

WHEN DARKNESS WRITES

Written by

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He wrote about evil. Now evil writes back

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FADE IN:

INT. DANIEL CROSS'S HOME - SUNDAY MORNING

Sunlight filters through stained glass panels in the dining room window, scattering soft colors across a modest but warm family home.

DANIEL CROSS (mid-40s) sits at the table, reading his worn leather Bible. His hands are steady, deliberate. A pen rests in the crease – notes and sermon scribbles fill the margins.

Across from him, GRACE (late 30s) pours coffee. She hums a hymn under her breath – "It Is Well With My Soul."

Grace gives Daniel a look – that gentle mix of love and concern reserved for people who mean well but think too much.

GRACE
Don't start preaching before
breakfast, preacher.

DANIEL
(smiling faintly)
Deacon. Retired preacher.
Occasional writer of good news.

She sets a plate of eggs before him. He bows his head. They join hands.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Lord, thank you for Your word, for
Your light, and for the strength to
keep writing about both – even when
others don't see the need.

As Daniel prays, his Bible flutters open on its own, a breeze that shouldn't exist.

He glances toward the window – sunlight bends oddly through the glass.

A faint crow's shadow crosses the wall.

GRACE
Daniel?

DANIEL
(forcing a smile)
Amen.

They echo it, but something in his eyes lingers – a flicker of doubt, or maybe recognition.

He closes the Bible with a soft thud – and for just a moment, the cross embossed on its cover seems upside down in the light.

EXT. COUNTRY CHURCH – DAY

The family walks toward the small white church on the hill, all smiles and Sunday best. The bell tolls. The world feels normal again.

But the camera lingers on the cracked window of their car – a single black feather stuck in the wiper.

INT. PUBLISHER'S OFFICE – AFTERNOON

A sleek, glass-walled space in downtown Little Rock. A cross hangs beside a framed quote: "Faith sells when it comforts."

DANIEL sits across from REBECCA HAYES (50s), a polished executive with the calm of someone who believes she knows what God wants – at least in print.

Stacks of devotional books and cheerful covers fill her office: *Finding the Joy*, *Grace Every Morning*, *Daily Hope for Busy Moms*.

REBECCA
Your last book hit number three on
the Christian charts.
Congratulations again, Daniel.

DANIEL
Thank you. I'm grateful for the
response.

Daniel leans forward.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
But this next one – it's different.
It's important.

Rebecca smiles, typing notes.

REBECCA

Different how?

DANIEL
It's about Satan. About how the
church has softened to the idea of
him. How he hides behind what we
call comfort.

Rebecca stops typing. The smile fades slightly.

REBECCA
Satan?

DANIEL
Not sensationalized – biblical.
Warnings about deception. How
temptation works quietly in
ordinary lives.

REBECCA
Daniel, you write inspirational
fiction. Our readers want hope, not
fear.

DANIEL
Hope without awareness is
dangerous. You know, it's like when
a football team prepares for the
Super Bowl. They train like mad
going over all their plays, but
they also research the opposing
team. Without knowing what the
opposition is capable of, they are
at a distinct disadvantage.

Rebecca pauses, choosing her words carefully.

REBECCA
We have a brand image, Daniel.
Faith-based inspiration. Family-
friendly messages. Something about
Satan doesn't exactly say "fun
summer reading."

Daniel leans back, exhaling slowly, studying the framed
covers behind her. Every one of them smiles at him – bright
skies, soft fonts, happy faces.

DANIEL
When did Christianity become a
brand?

Rebecca sighs. Her tone softens, but her eyes are sharp.

REBECCA
You're talented, Daniel, and you're
a part of what makes up that
"brand" as you call it. Don't throw
that away chasing darkness. Your
next book needs to uplift. Not,
unsettle.

He nods, silent. She slides a folder across the desk.

REBECCA (CONT'D)
Let's rework your outline.
Something lighter. Maybe "The Power
of Grace." That kind of title sells
itself.

Daniel stares at the folder but doesn't touch it. His hand drifts instead toward the cross pendant on her desk – it's inverted by the reflection in the glass table.

He notices. She doesn't.

DANIEL
Thank you, Rebecca.
I'll pray about it.

He stands, gathering his notes. She smiles again – professional, final.

REBECCA
Good. And Daniel?
(beat)
Don't let the Devil in through your
writing.

He nods faintly, walking out.

The door closes with a muted click – but his phone buzzes the instant it does.

He glances down. A new text from a "Private Number" glows across the screen:

TEXT:

"Keep going."

The screen flickers. His reflection lingers a half-second longer than it should.

INT. CROSS FAMILY HOME – EVENING

The house is quiet except for the faint hum of the dishwasher.

The last light of the day is slipping through the stained glass.

GRACE stands at the stove, stirring soup that's gone cold.

DANIEL sits at the kitchen table, jacket still on, hands clasped as if in prayer – but he's not praying.

GRACE
You didn't eat lunch again.

DANIEL
Didn't feel right eating after that meeting.

Grace glances up – the way she does when she knows he's been fighting windmills again.

GRACE
What did Rebecca say?

DANIEL
That the devil doesn't sell. Not in hardcover, anyway.

She sighs, turns off the burner, and sits across from him.

GRACE
Daniel, you know they're not wrong.
People want to feel better when they read your books. Not afraid.

DANIEL
Then maybe that's the problem.
What if comfort's exactly what blinds us to evil?

Grace folds her hands, steady but cautious.

GRACE
You've been talking about Satan a lot lately.

DANIEL
Because nobody else will.
(beat)
The church acts like he retired.

She studies him.

GRACE
You think this is a calling? Or another story?

He doesn't answer immediately. His voice is softer when it comes.

DANIEL
Maybe both.

Grace reaches out, takes his hand.

GRACE
Then promise me you'll be careful.
(beat)
When you write about darkness long
enough, it starts writing back.

He almost laughs – almost. But instead, he looks at her, eyes hollow but kind.

DANIEL
You sound like Rebecca.

GRACE
Rebecca's not the one who wakes up
at 3 in the morning with you pacing
up and down the hallway.

They sit in silence. The refrigerator hums. Somewhere in the house, a floorboard creaks.

Grace turns her head toward the sound.

She stands, peering down the hall.

Daniel's phone BUZZES on the table.

He flips it over. A new text message glows.

TEXT:

"She's right. You should be careful."

Grace turns – sees his face go pale.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Daniel...?

He shows her the screen.

Her hand covers her mouth.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Did you give anyone your new
number?

DANIEL
No. Only to Rebecca.
(beat)
No one else has it.

He sets the phone down, slowly, between them.

The light above them buzzes, then bursts – showering them in darkness.

INT. CHURCH FELLOWSHIP HALL – AFTERNOON

A midweek women's Bible study has just ended. Folding chairs scrape. The smell of coffee and lemon bars lingers in the air.

GRACE lingers near the counter, washing mugs that don't need washing – her thoughts louder than the clinking porcelain.

MARTHA HOLLIS (60s) – the senior pastor's wife, warm but watchful – approaches, a gentle smile masking curiosity.

MARTHA

You've been quiet today, Grace.
That's not like you.

GRACE

Just tired, I guess.

MARTHA

Tired, or worried?

Grace's hands pause in the sink. She exhales.

GRACE

It's Daniel. He's begun his next book, but he's at odds with his publisher. This book is about being aware of the devil in our midst. He's been writing all night, talking about the devil like he's sitting at our dinner table. Like he's sitting at everyone's dinner table.

Martha sets down her Bible, folding her hands.

MARTHA

Daniel's always been, passionate. The Lord blesses writers with big imaginations.

GRACE

This isn't imagination. It's like an obsession. When he told his publisher he wants to write about Satan, they tried to stop him. Now he says that's proof he should.

Martha's smile fades. Concern replaces politeness.

MARTHA

Has he spoken to Pastor Hollis?

GRACE

Daniel's avoiding him. He's afraid
the church doesn't want truth –
just comfort.

Martha sits beside her. The hall is empty now. A fluorescent
bulb hums faintly overhead.

MARTHA

Sometimes the enemy does attack
those who try to do God's work.
But sometimes, Grace...
It's pride that disguises itself as
purpose.

Grace looks away, swallowing hard.

GRACE

He used to write about forgiveness,
redemption. Now he's writing about
evil – and I don't know if he's
warning people or calling it
closer.

Martha reaches out, covering Grace's trembling hand.

MARTHA

You need to keep your home in
prayer. Keep your eyes open. And
maybe... keep your distance from
his work for a while.

GRACE

That's what frightens me, Martha.
Even when I'm not near his work...
it feels like it's near me.
Watching me.

A long pause.

Grace gathers her purse. As she turns to leave, the last mug
on the counter cracks in half – clean, deliberate, like
something split it.

Both women freeze.

The sound echoes longer than it should.

MARTHA

I'll... tell Pastor Hollis to reach
out to Daniel.

Grace nods, backing away slowly, eyes on the cracked mug.

EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Grace steps into the sunlight, blinking. The day is bright, too bright - the kind that should feel safe but doesn't.

She glances down - a single black feather rests on her windshield.

She brushes it away. It sticks to her hand.

INT. PASTOR HOLLIS'S OFFICE - DAY

A soft afternoon glow filters through venetian blinds. The office is orderly - diplomas, family photos, leather-bound Bibles, and a framed quote reading:

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." - John 1:5.

DANIEL sits stiffly in the guest chair. His Bible and notebook rest on his lap.

PASTOR HOLLIS (late 50s), calm but deliberate, closes the door and sits behind his desk.

PASTOR HOLLIS

Grace tells me you've been having a hard time, Daniel. And that you're working on... a new project?

DANIEL

A book. About Satan. About how the church ignores him at its own peril.

The pastor nods slowly, hands clasped, tone pastoral but probing.

PASTOR HOLLIS

That's heavy ground to till. The devil's name draws more eyes than his works. Sometimes we feed him by speaking too loudly of him.

DANIEL

That's exactly the problem. We whisper his name like it's superstition. He's not a myth. He's methodical. And we need an awareness of that.

PASTOR HOLLIS
And you think it's your duty to
expose him?

DANIEL
If not me, who?
People trust me because my words
have comforted them. Maybe it's
time I wake them up.

Pastor Hollis studies him, the faintest crease between his brows.

PASTOR HOLLIS
You're not wrong that evil exists.
But obsession can sound a lot like
faith when we stop listening for
God's voice.

Daniel looks away, his jaw tight.

DANIEL
Is that what Grace told you? That
I'm obsessed?

PASTOR HOLLIS
Grace told me she's afraid.
And that you haven't been sleeping.

DANIEL
Neither has she. Neither should
anyone who follows Christ. We're
targets.

PASTOR HOLLIS
Daniel, writing about darkness is
one thing. Letting it consume your
home is another.

A long silence. The ticking clock grows louder.

Daniel opens his notebook and slides a few pages across the desk.

INSERT - HANDWRITTEN NOTES: sketches of demonic diagrams,
phrases circled: "Deception in beauty," "Seven sins as
invitations."

Pastor Hollis studies them. A frown deepens.

PASTOR HOLLIS (CONT'D)
You drew these?

DANIEL

They came to me while writing.
Like reminders.

PASTOR HOLLIS

Reminders from whom?

Daniel's voice lowers, trembling with conviction – or fear.

DANIEL

Maybe from the one who doesn't want
this book written. Maybe from the
One who does.

Pastor Hollis exhales, sets the notes down.

PASTOR HOLLIS

Daniel... sometimes discernment
isn't about hearing voices. It's
about knowing which silence belongs
to God.

Daniel stares at him, unreadable.

PASTOR HOLLIS (CONT'D)

Daniel? Are you alright?

Daniel looks up, forcing composure.

DANIEL

Yes, Pastor. I think I've just
confirmed my next chapter.

PASTOR HOLLIS

Then write carefully, son. The
devil loves an editor.

Daniel stands, collecting his notebook. His shadow stretches
unnaturally long across the floor as he leaves.

The diagrams on the page appear to shift, almost
imperceptibly, like something moving beneath the ink.

INT. DANIEL'S STUDY – NIGHT

The room is dim except for a single desk lamp. Outside, wind
rustles the trees.

Stacks of theology books, handwritten notes, and Bible
concordances surround DANIEL. He sits before his laptop, a
blank document open. The cursor blinks like a heartbeat.

He takes a sip of cold coffee. His reflection in the black monitor flickers – slightly out of sync with his movements.

DANIEL (V.O.)
"If you want to hide the devil,
give him a choir robe and a smile."

He begins typing.

ON SCREEN:

"The Devil Among Us – Chapter One: The Whisper Beneath the Amen."

A faint electrical HUM builds in the room. The lamp flickers once, twice, steadies.

Daniel pauses, listening – the wind outside sounds like a chorus breathing.

He shakes it off, types faster.

DANIEL (V.O.)
We speak his name only in jest. We
picture horns, not hunger. But
temptation doesn't roar. It
whispers: 'Just this once.'
That's how it begins. That's how it
always begins.

He stops, staring at the words. Something feels off – like he didn't write them. His breathing quickens.

A knock from somewhere inside the house.

He looks toward the door.

GRACE (O.S.)
Daniel? You still up?

He exhales shakily, relief flooding his face.

DANIEL
Yeah. Just finishing a few lines.

Grace opens the door slightly. The hallway behind her is dark – too dark.

GRACE
You should get some sleep. It's
past midnight.

DANIEL
I will. Just–

Daniel glances at the screen; the message is gone.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Just lost my train of thought.

She nods, lingering. Her tone softens.

GRACE
You're scaring people, you know.
Pastor Hollis called. He's worried.

DANIEL
I'm fine. It's just research.
The truth has teeth, Grace. I just
need to show people the bite marks.

She looks at him for a long moment – sadness in her eyes.

GRACE
Don't let it bite you first.

She leaves. The door closes gently.

Daniel stares at the empty chair across the room.

A shape – faint, like heat distortion – lingers there.
Watching.

He blinks. It's gone.

He scrolls up on his document.

At the very bottom, below his last line, new text appears:

"Lust always writes first."

The cursor blinks once. Twice.

Then stops.

A sudden BUZZ – his phone lights up beside him.

Private number. One new message.

TEXT:

"Chapter One approved."

Daniel exhales, chest tight, as the wind outside turns into
laughter – faint, feminine, familiar.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

A quiet corner café near the university district.

Rain taps softly on the window. The sound feels rhythmic, intentional – like someone knocking politely at the edge of reality.

DANIEL sits alone at a table, his laptop open but untouched.

He's reading a printed email from his publisher: "Your proposal has been declined."

His jaw tightens. He crumples the page.

A voice interrupts – calm, warm, musical.

LILITH (O.S.)
You shouldn't let rejection ruin
your appetite.

Daniel looks up.

LILITH (mid-30s) – striking, elegant, eyes both kind and knowing – stands there with a coffee in hand and a smile that feels like memory.

DANIEL
I'm sorry... do I know you?

LILITH
Not yet.
I'm Lilith. A big fan. I've read
everything you've written.

He hesitates, shakes her hand. Her touch lingers – warm at first, then cold.

DANIEL
Thank you. That's, rare these days.

LILITH
Rare is what makes faith
interesting.
May I?

She gestures to the seat across from him.

He nods. She sits – too gracefully, like gravity doesn't apply quite the same way.

LILITH (CONT'D)
I heard you're working on something
new. Something different.

DANIEL
Where did you hear that?

LILITH
The world's smaller than you think,
Daniel.

He studies her. There's a familiarity he can't place – the way she says his name, the way her perfume smells faintly of burnt incense and rain.

DANIEL
Most people think it's a bad idea.

LILITH
Most people are afraid of mirrors.
You, on the other hand... you like
to look.

He blinks. She's already holding one of his pages – the draft he thought he'd left in his bag.

DANIEL
Where did you—?

Lilith interrupts him and reads from the paper.

LILITH
"Lust always writes first."
You really do have a poet's sense
of irony.

He snatches the page gently, unsettled but intrigued.

DANIEL
It's research. Symbolic.

LILITH
Oh, I believe that.

She leans in closer.

LILITH (CONT'D)
The oldest research there is –
temptation. Curiosity. God's
favorite experiment.

He exhales, uneasy, but doesn't move away.

DANIEL
You said you've read my books?

LILITH

Every word. Your first one made me cry. Your second made me dream.

She smiles – slow, haunting, knowing.

A drop of rain rolls down the window beside her, tracing the shape of a cross – then inverts itself as it falls.

LILITH (CONT'D)

Why don't you let me read what you've written? I could, help you find your new voice.

Her voice lowers – hypnotic now.

LILITH (CONT'D)

Writers lose themselves when they start writing for approval. You used to write for Him. Now you're writing against Him. That's brave.

DANIEL

I'm not writing against Him. I'm writing about His foe.

LILITH

You're giving Satan what he desires. Publicity.

He stares at her, pulse quickening. Her eyes seem to darken, the pupils expanding like eclipses.

A BUZZ – his phone vibrates on the table.

He glances down: one new message.

TEXT:

"You're meeting her now."

He looks up – Lilith is gone.

Her chair sits empty.

Only her untouched coffee remains, steaming in the shape of a faint spiral.

He stares, shaken.

The bell above the café door jingles – soft, distant laughter trails behind it.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Daniel steps out into the drizzle.

Across the street, Lilith watches from under a black umbrella.

When a passing bus blocks her for a moment and moves on - she's gone.

Daniel stands motionless, rain soaking his hair.

DANIEL (V.O.)
(hollow, trembling)
Lust doesn't seduce the flesh.
It seduces the purpose.

INT. DANIEL'S STUDY - NIGHT

The house is dark except for the cold blue glow of Daniel's laptop.

The rain has stopped, but water trickles down the window, refracting the faint lamplight into shifting crosses.

DANIEL sits hunched at his desk. A half-empty mug of coffee beside him. His fingers tremble slightly as he scrolls through his manuscript.

ON SCREEN:

Chapter One. Chapter Two.

Words he barely remembers writing.

He reads aloud softly - almost chanting.

DANIEL
"The Devil hides behind comfort. He waits in compromise. He enters when conviction becomes convenience."

He scrolls down further.

A paragraph appears in a different font - italicized, unfamiliar.

ON SCREEN:

"She is your mirror, Daniel. She knows what you want before you do."

He frowns.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
I didn't write that.

He opens the revision history.

No change log. No author name. Just: "Unknown Editor - 3:33 a.m."

The time stamp makes him shiver.

He highlights the words, presses delete.

They vanish.

He exhales.

Then – the line reappears instantly, this time in bold.

ON SCREEN:

"She is still with you."

The desk lamp flickers.

A faint whisper under the hum of the bulb – female, distant, almost tender.

LILITH (V.O.)
You wrote about me before you met
me.

Daniel spins around.

The room is empty – except the door, slightly ajar. He stares into the dark hallway beyond.

A shadow moves just outside.

He stands, heart pounding, steps toward it.

DANIEL
Grace?

Silence.

Nothing.

He shuts the door, locks it, leans against it – breathing hard.

He turns back to his desk.

The screen now reads:

"Stop trying to erase me."

He yanks the power cord – the laptop goes black.

Silence.

Then, faintly, click.

The laptop powers itself back on.

The same words blink across the blank document – repeating.

"Stop trying to erase me."

Each repetition grows darker, bolder, until the text fills the screen like blood seeping through paper.

Daniel slams the lid shut.

The typing continues beneath it – muffled clacks echoing in the silence.

He backs away, eyes fixed on the pulsing light leaking from the laptop's edges.

Then – BUZZ.

His phone lights up on the desk.

TEXT:

"You listened to her."

Another one appears before he can move:

TEXT:

"Now write what she told you."

The phone slips from his hand, hits the floor with a dull thud.

He sinks into his chair, shaking, whispering to himself.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
This isn't real. This isn't real...

He opens the laptop again – the document now perfectly blank.

Every word gone.

But as he stares, the cursor blinks once, then begins typing on its own again:

"Chapter Two: The Flesh of Faith."

Daniel's reflection in the screen doesn't move when he does.

INT. HALLWAY - SAME TIME

Grace, half-asleep, passes his study door. She hears the faint click-click-click of keys and whispers of a woman's voice - indistinct but intimate.

She freezes.

Listens.

Then slowly backs away toward the bedroom.

The light beneath the study door glows faintly red.

INT. CROSS FAMILY KITCHEN - MORNING

Soft gray light seeps through the blinds. The air feels heavy - the calm after a silent storm.

GRACE stands at the counter, pouring coffee.

DANIEL sits at the table, unshaven, eyes hollow from another sleepless night.

The only sound is the faint clink of a spoon against porcelain.

GRACE
You were up late again.

DANIEL
Couldn't sleep. I was working.

GRACE
Working?
It sounded like you were talking to
someone.

Daniel looks up, startled - cautious.

DANIEL
What?

GRACE
A woman. I heard her voice, Daniel.
I thought maybe I was dreaming -
until Susan called this morning.

He stiffens.

DANIEL
Susan?

GRACE
She said she saw you yesterday.
At that coffee shop near the
university. Sitting with a woman.
Said she was, young. Pretty.
And you looked, comfortable.

He sighs, rubbing his temples – trying to choose his words carefully.

DANIEL
She came up to me. I didn't know
her. She said she'd read my books.
That's all.

GRACE
And that's all it takes? A stranger
shows up, flatters you, and you
forget you're married? You start
chatting online in the middle of
the night?

DANIEL
Grace, that's not fair. I didn't–
It was one conversation. I left
after ten minutes.

GRACE
Did you tell me about it?

DANIEL
No, because it didn't mean
anything.

GRACE
Then why did she know where to find
you?

That lands like a punch.

Daniel hesitates – because he doesn't know the answer.

DANIEL
I don't know. Maybe coincidence.
Maybe she–

GRACE
–Maybe she what? Followed you?

DANIEL
Do you hear yourself? You sound
paranoid.

He stands now, hands raised – pleading but frustrated.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Grace, please. I'm telling you the
truth. She just appeared. Out of
nowhere. She knew things she
shouldn't have. It felt wrong. Like
she was testing me.

GRACE
Testing you?

DANIEL
Like temptation wearing a smile.

Grace stares at him, disbelief melting into something sadder
– fear.

GRACE
You really believe that, don't you?
That the devil sent a woman to talk
to you over coffee?

He doesn't answer. His silence says everything.

GRACE (CONT'D)
You're scaring me, Daniel.

He steps forward – gentle, desperate.

DANIEL
I swear to you, nothing happened. I
walked away. I came home. That's
all.

GRACE
And the voice I heard last night?

DANIEL
I don't know what you heard. Maybe
I was reading out loud. I've been
writing strange things lately.
Trying to make sense of it all.

Grace shakes her head, tears welling.

GRACE
You're slipping, Daniel. Maybe you
need to see a doctor. Or stop
writing for a while.

DANIEL
I'm fine.

GRACE
Well maybe you should let me read
your manuscript.

DANIEL
I will. You know, you've always
given good advice on where my
writing needs to go. When I get a
few more things polished up, I'll
print it out for you.

INT. SARAH'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

A small, cozy room - soft floral wallpaper, framed family
photos, the faint smell of lavender.

GRACE sits on the couch, staring at the wall.

Her sister, SARAH (40s), appears in the doorway, holding two
mugs of chamomile tea.

SARAH
How are you doing?

GRACE
Can't seem to stop thinking.

Sarah sets the tea down, sits on the edge of the bed.

SARAH
You and Daniel fought again?

Grace nods.

GRACE
He says there's a woman. Then says
there isn't. Then says she's,
"temptation."

SARAH
(gently, a half-smile)
That's quite a range of
possibilities.

Grace gives a sad laugh, then wipes a tear.

GRACE
He's been different since he
started that new book. Like he's
chasing something he can't see.
(MORE)

GRACE (CONT'D)
And the more I ask, the further
away he goes.

SARAH
Maybe he just needs rest. Writers
lose themselves in their work
sometimes - it's their job.

GRACE
This isn't writer's block, Sarah.
It's like he's haunted by what he's
writing. Last night I heard him
talking - whispering. There was a
woman's voice in the room.

Sarah studies her sister - the fear in her tone isn't anger
now, it's grief.

SARAH
You think he's having an affair?

Grace shakes her head slowly.

GRACE
I think something's gotten into
him. Something that's using his
faith against him.

Sarah takes her hand - squeezes.

SARAH
Grace, you've been under so much
stress. Maybe what you're hearing
isn't -

Grace jerks her hand away, eyes wet.

GRACE
-In my head?
I thought that too. Until last
night.

Sarah tilts her head - wary.

SARAH
What do you mean?

Grace looks toward the darkened window.

GRACE
When I came home from work, the
light in the guest room was on.
When I opened the door -
(MORE)

GRACE (CONT'D)
The computer was on. It had a
message on the screen.

Sarah frowns.

SARAH
What kind of message?

Grace hesitates, her voice barely above a whisper.

GRACE
It said: "You left him alone."

The room stills.

A long silence.

Sarah tries to smile, fails.

SARAH
Maybe, maybe Daniel texted you from
his laptop somehow?

Grace shakes her head – trembling now.

GRACE
I checked. No Wi-Fi, no cable. The
thing wasn't even plugged in.

Sarah stands, suddenly alert.

She goes to the window, pulls the curtain back – empty
backyard, motionless trees.

SARAH
It's probably just a glitch.
Computers do weird things.

Grace doesn't laugh.

GRACE
Daniel's computer did weird things
too.

She looks down into her tea – the surface ripples once,
though her hand is still.

SARAH
You want me to call him? Check that
he's okay?

Grace takes a long breath.

GRACE

No. If he's not okay, I can't fix him from here. And if he is, I need to know if it's him I miss – or the man he used to be.

Sarah moves to hug her. Grace leans in, finally letting herself cry.

SARAH

You'll get through this. Both of you.

God doesn't abandon people who still pray.

GRACE

I know.
But what if what's in our house prays too?

They hold each other, silent.

Outside, a faint wind chime begins to ring though there's no breeze.

Sarah glances toward the window.

The chime's tone bends – a half step sharp, unnatural, metallic.

Grace looks up, frozen.

CLOSE ON: the tea cup beside her bed.

Steam curls upward – spelling the faint shape of a question mark before fading.

INT. CROSS FAMILY HOME – LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

The house feels hollow – echoes where warmth used to live.

Grace's coffee mug still on the counter, cold.

A Bible sits open on the table beside Daniel's laptop, both bathed in pale moonlight.

DANIEL sits slumped on the couch, still wearing yesterday's clothes.

He scrolls through his phone – every call goes to voicemail.

ON SCREEN:

Grace - No Answer.

Sarah - No Answer.

He exhales, trembling, eyes red from sleeplessness.

DANIEL (V.O.)
Lord, You said You'd never leave
us. But I can't hear You anymore.

A faint creak from upstairs.

He freezes, listening.

Nothing. Just the house settling.

He sets the phone down and stares at the Bible.

The page is open to Ephesians 4:26:

"Be angry, and do not sin."

DANIEL
Then what do I do with it, Lord?
What do I do with this fire?

He slams the Bible shut - not in blasphemy, but in anguish.

The sudden sound echoes sharply through the empty house.

The lights flicker once.

INT. STUDY - LATER THAT NIGHT

Daniel paces. The laptop sits open again, taunting him from the desk.

He mutters to himself as he types, fingers hitting the keys too hard.

DANIEL
Wrath... Wrath is born when truth
is mocked. When love is taken for
weakness. When faith is left
unanswered.

He pauses - breathing heavy.

On-screen, new words appear below his paragraph:

"And wrath is how he speaks back."

Daniel stares at the sentence, shaking his head.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
No... no... I didn't write that.

He deletes it.

It reappears.

"Don't silence me."

Daniel screams at the screen.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Who are you?!

The lights dim. The house hums – a low vibration, almost a growl.

The laptop screen flickers – the cursor types on its own.

"You prayed to be heard."

Daniel pounds furiously on his desk.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
I prayed to God! Not to you!

He grabs the laptop, yanks it from the desk, hurls it across the room.

It hits the wall – screen cracks – but the glow doesn't go out.

The fractured display still pulses with words:

"Then why did He send me?"

Daniel's breath comes in gasps.

Tears mix with sweat.

He drops to his knees – the fury spent, replaced by horror.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
This isn't You... Please tell me
this isn't You...

The house goes silent again.

He hears a faint buzz from his phone.

He crawls to it, picks it up with shaking hands.

TEXT:

"Be still."

He stares at it – uncertain if it's comfort or command.

Then the phone vibrates again, more violently.

TEXT:

"Be still."

"Be still."

"BE STILL."

He drops the phone – it clatters against the floor, still flashing the words like a strobe.

Daniel covers his ears, shouting over the noise.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Stop! Stop it!

The vibration ceases.

Silence falls.

Then – a single knock at the door.

Three seconds later – another.

Measured. Patient.

Daniel stands slowly.

Moves toward the front door.

Each footstep echoes.

He peers through the peephole.

Nothing.

He exhales shakily – hand trembling on the knob.

Then, just as he steps back – a soft whisper from the other side of the door:

LILITH (O.S.)
Don't be still, Daniel. Carry on.

He jolts backward, heart pounding.

The whisper becomes a faint, melodic hum – the same rhythm as his phone's vibrations moments ago.

He collapses to his knees again, eyes shut tight, whispering:

DANIEL
Deliver me, O Lord...
Deliver me from her...
Deliver me from myself...

The hum stops.

A long pause.

Then a distant door creak from upstairs – the sound of someone entering a room that shouldn't be occupied.

Daniel lifts his eyes toward the ceiling, terrified.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Grace?

INT. CROSS FAMILY HOME – STAIRCASE – NIGHT

The house is still except for Daniel's uneven breathing.

He grips a small flashlight in one hand and a Bible in the other.

The stairway looms ahead – shadows stretching up like dark fingers toward the landing.

A faint creak again.

Something moves above – soft, deliberate, not random.

He hesitates halfway up, whispering under his breath:

DANIEL
Yea, though I walk through the
valley of the shadow of death...

The words catch in his throat.

He climbs the last steps.

INT. HALLWAY – CONTINUOUS

Dim moonlight filters through a narrow window.

The hallway is lined with family photos – Daniel, Grace, and their son, smiling.

As he passes, each photo seems slightly tilted, as if disturbed.

The air hums faintly – that same low vibration from before.
He stops at the spare bedroom door.
The door is ajar.
Daniel slowly pushes it open.

INT. BEN'S ROOM – CONTINUOUS

The flashlight beam cuts through the darkness.
The room is empty – bed made, pictures still on the walls.
But something's wrong: every cross and Scripture verse that once hung here has been turned upside down.

He steps inside, trembling.

DANIEL

No...
Not in this house.

He sets the Bible down on the nightstand, begins turning each cross upright again, one by one.

As he reaches the last one – a voice behind him.

LILITH (O.S.)
You can't turn faith around by
hand.

He whirls around – the flashlight flickers – the room's empty.

The whisper echoes, but it's not coming from the room now.
It's coming from his laptop downstairs.

A faint female voice begins to murmur through the house – like a corrupted audio file playing backwards.

Daniel's breathing quickens.

He backs toward the door.

DANIEL
Get out of this house!
In the name of Jesus Christ, get
out!!!

The flashlight dies.

Total darkness.

The voice stops.

Silence.

Then – tap, tap, tap, – bare footsteps crossing the hardwood hallway outside.

Daniel grips the doorknob – frozen.

DANIEL (V.O.)
God, give me strength.
This is not of You.
This is not of You...

He bursts out into the hallway – swings the flashlight wildly as it flickers back to life.

No one there.

Just a single wet footprint leading toward the master bedroom.

He follows, every muscle taut.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM – CONTINUOUS

The room looks undisturbed. Grace's robe still draped over a chair, her pillow neatly arranged.

Daniel's flashlight beam settles on the mirror above the dresser.

In the reflection – a woman's silhouette stands in the doorway behind him.

He spins around – nothing there.

Turns back – the silhouette's closer in the mirror now.

DANIEL
In Jesus' name –!

He raises the Bible toward the mirror.

The reflection mimics him – but its eyes are black.

The glass cracks down the center.

The reflection's mouth moves, whispering – her voice barely audible, like silk tearing:

LILITH (REFLECTION)
You prayed for understanding.
I'm the answer you asked for.

The lights flicker violently – then burst.

Shards rain down.

Daniel screams – throws the Bible at the mirror.

It shatters completely.

The reflection disappears.

Silence again.

Daniel drops to his knees, trembling, glass crunching beneath him.

DANIEL
Where are You?!

No answer.

Only the faint electronic ping from the laptop downstairs – a new notification.

He stands shakily, walks back into the hall, following the light.

INT. STUDY – MOMENTS LATER

The laptop sits open on the desk.

The cracked screen glows dimly.

A single new document is open.

ON SCREEN:

"Chapter Three: The Sin of Wrath"

Below it – one new line being typed automatically, letter by letter:

"He calls for God, but answers himself."

Daniel watches, frozen.

His face reflected in the broken glass – fractured into pieces.

He slams the laptop shut – breathing hard – then whispers:

DANIEL
Lord, please don't let that be
true.

He turns away, sinking to the floor as thunder rolls outside
- soft, distant, almost human.

INT. CHURCH - FELLOWSHIP HALL - MORNING

Morning light slants through stained glass, scattering colors
across empty folding chairs.

A whiteboard still reads "Men's Bible Study - 7:00 A.M."

DANIEL enters quietly, Bible under his arm.

He looks around - no one there. The coffee urn cold,
untouched.

He checks his watch, confused.

DANIEL
Hello?
Jim?
Pastor Hollis?

Silence.

The faint echo of his voice disappears into the rafters.

PASTOR HOLLIS (O.S.)
Daniel?

Daniel turns.

PASTOR HOLLIS appears in the doorway, coat slung over his
arm, expression measured - compassionate, but wary.

DANIEL
Pastor...
Guess I'm early.

PASTOR HOLLIS
You're not early.
We canceled your men's group this
week.

Daniel frowns.

DANIEL
Nobody told me.

PASTOR HOLLIS
I was going to call last night, but
I wasn't sure you'd want to talk.

The pastor motions toward his office.

INT. PASTOR HOLLIS'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

The office feels smaller in daylight - less holy, more human.

Daniel sits stiffly across from Hollis, who pours coffee for both of them.

PASTOR HOLLIS
Grace came to see me. She's told me
she is going to be staying with her
sister for a while.

Daniel's eyes lower.

DANIEL
What?

PASTOR HOLLIS
Maybe that's for the best. Give you
both some room to breathe.

Daniel nods slowly, then looks up.

DANIEL
You said my group was canceled.
What's really going on?

Hollis sighs. He sets his coffee down carefully, choosing his words.

PASTOR HOLLIS
There's been, "concern," among the
elders. About you. Your teaching,
your writing. Some of the men felt,
well, that the tone of your recent
devotions had grown, dark.

DANIEL
Truth has a darker tone than
comfort, Pastor. Always has.

PASTOR HOLLIS
This isn't about truth. It's about
balance.
Daniel, you're scaring people.

DANIEL
I'm trying to wake them up.

PASTOR HOLLIS
That's not your job anymore.

Daniel freezes.

DANIEL
What do you mean?

Hollis leans forward, hands clasped.

PASTOR HOLLIS
The board met last night.
You're being relieved of your
duties as deacon. Temporarily.
Until things settle. Until you've
had time to—
—to work on your own house.

Daniel stares at him, disbelief washing into quiet anger.

DANIEL
Until I stop writing about the
devil? Until I behave?

PASTOR HOLLIS
Until you find your footing again.
This isn't punishment, Daniel. It's
compassion.

DANIEL
Compassion.
When Job was covered in boils and
ashes, they called that compassion
too, didn't they?

Hollis exhales, patient but uneasy.

PASTOR HOLLIS
You're not Job. You're a man who's
hurting. And sometimes, hurting men
mistake the sound of their own pain
for the voice of God.

Daniel stands abruptly, the chair legs scraping across the floor.

DANIEL
You think this is about me?
You think I want this?
You think I can sleep?

The pastor looks at him – kind, but unmoved.

PASTOR HOLLIS
I think you need to rest, Daniel.
And pray.
And maybe stop trying to write the
Devil's biography.

Daniel's jaw tightens.

He looks toward the office window – the sunlight cutting through dust motes, refracting across the open Bible on Hollis's desk.

The light falls exactly across the verse title: "The Testing of Faith."

He points to it.

DANIEL
You preach that God tests His
people. What if this is my test?

PASTOR HOLLIS
Then pass it by letting Him, not
you, do the writing.

A long silence.

Daniel looks down – not defeated, but betrayed.

DANIEL
You're afraid. All of you. You
don't want to admit he's still out
there.

PASTOR HOLLIS
(quietly)
No, son. We just don't want to give
him a stage and the spotlight.

Daniel stares for a long moment, then nods – slow, resigned.

He reaches for his Bible, tucks it under his arm, and walks to the door.

Before he leaves–

PASTOR HOLLIS (CONT'D)
Daniel...
Please don't isolate yourself.
Darkness feeds on solitude.

Daniel stops in the doorway, back turned.

DANIEL
Then maybe that's where I'll
finally see what's been feeding.

He leaves.

The door closes softly behind him.

Hollis watches, deeply troubled, whispering to himself:

PASTOR HOLLIS
Lord, keep him safe from what he's
chasing.

The wind outside picks up.

The sunlight dims slightly – as though a cloud passes between it and the church.

EXT. GRACELINE CHURCH – PARKING LOT – LATE MORNING

The church bell tolls faintly in the distance – eight chimes, slow and even.

The air is bright but oddly still.

DANIEL exits the front doors, shoulders squared, Bible pressed to his chest.

He walks across the gravel lot toward his car. His steps crunch sharply – the only sound.

Birds perch silently on the telephone wire above, not moving, not singing.

He unlocks the driver's door – hesitates, glancing back toward the church.

Through the sanctuary windows, sunlight cuts across the empty pews. The building looks hollow.

The wind picks up just enough to rustle fallen bulletins along the sidewalk – one catches against his leg.

INSERT –
BULLETIN:

"Men's Group Cancelled – Pray for Discernment."

He crumples it, drops it into the nearest trash can, gets into his car.

INT. DANIEL'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

He sits behind the wheel for a long moment, hands gripping the steering wheel.

The Bible rests in the passenger seat beside him.

His reflection in the rearview mirror seems off.

For just a second, his eyes don't blink when he does.

He exhales, rubs his face, starts the engine. The radio clicks on mid-sermon - Pastor Hollis's voice from a previous broadcast:

RADIO (HOLLIS'S VOICE)
"...the enemy whispers, not to
tempt the sinner, but to tire the
faithful."

Daniel shuts it off immediately.

Silence.

He shifts into reverse - glances into the mirror again - and freezes.

A WOMAN STANDS ACROSS THE PARKING LOT, far away near the edge of the trees.

Still. Watching.

She's dressed in dark clothes, her hair moving only slightly in the breeze.

Too far to see clearly - but enough to feel familiar.

Daniel squints. The distance ripples faintly, like heat haze.

DANIEL
No, not here.

He steps out of the car, shielding his eyes from the sun.

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

The figure hasn't moved.

Daniel shuts off the car, gets out, and starts walking toward her, slow, cautious.

DANIEL
Hey! Can I help you?

No response.

He takes a few more steps.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
You need something?

Still silence.

Then, faintly - a woman's voice carried on the wind.

LILITH (O.S.)
You prayed for proof.

He stops cold.

His throat tightens.

The figure turns - not away, but slightly toward him, just enough to show the curve of a smile.

Then a truck passes between them - one of the church maintenance vehicles.

Daniel flinches, the sound jarring.

When it's gone - she is too.

The spot where she stood is empty.

Only the trees sway gently behind the chain-link fence.

He stares for several seconds, then laughs nervously - a broken, almost manic laugh.

DANIEL
I'm seeing things now. That's what
they want.

He turns back toward his car - stops.

ON THE DRIVER'S
WINDOW:

Written in the dust with a fingertip - seven simple words:

"When will your book be finished?"

Daniel stares at it, heart pounding.

He wipes it away with his sleeve - but as soon as it's gone, the letters reappear, faintly etched beneath the glass like scratches.

His breathing grows shallow.

He glances back at the church - empty.

Then at the tree line - no one.

Finally, he looks upward.

The birds are gone.

The telephone wire hangs empty, swaying in the breeze.

He gets into the car quickly, slams the door, locks it.

Inside, he grips the steering wheel tight, whispering to himself:

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Lord, if this is the devil's hand,
then give me Yours instead.

The wind howls suddenly, sharp and cold.

A single black feather drifts across the windshield - sticks for a moment - then slides away.

Daniel starts the car, his hands trembling, and drives off.

The camera lingers on the church behind him - the reflection of the steeple in his rear window slowly inverts as he pulls away.

INT. LOCAL CAFÉ - AFTERNOON

The café is cozy but busy - chatter, clinking dishes, light music.

GRACE and SARAH sit in a corner booth by the window. A plate of half-eaten sandwiches sits between them. Grace's coffee has gone cold.

Grace stirs it absently, staring out the window.

SARAH
You haven't touched your food.

GRACE
I'm not really hungry.

SARAH
You said that at breakfast. If I
didn't know better, I'd think you
were fasting.

Grace gives a faint smile that doesn't reach her eyes.

GRACE
Maybe I am. Just not on purpose.

Sarah studies her sister carefully – Grace looks pale, fragile, but alert.

SARAH
Have you heard from him?

GRACE
No calls. No texts. Not since
yesterday morning.

SARAH
Maybe he needs space.

GRACE
Space is what got us here.

She sets her spoon down, voice trembling slightly.

GRACE (CONT'D)
He's not sleeping, Sarah. He's
talking to things that aren't
there. And he thinks this woman –
this, "fan," is some kind of test
from God.

SARAH
(carefully)
You said she only met him once.

GRACE
Once that I know of. But she's in
his head now. And whatever he's
hearing at night –
–I think it's her voice.

Sarah leans in, concern replacing skepticism.

SARAH
Grace, I think you need to call
Pastor Hollis again.

Grace nods absently, then glances toward the café door – half expecting Daniel to walk in.

GRACE
I went by the church earlier. His
car was there. But Pastor Hollis
said the Bible study was canceled.

SARAH
You think he stayed to talk?

GRACE
He said they did.
He said the board suspended him as
a deacon. That's not going to help
him – it's just going to push him
deeper into whatever this is.

Sarah sighs, frustrated but trying to remain composed.

SARAH
Maybe what he needs isn't a pastor.
Maybe it's a doctor. You can love
God and still need help, Grace.

Grace's eyes flicker with quiet offense, then soften.

GRACE
You think I haven't thought of
that? He won't go. He says medicine
dulls the Spirit.
He thinks he's fighting something
real.

Sarah reaches across the table, takes her sister's hand.

SARAH
Then we fight for him. Together.
We don't just sit here waiting for
the phone to ring.

Grace looks up, her resolve wavering between faith and fear.

GRACE
You don't know what it's like when
he prays now. It's not peace. It's
like, like he's arguing with
someone who answers back.

Sarah starts to respond – then freezes, glancing down at
Grace's phone buzzing on the table.

ON SCREEN:

UNKNOWN NUMBER – 1 New Message

Grace hesitates, unlocks it.

Her face drains of color.

INSERT – TEXT:

"He's still mine."

Sarah leans closer, whispering:

SARAH
Is that Daniel?

Grace shakes her head – horrified.

GRACE
No. He never uses that phrase.

She scrolls – no sender info, no timestamp beyond "Just now."

Sarah grabs the phone, showing the screen to a nearby waitress.

SARAH
Do you see this message?

The waitress squints.

WAITRESS
No, ma'am. It's blank.

Sarah looks back – the text is gone.

Just an empty message bubble.

Grace's hand trembles.

Sarah grabs her purse, decisive now.

SARAH
That's it. We're going to your house. If this is in his head, we'll see it for ourselves.
And if it's not–

She doesn't finish.

Grace nods, tears brimming.

GRACE
Then God help us both.

They stand, leaving cash on the table.

EXT. CAFÉ PARKING LOT – MOMENTS LATER

The camera pans back through the café window – their table empty now, two half-drunk coffees cooling beside a single black feather resting on the seat.

INT. CROSS FAMILY HOME - LATE AFTERNOON

Muted sunlight filters through drawn blinds, slicing the living room into narrow bands of gold and shadow. Dust drifts in the air - the house feels abandoned and alive all at once.

DANIEL sits on the couch with his Bible open across his knees. The laptop is gone, unplugged, the cords wound neatly beside it. He's trying to look composed, but his hands tremble with exhaustion.

A faint tick-tick-tick from the kitchen clock.

No other sound.

He breathes out a slow, practiced prayer - the voice of a man convincing himself he's calm.

DANIEL

Lord, the world says I've lost my mind. They say the devil isn't real. But You see. You hear. You know what's walked through this world, and this house.

He turns the page - a verse underlined, shaky handwriting in the margin:

"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." - James 4:7.

A faint rumble of thunder rolls in the distance - though the sky outside is clear.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

If I resist long enough, You'll show them, won't You? You'll make them see.

He closes his eyes. A tear slips down his cheek, unacknowledged.

The tick-tick-tick of the clock seems to grow louder - then stops.

Daniel opens his eyes. The silence feels wrong, thick.

He glances toward the window.

Outside, the street is empty - no cars, no people, no birds.

The air looks too still.

Then - a car door slams in the distance.

Daniel flinches, peers through the blinds.

EXT. STREET (DANIEL'S POV)

A single car pulls up across from the house – dark blue sedan.

Two silhouettes inside.

Grace's car.

Daniel stares, heart racing.

DANIEL (V.O.)
They're back.
Or she's sent them.

He paces to the front door, whispering to himself now – prayer bleeding into fear.

DANIEL
Not again.
Not another test.
Lord, if that's them, give me
peace.
If it's her–

He stops, glancing toward the unplugged laptop.

The screen suddenly flickers on for an instant – faint glow, then darkness again.

Daniel freezes.

He steps closer, slow.

Touches the lid. It's cold.

The doorbell rings.

He jerks back.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
No. Too soon. She'd knock, not
ring. She's learning the sound of
my home.

He moves to the front window and peers through the blinds again.

EXT. FRONT PORCH (DANIEL'S POV)

A distorted reflection in the glass – two blurred shapes approaching the porch.

He can't see faces. Just motion.

DANIEL (V.O.)
She's found a way to wear Grace's
face now.

He grabs the Bible from the couch, clutching it tight.

DANIEL
You won't fool me again. You won't
speak in her voice.

The doorbell rings again – followed by a knock.

GRACE (O.S.)
Daniel? It's me.

His eyes widen. The voice sounds perfect – tender, familiar.

But he doesn't move.

GRACE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Please open the door. Sarah's with
me. We just want to talk.

Daniel shakes his head, backing away.

DANIEL
No, no, that's too good. You're not
her. You can't be.

SARAH (O.S.)
Daniel, it's really us!
Please—!

He closes his eyes, whispering the same phrase over and over:

DANIEL
Get thee behind me. Get thee behind
me. Get thee behind me...

The knocking grows louder – desperate now.

GRACE (O.S.)
Daniel, please! You're scaring me—

He slams his hand against the door, shouting:

DANIEL
YOU WON'T USE HER VOICE!

Silence.

Daniel stands there, chest heaving.

Then, softly – from behind him – another voice, right by his ear:

LILITH (V.O.)
Good, Daniel. That's exactly what
she said about you.

He spins around – nothing there.

The blinds sway gently as if something just passed by.

The doorbell rings again – one final time.

Daniel drops to his knees, clutching the Bible to his chest, whispering:

DANIEL
Deliver me, O Lord. I will not open
that door. Not again.

The knocking stops.

Silence.

Then, faintly – through the walls – Grace's voice, muffled but breaking:

GRACE (O.S.)
Oh my God, he's not answering.

A car engine starts outside.

Daniel looks toward the window again – just in time to see the sedan's taillights disappearing down the street.

He stands, trembling.

DANIEL
You see, Lord? I resisted. She
fled. Just like You said.

He collapses into the armchair, laughing softly through tears – part relief, part madness.

The house hums again, low and steady.

Daniel closes his eyes and begins to pray – voice cracking, the prayer half praise, half plea.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
You're still here with me, aren't
You?

The lamp flickers – once.

Then a whisper answers – faint, familiar, and unmistakably female:

LILITH (V.O.)
Always.

INT. SARAH'S CAR – DUSK

The car glides down a narrow, tree-lined road. The sun bleeds orange through the windshield, flashing between the branches like a slow strobe.

GRACE sits in the passenger seat, arms folded tight, staring out the window.

SARAH drives – alert, cautious – glancing at her sister every few seconds.

The air between them is heavy.

SARAH
He didn't answer. You saw the
curtains move, right?

GRACE
He was there. I could feel him. He
heard us and he didn't open the
door.

Sarah shakes her head, tightening her grip on the wheel.

SARAH
He looked right at us and refused
to come out. That's not Daniel.
That's something else.

Grace doesn't respond – her gaze distant, fixed on the fading light through the trees.

GRACE
He thinks it's us who changed. That
we're part of it now.

SARAH
Then he's sicker than I thought.

A beat of silence. The sound of the tires on gravel fills the space.

GRACE
He wasn't always like this.
When he prayed, it used to feel
like peace. Now when he prays, the
room goes cold.

Sarah glances at her – not understanding, but hearing the sincerity.

SARAH
You're not going back there
tonight. Promise me that.

GRACE
I just want him to see I haven't
given up on him. That I still
believe he can find his way back.

Sarah exhales, shaking her head.

SARAH
You can't pull someone out of the
dark if they think it's light.

Grace turns her face toward the window – eyes glistening.

Outside, the last rays of daylight slip away.

Then – a sudden thump from the roof.

Both women jump.

SARAH (CONT'D)
What was that?

She slows the car. Looks up through the windshield – nothing there.

Grace leans forward, staring upward, heart racing.

GRACE
Keep driving.

SARAH
Grace –

GRACE
Just keep driving!

Sarah accelerates. The tires crunch over the uneven road. The thumping continues - lighter now, moving from the roof to the trunk.

Then - silence.

Grace dares a look out the rear window.

Nothing.

She exhales shakily.

SARAH
Probably a branch, or a-

GRACE
No.
It was her.

Sarah glances at her - wary.

SARAH
Grace, don't start-

GRACE
You didn't see the feather on my
windshield this morning. You didn't
see the message disappear.

The tension breaks; Grace begins to cry quietly.

Sarah reaches over, resting a hand on her shoulder.

SARAH
We'll go back tomorrow. Together.
In daylight. If he won't open the
door, I'll call the sheriff, the
pastor- whoever it takes. But
tonight, we need to rest.

Grace nods, staring forward.

The car rounds a bend - headlights sweep across a wooden sign by the roadside:

"Faith Hill Cemetery - 1 Mile."

Sarah frowns.

SARAH (CONT'D)
That wasn't here before.

Grace turns to look out the window as they pass it – her reflection stares back, ghostly in the glass.

A black feather clings to the outside of her window, trembling in the wind.

She reaches up instinctively to brush it away – but it's outside the glass, not inside.

Her breath catches.

GRACE (WHISPERING)
It followed us.

Sarah doesn't see it. She turns to say something –

When she looks back, the feather is gone.

Grace sits frozen, hands clasped, whispering to herself:

GRACE (CONT'D)
Please, God, don't let her win.

The car disappears down the empty road, swallowed by the falling dark.

INT. CROSS FAMILY STUDY – NIGHT

The house is still, illuminated only by a desk lamp and the faint blue light of Daniel's cracked laptop screen. The glow cuts a halo around him – the light of creation, or of corruption.

DANIEL sits rigid in his chair, typing slowly, reverently, as though taking dictation.

ON SCREEN:

"Chapter Four: Pride. The serpent doesn't tempt the weak. He flatters the chosen."

Daniel stops, rereads the words – a strange, humbled awe on his face.

DANIEL (V.O.)
He's testing me because I matter.
Because I still believe when others
mock. He's showing me what others
won't see.

He looks around the room – the crosses he's turned upright, the pages of Scripture scattered like feathers of faith across the desk.

He picks up his Bible, opens it at random.

His finger lands on Matthew 4:8-9.

DANIEL (READING)

"The devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and said, 'All these I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.'"

He stares at the words for a long moment.

Then whispers, half-prayer, half-defiance:

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I won't bow. I'll expose him. Even if I have to write it in blood.

The wind outside moans softly through the chimney – almost like a sigh.

He sets the Bible down and opens a new document on the laptop. The cursor blinks.

He begins to type – fast, fevered, unstoppable.

DANIEL (V.O.)

He silences the shepherds.
He blinds the believers.
He hides inside the rules they write.
But I see him.
I see what he's become.

His breathing quickens.

He wipes sweat from his brow – though the room is cold.

A faint electrical hum fills the air again.

The screen flickers.

The words begin typing themselves – interlacing with his own:

"He sees me because I've chosen him."

"He writes because I guide his hand."

"His pride is my proof."

Daniel stares, transfixed.

He doesn't delete them this time.

Instead, he whispers – calm, almost grateful:

DANIEL
Then use me, Lord. If this is how
the truth must come, use me.

He stands slowly, spreading his arms, face tilted toward the ceiling.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
They called Noah a fool.
They mocked Moses.
They crucified You.
Let them doubt me too.

Lightning flashes outside the window – a brief silhouette reflected in the glass behind him.

It's Lilith – or something shaped like her – standing over his shoulder, smiling faintly.

Thunder follows – delayed, soft, distant.

Daniel doesn't turn.

LILITH (V.O.)
That's it, Daniel.

The light flickers again, brighter this time – the reflection disappears.

Daniel falls to his knees, arms lifted, eyes shining with conviction and exhaustion.

DANIEL
I will finish the book.
Even if it costs me everything.
Even if it costs her.

He lowers his arms slowly, whispering a prayer that sounds more like a vow:

DANIEL (CONT'D)
They'll remember me as the one who
saw.

A faint sound echoes through the house – the soft ding of a new email.

He turns toward the laptop. The inbox shows one unread message.

SENDER: Unknown

SUBJECT: "The world is watching."

He opens it.

It's blank – except for a single line at the bottom:

"Chapter Five begins with a sacrifice."

Daniel leans closer – eyes wide, lips parting in a trembling whisper:

DANIEL (CONT'D)
What sacrifice?

No answer.

Just the soft flicker of the screen, the hum of unseen current, and Daniel's reflection staring back – proud, haunted, convinced.

INT. CROSS FAMILY STUDY – SAME NIGHT

The laptop's glow paints the room in ghostly blue.

Daniel sits frozen before the message: "Chapter Five begins with a sacrifice."

His eyes shimmer with tears and exhaustion.

A long, eerie silence.

Then – his expression changes.

Peace. Purpose. Revelation.

DANIEL (V.O.)
Abraham didn't question. He just
prepared the altar.

He stands, closes the laptop with gentle reverence, and retrieves his Bible from the desk.

He flips to Genesis – his finger landing on the passage almost automatically.

INSERT – PAGE: "Take your son, your only son, whom you love, and offer him there."

Daniel exhales. A trembling smile crosses his face.

DANIEL (V.O.)
Not my son.
My offering.
My faith.

He looks toward the fireplace – cold, unused. The mantle holds family photos: Grace laughing, a wedding picture.

He begins to take them down one by one, stacking them neatly on the floor.

DANIEL
You gave me this home, Lord. If You want it back, take it.

He lights a match – the flare briefly illuminates his weary face, his eyes glassy but devout.

He drops the match into the cold fireplace. It fizzles against ash.

He lights another, and another – until the flame finally catches on an old page of his manuscript.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Let what's impure be burned away.

The papers begin to curl and blacken.

He watches as the words – Pride. Wrath. Lust. – disappear into flame.

But then, the fire grows too quickly, licking up the sides of the hearth.

Daniel steps back, startled.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
No – wait – not yet!

He grabs the fireplace poker, trying to smother the blaze, but the flames only flare higher.

The room flickers violently with red-orange light.

LILITH (V.O.)
Sacrifice is never control, Daniel.
It's surrender.

He freezes, the poker in his hand, eyes darting around.

DANIEL
You twist everything He says!

LILITH (V.O.)
No. I just translate.

He looks toward the desk – the laptop is open again, though he never touched it.

On the cracked screen, new words type themselves:

"She left you. She doubted you. She's the offering."

Daniel stumbles backward, shaking his head violently.

DANIEL
No. That's not what He meant–

The text deletes itself – then reappears, clearer, bolder:

"Bring her home. Complete the chapter."

Daniel grips his head, trembling, pacing.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Lord, tell me it's not You. Please,
tell me that's not You.

The house moans as wind howls through the chimney.

Somewhere upstairs, a door slams – echoing like thunder.

He falls to his knees, shaking uncontrollably, whispering:

DANIEL (CONT'D)
I am faithful. I am Yours. If You
need proof, I'll give it.

He looks toward the Bible on the floor – open to the same page.

His trembling finger traces the words "and he built an altar there..."

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Then I'll build mine.

He stands – calmer now, eerily composed.

He takes the crucifix from the wall and places it on the desk.

Then begins gathering the remaining manuscript pages, stacking them like kindling beside it.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
(whispering, steady)
Chapter Five begins tonight.

He dips his finger into the ash from the fireplace and makes a cross on his forehead.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Not my will, but Yours.

He kneels before the desk, bowing deeply, whispering into the shadows:

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Show me what to give. Show me who
to save.

LILITH (V.O.)
And it was good in his eyes.

The fire flares – the screen goes white.

EXT. CROSS FAMILY HOME – MORNING

The sky is an unnatural gray. Dew clings to the overgrown lawn. The air feels too still – like the world is holding its breath.

A blue sedan pulls up. GRACE and SARAH step out, cautiously. Grace clutches her phone in one hand, her keys in the other.

SARAH
If he's not here, we call the
police. No more waiting.

Grace nods, but her eyes are fixed on the house – on the windows, dark and smudged with smoke residue.

GRACE
Something's wrong. It smells like
something was burning.

They approach the porch. The doormat is charred around the edges. The faint smell of burned paper lingers.

Grace hesitates at the front door, key trembling in her hand.

SARAH
You sure you want to go in first?

GRACE
If he's here, I have to.

She slides the key into the lock. It turns stiffly.

INT. CROSS FAMILY HOME - CONTINUOUS

The door creaks open. A wave of stale air and ash drifts out.

The once bright home now feels hollow - a shell. Curtains drawn. The faint crackle of something still smoldering deep inside.

Grace covers her mouth.

GRACE
Oh, God...

SARAH
Stay behind me.

They step inside. The living room is littered with burned pages, scorched furniture, and melted candle wax. The smell of soot and incense fills the air.

On the wall, where family photos once hung, the frames are gone - a dark outline where they used to be.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Daniel?

Her voice echoes through the silence. No answer.

They move toward the study.

INT. STUDY - MOMENTS LATER

The door is half-open.

Inside, the desk is covered with ashes and blackened paper. The crucifix from the wall lies on its side - its bronze body warped from heat.

Grace steps closer, eyes wide.

On the desk sits Daniel's Bible, open to Genesis 22. The page is streaked with ash and smeared fingerprints.

GRACE (WHISPERING)
"Take your son, whom you love..."

Her voice breaks.

SARAH
Grace-

She points to the fireplace.

Inside, the fire has long since died, but the remains of printed pages still glow faintly at the edges. A stack of manuscript fragments sits beside it – untouched, except for one page that seems almost placed atop the ashes like an offering.

INSERT – PAGE:

"Chapter Five: The Sacrifice of Doubt."

'The faithful must destroy what weakens their belief.'

Grace's hand trembles as she picks it up.

GRACE

He thinks God told him to do this.
To burn his work, maybe worse.

Sarah kneels near the hearth, brushing away soot. She finds something small – a wedding photo, the glass cracked, edges singed but faces still visible.

SARAH

He burned everything except you.

Grace takes the photo from her, clutching it to her chest.

A faint sound upstairs – a floorboard creaks.

Both women freeze.

SARAH (WHISPERING) (CONT'D)

He's here.

Grace nods, terrified and hopeful at once.

They start up the stairs. Each step groans beneath their weight.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY – CONTINUOUS

Morning light leaks in through half-closed blinds.

The hallway walls are lined with Bible verses – handwritten in charcoal, some smeared, some barely legible.

"Obedience above all."

"Faith demands flame."

"She fled. I stayed."

Grace's voice trembles as she whispers:

GRACE
He wrote on the walls...

They reach the last door – the master bedroom.

It's closed.

Grace takes a breath, pushes it open.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM – CONTINUOUS

The curtains are drawn tight. Only a thin line of daylight slices across the bed.

Daniel is sitting on the edge, motionless.

Bible in one hand, a burned page in the other.

His face is calm – eerily so.

GRACE (SOFTLY)
Daniel...

He looks up slowly. His eyes are bloodshot but strangely serene.

DANIEL
You came back.

GRACE
What did you do?

He glances toward the window.

DANIEL
I proved my faith.
And He answered.

Sarah takes a cautious step forward.

SARAH
You need help, Daniel.
You almost burned the house down–

DANIEL
I purified it.

Grace looks around. On the nightstand: a kitchen knife, blackened at the tip, sits beside a burned crucifix and his phone.

She moves toward him carefully.

GRACE
Daniel, look at me.
Please. Whatever you think He said
- it's not from God.

His eyes flicker - a tear rolls down.

DANIEL
Then who else listens when I pray?

Grace kneels in front of him, grabbing his hand.

GRACE
I do. I'm listening now.

For the first time, his composure breaks. His shoulders shake.

DANIEL
I was trying to save us. I
thought... if I burned the sin, the
darkness would leave. But it's
still here.

GRACE
Then let me help you chase it out.
Together.

He looks at her - the faintest flicker of recognition. Of love.

Then his phone buzzes on the nightstand.

They both look at it.

The screen lights up.

TEXT (ON SCREEN): "When will my book be completed?"

Grace's face drains of color.

Daniel just stares - silent tears streaming.

DANIEL (WHISPERING)
I think it already is.

The message fades, replaced by a new one appearing letter by letter:

"Thank you for your sacrifice."

Grace gasps, covering her mouth.

Daniel's breathing quickens - awe, terror, faith all at war inside him.

The window blinds rustle though there's no wind.

Outside, a flock of black birds bursts from the trees, scattering into the pale morning sky.

INT. CROSS FAMILY STUDY - THAT EVENING

The light has changed; warm tones from the sunset spill through the blinds, glowing over the wreckage of Daniel's once-orderly study.

The air still smells faintly of smoke and ash.

GRACE kneels beside the desk. SARAH stands nearby with a trash bag, cleaning quietly, glancing toward her sister every few seconds.

Grace gently sifts through the burned manuscript pages, separating the legible from the charred. Some are fused together; others crumble to dust at her touch.

She murmurs softly, almost praying as she reads fragments aloud.

GRACE
"The serpent flatters the chosen..."

She turns a page

GRACE (CONT'D)
"...to destroy doubt is to prove devotion..."

She looks away from the page.

GRACE (CONT'D)
What did you do to yourself,
Daniel?

Sarah leans against the doorframe, weary.

SARAH
You don't have to read all that.
Just throw them away.

GRACE

No.

If I understand what he was
writing, maybe I'll understand how
to bring him back.

She finds a partially burned USB drive half-buried under the
ashes. It's blackened but intact.

SARAH

That from his laptop?

GRACE

Looks like it.

She plugs it into Daniel's cracked laptop on the desk.

The machine whirs to life, screen flickering, still
functional despite the damage.

ON SCREEN: The desktop loads – only one folder remains: "THE
DEVIL AMONG US - FINAL DRAFT."

Grace hesitates, then double-clicks.

A long pause. The screen blinks. Then hundreds of documents
appear – drafts, revisions, each with timestamps from the
past few weeks.

SARAH

That's a lot of versions.

Grace scrolls – her brow furrows.

GRACE

Look at this.

INSERT – SCREEN:

File names with identical timestamps, mere seconds apart.

"Chapter 3 - Lust (Daniel Cross).docx"

"Chapter 3 - Lust (Unknown Contributor).docx"

Sarah leans closer.

SARAH

Who's the other author?

Grace clicks one of the "Unknown" files.

The document opens – filled with Daniel's writing, but words and phrases are highlighted and replaced by something else.

INSERT – TEXT:

"God speaks in silence" replaced with "God speaks through me."

"The enemy whispers" replaced with "The enemy listens."

"My wife will save me" replaced with "My wife will test me."

Grace's eyes widen – trembling fingers covering her mouth.

GRACE
He didn't write this.

SARAH
Then who did?

Grace clicks "File Info."

The screen reveals an Author tag: L.Dane – GraceLine Publishing Security Division.

SARAH (CONT'D)
L.Dane...?

GRACE
Lilith Dane.
That's her.
That's the woman he met at the
coffee shop.

Sarah straightens, stunned.

SARAH
Wait – she works for his publisher?

Grace scrolls further – finds the edit history.

Dozens of changes timestamped between midnight and 3:00 a.m., when Daniel was home, alone, without Wi-Fi.

SARAH (CONT'D)
How could she – He didn't even have
internet.

Grace's breathing quickens.

GRACE
She's been inside his files.
Inside his head.
(MORE)

GRACE (CONT'D)
Changing his words until he
believed they were his own.

Sarah's phone buzzes, startling them both. She checks the screen – nothing there. Just a blank notification bubble.

She frowns, uneasy.

Grace clicks open Daniel's email – the last message still in the inbox:

"Chapter Five begins with a sacrifice."

She scrolls down – sees a footer that chills her blood.

INSERT - SCREEN
FOOTER:

Sent from GraceLine Publishing / Information Security
Department.

Grace slams the laptop shut, backing away from the desk.

SARAH
Grace, what is it?

Grace stares at the closed computer, trembling.

GRACE
She wasn't a hallucination. She's
real. And she's still here.

As she says it – the printer in the corner hums to life.

Both women turn. The machine spits out a single fresh page.

Grace approaches, hesitantly, and pulls it out.

INSERT - PRINTED
PAGE:

"Do not undo his faith."

Grace drops the page.

The printer shuts off on its own.

The house falls silent again.

Sarah whispers, almost afraid to breathe:

SARAH
Grace, we have to leave. Now.

Grace doesn't move. Her eyes remain fixed on the printer – on the faint wisp of smoke curling from the paper tray.

GRACE (WHISPERING)
She's not finished with him. Or
with me.

INT. CROSS FAMILY HOME – NIGHT

Rain lashes the windows. The storm outside beats like a heart against the glass.

The house is dim – shadows quivering with every flash of lightning.

DANIEL kneels in the living room, surrounded by the remnants of his burned manuscript. Pages soaked in ash, candle stubs melted into the hardwood.

He's calmer than before – eerily calm – the quiet resolve of a man who believes he's found purpose in madness.

The Bible rests open in front of him, marked at Genesis 22.

A small crucifix sits beside it, charred at the edges.

DANIEL (V.O.)
Abraham's faith was proven in
obedience. Not understanding. He
didn't ask why – only when.

He closes his eyes, whispering:

DANIEL
You said the world would know
through me. You said You'd make it
clear. I am ready, Lord. Tell me
what must be given.

The storm grows louder. A flash of lightning illuminates the mirror over the fireplace.

For an instant, Daniel's reflection isn't alone – a woman stands behind him, faint and pale, watching.

Then the light fades. She's gone.

The laptop screen on the table lights up.

Daniel opens his eyes, hesitates, then looks at it.

ON SCREEN:

"The lamb returns at dawn."

He stares, frowning – uncertain, reverent.

DANIEL (WHISPERING) (CONT'D)
The lamb...

He looks toward the mantel – at a framed photo of Grace, half burned.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
You wouldn't ask for her. You
couldn't.

A long silence.

Another flash of lightning.

The reflection in the mirror now smiles faintly – though Daniel himself does not.

LILITH (V.O.)
Faith isn't love, Daniel. It's
surrender.

DANIEL
You're not Him.

LILITH (V.O.)
Then why does He answer when I
speak?

The lights flicker; the crucifix falls from the mantel and hits the floor – the sound sharp in the quiet.

Daniel jumps.

When he bends to pick it up, the laptop screen lights up again.

ON SCREEN:

"She will return to you. Bring her to the altar."

He drops the crucifix, breathing hard.

DANIEL (V.O.)
Test me, Lord. If this is my trial,
I will not fail You again.

He stands, pacing – torn between fear and conviction.

He goes to the garage, opens an old chest, and pulls out a wooden carpenter's mallet, rope, and a small lantern.

His hands tremble as he carries them into the study, laying each carefully beside the Bible like sacred relics.

DANIEL (V.O.)
It's not violence if it's
obedience. It's not death if it's
deliverance.

He begins to arrange the burned pages in a circle on the floor – each labeled with a sin: Wrath, Lust, Pride, Envy, Greed, Gluttony, Sloth.

At the center, he places Grace's burned photograph.

Then he kneels inside the circle, closes his eyes, and whispers:

DANIEL
If this is Your will, let her come.
If it is not – take me instead.

The house seems to hold its breath.

The fire in the hearth flickers back to life – even though there's no wood.

Daniel opens his eyes, staring at the sudden flame.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
A sign.

The flame shifts color – orange to blue, then violet.

He weeps – overcome – as he reaches his hand toward it.

LILITH (V.O.)
He accepts your offering.

The flame surges – he flinches, the heat searing his palm.

He drops to his knees, clutching his burned hand to his chest, laughing through tears.

DANIEL
It's begun. It's really begun.

He stares at the burned photograph, then at the window.

The rain has stopped. The night is perfectly still.

ON WINDOW GLASS:

A faint outline appears in condensation – a handprint, small and delicate, as though Grace herself pressed it there from the outside.

Daniel's face softens. His voice breaks.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
She's coming back to me.

He turns back to the Bible, kneeling deeper, whispering with reverence:

DANIEL (CONT'D)
And when she comes, I will prove I
am faithful.

The camera lingers on his face – peace, fear, devotion all tangled into one.

Then slowly pans down to the Bible.

The flame's reflection dances across the open page, illuminating a new phrase written in ash that wasn't there before:

"Faith is proven through the one you love most."

Thunder rumbles faintly – distant, almost approving.

INT. SARAH'S HOUSE – LATE NIGHT

Rain patters softly against the window.

Grace sits at the kitchen table, the burned USB drive wrapped in a towel before her like something radioactive.

Sarah stands by the counter, phone in hand, watching her sister's mind work.

Grace stares at the drive – tired, hollow, but thinking.

GRACE
He won't listen to us.

He'll think we're possessed... or part of her.

SARAH
Then what? We can't just wait until
he burns the house down.

Grace's eyes flick toward the clock – midnight.

Then to a framed family photo on the wall: Uncle Frank, smiling in a police uniform.

GRACE (QUIETLY)
Maybe we don't ask him to come.
Maybe we bring him.

Sarah frowns.

SARAH
What are you talking about?

Grace takes a breath – trembling, resolute.

GRACE
Uncle Frank. He's still on the force, right? If the fire department logged that house fire, they can justify a welfare check. Frank can make it look official.

SARAH
You want the police to pick him up?

GRACE
Not as a criminal – as a witness. Say there were questions about the cause of the fire. Get him to the station, away from that house... and away from her.

Sarah hesitates, but sees the fierce clarity in her sister's eyes.

SARAH
And then what?

GRACE
Then I talk to him. Alone. They'll take his phone, his laptop – standard procedure. He won't have her in his ear for once. It's the only place left where she can't reach him.

Sarah stares at her, realizing Grace has moved from despair to strategy.

SARAH
You really think you can break through to him?

GRACE
I have to. Before she convinces him
I'm the sacrifice.

INT. POLICE STATION - NEXT MORNING

The hum of fluorescent lights. A quiet morning at the precinct.

OFFICER FRANK DAWSON, late 50s, kind-eyed, uniform neat but worn, stands near the front desk with Grace.

FRANK
You sure about this, honey?
He's your husband. Once he's in
here, we'll have to follow
procedure.

Grace nods, composed but shaking inside.

GRACE
Do whatever you need to do. Just...
keep him safe until I get to him.

Frank studies her face - the haunted look he's seen in too many domestic calls - then gives a slow nod.

FRANK
Alright. We'll say it's about the fire. No cuffs, no charges. Just questioning. If he gets agitated, we calm him down.

Grace squeezes his arm.

GRACE
Thank you.

INT. DANIEL'S HOUSE - SAME MORNING

Sunlight filters through gray clouds.

Daniel sits at the kitchen table, hands clasped around a cup of coffee, staring at the Bible open before him.

He looks peaceful - too peaceful.

A knock at the door.

He rises, opens it.

Two uniformed officers stand there, one of them Frank.

FRANK
Morning, sir. Daniel Cross?

DANIEL
That's right.

FRANK
I'm Officer Dawson. This is Officer Reed. We're following up on a report about a possible fire here last night.

Daniel stiffens slightly, defensive.

DANIEL
There was no hazard. I was burning old writings. Cleansing the home.

Frank smiles, calm.

FRANK
I understand. We just need to make sure everything's safe. Mind coming down to the station to answer a few questions? Won't take long.

Daniel hesitates, then nods slowly.

DANIEL
If it helps them see I've done nothing wrong.

He grabs his coat and Bible.

Frank gestures gently.

FRANK
Just the coat, sir. We'll keep your belongings secure for you at the station.

Daniel looks at the Bible in his hand - clutches it once - then sets it down on the counter.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERVIEW ROOM - LATER

A small, sterile room: metal table, two chairs, fluorescent light buzzing faintly.

Daniel sits alone, his hands clasped, a calm smile that doesn't reach his eyes.

Through the window, Frank nods at Grace.

FRANK

He's all yours. We pulled his phone and anything with a cord. He's in our Faraday room like you asked, it blocks all electromagnetic fields from entering or leaving. He's clean for now.

Grace exhales, heart pounding, and steps inside.

Daniel looks up – his eyes soften for a moment.

DANIEL

Grace.

GRACE

Hi, Danny.

She sits across from him, folding her trembling hands.

DANIEL

Is this your doing?

GRACE

Yes.

Because I love you.

He tilts his head slightly, curious, not angry – more like he's studying her.

DANIEL

They said it was about a fire.

GRACE

It is. But not the kind you think.

She reaches into her bag, takes out the USB drive, sliding it across the table.

GRACE (CONT'D)

This. This is how she's been inside your head. Inside your words.

He looks at it – then at her.

DANIEL

You shouldn't touch that. It's unclean.

GRACE

It's code, Daniel. It's not a spirit. She's not a vision – she's a person. A hacker. She works for your publisher.

He blinks, visibly unsettled.

DANIEL
That's not possible. She spoke with
His voice.

Grace leans forward, her voice low and urgent.

GRACE
No, she imitated it. She edited
your words – changed your
sentences. You've been writing what
she told you to, not what God told
you.

He stares at her, trembling – doubt flickering behind the
devotion.

DANIEL
You're lying. You'd say anything to
pull me away from my calling.

GRACE
Then look for yourself.

Grace slides the laptop toward him.

GRACE (CONT'D)
There's no Wi-Fi here, no phone, no
interference. It's just you and the
truth.

Daniel stares at the laptop like it's a loaded weapon.

He hesitates, then slowly opens it.

ON SCREEN: the same folder – THE DEVIL AMONG US – FINAL DRAFT
– the "Unknown Contributor" files highlighted.

Grace clicks one.

He watches as the words appear – "My wife will test me."

His lips part – a tremor of realization crossing his face.

DANIEL (WHISPERING)
She changed it.

GRACE
Every word. Every message. Every
prayer you thought you heard.

Tears fill his eyes.

DANIEL
Then who have I been obeying?

Grace reaches for his hand – this time he doesn't pull away.

GRACE
That's what we're going to find out. Together.

They join hands – fragile, human, shaking.

Through the observation glass, Frank watches quietly, the weight of understanding settling on his face.

For the first time, Daniel lowers his head – not in prayer, but in shame.

INT. CROSS FAMILY HOME – NIGHT

A clock ticks past midnight. The air is heavy – the kind of stillness that follows long isolation.

The rain has stopped, but thunder murmurs distantly beyond the windows.

DANIEL paces the length of the living room, arms folded tight, muttering under his breath.

The house, stripped of devices and screens, feels suffocating.

DANIEL (V.O.)
They think I'm blind without the words. But it's when I stop writing that I start hearing.

He moves past the fireplace – ashes cold now – past the Bible open on the table, its pages worn and trembling in the draft.

He runs his fingers along the text without looking at it.

DANIEL
You can't silence what's been spoken. You can't hide from what's chosen you.

He stops at the window, looking out into the darkness.

The reflection of his face seems to waver – half shadow, half light.

DANIEL (V.O.)
Too long in this house. Too long in
the dark. Maybe the world outside
still remembers me.

He grabs his coat from the rack – pauses – a thought forming.

DANIEL (V.O.)
If she's still watching, she'll
come. All I have to do is move.

He exhales, steadies himself, and speaks aloud –
deliberately, as though addressing the air:

DANIEL
I'm done hiding. I'm going out.
If you're still here, you'll have
to follow me.

A gust of wind rattles the door – sudden, sharp.

He smiles faintly.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Thought so.

He grabs his car keys and steps toward the door.

INT. FRONT HALL – CONTINUOUS

He slips on his coat, checks his reflection in the hall
mirror – eyes hollow but determined.

The faintest distortion ripples through the reflection – just
for a second – like someone else breathing behind the glass.

DANIEL (SOFTLY)
You can't resist curiosity, can
you?

He turns off the lights, opens the door, and steps into the
night.

EXT. EMPTY STREET – MOMENTS LATER

Daniel walks slowly down the wet pavement, shoes crunching on
gravel. The neighborhood is silent – only the hum of
streetlights and the distant drip of water from trees.

He passes the old church sign two blocks down – its lights
flickering, barely legible.

He stops beneath it, tilting his head back to read:

"THE DEVIL HIDES WHERE FAITH DOES NOT LOOK."

He exhales – a sound that's half laughter, half disbelief.

DANIEL

Then let's see where you're hiding.

He pulls his coat tighter, walking toward the main street. His pace is deliberate, baiting.

DANIEL (V.O.)

If she wants to whisper, she'll have to do it face to face this time.

A faint hum follows him – mechanical, rhythmic, the sound of a streetlight struggling for power.

Then it shifts – lower, melodic, almost like humming.

A woman's voice – soft, behind him:

LILITH (O.S.)

You don't have to go far.

He stops.

Turns slowly.

No one there – just the shimmering puddles reflecting amber streetlight.

DANIEL (CALLING OUT)

You think I'm afraid to look at you? You think you can hide in words forever?

The silence answers. Then a whisper – closer this time, intimate:

LILITH (V.O.)

I never hid, Daniel. You did.

The nearest streetlight flickers out.

He's swallowed by shadow.

Daniel takes a slow breath, lifts his chin.

DANIEL
Then come into the light and prove
it.

A long, tense silence.

Then — movement.

A faint shape at the far end of the street, barely visible through the mist. A woman.

Standing perfectly still beneath the last working streetlamp.

Daniel smiles grimly.

DANIEL (V.O.)
There you are.

He starts walking toward her, unhurried, whispering:

DANIEL
Let's finish this.

The woman remains still — until lightning flashes, revealing her face for a split second.

It's Lilith. Smiling.

When the light fades — she's gone.

Daniel stops where she stood.

At his feet — a single black feather, soaked in rain.

He kneels, picking it up with shaking hands.

DANIEL (WHISPERING) (CONT'D)
Not tonight. You don't win tonight.

The rain has thinned to a mist.

Daniel stands alone beneath the flickering streetlight, the feather still clenched in his fist.

His breath fogs in the cold air, his heart steady now — not afraid, but resolute.

DANIEL (V.O.)
She's not gone. She's retreating.
That's what they do when you stop
running.

He exhales, slips the feather into his pocket, and starts back toward home.

EXT. CROSS FAMILY HOME - MINUTES LATER

The house looms dark and silent.

No lights, no movement.

The reflection of the streetlight shimmers across the front windows, distorting his own face.

Daniel unlocks the car, slides behind the wheel, and sits there for a moment.

The silence feels too loud.

He grips the steering wheel tightly, whispering:

DANIEL

You can't corner me in here. You follow the walls, not the will.

He starts the engine - the hum of it grounding him.

The dashboard clock reads 12:37 a.m.

DANIEL (V.O.)

Maybe she can't reach me in noise.
Maybe she only lives in silence.

He pulls out of the driveway, headlights cutting through fog.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

Daniel drives with the window cracked open, cold air whipping against his face.

Old hymns play softly on the radio - scratchy, faint, barely audible.

His eyes flick to the rearview mirror - the empty road behind him.

Lightning flashes in the distance.

For a moment, in the rearview mirror, the back seat seems occupied.

A vague shape - the suggestion of someone sitting there.

He blinks, looks again - it's gone.

He doesn't flinch, doesn't slow.

DANIEL (V.O.)
You want me quiet and broken. But
I'm not confessing to a ghost.

He presses the accelerator.

EXT. ROAD INTO TOWN - CONTINUOUS

Neon lights appear in the distance - faint halos of blue and red through the rain.

The sound of the engine merges with faint thunder.

Daniel's car pulls into a nearly empty parking lot - a small roadside bar, its flickering sign half-dead.

THE CROSSROADS TAVERN

He stares at the sign for a moment, grimly amused.

DANIEL (SOFTLY)
Clever.

He parks, cuts the engine, and sits still for several seconds, breathing deeply.

He looks at his reflection in the window - older than he remembers, eyes hollow but burning with resolve.

DANIEL (V.O.)
You followed me into churches and dreams. Let's see if you'll follow me into sin.

He gets out of the car, slams the door, and heads toward the entrance.

INT. CROSSROADS TAVERN - MOMENTS LATER

Dim, warm, and soaked in cigarette haze.

A jukebox hums softly with old blues.

A few locals sit scattered at the bar - faces drawn, half-drunk, indifferent.

Daniel takes a stool at the far end.

The bartender, a woman in her fifties, looks up from wiping glasses.

BARTENDER
What'll it be, hon?

Daniel scans the bottles – bourbon, gin, vodka – old vices whispering from dusty shelves.

DANIEL
Something that burns.

She raises an eyebrow, pours him a double shot of whiskey.

He takes it, staring into the amber liquid.

DANIEL (V.O.)
If faith is fire, then maybe this
is prayer.

He drinks. The burn hits hard – he welcomes it.

He sets the glass down.

He glances at the far end of the bar – an empty stool next to him.

Lightning flashes outside.

When the light fades, there's a woman sitting there.

Black coat. Wet hair.

Her reflection shimmers faintly in the mirror behind the bar.

DANIEL (QUIETLY)
I was wondering when you'd show up.

LILITH (O.S.)
You called me. You always do.

He turns his head slowly, meeting her gaze – calm, defiant.

DANIEL
Then let's have a drink. No lies,
no scripture. Just truth.

She smiles faintly, her eyes catching the glow of the neon sign.

LILITH
That's the first honest thing
you've said to me.

He raises his glass, clinks it softly against hers.

INT. CROSSROADS TAVERN - LATER

Rain taps against the windows. The jukebox hums low - an old gospel tune warped into something mournful.

Daniel and Lilith sit at the far end of the bar, their glasses untouched now. The neon light flickers across them—red, blue, red.

Lilith leans closer, her voice soft, almost affectionate.

LILITH
You seem calmer tonight. Most men
tremble around me.

DANIEL
I've been trembling for weeks.
Now I'm just tired.

LILITH
Tired men make foolish choices.

She studies him, her tone lilting, almost tender.

DANIEL
Foolish choices make for intriguing
stories.

LILITH
You promised a sacrifice. Why are
you still waiting?

Daniel lets the question hang, then smiles faintly—measured, controlled.

DANIEL
Because timing is faith. And faith
isn't rushed.

Lilith tilts her head, amused.

LILITH
Faith - or fear?

DANIEL
Strategy.

He takes a slow sip of whiskey.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
If I do it now, it ends quietly.
But if I do it as a husband - a man
with everything to lose - it's
spectacle. It's a sermon.

Her expression flickers—something between pride and suspicion.

LILITH
So you'd rather be remembered than
redeemed.

DANIEL
You of all beings should
understand, God listens louder when
there's an audience.

Lilith's smile widens; she leans closer until her words graze his ear.

LILITH
You're learning. But you still
don't trust me.

Daniel turns his head toward her, their faces inches apart.

DANIEL
If I didn't trust you, why would I
come to you for answers?

A long beat.

Then she draws back, watching him carefully.

LILITH
You want to see where I live?

DANIEL
I want to see where you hide.

Lilith considers this, tracing the rim of her glass with one finger.

LILITH
Most men are afraid to ask that.

DANIEL
Maybe I'm not most men.

He stands, leaving money on the counter.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Show me your truth, Lilith. Then
I'll show you mine.

For a moment, she studies him—searching for deceit.

Then she smiles, faintly triumphant.

LILITH
Finish your drink. It's a long
drive.

Daniel tosses back the last of the whiskey, sets the glass down.

BARTENDER
You leaving?

Daniel nods.

DANIEL
Yes, ma'am. Got a sermon to finish.

They walk to the door, Daniel pushing it open. Rain glistens in the parking lot.

EXT. BAR PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Daniel looks around the lot. The air hums faintly.

A single car - black, sleek, unfamiliar - idles beneath the streetlight.

The passenger door opens.

Daniel takes a slow breath, straightens his coat, and steps forward.

DANIEL (V.O.)
Every prophet walks into the
wilderness once. Some just don't
come back.

He gets in. The door closes.

The car pulls away, taillights disappearing into the dark.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. LILITH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The car glides to a stop at the edge of a quiet cul-de-sac. The streetlights here burn steady, but the world beyond them looks slightly warped - like heat haze over cold pavement.

Lilith's house is nondescript from the outside, modern, glass and steel, immaculate. Yet every window is dark, as if the house itself is holding its breath.

They step out of the car. The air hums faintly, like the buzz of a thousand whispered prayers.

DANIEL
You live like a ghost.

Lilith smiles as she unlocks the door.

LILITH
Ghosts need privacy too.

INT. LILITH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Daniel follows her inside—and freezes.

The interior glows with warm lamplight, soft and golden. But every wall, every shelf, every surface is covered with him.

Framed photos.

Magazine clippings.

Printed book covers.

Handwritten notes in his own voice—verses, lines, fragments from his novels.

A shrine to Daniel masquerading as décor.

Lilith walks ahead casually, hanging her coat, as though this were all perfectly ordinary.

DANIEL
What is this?

She turns, her expression serene.

LILITH
Inspiration. You've been my gospel for years.

Daniel moves deeper into the room, scanning the walls.

There are photographs of him from public events, but also private moments—ones he never remembered anyone taking.

Him leaving church.

Him at his desk at night.

Him standing at Grace's father's funeral, eyes closed in prayer.

His throat tightens.

DANIEL
You've been following me.

LILITH
Studying. You said you wanted to write about Satan. I thought you should know how he studies men like you.

She steps closer, her tone affectionate, admiring, predatory all at once.

LILITH (CONT'D)
You write what others only fear to think. You open doors even angels won't touch. You were never meant to be ordinary. Tonight I want you to feel extraordinary.

Daniel's gaze flickers to the centerpiece on the far wall — his author portrait enlarged and framed like an icon, candles burned down to wax puddles beneath it.

He steadies himself, whispers:

DANIEL
You built a church out of my sin.

LILITH
No. Out of your courage.

She moves closer. Daniel doesn't step back.

DANIEL
You want the sacrifice. But you don't understand it.

LILITH
Then teach me.

A long silence-charged, dangerous.

He looks around the room once more, the walls closing in, her devotion both intoxicating and grotesque.

He turns back to her, voice calm, deliberate.

DANIEL
If you want to see what faith can do, we'll go to your altar.

Lilith arches an eyebrow, intrigued.

LILITH

My altar?

DANIEL

The place where you wrote the first message. Where you reached into my life. Show me where it began.

She studies him—uncertain whether he's testing or submitting.

LILITH

You'd come willingly?

DANIEL

You asked for obedience. I'm giving you devotion.

For the first time, she hesitates. Then she smiles again, slow, approving.

LILITH

Downstairs.

She gestures toward a spiral staircase descending into shadow. She takes Daniel's hand, leading him.

Daniel nods, following.

His portrait on the wall flickers in the lamplight.

INT. LILITH'S HOUSE - LOWER LEVEL / "THE ALTAR" - NIGHT

Daniel follows Lilith down the spiral staircase, each step clicking in rhythm with the pulse of hidden machinery below.

The light shifts from amber warmth to sterile blue, then to something colder – an electric hum that grows louder the deeper they go.

At the bottom, the staircase opens into a vast subterranean room – half shrine, half server farm.

The walls are lined with monitors – hundreds of them – each displaying fragments of Daniel's life, typed pages, recorded sermons, video clips from his own home security feed, snippets of phone calls.

Bible verses pulse across the screens in between the footage, rewritten, corrupted.

"And God said, Let there be truth, and she edited it."

"The Word became data."

Daniel stops in the center of the room, turning slowly, absorbing the scale of it.

DANIEL
This isn't faith. It's
surveillance.

Lilith walks gracefully to a console, her fingers gliding over holographic keys.

Images change—scenes from his burned study, Grace's face caught on a still frame, his unfinished manuscript open mid-sentence.

LILITH
Every believer leaves a trace.
You prayed through your keyboard.
You confessed through your drafts.
All I did was listen.

She steps closer to him now, voice lowering.

LILITH (CONT'D)
Do you understand how beautiful
that is? You invited me in every
time you typed His name.

She reaches for him — her hand light on his chest.

LILITH (CONT'D)
You've given me your soul, Daniel.
All that's left is—

He steps back sharply.

DANIEL
Don't.

The word lands like a command.

Lilith pauses, her expression darkening.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
I know what you are.

LILITH
Do you?

DANIEL
Chief Information Security Officer,
GraceLine Publishing. Former
government contractor. You wormed
into my drafts, my phone, my faith.

Her face flickers between pride and annoyance.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
You didn't find me through prophecy. You hacked me.

He gestures to the glowing screens.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
All this, your "altar" - it's a control room. You edit words, not souls. You don't tempt. You manipulate.

Lilith's calm smile returns, sharper this time.

LILITH
You think code and spirit are different? That temptation can't travel through a signal? You opened the door. I just walked through it.

DANIEL
You turned my faith into your project. You turned my marriage into your script.

Lilith tilts her head slightly, amused.

LILITH
And yet, here you are, in the final chapter. You could have stayed in the light. You chose to come here. To me.

He doesn't answer. Instead, his eyes drift to one of the screens - Grace's face appears, sitting in the police station earlier, crying, her voice faint through hidden audio.

GRACE (ON MONITOR)
We'll save him.

Daniel's expression tightens.

LILITH (MOCKING, SOFT)
She still thinks she can save you.

Daniel turns back to her, steady and cold.

DANIEL
She already has.

He takes a step closer now, not afraid.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
I know what you want. You feed on
guilt, on faith twisted into
obedience.

Lilith studies him – something flickers behind her eyes.

LILITH
You can't run from what's divine,
Daniel.

DANIEL
No. But I can turn it around.

He pulls from his pocket the small black feather he found in
the street—holds it up between them.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
You left this behind. A calling
card. A mistake.

He drops it to the floor, crushing it beneath his shoe.

The lights flicker – several monitors short out, sparks
hissing through the room.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
One of your "techno-toys."

Lilith's poise falters, her voice losing its velvet control.

LILITH
You don't understand what you're
doing.

DANIEL
Oh, I do. You made my life your
altar. Now I'll burn yours down.

He turns toward the console, slamming his hand down on the
main power control.

The lights strobe—alarms echo through the chamber.

Lilith lunges toward him, pushing him, then runs up the
stairs.

INT. LILITH'S HOUSE – UPSTAIRS – CONTINUOUS

LILITH charges up the stairs with DANIEL not far behind her.
Running into the kitchen, Lilith grabs a large butcher knife
from the block on the counter, and turns to face Daniel.
Daniel stops and halfway holds up his arms.

DANIEL
Lilith! Stop! I'm not going to hurt
you.

LILITH
You could never hurt me Daniel.
"Danny."
We've come too far together.

DANIEL
Put the knife down Lilith, just
tell me what you want.

LILITH
You know what I want Danny. You. To
be us. Forever together. It's what
I've always wanted, and I know you
want it too.

DANIEL
You know that can never be.

Lilith is conflicted, unfamiliar with rejection. She composes
herself, tilts her head slightly, and starts to approach
Daniel as if she's not heard a word he's said.

LILITH
Oh but it will be, it will be, and
it will begin tonight. You'll
follow me tonight, or spend the
rest of your days on earth in jail
writing, like the Apostle Paul.

DANIEL
Lilith. Don't do anything crazy.

LILITH
Will you sacrifice yourself for me
Danny?

DANIEL
What are you saying?

Lilith extends her hands holding the knife toward Daniel.

LILITH
Take my hands Danny.

Daniel slowly reaches out to grasp Lilith's hands to prevent
her from stabbing him.

As his hands wrap around hers, she reverses the knife to point toward herself, and with Daniel's hands still holding hers, she plunges the knife into her chest, removing it quickly. Blood flows over the knife and both their hands.

Lilith stares at Daniel with a defiant look.

LILITH (CONT'D)
The first step, follow me Danny.

Keeping Daniel's hands on the knife she plunges the knife into herself several more times, finally raising it to her neck, and making a clean slice. Lilith drops to the floor dead with her eyes open, leaving Daniel still holding the knife.

Daniel is aghast, his eyes in a panic. He drops the knife and stares at Lilith in horror. With shaking hands, he reaches into his pocket, removes his phone, and dials 911.

DANIEL
911? Yeah, I, I, uh, I need the police. A woman has committed suicide.
(pause)
The address? I, I don't know, hold on.

Daniel looks around the kitchen and finds a few letters on the counter to find her address.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
1074 Outland Lane. Please hurry.
(pause)
My name? Daniel. Daniel Cross.
(pause)
I, I don't know how to explain it.
No relation. She worked for my publisher. Please hurry!

Daniel hangs up the phone and looks about the carnage, Lilith still lies on the floor, bloody, with open eyes. Daniel moves to the counter and begins washing his hands, over and over, as if he could remove the stain of death from them.

INT. LILITH'S HOUSE - UPSTAIRS - LATER

POLICE and EMT's work around the bloody scene in the kitchen, while DANIEL sits with DETECTIVE PETERS in the living room. The detective is looking at Daniel with a skeptical eye.

DETECTIVE PETERS

So, tell me again what happened tonight, I want to be sure I'm getting this straight, but it's not making much sense to me.

DANIEL

I was out driving, and went to The Crossroads Tavern and stopped for a drink.

DETECTIVE PETERS

Why there?

DANIEL

I don't know, it was the first bar I drove by.

DETECTIVE PETERS

OK, go on.

DANIEL

Lilith was there at the bar, so we had a drink together.

DETECTIVE PETERS

Had you planned to meet her there?

DANIEL

No, it was a coincidence.

DETECTIVE PETERS

So you go to that little run down tavern in the middle of nowhere, and just happen to meet up with her?

DANIEL

Yeah, yeah, that's exactly what happened.

The detective rises to his feet with a disbelieving look on his face.

DETECTIVE PETERS

Mr. Cross, I think we'd better continue this interview back at the station. Please stand up and turn around.

Daniel stands, frightened.

DANIEL

Am I being arrested?

DETECTIVE PETERS

No, but you're going to be detained for further questioning. Now please turn around, I'm going to handcuff you for all our protection.

Daniel turns and puts his hands behind his back. Detective Peters places Daniel in handcuffs and leads him out the door.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERVIEW ROOM - NIGHT

DANIEL, still handcuffed, nervously sits alone in the interview room. He is now wearing a prison jumpsuit. DETECTIVE PETERS enters, closes the door. Daniel looks up at the detective.

DANIEL

Are these handcuffs really necessary?

DETECTIVE PETERS

Nah, not for now. Let's get them off you.

Daniel stands and turns around, whereupon the detective removes the handcuffs and tosses them on the table. Both men sit across from each other.

DETECTIVE PETERS (CONT'D)

Daniel, I've gone over your story several times with the other detectives, and it's just not working for us. You say you just happened to meet this beautiful woman, that you've met before, who you say was stalking you, at a run down bar in the middle nowhere. The two of you then left for her house, where she proceeded to take a knife, then take your hands, stab herself repeatedly and slice her neck, because you wouldn't have an affair with her?

DANIEL

Summed up, that's about it. But there is more background. Look at my phone. All the text messages.

DETECTIVE PETERS

Well, that's another thing. We've had our top electronics forensics officer review your phone, and we can't find any of these messages you claim she sent you.

DANIEL

Well, she'd send them, then they'd disappear after I read them.

DETECTIVE PETERS

Daniel, are you sure you don't want to tell us what really happened?

DANIEL

I have, that's what really happened!

DETECTIVE PETERS

Well Daniel, your story just isn't working for us.

The detective stands up and picks up the handcuffs from the table.

DETECTIVE PETERS (CONT'D)

I'm afraid I'm going to have to place you under arrest for the murder of Lilith Dane. Please stand up and turn around.

Daniel stands, turns around, and is again handcuffed. The detective leads him out of the room.

INT. POLICE STATION - DETECTIVE'S BULLPEN - MORNING

Several OFFICERS and DETECTIVES are milling about. A DESK SERGEANT approaches the DETECTIVE PETERS.

DESK SERGEANT

Detective, there's a lady here I think you should talk to. Says she's the shrink for the lady who was killed last night.

DETECTIVE PETERS

Thanks, take her to the interview room and I'll meet you there. This ought to be good.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERVIEW ROOM - MORNING

DETECTIVE PETERS sits across the table from DR. MAUREEN SNEATH. Dr. Sneath is holding a file filled with papers. The detective leans toward Dr. Sneath.

DETECTIVE PETERS
So you were Ms. Dane's
psychiatrist?

DR. SNEATH
Yes, I'd been seeing her for about 3 years now. When I heard the report about her on the television this morning, I thought it prudent to share her background with you.

DETECTIVE PETERS
I'm sure anything you can share with us will help clear up some things for us.

Dr. Sneath opens the file and flips through a few pages.

DR. SNEATH
I'll be blunt. Lilith Dane was a perfect fit for her job in cybersecurity, as she was a narcissistic obsessive compulsive.

DETECTIVE
And that means???

DR. SNEATH
She was a perfectionist. Beyond a perfectionist. When she got things perfect, she'd stress out that she could make things even more perfect. And she needed continued validation that she was more than perfect.

DETECTIVE PETERS
So what bearing does that have on this incident?

DR. SNEATH
I'm getting there. The cyber security field is tough. Someone is always trying to penetrate your systems. The longer she worked in this field, the more paranoid she became.

(MORE)

DR. SNEATH (CONT'D)
Adding paranoia to an obsessive
compulsive disorder is like
throwing a torch on a keg of
gunpowder. It's eventually going to
blow up. She was capable of
anything at any time. No one could
foresee what, but something was
bound to happen, and sooner, rather
than later.

DETECTIVE PETERS
So it could be possible that she
was suicidal?

DR. SNEATH
Not just possible, but probable.
Have you found her journal yet?

DETECTIVE PETERS
We have a forensic team at her
place now. Let me give them a call
and find out.

Detective Peters dials his mobile phone and waits for an answer.

DETECTIVE PETERS (CONT'D)
Jim? I'm at the station with Ms.
Dane's psychiatrist. She's asking
if you have found her journal yet.

The detective listens and nods.

DETECTIVE
Jim, I'm going to put you on
speaker.

The detective pushes a button on his phone and lays it on the table.

DR. SNEATH
Hello, Jim? This is Dr. Sneath.
Could you open the journal to the
last entry and read it to us?

JIM (V.O.)
Sure, hold on.

The sound of turning pages is heard over the speakerphone, as Detective Peters and Dr. Sneath anxiously await.

JIM (V.O.)
OK, here it is.
Tonight is the night.
(MORE)

JIM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It must be tonight. His wife is meddling too much, but we will deal with her later. I wish Daniel would have performed the sacrifice of her like I told him to, but we'll just have to make do for now. I can feel his ripeness, his readiness. Once I get him here, he will be mine. How could he resist? Why would he resist? But if he does, I'll make myself the ultimate sacrifice to him, an act to which he will surely follow. One way or another, we'll spend our eternity together.

(beat)
That's it. Whew.

DETECTIVE PETERS
Thanks Jim.

The detective looks at Dr. Sneath.

DETECTIVE
Any questions for Jim, Dr. Sneath?

DR. SNEATH
No, that should pretty much tell her story..

DETECTIVE PETERS
Thanks Jim. Is the computer forensics team on site?

JIM (V.O.)
They are.

DETECTIVE PETERS
Good. Give me a call if they find anything significant, especially if it should corroborate Mr. Cross' version of events.

The detective disconnects the call, puts the phone back in his pocket, leans back in his chair, and loudly exhales.

DETECTIVE PETERS (CONT'D)
So Doctor, what are your thoughts?

DR. SNEATH
Suicide. Hoping that Mr. Cross would join her. It's almost a textbook case.

DETECTIVE PETERS
Thanks doctor, if we need any further information, can we reach out to you?

Doctor Sneath hands the detective her card.

DR. SNEATH
Certainly. Anything I can do to help.

Both stand and exit the room.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERVIEW ROOM - AFTERNOON

DETECTIVE PETERS sits alone in the interview room. The door opens, and Daniel is led in by a UNIFORMED OFFICER. The detective stands as Daniel enters, and moves to remove Daniel's handcuffs. The uniformed officer leaves and closes the door. The detective gestures for Daniel to sit.

DETECTIVE PETERS
Sit down Daniel, I want to bring you up to date on what we've uncovered in our investigation.

Daniel slumps down in the chair, a broken, defeated man. The detective sits, then leans forward towards Daniel.

DETECTIVE PETERS (CONT'D)
I'll cut to the chase. We've determined it was a suicide. Just like you said. You're innocent, and we're dropping all charges against you.

Daniel sits up, shocked.

DETECTIVE PETERS (CONT'D)
Our forensics teams have been analyzing all the data from her systems, and we've been able to corroborate nearly everything you've been telling us. And in our search of your house, we've been able to uncover the cameras, microphones, speakers, and other electronic devices she'd installed and used to make you believe you were receiving supernatural messages. Plus, Grace gave us the USB drive to further confirm our decision.

DANIEL

So the emails, the text messages, you've been able to link all that to her?

DETECTIVE PETERS

Well, that's the thing Daniel. Now, we have one of the best digital forensics teams in the country, but we weren't able to find any evidence, on your phone, or her systems, of any text communications. Do you have any ideas on that?

DANIEL

I, I don't.

DETECTIVE PETERS

Well, let's just forget about that for now. Grace is on her way to pick you up with a fresh set of clothes.

(beat)

This whole thing has been an unfortunate mess. Hopefully you can put it behind you. Here's your phone if you'd like to give anyone a call.

The detective gives Daniel his phone, then exits the room. Daniel looks at his phone, and as he does, a new message notification from the private number appears. Daniel hesitates, then selects to read the message.

TEXT:

"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with these things;"

The text fades and is replaced by:

"Be still... and know it is your God who calls you;"

The text fades and is replaced by:

"Keep writing;"

The text fades and is replaced by:

"When will my book be finished?"

The text fades, and is replaced by a cross, which after a few moments fades.

FADE TO BLACK.