

THE PHOENICIAN CODE



"THE MYTH OF SOLOMON"

(01x01)

Written by

Pierre Lapointe

Based on the Novel

"The Phoenician Code"

By

Karim El Koussa

Developed for Television by

Pierre Lapointe

And

Nick Tarabay

Property of
NORTHERN STAR PICTURES
Los Angeles, CA

TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. ROOM, ABANDONED MANSION - NIGHT

A woman stares ahead blankly. There's a welt on a cheek. A gash on her forehead. Her normally curly hair now stringy, tangled and matted. She's been through hell.

Despite her condition and her dark, weary expression, MAYA DEEB is fit, pretty, mid 30s, educated. Lebanese. She sits at a makeshift table in the large room of what looks like an abandoned mansion, Arabic graffiti spray-painted across the dim walls.

Inaudible whispers in Arabic from another room.

Footsteps. A man's polished shoes clatter across the dingy, cracked marble floor. We only see bits of him. He lights a cigarette, draws in the smoke. Tosses the pack on the table.

Maya stares at it, then in Arabic--

MAYA

Thanks, but I don't smoke.

INTEROGATOR

Your Arabic is good. Your mother taught you?

She observes the man. Who the fuck is this guy with his Brunello Cuccinelli pinstriped suit, crisp lavender shirt, the vintage Patek Philippe watch, polished shoes...

INTEROGATOR (CONT'D)

She was Lebanese. From Ashrafieh. You were born there, but raised in France. Educated in Britain and the U.S. You speak French and English--

MAYA

German, Italian, Greek and Latin too.

He grunts, from now on, in English--

INTEROGATOR

I speak English.

MAYA

Why don't we cut the act then and just get down to it?

INTEROGATOR
Direct, aren't you?

MAYA
That's what they say. What are you?
Security Forces? Interpol? CIA?

He reaches for his badge, reveals a holstered handgun. He places the badge on the table by the cigarettes--

MAYA (CONT'D)
U.S. State Department?

INTEROGATOR
Tell me about Paul Khoury.

MAYA
Paul Khoury? That self centered,
arrogant son of a bitch?

INTEROGATOR
You were a couple once... Met at
Harvard. He was adjunct professor
of History. You were studying
archaeology.

MAYA
That's ancient history.

INTEROGATOR
Cute. Archaeology humor... Six
months ago, Khoury showed up on
your doorstep in Heidel--

MAYA
I think I'll have that cigarette
after all.

She reaches for the pack. He lights her up with a sleek silver lighter, watches her take a long drag. She taps the pack lightly, contemplating.

INTEROGATOR
Paul Khoury.

MAYA
Fucking brilliant historian. A
master provocateur and great at
creating controversies.

INTEROGATOR
Like the myth of the Temple of
Solomon? Isn't that what started
all this?

She glances at him, suspiciously. He knows things.

MAYA

It got the attention of...certain people.

INTEROGATOR

Like who?

MAYA

You wouldn't believe me if I told you.

INTEROGATOR

Well, whoever they are, they've been pursuing you...

She considers, smokes.

INTEROGATOR (CONT'D)

But you won't tell me who they are.

MAYA

I don't know who they are. Some kind of secret brotherhood.

INTEROGATOR

A secret brotherhood..?

MAYA

They're everywhere. Very powerful. Very organized. Above the law. And very ancient.

He considers carefully.

INTEROGATOR

That's the stuff of airport novels and Hollywood movies. Let's get back to Paul. Where is he now?

MAYA

Paul's dead.

INTEROGATOR

Really? What? Killed by this... brotherhood?

MAYA

You wouldn't happen to have any scotch, would you?

INTEROGATOR

Scotch?

He turns around to another man who produces a bottle and a glass, places them on the table. Maya glances at the label unimpressed.

MAYA

You did your homework on some things, scotch wasn't one of them.

She then pours some out, drinks it in one shot. Takes a deep breath.

MAYA (CONT'D)

I'll tell you what I know, but it'll make you question everything you believe to be true... And why I had to kill Paul Khoury.

CUT TO:

OPENING CREDITS.

EXT. NATIONAL MUSEUM, STREET, BEIRUT - AFTERNOON

Anxiously glancing over his shoulder, an elderly man hurries out of the museum, down the stairs to the sidewalk under the pouring rain, cellphone to his ear. A large banner in Arabic and French "*Musee Archaeologique*" hangs above the sturdy columns.

CAPTION: "BEIRUT, LEBANON" THEN "SIX MONTHS EARLIER"

A retired architect with too much time on his hands, HIRAM MELKI (60s) is a personable, educated, serious man, but right now, he's an anxious and nervous wreck. All scenes in Lebanon are in Arabic.

MELKI

I cracked it! I cracked it!

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. ST-JOHN'S CHURCH, LEBANON - AFTERNOON

Small, intimate, built of traditional Lebanese sand stone. Rain drums across the roof, slashes against the stained glass windows. Lightning. A brief, powerful strike. Jesus on a large cross overlooks the empty pews.

FATHER JOSEPH, a short, stocky priest, dressed in a Maronite Cossack is on his cell. Aging but full of vitality, his machine gun delivery adds a sense of purpose to all he does.

FATHER JOSEPH

(puzzled)

You cracked what..?

MELKI

The riddle. King Ahiram's tomb.

It hits the priest; a mixture of disbelief and excitement.

FATHER JOSEPH

Hiram... My God, are you serious?
...wait. We shouldn't talk about
this over the phone.

Melki nods, scurries to his older model BMW, climbs in.
Lightning! The growl of thunder.

INSIDE THE BMW

Melki settles, his breathing labored. He glances around
nervously, looks down at his trembling hands.

MELKI

I'm shaking. It just hit me. I'm
scared.

Melki retrieves a small stack of notes from his jacket, glances
at them; pages of handwritten notes, drawings--

Father Joseph paces.

FATHER JOSEPH

Hiram..?

MELKI

This will change everything. It'll
change religion as we know it.

Father Joseph pauses, puzzled.

FATHER JOSEPH

Hiram, let's meet.

Melki nods. His mind, a mass of twirling thoughts.

MELKI

Come over. At the house. Father,
you're the only person I trust.

Torn but curious, Father Joseph considers.

FATHER JOSEPH

I'll leave right now.

Melki hangs up. He rolls the notes and stores them back in his
jacket. A knock on the window startles him. A child, hands
cupped, drenched, begs for a handout. Melki hurriedly turns the
ignition and drives off.

FATHER JOSEPH

contemplates for a moment when the lights go out. He sighs frustrated.

The whirring sound of a generator echoes throughout the church and lights spark back on.

Father Joseph shakes his head, glances at his watch.

CUT TO:

INT. MAYA'S OFFICE, HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY, GERMANY - AFTERNOON

A beautiful ancient statuette in a secured glass display.

MIKAEL (O.S.)
Uhm, fifteen hundred B.C.
Babylonian?

MAYA (O.S.)
(chuckles)
You're incorrigible...

Hovering by the relic are Maya, fresh and bubbly, and boyfriend MIKAEL HAUPTMAN (42), tall, prematurely balding, a successful but stuffy stock broker who struggles to keep up with her. She slips into an overcoat.

MAYA (CONT'D)
It's Phoenician. Around five-
hundred B.C. You can tell by the
raised arm and the way the tunic--

Her cell chirps. She glances at it.

MAYA (CONT'D)
They're waiting for us at the
Dubliner.

MIKAEL
So how much is it worth?

MAYA
Priceless. But on the market, about
a quarter million...Wanna steal it?

Mikael looks back at her dumbly, not sure if she's serious.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Don't answer that. Come on.

She grabs his arm, pulls him towards the door.

EXT. ENTRANCE, UNIVERSITY BUILDING, HEIDELBERG - AFTERNOON

Maya and Mikael emerge from the centuries old building, past a sign: "Assyriology Department"

CAPTION: "HEIDELBERG, GERMANY"

As they near the street, two tall, broad Eastern European men climb out of an Audi sedan and lock eyes with Maya. She stops. Mikael gazes at the men.

MIKAEL
Maya, not again...

MAYA
I'll catch up with you.

MIKAEL
I don't like these people.

She gives him a reassuring kiss.

MAYA
I know...

She then climbs into the backseat of the car. The men settle inside and drive off, leaving a bewildered Mikael gazing after the departing car.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET, PAUL'S APARTMENT, BOSTON - DAY

Autumn leaves splash a canopy of colors against the red brick row houses lining this street near the university campus.

An Uber pulls up, disgorges AURORA LEE (28), a steely Asian American mother of two, trying to keep up with her packed schedule. Bundled in sweaters and a Burberry scarf, clutching a small satchel, she scampers up the stairs to a house, rings the button marked "PAUL KHOURY."

CAPTION: "BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS"

On the landing, Aurora waits patiently--

PAUL (V.O.)
(filtered)
Yeah..?

AURORA
It's me.

INT. LIVING ROOM, PAUL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Tastefully designed with Phoenician artifacts, paintings and a large collection of historical and theological books.

Without seeing his face, a man leisurely opens the door and walks back inside as Aurora bounds up the stairs and enters.

AURORA

Hey...

His face still unseen to us, the man lounges nearby, fixated on a magazine of cryptograms. He contemplates, taps a pencil.

Aurora looks around, then disappointed--

AURORA (CONT'D)

You're not ready.

PAUL

Just got a few more things to pack.

We finally get a look at him. PAUL KHOURY (45) is relaxed, laid-back, self-assured, quick with a smart-ass remark, yet there's an innocence to him, an unnatural dependence on others.

AURORA

Paul, Mar will be here any minute.

She marches to

THE BEDROOM

and finds a suitcase half-packed.

AURORA (CONT'D)

Did you pack a suit?

PAUL (O.S.)

Wasn't sure which one to take.

She shakes her head, moves to the closet, reaches for a suit and folds it neatly in the suitcase.

AURORA

You're hopeless. I've never seen a forty-five year old man so... helpless.

PAUL (O.S.)

Helpless or hopeless?

AURORA
Both! I don't know why I do this.
My maternal instinct. You're like a
child.

She busily goes to the bathroom and packs his shaving kit. He appears at the bedroom door, watches her.

PAUL
(jokingly)
I'm like your third son.

Not laughing, she hands him his shaving kit.

AURORA
How many shirts did you pack?

PAUL
Four.

AURORA
Undies?

PAUL
(playfully)
Maybe I don't wear any.

AURORA
(sarcastic)
That's always a turn-on. You packed
your sweats? Sneakers?

PAUL
Yes, dear. Hey, I'm only gone for
four days...

AURORA
Passport?

He turns to her, off guard. She marches back to

THE LIVING ROOM

to a nearby desk, reaches in a drawer for his passport.

AURORA (CONT'D)
Tickets? Reservations?

Paul just looks at her sheepishly, then a thought.

PAUL
I printed them.

She stomps to the printer, gathers the papers and places everything in a weathered satchel.

AURORA

You know I don't get paid for this.

She glares at him, but he stares back like a hurt child.

PAUL

I don't know what to say to that.

AURORA

Paul, you can't do anything for yourself. What woman is going--

The doorbell rings.

PAUL

That's Mar. Are you done?

She stares back, sighs.

AURORA

I am. Oh, before I forget...

She retrieves a memory card from her purse, hands it to him.

AURORA (CONT'D)

Your presentation. The Myth of the Temple of Solomon?

She gathers her things.

PAUL

What do you think?

AURORA

Your research is extensive and persuasive as always...

PAUL

Buuut..?

She passes by a framed magazine cover with Paul smirking and the heading "BAD BOY OF HISTORY."

AURORA

I know you like to be controversial, it feeds your ego. But this... it might be divisive.

PAUL

Aw, gimme a break.

AURORA
Some people take their religion
seriously, Paul. I know you don't--

Paul rolls his eyes, dismissive. She presses.

AURORA (CONT'D)
Listen, I'm just an editor. I'm not
going to debate you on the Old
Testament. I'm Buddhist.

PAUL
That's a cop-out!

AURORA
Guilty as charged. Don't forget
your pills.

He remembers, heads for the bedroom.

PAUL
Admit it. You love mothering me.

AURORA
I don't.

She's serious. He pivots at the door with doe eyes.

PAUL
Wait for me.

EXT. STREET, PAUL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Waiting at the door is MARWAN "MAR" NAJEM (50s). Paul's longtime friend, confidant and business partner, Mar keeps Paul balanced with his loyalty and honest pointed observations.

Aurora and Paul emerge from the building.

MARWAN
We're running late...

AURORA
Hi Mar.

They kiss on the cheeks.

MARWAN
Aurora. How's the intrepid
traveler?

Before she has a chance to answer--

PAUL
Hey, Bro.

Paul hands him his suitcase.

MARWAN
Dude, carry your own luggage.

PAUL
Jesus, what's with everyone? Tell me again why you're coming on this trip?

MARWAN
You need the company.

PAUL
It's four days. What am I, a child?

Marwan stares back.

PAUL (CONT'D)
...yeah, whatever.

MARWAN
You got everything? Tickets?
Passport?

Paul smiles sheepishly, takes his satchel from Aurora. Marwan and Aurora exchange knowing smiles. They head down the stairs to the waiting Towncar. Paul pivots to Aurora as he climbs in.

PAUL
I'll see you when I get back. If I'm still alive.

He winks. She smiles forcefully.

AURORA
Asshole.

He gives her a thumbs up and disappears inside.

MARWAN
We can drop you off.

AURORA
I have a faculty meeting around the corner. I'll walk.

MARWAN
You sure?

AURORA
Take care of him.

MARWAN
Don't I always?

She nods knowingly, leaves. Marwan watches her as if for the last time. The driver stows the luggage in the trunk.

CUT TO:

EXT. VILLA, HEIDELBERG - EVENING

A sumptuous villa overlooking the city and the Neckar River. The Audi drives through ornate gates, past a half-dozen high-end vehicles and to the entrance.

Maya climbs out, takes in the splendor.

INT. LIBRARY, VILLA - EVENING

Richly appointed with books, paintings and ancient artifacts.

The men escort Maya to a sitting area as EVGENY VERLAMOV (52), a finely dressed Russian ruffian, pours himself a scotch at the well-stocked bar. He appears relaxed.

EVGENY
Sit down.

The tone is civil, but cold.

She approaches, unsure what to expect, sits, facing an ancient artifact on the coffee table. She slides her gaze towards him as he sips, glances back at her.

MAYA
You're not offering me a drink?

EVGENY
(re: the artifact)
Recognize the piece?

MAYA
Of course...

EVGENY
You said it was one of a kind. That it was worth well over the one and a half million Euros they were asking.

MAYA
I did.

EVGENY

I bought it on your recommendation.
I was just told it's worthless.

She glances at the artifact on the table, curiously runs her fingers lightly over it and along the edges--

MAYA

Not worthless. Maybe a thousand
Euros.

He violently smashes his glass against the wall, startling everyone.

EVGENY

HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE?

Maya, somewhat unnerved, keeps her calm.

MAYA

This is not the piece I appraised,
Evgeny.

EVGENY

Is that so?

MAYA

The one I examined three months ago
was recently sold to a gallery in
Rome.

He pounds his fist on the table--

EVGENY

Are you mocking me?

MAYA

No, Evgeny, I wouldn't do that.
(motions to her purse)
May I?

She retrieves her phone.

MAYA (CONT'D)

I have contacts. I know people.
Nothing moves without me knowing
about it.

She scans through the screens.

MAYA (CONT'D)

So when I heard it had sold through
a broker here in Heidelberg...

She shows him the screen. A picture of the exact same artifact on an Italian website.

MAYA (CONT'D)
I assumed it was you.

EVGENY
What are you saying?

MAYA
This is a reproduction. A fake.
It's good. Very good, but still a
fake.

He approaches her menacingly.

EVGENY
I don't believe you.

MAYA
Well... There is one way to find
out.

In one deft move, she grabs the cuneiform and shatters it against the metal table in an explosion of dust and small black pellets. The Men draw their guns!

MAYA (CONT'D)
Look. Lead pellets. To give it
weight. They didn't do that five
thousand years ago. Look!

Evgeny approaches, examines the black pellets, his mind roiling.

MAYA (CONT'D)
I'm assuming whoever sold the real
one had access to this house.

Evgeny is beginning to understand.

MAYA (CONT'D)
You're pointing your guns at the
wrong person. I hate to tell you
this, Evgeny, but this was an
inside job.

Evgeny considers the revelation, his mind racing, until finally the answer comes to him and he sits quietly, looks at his men.

EVGENY
Find Katerina. Bring her back here.

The men exchange uncomfortable glances. One leaves.

MAYA
Well, okay then...

She eyes the bottle of scotch on the table, reaches for it, slyly pours herself a small glass and downs it.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Ouf, that's good.

She gathers her purse and rises.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Good to see you again, Evgeny.
I'll see myself out.

She leaves under Evgeny's angry glare.

INT. IRISH PUB, HEIDELBERG - NIGHT

Packed. Noisy. At a table, Maya is holding court, surrounded by Mikael and his friends in suits, ties loosened, nicely buzzed.

MIKAEL
Holy shit. You drank his scotch?

MAYA
It was an eighty year old Macallan M. I wasn't leaving without at least tasting it.

The table laughs, shaking their heads--

MAYA (CONT'D)
Say whatever you want about those bad guys, they know how to pick their scotch. And you know I'm a sucker for a good scotch.

Impressed, the men laugh heartily.

MIKAEL'S FRIEND
Whoever said women don't have balls hasn't met you.

MAYA
Women don't have balls, I just took all of yours.

They roar again.

MIKAEL'S FRIEND
Mikael's too?

She leans into Mikael.

MAYA

His were the first to go.

They erupt as she kisses him.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET, ST-JOHN'S CHURCH, LEBANON - EVENING

French hip-hop. Father Joseph's pickup swings out of the church lot and careens down the road, headlights shimmer across the wet pavement and past the village marker "Ehden."

INT. PADRE'S PICKUP TRUCK, STREET - NIGHT

The rain has stopped. Father Joseph behind the wheel. Tiring of the music, he punches the knob shut.

EXT. STREET, MELKI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Father Joseph's pickup pulls up to the gate of a traditional Lebanese home. The area is still soaked.

He climbs out. Suddenly, the power goes out in the neighborhood.

He glances around, generators in some of the neighboring homes kick in, lights flicker to life. Uneasy, he makes his way to the gate, finds it partially open. Somewhat concerned, he slips in.

INT. MELKI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The front door is ajar. Father Joseph pushes it open.

FATHER JOSEPH

Hiram?

Darkness. Father Joseph uses his cell phone as a flashlight and steps in to the dining room. He scans the light across the table; a feast of Lebanese dishes is laid out.

FATHER JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Hiram..?

No response. He steps away, scans the rooms, listens. Silence. A gust of wind. Curtains billow. The front door slams. He spins. Nothing.

Then, down the hallway, a dull light emanates from a doorway.

He cautiously heads towards it.

FATHER JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Hiram..?

IN THE ROOM

Father Joseph enters. A home office. The light of a cell phone on the floor casts grotesque shadows. He glances around to find--

THE LEGS

of a man lying on the floor. He rushes over, stops in his tracks.

FATHER JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Dear Jesus!

MELKI'S BODY

in a pool of blood, his decapitated head, eyes wide open stare back at him.

Father Joseph recoils, crosses himself.

FATHER JOSEPH (CONT'D)

May you live in peace this day. May your home be with our Father in Heaven, with Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, with Joseph, and all the Angels and Saints.

His eyes are drawn to the buttoned down shirt ripped open. Curious, he moves closer, pulls the material aside to reveal--

A BLOODY SYMBOL

in the shape of a "Y" carved in the man's chest. Repulsed but calm, he aims his cell and records a video of the odd symbol.

FATHER JOSEPH (CONT'D)

The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly...

He considers the situation then begins a hunt mumbling a prayer.

FATHER JOSEPH (CONT'D)

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep...

He finds a briefcase, rummages the contents, but doesn't find what he is looking for.

FATHER JOSEPH (CONT'D)
 ...O Lord, you unified your
 divinity with our humanity, and our
 humanity with your divinity, your
 life with our death, and our death
 with your life...

He scans the light of his cell across the room, his eyes fishing through the darkness.

FATHER JOSEPH (CONT'D)
 ...You took hold of what we have
 and granted us what you have so
 that you resuscitate and save us...

He moves around, carefully searching, drawers, cabinets, nooks and crannies. Nothing.

FATHER JOSEPH (CONT'D)
 ...Glory to you forever and ever.

He freezes. Fixated. The light reveals an unexpected sight: a small alabaster statue of the Virgin Mary splattered with blood.

He stares and snorts in disbelief.

INT. KITCHEN, MELKI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

In the dark, at the sink, Father Joseph washes the blood from the statue. He stares at the blood running through his hands for a moment, uncomfortably. A chill runs down his back.

He wipes the statue clean, then wipes the sink and counter dry.

CUT TO:

INT. CUSTOMS, GENEVA AIRPORT, SWITZERLAND - NIGHT

A Swiss CUSTOMS OFFICER opens an American passport to Paul's picture and details. He glances up at Paul, who stares back with a diplomatic smile.

The Customs Officer stamps the passport, hands it back to him.

Paul stuffs the passport in his satchel, gathers his things and heads out to a waiting Marwan.

PAUL
 Hello Geneva. If it was February,
 we could go snowboarding.

MARWAN
 And break a leg like you did last
 time?

PAUL
I'm not indestructible like you.
I'm flesh and bones, not whatever
it is you're--

MARWAN
Yellow sun.

Paul stares at him.

MARWAN (CONT'D)
It's how Superman gets his powers.

Unimpressed, Paul heads for the doors.

PAUL
I live in the land of *El*, *Astarte*
and *Baal* and you're at...Comic-Con.

MARWAN
Can't always live in the past,
dude. Superman is modern mythology.
Maybe you have powers you don't
know about.

PAUL
I have a bullshit detector that's
pretty accurate.

MARWAN
That's not a super power.

PAUL
I'm not a deity.

MARWAN
You don't have to be a deity to
have super powers.

PAUL
If I was a God, I'd make you
disappear.

MARWAN
If you were a God, I wouldn't have
to save your sorry ass all the
time.

INT. TERMINAL, GENEVA AIRPORT - NIGHT

Passengers flood out to waiting family and friends. Paul and Marwan emerge and follow the flow. They approach the line of waiting drivers, holding signs and to one driver with a tablet --
"PAUL KHOURY."

Marwan raises his hand. The driver smiles.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET, MELKI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Flashing police cars and an ambulance. Curious neighbors gathered in the street. Policemen keep them at bay. Half the neighborhood is still in the dark.

Police Inspector MAJOR ANTOINE KANAAN (42), a bear of a man with a perpetual scowl, emerges from the gate, munching on a *Lahm bi ajin*. A former Army sniper with a tormented yet keen analytical mind, he plods through life a day at a time.

He shuffles to Father Joseph, standing by his pickup. A policeman hands Kanaan papers. He glances at them.

KANAAN
Father Joseph?

Father Joseph turns to him, expectantly. Doesn't know what to make of the man chomping on the food from his ill-fated dinner.

KANAAN (CONT'D)
Major Antoine Kanaan. Inspector,
Internal Security Forces. My
officers tell me you found the
body.

Father Joseph nods, solemnly.

KANAAN (CONT'D)
You're a friend of Doctor Melki's?

FATHER JOSEPH
Thirty years.

He shuffles through the papers, without looking for anything in particular.

KANAAN
What brought you here tonight?

FATHER JOSEPH
Hiram... Monsieur Melki invited me
for dinner.

KANAAN
The Laham bi ajin is...

Kanaan gives a thumbs-up and gobbles up what's left while handing him his papers.

KANAAN (CONT'D)
You didn't see anything? Anyone
suspicious?

Father Joseph retrieves a handkerchief to wipe the grease off
his papers.

FATHER JOSEPH
No. Nothing.

KANAAN
A neighbor heard some motorcycles
earlier. Before the power went out.

Kanaan rubs his hands. Father Joseph hands him his handkerchief.

FATHER JOSEPH
It's clean.

Kanaan grunts, wipes his hands with it and hands it back to the
bewildered priest.

Suddenly, street lights come back on. Kanaan grunts.

FATHER JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Major, I'm concerned for Madame--

Kanaan heaves a sigh, leans against a car, reaches for
cigarettes. He offers the pack to Father Joseph who declines.

KANAAN
Filthy habit.

He lights one, runs his large hand through his dark mane of
hair, gathering his thoughts.

Just then, two policemen roll a stretcher carrying a closed body
bag from the gates. Kanaan and Father Joseph solemnly watch them
load the body in a van.

FATHER JOSEPH
Why would they do this terrible--

KANAAN
They..?

Father Joseph snaps out of his roaming thoughts.

FATHER JOSEPH
Whoever did this.

Kanaan sighs, smokes, considers.

KANAAN
 You know, Father, some people are
 just evil.

Kanaan glances down at his cigarette, rolls it between his fingers, thoughts percolating. He looks at the priest, smirks ever so briefly, then as if caught in a personal moment--

KANAAN (CONT'D)
 Do you know if he was a member of
 any religious sect?

Father Joseph is taken aback by the question.

FATHER JOSEPH
 I'm... Do you suspect--

KANAAN
 The killer carved a symbol in his
 chest. Near his heart.

FATHER JOSEPH
 (plays dumb)
 A symbol?

KANAAN
 Looks like the letter Y. But...

FATHER JOSEPH
 The letter Y..?

Kanaan watches Father Joseph contemplate the significance, then shrugs.

FATHER JOSEPH (CONT'D)
 Hiram was Christian.

KANAAN
 A God-fearing man..?

FATHER JOSEPH
 Devout Maronite.

Kanaan grunts, smokes, lost in thought, sucking bits of food stuck in his teeth.

FATHER JOSEPH (CONT'D)
 Major, if you don't mind, Madame
 Melki is very tired.

KANAAN
 We can't let her inside. The house
 is sealed. She has family?

FATHER JOSEPH
A sister in Beirut. But... I'll
arrange something.

Kanaan grunts. He searches his pockets as an afterthought.

KANAAN
We have your contact information.

He finally retrieves a business card, hands it to Father Joseph.

KANAAN (CONT'D)
My card. In case you think of
anything that might be useful.

Father Joseph is about to retreat when--

KANAAN (CONT'D)
As an ordained member of the
church, Father, this letter... this
"Y", does it mean anything?

FATHER JOSEPH
Not that I know of.

Kanaan nods, watches Father Joseph head to an exhausted older woman sitting in the back seat of a patrol car.

Kanaan then steps away, crosses a policeman, tossing his butt.

KANAAN
Filthy habit.

He marches to his car, a five year old Lexus which has seen better days and climbs in. There's an ingrained fatigue in every move he makes, as if it were his last.

IN THE LEXUS

Kanaan settles behind the wheel, observes Father Joseph lead the frail woman to the passenger side of his pickup.

Kanaan sighs, runs his hand through his thick hair, a habit, then turns the ignition and roars away.

INT. LEXUS, STREETS - NIGHT

Kanaan drives, his mind absorbed by many things. The window wide open, the cool night air churns inside. He fingers his cell. A classic *Fairouz* song from the 70s fills the car.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM, MAYA'S HOUSE, HEIDELBERG - NIGHT

Images of solitaire rings. In bed, Mikael scrolls through series of engagement rings on his laptop.

The bathroom door opens, footsteps. He quickly flips to airbnb listings as Maya enters.

MIKAEL

Found a great place in Rome...

MAYA

Rome..?

MIKAEL

We talked about going... For your birthday.

MAYA

It'll be hot as hell. And jammed with tourists.

MIKAEL

It'll be nice and romantic. You're the one who keeps saying we don't have enough romance--

MAYA

Passion. I said passion.

MIKAEL

There's plenty of passion in Italy.

MAYA

I don't need it in Italy--

MIKAEL

You love Rome.

MAYA

From an archaeological perspective, yeah, but--

MIKAEL

I already booked a table at Aroma. Do you know how impossible that is?

MAYA

Aroma..?

MIKAEL

Best restaurant in Rome. Overlooking the Coliseum.

(MORE)

MIKAEL (CONT'D)

Afterwards we can walk down the Via Sacra, see the Arch of Titan and--

MAYA

Arch of Titus.

MIKAEL

What?

MAYA

Arch of Ti-tus. It was built to depict the glory of Titus and the sacking of Jerusalem and the Temple of Solomon by the Romans.

MIKAEL

Okay, so glorifying the destruction of the Temple of...

MAYA

Solomon. You're severely lacking in biblical studies.

MIKAEL

I was too busy trading comic books.

MAYA

You really are incorrigible.

MIKAEL

Bought my first car and paid for all my studies with comic books.

Mikael feels foolish and somewhat offended by her reaction.

MIKAEL (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I'm not a history buff or know all the right archaeological terms.

MAYA

Yeah, stick to stocks.

Hurt, he stores his laptop, settles under the sheets.

MIKAEL

I'm trying. I just wanted to get away for a week. Thought it would make you happy. Forget it.

She's upset with herself, climbs into bed.

MAYA

Don't be upset. We can go to the Arch of...Titan if you want. Though we might have a hard time finding it.

MIKAEL

Why is it every time I go out of my way, it bites me? And you make fun of me.

MAYA

(in perfect Italian)

A thousand pardons, Signor Mikael. It would be a tremendous honor to be in the presence of such an extraordinarily intelligent, kind, humble man as yourself and to share a delicious meal under the blanket of a warm, soft Roman night.

MIKAEL

Wow... Okay, apology accepted.

MAYA

It wasn't an apology.

MIKAEL

Well, whatever it was, I take it you changed your mind?

MAYA

(in Italian)

Yes, my love.

They kiss. She tumbles in his arms--

CUT TO:

EXT. ENTRANCE, EDEN PALACE HOTEL, MONTREUX, SWITZERLAND - NIGHT

The black Mercedes swings into the street and pulls up to the hotel entrance. A valet opens the door. Paul and Marwan climb out. A bellhop handles the luggage.

INT. VAN, EDEN PALACE HOTEL - NIGHT

Two silhouettes in the back of a dark van gaze out the rear window at Paul and Marwan arriving.

The first man eyes the scene through a camera, focuses the long telephoto lens. Reels off a half dozen shots.

MAN #1
 (in Dutch)
 It's him.

The second Man retrieves a phone, taps the screen.

INT. FOYER, EDEN PALACE HOTEL - NIGHT

As Paul, Marwan and the bellhop approach, there's a noisy gathering at the lounge, when a shriek--

LAMPSON (O.S.)
 PAUL!

Paul pivots to PROFESSOR THOMAS LAMPSON (mid 60s), a tall, lanky, bearded academician, bearing down on him, loud, obnoxious, one of those annoyingly overtly cheerful personalities.

LAMPSON (CONT'D)
 How are you, my friend? It's been too long.

PAUL
 Professor Lampson.

Paul smiles, gets swept in a bear hug.

LAMPSON
 Marwan!

He shakes Marwan's hands.

LAMPSON (CONT'D)
 The dynamic duo is here. Let the party begin!

He laughs boisterously, motions two students with him; ALYCIA SCHIFFER (26), a freewheeling spirit trying to find her way in the world, and LUKAS STEINER (28), a stiff, faux-intellectual desperate for Alycia's attention.

LAMPSON (CONT'D)
 Let me introduce you to one of my star students; Alycia Schiffer and her friend Lukas. Both from Germany. Frankfurt, I believe..?

ALYCIA
 Munich.

LAMPSON
München. Alycia is a big fan.

She hungrily shakes Paul's hand. She's taken by him.

ALYCIA

I've read many of your articles and books. I find them fascinating.

PAUL

Thank you.

ALYCIA

Your treatise on the Phoenician God El was the reason I changed my major to ancient history.

PAUL

God El has that effect on people.

Lukas throws his hand out to Paul. She speaks for him.

ALYCIA

Lukas has no interest in theology, he's an atheist.

Paul and Lukas shake hands.

LUKAS

Agnostic.

ALYCIA

Agnostic. But I'm trying to convert him.

LUKAS

I confess. I don't know much about ancient biblical history, I'm pursuing law.

PAUL

As long as the law doesn't pursue you.

Alycia laughs, a little too loudly.

LAMPSON

If you want to talk German Constitutional law, Lukas is your man.

LUKAS

(clumsily)

Germans don't have a constitution. We have the *Grundgesetz*. It's a Basic Law imposed on us by the allies after the second world war.

Awkward moment for everyone. Lampson breaks it with a loud cackling sound, his odd laugh--

LAMPSON
I stand corrected.
(to Paul)
We're on our way to the opening
night party. Come, there's someone
I want you to meet.

Lampson grabs Paul by the arm, leads him away, leaving Marwan behind--

MARWAN
No worries. I'll check us in.

INT. BANQUET ROOM, EDEN PALACE HOTEL - NIGHT

A cocktail reception is in full swing; conversation and booze flow freely amongst the academicians, historians, scholars, and theologians of all stripes and nationalities.

Colorful banners and posters announcing the conference are prominently displayed as is sponsor THE NATIONAL HELVETIC BANK.

Lampson escorts Paul through the crowd with Alycia and Lukas in tow. Many recognize Paul and wave or shake his hand.

LAMPSON
Same old crowd, Paul. Same old
thoughts. Same old ideas. You're
the breath of fresh air that's
going changing all that.

A young SCHOLAR approaches Paul with a Sharpie and a copy of the "Bad Boy" magazine.

SCHOLAR
Mister Khoury, do you mind?

Paul gladly autographs and heads towards a bar as Lampson teasingly pulls him away.

PAUL
Where are you taking me, Thomas? I
need a drink.

Paul locks eyes with BRIGITTE (34), the pretty black bartender. Mutual attraction. She smiles. He smiles back, urged away by Lampson. The exchange is caught by Alycia.

LAMPSON
I'll get you your drink. In a
minute.

(MORE)

LAMPSON (CONT'D)
 I can't wait for your presentation
 tomorrow. It's a real hornet's
 nest, my friend.

Lampson cackles again!

LAMPSON (CONT'D)
 You are fearless! I love it.

PAUL
 Who's this mystery person? I hope
 she's pretty whoever she is.

LAMPSON
 It's a he.

PAUL
 Now you're disappointing me.

LAMPSON
 He also happens to be the most
 powerful man in the room. Head of
 the National Helvetic Bank.

PAUL
 Shit. Mathias Erisman?

LAMPSON
 He asked to meet you. It's a hell
 of an honor. This way.

Just then, a force of journalistic nature, FRANCOISE CARBONNIER
 (30s) intercepts. Direct, unflappable, seductive, cajoling, a
 former war correspondent who zeroes in on her prey.

CARBONNIER
 Hey Paul.

Surprised, he stares at her then walks past. She follows.

CARBONNIER (CONT'D)
 Let's not be like this, Paul.

She trots behind him--

CARBONNIER (CONT'D)
 Paul... Paul!

PAUL
 You misrepresented my position--

CARBONNIER
 Then let's set the record straight.
 Give me an interview.

He glares at her.

CARBONNIER (CONT'D)
 How many books did you sell after
 that article? I even got you the
 cover. Look at you now; headlining,
 signing autographs--

Lampson slips between them, then diplomatically.

LAMPSON
 (to Carbonnier)
 That's enough.

Lampson leads Paul and the group away.

CARBONNIER
 I'll be here all weekend!

Paul shakes his head as Lampson escorts him, Alycia and Lukas to a quieter part of the room where a man stands by the bay window sipping a scotch. His female assistant sits nearby, buried in a tablet.

Disappointed, Carbonnier watches them assemble from afar. She wants that interview.

Mid to late sixties, erudite executive MATHIAS ERISMAN grins smugly. A Swiss, educated in the finest British universities, climbed the corporate ladder and now, perched on its highest rung, exudes the confidence, entitlement and privilege his position provides.

ERISMAN
 Ah, the rising rock star of ancient
 history. No pun intended.

PAUL
 Too bad, it's a good pun.

Erisman holds out his hand.

ERISMAN
 Mathias Erisman, National Helvetic
 Bank.

PAUL
 Paul Khoury, rising rock star...

They shake. Erisman laughs. Pleased, Lampson excuses himself.

LAMPSON

(to Paul)

I promised you a drink. I'll be right back.

PAUL

Manhattan with orange twist.

Lampson nods, slips away. Paul catches Carbonnier watching him from the other side of the room. He then pivots to Erisman.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I should thank you for inviting me.

ERISMAN

I had nothing to do with it. The bank simply sponsors the event. I just get to enjoy the benefits.

Paul smiles diplomatically.

ERISMAN (CONT'D)

I have to admit though, it can be a little dry at times. That's why I wanted to meet you. Ancient history needs a kick in the pants. Someone who can make it fun, interesting and engaging.

PAUL

Phoenician history particularly.

ERISMAN

It's true. The Greeks. Egyptians. Mesopotamians. They always get top billing. Phoenicians are always cast aside in the dust bins of history.

PAUL

And yet they ruled and colonized the Mediterranean and invented the alphabet. Go figure.

ERISMAN

You're passionate.

PAUL

It's in my blood.

ERISMAN

And like all Lebanese, you're proud of your heritage.

(MORE)

ERISMAN (CONT'D)

You know, I own the largest private collection of Phoenician relics.

PAUL

I know. You also own an impressive collection of Babylonian artifacts.

His assistant hands him a fresh drink and takes his empty glass. Alycia and Lukas exchange impressed glances.

ERISMAN

You disapprove. You would rather they be on display in museums.

PAUL

It would make my job easier.

INT. RECEPTION DESK, FOYER, EDEN PALACE HOTEL - NIGHT

The receptionist hands Marwan the keys. He then heads to the banquet room as the bellhop carts their luggage to the elevators. He stops by a rack of conference magazines, picks up a copy of "Archaeology Today."

The two shadowy men from the van step in. They are JACOBUS (42), a brooding, intelligent operative and BARTEL (37), a stoic, loyal resource under his brother's manipulative control.

Jacobus motions Bartel to follow the bellhop into the elevator, while he walks after Marwan.

IN THE BANQUET ROOM

Marwan enters, waves and shakes familiar hands. He steps up to Lampson at the bar.

LAMPSON

Something to drink?

MARWAN

A good Swiss beer.

LAMPSON

We're in the far corner.

Marwan heads off when Carbonnier sidles up to him, nudges him.

CARBONNIER

Hey Mar.

Marwan smiles. There's an awkwardness to the meeting.

MARWAN

Francoise. How you been?

CARBONNIER

I've been assigned to the Europe Desk. Twice the work, same pay... But good. I'm good.

MARWAN

Rachel?

She smiles appreciatively.

CARBONNIER

You know, you're the only one who ever asks. Some days better than others. And Frank... At least he's taking good care of her.

MARWAN

She's a good kid.

CARBONNIER

Wicked smart. Like her mother.

She winks, smiles, an attempt to lighten the conversation.

MARWAN

Covering the conference?

She nods, plays coy. Jacobus observes from a safe distance.

CARBONNIER

I bumped into Paul. He's still upset.

MARWAN

What do you expect?

CARBONNIER

I was doing my job, Mar.

MARWAN

Come on, he was off the record.

CARBONNIER

He was on record. He's just too chickesh--

MARWAN

It was a private conversation! Your recklessness got the director of the museum fired.

CARBONNIER

He gave me a tip. I investigated.
It's what I do. And I'm damned good
at it.

MARWAN

Yeah...

He steps away.

CARBONNIER

Come on, Mar, setup an interview.

MARWAN

Can't help you.

CARBONNIER

Mar!

She grabs the "Archaeology Today" magazine from his hands,
scribbles numbers then slaps the magazine against his chest.

CARBONNIER (CONT'D)

My new number. Talk some sense into
him.

He sighs and walks off.

Jacobus follows Marwan, keeping his distance.

WITH PAUL AND ERISMAN

deep in conversation, Alycia and Lukas listen in.

ERISMAN

You make compelling arguments and
you make us think. That's important
even though I don't always agree.

Marwan steps up.

ERISMAN (CONT'D)

Is the Temple of Solomon a myth?

PAUL

The evidence is overwhelming.

ERISMAN

The world is not ready for it.

PAUL

On the contrary. It's time the
world found out the truth.

ERISMAN

The truth is a slippery thing. For thousands of years our world has been structured by religion. Our stringent belief in the words of the Bible, the Talmud, the Koran.

Paul, Marwan, Alycia and Lukas listen intently.

ERISMAN (CONT'D)

The minute people believe they've been lied to. That the word of God, the bible, is a sham, there'll be a reckoning.

PAUL

That's an alarmist reaction.

ERISMAN

The bank does a lot of research; financial modeling, risk analysis, predictive studies... Believe it or not, this is one of the greatest threats facing Mankind.

Paul is boiling, nostrils flaring, about to blow when Marwan puts his hand on him to calm him down.

MARWAN

How is this a threat to Mankind?

ERISMAN

Religion is a powerful thing. People need to believe in a higher power. That a benevolent God looks upon us. Guides us. Protects us. Take that away from them...

PAUL

You're asking me to turn a blind eye on the truth? To perpetuate a lie? Because God forbid, a few people will take offense.

ERISMAN

The minute you put a grain of doubt in people's minds, they will...

He trails off at the thought.

ERISMAN (CONT'D)

I'm asking you to do the right thing.

PAUL

No, you're asking me to take the easy way out. The right thing is to tell the truth. You see it as a threat to you, your institutions, your organizations, your money, the whole elite power structure.

ERISMAN

Yes. Alright. I'll admit. Money is what makes the world go round as the song goes.

Paul's heard enough. He turns to Erisman with dripping sarcasm.

PAUL

Thank you, Mr. Erisman! And thank you for financially supporting this conference.

He angrily walks away. Disappointed, Erisman glances at the group who stare back awkwardly. He motions his assistant. She gathers her things. They leave as Lampson returns with drinks.

LAMPSON

What'd I miss?

CUT TO:

EXT. RECTORY, ST-JOHN'S CHURCH, LEBANON - NIGHT

Father Joseph's pickup swings into the compound and parks in his reserved spot.

He climbs out, reaches inside for his satchel when he notices a dark colored van park at the curb and cut its lights.

Suspicious, he locks his pickup and hurries to the rectory.

INT. HALLWAY, RECTORY, ST-JOHN'S CHURCH - NIGHT

With a determined stride, Father Joseph marches the deserted hallway clutching his satchel across his shoulder and enters--

INT. FATHER JOSEPH'S QUARTERS, RECTORY, ST-JOHN'S CHURCH - NIGHT

Father Joseph rushes in, locks the door and quickly scans the rooms out of concern. He settles behind a small desk, turns on a desk lamp, reaches inside the satchel to retrieve the alabaster statue of the Virgin Mary from Melki's house.

He examines the underside, removes the rubber cover to reveal a concealed cavity.

He pokes his finger inside, slides a stack of papers out, lays them on the desk. They are the ones that Melki glanced at in his car.

Melki's notes; cryptic drawings, figures and symbols, words in Phoenician, English, French and Arabic.

Father Joseph flips through the pages, trying to make sense of the scribbles, the drawings. He turns to the last page to find

THE RENDERING OF AN INSCRIPTION

a figure at an altar, arms raised, offering a cup. The cup is vigorously circled and the word "GEBEL" written underneath.

Father Joseph rolls up the stack of papers, slides them back in the statue, restores the cover.

He rises, paces. He moves to the window, thoughts percolating, and glances out towards--

THE MOUNTAINS

in the distance silhouetted against a lightened sky. A swirl of white smoke catches his eye. It emanates from the darkened window of the same dark van parked across the street.

Father Joseph stares curiously, then opens the window to get a better look--

The van sits dark and motionless at the curb. A stream of smoke rises out the partially opened window followed by the ejection of a cigarette butt. The headlights splash open.

Father Joseph uneasily watches the van drive off into the night.

CUT TO:

INT. PAUL'S ROOM, EDEN PARK HOTEL - NIGHT

The door bursts opens. Paul and bartender Brigitte, in each other's arms, pitch in. He pins her against the wall, kisses her, caresses her neck. His mouth and hands eager to explore. She, hungry for his touch, his lips, his being. It's intense, passionate, soft and loving, not brusque, clumsy or violent. Two mature, sensual lovers, itching to discover each other.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PAUL'S ROOM, EDEN PARK HOTEL - PRE-DAWN

Paul stirs in the sex soaked sheets, alone. There's movement in the room. He rolls over to see Brigitte emerge from the bathroom, fastening her bra. She catches his stare.

BRIGITTE
Hi.

PAUL
Hey...

BRIGITTE
I washed up...

PAUL
Too bad.

She smiles, approaches, almost apologetically.

BRIGITTE
I have a little one at home waiting
for me.

PAUL
I have a little one here waiting
for you.

They chuckle. She sits by him. They stare at each other, unsure what to say. Finally, she leans in, kisses him softly, tenderly.

BRIGITTE
Thank you.

He's puzzled. But before he can reply, she moves, quickly finishes dressing. He watches her, then rises as she gathers her things. Naked, he follows her to the door.

She picks up a black envelope at the door, hands it to him.

BRIGITTE (CONT'D)
You have mail.

She smiles. They stare at each other. An unspoken longing.

BRIGITTE (CONT'D)
Bye.

And just like that, she's out the door and gone.

Suddenly alone, Paul breathes out. He returns to the bed, tosses the black envelope on the dresser just as his cell lights up and vibrates. He picks it up: "Marwan." He sighs heavily.

EXT. WATERFRONT WALKWAY, MONTREUX, SWITZERLAND - DAWN

The calm waters of the lake. Two joggers on a morning run.

Paul and Marwan, dressed in sweats and sneakers. They pound the walkway along the shore of the lake, their stride is strong, rhythm consistent, but Marwan is tiring--

PAUL
Come on, old man. Keep up.

Marwan steps it up, huffing and puffing--

PAUL (CONT'D)
Where's that yellow Superman power?

Marwan increases his pace. Paul keeps up--

PAUL (CONT'D)
Looks more like you got kryptonite
in your shoes.

MARWAN
The kryptonite's in your mouth.

Marwan pushes it. Paul matches his stride--

PAUL
You're huffing and puffing like a
peacock without feathers.

MARWAN
Speaking of plumage... That student
last night...

PAUL
Alycia. She's a cutie--

MARWAN
No, the other one...

PAUL
Lukas?

MARWAN
How do you remember these names?

PAUL
It's called memory. You should look
into it.

MARWAN
At my age, it's not the memory,
it's the storage.

PAUL
You better slow down. Wouldn't want
you to get a stroke.

MARWAN

I got more spring in my step than
your peacock legs can handle.

And with that, Marwan sprints and the race is on. Full bore,
they close in on--

EXT. BACK ENTRANCE, EDEN PALACE HOTEL - DAWN

In a furious head to head sprint, Paul and Marwan streak down
the walkway to the imaginary finish line at the back entrance of
the hotel. Marwan inches Paul out--

They slow, catching their breath and settling their heart rates.

PAUL

What about him, the kid, Lukas?

Marwan crumbles to the ground and stretches.

MARWAN

He's smitten.

PAUL

Unfortunately for him, I'm not
avail--

MARWAN

Not with you, moron. With her.

PAUL

Oh. Alycia. Well, yeah, maybe.

MARWAN

You're the blooming peacock with
the bright plumage...

PAUL

I can't help my--

MARWAN

Yeah, you can. Her eyes are on you.
Kid can't compete.

PAUL

Nothing's happened.

MARWAN

Yet. There's tonight. Tomorrow. She
could just be a fling to you, but
to the kid...

PAUL

What's it to you?

MARWAN

It reminds me of you at that age.

Marwan's words trigger a painful memory for Paul. He glares at Marwan for a moment, then--

PAUL

I don't even know if I'll see her again.

MARWAN

You damn well know she's going to--

PAUL

Alright. I get it. I'll turn off my natural irresistible charm.

Paul pulls Marwan up.

MARWAN

I thank you on behalf of the kid. Whatever his name is.

Paul heads to the hotel doors. Marwan follows.

PAUL

Lukas. Alycia and Lukas.

He springs to the doors leaving Marwan to ponder. He notices a man in the distance watching them; it's Jacobus. His gaze settles on a second man further down; Bartel.

Puzzled by their presence, Marwan follows Paul inside.

INT. BACK STAIRWAY, EDEN PALACE HOTEL - DAWN

Paul and Marwan round the landing. Marwan glances out the large bay window, sees Jacobus and Bartel converge at the walkway.

CUT TO:

INT. FATHER JOSEPH'S QUARTERS, RECTORY - MORNING

The quiet serenity of the humble priest's home. Dressed in sweats, Father Joseph sits at the dining table, his half-eaten breakfast aside. On his phone, he watches the video he took of Melki's body and the bloody carved symbol.

He rises. Contemplative. Paces. His mind reeling, he scans the list of contacts on his phone. Selects and taps.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. GYM, HEIDELBERG, GERMANY - MORNING

On a bench, a cell phone flashes and vibrates; an incoming call from Father Joseph. In the background, Maya pounds a TRAINER's strike pads in a choreographed sequence of kicks and punches.

TRAINER

Higher, Maya. Left hook. Right upper cut. Jab. Jab. Jab. Good.

Disappointed, Father Joseph hangs up.

CUT TO:

INT. PAUL'S ROOM, EDEN PALACE HOTEL - MORNING

Freshly showered and dressed, Paul stores his sneakers in a plastic bag and in his luggage.

A knock at the door. Paul opens. It's Marwan, carrying the copy of Archaeology Today Carbonnier scribbled on.

PAUL

Hey...

MARWAN

Hey. Bartender's gone?

PAUL

Sometimes you scare me.

Paul goes back to dressing.

PAUL (CONT'D)

What's that?

Marwan tosses the magazine on the bed.

MARWAN

Whatever you do, don't go to page twenty-three.

PAUL

So you're telling me you want me to go to page 23?

Marwan remains quiet, leans against the dresser.

Growing weary but curious, Paul finally grabs the magazine, thumbs through the pages until...his expression drops.

A feature article with a picture of Maya.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 (mumbles)
 Maya Deeb... famed archaeologist...
 Her research on Phoenician and
 Assyrian... gained her a fellowship
 at ...Heidelberg Uni... "History is
 our truth." That's my line. I
 taught her...

Paul tosses the magazine back on the bed--

PAUL (CONT'D)
 Good for her.

He returns to his things, his mind now perturbed.

MARWAN
 Call her.

PAUL
 Are you serious? No, I'm not going
 to call her.

MARWAN
 Call her.

PAUL
 Why?

MARWAN
 Because, she's the best--

PAUL
 She left, Mar... She left.
 Remember? End of story.

MARWAN
 You cheated.

PAUL
 Yeah, I cheated. I was an asshole.

MARWAN
 At least you admit it--

PAUL
 We both went our separate ways.
 What's the point? I'm sure she's
 settled down with a nice... Where?
 Where is she again?

Paul grabs the magazine, furiously searches for the article,
 finds it--

PAUL (CONT'D)
 Heidelberg. Heidelberg? I'm sure
 she's found a nice boring, German
 guy who doesn't cheat on her--

MARWAN
 Stop being a child.

PAUL
 Isn't that what you tell me all the
 time? That I'm a child.

MARWAN
 You guys were made for each other.

PAUL
 No...

Paul glances at the magazine, at her picture. He softens. It's painful.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 No... Apparently not.

MARWAN
 Agh, you're incorrigible.

PAUL
 That's something she would say.

He finally closes the magazine, tosses it on the bed.

MARWAN
 Your pride is your worst enemy.

PAUL
 I thought it was my ego. Mar, I
 love you, but let's drop it.

Marwan realizes now's not the time. He notices the black envelope on the dresser, reaches for it.

MARWAN
 What's this?

PAUL
 Dunno. It was at the door earlier.
 Open it.

Marwan opens and reads.

MARWAN
 The Temple of Solomon is not a
 myth. It's a living reality to us.
 (MORE)

MARWAN (CONT'D)
 No room for error. Be wise, or...
 What the fuck?

They turn to each other, Marwan is concerned. Paul chuckles.

MARWAN (CONT'D)
 You don't think...

PAUL
 Erisman? If he wanted me dead, I'd
 be in the lake with the fishes by
 now.

MARWAN
 Yeah, laugh.

PAUL
 Come on, Mar. It's bullshit. We've
 had these before.

MARWAN
 No room for error. Be wise, or...
 Or what? It's signed B.B.

Paul gathers his things. Scans the magazine again, gazes at
 Maya's picture.

MARWAN (CONT'D)
 There were a couple of weird dudes
 watching us this morning.

Paul turns to him, questioningly--

MARWAN (CONT'D)
 When we finished jogging.

PAUL
 You're getting paranoid in your old
 age.

He grabs the note from Marwan and tosses it in the trash can.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 Come on, let's get breakfast. I
 need my strength for the lecture.

Paul winks at Marwan and heads out.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS OF HEIDELBERG, GERMANY - DAY

Bumper to bumper traffic. Among the commuters, a recent model
 Jeep aggressively navigates the bustling streets.

INSIDE THE JEEP

Maya peers over the steering wheel. An energetic "morning person", she darts for every empty inch as if it were a game.

Sitting beside her, Mikael, not feeling well, reacts to each near miss, holding on tight.

MAYA

What are you so afraid of?

MIKAEL

Death..?

MAYA

Live a little.

MIKAEL

I'm trying!

MAYA

Oh shoot! I almost forgot.

MIKAEL

What?

She fingers the console and hits redial.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. FATHER JOSEPH'S QUARTERS, RECTORY, ST-JOHN'S CHURCH - DAY

Father Joseph at his table studying stacked reference books laid open as his cell rings.

He peers over - "Maya Deeb." He hastily grabs the phone.

FATHER JOSEPH

Maya!

His voice is on the car's speakers. Maya expertly maneuvers the traffic. Mikael cringes.

MAYA

Morning, Padre. Not calling at a bad time I hope.

FATHER JOSEPH

No... I just wanted to--

He grabs what's left of his breakfast, takes it to the kitchen.

MAYA

Sorry I wasn't able to take your call, I was at the gym.

FATHER JOSEPH

Maya, there's something I need to...

As he drops the dish in the sink, he glances outside to see--

The dark colored van, the same one as the night before, parked at the same spot, cigarette smoke escaping from the driver's window.

MAYA

Father?

Father Joseph is rooted, his mind reeling.

MAYA (CONT'D)

We're all set for your arrival.

Maya speeds down a narrow street.

MAYA (CONT'D)

You don't have to worry about anything. I have the whole week planned out--

Father Joseph grows concerned.

FATHER JOSEPH

Maya--

MAYA

I'm excited, Father. We'll have plenty of time together--

FATHER JOSEPH

Maya...

Father Joseph steps away from the window, gathers his thoughts.

MAYA

I really couldn't do this charity without you--

He reaches for the Alabaster statue, pops the cavity open to retrieve the papers, then a manila envelope from a desk--

MAYA (CONT'D)

You're going to love these kids, Father. They're really special. And they're going to love you--

Then finally, severely--

FATHER JOSEPH
 Maya, stop! I can't go!

Maya and Mikael exchange puzzled glances--

MAYA
 What? Why?

In a mild but controlled panic, Father Joseph marches into his bedroom and reaches for some pants.

FATHER JOSEPH
 You're making too many demands on me. I can't always be at your beck and call. Just do it on your own. For once! Goodbye, Maya.

MAYA
 Father..?

He's gone. She hangs up, confused.

MAYA (CONT'D)
 What the hell..?

She punches his number again. It rings. And hangs up.

MIKAEL
 He hung up.

MAYA
 I don't understand. It's not like him.

MIKAEL
 Must have caught him at bad time.

MAYA
 He's never talked to me like this before.

She reaches to punch his number again. Mikael stops her--

MIKAEL
 Give him a little time. Call him back later.

She relents. Reluctantly.

MAYA
 I can't believe it...

Frustrated, she suddenly veers around a car. Mikael jumps back.

EXT. UNIVERSITY PARKING LOT, HEIDELBERG - DAY

Maya barrels her Jeep past the gate into the Heidelberg University parking lot.

The Security Guard frowns, shaking his head.

CUT TO:

INT. FATHER JOSEPH'S QUARTERS, RECTORY, ST-JOHN'S CHURCH - DAY

Father Joseph reaches inside a hidden cavity in the ceiling and retrieves a blue, red, orange and yellow striped velvet bag, the colorful motif of the Swiss Guard.

AT THE TABLE,

he pulls a small ornate chest from the velvet bag, opens it to reveal a SIG P220 handgun, a magazine and ammo. He expertly cocks the gun, checks the chamber, fingers the bullets in the magazine and loads the gun.

He stares at the weapon and runs his thumb over a symbol etched in the barrel; to many it's just a symbol, but the trained eye will recognize its distinctive insignia.

Inside the cover of the velvet lined chest, a gold plaque with the same etched emblem and below it, the word "Vatican".

He shuts the cover.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHATEAU DE CHILLON, SWITZERLAND - DAY

A striking medieval castle on the lake. Conference attendees are queued at the gate and slowly stream inside. The black Mercedes SUV pulls up, disgorges Paul and Marwan.

VON GUNTEN (O.S.)

It is with great pleasure, and
perhaps with a little
apprehension...

INT. DOMUS CLERICORUM HALL, CHATEAU DE CHILLON - DAY

An aging socialite, ALEXANDRA VON GUNTEN (60s) chuckles at the podium in a packed hall of academics, scholars and students.

The crowd snickers along.

VON GUNTEN

...that I present our next guest.
He is an accomplished historian. A
writer with several books and
theses on Phoenician history.

Paul watches and waits just offstage. He glances over at the crowd in the darkened room, sees a few familiar faces including Lampson, Lukas and Alycia who smiles at him. Marwan stands to the side, scans the audience.

VON GUNTEN (CONT'D)

He has a PhD in Ancient History
from Harvard, a PhD in Theology
from the Harvard Divinity School
and today will share his thoughts
on "*The Myth of the Temple of
Solomon.*" Please welcome Doctor
Paul Khoury.

The audience applauds. Paul bounds the stairs, settles at the podium. The words "Shalam likum" splash on the screen behind.

PAUL

Shalam likum. This is how my
ancestors, the Phoenicians, greeted
each other.
(invites the audience)
Shalam likum.

AUDIENCE

Shalam likum!

The audience enjoys saying it as a group.

PAUL

You are now all honorary
Phoenicians.

The audience laughs.

PAUL (CONT'D)

According to the Old Testament,
approximately a thousand years
before Christ, there were two
kings.

A picture of King Solomon displays on the screen.

PAUL (CONT'D)

King Solomon. Of Jerusalem. In
Judea. Israel today.

The picture splits to include Hiram, King of Tyre.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 And Hiram, King of Tyre. In
 Phoenicia. Modern day Lebanon.
 Israel's neighbor to the North.

The audience watches captivated.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 Now most of you know the story of
 these two men. Their friendship.
 Their alliance--

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET, MELKI'S HOUSE, LEBANON - DAY

Kanaan pulls up in his Lexus, climbs out. A young policeman
 guards the area cordoned off with crime scene tape.

PAUL (V.O.)
 They were brothers in arms and made
 each other very, very rich.

Kanaan glances at the limestone house behind the gate, standing
 plaintively in this tranquil neighborhood.

PAUL (V.O.)
 So, the legend goes, flush with
 money and gold, King Solomon wanted
 to build a stone temple to the
 Hebrew God Yahweh in Jerusalem.

The young guard lets Kanaan through--

PAUL (V.O.)
 And so he asked his friend King
 Hiram of Tyre for help--

INT. ENTRANCE, MELKI'S HOUSE - DAY

The door swings open, Kanaan in silhouette steps in, the soft
 daylight reveals him. His eyes scan the room.

PAUL (V.O.)
 At the time, Phoenicians were known
 for building beautiful temples. So
 the Phoenician king put his
 greatest architect on the job.
 Hiram Abiff. Hiram knew he had to
 hire the best and finest artisans
 and engineers...

INT. DOMUS CLERICORUM HALL, CHATEAU CHILON - DAY (RESUME)

Paul glances at his audience.

PAUL
 ...and the best and finest came
 from the Phoenician city of Gebel,
 Byblos today.

Photos of the temple ruins at Byblos splash behind him.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 In the *Praeparatio Evangelica*, the
 Phoenician author *Sanchuniaton*
 details the existence of a great
 temple...

Lampson sits on the edge of his seat soaking it in. Alycia
 watches, turns to Lukas, catches him staring at her. He smiles
 awkwardly.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 ...which the Greek historian
 Herodotus confirmed as...
 (reads his notes)
 ..."richly furnished with many
 votive offerings..."

INT. ARCHAEOLOGY DEPARTMENT, HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY - DAY

Cup of coffee in hand, Maya walks the hallway and through a door
 "Maya Deeb, Professor of Archaeology."

PAUL (V.O.)
 "...It has two massive pillars, one
 made of pure gold..."

In her office, She settles behind her desk.

PAUL (V.O.)
 "...and the other of an emerald
 stone..."

She glances at her cell phone, worried. Not sure what to do. A
 mailroom clerk drops a stack of mail on her desk, drawing her
 out of her thoughts. In the stack, the edition of *Archaeology*
Today. She reaches for it.

INT. DOMUS CLERICORUM HALL, CHATEAU CHILON - DAY (RESUME)

Paul glances at his audience--

PAUL
 Sound familiar? It matches, almost
 word for word, the description of
 Solomon's Temple in the Old
 Testament.

Some are a little unsettled by his claim.

At the back of the room, Jacobus and Bartel slip in.

PAUL (CONT'D)
 But they don't allude to a temple
 built in the city of Jerusalem.
 Rather, they refer to a fabulous
 structure in the city of Tyre...

INT. MELKI'S HOUSE, LEBANON - DAY

Kanaan faces a curio cabinet in Melki's house. The cover of a large photo book stares back at him with the image of a Phoenician temple.

PAUL (V.O.)
 And is known as the Temple of Baal-
 Melkart.

Lined up on the shelf are large color picture books; "Phoenician Kings and Gods," "Ancient cities of Phoenicia," "The Riddle of Ahiram's Tomb" and "The Temple of Melkart."

Kanaan slides the last book, thumbs through the pages until he stumbles across a page with a blank Post-It Note.

PAUL (V.O.)
 As most of you know...

He carefully peels the note to reveal a beautiful rendering of the Temple of Melkart in its glory days.

PAUL (V.O.)
 ...there is no actual, physical,
 archaeological evidence of a temple
 such as the one described...

Puzzled, Kanaan curiously examines the drawing. He tacks the Post-It Note back and replaces the book.

IN MELKI'S OFFICE

Kanaan enters. The body is gone replaced by a taped outline. He explores, his eyes darting at anything that jumps out at him.

PAUL (V.O.)
 ...in the Old Testament having ever
 been built in Jerusalem.

INT. DOMUS CLERICORUM HALL, CHATEAU CHILON - DAY (RESUME)

Paul emphasizes his words--

PAUL (V.O.)
 There are no ruins, no stones, no
 artifacts, no documentation
 referring to such a structure...

INT. OFFICE, MELKI'S HOUSE, LEBANON - DAY

Kanaan bends over Melki's desk; a trail of blood spots and an a
 small dust-free area indicate an artifact has been removed (the
 statue).

PAUL (V.O.)
 Not from the Phoenicians. Or the
 Egyptians. Or Mesopotamians. No
 one.

Kanaan takes a picture with his cell phone. FLASH!

INT. DOMUS CLERICORUM HALL, CHATEAU CHILON - DAY (RESUME)

A low muffled groan rumbles through the audience. Paul scans the
 faces looking for reactions.

PAUL
 There is only one conclusion. That
 the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem
 never existed and that the temple
 described in the Old Testament is
 nothing but a reference to the
 Temple of Baal-Melkart in Lebanon.

More gasps and audible reactions. Lampson watches, enthralled.
 He exchanges amused glances with Lukas and Alycia.

An Orthodox Jew rises and shouts, pointing.

ORTHODOX JEW
 Shame on you!

With angered shouts and animosity, Paul tries to finish--

PAUL

I contend that the Temple of Solomon was created by scribes solely for the purpose of propagandizing the Kingdoms of David and Solomon.

Voices rise in anger along with a stream of "boos", "Proof?" "Nonsense!" "Disgraceful!" "Shame" "Outrageous!"

Erisman watches the agitated crowd with concern.

A perturbed scholar rises; thin, spectacled red-headed ACHIRAM FROHLICH (50s)--

FROHLICH

What you are proposing? That the Old Testament is nothing but--

PAUL

Fairy tales. A big budget Hollywood movie. Tom Cruise could play Solomon--

FROHLICH

--you mock those of us who take this seriously.

PAUL

Robert Downey Jr..?

FROHLICH

Enough! Do you speak for God?

PAUL

I speak on behalf of truth.

FROHLICH

Whose truth?

PAUL

The only one there is. Can you prove the Temple exists?

FROHLICH

It's called faith!

PAUL

That's not proof.

More audience outrage. Paul and Frohlich stare at each other. Paul gathers his things--

PAUL (CONT'D)
 My article with all the details
 will be published in Biblical
 Archaeology and available Monday
 online. Thank you.

He heads off the stage as the audience growls while others
 applaud forcefully.

LAMPSON
 Bravo! Well done!

Security staff approach and try to control the raucous audience.
 They escort Paul towards the doors.

Paul notices Erisman standing at the back of the room, staring
 back at him concerned. He leaves with assistant in tow.

Von Gunten crosses Paul with a sly smile.

VON GUNTEN
 Well, you know how to rouse an
 audience, I'll give you that.

She continues towards the stage, making her way through the
 outraged audience members angrily calling out Paul.

He crosses Carbonnier. They stare at each other as he passes.
 She smiles, more in admiration than sympathy.

Alycia notices the meaningful looks shared between them and is
 torn as Lukas observes her reaction.

Von Gunten steps to the lectern.

VON GUNTEN (CONT'D)
 As exhilarating as Doctor Khoury's
 lecture was, there's still much
 more to go--

Paul heads towards the door, passes Marwan, nods--

In the audience, Alycia watches Paul leave much to Lukas'
 dismay. Even Lampson notices.

VON GUNTEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Our next speaker is equally
 controversial...

Jacobus and Bartel monitor Paul's exit as the audience settles.

EXT. GATE, CHATEAU CHILLON - DAY

Paul and Marwan emerge from the gate. Paul angrily stops, paces, tries to calm himself.

PAUL
The evidence is just so fucking clear.

MARWAN
Give it time.

PAUL
And why did she have to be here?

MARWAN
Francoise? Dude, she's doing her job. You can't let that bother you.

They resume their walk to the waiting black Mercedes SUV. The driver opens the back door.

EXT. HIGHWAY, NEAR MONTREUX, SWITZERLAND - DAY

The black Mercedes SUV travels up the highway, along the shoreline of the lake, heading north.

INT. BLACK MERCEDES SUV, HIGHWAY, SWITZERLAND - DAY

In the back seat, Paul and Marwan pensively gaze at the passing scenery.

MARWAN
By the way, you'll be delivering that lecture in Chicago next week.

PAUL
I'm thinking I need to change things up. Present the facts without alienating people...

MARWAN
Alienating people is what you do best.

PAUL
You always got to lay one in, uh?

MARWAN
You bring out the best in me.

Paul points to the scenery--

PAUL
Wow. Look at this view. Gorgeous.

Marwan glances out. Idyllic setting with the lake and the mountains.

PAUL (CONT'D)
I could escape to a place like this. Relax. Clear my head.

Marwan is suddenly puzzled.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Buy a nice little house.

Marwan gazes around, suddenly uncomfortable.

MARWAN
This is not the same road we took.

PAUL
It's the scenic route. I like it.

MARWAN
(to driver)
Hey... Driver?

No response. Marwan and Paul exchange glances, chuckle.

PAUL
Maybe he doesn't speak English.

MARWAN
(to driver)
Chauffeur?

Marwan leans over to the driver--

MARWAN (CONT'D)
Monsieur...

But before Marwan can finish, the driver draws a handgun and SHOTS, drilling a bullet into Marwan who tumbles backwards spewing blood across the windows and seats!

PAUL
Mar!

Shocked by this unexpected turn, Paul stares at Marwan's body slumped motionless--

PAUL (CONT'D)
What the fuck? WHAT THE FUCK!?

The driver rounds a corner and accelerates, yanking Paul back.

Paul glances around the cabin, trying to figure out what to do.

In a fit of desperation, he grabs his satchel and in one swift, deft move, he slings the strap over the driver's head and pulls back. Hard.

The driver's head jerks back against the headrest. The car swerves tossing Paul around.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Why?... WHY?

Still the driver continues without a word, increasing his speed, navigating yet another turn, narrowly missing a passing car.

Paul yanks on the strap, tightening his grip. It digs deeper into the driver's muscular neck.

PAUL (CONT'D)
WHO ARE YOU?!

Choking on the lack of air and turning red, the driver raises his gun towards Paul.

Paul lunges for the hand and as he does, the gun goes off. The front passenger window EXPLODES.

Paul grabs the barrel of the gun and wrestles the driver for it. Then, something catches Paul's eyes. A tattoo near the driver's thumb - "B.B."

In a feat of incredible strength, the driver manages to pistol whip Paul and pull him over the seats to the front of the car without slowing down. And then proceeds to PUNCH the living shit out of him!

Dazed by the continuous punches, Paul fights back by KICKING at the driver's head and manages to free the gun from the driver's hand.

PAUL

turns the gun on the driver and just as he's about to get punched in the crotch, Paul SHOOTS - BLOWING the driver's brains out.

He struggles out of the passenger foot well in time to see--

OUT THE FRONT WINDSHIELD

the car bears down on a guard rail and a void.

Paul scrambles for the passenger window, leaps out, landing hard and caroming off the pavement, scraping the asphalt as

THE SUV

swerves, hits the curb, crashes through the guard rail and sails off the cliff.

PAUL'S

limp body tumbles off the side of the road into the rain ditch to a stop, his shirt and pants tattered and ripped.

A MUFFLED EXPLOSION brightens the scene. A billowing column of black smoke rises in the distance.

Silence. No breathing. No movement. Nothing.

A sudden breeze ruffles the fall leaves, rolling them across the ground.

PAUL'S FACE

Scratched and bloodied. Mouth agape. Listless. And then--

His eyes SPRING OPEN!

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF EPISODE