

Seraphim's Miracle

By: JB Storey

206-579-2740
jeremystorey@yahoo.com

EXT. SERAPHIM, TOWN HALL - NIGHT

A Rural Town in the United States.

A large Mid-19th Century TOWN HALL is bombarded by an EPIC STORM. A blanket of LIGHTNING forms a mesh web across the sky. Monstrous THUNDER claps echo over-and-over.

Then, lightening STRIKES the ground outside the Town Hall.

A shadowy MALE FIGURE - in a JET FIGHTER JUMPSUIT - materializes by the FRONT DOOR.

Another bolt of LIGHTNING. Followed by thunder. More thunder, louder, and louder, and louder.

INT. AFGHANISTAN, PRESS OFFICE - DAY

SUPER: Afghanistan. Bagram Air Base.

(The pounding THUNDER from the 'Rural Town' storm morphs into the percussion of PLANES and HELICOPTERS outside.)

BEN, (early-40s), jolts awake on a COUCH. As if roused from a nightmare. He's hungover. His five o'clock shadow's at midnight. A bright LIGHT pierces a crack of a curtain, forcing Ben to cover his bloodshot eyes.

The office itself is an assortment of desks cluttered with paper, BEER cans, and VODKA bottles. There's also a droopy, makeshift CHRISTMAS TREE in the corner.

Ben's PHONE rings. He answers, triggering a video call.

On the SCREEN is Ben's wife, BETH CHAMBERS (early-40s, Pretty. Bohemian-chic.) Ben's face lights up. He sees Beth is in a CLASSROOM. She studies Ben's cragged face.

BETH
Mornin', Dummy.

BEN
Hey, Dopey.

BETH
All-nighter?

BEN
Yea. How was school?

BETH
Well, one of my ducklings glued her hand to a desk and another crapped his pants. So, ya know, another day in elementary paradise. You?

BEN
'Bout the same; But instead'a glue and
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN (CONT'D)
poops my ducklings got guns and
grenades.

BETH
Swapsies?

BEN
No, no, no. Much safer here!

Beth smiles. Winces, as she tenderly rubs her forehead.

BEN
Migraine?

Beth nods. Looks at Ben's tired face, bloodshot eyes.

BETH
You look how I feel.

Ben holds up an empty Vodka bottle.

BEN
Helps with the stress.

BETH
Uh-huh. Did you try the meditation?

BEN
Well, yeah, see, I was gonna-

Ben hears *footsteps* in the hallway approaching the room.

BEN
Oh. Dang. Gotta jet.

BETH
Saved by the Boss!

BEN
Same *Bat-time* tomorrow?

BETH
Same *Bat-channel*. B4B?

BEN
B4B, baby.

Beth hurriedly blows Ben a KISS, he grabs it and puts it into his HEART. He blows her a kiss and she repeats the gesture, before they both hang up.

The DOOR to the press room swings open.

Standing in the doorway is SELINA RICHARDSON, (late-40s) a tall, elegant, and steely woman who clearly runs the show.

Next to Selina is JON ROSE (early-50s). A tall, bald, man,

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

with a smallish beer-gut from Northern England.

JON
Ah, there's our lad.

SELINA
You're rolling with Alpha today.

BEN
Isn't Jon-

SELINA
007's off to Syria. So you're up,
Slugger.

JON
What's it you Yanks like to say?
(Fakes American accent)
Go hit a touchdown, Ace!

Jon smiles, wryly.

BEN
Anything I need to know?

JON
Simple intel op. Click and observe.

SELINA
Piece of cake, Sparky.

Jon grins and winks at Ben, turns to leave.

Selina nods to Ben and follows Jon. She wraps her PINKY
FINGER around Jon's as they walk down the hallway.

Ben goes to his desk. Pulls a KEVLAR VEST from his chair,
with the word PRESS scrawled across the front.

EXT. CITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - NIGHT

Early evening. The school is closed for the day. Beth walks
outside. It's cold. On the verge of snowing.

She sees a nine-year-old GIRL sitting on a stoop, waiting.

BETH
Hey, Sweetie. Your Mom late again?

The girl looks at Beth and nods sadly. Beth hunches down,
next to the girl. The girl smiles.

The girl then opens a little LUNCH BOX. She takes out a
CUPCAKE, splits it in half, and gives one half to Beth.

GIRL
I made it myself.

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CONTINUED:

Beth smiles back at the girl and takes a bite.

INT. AFGHAN VILLAGE, RAMSHACKLE HOUSE - DAY

Dust. Gunfire. Chaos.

Six members of ALPHA TEAM, under intense FIRE, take refuge in a cramped SHACK, in the middle of a *dusty village*.

The team hold positions by the windows, firing back.

Amid the chaos is Ben taking pictures.

BEN
(Under his breath)
Piece of cake, my ass.

In the middle of the room is Master Chief, AL KING (late-30s), African-American. He's communicating to HQ.

KING
(To his men)
QRF incoming.

Petty Officer, ANSON (mid-30s), fires through a broken window.

Petty Officer, JARVIS, scraggy beard, (late-20s), fires from a different window close to Anson. He has a SNIPER RIFLE.

JARVIS
Gotta Tally street parade coming our way.

ANSON
Yep. And they're feelin' festive.

Jarvis looks out the window. He sees a MAN on a roof on a large building 200-yards away. He's holding a Rocket Propelled Grenade launcher (RPG).

JARVIS
RPG, RPG!

Jarvis takes a *shot* and hits the enemy in the head.

ANSON
Ding-dome!

They still fire the RPG, but it flies in another direction. Ben covers his head when he hears the EXPLOSION.

KING
(To Jarvis)
Numbers?

JARVIS
Too many.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KING

Copy that.

(Goes back on the radio)

Paradise, this is Alpha One. Stand down QRF, LZ's too hot. Advise on alternate exfil plan, over.

PARADISE (V.O.)

Copy that, Alpha One. Sit tight, over.

Enemy gunfire ramps up.

KING

Ok. Options?

ANSON

We're pinched in a *Little Big Horn*.

JARVIS

Lay down smoke. *Butch* and *Sundance* through the front?

KING

Negative. That's a last resort.

BEN

You do know how *Butch and Sundance* ended, right?

Anson *winks* back at Ben.

Jarvis looks out at the big building again where most of the enemy combatants have massed.

JARVIS

What if we make a new path?

KING

How?

JARVIS

Frag their building down to the studs.

ANSON

Part the sea.

KING

(Nods)

Time to get *Moses* on the line.

Enemy fire increases. King gets back on comms.

KING

Paradise. Request fire mission, over.

PARADISE (VO)

Copy. Standby, Alpha One.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MORTAR BLAST shakes the windows.

The SEALs fight harder. Ben starts to worry.

ANSON
Can't wait much longer, Boss.

King nods.

KING
(Into Radio)
Paradise, need sitrep, Over.

ANSON
Well shit. Looks like we'll be *Butch*
and *Sundancing* after all.

Another MORTAR EXPLODES, even closer this time.

PARADISE (V.O.)
Alpha One. Inbound *Eagle* 50 clicks
out.

King glances at his men, they all look relieved.

KING
Copy that, Paradise.

PARADISE (V.O.)
Patching you through to the Eagle,
call sign *Sentinel*. Paradise out.

KING
Anson, light it up.

Anson grabs a LASER TAGGER from his backpack. Points it at a
BUILDING 200 yards away.

ANSON
Target's tagged.

KING
Copy that.
(Switches on the radio)
Sentinel, this is Alpha One,
requesting emergency close air
support. Zero ten bearing from our
position. Target's tagged, over.

SENTINEL (V.O.)
Copy Alpha One. Blast field's danger
close. Confirm order, over?

King looks at his men.

KING
Order confirmed, *Sentinel*. Bacon's in
the pan... fry it up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SENTINEL (V.O.)
Copy that, Alpha One. Bogey's Alpha
Mike Foxtrot, over and out.

All of the men stare at King, including Ben.

KING
Big boom time, boys.

The sound of a JET FIGHTER approaches. The men take cover.
Ben snaps a few more pictures. Then... King grabs Ben and
drags him to the ground.

A small LEATHER-BOUND BOOK with 'B4B' embossed on the cover,
falls out Ben's pocket.

KING
(To Ben)
Not making Mrs. Kodak a widow, five
days before Christmas.

Ben nods. Looks for his BOOK. Grabs it. Holds it tight.

The whistling sound of a MISSILE cuts through the noise. Ben
looks up at a WINDOW. Everything flashes like a WHITE FLARE.

EXT. CITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - SAME

Beth shades her eyes from the lights of a car, as it pulls up
to the curb, to pick up the Girl.

The Girl gets into the car, and they drive away.

Beth glances at her WATCH, frowns. She decides to WALK.

She carries a LEATHER SATCHEL over her shoulder. She turns
down a quiet STREET, it starts to SNOW.

A passing car's lights catch Beth's eyes... making her wince.
She massages her head, fighting off a migraine.

Suddenly, the street lights start to burn incandescently,
practically blinding Beth. The pain is so extreme she falls
to her knees.

She looks further down the sidewalk. Silhouetted in the light
walks a MAN. He seems to be wearing a pilot's JUMPSUIT.

Beth tries to speak but no words come out. The silhouetted
man dissipates in the fading light.

Beth falls to her side. Her face, rests on her satchel. She
is trying to mouth the words, '*help*', but to no avail.

From a nearby street she can hear *Christmas Carolers* singing;
'*Silent Night*'.

Beth gasps small pockets of air, until she finally stops

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

breathing all together.

Snow settles on her hair.

CHRISTMAS CAROLERS

(OS, singing)

*'Silent night. Holy night. All is
calm, all is bright...'*

INT. AFGHANISTAN, BAGRAM BASE, AIR PLANE HANGAR - DAY

Ben sits at a table with Alpha team. Having a BEER.

Ben shades his eyes from a ray of sunshine blazing over Anson's shoulder. He sips tenderly from a BEER bottle.

ANSON

As far as *canked* ops go, that was a
category A fluster cluck!

The guys laugh. Ben faces King.

BEN

Seriously, how bad?

KING

100% *fubarred*.

ANSON

Just the way a Frog Man likes it.

Ben shakes his head at their craziness. King smiles, notices Ben is holding his 'B4B' booklet.

KING

(Points to the booklet)
What's with the book, Kodak?

BEN

Sorta a good luck charm, I guess. If
you believe in that kinda thing.

King reaches into his pocket, and pulls out a small BOOK.

KING

Got me one of those, too.

Ben notices it's a MINI-BIBLE.

KING

Goes where I go. So, the *Big Guy's*
always got my six. You feel me?

BEN

So, the '*Big Guy*' got us outta that,
uh, '*fluster cluck*'?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KING

Not the first time He's worked a miracle for Alpha.

Anson, Jarvis, and the other SEALs' around the table nod.

JARVIS

Somalia.

ANSON

Uh-huh... Somalia. Caracas. Baghdad.

KING

God, Country, and my Frog Family. Put it together, and miracles'll happen.

BEN

So, it wasn't the pilot who saved us?

KING

Mysterious ways, Kodak.

ANSON

Shit. Didntcha hear? The pilot-

A YOUNG SOLDIER arrives at their table and salutes King.

SOLDIER

(To Ben)

Sir. Your boss'd like a word.

Ben reluctantly gets up. He's still holding the Kevlar vest.

As he follows the Soldier he notices a tall Asian-American WOMAN (late-30s) in a pilot's jumpsuit talking to an OFFICER. She glances at Ben. She seems sad, melancholy.

For a moment they lock eyes. Then she continues talking to the Officer. Ben follows the Soldier out of the hangar.

INT. AFGHANISTAN, PRESS OFFICE - DAY

Ben bundles into the office, smiling and enthusiastic.

Selina, sits at a desk, with a placard that reads:

'Selina Richardson, 'Selina Richardson, Chief War Correspondent, Reuters'.

BEN

You can tell Jon to shove that so-called piece of cake up his Royal...

Ben notices Selina's bloodshot eyes and sad demeanor.

SELINA

Ben. I, I just heard...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN
What, what's goin' on? Is it Jon?

SELINA
It's Beth.

Ben FREEZES.

BEN
What, what do you mean, 'Beth'?

Selina tries to hold back her SOBS.

SELINA
Benji. She...

BEN
What? Is... is... is she okay?

Selina shakes her head. Starts to CRY.

For Ben, everything goes *BLURRY*. The Kevlar vest he was holding, slips from his fingers and hits the floor.

It starts to rain outside.

INT. CITY, LARGE BOOKSTORE - NIGHT

SUPER: Five years later

Ben walks in from outside. It's been raining heavily.

A book reading is taking place.

Ben props himself against a bookshelf at the back of the room. He appears disheveled and sickly.

Ben reaches into his pocket, pulls out a bottle of PILLS and washes them down with a few swigs from a FLASK.

He shields his eyes from a bright light emanating from --

A FAUX-STUDY. And sitting on a leather CHAIR is RAVI SHARMA (late-30s). He's charming and charismatic.

Next to Ravi is a TABLE, with a pile of BOOKS and a picture of him on the cover, wearing MOUNTAIN CLIMBING GEAR.

The book title reads: 'Surviving K2'.

Ravi reads to an audience, while behind him, a SCREEN plays a SLIDE SHOW of related images.

Ben looks over at Ravi with contempt.

The slide show projects an image of Ravi with his DAD.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAVI

I reached K2's summit five months
after my Father died. And once there,
I made an offering to Krishna.

Slide show projects an image of Ravi at the summit. Ravi sips
on some water.

RAVI

During our descent we were hit by a
lethal ice storm. It wiped out the
sherpas and climbers, one by one.

The audience is enraptured.

RAVI

After two days I was alone and it was
only a matter of time before I died.

(A beat)

But then, the incredible happened; My
Papa appeared. He was so real. I could
see him. Hear him. Smell his skin.

The audience are on the edge of their seats.

RAVI

He urged me to get up and go.

(Takes another sip of water)

I had no oxygen, no water. Yet,
somehow his spirit led me down to the
base camp. It was... a karmic miracle.

Ravi bows his head and holds his hands in PRAYER, a gesture
of 'thanks' to the audience, who clap enthusiastically.

RAVI

Ah, you're too kind. Any questions?

Ravi sees Ben waving his hand.

RAVI

Yes?

BEN

The name 'Dowa Pamu' ring a bell?

RAVI

Who are they?

BEN

Dowa's a Nepalese sherpa. He helped
you up K2. Ding-a-ling?

RAVI

Oh, you mean DP? That's what we called
him. Great guy. Couldn't speak
English, but was an awesome sherpa. He
was... uh, one of the last to go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN
You saw him die?

RAVI
Sadly, I saw all of them die.

BEN
Is he dead? Or maybe, unlike you, he really did make it down K2 without any oxygen, after being left for dead. Maybe, just maybe there were four of you still alive on the Northeast ridge. But none of you had enough oxygen to make it down. It required at least three canisters each. So you resolved to stay together. Any of that sound familiar?

RAVI
This isn't funny. People died.

BEN
Correct. Ann Wright and Joe Dean, were the other climbers you killed.

RAVI
Lies. All lies. Where's your proof?

BEN
Go to YouTube and search for '*Dowa's K2 Story*.' I just uploaded the video.

The audience watch the VIDEO on their phones. They're shocked. Ravi is fuming.

RAVI
(To Ben)
You, you, you BASTARD!

Ben smiles, snaps a picture of Ravi silently raging.

INSERT

Cover of a magazine entitled: 'Scuttlebutt'. The cover features Ben's snapshot of Ravi RAGING in the bookstore.

It reads:

"Killer Climber Caught" - Best Selling author's miraculous story about surviving a disaster on K2 was a lie."

Underneath the snapshot of Ravi in the bookstore, are pictures of the climbers he left for dead.

END INSERT

INT. 'SCUTTLEBUTT' OFFICE - DAY

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The City. A few weeks later.

Ben holds the 'Scuttlebutt' magazine cover featuring Ravi, as he steps off an elevator and into the Scuttlebutt office.

On a wall opposite the elevator is a placard for 'SCUTTLEBUTT MEDIA'(think, *Huffington Post* meets *National Enquirer*).

On the wall are other framed magazine covers, including two other 'debunking articles', written by Ben.

INSERT

'SCUTTLEBUTT' magazine cover:

The magazine cover reads:

"Immaculate Deception" - Mormon Pastor's so-called 'Immaculate Conception Miracles' fueled by Rohypnol and Hypnosis."

Accompanied by a picture of a Mormon Pastor trying to hide his face as he exits a court house.

Underneath the image of the Pastor is a picture of five YOUNG WOMEN holding kids aged 6-months to 3-years old.

THE OTHER FRAMED MAGAZINE COVER

Shows:

A dozen saddened people standing close to a large OAK TREE.

The tree trunk seems to have a face. Not clearly carved, but not fully natural either. The eyes of the face cry BLOOD.

Next to the tree is a WHITE MAN, posing as a Native Indian SHAMAN, (early-60s).

On the other side of the tree are two FOREST RANGERS.

They've dug a small hole from which they've pulled out an electrical HOSE contraption, attached to a BLOOD BAG.

The magazine cover reads:

"Shameless Sham-Man" - 'Weeping Face of God', nothing more than a callous carving infused with bison blood."

END INSERTS

Ben shakes his head and throws the magazine he was holding into a TRASH CAN before entering a conference room.

The conference room table is abuzz with WRITERS. At the head of the table is Selina.

Selina points to SARAH, a young woman to the left of her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SELINA

Pornstar turned professor? Hmm. "*Hot for Teacher*"?

Sarah nods. Takes a note. Selina points to MARK (early-30s).

SELINA

Illuminati colluding with
Scientologists to manipulate NASDAQ.
(Thinks)
How about... "Crypto Cult"?

Mark nods, pleased. Makes a note.

Meanwhile, Ben pours himself some COFFEE, and then surreptitiously adds some whiskey to the cup via a FLASK.

SELINA

What about tech?

Silence.

SELINA

Wait... Where's Jacob?

Selina looks down the TABLE.

SARAH

Um... he's on family leave.

MARK

They had a baby girl. She's-

SELINA

Who's covering for Jacob?

Clicks her fingers trying to remember. Points to a young ASIAN MAN at the end of the table... RONNY (mid-20s).

SELINA

Donny? You're on Jacob's team, right?

Ronny's mouth is full with a half-eaten bite of BAGEL. He SPITS it out into a napkin.

RONNY

Uh, yeah. I write his blogs. I'm Ronny, by the-

SELINA

What was Jacob working on?

RONNY

Um, yeah it's a piece about *Facebook* secretly working on an AI assistant that'll become self-aware by 2025.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SELINA

That's right... *'Terminator meets the Social Network'*. Folo?

RONNY

I can-

SELINA

Sorry Jonny, but I need someone who can write more than 280 characters.

RONNY

(Under his breath)

Um, I have a masters in media-

SELINA

(Points to Sarah)

It's all yours.

Sarah nods. Ronny sighs, pushes his BAGEL away.

Selina notices Ben idling next to a window.

SELINA

Okay, Squad. That's a wrap.

INT. 'SCUTTLEBUTT' OFFICE - LATER

Ben walks with Selina through the office hallways.

BEN

Pornstars and Illuminati?

SELINA

"All the news unfit to print"?

'Scuttlebutt's' DNA, lest you forget.

Ben glances around the busy 'bullpen' of writers. Frowns.

BEN

Why the summons, Lina?

SELINA

Phil requested an audience.

They arrive outside Selina's office. Ben peaks through the glass door at a man in her office: PHIL KNOX (mid-60s). A wealthy businessman in a three-piece suit. Ben sighs.

BEN

Oh. Great.

INT. 'SCUTTLEBUTT', SARAH'S DESK - [CONTINUOUS]

Ronny rolls his CHAIR next to Sarah. Watches Ben and Selina walking and talking.

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CONTINUED:

RONNY
So, what's their deal?

SARAH
Selina was Ben's bureau chief at Reuters.

RONNY
How'd they end up here?

SARAH
(Shrugs)
Chambers' wife died, right around the time Selina's partner Jon Rose was in Syria. And-

RONNY
Jon Rose, as in, THE Jon Rose?

SARAH
One and the same.
(Shudders. Shakes head.)
Would you go back into the field after that?

Ronny shakes his head. Continues to watch Ben and Selina.

INT. 'SCUTTLEBUTT', SELINA'S OFFICE - LATER

Phil greets Ben and Selina.

PHIL
Pleasure to meet you, Mr. Chambers.

Selina takes a seat behind her DESK.

Ben looks at Phil suspiciously, glances around the room.

BEN
Don't guys like you have an entourage of lawyers and assistants?

PHIL
I'm not 'those guys'. I didn't come from money. Left home when I was 16. Built my first property when-

BEN
I know your bio.

PHIL
Oh, you read my book?

BEN
Just the reviews.

SELINA
Phil has a proposal, Benji.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Phil pulls out a FILE from a BRIEFCASE.

PHIL

The Sharma piece was a hit. Just like the other stuff you've been writing.

BEN

Yeah, and?

PHIL

I got a case for you; About some small town yokels who claim a ghost saved their lives. A frickin' ghost.

Ben's peeks and pecks at the file, agitated.

BEN

I pick my own investigations.

Phil looks over ominously at Selina.

SELINA

Here's the rub, Benji... Phil's friends with Cardinal Varone.

PHIL

And he has asked we discreetly look into this matter on their behalf.

BEN

(Glances at the file)

Why now? This happened five years ago.

PHIL

Who am I to question the Vatican's agenda?

SELINA

The 'why' doesn't matter, Benji. It's the recompense.

BEN

Meaning?

Phil addresses Ben directly.

PHIL

The Cardinal's a family friend.

Ben looks over at Selina, baffled.

SELINA

Phil could get them to unseal the records you've requested.

Ben stares at Phil. Trying to size him up. Phil nods back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN
I'll think about it.

Phil gets up. Looks at Selina, and then back at Ben.

PHIL
Don't think too hard, buddy-boy. This
is a limited-time offer.

Phil smiles and heads to the door.

INT. 'SCUTTLEBUTT', SELINA'S OFFICE - LATER

Phil has left the office. Ben is sitting on the couch facing Selina, who is leaning against her desk.

BEN
Phil's a used car salesman. 100%
douche-asshat.

Selina bites her lower lip.

SELINA
Phil's the majority shareholder and
technically speaking, our publisher.

BEN
Still a douche-asshat.

SELINA
But, what if he can help? For real.

BEN
Unseal the adoption records? Pfft.

SELINA
Benji, I agree. He's a snake. But you
trust me, right?

Selina smiles nervously. Ben looks at Selina. Realizes.

BEN
How deep's the hole?

SELINA
Everything's hunky-dory.

BEN
C'mon. How bad?

SELINA
The truth is; all the *Illuminati*,
Pornstar, *Terminator* bullshit is just
about keepin' the lights on. If not
for your debunking articles, we'd be
be circling the drain.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN
So, no pressure then?

Selina sits next to Ben.

SELINA (CONT'D)
Look, if the ends justify your crusade
to rid the world of frauds then who
cares about the source?

BEN
Ok, ok... can I take a minute?

SELINA
Mañana. Fair?

BEN
(Nods)
Fair.

Ben picks up the FILE and starts to leave. He pauses and
turns back to face Selina.

BEN
What was it Jon used to say? *'You can
take the girl outta the fight, but-'*

SELINA
I know... I know.

Ben smiles sympathetically, and then exits the office.

Selina looks at a PICTURE on her desk of her, Jon and Ben all
wearing their Kevlar vests, with the word PRESS on them.

In particular, one face; Jon. She frowns... ashamed.

INT. 'SCUTTLEBUTT' OFFICE - LATER

Ben waits for an ELEVATOR to arrive.

The doors open. He gets in... Followed by Ronny.

They're the only ones in the elevator. Ronny clearly wants to
say something, but lacks the courage.

Ben notices. Finally faces Ronny.

BEN
Out with it, kid.

RONNY
Uh, yeah, right. Um, just wanted to
say, I'm a big fan. Huge fan.

BEN
So, you want an autograph?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RONNY

Pshhh, nah man, that'd be weird.
Totally unprofessional... right?

BEN

So...?

RONNY

Um, well, yeah... if you ever need
help... like for anything, it'd be
like a huge, huge honor.

BEN

Sure.

The elevator doors OPEN. Ronny hands Ben a CARD.

RONNY

Here's my number. Call any time, day
or night. I'm available.

Ben takes the card, scrunches it up, and pockets it.

BEN

You bet, Jonny.

The doors start to close. Ben walks away.

RONNY

Uh, um... it's Ronny.

The doors start to close. Ronny is alone.

RONNY

(Self-effacing)
'Any time, day or night'? Moron.

The doors re-open. It's Ben. He seems contrite.

BEN

For what it's worth, Kid... hang
tough. Stay consistent. Be persistent.
That's the best way get on her radar.

The elevator doors close. Ronny's grins.

INT. UPSCALE ITALIAN RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Ben sits at an intimate two-top TABLE.

An untouched plate of CARBONARA in front of him. On the other
side is a CHICKEN PARMESAN. Also untouched.

The seat opposite Ben is EMPTY.

Ben fills a GLASS with what remains of a bottle of RED WINE.

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CONTINUED:

BEN

(Mumbling)

Uh. You know, I tried the *chakra* meditation again. It didn't take.

A *semi-translucent* APPARITION of Beth appears opposite Ben. She smiles. (*Whenever Ben sees an apparition of Beth, she's always wearing the same clothes from the night she died.*)

Beth smiles start to say something, when-

BEEP BEEP BEEP.

A series of BEEP notifications, come from a PHONE being used by a DASHING MAN (mid-30s), at a table next to Ben.

Ben notices a pretty YOUNG WOMAN is with the Dashing Man. She seems bored and ignored. Meanwhile the Dashing Man focuses on the phone. *Beep. Beep. Beep.*

Ben GLARES at the Dashing Man. The Dashing Man takes notice.

DASHING MAN

Gotta problem, Bro?

BEN

Yeah, 'Pal', I do.

Ben rises up. Unsteady. He leans over the Dashing Man and slaps the phone outta his hands.

DASHING MAN

Bro? What the hell?

BEN

LOOK AT HER!

Ben aggressively grabs the Dashing Man's head and turns it toward the Pretty Young Lady.

DASHING MAN

Get the hell off me.

BEN

Look at her. That's the face of love. The face of acceptance. The face of home. And every single second you see her, is a gift.

One of the WAITERS gently grabs Ben. Pulls him away.

BEN

I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

They walk toward the door. Ben shuffles outside, looks back into the restaurant. Beth still sits in the chair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN
Happy anniversary, Dopey.

Ben trudges away down the street.

INT. BEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ben sits at his kitchen COUNTER. The FILE that Phil gave him is open. He flicks through the pages, irritated. A small batch of unopened MAIL is also on the counter.

Ben grabs a BEER from the FRIDGE. He slams the door. A PICTURE of a SONOGRAM falls off.

Ben gently picks up the sonogram pic. Glances over other pictures on the fridge of *him and Beth over the years*.

Including a WEDDING pic of Ben, Beth and Selina & Jon. Ben then returns to the counter, with the Sonogram pic.

He looks up, sees Beth's *apparition* opposite him.

BETH
We could finally meet him.

Ben sighs. Beth dissipates. Ben flips through his mail.

He notices a POSTCARD. The picture is of a small TOWN. The caption on the postcard's pic reads: '*WELCOME TO SERAPHIM*'.

Ben flips the postcard around. There's no note.

Something occurs to Ben. He hurriedly re-opens Phil's file. He reads. Finds what he's looking for and seems surprised.

BEN
Seraphim?

He grabs his CELL PHONE. Makes a CALL.

BEN
Lina? I'm in. Just make sure Phil's clerical collar doesn't become a noose. Fair?

Ben ends the call. As he leaves the kitchen, he re-attaches the SONOGRAM PICTURE to the fridge.

EXT. CITY STREET ALLEY - [BEN'S DREAM]

Night.

Beth's pale face is turned to the side. Her head, resting on her brown, leather SACHEL. Blood drips from her forehead.

Small snow flakes fall and rest in her hair.

Ben's face is opposite hers. She stares into Ben's eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BETH

Protgere Eos. Sanandum Eos. Teneat Eos

Ben tries to say something... But-

INT. SERAPHIM HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Ben lurches awake, covered in sweat. He squints his eyes, as bright morning light pierces through a crack in the CURTAINS.

He wipes his face. Looks over at the BEDSIDE TABLE. Notices something's missing. He frantically searches.

Finally sees his 'B4B' BOOKLET scattered among clothes on the floor. He grabs it and holds it tight to his chest.

Ben turns to his BEDSIDE TABLE, picks up a PEN and NOTEPAD. Tries to remember what Beth said in his dream. But can't.

BEN

Come on. Remember, dammit.

BEEP. BEEP. Ben's PHONE rings.

He sees it's Selina.

INTER-CUT: Ben/Selina -- Selina's in her office.

SELINA

Sitrep, Sparky?

Ben switches on the TV.

BEN

Got in last night.

Selina nods.

SELINA

How long will you need?

Ben grabs the '*WELCOME TO SERAPHIM*' postcard from the desk.

BEN

Few days, max. Hey, did you know
Phil's thing happened in *Seraphim*?

Selina pauses. Something occurs to her.

SELINA

Seraphim...? Isn't that where you and
Beth got en-

BEN

Same place.

Selina smiles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SELINA

The infamous shower proposal.

BEN

Yeah.

Selina notices Phil waiting outside her office.

SELINA

Keep your head on swivel, ok?

The call ends.

Selina looks down at her phone and then at Phil. She takes a deep breath and waves him in.

BACK TO SCENE

Ben glances at the TV. He notices a WEATHERMAN 'WPIJ'.
Caption on the TV reads: 'Will, The Weatherman'.

He walks over to the bathroom. Sees Beth's apparition.

BETH

You stepped out of the shower. Then,
butt naked, took a knee, and popped
the question. It was practically
Shakespearean.

Beth laughs.

Ben rubs his weary eyes. Beth's apparition disappears. Ben reaches for some pills.

Ben goes to a DESK next to his bed. On it, is his computer and the 'Seraphim' file. He opens the file, carefully reads what happened, in this so-called: *Incident*.

INT. SERAPHIM, TOWN HALL - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

(This is the story that Phil has asked Ben to investigate.)

"The Incident"

A major STORM rumbles outside. Anxious townsfolk huddle together in a large HALL that looks like a cross between a Library and an old Church.

Pews, tables, and chairs line each side of the hall.

Mid-way, sits former Marine, NORM CLANCY (late-50s). He stares at a PICTURE in a LOCKET of a woman.

Norm pulls out a HIP FLASK and takes a SWIG.

Towards the back of the hall is GEORGE (mid-20s). He sits with his Mother, LILLIAN, (late-40s).

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

George holds a Motorcycle Club (MC) leather vest with 'LEGION OF LUCIFER' inscribed on the back.

Lillian looks at the Vest with distaste.

Further up the hall, is FRANKIE (mid-20s), a junkie.

Frankie glances nervously at a young BOY (dressed in black), as he hands a COLLECTION BOX to an old PRIEST.

The Priest places the box down near a rustic, unique-looking Altar at the front of the hall.

Frankie glances around and catches Norm staring at her. She looks away. Ashamed.

LIGHTNING followed by loud THUNDER elicits frightened gasps.

Frankie stays focused on the Collection Box.

The STORM suddenly stops. The Hall is eerily silent.

DANTE, the town SHERIFF (early-50s), burly and red-headed.

DANTE

Think she's done a-huffin' and a-puffin', folks.

EDITH (mid-50s), devout and pious, also stands:

EDITH

Thank the Lord!

Norm stands. Frankie rises, steps towards the Collection Box. George puts on his vest.

Norm moves to the aisle, when- The BACK DOORS BURST OPEN.

A PILOT, in a JET FIGHTER JUMPSUIT, stands silhouetted, between the doors. A bright LIGHT behind this MAN, forces the surprised townsfolk to cover their eyes.

END FLASHBACK

INT. SERAPHIM, TOWN HALL - DAY

Ben sits at a table, near the front of the same Library/Church where the alleged 'Incident' took place.

Ben shades his eyes from a ray of light piercing through a window. He notices various POSTERS on the walls advertising an upcoming 'Fundraiser Event' for the 'Fairfax Altar'.

PADRE (O.S.)

You must be the journalist?

Ben swivels to see a man, PADRE (mid-20s), standing in the aisle. Padre's dressed in black. He's tall and graceful.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Uh, yeah. What gave it away, Padre?

PADRE

It's a small town; Whisper a myth in the morning, it'll be a legend by the afternoon.

BEN

So, all eyes on me?

PADRE

Apparently.

BEN

Why?

PADRE

Curious about your intentions.

BEN

Here to seek the truth. That's it.

PADRE

What truth? Factual? Personal?
Spiritual?

Ben sighs, slightly irritated, then looks Padre up-and-down.

BEN

Ah, ok; Aren't you a little young for confessional?

PADRE

(Deprecating)

You know what they say; wisdom comes in all shapes and sizes.

BEN

Do they? Haven't heard that before.

PADRE

Well, you learn something new everyday.

BEN

That one I'm familiar with.

Ben stands up.

BEN

Gotta go, Padre.

Padre smiles, as Ben starts to walk away down the aisle.

PADRE

I hope you find what you're looking for, Ben.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ben stops in his tracks. Turns to Padre.

BEN
'Looking for'?

PADRE
Sometimes, what we intend to seek
isn't what we're hoping to find.

Ben grins with a hint of sarcasm.

BEN
Thanks for the pearls, kid.

PADRE
See you soon.

Ben walks away.

BEN
Oh, that is highly unlikely.

EXT. HORSE STABLES - DAY

Norm's ranch.

Ben stands awkwardly as Norm moves haystacks around.

Outside of the stable are field enclosures with various
PEOPLE riding or grooming HORSES.

BEN
So, you were in the Marines, NCO and
medic? A veteran of Iraq war one?

NORM
Affirmative.

BEN
And six years ago, you converted this
ranch into a sanctuary for vets?

NORM
All you see, from pillar-to-post, was
inspired by my son, Jimmy.

Ben sees a YOUNG MAN - in a large COWBOY HAT - cleaning a
HORSE at the end of the stable.

Ben also notices the YOUNG MAN has a PROSTHETIC hand. The
Young Man tips his hat, saying 'hello'. Ben nods.

BEN
Which Jimmy? The real one, or the
other one?

Norm nods back, slightly perplexed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NORM

So... how does a war correspondent go from bullets and bombs to folklore and fantasy?

BEN

Former war correspondent.

NORM

Well tell me, Ben, do *'former war correspondents'* drink beer?

Ben nods. He takes another look around, suspicious.

EXT. NORM'S RANCH HOUSE - DAY

Ben and Norm sit on the porch. Norm holds two cold beer bottles. Opens them with an ornate wood-handled PENKNIFE.

The KNIFE has the initials, 'JC' carved into the handle. Norm notices Ben staring at the knife.

NORM

Gave it to Jimmy on his 12th birthday.

BEN

Jimmy was an only child?

NORM

Cynthia and I struggled to conceive. And just when we were about to surrender, God sent us an angel.

BEN

An 'Angel?'

NORM

Figure, you pray and pray for a child, but those prayers go unanswered.

(Sips his beer)

And just when you start losing faith, boom. It happens. Wouldn't you consider that a divine gift?

BEN

I'd consider it perseverance.

NORM

If Cynthia were here... she'd have you convinced in no time at all.

BEN

I don't break easy.

NORM

Nor does an old Grunt like me. But my girl was a dreamer. To her, the world was a happier place if you believe in

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NORM (CONT'D)
a little bit'a magic.

Ben looks up, sees an *apparition* of Beth. She stands next to Norm, smiling and nodding in agreement.

BEN
So. Um. Your wife... how did she-

NORM
Died saving her Angel from drowning in
a river.

BEN
What happened?

NORM
Boy got caught in the undertow. She
dived in after him. Got him to safety.
But... But I was too late to save her.

BEN
Musta taken a toll?

NORM
At first. But, Jimmy eventually found
a way forward. As for me? I got stuck
in the muck. So he lost his Mom and
then his Daddy went AWOL.

BEN
Did he resent you for that?

NORM
Jimmy? Heck, no. The opposite. He saw
it as his duty to help me.

BEN
Help you?

Norm opens another beer. Hands it to Ben.

NORM
You've been around *door kickers*, so
you know how seriously they take the
oath to '*leave no man behind*'.

BEN
Well aware.

NORM
Do you know its history?

Ben shrugs, shakes his head.

INT. NORM'S RANCH HOUSE - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

The home is dusty, unkempt. Unloved.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Norm sits slouched on the couch. BASEBALL plays on the TV. Half-a-dozen empty BEER BOTTLES sit on the coffee TABLE.

Norm stares intently at his old SERVICE GUN on the table.

Jimmy (12), walks in carrying a plate of pasta for his Dad.

He's wearing a BASEBALL UNIFORM.

NORM (V.O.)

'Leave no man behind' comes from the latin phrase; *'Nemo Resideo'*. For the Spartans this expression meant they were bound by brotherhood to bring home their dead, to ensure they're honored in the afterlife.

Norm grunts a 'thanks'. Jimmy sees the BEER and the GUN.

NORM (V.O.)

That credo was adopted by the Union Army, back in the Civil War era.

Jimmy starts to put on his jacket by the door. Looks back sympathetically at his father.

NORM (V.O.)

The South had taken to imprisoning Black soldiers and executing them. So, fearing the hell of prison, these soldiers would take their own lives if likely to be captured.

Jimmy leaves the house.

Norm barely touches the pasta bowl. Picks up his gun.

NORM (V.O.)

The Union Generals decided this wasn't acceptable. So, they gave orders that no matter the situation, no soldier gets left behind on the battle field.

Norm opens the locket again, cries. He puts the gun under his chin, readying himself to pull the trigger.

NORM (V.O.)

Over time, this tenet was adopted by all branches of the military. And after a while it started to mean much more than rescuing or recovering the wounded and dead.

The front door opens back up. It's Jimmy again.

Norm puts the gun down. He tries to hide his tears but can't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NORM (V.O.)

It was a commitment to look after all soldiers, whether at war or in peace.

Jimmy goes to his Dad and quietly removes the gun from the table and puts it into the drawer of a DESK by the window.

From the same desk Jimmy pulls out PRESCRIPTION PILLS.

He gives a pill to Norm, along with some WATER.

Norm no longer hides his tears. Takes the pill.

NORM (V.O.)

No vet will be left behind, 'cos their brothers and sisters won't let them suffer alone.

Jimmy sits next to Norm on the couch. Holds Norm's hand, as they both watch the game.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. NORM'S RANCH HOUSE - DAY [CONTINUOUS]

NORM

It's a father's job to prepare his son to be a man. Yet, when he needed me most, I surrendered to my grief. But Jimmy refused to leave me behind.

BEN

So, he saved you?

NORM

In a way, yes he was my salvation.

BEN

I suppose that makes him a *Saint*?

NORM

(Chuckles)
A *Saint*?

BEN

Well, you already said he's an *Angel*.

NORM

And I thought Frankie was cynical.

Norm finishes his beer and shakes his head, still amused.

Ben puts his beer bottle down and frowns.

INT. GROUP HOME, CLASSROOM - DAY

Ben is with FRANKIE, (the JUNKIE from the '*Incident*'.)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Frankie now appears to be healthy and drug-free. She cleans the room, while speaking to Ben.

FRANKIE
Shoulda come earlier; The kids have
never met a '*big city reporter*.'

BEN
I'm not really '*show-n-tell*' material.

FRANKIE
True. A *Pulitzer* journalist wouldn't
be remotely inspiring.

Frankie smiles, winks whimsically at Ben.

BEN
Mmm. Is the home Church run?

FRANKIE
No. Private donations. Nonprofit.

BEN
Oh. That's good.

FRANKIE
You're familiar with the system?

BEN
(Coughs)
Tell me about your job?

FRANKIE
I teach. Counsel. Hold them together
to create a sense of belonging.
Family.

Ben looks out the window. Sees kids playing SOCCER.

FRANKIE
Jimmy volunteered here. Coached
sports. Read books to the young ones.

BEN
So, what's the story with you and
Jimmy?

FRANKIE
Hmm, ok... where to begin? Well, it
goes like this; I grew up in the
system. Bounced around a few homes
before I was eighteen. And by-n-large
I got through it unbroken. But...
there's a big difference between
unbroken... and incomplete.
(A blissful smile)
Then Jimmy came along.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN
(Sardonic)
Let me guess; he '*completed you*'?

FRANKIE
I see why they gave you a Pulitzer!

INT. GROUP HOME, HALLWAY - DAY

Ben walks with Frankie as she starts locking-up the various class rooms for the day.

On the walls are a couple of posters advertising an upcoming FUNDRAISER to SAVE THE TOWN HALL.

FRANKIE
Jimmy was my constant. Always there --
even when I didn't deserve it.

BEN
Deserve?

Frankie pauses. Faces Ben.

FRANKIE
I'm a recovering addict.

Ben puts a hand in his pocket. Fiddles nervously with his prescription PILL BOTTLE. Frankie notices.

BEN
When did you-

FRANKIE
It started with a broken leg and 30 pills. Then before you know it, the bottom falls out.

BEN
Addiction's a disease, right?

FRANKIE
(Nods)
Mine was also pathological.

BEN
How so?

Frankie notices a Stray dog, Collie-Sheppard mix happily trotting along the sidewalk outside.

FRANKIE
Being in the system, is, it's like you're a Stray Dog, no one wants. And even if taken in, you feel afraid. 'Cos you worry one day they'll see the real you. The pariah. Then they'll cast you out. Know what I mean?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN
Mmm. Well, I-
(Catches himself.)
So you self-sabotaged?

FRANKIE
(Shakes her head)
Oh yeah. And Jimmy tried his best to help. But... even the saintiest of saints can lose patience with a sinner. So, one day he took off and left me a note. Well, not so much a note, but lyrics to a song.

INT. FRANKIE'S ADDICTION - DAY/NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

SERIES OF SHOTS - Depicting Frankie's battle with addiction.

Frankie' Apartment - She's in her BATHROOM frantically going through prescription PILL BOTTLES. But there's nothing left. She finds a dusty old COUGH MEDICINE bottle, opens it up. Sniffs it, and then downs the whole thing.

FRANKIE (V.O.)
*"You and I, together in our lives/
Sacred ties never fray/ Then why can I
let myself tell lies/ And watch you
die everyday?"*

Drug Dealer Den - Frankie enters a repulsive apartment, frequented by JUNKIES. She's wearing a BACKPACK.

Frankie approaches TONY (early-30s, DRUG DEALER), sitting at a small CARD TABLE. On a couch behind Tony is BAMBAM (late-20s). A lurid addict.

FRANKIE (V.O.)
*"I think back to the times/ When our
dreams were what mattered / You said
you'd never let me down/ But the horse
stampedes and rages/ In the name of
desperation."*

Frankie reaches into her backpack. She pulls out a large BOOKLET. Hands it to Tony.

Tony opens the booklet. The inside cover contains a note scrawled in the handwriting of a child: "JIMMY CLANCY'S BEST STAMP COLLECTION IN THE WORLD".

FRANKIE (V.O.)
*"Is it all just wasted time?/ Can you
look at yourself/ When you think of
what you left behind?"*

Tony looks at Frankie and shakes his head at how desperate she must be. He hands her a little BAGGY with WHITE POWDER.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Behind Tony, Frankie sees BamBam holding up a syringe, and smiling back at her with yellow, decaying teeth.

Frankie's Apartment - Jimmy lets himself in. A hoodie, shadows his face.

FRANKIE (V.O.)

*"Where's my friend I used to know?/
She's all alone/ She's buried deep
within a carcass/ Searching for a
soul."*

The apartment is ransacked. Empty bottles, half eaten food, and clothes all over the place.

Jimmy finds Frankie in her living room. She's passed out on her couch, with a needle still in her arm.

FRANKIE (V.O.)

*"Can you feel me inside your heart as
it's bleeding?/ Why can't you believe
you can be loved?"*

Jimmy then picks Frankie up and cradles her out of the room.

Hospital Room - Frankie slowly wakes up. She's emaciated and holding on by a thread. She notices a NOTE by her bed. She opens it up... starts to cry.

FRANKIE (V.O.)

*"The sun will rise again/ The Earth
will turn to sand/ Creation's colors
seem to fade to grey/ And you'll see
the sickly hands of time/ Will write
your final rhyme/ And end our memory"*

END SERIES OF SHOTS & FLASHBACK

EXT. GROUP HOME, PLAYGROUN - [CONTINUOUS]

Frankie faces Ben.

FRANKIE

*"Is it all just wasted time?/ Can you
live with yourself/ When you think of
what you've left behind?"*

Frankie hurriedly wipes a tear from her eye. For a moment, she looks embarrassed and ashamed.

Ben offers a sympathetic smile.

FRANKIE

So there you have it... warts 'n all.

BEN

Um, you didn't have to share the-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANKIE

Yes. I did. Recovery step one: own your addiction. If you can name it, you can tame it.

Ben stops fiddling with the pill bottle in his pocket.

BEN

All due respect, but this guy you make out to be perfect, abandoned you.

FRANKIE

If we had all day, I'd tell you about the other dozen times he saved my butt. But like I said, we all have a breaking point.

BEN

So, how'd you get sober?
(Playfully sardonic)
And please, don't say 'Act of God' or 'Miracle'.

FRANKIE

Well, you boxed me in, Ben. So, how about I meet you half way. To quote George; *'It took something sublime'*.

Ben raises an eyebrow, begrudgingly intrigued.

INT. POLICE CAR - DAY

(GEORGE, is the Tough Guy from the 'Incident'.)

George wears a DEPUTY UNIFORM and has grown a GOATEE.

Ben drives with George, as they weave through town. Ben notices a man in a disheveled ELF suit, holding a SALVATION ARMY bucket on the corner. Lazily ringing a bell.

BEN

What's it like policing a tiny town?

George smiles, warmly. Ignoring Ben's sleight.

GEORGE

See, my man, it's like a farm, with a flock'a critters runnin' around. But wit only three guard dogs protectin' 'em from all the Wily Coyotes.

BEN

That why you became a cop? To protect the 'flock', so-to-speak?

GEORGE

(Points to his badge)
Oh this here? This was Jimmy's idea.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Speaking of: Frankie told me you two were '*Thick as thieves*'.

GEORGE

Since preschool. Man, if we weren't playing *LEGO*, we'd be on our Big Wheels. Always goofin' off. And as we got older, *LEGOS* turned into video games, *Big Wheels* into bikes, games into girls and bikes into cars. So yeah, we were thick as thieves and twice as '*Thelma & Louise*'.

(Smiles to himself)

Or, that's what I thought.

BEN

What changed?

GEORGE

When I was eighteen, my cousin Pico got outta the joint.

BEN

What was he in for?

GEORGE

Being a badass outlaw.

BEN

Sounds like you admired him.

GEORGE

Dang, I thought he was the '*Shaft*' of Motorcycle Clubs.

BEN

What happened?

GEORGE

One day Pico shows up with the entire "*Legion of Lucifer*" MC outside my Mama's diner. Offers me a ride.

(Laughs to himself)

Ma lost her mind. Tells me if I get on one'a those '*Donorcycles*' then my ass best not come back.

BEN

So, you got on the bike?

GEORGE

Like'a bat outta hell.

EXT. PARK - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

The police car's parked.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

George and Ben lean against the hood, while they eat HOT DOGS and drink SODAS.

BEN

So, how'd Jimmy fit into this chapter?

GEORGE

I couldn't join the MC without Jimbo. So, Pico made him a Prospect. And ya know... Jim dug it at first... Maybe 'cos he liked the open road. Or maybe 'cos he was keepin' tabs on me. But after a time we were exposed to the darker side of the MC.

BEN

Which was?

GEORGE

Dealing. Smuggling. Theft. And that didn't sit well with Jimbo.

BEN

He quit?

George notices the Collie-Sheppard mix *stray dog*, milling.

GEORGE

Ever heard the tale about the feral cat and the hobo dog who were brothers?

Ben raises an inquisitive eyebrow.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT [FLASHBACK OF GEORGE'S STORY]

Twelve Years Ago

George and Jimmy on their bikes. Jimmy wears a black HELMET with ANGEL WING DECALS and it has a dark visor.

George's look is more old school.

GEORGE (V.O.)

So, check it out... The Cat and Dog grew up together on the streets; from kitty and pup to full blown critters. Where one went, the other followed.

George and Jimmy stop in front of a BAR. George ogles a CUTE GIRL standing out front. Jimmy shakes his head.

GEORGE (V.O.)

They made a good team; The cat was curious by nature and the dog was protective by instinct.

A BIG DUDE, with even bigger FRIENDS, walk out of the bar,

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

puts his arm around the girl. George and Jimmy ride away.

GEORGE (V.O.)
On it went like, 'till one day, the
cat wanted to sneak into the
restaurant kitchen to steal some grub.

George and Jimmy pull up to an alley. Parked half-way down is
a restored, 1970s SS CAMARO car.

George turns off his bike, gets off.

Again, Jimmy shakes his head, but this time, George won't
listen. Jimmy has no other option but to follow.

GEORGE (V.O.)
The dog knew this was dangerous but
that cat aimed to misbehave.

George approaches the car and pulls a SLIM JIM from his
jacket. Tries to pry the car door open.

Jimmy stands look-out.

GEORGE (V.O.)
So, he slinked into the kitchen and
found himself a treat. And despite
knowin' better, the dog followed.

A door opposite the car opens. A rugged, MAFIOSO-looking MAN,
(mid-40s), spots George and Jimmy.

GEORGE (V.O.)
So, it was no surprise when the chef
caught 'em red-handed, he attacked the
critters with a cleaver.

The mafioso-man pulls a GUN, as George and Jimmy run back to
their bikes. He shoots a couple of rounds.

GEORGE (V.O.)
The dog wasn't quick as the cat, so
the chef caught the end of his tail
with a mighty blow.

One of the bullets graze Jimmy's right shoulder.

GEORGE (V.O.)
Now, thankfully the dog got away. But
only with half-a-tail.

They jump on their bikes and speed away.

GEORGE (V.O.)
By protecting the cat from its nature,
he lost a part of himself.

LATER

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

George and Jimmy are outside the 'LEGION OF LUCIFER's' biker bar. George's bragging to a pretty GIRL (early-20s). He laughs, as he points to where Jimmy's shoulder was grazed.

GEORGE (V.O.)

Meantime, the cat ignored the dog's pain. And again aimed to misbehave.

George hops off his bike, follows the pretty girl into the bar. Jimmy remains still. Doesn't follow.

GEORGE (V.O.)

But this time the dog didn't follow. He turned away from his brother, 'cos he knew between his instinct and the cat's nature, he'd eventually wind up with no tail at all.

George turns around. Sees Jimmy driving off.

Jimmy's MC vest is hanging off the handlebar of George's bike, along with his *Angel Wing* helmet.

George goes to his bike. Picks up Jimmy's helmet.

He watches Jimmy gliding away off in the distance. His eyes filled with regret.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. PARK - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

George stares out ruefully at the Stray dog in the park.

BEN

So Jimmy left the MC?

GEORGE

And never looked back.

BEN

What about you?

GEORGE

Traded my brother-from-another-mother for the life of an outlaw.

BEN

How'd that work out?

GEORGE

I stayed true to my nature and got sixteen months for grand theft auto.

(Looks up at the sky)

As for Jimbo; he got hisself an F-16.

The Stray dog catches the scent of something. Runs away.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Ben follows George as he files paperwork.

On one wall is a poster for the TOWN HALL FUNDRAISER.

BEN

Ever hear from Jimmy again?

GEORGE

He wrote me everyday. Kept me believin' I could do better.

BEN

Did you?

GEORGE

I tried. I truly did.

(Pauses, faces Ben)

Problem is, ex-jailbirds get their wings clipped outside the yard.

BEN

Reality kicked-in.

GEORGE

Hard. So, I got thinkin' maybe bein' an outlaw is all I'm worth.

BEN

So, what changed your mind?

GEORGE

Jimmy.

INT. JIMMY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Ben looks around Jimmy's ROOM with Norm. It's filled with BOOKS about cars, bikes, planes and sports.

TROPHIES on shelves for baseball, football and tennis. Jimmy was clearly the archetype All-American Boy.

Ben notices a POSTER of an F-14 FIGHTER JET on the wall.

BEN

Jimmy was a naval aviator?

NORM

Top Gun, best-of-the-best.

Ben notices an old, Kodak Polaroid Camera.

BEN

When did he deploy?

NORM

Eighteen-months prior to the *Incident*.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Yeah... let's get into that... why were you at the Town Hall?

NORM

Townsfolk harbor there when we get hit by those big N'oreasters.

(Scratches his chin)

Also, there was something odd 'bout that night. I could smell Cynthia in the air. Felt like she was trying to say something. So, I went to the place I felt closest to her soul.

BEN

So, when did the 'incident' happen?

INT. SERAPHIM, TOWN HALL - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

Norm recalls the night of the 'Incident'.

Townsfolk hear the storm stop. Silence. DANTE (Town Sheriff), stands. As does EDITH (The Pious Woman)

DANTE

Think she's done a-huffin' and a-puffin', folks.

EDITH

Thank the Lord!

Norm gets up and starts to put on his coat.

NORM (V.O.)

I got up to leave when...

The door at the front of the hallway BLASTS open.

Silhouetted in the doorway is a PILOT in a wet JET FIGHTER UNIFORM, wearing a helmet.

NORM (V.O.)

And there he stood.

The Pilot enters. The doors slam shut behind him.

BEN (V.O.)

Were you sober at the time?

NORM (V.O.)

There or thereabouts.

The Pilot walks past Norm, whose mouth is agape.

BEN (V.O.)

What did he do?

The townsfolk stare at the Pilot, stunned.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NORM (V.O.)
He made peace with the past, by making
sure we had a future.

EXT. GROUP HOME, PLAYGROUND - DAY

Ben and Frankie sit in SWINGS.

Ben's PHONE vibrates. It's Selina. He ignores the call.

BEN
Were you at the Hall for the storm?

FRANKIE
Not exactly.

Frankie faces Ben.

FRANKIE
When you're an addict, there's no
depths you won't plumb to find or fund
your next high.
(Sighs)
I did things. Stupid, horrible things.

INT. SERAPHIM, TOWN HALL - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

FRANKIE (V.O.)
That night they were counting money
from weekly donations to help run our
library-slash-church. Wasn't much. But
enough for a fix.

Near the front is Frankie eyeing the COLLECTION BOX.

BEN (V.O.)
A church heist?

FRANKIE (V.O.)
What with the storm and all the chaos,
I could slip in-'n-out without notice.

Frankie starts to stand but pauses when the back doors open.

She covers her eyes from the bright LIGHT. The doors shut.

The *Pilot* passes Frankie on his way to the Altar. She holds
her breath.

FRANKIE (V.O.)
I could smell the rain on his uniform.

The *Pilot* removes his HELMET, kneels at the Altar. His face
remains hidden in shadow. He lights a CANDLE.

BEN (V.O.)
How long was he there?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANKIE (V.O.)
Maybe a minute or two.

The Pilot stands, puts his helmet back on. Walks toward the back doors. Momentarily pauses next to Frankie.

FRANKIE (V.O.)
And then he whispered something to me.

BEN (VO)
What did he say?

END FLASHBACK

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

George is at his desk. Ben sits across from him.

GEORGE
'Protect them.'

BEN
How are you so certain it was him?

GEORGE
Like askin' if I know my own shadow.

INT. SERAPHIM, TOWN HALL - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

George is at the back with LILLIAN.

Both watch as the Pilot kneels at the Altar.

BEN (V.O.)
You were that certain?

GEORGE (V.O.)
Not at first. When those doors blew open, I nearly up-n-pissed myself!

The Pilot gets up, and heads to the doors. Passes George and pauses. George, cocks his head, listening.

GEORGE (V.O.)
But after he spoke to me.... I felt at peace. Like everything was gonna be A-okay. That's how I knew it was Jimmy.

INTER-CUT: Seraphim Town Hall (Flashback)/Current day Police Station.

Police Station:

BEN
Felt like him? Like a sixth sense?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEORGE
(Chuckles)
Yeah, yeah I see dead people! And you
can question my 'sixth sense' all you
want, my man. But what you can't deny
is the timing of it all.

Town Hall:

The back doors slam shut as the Pilot leaves. The townsfolk
are left stunned.

George glances over at Frankie and Norm. They share a look as
others gossip in excitement, preparing to leave.

GEORGE (V.O.)
After the buzz died down, some folks
were ready to split.

A THUNDEROUS SOUND of screaming wind can be heard outside.

People pause. The sound gets louder and louder, until it
feels like they're in the middle of a 747 JET ENGINE.

The hallway shakes under the noise. George holds his Mother
tight. Others cover their ears.

The thunderous sound comes to an abrupt STOP. Everyone's
gripped by fear and confusion.

Norm marches past George to the doors. Opens them. George and
Frankie follow Norm.

They all stare in shock at the outside. They see absolute
devastation. HOUSES destroyed. CARS overturned.

GEORGE (VO)
If folks had left, there and then,
they woulda been swept away by a huge
twister -- just like *Dorothy* and *Toto*.

In the distance, a TORNADO spins off into the night.

Police Station:

BEN
Ok then. So, Jimmy saved the day?

GEORGE
Yep, I hear ya, bro. And if I were you
I'd think 'ol George here's trippin'.
But, do I look like one of 'em Jesus-
freak's to you?

BEN
No idea. But I do know, there's a
explanation. Always is.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEORGE

And if you can square that circle,
more power to ya, brother. But it
won't change what that night gave me.

BEN

Which was?

GEORGE

Belief.

BEN

In what?

GEORGE

The sublime, brother. The sublime.

Ben's PHONE vibrates. It's Selina again. He ignores the call.

EXT. NORM'S RANCH - DAY

Ben and Norm walk around a field, as they watch a MAN in his
mid-20s teaching a young WOMAN with an eye-patch to ride.

Wisps of snow fall through the air.

BEN

'*Heal them*'?

NORM

That's what he whispered.

BEN

You understand how that sounds?

NORM

Tell me, Son, do I look like a man who
believes in the *Tooth Fairy*?

Ben looks at Norm in the eyes.

BEN

Do you believe I can be convinced?

NORM

That's up to you. Our responsibility
is to tell the truth. The whole truth,
and nothin' but.

BEN

So, either you're all crazy. Or...

NORM

Or.

Ben sees Beth' *apparition* in the middle of the pasture. A
droplet of blood dribbles down her forehead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Or, people die. And there's no coming back. That's the truth. The whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Ben pauses, calms himself down.

NORM

Your wife passed, right?

Ben bristles, momentarily. Then nods.

NORM

When I find myself weighed down by uncertainty, I think of Cynthia and wonder what she'd say. What she'd believe. I suppose it's foolish, but it helps. 'Specially at night, when I'm in an empty bed, with nothin' but memories and shadows.

Beth's *apparition* stares dolefully at Ben.

BEN

Mind if we go? I can't feel my toes.

Ben doesn't wait for Norm to answer. He strides back toward Norm's house, who in turn, follows.

NORM

(To himself)

Oversteppin'. Roger that.

INT. NORM'S RANCH HOUSE - DAY

Norm and Ben are in the KITCHEN, nursing a cups of COFFEE. Norm hands Ben a folded American FLAG.

BEN

When were you informed?

NORM

Day after the '*Incident*'. Dec 22nd, 2017.

Something occurs to Ben. He reaches into his JACKET, pulls out a NOTEBOOK. Goes through the pages, searching.

BEN

Where was he stationed in Afghanistan?

NORM

Bagram, Air Base.

BEN

Bagram? December, 2017?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NORM
That's right.

Ben reads through the notes again with a furrowed brow. Picks up the flag, stares at it.

BEN
Who was his Commanding Officer?

NORM
Captain Suzy Kawachika. She's a good friend. Helped me get what we do here up 'n running.

Ben places the FLAG down on the counter, lost in thought.

QUICK FLASHBACK - Bagram. Five Years ago.

Ben following a Soldier to Selina's office... he notices a tall Asian-American WOMAN (late-30s) in a pilot's jumpsuit talking to an OFFICER.

She glances at Ben. She seems sad. For a second Ben can see a name, scrawled on a patch across her chest. "Kawachika".

END FLASHBACK

Norm stares at Ben.

NORM
Look like someone just walked over your grave, Ben.

Ben looks back at Norm, and slowly nods back.

EXT. GROUP HOME, PLAYGROUND - DAY

Ben stands up from the swing. Warms-up his cold arms.

BEN
Were you... using at that time?

FRANKIE
Always. But I wasn't wasted.

BEN
So what did he whisper to you?

FRANKIE
'Hold them'.

BEN
'Hold' who?

FRANKIE
'Hold them' - that's what he whispered to me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

And that meant what?

Frankie suddenly gets up from her swing, shivers.

FRANKIE

Hmm. You like ice cream?

Ben's perplexed by Frankie's request.

EXT. ICE CREAM PARLOR - NIGHT

Ben sits at a booth with Frankie. She eats CHOCOLATE ICE CREAM, while Ben sip's a black COFFEE.

Ben's PHONE vibrates. It's Selina. He ignores the call.

FRANKIE

Ten years ago--to the day--Jimmy took me here on our first date.

BEN

Ice cream? In the middle of winter?

FRANKIE

Yeah. That's our boy.

(Smiles to herself)

Anyway, we get here and place an order. I ask for cherry, but get served strawberry. Which I didn't notice at first, 'cos I was... you know, distracted. But after a couple of bites, I realized... Uh oh...

BEN

You have a strawberry allergy?

FRANKIE

Yep. I went into *anaphylactic* shock, right where you're sitting.

(Puts down her spoon)

Jimmy rushed me to the ER. Which saved my life, according to the Doc. He said if we'd waited for the ambulance, I wouldn't have made it.

BEN

(Sarcastic)

Boy Wonder saves the day again.

FRANKIE

Like I said... he was my guardian angel.

Ben looks around at the other tables. He sees an *apparition* of Beth at the counter, eating a vanilla ice cream.

Frankie notices Ben's expression. She looks back at him, with

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

genuine compassion.

FRANKIE
Are you okay?

Ben stares back at Frankie, irritated.

BEN
So, why are we really here?

Frankie removes a crinkled ENVELOPE from her pocket.

FRANKIE
A day after the incident--and few
hours after I heard Jimmy had died, I
received a letter from him.
(A beat)
Couldn't open it at first. Too much.

Frankie opens the ENVELOPE. Pulls out a scribbled-on NAPKIN.

FRANKIE
It took me a few days, but eventually
I came here to read it.
(A whimsical sigh)
His message helped me understand what
he meant by; *'Hold them'*.

BEN
So, what was in this... *'Letter'*?
Another set of lyrics?

Frankie reads the *'Letter'*.

FRANKIE
(Smiling)
It was a quote from a poem: *"Hold the
hand of the child within you. For this
child--"*

BEN
(Bewildered)
*"-nothing is impossible." ...Paulo
Coelho.*

FRANKIE
(Also bewildered)
He was Jimmy's favorite writer.

Ben takes out his B4B BOOKLET. Places alongside the *'Letter'*.

FRANKIE
What's that?

BEN
Beth, my wife, made this for me. It's
filled with quotes from *Paulo Coelho*,
her favorite writer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ben rubs his thumb over the embossed 'B4B' on the cover.
Frankie studies Ben's face.

FRANKIE
You're not like that other guy.

Ben looks back at Frankie, curious and confused.

BEN
What other guy?

FRANKIE
The reporter who came here a couple
years ago to research the 'incident'.

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

George stands on the driver's side of his police cruiser.

Ben leans against the passenger side.

GEORGE
Matt Darby? Yeah. I remember that Cat.
We opened up the kimono for him. And
we believed, he believed. But then he
ghosted us.

BEN
(Thinking)
Darby? Hmm. He was an up-and-coming
investigative journalist. And then,
the wheels came off. Rumors were, he
flew the cuckoos nest.

GEORGE
If he was loco, he faked the hell out
of it.

BEN
And you told him what you told me?

GEORGE
The whole nine.

Ben bites his lip, perplexed.

INT. 'SCUTTLEBUTT' OFFICE - DAY

Ronny is perched on his seat, next to Sarah. He is staring
intently at Selina's office, while eating POPCORN.

Selina's arguing with Phil.

SARAH
What are you doing?

RONNY
Trying to read their lips.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH
You can do that?

RONNY
I sorta dated this girl who was deaf.
So, I taught myself sign language and
lip reading.

SARAH
Okay then. What are they saying?

RONNY
(Focusing hard on Phil)
Uh, *'Mice ride bikes, 'cos clowns puke
pudding'*. Huh? That can't be right.

SARAH
Guessing the deaf girl swiped left.

Sarah turns her back to Ronny. Gets back to work.

Ronny's PHONE rings. He answers, mouth full of popcorn.

RONNY
Hello, this is Ronny.

INTER-CUT: Ben/Ronny -- Ben is in his car (Early 1970s Ford Mustang).

BEN
It's Ben.

RONNY
Ben who?

BEN
Chambers.

Ronny spits out his popcorn.

RONNY
Sorry, Mr. Chambers. I didn't
recognize the number.

BEN
You up for a favor?

RONNY
What kinda favor?

BEN
The *my eyes only* kind.

Ronny looks over at Selina's office again. She angrily points
a finger at Phil.

RONNY
Um... okay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

I want you to look up a reporter named
'Matt Darby'. Need anything and
everything from the last five years.
Got it?

RONNY

Darby, Matt. I'm on it, like... like,
someone who's on... like really on it.

Ben ends the call.

END INTER-CUT

RONNY

(To himself)

Okay, okay. I can do this, yeah?

Ronny watches Selina angrily berating Phil.

RONNY

I really shouldn't do this.

INT. SELINA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Selina is drinking a large GLASS of WINE.

PHIL

Why's he taking so long?

SELINA

What's the rush, Phil?

PHIL

Because, when the Vatican wants
something done, it gets done.

SELINA

Guess someone's gotta vouch for your
corrupt ass at the *Pearly Gates*.

PHIL

Corrupt? Pot, kettle Selina. Don't you
forget it.

SELINA

So you remind me. Every. Day.

Phil's leans forward.

PHIL

Maybe your boy's lacking motivation.

SELINA

Meaning?

PHIL

Meaning those documents he wants to
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PHIL (CONT'D)
unseal will stay sealed if this drags
on much longer.

SELINA
(Angry)
Phil. Gaslight my friend, and-

PHIL
And what, Selina? What?

Selina bits her tongue. Phil grabs his COAT.

PHIL
You used to be a *Prima Ballerina*. The
toast of the town. But then you lost
your *Cavalier*, and went into hiding.
Now, you're a washed-up dirty dancer
grinding for dollar bills. And I'm
tired of paying for the show.

(Beat)
So, drag this over the line, or Ben
won't be the only one who suffers.

Phil exits Selina's office.

Selina downs her drink. Throws her glass across the room.

SELINA
Dammit, Benji!

EXT. WEST POINT MILITARY ACADEMY - DAY

Parking lot. Ben leans against his car. Snacking on PEANUTS.

A MOTORCYCLE pulls up opposite Ben's car.

SUZY KAWACHIKA gets off the bike and removes her
HELMET.(She's the PILOT from *Bagram* Ben had remembered.)

Suzy notices Ben. She smiles. A kind, open smile.

BEN
Captain Kawachika?

SUZY
'Professor Kawachika' these days. But
please call me Suzy. You are?

BEN
Ben Chambers. I'm a reporter. I was
stationed at *Bagram*, three years ago.

SUZY
Oh? Did we meet? You seem really
familiar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN
Don't believe so.

SUZY
Well, Ben, what can I do for you?

BEN
I'm working on a story about a pilot
who was under your command.

SUZY
Who?

BEN
Sentinel.

Suzy quickly turns melancholy.

SUZY
Sentinel?

Ben nods back.

INT. LILLIAN'S DINER - DAY

Norm, Frankie, and George are huddled in a corner. They are eating pie and having a confab.

FRANKIE
So, think he believes us?

GEORGE
Brother plays his cards close. Then
again, so did that Darby dude.

FRANKIE
Agree. But this felt different. More,
um, I don't know... personal?

NORM
I concur. Personal. And-

NORM/FRANKIE/GEORGE
Familiar.

INT. BEN'S CAR - DAY

Ben drives back to the town, after his visit with Suzy. He seems animated, and lost in thought.

Ben's phone rings. It's Selina. This time he answers.

INTER-CUT - Between Ben's hotel room and Selina's office.

Selina sits on a COUCH.

BEN
'Lina.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SELINA
Finally. Are you wrapping up?

BEN
Soon.

SELINA
Soon? You promised two days.

BEN
I'm nearly there.

SELINA
Phil's getting cranky.

BEN
How cranky?

SELINA
Cranky enough to make threats.

BEN
Bark or bite?

SELINA
Snarling with intent.

BEN
I'm close. But... havin' a hard time coming up with the goods.

SELINA
Someone's hiding the treasure. You know the drill; Dig deeper, further, and harder. Fair?

BEN
Fair.

Selina ends the call, clearly feeling frustrated.

END INTER-CUT

Ben punches his steering wheel.

EXT. NORM'S RANCH - BARN - EVENING

Norm's in front of a double-door BARN bolted by a PADLOCK.

He removes KEYS attached to a pair of DOG TAGS from his JEANS pocket. He continues to stare at the barn in contemplation and consternation. He nervously bounces the keys in his hand.

Norm steps toward the Barn, then stops. Shakes his head. Puts the keys back in his pocket. Takes out his Locket. Opens it up, and stares at the picture of Cynthia.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NORM

I believe in magic too, Darlin'. But,
don't think there's a rabbit in this
hat.

Norm takes a deep, soothing breath, turns and walks away.

INT. FLOWER & PLANT STORE - DAY

Ben speaks with EDITH ROGERS (The Pious Woman from the Town Hall) - as she waters a variety of PLANTS & FLOWERS.

On the shop walls is a poster of the TOWN HALL FUNDRAISER.

BEN

So, you saw the 'mystery man', but he
didn't whisper anything to you?

EDITH

Not a peep.

BEN

Do you believe it was a, a-

EDITH

Ghost?

BEN

Something along those lines.

Edith snips away at a set of ROSES.

EDITH

I was once a Girl Scout. Back when
being a Girl Scout meant more than
selling *chocolate mint cookies*.

BEN

Ok?

EDITH

There was a girl in my troupe. Her
name was Paulina. She was deaf and
dumb. But sweet as a button. We all
took great care of her. But one night,
we were camping on the outskirts of
town, and right before lights out, we
discovered Paulina had gone missing.
Pretty soon the whole town was
searching for her. And do you know
where we found Paulina?

BEN

No. But I'm guessing you do.

EDITH

In the Town Hall, kneeling in front of
the *Fairfax Altar*. She was in some

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDITH (CONT'D)
sort of trance. Frantically babbling,
in French, Italian, Spanish, Japanese,
Latin and other languages.

BEN
She was speaking in tongues?

EDITH
Until that night she had never uttered
a word. And when she fell out of the
trance, she never spoke again.

BEN
How's this connected to-

EDITH
Later, when we returned to the
campsite, we found that it had been
swallowed up by a sinkhole.

BEN
Ah, I see. She saved you? Like, Jimmy?

EDITH
One of many such stories. I believe
the *Fairfax Altar* is a sacred relic.
Much like the *Arc of the Covenant* or
the *Shroud of Turin*.

Ben bites his lip.

BEN
Why's it called the '*Fairfax Altar*'?

EDITH
Well, if you're here to save the Town
Hall from ruin, then I suggest you
research its history.

BEN
With the greatest respect, I'm not-

EDITH
I know who you are and what you do.

Edith picks up a single small red ROSE.

EDITH (CONT'D)
I've been around flowers all my life,
Mr. Chambers. Therefore I know the
difference between fresh and fetid.

Edith attaches the rose to Ben's jacket, as a LAPEL.

EDITH (CONT'D)
Now, chop-chop. Time is of the
essence, and you have much to learn.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ben takes the rose and appears slightly bemused

INT. SERAPHIM, TOWN HALL - DAY

It's late in the afternoon, the sun is starting to set.

Ben enters the large hall/library. No one is around.

Ben goes over to the FAIRFAX ALTAR to examine it closely.

As he leans down over the back of the *Fairfax Altar*, his *B4B Booklet* falls from his top pocket, on to the floor.

Ben picks up the *Booklet*. Pauses. Notices WRITING engraved into the underside of the Altar.

Ben turns on his phone's FLASHLIGHT. To read the etchings:
'Protgere Eos. Sanandum Eos. Teneat Eos.'

PADRE (O.S.)

I thought your return was 'highly
unlikely'?

Ben, startled, sits up and BANGS his head on the altar.

He sees Padre standing opposite him.

BEN

And yet here I am, Padre.

PADRE

What brings you back?

BEN

Research.

PADRE

Anything I can assist with?

Ben looks around the hall.

BEN

The history of this place.

Padre genially smiles back at Ben. Walks over to a smaller bookshelf tucked, behind the 'Fairfax Altar.'

PADRE

You have to know where to look.

(Finds something)

Ah, here we are.

Padre pulls out a THIN BOOK. It looks homemade.

Padre places it on the altar. Ben reads the title: "*An Illustrated History of Seraphim, By Cynthia Rafferty.*"

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PADRE

Limited edition. Actually... there's only one edition.

BEN

Cynthia Rafferty? Any chance she was-

PADRE

Married to Norm Clancy? Yes. She wrote this when she was 16. Won first prize that year at the county art contest.

Ben opens up the book.

INSERT - Illustrations from the book

The illustrations are drawn with CHARCOAL.

PADRE (V.O.)

The town of *Seraphim* was established in 1822, by John Fairfax.

As Padre reads, the charcoal illustrations ANIMATE.

Image: Of a large BOAT at sea. On the deck of the boat stand The Fairfax Family.

PADRE (V.O.)

Fairfax emigrated from England to the United States with his four children and wife, Nora.

Image: A dozen Pioneers, travel on HORSES and WAGONS.

PADRE (V.O.)

With other Pioneers, they traveled North in search of land to settle.

Image: The Pioneers, battling the cold and disease.

PADRE (V.O.)

It was a perilous journey. Marred by fatal disease and deadly weather.

Image: All the other Pioneers are gone. Just the Fairfax family remain. As they push on through the bad weather, one-by-one, each member of the family disappears.

PADRE (V.O.)

Within three months, John's family, who had left home in search of a better life, were all gone.

Image: John Fairfax stands in front of a massive OAK TREE.

PADRE (V.O.)

John's grief became too much to bare.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Image: John ties a NOOSE to the Oak Tree.

PADRE (V.O.)
He could see no reason to go on.

Image: John sits atop a horse. The rope tied to the tree.
Rain starts to fall. John closes his eyes. Readyng himself.

PADRE (V.O.)
But then...

Image: LIGHTNING strikes the tree. Splits it in half.

PADRE (V.O.)
The extraordinary happened.

Image: John carves the base, trunk of the tree. He uses the
rest of the wood to build a small HALL around the trunk, that
he has carved into an ALTAR.

PADRE (V.O.)
John wasn't devout. But he knew
something divine had occurred. He
believed it was a message to help
others. Others like him.

Image: People arrive at the Hall John built. Soon, other
small wooden cabins emerge around John's Hall.

PADRE (V.O.)
People came from far and wide. They
didn't know what drew them to this
place. They just knew it was where
they needed to be.

Image: The town has grown. A sign on a road reads: '*Welcome
to the town of Seraphim*'.

PADRE (V.O.)
Within twenty years, the town's
population had grown to two-hundred
and thirty. People of all backgrounds
and faith made Seraphim their home.

Image: A small EMBER drifts through the wind until it lands
on John's Hall. Before long a huge FIRE consumes the Hall.

PADRE (V.O.)
Then tragedy struck.

Image: Smoke and ash is all that remains of the Hall. But as
that smoke and ash blow away, John can be seen draped over
the altar he had built.

PADRE (V.O.)
Somehow the altar was undamaged.

Image: A gravestone. The epitaph reads: '*Here lies John*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Fairfax. Husband. Father. And Founder of Seraphim.'

END INSERT

BACK TO SCENE

PADRE

As you can see, the Hall was rebuilt.

BEN

And they kept the altar?

PADRE

The roots of that big oak are still attached to the *Fairfax Altar*, and run directly underneath us.

Ben looks down at his feet and then looks up at POSTERS on the wall advertising the upcoming '*Fund Raising Event*'.

BEN

Is this an historical landmark?

PADRE

Yes. But there's a statute of limitations on heritage landmarks. Ours is set to expire in two months.

BEN

But if you raise enough funds...?

PADRE

We can extend the statute ten years.

BEN

And if you don't?

PADRE

The land's auctioned off.

Ben is about to ask another question, but his phone vibrates. Sees that it is a text from Ronny: "Got what you wanted".

Ben looks up at Padre.

BEN

Thanks for the assist, Padre.

PADRE

Any time.

Ben looks around the hallway again, and then leaves.

Padre watches as he goes and smiles to himself.

EXT. SERAPHIM, PARK SQUARE - DAY

Ben sits on a bench. The square has been decked out for the

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Holidays. Including a large CHRISTMAS TREE.

Ben's on the phone with Ronny.

**INTER-CUT: Ben/Ronny -- Ronny's in the 'Scuttlebutt' office.
Hiding in a supply closet.**

BEN

So, what did you find?

RONNY

Darby's living off the grid in Peru.

BEN

So the rumors were true?

RONNY

I poked around, and from what I can tell, it was a hatchet job. Someone musta wanted his life ripped apart. He was accused of drug addiction, porn addiction, gambling, and uh, some weird stuff about 'Bronies'?

BEN

Sources?

RONNY

Mostly tabloid articles. Magazines. The entirety of the web.

BEN

Think it was coordinated?

RONNY

It'd require someone who has fingers in a lotta a media pies.

Ben thinks for a moment.

BEN

Up for one more favor?

RONNY

How big?

EXT. ARCH DIOCESE - DAY

Ronny walks up to the step of a grand CATHEDRAL.

RONNY

Yep. This is a big, big favor.

INT. POLICE STATION, DANTE'S OFFICE - DAY

Ben sits with DANTE at the Sheriff's desk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANTE

Hmm. Let's see... He was wearing a green pilot uniform. Helmet still on.

BEN

Did he say anything?

DANTE

Not a peep.

BEN

Think it could'a been a prank?

DANTE

That dog don't hunt.

BEN

Do you have a theory?

DANTE

Push come to shove, it coulda been one of the *Coast Guard* guys from the crash.

BEN

Crash? What crash?

INT. ARCH DIOCESE - DAY

Ronny enters the Cathedral, starts walking down a hallway. A middle-aged male PRIEST intercepts Ronny.

PRIEST

Services don't start until 6 p.m.

RONNY

Oh. Okay. Yeah, yeah... sorry.

Ronny turns and starts to walk away. Stops himself, gathers up some courage, and turns back toward the Priest.

RONNY

Um, I'm not here for Services, Father. I'd like to talk to Cardinal Varone.

PRIEST

(Amused and Incredulous)
The Cardinal no longer takes confessional, but there are-

RONNY

I don't need confessional. I mean, I do. There's a lot I should confess. Like I have this cousin-

PRIEST

You can contact his secretary to arrange a meeting.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RONNY

It can't wait. It's kinda urgent.

PRIEST

You still need an appointment.

RONNY

(Thinks for a moment)

Phil Knox sent me.

This seems to immediately get the Priest's attention.

INT. COAST GUARD HELICOPTER HANGAR - DAY

Ben follows COAST GUARD pilot RICKY GONZALEZ (mid-30s), as he runs diagnostics on his HELICOPTER.

GONZALEZ

The storm was a Cat 3 by the time it made landfall.

BEN

So, where was the crash, in proximity to the town?

GONZALEZ

About five miles out, give-or-take.

BEN

Would it'a been possible for one of the pilots, or the medic, to walk from the crash into town and back again, before, um, dying?

GONZALEZ

They all died on impact. So, I'd say, that's a hard no, sir.

BEN

Right.

GONZALEZ

If that's all you need, I gotta get back to it, sir.

Gonzalez goes back to his work. Ben starts to leave, when he sees two PILOTS entering the hangar. They both wear ORANGE JUMPSUITS. Ben recalls something.

BEN

(Quietly to Himself)

Coastguard always wears orange.

Ben's attention is broken when one of the PILOT'S turns up a TV propped up on a table. 'Will the Weatherman' is reporting on a SNOW STORM heading toward their region.

Something on SCREEN grabs Ben's attention.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ON TV SCREEN

WILL THE WEATHERMAN

*As you can see, we got ourselves a big
'un headin' our way. But don't fret
folks, it won't be anything like the
Beast from the East five 2years ago.
Who could forget that?*

INSERT - ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE

*Will the Weatherman, is reporting from outside a TRUCK, as
wind and rain blow furiously around him. Behind Will, is the
Seraphim Town Hall.*

The rain comes to a stop. Will, looks around, astonished.

WILL THE WEATHERMAN

Seems like the storm's over, folks.

A SHADOWY FIGURE in the background walks into the Town Hall.
Then the archival footage finishes.

END INSERT

Ben cocks his head, as something occurs to him.

INT. CARDINAL VARONE'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Ronny enters. Behind a desk is CARDINAL VARONE (mid-60s).

RONNY

Greetings your Holy Honor? I mean,
your Holy Eminence? I-

VARONE

I take it Mr. Knox dug-up something
and wants to know if it should remain
buried?

RONNY

It's about a story you asked him, to
ask us, to investigate.

VARONE

What story?

RONNY

The one about a ghost who showed up
during a storm and saved everyone? Uh,
any of that sound familiar?

VARONE

It sounds absurd. Besides, the Vatican
has a team for investigating the
arcane. Knox knows this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RONNY

So... you didn't make the ask?

VARONE

I may be getting on in years, but I can assure you, I'm still in full control of my faculties. As for my patience, that's finite.

Ronny looks down at his feet, embarrassed.

INT. WPIJ LOCAL TV STATION OFFICE - DAY

Ben stands in a cramped office. A sign on the wall for the TV Station Reads: 'Start your Day with WPIJ'

A Female PRODUCER (early-20s) enters the room and sits behind her desk. She seems animated and eager.

FEMALE PRODUCER

Ben Chambers! Golly, it's really you.

BEN

In the flesh.

FEMALE PRODUCER

What brings you to WPIJ?

(Enthusiastic)

Oh! Is Selina Richardson recruiting?

Ben notices a bunch of NOTEPADS and BOOKS on the desk. Mostly educational books about journalism and foreign affairs.

BEN

I'm trying to find footage from three years ago; *Will the Weatherman?* The big storm?

FEMALE PRODUCER

I'm not really allowed to sign out-

BEN

Selina's a friend. And I bet she'd love to meet the producer who helped us with this top secret project.

FEMALE PRODUCER

(Whispers)

Is it about the Town Hall fundraiser?

Ben notices a FLIER for the upcoming fundraiser on the DESK.

BEN

Yea. Classic David and Goliath story.

The Female Producer surreptitiously glances around, then furtively nods to Ben.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ben grabs one of the fliers and writes on it.

BEN

Please send the footage here.

The Producer takes the flier.

FEMALE PRODUCER

Wow. Selina Richardson is gonna help us save the *Fairfax Altar*. And I'm gonna help her help us fight those booshi bozos. This is the most amazing day of my life.

Ben pauses, reflects on what she just said.

BEN

Hey, I don't suppose you know anyone on the city council?

FEMALE PRODUCER

Um. Yes. My cousin, Keith. Why?

Ben smiles.

INT. CITY COUNCIL, BASEMENT - DAY

A dark, dusty room, filled with creaky CABINETS, aging BOOKS, scraggy FILES and decaying cardboard BOXES.

In the middle of the room is a decrepit wooden TABLE.

Ben enters the room with Keith (mid-30s, wears GLASSES, bubbly). He has his hands full of SCROLLS and DOCUMENTS.

KEITH

When my cousin called I thought she was joshing. She's always been a kidder, that little whipper snapper. But, gee-whizz here you are! And it's an honor to be of assistance, sir!

BEN

Honor's all mine, Mr. Mayor.

KEITH

Don't be silly. Call me Mayor Keith.

Keith puts the scrolls and documents on the table.

KEITH (CONT'D)

These are all the land grant proposals from the past six years.

(Cleans his glasses)

Lemme tell ya; Some of them rich folk been bitin' at the bit to get their greedy paws on to our town for years. And if we don't raise the funds to

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KEITH (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
extend the preservation statute on the
Town Hall, they'll demolish her and
probably build a *Starbucks* on top.

(Puts Glasses on)
I know this is a tad unethical. But if
it helps save our *Fairfax Altar*, then
I'm more than happy to play the role
of Deep Throat 'n your Bernstein.

BEN
Good to know.

KEITH
Well, alrighty then. Happy huntin'.
Just holler if you need any help.

BEN
Will do, Mr. Mayor Keith.

Keith exits the room.

Ben unravels documents from several scrolls. Lays them out on
the table. Begins to browse through them. He pauses.
Something catches his eye. He glowers, nods his head.

BEN
Huh. That '*Douche* ass-hat'.

Ben smiles smugly to himself.

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

Ben parks his Mustang behind the hotel he's staying at.

Ben's phone PINGS. It's a TEXT message from Ronny: A *CROSS*
emoji, followed by a *RED X emoji*, and a *POOP emoji*.

Ben gets out of the car and notices a large stretch LIMO
idling a few yards away. A burly DRIVER (mid-40s) stands
outside the driver's side.

The passenger WINDOW of the limo roles down. It's Phil Knox.
Ben's demeanor tightens.

BEN
Speak of the Devil.

EXT. PHIL'S LIMOUSINE - [CONTINUOUS]

Ben sits in the back seat next to Phil.

PHIL
Selina promises me you're nearly done.

BEN
Gettin' closer everyday.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PHIL

I thought this was open and shut?

Ben pauses and faces Phil. Looks him in the eye.

BEN

How much is it worth?

PHIL

How much is what worth?

BEN

(Smiles snidely)

Your investment, if the heritage
statute on the Town Hall expires?

Phil grins and nods to himself. He looks out the window.

PHIL

Tell me Ben... when you look at this
town, what do you see?

BEN

History. Community.

(Smirks)

An interesting story, that could gain
national attention, and galvanize the
puritanical Twitterati to put a pin in
someone's plan.

PHIL

Hmm. I see opportunity. I see 120M
dollars in revenue over 10 years, on a
15M dollar investment. I see people
from the City who come here in the
summer to go boating on the lake. And
visit in the winter for the skiing. I
see jobs. I see security for a town
that time has forgotten.

BEN

No... I think you see a cash cow
you've been waiting to milk dry. Only
problem is this pesky story. The same
story you sent Matt Darby to shoot
down two years ago. The same story
you've been trying to keep out of the
public domain, because you're afraid
if the outside world actually believes
what happened here, then they'll
receive all the money they need to
renew the lease on the land. You saw
an opportunity to use me to your
advantage.

PHIL

All deals are based on leverage. Who
has the most to lose, and the most to
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PHIL (CONT'D)
gain. You have much to gain and
Selina, a lot to lose. So, whatever
morality hiccup you're experiencing, I
suggest you hold your breath and
finish what I asked you to start. Or,
you will gain nothing. And Selina,
will lose everything.

Ben frowns. Clenches his fist.

BEN
Why should I trust you?

PHIL
As my good friend Cardinal Varone
would say: *'Have faith, my Son'*.

Ben nods. Smiles to himself.

BEN
That reminds me; does the Cardinal
know you're using his name in vain?

Phil's face tightens. He looks up at the Limo's rear-view
MIRROR. Catches the Driver's eye. Nods. The Limo STOPS.

The Driver gets out.

PHIL
Two days.

The passenger door opens, the Driver ushers Ben out.

EXT. TOWN STREET - [CONTINUOUS]

The Limo drives away. Leaving Ben on the sidewalk.

Ben looks around to get his bearings. Notices he's been
dropped off in front of a FUNERAL PARLOR. Ben shivers.

BEN
Seriously?

EXT. PHIL'S LIMOUSINE - [CONTINUOUS]

Phil raises the Privacy Divider. He's brimming with anger.
Opens up his PHONE, and makes a call. Someone answers.

PHIL
You need to get up here, now!

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

Ben approaches the hotel.

Outside the hotel is that same bedraggled looking man in the
Elf Costume, carrying his AMRY SALVATION bucket and ringing a

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

bell. Ben rambles past him, and into the Hotel lobby.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY [CONTINUOUS]

Ben's phone rings. He answers.

BEN
This is Ben.

SUZY (O.S.)
Chambers? It's Suzy.

BEN
Captain- I mean, Professor-

SUZY (O.S.)
Suzy.

BEN
Suzy. Yeah. Did you-

SUZY (O.S.)
I got it. And... and you were right.

Ben pauses, stares at the phone.

BEN
Do you have plans tomorrow morning?

EXT. NORM'S RANCH HOUSE - DAY

Ben pulls up in his car outside the front porch at the same time, Suzy pulls up on her MOTORCYCLE.

Norm is waiting on the porch. Suzy walks straight up to Norm and gives him a warm, loving hug. Norm smiles.

NORM
It's been a minute.

SUZY
(Apologetic)
Too many.

NORM
What brings you by?

SUZY
This weirdo here tracked me down at West Point.

Norm looks inquisitively at Ben.

BEN
She bought something.

SUZY
It's classified. So, could only share
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUZY (CONT'D)
it with you in person.

Norm is intrigued.

INT. CONSERVATORY - CONTINUOUS

Ben, Suzy, and Norm sit in chairs, inside a covered porch/conservatory, overlooking a patio and back garden.

Norm points to the recorder.

NORM
A flight recording?

BEN
The flight recording.

Suzy presses play. Ben looks out to the BACK YARD.

FLASHBACK - as the flight recorder plays audio

The back yard morphs into a SUNNY SUMMER DAY, from TWENTY YEARS AGO.

YOUNG JIMMY plays in the yard. His MOM (Cynthia) and his DAD (Norm), sit on the patio, watching him.

Jimmy has two TOY JET PLANES... running through the yard.

PARADISE (V.O.)
Archangel, this is Paradise. We have an Alpha Unit stranded and surrounded requesting priority fire mission. 180 clicks from your vector, over.

Jimmy takes the toy planes around a SWING SET.

ARCHANGEL/SUZY (V.O.)
Copy, Paradise. Negative on the request. Bingo on fuel. Can't reach location and RTB, over.

PARADISE (V.O.)
Copy, Archangel. Stand down, over.

A few seconds of static over the radio. One of Jimmy's toy planes diverges from the other jet plane.

ARCHANGEL/SUZY (V.O.)
Sentinel, you've broken formation.
Return to my vector, over.

Jimmy puts down one of the toy planes. Continues flying the other, toward a SANDBOX in the garden.

SENTINEL (V.O.)
Negative. Our boys need help, Skipper.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The TOY PLANE approaches a BUILDING BLOCK in the sandbox.

GREEN TOY SOLDIERS are placed inside the structure. BLUE TOY SOLDIERS surround the outside of the structure.

ARCHANGEL/SUZY (V.O.)
Lieutenant Clancy. Bingo fuel for RTB,
do you understand, over?

SENTINEL (V.O.)
Good copy.

Static fills the radio comms.

ARCHANGEL/SUZY (V.O.)
Paradise, change of plan; Archangel
Two, call-sign 'Sentinel', will
execute fire mission, over.

PARADISE (V.O.)
Copy that.

ARCHANGEL/SUZY (V.O.)
(Reluctant)
Lieutenant Clancy, S&R will track you
for exfil after ejection.

SENTINEL (V.O.)
Copy that. See you on the other side,
Skipper.

Jimmy's TOY PLANE flies over the building block structure.

KING (V.O.)
Sentinel, this is Alpha One,
requesting emergency close air
support. Zero ten bearing from our
position. Target's tagged, over.

Jimmy's Toy Plane gets lower and closer to the structure.

SENTINEL (V.O.)
Copy that, Alpha One. Bogey's Alpha
Mike Foxtrot, over and out.

Jimmy pretends to drop a BOMB outside the building block structure. Clears a path for the Green Soldiers to leave.

He then flies the toy plane off into the setting SUN.

END FLASHBACK

The recording stops. Ben looks at Norm; both are dumbfounded.

BEN
(To Norm)
The pilot who saved us, saved me that
day, it was, it was Jimmy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUZY

Ben had a hunch. That's why he wanted me to track down the flight recording.

NORM

(To Ben)

I had no idea.

BEN

(To Suzy)

What happened after the fire mission?

SUZY

A canopy malfunction.

Suzy puts a comforting hand on Norm's shoulder.

BEN

When did you guys meet?

SUZY

After I retired from active duty, I took some time off. Roamed around from state to state. Then ended up here.

(Smiles and Norm)

Wanted to meet the father of the bravest pilot under my command.

NORM

She connected me to the Veteran Affairs committee, who helped fund everything we do here for vets.

Ben takes it all in. Looks around at the various VETS riding, and cleaning HORSES.

BEN

(Smiling)

Pillar to post.

Norm looks at Ben smiling... cocks his head, like he recognized something.

EXT. NORM'S RANCH, FRONT PORCH - [CONTINUOUS]

Ben and Norm walk Suzy to her MOTORCYCLE. Suzy gives Norm a big, warm hug. She also offers one up to Ben, who accepts, albeit stiffly.

Suzy then puts her hands on Ben's shoulders. Stares deep into his eyes. Cocks her head.

SUZY

I swear we've meet before.

BEN

Guess I have one of those faces.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Suzy and Ben smile and chuckle. Norm zooms in on Ben's smile, as though seeing something for the first time.

Suzy gets on her Motorcycle, leaves.

Ben then notices Norm intensely scrutinizing him.

BEN
Okay there, Norm?

Norm hesitates.

NORM
Ever been somethin' you wanted to
know, but were scared to find out?

Ben can see Norm's being very serious.

BEN
Of course.

NORM
Walk with me.

Norm heads toward a pasture. Ben follows, a bit confused.

INT. 'SCUTTLEBUTT' OFFICE, SUPPLY CLOSET - DAY

Ronny uses his laptop to review the '*Will the Weatherman*' archival VIDEO FOOTAGE of the big storm. While eating an excessively large SANDWICH.

Ronny clicks a few buttons, rewinding, and forwarding the footage. He *pauses* on something. He mouth drops open.

Then the MEAT from his sandwich slides off of the BREAD and on to the KEYBOARD of Ronny's laptop.

Yet Ronny's unmoved. He's locked in a state of astonishment.

EXT. NORM'S RANCH - DAY

Ben follows Norm along a track, that leads to the big DOUBLE-DOOR BARN. Norm pulls out the keys, with the dog tags.

NORM
Ben, would you mind indulging a
question of a personal nature?

BEN
How personal?

NORM
Did you and your wife have a child?

Ben stiffens. Looks away. Then he sees Beth's *apparition* in the pasture. She nods to Ben, encouraging him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

We were seventeen and had only been together a few months. We had no idea what to do. So, the decision was made for us.

(Beat)

The baby arrived seven weeks early. And eight weeks later, the Church facilitated the adoption.

(Beat)

Because of complications during the birth, Beth needed an emergency hysterectomy. So, she never got to meet the only child she'd ever have.

NORM

I'm sorry about that, Ben. Truly.

BEN

Why'd you ask?

NORM

That thing I was scared to find out?
Not feeling so scared now.

Norm opens the padlock to the barn.

INT. BARN HOUSE GARAGE - [CONTINUOUS]

In the middle of this space is a CAR covered by a TARP.

Norm removes the TARP. Underneath is an late-1960s RED FORD MUSTANG. It's clearly a WORK-IN-PROGRESS restoration.

NORM

Jimmy bought it before he deployed. We were gonna restore her when he returned.

BEN

Kid had good taste. But what's this-

NORM

Got his grease monkey paws from me. As for taste... well, I'm pretty sure that originated from the source.

Norm opens a CAR DOOR. Grabs something from the GLOVE COMPARTMENT. He removes a DOCUMENT and walks it over to Ben.

NORM

We got lucky with Jimmy.

BEN

What do you mean?

Norm gives Ben the document.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NORM

With adoption, you never know. There's what you can mold with nurture. Then there's nature.

Ben opens the envelope, reads the document in a state of utter bewilderment.

NORM (CONT'D)

And I can see now, why we got lucky with the latter.

Norm looks at Ben and then puts a hand on his shoulder.

NORM (CONT'D)

He had your eyes. And your smile.

BEN

You didn't know?

NORM

Swore I'd never open it. But ever since we met, there was somethin' about you I recognized but couldn't reconcile. Then you come by today with the flight recording. There's only so much coincidence an old Grunt like me can ignore. So, here we are.

Ben continues to stare at the document, in disbelief.

INT. SELINA'S TOWN CAR - DAY

Selina is in the back seat. She has Phil on the speakerphone.

PHIL (OS)

You told me he'd comply. Now he's gone off book. Like the other guy.

SELINA

I'll fix this. Same as last time.

PHIL (OS)

Last time, was for table stakes. This time, you're all in. Understand?

Selina shakes her head, annoyed. Hangs up the phone. SLAMS a hand against the window in frustration.

EXT. NORM'S RANCH - DAY

Ben and Norm walk toward Ben's car. Ben is still reeling.

Ben reads the document again.

BEN

After Beth died, I petitioned the Church to unseal the records. But,
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN (CONT'D)
they wouldn't play ball. Well, least
not 'til I do them a favor first.

NORM
And if you don't fulfill the favor?

BEN
That's a damn good question, Norm.

Ben studies the document again. Tears in his eyes.

INT. BEN'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Ben's at a desk. His LAPTOP is open. He's having a VIDEO CALL with Ronny.

INTER-CUT - Ben in Hotel Room, Ronny at Scuttlebutt Office

There's five empty cans of RED BULL on Ronny's desk.

RONNY
Ok. I reviewed the recording WPIJ
sent, and dude, it's crazy.

BEN
Opening it now.

ARCHIVAL VIDEO FOOTAGE displays on Ben's laptop.

RONNY
I cleaned up the background pixels to
focus on the building. Look at minute
8.46 and 23 seconds.

Ben forwards the FOOTAGE. Sees a slightly blurry MAN in an
unmistakable GREEN PILOT UNIFORM, enter the building.

BEN
Ok, that's our guy.

RONNY
Now, forward it to 8.49 and 5 seconds.

Ben forwards the FOOTAGE. On the screen he sees the PILOT
EXIT the building. There's a small FLASH OF LIGHTNING that
comes down from the night sky, on top of the Pilot. And then
the Pilot seems to evaporate.

BEN
Could it be doctored?

RONNY
It was shot on tape. Old school. It's
legit. It's as real as you and me.
Unless we're in the Matrix. Then this
would make sense.
(Gets serious)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RONNY (CONT'D)

Ben. What does this mean?

BEN

I don't know.

(Heavy sigh)

But I can tell you, we live in a post-truth world. So, most people would let their favorite media sources tell them what it is and what to believe.

RONNY

Yea. But, but what do you believe?

Ben rubs his weary eyes. Takes a deep breath.

BEN

I believe it's time to piece this puzzle together.

(Beat)

Oh, And Ronny... you're gonna be a heckuva journalist.

Ben ends the call.

END INTER-CUT - Back to Ben's Hotel Room

Ben returns to the footage. Re-watches it, over and over.

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Ben sits at the hotel bar reading NOTES while he eats.

He sees his GLASS is empty, gets the attention of the BARMAN.

BARMAN

Another?

SELINA (O.S.)

Make that two on the double.

Ben swivels to see Selina behind him.

BEN

I see, we've gone from bad cop to maniac cop.

SELINA

Don't. Don't test me, Benji. Not in the mood.

BEN

You know this has nothing to do with the Church, right?

SELINA

Meaning?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARMAN delivers two shots of WHISKEY.

BEN

Douchey-asshat is using us to line his pockets.

(Looks at Selina and sighs)

But you already knew that. 'Cos you were the one who made Phil's Matt Darby problem go away, huh?

Selina glares, taps her fingernails on the table.

SELINA

That was the price of admission.

BEN

Mutilating someone's career?

SELINA

Save me your self-righteous hypocrisy. How many lives have you ruined in the last year alone?

Ben downs his shot. Looks in a mirror behind the bar.

BEN

Okay. That's fair.

(At his own reflection)

But look at us. Who are we?

Selina sits back, angrily. Folds her arms.

SELINA

You wanna know who I am? A woman who wakes up most nights screaming. A girl too scared to sleep in the dark. A soul who sent her mate to his death. Who... who... who had to watch...

(Tears well in her eyes)

The man she loves have his head, slice... slice...

(Stops herself)

Live on *Al Jazeera*. That's who I am. And what about you? Think Beth'd approve of your antics?

Ben sees Beth's *apparition* at the end of the bar.

BEN

No. I don't.

SELINA

Benji, I need you to hold your nose and take the medicine.

Ben looks at Beth's *apparition*. She nods back to him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN
Maybe we let sleeping dogs lie.

SELINA
Not an option.

BEN
But...

SELINA
But what?

BEN
What, what if it's, it's true?

SELINA
Jesus. You kidding me?

Ben looks away.

BEN
Selina. This isn't what you think.
Something strange happened here.

SELINA
Good God. These Bible brats really
sunk their claws into you.

BEN
It's not like that. I'm serious. Let
me show you what I've found.

SELINA
I don't care. I need the take down.
This isn't a negotiation.

Selina downs a shot. Hesitates.

SELINA (CONT'D)
Besides, doesn't the Church have
something you want?

BEN
The circumstances have changed.

SELINA
The hell they have.

BEN
I can't do it. Not to these people.
Not to... not to my-

SELINA
You're my friend, so I'm giving you a
choice: Write the article, and control
the collateral damage. Or, if you
don't, I will go full scorched earth
on these bumpkins. It'll make what I
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SELINA (CONT'D)

did to Darby look like a pillow fight by comparison. So, their fate is in your hands.

BEN

I don't get it? Why are you so beholden to Phil?

Selina stands up, starts to walk away. Pauses.

SELINA

This isn't about Phil. I'm doing this, because Scuttlebutt's my island. And it's surrounded by an ocean of blood and shit. So, I'll do whatever it takes to stay on my island. You don't get to dictate when I leave. I say, when I leave. Me. Not you. Me.

BEN

'Lina. I understand your pain. I do. We've been dragged over the coals. And I'm not proud of what that's made me. But there's always a way back. Right?

(A half-smile)

You know, I've been thinking a lot recently about Jon's favorite quote: *'Above all, to thine ownself be true'*. No matter what life threw his way, he never deviated from that credo. Never.

Selina glares angrily at Ben. Shakes a finger at him.

SELINA

They're playing you for a fool. But being a jackass? That all you.

Selina angrily stomps away.

Ben shakes his head, disconsolate. But then looks over at Beth. She nods to him sympathetically. Approvingly.

Selina pauses at the FRONT ENTRANCE. Her anger slips away, replaced by sadness and grief. Then, she exits.

INT. SELINA'S TOWN CAR - DAY

Driving through Seraphim.

They pass through the center of town, where there's a PARK SQUARE. Selina sees various COUPLES canoodling next to a big CHRISTMAS TREE.

One of the COUPLES catch her attention. Their PINKIES interlocked. The WOMAN'S head against the MAN's shoulder.

Then, she sees another MAN, facing her, standing next to the

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

tree. He waves. It's an *apparition* of JON.

Selina's lips quiver. Her fists clench. Her eyes tear-up. She wipes them clear. She looks again for Jon, but he's gone.

INT. SERAPHIM, TOWN HALL - NIGHT

Ben sits at the back of the Hall. The space has been prepped for the fundraiser. The lights are dimmed. Ben is alone with his thoughts, contemplating.

PADRE (OS)

I'm starting to sense a pattern.

Ben notices Padre entered the room with a TROLLEY of books. He's placing them back on shelves. He smiles, wryly at Ben.

PADRE

What brings you by so late?

BEN

Couldn't sleep. Noisy brain.

PADRE

What's behind the ruckus?

Ben gestures to the whole Hall with his hands.

BEN

This. All this.

PADRE

What about it?

BEN

Starting to feel like some facts are better off fiction. And maybe this story should remain a myth.

PADRE

Ah, yes. That is a conundrum.

BEN

More than you know, Padre.

Padre walks. Ponders. Picks up a BOOK from a shelf.

PADRE

You know, for thousands of years, people have relied on stories to make sense of the world. They mark the passage of time. Can be a blueprint for change. A conduit for connection. A design for life.

Padre hands Ben a BOOK.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PADRE (CONT'D)

A book can inspire a quiet child to
find their voice.

Ben looks at the book. It's: *CATCHER IN THE RYE*. He looks
back at Padre. Completely flummoxed and surprised.

PADRE (CONT'D)

Most of all: Stories contain the most
enduring power of all: An idea.

BEN

(Takes a deep breath)

I understand what's you're saying,
Padre. And I agree. But the world's
fulla skeptics and sheep.

PADRE

Maybe people aren't as cynical as you
think. Maybe, they long for an
impossible story, told by an
improbable person, to touch their
hearts, and give them hope.

BEN

I wish I had your optimism. But no
matter which direction I take, it'll
come with a price.

PADRE

We encounter crossroads every day. Big
and small. But as long as you, and you
alone, choose which direction to take,
the destination is where you belong.
In the end, that's all that really
matters.

Ben considers Padre's words. He holds back a yawn.

BEN

Gotta hit the hay, Padre. Good luck
with tomorrow.

Padre nods back to Ben. Who gets up to leave, still carrying
the book he was handed.

PADRE

Goodnight, Ben.

INT. BEN'S HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

Ben's been up most of the night. Trying to decide what to do.

His LAPTOP is open. His weary eyes stare at the screen. He
looks to the side of the laptop and sees his B4B Booklet. He
opens it up, and a folded POSTCARD drops on his lap.

It's the 'WELCOME TO SERAPHIM' postcard. Ben scans it again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As he is about to put it down, he focuses in on the Postcard's STAMP. Squints his eyes for a closer look.

Ben holds his PHONE over the stamp to magnify the image with the phone's CAMERA.

The STAMP shows THREE PEOPLE in a field, beholding a MESSIAH figure in silhouette. Behind them, is a rising Sun over the Brazilian national flag.

The people consist of: A SOLDIER. A FARMER. And a NURSE.

*Below each of the people are the words: 'Protegere Eos.
Sanandum Eos. Teneat Eos.'*

Ben goes back to his computer. Pulls up a SEARCH. He types: 'Paulo Coelho, Art, Stamp'.

Ben reviews the RESULTS. Clicks on a LINK. He reads. His face contorts in annoyance and anger. Sits back. Folds his arms.

BEN

They played me.

INT. SERAPHIM, TOWN HALL - DAY

The Town Hall Fundraiser is wrapping up. A half-dozen townsfolk are still in the hall, counting what they raised.

Frankie (wearing a SANTA HAT), Norm and George are all there.

George is off duty. His MOTORCYCLE HELMET with the Angel Wings is on a table, next to one of the BOOK SHELVES.

Edith and an Mayor Keith count the donations. She looks up at Frankie and gives a tiny, disappointed shake of the head.

George and Norm both appear discouraged. Frankie sighs.

FRANKIE

There's still time.

Ben enters, via the back door. He's full of piss and vinegar. He ushers Frankie, George and Norm over to a small TABLE.

GEORGE

You missed the festivities, my man.

Norm stares at at Ben, worried.

BEN

I have questions.

Norm, Frankie and George all look at each other, confused. Then they all sit at the table next to the bookshelf.

Ben takes the 'WELCOME TO SERAPHIM' postcard out of his pocket and puts it on the table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

For a moment there, you got me.

GEORGE

'Got you'?

Ben points to the stamp on the postcard.

BEN

Paulo Coelho.

FRANKIE

What about him?

BEN

He designed this stamp for Brazil's 150th Year Anniversary. It's the only piece of art he's created. You knew this would get my attention.

NORM

Jimmy had a stamp like that in his collection, if I recall.

FRANKIE

Yes, he did. A replica.

All three are studying the postcard. They all look baffled and bewildered. Ben laughs, callously.

NORM

What's so amusing?

BEN

This was a set up from the start. I mean, the *postcard*, the *flight recording*, and then this...

Ben throws the ADOPTION paper on the table. Glares down Norm.

BEN

I've seen some gifted grifters, but this was a work of art.

GEORGE

What's that?

Frankie and George look at Norm, confused.

BEN

"*What's that*"? Cut the crap. Game time's over.

NORM

Ben, this isn't a game. I told you from day one, all you will get from us is the truth, and nothing but.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

I can see how you faked everything else. But this stamp? It's one thing setting up a con, but using a 30 thousand dollar stamp? That's insane.

FRANKIE

What you're saying is insane.

GEORGE

We never sent no postcard, Brother. As for that certificate, I have no-

NORM

(Brimming with anger)

None of us would turn MY Son's death into a hoax. Never. DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

Ben looks at them all. He can tell they're sincerely upset. Ben takes a deep breath. Calms himself down.

BEN

Nothing adds up.

Frankie studies the postcard.

FRANKIE

Who uses a 30 thousand dollar stamp?

GEORGE

Someone with a whole lotta dough.

NORM

(Directly to Ben)

Someone trying to get your attention.

Ben contemplates for a moment.

BEN

Someone trying to twist my arm.

(Thinks, realizes, sighs)

Ohh. *Douchey-asshat* strikes again.

FRANKIE

Douchey, what now?

Out of the corner of Ben's eye, he notices the MAN in the ELF Costume lurking near Edith and the money.

BEN

There's this guy. He....

Ben sees Elf Man pull out a BUCK-SHOT GUN. He cold-cocks Mayor Keith in the head, and pushes Edith to the ground.

Ben jumps up from his seat and sprints at the Elf Man.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Hey, you... Stop!

Ben reaches the Elf Man. Grabs the closest thing to him... a BOOK, and hits Elf Man with it. As Elf Man topples, he SHOOTS BEN, throwing him backwards, slamming his head against the floor and knocking him unconscious.

George is right behind Ben as the gun goes off. He hurdles a pew and tackles Elf Man to the ground, disarming him.

George pulls down the Elf MASK... it's TONY, (the guy who used to sell drugs to Frankie.)

George gets on his phone.

GEORGE

This is Charlie Echo 44, we have a 10-132 at the Town Hall. We need a bus, forth-with. Multiple injuries, possible GSW. Perp is apprehended and under control.

George handcuffs Elf Man/Tony, as Frankie goes to Ben. Sees he is unconscious.

GEORGE

Is he shot?

Frankie looks at Ben's chest. Sees no blood. Looks next to him and sees the book he grabbed: "An Illustrated History of Seraphim, By Cynthia Rafferty." It's mangled with BUCK-SHOT. But probably saved his life.

FRANKIE

No. But he's not breathing.

Norm joins Frankie.

NORM

Hold him. Hold him up against you.

Ben's eyes are closed.

BEN'S UNCONCIOUS DREAM

The Street where Beth died.

Beth's pale face is turned to the side. Her head, resting on her brown, leather SATCHEL. Blood drips from her forehead.

Small snow flakes fall and rest in her hair.

Ben's face is opposite hers. She stares into Ben's eyes, but unlike before, this time she smiles.

BETH

Protegere Eos. Sanandum Eos. Teneat
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BETH (CONT'D)

Eos.

BACK TO SCENE

Frankie holds up Ben's head against her chest.

NORM

He swallowed his tongue.

Norm opens Ben's mouth and fixes the problem.

NORM

Come back, Ben. Come on. Come back.

Ben COUGHS. Wakes up. He can see Norm, Frankie and George staring at him. They all smile, relieved.

BEN

(Slurring)

Protegere Eos. Sanandum Eos. Teneat Eos.

Norm, George and Frankie stare at Ben, puzzled.

Ben smiles assuredly and points to each of them.

BEN

It's Latin.

(Points to George)

Protegere Eos. Protect them.

(Points to Norm)

Sanandum Eos. Heal them.

(Points to Frankie)

*Teneat Eos. Hold them. It's... it's on the stamp. The Fairfax Altar. Beth... Beth said it to me. *Them, them*, is me. And, *them* is you. *Them* is... everyone.*

Ben seems giddy and euphoric from this epiphany.

GEORGE

Oh, no doubt. His bell's rung good.

Frankie hands Ben some WATER. Ben drinks it, slowly. He looks at them again.

BEN

I'm okay. Really. I'm good.

The Female Producer joins the huddle around Ben. She holds her phone up. Videoing.

FEMALE PRODUCER

I got it all on video. You're a hero, Mr. Chambers. A *bona fide* hero.

(Something occurs to her)

Oh my God! I GOT THE SCOOP! I got it!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She turns away and focuses on her phone. Mumbling to herself about *scoops, Twitter, Instagram, Selina*.

Meanwhile, Norm puts a hand on Ben's cheek.

NORM
Runnin' into the fire just like Jimmy.

SIRENS can be heard outside. Frankie and George look at each other, then Norm. Frankie holds the 'Adoption Certificate'.

FRANKIE
(To Norm)
Care to share?

Norm smiles at Frankie, George, and Ben.

NORM
We should pay Jimmy a visit. Time he met his biological father.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Ben and Norm enter a SMALL CEMETERY next to the town.

Waiting by a GRAVESTONE is Frankie and George. Ben reads the gravestone ENGRAVING: *James Clancy. Beloved Son. Cherished Friend. Soul Mate.*

NORM
Ben... this is Jimmy.

Norm looks at Frankie and George, gestures for them to give Ben some space. They turn and start to walk away.

The *Stray Dog* from the park and the group home, sits at the edge of the graveyard looking on.

BEN
Eight minutes.

Frankie, Norm and George pause, turn to face Ben.

BEN
Took the ambulance eight minutes to reach her.
(Beat)
She died alone. This amazing woman. Who believed in karma, miracles and all things magical. Who gave all of herself to others... died alone. Cold and afraid. No magic. No miracles.

Ben holds his pocket-sized "B4B" BOOK. Looks at Frankie.

BEN
Beth was raised in a Catholic Orphanage. I grew up in foster care.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN (CONT'D)
 (Nods to himself)
 We were those mutts no one wanted. So,
 when we found each other, we found our
 forever home.
 (Sighs)
 But then she left.

Ben places the 'B4B' booklet on Jimmy's gravestone.

BEN (CONT'D)
 When I started writing those articles,
 I was angry. Felt all of Beth beliefs
 were bullshit. 'Cos when it mattered,
 where was her karma? Her miracle?

FRANKIE
 And now?

BEN
 Now I'm afraid to tell your story. Not
 'cos of the consequences. But if I say
 it out loud, it's like admitting Beth
 wasn't worthy of a miracle.

Ben looks at Jimmy's 'Trifecta' apologetically.

FRANKIE
 For what's it's worth; you're a part
 of this crazy, misfit family of ours.

NORM
 So, whatever you decide, we've got
 your six.

Ben looks at Jimmy's gravestone, and then at Beth. She smiles
 back at Ben, then dissipates.

Ben kneels down, rests his forehead against the gravestone.
 Jimmy's 'Trifecta' each put a comforting hand on his back.

INT. 'SCUTTLEBUTT', SELINA'S OFFICE - DAY

Selina's stalks her office, to-and-fro. Anxious. Annoyed.
 She's holding an ENVELOPE sealed with an opulent RED WAX
 INSIGNIA, embossed with a CROSS.

Sarah, pops her head in through the door.

SARAH
 Boss, did you see?

SELINA
 What?

SARAH
 Mr. Chambers is blowing up on Twitter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sarah closes the door. Selina picks up her phone. Finds a homemade video of Ben *saving the day* at the Town Hall.

She lets out a deep breath. Relieved to see Ben was okay.

INT. SERAPHIM, TOWN HALL - DAY

Back in the library/hall. Ben sits opposite the *Fairfax* Altar. He's alone.

PADRE (O.S.)
Unusual day.

Ben turns to see Padre standing quietly in the aisle.

BEN
To say the least.

Padre approaches the *Fairfax* Altar.

PADRE
So, did you decide what to do?

BEN
To do or not to do? That is indeed the question.
(Scratches his head)
For which I still have no answer.

Padre pauses, leans against the *Fairfax* Altar.

PADRE
Forgive me for prying, but what motivated the articles you write?

Ben takes a beat to gather this thoughts.

BEN
I guess, I felt that people who believed in stuff like *miracles*, couldn't cope with reality.

PADRE
What reality?

BEN
That there is no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

PADRE
And what do you believe now?

BEN
In progress.

PADRE
(Beat)
Is there a possibility your quest was
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PADRE (CONT'D)
hiding your true intent?

BEN
My 'true intent'?

Padre sits opposite Ben.

PADRE
Okay. Since your wife passed. What is
it you really wanted to know?

BEN
There's nothing to know. She's gone.

PADRE
But you've been asking the question?

BEN
What question?

PADRE
The pot of gold question.

BEN
(Getting irritated)
Where are you going with this?

PADRE
Remember when I asked you about what
'truth' you were seeking?

BEN
(Voice rises)
Yeah. Yeah, I remember. So what?

PADRE
Did you figure it out?

BEN
What happened?

PADRE
No. Did you find an answer to the
question.

BEN
(Irritated)
Again? What question?

PADRE
The one that keeps us all up at night.
(beat)
Again... What is the question?

BEN
(Angry and frustrated)
I... I... I wanted... I wanted to
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN (CONT'D)
know... is... is...
(Tears fill his eyes)
Is... she okay? Is she alone?

Padre puts a calming hand on Ben's shoulder.

PADRE
Why?

Ben stands, touches the Altar.

BEN
Because all we had was us.

PADRE
Were you scared she was alone, or that
you were abandoned?

BEN
Both. Yeah, both I suppose.
(Faces padre)
But I couldn't find an answer.

PADRE
Because, there is no answer. It's a
choice about what we believe.

BEN
A choice?

Padre joins Ben, next to the *Fairfax* Altar.

PADRE
Our souls are like the roots under
this altar. They can spread far, and
wide, long after the tree's gone.
Which is why Jimmy's family believe
he's ok. His roots are forever
intertwined with theirs. And this
belief has given them something
priceless in return.

BEN
Peace?

PADRE
(Shakes his head)
Purpose.

Ben ponders Padre's words. Wipes his eyes and flashes a faint
smile. Looks Padre up-and-down again.

BEN
(Sardonic)
Ha! Wisdom in all shapes and sizes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PADRE
Haven't heard that before.

BEN
You learn something new every day.

PADRE.
Yes. Yes you do.

Ben looks at his watch. He rises.

BEN
It's time to face the music, Padre.

Padre nods, sympathetically back at Ben.

PADRE
If you're heading south, you should stop by 'Lillian's Diner', in Neesham. Her peach cobbler with a side of caramel ice cream is outstanding.

BEN
Sadly I'm going the opposite way.

PADRE
Well, if you change your mind.

BEN
Sure. Uh... hey, good talk, Padre.

PADRE
Yes. Yes it was a good talk, Ben.

Ben nods, as he starts to walk away, he pauses. Pulls a BOOK from his Satchel: *CATCHER IN THE RYE*. He turns back toward Padre. Hands him the book.

BEN
Holden Caulfield is why I became a writer. How I found my voice.

PADRE
(A knowing smile)
Hmm.

Ben cocks his head, with a sly smile, nods. Then leaves slowly shaking his head at the oddity of it all.

INT. BEN'S CAR - DAY

Ben drives in his car. Distracted and lost in thought. He looks at his WATCH. Sees that it's 5.15 PM.

His phone RINGS. He sees it's Selina. He frowns.

When he looks up, a BRIGHT BLADE OF LIGHT, pierces his eyes. Forcing him to slightly swerve the car.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A big TRUCK going in the other direction, has drifted partially into the OPPOSITE LANE.

The SWERVE caused by the bright light, helps Ben avoid a head-on COLLISION with the truck.

His car skids over to the side of the road, untouched. The PHONE continues to ring.

Ben gets his bearings. The car is settled safely at the side of the road. Forty yards ahead is a T-JUNCTION.

One direction points to NEESHAM. The other, the CITY.

Ben takes a deep, calming breath and smiles.

He picks up his phone and sends a TEXT to Selina.

Ben starts his car and heads to the T junction. He turns toward NEESHAM.

INT. SELINA'S 'SCUTTLEBUTT' OFFICE - DAY

Selina stares at her COMPUTER. Looks at her WATCH. Sees that it's: 5:20 PM Twenty minutes PAST Ben's deadline.

Her PHONE bleeps. She sees a TEXT from Ben: "*To mine-ownself be true*". Selina cocks her head, her eyes squint in thought.

SELINA

Fair.

RONNY knocks on her office DOOR. Selina waves him in.

RONNY

You wanted to see me, Boss?

SELINA

So, you've been helping Ben?

Ronny hesitates.

RONNY

Um. I can explain. He needed-

SELINA

Why?

RONNY

Uh, 'cos he asked?

SELINA

You went behind my back. So, when I ask '*why*', I expect a real answer.

Ronny swallows, composes himself. Stands straight. Poised.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RONNY

I was curious. So, I chased down leads. Followed the story. And, to be honest it was, um... it was-

SELINA

Exhilarating?

Ronny nods back. Looks at his shoes. Selina says nothing.

RONNY

I'll, uh, I'll go clean my desk out.

Selina stares at the PICTURE on her desk of her and the guys in their KEVLAR VESTS. Especially Jon.

SELINA

Masters in journalism from *Stanford*?

Ronny looks up. Selina looks up at Ronny.

RONNY

Uh, yeah.

SELINA

Why *Scuttlebutt*?

RONNY

Um, well... you.

SELINA

Me?

RONNY

When I was 16, I attended an event for aspiring journalists. You were the keynote speaker.

Ronny decides to sit on a chair at Selina's desk.

RONNY

You were there with this British guy. And I remember you were asked what advice you have for young journalists? You said: *Never fear the facts. Prioritize integrity over prudence. And above all, be true to yourself.* (beat) I knew then, I wanted to be a reporter. Just like Selina Richardson. A frickin' legend.

Ronny looks away. Realizes he encroached by sitting down.

SELINA

And how's it working out?

RONNY

Uh, well... fine I guess.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SELINA

Fine's for curtains. Try again.

RONNY

Uh... you know the phrase; '*Never meet your heroes*'... well, yeah.

Ronny's mouth drops.

RONNY

Guessing I should go update my
LinkedIn profile?

Selina looks at a small PICTURE on the wall of her, with Ben and Beth on their WEDDING day.

She then looks at an ENVELOPE with the red wax insignia. Selina grabs a LETTER OPENER from her desk. Ronny flinches.

Selina opens the envelope. Reads the *document* inside. Smiles.

SELINA

Huh. Well whaddya know?

Selina then scrutinizes Ronny.

SELINA

Tell me about everything you've been working on for Ben.

RONNY

Um. Okay. There a reason why?

SELINA

'Cos it's time to leave the island.

Ronny looks back at Selina, puzzled. But then she smiles. A kind, inviting smile.

INT. LILLIAN'S DINER - DAY

Ben sits at the COUNTER. Lillian, George's mom, stands on the other side.

LILLIAN

I was hoping you'd pay me a visit.

BEN

Apparently your peach cobbler's '*heaven sent*'. So, it'd be a sin not to give it a try.

LILLIAN

Not sure it's divine, but it's won the town pie contest a time or two!

Lillian goes to fetch the PIE from a tray display.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEN

Could you put a scoop'a *caramel ice cream* on the side?

LILLIAN

Comin' right up.

Ben browses over his NOTES. Lillian serves up the pie.

BEN

Thanks.

Lillian turns to walk away, but pauses.

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

Huh... ain't that a coincidence.

(Points to the dish)

That combo was Jimmy's favorite.

BEN

Right. Of course it is.

LILLIAN

Not the usual. But then again, Jimmy always was a little... Jimmy.

Lillian pulls down a PICTURE from the top shelf.

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

Last I saw him was the mornin' he deployed. So handsome in his uniform.

BEN

Mind if I a look? Only seen pictures of him as a kid.

Lillian hands the picture to Ben.

LILLIAN

He was only twenty-four. But had such an old, gentle soul.

Ben stares at the picture. His face twists into SHOCK.

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

(Smiles fondly)

Like he'd always tell me: 'Aunt Lil, *Wisdom comes in all shapes and sizes.*'

Ben's eyes WIDEN, the FORK he holds drops from his hand.

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

You okay, Honey?

Ben looks up at Lillian, bewildered. He waves the picture.

BEN

Mind if borrow this?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ben throws a TEN DOLLAR BILL on the counter, and bolts.

Lillian watches him go, shakes her head.

INT. SERAPHIM, TOWN HALL - NIGHT

Early evening.

Ben BURSTS into the hallway, out of breath. All is quiet.

BEN
Hello? Padre? Jimmy?

Ben goes to the Fairfax Altar. He looks at the picture again.

INSERT PICTURE

JIMMY and NORM outside Lillian's Diner.

Jimmy's in his NAVY WHITES.

A closer look at Jimmy's face reveals that he's 'PADRE'.

END INSERT

A voice whispers in the silence...

BETH (O.S.)
(Whisper)
Hey, Dummy.

The back doors of the room open. A BRIGHT LIGHT follows. Ben shields his eyes. He sees TWO FIGURES silhouetted.

They come into focus, Ben can see JIMMY (Padre) and BETH.
(Unlike 'Beth' in Jimmy's imagination, this Beth isn't wearing the clothes she died in. She looks real, like Jimmy.)

Beth tightly holds Jimmy's hand. She then blows Ben a KISS. Ben grabs it, puts it in his heart. Repeats the gesture.

BETH
Thank you.

The light behind Jimmy and Beth fades, as do they. Soon they disappear. All that remains is an open door to the outside.

Benn walks toward the door. Tears fall freely.

BEN
Good talk... Son.

Ben walks toward his car, and sees that same Collie-Sheppard Stray Dog. And somewhere in the distance he can hear Christmas Carolers singing:

'Silent night, holy night. All is calm, all is bright...'

INT. LIBYA, MAKESHIFT PRESS ROOM - DAY

Super: *Libya, One Year Later*

A picture hangs from a wooden wall. The picture features a SCUTTLEBUTT MAGAZINE COVER. On the cover: *Phil Knox trying to shield his humiliated face from half-a-dozen cameras.*

The magazine's CAPTION reads:

'Teflon Phil, Fixed for Fraud - Powerful Business Man Cons Church and Bribes Widower Journalist.'

A subhead at the bottom of the page reads: *'Scuttlebutt to be Re-branded'*

Selina sits at a table in a hot, dusty PRESS ROOM with slapdash chairs and tables. She looks happy and content.

A name tag on her desk reads: *'Editor-in-Chief, Scuttle News'*

RONNY bundles excitedly through the door.

RONNY

Chief... Package for you.

Ronny places the package on Selina's desk.

In the corner of the room is another desk. Sitting there, is the young *female producer* from WPIJ local news station. Ronny gives her a shy wave. She smiles back.

Selina opens the package. A BOOK is inside. She opens the cover and sees a written inscription: *"You can take the girl out of the fight, but not the fight out of the girl"*.

Selina smiles. Looks at a pic on her desk of Jon and Ben.

SELINA

Door kicking tonight with the big boys, Sparky?

RONNY

First time.

SELINA

Head on a swivel... fair?

RONNY

Fair, Chief.

Ronny leaves the room. Selina looks at the book. Closes it. The cover shows an image of an ANGEL STATUE.

The BOOK TITLE reads: *'Seraphim's Miracle', By Ben Chambers'*.

INT. SERAPHIM TOWN HALL - NIGHT

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A cleanly shaven Ben stands next to the *Fairfax Altar*, as he reads from a book to an AUDIENCE of thirty-or-so people.

Multiple copies of his book, '*Seraphim's Miracle*', are stacked on a table in front of him.

BEN

So, as a wise young man once said to me... "Maybe people aren't as cynical as you think. Maybe, they long for an impossible story, told by an improbable person, to touch their hearts, and give them hope."

(Closes book)

I hope in some small way, I've illuminated yours.

The audience APPLAUDS enthusiastically.

BEN

Any questions?

Ben sees a hand at the back. Their face is in shadow.

WOMAN (FRANKIE)

How do you feel about eating ice cream in the middle of winter?

The woman steps forward. Ben sees that it's Frankie. Behind her is Norm and George. Ben smiles back.

BEN

Other than strawberry, I'm all for it.

Jimmy's '*Trifecta*' laugh. Ben silently nods back and smiles.

EXT. ICE CREAM PARLOR - NIGHT

Snow falls outside. Holiday lights wink and sparkle.

Ben, Norm, George, and Frankie sit by a steamed-up window as they EAT ICE CREAM (not strawberry) and laugh merrily.

Laying on the floor, next to the booth is the Collie-Sheppard mix *Stray Dog*... now named Padre.

Parked outside in front is a fully RESTORED and gleaming, late-1960s RED FORD MUSTANG.

A reflection in the window of the Ice Cream Parlor shows two figures across the street, holding hands.

It's BETH and JIMMY. They watch their loved ones and smile, contentedly. A bus passes in front of them. And just like that... they're gone.

END