

AORTA

Written by Noel Vinson

FIRST DRAFT - February, 27 2020  
© 2021 Dissenter Stage Entertainment  
+61 401 790 037  
noel@dissenterstage.com

QUOTE:

*"Only those elements time cannot wear were made before me and beyond time, I stand. Abandon all hope ye who enter here."*

- Dante Alighieri; *Inferno*

END QUOTE.

INT. DARK MESS HALL - QUARANTINE CAMP

The face of MILES THORNE (50s) suddenly SLAMS into existence, illuminated opaquely in pale blues. His eyes search an infinite darkness as he exhales a preponderance of steam, trying to stay warm in the freezing room.

The sound of candles bursting to life causes him to jolt. Miles turns to discover that he's in some sort of large mess hall, all ablaze in candles. These candlelights illuminate a weird sigil that he finds himself in the middle of.

A banquet table sits a short distance in front of him, and on it, he sees the body of a 13-YEAR-OLD BOY, pale and alabaster, dressed only in underwear. As soon as Miles' eyes take him in, the boy begins to convulse violently.

MILES

Hey!

Miles stands and quickly moves in on the boy, trying to pin him down to the table. The convulsions only grow more aggressive.

MILES (CONT'D)

Come on, stay with me, kid! You're gonna be okay, you'll be fine, just come on.

Miles grows frustrated, unable to get through to him.

MILES (CONT'D)

Goddammit! Come on, kid, look at me! Look at me.

Suddenly, the boy turns his face and locks eyes with Miles. His entire demonic countenance is revealed: the vilest eyes, rotting teeth, and facial scarring, all contoured by beads of sweating blood. Only evil and pain exist here.

BOY

(dark)

I know you now.

A smile spreads across the boy's face, and his neck violently SNAPS BACKWARDS with the booming sound of a gunshot. Miles immediately reacts, removing his hands from the boy's body and falling to the floor in a severe burst of pain.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

In a dank alleyway, under an unforgiving rainstorm, Miles falls to the concrete. He wears a POLICE UNIFORM and suffers a gunshot WOUND to his leg. He stares to his ATTACKER who wears a PRIEST'S garb under a TRENCH COAT. A STILL-SMOKING GUN is held on him.

MILES  
(struggling)  
Who...who are you?

As Miles tries to make out his attacker's features, another BANG from the gun reverberates around him. He's been SHOT point-blank in the chest.

Miles struggles to catch his shallow breaths as he bleeds out into the rainwater that continuously forms below him.

The Attacker re-holsters his gun and then bends down to place a CRIMSON ROSARY in Miles' hand. He departs.

Miles looks down at the rosary, then back up at the sky. He tries to speak again, but only manages a weak whisper.

MILES (CONT'D)  
Forgive me.

Now alone and shaking, Miles white-knuckles this rosary as he passes out completely.

INSERT TITLE CARD: AORTA

INT. EXAM ROOM - ST. LUCIA'S HOSPITAL - DAY

THREE SUCCESSIVE SHOTS OF CHEST X-RAYS flash, one after the other, onscreen. In each picture, a metallic NETTING can be seen replacing what would normally be the AORTIC VALVE. Minor SCARRING can also be seen on the muscle itself.

The x-rays are all pinned, illuminated against an X-RAY LIGHT-BOX. They belong to Miles, who now appears older and weathered. He sits on an examination bed in his boxer shorts and his shirt unbuttoned. Just underneath his shirt, we can see an old SURGICAL SCAR.

He stares at the x-rays and suddenly exhales a shiver.

MILES  
Damn thing's always gotta be so cold?

VAS (O.S.)  
Gets the blood running. Now just give us a deep breath.

Miles inhales and exhales deeply.

© 2020 Disney Entertainment

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

And again.

Miles breathes in and out, staring back at the x-rays.

MILES

So what am I supposed to be looking at here, Doc? Nothing's really jumping out as different.

VAS (O.S.)

And one more.

Miles inhales and exhales once more.

MILES

You know I'm glad you don't charge by the hour.

Lucretia Vas (39), Miles' doctor, reveals herself, placing her STETHOSCOPE back around her neck.

VAS

You are a damn tough cookie, Miles. I'm pleased to see that your blood pressure's staying steady.

Miles doesn't bat an eye at the words he hears.

VAS (CONT'D)

Oxygen levels also remain optimal, that's good. No signs of stenosis. We're clear.

Miles begins to button up his shirt.

MILES

For the next month at least.

VAS

Well, yes that's true, but are you really trying to criticize normal procedure these days? It's a pandemic my friend, not the Ritz, and you're lucky you only had a mild case.

Miles quickly looks down at the inside of his RIGHT WRIST. THREE BLACK LINES are tattooed on it.

MILES

Sure. What about the chest pains?

VAS

Those, I suppose, are to be expected. You had a compromised condition before any of this madness.

(MORE)

VAS (CONT'D)

As such, they're just a combination of residual effects which we'll have to continue to monitor, and I'm sorry if I don't have any more of a definitive answer than that. But there's no reason that you shouldn't take this as a clean bill of health, all things considered.

MILES

All things considered.

VAS

(re: the x-rays)

There's nothing here to indicate otherwise. It's just time. But in saying that...

Miles arches an eyebrow at her, suspect of the statement.

MILES

Uh-huh?

Vas looks Miles in the eye. He stares back, unwavering.

VAS

Miles, you'll just have to accept the fact that your body is not as forgiving as it once was.

MILES

Forgiving? Is that your best medical advice?

VAS

As a Doctor, yes. I'm telling you that you have nothing to worry about if you take care of yourself AS prescribed. As a friend, I'm saying recovery is a long road. It's best to take it easy.

Miles pulls his shirt cuff down and reveals the underside of his right hand to her, showcasing the tattoo on his wrist.

MILES

And all this for a pension in a shit storm.

He stands and throws his pants on. But he begins to waver. Vas catches him and assists him into a chair.

VAS

Whoa there, cowboy.

MILES

Sorry Doc. Just a bit lightheaded's all.

VAS

Then rest a bit longer. But I am serious about you settling down.

MILES

Unfortunately, I can't afford the kinda time it takes to do something like that.

Vas hands him a cup of water and then sits across from him. She crosses her legs which Miles can't help but glance at.

VAS

Oh, I'd beg to differ. You know, chasing heathens to Hell and back isn't as flattering on you as you think it might be.

MILES

You're the one who says I need exercise.

VAS

How's your diet?

MILES

I eat.

VAS

And sleep?

MILES

When I can.

Miles begins to put on his shoes.

VAS

You're not going to give much more thought to any of this, are you?

MILES

Well at my age, what would you suggest? I still gotta pay my bills, Doc. Hell, I still gotta pay YOURS!

VAS

Yeah. You do make a valid point. I can't afford it either, Mark or not.

They laugh together and Miles stands, focusing on getting his jeans back on. She follows his lead.

VAS (CONT'D)

Just don't lose hope, okay? Ruined slope or not.

MILES

Nah. Never. Voyeurism's always been second nature, anyway.

VAS

(disapproving)

Mmm.

With his pants on and his shirt tucked in, Miles moves to the window to grab his coat.

As he throws it on, he gazes down, out of the window and notices a TALL FIGURE, dressed in all black, staring up at him from the street below.

The figure takes a picture of Miles.

MILES

Hey Doc, sorry to make this quick, but --

VAS

-- Already ahead of you.

Miles quickly takes his eyes from the street and lays them back on the Doctor. She hands him TWO PRESCRIPTION SLIPS, one at a time.

VAS (CONT'D)

Same drill with these, once a day. But can we try and stretch the painkillers out this time?

A bit preoccupied, he looks back out to the street, but she pulls his attention back when she hands him a THIRD SLIP.

VAS (CONT'D)

And I'm adding this to your regiment. It's only a supplement, but it's there to assist your immune system with the other two.

Miles' eyes dart back outside. The tall figure is GONE.

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

Okay?

Miles folds the scripts and puts them in his pocket.

MILES

Yeah sure. Always appreciated, Doc.

Vas begins pulling the x-rays from the light box.

VAS

Good. We'll get onto the blood work and I'll see you next month.

As Miles places a dirty FEDORA on his head, he returns the smile and exits the room.

MILES  
With bells on.

EXT. ST. LUCIA'S HOSPITAL - DAY

Miles exits the hospital. As he steps out onto the street, he scans it up and down, looking for the tall figure.

The street carries an unsavory atmosphere, strewn with refuse and derelicts who live amongst it. It's a bad part of a dirty city, and Miles cannot locate the figure anywhere.

A JUNKIE approaches him and coughs. He holds his hand out, encroaching on Miles' space.

Miles steps back from the cough and makes a bad attempt at batting the bad air away from himself.

JUNKIE  
Excuse me brother, reckon you could  
spare a dollar or two?

He notices multiple TRACK MARKS on the Junkie's arms and points at them.

MILES  
Not with those hornet stings,  
buddy.

Miles leaves the Junkie and walks a few doors down.

He passes a drunken DOOMSDAY VAGRANT speaking out aimlessly to whoever will listen. The man wears a BILLBOARD over his shoulders marked with multiple statements like: *THE END IS NIGH* and *REVELATION 13:1*. The man's words carry the same doom and gloom context as his sign.

Miles quickly ducks past him to enter --

INT. PHARMACY - CONTINUOUS

As Miles walks in, he heads to the back and places himself next in queue. He steals some glances back out toward the windows in an attempt to catch a glimpse of the figure.

PHARMACIST  
Next.

MILES  
Yeah, hi.

Miles hands the PHARMACIST the three scripts from Vas.



The Pharmacist scrutinizingly eyes Miles like he recognizes him as a junkie in his own right.

PHARMACIST

One second.

(reads the scripts)

Yeah, I'm going to have to call this one in. Just a moment.

MILES

You're kidding me.

The Pharmacist leaves the drop off queue and Miles looks around, impatiently exhaling. He is unaware that, framed by the storefront windows behind him, the TALL FIGURE now stands out-of-focus in the street.

Another picture is taken.

Suddenly, Miles feels like he's got eyes on him. He turns abruptly, but there is no one to see. He shakes it off.

PHARMACIST (O.S.)

Okay, Mr. Thorne...

He turns to find the Pharmacist holding two separate PRESCRIPTION BOTTLES and an over-the-counter BOX of some sort, placing each one on the counter.

PHARMACIST (CONT'D)

...from here on out any refill on these will have to be called in by Dr. Vas directly.

MILES

When has it ever not been?

They have a brief stare-down.

PHARMACIST

\$126 even.

Miles lays cash down on the counter and the Pharmacist bags the meds up.

A LOUD VOICE suddenly wafts in from the outside. Miles cannot make out what its saying.

He grabs the bag and exits.

EXT. PHARMACY SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Stepping back out onto the filthy street, Miles discovers that the voice belongs to the Doomsday Vagrant, who now SHOUTS his apocalyptic sermons at passers-by.

Miles moves directly past him, and up a few meters to shout into the open window of a sitting TAXI CAB.

MILES  
Florence and Verona?

The Driver nods affirmatively and Miles gets in.

INT. TAXI CAB - MOMENTS LATER

A NEWS BRIEF plays on the cab's radio.

RADIO  
*With Mark numbers on the rise, scientists still remain unsuccessful as they race to crack the virus' transmission methods and incubation periods. But as results grow even more elusive, politicians have begun pointing the finger at other countries in accusations of what could only be described as biological warfare. Obviously, we cannot expect something like this to go on, forever unchecked, but bureaucratic oversight coupled with human kind's blatant disregard has brought itself to where it finds itself now, laying in the burning beds of sleeping time-bombs, and only time left to finish the tale...*

Listening to the announcer, Miles studies the cab.

He notices a ROSARY that hangs from the rearview mirror and a bottle of HOLY WATER that sits next to ASSORTED PRAYER CARDS propped up on the dash.

Out on the street, he watches as TWO SICK PEOPLE are violently forced out of a dilapidated building and into an ISOLATION VAN by a team of MED-POLICE, dressed in their full regalia.

Miles can't be bothered. This has become the new normal. He checks his CELL PHONE and sees that he's missed a call from someone named MAC.

Instead of returning the call, Miles re-pockets his phone and pulls the bottle of painkillers, cracking the seal.

The cab driver, RUSSELL, is an older man. He interrupts Miles and the News Announcer.

RUSSELL

My mother had it, you know? The Mark. She died from this shit. Filthy fuckin' immigrants, all of 'em.

MILES

How's that, pal?

RUSSELL

You know that's the reason we're all getting sick, dontcha? They don't regulate the borders anymore.

Miles doesn't respond. He allows the man to ramble on.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Suppose I been through worse though. Did two tours of duty in Vietnam. Lost a few friends, but... I dunno. This shit. It's different. I'm Russell by the way.

MILES

(indifferent)

Miles.

RUSSELL

So you believe what they been sayin', Miles? That these are the end times?

MILES

Certainly an interesting spin.

RUSSELL

Yeah, well dammit if I'm not starting to believe it myself. I mean the world's been sick for years now. I think that maybe this virus could really be the Lord's way of culling his flock. Rapturin' us home like this, ya know.

MILES

(sarcastic)

So much for good fortune.

RUSSELL

You call all of this good fortune?

MILES

Look, it's an encouraging thought, but I always thought God was the undisputed master of mistakes. Seen enough of 'em with my own eyes.

RUSSELL  
Is that so? Then pray-tell friend,  
what is it that keeps you going?

Miles looks down at the open bottle of pills in his hand.

RUSSELL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Buddy?

MILES  
If you can't beat 'em, join 'em.

He pops two of the painkillers into his mouth. As he swallows them, Russell turns to open his mouth, but Miles stops him.

MILES (CONT'D)  
Just watch the road please.

The cab trundles along.

EXT. MILES' PRIVATE INVESTIGATIONS OFFICE - LATER

The cab stops outside of Miles' office and Miles hands Russell a twenty-dollar bill as he exits the cab.

MILES  
Keep the change, alright?

RUSSELL  
Hey wait a minute, pal.

Miles stops, just shy of stepping out. The Driver hands him back his change: TWO QUARTERS.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
Better yours than mine.

Miles stares a beat at the quarters. He then raises his eyes back up to the Russell and grins.

MILES  
*Mea culpa, mea culpa.*

Miles exits the cab gripping his bag of meds tightly.

INT. RECEPTION AREA - MILES' OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Miles shuffles into the office. He is immediately met by his secretary, SOPHIE DUNNE (early 30s). She rises from her seat.

MILES  
Hiya Soph.

SOPHIE

Mr. Thorne. Everything well with the Doctor?

Miles removes his hat and moves to inspect a stack of letters that sit on the counter in front of Sophie.

He places the bag of meds down next to them.

MILES

Everything is well Sophie, thanks for asking.

SOPHIE

Oh good. Good. Then could I grab you a coffee? You've got quite the live one in there, sir.

MILES

No thanks. Live one?

SOPHIE

New client. You'll see. She's been in there with Mr. McAvoy for the last 20 minutes.

Miles studies the girl's level of excitement.

MILES

You know, if I didn't know better, I'd say you were anxious. Who is it?

Miles dumps the stack of envelopes back on the counter.

Amused, Sophie comes around her desk and begins to smooth Miles' hair and clothes out.

MILES (CONT'D)

Hey, hey what're you doing?

He takes a step back.

SOPHIE

Hey yourself Mr. Thorne, you never get second chances to make first impressions. Now stand still.

MILES

Jesus, it's like that, is it?

SOPHIE

Yessir. And now might be the best time to waltz right in there and play hero.

She offers Miles her COMPACT. He quickly looks at his reflection and smooths his hair out further.

MILES  
Hero? Her's or Mac's?

SOPHIE  
You tell me, boss.

Miles' shoots a look up at her from the compact.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)  
Looking good though, Mr. Thorne,  
honestly.

He grins and then grabs the meds and the envelopes before crossing the reception room toward his main office.

INT. MILES' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Miles walks in to find his mentor and colleague LIONEL 'MAC' MCAVOY (80) leaning on Miles' side of their two-facing desks.

He looks on an objectively gorgeous woman, VIVIAN STANHOPE (early 40s), who stands at the window.

From the window's view, Vivian's gaze is turned on Miles. She holds a smoldering cigarette in her hand.

MAC  
Ahh, Mrs. Stanhope. May I present  
Miles Thorne.

A look of recognition flashes through Miles' eyes. He smiles, albeit surprised, and moves in, closing the door behind him.

VIVIAN  
Mr. Thorne. I'm Vivian Stanhope.

MILES  
Yeah, you certainly are. It's a  
pleasure Mrs. Stanhope.

VIVIAN  
Charmed.

Miles moves around and drops his hat on his side of the desk, along with the stack of letters and the bag of meds.

He then removes his coat and hangs it on the coat tree.

Mac moves to take his own seat at his side of the desk.

MILES

I trust Mr. McAvoy here has been on his best behavior since you've arrived.

VIVIAN

Why yes, he has been. Quite the gentleman, actually.

MAC

(to Miles)

Makes one of us, son.

Miles smirks at Mac and takes his seat. He grabs his bag of medication and drops it into the top desk drawer, which also contains, slightly hidden, the CRIMSON ROSARY from the assailant who shot him.

MILES

So. I'd rather not pretend to feign happenstance here, Mrs. Stanhope, but you do have my intrigue. How can we help you?

Vivian walks to their desks and removes her belongings from a chair where she takes her seat.

She still smokes her cigarette. She is *sex-on-two-legs* without any need of trying to be.

VIVIAN

Please. Do call me Vivian.

Miles leans in and pushes an ashtray closer to her.

MILES

Thank you Mrs. Stanhope, that is certainly appreciated. But if you could please begin.

VIVIAN

(slighted)

Hm.

She reaches toward the ashtray and ashes her cigarette, regaining her composure in the moment.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

Well, you see it's about my son, Silas. I believe him to still be alive and I'd like for you to find him.

MILES

I see.

VIVIAN  
Do you, Mr. Thorne?

They hold each other's stare for a beat -- the kind of stare that can peel off a layer of flesh.

MAC  
(to Miles)  
Silas Stanhope has been missing for over six months. It was all over the news, if you remember, one cold lead after the next.

MILES  
Yeah Mac, I got that. I'm just a bit surprised by the high profile.  
(a pause)  
Mrs. Stanhope would I be wrong to say that your husband *is* one of this city's biggest philanthropists?

VIVIAN  
You'd be correct. Emerson does have a maddening way of creating attention when he chooses.

MILES  
Well, that being the case, why would someone of his stature choose someone so far removed to further his cause?

VIVIAN  
Mr. Thorne, you'll have to forgive me, but my husband has no awareness of my current actions.

MILES  
Right. Then I assume you've done your own research.

VIVIAN  
I have.

MILES  
So what can Mac and I do for you that the police haven't done already?

Vivian pulls another cigarette from a SOLID GOLD cigarette case, a bit annoyed.

Mac leans forward and lights it.



MAC

I apologize for the weight of my colleague's uninformed repartee, Mrs. Stanhope. If I may rephrase?

VIVIAN

Certainly.

MAC

What makes us the right outfit for this investigation?

VIVIAN

Because discretion is of the utmost importance, Mr. McAvoy. You're already familiar with my husband's prominence and alleged predilections. And the police don't necessarily tread softly... Traits I expect you do not echo, Mr. Thorne.

MILES

(to Mac)

Christ, Mac, Emerson Stanhope's got more cameras on him than a reality show whore.

(to Vivian)

That practically makes your son the Lindbergh baby, lady.

MAC

Miles, will you stop?

MILES

Mac, if we go sniffing around in a trafficking scandal, we'll be the one's who end up with our pants down, and that's not the kinda press we need.

VIVIAN

Ha! Quite the double standard it seems.

MILES

How's that?

VIVIAN

You'll only poke your eye in the places others don't poke back.

MILES

That's my job, Mrs. Stanhope. And in the interest of self-preservation, I choose to go about it the only way I see fit.

VIVIAN

Well that's exactly it, Mr. Thorne. You're mediocre. And that's what I'm hoping camouflages this entire endeavor, my husband's aversions to mediocrity. So any press is something neither you, nor I, nor your more respectful colleague here, can afford. It actually puts us all in bed together. Now does that answer your question, because you've forced me to be rude?

The room goes silent for a beat. Then Miles buzzes Sophie on the intercom.

MILES

Sophie, would you mind drawing Mrs. Stanhope up one of our standard agreements?

SOPHIE (O.S.)

Sure thing, Mr. Thorne.

Miles leans back into his seat and casts his eyes over to Vivian. He puts his hands behind his head.

MILES

My apologies, Mrs. Stanhope. My more respectful colleague here'd tell you that I tend to jump the gun from time to time. It's just this damned pandemic fatigue. All sophistry of course, please forgive me.

The right arm on Miles' long sleeve shirt pulls back and reveals a quarter of his three-lined tattoo to Vivian.

VIVIAN

I understand, Mr. Thorne, apology accepted.

(re: the tattoo)

Bleeding heart, is it?

Miles realizes his tattoo is showing.

MILES

Uh, the *bleedingest*.

He straightens himself out, taking it out of view.

MILES (CONT'D)

But before we go any further, I hope you understand that things of this nature tend to take a bit of time and that, that time tends to take a bit out of your pocket book. Now pardon my presumptions, Mrs. Stanhope, but I am assuming this would be something you're good for.

VIVIAN

Of course. I'll pay you your normal rate. Plus twenty-thousand dollars should you find Silas.

Miles and Mac shoot a gaze toward each other.

MILES Works for me. MAC Works for me.

MILES (CONT'D)

(to Vivian)

Very well. Now if I can ask you what makes you believe that your son is still alive?

VIVIAN

Because I'm sure that it is my husband who is responsible for his disappearance.

Miles and Mac shoot each other another gaze.

MAC

Then the prior allegations are not unfounded?

VIVIAN

No. They're not. I can't exactly prove it yet, but I plan to --

Just then Sophie comes in with the PAPERWORK.

SOPHIE

Here you are Mr. Thorne.

She turns to smile at Vivian, a bit excited by her presence.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

Mrs. Stanhope.

Vivian flashes a smile despite her concerns and watches as Sophie exits, making sure she shuts the door behind her.

MAC

You were saying, Mrs. Stanhope.

Vivian's eyes dart from the door, back to Mac.

VIVIAN

I'm saying that my husband is not  
the man he presents himself to be.

Miles pours over the verbiage of the contract and fills in  
some of the figures.

MILES

Could you elaborate further?

VIVIAN

Of course. As many know, Emerson  
has business with every children's  
cause under the sun.

Miles' eyes lift from the contract to meet hers. A lump grows  
in her throat.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

You understand now?

MILES

I see. Have there been complaints?

VIVIAN

Only statements made on broken  
records.

MAC

Mrs. Stanhope, we'd be hard pressed  
for success if we didn't go in  
knowing the whole story.

VIVIAN

And that's entirely why I need your  
help, Mr. McAvoy. I wouldn't be  
here otherwise.

Mac nods his head in resignation. Vivian ashes her cigarette.  
Miles signs the contract and slides it to Vivian to sign.

MILES

Well, don't lose any of that faith,  
Mrs. Stanhope, I'm sure it'll come  
in handy. And we'll certainly do  
our best for you.

They hold that stare again. Then she smiles.

VIVIAN

Thank you Mr. Thorne. I shall try  
my best as well.

Miles studies her as she signs the agreement.

The sound of an approaching storm rumbles outside.

EXT. NEW BOYS & GIRLS CLUB - AFTERNOON

Miles stands at the back of a healthy sized, socially-distanced crowd patrolled by Med-Police.

He crosses his arms as he watches EMERSON STANHOPE (late 40s) speaking at a podium in front of a crowd.

Mac stands to the front of that crowd, wearing a FACE MASK, along with the rest of the PRESS who all hold onto cameras.

A banner advertising the "BOYS & GIRL'S CLUB" hangs behind Emerson, as do a handful of children and club counsellors.

A big RIBBON guards the entrance to the new building.

EMERSON

...and whether rain, sleet, snow or sickness, we can always find the beauty within a day, can't we? Because today is a beautiful day for new opportunities to be afforded to these beautiful children. I really do need to say a huge thank you to everyone who came out in support of this new location, and cause. You know, donations are one thing, but the passion and dedication towards the benefit of our fellow people is something astronomically greater. To see all of you here, all with that same glint of hope in your eyes, I really can't help but think of my own son, Silas.

Some in the crowd begin to empathize with Emerson as he speaks of his missing son.

EMERSON (CONT'D)

I still know, deep in my heart, that he is out there, and I can only hope for him to find his way home soon. But as I stand here, now, it is my sincere hope that he's found himself amongst wonderful people like yourselves who can help him along his way. Let's hear it for you all! Thank you so much!

The crowd gives a roaring applause.

Emerson moves to the ribbon. He smiles a large PR smile and cuts the ribbon with a large pair of scissors.

EMERSON (CONT'D)

Come on in!

The applause intensifies. Miles looks over to Mac who keeps his eyes on Emerson, and snaps his camera along with all the other press photographers.

Just then more children file onstage with the event's organizers. Mac temporarily pulls his face mask away to shout at Emerson.

MAC

How 'bout one with the kids, pal?

As if on cue, Emerson begins to direct the kids into place. Mac and the others continue snapping pictures.

MAC (CONT'D)

There you go.

Miles notices specifically how Emerson interacts with the children. They don't seem particularly uncomfortable, but Miles still scrutinizes every action.

For his final picture, Emerson shines his PR smile even bigger and wraps both of his arms around one of the heavier-set kids in a tight embrace.

He then stands and waves to the crowd one final time, bidding everyone a wonderful evening. His hand then returns down to the boy's back as he ushers him off the stage.

The crowd dissipates in line with the Med-Police's protocols.

INT. MAC'S CAR - NIGHT

Mac navigates through traffic and Miles sits in the passenger seat as they tail Emerson's car.

MAC

Jesus, it's windy out. Storm must be coming in.

MILES

Just stay on him, Mac.

Emerson's car drives about 100 feet up from them.

MAC

Surprised he isn't being chauffeured around in some limo or town-car.

MILES

Maybe he's chosen a smaller footprint.

MAC

Sure. Less he be judged. You reckon you'll ever chip in on the transportation?

Miles curiously looks over at Mac.

MILES

Your point being?

MAC

Well you sleep in the office and you don't have a car. I'd like to think you'd finally address one of those faults.

MILES

Hey, let's not forget about who really pays the bills around here, okay?

MAC

I'm just saying that we could cover a lot more ground if --

MILES

(grins)

-- Yeah, but we've been over this already. I'm the brains and you're the brawn, remember?

MAC

Just don't say I never enabled you. And since when did brawn equate to the duties of your chauffeur?

MILES

Ever since age prefaced beauty.

MAC

Ha! Succinctly put.

About a half-mile up the road, they see Emerson pull into the parking lot of a STRIP CLUB called *TEMPEST*.

MILES

There he goes. Pull in up here.

MAC

God, could he be any more on the nose?

MILES

I'm sure we'd be surprised.

Suddenly: CRASH!

They jerk in their seats as they are REAR-ENDED by some ambiguous vehicle.

MILES (CONT'D)

The hell?

This vehicle's HIGH BEAMS shine in on them, illuminating the entirety of their car.

MAC

What a prick.

Mac manages to pull the car to the side of the road and the offending vehicle follows him, its HIGH BEAMS still suffocating them.

Mac attempts to look in the rearview mirror to no avail but he notices Miles readying his pistol.

MAC (CONT'D)

You think?

MILES

No such thing as coincidence, you taught me that.

MAC

Mm.

Mac readies his pistol and follows Miles' lead.

Making his way to the rear of Mac's car, Miles' vision remains obscured by the intensity of the high beams.

MILES

Hey pal, you wanna come out here and give this a look?

Miles looks down to check the damage himself. It's nothing more than a dent and some scratches.

As Mac joins him, the mystery driver revs his growling engine. Angered, Miles steps forward to the driver's door.

MILES (CONT'D)

You got some kind of a problem, buddy?

Suddenly, the vehicle charges him and speeds away from the side of the road. Miles hits the deck.

Mac rushes to offer him his hand.



MAC

Miles, shit, are you alright?

Miles shuns Mac's hand and pushes himself up.

MILES

I'm fine. Goddammit.

They both stare at the ongoing traffic. The phantom vehicle is nowhere to be found.

MAC

I couldn't even catch the plates.

MILES

Coulda been a distraction. Come on.

Just then an ISOLATION VAN full of Med-Police stop in front of them, shining its LIGHT out at their faces.

MAC

(annoyed)

Of course.

MED-OFFICER 1 (O.S.)

Is everything okay here, gentlemen?

MAC

Yeah officer. Just a bit of car trouble, that's all.

MED-OFFICER 1 (O.S.)

Will you require assistance?

MAC

No sir. Only looks like a few scratches.

MED-OFFICER 1 (O.S.)

(to Mac)

Okay. Just make sure to watch it next time.

(to the Van)

They're clean, let's move on.

The light turns off and the iso-van drives away, leaving Miles and Mac standing against the night's strong winds.

MILES

Asshole.

MAC

Asshole.

They both quickly jump back into the car and head into the --

EXT. TEMPEST PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Pulling in, they locate Emerson, who sits still in his vehicle like some kind of strange mannequin.

They park in a space opposite his vehicle, but distant enough to stay safe from his radar.

Mac shuts the car's engine off.

INT. MAC'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Miles adjusts the rearview mirror toward him so he can keep his eyes on Emerson without turning around.

MAC

Now what do you suppose he's doing in there?

MILES

Not sure. I honestly hadn't realized how far down we'd come.

MAC

Not exactly the most respectable part of the city for someone of his ilk to loiter about.

MILES

You call that loitering?

MAC

He's gotta be going inside right?

MILES

Maybe he's jerking off first.

Mac scoffs at Miles' words when Emerson finally exits his vehicle.

He turns his collar up against the wind and quickly surveys his surroundings. Then he holds his face down as he crosses into the club's SIDE DOOR.

MILES (CONT'D)

Huh. VIP entrance. You think he could be cheating on his wife?

MAC

It's possible, though going to a strip club isn't exactly out of order for an older, married man.

MILES

Yeah but even so, why would Stanhope risk being made in a place like this?

MAC

I dunno. Barely legal?

MILES

Any port in a storm.

Drops of RAIN begin to fall on the car's windshield.

MAC

Not like we haven't made an entire career off this kinda shit. Infidelity and distrust.

MILES

These are kids, Mac.

Miles drops his gaze and studies his tattoo.

MAC

Allegedly.

Miles doesn't say a word. He just sighs and runs his thumb over the ink.

MAC (CONT'D)

Yeah, I suppose the one thing we all have in common in this *hurricane of souls* is that more advanced appetites can never quell themselves.

Mac's stomach growls.

MAC (CONT'D)

See what I mean?

MILES

Alright, I'm going.

Miles opens up the glove compartment. He pulls out a pair of GLOVES and puts them on.

MAC

Good. I'll keep her running.

Mac starts the car and pops its trunk as Miles exits.

EXT. TEMPEST PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Miles slips out of the car and surveys his surrounds. There is no one he can see.

He moves around to the trunk and removes a SLIM JIM which he conceals under his coat. The RAIN begins to pour harder.

Miles passes silently along the edge of the parking lot toward Emerson's car.

Reaching the vehicle, Miles ducks down behind it inconspicuously.

Checking once more to ensure he will not be seen, Miles rises and moves to the driver-side door.

He slips the slim jim into the space between the window and the door and finagles it around.

SOUND: CLICK

The door unlocks and opens and Miles slips inside, throwing the slim jim into the passenger seat before him.

He closes the door behind him just as the storm fully opens up above.

INT. EMERSON STANHOPE'S CAR

Miles opens the glove compartment, riffles around and finds nothing. He closes it.

He then moves to the middle console of the car. Opening it, he continues his search for any scrap of a clue.

MILES  
(to himself)  
Unusually tidy, Mr. Stanhope.

Miles shuts the middle console and peers into the backseat. He sees nothing. He then checks below the front seats, still nothing.

Miles takes a minute to catch his breath, realizing that he had been holding it during his search.

Miles notices the windshield beginning to fog up.

This is also when he sees a SLIP OF PAPER peering out from the side of the car's sun visor.

Miles pulls the visor down revealing nothing but the piece of paper held in place by the visor's band.

He makes a grab for it and unfolds the paper.

MILES (CONT'D)  
(reading)  
623 E. 68th Street, Apartment 9.  
June 25th, 11:24PM.

Miles looks at his watch. It is in fact 9:48PM on June 25th.

MILES (CONT'D)

Interesting time for a rendezvous.

Miles shoves the paper back underneath the sun visor and then sets his watch for 11:24PM. He grabs the slim jim.

Just as Miles pushes the car door open, the side door to TEMPEST also pushes open and two rather boisterous BOUNCERS exit the club, walking straight toward Emerson's car.

MILES (CONT'D)

Shit!

Miles shuts the car door quickly, but quietly, and ducks down as far as he can get.

He tries to hold his breath steady as he listens to the muffled conversation.

BOUNCER 1 (O.S.)

Yeah man, that's why. Only way's when they're at their sweetest.

BOUNCER 2 (O.S.)

Still don't do anything for me. I like it when there's some fight left in 'em.

BOUNCER 1 (O.S.)

You don't get it, do ya? A vessel has to be broken before it can be unmarked, moron. Just like Mr. Stanhope says.

As Miles listens to them get closer, he readies his pistol. The Bouncers stop in their tracks, right in front of the car. As they continue to talk, they do not notice that the OVERLY-FOGGED windows of Emerson's car keep getting FOGGIER.

BOUNCER 2

The principle is not lost on me.

BOUNCER 1

See, I think it is.

BOUNCER 2

Look, all I'm saying is that if this is supposed to be a requirement, it should be a lot funner, that's all.

BOUNCER 1

Yeah, yeah, you talk too much and I don't wanna get drenched. Come on.

The two Bouncers move to the car's trunk. They pop it.

Miles can hear them grunt as they remove something heavy and plastic. They shut the trunk.

BOUNCER 2 (O.S.)  
 (struggles)  
 Shit, this one's heavier than the last.

BOUNCER 1 (O.S.)  
 (also struggles)  
 Everyone's got a taste. Let's go.

BOUNCER 2 (O.S.)  
 Amen to that.

The trunk slams shut.

Miles tries to peak through the fogged window. He can't. He wipes just enough moisture away to watch the two men carry a heavy TRASH BAG back into Tempest's side entrance. It looks like it might conceal a small body.

MILES  
 Oh Jesus.

As soon as the door to Tempest shuts, Miles quickly slips out of the car, locking it from the inside.

Turning, he slinks back the way he came across the wet parking lot and over to Mac's car, slipping in quickly.

INT. MAC'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Mac re-holsters his pistol once Miles gets inside. Miles takes a breath.

MAC  
 You okay?

MILES  
 Yeah. You see those two meatheads?

MAC  
 Figured you were a goner for a bit there.

MILES  
 Could you see what they were carrying?

MAC  
 Wasn't able to make anything out from here.

(MORE)

MAC (CONT'D)

And couldn't take any photos  
without being obvious in the rain.  
You find anything?

MILES

Yeah. Looks like Stanhope's got a  
meeting over on E. 68th in about an  
hour.

MAC

Suppose he ain't in there for  
leisure purposes then.

MILES

Probably not, but that's what you  
need to find out. See if you can  
get eyes on him in the meantime.

MAC

Okay.

MILES

And try to clock *those* idiots. Find  
anything out about that package  
that you can.

MAC

Aye aye sir. Anything else?

MILES

Yeah. Keep your money in your  
pocket, will ya?

They both exit the car.

MAC

Hey Miles. Try not to get the car  
scratched any further. We've  
already had one fender bender this  
night.

MILES

Of course. Better driver than you  
anyway. Now get in there.

MAC

And Miles?

Miles pulls the car door shut and starts it, interrupting  
Mac. He speeds out of the parking lot as Mac pulls his coat  
closer in around himself.

MAC (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Put some damn gas in it.

EXT. TENEMENT BUILDING - E. 68TH STREET - LATER

The building is dark, dank and derelict. The rain pours down harder than ever as Miles pulls Mac's car to a stop.

MILES  
(sarcastic)  
Lovely.

Miles kills the engine before he steps out of the vehicle and into the torrential downpour.

Making his way towards the dilapidated front door of the building, Miles accidentally submerges his left foot into the MUDDY PUDDLE of a pothole on the sidewalk.

MILES (CONT'D)  
Son of a bitch. Goddamn Florsheim  
shoe.

As Miles walks, he attempts a weak shake of his shoe, doing little good in the middle of such a storm.

He makes his way up to the front door and pushes into the building.

INT. TENEMENT BUILDING - E. 68TH STREET - CONTINUOUS

Closing the door behind him, Miles takes his first look around the entryway.

All that he sees is littered by a menagerie of filthy furniture, refuse and people; squatters and junkies.

Just then Miles finds himself accosted by THREE TRANSIENTS. Each of them wear FACE MASKS and GLOVES and their EYES speak their horror to him.

The biggest of them, TRANSIENT 3, holds Miles still, while TRANSIENT 2 searches him and relieves him of his gun.

TRANSIENT 2  
Hey look who brought a gun to a  
shit fight?

She holsters the gun and then moves to the building's doorway and peers out.

TRANSIENT LEADER  
Whadaya think you're doing here?  
You Med-Police?

MILES  
No. Nothing like that.



TRANSIENT LEADER  
No? You like to lie to us, do ya?

MILES  
I'm not lying. I have business here.

Transient 2 returns to the fold.

TRANSIENT 2  
Street's clear. No Iso-Brigade.

TRANSIENT LEADER  
Okay Then what may your business be, friend? This ain't necessarily a place of welcome.

MILES  
I'm just looking for someone. Couple of floors up. Apartment 9.

TRANSIENT LEADER  
9, is it? Well then, I assume you been invited?

MILES  
Of course. Can't disrespect the keeper of the soiree without proper invitation.

The Leader stares at him, suspect.

TRANSIENT LEADER  
We'll just see about that.

Transient 3 strong-arms Miles further, but as Miles struggles to defend himself, the Leader gets a glimpse of the tattoo.

TRANSIENT LEADER (CONT'D)  
Wait!

He seizes Miles' arm and makes sure he sees it correctly.

TRANSIENT LEADER (CONT'D)  
No shit. You've worn the Mark and here you stand.

MILES  
I told you. I have my invitation. Received it about six months back.

TRANSIENT LEADER  
(to the others)  
Leave him be.

Transient 3 lets Miles go as The Leader removes his face mask and holds his hand up. He possesses the same tattoo on his own wrist.

The others remove their masks as well.

TRANSIENT LEADER (CONT'D)  
Received mine around the same time.  
Funny what trust measures out to  
these days.

The Leader nods to Transient 2, who returns Miles' gun.

TRANSIENT 2  
Try to hold on to this next time,  
cowboy.

MILES  
Sure thing.

He re-holsters the weapon and they all disappear back into the building's dirty shadows.

Miles checks his watch. He reads 11:09PM.

Wasting no more time, he ascends the stairs of the apartment building, finding two units to each floor.

Reaching the top floor, where the stairs lead no further, Miles finds the apartment he is looking for. The "9" has come lose, and is hanging as a "6".

Miles reaches up cautiously, righting the metallic numeral.

MILES (CONT'D)  
Apartment 9.

As Miles reaches for the doorknob, a subtle rumbling GROWL catches his attention from behind.

Turning, Miles sees a fierce looking ROTTWEILER sitting perfectly still on the staircase landing below him, blanketed in shadow. It wasn't there before.

Miles slowly holds a finger to his lips in the beast's direction.

MILES (CONT'D)  
Shhh.

Gaining no further disapproval from the dog, Miles turns to grab the doorknob.

As he does so, the door pushes open smoothly on its own and stands ajar, just a crack.

Miles looks back to the Rottweiler and then again back to the door.

He pulls his pistol from it's holster, takes a deep breath and crosses the threshold.

INT. APARTMENT 9 - CONTINUOUS

Rain can be heard pattering the windows and roof as Miles enters the corridor of the derelict apartment.

Decorated on it's walls are drawings of strange sigils, stars, moons and circles which spiral in on themselves as religious artifacts hang asymmetrically about. Bundles of burnt sage are strewn over the floor.

Coming to an open doorway, Miles turns into the lounge of the festering space. He is immediately met with the debilitating stench of a decaying body.

He JOLTS and clasps his hand to his mouth.

MILES

Oh Christ!

Miles can see that in the middle of the room, slumped over in a chair, is a DEAD AND ROTTING BODY of what looks to be a tall, thin man.

He calms and steps closer to the corpse, looking it over. It remains still and lifeless.

Miles denotes THREE FRESH LINES that carve away at the length of the corpse's face like some kind of flesh-eating bacteria. It's placement much like the three lines of Miles' tattoo.

MILES (CONT'D)

Huh. Dead of Mark and they still get you. Poor son of a bitch.

Just as Miles goes to holster his gun, he hears a strange noise come from somewhere behind him.

He immediately turns and aims the gun at a room directly across from him.

It's completely barren, save for a BRIEFCASE placed curiously in the dead center of the floor.

Miles ventures toward it and as he gets closer he sees that a pair of HANDCUFFS are attached to the BRIEFCASE'S HANDLE.

MILES (CONT'D)

Strange.

He leans down and grabs the handle. Pulling, he realizes that the briefcase is completely IMMOVABLE.

MILES (CONT'D)

You gotta be kidding.

Miles places his gun on the floor next to him and grasps at the handle with both hands, giving it a valiant effort as he tries to move it from its spot.

Nothing.

Resetting himself, this time he preps all of his strength for one final pull. As he puts the effort forth, a voice suddenly calls from behind.

VOICE (O.S.)

Thorne!

Miles quickly wheels around to find the figure of the, previously presumed, lifeless CORPSE standing before him.

MILES

Holy shit!

Scared half-to-death, Miles stumbles backward over the case and scrambles away, across the floor in fright.

The Corpse kneels down slowly and picks up Miles' gun. As it stands back up, it trains the gun on Miles.

THE CORPSE

There is nothing to fear Mr. Thorne. I'm not contagious.

MILES

How do you know my name?

THE CORPSE

You're the one meant for the boy's belongings.

MILES

Come again?

THE CORPSE

(re: the briefcase)

That. Before you. It's to come to his aid, should he be fortunate enough you find him.

MILES

What's in it?

THE CORPSE

Why, the agreement of course.

MILES

The fuck is the agreement?

THE CORPSE

Mr. Thorne, you have been entrusted with a young boy's life and whether you like it or not, you are the one who's responsible for him now.

MILES

You think I don't already know that?

THE CORPSE

I'm afraid there's a lot you don't know. So the sooner you accept your responsibility, the sooner we can begin. Now, *clickety-clack*.

The Corpse brandishes the gun a little more intentionally, pointing it at Miles and nodding to the briefcase.

MILES

You can't be serious. I can hardly lift that thing up.

THE CORPSE

Not yet. Not until you believe.

MILES

So where's the key?

THE CORPSE

You *are* the key, Mr. Thorne.

MILES

What's that suppose to mean?

THE CORPSE

Fortunately, any additional clarification needed and you won't have to look any further than the boy's own mother.

MILES

Vivian?

THE CORPSE

She'll be able to sedate that unquiet mind of yours. Or else... maybe I could.

The Corpse pulls the hammer back on the pistol. Its CLICK echoes around the entire space.

THE CORPSE (CONT'D)

Now be a sport.

Miles reluctantly moves to the briefcase and fixes the open cuff around his LEFT WRIST. He looks up at The Corpse.

THE CORPSE (CONT'D)  
(grinning)  
Mmm hmm.

When the cold metal of the cuff clasps shut, a sudden and intensely piercing PAIN shoots through Miles' chest.

He collapses to his knees and clutches at his heart.

MILES  
Ahh!

The Corpse watches, his grin growing, waiting for Miles' wave of pain to subside.

It does and Miles slowly heaves, catching his breath.

THE CORPSE (O.S.)  
And Mr. Thorne?

Miles looks up and JOLTS, suddenly finding himself face-to-face with The Corpse.

THE CORPSE (CONT'D)  
You really need to consider who you trust from here on out.

Miles tries to back up, but the briefcase still stands stuck.

MILES  
Yeah, why's that?

Just then The Corpse puts the gun to its head.

THE CORPSE  
Because I know you now.

MILES  
NO!

The Corpse pulls the trigger and its DECAYING GREY MATTER AND BLOOD spray all across the floor, the wall, and Miles. He rolls back in reflex and the briefcase now LIFTS from the floor with ease.

Then his WATCH ALARM goes off.

Miles pauses in shock when he reads the watch face.

MILES (CONT'D)  
11:24.

He is suddenly JARRED back to reality by the BARKING Rottweiler in the hall.

MILES (CONT'D)  
(to himself)  
Get it together, pal!

Miles gets to his feet, crossing to the once again lifeless corpse. Reaching for his gun, he stumbles when he finds it immovable as the rigor mortis has already claimed The Corpse's fingers.

Miles plants himself firmly, and quickly pulls and claws the gun from The Corpse's cold grip until it comes free. As it does so, he finds himself staring at a strange SIGIL branded into the palm of The Corpse's right hand.

Committing it to memory, Miles quickly rises and leaves.

INT. 5TH FLOOR HALLWAY - TENEMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Miles steps out from the Apartment, to the loud BARKING. He shuts the door with briefcase in hand.

When he turns to head back down the stairwell, there are now THREE ROTTWEILLERS barking instead of one, all of them hulking black masses of muscle.

MILES  
Shit... Good boy?

All at once, as if in response, the three brutish Rottweilers charge up the stairs toward Miles.

As they close in on him, Miles turns to retreat back into the apartment, attempting to shut the door behind him. He finds that it never had a latch in the first place.

INT. APARTMENT 9 - CONTINUOUS

As Miles makes his way back down the dark apartment's corridor, he makes a B-line to the FIRE ESCAPE.

The sound of the Rottweilers breaking past the apartment door causes Miles to turn in fear, but only for a moment.

He sprays a few rounds back down the hall, missing each time.

Wheeling back around, he finds the window that he is looking for. He tries to pull open its sill, but finds it stuck.

In a final hurrah, he puts two bullets through the glass, as the three dogs bite just at his heel.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE - TENEMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Miles jumps through the shattered glass and hits the landing of the fire escape, hard.

He finds that his left foot is caught on something behind him.

He turns his attention toward it and finds his MUDDY SHOE caught in the maw of the lead Rottweiler.

Miles kicks back, pushing the lead beast back into its comrades. His shoe is lost in the process, disappearing into the apartment with the rest of the commotion.

Abandoning it, Miles tears down the fire escape, slipping once or twice on its waterlogged steps.

Reaching the bottom of the fire escape, he jumps to the street below and his cell phone falls from his pocket, CLACKING against the concrete where rain saturates it.

MILES

Goddammit.

He quickly picks up the phone and stumbles toward Mac's car.

INT. MAC'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Once inside, Miles doubles over in pain as a surge of the familiar sensation he felt at the grip of the handcuffs, ripples through his chest.

He struggles to locate the pill bottle that he is so desperate to find.

Once successful, he pops a few into his mouth, letting out a gasp of relief as the pain eventually passes.

BEAT

Once calm, Miles kicks the engine to life and peels out.

INT. SLEEPING BARRACKS - QUARANTINE CAMP

Miles cautiously finds himself in the middle of a long barracks where EMPTY BUNKS carve each side of him. It's dark.

He raises a LANTERN. The HANDCUFFS that connect it to his wrist clang together with familiarity.

MILES

Silas?

A WHIMPER echoes in the distance.



Miles heads toward that whimper, passing each empty bunk when suddenly, the lantern illuminates Silas' figure standing at the head of the barracks.

The boy's back faces Miles.

MILES (CONT'D)

Silas!

Miles bolts to the boy and grips his arms.

MILES (CONT'D)

Come on champ, we gotta go. Let's get you out of here.

Silas turns his head to Miles revealing a scarred countenance carved by THREE FRESH LINES opening down the length of his face -- just like The Corpse.

Suddenly, the boy's entire body transforms into a late-stage Mark victim.

Miles watches in horror as the Mark's disease begins to trickle from the boy's arms through to his hands and then up his own arms, covering his entire body.

BLACK BLOOD begins to leak from his chest through his shirt.

Miles begins to scream.

MILES (CONT'D)

No! No!

The same BLACK BLOOD fills his mouth and he gasps for breath. He's drowning.

Suddenly a legion of maniacal looking DOCTORS, PATIENTS and MED-POLICE aggressively swarm him from out of the darkness --

INT. MILES' OFFICE - THE NEXT DAY

Miles charges up from his couch, trying to catch his breath.

Getting his bearings, he finds himself still in the same clothes from the night before, minus his lost shoe.

The phone is ringing. It's likely what woke him up. He yells out with a raspy voice.

MILES

(pained)

Hey Sophie?

Nothing - the phone continues to ring.

He sighs and rises. Realizing he is still handcuffed to the briefcase, he reaches his desk and answers the phone.

MILES (CONT'D)

Hello.

(a pause)

Mrs. Stanhope? Is everything alright?

(a pause)

Wait, wait. Slow down.

Miles grabs a pen and begins to write on a piece of paper. He reacts to a new PAIN that stings his cuffed wrist.

MILES (CONT'D)

How's that now?

(a pause)

Uh-huh... No, no it was just a long night, that's all... uh-huh...

(a pause)

Yes, I understand. I'll be right over.

Miles hangs up the phone. He finds his WRIST is SWOLLEN.

MILES (CONT'D)

Just what I needed.

He moves over to the desk drawer and grabs his heart medication. He pops one pill and chucks the bottle back down into the drawer, right next to the ROSARY.

EXT. STANHOPE HOUSE GROUNDS - DAY

Miles drives Mac's car up to the Stanhope house. Its palatial surroundings complement the lovely day. Exiting the vehicle, Miles surveys the property while approaching the door.

He knocks. A BUTLER answers the door.

MILES

Miles Thorne for Vivian Stanhope.

BUTLER

This way Mr. Thorne. Madame has been expecting you.

MILES

Of course.

Miles squeezes the briefcase's handle and enters the house.

INT. STANHOPE HOUSE - OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Miles follows the Butler through the house.

He cordially smiles back at the numerous amount of HELPERS who greet him with smiles. He is brought to an office where he finds Vivian standing distraught, focused over items spread out on a desk.

BUTLER  
Madame. May I present Mr. Thorne?

Vivian looks up, somewhat surprised at the interruption. Even though she's troubled, she's beautiful.

MILES  
Mrs. Stanhope.

Vivian comes around the desk and tries to greet Miles with as much hospitality as she can muster.

VIVIAN  
Mr. Thorne, can I offer you anything? Something to eat. A drink perhaps?

MILES  
I'm fine ma'am, thank you.

VIVIAN  
Thank you Izaak that will be all.

BUTLER  
Madame.

Vivian waits for the Butler to put distance in between them. She turns to Miles.

VIVIAN  
Thank you for coming so quickly.

MILES  
You made it sound like the end of the world, Mrs. Stanhope. I didn't think I had a choice.

She tries to smile. He answers it with a smile of his own.

MILES (CONT'D)  
So whadaya got?

VIVIAN  
Oh forgive me. On the desk.

Miles' expression turns to apprehension as he crosses the room to the desk.

He picks up a stack of PHOTOGRAPHS taken from the night before, OF HIM, racing down the fire escape outside of the dilapidated apartment building.

As he scrutinizes the photos, Vivian can't help but notice the briefcase handcuffed to his wrist.

MILES  
Where'd you get these?

VIVIAN  
They came in with today's mail.

MILES  
(angry)  
Are you the one who's been having me tailed?

VIVIAN  
Someone's following you?

MILES  
Well how the hell else can you explain these?

Miles throws the pictures back down to the desk. His eyes scrutinize her.

MILES (CONT'D)  
I noticed someone outside of my Doctor's office the same day you came to see us.

VIVIAN  
I promise you Mr. Thorne, I had nothing to do with this. You must believe me. Why would I bring these to your attention if I did?

MILES  
Where's your husband?

VIVIAN  
At his office where he always is. Unless he's scheduled another press conference.

MILES  
When do you expect him home?

Vivian drops her eyes from him and stays silent.

MILES (CONT'D)  
Mrs. Stanhope?

She struggles as she re-establishes eye contact.

VIVIAN  
It's not unusual for him to stay away. For days sometimes.  
(MORE)

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

Especially now. Since we've become quite *disconnected*.

MILES

True sweethearts.

VIVIAN

We do what we must to survive.

MILES

You think your son shares that same outlook?

VIVIAN

(angry)

Do you really have to be so cruel to me, Mr. Thorne? I don't know what I could have possibly done to offend you.

MILES

Oh you haven't offended me yet ma'am, you can be sure of that. I just can't shake the suspicion that your whole damned, demure heroine act comes with a plate of half-truths and entitlements.

VIVIAN

You think I'm entitled, do you?

MILES

I don't have to think it, Mrs. Stanhope, I just have to take in my surroundings.

VIVIAN

Well, you're wrong.

MILES

Am I? Why'd you wait a whole six months to have your son's disappearance privately investigated?

Vivian stares slighted, trying to formulate a response.

MILES (CONT'D)

Don't worry about it. Half-truth or not, I really don't believe you wield the kind of influence that'd push someone far enough to go and blow their brains right out in front of me. Your husband, maybe. You, not so much.

VIVIAN

What on earth are you talking about?

MILES

I may have ran into one of his operatives last night.

(lifts the briefcase)

He made sure I got this before he... kamikaze'd himself.

VIVIAN

Oh. Oh dear. What's inside of it then?

MILES

He said you might be the one to answer that question.

VIVIAN

(stammers)

He said... that I could? But I don't know how that could be, why would he mention my name?

MILES

I don't know. But if I find out you've compromised your own investigation by having me tailed, I won't hesitate to make a call downtown. Still have a few friends down there who can smell a set-up.

Vivian pours through her thoughts.

VIVIAN

It's Emerson. It has to be. He has people everywhere.

MILES

Everywhere? What do you mean, everywhere? Is he having people murdered?

VIVIAN

Potentially. To protect his corporate interests.

MILES

What else aren't you telling me?

There is a pause.

VIVIAN

Look. I was first concerned about Emerson a few months prior to Silas' abduction.

(MORE)

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

It was a rocky period for us and Emerson had made some rather uninformed choices, but suffice it to say that we ended on a bit of a hard time. Certainly nothing that we had ever been accustomed to before.

MILES

I don't remember hearing anything about that.

VIVIAN

It's not the kind of information one allows to the public.

MILES

Not when you actively maintain your connections.

VIVIAN

That's right.

MILES

So what did he do?

VIVIAN

Well, that's the thing. I don't really know. But he did find his footing again. Almost as quick as he had lost it.

MILES

And Silas?

VIVIAN

Silas was taken shortly after.

Miles thinks on this.

MILES

Why didn't you bring any of this to our attention yesterday?

VIVIAN

I couldn't be sure if it was connected. I mean Emerson has been as diligent as anyone in the search for Silas. Even more so.

(beat)

And besides, I didn't want to run the risk of looking --

MILES

Looking like an opportunist?

VIVIAN  
You underestimate me, Mr. Thorne.

MILES  
I'm starting to think I estimate  
you quite accurately, Vivian.

Hearing him call her by her first name sends a shot of  
electricity through her. Still, she keeps her poker face on.

VIVIAN  
Well, as it happens, when one  
begins to feel... discarded from  
the world, it becomes difficult to  
know who to trust.

The air is tense for a moment before Miles lets out a sigh,  
brandishing the suitcase in front of Vivian.

MILES  
I believe this may belong to your  
husband. Supposed to hold some kind  
of an agreement pertaining to your  
son.

VIVIAN  
A contract?

MILES  
Yeah, maybe. You happen to know  
where he may keep the key?

VIVIAN  
I've never seen that briefcase in  
my life, though I'm sure Emerson  
has dozens. You can check the desk.

Miles takes a seat at the cluttered desk and goes through the  
drawers. He finds no key, but eventually comes across a  
beautifully written letter on thick parchment.

Its LETTERHEAD contains the same SIGIL that was carved on the  
palm of The Corpse's hand. Next to the sigil reads the words  
*AXMO DEUS ENTERPRISES* followed by the name *BIANCA TRUSEAU* and  
an ADDRESS.

Miles motions for Vivian. He points to the letterhead.

MILES  
Hey. Do you recognize this?

VIVIAN  
Axmo Deus Enterprises? Just one of  
Emerson's subsidiaries, why?

Miles points to the sigil.



MILES  
How about that?

VIVIAN  
Company logo.

Miles skims through the letter. It is signed to Emerson from Bianca.

MILES  
Bianca Truseau?

VIVIAN  
Someone in his employ.

MILES  
Got it.

VIVIAN  
Also... one of his more fervent admirers, to be honest.

Miles looks up at her. He decides to tread lightly.

MILES  
Mrs. Stanhope, is your husband faithful to you?

VIVIAN  
I think you should be able to answer that question yourself.

MILES  
Right.

Miles places the letter down on the desk and rises. They stand close.

MILES (CONT'D)  
How about you?

There is a pregnant pause as the two look deeply at one another.

VIVIAN  
Shouldn't be a shock there either.

Miles realizes what he's doing and he breaks away, briefcase in hand.

MILES  
Amicable then?

VIVIAN  
Of course it's amicable. It's how we maintained peace in the marriage.

MILES

Was your son ever aware of any extracurricular activities between you both?

She is embarrassed.

VIVIAN

Unfortunately, yes. Emerson not so much, but Silas had accidentally caught me with another man some years ago. It didn't go over well and I'm afraid he may have developed a...

(a pause)

Well, let's just say a bit of an Oedipus complex.

MILES

I'm sorry?

VIVIAN

Silas would try to court me after that. In his own childish way of course, but still uncomfortably. I think it practically killed Emerson because he never forgave me for it.

All of a sudden, a pain surges through Miles' arm and chest. He braces against the desk and clutches at his chest.

MILES

(pained)

That's quite the story.

Vivian urgently comes to his aid.

VIVIAN

Mr. Thorne? Are you okay? Can I get you anything?

He does his best to suppress the pain.

MILES

I'm fine, ma'am. Probably just got these cuffs on a bit tight. Give me a second please.

Miles reaches into his pocket and takes two of his PAINKILLERS. Vivian watches as the man quickly calms from his episode.

MILES (CONT'D)

That's better. My apologies.

VIVIAN  
It's quite alright, Mr. Thorne.  
You're only human.

MILES  
Trying to be.

The doorbell RINGS, pulling their attention.

MILES (CONT'D)  
You expecting anyone?

VIVIAN  
Not a soul.

Miles takes the moment and slowly rises back to his feet,  
away from the security of the desk.

Vivian takes a curious step closer to him.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)  
So... Would it be foolish of me to  
inquire whether any of this found  
you accounted for or otherwise  
betrothed?

MILES  
Wow. You're quite the loose woman  
aren't you, Mrs. Stanhope?

She quickly reconstructs herself and turns away from him,  
slighted.

VIVIAN  
I am not loose Mr. Thorne. I just  
know my worth.

At this moment they are interrupted by the Butler who leads a  
MED-OFFICER into the office. He steps forward, exchanging a  
quick glance with Miles - there is a recognition - before his  
eyes return to Vivian.

LUKASHENKO  
Vivian Stanhope?

VIVIAN  
Yes.

He flashes his BADGE.

LUKASHENKO  
Lieutenant Peter Lukashenko. Afraid  
you'll need to come with us. It  
would seem we need your assistance.

VIVIAN  
Whatever on earth for?

LUKASHENKO

Ma'am, we're sorry to have to tell you this, but your husband is dead. We need you to come down to the morgue and formally identify the body. Now, are you able to do that for us?

VIVIAN

Oh...

She tries to process the Lieutenant's words.

LUKASHENKO

Maybe Mr. Thorne, here, wouldn't mind accompanying you. Should you need the moral support.

(a pause)

Miles.

MILES

Pete. Still trying to make Captain, I see.

LUKASHENKO

That's right. Made Med-Police, though. Try not to take too long, please, this is a pressing matter.

MILES

No, we wouldn't want him to thaw out, now would we?

Vivian shoots Miles a sharp look before re-composing herself.

VIVIAN

I apologize Lieutenant. I just need to grab my things. Uh, Mr. Thorne... would you possibly mind coming with?

MILES

(to Lukashenko)

Not in the least.

LUKASHENKO

Splendid. We look forward to seeing you two momentarily.

BUTLER

If you'll follow me, please.

The Butler escorts Lukashenko back out to the front door. Miles and Vivian share a momentary look before she breaks it.

VIVIAN

I just hope you'll remember that it's my side you're supposed to be on.

Miles watches as she goes about gathering her things. He grabs BIANCA'S LETTER and folds it into his pocket.

INT. MORGUE - LATER

As Miles and Vivian walk into the reception area of the morgue, Lukashenko greets them.

LUKASHENKO

Thorne. Ma'am. You'll both need to sign in.

VIVIAN

Certainly.

A RECEPTIONIST hands Vivian a SANITIZED PEN. Miles peruses the sheet as Vivian fills it out.

MILES

Since when did a morgue require your home address?

LUKASHENKO

It's contact tracing, Thorne. I hope you're not offended by due diligence.

Lukashenko knocks on the counter. Two FACE MASKS wait.

LUKASHENKO (CONT'D)

And you'll be required to wear those.

Vivian passes Miles the pen and grabs the masks. She puts hers on.

MILES

Where's yours?

Miles begins to fill out his details.

LUKASHENKO

Don't need it. We're clean. Still a benefit of being involved in law enforcement, you understand.

MILES

Doesn't necessarily make you immune.

LUKASHENKO

No, it doesn't. Not like you anyway. Still, public protocols are to be followed at all times.

MILES

Whatever you say.

Miles finishes with the sheet and hands the pen back to the Receptionist's gloved hands. He puts on the mask that Vivian hands him.

MILES (CONT'D)

Ironic, though, isn't it?

LUKASHENKO

Come again?

MILES

Well they're all already dead in there, aren't they?

Miles' words are ignored.

LUKASHENKO

This way, Mrs. Stanhope.

Lukashenko leads the way through a heavy door and into an antiseptic corridor. Vivian follows with Miles right behind her. They are led into the --

INT. POST MORTEM ROOM - MORGUE - CONTINUOUS

THREE EXAMINATION TABLES and a maskless Doctor greet them as they enter. The Doctor nods at them sincerely.

He stands at the nearest table to the room's entrance where lays a corpse underneath a white sheet.

LUKASHENKO

When you're ready ma'am.

Vivian nods and Lukashenko signals the Doctor. He pulls the sheet just below the corpse's face.

Vivian lets out a gasp of surprise and nausea as she takes in the sight of her husband with a GUNSHOT to his head and THREE DEEP LINES that carve the length of his face.

VIVIAN

What happened to him?

Miles is also surprised. The man on the table looks IDENTICAL to the CORPSE that confronted him on the night previous.

LUKASHENKO  
We can exit through here.

Lukashenko directs Vivian and Miles through the next door, signaling the Doctor as he does so.

The sheet is placed back over Emerson's marked face.

EXT. MORGUE - MOMENTS LATER

Vivian and Miles remove their masks as Lukashenko escorts them from the building to Mac's vehicle.

LUKASHENKO  
Mrs. Stanhope, if we could just ask you a few questions before you take your leave? It would help us out immensely.

VIVIAN  
Certainly.

Miles glares at Lukashenko.

MILES  
You don't have to Vivian. Not yet.

LUKASHENKO  
Is there a problem?

MILES  
No problem, Pete. I just think Mrs. Stanhope should be afforded some time out of respect for the dead.

LUKASHENKO  
Respect is what warrants the questions we need to ask, Thorne. Figure you'd know that.

Miles stops in his tracks.

MILES  
Yeah, but I'd also like to know what a Med-Officer's doing with a suicide, anyway? Shouldn't you be out tattooing children and sanitizing urinals?

Lukashenko takes a calculated step toward Miles.

LUKASHENKO  
Whoa. Who ever said it was suicide?

MILES  
I thought that much was obvious.

Lukashenko drops his gaze to look down at the briefcase handcuffed to Miles' wrist.

LUKASHENKO

Is that where you keep your medication these days? Helluva way to make sure it doesn't go missing.

The cop turns his back to Miles' scornful eye.

LUKASHENKO (CONT'D)

Mrs. Stanhope?

MILES

You really don't have to Vivian.

VIVIAN

It's okay. I rather not be involved in whatever bad blood you have toward each other. Just make it quick.

LUKASHENKO

Thank you.

They resume walking to Mac's car.

LUKASHENKO (CONT'D)

Right. Well, as your companion has pointed out, the gunshot does appear to have been self-inflicted. But what we can't figure out is how he would have gone about receiving those gashes to his face.

Vivian reaches into her purse and retrieves a pair of SUNGLASSES which she puts on.

LUKASHENKO (CONT'D)

Mrs. Stanhope, it doesn't seem likely that your husband's the type who would carve something like that into himself.

VIVIAN

Where was he found?

LUKASHENKO

Some squatter's hovel over on the east side.

VIVIAN

My God, what would he be doing all the way over there?



LUKASHENKO

Our exact question ma'am. But being a man of his station, would you be surprised if he found himself with any number of targets on his back?

They reach the car and Vivian turns to Lukashenko.

VIVIAN

What is it you're after, Lieutenant?

LUKASHENKO

Ma'am, we'd like access to your husband's calendars. Appointments he had made, lists of his associates and all accounts he's kept. Of course, anything else you feel may help us in getting closer to his murderer.

VIVIAN

Murderer?

LUKASHENKO

That's right ma'am. We don't believe your husband pulled the trigger of his own volition. Even if he was sick.

VIVIAN

Oh no, Emerson wasn't sick.

LUKASHENKO

Are you certain of that?

VIVIAN

If you like you can come by the house later and make your way through Emerson's things. Whatever assists you, you'll be free to take.

LUKASHENKO

Well thank you Mrs. Stanhope, we certainly would appreciate that.

Miles moves to open the car door for Vivian. She moves to slide in.

LUKASHENKO (CONT'D)

Your son is still missing, though. Isn't he?

She freezes and turns back to the officer.

VIVIAN

What does that have to do with anything?

LUKASHENKO

Well, we're not exactly sure, ma'am, but two tragic events surrounding the same family in such close quarter... Possibly nothing.  
(he looks at Miles)  
Possibly everything.

MILES

Okay, that's enough bullshit for today. You'll be free to re-infringe on Mrs. Stanhope's good charity later. Let's go, Vivian.

Miles nudges Vivian into the car and shuts the door.

LUKASHENKO

We'll be keeping our eyes on you, Thorne.

MILES

Great. Here's something to tie you over in the meantime.

He flips his MIDDLE FINGER up at Lukashenko.

MILES (CONT'D)

Cheers.

Miles slides into the car and drives away.

INT. MAC'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

As Miles drives off, he stares at Lukashenko who still stands, watching them as they leave.

Miles then shifts his gaze back over to Vivian who sits in the passenger seat, in a stoic resolve.

He is about to speak, but instead, decides it best to continue on in silence.

EXT. STANHOPE HOUSE - LATER

The car rolls to a stop in front of the Stanhope House's entryway. Vivian's hand nervously taps on the car's middle console.

MILES

You gonna be alright, Mrs. Stanhope?

She turns to Miles, slightly shaking from concern.

VIVIAN  
That man you said... who... last  
night he...

Miles gently places his hand on top of hers.

MILES  
Yeah... I'm sorry, I... there's no  
way I would have recognized him.

His eyes offer her sincerity. A SINGLE TEAR escapes from  
under her sunglasses.

VIVIAN  
Okay.

She frees her hand from underneath his and opens the  
passenger door, exiting the car.

She steps out to the house but then turns and stands. She  
studies Miles as he drives away.

In the car, Miles watches her perfect form shrink away in the  
rearview mirror.

INT. MILES' PRIVATE INVESTIGATIONS OFFICE - DAY

Miles walks into his office. Sophie rises to greet him.

MILES  
Hey Soph.

SOPHIE  
Mr. Thorne. Late start today?

MILES  
Just coming from a meeting with  
Mrs. Stanhope.

SOPHIE  
Oh. Making house calls now, are we?

MILES  
Yeah. Listen, do we have a saw  
around here?

SOPHIE  
You mean like a hacksaw? Yeah I  
imagine so. Maybe check the storage  
closet?

MILES  
Good call.

SOPHIE

Mac's been trying to reach you all day.

Miles turns around and moves back toward her.

MILES

Oh. Yeah, sorry. I dropped my phone last night. Might be broken.

SOPHIE

That's a shame. Can I get you some coffee?

MILES

No, I'm fine Sophie thanks, but... one more thing, actually?

Miles pulls BIANCA'S LETTER from his pocket. He unfolds the paper and directs Sophie's eyes to the LETTERHEAD.

MILES (CONT'D)

I need you to find out everything you can about Axmo Deus Enterprises and, in particular, this symbol. Let me know what comes up.

SOPHIE

What am I looking for exactly?

MILES

I don't know. But I imagine you will when you see it. Then backlog it against anything we know about Emerson, Vivian or Silas Stanhope.

SOPHIE

Sure. Consider it done.

MILES

Thanks Soph.

INT. STORAGE CLOSET - MOMENTS LATER

Miles rummages around, looking for something that may be able to break the chain or the lock on the handcuffs.

Finding a FLATHEAD SCREWDRIVER, he attempts to pick the lock. It doesn't work.

He uses a bit more force, but the screwdriver slips and drops to the floor and he almost injures himself.

MILES

Gah, fuck me!

Mac pokes his head into the storage room, as Miles picks up the screwdriver and continues to rummage around the shelves.

MAC  
Late start?

MILES  
No. Had to go and see Mrs. Stanhope.

MAC  
Oh right. What's with the briefcase?

MILES  
Well. I'm currently looking for something to break these cuffs off if that's what you're asking.

MAC  
Good luck. Where'd it come from?

Miles locates a small HACKSAW next to a toolbox.

MILES  
E. 68th.

MAC  
No shit. You got the keys?

MILES  
Does it look like I have the keys?

MAC  
No smartass, I mean my keys.

MILES  
Oh yeah. Sorry.

Miles tosses Mac's car keys back to him.

MILES (CONT'D)  
Car's out front.

They both exit the storage room and move into --

INT. MILES' OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

They sit at their respective desks. Miles attempts to saw himself free of the handcuffs.

MAC  
Didn't hear from you last night. Got a little worried. Especially since you never came back for me.

MILES

Yeah, sorry. I ran into a bit of trouble on my way out of there.

He nods to the briefcase.

MAC

Sure looks it. Anything worth discussing?

Miles continues to ravenously attack the handcuffs.

MILES

Turns out Emerson Stanhope shot himself last night.

MAC

He what?

MILES

And can you imagine my surprise when he decided to do it right in front of me with my own fucking gun?

MAC

But how could that even happen?

MILES

I don't know, Mac. I mean the son of a bitch sure didn't look like Emerson Stanhope.

MAC

What do you mean by that, now?

MILES

I mean the guy I saw looked like he coulda been dead for ten years.

MAC

Yeah well, you don't go around mistaking a corpse for a damn social paragon.

MILES

Exactly.

MAC

Where's your gun?

MILES

Huh? Oh. It's gone. I threw it in the river last night. Fortuitous too, 'cause we may have an unwanted guest joining the party.

MAC  
Yeah, who's that?

MILES  
Pete Lukashenko.

MAC  
Peter Lukashenko? Good God, I never thought I'd hear that name again.

MILES  
You're telling me. He's Med-Police now.

MAC  
Med-Police?  
(sarcastic)  
So now he can shoot folks for not breathing correctly.

MILES  
Probably waited his whole career for that stripe. You turn anything up?

MAC  
Nothing in comparison.

MILES  
How about that trash bag we saw carried in?

MAC  
Sorry kid. Fat chance of getting my ass anywhere backstage without a few hundred to burn.

MILES  
No sex in the champagne room, huh?

MAC  
Not with a face mask on.

The saw slips and Miles finds himself no further along.

MILES  
Fuck!

He's winded as he places the saw on his desk.

MAC  
Yeah, all I could really make out was that the entertainment was indeed barely legal and that the joint itself is owned by a Bianca Truseau.

Miles looks back up, re-engaged.

MILES  
Come again?

MAC  
Bianca Truseau?

Miles quickly buzzes for Sophie.

MILES  
Hey Sophie?

SOPHIE (O.S.)  
Yes.

MILES  
That letter I gave you earlier. Can you bring it to me, please?

SOPHIE (O.S.)  
Of course, Mr. Thorne. Just a moment.

MILES  
Rolling stone, Soph.

MAC  
What's this about?

MILES  
Last night, after Stanhope's little game of roulette, I found a strange symbol branded on the palm of his right hand.

Sophie enters the office and passes the letter to Miles.

SOPHIE  
Per your request. Quite a racy little note if I may say.

MILES  
That'll be all Sophie, thank you.

Sophie exits and Miles excitedly turns the letter over to Mac, pointing at the SIGIL.

MILES (CONT'D)  
This was the symbol I saw.

MAC  
(reading)  
Bianca Truseau.



MILES  
Apparently an old lover of  
Stanhope's.

MAC  
You think she's involved?

MILES  
Can't say. But all roads lead to  
Rome.

Mac stands from his desk and removes his PISTOL from its  
holster. He places it down in front of Miles.

MILES (CONT'D)  
What's that for?

MAC  
For one, it's clean. And I figure  
you'll need it more than me.  
Besides, I'm better off shooting  
pictures in my old age.

Miles looks up at his old friend. He smiles in appreciation.

MILES  
So long as *something* gets shot,  
right?

EXT. CHURCH - THE NEXT DAY

RAIN pours down in sheets.

A TAXI CAB pulls up parallel to MAC'S CAR, which is parked  
opposite of a GOTHIC STONE CHURCH.

Miles quickly exits the cab and slides inside Mac's car to  
find his colleague staking out.

INT. MAC'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

MILES  
Well I'd be lying if I said I  
wasn't surprised. Whadaya got for  
me?

MAC  
You're not going to believe this,  
but they got an unsanctioned casino  
running in the basement.

MILES  
Jesus, first a strip club and now a  
church.

MAC

What's the difference, they're both flesh peddlers. Anyway, from what I can tell, there seems to be quite a bit of money moving in and out of there.

MILES

Anything else?

Mac pulls out his camera, scrolling through a few of the photos he's taken.

MAC

Took these about an hour ago. It's why I called you. May I introduce you to Bianca Truseau.

In the photos, Bianca seems to be entering the church with two men dressed as clergy members.

MILES

And she hasn't made an appearance since then?

MAC

Nope. Nobody's gone in or out.

MILES

Alright. Wait for me here. I think it's time I have an introduction with Ms. Bianca.

Mac points to the briefcase.

MAC

You really need to do something about that.

MILES

Yeah. I'm working on it.

Miles opens the door, about to step out into the rain.

MAC

Hey Miles.

Miles turns, and shelters himself back under the car.

MAC (CONT'D)

*Marco cinque nove.*

MILES

How's that?

MAC

It's Mark 5:9. For confession.

MILES

Right.

Miles exits the car and crosses the street.

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Miles looks around the church, finding only a handful of parishioners who pray, scattered amongst the pews.

He crosses the grandiose archways and makes his way to a --

INT. CONFESSIONAL BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

As soon as Miles slips in, he kneels down. Not a moment passes and the screen slides open.

PRIEST

May the Lord be in your heart and help you to confess of your sins.

MILES

Thank you father, uh... *Marco cinque nove.*

The Priest suddenly turns his head. He smiles.

PRIEST

(delighted)

*Ah papê Satàn, papê Satàn aleppe!*

The screen immediately slides shut and the sound of TURNING GEARS fill the small space. The back panel of the booth SLIDES OPEN, revealing a STAIRCASE that leads down.

As Miles steps out into the stairwell, he is met by the Priest who holds out a decorative OFFERING PLATE where lay a number of GUNS.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

I am afraid you cannot proceed without making your donation first.

Miles regards the plate for a moment before placing Mac's gun down amongst the others.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

Thank you. Now go in peace, my son.

Miles smiles and descends the stairs. It opens up to a --

INT. GAMBLING HALL - CHURCH BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Miles steps into a dingy, smoke filled hall. ROULETTE TABLES, SLOT MACHINES and other CARD TABLES are scattered throughout.

DEALERS are older and dressed like CLERGY while SERVERS are younger and dressed like ALTAR BOYS.

MILES  
Beautiful.

The various patrons are ALL SILENT which lend a strange, STILL air to the action. Bianca is nowhere to be found.

WAITER (O.S.)  
Water or wine, sir?

Miles wheels around to find a waiter holding a tray with GLASSES and two small DECANTERS filled with water and wine.

MILES  
No. I'm alright, thank you.

WAITER  
Peace be with you.

Miles saunters over to a roulette table. He shuffles the briefcase so he can reach his wallet.

He notices that everyone at the table is quite robotic, obsessed over the healthy STACKS OF CHIPS in front of them.

When they begin placing their chips in for the next spin, Miles removes a FIFTY DOLLAR BILL and places it over the table's GREEN '00'.

DEALER  
Final bets.

Miles watches as the dealer sends the roulette ball spiraling around the wheel. He attempts to make small talk to a man at his side.

MILES  
How're the chips tonight?

No response. The man is far too entranced with the roulette ball, watching it with an unhealthy hunger, as do the others.

Miles meets the gaze of the Dealer who feigns recognition. Miles gives the Dealer a polite nod in acknowledgement.

MILES (CONT'D)  
Padre.

The Dealer takes his eyes off of Miles and back to the wheel. The ball falls neatly into its slot: "00 Green".

DEALER  
And it's double zeros.

MILES  
Beginners luck.

As the Dealer pushes Miles' winnings across the table, a Waiter approaches, the same Waiter from before.

WAITER  
Mr. Thorne. Your presence has been requested by Ms. Truseau.

MILES  
Is that so?

Miles looks up to see Bianca surveying the room from her office in the back of the room. She disappears back inside.

Miles tries to retrieve his winnings from the table, but the Waiter places his hand on Miles' wrist.

WAITER  
You may collect your winnings after. Your account is recognized.

Miles' eyes scan from the Waiter back to the Dealer.

MILES  
Very well.  
(to the Dealer)  
Thanks padre.

INT. BIANCAS OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Miles enters to find Bianca sitting at a desk in an unflattering room.

Lining the wall behind her are boxes and boxes stuffed with CASH.

MILES  
Bianca Truseau?

He moves closer, extending his hand.

BIANCA  
Miles Thorne. Please sit.

Miles sits without Bianca standing to honor his handshake.

BIANCA (CONT'D)  
I don't recognize you from any of my other establishments.  
(re: the briefcase)  
Are you here to open up an account?

MILES

I'm here on business, Ms. Truseau.  
Are you aware that Emerson Stanhope  
is dead.

She processes the information.

MILES (CONT'D)

Quite a cold reception to a lost  
lover.

BIANCA

Only an untrained eye would call  
him my lover.

MILES

You denying the affair?

BIANCA

No. But there is always so much  
more entangled in an affair than  
love. What business of yours is  
Emerson?

MILES

None actually. I'm looking for his  
son, Silas.

BIANCA

Isn't everyone?

MILES

Doesn't seem so from where I sit.

BIANCA

So this would either make you  
another one of Vivian's ponies, or  
perhaps... just a man in desperate  
need of company. But if you'll  
forgive me, you don't look the type  
to be into *diddles with littles*.

Miles does not respond.

BIANCA (CONT'D)

Unless I'm wrong, in which case I  
can make arrangements, depending on  
your budget of course. But you  
should know that Silas Stanhope was  
replaced some time ago. His  
indenture, paid.

MILES

Indenture?

BIANCA

Yes. Quite a shame really, the boy was really good for business. He had a few invisible talents.

MILES

So you're saying it's true. Emerson Stanhope ran an underage sex-trafficking ring.

BIANCA

I'm not saying anything.

MILES

Where's Silas now?

BIANCA

Once a ward has paid their penance, they're moved further down the circle, at which point, they're free of my care and oversight. After all, I'm only an accountant.

MILES

You're a monster.

BIANCA

I wouldn't say that. I simply honor commitments here. But good luck proving it. More importantly, I can still ensure that your money is put to good use should you decide to... entertain future notions.

Miles looks around at all the BOXES OF MONEY.

MILES

Seems you entertain a lot of notions. I wonder what the courts would make of all this.

BIANCA

Please don't tempt a place of worship with idle threats, Mr. Thorne. We are exempt from taxes and the law. Even from the eyes of God down here.

(a pause)

So what'll it be?

MILES

I wanna see your books.

BIANCA

Just another dog without its master, I see.

MILES  
I'm not joking.

BIANCA  
How much further do you think a  
list of hoarders and squanderers  
can take you?

MILES  
You'd be surprised.

BIANCA  
Look, I'll make you a deal. If you  
agree to give up your spoils from  
the tables today, I may be able to  
provide you with some information.

MILES  
Fine. Keep it.

BIANCA  
Good. But, I'm going to have to ask  
you to do me the honor of washing  
your hands of it first. There.

Bianca references a sink basin to her left. Miles studies it quizzically, looking back at Bianca for clarification.

BIANCA (CONT'D)  
Cleanliness is next to godliness,  
after all.

Miles stands and walks to the basin. He props the briefcase up and showers his hands in under the tap.

As the water trickles down to where the cuff wraps his wrist, it STINGS him.

MILES  
Ahh!

Finishing up, Miles pats his hands dry and returns to his seat. He rubs on his sore wrist which now appears to be RED, RASHY and TENDER. He tries to ignore it.

MILES (CONT'D)  
Okay. Now tell me where he is.

BIANCA  
I'd say that the person you'd want  
to ask that question to is one  
Phillip Argento. He was very fond  
of Silas during his tenure with us.

MILES  
Phillip Argento?



BIANCA

In truth, the man grew quite the obsession. He even became one of our biggest donors in years due to their relationship.

MILES

Keep talking.

BIANCA

Understandably, Mr. Argento's business has become far more lacking in recent times, what with this pandemic and Silas' *repurpose*. There's been little interest for him anymore. But if someone were to keep tabs on the boy, you wouldn't expect anyone else other than him.

MILES

Where can I find him?

BIANCA

He runs a small boxing gym down Chinatown which he used to use as collateral. Hard to miss. He named it after himself. Almost like he wanted to stick out amongst a thousand Chinamen.

Miles stands.

MILES

If you're lying --

BIANCA

-- Then you shouldn't be surprised, Mr. Thorne. The path you walk on is practically paved with misdirection. But a deal is a deal, and I assure you that I am not a liar. *I promise.*

(a pause)

Oh be still that beating heart. Why, one can practically hear it coming.

Miles turns to leave, but Bianca stops him in his tracks.

BIANCA (CONT'D)

One last thing.

MILES

I'm listening.

BIANCA

You should know that the man is sick. Not just in perversions but with all manner of shit, his habits being what they are. We've even resorted to taking several of our best prospects off the board because of him.

MILES

Why are you telling me this?

BIANCA

Because throughout all of his time here, Silas never contracted anything from their relations. It's as if he were already immune. Make of that what you will, but fortune does favor the bold, you know?

Miles turns and leaves.

BIANCA (CONT'D)

Don't forget about your donation.

INT. MAC'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Mac scrolls through more pictures on his camera when Miles slides in, dripping from the rain.

MAC

Bring me anything?

MILES

Yeah, looks like this sex-trafficking thing has some truth to it. We gotta head to Chinatown.

MAC

Are you serious? Miles, that place is ripe with Mark cases.

MILES

If you believe the news. Nonetheless, it's where the finger points.

MAC

Wow. Suddenly 20 grand doesn't seem so grand.

Mac turns to drop his camera on the back seat.

MILES

The last person to see Stanhope's kid in any form runs some gym in Chinatown, so until we find him, don't touch anything and breathe only half as much as you need to. Let's go.

Mac turns the ignition on the car. It roars to life.

EXT. PHIL'S GYM - AFTERNOON

Parked at the curb, Miles and Mac exit the car and meet almost shoulder to shoulder under the sign reading PHIL'S GYM.

They find it blocked off by an IRON SHUTTER which is betrayed by a beam of light that emanates out from underneath.

Mac puts on GLOVES and a MASK.

MAC

I understand why you're not worried Miles, you had it. But me, I'm a goddamn 80-year-old sitting duck.

Miles lifts the shutter.

MILES

Mac, you'll be fine, now come on.

Mac feigns a sigh of disapproval but moves underneath to find the door to the gym unlocked.

He walks in and Miles drops the shutter behind them.

INT. PHIL'S GYM - CONTINUOUS

Inside it's gloomy, drab and empty.

MAC

Cheery spot.

MILES

At least it's free of crowds. Look, you check the locker room and I'll take the office.

MAC

(sarcastic)  
Oh geez, can I?

Miles offers Mac his gun.

MILES  
Take this if you want.

MAC  
Some olive branch, what good's a  
gun gonna do a virus? I'll call you  
if I need you.

They split up.

INT. LOCKER ROOM/SHOWER ROOM - PHIL'S GYM - CONTINUOUS

Mac enters to hear RUNNING WATER.

He follows its sound through rows of lockers, into the SHOWER ROOM and into a SHOWER STALL.

He discovers a NAKED MAN lying motionless on the DIRTY SHOWER FLOOR, his head laying below the RUNNING SHOWER HEAD with its mouth agape and overflowing with water.

MAC  
My God.

Mac drops to the man's side and pulls him out from under the water's stream, fearful when he sees THREE FRESH LINES that carve down the length of his face.

MAC (CONT'D)  
Aw Christ.

He reaches down to get a pulse when he pauses, realizing he has gloves on. He removes his right glove and checks the man for a pulse only to discover the branded SIGIL on his palm.

MAC (CONT'D)  
(shouting)  
Miles! Hey Miles get in here!

Mac removes his face mask.

Miles comes running in, almost slipping on the wet floor.

MILES  
What is it?

He sees the dead man.

MILES (CONT'D)  
Aw God damn it all to Hell!

MAC  
You think we found Phil?

MILES  
Pretty safe to assume.

Miles turns the shower off.

MAC  
You see his hand?

Miles drops to examine the sigil. Mac kneels to join him.

MILES  
(sighs)  
This goes deep doesn't it?

MAC  
You think they knew we were coming?

MILES  
I wouldn't put it past 'em.

MAC  
So. Who is them, Miles?

MILES  
I wish I knew. But Vivian said her  
husband had people everywhere.

MAC  
Damn. Everywhere doesn't sound so  
good.

They both stand back up.

MILES  
Yeah. I just hope all of this  
doesn't lead us to the body of a  
dead kid --

Miles' thought is suddenly interrupted by an ASSAILANT who overpowers Mac from behind and slams him into a tiled wall.

Mac falls to the floor injured, but not unconscious.

Miles turns to face the Assailant. He goes to grab his gun, but the Assailant lunges at him and swings at his head.

Miles ducks and throws two punches into his attacker's kidneys with his free hand.

The Assailant shoves Miles backwards and Miles falls to the floor due to his own inertia.

His painkiller bottle slips out and rolls across the tiles.

The Assailant then makes a move to grab for Miles' gun himself, but Miles overtakes him by bringing the briefcase thundering down on the Assailant's back.

The Assailant crumbles to the floor, rolls to one side and kicks at Miles, who braces the kick with the briefcase, and only stumbles back a few feet.

The Assailant gets to his feet and pulls a KNIFE.

Miles tries to pull for his gun again but realizes it's off his person.

MILES (CONT'D)

Wouldn't you rather talk about this first?

The Assailant then lunges in, and Miles decides to make a preemptive swing at the Assailant's head, but the man ducks out of the way and SLICES at Miles' fist, drawing BLOOD.

MILES (CONT'D)

Gah!

The Assailant then kicks Miles to the floor and straddles him. He begins to SLICE at Miles' swollen wrist, attempting to cut it from the briefcase.

MILES (CONT'D)

Aaaaah!

BLOOD begins to flow, mixing and diluting in the wet puddles of the draining shower floor.

A SUDDEN GUNSHOT echoes through the tiled shower, and the assailant falls to the floor, clutching his arm in pain.

Miles' clutches at his heart as his awareness quickly shifts from the Assailant on the floor to the SMOKING GUN, gripped firmly in Mac's hand.

MILES (CONT'D)

Thanks for that.

MAC

You got it kid.

They both immediately turn at the sound of the Assailant getting back up to his feet and bolting from the shower.

MILES

Oh, come on!

Miles immediately stands and runs off after him.

EXT. STREETS - PHIL'S GYM - MOMENTS LATER

Miles bursts out of the open door to Phil's Gym, ducking under the iron shutter, and clambers into the rainy street.

He can see the Assailant running in the distance, silhouetted by each of the street lamps he passes in succession.

Miles breaks into a sprint, the METALLIC SHUTTERS of the various, closed storefronts glinting maliciously under the lights of the city. He tries his damndest to catch up.

But he can't get any closer to his target.

Miles begins to double over and kneels to the ground in pain as his chest weighs him down.

MILES

No, no, no, no, no, please not now!

Miles looks up and ahead as his vision blurs from the pain.

MILES (CONT'D)

You're fine. Come on goddammit,  
you're fine!

Miles looks down to his wrist and sees that blood still pours profusely from it.

He reaches into his coat pocket, searching for the medication he desperately needs. It's not there.

He collapses down, fully onto the pavement, covered by rain.

Mac can be heard pattering toward Miles through the puddles on the sidewalk.

MAC

Miles!

Reaching his protege, Mac drops to his knees and hands Miles the bottle that he was looking for.

MAC (CONT'D)

You okay, son? You dropped these.

Miles begrudgingly grabs the bottle.

MILES

He got away.

Miles tries to sit up and pop the bottle, but he struggles under a wave of lightheadedness that has struck him.

MAC

Miles. You gotta hang in there  
buddy...

MILES

Mac... we lost...

Mac grabs his phone to call someone.

Miles blacks out.

INT. MILES' OFFICE - NIGHT

Miles revives on his office sofa, still in the same, soiled clothes. His WRIST is no longer bleeding.

VIVIAN (O.S.)  
That's certainly a nasty cut.

He is surprised to find Vivian sitting with him.

MILES  
Mrs. Stanhope. How'd you -- what  
are you doing here?

VIVIAN  
Mr. McAvoy called me. Told me what  
happened. I sent him home to get  
some rest with the promise that I'd  
look after you. You had us worried,  
Miles.

Miles sits up, a bit pained, and straightens himself out.

MILES  
My apologies.

He's annoyed to find himself still cuffed to the briefcase.

MILES (CONT'D)  
Shit.

He repositions the briefcase, inadvertently revealing his tattoo to Vivian's inquisitive eyes.

VIVIAN  
(re: the tattoo)  
So... would it be wrong to ask what  
that was like?

MILES  
What, what was like?

VIVIAN  
Quarantine.

MILES  
How'd you know I was in QC?

VIVIAN  
You're tattoo.



MILES

Oh. Right. Well, the tattoo means I'm clean, Mrs. Stanhope, so no need to give it any further thought.

VIVIAN

Wasn't it painful, though? The Mark, I mean?

MILES

Not as painful as a bullet, ma'am.

Feeling anxious, Miles begins to dig around his person for his painkillers. He can't find them. Vivian reveals the bottle, shaking it.

VIVIAN

You looking for these?

MILES

I am.

VIVIAN

Here.

She hands it to him and he places it protectively into his coat pocket.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

Mac had mentioned that. Your heart meds are still in your desk.

MILES

Appreciate it.

VIVIAN

So is it true that more people die in Quarantine Camp than recover?

MILES

Mrs. Stanhope, you're better off forgetting about that kinda thing. It's probably something someone like you will never have to deal with, anyway.

VIVIAN

Why do you say that?

MILES

Because they're not as much for protecting the healthy from the sick as they are the haves from the have-nots. You think anyone ever gets isolated once they're processed in?

(MORE)

MILES (CONT'D)

It's like they set everyone up to succumb under the same roof.

VIVIAN

But you made it out.

MILES

For better or for worse.

VIVIAN

What are we going to do with you?

MILES

Dock my pay, maybe.

Vivian shines a foolish smile.

VIVIAN

At this stage, I'd find you more deserving of a raise, wouldn't you agree?

Miles eyes meet hers, but he doesn't allow his attraction to take control.

He gets up and separates himself from her, moving over to his desk.

He throws the pain pills into the drawer where they land next to his heart meds and the ROSARY.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

The Lieutenant came by the house tonight.

MILES

Yeah? He end up taking anything?

Miles pours himself a glass of SCOTCH.

VIVIAN

There wasn't much to take. I told him he'd be better off focusing his efforts on Emerson's office, being that's where he spent the majority of his time.

(re: the Scotch)

Gosh, you really do honor the tropes, don't you?

MILES

Sorry. Sometimes I forget my manners. Can I offer you one?

VIVIAN

Yes please.

She rises from the sofa as Miles grabs another glass, filling it with the amber liquid.

MILES  
So what else did he say?

He hands her the drink and begins to sip his own.

VIVIAN  
He thinks Emerson's death may have been a setup. And he was rather inquisitive about you. He kept pushing for the exact dynamics of our *relationship*.

She leans against the desk, pushing MAC'S CAMERA out of her way, and unintentionally reveals the further length of her long legs.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)  
If one can, indeed, call it that.

Miles studies the seductive woman's rhythms. They weaken him.

MILES  
And?

VIVIAN  
And I told him that I employed your services in the hopes of finding my son, and beyond that, there was nothing personal between us.

MILES  
Did he believe you?

VIVIAN  
I honestly don't think so. I just hope it doesn't complicate things for you.

MILES  
That makes both of us.

Vivian's eyes dart from his down to the briefcase.

VIVIAN  
You really do need to do something about that briefcase. I don't believe I've seen you in a clean shirt since we've met.

MILES  
Just part of my charm.

VIVIAN

I am serious Mr. Thorne. Feral does not become you.

MILES

Then what would you suggest?

The woman stands and smiles. She closes in on Miles.

VIVIAN

Well first, we'll have to remove this coat.

MILES

And how do you plan to accomplish that?

VIVIAN

By any means necessary.

Miles takes a step back as Vivian steps in to pull out one of his desk's drawers and search through it.

She finds an OLD PHOTOGRAPH of Miles in his POLICE UNIFORM and holds it up to him.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

Well this proves me right. You were quite handsome in uniform.

He takes the photo from her and places it back in the drawer.

MILES

That was a long time ago, Mrs. Stanhope. A different man.

She continues to search around the drawer.

VIVIAN

Yeah? What was so different then?

MILES

Belief.

VIVIAN

Oh. Sure. I guess that's why they call it faith. You can't always bank on it to work.

The woman then pulls out a large pair of SCISSORS and Miles can momentarily see his skewed reflection in their shears.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

But I'm certain these will work.

Vivian begins to cut the length of the LEFT SLEEVE to Miles' coat from his wrist through to his shoulder and neck.

MILES

Look, Mrs. Stanhope --

VIVIAN

-- Shh. Don't worry. I'm happy to replace it with one of Emerson's later. He's not going to need it.

MILES

It's not that. I just don't know if this is appropriate.

VIVIAN

Appropriate? You're practically a Saint, aren't you, Mr. Thorne?

MILES

First time I'd ever be called that, ma'am.

VIVIAN

Well, you know what Oscar Wilde said about saints and sinners, don't you? He said that saints have a past, but sinners?

(beat)

Sinners have a future.

Vivian succeeds in removing the coat from his body and drops it to the floor. They're standing really close now.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

There. That's better.

Miles doesn't say a word. He's falling under her spell. He finishes his last bit of scotch.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

I told you not to worry, Mr. Thorne. I promised your colleague I'd take good care of you.

MILES

I'm sure he believed you.

Vivian begins to unbutton his shirt.

MILES (CONT'D)

Uh, Vivian, this isn't exactly professional.

She doesn't listen. She only continues slowly down his torso, one button at a time. Their breath colors their anticipation.

VIVIAN

Is that what you're after?  
Professionalism? Would you rather I  
call a cab?

MILES

Well, no. Not exactly.

After the final button, Vivian spreads his shirt open.

Her eyes focus intently on his fit chest and the SCAR  
emblazoned on it. She traces it lightly with her fingers.

VIVIAN

Where did this come from?

She bows her head and tastes the length of it. Miles stares  
weakly down at her.

MILES

Just... one of my miscalculations.

She rises back up and meets his eyes, her lips close to his.

VIVIAN

Is that what you'd call it? A  
miscalculation?

Vivian proceeds to push Miles' shirt down off of his  
shoulders and back him up onto his desk.

MILES

Not tonight.

Miles seizes Vivian and KISSES her. It's a long kiss, filled  
with hunger, passion AND aggression.

When they pull away, he watches as she begins to reveal her  
body to him.

Overcome with himself, Miles overpowers Vivian and forces her  
backside down onto the desk where she aggressively rids it of  
anything that could hinder the moment.

Miles maneuvers the briefcase and places it at Vivian's side  
as he slams his mouth down on top of hers, and she undoes the  
clasp of his pants and forces them down, first with her hands  
then her feet.

At this moment his free hand maneuvers his eager self to meet  
Vivian right where she needs him. She lets out an IMPASSIONED  
GRUNT, encouraging him further.

Miles meets her in harmony with just as much fire and fury.

As this frenzy escalates, they are both unaware that Miles'  
cuffed WRIST begins to BLEED out profusely.

INT. MILES' OFFICE - THE NEXT DAY

Miles' eyes flick open. He's back on the couch in his same clothes, but his trench coat is missing and his shirt is three-quarters unbuttoned.

He's slept in.

Puzzled, Miles gets up from the sofa and pulls the briefcase up with him. His wrist is MORE PAINFUL now. And it's INFECTED in a way he could never imagine.

He moves to the reception room.

MILES

Vivian?

Sophie's head pops up. She's surprised to find her boss in this manner.

MILES (CONT'D)

Oh Sophie. Morning.

SOPHIE

Afternoon.

Miles realizes he's somewhat revealed and begins to button the full extent of his shirt back up.

MILES

Sorry, uh, did you happen to see Mrs. Stanhope this morning?

SOPHIE

No sir, I haven't.

She notices his wrist.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

But are you okay?

MILES

I'm fine. How about Mac, he call in?

Miles buttons his shirt cuffs.

SOPHIE

Nothing from Mr. McAvoy either. Would you like me to try him?

MILES

Yeah if you could Soph, that would be great.

Miles turns to head back into his office.

SOPHIE

Are you sure you're okay? How about some coffee?

Miles turns back to Sophie.

MILES

Coffee actually sounds like mother's milk right now Sophie, thank you.

Miles returns to his office and shuts the door behind him.

Just then the phone rings, but it is immediately intercepted by Sophie.

Miles moves to his desk where he finds his slivered trench coat laying on the floor in two pieces.

He opens a desk drawer and fishes out his medication. He does not notice that his ROSARY IS MISSING.

He takes one of the pills and mixes it with two painkillers.

Miles leans back, shuts his eyes and deeply inhales. His pain numbs...

Then Sophie buzzes in.

SOPHIE (O.S.)

Boss there's someone on the line for you, and they're refusing to hang up.

MILES

Who is it?

SOPHIE

I don't know. He only says he's from Church.

MILES

Put him through.

Miles picks up his phone receiver.

MILES (CONT'D)

Miles Thorne.

VOICE (O.S.)

I have an address for you.

MILES

Who is this?



VOICE (O.S.)  
You're looking for the Stanhope  
boy, yeah? Well I might be able to  
point you in the right direction.

MILES  
Yeah and why should I trust you?

VOICE (O.S.)  
Because I'm the one who ordered  
that briefcase to be taken from  
your wrist last night.

MILES  
I'm listening.

EXT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - DAY

Miles arrives to the given address in a taxi cab. He exits  
the vehicle and hands the driver some cash.

CAB DRIVER  
You want me to keep the meter  
running, buddy?

MILES  
I'm fine here, thanks.

CAB DRIVER  
You sure?

MILES  
Yup.

CAB DRIVER  
Okay. Your funeral.

The cab drives away and Miles walks the perimeter of the  
derelict building.

He finds a skewed door, partially blocking the entry. He  
kicks it in.

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

As the door falls inward, Miles can hear the scurrying of  
birds upon his boisterous entry.

As he investigates a bit deeper into the warehouse, his eyes  
focus in on a horrible sight.

MILES  
Mac!

His long-time partner, colleague and mentor, MAC is DEAD, his body CRUCIFIED on an some kind of industrial makeshift CROSS.

Miles closes the distance between them to find that Mac's hands and feet have been RIVETED into the cross' rusted metal.

The entirety of his body has been SEVERELY BURNED.

MILES (CONT'D)

Aw shit, Mac...

On the ground below him lay a pool of PHOTOGRAPHS.

Fighting tears, Miles kneels down to inspect them, finding that they are all of Miles during various moments of his investigation.

MILES (CONT'D)

What were you even up to?

Miles drops the photos and rises back up.

Gripped tightly in Mac's left hand is Miles' CRIMSON ROSARY.

Miles takes it from Mac's grasp and puts it in his pocket. As soon as he does so, his chest burns with shooting pains.

Once again, he doubles over and grabs for his pain meds.

Fumbling over the bottle in his haze, Miles spills the pills all over the ground.

He scrambles for a few and successfully ingests three and collapses to the floor on his back. The wave of pain subsides.

Still on his back, the warehouse suddenly erupts with the sounds of heavy footsteps and Miles finds himself with numerous Med-Police training their guns on him. At their helm, Lt. Lukashenko.

LUKASHENKO

Miles Thorne. How did we just know?

Miles tries to sit up, but is kicked and held down by one of the faceless cops.

MILES

Gah, fuck...

The cop confiscates Miles' gun and moves to inspect the briefcase, finding it cuffed to his INFECTED looking wrist.

He looks up to Lukashenko puzzled.

FACELESS COP

That's pretty fucked Lieutenant.  
Looks a bit hot for contact.

LUKASHENKO

That's alright, let him save his  
energy for the station, anyway.  
(shouts)  
Quarantine him!

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - LATER

Lukashenko enters the antiseptic room carrying a FILE.

He sits across from Miles who wears a FACE MASK and sits handcuffed to the interrogation table, his left hand cuffed twice with the burdensome handcuff still attached to the briefcase.

The infected wrist has been somewhat bandaged, as best as it can be.

LUKASHENKO

Looks painful.

MILES

Looks a lot better than it feels.

LUKASHENKO

You'll be happy to know that your  
Mark targets remain negative.

MILES

That surprise you?

LUKASHENKO

Not really.  
(a pause)  
So where's the key?

MILES

I told you. I don't know. You think  
I'd be sitting here with my own  
blood on my hands, otherwise?

LUKASHENKO

We always took you to be a bit of a  
masochist, Thorne, maybe it fits  
the profile.

MILES

Then if you wanna try and take this  
in as evidence, be my guest. You'll  
be doing me a favor. If not, then  
cut the shit.

LUKASHENKO

Okay. Whatever you say. I'm sure you've realized by now that we identified your colleague Mr. McAvoy. And it seems he'd been tailing you for some time.

Lukashenko opens the folder filled with Mac's photographs and slides it over to Miles. Miles doesn't break his gaze.

LUKASHENKO (CONT'D)

Now why would he be doing that, you think?

MILES

You'd have to ask him.

LUKASHENKO

Convenient how that works out, huh? Suppose you could continue on in that car of his now.

MILES

Is that really your angle here, Pete? That I killed him for his beater car?

LUKASHENKO

Well given this kind of betrayal, we wouldn't put it past you. Nonetheless, the photographs also prove that you were at the same location as Emerson Stanhope on the night he was murdered.

Miles shuns the accusation.

MILES

So murder's become your only conclusion? Based on what, then? These?

LUKASHENKO

They don't exactly paint a flattering picture of you Thorne.

Miles glances down to the photos, then back up.

MILES

No. That's true. But you wanna show me the timestamp on 'em?

Lukashenko falters at this, as there is no timestamp being printed photographs. He chuckles to recover and smiles.

LUKASHENKO

When was the last time you saw Vivian Stanhope?

MILES

Last night.

LUKASHENKO

Well, Thorne, that's actually interesting because see, we can't seem to find her.

MILES

You can't find her?

LUKASHENKO

No. She's been off the radar since we saw you both at the morgue, and up to this point all of her Help has corroborated the same thing. They haven't seen her either. But being that you've just admitted to seeing her last night, you wouldn't happen to have an idea as to where she might be right now, would you?

MILES

Not. One.

LUKASHENKO

Well that's pretty unfortunate because I'm beginning to think that she may have been the one who hired your friend McAvoy to tail you in the first place.

MILES

That doesn't make any sense. Why would she do that? It'd be a waste of her own resources.

LUKASHENKO

Oh I dunno. Maybe she got wise to your act.

(a pause)

Or maybe she got bored with your affair.

MILES

Christ Pete, you must be a lot dumber than you think I think you look. I never had an affair with Vivian Stanhope, she's a client. You think I like to shit where I eat?

LUKASHENKO

If you murdered her husband then sure.

MILES

You know, I'd really like to see you try and prove that.

LUKASHENKO

And I'd like to see you back in quarantine with that shit stain for a hand. You may have built up immunity to the Mark, Thorne, but that doesn't make you an innocent man.

Miles leans in, calculated.

MILES

Then it pains me to tell you that anything you think you might have on me is circumstantial at best, so...

LUKASHENKO

You may be right. But once we cross-examine your firearm with the bullet found in Stanhope's brain, I have a feeling you may change your tune.

Miles leans back, silent to the accusation.

LUKASHENKO (CONT'D)

Huh. You hear that? We got those little wheels turning now, don't we? You can expect a warrant soon.

MILES

Knock yourself out. Now give me my goddamn phone call.

EXT. POLICE STATION - EVENING

Miles removes his CELL PHONE, WALLET, KEY-RING and ROSARY from a plastic ziplock bag as he heads out of the station.

Sophie awaits him in her car.

MILES

Thanks Sophie, I know it's after hours.

SOPHIE

It's alright Mr. Thorne. Are you okay?

MILES

I'm fine, thanks. You?

SOPHIE

I am. It's just terrible, though.

MILES

I know. And I am sorry to ask you to come out like this.

SOPHIE

I still have a job to perform Mr. Thorne and I intend to honor it.

MILES

Appreciate the gesture, Soph, it's generous.

She passes an ENVELOPE to Miles before they drive into the city's darkening streets.

MILES (CONT'D)

What's this?

He opens the envelope to find BIANCA'S LETTER to Emerson. And another PAGE with notes scribbled onto them.

SOPHIE

So I was doing some digging and it turns out that, that company, Axmo Deus? It's not a practicing business. It's actually registered as a non-profit organization operating under the exemptions of a Church.

MILES

That would make sense. I had a chat with Bianca Truseau and she just about confirmed as much.

Miles scans the notes. He sees the words *Marie Laveau* and *The Lesser Key* written with preceding question marks.

MILES (CONT'D)

What's this about? The Lesser Key?

SOPHIE

Well I'm not sure if it's something you'd subscribe to, but as far as your symbol goes, I think it's probably worth the lead.

MILES

I'm intrigued.

SOPHIE

So, The Lesser Key is an old book store over on George Street owned and operated by this mystic, Marie Laveau. Matter of fact, she's Madam Laveau. And as far as this city goes, she's the be all end all on this kind of stuff.

Miles places the papers back into the envelope.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

Anyway, I emailed her a copy of the letterhead and when she finally replied, she said that the symbol, or rather, sigil, is meant for, get this, some kind of rite of conjuration. It's like a phone number that practitioners can dial.

MILES

Who are they calling?

SOPHIE

Mr. Thorne, she said the sign is representative of a demon called Asmodeus... or as it reads on that letterhead, Axmo Deus.

MILES

And that would mean --

SOPHIE

-- That would mean Emerson Stanhope was into some pretty dark shit.

Miles checks his watch. It's going on 7PM.

MILES

This book store still open?

SOPHIE

They seem to keep odd hours.

MILES

Then take me there, will ya?

Sophie accelerates as Miles studies the envelope once more.

EXT. THE LESSER KEY - NIGHT

Sophie stops the car opposite of some old storefront. Miles gets out of the car and looks back in on her.



MILES

Soph, I'm gonna need another favor.  
And I'm afraid it's not exactly  
honorable.

SOPHIE

As opposed to the valiance of  
affairs and lies from all our other  
cases?

MILES

I need you to head back to the  
office. Mac's camera is on my desk  
and I need you to get rid of it  
before Lt. Lukashenko shows up with  
his search warrant. Is that okay?

SOPHIE

Of course. Anything you say, boss.

Sophie winks and he shuts the car door. She pulls away.

MILES

(to himself)  
Thanks Soph.

Miles heads into book shop.

INT. THE LESSER KEY - CONTINUOUS

Inside the gothic, antiquated shop, Miles is greeted by the  
gaze of a spectacled man, CLERK, who stares him up and down.

MILES

I'm looking for Marie Laveau.

CLERK

Is that briefcase yours?

MILES

Not exactly, but it's become quite  
the attachment.

CLERK

In the back. Just have a seat and  
light the candles.

Miles nods his head and proceeds down the long, spindly ROWS  
of archaic books which stretch out dimly before him. They  
seem to dwarf his body.

At the end of the path he comes upon an open door. He enters.

INT. SEANCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

At the northern, southern, eastern and western points of this room stand FOUR MANNEQUINS dressed in elaborate gowns of different color. They all wear PLAGUE DOCTOR MASKS.

A circular table sits perfectly in the center of the room. FOUR CANDLES rest on top of it and a BOOK OF MATCHES lays in the middle.

Miles shuts the room's door behind him and takes a seat at one end of the table.

MILES

Hello?

With no reply, he positions the briefcase on the table and takes the matches, lighting one candle at a time.

1, 2, 3 and 4.

VOICE (V.O.)

Thorne.

Suddenly, the room goes completely dark. But when the candles re-ignite a split second later, Miles JOLTS up to find that one of the Mannequins (in a white bridal gown and white plague mask) sits across from him. This is Madam Laveau.

LAVEAU

Calm child.

MILES

Are you... Laveau?

LAVEAU

To some. But I am not limited by label.

Miles cautiously re-takes his seat.

MILES

Look ma'am, I don't typically go for this kind of thing, but I understand you've recently communicated with a colleague of mine.

LAVEAU

If our alliance is permitted, it would have been so.

MILES

Right. Then what can you tell me about Axmo Deus?

The Mystic shifts her head, knowingly. She inhales and gives a hollow chuckle.

LAVEAU

Axmo Deus, indeed. The lead which you follow has become the noose to your neck...

(re: the briefcase)

...and the binds to your hands. Your mistress misleads your heart when you lay together in sin. And the marked man, not without flaw, has fled the prodigal son away from her opportunistic eyes.

MILES

You mean to say... Vivian?

LAVEAU

No trust can grow where darkness remains, child. Their plague is as infectious as their sin and your heart connects you to them all.

MILES

Where is Silas Stanhope?

LAVEAU

Hidden in the place where only you can start and end.

MILES

(incredulous)

Look, your theatrics are pretty compelling, but I don't play well with riddles. Who has him?

LAVEAU

They are servants of the succubus and the worshipped Prince.

MILES

(rises)

Forget it. I can't go for this shit.

LAVEAU

But you already hold the balm against the weight of your actions. There.

Laveau points to Miles' shirt pocket.

Compelled, Miles sits back down and reaches into the pocket. He pulls out the ROSARY.

LAVEAU (CONT'D)  
What's a little dust for your soul,  
child?

Miles studies the rosary as it dangles from his fingers.

MILES  
Why not?

Miles instinctively places the rosary around his neck, and immediately, it begins to BURN his flesh.

MILES (CONT'D)  
Ghaaa!!! I can't breathe!

BLOOD starts to soak profusely through Miles' bandages as the shooting pain aggressively attacks his chest. His surgical SCAR begins to BLEED through his shirt.

Miles hunches over and clutches at his chest, pulling the briefcase with him.

MILES (CONT'D)  
What's happening to me?

He tries to catch his breath. A single tear of BLOOD falls from his eye. The cacophony and chaos of his cries intensify.

LAVEAU  
Recompense.

Then, in one big booming CRASH, Miles suddenly finds himself ALONE in the room.

The candles are extinguished and the four mannequins stand frozen.

It's like Laveau was never even real.

But with the rosary around his neck, his pain has completely vanished. His WRIST, still cuffed, has also healed.

Surprised and puzzled, but breathing normally, Miles investigates his person when suddenly --

SOUND: BUZZ-BUZZ-BUZZ

Miles feels his CELL PHONE vibrate in his pocket. He pulls it out to reveal 7 MISSED CALLS and 1 VOICEMAIL, all of them from DR. VAS.

MILES  
Dr. Vas?

He secures the briefcase and rises from the table, heading back out to the rows of the bookstore.

INT. THE LESSER KEY - CONTINUOUS

Miles dials his voicemail as he makes his way toward the exit. The message finally plays.

VAS (O.S.)  
Miles, it's Dr. Vas. Listen, I'm going to need you to come in as soon as you can. Tonight even. I'm on duty from 6...

Miles passes by the clerk who shoots him a knowing smile.

CLERK  
Come again, Mr. Thorne.

Miles nods and exits back out to the street.

EXT. THE LESSER KEY - CONTINUOUS

Miles urgently steps to the curb and sticks his hand out in attempts of hailing a cab.

Dr. Vas' voicemail continues.

VAS (O.S.)  
...and I really do need to discuss your test results with you. I can't stress how important it is. Please come as soon as you get this, don't bother calling. Just get here as soon as you are able, and I hope you're feeling okay.

A cab pulls to a stop and Miles pulls the door open and hops in.

MILES  
St. Lucia's please.

INT. EXAM ROOM - ST. LUCIA'S HOSPITAL - LATER THAT NIGHT

Miles watches as Dr. Vas closes the room's door behind her. She turns around wearing a FACE MASK.

VAS  
Thank you for making your way down here at such short notice.

MILES  
It's fine Doc, but what's going on. Why the urgency?

Vas begins to flip through papers on a CLIPBOARD that she holds in her hands.

VAS

Well, Miles I don't exactly know how to say this to you because it's something I don't really understand myself, but um, it would seem that your blood... well, you're blood's been tainted.

MILES

I'm sorry, Doc, tainted? What do you mean? What's the prognosis, is it Marked?

VAS

No, it's not that. I mean there's a few indicators, but those are most likely just residual in nature.

MILES

Then what's the problem?

VAS

Miles, by all accounts your blood profile says that you should be a corpse. I mean, I've never seen such an advanced stage of decay.

MILES

Well, that obviously can't be true. Someone fucked up somewhere, right?

VAS

Have you been experiencing anything out of the ordinary since the last time I saw you?

Miles glances down at the briefcase.

MILES

Business as usual, Doc.

VAS

I was initially worried that your sample had been mishandled. Frankly, I hoped we'd gotten the results mixed up, but...

MILES

But?

VAS

Miles, I personally ran the tests three times myself. The same results were yielded each time.

MILES

So what does that mean? Is it contagious?

VAS

I honestly can't say, but at this stage I can't let you leave either. I'm admitting you for further observation.

MILES

Well, I'm afraid that, that can't happen yet, Doc. Bad timing. I'm in the middle of an investigation and I feel fine.

Miles moves to leave. Vas grabs the briefcase.

VAS

Well, I'm afraid I have to insist, Miles. You're not going anywhere.

Miles turns to see a drop of SWEAT sliding down her forehead.

MILES

Bullshit.

He shrugs past her when, suddenly, four ORDERLIES enter the room and overpower him, pushing him deeper into the room.

Vas reveals a SYRINGE and approaches him.

Miles struggles as he is forcibly held to the exam table.

VAS

This is just mild sedative, Miles. We'll have you fixed up right away.

She sticks the syringe through his pants and into his leg where she injects the liquid.

VAS (CONT'D)

Very good.

As she retracts the needle, Miles suddenly seizes it and STABS it into one of the Orderly's necks, kicking the man into Vas. They both slam against the wall and drop.

Using the BRIEFCASE, Miles aggressively bashes it against each man, fighting his way through until he escapes the room.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Miles stumbles through the hospital as quickly as he is able. He pushes through people as the orderlies pursue him from behind.

As he runs, the hospital seems to become less populated and his vision begins to BLUR from the tranquilizer.

Panicking, Miles pushes through a door into a room off of the hall, hoping to hide.

INT. HOSPITAL LABORATORY - CONTINUOUS

With his muscles turning to jelly, Miles SLIPS and falls to the floor of the DARK room he has just entered.

He grabs up to an exam table to pull himself back up, but it falls over, and a dead MARK PATIENT nearly falls on him.

Its hand is BRANDED with the AXMO DEUS SIGIL.

He screams and gets to his feet as best as he can.

Standing, he sees himself among rows of exam tables where numerous MARK PATIENTS lay in compromising situations, all in various stages of infection and decomposition, and all looking as if their hands possess the SIGIL.

Each patient is being DRAINED of BLOOD from the tables to the floor, where a TRIBUTARY OF BLOOD collects and flows into a DRAIN at the middle of the room.

With the tranquilizer really beginning to take a hold, Miles falls back to the floor when three of the orderlies enter the lab, jolting him. His eyes close as they converge on him.

And just before he passes out completely, he opens his eyes to see his aggressive attackers as the dead MARK PATIENTS.

INT. PATIENT ROOM - HOSPITAL - THE NEXT DAY

Miles comes to. He is being awoken, rather aggressively, by Vivian.

MILES

Vivian. I thought you were...

Miles attempts to move, but realizes he lays on a gurney, hooked up to all manner of medical equipment.

VIVIAN

We need to hurry Miles.

MILES

But what's going on?

VIVIAN

Lukashenko's on his way here now.  
He got his warrant and found Mac's  
camera in your office.

(MORE)



VIVIAN (CONT'D)

He's using it to implicate you in Emerson's murder.

MILES

But I didn't kill Emerson.

VIVIAN

You know that and I know that, but you're not in any condition to fight the law.

She pauses, taking in his face. She kisses him.

Miles hardly returns the kiss, remembering Laveau's warnings.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

But we really must go.

Vivian begins, rather forcefully, removing the IVs and other attachments to Miles' body.

Still foggy, and very confused, Miles looks around the room in bewilderment. He realizes that the handcuffs are NO LONGER around his wrist.

MILES

Where's the briefcase?

VIVIAN

Good news. I found Emerson's keys.

MILES

But where is it? I'm supposed to --

VIVIAN

-- It's just on the chair, with your clothes. Now get up.

Miles musters up his strength and moves to the chair. He gets dressed as quickly as he can. He notices that his ROSARY is gone, but is relieved to see the briefcase.

MILES

What happened to my rosary?

Vivian is at the door to the room, peeking out into the corridor. She sees Lt. Lukashenko and three other Med-Officers closing in from down the hall.

VIVIAN

This ain't the time to find God, Miles, we really need to go. Can you walk?

MILES

Yeah. I'll be fine.

VIVIAN

Then hurry up.

As Miles continues to get dressed, a NURSE tries to enter the room, carrying Miles' lunch. Vivian stops her at the door.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry Nurse, but Mr. Thorne is taking his rest right now.

NURSE

I'm sorry ma'am but it's his scheduled meal time. Hospital policy.

VIVIAN

Well then let me take that for you.  
I can feed him myself --

The Nurse pushes into the room, past Vivian, just as Miles finishes his last button. Everyone in the room freezes.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

(to Miles)  
We have to go.

Miles grabs the briefcase and makes a move to join Vivian by the door.

But Lukashenko enters the room first. He surveys the scene and immediately draws his firearm, pointing it at Miles.

LUKASHENKO

Miles Thorne. You're under arrest  
for the murder of Emerson Stanhope  
and Lionel McAvoy.

In rapid response, Vivian grabs the Nurse, sending the tray of food crashing to the floor. She pulls her own FIREARM from her garter belt and holds it to the Nurse's temple.

The Nurse begins to tear, fearing for her life.

VIVIAN

Let us through.

LUKASHENKO

Mrs. Stanhope, nice of you to make  
your presence known.

VIVIAN

Let. Us. Through.

Vivian cocks the hammer on her gun.

LUKASHENKO  
Okay ma'am. Just stay calm.  
(to police)  
Stand down boys.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Miles exits the room cautiously. Vivian follows closely behind him, still holding the Nurse captive.

She stops. The entire Hospital is frozen in this moment.

VIVIAN  
Miles. Get the elevator for us.

MILES  
Vivian I don't --

VIVIAN  
-- Go! Now!

Miles decides to do as he is ordered, and as he breaks into a run, one of Lukashenko's men breaks stance and tries to get a clean shot on Miles.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)  
(shouts)  
Miles watch out!

Vivian immediately lets go of the Nurse and pushes her out of the way.

Lukashenko's man fires a shot, but Miles ducks it. Screams come from the hospital's bystanders.

Vivian then points her gun at Lukashenko and FIRES a single round, hitting the cop square in the chest and sending him to the floor. More screams.

Two of the Officers drop to their knees to attend to their fallen comrade, while the other begins to run after Miles.

But before he can really begin, Vivian hits him with a point-blank bullet too.

She yells out to the Hospital, swinging her gun around in each direction.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)  
(shouting)  
Everyone down on the floor! Now!  
Don't make me a martyr today,  
please just get down!

She fires a WARNING SHOT.

Every witness on the floor immediately drops to the ground.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

Now don't move for ten minutes!

Vivian sprints down the hall trying to catch up to Miles.

When she rounds a corner she sees him and he leads her, weaving and bobbing through the corridors. They can hear the fast-clacking footsteps of the two Med-Officers behind them.

Miles finds access to a stairwell but the door is locked.

MILES

Fuck!

He grabs her hand and after more ducking and dashing, they finally find a SERVICE ELEVATOR at the end of a long hallway.

MILES (CONT'D)

In here.

Miles frantically jams the DOWN BUTTON. The Service Elevator begins making the journey up, albeit slowly.

The Med-Police are catching up.

VIVIAN

How much longer?

MILES

It's almost here.

MED-OFFICER 2 (O.S.)

They're just down this way, come on.

Miles jams on the down button some more.

MILES

Christ! Come on!

The Elevator has almost reached them.

VIVIAN

Miles they're almost here!

The Med-Officers round the corner and the elevator doors slowly open.

Miles forces Vivian and himself inside and he immediately moves to press the BASEMENT BUTTON in the elevator. Unfortunately the doors are still in the process of opening.

MED-OFFICER 2

There they are!

The Med-Officers run after them with their guns pointed.

Miles frantically presses the CLOSE DOORS BUTTON.

MED-OFFICER 2 (CONT'D)

Freeze!

The elevator doors begin to shut as the cops close in.

In response, Vivian points her gun out at them, through the closing doors lift's.

VIVIAN

Stop!

MILES

Vivian, what are you doing? There's already been enough bloodshed today.

MED-OFFICER 2 (O.S.)

She's gonna fire!

VIVIAN

If they take us, what will happen to Silas? I cannot fail him again.

She shoots a SINGLE ROUND out at the charging officers. They duck.

Miles drops the briefcase and immediately grabs Vivian, trying to wrestle the gun from her hands.

MILES

I said that was enough!

They struggle momentarily. He forces her to turn to him and successfully seizes the gun when --

BANG!

A BULLET roars through the elevator doors just as they close shut, tearing into Vivian's backside.

Their eyes hold as she falls further into his arms and the energy leaves her body.

VIVIAN

I'm sorry. You know my heart.

The elevator begins its journey down.

INT. SERVICE ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Miles scrambles to pocket the gun as he lowers Vivian's body to the floor of the elevator.

MILES  
Vivian, come on! Come back to me  
Vivian!

He tries to revive her, but to no avail. She's dead.

He kisses his fingers and shuts her eyes with them.

MILES (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry.

He simply holds her as he listens to the elevator's DINGS while it travels down from the 8th floor to the basement.

He notices THREE minor WOUNDS on his RIGHT WRIST where Vivian had dug her fingernails into him during their struggle.

He SNIFFS them before wiping them against his shirt.

Once he reaches the basement floor... the elevator CONTINUES TO DING, and Miles' attention raises to the lift's indicator panel. He watches it count down, floor after floor.

-2, -3, -4...

Suddenly his attention is caught by the briefcase. Something mildly THUMPS inside of it. The lower he goes, the louder it gets.

The case then FALLS over on its own accord and Miles reacts to a quick, sharp pain at his wrist.

Then the elevator stops, and the panel flickers "-8".

MILES (CONT'D)  
What the hell?

The doors suddenly "ding" open, revealing the FREEZING darkness of the QUARANTINE CAMP'S MESS HALL beyond.

Miles cautiously grabs the briefcase.

INT. DARK MESS HALL - QUARANTINE CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Miles steps out from the elevator. He grips the briefcase tightly and exhales STEAM into the frozen room.

He can faintly make something out at the other end.

Miles takes a few steps toward it and the THUMPING in the briefcase resumes.

He stops. So does the thump. He SHIVERS from the cold.

When he resumes, the thumping resumes with him.

He pushes forward, and as he gets nearer to the other end, the thumping in the briefcase becomes more aggressive, as if to egg him on.

Once he gets close enough, the thumping suddenly stops, and that's when Miles sees him for the first time.

MILES  
(shocked)  
Silas.

Prone, on a BANQUET TABLE in front of him, lays SILAS. The boy is only dressed in his underwear, pale and alabaster, and ripe for sacrifice.

He is FROZEN and the frost has eaten away at pieces of his skin. He must be dead.

Miles closes the distance and stands at the table.

MILES (CONT'D)  
Hey buddy! Are you with me? C'mon  
kid, wake up.

Miles places the briefcase on the table and feels for the boy's pulse.

Nothing.

At this moment, Miles attempts to bundle Silas in his arms and remove him from the table when he hears someone.

VIVIAN (O.S.)  
You know my heart.

Suddenly, Miles is aggressively PULLED DOWN into the darkness below him, leaving only a breath of STEAM behind him.

INT. DARK MESS HALL - QUARANTINE CAMP - CONTINUOUS

A plethora of CANDLES immediately burst to life and Miles finds his wrists, ankles and head chained to a chair that sits in the middle of the AXMO DEUS SIGIL.

In front of him, Silas still lays dead at the banquet table, but just beyond it stand a legion of 13 ROBED FIGURES.

Their faces are all obscured and STEAM emanates out from underneath their hoods. They look as if they are about to sit for some twisted mockery of Jesus' last supper.

MILES  
So this is it? This is the whole  
enterprise? The secret that Emerson  
was hiding.

The group removes their hoods in unison, revealing themselves to all be LATE STAGE MARK PATIENTS, scarred and deformed.

What's more, each one of them possess THREE deep LINES that carve down the entire lengths of their faces.

But even behind the disease, Miles can see this cult for who they are, in particular the faces of: VIVIAN and EMERSON STANHOPE, DR. LUCRETIA VAS, BIANCA TRUSEAU, SOPHIE DUNNE, the PHARMACIST, CHURCH PRIEST, PHIL ARGENTO and five of the Stanhope's HELPERS.

They all sit down at the table except for Vivian, who stands at its center.

VIVIAN

You flatter us, Miles. We're hardly illuminati.

Miles stares in shock.

MILES

But this doesn't make any sense. It can't be possible.

Dark laughter erupts as Emerson - to Vivian's right - reveals a long, curved, ritualistic-looking DAGGER. He hands the dagger up to his wife.

VIVIAN

Oh, you are too cute.  
(to the Legion)  
He still thinks he's a real boy!

She lifts the dagger over her head and...

MILES

No! Don't!

Vivian PLUNGES the dagger directly into Silas' chest, sending BLOOD spraying in all directions.

Then she violently SLICES through the boy's chest plate, creating a WIDE-OPEN POCKET as those at the table shake and groan in a twisted state of orgasm.

The THUMPING in the briefcase increases to match their dark rapture. It JUMPS slightly on the table.

Unable to move, tears begin to form in Miles' eyes.

MILES (CONT'D)

Please God.



VIVIAN

Your sadness betrays you Miles.  
This is not defeat. It's a  
celebration.

Vivian then takes the BRIEFCASE and finally opens it. From inside, she pulls out Miles' still-beating, corrupted HEART.

It PULSES in her hand.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

And you're the guest of honor.

Miles can do nothing but watch as she forcefully places the aggressive heart into Silas' open chest, when --

Miles' own chest suddenly explodes in pain for the final time.

MILES

Ahhhh!

His restraints keep him from doubling over, but the sensation is now worse than he has ever experienced.

In his struggle to fight, Miles looks back to the table, FROZEN TEARS now sticking to his face.

With each look, he watches as successive cult members take the ceremonial dagger and SLICE the remainder of their FACES OFF in sacrifice, dropping dead to the table after.

More intense pain accompanies each suicide and it continues to attack Miles at his very core. Still, he can't move.

But once Vivian makes her sacrifice, his pain stops.

The room is suddenly draped in complete SILENCE except for the sound of Miles' BEATING HEART, coming from the inside of Silas.

And that's when Silas' body RISES from the table, guttural and unnatural. EVIL. Even his breathing is carved with a discordant darkness.

Suddenly, a faint and muffled voice from somewhere BEYOND begins to roar into the room.

VOICE (O.S.)

...by the descent of the Holy  
Spirit, by the coming of our Lord  
for judgment...

Puzzled, but finally able to catch his breath, Miles watches as the boy's insectile movements draw him angrily closer, his form covered in shadow and candlelight.

But the one thing Miles cannot deny is that, right now, his HEART beats steadily inside of the boy's bloody, open chest.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 ...that you tell me by some sign of  
 your name, and the day and hour of  
 your departure...

Reaching Miles, SILAS brings his eyes in direct contact as he places his HANDS on both sides of the Detective's head.

SILAS  
 (dark)  
 You too, must die.

Miles stares into the deepest pools of the void. And he SCREAMS, experiencing a fear he's never known before.

VOICE (O.S.)  
 ...I command you moreover to obey  
 me to the letter...

Miles' perspective changes and he suddenly finds himself looking at THE REAL WORLD from the inside of --

INT. SILAS' BEDROOM - REAL WORLD - NIGHT

From his POINT-OF-VIEW shooting wildly all over the FREEZING room, Miles finds himself restrained to a bed. He can feel himself asphyxiating.

He sees that he possesses SMALL ARMS that are covered in weeping WOUNDS and BRUISES. They SHAKE violently, as does his whole body.

TWO PRIESTS attack him: the older FATHER LIONEL 'MAC' MCAVOY who stands with a CRUCIFIX and HOLY WATER and the younger FATHER PETER LUKASHENKO, who stands with an open BIBLE.

The voice that has been cutting through the cacophony is MAC'S.

FATHER MCAVOY  
 ...I who am a minister of God  
 despite my unworthiness; nor should  
 you be emboldened to harm in any  
 way...

Out of control, Miles spits LOUD guttural and evil, yet painful sounds out toward the room.

FATHER MCAVOY (CONT'D)  
 ...this creature of God, or the  
 bystanders, or any of their  
 possessions...

Father McAvoy lays a HAND on Miles' head and Miles laughs fiendishly.

Only Miles is not Miles. HE IS SILAS. And Silas is POSSESSED and undergoing an EXORCISM.

FATHER MCAVOY (CONT'D)  
 ...They shall lay their hands upon  
 the sick and all will be with  
 them...

SILAS/DEMON  
 Fuck you!

FATHER MCAVOY  
 ...May Jesus, Son of Mary, Lord and  
 Savior of the world through the  
 merits and...

SILAS/DEMON  
 McAvoy, fuck you!

FATHER MCAVOY  
 ...intercession of His holy  
 apostles Peter and Paul and all His  
 Saints...

SILAS/DEMON  
 Faggots!

FATHER MCAVOY  
 ...show you favor and mercy.

FATHER LUKASHENKO  
 (nervous)  
 Amen.

SILAS/DEMON  
 FAGGOTS!

Silas' voice suddenly changes to that of a young, concerned Lukashenko.

SILAS/DEMON (CONT'D)  
 (as Lukashenko)  
 What would God say if you touched  
 me, Father?

Lukashenko's eyes widen and his breath catches in a quick state of shock.

FATHER MCAVOY  
 Enough! Be silent, foul beast!

McAvoy then throws an aggressive amount of HOLY WATER over Silas, who reacts violently to it and grits in pain.

INT. DARK MESS HALL - QUARANTINE CAMP - MILES' WORLD

MILES grits in pain. He tries to break the restraints, but they only dig into his skin further and he BLEEDS.

FATHER MCAVOY (O.S.)  
The Lord be with you.

FATHER LUKASHENKO (O.S.)  
And also with you.

Silas takes one of his jaggedly SHARP FINGERS and CARVES one DEEP LINE down the left side of Miles' face.

Miles screams as it happens, the blood pooling around his left eye.

SILAS  
As above. So below.

INT. SILAS' BEDROOM - REAL WORLD

A SCRATCH adorns Silas' face in the exact same place where Miles has just been scratched. Beads of BLEEDING SWEAT formulate over his forehead.

His bed TREMORS as the two Priests make SIGNS OF THE CROSS in front of themselves.

Everyone still exhales STEAM out to the frozen room.

FATHER MCAVOY  
I cast you out unclean spirit,  
along with every Satanic power of  
the enemy, every specter from Hell  
and all of your fell companions.

FATHER LUKASHENKO  
Thanks be to God.

Silas' begins to convulse violently in his bed, his body being thrown about like a rag doll by an invisible bully.

The only things that keep him from being jerked from the bed completely are the BINDINGS at his wrists.

LOUD SLAMS emanate from the rooms walls.

A ROCKING HORSE in the corner of the room eagerly rocks back-and-forth.

FATHER MCAVOY

Hearken, therefore, and tremble in  
fear, Satan, you enemy of faith,  
you foe of the human race, you  
begetter of death, seducer of men,  
betrayers of the nations...

More deeper unearthly sounds emanate from Silas and his  
convulsions, somehow intensify.

Lukashenko jumps on top of the boy, using all of his strength  
to pin him down. He can hardly do it.

FATHER MCAVOY (CONT'D)

...instigator of envy, font of  
avarice, fomenter of discord,  
author of pain and sorrow.

Lukashenko tries to hold his CRUCIFIX to Silas' head.

FATHER LUKASHENKO

(struggles)

Father. I don't know how much  
longer I can --

Suddenly, the TIE that binds Silas' LEFT WRIST rips of its  
own accord.

Silas immediately grabs the CRUCIFIX from Lukashenko's hand.

SILAS/DEMON

You have no power where the swine  
lay in heat.

The boy then BELTS Lukashenko away with an unnatural force,  
sending the Priest crashing into the wall behind him.

Silas looks to McAvoy as he takes the crucifix and GOUGES it  
into his face, CARVING a SECOND LINE down its right side.

He laughs tauntingly as his BLOOD spills.

INT. DARK MESS HALL - QUARANTINE CAMP - MILES' WORLD

As Miles cries from the pain, Silas finishes carving a SECOND  
deep LINE down the right side of Miles' face.

ICE had CRUSTED OVER on the first wound, almost preserving  
it.

FATHER MCAVOY (O.S.)

Depart then, transgressor! Depart  
seducer, full of lies and cunning,  
ancient serpent, persecutor of the  
innocent...

Silas is scared. He grabs Miles by his shirt collar and leans in to him.

SILAS  
His are lies.

Through Silas' eyes, Miles can see Father McAvoy as he aggressively LEANS IN --

FATHER MCAVOY (O.S.)  
Give place, abominable creature.  
Give way to Christ who has already  
laid waste your kingdom, bound you  
prisoner and plundered your  
weapons.

LUKASHENKO (O.S.)  
He has cast you forth into the  
outer darkness, where everlasting  
ruin awaits you and your abettors.

These words cause Silas to react in fear, and he JUMPS into Miles, causing the chair to FALL and break.

Miles lands flat on his back, still chained, with Silas standing on top of him in a feral state.

FATHER MCAVOY (O.S.)  
You are guilty before the almighty  
God, before his son Jesus Christ.

SILAS  
(fearful)  
No! He's failed!

FATHER MCAVOY (O.S.)  
You are guilty before the whole  
human race to whom you proffered by  
your enticements the poison cup of  
death.

Silas shouts violently into Miles' face

SILAS  
(shouting)  
NO! HIS WORLD WILL DIE!

Suddenly Miles is stricken and MCAVOY'S WORDS BECOME HIS OWN. He SHOUTS these words out, back to Silas' face, as if he were a lone instrument being played by some authoritative force.

FATHER MCAVOY (O.S.)  
Therefore, I adjure you profligate  
dragon --

MILES

-- I adjure you, profligate dragon  
in the name of the spotless Lamb  
who has trodden down the asp and  
the basilisk...

Silas reacts in FULL FLEDGED-FEAR and, in what could only be described as defense against these words, he darts down, BITING, CHEWING and CLAWING at Miles' head, rabidly.

Miles fights on, in pain, despite the attack.

MILES (CONT'D)

...who has overcome the lion and  
the dragon, to depart from this  
boy...

Silas then takes a CHUNK OF FLESH from Miles' face and spits it out to the frozen room.

MILES (CONT'D)

Ahhh -- to depart from this Church  
of God. Tremble and flee unclean  
spirit, for the Lord God commands  
you!

FATHER LUKASHENKO (O.S.)

The cherubim's and seraphim's  
praise commands you! The word made  
flesh commands you!

SILAS

STOP IT!

Miles then SHOUTS out with all of his power.

MILES

I COMMAND YOU!

INT. SILAS' BEDROOM - REAL WORLD

Father McAvoy aggressively hovers over Silas.

On the other side of the bed, Father Lukashenko quickly unbinds Silas' right hand, utilizing all of his strength to form the boy's arms into the shape of a cross.

FATHER MCAVOY

Tell me your name, demon!

SILAS/DEMON

He was born of a rotten cunt!

FATHER MCAVOY  
Your deceit will not be heard, nor  
your Mark empowered. You will tell  
me your name!

SILAS/DEMON  
The pig's mother is a whore!

Successful, Lukashenko now ties the bindings in the place  
where Silas' arms join together, locking them into the cross.

SILAS/DEMON (CONT'D)  
She is full of cum and grief --

FATHER MCAVOY  
-- Demon enough --

SILAS/DEMON  
-- Refuse and resentment --

FATHER MCAVOY  
-- I SAID ENOUGH!

McAvoy hits Silas with another aggressive dose of HOLY WATER.

FATHER MCAVOY (CONT'D)  
(aggressive)  
NOW TELL ME YOUR NAME!

At this moment, Silas' body immediately jerks up to sit and  
scream. He enunciates a word with the chaotic frequency of a  
fighter plane coming in for a crash landing.

Another voice simultaneously echoes it from somewhere beyond.

SILAS/DEMON	SILAS (O.S.)
Asmodeus!	Asmodeus!

INT. DARK MESS HALL - QUARANTINE CAMP - MILES' WORLD

Silas looks up and freezes, his mouth removed from Miles'  
gnawed head. The boy begins to violently shake and heave.  
This leads to a definitive CHOKE.

FATHER MCAVOY (O.S.)  
I cast you out, demon.

He looks down at Miles, and they both find themselves FROZEN  
IN TIME. Suddenly, Silas begins to slowly REGURGITATE Miles'  
CRIMSON ROSARY.

FATHER MCAVOY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Be gone with your filthy plague.

Frozen, they cannot remove their eyes from each other and  
Miles' MOUTH is forced open by an invisible force.



Silas' jaw violently CRACKS as his mouth opens even wider, allowing the rosary more room to escape.

FATHER MCAVOY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Return your insolent Mark back to  
the hellfires from whence it came.

The rosary continues to slowly drop from Silas' mouth into Miles' mouth. Miles begins to choke upon its entry.

As Miles fully ingests the rosary, he finds himself stronger, coming free of the shackles. Silas, in turn, becomes weaker. He squeals painfully as his mouth stays broken in place.

He tries to back off of Miles, but Miles suddenly surges at the demonic boy and overpowers him, flipping him over.

INT. SILAS' BEDROOM - REAL WORLD

McAvoy is right on top of Silas as he and Lukashenko use their weight to hold the convulsing boy down.

FATHER MCAVOY  
I CAST YOU OUT, ASMODEUS!

Silas' eyes open in wide fear. He stares up at McAvoy.

INT. DARK MESS HALL - QUARANTINE CAMP - MILES' WORLD

Silas stares up at Miles' face, with the same fear.

MILES  
I know you now.

Miles fires a BULLET from Vivian's gun into Silas' HEART.

The boy collapses dead. His HEART stops beating and Miles watches as the view of the real world disappears from Silas' dying eyes.

Catching his breath, Miles begins to CRY. He embraces the dead boy only to collapse shortly after.

INT. SILAS' BEDROOM - REAL WORLD

Silas CRIES, free from the demon's grip. The wounds he had suffered at the hand of his oppression, still very real.

Father McAvoy holds the boy to steady him.

FATHER MCAVOY  
You're going to be okay, son.  
You're going to be okay.

FATHER LUKASHENKO  
 (to himself)  
 Praise be to the almighty father.  
 Praise be to the risen son. Amen.

Silas buries his crying face into McAvoy's burly arm. His cries are not born of pain, but of deliverance.

FATHER MCAVOY  
 Let it out son. You're safe now.

Lukashenko moves toward McAvoy in the utmost admiration.

FATHER LUKASHENKO  
 Thank you Father! I don't know if I would have been able to remain so steadfast if not for you.

FATHER MCAVOY  
 It's quite alright my son. One day, God knows you most certainly shall.

Lukashenko wipes the tears forming in his eye.

FATHER LUKASHENKO  
 God knows I'll try.

McAvoy smiles at the younger Priest.

FATHER MCAVOY  
 I suppose you can go inform the boy's parents.

FATHER LUKASHENKO  
 Of course, Father.

Lukashenko opens the door to the room. He speaks to SILAS' PARENTS who stand obscured just beyond the door.

FATHER LUKASHENKO (CONT'D)  
 You can come in now.

At this moment, VIVIAN and EMERSON STANHOPE come rushing in.

VIVIAN  
 Silas!

Silas looks up from McAvoy's embrace.

SILAS  
 Mommy! Daddy!

Vivian and Emerson embrace Silas and they all join as a family within their tears and happiness.

VIVIAN  
I'm so sorry baby, etc.

EMERSON  
I love you so much my son,  
etc.

McAvoy decides this is the time to leave the family to themselves. As he moves toward the door, he thinks he hears a potentially dark voice behind him.

VOICE (O.S.)  
Thank you, Father.

He drops his smile and turns to glance back to the family who still stay huddled in their embrace.

He catches the ROCKING HORSE in the corner of the room right as it STOPS ROCKING, almost like it had been caught.

McAvoy also notices that Silas stares distantly at this rocking horse. He is no longer crying. As a matter of fact, the boy is completely devoid of emotion.

His Mother and Father still hold on to him tightly.

What McAvoy does not notice is that behind the rocking horse is a BOOK SHELF, filled with a COLLECTION of well-worn BOOKS, all titled: *MILES THORNE MYSTERIES*.

VIVIAN  
(to Silas)  
I love you so much, honey! So much.

All at once, Silas shoots a quick, dark glare at McAvoy, who stares back, studying the boy's eyes.

VIVIAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
No matter what, you know my heart.

Silas then breaks the stare and returns his gaze back to the stilled rocking horse.

SILAS  
I love you too, mommy.

McAvoy watches the boy for just one more beat. He decides to let it go for now.

He leaves the room, marking himself in the name of the father, son and holy spirit.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END.

INT. APARTMENT 9 - TENEMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

A NEW DETECTIVE THORNE (50s) kneels in the hovel, studying The Corpse who stands in front of him, as well as the BRIEFCASE that stands immovable on the floor.

MILES (O.S.)  
Now be a sport.

Training the gun on the New Detective is MILES. He stands, fully INFECTED by the Mark. THREE LINES carve his face.

The new Thorne reluctantly moves to the briefcase and fixes the open cuff around his LEFT WRIST. He looks up at Miles.

MILES (CONT'D)  
Mmm hmm.

When the cold metal of the cuff clasps shut, a sudden and intensely piercing PAIN shoots through Thorne's chest.

He collapses to his knees and clutches at his heart.

THORNE  
Ahh!

Miles watches, waiting for the new Thorne's pain to subside.

It does and Thorne slowly heaves, catching his breath.

MILES  
And Mr. Thorne?

Thorne looks up to find Miles face-to-face with him.

MILES (CONT'D)  
You really need to consider who you trust from here on out.

THORNE  
And why's that?

Miles puts the gun to his head and locks eyes with Thorne.

MILES  
Because I know you now.

THORNE  
NO!

Miles pulls the trigger and his DECAYING GREY MATTER AND BLOOD spray all across the floor and wall.

SMASH TO BLACK.