

THE KNIGHT  
OF GOD

Written by

TONY DI PIAZZA

151-38 26 AVENUE  
FLUSHING NY 11354

917 757 1551  
[Tony4chef@hotmail.com](mailto:Tony4chef@hotmail.com)

**FADE IN:**

**EXT. TORINO FOREST - DAY.**

Sunlight beams through the canopy of autumn trees, casting shadows on the floor. The air is crisp. Cheerful CHIRPING of birds fill the air.

We see a hand working a buck knife, carving into a bark of a tree. Finished it reads "NERONI AND MARIA 4EVER" engraved bold and deep.

MARIA (O.S.)  
Our love will be here forever.

**EXT. TORINO FOREST - CAMPSITE - MORNING.**

A tent is set up against a boulder. Personal belongings, and camp gears are scattered around. It's a little messy.

MARIA, early 20's, beautiful and naive, emerges from the tent. Her full red lips are pleasure sins. Her eyes are big, and innocent like a kitten. She inhales the fresh air, her breath visible in the cold air.

MARIA  
It's getting colder.

NERONI  
Season is changing. Gonna be getting  
darker sooner too.

NERONI is in his late 20's, tall, strong, and brutally handsome. Invincible in his mind, but he has never been challenged. He throws some branches on a burning campfire. The flames leap higher.

MARIA (O.S.)  
How much money we got left?

NERONI  
Seventy-eight dollars. Enough for food  
and some beer.

Squatting by a bush Maria is peeing - she cleans herself with a napkin, takes a look at it, and picks up her shorts.

MARIA  
Got my period finally.

Neroni opens a purse bag. He begins tossing all kinds of stolen IDs and credit cards into the fire.

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Maria comes to stand by Neroni. Entwining their hands, they both stare at the evidence of their crime dissolving in the flames.

NERONI  
You okay?

MARIA  
Yeah. I'm fine... It's just we were suppose to runaway, get married. Talked about having a family one day.

NERONI  
We will babe. Just, now's not the time. We got a good thing going here. Don't we?

MARIA  
Yeah I guess so. But it scares me. What if this is all we ever have.

NERONI  
Don't think like that. As long as we have each other that's all we need. Ok?

Maria nods a yes, and they share a kiss. Two runaways thieves believing the world is their oyster. The BELLS of St. Anthony's Cathedral begin to TOLL from a far distance.

MARIA  
Do you hear it? The bells. They are ringing again. It reminds me of angels sing... Can we go into town again?

**EXT. TORINO CITY - DAY.**

The streets are closed off, packed with PEOPLE eagerly waiting on a procession. Neroni is holding Maria by the hand weaving through the crowd. He bumps into a man with a expensive suit -

- Neroni's hand goes in and out of the man's coat pocket with his wallet in a blink of an eye.

**EXT. TORINO CITY - LATER.**

Leaning against a parked car, Neroni and Maria share a melting ice cream cone, laughter dancing between them. A NUN approaches with a radiant smile.

MARIA  
Hi! What's going on?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NUN

God has blessed us on this glorious day.  
Father Nicolo has been anointed Bishop.

The nun beams, tears of joy glistening in her eyes

MARIA

Is he like someone real special?

NUN

He's the most holy of the holy. And he's  
going to bring God's words and justice to  
our city.

A GREGORIAN CHANT begins, and it quiets the crowd. Everybody  
is excited as we begin to see a assembly of HOODED MONKS. Out  
of nowhere -

- MEN wearing long black leather dusters, brandishing sawed-off shotguns appear.

NERONI

What's up with the guys in long leather?

NUN

They are the Lupara Della Croce.

NERONI

A Lupa what?

NUN

Lupara Della Croce. Lupara is the  
shotguns they are carrying. And Della  
Croce means, "The Cross".

NERONI

Shotgun of the Cross? They are like what,  
killers?

The nun gives Neroni a stern look.

NUN

They are protectors of this realm.  
Soldiers of Torino Diocese.

A line of choir boys file in, one raising a crucifix high.  
The crowd is buzzing with excitement.

NUN (cont'd)

There is going to be a great celebration.  
We having a carnival at -

The crowd erupts in cheers and shouting praises.

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NUN (cont'd)  
- there he is! There he is!

Wearing his full pontifical vestments, BISHOP NICOLO is a big man standing out among the priests surrounding him.

Following closely is MARKO, a scarred and imposing Lupara. A silver badge shines in the sun on his duster. He scouts the roof tops ready for anything.

NERONI (O.S.)  
That guy look like he's no bullshit.

NUN (O.S.)  
Wears the badge of Archangel Michael.  
Making him a knight of the bishop from  
The Holy Order.

The bishop's greets the crowd joyfully, dipping his aspergillum in the holy water and blessing them. Drops of water rain down upon the crowd. They make the sign of the cross. Neroni and Maria don't.

**EXT. TORINO'S TOWN SQUARE - DAY.**

MUSIC is playing. People are eating and drinking, celebrating the anointing of Bishop Nicolo.

Neroni navigates an open window eatery, tray of burgers in his hands. He turns and -

- SMACK! He bumps into Marko. Neroni can't hide the shock, eyes drawn to the silver ARCHANGEL MICHAEL BADGE - angel warrior spearing a serpent at the feet.

**EXT. ST. ANTHONY'S CATHEDRAL - NIGHT.**

The cathedral's parking lot has transformed into a carnival. A banner above the entrance reads, "THE HOLY ORDER WELCOMES BISHOP NICOLO TO TORINO CITY".

Dazzling lights from the rides color the smoke from the food venders above the crowded venue. Carnies are SCREAMING for a shot and a win.

At the "Shoot Out The Star" tent, Neroni leans with a BB rifle, Maria is CHEERING him on. RAT-A-TAT-A-TAT-A - the red star is completely shot out.

**INT. CARNIVAL'S PHOTO BOOTH - LATER.**

Maria is sitting on Neroni's lap, their faces lit with joy, waiting for the camera flash. A big smile - FLASH!

**EXT. CARNIVAL - LATER.**

Luparas are sneaking amongst the crowd.

Neroni and Maria are on line waiting to buy cotton candy. A SCREAM pierces the carnival noise!

Luparas surround a figure. With daggers they are repeatedly stabbing high, coming down with great vengeance!

Chaos erupts. People scatter. In seconds it's over, and the Luparas run off into the night.

Knight Marko lies on the ground lifeless. Pool of blood beneath him. His dead eyes staring at the night sky.

**EXT. TORINO FOREST - CAMPSITE - NIGHT.**

A star filled night blankets the forest. The trees sway gently, whispering in the early autumn wind. A warm glow emanates from inside the tent.

**INT. TENT - CONTINUOUS.**

A dying lantern flickers. Maria, wide eyed and restless, shifts anxiously in a sleeping bag besides Neroni, who sleeps peacefully.

MARIA  
Neroni... Neroni.

Neroni stirs.

MARIA (cont'd)  
I can't sleep. Are you cold? I'm cold.

Neroni moves onto his side. Maria sinks in deeper into his warmth, almost disappearing.

MARIA (cont'd)  
I had a bad dream. Keep thinking of that poor man they killed... What if one of us was to die? If I die would you meet someone else? Fall in love?

Nothing.

MARIA (cont'd)  
Neroni?

NERONI  
(groggy)  
You are the only one for me Maria. The one and only ever. Let's get some sleep.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA  
My knight in shinning armor. I love you  
Neroni.

**EXT. ST. ANTHONY'S CARNIVAL - NIGHT.**

Colorful lights blink and swirl. Neroni and Maria are seated on a magical white horse riding a carousal, sharing playful kisses. They go up and down, around and around - we are getting dizzy.

**EXT. ST. ANTHONY'S CARNIVAL - LATER.**

People waking about. The lights of the rides are getting shut off - carnies are closing their booths - food stands are getting cleaned up.

Neroni and Maria are sitting on lawn chair sharing a beer. A duffle bag is at their feet. They are tuned in at the gambling tent.

The Ferris Wheel behind the gambling tent lights go off. The cathedral's silhouette emerges in the background like a shadow watching.

NERONI  
The lights on the wheel are off.  
Midnight, ready babe?

MARIA  
It's now or never.

Maria pulls her sundress over her head, exposing her breast, and her daisy duke shorts. She opens the duffle bag, stuffs the dress inside, and pulls out a bikini top. She puts it on. Neroni ties it from the back.

MARIA (cont'd)  
Think that priest will fall for it?

NERONI  
Staring every time you walk on by babe.  
Tell him you got a confession to make,  
and you like to receive the holy cookie  
with your mouth wide open.

Maria takes off her skids, and throws them in the duffle bag. Out comes six inch red pump heels. She puts them on.

MARIA  
Feel bad about it. Him being a man of God  
and all. Plus, stealing money from the  
church.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Maria puts lipstick on and teases her hair.

NERONI (O.S.)

If he's truly a man of God, he'll turn you down, and we walk away. As for stealing money from the church. The church gives to the poor. What do you think we - shit there he is.

Stepping out of the gambling tent is a red hair YOUNG PRIEST carrying a lock and key money box.

NERONI (cont'd)

Give me a few minutes. Take him to the alley like we planned.

They kiss. Maria catwalks off. Neroni watches Maria walk away, she's everyman's dream.

**INT. GAMBLING TENT - LATER.**

The night has gone dreadfully wrong. A roulette wheel spins, and we watch the white ball jump from number to number.

MARIA (O.S.)

Neroni! Neroni! Neroni!

NERONI (O.S.)

Maria! Maria!

The ball land on 14 black.

An UGLY LUPARA smiles for the win.

The red hair young priest collects his winnings off the roulette table. His eyes and hair are wild. He looks processed.

PRIEST

(spitting his words)

Sinner! A fornicator! The devil itself!  
She must pay for her sin. She must pay -

MARIA

No! No! Please no!

Maria gets SLAPPED! Two Luparas have her naked body pinned down on a poker table. The winner, the ugly Lupara is unbuckling his pants. His intention is clear.

NERONI

I gonna fucking kill you all!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Luparas that are holding Neroni back are having a hard time. He tries to bite one to break free. WHACK! A baseball bat smacks the side of his head!

At the poker table Maria has lost her spirit. She gazes unseeing at Neroni getting plummet with the bat, as her body is violated.

The young priest is aroused by the rape. Licking his lips, he bring Neroni's BUCK KNIFE up to his face. The tip of the knife is burning red hot.

RED HAIR PRIEST  
Now I will cast the devil out of you my  
child. Sins of the flesh.

He stalks to the poker table. With Maria's SCREAMS we fade to black - on the black screen we read.

**10 YEARS LATER**

*DONG! DONG! DONG!* The bells of St. Anthony's Cathedrals begin to toll. Slowly it emerges -

**EXT. ST. ANTHONY'S CATHEDRAL - DUSK.**

- a Gothic wonder. Steeples rise from the cathedral to the sky - a rose window over looks an outsized plaza - a bell tower dominates the court-yard.

We continuously HEAR the bells ringing -

**TORINO CITY**

- through the street of the city. A reminder that the Lord is ever presence seeing people go about their daily lives.

**EXT. ABANDON BUILDING - ROOF TOP - CONTINUOUS.**

The bell's RINGING is afar from here. The cross high on the steeple of Saint Anthony's Cathedral is just a speck in the sunset sky.

We stand behind a Lupara looking across the Torino city landscape as a guardian. The tail of his duster flaps in the wind. After a few moments, he walks across the rooftop towards the door.

**INT. ABANDON BUILDING - CONTINUOUS.**

The rooftop door gets pulled shut, and a log gets placed across iron hooks to barricade the outside world.

**INT. ABANDON BUILDING APARTMENT - LATER.**

A hand opens a wood burning stove hatch. Feeding firewood, embers begin to glow.

The flickering flames illuminate the Lupara's face - It's Neroni! Gone is the handsome, young, and invincible. A scar above the eye shows that ageing has been brutal. He stares into the fire looking at memories.

The apartment resembles a underground bunker - small, bare, devoid of comfort. Boarded up windows, a meager bed, small table for two. There's can foods and water containers crowding the shelves. A pile of firewood at a corner.

**INT. NERONI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT.**

The PHOTO BOOTH PICTURE of Neroni and Maria stares at us in a open drawer next to a .38 revolver. Insignificant besides the intimidating .44 Magnum. Neroni's hand takes the 38.

**APARTMENT - LATER.**

At the back door before exiting, Neroni takes something from his pocket, and pins it on his duster's - it's the Archangel Michael badge. Neroni is a knight!

**INT. ST. ANTHONY'S CATHEDRAL - NIGHT.**

Pillars soar to the heaven fresco painted ceiling. Statues of saints, and burning candles are everywhere. Extensive glass stain windows hover over a sea of pews.

In the middle of the pews a rebel Lupara named TASSO, is praying to the crucifix at the alter. Neroni slides into a pew and sits behind him.

**CATHEDRAL'S BALCONY.**

The CHILDREN CHOIR begin practicing for the Christmas Midnight Mass. The CONDUCTOR rises his baton -

CHOIR  
- *Come they told me, pa rum pum pum pum -*

The choir SING "Drummer Boy" through the whole scene.

**CATHEDRAL'S PEW.**

TASSO  
How did you know I was here?

NERONI  
Where else will you go at your last hour.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TASSO

Am I to be fucking grateful. Grateful for the bishop has sent his knight to seal my fate, and not some Lupara thug. A bullet is a fucking bullet. Makes no difference to me. Ask the 23 souls on my list.

NERONI

You spoke rebellion. That's treason -

TASSO

- Fuck you treason! Luparas are going fucking hungry while the bishop dines on gold plates. We have suffered enough! At least you get the scrapes, we get shit. This peace treaty the bishop got with them *Savages* is destroying us. We want war for fucking Christ sake!

Tasso gets resentful and bows his head.

TASSO (cont'd)

Forgive me lord. Forgive me for having said your name in vain... La Domé, Neroni. La Domé. That territory was under my patrol, and the bishop just gave it to them *Savages* with a stroke of a pen. How am I gonna provide for my family?

NERONI

... You have been granted an honor death. The bishop will say a mass in your name for a safe passage.

TASSO

Safe passage? An honor death?  
Where's the honor in the living? Tell me, what honors do men like us have left?

CHOIR (O.S.)

*pa rum pum pum pum* -

TASSO

Peace has made us hungry. Desperate. Blood that has been spilled on earth in the name of Christ made us supreme one time. Now nothing... Why not give us war dam it!

NERONI

The Holy Order commands us. We await their orders, soldiers of the Cross.

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CONTINUED: (2)

TASSO

Soldiers? We have become nothing more than thieves, beggars, coward killers in the night... You know, that badge on your coat don't make you better than me Neroni. You just a fucking puppet doing the Holy Order bidding. And that whoreson of a bishop holds your strings. A Pinoccio. A fucking puppet.

NERONI

... I'm a Knight of The Holy Order. Treason is death. Make your peace with God your hour has come.

CHOIR (O.S.)

- *pa rum pum pum me and my drum.*

**EXT. SAINT ANTHONY'S CATHEDRAL - NIGHT.**

It's raining. In a alleyway somewhere around the cathedral's dark corners, Tasso is on his knees holding his lupara across his chest in prayer. Neroni's .38 behind his head.

TASSO

Amen

BANG! Tasso falls. Rain spits at Neroni's face.

**INT. BISHOP'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT.**

Rain is PELTING the window. We can see the cathedral steeples. Candles burning on pewters, and a low burning fire shows us a room rich in gold religious artifacts and paintings.

Bishop Nicolo sits at his busy desk. Time has given to fat and baldness. A heavy COUGH takes a hold on him. There is a KNOCK at the closed door.

BISHOP NICOLO

(trying to speak over the  
coughing)

*Come in.*

FATHER VINCENZO enters. He's the young brother of the bishop, and the pastor of the cathedral. The nose is big on his face, like a bird of prey. He wears his clerical attire tailored.

He runs with a dinner cart to his brother side, and pour him a glass of water. The bishop grabs it and guzzles it down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FATHER VINCENZO  
A man in your conditions shouldn't be  
working so hard.

BISHOP NICOLO  
(catching his breath)  
Thank you my brother. I'm blessed to have  
you as my own flesh and blood.

FATHER VINCENZO  
You need rest Nico.

BISHOP NICOLO  
Yes. Yes I need rest. This campaign for  
the cardinalate has consumed me. I feel  
very weak.

Father Vincenzo takes the cover off the plate, and pours a glass of wine. He takes a moment being nosy with the spread out paper work before retrieving to the fire place.

Warming his hands, Father Vincenzo is in a state of nerves.

BISHOP NICOLO (cont'd)  
Soup is splendid. What troubles you?

FATHER VINCENZO  
You know me well brother. I couldn't help  
notice that funds are being rerouted to  
the Holy Order. Have we lost interest in  
the West Side Yards?

BISHOP NICOLO  
The West Side Yards will be given to the  
Savages for a treaty -

FATHER VINCENZO  
- But part of that estate income was to  
be giving to me. It was a promise.

BISHOP NICOLO  
I will not instigate another war. We've  
bled enough in the name of God. At my  
coronation I will be known as, "Cardinal  
Nicolo The Peace Maker".

Bishop Nicolo continues with his soup.

FATHER VINCENZO  
Have you discussed this with Magnificent  
Aspano? The Holy Order will -

Bishop Nicolo puts his hand up. He has heard enough.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BISHOP NICOLO

I command here!... Other interest will present itself in the near future. I'm sorry brother.

Bishop Nicolo takes a drink from his wine, and a violent COUGH erupts, rattling him as he spills his wine across the desk. His terrified eyes meet Father Vincenzo.

FATHER VINCENZO

I will not be kept in your shadows any longer. I have become nothing more than a servant to you. Far to long I have let you take the lead. It's now my turn. I will bring the glory to the Holy Order. I will be praised, and God will reward me.

Bishop Nicolo rises, struggling for air, and collapses behind the desk. Father Vincenzo walks over. Standing above his brother, he makes the sign of the cross.

FATHER VINCENZO (cont'd)

You have been poisoned. *Dues vult.* It is God's will my brother.

Bishop Nicolo gives a last gasp of life and dies.

FATHER VINCENZO (cont'd)

It is finished... Come in.

FIVE BENEDICT MONKS walk in. THOMAS a monk with his hood up stands by the door. The others go about getting the bishop's body off the floor as if it's been rehearsed.

Carrying the body out of the room Father Vincenzo follow, but stops in front of Thomas. Gets closer for better look at Thomas concealed face - a pious man of God, with hope, crying for the bishop.

FATHER VINCENZO (cont'd)

Brother Thomas. Don't be troubled. It's for the good of the diocese, and the cathedral. Remember, he died peacefully in his bed.

**INT. BUTCHER SHOP / HUNTING LOUNGE - DAY.**

Heads of game mount the walls - bucks, wild boars. There's even a bear on his hind legs at the front door.

As we move towards the back of the shop, a window showcase with all cuts of meats runs along empty tables, and chairs scattered around the front of the place.

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CONTINUED:

At the back, up a few steps, you can get a shave in a old fashioned barber chair which GIACOMO, a Torino City Magnate, smoking a cigar is getting. The BARBER is using a straight razor.

BARBER

- Lordless men sir. Men without honor.  
They have forgotten respect and God.

GIACOMO

Yes they are. Back in Bishop Giovanni's days, when I was a young Lupara, I got so much fucking contracts, I had arteritis in the hand for pulling the dam trigger. We kept law and order. We had honor.

A big puff of smoke escapes his mouth.

GIACOMO (cont'd)

That's how I made my bones y'know.

BARBAR

Those were the days my friend. Peace is a fleeting dream now with the bishop died.

GIACOMO

I like it. This war with the Savages for the West Side Yards will unite these young guns. Put some money in their pocket. Stop this bullshit talk about a rebellion keep hearing.

BARBAR

Well, I hope so Mr. Giacomo.

GIACOMO

My properties are plummeting with them Savages breeding here. It's like they feast on the very heart of the city. The food they eat will make a vulture vomit.

#### AT THE FRONT OF THE SHOP

CHOP! A BUTCHER behind a counter comes up with the cleaver -

- JINGLES of bells from the front door, Neroni has walked in. The bear at the entrance towers over him.

BUTCHER

Morning Neroni.

Neroni gives a curt nod, walks up to the glass counter showcase, and takes a look.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BUTCHER (cont'd)  
What can I getcha?

NERONI  
Two pounds of the prime.

The butcher begins to gather the meat.

BUTCHER  
So looks like the West Side Yards is back  
on the table. War with them Savages  
really gonna happen now with the bishop  
dead -

NERONI  
- What! What did you just say!?

The butcher freeze as if he's in a stick-up.

NERONI (cont'd)  
Whose dead!? Say what you just said!

Scared the butcher can't even speak.

GIACOMO (O.S.)  
Neroni!

Giacomo has walked down the steps, face with half shaving  
cream on. He tries to ease the situation.

GIACOMO (cont'd)  
Neroni. We are all deeply saddened about  
this. The reign of our great Bishop  
Nicolo has ended. Passed away two days  
ago. I'm sorry.

Neroni is in shock and disbelief. He throws money on the  
counter, takes his packed meat, and heads out in a hurry.

**EXT. LUPARA HEADQUATERS - DAY.**

The Lupara's headquarters is a corner dive-bar with a porch.  
It sits across the street from the front iron-gates of Torino  
City Cemetery.

THE CREST of the Lupara Della Croce, a emblem of two lupara  
shotguns crisscrossing each other, on top between the saw-off  
barrels is The Holy Cross - hangs bold on the front doors.

**INT. LUPARA HEADQUATERS - CONTINUOUS.**

Inside the Luparas, clad in traditional black leather  
dusters, populate this smoke-filled whiskey hole.

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CONTINUED:

They lounge at the bar, and sit around the tables. At the back a closed door reads, "PRIVATE".

IL GATO, meaning "The Cat" walks in. His posture is like an alley cat to be precise. Donning a left eye patch we follow him to a corner table.

IL GATO

My brothers in arms gather close. I bring a whisper... Pugno has been moved to Padre Pio Abbey.

A harlequin of SIX LUPARAS playing poker freeze, intrigued by the weight of his words.

LUPARA FENI pours Il Gato a tall shot of whiskey. He gulps it down, some on him. His tongue comes out licking his whiskers.

FENI

Who barked at the cat?

Il Gato

A monk by the name Gilbert. Our moment has come boys. It's time to get him out. Start our rebellion.

FENI

(eyeing the front door)  
Well, look what the cat dragged in.

Neroni the knight has walked in. The place gets a little quitter, all eyes gravitating towards him. Head down, Neroni pounds his boots toward the private door at the back.

**INT. PRIVATE ROOM - SAME TIME.**

A HAND spins the dial for the safe combination.

Neroni is WATCHING the numbers spin, mentally logging the combination. We can HEAR him saying the combo numbers to himself.

The hand pulls back the handle, and the safes opens. The money is stacked like bricks. A crammed envelope is taken out, and thrown on the desk.

MR. BORGETTO, 60's, captain of the Lupara, sits behind his desk, with the safe opened behind him.

MR. BORGETTO

I'll notify Padre Vincenzo that you have an urgent matter. Wish to see him at his earliest conveniences. The bishop's death changes nothing for you. Understood?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Neroni nods, sliding the envelope across the desk, and into his jacket.

MR. BORGETTO (cont'd)

Good.

Mr. Borgetto leans back on his chair, and rubs his temples. He is tired, has had enough trying to control the Luparas, and follow orders.

MR. BORGETTO

The Holy Order favors Father Vincenzo for now. We are to take the West Side Yards from the Savages.

NERONI

Looking to start another war.

MR. BORGETTO

War with these Savages is inevitable, Neroni. The church is losing capital. Christendom is getting smaller. Plus the boys are restless. Been a long time. War will be good for them. It will rouse their spirits, put some money in their pockets.

**EXT. TORINO CITY - DAY.**

Open food markets are busy along the narrow cobblestone streets. Neroni keeps to himself among the pedestrians.

**EXT. ROSES ALLEYWAY - DAY.**

SISTER HELEN, 70's, is peddling roses in a alleyway outside a shack. She looks more like a bag lady than a nun, with a dirty coif on her head. Cats are everywhere, some follow her meowing for their meal.

SISTER HELEN

Hungry again are we. Hungry my little friends.

She turns, and is startled to find Neroni standing there.

SISTER HELEN (cont'd)

Oh dear God! You scared me.

Cats gather around Neroni.

SISTER HELEN (cont'd)

There's no love in this world. I didn't sell not a single rose today... Maria was here two days ago.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SISTER HELEN (CONT'D)  
When she heard that the bishop died she  
left the convent in search of you.

Neroni face tightens, unease washing over him at the mention of Maria.

SISTER HELEN (cont'd)  
She's having a hard time trying adjust to  
a life outside the convent. But she's a  
feisty child. Her spirit will weather the  
storm.

Sister Helen feeds her cat.

SISTER HELEN (cont'd)  
Her heart still beats for you, Neroni.  
And no one can take that away from her.

NERONI  
She has to understand that I'm not the  
man I once was.

SISTER HELEN  
And yet, in her eyes, you still are. She  
is working at the White Swan Tavern if  
it's any interest to you.

Neroni hands over the envelope of money he received from Mr. Borgetto.

SISTER HELEN (cont'd)  
Bless you Neroni, oh bless you. The  
Sisters Of The Blessed Mary doors have  
remain open because of you. Bless you.

Her held back teary eyes stares into him.

SISTER HELEN (cont'd)  
I fear for you as I do for her. With the  
bishop gone, a tempest looms on the  
horizon.

NERONI  
It's ok.

Neroni leans down, pressing a gentle kiss to her cheek.

SISTER HELEN  
Follow your heart Neroni. Follow your  
heart.

**EXT. NERONI'S APARTMENT - DUSK.**

"DO NOT ENTER" signs plaster the abandoned building. Bare wires run along on top of a fence enclosing the property. We find Neroni sneaking in through a gap, and into -

**NERONI'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS.**

- a yard filled with junk that people have tossed over cumulating through the years. He walks across the yard, and zigzags up the fire-escape to his back door. He will be safe inside, it's his fortress.

**INT. NERONI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT.**

A prime-rib steak sizzles in the cast iron-pan, and a pot of water is boiling. Neroni is cooking on top of the wood burning stove.

**NERONI'S APARTMENT - LATER.**

Neroni has finished his dinner, and is dozing off in a chair by the fire.

**BEGIN FLASHBACK.****ST. ANTHONY'S CATHEDRAL - DUNGEON - DAY.**

A young Neroni lays on the floor, one arm chained to the stone wall, the other arm broken he keeps to his side. His face is swollen. He has only one good eye to see.

CLINK - The dungeon door open. Bishop Nicolo enters, with two monks behind him. He expression shifts from shock to compassion at the sight Neroni.

## BISHOP NICOLO

My God. The sins that men do. I pray for them. And I will say a pray for you. May the love of God provide you with solace in this darkness.

He walks over to Neroni, and places his hand on his head. He mumbles a PRAYER, finishing with the sign of the cross.

NERONI  
(a whisper)  
Ma-ma... maria.

## BISHOP NICOLO

Maria? Is that her name? Maria? She lives the poor child. The Sisters Of The Blessed Mary attend to her. Sister Helen will see to her recovery.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BISHOP NICOLO (cont'd)  
She will learn the teachings of our Lord,  
and so will you my son.

Neroni gives a moan.

BISHOP NICOLO (cont'd)  
That foul priest that inflicted  
wickedness on you has been excommunicated  
on my orders. As for the Lupara men, they  
suffered a different fate. They have been  
executed by The Holy Order.

Neroni tries to move, but the pain is unbearable.

BISHOP NICOLO (cont'd)  
God saved me when I was a young man your  
age. And through me the power of God has  
come to save you.

NERONI  
Water.

**INT. ST ANTHONY CATHEDRAL - DAY**

Neroni's face is submerged in a fountain of holy water. His eyes are wide open, with bubbles floating from his mouth to the surface. He's getting baptized.

**ST. ANTHONY'S CATHEDRAL - LATER.**

Gregorian CHANT echoes. God's Eminence radiates through the stain glass windows in colors.

Neroni stands, drenched in a white baptismal gown. Bishop Nicolo, and the CLERGIES of the Holy Order are gathered around him in a ceremony.

Bells start TOLLING! The silver badge of Archangel Michael is resting on a pillow. Bishop Nicolo takes the badge and pins it on Neroni, who is kneeling at the alter before him.

BISHOP NICCOLO (O.S.)  
- Through this rite, you embrace a new  
path. Knight of The Holy Order. A  
protector of this realm. God guide you -

**END FLASHBACK.**

**INT. NERONI'S APARTMENT.**

A SPARK from a burning log wakes up Neroni.

**INT. ST. ANTHONY'S CATHEDRAL - DAY.**

Grannies sit in the pews RECITING the rosary in Latin. Neroni walks along the Stations Of The Cross on the wall - he disappears behind a pillar.

Hiding behind the pillar Neroni is bending over the cellar door. Using some strength he pulls up on a iron ring, opening the heavy door.

**CATHEDRAL CELLAR - SAME TIME.**

We are in the dark - STRIKE of a match. Neroni ignites a lantern atop of a wine barrel, illuminating the stone and rock cellar. We HEAR the dripping of water.

Neroni walks across the cellar and into -

**CATACOMBS - CONTINUOUS.**

- a tunnel. The lantern casting his shadow behind him as he walks among the tombs of the dead along the walls. Embedded skulls watch Neroni walk by.

The way Neroni cuts turns, you've to know where you are going or you'll be lost.

At a tomb marked "X" Neroni hangs the lantern, removes the stone plaque, and a safe is revealed. CLICK his key opens it, pulls out a sack, and begins transporting his money.

FATHER VINCENZO (O.S.)  
Neroni.

Neroni's reflexes kick in! His Magnum slides out with swift motion!

FATHER VINCENZO (cont'd)  
Have no fear my son. It's me, Father Vincenzo.

Father Vincenzo steps into view at the far end. His big nose shadows the wall.

NERONI  
Father Vincenzo?

VINCENZO  
Yes, it is I.

There's a charged silence as Neroni lowers his gun.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NERONI

My condolence on your brother. The great Bishop Nicolo.

FATHER VINCENZO.

We held a beautiful mass for him. He was loved by so many. But I fear his death disrupts the delicate balance we held.

Neroni puts his gun away and resumes his work.

FATHER VINCENZO (O.S.)

I sense your unrest my son. The death of my brother weighs heavily on us all.

NERONI

With the bishop dead things will change.

FATHER VINCENZO

Yes. Yes they will... Captain Borgetto informs me that you urgently wish to discuss matter of great importance.

NERONI

I do Father.

FATHER VINCENZO

(walking away)

Come then. We have much to discuss. I can reassure you that your money is and will always be kept safe here in the house of God.

**INT. SAINT ANTHONY'S CATHEDRAL - CONFESSION BOOTH.**

Neroni is sitting in a tight closed booth. A wood panel wall with a small curtained box widow divides the joining booth. The drape of the window to the connecting booth is pulled back - it's Father Vincenzo.

FATHER VINCENZO

How are you Neroni? We all pray for you fervently. You saved my brother from assassination."A Knight of God", he will always praise.

Neroni doesn't know what to make out of Father Vincenzo. He just gives a nod of gratitude.

FATHER VINCENZO (cont'd)

Difficult times lie ahead. Whispers of a rebellion abound. Has this hierarchy not done what is right for the Lupara Della Croce.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NERONI

There's always talk. The Lupara, they're hungry. Desperate.

FATHER VINCENZO

Yes, hunger breeds societal disruption. That's why war with the Savages for the West Side Yards is crucial. You see that don't you?

Neroni's silence hangs in the air.

FATHER VINCENZO (cont'd)

Them Savages come from a land devoid of the true God. They have no soul. Infesting our city like rats. Today it's the West Side Yards. Tomorrow, God know what will come -

NERONI

- My oath to your brother is fulfilled.

FATHER VINCENZO

Pardon.

NERONI

The bishop has died. My oath, it's done.

Father Vincenzo stare pierces through the booth's dim light.

FATHER VINCENZO

My son, we are but fragments in God Kingdom. Where would you go? Where would you hide?... The church has kept you alive. Your oath to my brother is granted to me now.

Father Vincenzo slides a sealed contract envelope under the window. Neroni glances at it.

FATHER VINCENZO (cont'd)

Mogui. The Savage's crowned leader. New Year's Eve at Dante's Inferno, La Domé. Kill in the name of God. Send these heathens back to hell!

NERONI

... There is this woman, a nun. She left The Sisters Of The Blessed Mary a few days ago. Works at White Swan Tavern. When I was young -

A montage of their past ignites within him. He blinks back tears.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NERONI (cont'd)  
 She is under the protection of the Holy Order. Your late brother granted it when I was knighted.

FATHER VINCENZO  
 I see. And what is this child's name?

NERONI  
 Maria... Her name is Maria.

FATHER VINCENZO  
 Don't be anguish my mighty knight. I will reinstate the documents and sign.

Neroni, torn reluctantly takes the contract, stuffing it inside his jacket.

FATHER VINCENZO (cont'd)  
 Remember Neroni. A woman welcomed evil into this world. Don't forget who you are. It's safer to be feared than loved. Go in peace my son.

**EXT. WHITE SWAN TAVERN - NIGHT.**

Flurries of snow dance in the air. Christmas lights reflects off an illustrated sign of a WHITE SWAN hanging above the tavern door.

CHILDREN bundle up from the cold arrive at the front windows SINGING Christmas carols.

CHILDREN  
*Hark! The herald angels sing  
 Glory to the new born king -*

**INT/EXT. WHITE SWAN TAVERN - CONTINUOUS.**

The tavern adorned in charming Tudor décor, sits empty save for a single WAITRESS cleaning a table. A warm fire crackles in the hearth.

CHILDREN  
*- Peace on earth and mercy mild  
 God and sinners reconciled -*

The waitress turns her head to the window - it's Maria!

CHILDREN (cont'd)  
*- Hail the heaven born Prince of peace  
 Hail the Son of righteousness -*

Maria approaches the window.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHILDREN (cont'd)  
- *light and life to all he brings* -

Maria looks much older in years and hardship. Hair up in a bun, she is dressed prudish. Her eyes have lost it's glow of young and innocent, now pain and sorrow.

The burned scar on the side of her face mars her beauty. A haunting reminder of that carnival night ten years ago. A rare small smile comes upon her face as she stares out the window.

CHILDREN (cont'd)  
- *Hark! The herald angels sing  
Glory to the new born king.*

The children finish, SHOUTING their Merry Christmas before scrambling off.

Maria lingers at the window touching her cross necklace as if waiting for someone.

**EXT. WHITE SWAN TAVERN - CONTINUOUS.**

Across the street Neroni slips from the shadows. His gaze is fixed on Maria as she turns away, disappearing from the window.

He stands frozen, the falling snow covering him like a shroud.

**INT. WHITE SWAN TAVERN - DAY.**

Cozy, with few customers. Not busy at all for lunch.

Maria is sitting in a booth with a burger in front of her saying a grace. She makes the sign of the cross, and takes a huge bite into her burger.

OLSON  
Relax Maria. The burger ain't going nowhere.

OLSON, 60's, is the owner, and chef of the place. Behind the counter his caring eyes smile at Maria.

MARIA  
You make the best burgers.

OLSON  
Dam right. Been making them for thirty-five years.

Maria slurps her soda, and takes another huge bite.

**INT. WHITE SWAN TAVERN - NIGHT.**

Olson and his wife MILDRED don their coats on by the front door. Maria is helping Mildred with a scarf.

MILDRED  
You sure you don't want to spend  
Christmas at our home. We have an extra  
room.

MARIA  
I'm sure. Thank you.

MILDRED  
Well if you change your mind, just call.

OLSON  
Yeah. I'll come get ya.

MARIA  
Thank you. You been like a family to me  
that I never had. Given me food and a  
room.

OLSON  
Room? A bed in the pantry? Wish we can do  
more.

MARIA  
It's fine. The Lord will provide for what  
I need.

MILDRED  
Good night. See you tomorrow at the  
Christmas Mass.

Hugs and Merry Christmas wishes all around.

**INT. WHITE SWAN TAVERN - BATHROOM - LATER.**

Closet-size bathroom. Maria at the sink with her hair down  
finishes washing her face - she stares at her reflection.

Her hand tracing the burn scar on her face. Wearing a  
nightgown, more burn SCARS on her upper body is revealed.

**MARIA'S ROOM - LATER.**

Next to shelved dry goods, Maria is laying on a cot, rosary  
in her hand. On her night stand, a statue of the Virgin Mary,  
and a burning candle.

**EXT. PADRE PIO'S ABBEY - NIGHT.**

A full moon casts a glow over an abbey encircled by pine trees. Seven figures secretly emerge out of the trees, and make their way to the abbey on a mission.

**EXT. PADRE PIO'S ABBEY - FRONT GATE.**

They arrive at the wall's gate. It's the Luparas, Il Gato and the six that were at the poker table. They wait in the freezing cold. Someone COUGHS.

The bells begin to TOLL for the Midnight Prayers.

**INT. PADRE PIO'S ABBEY - CELL - SAME TIME.**

DONG! DONG! DONG! A LARGE MAN in monk's robe is sleeping on a bunk bed. His hands and feet are shackled. An open bible is resting on his chest. CLICKS - the door opens.

MONK (O.S.)  
Get up. It's time for prayers.

**EXT. PADRE PIO'S ABBEY - COURTYARD.**

DONG! DONG! DONG! Monks pour into the courtyard from all directions, forming a line as they move toward a small church.

We follow the shackled large man cloaked in a fair hood. Monks escort him with caution.

**EXT. PADRE PIO'S ABBEY - SAME TIME.**

The bells cease. The luparas are still waiting patiently. Finally the gate swings opens - it's a monk, BROTHER GILBERT. Il Gato displays a wide grin.

IL GATO  
Brother Gilbert.

Il Gato tosses a bag of money to brother Gilbert. He catches it. Stares at it for a moment, shame washing over his face.

The Luparas rush pass him, some bump him. No respect for a traitor.

**INT. PADRE PIO'S ABBEY - CHURCH - SAME TIME.**

Small, crude, and gloomy. Monks are kneeling, cloaked heads bowed, and praying. At the alter ABBOT FONTI is standing, facing them leading the prayers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MONKS  
(Latin)  
*Pater noster, qui es in caelis -*

Il Gato and the Luparas quietly step into the church, behind Abbot Fonti unnoticed. They scan the monks - weak and easy prey. BRUTUS, a gorilla size Lupara whips out his saw off shotgun -

- KABOOM! The deafening blast shatters the serenity. Silence freezing for a fraction of a second, shock gripping the air, then - SHOUTS of fear fill the sacred place. The sanctuary transform into chaos!

A MONK darts towards the alter at Feni, wanting to be a martyr.

Feni side steps and aims - KABOOM! The monk is sent flying across the church - landing on top of his comrades.

Another monk rushes forward - KABOOM! He explodes! Dark red ink against stone walls!

PUGNO (O.S.)  
Enough! I said enough!

The big man, PUGNO has spoken. Hooded and in shackles, he small steps up to the alter. All eyes on him.

ABBOT FONTI  
This is the house of God! How dare you unleash this evil upon us!

PUGNO  
"Love your enemies. Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be paid. Then the reward from heaven will be great. For he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked."

Pugno and the Abbot come face to face. Pugno pulls back his hood - a big bold head adorned with thick black eyebrows that shade eyes seething with revenge.

PUGNO (cont'd)  
Luke 6:35... Where are the rings of the bishops?

**EXT. PADRE PIO'S ABBEY GARDEN - EARLY DAWN.**

Pugno, unbound and fierce, stands beside a bruised Abbot Fonti. The Luparas are around a pit looking down at -

- two monks shoveling, and heaving earth to the surface.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PUGNO  
So my inquisitor. What am I to do with  
you?

ABBOT FONTI  
The Holy Order will have you  
excommunicated, and sentence to death for  
what you have done here.

PUGNO  
Excommunicated? Death? What power does  
the man of the cloth hold over us, when  
we're all equal in the eyes of the Lord?

Pugno moves in closer, lowering his tone. Making sure no one  
is listening.

PUGNO (cont'd)  
... Rotting in the dungeons I meet a man  
of God, cursed for his lust for boys. He  
begged for death and mercy. And I  
delivered it for him. Not to end his  
agony but for a secret. A secret he heard  
a cardinal chirping in the palace about a  
Pontiff Palace Guard named Octavio  
Machiavelli. Who found and took... *La  
Malice*.

Father Abbot makes the sign of the cross, looks to the  
heavens and MUMBLES a prayer to himself.

PUGNO (cont'd)  
Yes. The Gethsemane blade. The sword of  
Saint Peter it's hidden. Hidden with the  
rings of the bishops. Is it not my padre?

ABBOT FONTI  
You don't grasp the power of what you  
seek. It will consume men. Destroy them!  
I knew it will not be safe here. I sent  
Octavio and the Malice to be lost. Away  
from the evil that is festering in our  
land. Kill me then, for I will not betray  
God -

LUPARA (O.S.)  
- We have it.

With a struggle the monks hurl a treasure chest above the  
ground.

Pugno walks over to the chest. He gives a hard kick to a monk  
to get out of the way. He squats in front of it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Il Gato hands Pugno a gun. Pugno takes aim at the lock -  
BANG! And rips it opened.

Pugno's eyes gleam with the splendor. His hands dive in searching and searching. Behold -

Pugno stands with his RIGHT HAND glorified with the rings of the bishops! Gold with massive precious stones in color and light. The hand makes a fist so tight and it -

**EXT. LUPARA HEADQUARTER'S - NIGHT.**

- WHOMP! Mr. Borgetto's face seems to cave in with the power of the rings studded fist! He flies backwards off the porch.

PUGNO  
Judas! A fucking Judas is what you are!

Pugno walks off the porch, his boots crunching against the gravel - WHAM! Kicks Mr Borgetto in the face!

PUGNO (cont'd)  
Tell me! Been waiting for death or  
forgiveness!

Mr. Borgetto gets on all fours, his mouth is smashed in. Luparas are forming a circle around him under the street lights.

MR. BORGETTO  
*The Holy-The Holy Order-afraid of what  
you were becoming-afraid-afraid of a-  
rebellion. Magnificent Aspano wanted you  
dead.*

PUGNO  
You set me up! Walked me right into a cage! The Holy Order made you a captain as your reward -

MR. BORGETTO  
- Please Pugno! Please -

PUGNO  
- and our great Bishop Nicolo knighted Neroni!

Pugno spits on him!

PUGNO (cont'd)  
With you chirping in his ear no fucking doubt. I should have been knighted! It should have been me!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WHOMP! Pugno kicks him in the ribs. We can hear the air go out of Mr. Borgetto.

Luparas are looking on with sadistic smiles. Il Gato is fashioning a noose.

Mr. Borgetto's gets on his knees, and brings his clasps hands high above begging for mercy. His face is a bloody pulp.

MR. BORGETTO

*Pugno. Pugno I-I persuade them for your life... Five years in the dungeons and life at the abbey for your sins -*

PUGNO

- They should have kill me!

Il Gato walks over with the noose. Two Luparas pull Mr. Borgetto off the floor and hold him up. The noose gets fitted around his neck.

They drag him to a great big OAK TREE by the side of the front iron gates of the cemetary. The rope gets thrown over a branch.

Mr. Borgetto takes a good look all around him. One last attempt to save his soul.

MR. BORGETTO

You are my men! Under my command!

(wailing)

Save me! Save me!

PUGNO

They rebel. Therefor I exist. I'm a leader among the starving destitute.

These men have sworn loyalty to me. And we are ready to send this place to hell.

MR. BORGETTO

*My God have mercy on my soul.*

The rope gets pulled. Mr. Borgetto suspended body twists and fights in agony - the soul leaves.

**INT. GAUNTLET HEADQUATERS - PRIVATE ROOM - DAY.**

Pugno stand before a mirror, flexing his hand adorned with huge precious stones. It looks deadly.

IL GATO

You know wha it look like? Wha they call them medieval gloves them guys use to wear?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FENI  
Gauntlet.

Pugno mimics a quick draw with his Desert Eagle!

IL GATO  
Yeah that's it, a gauntlet. Just make  
sure all them rocks don't slow your gun  
hand down.

PUGNO  
What's with the Savages breeding in the  
West Side Yards? And Father Vincenzo  
calling for war?

Feni  
When them Savages started coming over,  
Bishop Nicolo gave them La Domé by the  
West Side Yards as a peace treaty.

PUGNO  
La Domé? Isn't that Tasso's patrol?

FENI  
Was. Poor fucking bastard. Talked  
rebellion. Not much of a leader. Bishop  
Nicolo had him assassinated for treason.

PUGNO  
Neroni?

FENI  
Yeah, who else.

With that Pugno snorts out a hard nasal spit to the wall! We  
see it hanging there on the Lupara Crest.

FENI (cont'd)  
The West Side Yard was right at La Domé's  
backyard. Little by little they just took  
it over.

IL GATO  
They call La Domé "Dante's Inferno" these  
days. Made it to some kind of night club.  
Making money hand over fist on Torino  
City's lost souls. Hear no note has been  
paid to the Holy Order yet.

PUGNO  
Hand over fist. How much we talking?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FENI

Enough that the West Side Yard is now prime real estate.

Pugno puts his gun away, kisses his gauntlet, and takes his seat behind the desk. He takes a moment thinking.

PUGNO

So good'ol Padre Vincenzo wants to wrangle the Luparas for a pistol dance with the Savages to fill his pockets. And his aristocrat dogs wag their tails... How many Luparas have bullets in their chamber?

BRUTUS

Got about 40. Another 20 at your command. We can rally some young guns. Get them to take oaths.

PUGNO

Where do I throw my first dagger.

FENI

La Domé.

**INT. GAUNTLET HEADQUATERS - CONTINUOUS.**

With a lite cigar in his mouth Pugno steps out into the packed bar. The chatter dies down. All eyes fixated on him.

PUGNO

Veterans and young defenders of the Cross listen up!

The Luparas all gather around him eager for news.

PUGNO (cont'd)

You as soldiers of Torino have a voice in the exercise of power in this city. But it seems to me that the political, and economic system of this realm is in the fucking shits!

Murmurs of agreement ripples among the Luparas.

PUGNO (cont'd)

For far too long these men of God and their aristocrats scumbags fattened their pockets with our spilled blood! We give them victory, and we get what?.. Pocket change! We get shit!

The Luparas are SHOUTING their disapproval.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PUGNO (cont'd)  
 Yes, war with the Savages is coming boys.  
 This time it's not for The Holy Order.  
 It's for our own. Non ducor duco! Know  
 what that means?... I'm not lead, I lead.  
 The days of the Lupara are gone! We are -

Pugno bring his GAUNTLET FIST high above for all to see.

PUGNO (cont'd)  
 - the Gauntlets! For the West Side  
 Yards! Non ducor duco!

A Big HOORAY!

**EXT. LUPARA HEADQUATERS - DAY.**

A Lupara nails the new crest "A FISTED GAUNTLET" onto the front doors. The Luparas are now the Gauntlets.

**EXT. ST. ANTHONY'S CATHEDRAL - DAY.**

The BELLS toll in the pouring rain. We look down from above the bell tower on parishioners under umbrellas in the plaza.

A monk struggles against the downpour, while holding an umbrella high as Father Vincenzo waves good-bye to the last of the parishioners.

FATHER VINCENZO  
 (looking up at the sky)  
 Good God. It's like the end of the world.

Father Vincenzo picks up his gown, and hurries up the steps to get inside. The monk tries to keep up.

GIACOMO(O.S.)  
 Father Vincenzo!

Father Vincenzo squints pass the rain to see -

- Giacomo with SANTINO, and MAXIMO. Three magnates of Torino City under their umbrellas.

GIACOMO (cont'd)  
 We would like a word with you.

Father Vincenzo looks up at the sky again. He walks over.

FATHER VINCENZO  
 Gentlemen.

The men nod in acknowledgment. The rain PELTS the umbrellas running off in endless streams.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FATHER VINCENZO (cont'd)  
Wish to talk inside away from this  
treacherous weather?

GIACOMO  
No hard feelings padre, but every time I  
step inside my wallet gets a little  
lighter.

Father Vincenzo gives a nervous laugh.

FATHER VINCENZO  
What can I do for you great men of  
Torino.

SANTINO  
With Captain Borgetto dead, talk about a  
rebellion is buzzing like flies.

FATHER VINCENZO  
Santino, you know that there has always  
been such talk.

SANTINO  
Yeah, but this time they got Pugno as  
their ring leader. We should have killed  
him.

GIACOMO  
We warned your brother.

MAXIMO  
They are gathering under a new banner.  
The Gauntlet. Non ducor duco.

FATHER VINCENZO  
Non ducor duco? Not be lead but lead.

SANTINO  
He's is rallying these lordless men for  
the promises of riches. We have invested  
a lot of funds on this West Side Yard  
campaign of yours. Is it lost before we  
even started?

FRANCO  
A disturbance in our financial aspects is  
not why we keep you ringing them bells  
padre. We can always ask The Holy Order  
for another bell ringer.

FATHER VINCENZO  
What will you have me do?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SANTINO  
We wish to hold council with The  
Magnificent Aspano.

All the men look around at each other with a bit concern with that name. Father vincenzo makes the sign of the cross.

GIACOMO  
We got no choice. This thing can get ugly. Get him on the horn. Tell him that The Holy Order will not see another note from us till this matter has been settled.

MAXIMO  
Good day padre.

Padre Vincenzo watches the men leave. He looks up the black clouds letting the rain hit his face.

**INT. WHITE SWAN TAVERN - NIGHT.**

New recruits of GAUNTLETS and WHORES, wearing party hats, and using party noises are gathered around the back tables getting drunk and rowdy. Feni leads the festivities.

Maria at a distance holding a bus-tray with Olson and Mildred.

OLSON  
My God. It's finally happened. The Holy Order has lost control of the Luparas. They have finally rebelled.

OLSON (cont'd)  
Oh Lord helps us.

Feni jumps up on a table with a bottle and gives a toast.

FENI  
To the young Gauntlets! Your oaths, new year, and to war. May it bring you fortune boys! Non ducor duco!

The Gauntlets give a ROAR and down their whiskey. Feni jumps down.

FENI (cont'd)  
Olson! Olson! Clean up this mess! More whiskey! We're thirsty!

Maria goes about collecting glasses. Feni has his eyes on her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Maria gets to Feni's table. He grabs her by her wrist! She tries to pull away.

MARIA  
Please let go. You are hurting me.

FENI  
Your face may be a bit ugly with that nasty scar of yours, but bettcha got sum nice perky titties.

GAUNTLET (O.S.)  
Lets see your titties.

Maria struggles to break free. Feni gives a hard squeeze of her breast. Maria SMACKS him clear across the face!

Maria is in shock. Feni is in shock. Everybody is in shock. After the seconds of the stun, Feni becomes enrage! He grabs Maria by her phony tail and -

MARIA  
No! Please no! I'm sorry -

- rips her blouse! Maria gets violently thrown around, and bend over a table. Feni locks her arm behind her back.

Olson comes running over - WHAM! A Gauntlet punches him in the face. He goes down hard!

MILDRED  
AAAH!

Feni mocks humping Maria her from behind. The Gauntlets and whores are laughing.

OLSON  
(bleeding mouth)  
Feni, please Feni. Please. She's from The Sisters Of The Blessed Mary. She is under our care.

FENI  
A sister huh. A virgin.

GAUNTLET (O.S.)  
Bitch tight as a fresh water clam I bet.

KABOOM!

Neroni has stepped in from the cold! His smoking lupara is pointing to the ceiling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The shit stops! The place becomes dead silence. Feni hands go up. He slowly backs away from Maria.

Neroni takes a look around at the open mouth faces. His eyes find Maria's eyes.

There is hurt, lost love, and longing in the souls of their eyes. Time stands still for a moment. They are in their own world.

Maria's ripped blouse slips, and all have a quick glace at the scars violating her body. She quickly covers herself up.

Ashamed. She hangs her head and begins to cry. She let's out a SCREAM! It pierces our heart! She runs to her room SLAMMING the door behind her! It gets very quiet.

FENI

... Young Gauntlets! Know who you looking at? Wears the badge of Archangel Michael. Making him a fucking knight. This is the one that I have warn you about.

Neroni has a death stare.

FENI (cont'd)

Hey, we just fooling around Neroni.  
Having sum good time. It's New Year's Eve  
you know wha I mean?

JACK (O.S.)

You nottin but a lone wolf so fuck off  
asshole. We are the Gauntlets!

NERONI

Who said that?!

JACK, a new Gauntlet soldier sitting in the corner has whiskey courage. He stands up to face Neroni.

JACK

Things gonna change big dog. Fuck the Holy Order, fuck the Lupara, and fuck you.

NERONI

New law and order is that what you pups are crying about? Blood on the streets, money in the pocket, and Pugno is the man with the plan.

Jack flashes his gun tucked in his waist.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JACK  
Yeah. That's right.

NERONI  
That's treason.

Jack itches for his gun -

- BANG! Neroni shoots Jack between the eyes with the Magnum!

He look at everyone in the room. No one dares to move or breath.

**EXT. TORINIO CITY - NIGHT.**

Snowflakes drift through the air blanketing the streets in white. Maria, bundled up in a red coat, scarf, and knitted hat, follows Neroni wheeling her luggage.

Not a word is being said between them, as we follow them going through the town. People are rushing to get home.

**EXT. TORINO PARK - NIGHT.**

Neroni and Maria are trekking across the park. The park's lamp-posts illuminates the snow dusted ground. No one is around. It's a winter wonderland.

**EXT. TORINO PARK - SAME TIME.**

Maria sittings on a snow-covered bench, her luggage besides her. Neroni stands at the edge of a pond deep in thoughts.

MARIA  
"If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you". And I wished. In the moment in between I prayed. It was never answered... You never came for me.

NERONI  
I'm a knight of The Holy Order. I'm better to be feared than loved.

MARIA  
I forsaken my vows to God to find you! But you... You remain hidden from me. Be patient the sisters told me. Neroni's oath to Bishop Nicolo is under God, it can't be broken. And I waited. Waited for the bishop to die. Waited for you. Waited for God to answer my prayers. But you, you never came.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Maria looks up to the snow falling sky.

MARIA (cont'd)  
Oh God, if I close my eyes forever will  
it all remain the same.

NERONI  
Maria. What was once in our heart is just  
a dream now -

MARIA  
- That day at the court yard! The last  
time I saw you! When they were taking me  
to the convent do you remember -

NERONI  
- I'm sorry to -

MARIA  
- we made a promise to each other!

NERONI  
I'm sorry to hurt you. I never wanted to  
hurt you.

MARIA  
Hurt me? It killed me... Can't you even  
look at me.

Maria begins to cry, the warmth of her breath visible in the cold.

MARIA (cont'd)  
*Is it the scars!? Do they make me too  
ugly for you?*

Neroni clenches his fist at his heart. He feels her pain and it's destroying him. He walks to the bench, stands above her.

NERONI  
I will sacrifice my life for eternal hell  
if it will heal your heart... You are the  
most beautiful vision I had or will ever  
see.

He reaches down, lifting Maria's chin, and looks right into her eyes, caressing her face.

NERONI (cont'd)  
I look at you and I will love again. Want  
what once was. And it will be selfish of  
me... I'm a shadow of death. Your life  
will be worthless with me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Maria reaches for Neroni's hand, grabs it, holds it tight, and pulls him close. She snugs up against him, burying her face in his duster.

MARIA  
Hold me. Just hold me.

Neroni hesitates, but her love beckons him. Slowly he envelopes her in his arms. He caresses his face on top of her knitted hat breathing in life.

NERONI  
It's not safe here anymore. You have to go back to The Sisters Of The Blessed Mary.

MARIA  
I'm not going back. I'm leaving here. With or without you.

**INT. ST. ANTHONY'S CATHEDRAL CELLAR - NIGHT.**

HUNTER, a towering pagan mercenary doing Magnificent Aspano's dirty work, is waiting in the dim light. Fashioning long braided hair, beard, and a mud splatter duster. He looks like a Viking warlord.

Disgusted at all the religious artifacts about, he touches his pagan war hammer amulet that hangs around his neck. Chewing tobacco he spits at a corner.

DANIEL, a hooded monk waits with him at the far side of the cellar.

Father Vincenzo descend down the stairs, flanked by TWO MONKS. He is taken back at the sight of Hunter.

FATHER VINCENZO  
(Makes the sign of the cross)  
My God.

The two monks walk to the corners of the room as guards. Hunter takes a good look at them being very cautious. His eyes are back at Father Vincenzo.

HUNTER  
(chewing tobacco)  
Magnificent Aspano sent me. Making sure he doesn't step on shit when he gets here.

FATHER VINCENZO  
And you are?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HUNTER  
Hunter.

FATHER VINCENZO  
Oh Yes. Yes. You came highly recommended.  
You were send here on my terms. I  
obtained your fee.

HUNTER  
You penguins are all the same. Your cry  
for your God has made me a living.

FATHER VINCENZO  
... Thirsty? You must be thirsty from  
your long travel. Can I offer you a  
drink?

HUNTER  
Whiskey.

Father Vincenzo gets busy getting a bottle off the webbed  
dusty rack.

FATHER VINCENZO (O.S.)  
Did Magnificent Aspano mention when his  
arrival will be?

Hunter gives a tobacco spit. It flies across the room.

FATHER VINCENZO (cont'd)  
Excuse me! This is the house of God! The  
dead lay here!

Hunter couldn't give a dam. He chews his tobacco.

FATHER VINCENZO (cont'd)  
Any news on your journey that might be an  
interest to me?

HUNTER  
Names and numbers, that's all I want.  
Tell me the dead, and tell me the bread.

Father Vincenzo hands Hunter his drink.

FATHER VINCENZO  
Strictly business. Yes, I can respect  
that. Okay. A man that goes by the name  
Pugno is getting a allegiance of the  
Luparas to uprise against The Holy Order.  
By the power invested in me by God -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HUNTER

- Don't feed me your God shit padre.  
The bread?

Hunter downs his whiskey.

**INT. CATACOMBS TUNNEL.**

In single file the two monks lead the way with a lantern.  
Follow by Father Vincenzo, Hunter, and the monk Daniel.

HUNTER

Is there a man that goes by the name Il  
Gato in these parts?

FATHER VINCENZO

Il Gato. Oh yes, the one eye cat. Yes he  
is known very well here. Unfortunately  
for his sins.

The rooted skulls watch their shadows walk by. Some parts of  
the tunnel are so tight Hunter has to walk sideways and bend  
his head.

FATHER VINCENZO (cont'd)

What's your business with this Il Gato?  
Would you like to obtain information on  
his whereabouts? For a small fee of  
course.

HUNTER

Back at my days at the glades did sum  
gator hunting. Baited my prey. You gotta  
beat it bloody, gag it's mouth, tie it up  
like a hog. Get a big hook in the eye.  
Not too deep. Don't wanna get the brain.  
Live bait works best for the five hundred  
pounders.

FATHER VINCENZO

Oh. So, you are Il Gato's predator.

HUNTER

Paddle my way around. Got my bait in. See  
pair of yellow eyes in the dark. It  
smelled the blood like a bitch in heat.  
Got -

Father Vincenzo stops, and turns to face Hunter. He bring the  
monk's lantern closer to Hunter face. Studies it for a moment  
and turns. They continues their walk.

FATHER VINCENZO

You speak with savage pride.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HUNTER  
Got my rifle ready. But that Gato, that fucking worm got away.

Father Vincenzo comes to a stop. They have arrived at the tomb marked "X", Neroni's safe. He begins to open it.

**EXT. TORINIO PARK - NIGHT.**

Neroni and Maria are cuddled. They have fallen asleep on the park bench. Snow has accumulated on them. DONG! DONG! DONG! The bells of St. Anthony's Cathedral begin to toll.

Neroni jumps up with his Magnum in hand! He wakes up Maria scared.

NERONI  
I'm late. I gotta go!

Neroni is in a hurry. He checks to see if all his weapons are in place.

MARIA  
Neroni... Let's get out of here.

Maria offers Neroni her hand. Hope, a candle in the dark.

The temptation is in Neroni's eyes - it quickly disappears.

NERONI  
I got no time for this. Go back. Go back to the sisters. I gotta get going.

He takes out some money and offers it to Maria. Maria looks at the money, turns her face away disgusted at the gesture. Neroni shoves the money in her pocket.

NERONI (cont'd)  
If you ain't going to the sisters tonight  
get a room away from here. Meet me here  
tomorrow. I got money for you to live a  
good life. Take it and get out of here.

One last look into each other's eyes.

MARIA  
My love -

NERONI  
- No... What we had was once upon a time.

Neroni leaves Maria sitting alone in the falling snow, with the bells TOLLING ominously in the background.

**EXT. DANTE'S INFERO - NIGHT.**

Dante's Inferno is La Domé. A dome church converted into a night club. A long line of freezing LOST SOULS aka CLUBGOERS dressed in white are waiting in the snow to get inside.

**INT. DANTE'S INFERO - HELL PIT - CONTINUOUS.**

PULSATING MUSIC reverberates along with the strobe lights through the haze of smoke, illuminating four tiers of circular balconies that circle the vast cavity of the dome.

Below, raucous sea of LOST SOULS dance in a frenzy of hedonism - drugs, sex, and chaotic celebration in the dancing light of the HELL PIT!

BOOSH! Fireballs erupt from the pyrotechnics around the hell pit, sending clouds of smoke up to Botticelli's painting of "HELL" on the dome ceiling.

The SAVAGES are a race of pale skin men with raven hair, and piercing eyes. They look like vampires. Wearing satin black raincoats, they walk amongst the Lost Souls as predators.

MOGUI, the Savage leader, sits on a throne-adjacent alter. His black mirror shades obscure his gaze as he observes his men enslaving Torinio's youth with drugs.

**INT. DANTE'S INFERO - PRIVATE LOUNGE.**

Mogui inspects frightened subdued young girls, as if they are livestock. He gestures to his massive BODYGUARD nearby before striding out of the room.

Neroni appears! And he follows.

**INT. DANTE'S INFERO - HALLWAY.**

The bodyguard stands before bathroom door arms crossed. Waves of Lost Souls pass him by. Like a salmon swimming up the river, Neroni goes against the wave. He pulls out a double edge dagger and -

- without missing a beat steps out from the current, thrusting the blade into the bodyguard's chest! He pounds the pommel with his fist spearing him to the door - blood spit out from the bodyguard's mouth!

The Lost Souls keep swimming behind Neroni oblivious.

**INT. DANTE'S INFERN - MEN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS.**

Music from outside is muffled. Small and disgusting. The toilet is over flowing. Shit, urine, toilet-paper, and vomit all over the floor.

At the sink Mogui wets his hair. He looks at himself in the mirror. At his shades reflection the bathroom door opens behind him - Neroni enters.

**INT. DANTE'S INFERN - HALLWAY - SAME TIME.**

The Gauntlet have busted in the front door with victims blood on them. Pugno leads his men down a hallway. They move fast. A Savage appears - he gets his gutted!

**HELL PIT.**

BOOSH! Fireballs flash up the arena revealing the LUNACY! The music blasting is an GREGORIAN TECHNO MIX - the Gauntlets enter!

A Savage is squatting on the railing of the fourth tier balcony high above. He looks down at them like a perched gargoyle.

Pugno spot him and readies his lupara.

The Savage spread his arms and jumps off. BOOSH! - through fire from the pyrotechnics as if reborn from flames.

KABOOM! The power of the lupara hits him in the chest, he's sent flying back. KABOOM! The head explodes!

Pugno reloads. The Gauntlets make a wall around him. Eyes and barrels fixed above!

Savages begin emerging from the darkness, crouching on all four tiers like ravenous beasts waiting to fly down.

**PUGNO**

Don't let them touch the ground! We stand shoulder to shoulder! You hear me! Stay close! Stay fucking close!

The Savages jump off! Their black raincoats billow like wings as they soar down into -

- the BLASTING of luparas! The Gauntlets are skeet shooting! Bodies are ripped apart mid-air! Organs and blood shower the Lost Souls! They give a ROAR, jumping up and down for more!

**MEN'S ROOM.**

A vicious knife fight is happening! Mogui swings a blade - Neroni slaps it aside, grabs his arm to break it, but Mogui produces another blade and slashes Neroni's across his cheek!

Neroni lets go, and stumbles back on one knee with a CRY derived far more from anger than pain.

Mogui pounces, blade ready for the final blow - he is caught at the neck, Neroni head-buts full tilt!

Mogui's nose is SMASHED - blood splatters! He hits the floor dazed, drops his blade. Neroni rises, the Magnum is out, and the hammer gets pulled back.

BANG! - skull, brains, and blood saturate Neroni's cut face.

**HELL PIT.**

Some savages make landing! They disappear inside the Hell Pit, hiding among the Lost Souls.

PUGNO

They are too many! Fall back! Stay fucking close! Move with me! With me -

Pugno and the Gauntlets are breached! Savages come out behind the Lost Souls attacking with Scimitar like swords!

We witness the chaos from above the balcony's perspective - GAUNTLETS and SAVAGES being killed, and killing anyone in their way!

**MEN'S ROOM.**

Neroni opens the door and looks out - Savages are stampeding over the Lost Souls towards him! He look at the open window to the fire escape.

**EXT. DANTE'S INFERN - FIRE ESCAPE - CONTINUOUS.**

Snow falls. Neroni scrambles down the second landing. With a final desperate heave Neroni vaults over the railing -

- landing on his feet in a alleyway. He sees the street and makes a run for it.

A Savage lunges from behind a dumpster knocking Neroni down, SLASHING him across the belly!

NERONI

AARGH!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Pinned, Neroni pulls out a buck knife tucked in his boot. He stabs repeatedly into the Savage's liver.

**EXT. DANTE'S INFERO - FRONT DOORS - SAMETIME.**

Drenched in blood, Pugno and Gauntlets storm out of Dante's Inferno. Running across the street they're meet up by more Gauntlets.

PUGNO  
Get ready! Get fucking ready!

Savages spill out from Dante's Inferno gun blazing! Gauntlets return fire!

In the midst of it all, Pugno spots Neroni stumbling out of the alleyway, making a run away from the carnage. A devious smile comes upon his face.

**EXT. TORINO CITY - CONTINUOUS.**

**INTERCUT BETWEEN NERONI AND PUGNO.**

Neroni is swaying, leaving blood tracks behind him in the snow.

Pugno squats at Neroni's blood trail in the snow.

Neroni's VISION is blurry. He takes a moment to catch his breath. He opens his jacket and lift up his shirt. The slash across his belly is bleeding profusely, it's fatal.

Pugno pace has quickened, he is on a hunt.

Neroni staggers towards subway station.

Pugno see Neroni. Out come his Desert Eagle.

Neroni's bloody hand grabs the railing - BANG!

Neroni clutches his shoulder and tumbles down the stairs.

**INT. SUBWAY STATION - CONTINUOUS.**

Pugno follows Neroni's blood. It lead us down the stairs - to the turnstile - across the station floors - into the tunnel.

**INT. SUBWAY TUNNEL.**

Pugno stalks along the tracks. He spots blood on the third railing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We HEAR the train coming. In the fast approaching train lights, Pugno spot Neroni on the other side of the tracks. Their guns start BLASTING -

- the train SCREAMS between them. The last car is coming. Pugno gets his aim ready.

Hanging on the back of the last car is Neroni. BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! The back train lights disappear into the darkness of the tunnel taking Neroni for a ride.

**INT. NERONI'S BATHROOM - NIGHT.**

We are in the dark. We HEAR Neroni breathing laboriously. CLICK - a flickering light bulb revels Neroni's grotesquely bloodied naked body and face - blood is gushing and pulsing!

He hurls the medicine cabinet door open slamming his fist inside, knocking out all kinds of medical supplies! Out comes a syringe needle.

He drops to his knees, teeth tugging off the cap, Neroni plunges the needle into his shoulder and collapses.

**EXT. TORINO PARK - DAWN.**

The rising sun paints orange skies. It's a frigid morning. Snow and ice shroud the park in silence. The pond where Neroni and Maria sat by yesterday is now frozen.

Maria has remained at the park bench. Her face is red raw sitting there all night. Icicles dangle from her nose. She shivers, rocking her body to keep warm.

**INT. CORNER DELI - DAY.**

Maria is at a coffee counter making herself a hot tea. The weather forecast crackles in the background.

WEATHERMAN (O.S.)  
*- well the snow has ended, but it's going to get a lot worst. A winter storm is coming our way. Blizzard conditions -*

A moment of stillness passes as Maria stares out the window.

**EXT. ST ANTHONY'S CATHEDRAL - DAY.**

We follow Maria dragging her suitcase at the cathedral's garden sanctuary. Her red coat starkly contrasts against the snow and dead trees. She walks as going to her grave.

A statue of the VIRGIN MARY comes into view. Maria walks up to it and drops to her knees.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The face of the Virgin Mary looks down upon her. Maria looks up with eyes filled with tears.

**EXT. TORINO PARK - DAY.**

Sitting back on the park bench numb, Maria looks across the frozen pond - it's so peaceful. All the world in white. She had hope, but all is gone now. There's a soft HOWL of the wind.

NERONI (O.S.)  
*Maria.*

Did she hear it? After a moment she lets it go. It's was just her imagination.

NERONI (cont'd)  
*Maria.*

Maria is up, and looking behind her. Several yards away is Neroni. It takes a moment for Maria to realize what she is seeing.

MARIA  
Are you an angel?

Neroni falls on his knees.

Maria jets over - throws her arms around him! Hugging, kissing, crying life, love, it's all here right now! She is getting Neroni's blood all over her.

Maria looks at Neroni's face, and is taken back. The eyes are dazed, he's caked in blood, white as a ghost. She open's Neroni's duster and sees the blood bath. Blood is pouring - turning the virgin snow red all around them.

MARIA (cont'd)  
*Oh my God. Oh God.*

NERONI  
*I'm a dead man walking. We need to get out of here. They kill us both.*

With great effort Maria hoist Neroni up. He leans on her. She looks around - where the hell do we go?

NERONI (cont'd)  
*The forest. We cut through the trees.*

Maria look at her suitcase. No way can she take it and carry Neroni.

**EXT. TORINO FOREST - LATER.**

CAW CAW CAW. A RAVEN is flying above. Branches gives sheltered as Neroni and Maria forge a narrow way on a deer trail through the snow.

**EXT. TORINO CITY - SAME TIME.**

Il Gato is running down the street as if death is upon him. Pushing pedestrians out of his way, racing across a intersection. He takes a look behind at -

- Hunter! He's in no hurry. He takes out a chunk of tobacco and chews, watching Il Gato run into the forest and disappear.

**EXT. TORINO FOREST - SAME TIME.**

Neroni and Maria are slowly making their way on a make-shift bridge over a ditch. Their breaths visible in the biting cold. Neroni stumbles and they stop.

NERONI  
*I need to stop.*  
*(coughs)*  
*I need to rest a minute.*

MARIA  
 Lets rest. Lets just rest for a minute.

Maria steadies him, her own breath ragged. She scans their surrounding. Neroni takes another fall. Maria struggles to gets him back on his feet. She shakes him up.

MARIA (cont'd)  
 Hey! Hey look at me! Look at me! Where are we going!? Where are we going!?

NERONI  
 Home. My home.

MARIA  
 When do we turn!? When do we turn!?

NERONI  
 The tree. Our tree.

MARIA  
 You gonna be ok.

NERONI  
 I'm gonna be ok.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA  
Because I love you.

A spark of life has enter Neroni's eyes. He stare at Maria for a moment transfix. She is his life.

NERONI  
... I love you.

**INTERCUT BETWEEN - NERONI AND MARIA / HUNTER AND IL GATO.**

Il Gato darts through the trees like a hunted animal.

Hunter makes his way through the dense undergrowth. CAW CAW CAW - the RAVEN sits on top of a branch.

Hunter is bewitched by the raven. The eyes roll back, and he fists his hammer amulet around his neck. His gods are calling him.

HUNTER  
Odin, oh high one. Though you sit in Valhalla show me. Lead me. And I will reward it to you.

The raven CAWS again and takes flight. Hunter follows it.

Maria's hand traces the faded engraved "NERONI AND MARIA 4EVER" on the tree - so many years ago. Wet with exhaustion, Neroni and Maria are mesmerise by it.

**EXT. TORINO FOREST.**

Maria and Neroni emerge from the bend of a narrow trail. Ahead, the boulder marks their old campsite. Snow begins to fall heavily enveloping the scene.

CAW CAW CAW. The raven lands on top of a branch above them. Maria glances up at it. Alert something stirs in the shrubs, she turns her head -

- Stepping out onto the trail is Hunter!

MARIA  
(terrified)  
Neroni!

Neroni's dizzy mind spins, struggling to comprehend his surrounding through the blinding snow!

CAW CAW CAW - the raven takes flight.

Hunter looks up to the sky.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HUNTER

I fly upon the blackest of wings, I soar  
through the dark night sky, I answer no  
call but my own. I alone forge my  
reality, for I am the Raven. The child of  
Odin.

His EYES turn back to Neroni and Maria.

Neroni tries to stand up straight. His hand on his tucked  
Magnum. He is on the edge of collapsing.

IL GATO (O.S.)  
*Meeooww. Meeooww. Meeooww.*

NERONI  
(sighs)  
Il Gato.

**BEHIND THE BOULDER**

Il Gato with two guns in his hands is PACING and HISSING like  
a caged wild cat. His eye patch is off, and he has stripped  
naked. The eye socket is black and vile. His body is covered  
in knife wounds, and tattoos of pornographic cartoons.

IL GATO  
*Meeooww. The cat goes into a hole for a  
mouse comes out with two in his mouth.  
Who do I shoot first? Meeooww. Hunter!  
Take my revenge. You hear me! Hunter! An  
eye for a fucking eye!*

Maria is losing strength holding up Neroni.

IL GATO (cont'd)  
Or do I take Neroni first. Kill the great  
knight for the Gauntlet's glory!

Hunter spits. His double barrel semi automatic pops out!

Neroni gets a second wind. His duster falls off, out comes  
the 44 Magnum! He throws Maria behind him.

Behind the boulder Il Gato has his two guns tucked underneath  
his arm-pits freeing his hands and is PISSING hard!  
Contaminating the white snow - steam and a foul stink in the  
air.

IL GATO (cont'd)  
I'll kill you both, and rape the woman.  
*Meeooww. Here pussy pussy pussy cat.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The last of the daylight disappears, plunging them into darkness - BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! FLASHES of gun blast! Two came from behind the boulder!

All is quiet - a COUGH from Neroni.

MARIA  
Neroni?

NERONI  
Don't move.

CLICK. Neroni flicks a lighter. In the light of the high flame Il Gato's face SPOOKS us from behind Maria! He lunges!

IL GATO  
AAAH!

Neroni jams his dagger in Il Gato's eye socket! Il Gato emits a wretched CRY - the lighter goes out.

**EXT. NERONI'S APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING.**

The blizzard is over. Four feet of snow mounds the neglected backyard. We can make out an uneasy path in the snow that someone has made.

Snow shifts against a wall. Something is buried underneath - Maria's hand breaks out, and it disappears back in.

**INT. SHELTER - CONTINUOUS.**

Morning light filters through from the breakout opening hole. Maria and Neroni have taken shelter under a plywood against the wall. Neroni is not moving. Maria begins to CRY.

The bells of Saint Anthony begin to TOLL from a distance.

**EXT. NERONI'S APARTMENT - DAY.**

Maria has dug her way out from the plywood shelter. The snow is up to her knees. She looks up at the fire escape leading to Neroni's apartment back door. It's one hell of a task.

**SERIES OF SHOTS.**

Maria using her hands to shovel the snow from the stairs.

Maria takes a slip, and falls down the stairs.

Maria's face and hands are red, raw, and frozen. She takes a moment to rest.

Maria drags Neroni across the snow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Maria struggles pulling Neroni up the stairs one step at a time.

**EXT. NERONI'S BACK DOOR - NIGHT.**

A quarter moon is out. Freezing and exhausted, Maria leans against the back door. Neroni lies lifeless across her lap.

MARIA

Neroni. Neroni... Can you hear me?

She goes through Neroni's pocket looking for a key. She pulls out the Magnum. It's heavy in her hand.

**NERONI'S BACK DOOR.**

Maria is gripping the Magnum, aiming at the lock. She closes her eyes, and squeezes the trigger - BANG! The power has her falling backwards!

**INT. NERONI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT.**

The wood burning stove gives us the light. The room looks like a civil war medical tent with blood stain rags everywhere.

Neroni is in his bed unresponsive. Blood is gushing out of his wounds, bathing all over Maria and the sheets.

Maria is hysterical. She dunks a blood soak cloth into a basin. The water in the basin mixes with blood, turning it red.

**EXT. SISTER HELEN'S ROSE SHACK - DAY.**

Cats come up to Maria as she runs into the alley. She see Sister Helen attending to her roses.

MARIA

Sister Helen! Sister Helen!

Sister Helen turns. Her eyes gleam with affection for Maria, but that quickly becomes unease seeing Maria drenched in Neroni's blood.

MARIA (cont'd)

It's Neroni! I need your help!

**INT. NERONI APARTMENT - NIGHT.**

The ambers are burning low. Maria and Sister Helen are at Neroni's bedside. Maria's face streaked with tears.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA

*- Mother Mary, Mother Mary please hear my  
cries. Don't take him away from me,  
please please answer my prayers -*

SISTER HELEN

*- Hail Mary fill with grace the lord is  
with the. Blessed are you among women -*

A flickering LIGHT appears. It dances at the foot of the bed - FLASH! Glorious light radiants from a silhouette of The VIRGIN MARY! Maria and Sister Helen agleam with the divine light!

**INT. NERONI'S APARTMENT - MORNING.**

The morning sunlight sneaks in through the boarded windows on a naked, cleansed, and stitched Neroni on white linen.

**INT. NERONI'S BATHROOM - DAY.**

Maria is sitting on the shower floor. The little water that drips down on her rinses Neroni's blood into the drain.

**SERIES OF SHOTS - INT. NERONI'S APARTMENT.**

Maria feeds wood into dying ambers.

Maria rummages through the cabinets at the can-foods.

Maria dumps the contents of a soup in a pot on top of the wood-burning stove.

Maria opens a drawer - we see Neroni and Maria photo booth picture.

Maria lies next to Neroni in bed. The rosery in one hand, the other hand holds the picture against her chest.

**INT NERONI'S APARTMENT - DAY.**

Maria is working with a hammer, prying nails from the boards shuttering a window. Pulling with some strength the board falls off - SUNLIGHT and FRESH AIR bursts in with a rush!

Maria takes it all in. She inhales deeply. A relief as if she just reached the surface from a drowning.

**INT. - BISHOP'S CHAMBERS - DAY.**

Father Vincenzo looks out of the window into his troubled world.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FATHER VINCENZO

The pagan Hunter is lost. Lordless men  
are taking oaths under Pugno's banner,  
*Non ducor duco*. Neroni has vanished with  
a tavern whore, abandoning us. And them  
*Savages are licking their lips.*

He turns to face his monks, all eight of them. They are lined up like perfect soldiers. Among them, Thomas and Daniel.

FATHER VINCENZO (cont'd)

I'm sending you out like a lamb among  
wolves, Daniel my son.

Daniel stares ahead, resolute.

FATHER VINCENZO (cont'd)

We will intercept and exterminate with  
any need necessary this wickedness that  
is festering in our land. We will not  
astray or fear.

Father Vincent's eyes pierce Thomas a warning look.

FATHER VINCENZO (cont'd)

For the Lord Jesus Christ is in our  
hearts.

**INT. GAUNTLET HEADQUATERS - PRIVATE ROOM - DAY.**

It is tight in here. With the door open the Gauntlets spill in from the bar room.

Pugno sits behind his desk. His gauntlet hand splayed out, a display of dominance and authority.

Standing before him is Daniel, stripped of his monk's tunic, looking like a tentative young man. His right hand rests on the Bible, left hand on his heart taking his oath.

DANIEL

- and I will perform everything as it was  
in our agreement when I submitted myself  
to him and chose his will. As God my  
witness.

PUGNO

What's your name kid?

DANIEL

Daniel sir.

PUGNO

Where you from?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANIEL  
The Blue Ridge Mountains sir.

PUGNO  
Say you're pretty good with the scope.

DANIEL  
Can shoot a buck at two hundred yards.

With that Pugno and some Gauntlets give a laugh.

PUGNO  
You ever shoot at a man?

Something has caused a disturbance. Someone has come in, and is walking through. The Gauntlets are stepping aside. Reaching the desk it's - Hunter!

Hunter throws a blood stained sack on the desk. He empties it, and Il Gato's severed head rolls out. Neroni's dagger still jammed in the eye.

HUNTER  
(chewing tobacco )  
Been barking up the wrong tree.

Pugno tilts his head to take a better look at Il Gato.

PUGNO  
We're about law and order here. You've just executed a lieutenant under my banner. That's a death sentence.

Pugno strikes a match against the desk, lighting his cigar as he studies Hunter.

PUGNO (cont'd)  
Besides, bullet for hire contracts are payouts through my channels only.

HUNTER  
I hunted the cat for sport. Your head was my cash.

PUGNO  
Oh yeah. From whom?

HUNTER  
Magnificent Aspano send me. The man with the cross paid me. You can keep your pet. Didn't tag it. Got no pride in it. The blade belongs to a man, and that is why I am here.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HUNTER (CONT'D)  
(spits)  
Where can I find this Neroni?

**EXT. TORINO CITY HIGHWAY - DAWN.**

A sedan is hiding on the shoulder off a highway, It's hazard light flashing. An exit sign reads "WEST SIDE YARDS".

**INT. SEDAN - CONTINUOUS.**

Daniel sits in the driver seat nervous. Hunter is in the passenger seat chewing tobacco staring at him. The dashboard lights blinks at their faces.

Hunter  
My partner, uh. Never really had one before. I like working alone.

Daniel swallows hard and shifts in his seat.

HUNTER (cont'd)  
What you know about this man named Neroni?

DANIEL  
Nothing really. Wears the badge. Making him a Knight of The Holy Order.

HUNTER  
... I know you. Seen your face before.

DANIEL  
I ah, I don't think so. I'm ah. I'm from the Blue Ridge Mountains. You, you ever been there?

HUNTER  
Folks don't look in the eyes when they talk in them mountains of yours?

Daniel knuckles are white gripping the steering wheel. He slowly turns to meet Hunter's gaze.

HUNTER (cont'd)  
You got fear in your eyes boy.

DANIEL  
This... This will be the first time. The first time I will kill a man.

HUNTER  
First time, uh. Well let me tell you something about killing a man.  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HUNTER (CONT'D)  
There are only two kinds in this world.  
Predator and prey.

Hunter rows down the window, and gives a hard nasal black tobacco spit.

HUNTER (cont'd)  
Predator and prey. Once you taste that kill. Taste that first blood, you have separate yourself from your fellow man. Men will always be your prey. The thing is each predator got different styles on the killing. I think it depends on the prey. I Like to hear them beg first sometimes. Their cries sweetening the moment before the lights go out.

Sweat beads on Daniel's brow, as he processes Hunter's twisted world-view.

**EXT. WEST-SIDE YARDS FOOTHILLS - LATER.**

Daniel with his rifle slung over his shoulder climbs a hill through overgrown shrubs - Hunter follows right behind.

HUNTER  
This nailed God of yours that you people pray to, you never sacrifice him anything. But keep asking for glory.

Daniel touches a hidden dagger at his belt.

HUNTER (cont'd)  
I say lets capture a Savage. Cut his heart out. Give it to your God as an offering. Bet he will welcome it.

DANIEL  
My God, the only true God needs no sacrifice of blood. He sacrifice his son for all. He awards those that are true to him with eternal life.

HUNTER  
Know what a blood eagle ritual is partner? Bet your God will welcome it.

**EXT. WEST-SIDE YARDS FOOTHILLS.**

They reached the top of the hilltop, and are looking down at -

**EXT. WEST-SIDE YARDS - CONTINUOUS.**

- a massive destructive land powering a great river. Scaffolds surround a gated area with armed Savages patrolling. A stone block building sits in the middle like a tower.

Across the river, Savages are building homes. We see women and children.

HUNTER

Go ahead boy. Get your rifle ready, become a predator. Kill a Savage in the name of your God.

Daniel takes a deep breath. He pulls out his dagger, and quickly turns around ready to strike -

- Hunter has disappeared! Daniel frantically looks all around -
- Hunter grabs him by the neck - slams him to a tree! Feet off the ground. The dagger falls out!

HUNTER (cont'd)

I know who you are. I remember you in the cellar. That church of yours. I don't forget fear.

Daniel face is turning blue. His eyes are popping out. He gets a a hard and nasty tobacco spit at his face!

HUNTER (cont'd)

No care about your war, money, or your God. Odin has send me a vision, Neroni. I'm gonna find him. You are my sacrifice for him.

Hunter looks up to the sky.

HUNTER (cont'd)

Lord Odin. Far wanderer and wisest of all the gods, grant me wisdom, courage, and victory in my travel.

**INT NERONI'S APARTMENT - MORNING.**

The sunlight creeps across Neroni's stubble face. He blinks awake to Maria's silhouette.

NERONI (O.S.)

(whisper)

*My angel.*

**INT. NERONI'S APARTMENT - DAY.**

Maria is sitting on the edge of the bed blowing on a spoonful of hot soup. Neroni gazes at her. His eyes want to speak to her.

Maria brings the spoon to Neroni lips, He winces, struggles to swallow, coughs it out all over him. Maria clean it up, and tries it again with time and love.

**EXT. NERONI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT.**

Neroni and Maria are wrapped in a comforter together on the rooftop against a wall. It's a star filled night. Neroni is weak, but he's clean shaven, looking much better.

MARIA

You ok? Are you cold?

NERONI

I'm ok. Not too cold.

MARIA

Look at the stars. Do you remember how we used to count them. Making wishes until the dawn broke.

Neroni nods a yes.

MARIA (cont'd)

So many wishes. We had so many dreams...  
Remember the poem?

NERONI

... If I was a king, you'll be my queen.  
I'll build you a castle, we will live by the sea.

MARIA

You remembered.

NERONI

Because I believed... I'm sorry.

MARIA

Sorry? It's not your fault. None of it is our fault.

NERONI

Things went so wrong. They went very wrong with us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA

Sometimes things have to go very wrong  
before they can be made right... It has  
brought me closer to God.

NERONI

Seen more of hell in my life than I seen  
of God.

MARIA

You remember what love is?

NERONI

Love is what I see and feel when I am  
with you.

MARIA

Then God is with us.

They snug closer. Comfort quietness. They couldn't ask for  
anything more at this moment.

NERONI

She came to me. I saw her. Mother Mary  
came to me.

MARIA

I felt her. Sister Helen saw her. A  
divine intervention is in you. You are a  
true Knight of God she said.

NERONI

... What happen? What happen in the  
forest? Did I kill that man. The man with  
the long beard?

MARIA

I don't know.

NERONI

Where are my guns?

MARIA

I put them somewhere safe.

NERONI

We need to get out of here.

MARIA

Let's leave. Go somewhere far. We  
promised each other a family one day.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NERONI

... I once had a contract. A Pontiff Palace Guard. The Holy Order gave the orders. I tracked him down at a cabin in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Took him by surprise. Gave him some time to say his prayers. He pleaded for his life and God's forgiveness.

A beat.

NERONI (cont'd)

His wife and daughter came out from hiding. The little girl was so young. The wife... I remember her eyes. I couldn't do it. I just couldn't do it... So I spared him his life. He promised me he'll take his family and be forgotten. Gave me his cabin as a blessing... That's where we will go.

**EXT. ST. ANTHONY'S CATHEDRAL - DAY.**

We find father Vincenzo walking through the sanctuary garden.

MONK (O.S.)

Father Vincenzo! Father Vincenzo!

A monk runs up to Father Vincenzo out of breath.

MONK (cont'd)

Brother Thomas is gone!

FATHER VINCENZO

Gone?

MONK

His cell is empty. Must of left after Vespers.

Father Vincenzo is disturbed by the news. Out of nowhere a swarm of flies are BUZZING around their faces irritating them. Father Vincenzo sees something from the corner of his eyes.

FATHER VINCENZO

My God.

Horror it etched on Father Vincenzo face. He mechanical walks up to a tree and sees -

- Hunter's blood eagle sacrifice! Daniel is tied to a tree. The ribs are severed from the spine with the lungs pulled through the opening like a pair of wings.

**EXT. TORINO FOREST - DAY.**

It's a beautiful day. Neroni and Maria walking through the forest with a suitcase and duffel bag. We can tell Neroni is still a little weak - they stop.

Maria gives Neroni a liter of water to drink - he was thirty. He rolls his injured shoulder. The pain is on his face.

MARIA

You okay? Want to rest a little?

NERONI

I'm alright. Let's keep moving, or we'll miss our train. Anyway, I know how to use my lupara with my left if it comes down to it.

Maria make the sign of the cross.

MARIA

I hope not.

**EXT. TORINO CITY - LATER.**

Neroni and Maria are sitting on a schoolyard bench. The suitcase and duffel bag at their feet. Neroni is drinking water.

Maria eyes are smiling watching a child LAUGHING at play with the mother at a swing set. The joy is on her face to become a mother. We stay with her a moment.

**EXT. TORINO CITY - LATER.**

Neroni is pounding the streets with a duffle bag over his shoulder. Maria keeps up, luggage wheeling in hand behind Neroni. They keep their heads down.

**EXT. SAINT ANTHONY'S CATHEDRAL - LATER.**

At the sanctuary gardens, Neroni and Maria are at the front of the statue of the Virgin Mary. Neroni looks around, so far so good.

NERONI

Give me twenty minutes. Meet me at the front doors.

Maria looks around unsure.

NERONI (cont'd)  
Hey, it's going to be ok.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She nods a slow yes, forcing a smile. Neroni gives Maria a soft kiss and heads out.

**INT. CATACOMBS TUNNEL - LATER.**

We follow Neroni with a lantern through the network of tunnels.

At his safe, Neroni hangs the lantern on a hook. He removes the stone plaque, and keys the safe. He open it - it's empty!

**EXT. TORINO CITY - LATER.**

Neroni storms through the street furious. Maria is trying to keep up with his pace behind him. He crosses the street, Maria remains at the curb.

MARIA  
Hey! Where you going?

Neroni stops and look back.

MARIA (cont'd)  
The train station is this way.

Neroni walks up to Maria.

NERONI  
Sweetheart. We got no money. Them fucking bastards took our money. How we gonna live?

MARIA  
It's ok. We got enough to get out of here. Let's go or we'll miss the train.

Maria extend her hand for Neroni.

MARIA (cont'd)  
The Lord will provide for what we need.

**EXT. TORINO CITY - SAMETIME.**

A BLACK LIMO with tinted windows prowls through Torino City streets. White banners of the Holy Cross flutters at the front fenders. Pedestrians make the sign of the cross as it drives on by.

**EXT. ST. ANTHONY'S CATHEDRAL.**

The limo pulls in front of the cathedral.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The back door opens and THREE KNIGHTS begin to exit one by one - LORENZO, MATTEO, MARKUS - all displaying the Archangel Michael badge on their duster.

Next out, hiding in a black hooded robe is IRONCLAD. His face remain shrouded. They stand in attention waiting.

THE MAGNIFICENT ASPANO steps out last. He's 50's, distinguishably dressed, and fit. A roman nose, black van dyke, and slick back gray hair in a pony tail. He takes off his sunglasses -

- peering shrewd GREEN EYES that will hypnotise your soul look up at the cathedral.

They march across the plaza. Ironclad always behind Aspano as if his shadow. A huge sapphire signet ring on Aspano's hand commands respect and power.

**INT. ST. ANTHONY'S CATHEDRAL - CONTINUOUS.**

Magnificent Aspano, his knights, and Ironclad walk up the nave as if they own the place.

At the alter, Aspano gets on his knees, makes the sign of the cross and prays. His posse stand guard.

**INT. TORINO CEMETERY - SAME TIME.**

Neroni is spying on the Gauntlet Headquaters behind a mausoleum from across the street at Torino Cemetery. No one is around. Maria is behind Neroni looking nervous.

Neroni opens up his duffel bag, takes out his lupara and puts it inside his duster. The Magnum he tucks in his pants. Out comes the .38 and he offers it to Maria.

Wide eyes Maria stares at it, as if it will burn her with the touch. She looks up at Neroni.

MARIA

Please. Neroni please. Lets just walk away, and get out of here.

NERONI

Maria listen to me love. All we dreamed, all we wished for we can't do it on God alone. We need money.

MARIA

We have enough to get out of here. We'll miss our train. Please lets just go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Neroni draws her into a fierce embrace, as if may be their last time together.

NERONI

We were lost, and we found each other again. I love you. God has blessed me. I want children. I want to us to grow old together. It's gonna be ok. God has a plan for us. You are my angel, my life.

They stay for a moment in each others arm. Neroni puts the .38 in her pocket.

**EXT. TORINO CEMETERY - CONTINUOUS.**

DONG! DONG! DONG! The bells toll. Neroni steps out of the cemetary's front iron gates looking around. Magnum in his hand, he crosses the street heading straight to the Gauntlet Headquarters.

**INT. GAUNTLET HEADQUARTERS - CONTINUOUS.**

The front door opens. Neroni steps in, bringing in the light and the RINGING of the bells.

Four Gauntlets are sitting around. They squint their eyes at Neroni's silhouette. The door closes behind Neroni.

Neroni the knight has just walked in! The surprise hits their faces. They reach for their gun. Neroni is too fast - HEADS EXPLODE! Four perfect shots!

Neroni speeds to the private room in the back while reloading, stepping over the dead. Brutus appears from the private room - BANG!

**PRIVATE ROOM.**

Neroni runs behind the desk to the iron safe. He runs the combination, turns the handle, nothing. He run the numbers again, turns the handle - CLICK!

NERONI

*(sighs)*

Thank you God. Never changed the combo.

**EXT. GAUNTLET HEADQUARTERS.**

Neroni crosses the intersection with the bag of money over his shoulder. He looks past the front gates of the cemetary, and sees Maria still waiting at the mausoleum. He smile at her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The bells fall silent. KABOOM! A car window shatters in front of Neroni!

Maria SCREAMS!

Neroni runs behind a parked car. Out comes the Magnum.

Two Gauntlets are moving with tactics up to the car.

Neroni pops out behind the car trigger happy - BANG! BANG!

**INT. ST. ANTHONY'S CATHEDRAL - SAME TIME.**

Eyes closed Magnificent Aspano is still praying. We HEAR Neroni's gunshots happening - his green eyes open.

**EXT. TORINO CEMETERY - SAME TIME.**

At the front gates Neroni is waiting on Maria.

Neroni  
Maria! Come on! Lets go!

Maria is scared stiff. She will not move.

NERONI (cont'd)  
Maria!

Neroni runs into the cemetery to her.

NERONI (cont'd)  
We gotta get out of here -

- KABOOM! A lupara blast misses them! Pellets explode into the mausoleum!

Neroni's quick reflexes fires a SHOT! A Gauntlets fall dead outside the front gates.

Neroni takes Maria by the wrist, grabs his duffel bag and money bag -

NERONI (cont'd)  
Get your suit case!

- and they are off! Running across tombstones, going deeper into the cemetery.

**EXT. TORINO CITY STREETS - SAME TIME.**

Magnificent Aspano, flanked by his crew are on the move in long stride, and in sync. Pedestrians are getting out of their way. Some make the sign of the cross.

**INT. TORINO CEMETERY - SAME TIME.**

Neroni and Maria run behind a statue of an ANGEL for cover. Panting they steal a moment to gather their thoughts. Neroni look over to Maria. She stares at the trees in her own world.

NERONI  
Maria.

Nothing. Neroni touches her hand.

NERONI (cont'd)  
Maria.

Maria jolts to the touch. Sorrow flickering in her eyes.

NERONI (cont'd)  
We gotta get out of here. I need you to  
be strong.

MARIA  
... In what you do I follow.

Neroni nods and moves fast. He goes into the duffel bag, pull out his scope rifle, and sets himself up behind the statue.

**THROUGH THE CROSS-HAIR OF THE SCOPE.**

Scanning around the cemetery - Gauntlets are coming in the front gates taking unbeaten paths - Pugno and Gauntlets are entering at the back gates -

- about hundred yards away a beam of sunlight pierces through the clouds, SHINING on a collapsed stone wall that leads to the streets. It's like a sign from heaven above.

Neroni reloads and ties the money bag around his waist.

**INT. GAUNTLET HEADQUATERS - SAME TIME.**

The Magnificent Aspano, his knights, and Ironclad are walking around, stepping over the dead. He eyes the GAUNTLET CREST hanging above the bar.

MAGNIFICENT ASPANO  
Burn this place.

**EXT. TORINO CEMETERY - SAME TIME.**

A Gauntlet spots Neroni and Maria behind the statue. He slowly inches his way -

- BANG! Neroni comes out behind the statue blasting his Magnum. He grabs Maria wrist.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NERONI  
Leave the luggage here! We move now!

MARIA  
Wait! Wait!

Maria open the luggage, and rummages through it. Out comes her rosery, and the one and only photo booth picture. The rosery goes around her neck, and the picture goes deep in her pocket.

They break cover for the collapsed wall - GUNFIRE erupts all around!

PUGNO  
They heading towards the collapsed wall!  
Cut them off! Cut them Off!

Neroni is a one man army! Powering his Magnum. BANG! BANG! Two in front! BANG on the left! They dive behind a tree for cover.

He tosses the Magnum, it's spent. Out comes his rifle again.

Through the CROSS HAIR of the rife we see two Gauntlets by the collapsed wall. Neroni puts his target on one.

**EXT. TORINO CEMETERY - FRONT GATES - SAME TIME.**

Magnificent Aspano stands at the front iron gates looking into the cemetery. We hear the BLAST of Neroni's rifle! It echo and lingers in the sky.

**INT. TORINO CEMETERY.**

Bullets WHIP pass Neroni and Maria as they reached the crumbled wall! Neroni discards his rifle, and pulls out his lupara, scaling the wall with Maria's hand holding on tight!

Feni and a Gauntlet have reached the top of the crumble wall from the street-side ready to shoot!

KABOOM! KABOOM! At close range Neroni's lupara spatters blood on him and Maria! They get to the top of the crumbled wall, step over the dead, and -

**EXT. TORINO CEMETERY - CONTINUOUS.**

- tumble down the other side, landing on the street hard. Neroni helps Maria up.

CAW CAW CAW. The RAVEN is gilding in the sky above them. Neroni look around while reloading his lupara.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A CAR speeds up, screeches to a halt in front of them! Two Gauntlets come out ready! KABOOM! KABOOM! Neroni kills them both.

Neroni hauls Maria towards the car, tossing her in the passenger seat, the money bag at the back seat. He runs around, jumps in the driver seat - the car takes off!

**EXT/INT. CAR - LATER.**

The car is speeding down the highway! The engine is LOUD!

Neroni is fisted on the wheel. Maria is crunched up at the passenger seat.

Neroni takes a look at his rearview mirror. Torino City is moving away - A BLACK CHROME BIKE appears!

HUNTER is riding at full speed! Beard and hair flying in the wind.

Neroni puts two slugs in the lupara - slams it shut!

NERONI  
Get down! Stay down!

Maria gets on the floor of the passenger seat.

The bike is SCREAMING. Hunter pulls out a throwing ax from inside his duster and hurls it -

- the ax tumblesaults in the air - SMASHING through the rear window! Glass showers all over Neroni and Maria. The ax beds itself on the dashboard!

MARIA  
Ahhh!

The HOWL of the wind! The ROAR of the engine! It's fucking loud inside the car! With one hand on the wheel, Neroni looks back aiming the lupara.

Hunter is just a few feet away. Out comes another ax. He gets ready for the throw!

Neroni fires - KABOOM!

The ax gets thrown - THUD! Into the rear wheel, shedding it as it spins!

The car SCREECHES and SKIDS out of control - CRUSH! Hunter collides with the back of the car! The impact SLAMS Neroni and Maria against their seats! Neroni loses his lupara to the back seat!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Hunter and bike are air born!

From the front windshield we see the bike plummeting down in front of the car! They drives over it! A PIERCING sound of metal on metal, sparks of fire!

Neroni checks all mirrors. Maria looks around. Where's Hunter? BOOM! Hunter CRASHES onto the hood! Half his face is blown off! Maria SCREAMS!

Like a Viking warlord, Hunter rides the waves of the wind on top of the hood. He pulls out two axes! One he SLAMS on the rooftop anchoring him in place -

- the other ax comes THUNDERING down on the windshield! Again! Again! It destructively demolishes! Hunter gets his arm in, starts swinging fucking mad!

Neroni struggles for the lupara in the back seat. A fatal strike to Neroni is coming - BANG!

The shot powers all sound! The bullet rockets into Hunter's eye. A disbelief on his face as he slides off - the car BUMPS over his body.

Maria has the smoking .38 In her hand.

**EXT. GAUNTLET HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT.**

The Gauntlet Headquarters is a fire blaze! Magnificent Aspano, his knights, and Ironclad look like guardians of hell standing in front of it.

A crowd is starting to form. The gun-bang hooha has caused citizens of Torino City, and the magnates to come out.

Father Vincenzio with his monks at his heel make their way to the front of the crowd.

Magnificent Aspano gesture his knights, and Ironclad to move on into the cemetery.

MAGNIFICENT ASPANO  
I want Pugno alive.

The knights pull out their luparas. Ironclad opens his robe, a two handed long sword hangs down. He takes it and wields it! They enters the iron gates and disappear.

Magnificent Aspano turns to face the crowd in front of the flickering flames. The crowd look down avoiding eye contact.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAGNIFICENT ASPANO (cont'd)  
 Do not fear. For this here is a piece of  
 God's kingdom! A sanctuary protected from  
 the wolves that prey on His flock. And  
 I have come to pass God's judgement on  
 the evil that takes place here.

HORRIFYING WAILS of Gauntlets reverberate in the cemetery,  
 stirring the crowd into fearful whispers. The CRIES fade a  
 away - it gets eerie quite.

MAGNIFICENT ASPANO (cont'd)  
 And He will decide whether to deliver  
 their soul to heaven or hell.

**EXT. TORINO CEMETARY - NIGHT.**

Pugno's GAUNTLET HAND is tied at the wrist on a tree trunk.

PUGNO (O.S.)  
*Non ducor duco! Non ducor duco!*

SWOOPED! Ironclad sword comes striking down chopping off the  
 gauntlet hand!

PUGNO (cont'd)  
 Aaaaah! Aaaaah! Aaaaah!

Pugno is tied like a wild animal against the great big oak  
 tree in agony. He is encircled by Aspano, his knights and  
 Ironclad.

MAGNIFICENT ASPANO  
 Non ducor duco?  
 (laughs)  
 I am not led, I led. Leader? You? You are  
 a thug, a penniless thief. Nothing more.

Aspano picks up Pugno's severed gauntlet hand, and rises it  
 high for the crowd to see. He pulls off the bishops rings and  
 pockets them.

MAGNIFICENT ASPANO (cont'd)  
 Power that have held or hold rule over  
 men are to be preserved by great  
 hereditary. For only a noble of great  
 character won't shit in his own home.

Magnificent Aspano tosses the gauntlet hand high over the  
 crowd into the burning headquaters. He takes out a  
 handkerchief to wipe the blood off his hands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAGNIFICENT ASPANO (cont'd)  
 I have sole authority here! A divine  
 right bestowed upon me by God! As was my  
 father and the fathers before him! My  
 lineage blessed from the Council of  
 Clermont by Pope Urban II to cleanse the  
 Holy land of savagery! Generations of my  
 blood line has keeps the laws and fear of  
 God in the hearts of men! And now it's to  
 be question by you! A whoreson rebel!

Magnificent Aspano take out a cross pommel stiletto from is  
 coat.

MAGNIFICENT ASPANO (cont'd)  
 You have pilfered Torino's loyal  
 financiers. Amassed a rebellion against  
 the authority of The Holy Order. Killed  
 men of God in the house of worship. And  
 as a lieutenant, kin to our beloved  
 Supreme Pontiff, I declare your  
 punishment. Death. You will burn in hell.

PUGNO  
*Malchus. The Gethsemane blade... The  
 blade of Saint Peter. It's here.*

It catches Magnificent Aspano's attention. He moves closer  
 making sure no one can hear.

MAGNIFICENT ASPANO  
 What dose a sinner know about such things  
 of God and power?

PUGNO  
 (a chuckle)  
*Cardinals sing in their palaces.*

MAGNIFICENT ASPANO  
 ... May God have mercy on your soul.

Magnificent slices Pugno's neck - blood squirts on his face!

**INT. BISHOP'S CHAMBER - DAY.**

The MAGNATES shifts nervously in their seats across the desk  
 from Aspano. Father Vincenzo stands by the mantel. The three  
 knights stand sentinel in their corners. Hooded Ironclad  
 gazes out the window.

MAXIMO  
 Generations of our homage to The Holy  
 Order should not be undermined.  
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAXIMO (CONT'D)

We are and will always be indebted for the shelter and protection administered.

SANTINO

We have assemble wealth. Our families have thrive, we are blessed. Give us council for we are committed to your needs Magnificent.

MAGNIFICENT ASPANO

A crisis looms my brothers in Christ. Men with weak character are abandoning their faith. Forfeiting their souls. Our flock is getting smaller. The bread in the basket are nothing more than crumbs.

Magnificent Aspano pours himself a glass of wine, and takes a drink.

MAGNIFICENT ASPANO (cont'd)

Taxation increase and remission of sins is what I petition here. Forty percent. Torino City will be fortified on your consent. And I as a vassal of God will restore the power and glory to be here. For God wills it.

GIACOMO

(trembling voice )

A tax increase my Magnificent? Forty percent -

ASPANO

- Added on your monthly proceeds to be paid to me, yes.

Aspano gives a look at the magnates for any objections. They down their eyes.

ASPANO (cont'd)

To lead these lost faithless men. My knights will make them soldiers of God, Luparas Della Croce again. Their service will be paid, and distributed by my channels of course. And they in return will contribute twenty five percent weekly to The Holy Order for the protection of their soul. Indulgence.

A hard swallow, but the three magnates keep a straight face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ASPANO (cont'd)  
It has worked before, and it will work  
again... Go in peace my brothers. May the  
Lord be with you.

The magnates leave closing the door behind them.

MAGNIFICENT ASPANO  
God has sent me here. By fate or divine  
decree. Pugno had a whisper in his ear,  
and I had my suspicion. He was searching  
at Saint Pio Abbey at the buried treasure  
of the bishops rings. But did not find  
it.

Father Vincent is intrigued. The cathedral bells begin to  
TOLL.

FATHER VINCENZO  
What? What was he looking for  
Magnificent?

MAGNIFICENT ASPANO  
... *The Gethsemane blade.*

The knights make the sign of the cross. Father Vincenzo sinks  
to his knees, arms raised in prayer.

MAGNIFICENT ASPANO (cont'd)  
The blade of Saint Peter. A weapon of  
unimaginable power that will deliver us  
dominion over our enemies. And I will not  
rest till it's mine.

Hooded Ironclad is listening.

**EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUTAIN - DAWN.**

Maria is kneeling at a little stream splashing water on her  
face. A burned-out campfire, and the money bag are behind  
her.

Maria's reflection in the water stares back - Neroni appears  
behind her.

NERONI  
I found something.

**EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUTAIN - DAY.**

Neroni and Maria in soiled and tattered clothes, are trekking  
across a valley looking like vagabonds, grass is knee high.  
It starts to rain.

**EXT. SHACK HOUSE - AFTERNOON.**

Neroni and Maria are laying low in a corn feild looking at - - a rusty old, beat-up pickup, with a "For Sale" sign sitting in front of a shack house. A few chickens are pecking by the barn.

**EXT. SHACK HOUSE - LATER.**

We meet the JOHNSONS, a dirt poor black family. JACOB the father is showing Neroni the pickup's engine. Dressed in rags with no shoes is ten year old JUNIOR. SARAH the mother is holding a CRYING baby girl on the porch. She's pregnant with a big belly.

Maria is by the barn withdrawn with the pecking chicken by her feet.

JACOB

Ain't nott'in wrong with this motor here, no sir! Just put in a new timing belt myself. She got 240,000 miles and still runs like a beaut. No let me down. She ain't no prize, but she get you going to where you gotta get. Junior, son get the keys. Let show the man here hows the engine runs.

Junior take off excited. He finally has something to do. The baby is WAILING. Jacob takes a look at his wife concerned.

Sara walks over, and Jacob takes the baby. Sarah tired face shows a little relief.

JACOB (cont'd)

It's okay my little angel. It's ok. She got a sickness my little angel here. She need some medication. With the harvest no doing any good, well it been hard on us.

Maria appears eyeing the crying baby.

JACOB (cont'd)

Selling this pickup put some change in our piggy bank. Get us some medication that baby here needs.

The screen door slams! Junior come running up.

JUNIOR

Here's the keys pops.

Jacob goes to give the crying baby back to Sarah.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA (O.S.)  
Can I hold her.

They all look at Maria. Jacob hesitates. He takes a look at his wife. She gestures it's fine.

Maria take the baby, cradling her close. The baby's crying slowly ends. There is peace in the baby.

Everyone look at Maria and the baby in awe.

JACOB  
A miracle.

**INT. SHACK HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT.**

Chipped paint cupboards, a dated oven-stove top, and a copper sink occupy the green dated room. Neroni, Jacob, and Junior sit at a table set for dinner. Sara is cooking.

JACOB  
- trouble with the law when I was a young buck. Did my time. Got myself a job and that is were I meet my Sara. Working folks at Mr. Nickel's farm. Worked there for fifteen years. Worked hard, saved my money. Save my money I did. Fell in love at the dance and that's when we got hitch. We move here -

Sara places a large covered pot in the middle of the table, and turns to attend her stove.

SARAH  
- Jacob let Mr. Neroni ease his mind a bit. Been yapping since you laid eyes on him.

Neroni has washed up and is wearing Mr. Jacob hand me down.

SARAH (cont'd)  
Excuse my husband. We don't get much visitors here.

Jacob sits in his chair like a boy being scolded - gets a surprise look! Neroni and Sarah take a look behind them and it's -

- Maria, refresh, clean, and a radiant. She has come in through screen-door. Little white and yellow flower are pinned on her hair. She is wearing Sarah's nightgown.

Felling self conscience from the stares, she lowers her head and touches her scar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA  
I had an accident.

SARAH  
An accident? Girl you beautiful.

JUNIOR  
Yeah. You look like an angel.

SARAH  
Please sit. You must be so hungry.

Maria sit at the table. She looks around at everything. Everyone is smiling at each other. Sarah places a basket of hot corn bread on the table and sits.

JACOB  
We always say a blessing before we eat.  
And today we are very blessed. We hold  
each other's hands.

Around the table all hold hand and bow their heads. Neroni and Maria seek a peak at each other as Jacob says the BLESSING.

**INT. JACOB'S BARN - EARLY DAWN.**

The setting moon spills light into the half open barn door. Maria is laying awake on a sleeping bag. Neroni is going through the money bag.

NERONI  
You ready?

Maria sits up.

MARIA  
Going to wash my face by the stream.

**EXT. SHACK HOUSE - LATER.**

The skies are turning pink. Birds are beginning to SING. Neroni has the pickup hood up looking in - Maria approaches.

**EXT/INT. PICK-UP - LATER.**

The pickup crawls to the front of the shack. Neroni and Maria take one last look at the home. The pickup hits the road and they are gone.

**INT. BARN - DAY**

Jacob has on the biggest smile. Sara is crying with joy. They are looking at the stacks of money on the barn floor. More than they ever wish for.

**EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS - DAY.**

Bird-eye view on the pick-up driving on a snake road that runs between two great mountains. It's a beautiful day.

**EXT. PICK-UP - DUSK.**

The pickup take a tight turn on a path leaving the forgotten road behind, making it's way into the woods.

**EXT/INT. PICK-UP - NIGHT.**

The pickup struggles, jolting over wild vines and branches. The headlights cut though the darkness.

Neroni has his face closes up on the windshield trying to stay alert for any nature's obstacle. Maria is snugged up against him as a sleepy copilot.

The pickup sounds like a dieing animal, as it slowly comes to a stop. Maria becomes alert.

NERONI  
... This is it. This is our home.

The headlights reveal a cabin lost deep in it's natural surroundings. Years of abandoned have turn it into the forest land. There is even some tree twigs growing on the roof.

**EXT. WEST-SIDE YARDS - DAY.**

Gray - a scorched battlefield littered with dying and dead Savages. Men, women, and children are laying in their own pool of blood. Like the REAPER, Ironclad watches this from a hilltop.

Luparas are going around cutting throat to any saviours. A young girl crawls, she is still alive. A Lupara quickly ends it.

Magnificent Aspano in a cassock and red sash, offers communion to Luparas lined up before him. His knight Lorenzo approaches.

KNIGHT LORENZO  
There is no sign of it. The Gethsemane  
blade is not here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Magnificent Aspano stops giving communion. He's concern about the news. After a thinking moment he continues with the sacrament.

**EXT. CABIN - EARLY DAWN.**

The cabin has been cleared from the choking of the forest. It's nested peacefully in nature. We HEAR the birds singing to the rising sun.

**INT. CABIN - SAME TIME.**

In bed, Neroni and Maria are in a spooning position making love. The light of the early dawn peeks in the window.

Neroni is slow and gentle. Maria is MOANING in pleasure - they reach their climax together.

They remain yoked together in each others bodies relaxed, enjoying the intruding early light.

Maria pulls the covers off, and sits on the edge of the bed naked. She rubs her three month pregnant belly. Time has passed.

**EXT. GAS STATION/MARKET - DAY.**

We see a off road small country store. There's a attached mechanic garage at the side. Neroni's pickup sporting a row boat in the cargo bed, is parked at the lone gas pump.

**INT. GAS STATION/MARKET - SAME TIME.**

Not much to offer but basic necessity essentials, and some home baking. Maria lifts her basket of goods on the counter. GRANMA MILLY rings up the sale.

GRANMA MILLY  
You gonna love them blueberries muffin.  
Put some extra, so many this time of  
year. How's the honeymoon going?

MARIA  
Great. We really love it up here. We feel  
truly blessed.

GRANDMA MILLY  
God be praised.

Maria sticks her hand in a candy jar, takes out a stick of liquorice, and sucks on it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRANMA

Me and granpa Benny came up here to start a new life, like you young ones. Had a family, two beautiful boys. Time passed, meet their sweethearts, and got married. Living in them big towns. Got family of their own now. We miss them terribly. Honestly, I still cry at night.

**INT. ATTACHED MECHANIC GARAGE - SAME TIME.**

Neroni is hunch over on a high shelf taking a tire off its rack. GRANPA BENNY is right below him leaning on a cane.

GRANPA BENNY

Was at the town bar last night. Went to watch the game. We are looking good. You like baseball.

NERONI

I never really -

Neroni gets the tire off the rack, and drops it down right by Granpa Benny. Granpa hits the tire with his cane as if inspecting it. Neroni jumps down.

NERONI (cont'd)

- I really never watch games.

Neroni begins to put the tire on a jack-lift car. Grandpa Benny hands him the tools.

GRANPA BENNY

Maybe you can come along sometime if the misses wishes.

NERONI

Maybe.

GRANPA BENNY

Mr. Thompson is picking up his car tomorrow, gotta get that tire on. Thanks to you. I could never have done it myself.

NERONI

No, thank you. We don't have much money and you were kind enough to gives us food, clothes. And the boat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRANPA BENNY

Oh you gonna love her. Me and granma use to do a lot of fishing at the lake about few miles behind your cabin. Caught myself a ten pounder bass one year!

NERONI

Thank you.

GRANPA BENNY

You know, been doing some thinking. Been talking to Grandma about it too. The thing is, well I'm just getting too old. Can't do much now around here. And seeing you got a family coming, and we like you folks. You folks seem trustworthy... How's bout a job here?

**INT. GAS STATION/MARKET - CONTINUOUS.**

Maria is on her second liquorice.

GRANDMA MILLY

I'm telling you its going to be a boy. You prefer the black liquorice over the red. Black ones are more bitter than the reds. Reds are sweeter. Boys are more bitter in life than girls after all. Plus the way you hold your belly low, and you eyes shine. Telling you it's a boy.

Neroni and Granpa Benny come in from the side door of the garage.

GRANDMA MILLY (cont'd)

Shh now, let's keep it our little secret.

GRANPA BENNY

Grandma we have ourselves a new hire here.

Neroni and Maria exchange bright smiles.

**INT. CABIN - DAY.**

This is the first time we fully see the cabin. Small with a stone fireplace, cast iron stove, and a antique cabinet on one side of a wall. There's a table for two, and a bed by the back window.

The swing door opens, Neroni with a scruffy beard steps inside to find Maria at a water pump-sink filling up a jug. Sunlight spills in though the kitchen window.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NERONI  
Wow! You are so beautiful.

Maria smiles. Her eyes are shining.

NERONI (cont'd)  
Are we all ready to go?

**EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUTAIN - DAY.**

A majestic BUCK stands watch. A doe and fawn come to stay behind him in the ferns.

Neroni and Maria are watching from a distance. Neroni is carrying a backpack.

MARIA (O.S.)  
Oh my God. Look at them. So beautiful.  
Amazing.

**EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUTAIN - VALLEY - DAY.**

A eagle is gliding in the clear blue skies. Below Neroni and Maria are two small figures walking though a valley. Wildflowers are blooming in a riot of colors.

**EXT. VALLEY - CONTINUOUS.**

Maria is picking flowers. Neroni walks ahead, occasionally glazing back at her, soaking the beauty of the world around him.

MARIA (O.S.)  
Can you believe this paradise is ours?  
Those little white ones, White Dutch  
Clover! And over there, Wild Blue Iris.  
Aren't they beautiful? Those yellow ones  
are Heartfelt Arnica, I think.

Neroni turns to watch Maria and he's captivated. He looks up to the sky, the sun upon him.

NERONI  
Thank you God. Thank you for all you have given me. You have blessed me.

MARIA (O.S.)  
What? What did you say?

NERONI  
How you feeling?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA  
(rubbing her pregnant belly)  
Little tired. A bit weary.

NERONI  
Then we should rest.

Like a bride walking to the alter to meet her groom, Maria walks to Neroni with a bouquet of wild flowers.

Neroni takes off his backpack. He pulls out a jug of water, uncapping it, offering it to her first. They take turns drinking in the sun.

MARIA  
A month ago this place was all green when we dragged our rowboat to the lake.

NERONI  
All that rain... Why do you keep looking at me like that?

MARIA  
Looking at you like how?

NERONI  
I don't know. It's like you want to tell me something.

Maria giggles, enjoying the playful exchange.

NERONI (cont'd)  
Tell me? What is it?

MARIA  
Do you want to know.

NERONI  
Yes, I wanna know.

MARIA  
... A boy. It's going to be a boy.

Neroni pull Maria into his arms and they embrace.

MARIA (cont'd)  
Neroni. I want to call him Neroni Junior.

Cheerfully Maria pulls away and crosses her arms.

MARIA (cont'd)  
So when are you going to marry me Mr. Neroni? My shining knight?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NERONI  
Do you really wanna know?

MARIA  
Yes! Tell me!

Neroni goes into his pockets, and comes out with simple silver ring with a small stone.

NERONI  
I saved some money and brought a ring  
Granma Milly had in a box. I wanted to  
give it to you at the lake.

Maria's eyes widen, tears of happiness. Neroni gets on his knees, taking Maria with him. They rub their face together feeling each other's love under the sun.

MARIA  
You wanna do it here.

NERONI  
Just you and me. God as our witness.

Neroni take Maria's hand.

NERONI (cont'd)  
... What God has joined together no man  
can divide -

MARIA  
My lover belongs to me, and I to him -

He places the ring unto her finger.

NERONI AND MARIA  
- In the name of Christ our flesh  
becomes one.

Neroni kisses his bride.

**EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS - LAKE - DUSK.**

The sun sets at the lake's horizon bringing crimson and gold across the water bringing heaven and earth together.

Wet from a swim, Neroni and Maria in arms sit at the pebble shore. The lake lazily water laps at their feet. Behind them a tent, small burning camp fire, and the small row boat.

MARIA  
Wish we can stay here one more night.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NERONI

Me too. But got to work tomorrow. Grandpa and Granma won't be back for another two weeks.... Granpa Benny told me he thinks this will be their last winter here. He wants to give me the keys for good. Just gotta pay him back little by little.

MARIA

Neroni we are truly blessed. A home, a job. Soon we will have a family. God is with us.

NERONI

Yeah. God is with us.

MARIA

... You ever think about Torino?

NERONI

I do. But we have a life here now. As long we have each other we will be alright.

Maria look into the setting sun.

**INT. CABIN - NIGHT.**

Neroni tosses in bed, restless. Maria is sound asleep.

NERONI

Maria. Maria.

MARIA

Mm-hmm.

NERONI

I found something. Something in the back of our cabin.

**EXT. CABIN - SAMETIME.**

Maria is following Neroni a few yards behind the cabin in the moon light.

NERONI

Found it when I was chopping that dead tree. Thought it was just a stone at first.

They arrive at a uprooted tree. Neroni kneels, digs with urgency under the exposed roots, and pulls out -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

- the GETHSEMANE BLADE! Corroded from age, the blade is two feet long with an exposed tang. The edging glitters silver in the moonlight.

**INT. BISHOP'S CHAMBERS - DAY.**

CARDINAL PONTI is gluttony of a old man. Dressed in high status clerical wear, and jewelry of authority. He's sitting behind the desk eating grapes, while looking through a century old ledger.

CARDINAL PONTI  
Congratulation on another victory, Aspano  
the Magnificent.

Magnificent Aspano sits across the desk, as if at attention.

MAGNIFICENT ASPANO  
The victory belongs to God. And God  
alone.

Cardinal Ponti closes the ledger and leans back.

CARDINAL PONTI  
Yes indeed.  
(sighs)  
I'm afraid what I'm looking for is not to  
be found here.

Ponti stares right into the eyes of the Magnificent. A tense stand off, while continuing to eat his grapes.

CARDINAL PONTI (cont'd)  
What brings you to Torino?

MAGNIFICENT ASPANO  
Just commanding my post my Holiness.  
Torino City is but a small fraction of  
the kingdom of God. I will not let it  
fall to the Savages.

Father Vincent enters, pushing a dinner cart.

CARDINAL PONTI  
Oh my dinner!

FATHER VINCENZO  
Pheasant cacciatori. Gorgonzola truffle  
polenta with roasted chestnuts, and a  
Super Tuscan.

Father Vincenzo parks the cart in front of the Cardinal. He gets busy as a servant washing the cardinal's hands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARDINAL PONTI  
 A great knight you are my Magnificent.  
 Your prowess has eared you riches. But -  
 estate and year?

FATHER VINCENZO  
 Volpaia 87.

CARDINAL PONTI  
 Oh yes! God be bless. But don't estimate  
 the power of The Holy Order.

Father Vincenzo ties a silk bib around the cardinals neck,  
 and pours the wine. Pugno grabs the wine and downns it -  
 BELCH! Father Vincenzo pours another full.

CARDINAL PONTI (cont'd)  
 Your lust for riches is a sin Aspano.

Cardinal Ponti dives into his food like he's off to the  
 races. He tears off a piece of the pheasant, scooping up  
 polenta with it.

CARDINAL PONTI (cont'd)  
 (mouth full of food)  
 A skirmish on the other side of the ocean  
 will not disturb your sleep.  
 (swallows)  
 So tell me, why are you here?

MAGNIFICENT ASPANO  
 ... The Gethsemane blade.

Grease around his lips and sucking his fingers, Cardinal  
 Ponti gives a CHUCKLE.

CARDINAL PONTI  
 Yes, the Gethsemane blade. The blade that  
 cut off the ear of Malchus, a slave of  
 the Jewish High Priest Caiaphas, at the  
 garden of Gethsemane, at the night of our  
 Lord and Savior Jesus Christ betrayal is  
 hidden here.

Cardinal Ponti drinks down another glass.

CARDINAL PONTI (cont'd)  
 And I will take it. Once you have it.  
 (bleach)  
 Dose a name Machiavelli come to you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAGNIFICENT ASPANO

Machiavelli?... Yes, of course. A family of heretics that my own great grandfathers sent to the flames of hell.

CARDINAL PONTI

There lives a bloodline I fear. Two brothers. They went hiding when the house fell. One was lost. The other served as a Pontiff Palace Guard, under the alias Giancarlo Facci... He is Octavio Machiavelli.

MAGNIFICENT ASPANO

How can that be?

CARDINAL PONTI

The devil hides in many places Magnificent. And it's this Octavio that has stole the Gethsemane blade.

MAGNIFICENT ASPANO

... I see. His where abouts?

CARDINAL PONTI

He was captured with his family. They were torture, and he confessed. The blade of Saint Peter lies hidden somewhere in The Blue Ridge Mountains. At a cabin were he had taken refuge.

Cardinal Ponti licks his fingers.

FATHER VINCENZO

Five years ago before his capture, The Holy Order sent a contract to assassinated this whoreson Octavio. Bishop Nicolo sent his knight. To my surprise it's not written in the ledger. The wine!

Father Vincenzo pours another full glass. Cardinal grabs the wine and drinks it down as if it's water - BELCH.

CARDINAL PONTI

But this knight let him live. So my question is? Where is this knight? What is his name? What dose he know? I wish to speak to him. I will have him put to death for his failed -

Cardinal Ponti world begins to spin - all is blurry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FATHER VINCENZO (O.S.)  
 The knight's name is Neroni. I'm afraid  
 he has deflected and fled. He was last  
 seen fleeing up north to the Blue Ridge  
 Mountains. You've been poisoned.

Cardinal Ponti is gasping for air. He attempts to rise, but  
 slams his face into his supper!

MAGNIFICENT ASPANO  
 The blade belongs to me my excellency.

**EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS - DAY/NIGHT.**

Ironclad walks through the forest under the moon-light. The  
 beauty of nature dies before him. We see flowers wilt and  
 die.

MAGNIFICENT ASPANO (V.O.)  
 The Gethsemane blade in my hand will give  
 us triumph of good over evil in this  
 world. I will sit as the right hand of  
 God. We will destroy our enemies in His  
 name... Travel in the dark.

Ironclad hides beneath an outcrop away from the sun, watching  
 life in the valley below.

MAGNIFICENT ASPANO (V.O.)  
 Take shelter in the light, remain unseen.  
 This cabin is a forty day walk. Beware of  
 this Knight Neroni. He is cunning, a  
 master of deceit. He will be waiting for  
 us. Remember we serve a higher purpose.

**EXT. JOHNSON'S SHACK HOUSE - DUSK.**

Junior small body is lying on his back dead before the shack.

MAGNIFICENT ASPANO (V.O.)  
 Who knows what this hellion knight  
 trickery of a fork tongue has whispered  
 on his journey. Kill with extreme  
 prejudice by the mercy of God to all that  
 have come across his pass.

We HEAR the agonizing screams of Sara. She's being  
 slaughtered - it end abruptly!

JACOB (O.S.)  
 (crying hysterical)  
 ... My Jesus! Oh my Jesus! I know nottin  
 of this blade. My Sara, oh my Sara. I no  
 know -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SWOOP!

Aside from the birds CHIRPING it's quiet now. Hooded, Ironclad steps out from the screen door.

**EXT. - CABIN - DUSK.**

THUD! A log splits in half. Chopping firewood Neroni's beard has grown fuller. He brings his ax high before crashing it down with a resounding THUD!

Maria come out of the cabin holding her big belly.

MARIA  
Neroni! Dinner is ready my love!

**INT. CABIN - NIGHT.**

Quiet night as we watch them have supper. We can see there is a baby's crib at the back corner by their bed. They look back at it. Fingers get entwined.

**EXT/INT. GAS STATION/MARKET - DAY.**

Neroni is pumping gas for a customer.

Maria is attending the counter, ringing up a sale of basket of fruit for a customer.

MARIA  
Neroni! Neroni!

Neroni walks in from the garage wiping grease from his hands.

MARIA (cont'd)  
How much for the repairs?

NERONI  
The timing belt and tires rotation. \$325.

MARIA  
That will be \$340 all together, Mrs. Swanson.

**EXT. GAS STATION/MARKET - LATER.**

Neroni locks the door. Behind him, Maria is sitting in the pick up truck. A long day.

**EXT. CABIN - DAWN.**

Autumn blankets the landscape. Neroni is walking at the back of his cabin. He reaches the fallen tree, and looks under the roots. Out comes the Gethsemane blade in his hand -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

- a twig SNAPS!

Neroni quickly turns around - Iron Clad strikes with his sword!

**EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS - DAY.**

Dark clouds are racing across the sky! Trees bend in the HOWLING wind! Leaves fly in the air -

- sailing down upon Neroni. Nature has started to accumulated on his body tangled in the roots of the dead tree. We think he's dead - his lips move.

NERONI

... Maria.

**EXT. CABIN - DAY.**

Neroni is crawling towards the cabin. Every movement is a unforgiving task. The skies open up and it starts MONSOONING rain! He collapses on his back.

Blood mingling with the rain as it pools around him. We SEE the sword stroke has sliced open his chest. His open mouth is taking in the pouring rain. It's drowning him - CHOKES for air.

**INT. CABIN - DAY.**

The cabin is in disarray, signs of a struggle everywhere. The swing-door opens, Neroni grovels in on his belly and collapse.

NERONI

... Maria

With all his strength he lifts up his head and looks around. He comes to look upon hell!

Staring out at us is Maria's glossy dead eyes!

Neroni lets out a SCREAM that -

**EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS - CONTINUOUS.**

- reverberates across mountain peaks, echoing the skies!

**INT. CABIN - NIGHT.**

The cabin is in darkness, interrupted only by flashes of LIGHTING from the THUNDER storm outside, it's violent! Each flash reveals Neroni cradling Maria's body, rocking back and forth in agony.

**EXT. CABIN - DAWN.**

Birds are signing. The storm has passed. A HOODED MONK splattered with mud on his tunic, and a walking staff comes into view.

He pulls back his hood - it's Brother Thomas!

**INT. CABIN - DAY.**

Brother Thomas sits by a unconscious Neroni in bed. Needle and thread he's stitching his wound. We SEE Brother Thomas hands are bandaged with blood stains at the palm.

**EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS - DAY.**

Deep in the forest, Brother Thomas is gathering wild herbs.

**INT. CABIN - NIGHT.**

Brother Thomas is sponging Neroni's forehead with herbal water.

**EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAIN - DAWN.**

Sun rays break through the trees, illuminating Brother Thomas on his knees praying.

**INT. CABIN - DAY.**

Brother Thomas enters, eyes widen in shock - the bed is empty. He turns just in time to feel a knife at his throat!

**EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS - DAY.**

Nestled above a mound of ivy lies Maria. Eyes closed, face porcelain white, her rosery on her, an ethereal angel. Under the tight white linen wrapping her body, she cradles the unborn baby.

BROTHER THOMAS (O.S.)  
I preserved her body the best I could.  
Praying you'd awaken to see her one last  
time... But she needs to be buried.

Neroni stands above her consumed. He begins to cry, it's overwhelming.

NERONI  
... I'm sorry... I'm sorry.

He looks up beyond the branches towards the sky, into the heavens - SCREAMS at the top of his lungs!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NERONI (cont'd)

It should have been me! Do you hear me  
 God! Should have been me! You bastard!  
 I'm the sinner! I have killed! Killed in  
 your name! Why take an angel that walks  
 upon your earth giving nothing but love.  
 Why?!.. She was my life!

Neroni collapses to his knees.

NERONI (cont'd)

She was my life... You do not care. You  
 have no mercy. You have no mercy. You are  
 a lie.

He prostrates in despair, wrapping his arms around Maria and  
 the unborn baby. He buries his face in their embrace. His  
 CRYING is heart-wrenching.

Brother Thomas approaches. He places his bloodstained  
 bandaged hand on Neroni.

NERONI (cont'd)

Leave us!

BROTHER THOMAS

My son -

NERONI

- Leave us! Or I will sent you to meet  
 your merciless God! I swear it on my love  
 for her! I will be the last thing you see  
 in this wretched life. In this world of  
 hell.

Brother Thomas feels Neroni's pain. He takes his hand off  
 Neroni and backs away.

NERONI (cont'd)

I'll wait here. Holding her until I die.

**INT. CABIN - NIGHT.**

The burning fireplace gives us the shadows. Brother Thomas is  
 wrapping his hands with clean bandages. His hands bear the  
 crucifixion of the cross - STIGMATA.

**EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS - DAY .**

Brother Thomas stands in the trees looking at Neroni. He is  
 still in the same position next to Maria. Dead leaves has  
 cumulated on them.

**EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS - DUSK.**

It's a cold and gray. We are alone with Neroni and Maria. Neroni still has not moved - it's starts to snow.

**EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS - CONTINUOUS.**

A luminous human silhouette is walking in the forest, sparkling light to the drifting snow flakes. It approaches Neroni who is covered in snow.

A radiant hand touches him -

- CRACK! The snow-ice encasing Neroni splinters and breaks. As of awaking up from death, Neroni turns his head to look behind him. His lifeless eyes begin to gleam at -

- MARIA! She an angelic vision smiling down at him!

**EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS - LAKE - NIGHT.**

Northern lights dance in the skies. Maria's angelic glow reflects onto Neroni. They embrace, taking a moment touching each other. Neroni places his hand on Maria's belly.

MARIA

... Your son is with God. He is beautiful, a reflection of you.

NERONI

I wish to be with you. I want to be with you. You-you heard my prayers. You have come to take me away. Take me away with you.

MARIA

My love. My husband. Why do you wish what we already have. We will always be together. I in you. And you in me.

Neroni begins to cry.

NERONI

... No-no-no! That's not the same! It's not the same! Don't leave me alone! Please heaven in the palm of your hand.

Maria takes Neroni's hand to rest on her heart.

MARIA

Our spirit is conjoined together. I from heaven, and you from earth. Your time is just a moment. Take comfort.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA (CONT'D)

For our time together in heaven will be forever. Our love is glorified in God's eternal light.

NERONI

God! No! God has forsaken me!

MARIA

God has not abandon you. He will never abandon you. He hurts at your suffering. I have come to give you His message and His love. You have a purpose here, on His earth. He has chosen you... God has made you his Knight.

She plants a kiss on his lips, and something magical happens. Neroni becomes unstained in flesh and spirit. A MIRACLE right before our eyes!

MARIA (cont'd)

My love. Look for me, and you will see me. Listen for me, and you will hear me. Ask for me, and I will hold you.

She caresses his face.

MARIA (cont'd)

I will wait for you. With our son.

A warm encouraging smile and Maria disappears. The northern lights fade away - a star shoots across the sky.

**EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS - DAY.**

Drizzling rain. We are on top of a mountain cliff overlooking the valley to the lake. Neroni places flowers on Maria's cross marked grave. Brother Thomas is off to the side.

**EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS - DAY.**

Brother Thomas is busy moving from tree to tree, cutting wild mushrooms. Neroni is at a distance behind him.

BROTHER THOMAS

Just look at all these mushrooms!  
Neroni my son, we will have a fine meal tonight. The Lord has blessed us.

NERONI (O.S.)

Where are we going?

Brother Thomas keeps cutting his mushrooms.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NERONI (cont'd)  
I said where are we going?

Brother Thomas cuts his last mushroom, gives it a nose, and tucks it inside his sack. He walks down a slope, to come face to face with Neroni with authority.

BROTHER THOMAS  
Are you afraid? Because I am. You are God's Knight Neroni. His archangel that walks upon his earth. Satan has come to know of us... We must get ready.

NERONI  
... You are leading me the wrong way.  
Away from Torino.

BROTHER THOMAS  
No. No I'm not. I'm leading you to a cave that my brother has kept secret. Letters from my brother Octavio Machiavelli before he was torture and murdered revealed it to me.

NERONI  
Your brother?

BROTHER THOMAS  
Yes. Do you remember him? I'm a Machiavelli. You let my brother live, and he gave you his cabin. Before he fled with his family he hid the Gethsemane blade. It is now linked to our fate... But first we need to find this cave.

Brother Thomas looks around at all of nature.

BROTHER THOMAS (cont'd)  
But the Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us with abundance of food. The cave is up this mountain. But, I choose to catch me a fish. We will head down and have our supper.

Brother Thomas starts heading down.

BROTHER THOMAS (cont'd)  
I suggest you eat your full, for we will fast for forty days. Man don't live on bread alone you know.

**EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAIN - CAMP SITE - DAY.**

Neroni is working a little camp fire with a buck knife.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Brother Thomas walks into the camp wet from head to toe. He's holding a makeshift fishing pole in one hand, and one large salmon by the gills in the other.

BROTHER THOMAS  
Neroni! Neroni! Look! Look what I got!

**EXT. CAMP SITE - NIGHT.**

Neroni and Brother Thomas are sitting by the campfire, roasting the salmon, and cooking wild mushrooms.

BROTHER THOMAS  
Power, pride, and prejudice are the three forces Satan hold over this world. These powers are interdependent. Power feeds pride, then power and pride, feeds prejudice. This evil deception grows all the violence in the world. Putting man against man. Brother against brother. Man become blinded by sins. They remain in the darkness.

Brother Thomas and Neroni take their piece of hot salmon meat, juggling it with their bare hands. They pick at the mushrooms enjoying their meal in silence for a moment.

BROTHER THOMAS (cont'd)  
But we also have three forces. The Holy Trinity. The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit. With this we will conquer the evil that dwells in Torino City, and retrieve the Gethsemane blade. The mercy and grace of God is with us.

NERONI  
... What then?

Brother Thomas is dump-founded. He never really thought of it. He gazes into the forest, as if searching for answer among the trees.

BROTHER THOMAS  
Yes, what then... Our paths diverge at dawn. We have much to learn on our journey. Physically and spiritually. You will be thunder and lighting, fierce and unrelenting. I will be His Word. A message of salvation... We will meet at the bell tower of St. Anthony's Cathedral in God's appointed time.

Brother Thomas takes a look at his stigmata hands. They are bleeding.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NERONI  
Do they hurt? Your hands?

BROTHER THOMAS  
Only when I forget the reason I bear  
them... The Lord sends me visions Neroni.  
Magnificent Aspano and his knights have a  
demon walking among them... Ironclad. He  
has come to start the apocalypse to  
mankind. He has taken Aspano's body and  
mind. Soon he will have his soul.

Neroni stares into the fire.

BROTHER THOMAS (cont'd)  
In my visions you must first seek an  
abandoned church. Outside the skirts of  
Torino City lies a forsaken city. It's  
there where your journey begins for you.  
But first, first you must find the cave.

NERONI  
How far is this cave?

BROTHER THOMAS  
Two days. Ascend this mountain. On the  
second midday, you will come upon a flow  
of water coming out of a stone wall.  
Quench your thirst. Look closely. The  
cave is hidden from those that do not  
believe.

NERONI  
What am I to find in this cave.

BROTHER THOMAS  
... The full armor of God!

#### EXT. FORSAKEN CITY - DAY

A wasteland of desolation. Smoke snakes through crumbling  
structures to the grey sky. It looks like we are in a  
nightmare.

A black hooded cloak FIGURE emerges from the haze. Sword and  
shield strapped on the back.

Head down he remains hidden from us - we follow him. CLINK!  
We hear the tapping of steel armor and weapons. The pommel of  
the sword has the CROSS.

The cloak figure halts in front of a small decaying church.  
He pulls back his hood - It's Neroni! A WARRIOR, stronger -  
so different! We don't see his full body armor till later.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He checks his weapons. The GUN - an imposing titanium cannon eight shooter, with a gold crucifix on the grip. The LUPARA - gleaming black silver double barrel bazooka with woodwork made from a cypress tree.

**INT. DECAYING CHURCH - SAMETIME.**

The place has been destroyed. Religious artifacts have been defecated. Satanic graffiti are on the walls and pillars. At the alter a cross hangs upside down.

CLINK. CLINK. Neroni cautiously walks on shattered stained glass up the nave. He covers his nose from the stench of sulfur.

NAKED MAN (O.S.)  
What authority do you have to come upon  
my lair immortal man.

Neroni quickly aims his gun at -

- a little NAKED MAN wearing just a clerical collar. He's covered in filth, his long hair is greasy. He runs and disappears through a door at the back of the alter.

**INT. DECAYING CHURCH - HALLWAY.**

Neroni meanders down a long dark corridor gun ready. Scratches mars the walls, a bloody mattress sprawls the floor, and remnants of depravity litter the hallway.

A faint CRYING of a little girl echoes from behind a closed door at the far end.

Neroni closes in on the source of the cries. With the nose of his gun he nudges the door open.

We see three soiled LITTLE GIRLS in torn gowns, huddled together in the corner of the room. Two girls eyes are traumatized. The girl crying looks up at Neroni.

Neroni walks in, and kneels face to face with her.

NERONI  
It's ok. Do not fear me. Take my hand.

The little girl stops crying. Her eyes look past Neroni and outs a SCREAM!

The power of the Naked Man is unnatural! He lifts Neroni above his head, and he is thrown out into hallway - slamming onto the ground hard!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Neroni shakes his head out of it - the Naked Man grasp Neroni by his leg and hauls him up!

NAKED MAN  
Bwahaha Bwahaha Bwahaha.

Hanging - Neroni world is upside down! Like a rag-doll he's is SMASHED from wall to wall down the hallway! Neroni tries for his dagger, but he is tossed out -

**INT. DECAYING CHURCH.**

- sailing through the church - CRASHES into the pews, taking a few down with him!

At the alter the Naked Man form distorts into a grotesque IMP! Eye pupils are slits, ram horns through his skull, it's skinny legs of a hoof mammal.

It spreads it's arms and jumps off the alter. Black wings appear. It flies around the ceiling - lands on a pillar, hanging on upside down like a reptile - HISSING!

BANG! Neroni fires his eight shooter! BANG! BANG!

Jumping and flying around from pillar to pillar, the Imp is too fast. Fuck this! Neroni pulls out his lupara, takes aims -

- KABOOM! The church rattles! Pieces of the ceiling rains down! Again - KABOOM! It a hits! It falls mid-flight behind the alter.

**BEHIND THE ALTER.**

Neroni comes to stand above the creature. It's still alive. It's fangs and tongue out HISSING at Neroni.

Neroni places his foot on the chest. SCHWING! - out comes the sword! He brings it high - THUD! Through the heart!

**EXT. TORINO CITY - DAY.**

Hooded up Neroni trudges through a ravaged Torino City. Store fronts are burglarized, and torched. A ragged mother darts past him, clutching a CRYING baby.

**EXT. TORINO CEMETERY - LATER.**

Neroni is at the front iron gates, staring across at the Lupara's headquarters. It's rebuild with a top floor.

Behind him is the great big oak tree. Giacomo and Maximo are neck swinging dead from its branches. Crows feeding on their eyes.

**INT. LUPARA HEADQUARTERS - SAMETIME.**

A SAVAGE WOMAN in threads is on the floor BEGGING for mercy. A GRIZZLY LUPARA kicks her!

GRIZZLY LUPARA  
Get up I said! Get up you savage whore!

The room is packed with Luparas watching and grinning. Two young SAVAGE SISTER are in the corner, terror in their eyes, tears streaming down their filthy cheeks.

The grizzly Lupara lifts the old savage woman by her hair, and tosses her to the bar - her head hits hard!

SAVAGE SISTER ONE  
*Mommy! Mommy!*

GRIZZLY LUPARA  
Shut up you! Shut up I said!

SAVAGE SISTER ONE  
*Please. Please don't hurt our mommy.*

SLAM! All eyes jump to the front door that just slammed shut. It's Neroni! He pulls back his hood and looks around. The private room in the back is closed.

GRIZZLY LUPARA  
Watcha want monk?

NERONI  
I'm on a pilgrimage to Saint Anthony's Cathedral. It's been a long journey. If I can get a drink.

GRIZZLY LUPARA  
... Yeah sure.

Neroni approaches the bar.

NERONI  
Water please.

Neroni extends his hand to the savage woman on the floor. Afraid, she move back a few paces with fear in her eyes.

GRIZZLY LUPARA (O.S.)  
She is a lazy savage hag that cunt. A prize from Knight Matteo. For my valor in the Savage War. Look here, made me captain.

The Grizzly Lupara shows off his captain badge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRIZZLY LUPARA (cont'd)  
 Them two animals over there are her  
 daughters. I pimp them out. I give you a  
 good price padre. But you Gotta be  
 gentle.

The room laughs. Neroni keeps his hand extended. His eyes  
 feel her pain. He stare into her with COMPASSION. Slowly she  
 give her hand. Her daughters rush over and help her up.

GRIZZLY LUPARA (cont'd)  
 Get up stairs to your cages. Go on get!

They put their heads down and scuffle away up the stairs.

It's eerie quiet and tense in the room. No one knows what to  
 make with this monk.

Neroni put his hands on the bar. His back is against every  
 one. He looks at the crest above the bar, "Lupara Shotgun and  
 the Gethsemane Blade" crisscrossing each other.

The bartender puts a glass of water in front of Neroni. He  
 takes a good drink.

NERONI  
 Thank you... It's noon. Why do the bells  
 remain silent?

GRIZZLY LUPARA  
 Bells? What bells?

NERONI  
 Bells to summons the faithful to recite  
 in the Lord's Prayers.

LUPARA (O.S.)  
 Oh yeah. Well, Magnificent Aspano decides  
 when to ring them bells.

Neroni turns to face them. He pulls on a tassel letting his  
 cloak fall, we see -

- ARMOR, made in splendor and brilliance for beauty and war,  
 that time has forgotten in the craftsmanship of the  
 Renaissance! It hits their faces hard!

NERONI  
 Vengeance is Mine, I will repay says the  
 Lord... He is busy. So he send me.

Panic swirls in the room, as Luparas draw their guns.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

NERONI (cont'd)

God is merciful. Those wish to repent  
their sin better run out now, and bury  
your dead. Or feel the wrath of God.

A few Luparas drop their guns, and run out the front door.

The private door opens, Magnificent Aspano's knights emerge.  
Lorenzo and Matteo with their luparas and shields.

They walk to the corners of the room. Lorenzo goes right, and  
Matteo to the left. Their eyes on Neroni - at their corners,  
they get their luparas ready, with shields half raised.

The room buzzes with anticipation. The calm before the storm.

Neroni jump up unto the bar backwards in a single fluid  
movement! Wielding his lupara and eight shooter -

- doing unspeakable act of violence too fast for the human  
eyes to register, but enough to make you wonder the wrath of  
God!

Spitting blinding flashes of LIGHTING and echoing THUNDER!  
Luparas are exploding, splattering the room with blood!

KABOOM! Sparks ricochets off Neroni chest armor - he jumps  
behind the bar!

The smoking barrel is Knight Lorenzo. He peeks out of his  
shield, and looks across the room at Matteo.

Behind the bar Neroni reloads, makes the sign of the cross,  
and with one leap - jumps up and over the bar, landing on his  
feet! It's unnatural!

Neroni moves in for the final kill blasting his eight shooter  
to the survivors! BANG - to the right! BANG - to the left!  
Back and forth - BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! Keeping  
the knights at their corners, hiding behind their shields!

The eight shooter is done, his lupara is next! It's raining  
blood on Neroni as he walks across the room to kill the  
knights!

KABOOM! Lorenzo's shield gets destroyed - he stays behind it  
scared. KABOOM! The impact has Matteo falling behind his  
shield.

Reaching Lorenzo, Neroni pulls down the shield - out comes a  
dagger. Lorenzo tries to scream at the horror he is  
witnessing, but the dagger is in his mouth!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

CLICK - a mechanism releases an arrow from Neroni's vambrace. It WHISTLES across - pinning Matteo's head to the wall!

The room absorbs it's collective terror. The silence is deafening.

**EXT. GAUNTLET HEADQUATERS - LATER.**

Neroni slumps on the steps of the porch exhausted. He gazes up at the sky. The sun is trying to shine through the black clouds.

The mother and the two daughters come out of the door. They look at their savior in wonder.

**INT. TORINO CEMETERY - DUSK**

It's surreal. The light diminishing is casting long shadows of bare trees across the tombstones. Gust of winds swirl dead leaves into a frantic dance.

On one knee, with sword planted in front of him, Neroni bows his head in prayer.

Markus the knight is watching Neroni behind a tree. He is panting, sweating, and frightened. He clutches his gut, blood seeping through his fingers. He is dying.

He moves from tree to tree staying behind Neroni, always keeping him in his sight.

CHIP! CHIP! CHIP! A RED CARDINAL is chirping on a branch. It catches Markus attention for a few seconds. Eyes back at Neroni, but he is gone! He pulls out a dagger, and makes a run for it!

He stumbles across the graves, falling to his knees, dropping his dagger. Exhausted, eyes closed, he tilts his head back towards the sky.

KNIGHT MARKUS  
Forgive me. Forgive me Father for I have  
sinned. Have mercy on my soul.

Markus opens his eyes - Neroni is standing above him!

KNIGHT MARKUS (cont'd)  
... I was send out to look for you. He  
knows you are here. He is waiting. He has  
taken Padre Vincenzo and Magnificent  
Aspano soul. And soon he will have mine.  
Ironclad is a demon. I have seen it with  
my own eyes!  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KNIGHT MARKUS (CONT'D)  
He has made the house of God his domain.  
Apocalypse awaits us my brother.

Markus tilts over.

KNIGHT MARKUS (cont'd)  
I was an honored man one time. I lived by  
the word of the Lord. A knight like  
yourself. But a darkness consumed me,  
took hold of my heart. Forgive me.  
Forgive me Lord. Have mercy on my soul.  
Pray for me my brother. Pray for me.

Markus reaches for Neroni's hand, and he answers.

**EXT. ST. ANTHONY'S CATHEDRAL - PLAZA - NIGHT.**

Sword in hand Neroni stand in the plaza looking at the cathedral. The open doors, and the rose window are giving radiates of red glow from the inside. Father Vincenzo lifeless body is sprawled on the top steps.

**INT. ST. ANTHONY'S CATHEDRAL - SAME TIME.**

Neroni enters the Cathedral. Patches of flickering flames here and there reveals the cathedral's barren, hollow expanse. It looks like a cave.

Walking, Neroni comes upon Magnificent Aspano distort dead body on the floor. His socket dead eyes stare at eternal fear.

Neroni sees Ironclad in the light of the flickering flames. He's stands at the open cellar doors leading down into the catacombs. His expression hidden in his hood.

He gestures an invite to the cellar, and descends down the stairs.

**INT. CATAcomb.**

Neroni sprints through the tunnels lost and desperate. The torch in his hand is burning out. The embedded skulls cry out with imagines of men, women, and children. Their distort faces in agony.

The WAILING of the condemned souls are clawing at Neroni's sanity, as he descends deeper in despair and darkness.

Turn left or turn right, not knowing what to do Neroni collapses. Head down defeated. The torch burns out. We are in the dark.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NERONI

... I can do anything through Christ who  
strengthen me... Maria.

Light begins to illuminate in the darkness. Neroni looks up - its MARIA, radiant and eternal!

MARIA

Arise Knight of God!

He extends his hand, Maria reaches for it, they grasp tight! An anchor of hope!

**INT. CATACOMB.**

With a burning torch Neroni strides through the tunnels in control. He turns left - turns right, and comes upon his safe marked X. He takes the plaque off and opens it.

Inside it's the GETHSEMANE BADE!

**INT. IRONCLAD LAIR.**

Inside earth's belly, flames of fire shoot up from a pit to the stalactites hanging above. We find Ironclad sitting with his sword on a black marble throne. His black cloak at his feet, eyes are closed.

Ironclad is MARVELOUS. Long locks of golden hair on his angel face. His black shining armor mirrors the fire from the pit. He sniffs the air, something is approaching. He opens his eyes - beautiful BLUE.

Neroni stands in the shadows at the entrance of the lair.

IRONCLAD (O.S.)  
(voice is deep and echoing)  
Behold. Behold The Knight of God!

Ironclad eyes morph to ONYX, devoid of empathy. He closes them - to open them again with the blue.

IRONCLAD (cont'd)  
Step into the light noble one. Let me see  
what your God has whored you into.

Neroni steps in ready for battle.

IRONCLAD (cont'd)  
Oh my! You look splendid! Your heart must  
be swell with pride. Is it not Neroni?  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

## IRONCLAD (CONT'D)

A mortal man no more than a lost soul  
 chosen to bring sword and shield to his  
 feeble children. Oh yes, the mighty  
 Knight of God indeed.

Ironclad LAUGHS at his own mockery - his eyes turn onyx.

## IRONCLAD (cont'd)

You and I are the same. We share a bond.  
 Love and vengeance has brought us  
 together... I tortured her mind and body  
 as she cried out your name, and vengeance  
 took me. She watch me bite the skull of  
 your unborn child before I killed her.

Ironclad closes his eyes, enjoying the memory he licks his lips. He rises with his sword - his eyes turn blue.

## IRONCLAD (cont'd)

For I too loved an angel at a time  
 forgotten. And your God took her away  
 from me. Sending me to a world of void.  
 And in the darkness my Lord found me.  
 Bestowed upon me knighthood in his  
 kingdom. It is there in the halls of hell  
 I forged it. And in the night that my  
 master put the betrayal in the hearts of  
 men, and your God looked into the heaven  
 asking mercy. The blade was stolen from  
 me... The Gethsemane blade belongs to me.

## NERONI

I know well my Lord's betrayal, that lead  
 to His death. His Passion. Three days  
 after, He rose from the dead. He  
 conquered death and sin. You been living  
 in the shadows of His Glorious Victory in  
 fear. You are nothing more than a coward  
 that hides behind your armor of deceit.  
 My faith is of a mountain. You will not  
 break me.

## IRONCLAD

Fool! What have you hunted? What has your  
 sword tasted? I reborn a Amalekite has  
 seen the Israelites cry for mercy as I  
 bathed in their blood!

Iron raises, and walks toward Neroni. His sword striking the air ferociously.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

IRONCLAD (cont'd)

I have adorn the cross on my chest and  
 whispered to bishops and kings as I  
 slaughter and raped the innocent. My  
 wormongering in the ears of your God's  
 children have made them destroyed  
 themselves a thousand folds! What can  
 you, a man possible do to me!

Ironclad strikes! CLASH! Sparks fly! Neroni blocks it high  
 and sways it away!

The clashing of steel fills the lair as Good and Evil engage!

Neroni is swigging and thrusting! But Ironclad parries  
 Neroni's two handed strikes single handed with ease,  
 sidestepping effortless.

IRONCLAD (cont'd)

*Hahahah. Knight of God.*

Ironclad has had enough. His sword is raised and it strikes  
 down THUNDERING on Neroni's shield!

Neroni gets HAMMERED and POUNDED backwards towards the fire  
 pit. His shield splinters under the assaults, turning to  
 shreds!

Neroni only defence now is his sword. Two handed he blocks  
 Ironclad's POWER! Ironclad is amazed at Neroni strength.

Ironclad catches Neroni's hilt, and with a flick of his sword  
 Neroni loses his!

Ironclad gives a swift kick at Neroni chest, and he stumbles  
 backwards to the edge of the fire pit!

The flames of the pit get stronger. Silhouettes of condemned  
 souls on fire emerge from the flames screaming, reaching for  
 Neroni - he dashes aside, makes a run away from it!

IRONCLAD (cont'd)

You fight well knight of God. But now I  
 will capture your soul.

Ironclad reaches in his armor breastplate. He pulls out a  
 beautiful gleaming blade with a gold handle, encrusted with  
 precious stones.

IRONCLAD (cont'd)

The Gethsemane blade is in my hand. I  
 made it beautiful. Is it not? Come. Come  
 take it. I will let you have it. Isn't  
 what you have came for?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Neroni begins unlocking his armor. He takes it off piece by piece, dropping it, clattering before him.

NERONI  
... You can not give what belongs to God.

Aside from a garment wrapped around his waist, Neroni stand naked, sweaty, and panting with a sheath tucked at his side. He reaches for it - out comes the Gethsemane blade!

Neroni pounds his heart with it!

NERONI (cont'd)  
I have on the armor of God! Your steel  
and malice lies will not defeat me. This  
not a battle of steel, but of spirit!

Surprise hit Ironclad face! He is scared. The eyes turn onyx again. His beautiful full lips become horribly diseased from the evil and lies spoken. His face begins to change to an ashen skull!

IRONCLAD  
(demonic)  
... You have the power of your God in  
your hand, mighty knight. Do you feel His  
glory?

NERONI  
All glory is His. In His name we praise.

Showing his FANGS Ironclad is enraged!

IRONCLAD  
Fool! We are legions and there are many  
among us!

Neroni and Ironclad rush at each other! Ironclad swings! Neroni drops, tucks, and rolls behind Ironclad - the Gethsemane blade pierces through Ironclad's back, the tip protruding through his chest armor!

NERONI  
Back to the abyss where you belong!

Ironclad is SHRIEKING not in pain but defeat!

Neroni pulls out the Gethsemane, and shoves Ironclad into the pit! The SHRIEKING falter as Ironclad descends deeper into the abyss till it fades away.

Neroni watches the flames get suck back into the pit. It becomes nothing more than a glow coming from it's depths until it dies - we are in the dark.

**INT. ST. ANTHONY'S CATHEDRAL - DAY.**

Wrapped in his cloak Neroni climbs out of the cellar. Exhausted he look around - the CATHEDRAL is GLORIOUS. The sun beaming through the rose window is bringing in a new day. All is magnified in God's Light. The bells begin to TOLL!

**EXT. ST. ANTHONY'S CATHEDRAL - SAMETIME.**

DONG! DONG! DONG! It's a beautiful day. Neroni steps out and stands at the steps. The town is coming in droves - men, women, young, old, families all in union, walking towards the cathedral for mass.

Neroni's eyes drift to the bell tower and smiles.

Brother Thomas is pulling on the ropes ringing the bells. He looks at Neroni beaming. We did it!

**EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS - LAKE - DAY.**

Brother Thomas's BANDAGED HANDS is wrapping the Gethsemane blade. A pull on a strap secures it.

Neroni is in the lake waist high putting supplies in a skiff boat. Brother Thomas approaches the shore, and walks into the lake, holding the Gethsemane blade against his chest.

Reaching the skiff boat, Brother Thomas hand over the Gethsemane blade to Neroni. He takes it, looks at it for a moment, and tucks it deep with the supplies.

Neroni assists Brother Thomas into the boat.

## BROTHER THOMAS

This lake run into a river that meets the ocean. The seasonal wind of the north should set my sails. Another part of my journey begins. The Gethsemane needs to be lost. Hidden from men. It will rest at the bottom of the deepest ocean.

On the boat Brother Thomas looks at the horizon.

## BROTHER THOMAS (cont'd)

My life is in God's hands if I should live this divine delegation. If that is His purpose.... Then I will sail to the shores of the Supreme Pontiff, and pray to God for guidance. For Satan is always stirring.

He looks at Neroni.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BROTHER THOMAS (cont'd)

... God's Knight indeed. We have much to learn you and I, but always remember what our Lord has taught us. "Love the Lord your God with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." And second, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Keep this in your heart and you will share your life in His glory.

They touch foreheads, a silent vow.

BROTHER THOMAS (cont'd)

You are in my heart and prayers. God willing we will meet again Neroni. For now goodbye my brother.

NERONI

In my heart and prayers.

**EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUTAIN - LAKE - LATER.**

Neroni watches the skiff boat sail into sunset horizon.

**EXT. BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS - DAWN.**

The sun is rising above the mountains. In a monk's attire and a full beard Neroni stands at the cliff's edge overlooking the valley to the lake. He places flowers on Maria's grave.

**FADE OUT.**