hang tough. But everyone's
got a breaking point, right?

BEN
So, what happened?

George notices a young man walking his dog.

GEORGE
Ever hear the tale about the feral cat
and dog raised as brothers?

Ben raises an inquisitive eyebrow.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT [FLASHBACK OF GEORGE'S STORY]

SUPER: Twelve Years Ago

George and Jimmy on their bikes riding. Jimmy wears a dark
helmet with dark visor. George is more old school.

GEORGE (VO)
So, check it out... The Cat and Dog
grew up together on the streets; from
kitty and pup to full blown critters.
Where one went, the other followed.

George and Jimmy stop in front of a BAR.

George ogles a CUTE GIRL standing out front.

Jimmy shakes his head. *Don't do it, George.*

GEORGE (VO)
They made a good team; The cat was
curious by nature and the dog was
protective by instinct.

A BIG DUDE, with even bigger FRIENDS walk out of the bar,
puts his arm around the girl. George and Jimmy ride away.

(CONTINUED)

GEORGE (VO)

On it went like this for a time. 'Till one day, the cat wanted to sneak into restaurant kitchen to steal some grub.

George and Jimmy pull up to an alley. Parked half-way down is a restored, 1970s SS CAMARO car.

George turns off his bike, gets off.

Again, Jimmy shakes his head, but this time, George won't listen. Jimmy has no other option but to follow.

GEORGE (VO)

The dog knew this was dangerous but that cat aimed to misbehave.

George approaches the car and pulls a SLIM JIM from his jacket. Tries to pry the car door open.

Jimmy stands look-out.

GEORGE (VO)

So, he slinked into the kitchen and found himself a treat. And despite knowin' better, the dog followed.

A door opposite the car opens. A rugged, MAFIOSO-looking MAN, (mid-40s), spots George and Jimmy.

GEORGE (VO)

So, it was no surprise when the chef caught 'em red-handed, he attacked the critters with a cleaver.

The mafioso-man pulls a GUN, as George and Jimmy run back to their bikes.

He shoots a couple of rounds.

GEORGE (VO)

The dog wasn't quick as the cat, so the chef caught the end of his tail with a mighty blow.

One of the bullets graze Jimmy's right shoulder.

GEORGE (VO)

Now, thankfully the dog got away. But only with half-a-tail. By protecting the cat from its nature, he had lost a part of himself.

They jump on their bikes and speed away.

LATER

George and Jimmy are outside the 'LEGION OF LUCIFER's' biker

(CONTINUED)

bar HQ.

George's recounting the story to a pretty GIRL (early-20s). He laughs, as he points to where Jimmy's shoulder was grazed.

GEORGE (VO)
Meantime, the cat ignored the dog's pain. And once more, aimed to misbehave.

George hops off his bike, follows the pretty girl into the bar. Jimmy remains still. Doesn't follow.

GEORGE (VO)
But this time the dog didn't follow. He turned away from his brother, 'Cos he knew between his instinct and the cat's nature, he'd eventually wind up with no tail at all.

George turns around. Sees Jimmy driving off. His MC vest is left hanging off the handlebar of George's bike.

George watches Jimmy drive away, with a look of regret.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. PARK - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

George stares out ruefully at the DOG in the park.

BEN
So Jimmy left the MC?

GEORGE
Saved his tail and turned in his vest.

BEN
And you?

GEORGE
Traded my brother-from-another-mother for the life of an outlaw.

BEN
Why?

GEORGE
Here's the rub; I grew up poor. Dad died young of cancer. Ma worked two jobs. The MC gave me a family.

BEN
And that family landed you in jail?

(CONTINUED)

GEORGE
Without Jimmy around to keep my stupid
ass in line, I stayed true to my
nature.

INT. COP CAR - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

SUPER: Eleven Years Ago

21-year old George sits in the back of the POLICE CAR, hands-cuffed behind his back. He seems ashamed, but stubborn.

Lillian, desperately pleads with Dante (*Sheriff*), outside.

On the other side of the street is Pico with half-a-dozen 'League of Lucifer' riders.

Pico gives George a knowing nod. George nods back.

Dante walks to the car and gets in. He removes his hat.

George watches a neighbor guide Lillian back to her house.

Dante looks across the street at Pico. Then back at George.

George looks away, ashamed and defiant.

Dante sighs, starts the engine and drives away.

GEORGE (VO)
I got six months for grand theft auto.
While, Jimbo was off in another world
learning how to be an officer and a
gentlemen.

END FLASHBACK

INT. POLICE CRUISER - DAY - CONTINUOUS

George and Ben pull up to the POLICE STATION.

BEN
Did you hear from Jimmy again?

GEORGE
Believe it or not, he wrote me
everyday I was in lockup. Kept me
sane. Kept me believin' I could do
better when I got out.

BEN
What was your plan... to do better?

(CONTINUED)

GEORGE
Help others, like Jimbo. But... wasn't
sure how. Not until he spoke to me...
showed me the way.

BEN
You spoke before he...

GEORGE
No, brother. After. In the Church. The
night of.

INT. JIMMY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ben looks around Jimmy's ROOM with Norm.

It's filled with BOOKS about cars, bikes, planes and sports.
TROPHIES on shelves for baseball, football and tennis. Jimmy
was clearly the archetype All-American Boy.

Ben notices a POSTER of an F-14 FIGHTER JET on the wall.

BEN
Jimmy was a naval aviator?

NORM
Top Gun, best-of-the-best.

BEN
When did he deploy?

NORM
Eighteen-months prior to the incident.

BEN
Okay... let's get into that... why
were you at the church?

NORM
Townfolk tend to harbor there when
tempests come-a-callin'.

BEN
Why not go to your own storm cellar?

NORM
Something 'bout that night. I could
smell Cynthia in the air and hear her
voice in the wind. Felt like she was
trying to say something. So, I went to
the place I felt closest to her soul.

BEN
Ok. So, when did the so-called
'incident' happen?

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

Norm recalls the night of the 'incident'.

Parishioners hear the storm stop. Silence.

DANTE (Town Sheriff), stands...

DANTE

I do believe she's done a-huffin' and
a-puffin', folks.

EDITH

Thank the Lord, for our salvation!

Norm gets up and starts to put on his coat.

NORM (VO)

It was right about the time I decided
to leave...

The door at the front of the church BLASTS open.

Silhouetted in the doorway is a MAN in a soaking wet jumpsuit
AVIATION UNIFORM, wearing a helmet.

NORM (VO)

And there he stood.

BEN (VO)

The guy?

NORM (VO)

That's right.

The MAN in uniform enters. The doors slam shut behind him.

BEN (VO)

Were you sober at the time?

NORM (VO)

There or thereabouts.

BEN (VO)

So, did you recognize the guy?

The man walks past Norm, whose mouth is agape.

NORM (VO)

Not at first, what with the helmet and
wet uniform.

BEN (VO)

What did he do?

The Uniformed Man approaches the altar. The parishioners
stare at him, stunned.

(CONTINUED)

NORM (VO)
Let me tell you, Ben... it was the
darndest thing I've ever seen.

EXT. PRESCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

Late afternoon.

Ben and Frankie sit in swings, as they speak.

Ben's phone vibrates. It's Selina. He ignores the call.

BEN
Were you at the church 'cos of the
storm?

FRANKIE
Not exactly.

Frankie faces Ben.

FRANKIE
When you're a junkie, there's no
depths you won't plumb to find or fund
your next high.
(sighs)
I did things. Horrible things.

INT. THE CHURCH - NIGHT OF THE 'INCIDENT' [FLASHBACK]

FRANKIE (VO)
Sunday night's when they'd count the
money from weekly donations. Wasn't
much. But enough for a fix.

Near the nave is Frankie.

Frankie glances nervously at the young CHOIR BOY (all in
black), as he hands a COLLECTION BOX to an older PRIEST.

The Choirboy looks over at Frankie. She smirks back at him.

Frankie bites her nails. Eyes locked on the COLLECTION BOX.

The PRIEST places down the BOX next to the ALTAR.

BEN (VO)
A church heist?

FRANKIE (VO)
What with the storm and all the chaos,
I could slip in-'n-out without notice.

A flash of LIGHTENING followed by a loud thunder clap.

Frankie starts to stand, still focused on her prize.

(CONTINUED)

Frankie pauses when the back doors of the church burst open.

She covers her eyes from the bright LIGHT, until the front doors slam shut.

The MAN IN UNIFORM walks to altar.

The Choirboy steps back against a wall, frightened.

Frankie's eyes flicker with fear. The Man in Uniform passes her. She holds her breath.

FRANKIE (VO)
I could smell salt water on his
uniform.

The Man in Uniform removes his HELMET, kneels at the altar. No one can make out his face.

The Uniform Man lights a CANDLE. The church remains silent.

BEN (VO)
How long was he there?

FRANKIE (VO)
Felt like forever. But probably wasn't
more than two or three minutes.

The Uniform Man dons his HELMET. He stands, then slowly walks back toward the doors.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND [CONTINUOUS]

Ben stands up from the swing.

BEN
Were you... using at that time?

FRANKIE
Always. But I wasn't hallucinating.

BEN
Did he say anything?

FRANKIE
Kind of. You see, right as he went
past me, I heard him whisper.

BEN
Just you?

FRANKIE
A few of us.

(CONTINUED)

BEN
What did he say?

FRANKIE
(Chuckles)
We all heard something unique. Just
for us and us alone.

BEN
Why so vague?

FRANKIE
(Grins sympathetically)
The consequences matter more than the
words.

BEN
Which were?

Frankie suddenly gets up from her swing. Looks to the sky.

FRANKIE
Wanna go watch the sunset?

BEN
Now? As in... now?

Frankie nods an affirmative.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Ben follows George as he's filing away paper work.

BEN
So, what did you mean about Jimmy
showing you the way?

GEORGE
After I got out, I felt righteous.
Like I had a path.
(Pauses, faces Ben)
Problem is, ex-jailbirds get their
wings clipped in the real world.

BEN
Reality kicked-in.

GEORGE
More like, kicked me where the sun
don't shine. So, I started to think
maybe I'm better off an outlaw - 'cos
that's all I'm worth.

BEN
But the 'incident' changed your mind?

(CONTINUED)

GEORGE
Ok, so you know about the uniformed
dude. How he prayed. And then-

BEN
The whispering. What did he tell you?

GEORGE
'Protect them.'

BEN
Ergo the badge. But with a criminal
record, I thought-

GEORGE
We'll get there.

BEN
Ok. So, how'd you know it was him?

GEORGE
You're askin' if I know my own shadow.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT OF THE INCIDENT [FLASHBACK]

George is at the back with LILLIAN.

Both frozen in shock and fear, as the Uniformed Man kneels at
the altar.

BEN (VO)
You were that certain?

GEORGE (VO)
Not at first. When those doors blew
open, I nearly up-n-shit myself!

The Man in Uniform gets up, and heads to the back. Passes
George. Who in turn, cocks his head, listening.

GEORGE (VO)
But after he spoke to me.... I felt at
peace. Like everything was gonna be A-
okay. It felt like Jimmy.

INTERCUT - Police Station (Present Day)

Ben and George sit at George's DESK.

BEN
Felt like him? What, like a sixth
sense?

GEORGE
(Chuckles)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GEORG (CONT'D)

Yeah, yeah I see dead people! And you can question my 'sixth sense' all you want, my man. But what you can't deny is the timing of it all.

FLASHBACK at the Church Continued

The church doors slam shut as the Uniformed Man leaves.

The parishioners are stunned.

George glances over at Frankie and Norm. They share a look as others gossip in excitement, preparing to leave.

GEORGE (VO)

After the buzz died down, some folks were ready to split.

As some parishioners head to the DOOR, a THUNDEROUS SOUND of screaming wind can be heard outside.

They pause. The sound gets louder and louder, until it feels like they're in the middle of a 747 JET engine.

The church shakes under the explosive noise.

George holds his Mother tight. Others cover their ears.

The thunderous sound comes to an abrupt stop.

Everyone appears to be gripped by fear and confusion.

Norm marches purposefully past George to the doors. Opens them. George and Frankie follow Norm outside.

They all stare out in shock.

What they see is absolute devastation, merely one hundred yards from the church.

Houses destroyed. Cars overturned.

They pause, as if hearing something. Then look at each other in shared disbelief.

GEORGE (VO)

If folks had left, there and then, they woulda been swept away by a huge twister -- just like *Dorothy* and *Toto*.

In the distance, a TORNADOe station.

BEN

Ok then. So, you're basically saying Jimmy saved the day?

(CONTINUED)

GEORGE
Yep, I know how it sounds. And if I
were you I'd think George's trippin'.

BEN
You wouldn't be wrong.

GEORGE
Ok. Ok. But, do I look like some crazy
born-again, Jesus-freak to you?

BEN
I have no idea who you are. But I do
know there's a rational explanation
for what happened. There always is.

GEORGE
And if you can square that circle,
more power to ya. But that won't
change what that night gave me.

BEN
Which was?

GEORGE
Belief.

BEN
In what?

GEORGE
The sublime, brother. The sublime.

Ben's phone vibrates. It's Selina again. He ignores the call.

INT. SELINA'S 'SCUTTLEBUTT' OFFICE - DAY

Early evening.

Phil and Selina sit at her couch, both have a glass of wine
in front of them. They've been arguing.

PHIL
Time to put your dog back on a leash.

SELINA
My *Littlest Hobo* will figure it out.
So stop getting your thong in a twist.

PHIL
I swear to God, if it weren't for your
father-

SELINA
You wouldn't have a house in the
Hamptons, two yachts, and enough dough
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SELIN (CONT'D)
to pay three bimbos alimony. Shall I
go on?

PHIL
Don't forget, I also own this failing
little project of yours. The only
reason I haven't shut this shit down,
is 'cos Varone wants your boy to go
the distance. But he's losing
patience. And he's not the type of
friend I intend to disappoint. Got it?

SELINA
Explains why you keep the Monsignor so
close; Someone's gotta vouch for your
lousy ass at the *Pearly Gates*.

Phil shakes his head, grabs his coat.

PHIL
You got a week.

Phil exits Selina's office.

Selina downs her drink, angrily. Then throws her glass across
the room.

SELINA
Goddammit, Benji!

EXT. FARM - DAY

Ben and Norm walk around a field, as they watch a MAN in his
mid-20s teaching a young WOMAN with an eye-patch to ride.

BEN
'*Heal them*'?

NORM
That's what he whispered to me.

BEN
How'd you know it was him?

NORM
More of a feeling, really.

BEN
But, objectively speaking, it couldn't
have been Jimmy. After all-

NORM
He was half-a-world away.

BEN
You understand how that sounds, right?

(CONTINUED)

NORM
Tell me, Ben... Do I strike you as a
man who tolerates bullshit or believes
in the Tooth Fairy?

BEN
No, Sir. And neither do I.

NORM
Do you believe I'm telling the truth?

Ben looks at Norm in the eyes. A moment of self-doubt flashes
across Ben's face. And then it's gone.

BEN
So, when'd you find out about Jimmy?

They arrive at the top of Norm's DRIVEWAY.

NORM
Very next morning. Navy Chaplain came
by to give me the news... and a flag.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Norm and Ben are in the kitchen.

Norm hands Ben a folded American FLAG.

Norms pours them another ICE TEA.

BEN
Where was he?

NORM
Kandahar region of Afghanistan.

BEN
Half a world away.

NORM
12,972 miles to be exact.

BEN
And you're certain it was him?

NORM
Certain as death and taxes.

Ben sits on a STOOL. Takes a deep breath.

BEN
You invited me here. So you know what
I've been doing? What I write.

NORM
I do.

(CONTINUED)

BEN
Yet, you believe I can be convinced?

NORM
Wouldn't be here otherwise.

BEN
So, either you're all certifiable.
Or...

NORM
Or.

BEN
Yeah. Or.

Ben places the flag down on the counter, lost in thought.

INT. FLOWER & PLANT STORE - DAY

Late morning.

Ben speaks with EDITH ROGERS, (now in her mid-60s), as she waters and cares for a variety of PLANTS in her store.

The walls are covered in Christian Evangelical paraphernalia.

BEN
Until that night, had there ever been
any... shall we say, unusual activity,
in the Church?

EDITH
Do you mean, ghosts and such?

BEN
Unusual, is what I mean.

EDITH
Then, no. Our Church isn't haunted by
ghouls, any more than my store is
enchanted by Fairies.

BEN
But you agree that a man in uniform
came into the Church that night.

EDITH
I do.

BEN
How do you explain it?

EDITH
You surprise me, Mr. Chambers. I'd
have thought a man of your renown
would've figured it out by now.

(CONTINUED)

BEN
Figured what out?

EDITH
It was a hoax, of course.

BEN
A hoax? Why?

EDITH
Must I spell it out for you?

BEN
If you wouldn't mind.

Edith snips away at a set of roses.

EDITH
The dead-beat father, the thief, and
the junkie. They conspired to deceive.

BEN
To what end?

EDITH
I believe they felt guilty.

BEN
About Jimmy?

EDITH
Of course. They were rotten to him.
So, they concocted a ridiculous ruse
to publicly display their remorse.

BEN
But they didn't find out he was dead
until the day after.

EDITH
According to them.

BEN
Ok. So, I assume you didn't hear the
man in uniform whisper anything?

EDITH
Don't be foolish. And even if such a
thing were true, do you honestly
believe this so-called divine entity
wouldn't converse with the most devout
member of the parish?

BEN
I take your point.

(CONTINUED)

EDITH

Good. I look forward to reading your article, Mr. Chambers. They deserve to be shamed for their sacrilegious display of blasphemy. It's a pox on our congregation.

BEN

I'll keep that in mind.

Edith holds out a RED ROSE to Ben. She smiles, sickly.

EDITH

Please... take one.

Ben reluctantly takes the ROSE.

INT. POLICE STATION, DANTE'S OFFICE - DAY

Ben sits with Dante at the Sheriff's desk, as he does paperwork. Dante is wearing READING GLASSES.

BEN

So you were there that night?

DANTE

Indeed I was.

BEN

And you remember this mystery man?

DANTE

Yep. He was wearing a green pilot uniform. Hard to forget.

BEN

And he didn't say anything to you?

DANTE

Not a peep.

BEN

Do you think it could've been a prank?

DANTE

In the middle of a storm?

BEN

Kids do crazy shit sometimes.

DANTE

There's crazy, and there's insane.

BEN

Maybe it was one of the adults...
or... a group of them?

Dante pulls off his reading glasses.

(CONTINUED)

DANTE

You've been speaking with Edith?

BEN

I've spoken to a lot of eye witnesses. With the exception of Frankie, Norm and George, they all saw the same thing, but none heard a word from the mystery man.

DANTE

So, the best you got, is a wackadoodle theory from Edith?

BEN

Well... do you have a theory?

DANTE

If push came to shove, and I had to guess, I'd say... maybe it was one of the Coast Guard guys who crashed outside of town. Maybe.

BEN

Crash? I didn't hear about that.

DANTE

Well, that's the best I got, as far as theories go.

Ben looks up at a spare POLICE UNIFORM hanging on a peg.

INT. COAST GUARD HELICOPTER HANGAR - DAY

Ben follows COAST GUARD pilot RICKY GONZALEZ (mid-30s), as he runs diagnostics on his HELICOPTER.

GONZALEZ

By the time the storm hit the coast it was a Cat three. Destroyed just about everything in its path.

BEN

Were you out on search and rescue?

GONZALEZ

No, sir. I was on Comms duty that night.

BEN

Where was the crash in proximity to the town?

GONZALEZ

About five miles out, give or take.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

Would it've been possible for one of the pilots, or the medic, to walk from the crash site into town and back again, before dying?

GONZALEZ

Well, let's see; Captain Flower died on impact. His head was severed from his body. The co-pilot, Lieutenant Birchram was crushed under the skids. As for Doc Matheson - they needed dental records to identify his body. So, I'd say, that's a hard no, sir.

BEN

I see.

GONZALEZ

Anything else I can help with?

BEN

No, that's...

Ben looks at two PILOTS entering the hangar. They're both wearing ORANGE JUMPSUITS.

BEN

Actually, one last... dumb question... Coast Guard aviation uniforms have always been orange, right?

GONZALEZ

Since the 1950s.

Ben watches the PILOTS approach the helicopter, walks away.

BEN

Thanks.

Gonzalez nods back, turns his attention to the pilots.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Ben and Frankie in Ben's car.

FRANKIE

'Help them'.

BEN

Help who?

FRANKIE

'Help them' - that's what he told me.

BEN

That put you on the path to teaching?

(CONTINUED)

(Snaps his fingers)
Just like that?

FRANKIE
God no! It was a wayward journey to
the chalkboard. But yes, that was my
initial interpretation.

BEN
Initial interpretation?

FRANKIE
Well, best to say Jimmy's message had
multiple meanings.

BEN
Of course it did.

FRANKIE
All in good time, my friend.

Ben frowns.

BEN
Slow-rolling this... this... whatever
this is, won't make me any less
skeptical. Please tell me you're not
that naive?

Frankie grins, looks out at the darkening sky.

FRANKIE
Jimmy loved cars like this. He used to
work on them.

BEN
Ah, the not-so subtle art of
deflection.

FRANKIE
Merely making an innocent observation.

BEN
Appeal to my compassion by finding
something in common between me and the
mysterious Jimmy.
(Shakes head)
This isn't my first rodeo, young lady.

Frankie ignores Ben and smiles again to herself.

FRANKIE
Giddy-up.

EXT. WOODS/RAVINE - NIGHT

Ben's car pulls up to an OUTCROPPING viewpoint along a
RAVINE, overlooking the town.

The SUN is setting.

Ben stretches as he exits the car. Looks around.

Ben's phone vibrates. It's Selina. He ignores the call again.

FRANKIE

Do you need to get that?

BEN

Uh... no.

(Looks around)

So, I'm assuming there's a story behind this spot?

Frankie walks to the edge of the VIEWPOINT.

FRANKIE

Jimmy took me here on our second date.

BEN

Where was the first?

FRANKIE

Well, for our infamous first date, Jimmy took me to an ice cream parlor. In the middle of winter. Pure Jimmy.

(Smiles to herself)

Anyway, we get there and place an order. I asked for cherry, but get served strawberry. Which I didn't notice at first, as I was... you know, distracted. But after a couple of bites, I realized... Uh oh... Strawberry.

BEN

Uh oh?

(Realizes what she means)

Oh! You were allergic?

FRANKIE

Very. Anyways, five minutes later I was in anaphylactic shock. Ten minutes later an ambulance took me to the hospital, where I stayed overnight. And despite it being the worst first date ever, Jimmy never stopped holding my hand.

BEN

Sounds like a keeper.

FRANKIE

I know, right? So, date number two, he took me here to watch the sunset. He figured no way can I be allergic to a sunset.

(CONTINUED)

Ben smiles; A smile of genuine mirth and warmth.

Frankie smiles back.

BEN

Good to know I'm not the only man to
make a woman suffer on a first date.

FRANKIE

The storyteller has a story?

FLASHBACK - HIGH SCHOOL, 1980s

EIGHTEEN-YEAR-OLD Ben watches as a pretty girl (BETH) his age
passes her in the school corridor.

BEN (VO)

I was seventeen, going on eighteen.
She was about the same age. She was a
valedictorian hippy-chick. Beautiful
as she was kind.

FRANKIE (VO)

I hate her already.

YOUNG BETH walks past YOUNG BEN. She looks back, and smiles.

BEN (VO)

She was outta my league. We didn't
have much in common. I was a comic-
book nerd who played Dungeons and
Dragons. She was this mysterious new-
agey girl who wore crystals, smelled
like incense and had a fondness for
the arcane.

FRANKIE

Oh! She was Wiccan, wasn't she?

BEN

Not quite. But different enough that I
figured there's no way she'd go on a
date with me. But I asked her anyway.
What did I have to lose?

BACK TO SCENE

FRANKIE

Oh... I dunno... your dignity?

BEN

Dignity means nothing to a teenage boy
with a crush.

FRANKIE

Ok. So, I'm guessing she said, 'yes'?

Ben nods, affirmatively.

(CONTINUED)

FLASHBACK - FLUSHING CEMETERY (mid-1980s)

EIGHTEEN-year-old Ben and SEVENTEEN-year-old Beth walk through the CEMETERY GATES.

BEN (VO)

I wanted her to think I was edgy and mysterious too. So, I took her to *Flushing Cemetery* for a picnic.

FRANKIE (VO)

So thoughtful... and morbid.

YOUNG BEN lays out a blanket for their picnic, takes out a book by EDGAR ALLEN POE from this picnic basket.

Meanwhile, Beth is getting paler by the second.

BEN (VO)

It took me a while to notice how pale she was. The shortness of breath. The cold sweats.

FRANKIE (VO)

No way. Fear of graveyards?

BACK TO SCENE

BEN

Coimetrophobia.

FRANKIE

That's a real thing? I thought it was made up.

BEN

Just as real and scary as *Arachnophobia.*

FRANKIE

Wowzers. So, what happened next?

BEN

Despite the Graveyard Incident, she went out with me again. And eight years later... we were married.

FRANKIE

Well. Well. Well. Will miracles never cease... even for hard-nosed skeptics!

Ben's smile fades.

The Sun starts to set fully behind the town.

(CONTINUED)

BEN

However, unlike you, my dead partner
doesn't speak to me beyond the grave.

Ben folds his arms. Looks out toward the sunset, frowning.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Ben's car pulls up to Frankie's house. An awkward silence.

Frankie removes a crinkled ENVELOPE from her pocket.

FRANKIE

A day after the incident--and two
hours after I got the news of his
death--I received a letter from Jimmy.

(A beat)

Couldn't open it right away. Too much
too soon, I guess.

Frankie opens the ENVELOPE. Pulls out a scribbled-on NAPKIN.

FRANKIE

It took me a few days, but eventually
it was time.

(A whimsical sigh. Reads)

His message was... perfect. It gave me
a sense of peace. Felt like I was
gonna be okay, 'cos no matter what,
he'll always be in my corner.

BEN

What was in this... 'letter'?

FRANKIE

(Reading the letter)

It was a quote:

(Clears her throat)

*"Hold the hand of the child within
you. For this child--"*

BEN

(Bemused)

*"-nothing is impossible." ...Paulo
Coelho.*

FRANKIE

Jimmy's favorite writer.

Ben takes out his pocket-sized leather BOOKLET.

FRANKIE

What's that?

(CONTINUED)

BEN
Beth made this for me, before I left
for Afghanistan. It's filled with
handwritten quotes from *Paulo
Coelho*... my favorite writer.

FRANKIE
Well knock me down with a feather.
Ain't that a coincidence.

Ben rubs his thumb over the embossed 'B4B' on the cover.

BEN
Why do I get the feeling there's more
to this story than you're letting on?

FRANKIE
(Grins impishly)
As far as my story goes, there's only
one chapter left... The epilogue.

Frankie exits Ben's CAR. Smiles back at him.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Early morning. Ben sits on a bench, drinking a coffee,
staring out at a pond full of ducks, swans and geese.

His phone rings. It's Selina again. Ignores the call. Frowns.

VARONE (OS)
Good morning, Mr. Chambers.

Ben swivels in his seat, and sees Monsignor Varone standing
next to the bench. Ben looks behind Varone and sees a black
LIMO idling away in the parking lot.

BEN
Monsignor Varone? Well this is a...
weird surprise.

Varone looks around the park and smiles.

VARONE
Let's walk and talk.

Varone and Ben walk along a path adjacent to the water.

BEN
Ok, what gives?

VARONE
I heard about your detour and it
piqued my curiosity.

(CONTINUED)

BEN
We're not married. I date other
investigations.

VARONE
I'd expect nothing less.

BEN
So... ?

VARONE
I worry that your recent work has
lacked conviction. So, I prayed.
Prayed for clarity. Prayed for a way
to help you overcome any doubts.

BEN
Must'a been hard on the knees.

VARONE
Mr. Chambers... Hear me out.

BEN
Fine. But make it snappy.

VARONE
You understand the sanctity of the
confessional seal, yes?

BEN
(Bristles)
All too well.

VARONE
It recently came to my attention, that
seven years ago, a young priest from
Brooklyn, took confession from a man
who claimed he'd killed a woman who
tried to stop him from stealing a car.
The police found out about this
development but the Church refused
break the confessional seal. Any of
this sound familiar?

Ben stops walking. He looks at Varone, angrily.

BEN
Let's get this straight... I don't
care who you are. Who you know. Or the
God you praise. So, be very careful
about what you say next.

VARONE
Under extraordinary circumstances, the
confessional seal can be ruptured, if
permitted by the Pope.

(CONTINUED)

BEN
What's the catch?

VARONE
You're on a crusade, ordained by God.
A crusade that must be completed.

BEN
Are you... are you bribing me?

VARONE
Holy quests are forged in a trial of
faith. The Bible's full of such
allegories.

BEN
The Bible's fulla a lotta things...
but I'm pretty sure blackmail ain't
one.

VARONE
This may seem unfair or even tawdry.

BEN
Unfair and tawdry? Seriously? This is
flat out vicious and vile.

VARONE
A prophet's path is replete with
sacrifice. So, trust God's wisdom will
guide your way. And in turn, your
faith will be rewarded.

BEN
Selina won't let this stand.

VARONE
She's aligned with our decision. And I
urge you to do the same. After all,
don't you desire closure?

Ben looks out at the water. Sees two Swans in an embrace.

BEN
What are you asking of me?

VARONE
Finish up here. Publicly desecrate
their story. Complete the three
remaining assignments. And that'll be
the sum of your trial.

Ben pauses to deliberate.

BEN
Do... Do I have your word?

(CONTINUED)

VARONE
I'm a servant of God. My word is
incorruptible.

Ben looks back out at the pond. The swans have separated.

INT. CAFE - NIGHT

Ben sits in a booth with Frankie. Ben's visibly stewing.

FRANKIE
You okay?

BEN
Never better.

Frankie looks Ben over. Clearly doesn't believe him.

CHLOE (late-20s), American-Asian, saddles up to their table,
and hands them both LATTE'S in large MUGS.

FRANKIE
Thanks, sweetie.

Ben looks down and sees a SMILEY FACE in the coffee FROTH.

BEN
Cute.

Chloe pauses. Ben notices.

CHLOE
So this is him?

FRANKIE
In the flesh.

CHLOE
Coolbeans.

BEN
And you are?

CHLOE
Chloe.

FRANKIE
She's my epilogue.

CHLOE
And Frankie, is my guardian angel,
slash, big sister, slash... sponsor.

FRANKIE
We met in the program.

(CONTINUED)

CHLOE
She's the reason I'm in it.

BEN
Whoa. Slow down. One thing at a time.

Chloe SCOTCHES next to Frankie in the BOOTH.

FRANKIE
You know about the program?

BEN
I do.

FRANKIE
Right, so you know one of the most important steps is to make right the things you did wrong.

BEN
I'm familiar.

FRANKIE
Well, about a year after the 'incident' I celebrated twelve months sober. Which meant it was time to make up for my misdeeds.

INT. DRUG DEALER APARTMENT - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

SUPER: Seven Years Ago

Frankie approaches the front door. KNOCKS.

TONY (OS)
Come-the-fuck-in.

Frankie opens the door and walks over to a table where Tony is sitting with Bam-Bam.

In front of them are bags of DRUGS.

TONY
Yo, Bam! Look. Little Lady is back.

BAMBAM
Awesome. Ready for some blow, Lady?

TONY
Or the other kinda blow?

Tony and BamBam laugh and high-five each other.

FRANKIE
You still have the stamp collection?

Tony nods in the direction of the COUCH.

(CONTINUED)

Frankie can see the BOOK on a coffee table. She also sees a young Asian-American girl (CHLOE) drugged out in the corner.

Frankie takes out a white ENVELOPE.

FRANKIE

I'll give you three hundred for it.

TONY

No way. I know for a fact that thing's worth at least a couple grand.

FRANKIE

Please... I'm begging you.

BAMBAM

(Giggles)

Snap! Looks like it's blow time after all!

FRANKIE

Shut up.

Tony puts a HANDGUN on the table. Frankie steps back.

BamBam, waves goodbye.

BAMBAM

Bounce, beeatch!

Frankie frowns. Shakes her head and moves to the door.

TONY

Don't be a stranger, Little Lady.

Frankie looks one last time at the STAMP COLLECTION. Also notices the comatose Chloe again.

She exits through the DOOR, but as she shuts it, she places a small piece of CARDBOARD between the door jam and the frame.

This leaves the DOOR slightly ajar.

EXT. DRUG DEALER APARTMENT - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

Frankie LURKS in the SHADOWS of an ALLEY, watching the apartment from across the street.

She sees the lights go out.

Makes her move.

INT. DRUG DEALER APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS [FLASHBACK]

Frankie discreetly slips into the apartment.

She sees BamBam and Tony, asleep on the COUCH.

Frankie tip-toes to the STAMP BOOK. She picks it up, softly.

BamBam stirs, but doesn't wake.

As Frankie leaves, she notices Chloe waking. Chloe appears vacant and sickly.

Frankie PAUSES. Decides to make a bad decision.

She looks around for something to hold the STAMP BOOK.

She notices a large BACKPACK at the side of the couch and opens it silently.

Inside the backpack are bundles of CASH. Frankie takes a breath, then puts the book into the backpack.

Tony stirs. Frankie sees his gun, on the coffee table.

Tony rolls over, and snores. Frankie's relief is palpable.

Frankie approaches Chloe. She gestures silence. Chloe is too addled to make a peep.

Frankie picks Chloe up. She cradles her to the door, and then uses her foot to shut the door quietly behind her.

Cradling Chloe, Frankie heads to the building's front door. Chloe groggily looks up at Frankie.

CHLOE

Wh... wh... where am I?

Chloe PASSES OUT.

EXT. CLINIC - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

Frankie parks her car outside a run-down RECOVERY CLINIC.

A FORECLOSURE notice is taped to the door.

Frankie carries Chloe to the entrance. Rings the BUZZER.

A female NURSE (mid-50s), greets them... ushers them inside.

Frankie hands the backpack to the Nurse. The Nurse notices the cash. Frankie shrugs.

FRANKIE

Mysterious ways, right?

NURSE

So it would seem.

Frankie follows the Nurse, still cradling a comatose Chloe.

(CONTINUED)

END FLASHBACK

INT. CAFE - CONTINUOUS

Ben listens as he stirs his COFFEE absentmindedly.

CHLOE

She rescued me. But most of all... she helped me be me again.

Chloe's eyes TEAR-UP. She gives Frankie a big hug.

BEN

And the clinic?

FRANKIE

I volunteer there a few times a week.

BEN

Helping others... like you?

FRANKIE

To the best of my ability.

Ben stops stirring. Realizes something. Looks at Frankie.

BEN

'Help' them.

FRANKIE

(Nods, grins)

Help them. But first, I had to learn how to help myself.

INT. PIZZA PARLOR - DAY

Ben sits with Dante and George, as they eat PIZZA.

Ben notices Dante and George's eating routine is highly familial, as they pass food and condiments around.

BEN

So, I've had this question batting around my head all day.

DANTE

Let me guess; You wanna know how George was able to join the PD... ?

GEORGE

Even though I'm an ex-con.

BEN

Something to that effect.

(CONTINUED)

DANTE
Well, it wasn't easy.

GEORGE
'Cos the Sheriff's a hard-ass.

Both George and Dante laugh.

DANTE
Here's the deal; This is a small town
and we're not the NYPD. I'm an elected
official, so, I can hire who I want.

GEORGE
He wasn't sure if I was ready. Hell, I
wasn't sure if I was ready.

DANTE
He had a lot to prove.

GEORGE
And big-ass shoes to fill.

BEN
Whose shoes?

INT. LILLIAN'S DINER - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

SUPER: Seven Years Ago

Closing time.

FIVE late-night stragglers are finishing-up their meals.

George mops the floor, while his mother, Lillian cleans.

At the counter is Dante, eating PIE.

Lillian looks over at George. She silently gestures for him
to approach Dante.

George frowns. Reluctantly pulls out a piece of PAPER from
his pocket, takes it over to Dante.

GEORGE
Hey, uh, Dante. I mean... Sheriff?

DANTE
How can I help you, George?

GEORGE
I... I filled out an application for
that open Deputy position.

Dante takes the application from George. Glances at it.

(CONTINUED)

DANTE
You know it's a hard sell, right?

GEORGE
Yeah. I... uh, figured it might be.

DANTE
Having a record doesn't help. Plus
there's the whole nepotism thing. It's
not a good look for the department.

Lillian glares daggers at Dante, annoyed.

LILLIAN
That's a crock and you know it.

DANTE
Lill... I'm not Henry. I don't have
the same pull or trust.

LILLIAN
The boy needs a break.

DANTE
Opinions and reputations can be as
stubborn as a deaf mule.

LILLIAN
If I recall, there was once a good-for-
nuthin' boy whom my husband helped
become a man.

DANTE
There's a difference.

LILLIAN
Bullcrap. Only difference bein', you's
never caught.

Lillian walks off in a huff. Dante sighs. Puts his fork down.

The front door of the diner flies open. Two MEN, wearing
HOCKEY masks enter. Both have GUNS.

ROBBER ONE
Everyone, put yer hands up!

ROBBER TWO
We want your money, and what's in the
cash register. Don't be stupid.

Dante pivots in his stool to face Robber One.

DANTE
Ok, Son. There's no reason-

(CONTINUED)

Robber One smacks Dante on the head with his gun. Dante tumbles to the floor. His forehead, BLEEDING.

The other people in the cafe gasp.

George holds tightly to his MOP HANDLE.

Robber One points his GUN at Lillian. George tightens.

ROBBER ONE
Are you deaf? I said gimme the money
in the cash register. NOW!

Lillian slowly goes to the REGISTER.

Robber Two is in front of George. He points his gun at a YOUNG COUPLE in a BOOTH and then back at George.

The YOUNG MAN in the booth slowly reaches into his side pocket. George sees he has a KNIFE.

ROBBER TWO
C'mon. Give me your money, assholes.

GEORGE
Be cool.
(Looks at the YOUNG MAN)
You. Be cool.

The YOUNG MAN takes his hand off the KNIFE HANDLE.

George slowly starts to unscrew the handle from the MOP.

GEORGE
Hey man. You thought this through?

ROBBER TWO
Shut your mouth. Get on your knees.

GEORGE
Seriously, Bro. You got a cop over
there bleeding. You're in some shit.

ROBBER TWO
Get your ass down.

GEORGE
Cops look after their own. Ain't no
place they won't find you.

Robber One looks over at Robber Two.

ROBBER ONE
Dude. Hurry up.

ROBBER TWO
Did you get their money?

(CONTINUED)

Robber One looks at the COUPLE. They put their CASH on the table.

George has fully unscrewed the handle from the mop.

He glances over at Dante on the floor.

Dante looks up, catches George's eye. Sees George has a plan. He silently nods back, in agreement.

George refocuses on ROBBER TWO. Starts to hand over his WALLET. But accidentally drops it on the floor.

As Robber Two looks down, George throttles his head with the mop handle. And then upper-cuts the handle through Robber Two's legs... catching him in the BALLS.

Robber Two crumples in a heap.

Robber One looks over at the commotion. As he does so, Dante kicks out the back of his legs. He falls to the floor, and Dante quickly disarms him.

George disarms Robber Two, whose mask has fallen off.

Robber Two looks up at at George... it's BAMBAM.

Dante has removed Robber One's mask... it's TONY.

LATER

Dante and George are at the counter.

Dante nurses a bag of ICE on his head.

Meanwhile, TWO DEPUTIES perp-walk BAMBAM and TONY out the Diner, to a POLICE CRUISER outside.

DANTE
Handled yourself well, George.

GEORGE
I wanted to help, you know?

DANTE
Your first instinct was to protect.
(Smiles to himself)
Like father, like son.

Dante pats George's shoulder. Lillian looks at Dante.

DANTE
Come by the station tomorrow. We'll
discuss your application.

Dante looks at Lillian... she smiles back, gratified.

George sees the robbers being driven away... he grins.

(CONTINUED)

END FLASHBACK

INT. PIZZA PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

George nabs the last of Dante's pizza crust... chews on it.

DANTE

Within six months he was a Deputy.
Best lawman we've had around here
since... well, since his Pops.

George smiles, playfully punches Dante's arm.

GEORGE

And like the old man, I'll run for
Sheriff once this 'ol fart retires.

Dante grabs their trash, gets up to throw it in the garbage.
Ben looks at George.

BEN

'Protect them'?

GEORGE

(Winks at Ben)

Damn straight. But I first had to
learn to protect myself from myself.

George sits back in his chair, pleased with himself.

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Ben sits at the hotel bar. Open folders full of notes and
documents are scattered about.

He sees his glass is empty, gets the attention of the BARMAN.

BARMAN

Another?

SELINA (OS)

Make that two on the double.

Ben swivels to see Selina behind him.

BEN

Lina? What're you doin' here?

SELINA

It's been four days of radio silence.

BEN

So you drove five hours outta the city
to check-up on me?

BARMAN delivers two shots of WHISKEY.

(CONTINUED)

SELINA
Still working the story?

BEN
It's complicated. Hard to decipher.

SELINA
Sounds like they've spun you up in a web of bullshit.

Selina downs her drink. Requests another.

BEN
We've been around the world a few. Seen the best and worse of humanity. So, we know when someone's lying.

SELINA
And?

BEN
And, maybe some facts are better off fiction.

SELINA
Too late for that now. I need the article for next week's print run.

BEN
You need it, or the Monsignor?

SELINA
Don't. Don't test me. And besides, you got a lot at riding on this, remember?

BEN
How can I forget? Anyways, what does it matter if I let this go, and make good on the other cases?

SELINA
Look, all I know is that Phil wants this done. So, get it done.

BEN
So, we take our marching orders now from a Punxsutawney Phil and Father Fuckface?

SELINA
Get off the soapbox, Benji. It's not a good look.

BEN
'Above all, to thine ownself be true.'
Who taught me to live by that mantra?

(CONTINUED)

SELINA
A young, colossally naive editor.

Ben downs his shot.

BEN
(Heavy sigh)
I'm not sure Jon'd recognize what
we've become. I don't.

Selina sits back, angrily. Folds her arms.

SELINA
You wanna know who I've become? A
woman who wakes up most nights
screaming. A cocky bitch who cowers at
loud noises. A girl who watched her
lover, decapitated on *Al Jazeera*.
That's me. And that cocky bitch is
your boss. So show her some goddamn
respect. Fair?

BEN
Not even close.

SELINA
What did you say to me?

BEN
I'm saying, I need to press pause.

Selina reaches into her purse and pulls out a thumbdrive.

SELINA
The Monsignor gave this to me. It's a
password protected file that contains
the name of the man who killed Beth.

BEN
What? What are you saying?

SELINA
I'm telling you to deliver my article
by 5pm tomorrow, or... or, forget
about your job and... and forget about
the contents of this file.

Selina stands as Ben glares angrily at her.

BEN
What the hell's wrong with you?

SELINA
Me? Me? How is this even a decision?
You're gonna sacrifice your career and
give up on finding Beth's killer, for
what? A bunch'a local yokel morons?

(CONTINUED)

BEN

At least I can still see right from wrong. So could the old Selina. But this... this second-rate hack wouldn't be fit to tie her shoes.

Selina starts to walk. Ben looks in the MIRROR over the bar.

BEN

I thought you were Beth's friend.

SELINA

Grow up, Benji.

Selina exits the bar, and for a moment, looks ashamed.

Ben shakes his head, disconsolate.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

BEN's asleep on the bed.

BEN'S DREAM

Quiet, dimly-lit street, late at night.

Ben stares at Beth's face, as it rests on a brown SATCHEL. One TEAR drop trickles down her cheek.

BETH

Where's my miracle?

BLOOD starts to bubble at her lips. Ben starts to reach out-

BACK TO SCENE

Ben awakens in a cold sweat.

EXT. NORM'S FARM HOUSE - DAY

Morning.

Ben pulls up in his car outside the front porch.

Norm is waiting on the porch. An elegant, Asian-American SUZY KAWACHIKA (mid-40s), dressed neatly, stands beside him.

Ben gets out of his car, approaches Norm and the Woman.

NORM

Thanks for coming back, Ben. There's someone I want you to meet.

Suzy steps forward. She smiles at Ben. He looks at her with his head cocked, as if he's trying to place her face.

(CONTINUED)

NORM
This is Captain Suzy Kawachika.
Retired, Air Force pilot.

SUZY
Delighted to meet you, Mr. Chambers.

BEN
Do we know each other?

SUZY
Not... directly.

QUICK FLASHBACK

Ben flashes back to 8 YEARS AGO in Afghanistan. In the airplane hangar. Following a Soldier to Selina's office.

Seeing a sad-looking Asian-American female pilot (Suzy Kawachika) talking to another OFFICER.

She looks at Ben. Then looks away to hide her tears.

END FLASHBACK

BEN
Afghanistan? You're a pilot. Right?

SUZY
Affirmative.

BEN
I don't understand. How.... why...?

Norm puts an arm over Ben's shoulder. Leads him to the house.

NORM
It's a helluva story.

INT. BACK PORCH, NORM'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ben, Suzy, and Norm sit in chairs, under a covered porch.

On a small table is a TAPE RECORDER.

SUZY
I retired from active duty six years ago. Took some time to travel. Get my head straight. And that's when I arrived at Norm's front door.

BEN
Why? What for?

(CONTINUED)

SUZY

I wanted to meet the father of the bravest pilot I've ever commanded.

NORM

She wanted to share something with me.

Norm points to the recorder.

BEN

What is it?

NORM

A flight recording.

Ben stares at the recorder. He seems hesitant.

Norm presses play.

Ben looks out to the BACK YARD.

FLASHBACK

The back yard morphs into a SUNNY DAY, from TWENTY YEARS AGO.

YOUNG JIMMY plays in the yard. His MOM (Cynthia) and his DAD (Norm), sit on the PORCH, watching him.

Jimmy has two TOY JET PLANES... running through the yard.

Cockpit RADIO TRANSMISSIONS come from the tape recorder...

PARADISE (VO)

Archangel, this is Paradise. We have an Alpha unit stranded and surrounded. They require immediate fire mission on their vector, which is 33.83 north, by 67.54 south. One hundred and thirty clicks from your vector, over.

Jimmy takes the toy planes around a SWING SET.

ARCHANGEL/SUZY (VO)

Roger, Paradise. Negative on the request. We don't have enough fuel for a fire mission at that location, plus return to base, over.

PARADISE (VO)

Copy that, Archangel. Understood. We'll continue to work the problem from our side. Over and out.

A few seconds of static over the radio. One of Jimmy's toy planes diverges from the other jet plane.

(CONTINUED)

ARCHANGEL/SUZY (VO)
Seraphim, you've broken formation,
over.

SERAPHIM (VO)
Roger that, Archangel.

Jimmy puts down one of the toy planes. Continues flying the other, toward a SANDBOX in the garden.

ARCHANGEL/SUZY (VO)
Seraphim. Repeat, you've broken
formation. Return to my vector
immediately, over.

SERAPHIM (VO)
Our boys need help, Captain. They're
running out of time, over.

ARCHANGEL/SUZY (VO)
Seraphim, that's not your call. Get
back to my six, that's an order, over.

SERAPHIM (VO)
It's the right thing to do, Captain.

The TOY PLANE approaches a BUILDING BLOCK structure in the sandbox.

GREEN TOY SOLDIERS are placed inside the structure. BLUE TOY SOLDIERS surround the outside of the structure.

ARCHANGEL/SUZY (VO)
Lieutenant Clancy, last chance. You
won't have enough fuel to return to
base, do you understand, over?

SERAPHIM (VO)
Roger. Understood, over.

Static fills the radio comms.

ARCHANGEL/SUZY (VO)
Paradise, this is Archangel. Change of
plan; Archangel Two, call-sign
Seraphim, will execute fire mission,
over.

PARADISE (VO)
Copy that. We'll relay confirmation to
the to Alpha unit. Good luck, over.

SERAPHIM (VO)
Thank you, Captain.

ARCHANGEL/SUZY (VO)
(Reluctant)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ARCHANGEL/SUZY (VO (CONT'D))
Lieutenant Clancy, S&R will track you
for exfiltration after ejection.

SERAPHIM (VO)
See you on the other side, Captain.

ARCHANGEL/SUZY (VO)
Godspeed, Jimmy.

Jimmy's TOY PLANE flies over the building block structure.

KING (VO)
Seraphim, this is Longhorn actual.

SERAPHIM (VO)
Copy Longhorn, this is Seraphim. Forty
clicks out, over.

Jimmy pretends to drop a BOMB outside the building block
structure. Clears a path for the Green Soldiers to leave.

He then flies the toy plane off into the setting SUN.

END FLASHBACK

RETURN TO SCENE

Norm presses STOP on the tape recorder. Ben stares off into
the distance. In a state of mild disbelief.

BEN
(To Norm)
The pilot was... was Jimmy?

NORM
Yes. He was.

BEN
(To Suzy)
I remember hearing the pilot had died.
But.... What happened? How did he...
you know?

SUZY
It was a canopy malfunction.

NORM
The Captain was kind enough to play me
the recording when we met. It might
sound strange, but it helped knowing
Jimmy died in the service of saving
others. It's what he woulda wanted.

SUZY
He was a rare young man. That's why I
came to Norm with this recording.

(CONTINUED)

NORM
And an idea.

Ben looks at Norm and Suzy inquisitively.

SUZY
Jimmy told me a lot about this ranch
and his father. To him it was a
healing haven that helped them both
after his Mother died.

NORM
And before she died, it helped me with
my PTSD from Gulf War 1.

SUZY
And after spending a few hours here, I
could understand why it meant so much
to Jimmy. So I thought... what if?

NORM
What if we could open the ranch to
vets who need their own haven for
healing?

SUZY
A sanctuary to honor Seraphim's
miracle.

NORM
So, Suzy went to work.

SUZY
Well, actually I called my Mom in DC.

Something occurs to Ben.

BEN
Holy crap! Is your Mom, Congresswoman
Anna Kawachika?

Suzy smiles demurely back. There's clearly something about
her that impresses Ben.

SUZY
(Nodding)
Chairwoman of the Veteran Affairs
committee. And...

NORM
One thing led to another. And...

SUZY
You're a journalist, I'm sure you can
fill in the blanks.

Ben takes it all in, with a small smile on his face.

(CONTINUED)

BEN
Yeah. I can.

Sees the various folks in pastures, riding, training, and cleaning horses. Nods, impressed.

LATER

Ben stands with Norm by the FRONT PORCH, as Suzy gets on her MOTORCYCLE.

Suzy looks at Ben. They have a 'moment'. Suzy smiles as does Ben. Until he catches himself, and the smile slips away.

As does Suzy on her CYCLE.

Ben looks over at Norm.

BEN
'Heal them'?

NORM
(Slowly smiles)
That's the idea. But before them, I had to get myself squared away.

Ben smiles to himself and nods.

NORM
Something else I need to show you.

Ben looks back at Norm, inquisitively.

INT. BARN HOUSE GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Norm opens the double-doors to a BARN that's been converted into a cross between a WORKSHOP and a GARAGE.

In the middle of this space is a CAR covered by a TARP.

Norm removes the TARP. Underneath is an late-1960s RED FORD MUSTANG. It's clearly a WORK-IN-PROGRESS restoration.

NORM
Jimmy bought it before he deployed.
Wanted to restore her back to former glory when he returned.

BEN
He had good taste. Hope he had the mechanical skills to match.

NORM
Jimmy got his grease monkey paws from me. As for taste... well, that came from someone else.

Norm opens a car door. Takes a KEY from his pocket and opens
(CONTINUED)

the GLOVE COMPARTMENT.

He removes a DOCUMENT and walks it over to Ben.

NORM
We got lucky with Jimmy.

BEN
What do you mean?

Norm gives Ben the document. He sighs, heavily.

NORM
With adoption, you never know how the kid'll turn out; There's what you can mold with nurture. Then there's what's already been decided by nature.
(Scratches his head)
And now we've met... I can see why we got lucky with the latter.

Norm looks at Ben and then puts a hand on his shoulder.

Norm takes out the TAPE RECORDER.

NORM
After the fire mission, Jimmy went radio silent for twenty-two minutes. About thirty seconds before the crash, he made one last transmission.

Norm presses PLAY. For a few seconds there is static. Then a voice breaks through.

SERAPHIM/JIMMY (VO)
Find him.

The radio goes to static, and then comes to an eerie stop.

Ben looks at Norm, with a sense of sadness.

NORM
He had your eyes. And your smile.

Ben reads the document. He's shocked by its contents.

Ben takes a deep breath to gather himself.

BEN
Beth and I were eighteen when we started dating. We'd been together only a few months when she got pregnant. We didn't know what to do. So, her Catholic parents decided for us; Beth'd bring the baby to term, and then give it up for adoption.

(CONTINUED)

NORM
That's a rough road to travel.

BEN
Even rougher when the baby arrived
seven weeks early.

FLASHBACK

Hospital. Pediatric ward.

YOUNG BEN (18) and YOUNG BETH (also, 18) stand, looking into
a BABY NURSERY. They're holding hands.

BEN (VO)
He was kept in one of those infant
incubators until he was fully formed.
Beth stayed with him, 24/7. And then
the day came to say goodbye.

Young Ben and Young Beth watch a BABY being swaddled in the
nursery. A NURSE looks over at them and smiles.

BETH
There's my little miracle boy.

Beth puts her head on Ben's shoulder, and cries. Ben cradles
her face, and kisses her forehead.

END FLASHBACK

RETURN TO SCENE

BEN
'Cos of complications with the birth,
we were one and done.

NORM
Well, the one you did bring into this
world, broke the mold. And for what
it's worth... He woulda liked you.

BEN
Seriously? I mean, look at me... not
much to admire. And then there's the
whole abandoning him thing.

NORM
He wouldn't see it that way.

BEN
Then how?

NORM
He'd see you as his father.

BEN
But... he doesn't even know me.

(CONTINUED)

NORM

Then maybe it's time you met.

Ben's perplexed by Norm's statement.

EXT. CHURCH CEMETERY - DAY

Ben and Norm enter a SMALL CEMETERY next to the town Church.

Waiting by a large GRAVESTONE is Frankie and George. They nod kindly to Ben.

Ben reads the gravestone ENGRAVING:

James Clancy. Beloved Son. Cherished Friend. Soul Mate.

Below the words is the INFINITY SYMBOL.

NORM

Ben... this is Jimmy. Your son.

Norm looks at Frankie and George, gestures for them to give Ben some space. They turn and start to walk away.

BEN

Eight minutes.

The Trifecta pause, turn to face Ben.

BEN

Beth waited at school with a student, because their Mom was running late. As a result, she missed the last bus home by eight minutes.

FLASHBACK

Beth walks down a quiet city street. Turns down an even quieter side street - 8th Avenue.

It starts to SNOW.

BEN (VO)

So, she walked back.

Beth sees a bedraggled GRUBBY MAN attempting to break into a car, approximately fifty feet in front of her.

BETH

Hey! Stop that!

The Grubby Man looks up and pulls out a gun.

The gun rattles in the Grubby Man's nervous, shaky hands.

GRUBBY MAN

Back off!

(CONTINUED)

Beth puts up her hands.

BANG.

The gun GOES OFF in the Grubby Man's hand. Surprising him.

Beth notices a BLOOD PATCH growing, like a red rose in bloom, over her stomach.

The Grubby Man notices too. Drops the gun and runs away.

Beth collapses to the sidewalk.

Her face rests on a BROWN LEATHER SATCHEL. Her breathing slows, and slows, until it stops altogether.

BACK TO SCENE

Ben holds his pocket-sized BOOK. His thumb unconsciously rubs the 'B4B' embossed on the cover.

BEN

Eight minutes was the difference between her life and death.

FRANKIE

I'm so sorry, Ben. I can't ima-

BEN

So don't. I've heard it all. '*Thoughts and prayers.*' '*She was one of a kind.*' '*Our hearts are with you.*' But it doesn't turn down the pain. Or make it any easier. You see, like Frankie, I grew up in the system and didn't know the meaning of family until I found Beth. She was my home. So, when she died, the best part of me went up in flames. Life felt harsh and unfair. And if there was such a thing as divinity... Why would such a loving person be left to die cold and alone? Why wasn't she saved by a miracle? Why?

GEORGE

Ben. We-

BEN

Look, I hear you. And I wish I could tell your story to the world. Like I wish I could go back to being me. I wish Beth was here to see her boy.

(Rubs tears from his eyes)

What you want me to do, might mean never knowing who killed my wife. Or worse... it'd be like accepting she

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BE (CONT'D)
wasn't worthy of a miracle. And I
just... I can't.

Frankie, George and Norm look at each other, silently
agreeing.

FRANKIE
Before you leave there's something
else you should know.

GEORGE
Something else we heard the night of
the incident.

FRANKIE
And have dreamt about ever since.

NORM
As the three of us stood outside the
church, we heard him whisper;

NORM/GEORGE/FRANKIE
'*Find him.*'

Ben looks back at Jimmy's gravestone. His eyes light up.

BEN
Find them...
(Nods to himself)
'*Find them.*'

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Back in the church, Ben sits near the front, thinking.

PADRE (OS)
I thought your return was 'highly
unlikely'?

Ben swivels to see Padre sitting opposite him.

BEN
(Smiling)
And yet here I am, Padre.

PADRE
Good. I was hoping we'd chat again.

BEN
Didn't we already have the
confessional talk?

PADRE
And yet, here I am.

Ben smiles, nods.

(CONTINUED)

PADRE
So, what did you make of their story?

BEN
That's a small question, with a very big answer.

PADRE
I'm not going anywhere.

Ben looks at his watch... deciding if he wants to divulge.

BEN
Sure. Why not?

LATER

Ben is now sitting on a set of stairs in front of the pulpit. Padre sits opposite him on a bench.

PADRE
Sounds like you're at crossroads?

BEN
Damned if I do. Damned if I don't.

PADRE
Well, tell me this; Do you believe their story?

BEN
I believe something unusual happened here. But that doesn't mean the skeptics and trolls out there'd believe a word of it.

PADRE
Or, maybe people aren't as cynical as you think. Maybe, what they crave is an impossible story, told by an improbable person, to touch their hearts, and ignite their souls.

BEN
Wish it were that simple, Padre. But no matter what path I take, there'll be a price to pay.

PADRE
Life is full of crossroads, big and small. And if we have faith, it doesn't matter which direction we go, as it'll take us to where need to be.

BEN
No offense, but my faith in the church is equal to my distrust of karma.

(CONTINUED)

PADRE

Forget the church. I'm talking about faith in yourself.

BEN

That's also in short supply.

PADRE

I think the folks here would disagree.

BEN

I'm not their savior. Hell, I'm not even sure what to believe. I have more questions than answers.

PADRE

About their story? Or about the truth you've been hoping to find?

BEN

I've reached my threshold for cryptic repartee. So for the love of... of you know who, speak plainly.

Padre stands.

PADRE

Okay. Since your wife died. What is it you really wanted to know?

BEN

(Bristles)

Who killed her. But what's that got to do with any of this?

PADRE

Everything. It's what drives you.

BEN

There's nothing to know. She's dead.

PADRE

Yes she is. And since then, you've been on a crusade of sorts, right?

BEN

I think that's well documented.

PADRE

Have you ever considered that the intent was masking your actual desire?

BEN

My desire was quite clear.

(CONTINUED)

PADRE

On the surface, yes. But I believe you have been in search of an answer to a question that man has been asking since the dawn of time.

BEN

That sounds profound.

PADRE

Let me put it another way; Since giving your son up for adoption, what have you asked yourself, time and again?

BEN

Um, I wanted to know where he ended up. Was he loved? How did he turn out?

PADRE

In essence, what does that all mean?

BEN

I guess... I wanted to know is he ok?

PADRE

And?

BEN

(Getting irritated)

And what's that got to do with my wife?

PADRE

What have you wanted to know?

BEN

(Anger starts to build)

I told you.

PADRE

What have you been looking for?

BEN

(Voice rises)

An answer.

PADRE

What is the question?

BEN

(Angry and frustrated)

I... I... I wanted... I wanted to know... is..

(Tears fill his eyes)

Is... she okay? Is she okay.

Padre puts a calming hand on Ben's shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

PADRE

There's no binary answer. Only what you choose to believe.

BEN

A choice?

PADRE

Jimmy's Trifecta embody his spirit. So, he lives on in their hearts. Which is how they know he's okay. And that's also given them something in return.

BEN

Peace?

PADRE

Permission. To live.

Ben nods, stands. Wipes his eyes.

Ben flashes a tiny smile. Looks Padre up-and-down again.

BEN

(Sardonic)

Wisdom in all shapes and sizes.

PADRE

Haven't heard that before.

BEN

You learn something new every day.

PADRE.

Yes. Yes you do.

Padre smiles and nods. Ben looks at this watch.

BEN

Time I hit the road, Padre.

PADRE

Of course.

Ben nods back, gets up.

PADRE

If you're heading south, I suggest stopping by '*Lillian's Diner*' in Neesham county. Her peach cobbler with a side of caramel ice cream is heaven sent... forgive the pun.

BEN

Thanks for the recommendation... and... uh... good talk, Padre.

(CONTINUED)

PADRE
Yes... Good talk, Ben.

Ben nods, gives the Padre a slight wave, and then leaves.

INT. BEN'S CAR - DAY

SUPER: 5.15 p.m.

Ben drives in his car. Distracted and lost in thought.

His phone RINGS. He sees it's Selina. He frowns.

When he looks up, a BRIGHT BLADE OF LIGHT, pierces his eyes. Forcing him to slightly swerve the car.

A big TRUCK going in the other direction, has drifted part way into the OPPOSITE LANE.

The SWERVE caused by the bright light, helps Ben avoid a head-on COLLISION with the truck.

His car skids over to the side of the road, untouched.

The PHONE continues to ring.

Ben gets his bearings. The car is settled safely at the side of the road. Forty yards ahead is a T-JUNCTION.

A CROSSROADS.

One direction points to NEESHAM. The other, NEW YORK CITY.

Ben shakes his head in amazement.

BEN
Well how 'bout that?

The phone continues to ring.

Ben makes a decision, and sends Selina to VOICEMAIL.

Ben smiles, throws his phone into the back.

He starts the car and heads down the road.

He turns toward NEESHAM.

INT. SELINA'S 'SCUTTLEBUTT' OFFICE - DAY

Selina stares at her COMPUTER. Looks at her WATCH. Sees that it's: 5:20 p.m. Twenty minutes PAST Ben's deadline.

RONNY knocks on her office DOOR. Selina waves him in.

Ronny stands nervously inside the door frame.

SELINA

You wanna seat at the big boy table?

Ronny nods, hesitantly. Selina slides a FOLDER to Ronny. Ronny picks it up and browses through the contents.

SELINA

Welcome to the show, Ace.

Ronny hesitates.

RONNY

Uh. Isn't this Mr. Chambers' article?

SELINA

Ben no longer works here.

RONNY

Oh.

Ronny turns to leave.

Selina stares at the PICTURE on her desk of her and the guys in their KEVLAR VESTS. Especially Jon.

SELINA

Masters in journalism from Stanford?

Ronny pauses. Uncertain. Selina looks up at Ronny.

RONNY

Uh, yeah.

SELINA

You could hang you hat anywhere. So, why *Scuttlebutt*?

RONNY

Um, well... it was, you, actually.

SELINA

Me?

RONNY

Selina Richardson. Badass, media maverick, who wrote the book on why aspiring journalists should ignore the book and trust their instincts. The woman who won the Pulitzer for castrating the world's biggest military contractor. I mean, you're frickin' legendary.

Ronny looks away.

SELINA

And how's it working out?

(CONTINUED)

RONNY
Uh, well... fine I guess.

SELINA
Fine is for curtains. Try again.

RONNY
Uh... you know the phrase; '*Never meet your heroes*'... well, yeah.

Ronny's shocked at himself. Selina stares back, impassive.

RONNY
Shit. Sorry. I... my Pops raised me to always be true to myself. He'd say; '*Ronald there are two types of men...*'
(Scratches his head)
I'm fired, aren't I?

Selina looks at a small PICTURE on the wall of her, with Ben and Beth on their WEDDING day. She then looks at the Monsignor's THUMB DRIVE on her desk.

SELINA
And a masters degree in computer engineering from MIT?

RONNY
Uh, yeah. That too.

SELINA
(Holds up the thumbdrive)
Can you break the password on this?

RONNY
Uh, I could give it a try.

Selina tosses the drive over to Ronny.

SELINA
'Attaboy.

RONNY
Should I ask what's on here?

SELINA
Resolution and redemption.

Ronny smiles.

INT. LILLIAN'S DINER - DAY

A few patrons sit in booths. Ben sits at the COUNTER.

Lillian, George's mom, stands on the other side.

LILLIAN
I was hoping you'd pay me a visit.

BEN
You come highly recommended.

LILLIAN
I should hope so. Been fillin' hungry bellies 'round here since the Nixon Administration.

BEN
I hear your peach cobbler's 'heaven sent'.

LILLIAN
Not sure it's divine, but it's won the town pie contest a time or two!

Lillian goes to fetch the PIE from a tray display.

BEN
Would you put a scoop'a caramel ice cream on the side?

LILLIAN
You betcha, Hon.

Ben browses over his NOTES. Lillian serves up the pie.

BEN
Thanks.

Lillian turns to walk away, but pauses.

LILLIAN
Hmm. Well ain't that a thing. You're here about our Jimmy, right?

BEN
Yes, ma'am.

LILLIAN
Well, that there was Jimmy's favorite.

BEN
You don't say.

LILLIAN
Not the usual combo. But then again, Jimmy always was a little... Jimmy.

Lillian pulls down a PICTURE from the top shelf.

LILLIAN
Last I saw him was the mornin' he deployed. So handsome in his uniform.

(CONTINUED)

BEN
Mind if I take a look? Only seen
pictures of him as a kid.

Lillian hands the pic to Ben.

LILLIAN
He was only twenty-four, yet wise
beyond his years.

Ben stares at the picture. His face twists into shock.

LILLIAN
(Smiles fondly)
Like he'd always tell me: '*Aunt Lil,
Wisdom comes in all shapes and sizes.*'

Ben's eyes WIDEN. His face pales and the fork he holds drops
from his hand to the dish. CLANG.

Lillian looks over at Ben, concerned.

LILLIAN
You okay? Looks like you seen a ghost.

Ben looks up at Lillian, bewildered. He waves the picture.

BEN
Mind if borrow this?

Ben throws a TEN DOLLAR BILL on the counter, and bolts.

Lillian watches him go, shakes her head.

LILLIAN
City folk.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Early evening.

Ben BURSTS into the church, out of breath.

BEN
Hello? Padre? Jimmy?

All is quiet.

Ben goes to the ALTAR. He looks at the picture again.

INSERT PICTURE

A picture of JIMMY and NORM outside Lillian's Diner.

Jimmy's in his NAVY WHITES. Both are smiling.

A closer look at Jimmy's face reveals that he's 'PADRE'.

(CONTINUED)

END INSERT

A voice whispers in the silence...

BETH (OS)
(Whisper)
You found my miracle.

The back doors of the church open. A bright light follows.
Ben covers his eyes.

As he looks closer he sees TWO FIGURES silhouetted in front.

The figures hold hands. As they come into focus, Ben can see they are JIMMY and BETH. They both smile.

JIMMY
(Softly)
Hey, Dad... Good talk.

Ben looks at them, completely dumbfounded. He cries.

The light behind Jimmy and Beth fades, as do they. Within seconds they're gone.

All that remains is an open door to the outside world.
Silence.

Ben wipes tears from his eyes... and smiles.

BEN
Yeah. Good talk... Son.

INT. MAKESHIFT PRESS ROOM - DAY

Super: Syria, 18 months later

CLOSE IN

A picture frame featuring a SCUTTLEBUTT MAGAZINE COVER.

On the cover is Monsignor Varone trying to shield his humiliated face from half-a-dozen cameras.

The magazine's caption reads:

Devious Deacon Coerces Widower - Powerful Monsignor blackmails journalist with info about his wife's killer. Catholic Church disgraced.

A subhead at the bottom of the page reads:

'Scuttlebutt to be Re-branded'

PULL BACK to reveal:

(CONTINUED)

SELINA sitting at a table in a hot, dusty PRESS ROOM with slapdash chairs and tables. She looks happy and content.

A name tag on her desk reads: '*Editor-in-Chief, Scuttle News*'

RONNY bundles excitedly through the door.

RONNY
Chief... Package for you.

Ronny places the package on Selina's desk.

She opens it. A BOOK is inside. She opens the cover and sees a written inscription inside: "*You can take the girl out of the fight, but not the fight out of the girl*".

Selina smiles to herself. Looks at a PICTURE on her desk of her and, Ben and Jon in their Kevlar. She looks up at Ronny.

SELINA
Door kicking tonight with the big boys, Sparky?

RONNY
First time.

SELINA
You stay safe... fair?

RONNY
Fair, Chief.

Ronny leaves the room. Selina looks at the book again. Closes it to reveal the book cover. The cover shows an image of an ANGEL STATUE.

The BOOK TITLE reads: '*AN ANGEL WHISPERS*', *By Ben Chambers*'.

INT. BOOKSTORE/CAFE - NIGHT

A cleanly shaven Ben sits on a comfy LEATHER CHAIR, as he reads from a book to an AUDIENCE of about thirty people.

Multiple copies of his book, '*AN ANGEL WHISPERS*', are stacked on a table next to his chair.

BEN
So, as a wise young man once said to me... "*Maybe people aren't as cynical as you think. Maybe, what they crave is an impossible story, told by an improbable person, to touch their hearts, and ignite their souls.*"

(Closes book)
I hope in some small way, I've illuminated yours.

The audience APPLAUDS enthusiastically.

(CONTINUED)

BEN
Any questions?

Ben sees a hand at the back. Their face is in shadow.

WOMAN
How do you feel about eating ice cream
in the middle of winter?

The woman steps forward, the light catches her face. It's FRANKIE. Behind her is NORM and GEORGE. Ben smiles back.

BEN
Other than strawberry, I'm all for it.

The '*Trifecta*' laugh. Ben silently nods back, as if to say, 'Thank You'.

EXT. ICE CREAM PARLOR - NIGHT

Snow falls outside.

Ben, Norm, George and Frankie sit by a steamed-up window as they EAT ICE CREAM (not strawberry) and laugh merrily.

Also sitting snuggled up to Ben, is Suzy Kawachika.

Parked outside in front is a fully RESTORED and gleaming, late-1960s RED FORD MUSTANG.

A reflection in the window of the Ice Cream Parlor shows two figures across the street, holding hands.

It's BETH and JIMMY. They watch their loved ones and smile, contentedly. A bus passes in front of them.

And just like that... they're gone.

THE END