

5-16-2008

The Sanctity

Jason D. Buch
University of New Orleans

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td>

Recommended Citation

Buch, Jason D., "The Sanctity" (2008). *University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations*. 668.
<https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td/668>

This Thesis is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by ScholarWorks@UNO with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Thesis in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Thesis has been accepted for inclusion in University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UNO. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uno.edu.

The Sanctity

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in
Film, Theatre and Communication Arts
Creative Writing

by

Jason D. Buch

B.S. University of South Florida, 1999

May, 2008

This is dedicated to my family
who have always supported me --
My mom Ellen, my dad Dhar, and
my brother Chris.

Acknowledgements

I would like to recognize the contributions and support of the people who helped make this thesis possible: My committee, Michelle Benoit, Henry Griffin and Joanna Leake; Lish McBride, who was always willing to read a draft; Barb Johnson, who brought a unique perspective and helped me to see things in a different light; my fellow screenwriting students, Karen Atherton and Peter Hagen, who gave me excellent feedback on the piece; and all of the other students and professors in the Creative Writing Workshop who created an environment that encourages creativity and hard work, without losing sight of the things that are important in life.

FADE IN:

EXT. DONOVAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

DONOVAN LEWIS, 30s, a man of few, but powerful, words. His clothing is simple, modern. He carries a duffle bag slung over one shoulder.

Donovan waits outside the door of a colorful cottage-style house with crafted architectural details. An older home in an older neighborhood. He holds a set of KEYS in his hand.

In a window beside the door, MAGGIE, 20s, appears. Donovan glances at her. She gives a questioning look, then disappears.

Donovan turns back as the door unbolts and swings inward. Maggie steps out, wraps her arms around him, and gives him a long KISS.

MAGGIE

What are you doing out here?

She stares at him for a moment. Donovan looks back, no answer to be found. Maggie smiles.

MAGGIE (cont'd)

Never mind. You're here, that's all I care about.

She pulls him into...

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Donovan follows Maggie into a brightly painted, but modest, room. Sparse, yet homey.

Donovan looks at the walls.

DONOVAN

You painted.

Maggie smiles and drags him farther in, pulling the bag off his shoulder.

MAGGIE

I was hoping you wouldn't notice.
You don't mind, do you?

Donovan waits for a moment, then takes her in his arms.

DONOVAN
Of course not. It's beautiful,
just like you.

He kisses her. They gaze into each other's eyes. They kiss again. The kisses turn into the groping of two lovers long parted. Donovan kicks the door closed.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

A simple bedroom. A VANITY with a MIRROR is against one wall. Donovan and Maggie's clothes from the night before are spread over the floor.

Maggie MOANS. Bodies move beneath the sheets. The MOANS continue, grow louder.

Maggie grinds on top of Donovan. The sex is heated. Their bodies stop, hold at the moment of passion.

Maggie rolls onto her back, reveals Donovan underneath her.

Donovan turns onto his side to face her, a sweaty smile on his face.

MAGGIE
God, that was good!

The smile fades from Donovan's face.

DONOVAN
I wish you wouldn't say that. Not
when...

Maggie props herself up on her elbow, looks down at him.

MAGGIE
Sorry. I forgot.

Donovan stares back, frown still in place.

MAGGIE (cont'd)
Well it's been a year! What did
you expect?

Donovan can't hold the frown and breaks into a smile.

DONOVAN
You know I can't stay mad at you.

He takes her in his arms, kisses her again.

MAGGIE
I just want things to be like they
were. That was good, right?

DONOVAN
Yeah, that was good.

Maggie reaches for him, playful.

MAGGIE
'Cause if that didn't do it for
you, I don't mind trying again.

Donovan pulls away.

DONOVAN
I have to get ready.

Maggie watches as Donovan stands, pulls on his shorts.

Donovan takes a few steps towards the bathroom. He turns
back to look at her.

MAGGIE
You've changed, Donovan. You know
that, right?

Donovan turns and walks into the bathroom.

INT. SHOWER - DAY

Water pelts Donovan's face. He's deep in thought.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Donovan steps in front of the mirror. He wears a black, long
sleeved shirt, buttoned to the neck. He stares at his
reflection. He raises his hand up, holds a WHITE COLLAR,
which he fastens around his neck.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Donovan enters from the bathroom in his full priest uniform.

Donovan goes straight to the vanity. In the mirror, Maggie
is reflected. She's crouched on the bed, now wearing a robe.

MAGGIE
Are you sure you can't put it off
for a few days?

Donovan studies her reflection. Her smile. Her BARE LEG.
The hint of her BREAST where the robe hangs open.

MAGGIE (cont'd)
Well? You could say something.

DONOVAN
Father Matthews will be waiting.

MAGGIE
You could say something else.

DONOVAN
See you tonight, beautiful.

He smiles at her reflection, turns to walk out of the room.

MAGGIE
Aren't you forgetting something?

Donovan stops, turns back to the vanity. He looks down...

On the counter, in a dish, a GOLD WEDDING BAND. Tentative,
Donovan picks it up, brings it up in front of his face. He
stares at it. Still reflected in the mirror, Maggie walks up
behind him. She wraps her arms around his waist, kisses him
on the neck.

MAGGIE (cont'd)
My husband, the priest.

Donovan slips the ring on his finger.

EXT. ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE CHURCH - DAY

A Gothic Catholic church on a crowded street. Donovan climbs
the stairs and enters.

INT. ST. PAUL, FOYER - DAY

Donovan makes his way into the foyer. It's a grand church,
ornate and dimly lit by shafts of light that filter in.

A statue of St. Paul is set back into an alcove by the door.

Donovan stops at a FONT, dips his fingers into the holy
water, and crosses himself.

He turns towards the main hall, pauses, lets the moment sink
in. Then he takes a confident step forward.

INT. ST. PAUL, NAVE - DAY

The nave is vast, two rows of wooden pews flank the aisle which leads to an ornate altar. A large WOODEN CRUCIFIX hangs over the altar and stained glass windows line the sides of the building.

Sconces hung on the walls provide additional illumination where the light from the windows can't reach.

Donovan walks down the aisle, meets FATHER MATTHEWS, 50s, a stern man with a disapproving face.

FATHER MATTHEWS
Father Lewis. You're late.

DONOVAN
I apologize, Father.

Father Matthews notices something, glances down, sees...

Donovan's wedding ring.

Father Matthews motions to it.

FATHER MATTHEWS
I thought we had settled this matter.

Donovan holds his hand up. He watches Father Matthews.

FATHER MATTHEWS (cont'd)
It raises too many questions with the parishioners. Please. No one is asking you to break your wedding vow. I just want to maintain some degree of order.

DONOVAN
You have my answer.

Father Matthews sighs.

FATHER MATTHEWS
Consider it, at least. I can't force you, but it would make things easier. There are those who won't understand.

Donovan stares at him, waits for the topic to change.

FATHER MATTHEWS (cont'd)
Very well. If you must. Let me
finish showing you around.

They start walking, past the pews to the edge of the room.

Donovan glances around the church. There are a few scattered parishioners amongst the pews.

He focuses on a statue of the VIRGIN MARY, which is mounted over several rows of votive candles. JUDE, 20s, a pretty young woman, lights one of the candles and says a silent prayer.

She looks up and spots Donovan watching her.

Donovan turns away. Father Matthews stops in front of the confessional.

FATHER MATTHEWS (cont'd)
Episcopalians don't take
confessions, do they?

DONOVAN
They perform the Act of Contrition,
but no, they don't use a
confessional.

FATHER MATTHEWS
I've always felt it was better to
speak one's sins out loud. A truly
tortured soul sometimes won't admit
to themselves what they will in
there.

Donovan looks at the confessional.

The confessional, a dark stained wooden structure. Its sides are carved with intricate scrollwork. Two doors allow access for the priest and the penitent.

FATHER MATTHEWS (cont'd)
And believe me, I've heard more
than a few things that keep me up
at night.

Father Matthews watches Donovan, who is fixated on the confessional.

FATHER MATTHEWS (cont'd)
Do you have any questions?

DONOVAN

There are no hours posted.

FATHER MATTHEWS

The conscience of man will not be
slave to the wheels of time. My
ears are always open for
confession. And so are yours.

Donovan nods and turns his gaze back on the confessional.

LATER

Donovan stands outside the confessional, keeping his
distance. Father Matthews is gone. Donovan turns to survey
the crowd in the church.

There are a few more PEOPLE scattered among the pews. He
catches the eye of an OLD WOMAN kneeling in one of the pews.

Donovan nods to her, but she looks down, returns to her
prayer without acknowledging him.

Donovan sighs, turns back to the confessional...

Jude stands in front of him.

JUDE

Hello Father... Donovan, is it?

Donovan smiles. Finally.

DONOVAN

Lewis. I prefer to be addressed by
my last name. Miss?

She touches his arm, a little too informal.

He looks down at her hand, her fingers against his sleeve.

JUDE

Jude. Just Jude. I prefer to be
addressed by my first name.

Donovan nods, but doesn't laugh at the joke, distracted by
Jude's touch.

She pulls her hand away, laughing off her lame attempt at a
joke, and searches for something to change the topic.

JUDE (cont'd)
That's not something you see every
day.

She motions towards Donovan's hand.

Donovan holds it up, his ring flashing as he does.

DONOVAN
Does it stand out that much?

JUDE
Word gets around quick.
Everybody's talking about it behind
your back.

DONOVAN
Except you.

JUDE
I find the front much more
appealing.

Donovan's attention perks, surprised at how forward this
woman is.

Jude again catches herself, embarrassed.

JUDE (cont'd)
I'm sorry. That came out wrong. I
just meant -

DONOVAN
It's OK. I know this is a new
situation for everyone. I want you
to think of me like any other
priest.

JUDE
But you're not, are you? I mean,
you're unique.

Donovan shakes his head, quick to dispel the misconception.
It's a prepared answer to an expected question.

DONOVAN
No. There are about a hundred of
us. Mostly former Episcopalians
who were already married when we
were accepted into the Church.

Donovan spots a crying woman, KATE, 30s, proper but
distracted, enter the confessional.

JUDE

If you don't mind me asking, why
did you convert?

Donovan looks back at Jude - a question equally expected, but
that he's less prepared for. He glances at the confessional.

DONOVAN

I'm sorry... Jude. We'll have to
continue this conversation another
time. I have duties to attend to.

She smiles and nods.

JUDE

Sure.

Jude leaves. Donovan turns back to the confessional.

INT. CONFESSIONAL - DAY

Donovan settles into his seat opposite the screen. The
pattern on the screen is tight. It's difficult to see the
person on the other side.

Donovan looks around, inspects the interior. He runs a hand
along the interior wall, feels the wood against his fingers.
His eyes are drawn down. He sees...

A BIBLE set to one side. He reaches for it when...

Through the screen, Kate sobs.

KATE

Bless me Father, for I have sinned.
It has been two weeks since my last
confession.

Donovan straightens, but does not answer. A moment passes.

KATE (cont'd)

Father?

DONOVAN

Tell me your sins. What weighs
heavy on your soul?

KATE

I... I know it was wrong, father,
but I cheated on my husband.

Donovan sighs. First time and already it's predictable. He looks to the Bible, as if it's responsible. As if it's put Kate here as a test for him.

KATE (cont'd)
Father?

DONOVAN
Are you truly sorry for what you
have done?

KATE
Yes, Father.

Donovan fixates on her lips through the screen.

DONOVAN
And have you confessed to your
husband?

Kate looks up, still sobbing.

KATE
What?

DONOVAN
Have you told your husband what you
have done?

KATE
No... No, I can't. I can't do that
to him.

Donovan looks at the Bible once more.

KATE (cont'd)
Father?

DONOVAN
I can offer you no absolution until
you confess to your husband.

KATE
What?

His reaction takes Kate by surprise, and her sobbing stops.

DONOVAN
I'm sorry, but I can't help you.

KATE

What? No, you have to. Please.
I'll say as many Hail Mary's as you
want. But I can't tell him.

Donovan summons an inner calm, searching his mind.

DONOVAN

"When a man or woman wrongs another
and so is unfaithful to the Lord,
that person is guilty and must
confess the sin he has committed."

He leans in closer to the screen.

DONOVAN (cont'd)

"He must make full restitution for
his wrong, add one fifth to it and
give it all to the person he has
wronged."

KATE

Add one fifth to what?

Donovan closes his eyes, leans back in his seat.

KATE (cont'd)

Father?

DONOVAN

It means that you have wronged your
husband, and however painful it is,
you have to tell him.

KATE

I can't...

Donovan doesn't move. Doesn't open his eyes.

Kate leaves, slams the door behind her.

INT. ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE CHURCH, NAVE - DAY

Kate sobs and hurries from the confessional.

Father Matthews watches her go. He looks back.

The confessional looms.

INT. ST. PAUL, SACRISTY - NIGHT

Donovan holds his robes out on a hanger, checks over them.

Father Matthews approaches.

Donovan turns to him and smiles.

FATHER MATTHEWS
Getting settled in?

Donovan nods.

FATHER MATTHEWS (cont'd)
Good. Good. No problems with any
of the parishioners?

DONOVAN
No problems.

FATHER MATTHEWS
That's good.

Father Matthews smiles, waits.

Donovan hangs the robes back up.

DONOVAN
Was there something else?

FATHER MATTHEWS
I noticed that you met Miss Jones.

DONOVAN
Who?

FATHER MATTHEWS
Miss Jones. Jude Jones.

Donovan shifts his weight so that he faces Father Matthews directly.

DONOVAN
Yes, Jude. She introduced herself.

FATHER MATTHEWS
Pretty, isn't she?

DONOVAN
Excuse me?

FATHER MATTHEWS
She's a pretty girl, isn't she?

Donovan shifts, uncomfortable. Where is this going?

DONOVAN
I suppose she is.

FATHER MATTHEWS
I believe I once overheard one of
the altar boys call her hot.

Donovan laughs and goes back to straightening the robes on
the hanger.

DONOVAN
I'm sure the altar boys say a lot
of things.

Father Matthews positions himself so that Donovan can't help
but look at his face.

FATHER MATTHEWS
I trust that despite your unusual
circumstances, I have no need to be
concerned?

Donovan straightens up. So that's what this is about.

DONOVAN
I assure you, Father, I am as
devoted to my vows as any priest in
the parish.

Father Matthews relaxes his posture, becomes less
threatening. His point is made.

FATHER MATTHEWS
Of course. Forgive me for
suggesting otherwise.

They watch each other again, then...

DONOVAN
May I go now?

Father Matthews nods his assent.

Donovan takes a few steps away, turns. He pauses to glance
back over his shoulder.

Father Matthews watches him.

Donovan walks away at a brisk pace.

EXT. ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE CHURCH - NIGHT

Donovan exits the building, closes the door tight behind him.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Donovan strolls past more colorful, older houses, like his own, closely grouped. It's an urban street, but not a bad neighborhood. An historic district. It's quiet.

INT./EXT. DONOVAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

From across the street, Donovan looks at his house.

Through the window he can see Maggie, stretched out on the couch. She watches TV.

Donovan gathers himself.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Donovan closes the door softly, turns into the room.

Maggie from the couch, looks up. She smiles.

MAGGIE
Hey! How was it?

Donovan looks at Maggie, takes in her beauty.

MAGGIE (cont'd)
Your first day. How'd it go?

Donovan crosses past her, suddenly not in the mood to talk.

DONOVAN
Fine. It was fine.

He passes the opening into the dining room, stops.

The table is set for dinner, with candles.

Maggie approaches behind him, wraps her arms around his waist in a tender embrace. Her chin rests on his shoulder.

MAGGIE
I made meatloaf.

She kisses his neck.

MAGGIE (cont'd)
And mashed potatoes.

She kisses the other side of his neck.

MAGGIE (cont'd)
With gravy.

She places her hand under his chin and gently turns his head to face her. She kisses him lightly on the lips.

DONOVAN
And pie?

MAGGIE
Pecan.

Donovan kisses her.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Donovan, seated, waits. He adjusts his seat, straightens the silverware, reacquaints himself with his own house.

Maggie enters and sets the plate of meatloaf down. She picks up a butane lighter.

A FLAME ignites at the end of the lighter, lowers slowly to the wick of the candle, ignites it.

Donovan peers into the fire, watches it dance. Maggie's hand pulls away, but Donovan keeps looking into the flame.

The flame reflects in his eye.

LOLA (V.O.)
Hail Mary, full of grace...

The flame burns higher, flickers, dances.

FLASHBACK -- INT. ST. PAUL, NAIVE - NIGHT

The flame burns in the eye of an angry TEENAGE DONOVAN, 19. He's dressed in a Catholic school uniform with a cross around his neck. He's seething, not the calm adult he will become.

He stands next to the row of votive candles, underneath the statue of the Virgin Mary.

LOLA, 40s, reserved, kneels before the candles and has just finished lighting one. Her other hand holds a ROSARY.

LOLA
The Lord is with thee.

DONOVAN
So what, you come here and all is forgiven? You should have told me.

Lola tries to ignore him, pushes on with the prayer.

LOLA
Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is-

DONOVAN
Mom! Look at me.

He grabs her shoulder.

MAGGIE (V.O.)
Donovan?

BACK TO PRESENT

Maggie stands over Donovan, stares down at him.

MAGGIE
Donovan?

Donovan looks up at her. Where is he? Then...

DONOVAN
Sorry. I'm OK.

He takes her hand, smiles, his mind returning to the present.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
Really. I'm fine.

Maggie looks at the table.

MAGGIE
Shit. I forgot the ketchup.

She looks up to see a frown on Donovan's face.

MAGGIE (cont'd)
Sorry.

She moves to leave. Donovan holds onto her hand.

DONOVAN

It's OK.

Maggie pulls away.

MAGGIE

No, no it's not. You can't have
meatloaf without ketchup. It'll
just take a minute.

She exits into the kitchen. Donovan's eyes follow her.

The sound of the REFRIGERATOR OPENING, then closing, followed
shortly by Maggie striding back into the room.

She sets the red bottle down in front of Donovan.

As she takes her seat...

MAGGIE (cont'd)

There we go. Now we can eat.
Everything's perfect.

She cuts a slice of meatloaf, puts it on Donovan's plate.

She looks at Donovan, expectantly.

He looks back, more interested in her face than the food.

MAGGIE (cont'd)

Well go ahead.

Donovan smiles at her.

DONOVAN

I've missed this.

Maggie cuts a slice of meatloaf for herself.

MAGGIE

I bet Seminary food sucks. Was it
all bread and water, or what?

DONOVAN

I didn't mean the food.

Maggie stops, fork full of food in mid air. She smiles at
him, then takes a bite.

MAGGIE

I'm glad you made it back in time
for Mara's wedding.

(MORE)

MAGGIE (cont'd)
She'd have been devastated if you weren't there. Plus, Father Chris has been asking about you.

DONOVAN
Oh yeah, what did he say?

MAGGIE
He asked if you'd come to your senses yet. I think he misses you.

Maggie smiles.

Donovan smiles back, takes a bite, then turns and something catches his eye...

THE FLAME weaves left and right.

INT. ST. PAUL, NAVE - DAY

The church is full of parishioners, a service in progress.

Donovan stands at the pulpit. His eyes scan the crowd. He speaks, forceful, loud, in contrast to his normal voice.

DONOVAN
"It is good for a man not to marry. But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband."

Kate sits next to GEORGE, an older man, 50s. She watches Donovan intently.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
I am weak. I admit it. I have a weakness that tears at my heart, at my soul.

Father Matthews stands to the side of the altar. He stares at Donovan, a frown on his face.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
"It is good for a man to stay unmarried. But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion."

Donovan's gaze settles on Jude, who locks eyes with him.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
I burn with passion. I burn with
passion for a woman. Since the
moment I first saw her, I burn.

A scattering of SHOCKED MURMURS flows across the crowd.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
Like St. Augustine, I prayed.
"Grant me chastity and continence,
only... not yet." Not yet. Try as
I might, I couldn't force her from
my mind. So I did the only thing I
could...

Donovan pauses. He looks over the faces in the crowd.

They hang on his next word.

Father Matthews is not a happy man.

Donovan glances down at the unopened Bible in front of him.
Then, resolute, he looks up, faces the crowd.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
I married her.

A collective release from the crowd.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
And in doing so, I did nothing more
than what the Bible says. "It is
better to marry than to burn with
passion."

Donovan steps from behind the pulpit, moves closer to the
people.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
I have a weakness, but that
weakness brings me closer to you...
closer to God, not farther away.
Those of you who are married, what
would you be without your wives,
your husbands?

He lowers his voice, but the room is silent, so his words
carry far.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
You would be less than you are.
Incomplete. And so would I. I am
priest and I am a man.

Donovan notices something...

A MAN in the back row. He wears a BASEBALL CAP and DARK GLASSES, his face obscured.

DONOVAN (cont'd)

I am married and I am devout, and I defy any of you prove that being one lessens and not strengthens my ability to be the other.

The parishioners are shocked to silence.

Father Matthews, anger on his face.

Donovan surveys the room again, pleased with the response.

LATER

Donovan and Father Matthews, side by side, deliver Communion.

Kate approaches Father Matthews, but glances over at Donovan as she does. Donovan catches her eye.

FATHER MATTHEWS

Body of Christ.

He places the host in her hand.

Donovan turns back to his own line. A few people back, Jude stares him down.

When her turn arrives, Jude steps up to him. Her mouth drops open, her tongue out slightly as she waits.

Donovan places the host on her tongue.

DONOVAN

Body of Christ.

Jude hesitates for a moment, then flicks the host into her mouth with her tongue. She smiles before moving away.

Donovan watches her go until the next parishioner steps up.

LATER

Donovan chats with TWO ELDERLY PARISHIONERS. He talks with his hands, raises his left hand up. His RING clearly visible.

As he turns from the Elderly Parishioners, he spots two GIGGLING GIRLS pointing in his direction.

They notice him watching them, giggle more, and hurry off.

A HAND grasps Donovan's shoulder. He turns to see...

Father Matthews looms behind him.

FATHER MATTHEWS
A word, Father Lewis? Now?

Donovan nods.

Father Matthews pulls him aside, away from the parishioners. He glances around to make sure they are alone.

FATHER MATTHEWS (cont'd)
What was that?

DONOVAN
What?

Father Matthews looks back at the room, then speaks in a hushed but angry tone.

FATHER MATTHEWS
That sermon.

DONOVAN
It was the topic on everyone's mind, so I gave it to them.

Father Matthews leans in, close.

FATHER MATTHEWS
When I agreed to take you in, I did not agree to let you turn my church into your own political soapbox.

DONOVAN
And when I agreed to come here, I did not agree to censor myself.

FATHER MATTHEWS
Do not deliver another sermon like that in my church.

DONOVAN
With respect, I don't intend to have the contents of my sermons dictated to me.

The two men stand in silence for a moment. Father Matthew is at a loss for words.

INT. CONFSSIONAL - NIGHT

Donovan rests his head on the back of the confessional.

A SHADOW passes over him as someone enters on the other side.

Donovan does not appear to notice.

THE CONFESSOR
Bless me Father, for I have sinned.
It has been three days since my
last confession.

Without leaning forward, Donovan answers.

DONOVAN
Tell me your sins, my son.

The man, THE CONFESSOR, 30s, leans closer to the screen, but still cannot be clearly seen.

THE CONFESSOR
I have coveted.

Donovan still doesn't move.

DONOVAN
What is it that you covet?

THE CONFESSOR
We covet that which we cannot have,
and which others have, but are
unworthy of.

DONOVAN
You feel yourself more worthy than
another?

THE CONFESSOR
"For some are eunuchs because they
were born that way; others were
made that way by men; and others
have renounced marriage because of
the kingdom of heaven."

Donovan, for the first time, looks at the screen and the figure behind it.

DONOVAN
Matthew 19:12.

THE CONFESSOR
Why have you come to us?

DONOVAN
I am here to absolve you of your
sins.

The Confessor's mouth cracks a smile.

THE CONFESSOR
And I am here to punish you for
yours.

Donovan watches the outline of the man opposite him. This is something new.

The man's face is obstructed by the screen. Only the shape of a BASEBALL CAP and DARK GLASSES.

DONOVAN
What makes you think I've sinned?

The Confessor's grin continues as he talks.

THE CONFESSOR
Tell me, Father, how does your wife
like being married to a priest?

DONOVAN
My wife? Who...

THE CONFESSOR
What's the matter, Father? Is
there something wrong? Are you
burning with passion?

Donovan leans forward, raises his voice in an attempt to regain control of the conversation.

DONOVAN
Who are you?

THE CONFESSOR
I am your confessor. You can tell
me all your dirty little secrets,
all the nasty things your pretty
little wife whispers in your ear
while you're sticking it to her.

DONOVAN
Leave my wife out of this.

THE CONFESSOR
Does she play the slut for you?
Does she beg you for it?

DONOVAN
Shut up.

THE CONFESSOR
Do you scream the name of God when
you're inside her? Does she?

Donovan grips the screen.

DONOVAN
Shut up.

THE CONFESSOR
Or do you cry to the Devil,
shouting obscenities when you make
her come?

Donovan grips the screen tighter, his face close to it.

DONOVAN
Shut up. Shut up. Shut up.

THE CONFESSOR
Do you see the face of Christ as
you ram your cock into her tight,
wet -

DONOVAN
Shut the fuck up!

Silence. Donovan is shocked at himself.

The Confessor laughs, a low drawn out laugh.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
Get out.

THE CONFESSOR
So eloquent. Certainly not a sign
of weakness.

DONOVAN
Get out.

THE CONFESSOR
I accept your challenge, Father.

The Confessor slides from the booth.

Donovan holds, watches the light vanish as the door swings closed. When the shock wears off, Donovan exits the booth.

INT. ST PAUL, NAVE - NIGHT

Donovan hurries from the confessional, looks, searches, but sees no sign of The Confessor.

Several PEOPLE still remain scattered throughout the pews. Donovan looks at the faces of all of the men, tries to recognize The Confessor, but he can't.

The DOOR to the church swings shut, draws Donovan's attention.

A hand grabs Donovan's shoulder. Donovan starts, pulls away.

FATHER MATTHEWS
Father Lewis?

Donovan still scans the crowd.

Father Matthews looks at the last man Donovan was staring at, then back at Donovan.

DONOVAN
A man, in the confessional... I
think he -

FATHER MATTHEWS
Must I remind you of the sanctity
of the confessional? What you are
told in there is private, between
the confessor and God.

Donovan turns to Father Matthews.

DONOVAN
But -

FATHER MATTHEWS
When you converted, you took a vow
to uphold our traditions, and I
know how seriously you take your
vows.

Donovan pauses, frustrated at having his own words used against him. He bites his tongue.

DONOVAN
Of course. I apologize Father.

Donovan looks once more around the room, then leaves.

Father Matthews watches him go.

INT. DONOVAN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Donovan closes the door, locks it. He peers out the window.

MAGGIE (O.S.)
How was work?

Donovan peers out at the street again.

ON THE STREET

All is quiet.

BACK IN THE HOUSE

Donovan turns to Maggie, moves to speak, but stops when he sees her.

Maggie is dressed in revealing lingerie, a silk robe hanging loosely over her body.

DONOVAN
What are you doing?

Maggie glides across the room to Donovan.

She drapes an arm over him.

MAGGIE
What does it look like?

She leans in to kiss him, but Donovan pulls away.

DONOVAN
Not now.

She kisses him.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
I said -

She kisses him again, backs him up against the door.

Maggie kisses up the side of his face, to his ear.

DONOVAN (cont'd)

No...

Maggie whispers into Donovan's ear.

MAGGIE

I need you. I want you.

She pulls back a little. They look into each other's eyes.

Maggie raises her hand, unfastens Donovan's shirt. She grips the WHITE COLLAR, pulls it from his neck. The collar falls from her hand to the floor.

LOUD MOANING and SPRINGS CREAKING...

INT. DONOVAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Donovan, on top, vigorously thrusts into Maggie.

MAGGIE

Oh yes. Yes! God yes!

Donovan's face, lost in the moment. He continues to thrust.

Maggie's face. This is what she's been missing.

Donovan looks down at her. His expression drops as he hears...

THE CONFESSOR (V.O.)

How does your wife like being married to a priest?

He pounds away, but his enjoyment fades, turns to anger. He thrusts harder, tries to drive The Confessor from his mind.

THE CONFESSOR (V.O.) (cont'd)

Do you scream the name of God when you're inside her?

Maggie nears climax, her face alight with ecstasy.

THE CONFESSOR (V.O.) (cont'd)

Does she?

Donovan pushes into her one last time as they both orgasm.

Donovan SCREAMS, a guttural, howling scream.

Donovan collapses on top of his wife, sweat dripping from their naked bodies.

Exhausted, he rolls off of her, turns away from her, ashamed.

Maggie wraps her arm around him, holds him close. Her face pure happiness. Donovan's anything but.

INT. ST. PAUL, NAVE - NIGHT

Donovan walks through the aisle. His eyes drift from face to face in the scattered crowd. Some are familiar, others not.

LATER

The church is empty of parishioners.

Donovan sits on a pew, leans on the pew in front of him. A THUD draws his attention.

Donovan spots the confessional, sees the back of a MAN enter.

Donovan steps up to the door on the priest's side, pushes it open.

INT. CONFESSIONAL - NIGHT

Donovan takes his seat.

THE CONFESSOR

Bless me Father, for I have sinned.

Donovan leans forward. Enough of this game.

DONOVAN

Who are you?

THE CONFESSOR

It has been one day since my last confession.

DONOVAN

What do you want from me? Why did you threaten me?

Donovan scans the screen, tries to see the man behind it.

THE CONFESSOR

I told you what I want.

DONOVAN
To punish me? For what?

THE CONFESSOR
"Blessed are they who keep their
flesh undefiled, for they shall be
the temple of God."

DONOVAN
Because I'm married?

THE CONFESSOR
Because you pretend to be a priest,
but refuse to give yourself wholly
to God.

DONOVAN
My commitment to my wife takes
nothing away from my commitment to
God. I serve him just as well as
any other priest.

THE CONFESSOR
Do you?

Donovan draws back, defensive.

DONOVAN
Yes.

THE CONFESSOR
Then you have not been distracted
since you came here?

Donovan pauses, considers. Has he been? He dismisses the
idea.

DONOVAN
I don't know who you are, but you
have no right to come into my
church and question my commitment
to God.

THE CONFESSOR
No, Father Lewis. It is you who
have no right. No right to defile
the Church. No right to challenge
the conventions of our faith. It
is you, Father, who have come into
my church and threatened its
commitment to God.

Donovan leans back against the wall of the confessional.

THE CONFESSOR (cont'd)
Why are you here, Father? Why
choose Catholicism if you aren't
looking for forgiveness?

The Confessor's mouth cracks a smile.

THE CONFESSOR (cont'd)
Or maybe it's not forgiveness for
yourself that you seek.

DONOVAN
Who are you? What do you want from
me?

THE CONFESSOR
Haven't you guessed?

Donovan stares expectantly.

THE CONFESSOR (cont'd)
I want to kill you.

A moment when both men sit, silent. Donovan stunned. Did he
just hear that?

The Confessor bolts out of the confessional.

Donovan follows, fast.

INT. ST. PAUL, NAVE - NIGHT

Donovan exits the confessional. He spots The Confessor, a
tall, muscular man, as he strides from the confessional.

DONOVAN
Wait.

The Confessor turns, pauses. He takes off his sunglasses and
baseball hat, reveals his face. He's in his 30s, strong
features, large, but not out of shape. His lips twist into a
demented smile.

The Confessor walks out of the church.

Donovan follows.

EXT. ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE CHURCH - NIGHT

The Confessor walks off down the street. Donovan exits the
church and takes a few steps down the stairs.

DONOVAN
Please, wait!

The Confessor keeps walking and doesn't look back.

Donovan stands on the steps and watches him. Donovan is shaken.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Donovan walks quickly along a quiet street. The same bright houses we saw before flow past.

He passes an alley.

A CRASH startles him. He turns.

An overturned garbage can lies across the alley.

A YOUNG COUPLE makes out against the building. The YOUNG MAN looks up.

YOUNG MAN
Oh shit. Sorry, Father.

The Couple leaves the alley, walks past him down the street, laughing.

Donovan stares into the alley. The end of it obscured by DARKNESS.

Donovan hurries on.

EXT. DONOVAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Donovan again stares at the building. This time Maggie is not visible through the window.

Donovan looks around, nervous, scans the street.

A JOGGER runs by, but otherwise it is empty of people.

Donovan sighs, turns back to his house. He takes a step forward.

INT. DONOVAN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Donovan closes the door and fastens the latch. He turns his back to it, leans back. Emotion overcomes him.

MAGGIE (O.S.)

Donovan?

Maggie enters from the kitchen.

MAGGIE (cont'd)

Donovan? Are you OK?

Donovan tries to calm himself. He can't show weakness.

Maggie steps closer.

MAGGIE (cont'd)

What's wrong?

Donovan wraps her in his arms, embraces her. He holds her tight to him, his head on her shoulder. His face still distraught.

MAGGIE (cont'd)

It's OK. It's OK.

Donovan chokes back tears.

THE CONFESSOR (V.O.)

Why are you here, Father?

Donovan clings to his wife.

INT. ST. PAUL, NAVE - DAY

Donovan, his face weary, bags under his eyes, stares down, lost in thought. A COUGH cuts the silence.

Donovan stands at the pulpit, a packed room of PARISHIONERS waits for his sermon.

DONOVAN

Why...

He pauses, collects himself.

DONOVAN (cont'd)

Why are you here?

He looks over the confused crowd.

Jude sits close to the front, her makeup impeccable.

Donovan glances down at his notes.

THE CONFESSOR (V.O.)
Haven't you guessed?

Donovan shakes off the voice. He stammers on.

DONOVAN
Faith?

THE CONFESSOR (V.O.)
Fear?

Donovan clears his throat again.

DONOVAN
Devotion?

INTERCUT WITH

INT. CONFSSIONAL - NIGHT

The Confessor's mouth spits the words...

THE CONFESSOR
Pain? Anger?

AT THE SERMON

Donovan looks around, confused.

The crowd stares, whispers amongst themselves.

DONOVAN
Loyalty?

THE CONFESSOR
Obligation?

DONOVAN
Piety?

THE CONFESSOR
Ignorance?

DONOVAN
Need?

THE CONFESSOR
Desire?

Donovan bears down, determined to get through the speech.
His voice crescendos to a shout.

DONOVAN
Altruism? Charity?

THE CONFESSOR
Greed? Pride?

DONOVAN
Kindness? Concern?

THE CONFESSOR
Shame? Hate? Madness? Suffering?
Weakness? Insecurity? Cowar-

DONOVAN
-dice?

Donovan stops. Sweat drips from his face and his breathing is labored.

A stunned crowd stares back at him.

Donovan stands silent, lost. What did he just say?

THE SOUND OF A WOMAN SOBBING...

LATER

Kate sobs into a handkerchief.

Donovan stands in front of her in one of the aisles.

KATE
I did what you said, Father. I
confessed to George, and now he
wants a divorce.

Donovan looks past her, around the room.

PARISHIONERS are scattered about, only a handful remain, but the ones who do stare at him.

KATE (O.S.) (cont'd)
I don't know what to do. I've
never seen him like that. The
things he said to me...

Father Matthews watches from across the room, catches Donovan's eye. Donovan looks away.

He sees that Kate has trailed off. Donovan reaches out, touches her shoulder.

DONOVAN

Your husband is understandably upset. Infidelity is a difficult thing for a marriage to survive. But you did the right thing in telling him.

She looks up at him.

KATE

It doesn't feel that way.

DONOVAN

The truth is not always easy to hear...

Donovan sneaks a glance up.

Father Matthews is no longer there.

DONOVAN (cont'd)

Listen... Kate?

Kate nods.

DONOVAN (cont'd)

I apologize for what I said in the confessional. Clearly you are tormented by what you've done. I had no call to make it worse.

She stares back at Donovan. Hope.

DONOVAN (cont'd)

But I stand by my advice. Absolution is something we should seek not only in the spiritual world, but also the physical one.

She nods, dots her eyes with the cloth.

DONOVAN (cont'd)

Why don't you bring George around and I can talk to both of you, together. See if I can help?

KATE

I don't think he will. I don't think he wants me to ask him anything anymore. I don't think he loves me anymore.

DONOVAN

He does. If he didn't, he wouldn't be hurting so much. Just... just ask him.

She nods again, blows her nose.

INT. DONOVAN'S OFFICE - DAY

Donovan sits behind a desk, flips through a stack of papers. There's a KNOCK. Donovan looks up.

Father Matthews stands in an open doorway.

FATHER MATTHEWS

That was some sermon. Makes you two for two by my count. Should I expect this every time out?

DONOVAN

I'm sorry. I haven't been feeling well.

Donovan motions to the chair opposite the desk.

Father Matthews doesn't move.

FATHER MATTHEWS

How well do you know your Deuteronomy, Father Lewis?

DONOVAN

I know it.

FATHER MATTHEWS

"If you obey the Lord your God and follow his commands, you will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out."

DONOVAN

I know the passage.

FATHER MATTHEWS

"If you do not obey the Lord, the Lord will afflict you with madness, blindness and confusion of mind."

The two men watch each other.

Father Matthews turns to leave. He bumps into Jude as she walks into the doorway. She carries a plastic container.

JUDE
Oh. Excuse me!

FATHER MATTHEWS
Miss Jones. Lovely to see you.
Did you need assistance?

Donovan watches the exchange, sets his papers down.

JUDE
I just had a question for Father
Lewis. It won't take long.

Father Matthews nods. He turns back to Donovan.

FATHER MATTHEWS
I find it interesting that
sometimes the punishment is the
only evidence of the crime.

He leaves. Jude watches him go, then steps into the room.

Donovan rises from his chair.

JUDE
What was that about?

DONOVAN
Theological debate. People wonder
what priests talk about in their
off time...

He shrugs.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
Please, sit.

JUDE
Thank you.

She glides over to the chair, slides into it.

Donovan sits.

Jude adjusts herself, crosses her leg. Her skirt falls to the side, revealing her bare leg. She fidgets with her skirt, covers up.

She looks up at Donovan watching her.

DONOVAN
You had a question for me, Miss
Jones?

JUDE
Please. Jude.

Donovan nods.

JUDE (cont'd)
It's more of a proposition than a
question, actually.

Donovan stares at her. What is it with this woman?

JUDE (cont'd)
Well, a bribe, really.

She holds up the container.

Donovan takes it. Wary, he opens it. He looks up at her,
surprised.

DONOVAN
Brownies?

JUDE
Go ahead, try one.

Donovan takes a wedge of brownie out, studies it, then takes
a bite. He stares at the brownie, then takes another bite.

DONOVAN
This is amazing!

JUDE
Award-winning, even. I have a lot
of spare time.

Donovan finishes the first brownie, takes out another.

JUDE (cont'd)
Careful Father. Gluttony is a
deadly sin.

DONOVAN
Consider me tempted. You said
something about a bribe?

JUDE
I make a batch of brownies every
Saturday, for the church softball
team.

Donovan still eats, talks between bites.

DONOVAN

I didn't know the church had a team.

JUDE

It doesn't. Not officially. Just a bunch of us regulars who decided to start one. Ever since Father Dan went on his leave, though, we've been short a second baseman.

DONOVAN

And you want me to find you a new one?

JUDE

I was hoping you'd join the team. I'd ask Father Matthews, but a man of his age shouldn't be out in the sun that long.

Donovan sets the container of brownies down.

DONOVAN

I don't know if I can.

JUDE

Oh. You've never played softball?

DONOVAN

No, that's not it. I played a little baseball back in High School, at Jesuit. I just don't know if I'd have the time.

JUDE

Are you sure? We could really use you. We always have to borrow a player from the other team. Father Dan was our cleanup hitter, too.

DONOVAN

I'm sure.

Jude stands.

JUDE

Well, I don't know how to feel. That's the first time my brownies have failed to get a man.

Donovan stands as well.

DONOVAN
I'm a priest. I'm used to kicking
temptation's ass.

Jude laughs.

JUDE
You're too much, Father Lewis.

She turns to leave.

DONOVAN
Jude?

She turns back.

JUDE
Yes?

DONOVAN
Who is Father Dan? I thought
Father Nathan was here before me.

Jude laughs.

JUDE
Oh. No. Father Dan's not really a
priest, not anymore, but we all
still think of him that way. He
left the cloth a couple of years
back. I guess the name stuck.

DONOVAN
But he doesn't come to St. Paul's
anymore?

JUDE
No. No, not since... Not for a
while. Poor man. I wish he'd come
back. There's just something about
a man that devoted to God.

She smiles at Donovan.

JUDE (cont'd)
You remind me a lot of Father Dan.
Too bad you're already taken.

Jude smiles.

Donovan smiles back, uncomfortable.

JUDE (cont'd)
Have a good one, Father. And in
case you change your mind,
remember, Saturdays in the park.
There are more brownies where those
came from.

She turns and walks out.

Donovan sinks back down into his chair. He looks at the pile
of papers on his desk, then over at the BROWNIES. He stares
at them, then grabs one and takes a huge bite.

INT. ST. PAUL, NAVE - DAY

Donovan stares at...

THE CONFSSIONAL.

He stares, then looks away.

INT. ST. PAUL, SACRISTY - DAY

Father Matthews removes his formal robe and hangs it in a
closet. Donovan steps into the doorway behind him.

DONOVAN
Father.

Father Matthews turns.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
You know, I still feel a little
ill. Do you think you could man
the confessional for me tonight?

Donovan smiles slightly.

EXT. ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE CHURCH - DAY

Donovan trots down the steps.

He looks down the sidewalk, then across the street.

PEOPLE walk about, scattered. TWO MEN sit on a stoop, talk.

Donovan looks back down the sidewalk, towards his walk home.
He turns back to the street, flags down a passing cab.

INT. DONOVAN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Donovan closes the door, locks and latches it.

DONOVAN
Maggie? I'm home.

He spots a NOTE, by the phone. He reads it:

"GONE TO MARA'S. WEDDING STUFF. BE HOME LATE."

Donovan tosses the note in the trash.

He moves to the window, checks the street again.

INT. DONOVAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Donovan lies awake, stares at an ALARM CLOCK. The numbers, 5:13 A.M.

Maggie enters, obviously drunk, tries to be quiet. She slides off her clothes and climbs into bed beside him. Donovan, awake, never looks over at her.

INT. ST. PAUL, NAVE - NIGHT

Donovan sits in the church, alone. He stares up at...

The crucifix over the altar.

Donovan's eyes search, look for something unseen.

Small below the cross, he sits in the pew, stares up. Empty rows surround him.

FLASHBACK - INT. ST. PAUL, NAVE - NIGHT

Teenage Donovan stands near the front of the church looking back as Lola hurries, sobbing, out of the building.

DONOVAN
I hate you! I hate you for lying
to me!

She pulls the large door open and storms out.

Donovan stares up at the cross. He shouts at it.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
Tell me what to do.

A NOISE, a SHUFFLING, draws his attention over to the confessional.

A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN leaves it, walks out of the church.

Donovan stares at the booth. He walks towards it, with purpose.

INT. CONFESSIONAL - NIGHT

Teenage Donovan slides into the parishioner's side of the confessional. He stares forward, fury in his eyes and voice.

DONOVAN
Bless me Father, for I have sinned.

The shape of the priest on the other side, FATHER CAINE, shifts. His voice is deep with the roughness of age.

FATHER CAINE
How have you sinned, my son?

DONOVAN
I have laid false blame. I have chastised someone for the sins of another.

FATHER CAINE
Blame is often misplaced.

Donovan leans closer to get a better look at Father Caine.

DONOVAN
I have directed my anger at my mother, Lola...

At the name, Father Caine's head jerks up, stares at Donovan.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
When it rightfully belongs to you.

FATHER CAINE
Donovan?

Donovan leans in close, his lips almost touching the screen.

DONOVAN
I know.

His face struggles to hold back the anger inside.

THE CONFESSOR (V.O.)
Need some time alone with God,
Father?

BACK TO PRESENT

Donovan whips his head around as the words still echo through the hall.

He sees no sign of The Confessor. The voice echoes again.

THE CONFESSOR (O.S.)
Tell me, does he answer?

Donovan scrambles out of the pew, frantic, looks around the room, peers into every shadow, every corner.

DONOVAN
I don't ask expecting an answer.

THE CONFESSOR (O.S.)
Then you've never gotten one?

Donovan, cautious, makes his way down one of the side aisles.

DONOVAN
I didn't say that. What are the answers you seek?

THE CONFESSOR (O.S.)
I have my answers.

DONOVAN
You know I almost went to the cops.

THE CONFESSOR (O.S.)
But you didn't. You think you can save me. Or maybe you know I'm right.

DONOVAN
You must be troubled, to threaten a priest. Tell me your pains. Maybe I can help.

Donovan stops, waits a long moment listening to the silence.

THE CONFESSOR (O.S.)
You're wife is very attractive.

Donovan tenses. Here we go again.

DONOVAN
You don't know anything about my
wife.

THE CONFESSOR (O.S.)
I know that she should close the
blinds when she's watching TV,
and... doing other things.

Donovan shouts.

DONOVAN
Stay away from my family!

THE CONFESSOR (O.S.)
Watch the temper, Father. It's bad
for your health. And from what I've
seen of your wife, you need to stay
in shape.

DONOVAN
I swear to God, if you -

THE CONFESSOR (O.S.)
Such smooth skin. Is it as soft as
it looks? And those lips -

DONOVAN
Where are you?

Donovan picks up his pace, crosses to the middle of the room,
spins around.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
Where are you?

THE CONFESSOR (O.S.)
I bet they feel good pressed
against your skin. Her moist
tongue licking you.

Donovan nears the front of the church, looks back at the
door.

THE CONFESSOR (O.S.) (cont'd)
Those full, soft lips, wrapped
around your -

DONOVAN
Enough!

The shout echoes through the church, then... silence.

Donovan looks around. Nothing. He creeps along the front pew, looks over the room.

THE CONFESSOR (V.O.)

Do you know where your wife is tonight? Do you know where she was last night? Do you know with whom?

DONOVAN

I won't give in to your tricks. You caught me off guard once. Never again.

He reaches the end of the row and looks up, right into...

A GLOVED FIST slams into his face.

Donovan drops.

BLURRY LEGS, black slacks and black shoes, stand over him.

A blurry shape looks down from above.

THE CONFESSOR

You should keep better track of your wife, Father.

The Confessor laughs, turns and walks away.

Donovan passes out.

LATER

Donovan lies sprawled out on the floor. He GROANS and stirs.

Donovan's face cringes in pain. He opens his eyes.

Donovan pulls himself up, looks around at...

An empty church.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Donovan stands across the street from a busy police station. He watches the building as COPS and PEDESTRIANS go about their business.

THE CONFESSOR (V.O.)
Do you know where your wife is
tonight? Do you know with whom?

Donovan walks away from the station.

INT. DONOVAN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Donovan enters the house.

DONOVAN
Maggie?

Silence. He looks to the phone, ANOTHER NOTE.

"AT MARA'S AGAIN. THIS WEDDING IS STRESSING HER OUT."

EXT. MARA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A CAB pulls up in front of a quaint house. Donovan gets out. He leans into the window.

He crosses the street, approaches the house. The lights are out inside, only a flicker of light from a TV can be seen in the window.

Donovan steps up to the door, raises his hand to knock. He stops himself. He moves over to the window.

Donovan peers inside.

IN THE HOUSE

MARA, early 20s, lounges on the sofa, a blanket pulled over her. She looks a lot like Maggie, only younger. She eats from a bag of popcorn and watches TV. Maggie is not there.

ON THE PORCH

Donovan backs away from the window.

INT. DONOVAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Donovan lies awake in bed, facing away from the door. Maggie enters, strips down to her underwear and crawls into bed.

Donovan stirs and rolls over to face her. He pretends to wake up.

DONOVAN
What time is it?

Maggie kisses him on the forehead.

MAGGIE
It's late. I know. It's Mara.
She's a mess. You know how nervous
brides get this close to the
wedding.

Donovan stares at her. Maggie notices a bruise where Donovan was struck. She reaches forward and touches it. He winces and pulls away.

MAGGIE (cont'd)
What happened?

DONOVAN
Nothing. One of the parishioners
didn't like what I had to say.

MAGGIE
I hope they caught the guy. Did
you call the cops?

DONOVAN
No. He's just a troubled soul.
And he may not have been entirely
wrong.

MAGGIE
That's my husband. Seeing good in
everyone but himself.

She smiles and leans in, kisses his bruise. They separate.

DONOVAN
Why don't you come to service
anymore?

MAGGIE
What?

Donovan props himself up.

DONOVAN
When we first met you used to come
to Holy Trinity every Sunday. I
miss that.

Maggie looks confused.

MAGGIE

I was never that religious. You know that. Easter and Christmas, and only then because my dad made me.

DONOVAN

But something kept you coming back.

She smiles at him, leans her forehead against his.

MAGGIE

I was there to see you, silly.

He pulls away. Her playful expression vanishes.

MAGGIE (cont'd)

It's different now. At least then it was somewhere I was comfortable. St. Paul's, the Catholics... You may be fine with being a maverick, but I'm not. I don't want people to stare at me.

DONOVAN

No one will stare.

MAGGIE

Of course they will.

Donovan can only stare at her. He knows she's right.

Maggie rolls onto her side and curls up to go to sleep.

Donovan looks down on her.

INT. DONOVAN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Maggie eats a bowl of cereal on the couch. Donovan enters from the other room, straightening his collar.

DONOVAN

I've got to run. Busy day.

Maggie looks up.

MAGGIE

Expecting a run on confessions?

Donovan smiles at her.

DONOVAN
Something like that. Are you at
the shop today?

Maggie nods and mumbles her assent through a mouthful of cereal.

Donovan pauses, studies her. It has to be all in his head. Doesn't it?

EXT. DONOVAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Donovan closes the door, looks in through the window at Maggie, then hurries down the steps and across the street.

He unfastens his collar and puts it in his pocket.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Donovan walks onto a small commercial street, houses mixed in with restaurants, bars and shops.

He stops across the street from a small flower shop. He watches it for a moment, then turns and walks into...

INT. CAFE - DAY

A small, local cafe. A HAPPY COUPLE sit at a table in the corner, laughing over breakfast.

Donovan takes a seat by the window, he stares across the street at the front of the shop.

LATER

An empty cup of coffee sits on the table in front of Donovan.

The Happy Couple is gone, but several other PATRONS now fill the cafe.

Donovan continues to watch the shop through the window.

A WAITRESS walks up beside him.

WAITRESS
More coffee?

He looks up, distracted from the window.

DONOVAN

No thanks.

He turns back and sees...

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Maggie approaches the FLOWER SHOP. She's greeted at the door by a KIND WOMAN in her 50s.

Through the window of the cafe, Donovan watches...

Maggie goes into the flower shop.

INT. CAFE - DAY

From his vantage point, Donovan can see Maggie through the glass windows of their respective shops. She puts on an apron and starts to straighten the flowers in their containers.

The Kind Woman asks her a question and the two laugh.

Donovan settles in for a long day.

LATER

The street is busy now with PEDESTRIANS who mill about and walk between the small shops and restaurants.

Donovan still watches.

Maggie is alone in the flower shop now, casually going about her business.

On the street, a SHARP DRESSED MAN, late 40s, strides confidently towards the shop.

Donovan focuses on him. Is that who he thinks it is?

The Man enters the flower shop. Maggie smiles when she sees him. He walks right up to her and gives her a KISS on the lips. At first she kisses back, then pulls away, and looks around for anyone watching.

Donovan leans closer to the window. No...

Maggie and the Man seem to argue, but quickly stop when the Kind Woman enters the room from the back of the store.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Sir.

Donovan turns to see...

A MALE BARISTA stands over him, the Waitress behind him.

BARISTA

Is there something I can help you
with, sir?

DONOVAN

No.

Donovan turns back to what he was doing, but the Barista
clears his throat. Donovan looks back at him.

BARISTA

I'm going to have to ask you to
leave, sir, if you aren't going to
order anything.

Donovan nods. He gives one more glance into the shop, then
stands up.

DONOVAN

I'm sorry.

He tosses a twenty onto the table.

INT. ST. PAUL, NAVE - DAY

Donovan, in a haze, walks down the aisle of the church. He
is still not wearing his collar.

His face is one of shock, uncertainty, pain.

Jude pops up beside him.

JUDE

You're in trouble.

Her voice a sing song, teasing.

Donovan looks over at her. Not now.

JUDE (cont'd)

Father Matthews is looking for you.
He has been all morning.

DONOVAN

I had something to take care of.

Still distracted he starts to leave.

JUDE

You, uh...

Donovan looks at her. Jude motions to his collar, reaches forward and buttons the top button of his shirt.

DONOVAN

Thanks.

He takes the white priest's collar out of his pocket.

JUDE

Here, let me.

She takes it from him and slides it into place, taking care to make sure it's on straight.

JUDE (cont'd)

Want to talk about it?

Donovan's face is cold, emotionless.

JUDE (cont'd)

I'll take that as a no.

Father Matthews enters the room from the Sacristy.

Donovan looks over at him.

JUDE (cont'd)

That's my cue.

She walks off.

Father Matthews strides towards Donovan.

FATHER MATTHEWS

Have you any idea -

DONOVAN

Not today.

He brushes past Father Matthews, leaves the older man frozen.

INT. CHURCH OFFICE - DAY

Donovan sits behind his desk, a blank expression on his face.

THE CONFESSOR (V.O.)
Need some alone time with God,
Father?

Donovan SLAMS his FISTS down on the desk.

FLASHBACK -- INT. CONFSSIONAL - NIGHT

Young Donovan SLAMS his FIST against the side of the
confessional.

On the other side, Father Caine flinches.

Tears well up in Donovan's eyes.

DONOVAN
All these years.

Father Caine leans forward, places a hand against the screen.

FATHER CAINE
I wanted to tell you. I wanted to
be with your mother. With you.

DONOVAN
Why weren't you?

FATHER CAINE
There are rules, Donovan. I would
have to give up everything I am.

Donovan starts to sob.

DONOVAN
She needed you. I needed you.

FATHER CAINE
I've been watching you, making sure
you were safe. I know you're in
the Seminary. You have no idea how
proud that makes me, that you would
choose to follow -

DONOVAN
I quit.

Donovan looks up, faces the screen.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
I left the Seminary.

FATHER CAINE

No...

DONOVAN

How can I believe in a Church that
would keep a father from his son?
How can I love a father that would
let it?

Donovan pulls away, pushes out of the confessional.

INT. ST. PAUL, NAVE - NIGHT

Donovan exits the confessional. Father Caine exits the other side. The two men stand across from each other.

Father Caine is in his 60s. His face worn and harried, and he seems genuinely concerned.

Donovan is a ball of anger.

FATHER CAINE

Please, son...

DONOVAN

Out of my way, *father*...

Donovan moves forward. Father Caine moves to stop him, but Donovan **SHOVES** him **HARD** into the confessional.

Father Caine grabs his shoulder in pain and watches Donovan hurry out of the church.

BACK TO PRESENT

Donovan breaks down into tears, leans heavy on his desk.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Donovan sits in a chair, in the dark, and stares at the door.

The **LOCK CLICKS** and the door swings open. Maggie enters. She flicks on the light then jumps when she sees Donovan.

MAGGIE

What are you doing? You scared me
half to death.

Donovan doesn't move.

MAGGIE (cont'd)
What? What's wrong?

DONOVAN
How long? Did it start before I
left, or because I left?

Maggie slowly pushes the door closed, leans her head against it.

Donovan watches her from the chair, cold.

Maggie takes a deep breath.

MAGGIE
You left me alone, and I didn't
know why. I still don't.

DONOVAN
Does Mara know?

Maggie shakes her head, tears stream down her face.

EXT. TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH - DAY

A large church, Gothic.

Donovan and Maggie walk up the path. They keep their distance from each other. He wears his priest uniform, and she's dressed fancy casual.

The bruise around Donovan's eye has healed some but is still visible.

Maggie holds her arm out and stops Donovan before the stairs. She turns to him.

MAGGIE
Remember, you promised not to make
a scene. We just have to get
through the next three days.

He stares back at her coldly.

They walk up the stairs.

INT. TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH - DAY

The room is sparsely filled with PEOPLE, adults, most in their 50s, hurrying about or finding seats.

It's brighter inside than its Catholic counterpart, but equally as impressive.

In a small group in the middle aisle are Mara, FATHER CHRIS -- a handsome, young priest -- and the Sharp Dressed Man from the flower shop.

Donovan's eyes fixate on the man, anger barely below the surface.

Mara sees Donovan and Maggie and excuses herself from the group to approach them.

MARA
There you are!

She wraps Maggie in a big hug and kisses her on each cheek.

MARA (cont'd)
I was getting worried.

MAGGIE
Like I would miss this. I'm almost rid of you for good. Finally.

They laugh. Donovan looks around, notices Father Chris who locks eyes with him and nods.

Mara turns to Donovan and catches his attention.

MARA
Donovan.

DONOVAN
Hello Mara. You look wonderful.

MARA
Thank you.

They awkwardly embrace, and she gives him two very hesitant pecks on the cheek. With the second one she accidentally bumps his bruise. Donovan winces. They pull apart.

MARA (cont'd)
Sorry. I wasn't sure if I should still... you know... Where'd that shiner come from?

MAGGIE
Donovan was attacked, right in the church!

MARA

No! Really?

DONOVAN

It was nothing. Probably just someone off the street hoping to rip off the donation box. If he wanted the money that badly, I'm sure he was in need.

Father Chris walks up beside Mara.

FATHER CHRIS

I see you haven't changed too much.
Welcome back, Donovan.

He reaches out for a familiar handshake, and pulls Donovan into a hug.

DONOVAN

It's good to be back, Christopher.

FATHER CHRIS

If only it were for more than a couple of days, right?

Donovan nods awkwardly, smiles slightly, noncommittal.

The Sharp Dressed Man walks up behind Mara, embraces her. He kisses her on the top of the head.

Donovan locks his eyes onto the man.

Andrew, the Sharp Dressed Man, turns back to Mara.

SHARP DRESSED MAN/ANDREW

Honey, let's get this show on the road. Reservations are at eight tonight.

He smiles when he sees Donovan and Maggie.

ANDREW

Donovan, Maggie.

Donovan nods acknowledgement, then looks away.

MAGGIE

Andrew.

Maggie smiles, then looks at Donovan and the smile fades.

LATER

The wedding party stands at the altar for the rehearsal. Father Chris faces the room and performs the ceremony. Mara and Andrew stand in the bride and groom positions.

Maggie is the maid of honor and Donovan is one of the groomsmen. The rest of the WEDDING PARTY surrounds them. Donovan looks over at Maggie.

FATHER CHRIS

To have and to hold, in sickness
and in health, till death do us
part.

Donovan's eyes fixate on Maggie.

ANDREW (O.S.)

To have and to hold...

Maggie looks back at Donovan. Her expression grim.

ANDREW (O.S.) (cont'd)

In sickness and in health...

Donovan stares at his wife. What went wrong?

ANDREW (O.S.) (cont'd)

Till death do us part.

THE CONFESSOR (V.O.)

I want to kill you.

Donovan's head jerks back, then he rights himself.

Maggie and the Wedding Party send questioning looks at Donovan.

Donovan feigns a cough and looks away, towards the crowd.

He scans a sparsely filled group of GUESTS, most in their 50s or older. His gaze stops on The Confessor, seated among the Guests.

The Confessor watches Donovan. His eyes catch Donovan's, and they lock on each other. His lips twist into a wicked smile.

LATER

The rehearsal has finished and the People make their way out of the church.

Donovan watches from the front of the church as The Confessor walks towards the door.

Donovan stops a FRAIL WOMAN and motions toward him.

DONOVAN

Excuse me. Do you know who that man is?

The Frail Woman looks.

The Confessor has almost reached the door.

FRAIL WOMAN

I think he's with the bride.

She continues on her way. Donovan looks back one more time at the man.

The Confessor stops at the exit and turns to look at Donovan. He WINKS at him, then walks out.

Donovan runs the length of the church, pushes past a GUEST as he goes. He grabs the door and bursts out into...

EXT. TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH - DAY

The Guests wander toward their cars. There's no sign of The Confessor.

Donovan stands in the threshold of the church, looking out.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A busy, fancy restaurant. The Guests and Wedding Party are spread out across several large tables, already in the process of eating.

Donovan and Maggie sit at a table with Mara, Andrew and Father Chris.

Andrew and Mara laugh, lost in each other's eyes. Andrew nods towards Donovan.

Mara gives him a disapproving look.

They both laugh. They're both drunk.

ANDREW

Hey, Donovan. Mara here's been wondering something, but she's too embarrassed to ask.

Donovan sets down his fork.

DONOVAN

What is it?

ANDREW

Well, what's it like? You know, the new place?

DONOVAN

The adjustment has been more difficult than I thought.

Father Chris looks over at Donovan.

Donovan quickly catches himself.

DONOVAN (cont'd)

But it was the right decision.

ANDREW

I bet they make you praise the Pope and all that, don't they?

He turns to Mara, almost like he's talking to a child.

ANDREW (cont'd)

Now that's an evil old bastard if every I saw one.

Donovan clenches his fist under the table. Keep control.

ANDREW (cont'd)

Oh, sorry Donnie-boy. Didn't mean to blaspheme the Holy See. What is that, anyway? The Holy See? Is that like the "Big C"?

He makes a "C" shape with his hand.

ANDREW (cont'd)

Uh oh... watch out! The Pope's a Holy Cancer!

He laughs again at his own joke. Mara slaps his arm, but she can't help but laugh as well. Maggie cringes in her chair.

Donovan remains calm.

DONOVAN
The Holy See isn't the Pope. It's
the government of the Church.

ANDREW
Yeah, well, Monkey See, monkey do,
that's what I always say.

He laughs again, looks around the table for approval.

MAGGIE
Drew, enough.

ANDREW
See Dick run... the Church...

Mara quiets now, her laugh fading.

MAGGIE
Andrew, stop it.

Donovan sits tight, determined not to crack.

Andrew turns directly toward him.

ANDREW
One if by *hand*, and two if by See.

He makes a motion with his right hand as if masturbating.

A CHAIR SCRAPES across the floor, topples over, loud.
Everything stops, and people stare at...

Father Chris, who has risen from his seat, knocking it over.

FATHER CHRIS
I need to step outside for a few
minutes. Donovan?

Donovan doesn't take his eyes off Andrew.

DONOVAN
Sure. I'll be right there.

He stares at the older man.

EXT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Father Chris exits, followed by Donovan. They move to the
side, out of the way of the door.

Father Chris leans against the wall of the building. He pulls out a pack of cigarettes, lights one up. He holds the pack out to Donovan.

DONOVAN

No thanks.

Father Chris pockets the pack. Smokes.

FATHER CHRIS

I have my vices, like all men. But at least I know what they are.

Donovan walks over, to the side away from the smoke and leans against the wall next to Father Chris.

FATHER CHRIS (cont'd)

Don't mind that jerk.

DONOVAN

It's OK. I'm used to it. That's what happens when your sister-in-law marries an atheist.

FATHER CHRIS

That's what happens when your sister-in-law marries a jackass.

Father Chris flicks the ash off the end of his cigarette.

FATHER CHRIS (cont'd)

We miss you around the church.

DONOVAN

It was something I had to do.

The two men stand in silence. Father Chris takes a drag from his cigarette.

DONOVAN (cont'd)

I am having trouble with some of the rules.

FATHER CHRIS

What, the no birth control thing? Is Maggie? Are there going to be a bunch of little Donovans running all over the place, acting somber and never laughing at any of my jokes? Because that's something I'd pay to see-

DONOVAN

No.

Father Chris laughs. Donovan manages a smile.

FATHER CHRIS

All right, then. What's the problem? I've argued against enough of the Catholic Church's policies, I can probably explain them better than most of their bishops.

Donovan pushes himself off the wall, paces.

DONOVAN

Are you a Hitchcock fan?

FATHER CHRIS

Sure. Nothing wrong with some good, wholesome suspense.

DONOVAN

Have you seen *I Confess*?

Father Chris smokes as he talks.

FATHER CHRIS

The one about the priest, right? With Montgomery Clift? I think I remember it. Someone confesses a murder to him, but he can't tell the cops because of the seal of the confessional.

He lowers the cigarette and faces Donovan.

FATHER CHRIS (cont'd)

No...

DONOVAN

No. No. That's not what I meant.

FATHER CHRIS

Donovan, if someone committed a crime and they told you about it...

DONOVAN

No, that's not it. He hasn't done anything... Not really... And I don't know if I believe he will.

FATHER CHRIS

If someone is in danger, you have to say something.

DONOVAN

No one *else* in is danger... at least I don't think... It was a mistake to bring it up.

FATHER CHRIS

I don't care about their damn rules. Tell me what you know. You've only been Catholic for what, a year?

Donovan steps up to Father Chris.

DONOVAN

I've always been Catholic! In my heart. You never understood that. But I couldn't go back, not until...

FATHER CHRIS

Spare me the Daddy issues.

Father Chris takes another drag from the cigarette. Turns his head to avoid blowing smoke in Donovan's face.

DONOVAN

I shouldn't have said anything, and if you're my friend, you won't say anything either.

FATHER CHRIS

Yeah. Sure. Fine.

Donovan backs off, takes a few paces away.

A FANCY COUPLE walks up to the door, looks over at Father Chris as he finishes his cigarette. He notices them and flicks it to the ground. They look alarmed.

He makes the sign of the cross at them.

FATHER CHRIS (cont'd)

Go with God.

They hurry inside.

Donovan looks between Father Chris and the Couple as they leave, then back to Father Chris. Both men break into a laugh, the tension broken.

INT. MEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Donovan enters the restaurant men's room. It's clean, upscale. One of the stalls is occupied.

Donovan stands at a urinal relieving himself.

Donovan stands before the sink, washes his hands. He looks at his reflection in the mirror. The bruise is obvious.

A FLUSH and the SOUND of a STALL OPENING.

In the mirror, Donovan sees Andrew come out of the stall.

ANDREW
Hey, Donnie-boy!

He steps up to the sink beside Donovan, still fastens his belt and zipper.

ANDREW (cont'd)
I didn't mean anything by that stuff in there, you know. I mean, who can you make fun of if you can't make fun of the Pope, am I right?

Donovan finishes washing his hands, cuts the tap off. He reaches for a paper towel.

ANDREW (cont'd)
Hey, between us, we've got two of the finest looking women this side of the Pearly Gates. Don't you think?

He nudges Donovan's arm.

ANDREW (cont'd)
I bet all the Padres down at the mission are jealous, huh? You can tell me. Let me in on some of the Rectory-talk. I bet you've heard some crazy shit.

Donovan stares at his own reflection.

DONOVAN
She told me.

Andrew shuts up.

Donovan finishes drying his hands and tosses the paper towel in the garbage can.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
Maggie told me.

ANDREW
Hey, man... Donnie-boy... Look...

Donovan turns to face him.

DONOVAN
Why did it have to be with a prick
like you?

The smile drops from Andrew's face.

Donovan unleashes a swing right into Andrew's kidney. The older man crumples over.

THE CONFESSOR'S MOUTH

THE CONFESSOR
Anger. Pain. Jealousy.

BACK TO SCENE

Donovan grabs Andrew's collar and pulls him back up. Donovan cocks his arm back.

DONOVAN
Vengeance is mine, thus sayeth the
husband.

He slugs Andrew in the face.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Maggie and Mara talk and giggle. Father Chris picks at his desert. SHOUTING and BANGING draw their attention.

Donovan and Andrew, tangled up in a flurry of punches, kicks and bites, stumble out of the Men's Room and fall to the floor.

The two men wrestle, determined.

Father Chris and another STRONG MAN pull the two men apart. After struggling for a few moments, both men relax.

MARA

What's going on here?

She looks between Andrew and Donovan.

Donovan looks at Maggie, who is frozen in fear.

ANDREW

It was my fault. I called the Pope
a wanker.

He looks over at Donovan. Blood trickles down Donovan's
face.

ANDREW (cont'd)

I guess I don't know when to shut
up. I'm sorry, Donnie-boy. No
permanent harm, right?

Andrew holds out his hand, but Donovan doesn't take it.

Maggie steps in front of Donovan. He still watches Andrew.

MAGGIE

Come on. Let's go home.

She turns back to Mara as she drags Donovan off.

MAGGIE (cont'd)

I'll call you tomorrow.

Donovan allows Maggie to pull him away.

INT. DONOVAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Donovan and Maggie enter in silence. Donovan holds a blood
stained towel, wrapped around ice, to his face. He goes into
the bathroom, while Maggie stops at the vanity. She holds
her hand up, stares at her wedding ring.

Donovan enters from the bathroom with a fresh hand towel,
securing it around the ice. There's a gash on the side of his
face with blood smeared around it, but it's not bleeding now.

Maggie turns to him.

MAGGIE

Three days. Three days.

Donovan watches her. Cold. She leaves the room, heading
into the hall. Donovan sits on the bed, puts the towel to
his face. He winces.

INT. CHURCH OFFICE - DAY

Donovan sits behind his desk. He wears a band-aid over his cut from the night before, and there are a few more visible bruises. He pokes at a bruise, winces.

Father Matthews steps into the doorway. Stern.

DONOVAN

I know. I was completely out of line. I don't know what got into me.

FATHER MATTHEWS

This type of behavior is unacceptable.

DONOVAN

I know -

FATHER MATTHEWS

I can't have my priests starting drunken brawls -

DONOVAN

I wasn't drunk.

FATHER MATTHEWS

Then so much the worse. Father Lewis... Donovan...

He steps into the room, takes a seat across from Donovan.

FATHER MATTHEWS (cont'd)

I know that I've been hard on you since you got here. To be honest, I didn't want you here in the first place, and I don't agree with the Vatican's decision to ordain you.

DONOVAN

Then why did you accept me?

FATHER MATTHEWS

I didn't have a choice. I don't know what you are to the Church, but for some reason they're willing to bend over backwards for you. Twelve months after you convert and they make you a priest. It should have taken three times that long.

DONOVAN

I had previous experience in the Seminary.

FATHER MATTHEWS

It's more than that. You've got something on the Church. Because if you don't, what I've seen since you've been here is enough to make me question the infallibility of the Pope.

Donovan looks back at him. Donovan's face sinks. He's really made a mess of things.

FATHER MATTHEWS (cont'd)

Something is troubling you, Donovan, and you need to deal with it. I've seen the way women affect the men in my parish. The time will come when you'll have to decide whether you're a man or a priest, because you can't be both.

They stare at each other for a tense moment, then Father Matthews slaps the table and stands.

FATHER MATTHEWS (cont'd)

When you've finished collecting yourself, meet me at the altar. There's someone I want to introduce you to.

DONOVAN

Of course, Father.

Father Matthews nods, then leaves.

Donovan stares at the empty door.

INT. ST. PAUL, NAVE - DAY

Donovan walks out of the Sacristy into the Nave.

Standing in a group by the altar are Father Matthews, Jude, and a MAN who has his back turned to Donovan. Father Matthews notices Donovan approaching.

FATHER MATTHEWS

Father Lewis, good. Come here. There's someone I want you to meet.

The Man turns around. It's The Confessor. He smiles as Donovan approaches.

Donovan stops in his tracks, stares at the man.

Father Matthews watches for a second, then takes a step forward to close the gap between them.

FATHER MATTHEWS (cont'd)
Father Lewis, this is Daniel Grey.

Jude smiles, excited.

THE CONFESSOR
You can call me Father Dan.
Everyone does.

The Confessor takes a step over to Donovan, extends his hand.

Donovan stares at the man in front of him.

The Confessor smiles again, glances at his extended hand.

Donovan, deliberate, extends his hand.

The Confessor takes hold of it, shakes it firmly.

Donovan and The Confessor stare each other down.

Jude steps up to the group.

JUDE
Isn't it great, Father Lewis?

She lightly embraces The Confessor's arm.

THE CONFESSOR
Bless me Father, for I have sinned.

Donovan stares at The Confessor in horror.

THE CONFESSOR (cont'd)
I've been away from the Church far
too long.

He releases Donovan's hand.

THE CONFESSOR (cont'd)
Many things have changed in my
absence.

Donovan looks between the harsh face of Father Matthews, the beaming face of Jude and the sinister face of The Confessor. The Confessor winks at him.

INT. ST. PAUL, HALLWAY - NIGHT

The Confessor walks down a narrow hallway.

A HAND grabs his shoulder from behind. He turns to see...

DONOVAN... pissed off.

DONOVAN

What do you want from me?

The Confessor feigns ignorance.

THE CONFESSOR

I don't know what you mean, Father.
I'm just here to do God's work.

He lowers his voice and leans in. Threatens.

THE CONFESSOR (cont'd)

Somebody has to.

He leans back, smiles wickedly at Donovan, then turns and walks away, leaving Donovan standing alone.

FATHER CHRIS (V.O.)

Dearly beloved...

INT. TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH - DAY

Donovan stands, somber.

FATHER CHRIS (O.S.)

... We are gathered here today to
see these two people...

Father Chris stands before Mara and Andrew at their wedding.

FATHER CHRIS (cont'd)

Andrew Kline and Mara McDonnell
joined together in Holy
Matrimony...

Donovan stands off to the side, NOT in the wedding party. He watches Maggie in her place as Maid-of-Honor.

Maggie looks over to him, frowns.

LATER

The ceremony nears its end.

FATHER CHRIS

If any person can show just cause
why they should not be joined
together...

Donovan still watches. He tenses up.

FATHER CHRIS (O.S.) (cont'd)

... let them speak now, or forever
hold their peace.

Donovan watches. Time slows. He looks at Mara and Andrew,
smiling.

Maggie frowns, glances at him.

The crowd full of people.

Donovan, his face conflicted.

Mara and Andrew at the altar.

THE CONFESSOR (O.S.)

Coward.

Time flows normal. Donovan turns to see...

The Confessor stands beside him, watches the ceremony.

THE CONFESSOR (cont'd)

You could stop it. You could say
something.

DONOVAN

It's not my place.

THE CONFESSOR

You more than most know the pain
that will come of this. You know
that he has sinned. And yet you
let her walk into misery? If it's
not your place to stop her, then
who?

DONOVAN

And what about you, *Father Dan*? If
you're so righteous, why did you
renounce your position?

FATHER CHRIS
I now pronounce you man and wife.
You may kiss the bride.

The couple kisses in the background, but Donovan is fixated on The Confessor.

THE CONFESSOR
I had no choice.

The room cheers for the newlyweds.

DONOVAN
What you said, in the confessional,
did you mean it?

The crowd begins to move, following the wedding party outside.

THE CONFESSOR
Father, please. I don't want to
know what you heard in the
confessional.

The Confessor steps into the flow of the crowd, and as he leaves, turns back.

THE CONFESSOR (cont'd)
Some of us respect our vows.

He steps back into the stream of people and disappears into the crowd.

Donovan stands alone.

EXT. TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH - DAY

Donovan, at the back of the crowd watches Maggie put Mara and Andrew into their car before they drive off. As soon as they pull away, Maggie turns back and scans the crowd. She sees Donovan and walks his direction.

Donovan waits for Maggie. She climbs the stairs to him.

MAGGIE
I thought you weren't going to be
here? When I saw you, I thought
you might say something.

DONOVAN
I thought I might, too.

MAGGIE
Why didn't you?

DONOVAN
Because I'm a coward.

A GIRL WITH THE BOUQUET runs by them, draws their attention for a moment. When they turn back to each other, Maggie doesn't look directly at Donovan.

MAGGIE
I know I screwed up. I've tried a thousand times to apologize. To make it better. But I have to know, can I? Will you ever be able to forgive me?

DONOVAN
I don't know.

She reaches out and touches his arm.

MAGGIE
Donovan, I'm sorry.

Donovan looks down at her hand on his arm.

He looks up, and behind her, across the yard, he sees The Confessor, watching him. Donovan stares at the man.

MAGGIE (cont'd)
Donovan? I said I'm sorry. I wish...

He turns back to her.

DONOVAN
I wish a lot of things.

Maggie lowers her hand.

MAGGIE
So that's it?

DONOVAN
I don't know. I don't know anything. I don't know how I should feel. I just know that having you constantly remind me that you screwed up isn't helping.

Maggie cringes at the comment.

MAGGIE

Fine. Then don't come home. If you can't forgive me and move on, and if the sight of me hurts you so much, then just don't...

She wipes a tear from her eye, turns from him and runs.

DONOVAN

Maggie!

Donovan lunges for her, but she's too quick. She runs off down the road as PEOPLE stare.

Donovan watches his wife go. He turns, sees...

The Confessor continue to watch. The Confessor smiles.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Donovan sits on a stoop on a familiar stretch of street near his house. His stare blank.

A KID ON A BIKE pedals by. Donovan doesn't move.

A THIN MAN, homeless and dressed in an old army jacket, stumbles up to Donovan.

THIN MAN

Got any change Father?

Donovan doesn't react.

THIN MAN (cont'd)

I said got any change?

Donovan glances up at the Thin Man. Donovan reaches in his pocket and pulls out a twenty, doesn't even look at it as he hands it over.

THIN MAN (cont'd)

Hey, thanks Father!

Donovan nods, then resumes his melancholy position.

The Thin Man watches for a moment, then takes a seat beside Donovan.

THIN MAN (cont'd)

If I didn't know better, I'd say it looked like some woman done you wrong.

Donovan looks over at the Thin Man. He raises his left hand, shows the man his ring.

The Thin Man whistles.

THIN MAN (cont'd)
Shoot. Will you look at that?
First time for everything, I guess.

Donovan pulls his hand back.

DONOVAN
And a last.

The Thin Man's eyes stay fixated on the ring.

THIN MAN
I hear that. My woman done me wrong. Cheated on me six-ways to Sunday, then took me for everything. My house, my car... my kid.

The Thin Man takes out a tattered wallet, shows Donovan a picture.

Donovan takes it, stares at the picture.

A LITTLE GIRL, 8 and a PRETTY WOMAN, 40s.

THIN MAN (cont'd)
My girl's seventeen now. I ain't seen her in five years. Don't want her to see me, really. Not even sure she's mine, if you want the truth, but I like to think so.

Donovan hands the wallet back over.

THIN MAN (cont'd)
But you know what? Much as I miss my daughter, getting rid of her mother was the best thing that ever happened to me.

Donovan stares at the man, his tattered coat, his dirty face.

THIN MAN (cont'd)
I may not be much, but I'm a free man. That's more than I can say for most.

Donovan's face snaps from his haze.

DONOVAN

Do you know what time it is?

The Thin Man smiles.

THIN MAN

Sell you a watch. Ten dollars.
It's a Rolex.

Donovan frowns.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

A SOFTBALL FIELD with no fence. TWO TEAMS are gathered around the sides of the field. One is made up of CHURCH PARISHIONERS and the other is half SHORT MEN in their 40s and half PERKY WOMEN in their 20s. They wear shirts that say "More than a Filling."

Jude adjusts her hat and makes out a lineup card. She wears shorts, her long legs on display.

TWO BALL PLAYERS hover over a tray of brownies on the bench.

Donovan, at the edge of the field, watches. He starts in the direction of the crowd.

Donovan walks up to Jude, who notices him.

JUDE

Father Lewis! I didn't expect to see you today.

DONOVAN

I had a craving for brownies.

Jude smiles.

JUDE

Help yourself. You here to play,
or just to eat?

Donovan looks over the crowd. He smiles.

DONOVAN

Second base?

Jude frowns.

JUDE

Oh. No... I mean, we already have someone...

A hand clamps down on Donovan's shoulder. He turns to see...

THE CONFESSOR with a huge smile on his face.

THE CONFESSOR
Father Lewis. This is a surprise.

Donovan's smile turns into a frown.

JUDE
Oh, but it's OK. The dentists'
catcher is out sick.

Jude and The Confessor smile at Donovan.

Donovan looks over at the group of dentists.

LATER

The game is in full swing. Donovan stands in the on deck circle, watches.

Jude pitches a strike. The BATTER swings, connects, hits a sharp ground ball to second.

The Confessor ranges easily to his left and makes the play, throws the runner out.

GERALD, the captain of the dentists' team, steps up to Donovan. He wears a prominent Star of David on a necklace.

GERALD
You got this, Father. You got it.

Donovan nods.

He steps up to the plate. Donovan stares out at the field.

Jude stretches, prepares for the pitch.

Donovan watches her, the bare skin of her legs, her thighs disappear into the tight shorts, the sweat beads glisten.

THE CONFESSOR
Hey batter, batter!

The Confessor catches Donovan's eye. He cracks a big smile.

The BALL floats past Donovan.

UMPIRE
Strike!

Donovan looks back at the umpire, then out at Jude. The catcher tosses the ball back.

Donovan digs in.

Jude winds, delivers the next pitch.

Donovan keeps his head down, swings, connects. He sends a long drive into left field.

Donovan runs, makes the turn at first. He barrels down on second.

In the outfield, the left fielder gets to the ball, turns and fires it in to second.

The Confessor waits at the base to take the throw.

Donovan slides hard into him, knocking The Confessor off his feet just as the ball arrives.

UMPIRE (cont'd)

Safe!

The play winds down. Donovan and the Confessor are tangled up. They stare at each other.

THE CONFESSOR

Nice swing, Father.

They climb to their feet, take their positions.

Donovan gets a small lead off the base. The Confessor moves in close to cover it.

DONOVAN

You need help.

THE CONFESSOR

I don't think I'm the one who needs help, Father. Tell me, where's the wife?

Donovan looks over.

The BATTER swings and misses the pitch.

DONOVAN

None of your business.

THE CONFESSOR

She left the wedding in a hurry.
Think she's being comforted by the
best man?

Donovan glances over.

DONOVAN

I know a counselor, someone that
will listen. I don't know why
you're angry, but you need to get
past it.

THE CONFESSOR

You don't know anything about me.

DONOVAN

I know you were forced out of the
priesthood. Why was that again? A
little too unstable, maybe?

The Confessor shoots Donovan a glance.

Jude delivers the next pitch.

The Batter swings and misses again.

THE CONFESSOR

Don't try and get inside my head.
It's a game you'll lose. You
should look in the mirror before
you call me unstable. I'm not the
one lusting after my parishioners.

Donovan turns to look at Jude as she leans over, hips thrust
back.

Donovan glances over at the Confessor, then back at Jude.
Too late he realizes she's spun to throw to second. Donovan
turns back to the base, runs into...

The Confessor, ball in glove, blocking his path. He slaps
the glove onto Donovan's chest.

UMPIRE

You're out!

The Confessor laughs and leaves Donovan standing. He lost
this round.

LATER

Donovan is behind home plate. The Confessor is on second base, watching him.

The pitcher delivers the pitch. The batter swings. It's a drive to right.

Donovan takes up position at the plate to receive the throw.

The Confessor rounds third base, running full steam.

The throw arrives at home. Donovan takes it, turns.

He digs in as The Confessor approaches. The larger man leans into the run, no intention of sliding. Donovan braces himself.

The two men COLLIDE. Donovan is knocked to the ground, The Confessor lands on top of him. Dust flies up around them.

Donovan winces in pain. The Confessor leans in close, a crazed look on his face.

THE CONFESSOR

Embrace the pain, Father.

Donovan smiles, holds up the glove, the ball clutched tight.

DONOVAN

Go to Hell.

The Umpire leans over the scene.

UMPIRE

You're out!

Donovan's smile is just as crazed as The Confessor's.

LATER

Donovan eats a brownie as Gerald shakes his hand and Jude stands close by, laughs and smiles. Donovan looks up.

Across the field, The Confessor glares at him.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

The Confessor leaves the park, walks onto a neighborhood street. He stops at a COMPACT CAR.

Behind him, careful not to be seen, Donovan watches.

The Confessor gets in the car.

Donovan hails a passing cab.

EXT. ST. MARGARET'S HOSPITAL - DAY

The Confessor enters the hospital.

Donovan, from across the street, watches.

INT. ST. MARGARET'S HOSPITAL, HALLWAY - DAY

At the far end, The Confessor waits outside an open doorway. He crosses himself then enters. As soon as he's inside...

Donovan steps out of one of the rooms at the near end of the hall and hurries down the hallway, careful to stay out of sight of that room. When he reaches the end, he puts his back to the wall next to the open door.

Through the doorway, The Confessor is seen kneeling next to a BED. The person on the bed is hidden by the doorway.

THE CONFESSOR

"Jesus, I accept willingly this trial which it has pleased you to lay upon me. I confide all my pains to your Sacred Heart, and beg you to unite them with your bitter sufferings, and thus perfect them by making them your own."

Donovan tries to see around the door, but pulls back, afraid of being spotted.

THE CONFESSOR (cont'd)

"As you thanked God with all the powers of your soul for the suffering you endured, so, I pray you, give him thanks for my trials also. Offer my sufferings, physical and spiritual, to him together with your most holy pains to his eternal honor and glory. Amen."

Donovan again moves to look into the room. He catches sight of a BANK OF MACHINES and the ARM of the person in the bed, before he pulls back.

THE CONFESSOR (cont'd)
Go with God.

The Confessor stands and turns to the door. Donovan hears him and DUCKS into the next room over, swinging the door almost closed just in time. Through the crack he watches The Confessor leave.

As soon as The Confessor is out of sight, Donovan pulls the door back open and moves around into the room The Confessor was in.

INT. ANNA'S ROOM - DAY

Donovan enters the stark hospital room. He grabs the chart off the door and approaches the bed, slow and deliberate.

On the bed, a woman, ANNA, 30s, lies unconscious, hooked up to the bank of machines.

Donovan stands over her.

She's pretty, but her hair is unevenly cut and her face without makeup. Around her neck hangs a cross.

Donovan brings the chart up, opens it.

On her chart, a NAME, "ANNA GREY". Under NOTES, "Massive internal trauma" and "PVS."

Donovan looks down on the woman. He reaches for her neck.

INT. DONOVAN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Donovan opens the door and enters.

A SMALL SUITCASE stands in the middle of the floor with a NOTE. Donovan pulls the note off the suitcase.

It reads "Be out by 9."

Donovan sighs.

INT. ST. PAUL, RECTORY - NIGHT

Donovan wheels the suitcase into the entrance.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Donovan wheels his bag past a row of doors. The first one is open. He stops, looks into the room.

INT. GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

A small guest room. A DIRTY MAN sleeps on a single bed.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Donovan continues on, stops a few doors down.

INT. GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Donovan unpacks his suitcase, which sits on the bed.

LATER

Donovan lies in bed, awake. The wedding ring rests on the night table beside him.

INT. ST. PAUL, NAVE - DAY

The church is full of parishioners.

Donovan stands at the pulpit, recites from the Bible without looking at it.

His eyes scan the crowd as he talks.

DONOVAN

"Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us?"

Donovan's gaze settles on Kate. George sits next to her.

DONOVAN (cont'd)

"Why do we profane the covenant of our fathers by breaking faith with one another?"

Kate averts her eyes.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
"You flood the LORD's altar with tears." You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands."

Father Matthews watches from the side of the church.

Donovan continues to scan the room, finds Jude.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
"You ask, 'Why?' It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant."

His eyes lock with Jude's.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
"Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth."

Donovan lingers on Jude. They watch each other.

INT. CHURCH OFFICE - DAY

Donovan sits behind his desk.

Across from him sit Kate and George, a displeased look on his face. Kate cries softly.

DONOVAN
Mr. Gilmore, Mrs. Gilmore. Thank you both for agreeing to meet with me.

George nods, glances at Kate, but won't look directly at her.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
Every marriage goes through difficult times. People change. They make mistakes. And some mistakes are difficult to forgive.

Kate dabs at her eyes with a handkerchief.

KATE
I've told him I'm sorry.

She turns to George.

KATE (cont'd)
I said I'm sorry. I don't know why
I...

Donovan watches Kate, but doesn't hear. Instead...

FLASHBACK -- EXT. TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH - DAY

Maggie at her sister's wedding.

MAGGIE
I said I'm sorry.

BACK TO SCENE

George boils over.

GEORGE
Sorry isn't good enough. Am I
supposed to just forget that it
happened? Pretend that my wife
didn't cheat on me? Is that what
you want, Kate?

Donovan leans forward.

DONOVAN
Maybe you could start with
accepting that it happened, and
that it's in the past.

GEORGE
Accept that it happened? What the
Hell is that supposed to mean,
Father? Of course it *happened*.

DONOVAN
Please, if you'll just be patient -

GEORGE
No, I won't. I shouldn't have
agreed to come here.
(MORE)

GEORGE (cont'd)

You think just because you've got that band on your finger you can help us more than Father Matthews could? That you know what I'm going through?

Donovan grips the side of the table tight. He snaps.

DONOVAN

I know. I know that you're hurt. I know that you feel responsible. That each night you run through every moment of your marriage, wondering if that was where you went wrong. If that time you ran your hand through her hair, or that time you didn't, could have made a difference. If only you'd kissed her once more often for no reason. If only you'd listened when she told you about the dress she wanted. Then maybe, maybe it would have been different.

Donovan leans in closer. George backs down, flustered.

Kate looks between them, unsure.

DONOVAN (cont'd)

Maybe then you wouldn't have seemed like such a miserable person that she had to look somewhere else. Maybe then everything would have been good. Maybe then you wouldn't be such a loser!

Tears well up in George's eyes.

DONOVAN (cont'd)

Maybe then she would love you!

Kate leans forward.

KATE

Father Lewis!

Donovan stops, breathes heavy. He lets the anger pass.

DONOVAN

I'm sorry. I...

He slumps back into his chair, dazed.

KATE
This was a mistake.

She helps George, who now cries openly, to his feet.

INT. ST. PAUL, NAVE - DAY

Donovan steps out into the Nave. The room is sparsely filled with PARISHIONERS.

The DOOR CREAKS OPEN. Donovan looks up.

MAGGIE stands in the doorway of the church. She looks at Donovan.

He looks back, unable to move.

Maggie turns away, unable to cross the threshold. The door swings shut behind her.

INT. GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Donovan lies awake in bed, stares at the ceiling.

THE CONFESSOR (V.O.)
Embrace the pain, Father.

A CRASH from the hallway startles him.

He sits up in bed, listens. Muffled METALLIC SOUNDS come from outside.

Donovan, in his boxers, rises from bed and moves, slow, across to the door.

He cracks it open. Peers out into...

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Donovan's face peers out from the door.

Light hits the wall at the end of the hallway. A SHADOW of a person stretches across it. The sounds continue.

Donovan steps into the hall. He leaves the door open.

The Shadow continues to move on the wall.

Donovan creeps forward, closer to the end of the hall. He's right near the edge when...

JUDE, carrying several metal trays, rounds the corner and collides with him.

JUDE
Watch out!

Metal baking trays crash to the ground.

Donovan grabs hold of Jude, and they both fall. She lands on top of him.

JUDE (cont'd)
I'm so sorry!

They lie on the ground, holding each other.

DONOVAN
It's OK.

Jude looks, sees Donovan.

JUDE
Father Lewis?

Their faces are only inches apart. Her body on top of his. Donovan stares into Jude's eyes.

JUDE (cont'd)
I didn't even see you. What are you doing here?

Donovan shifts, uncomfortable. He looks down at Jude's long legs. Her skirt hangs off the side, hiked up, most of her leg exposed. Her other leg rests in between his, pressed against his crotch.

DONOVAN
I heard a noise.

JUDE
Oh. I dropped my pans- Oh.

Jude looks down to where her leg rests on Donovan.

DONOVAN
I was just... I...

Jude climbs to her feet, quick.

JUDE
It's OK, Father. It happens. I'm sorry I wasn't looking where I was going.

Donovan pulls himself up.

DONOVAN
Miss Jones.

JUDE
Please, forget it. And I want you
to call me Jude. But, if you don't
mind me asking, what are you doing
here?

Donovan sees the pans on the ground.

DONOVAN
Let me help you with those.

He picks up the pans, winces when he takes a step.

JUDE
What's wrong?

Donovan favors one leg.

DONOVAN
I think I twisted my ankle.

Jude puts her arm around him so he can support himself on her
shoulder.

JUDE
Here. Let me help you.

She walks him to the open door and into...

INT. GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Jude supports Donovan long enough to get him to his bed.

He sits down hard.

JUDE
There.

DONOVAN
Thanks.

Donovan settles in, grabs his ankle.

Jude stares down at him.

JUDE
I'm just... I'm going to...

She points at the door.

Donovan nods.

Jude starts to back out of the room, then stops.

JUDE (cont'd)
You want to talk about it?

Donovan looks up at her.

DONOVAN
No. No, really. I'm fine.

Jude takes a step back towards him.

JUDE
I'm a good listener. I volunteer
for the hotline twice a month.

DONOVAN
I'm not a good talker.

Jude sits on the bed beside Donovan.

JUDE
Nonsense. I've seen you talk to
people. When you want to, you
usually think of the right things
to say to help them.

DONOVAN
That's my job. What do you mean
when I want to?

JUDE
I'm sorry. I... Since you've been
here... Well, it's pretty obvious
something's been bothering you.
And...

She motions to his wedding ring, which sits on the
nightstand.

JUDE (cont'd)
I'm pretty sure I can guess what it
is.

Donovan stares at the ring, then looks back to her.

DONOVAN
Things haven't been good... At
home.

JUDE

Marriage is hard for anyone. I bet it's twice as hard for you.

DONOVAN

Why? Because I'm a priest? My marriage was great. At least, I thought it was.

He winces again and grabs his ankle.

Jude repositions herself, takes hold of his foot.

JUDE

Here.

She swings his foot up into her lap, forces Donovan to lie back in the bed. Jude massages the ankle.

JUDE (cont'd)

This will help.

Donovan cringes at first, but it does help.

DONOVAN

How did? Where did you learn that?

Jude smiles as she continues to rub his ankle.

JUDE

Church softball is a dangerous game. You know those religious types. An eye for an eye, or an ankle for an ankle, and all of that. I've tended my share of wounds.

DONOVAN

Well, thanks.

She goes back to her task.

JUDE

You were saying? Things were good until?

Donovan lies back, stares up at the ceiling.

DONOVAN

I can't talk about it.

Jude continues to massage his ankle, but moves her hands a little higher up.

JUDE
We all need to let it out
sometimes.

DONOVAN
It's my wife. She...

JUDE
Cheated on you?

Donovan stares up.

DONOVAN
Yes. With her Brother-in-law.

JUDE
Does she know? The sister?

DONOVAN
No.

Jude continues the massage, looks down at Donovan.

JUDE
Why didn't you say anything?

DONOVAN
I just found out. And I'm afraid,
I guess, of what everyone will
think. I just wish it would go
away. I wish it had never
happened. I wish... I wish I could
forgive her.

JUDE
Some things can't be forgiven.

THE CONFESSOR (V.O.)
Maybe it's not forgiveness for
yourself you seek.

DONOVAN
Daniel Grey doesn't think I'm a
very good priest. Neither does
Father Matthews. And I'm not sure
I do anymore, either.

Jude gazes down at him.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
I came here to prove it's possible
to be a good priest and a good
husband. I really screwed that up.

JUDE
Why do you care what people think?

DONOVAN
I don't, normally. But, ever since
I came here... I never felt like I
was given a chance. I feel like
there's a target on my back.

JUDE
There is.

Donovan looks at Jude, looks down at her hands. They've made
their way up his leg to his thigh.

DONOVAN
Miss Jones...

JUDE
Jude.

She slides her hand up to his crotch. Her head drops down.

LATER

Donovan and Jude lie naked in bed together, hold each other.
Jude, a satisfied grin on her face, holds onto Donovan tight.

DONOVAN
This was a mistake.

She snuggles in closer.

JUDE
Don't worry. I'll confess later.

LATER

Donovan sleeps. Jude lies asleep next to him, her leg draped
over his.

DONOVAN'S DREAM

INT. ST. PAUL, NAVE - NIGHT

Teenage Donovan screams at Lola as she flees from the church.

DONOVAN
I hate you!

THE CONFESSOR'S MOUTH

THE CONFESSOR
Why are you here?

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

It's Donovan's house, but the walls are a different color, muted, stained. An old paint job.

Donovan, face pale, sits on the couch and stares down at a NEWSPAPER.

Maggie walks up behind him, leans down and wraps her arms around his neck, kisses it. She sees the paper.

MAGGIE
What is it?

The NEWSPAPER ARTICLE -- a PHOTO of FATHER CAINE and a headline, "BISHOP LAID TO REST."

A tear streams down Donovan's face.

INT. ST. PAUL, NAVE - NIGHT

Teenage Donovan stands before Father Caine.

FATHER CAINE
I love your mother.

DONOVAN
Fraud! Hypocrite! You defile the Church you represent. The Church she loves.

INT. GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Jude WRITHES on top of DONOVAN.

Donovan's face twisted. Agony.

THE CONFESSOR (V.O.)
Embrace the pain, Father!

INT. ST. PAUL, NAVE - NIGHT

Teenage Donovan SHOVES Father Caine into the confessional.

Donovan hurries out of the church.

He reaches the door, steps outside, then SLAMS it closed.

THE CONFESSOR (V.O.)
Anger. Pain. Jealousy.

INT. DONOVAN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The walls are faded as they were earlier in the dream, but the furniture is also different, older. RELIGIOUS ICONS hang on the wall, a CRUCIFIX, a PORTRAIT OF THE VIRGIN MARY, a PHOTO of POPE JOHN PAUL II in his mid-60s during a visit to St. Louis Cathedral in New Orleans.

The door swings open and Teenage Donovan enters, head down. He SLAMS the door closed without looking at the room. When he does turn and look, he SCREAMS.

DONOVAN
No!

He rushes into the room. A pair of LEGS, LOLA'S, hang down, suspended in air. Donovan wraps his arms around them, struggles to support them.

THE CONFESSOR (V.O.)
Embrace the pain!

BACK TO REALITY

DONOVAN (V.O.)
No!

Donovan wakes with a start. Sweat covers his face.

He looks next to him, but Jude is not there.

Donovan reaches for his clothes and rises from bed.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Donovan, now in his priest uniform, walks down an empty hallway.

INT. ST. PAUL, NAVE - NIGHT

Donovan enters the church.

DONOVAN
Jude?

The room is cavernous. No one is in sight.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
Miss Jones?

Donovan walks along the pews.

THE CONFESSOR (O.S.)
That's a little formal, isn't it...

Donovan starts, his head jerks around as he searches for the source of the voice.

THE CONFESSOR (O.S.) (cont'd)
Considering what you and Miss Jones
just did?

Donovan's eyes dart around again. He looks towards the alcove where The Confessor jumped him before.

DONOVAN
Where is she?

THE CONFESSOR (O.S.)
Come now, Donovan... I can call you
Donovan, can't I? Now that you've
sinned in the house of God?

Donovan cuts through the pews, heads towards the alcove.

DONOVAN
What do you call what you've been
doing, *Father Dan*?

THE CONFESSOR (O.S.)
My soul is already damned.

Donovan reaches the alcove, waits outside.

DONOVAN
Then you're overdue in Hell.

Donovan spins around the opening, fist raised...

But the alcove is empty.

The Confessor laughs.

THE CONFESSOR (O.S.)
Do you plan to take me there
yourself? I've got tickets for
two.

Donovan spins around, scans the room. Nothing.

THE CONFESSOR (O.S.) (cont'd)
If we hurry, maybe we can catch
Miss Jones on the way.

DONOVAN
Jude? Where is she?

THE CONFESSOR (O.S.)
She had the urge to confess.

Donovan's gaze drifts back to the confessional. The door sways slightly.

Donovan walks, cautious, towards it.

He gets to the confessional, looks around once more.

Quiet. The room empty.

He turns back to the door.

DONOVAN
Jude?

He reaches out with his left hand, his right cocked back ready to strike. He pulls on the door.

JUDE'S BODY falls out onto the floor.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
Jesus!

Donovan jumps back, stares down at...

Jude's lifeless face. Her naked body, throat slit.

Donovan makes the sign of the cross.

Donovan staggers back from the confessional. He turns to face...

The Confessor, several paces away, holds a large KNIFE. He wears the uniform of a priest, collar and all.

THE CONFESSOR
Was it good for you?

Donovan stares at The Confessor, looks for somewhere to escape to.

He feints to run. The Confessor mirrors him.

Donovan takes off, runs from the church.

The Confessor lashes out with the knife as Donovan passes, just missing him.

The Confessor chases after Donovan.

EXT. ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE CHURCH - NIGHT

Donovan slams the heavy door as he hurtles down the stairs, three at a time.

The Confessor pushes the door open and chases after him.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Donovan runs past the same houses as usual, but does not look behind him. He favors one leg.

Feet run after him.

Donovan comes up on the alley, he ducks inside.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Donovan scrambles past the still overturned trash can and further into the alley. He ducks behind another garbage can.

FEET step into the opening of the alley. They pause.

Donovan, out of breath, tries to remain still.

The feet walk into the alley.

The Confessor looks from side to side.

THE CONFESSOR
"I would that all men were even as myself. But I say to the unmarried and to the widows, it is good for them if they so continue."

Donovan tenses.

THE CONFESSOR (cont'd)
I know you're there.

Donovan calls out.

DONOVAN
"But if they cannot control
themselves, they should marry, for
it is better to marry than burn
with passion."

The Confessor stops, looks around, knife held out.

THE CONFESSOR
"An unmarried man is concerned
about the Lord's affairs, but a
married man is concerned about the
affairs of this world, and his
interests are divided."

DONOVAN
"Each man should have his own wife,
and each woman her own husband."

The Confessor takes a few steps further into the alley. He's
just on the other side of the garbage can now.

THE CONFESSOR
"Blessed are they who keep their
flesh undefiled, for they shall be
the temple of God."

Donovan tenses, whispers.

DONOVAN
"A husband must not divorce his
wife."

He leaps to his feet and barrels into The Confessor, knocking
him back.

The two men struggle. Donovan swings, connecting with blow
after blow.

The Confessor falls back. He grabs onto Donovan as he does.

Donovan's ankle gives way.

Donovan winces in pain, topples down with The Confessor.

The Confessor rolls Donovan over, straddles him, pinning his arms to the ground.

THE CONFESSOR
You should have stayed out of my church. You defile it.

Donovan continues to struggle.

DONOVAN
I love the Church.

THE CONFESSOR
That's not enough.

Donovan wrestles one hand free, but before he can get away, the Confessor pins him again.

THE CONFESSOR (cont'd)
You'll see, once I've opened your eyes. Once I've removed everyone who blinds you to the truth.

The Confessor, a crazed smile on his face, leans in close to Donovan.

The Confessor rocks his head back and HEAD-BUTTS Donovan, stunning him.

The Confessor stands.

THE CONFESSOR (cont'd)
I wonder if the wife is at home or in the arms of her lover.

The Confessor spits on Donovan.

He turns and walks from the alley.

Blood and sweat sting at Donovan's eyes. He struggles to maintain consciousness, but passes out.

LATER

Donovan regains consciousness. He pulls himself to his knees, then his head shoots up.

DONOVAN
Maggie.

He scrambles to his feet and runs from the alley, still hobbled by his ankle.

EXT. DONOVAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Donovan's house looms at the end of the street.

Donovan spots it, pushes to quicken his pace, fights through the pain.

Donovan leaps up onto the porch, tries the door. It's open. He swings it open and ducks into...

INT. DONOVAN'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Donovan slams the door. He turns back to the room.

DONOVAN
Maggie?

He rushes towards the hallway.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
Maggie!

He almost knocks Maggie over as she comes in from the hall.

MAGGIE
What the Hell are you doing here?

Donovan grabs her, embraces her.

DONOVAN
Thank God you're OK.

Maggie struggles to get free of Donovan's grasp.

MAGGIE
Let go of me!

The Confessor CRASHES through the window, sending shattered glass everywhere.

Donovan pulls Maggie to the ground and shields her from the glass. He looks up to see...

The Confessor brandishes a sharp KNIFE only a few feet away.

Donovan rises to face him.

DONOVAN
Leave us alone!

The Confessor laughs.

MAGGIE

Donovan!

Donovan glances back, distracted.

DONOVAN

Maggie, get out of here!

The Confessor steps forward, swings his arm, strikes Donovan across the face, knocking him to the side.

Donovan trips, falls back over the couch. He's cornered.

The Confessor advances.

THE CONFESSOR

If you have anything you need to confess, now is the time.

Donovan looks to Maggie.

DONOVAN

I...

The Confessor sees the exchange.

THE CONFESSOR

Why don't you tell her where you were tonight, Donovan? Why don't you tell her how you fucked that little whore under God's own roof!

Donovan looks to Maggie, pleads.

MAGGIE

Donovan?

DONOVAN

I'm sorry...

THE CONFESSOR

You are a sinner.

DONOVAN

Yes! I am.

The Confessor shouts.

THE CONFESSOR

You are a priest!

DONOVAN

I am a man first!

A tense moment. Donovan calms a little. Quiet.

DONOVAN (cont'd)
And I'm in love. Maggie, I'm
sorry.

THE CONFESSOR
Why should you have what I can't?

The Confessor raise the knife, ready to pounce.

DONOVAN
I know about your wife!

The Confessor stops, holds the knife ready.

THE CONFESSOR
You don't know anything about her.

DONOVAN
You left the priesthood for her.

THE CONFESSOR
I love her!

Donovan reaches into his pocket.

He pulls out a NECKLACE, hanging from it a CROSS. It's the
same one Anna wore around her neck.

THE CONFESSOR (cont'd)
Anna?

The Confessor relaxes a little.

Donovan inches forward.

THE CONFESSOR (cont'd)
You don't know what it feels like
to have to choose.

DONOVAN
I know exactly how it feels.

Donovan's hand reaches for the knife.

The Confessor's eyes shoot up, glare at Donovan.

THE CONFESSOR
No! You should have had to
sacrifice! You should have had to
make a choice!

The Confessor presses forward. Donovan scrambles back.

THE CONFESSOR (cont'd)
But they let you in on a
technicality! You don't deserve
it. You don't deserve to live!

He moves to strike.

MAGGIE
WAIT!

She places herself between The Confessor and Donovan.

DONOVAN
Maggie, no!

The Confessor stops.

MAGGIE
I'm the sinner here.

DONOVAN
Maggie, please...

The Confessor stares at her, rage just below the surface.

MAGGIE
If you want a sinner, here I am.
I'm the one who strayed first.
I'm the one who should suffer.

The Confessor looks at the two of them. He stares at Maggie.

THE CONFESSOR
I absolve you of all your sins...

He raises the knife.

DONOVAN
No!

Donovan leaps from the couch, knocks Maggie out of the way.
He grabs The Confessor's arm.

Maggie tumbles to the ground, brings a LAMP down with her.

On the wall, Donovan and The Confessor's SHADOWS STRUGGLE.
The shadow of the knife raises up. It drops with a loud
SQUISH as it penetrates flesh. Maggie SCREAMS.

The knife, covered in blood, hits the ground with a clang. A THUD follows. A few moments pass, and a BLOODY WHITE COLLAR is tossed on top of the knife.

EXT. ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE CHURCH - DAY

POLICEMEN carry evidence bags from the church and two MORGUE MEN wheel a gurney out with a sheet covering a body.

INT. ST. PAUL, NAVE - DAY

Father Matthews stands in front of the confessional.

POLICE TAPE covers it, sectioning it off from the rest of the church. DRIED BLOOD remains on the ground beside it, and a CHALK OUTLINE of where Jude's body was.

Father Matthews gives the sign of the cross, then walks away, towards the front of the church.

He looks up at the crucifix above the altar, looks into the eyes of Jesus on the cross.

A THUD of a DOOR CLOSING. Father Matthews turns around.

The police tape is on the ground and the door of the confessional pulls closed from the inside.

Father Matthews walks over, stares at the confessional.

He enters the priest's side.

INT. CONFESSIONAL - DAY

Father Matthews sits in the confessional.

The SHADOW OF A MAN on the other side, behind the screen.

FATHER MATTHEWS
The confessional is closed.

The Shadow holds still, silent.

FATHER MATTHEWS (cont'd)
Do you have something to confess?

A muffled voice.

MAN (O.S.)
Bless me Father, for I have sinned.

FATHER MATTHEWS

What is your sin my son?

A ripped black sleeve... A hand covered in dried blood... a black shirt, covered in blood, collar open.

Donovan, face streaked with dried blood.

FADE TO BLACK.

Vita

Jason D. Buch spent most of his years growing up in Tampa, FL, where he attended the University of South Florida receiving a Bachelor's of Science in Computer Science in 1999. After six years working as a systems analyst for AT&T and IBM, Jason moved to New Orleans to pursue screenwriting and producing. He has written several short films and feature length screenplays as well as serving as a producer of documentaries, such as the 2006 PBS documentary *American Creole: New Orleans Reunion*, on which he was the Associate Producer. Jason plans to continue writing, making movies and encouraging creative developments in New Orleans.