

Hex - Orientation

written by

Anthony Cloutier

457 Old Portland Rd. Freedom, NH 03836
Phone:(603)244-8490
E-mail: anthony@teamefs.com

Season 1, Episode 1 - "Orientation"
COLD OPEN

INT. CAMPUS UNION BUILDING - NIGHT

A warm hum of conversation and coffee machines. Student groups are scattered on couches and at tables. Posters for club fairs, film nights, and fraternity/ sorority rushes decorate the walls.

Out of place, a young woman(24) carrying a baby with a knitted cap stops in front of two young women, athletes. She looks them over and then walks off.

SARA (18, curious, a little skeptical) sits cross-legged on a couch, a steaming mug in hand. Across from her is EMMA (19, effortlessly cool, athletic), dressed in a Maplewood Field Hockey sweatshirt.

SARA

Ugh. First class is in only two days? And I have to start with Secrets and Shadows: Intro to the Occult. Only thing left that fit my schedule. Humanities requirement.

EMMA

(chuckling)

Longfellow? You lucked out. He's a legend. Smart, intense... kinda hot, in a brooding "I probably talk dirty in Latin" way.

SARA

(skeptical)

Please tell me he doesn't wear a cape or something.

EMMA

No, but he does have a black cat. Name's Jinx. Follows him around campus like a familiar or whatever.

SARA

You're messing with me.

EMMA

Dead serious. The cat even has a tiny bell collar. Totally adorable. Kind of obsessed, not gonna lie.

Sara laughs despite herself, intrigued.

SARA
Okay... now I'm curious.

EMMA
Told you. Just don't fall under his
spell.

They both grin. Emma checks her phone.

EMMA (CONT'D)
I gotta crash—double practice
tomorrow. You good?

SARA
Yeah, I'll head back in a sec. My
phone's almost dead.

Emma leaves. Sara gathers her things and heads out.

EXT. CAMPUS PATH - NIGHT

Sara walks alone through the dimly lit quad. Old stone
buildings loom. Trees rustle in the breeze.

She hears a faint whispering on the wind. She glances back.
No one there.

Footsteps—soft, not hers—echo behind her.

She walks faster.

A shadow flickers across a lamppost. Sara stops.

SARA
Hello?

Silence.

She takes out her phone—the battery is dead. Typical.

She turns down a narrower path, a shortcut to her dorm.

A shape moves behind her. Fast.

SARA (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
Okay, not funny—

A rush of wind. The lights overhead flicker and go out.

She runs. Her breath ragged. Heart pounding.

Behind her—SOMETHING MOVES.
Too fast. Too close.

She SCREAMS.

Smash to BLACK.

OPENING CREDITS BEGIN. MUSIC SWELLS.

INT. DEAN WALTER TRUMBULL'S OFFICE - MAPLEWOOD COLLEGE -
MORNING

A cathedral of wood and shadow. Dark oak panels. Tall shelves stacked with leather-bound volumes. A massive oil painting of a grim-faced founder presides over the room. A fire flickers faintly in the hearth—unseasonal, unnecessary, theatrical.

DR. MARIBETH SPENCER (29) stands near a sideboard, delicate china cup in hand. Sharp-eyed and composed, she takes in the room with subtle curiosity.

DEAN TRUMBULL (60s) looms behind a desk big enough to bury secrets under. He wears authority like a second skin—tailored, polished, but not without a scent of rot.

TRUMBULL

And so, Dr. Spencer, welcome to
Maplewood. You come to us highly
recommended. Impressive
credentials. Columbia. Fieldwork in
Tunisia, yes?

MARIBETH

(sits, relaxed but alert)
Thank you, Dean Trumbull. And sorry
no—southern Iraq, two years from
Baghdad to Basra. I was studying
group hallucinations during the
war. Fascinating overlap of
folklore, stress disorders, and
collective belief. There are
stories from modern day going all
the way back to the time of
Gilgamesh.

TRUMBULL

(nods stiffly)
Yes, well. The cradle of
civilization. Let's hope your
tenure here proves... less
eventful.

A pause. Trumbull smiles, thin and cold.

TRUMBULL (CONT'D)
Replacing Professor Crowley won't
be easy, I suppose. He had his...
fans.

MARIBETH
He has a brilliant mind. I've never
met him, but his work is
groundbreaking. It's tragic what
happened. No word from the
authorities?

TRUMBULL
(leans back)
None worth printing. Wandering
scholars are prone to disappear.
Occupational hazard. The Middle
East is a very dangerous place for
Americans these days. I can
remember, when I was a young grad
student myself and...

Maribeth looks out the window. The view reveals the dewy
morning quad. A man jogs past in sweats, moving with a quiet
grace. Trotting behind him is a sleek black cat with a tiny
silver bell.

MARIBETH
(smiling, curious)
Excuse me. I'm sorry, but is that-?
That cat is running with that
gentleman.

TRUMBULL
(doesn't look)
Ah. Yes. That would be Professor
Longfellow and his eternal shadow,
Jinx.
(Sneers)

Maribeth turns from the window, intrigued.

MARIBETH
Professor Noah Longfellow? I've
read his work—Perception and Power:
Cultural Memory in Demonological
Texts. That paper caused a stir.

TRUMBULL
(smirking)
Yes. The media loved that one.
(MORE)

TRUMBULL (CONT'D)
 I believe it even went viral—isn't
 that the term? I do so love
 receiving complaint letters from the
 Papacy.

He sips his tea, eyes glittering.

TRUMBULL (CONT'D)
 Of course, if the Longfellows
 hadn't founded this college in 128
 years ago.
 —and if his mother weren't seated
 comfortably on our Board of Regents
 —I might have sent the good
 professor packing long ago.

MARIBETH
 (carefully)
 He's considered one of the foremost
 minds in Occult Studies.

TRUMBULL
 And I am considered a patient man.

A beat.

TRUMBULL (CONT'D)
 You'll find, Dr. Spencer, that we
 tolerate many eccentricities here.
 Up to a point.

Maribeth smiles politely, sensing the edge beneath the
 civility.

MARIBETH
 I'll keep that in mind.

A KNOCK at the heavy wooden door.

TRUMBULL
 Come.

The SECRETARY steps in quietly and leans to whisper in
 Trumbull's ear.

SECRETARY
 Detective Rand is here to see
 you... about last night's incident.

Trumbull's smile returns—tight, rehearsed.

TRUMBULL
 Ah. Pardon me, Dr. Spencer. College
 business. You'll forgive me.

He rises with a performative gesture of courtesy.

MARIBETH

Of course. I can find my way to
Longfellow Hall.

TRUMBULL

(mildly amused)

Yes... I'm sure you can.

She gives a nod and exits gracefully, leaving the door
slightly ajar behind her.

A moment later, DETECTIVE OLIVIA "LIV" RAND (35) strides in.
Crisp coat, unshakable presence, the scent of coffee and
sleepless nights clinging to her like a badge.

LIV

(sarcastic, dry)

Good morning, Walter. Can we go a
month without you being called to
this campus? We have a real
problem.

(She tosses a folder on his desk)

TRUMBULL

(sighs, without surprise)

Of course we do.

INT. LONGFELLOW HALL - MARIBETH'S OFFICE - MORNING

A modest but charming office, still half in boxes. Shelves
line the walls, and an old poster of RASPUTIN THE MAD MONK is
already pinned up. MARIBETH SPENCER (29), sharp-eyed and
casually dressed, unpacks a stack of books.

A soft KNOCK at the door.

She turns to see NOAH LONGFELLOW (35) - freshly showered, his
dark hair damp, an Iron Maiden T-shirt, and worn jeans. At
his side is JINX, a sleek black cat with intense, watchful
eyes.

NOAH

Dr. Spencer? You must be the new
blood.

MARIBETH

And you must be Professor
Longfellow - the man with the
feline sidekick.

Jinx hops onto a nearby chair and, unusually, nudges Maribeth's hand for a pet.

NOAH
Traitor. He's usually not this forward.

MARIBETH (PETTING HIM)
Maybe he senses I'm a cat person.

NOAH
Or he's making sure you're not possessed. Standard onboarding procedure.

She laughs. He gestures to her Rasputin poster.

NOAH (CONT'D)
Rasputin, huh? You know he never actually died the first time.

MARIBETH
Or the second, if you believe the autopsy.
You don't strike me as a Romanov sympathizer.

NOAH
More like an admirer of improbable survival.

MARIBETH
He was a narcissist with delusions of messianic purpose.

NOAH
And yet he still inspires conspiracy theories a century later. That's influence.

MARIBETH
Or unresolved trauma on a national scale.

They exchange a smile — this is fun for both of them.

NOAH
Coffee? Tour? I promise I won't mansplain the ley lines on campus... unless you ask.

MARIBETH

Deal. As long as you explain why
your cat acts like he understands
English.

Noah shrugs, as Jinx hops down and trots to the door — like
he knows the way.

NOAH

Don't all cats?

They exit together, Jinx in the lead.

INT. LONGFELLOW HALL - MAIN ENTRYWAY - MORNING

Noah and Maribeth step into the grand, wood-paneled
hallway. Sunlight filters through stained glass windows,
casting colorful patterns on the floor. A large, sepia-toned
photograph in an ornate frame hangs prominently on the wall.

MARIBETH

(stopping abruptly)

Wait... is that Rasputin?

She approaches the photograph, eyes wide.

NOAH

(smiling)

The one and only. He was a
contemporary of my great-
grandfather, Edmund Longfellow—the
Timber Titan. This was from the
consecration ceremony. Dignitaries
came from around the world.

MARIBETH

Did Edmund Longfellow found this
college? I've seen his name on
several museums, libraries, and
theaters, I think there's even a
hospital. I had no idea he built a
school.

NOAH

I'm told this was his pride and
joy. Though he was also proud of
being a notorious union buster,
deforester, and a shareholder in
the Pinkerton Detective Agency.

MARIBETH

A complicated man, indeed.

NOAH
That's putting it mildly.

He gestures to other figures in the photograph.

NOAH (CONT'D)
If you look closely, you can also
see Aleister Crowley, H.P.
Lovecraft, Robert E.
Howard, MacGregor Mathers, Arthur
Waite—the creator of the Tarot
cards—and President McKinley.

MARIBETH
An impressive assembly.

She points to a banner held by the men in the photo.

MARIBETH (CONT'D)
(reading)
“Lux Aeternum?” Sorry, I don't
speak Latin.

NOAH
No one really does anymore.

He smiles wryly.

NOAH (CONT'D)
(continuing)
But it translates to “The Eternal
Light.” I think they were inspired
by Yale.

They share a thoughtful glance, the weight of history
pressing in around them.

LIV (O.S.)
There you are. Glad I caught you!

Noah and Maribeth jump slightly. Liv strides in, crisp and
confident in a blazer and jeans, flashing her badge almost
like an afterthought.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. LONGFELLOW HALL - MAIN ENTRYWAY - MORNING

NOAH

(startled, but amused)

Liv! We were just heading out on a campus tour.

LIV

Well, I need you to take a detour. A student—Sara Myers, Freshman age 18—was attacked by someone... or something. I need your eyes on this one.

MARIBETH

(looking between them, confused)

Wait, I'm sorry. What exactly do you mean, "your eyes"?

NOAH

It's fine. I consult for the police sometimes. Liv's an old friend. We go way back.

He steps slightly aside, gesturing between them.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Maribeth Spence, meet Detective Olivia Rand. Liv, this is Dr. Spencer, our new Occult Studies professor.

They shake hands. There's an almost imperceptible tension—polite, but cool.

LIV

(half-smiling)

Welcome to Maplewood.

MARIBETH

Thanks. It's... been eventful already.

NOAH

(to Jinx, casually)

Go home, buddy. I'll catch up later.

The cat gives a "meow" and trots down the hall like he understood perfectly.

NOAH (CONT'D)
(to Maribeth)
Raincheck on the tour? Maybe
dinner?

MARIBETH
I've actually got plans tonight.
But yeah... raincheck.

She gives him a small smile—genuine, but guarded.

LIV
(heading toward the door)
You coming, Professor?

NOAH
Always.

He follows her out, leaving Maribeth standing by the
photograph, the words Lux Aeternum still echoing in her mind.

INT. MAPLEWOOD COLLEGE - CHAPEL - MORNING

The chapel is dim, hushed. Stained glass windows spill
colored light across the polished floor, disrupted by dark
blood smeared in precise, swirling patterns. The air is
still.

NOAH crouches near the markings. LIV RAND stands behind him,
arms folded, trying to break the tension with her usual sass.

LIV
She's pretty, your new colleague.
(grins)
Smart and pretty. You're screwed.

NOAH
(focused, unfazed)
You're bleeding sarcasm into a
crime scene, Liv.

LIV
(shrugs)
She's definitely your type. How
much time do you think she spends
on the Stairmaster? I'm thinking an
hour a day. That or she doesn't
eat. Which is good for you. I don't
think you've ever bought me dinner.

NOAH
Not true. Freshman year you left
your purse in Angie's room. I paid
for lo mein and crab rangoons.

Liv crouches next to him.

LIV
 You're calling sharing Chinese food
 with me fifteen years ago dinner?
 (nods toward the markings)
 What do you see?

NOAH
 (tracing with his eyes,
 not touching)
 Cuneiform. Or something like it.
 Stylized. Ritualistic.
 Almost... Babylonian. But it's not
 written by someone fluent—it's a
 mimicry.

LIV exhales slowly, watching Noah work.

LIV
 The scene's clean. No prints except
 the victim's. Nothing on door
 handles, pews, even the light
 switches. Like the perp floated in
 and out.

NOAH
 (half to himself)
 Or knew what not to touch.

Footsteps echo from the back. RABBI BEN LEVY enters, holding
 his kippah against the wind from the open door. He halts as
 he sees the blood, his eyes tightening.

BEN
 (a soft prayer)
 Baruch dayan ha'emet...

NOAH
 Ben. Over here.

BEN
 What happened?

LIV
 Sara Myers. Freshman. No known
 enemies, no reason to be here last
 night. She's in a coma. ICU.
 Parents are on their way from
 Connecticut—I need to meet them at
 the hospital in half an hour.

BEN
(steps carefully toward
the symbols)
God have mercy. This—
(leans in)
These aren't random. The flow, the
loops... they're ceremonial.

NOAH
(surprised)
You recognize it?

BEN
Some of it. I saw something like
this in Prague, in an old
Kabbalistic archive.
(beat)
The symbols are cuneiform-inspired,
but the order? It's... reversed.
Intentionally corrupted. Maybe?
It's hard to tell.

NOAH
A perversion or the author didn't
know the difference.

BEN
Or a summoning.

Noah takes a picture with his phone. Liv watches them,
skeptical but intrigued.

LIV
(to Noah)
You really keep rabbis on speed
dial for this kind of thing?

NOAH
Just the brilliant ones.

LIV
(to Ben)
No offense.

BEN
(smiles gently)
None taken. I've been called worse
for better reasons.

She nods and starts heading out.

LIV

Alright. I've got to face the
parents. Try not to summon anything
while I'm gone.

NOAH

No promises.

LIV

And I want dinner. With plates and
metal utensils.

Noah is engrossed and ignores her.

Liv exits, tension lingering in the air like incense smoke.
Ben and Noah remain, gazing at the bloodwork.

BEN

Friend of yours?

NOAH

You could say that. We grew up
together. Her parents worked for
mine, so they lived at the estate.

Snapping another photo with his phone

NOAH (CONT'D)

Then, they got killed in an
accident, and my father insisted
she stay.

BEN

My God. How old were you?

NOAH

Ten.

BEN

(sympathetically)

So your mother raised the two of
you?

NOAH

(chuckles)

Hardly. My mother isn't what you'd
call the domestic type. She's
always running between one event or
another. As a kid, I rarely saw my
parents.

BEN

(Awkwardly looking to
change the subject)

(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)
Have you spoken with the new
professor?

NOAH
Maribeth Spencer? Behavioral Psych,
myth specialization? Yeah, we met
this morning.
(another photo)
She's sharp. Reminds me of someone.

BEN
Your mother?

NOAH
(dryly)
God, I hope not.

BEN
(smiling)
Crowley will love her when he gets
back.

NOAH
Still no word?

BEN
No. Not since Cairo.

NOAH
You think it's connected to what he
was looking for?

BEN
I think... the last thing he told
me was that the Grimoire of
Solon was real.
That he was close.

NOAH
(quietly)
And if he found it?

BEN
Then God help us all.

INT. UNIVERSITY LIBRARY - DAY

The library is quiet. MARIBETH enters, her eyes wide with wonder as she takes in the towering bookshelves. Classes start tomorrow, but for now, it's a sanctuary of silence.

She wanders into the basement floor. Hidden study nooks are everywhere.

A gleam of metal catches her eye—a steel door at the far end of the library. It's clean, modern, and clearly out of place among the oak and parchment.

She approaches. A small keypad with a key-card scanner beeps when she tries the handle—locked.

LILY (O.S.)
Can I help you?

MARIBETH turns to see a stern-looking Asian woman in her 40s, dressed in a tailored blazer, a satchel slung over her shoulder. Sharp eyes.

LILY (CONT'D)
That door is off-limits. Who are you and why are you trying to get into the Under Library?

MARIBETH
I'm Maribeth Spencer. I'm starting tomorrow—Occult Studies. I wasn't trying to break in. I was just... curious.

The woman's suspicion doesn't fade.

LILY
Curiosity gets people hurt. That section is for authorized personnel only.

TRUMBULL (O.S.)
Ah, Professor Spencer! I see you've already met Professor Li Chan.

They both turn as TRUMBULL, strides toward them. He speaks flawless Mandarin as he greets the woman.

TRUMBULL (CONT'D)
Nǐ hǎo, wǒ zūnjīng de tóngshì
Jiàoshòu Li Chan, you're always so diligent.

LI CHAN visibly bristles at the use of her complete title.

LI CHAN
(Off-guard to Trumbull)
Your Mandarin is impressive.

TRUMBULL
(Smiling menacingly)
You'll find I'm full of surprises.

LI CHAN

(To Maribeth)

You may call me Lily, Professor Spencer. I'm the curator for the university museum. The Under Library is part of our conservation area—repairs, archival prep, that sort of thing.

MARIBETH

Under Library?

TRUMBULL

It's quite the place. Come, I'll show you.

He pulls out his own key card and swipes it. The steel door unlocks with a heavy click.

LI CHAN

You have access?

TRUMBULL

Of course I do. Perks of being the Dean.

LI CHAN says nothing, but her expression speaks volumes.

INT. UNDER LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

The door opens into a cool, dimly lit chamber filled with sealed cases, shelves of leather-bound tomes, and ancient relics preserved in glass. A maze of shadow and memory.

Waiting by a desk is JASPER, an elderly Black man, his exact age indeterminable. He wears a perfectly pressed vest and a bowtie, and moves with a gentle grace.

JASPER

Ah, Professor Spencer. Welcome.
I've read your CV. Impressive work
on the Sumerian dream tablets.

MARIBETH is taken aback—flattered.

MARIBETH

Thank you... and you are?

JASPER

Jasper. Under Librarian. If you
need a volume from the stacks, just
search the terminal at the counter.
I'll fetch it for you.

He nods politely at LI CHAN.

JASPER (CONT'D)
Good to see you back, Lily.

TRUMBULL clears his throat, trying to insert himself.

TRUMBULL
Well, I'll leave you in their
capable hands, then. Be careful not
to break anything expensive.

He chuckles, clearly aiming for humor. JASPER says nothing—
doesn't even look at him.

TRUMBULL stiffens, mutters something inaudible, and exits
quickly.

JASPER
(to Maribeth, smiling)
You'll like it here. The books
remember more than most people ever
learn.

INT. MARIBETH'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

Stacks of books still half-unpacked. A small desk lamp glows
against the gathering twilight. MARIBETH arranges a few old
texts on a shelf, her movements precise. She takes a deep
breath and exhales slowly.

Her phone vibrates. She checks the screen, then answers.

MARIBETH
(into phone)
Yes. I'm in.

A pause. She listens, her expression neutral but focused.

MARIBETH (CONT'D)
No, I don't think it's here. Not
the grimoire itself. But there are
signs—breadcrumbs. Someone hid the
trail well.

She crosses to the desk and opens a folder filled with
photocopied pages, annotated in red ink. Some are in Latin.
One has a crude map sketched in the margins.

MARIBETH (CONT'D)
If Crowley was right, the
references in his notes might point
to where it actually is. But I need
more time.

She glances at the clock.

MARIBETH (CONT'D)
I know. I have dinner with her
tonight. If she knows anything,
I'll draw it out of her.

Beat.

MARIBETH (CONT'D)
He doesn't trust easily. Neither do
I. God, he's as arrogant as
advertised.

Her tone sharpens slightly.

MARIBETH (CONT'D)
Don't rush me. If we misstep, we
lose everything. I'll find it—but I
won't be sloppy.

She listens again, frowning.

MARIBETH (CONT'D)
Yeah. I'm aware of the
consequences.

She ends the call and stands still, her face unreadable.
After a beat, she moves to a drawer and pulls out a slim
black notebook. She opens it, flips past coded entries, then
begins writing.

MARIBETH (CONT'D)
(softly, to herself)
Just don't make me choose.

Jinx quickly crosses in front of her door, unseen by
Maribeth.

She closes the book, slips it into her coat pocket, and
extinguishes the lamp.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. MENS LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Steam lingers in the air. The echo of laughter fades as the last of the team exits. JOEY TURNER, a massive linebacker with a towel slung around his neck, finishes his shower.

PLAYER #1 (O.S.)
You good, Turner?

JOEY
Yeah, I'll catch up. Go ahead.

PLAYER #2 (O.S.)
You sure?

JOEY
I'm not afraid of ghosts. Go. I'll see you at the party.

The heavy door swings shut behind them with a hollow THUD. Silence returns.

Joey dries off and begins dressing. The fluorescent lights flicker once—then cut out completely. A distant light down the hall is all we have.

JOEY (CONT'D)
Real funny, guys. I'm gonna crush you in drills tomorrow, D'Angellis.

He grabs his phone, but the screen stays black. Dead.

Joey moves cautiously through the dark, bare feet slapping against tile. He fumbles toward the wall.

JOEY (CONT'D)
Okay... You got me. Turn it back on.

Movement. A wet drag. Something is not right. Distant murmured whispers.

JOEY (CONT'D)
(Hesitantly)
Coach? That you?

No answer.

A locker creaks open somewhere behind him.

Joey whirls.

JOEY (CONT'D)
(Fearful now)
Who's there?

Breath catches in his throat. The air feels heavier.
Oppressive. Like it's pressing in from all sides.

Suddenly—

A LOW GROWL.

Joey turns toward the sound, but something slams into him
from the dark. He's dragged off his feet, crashing into metal
lockers with a thunderous CLANG.

JOEY (CONT'D)
(SCREAMING)
No! Wait—AAGGHHHH!

Bones crack. A wet, meaty snap. The scream cuts short.

SMASH TO BLACK.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. FOOTBALL LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

The hum of overhead halogens buzzes like static. The air is thick with disinfectant, blood, and steam.

CRIME SCENE TAPE slices the room in half. FORENSICS move like ghosts, photographing, bagging, logging. A BODY BAG zips closed with a final, grim note.

LIV stands near the center. Still. Watchful. She keeps her hands clenched behind her back to stop them from shaking.

Beyond the tape, NOAH waits, composed. His tweed coat is half-buttoned. He doesn't move until she lifts a hand.

LIV

Come on. You're already here.

Noah steps in. He doesn't look at the body or the gurney. He walks slowly, eyes sweeping the floor, the walls, the ceilings. A predator tracking patterns.

Then he stops.

NOAH

(quietly)

There.

Near a row of lockers — blood, streaked and patterned in precise cuneiform glyphs, smeared like someone used their fingers... or claws.

He kneels. Unhurried. His breath fogs slightly as he gets closer to the floor.

LIV

Joey Taylor, Senior. Two of his teammates said Joey was the last one out of the showers. They waited outside. He told them to go, but they heard him scream. When they came back in, it was already over.

(beat)

It happened fast. No one saw the perpetrator flee.

Noah doesn't respond. He studies the symbols, brow furrowing slightly. His fingers hover just above the blood, mapping it mentally. Then he takes out his phone and snaps several photos. One. Then another. And another.

LIV (CONT'D)
You're not going to ask what
happened? Ask about the witnesses?

NOAH
I already know.

He stands. Calm. Thoughtful.

NOAH (CONT'D)
This isn't like the first girl,
Sara.
(gesturing)
The strokes are broader. More force
behind them. Less... deliberate.

LIV
You think he wrote that?

NOAH
No. He bled for it.
(beat)
Someone — or something — used him
as ink.

Liv looks away for a moment, jaw tight.

LIV
His spine was broken. Rotated
backward. Like someone... twisted him
from the base and kept turning.

NOAH
(examining blood spatter)
No defensive wounds?

LIV
Nothing. And no signs of a weapon.

NOAH
(satisfied)
Good. That fits.

LIV
Fits what, Noah?

He doesn't answer. Just walks toward the lockers again. Snaps
another photo. Zooms. Adjusts focus. His voice is almost
casual.

NOAH
This is Sumerian, but not just
that.

(MORE)

NOAH (CONT'D)

It's early cultist — pre-Ziur —
before they merged the death rites.

LIV

You're doing that thing again.
Where you talk like this isn't a
person who died. Like it's a puzzle
box.

NOAH

That's precisely what it is.

LIV

He was twenty-two.

NOAH

(seamless)

Then he had strong bones.

(off her glare)

Liv — I'm not here for grief. I'm
here because something left a
message written in a dead language
with the blood of a college
linebacker. You want me to care
about Joey Taylor? I care about
what did this to him.

He pulls out a small notebook, jotting down a translation.
His handwriting is neat, almost mechanical.

NOAH (CONT'D)

If I'm right... It's escalating. The
first symbols were passive — a
marking, saying "Hello, look at
me." This is active. A trigger.
It's angry... no, vengeful, and it
won't stop until we stop it. The
killer is also getting more
confident. He's not worried about
getting caught. He didn't rush like
he did with the girl.

Liv takes a step back, eyes narrowing.

LIV

Where are you going?

NOAH

Under Library. I need access to the
restricted archive. I'll call Ben.

LIV

You're not a cop, Noah. You don't just get to walk away from a murder scene and work on it on your own.

NOAH

I'm not walking away. I'm walking toward the next step.

He starts to go.

LIV

(sharply)

Noah. Bring me everything. No filters. No lectures. I want answers, not more riddles.

He pauses at the door. Looks back. Something in his eyes — not warmth, not cruelty. Just purpose.

NOAH

Then don't fall behind.

He leaves.

LIV is left standing beside the blood. Alone now, except for the echo of a scream no one heard in time.

CLOSE ON TILE — The glyphs flicker, almost imperceptibly, as if breathing.

INT. UNDER LIBRARY — RITUAL WING — NIGHT

A vast, dim hall beneath the old library. Smells of wax, dust, and old ink. Candle sconces. Stacks of forbidden texts.

BEN is already seated at an old table under a warm pool of light from a brass desk lamp, hunched over a stack of books.

NOAH enters, removing his coat. He's clearly wound tight.

Before he can speak, a voice slips from the shadows:

JASPER (O.S.)

You want Volume II. The one with the stitched spine.

JASPER emerges from between the shelves, arms full of ancient tomes.

NOAH

You're sleeping down here now?

JASPER

Who sleeps?

He slides the Codex of Akh'Enesh, Vol II onto the table like a blackjack dealer.

BEN

Got your text. And yes, it's definitely Sumerian. Or a Sumerian dialect. A rare one.

He turns the book around to show a page covered in glyphs. They match Noah's sketches.

BEN (CONT'D)

If only we knew an expert in Sumerian folklore...

NOAH

She just got here. It's her first day.

BEN

Who just got back from Iraq...

NOAH

No.

JASPER

Nothing says welcome to the department like a little apocalypse.

NOAH

(sighs)
Call her.

INT. UNDER LIBRARY - 30 MINUTES LATER

MARIBETH enters, still dressed from dinner in a stylish blouse and blazer, a little overdressed for demon-hunting. She clocks the scene.

MARIBETH

Okay, someone say "summoning glyphs" or did I just feel a disturbance in the force?

NOAH

Both.

She slides in between them, flips open the Codex, and immediately starts muttering Sumerian under her breath.

MARIBETH

Oh. These aren't just names.
They're verbs. Commands. "Tear."
"Bind." "Open."

BEN

What are they trying to open?

MARIBETH

A gateway. To Kur. The Sumerian
underworld. Closest translation is...
(beat)
Hell.

They all glance at each other.

NOAH

So this wasn't just a message. It
was ritual progression. Each attack
moves it forward.

JASPER

Three deaths. One more to complete
the set.

BEN

Any clue where?

MARIBETH

These coordinates... it could be the
science building. Maybe the
greenhouse? Or Longfellow Hall.
Depends how you interpret the axis
reference.

NOAH

If they're trying to let something
out, then... they screwed up. They
did it backwards.

Everyone looks at him.

NOAH (CONT'D)

They inverted the ritual. That
symbol — it's a binding sigil
flipped inside out. Instead of
opening a door out, it creates a
pull. A vortex.

MARIBETH

To drag something in?

NOAH

Exactly. It's not a release. It's a return. Someone—or something—is trying to shove a demon back where it came from.

(beat)

Or they're an amateur.

BEN

An amateur demon summoner? Some days I really hate the internet.

(beat)

Maybe we should keep this around. Just in case. Could be useful down the road.

NOAH

Yeah? Worth killing three more kids to finish the spell?

A long silence. Ben looks away.

BEN

I'll check the science building.

NOAH

I'll go to Longfellow.

Ben grabs his coat and flashlight.

MARIBETH

Wait. What if it's both?

NOAH

Then we're screwed.

They split up.

INT. UNDER LIBRARY - NIGHT

The sound of receding footsteps — Noah and Ben are gone. The heavy silence settles like dust.

JASPER stands near the main table, quietly reshelving several of the Codices. He hums a low, unfamiliar tune — haunting, almost like a Civil War tune.

MARIBETH watches him from her seat, still processing what they uncovered. After a moment, she stands, stretching, then glances deeper into the stacks.

MARIBETH

So... how off-limits is the rest of this place?

Jasper doesn't look up.

JASPER

That depends on how good you are at not dying.

She raises an eyebrow.

MARIBETH

Is that a "yes" or a "don't tempt fate"?

JASPER

Just a reminder. Curiosity is welcome. Recklessness... less so.

MARIBETH

(dry)

Cool. Super comforting.

She gives him a half-smile and wanders off into the shadows.

INT. UNDER LIBRARY - ADJACENT HALL - MOMENTS LATER

The light dims the deeper she goes. Maribeth walks slowly, reverently. She passes ancient shelves holding relics and locked cabinets with mirrored surfaces. Something whispers faintly – she freezes, but it was just the shifting of air.

A narrow archway opens into a hidden alcove – Lily's Workshop.

Inside: organized chaos. Glass domes, diagrams etched on translucent parchment, glowing stones suspended in fluid. A feather that moves despite no breeze.

She steps in, fascinated.

MARIBETH (CONT'D)

(whispers)

Lily, what are you?

She studies an open journal – drawings of artifacts and inscriptions with hand-written annotations. Then, her eyes lock on a small mirror framed in black iron. Her reflection doesn't quite mimic her movements. She flinches.

JASPER (O.S.)

Some of them still remember who they belonged to.

She jumps – JASPER is just behind her.

MARIBETH
Do you have to float like that?

JASPER
(Smiling)
It's in the job description.

He strolls past her, gently closing the journal and repositioning a sigil stone she nudged out of alignment.

MARIBETH
I didn't touch anything.

JASPER
Yet.

MARIBETH
(sincerely)
This stuff — they're replicas.
Right?

JASPER
(quiet pride)
Some. Most are waiting to be copied. That's Lily's gift. And her calling.

MARIBETH
Why fake them?

JASPER
Because the real ones are far too dangerous to be out in the world. You've seen that tonight.

He walks to a shelf and carefully picks up a goblet inscribed in cuneiform.

JASPER (CONT'D)
This one caused an entire monastery to vanish in 1622. Lily's version just makes bad wine taste better.

MARIBETH
How does she acquire them?

JASPER
We are a library and a museum. We borrow them and we have an excellent reputation for cleaning and repair. Collections around the world are happy to lend them to us. Lily copies them. Alters them.
(MORE)

JASPER (CONT'D)
Sends them back. No one's the wiser
— and the world is a little safer.

MARIBETH
And the real ones?

JASPER
Sealed. Deep in a hidden vault
within the Under Library.

MARIBETH
What if someone breaks in?

JASPER
They wouldn't make it past the
first door.

She turns to him, really looking at him now.

MARIBETH
Who are you?

Jasper tilts his head, amused.

JASPER
Head Librarian. Curator. Occasional
babysitter.

MARIBETH
That's not what I meant.

JASPER
Let's just say... I've seen a few
things.

MARIBETH
How old are you?

Jasper's eyes sparkle — ancient and amused.

JASPER
Old enough to remember when this
university only had one building.
And it was made of wood.

MARIBETH
(shocked)
That was, what... Late 1800s?

JASPER
Give or take.

He walks past her, hands clasped behind his back.

JASPER (CONT'D)
Time is... strange down here.

She watches him, unsettled and intrigued. He motions for them to leave.

MARIBETH
Professor Crowley – was he trying to put something back, too? Like Lily does?

Jasper stops.

JASPER
Not exactly. The Grimoire of Solon. He feared it had been found. He was trying to retrieve it before... others could.

MARIBETH
Others like who?

JASPER
There are groups of people in this world who lust after power. Men who will search for decades. Centuries if they have to. Very old. Very dangerous. They believe the Grimoire is more than a spellbook.

MARIBETH
What is it?

Jasper looks at her, the shadows catching in his eyes.

JASPER
A key.

MARIBETH
To what?

He steps closer, his voice soft – deadly serious.

JASPER
The end of the world.

Silence.

They arrive at the front desk.

MARIBETH
That's... not just folklore, is it?

JASPER

No.

MARIBETH

What happened to Crowley?

JASPER

We don't know. But if he failed...
someone may already be using the
key.

MARIBETH

Then why are we just sitting around
reading?

JASPER

Because if we move too quickly, we
may just open the door ourselves.

He holds her gaze — calm, steady — but behind it: fear,
tightly controlled.

She nods, absorbing it all.

MARIBETH

Okay. Then I guess we need to read
smarter.

JASPER

And faster.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. SCIENCE BUILDING - NIGHT

The fluorescent lights hum like a nest of wasps overhead. BEN creeps down the corridor, flashlight in hand, eyes scanning the rows of lab doors. He reaches for a doorknob—stops—then hears:

TRUMBULL (O.S.)

You know, Rabbi, most people wait
for daylight before attempting
divine intervention.

BEN jumps, turning around. DEAN TRUMBULL stands at the other end of the hallway. He's in a three-piece suit that's just slightly too crisp for midnight, holding a small briefcase. His smile is thin and dry, like old paper.

BEN

Dean Trumbull. I didn't expect to
see you here. It's what... almost 3
AM?

TRUMBULL

Is it? Time flies when you're
dabbling in morally ambiguous
science. Or faith, I suppose.

Trumbull starts walking toward Ben slowly, footsteps clicking like a metronome.

BEN

I'm here because I believe
someone's trying to complete a
summoning ritual. I have reason to
believe this building is involved.

TRUMBULL

(chuckling)

Oh, I'm sure it is. Terribly useful
building. So many acids. So much
potential. People do love science,
maybe more than God.

BEN

(cautious)

What are you doing here?

Trumbull stops, mock-wounded.

TRUMBULL

What? Can't a Dean enjoy a late-night stroll through the temple of knowledge?

He lifts the briefcase slightly and gives it a tiny shake—something inside sloshes.

BEN

That doesn't sound like a walk.

TRUMBULL

Maybe I'm prepping for a demonstration. Or perhaps just stealing a few things before the budget cuts get them first.

BEN

You're joking, right?

TRUMBULL

Am I? Hard to tell. Humor is... subjective. Like morality. Or scripture.

Ben narrows his eyes.

BEN

Look, if you're doing anything that could endanger people—

TRUMBULL (CUTTING IN)

Oh please, spare me the rabbinic thunder. If I wanted brimstone, I'd summon it myself. Much faster than waiting for Yahweh to do it.

A heavy pause. Ben's fists clench.

BEN

I'm not going to let anyone else get hurt. You should leave.

Trumbull steps closer, just inside Ben's personal space. His breath smells like iron and cloves.

TRUMBULL

You know what I've always admired about your people, Rabbi? Your... tenacity. It's almost touching, really.

(MORE)

TRUMBULL (CONT'D)

Century after century—plagues,
pogroms, fires, wars—and still, you
light your candles and recite your
prayers like any of it matters.

(pause, measured)

There's something almost beautiful
in that kind of devotion.

(beat)

Almost.

BEN

I'm not afraid of you.

TRUMBULL (GRINNING)

Liar.

He taps Ben on the chest—just once, lightly, with a finger
colder than it should be.

TRUMBULL (CONT'D)

You should be. Not because of what
I am—but because you've put
yourself in the circle. The ritual
you're so concerned about stopping?
You just became part of it.
Congratulations.

Ben's face drains of color. He looks around—at the walls, the
floor. Subtle marks are etched into the tile now that his
eyes know what to seek. Symbols he's seen before. Too late.

BEN

No... no, I—how could I have—

TRUMBULL

It's always the righteous who walk
into traps with the most
conviction. So focused on doing
good, they forget to check for
sigils underfoot.

Trumbull starts to walk past him, then stops and leans in.

TRUMBULL (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Tell Noah I said hello. Or don't.
He's such a fragile thing. Breaks
easy. Like glass. Like... faith.

He chuckles and disappears down a stairwell, humming a tune
Ben vaguely recognizes as a funeral melody.

BEN stands frozen, staring at the floor where—just moments
ago—he was sure he saw arcane symbols. Etched lines, burnt
edges, the faint shimmer of ritual magic. But now?

Nothing.

Just tile. Scuffed and mundane. No glyphs. No sigils. Just the soft buzz of fluorescent lights and the echo of Trumbull's retreating footsteps.

BEN
(quietly, to himself)
No. I saw them.

He crouches, running his fingers over the floor. Smooth. Cold. Perfectly normal. He even smells the tile-cleaner and wax, nothing sulfurous or metallic. No trace of blood. No scorched outlines.

He stands again, eyes scanning, then closes them and exhales hard.

BEN (CONT'D)
Unless I didn't.

He pinches the bridge of his nose, then mutters:

BEN (CONT'D)
Don't let him get in your head.
Don't let it get in your head.

A beat. Then—

BEN (CONT'D)
But what if he already did?

EXT. CAMPUS QUAD - NIGHT

BEN hurries out of the Science Building, his coat fluttering behind him. The air is sharp and full of static. The clock tower chimes once—3:00 AM.

He pulls out his phone and dials. The screen lights up with NOAH LONGFELLOW. Rings once. Twice. Then:

NOAH (O.S.)
You've reached Professor Noah
Longfellow—leave a message or
don't. It's your karma.

BEEP.

Ben hesitates, standing alone beneath the lamplight, phone to his ear. His voice is lower now, uncertain.

BEN
Noah... call me when you get this.
Something weird just happened.
(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)
I think—no, I know Trumbull's
involved. I need to talk to you.
It's... it's probably nothing. Maybe
I imagined it.

A pause. Ben's voice tightens.

BEN (CONT'D)
But I don't think I did.

He hangs up and lowers the phone. For a long moment, he just stands there. Alone. Wind whispers through the trees like a distant voice he almost understands.

Then he starts walking.

Not toward home. Not toward the chapel. But into the dark.

INT. LONGFELLOW HALL - MAIN FOYER - NIGHT

A cathedral of polished stone. Moonlight filters through stained glass, throwing fractured patterns on the floor. The portraits of past professors and headmasters hang above the grand staircase.

NOAH steps inside, methodical, taking in the space like it's a puzzle. His footsteps echo.

He pauses beneath the portraits. His eyes catch on one—maybe his father. Maybe not. They all look the same now. Erased by time.

Then—WHISPERS. Dozens. None of them in any language he knows. Just behind him. Then in front. Above. Around.

Noah exhales slowly, adjusts the strap on his satchel. Clinical. Calm. Ready.

NOAH
(softly, to himself)
Here we go.

WHAM. An invisible force hits him like a freight train, flinging him backward against the wall. His breath's knocked from him. Something tightens around his chest — invisible, immense, like the pressure of the deep sea. Bones creak.

He fights it. Tries to reach into his coat, but his arms are pinned. He gasps.

From the doorway—a FIGURE.

A man stands in silhouette. Unmoving. His face slowly becomes visible—milky white eyes, staring vacantly as he mutters in a dead tongue.

The whispers grow louder, frenzied.

Noah's knees buckle. Blood at the corner of his mouth. This is it.

Then—

BANG. A deafening gunshot rips through the air. The muttering man jerks backward, then collapses, the spell breaking with a sudden gust of wind that snuffs the whispers.

NOAH drops to the floor, gasping like a drowning man breaching the surface.

LIV rushes in, gun still hot in her hand. She's not in field gear — she's in slippers, a coat over her pajamas. She slides to her knees beside him.

LIV

Noah! Stay with me! You're alright—
you're okay.

She checks his pulse, presses a cloth to a wound at his side.

NOAH

(pained, wheezing)
What—how did you—?

LIV

Trumbull. He called me. Said you'd
need backup.
(beat)
You could've waited, dumbass.

Noah blinks up at her, trying to make sense of it. His voice is hoarse.

NOAH

Trumbull...?

She nods as she pulls out her phone.

LIV

Hold on, I'm calling an ambulance.
You're not dying in some dusty
hallway. I won't let you.

She strokes the side of his face as he starts to fade.

LIV (CONT'D)
Just hang on.

NOAH
(whispers)
He shouldn't have known...

And then—darkness. Noah slips into unconsciousness.

Liv holds him tight, fear and fury warring behind her eyes.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. COLLEGE HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Muted light spills through the blinds. Machines beep softly. NOAH lies in bed, bruised and bandaged, a grimace etched on his face. His left side is wrapped in gauze, and he breathes shallowly.

A DOCTOR checks the chart.

DOCTOR

Three broken ribs. You're lucky, Professor. A little deeper and we'd be having a different conversation. No more judo practice for you. Tell your coach to go easier on you next time.

(beat, dry)

Also, maybe avoid laughing for a while. Or sneezing. Or breathing deeply.

NOAH

(faint smile)

I'll cancel my stand-up tour.

The doctor nods, scribbles a note, and leaves. BEN sits in the chair by the window, pale and restless. He hasn't slept.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Ben?

BEN

Yeah. I'm here.

NOAH

You alright?

Ben looks down at his hands.

BEN

I will be. Three tours in Afghanistan as an Army chaplain, and you'd think there was nothing left that could shake me.

(beat)

I don't remember telling Trumbull where you were. I-I might have. I don't know. Everything's a mess in my head right now.

(beat)

I don't trust myself, Noah.

NOAH

Whatever happened, you got me out alive. That's what matters.

Ben doesn't look convinced.

The door opens and LIV walks in, tired but composed. She tosses a file on the small table by Noah's bed.

LIV

Dead guy's name was Owen Rourke. Graduated Maplewood three years ago. Took one of your courses, Noah. And one of yours, Ben. What did you do to piss him off?

Ben blinks. Tries to picture the face.

BEN

I don't remember him.

LIV

Neither did campus security. Nothing on file but a couple of written complaints against the Dean. Said he had it out for the place.

NOAH

I remeber the name, but nothing stands out. I haven't flunked a student...Ever. Why would he come after me?

LIV

Still working on that. His file's thin. After graduation, worked for a big investment bank, got married, medical records say they lost a baby in child birth.

A quiet beat. The room stills.

LIV (CONT'D)

Six months ago he dropped off the radar. Quit his job. Sold his house. I've got people digging. I haven't been able to reach the wife or parents. For now, the danger's passed. You should all get some rest.

As if on cue, the door swings open.

NOAH'S MOTHER (ELEANOR) enters, mid-sixties, elegant, theatrical. She carries a designer handbag like a scepter of status. Her voice is full of concern—and narcissism.

ELEANOR

Darling! They told me you had a fall. I said to myself, not again, and then I blamed that damn cat of yours.

She walks past Liv without even a glance. Approaches the bed and kisses Noah on the forehead with performative care.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Three broken ribs? That's what you get for leaving boxes in the hallway. I told you clutter is dangerous. Especially emotional clutter.

NOAH

Hi, Mom.

ELEANOR

I wore navy today. It's slimming but still shows compassion. You know what they say, never wear black to a hospital—it makes people think you've given up.

Eleanor now seems to notice Liv.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Olivia, my dear. Do get Noah something to drink, won't you?

LIV

(dryly)

Always a pleasure to see you Mrs. Longfellow.

(she settles into a chair
focusing solely on Noah)

Anyway, how is everyone treating you? Not flirting with the nurses, I hope.

NOAH

Hard to flirt when breathing hurts.

ELEANOR

Good. Keep it that way.

(Nod's to Ben then, eyes narrowing slightly)

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Speaking of flirting—are you dating
that new girl? What's her name...
Maribeth?

NOAH

What? No. Why?

ELEANOR

Well, we had dinner last night.
College function. It was on my
calendar for weeks. She sat next to
me and asked so many questions
about you. Family history,
childhood, favorite foods. You've
definitely caught her eye.

(beat)

Frankly, it was a little intense.
Strikes me as a bit of a gold
digger.

Ben and Liv exchange a look. Noah stiffens.

NOAH

She asked about our family?

ELEANOR

Yes, and me of course. Everyone
does. I assume she's writing a
paper or planning a podcast.
Everyone's doing podcasts now,
aren't they?

Noah doesn't answer. His mind is elsewhere now—connecting
dots that shouldn't connect.

LIV

(suspicious)

And she just happened to be seated
next to you?

ELEANOR

Darling, I'm always seated at the
center of things.

Noah closes his eyes. Not from pain this time—but from the
growing certainty that something's very, very wrong.

INT. TRUMBULL'S OFFICE - MORNING

Secretary enters, but stands in the doorway.

SECRETARY

Morning, Dean. Just checking your schedule.

TRUMBULL

Yes. Kindly post signs and send a campus-wide notice—classes in Longfellow Hall are canceled today. Water leak - a steam pipe gave way. Resume next scheduled day.

SECRETARY

Of course. Did you want me to call maintenance?

TRUMBULL

Oh no. They're already cleaning up the mess. That will be all.

She exits. Trumbull waits until the door clicks shut.

Then he opens the lower drawer of his desk.

Inside: an ornate dagger, a small black briefcase, and a cast iron cauldron no bigger than a soup bowl.

He rolls up his sleeve.

TRUMBULL (*quietly, to himself*)

Let's make it official.

He slices his palm with the dagger. Blood drips into the cauldron. He adds powders and ash from vials in the briefcase. A faint hiss and shimmer rises from the mixture.

He speaks—not loudly—but with quiet, ritualistic precision.

TRUMBULL (CONT'D)

You got close, Mr. Rourke. Very close. But you were never enough. Barely serviceable, really. At least you were good for one thing.

The cauldron flares.

A glowing rune appears on the ceiling above his head, spinning, pulsing—then slowly fades.

Trumbull wraps his hand with a handkerchief. Closes the case. Slides everything back into the drawer.

He pulls a folder off a neat stack and begins signing forms, as if nothing unusual had occurred.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - BACK ALLEY PATIO - EVENING

The golden-hour light gives everything a warm glow, but the mood here is cold.

MARIBETH sits at a wrought-iron table, sleek and unreadable. She wears a long coat, collar up against the breeze. A slim LEATHER FOLDER rests on the table in front of her.

Across from her, a MYSTERIOUS MAN in his late 40s, military bearing, black gloves he never takes off—sips from a paper coffee cup without looking at her. He doesn't belong in this college town. Too precise. Too dangerous.

MARIBETH

Here. It's everything I've got so far.

She slides the folder across the table. He opens it. Inside: surveillance photos, class rosters, incident reports, and a still frame from campus security of Owen Rourke.

MYSTERIOUS MAN

(pages through)
This is light.

MARIBETH

It's all I could get without spooking them. They're hiding something—but not what we thought.

MYSTERIOUS MAN

You're saying they didn't take Crowley?

MARIBETH

I'm saying they don't know what happened to him. And if they do, it's buried deep. I'm still convinced they're not behind it.

He taps a photo of Noah, the edges smudged from too much handling.

MYSTERIOUS MAN

Then who is?

MARIBETH

If anyone knows, it's Noah Longfellow. He's the center of the web. Everything radiates out from him—Crowley, the disappearances, even the book.

(beat)

(MORE)

MARIBETH (CONT'D)
But he's holding back. He knows
more than he says.

The man closes the folder.

MYSTERIOUS MAN
I can remove him. Quietly. No fuss.

MARIBETH
(cutting)
No.

He waits, unmoved.

MARIBETH (CONT'D)
If I push too hard, they'll close
ranks. I'm in. I need them to trust
me. That's worth more than removing
one scholar with a broken rib.

(Beat)
Besides, there's more going on here
than we know. Other forces at work
we didn't count on.

MYSTERIOUS MAN
(beat)
You think Longfellow will lead you
to the grimoire?

MARIBETH
I know he will. Whether he means to
or not.

She stands, smooth and assured.

MARIBETH (CONT'D)
But if he becomes a problem... I'll
deal with him myself.

The man leans back in his chair, shadows playing across his
face.

MYSTERIOUS MAN
Just remember the mission. The book
is all that matters.

MARIBETH
It always has been.

She walks away, leaving her coffee untouched. The man watches
her go, eyes narrowing.

INT. MODEST APARTMENT - NIGHT

The room is dim, heavy with silence. Shelby Rourke (24) paces slowly, cradling a BABY to her chest. Her face is tear-streaked, but her eyes burn with fury.

A PHONE rests on the nearby table—screen still glowing, the call just ended.

She presses her cheek to the baby's soft head, her voice low and tight.

SHELBY
He's gone, sweetheart.
Daddy's not coming home.

She stands still. Breathing. Seething.

On the mantle above her is a framed wedding photo: her and OWEN ROURKE, smiling under a canopy of autumn leaves.

She looks at it for a long beat. Then—

SHELBY (CONT'D)
But someone is going to pay for
what happened.

The baby gurgles softly. She shifts the child to her shoulder—and now we see it:

TWO SMALL HORNS curve gently from the baby's forehead.

She doesn't flinch. She only smiles—dark, resolved.

SHELBY (CONT'D)
(baby voice)
Don't you worry, my little devil.
Mommy's going to burn the whole
rotten thing to the ground.
And send the bad man back to hell—
where he belongs.

She turns toward the window, eyes gleaming with cold promise.

SMASH TO BLACK.

CREDITS.

INT. UNKNOWN LOCATION - STUDY - NIGHT

A pair of gloved hands moves ancient pieces on a custom chessboard.

One piece looks like a book, another like a cat, one like Noah Longfellow, and one—black and twisted—clearly represents Trumbull.

A new piece is placed onto the board: a woman holding a child. The hand hesitates... then moves her opposite the Trumbull piece.

A faint voice, raspy and androgynous, speaks off-screen.

VOICE

The pawn thinks she's the queen.
Let her try.

THE END