

QUEEN OF HOARDS
an original screenplay by
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FADE IN:

EXT. FARMHOUSE - AFTERNOON

A beat-up pickup truck sits outside a rambling two-story farmhouse on a quiet rural road. Prominent on its back window is an Army star.

YUSEF (O.S.)
Yes, I'm a unfeeling asshole.

INSIDE THE PICKUP TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

YUSEF (30s, a swarthy, Arab-American man) sits behind the wheel. Rumpled blazer and tie. Military haircut with trimmed beard. Sturdy. He holds an iPhone to his ear with his shoulder.

YUSEF
Audrey, can we rehash my emotional issues later? I met with the lawyer about his will...

Yusef pulls a maroon envelope emblazoned with gold handwriting from the sun visor. Pours a shiny key from it into his hand.

YUSEF
Who else would he give the fucking house to? Richard had nobody.

His tired gaze lingers on the farmhouse. Wistful.

YUSEF
He barely had me... what? Jesus, I can't just click my heels and turn it into cash. I know we're behind...

Yusef glances around outside as he pulls a semi-automatic pistol from the center console. He checks the clip.

YUSEF
The VA claim will come through – someday – and then probate... would you just trust me for once..?

The phone goes dead.

Yusef angrily shoves it into his pocket. He wrestles off his tie and yanks open his shirt collar. A small copper medallion hangs from his neck and glints in the sunlight.

Yusef climbs from the pickup. Pockets the maroon envelope and key. Jams the gun and a box of ammo into his blazer. And plods toward the farmhouse.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The farmhouse sits on a large wooded lot. Detached garage. A church steeple peeks above the trees behind it.

Yusef walks behind the house. He notes a piece of yellow caution tape tangled in a shrub beside the garage. A festival of yard gnomes jam the patio.

He unlocks the kitchen door with some anticipation.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Yusef clicks on the light.

An epic hoard faces him. Storage containers and bric-a-brac cram the room. Vintage appliances are barely accessible.

YUSEF
Nice job, Richard.

Yusef tosses the key into a vintage ashtray on a surprisingly tidy cafe table. A photo hanging above it catches his eye.

YUSEF
Or should I say, Olivia.

CLOSE ON a beauty shot of an elegant old drag queen.

Yusef drapes his blazer over one of two cafe chairs and wedges the pistol and ammo into a cabinet. He squeezes into the:

DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Yusef takes in the room. His eyes scan the stacks of crystal, china and figurines that cover the table, and the piles of boxes that jam the floor. Searching for something.

LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Floor-to-ceiling storage containers. Dressed mannequins and stacks of literature block the windows and doors. Intricately hung artwork fills the walls like puzzle pieces.

A portrait of a soldier – an unmistakable likeness of Yusef – draws his attention. Yusef touches it fondly, then clears a path through the foyer to access the stairway.

INT. STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER

Two chairs, an easel, paint supplies and canvases form an artistic oasis from the hoard. Artworks cover the walls.

Yusef lifts a painting of a muscular man from the the easel to examine it – and gets wet paint on his shirt.

YUSEF

God damn it...

A maroon envelope falls from behind it.

Yusef picks up the envelope. He recognizes the gold handwriting on the front, but the name...

YUSEF

Who the hell is Pauli?

Baffled, he replaces the envelope and sets the painting back on the easel. He recognizes another painting of himself as a young boy, smiling at the memory of it.

Yusef searches a file cabinet. Finds a folder he wants. He notes another folder behind it and pulls it out.

CLOSE ON the label "SUBJECTS" and the folder's contents: nude photographs of Richard's models.

Yusef hears someone outside. He quickly replaces the folders where he found them.

INT. KITCHEN - THAT DAY

LEONA (50s, a flamboyant, rotund but demurely-dressed drag queen) bursts in like a tornado, a maroon envelope in hand.

Handsome PAULI (20s, an athletic latino stud in a black shirt with an Olive Garden pin on the chest) trails behind her.

Leona takes in the room with dramatic disgust.

LEONA

Minimalist, my ass.

PAULI
Was she a collector?

LEONA
She was a liar and a tramp.

Yusef squeezes into the room, surprising Leona. Pauli gives Yusef a once-over and likes what he sees.

YUSEF
Uncle Sebastian?

LEONA
Aunt Leona, darling. Get the nom de drag right. And the pronouns --

YUSEF
-- What the hell are you doing here?

Leona waves a maroon envelope in Yusef's face.

LEONA
An invitation from my ex -- from the grave no less. Apparently, dear Olivia left some life-changing something for me in this shit-hole.

Yusef looks between Leona and Pauli.

YUSEF
I have a lot to do here...

LEONA
That's obvious, darling. How's your mother?

YUSEF
She'd like a visit from her brother -- or sister, or whoever you decide to be that day.

LEONA
Don't be catty. Olivia would have wanted me this way.

YUSEF
Mom misses you --

LEONA
-- Is this house for sale? With this end of town urbanizing and all.

YUSEF

Leona, I just got possession --

LEONA

-- You keeping it and rejoining the real world, or going back to Iraq?

YUSEF

No, the house isn't for sale.

LEONA

I never wanted you sucked into that desert boondoggle. You don't actually enjoy killing people, do you?

The comment hangs between them. Pauli extends a hand.

PAULI

Yo, I'm Pauli, Ms. Leona's companion.

Yusef shakes Pauli's hand coldly.

YUSEF

I'm in the Quartermaster Corps now, and not by choice. I want to be on the front with my men. My people --

LEONA

(derisively)
-- Your people.

PAULI

Is that paint? Lemme help with that.

Pauli finds dish soap and a brush beneath the sink and deftly attacks the paint on Yusef's shirt. Yusef tries to pull away.

PAULI

Hold still. I don't bite.

Pauli's selfless act is at once aggressive and tenderly intimate. He touches the medallion hanging from Yusef's neck.

PAULI

This copper piece mean somethin'?

Yusef simply nods as he studies Pauli.

PAULI

It's nice. It fits you.

Leona loudly searches cabinets.

PAULI

Leona, you should wait for the others.

YUSEF

Wait... what others?

EXT. BACKYARD - LATER

A line of yard gnomes sits on a picnic table. An empty field stretches out behind it. Suddenly, three successive gnomes disintegrate into broken shards.

On the patio, Yusef lowers his pistol.

BUTCH (O.S.)

HEY, BUDDY - hold up!

BUTCH (early 40s, a burly Catholic priest in traditional collar, black shirt and black leather coat) approaches through the backyard. An earnest man with impish eyes.

He has a brown bag in one hand and waves the other.

BUTCH

I surrender.

Yusef studies Butch as he approaches.

YUSEF

You make a dramatic entrance, Father.

BUTCH

There's a gap in the fence behind the church. You're Yusef, right? Richard's nephew?

YUSEF

Richard and my uncle --

BUTCH

-- Were lovers for 12 years. Richard said he kept up with you after they split. He spoke very highly of you.

YUSEF

Did he?

BUTCH

He never said you were Chaldean. I imagine some folks in Iraq would take issue with that.

Yusef stuffs the copper medallion necklace beneath his shirt.

YUSEF

I don't advertise on the job.

Yusef considers Butch as he reloads the gun.

YUSEF

That's your church then.

BUTCH

It is – but I left my manners in the rectory... Father Butch, pastor at St. Matthew's there, and a paper pusher at the diocesan offices.

Butch shakes Yusef's hand. He is warm. Comforting.

BUTCH

I'm so sorry for your loss.

YUSEF

Butch is an odd name for a priest.

BUTCH

It's a nickname from my time as an Army chaplain. A couple of the lads labeled me and it stuck. Mind if I give that a go?

Yusef checks the safety and hands Butch the gun. Butch knows his way around a weapon, but misses every gnome.

Butch engages the safety. Returns the gun to Yusef.

BUTCH

I'm more a lover than a fighter.
Weren't you a sharpshooter --

YUSEF

-- Why are you here, Father?

Butch shows Yusef a maroon envelope.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Yusef and Butch enter the now crowded kitchen. Yusef hides the gun as Butch introduces himself to Leona and Pauli.

BUTCH

Wow, it's tight in here.

He claps Pauli on the back, jovial and unrestrained.

BUTCH

The new owner could use your muscle
to clear it out.

YUSEF

I'm the new owner, neighbor.

Butch pulls whiskey from the brown bag. Hands it to Pauli.
Pauli checks out the bottle – and Butch.

LEONA

I didn't realize this was BYOB.

BUTCH

Sometimes mourning requires a wee
dram.

LEONA

Are you truly celibate, daddy, or
just playing at priestly devotion?

BUTCH

I'd never suggest you were playing
dress-up, Ms. Leona. Are you?
(meeting Pauli's gaze)
No, I'm every inch a priest.

Leona exchanges a skeptical look with Yusef.

BUTCH

So, Richard owned a lot of stuff,
eh? I visited his downtown studio.

YUSEF

You don't strike me as a collector.

BUTCH

More an enthusiast. It was very
minimalist. Not like this.

YUSEF

How did you meet Richard?

BUTCH

At church. Where else?

XENIA (50s, an elegant Latina in a practical suit) enters.
Poised and regal in the best of times, she bangs the door
into Pauli as she rushes in.

XENIA

I am so sorry! Are you okay?

PAULI

Hey, no worries.

XENIA

So crowded! Reminds me of my town
hall meetings – and look at this
place! Did he live here – oh, Yusef...

She smothers Yusef in a hug. He accepts it coolly.

XENIA

Let your godmother see you. Are you
okay? I worry so about you in Iraq,
doing the good work of this country.

LEONA

(disgusted)
Oh my God...

XENIA

How is that saint, Audrey – keeping
the home fires burning as you fight
for our freedom?

YUSEF

Audrey is Audrey.

She shakes Pauli's hand perfunctorily. Butch shakes her hand
with gusto.

BUTCH

Father Butch. St. Matthew's church.
A pleasure to meet the Honorable
Xenia Jackson.

XENIA

My face is all over town – those ads
for Congress. Everyone seems to know
me. Did you know Richard very well?

BUTCH

Very. Can I buy you a drink?

Butch opens the whiskey. Pauli deftly provides juice glasses
without a search.

XENIA

No, thank you. I'm sober ten years.

BUTCH

I'll toast to that. And, to Richard..?

Butch pours four shots as Pauli retrieves a water for Xenia. Butch raises his glass – and nods to Yusef.

YUSEF

To Richard: so full of surprises.

BUTCH

Rest in peace, my friend.

They clink glasses. Pauli and Butch slam theirs. Yusef sips his. Leona sets hers aside.

XENIA

Are you solely a priest, or have you meatier roles within the church?

BUTCH

I go wherever the Lord sends me --

YUSEF

-- Enough jibber-jab. If you have a key to this place, hand it over.

Yusef holds out the ashtray and they each give up a key. Pauli dumps his key from a maroon envelope.

PAULI

Anyone want coffee?

LEONA

Wait one minute... why do you have a key to this hovel – or an invitation at all for that matter? You never met the man!

Pauli fills a pot. Finds coffee grounds.

LEONA

Answer me! I pay your freight --

YUSEF

-- There's four shiny new keys and one old tarnished one. Someone spent a lot of time here. Who was it?

Pauli finds mugs, milk and sugar. He maneuvers around Butch to set up a coffee maker in the tight space.

XENIA

I only visited his studio in town.

YUSEF

You've never stepped foot in there.

XENIA

We haven't talked in years and you're the expert on me? Richard sent me this invitation...

Xenia opens it with flair.

XENIA

"Come to this address at 3:00 p.m. Today to retrieve a life-changing gift as a thanks for your impact on my life. Remember always; the reward is in the journey."

LEONA

This is such horse shit. Come, Pauli.

PAULI

Some chances come once in a lifetime. You willin' to chuck that?

LEONA

Like anyone on this earth would give you a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

PAULI

You did.

Leona considers that, chastened.

XENIA

So we must actually sort through this, this pile to find our gift?

They all look at Yusef. Expectant.

YUSEF

Okay, fine. Find your friggin' gift and then go.

They disperse into his house. Yusef glances at Richard's drag beauty shot.

YUSEF

(sotto voce)

You just totally fucked me.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

Yusef watches as Leona makes a mess of the room. Pauli gingerly examines the china.

LEONA

This property is worth money, hon.
Amazon wants to build a distribution
center near here - my God, where did
that cow get all this crap?

YUSEF

How's your cash flow, Leona?

LEONA

Oh, you know, it comes and goes.
Wigs and fabric cost a lot, not to
mention the jewelry.

Pauli mouths that it's the shoes.

LEONA

I had a show just this past weekend
- of course you weren't there. With
Olivia gone, I'm finally headlining.

PAULI

Hey, I saw you shootin' out there.
You in the Army?

YUSEF

Second Battalion, 402 Army Field
Support Brigade.

PAULI

Iraq must be tough. All that sand
and whatnot.

LEONA

Our Yusef is a regular Jawa Joe.

PAULI

I was thinking about joinin' the
military myself. It seems a good
deal, what with tuition and --

YUSEF

(to Leona)

-- So that money I loaned you - should
I expect it back this century?

LEONA

You'll see it when I see it, darling.

YUSEF

You sell real estate in a bull market.
How can you possibly --

LEONA

-- How does the war business pay
these days? By the head?

PAULI

Hey, that's not cool --

YUSEF

(to Pauli)

-- And how is it you know your way
so well around this fucking house?

PAULI

I, um --

YUSEF

-- You found soap, coffee, and shot
glasses without a thought. I'd almost
guess you lived here --

PAULI

-- I been in a kitchen or two, okay?

Pauli stomps out into the kitchen.

LEONA

I see you continue to make friends
and influence people.

A ripping noise distracts Yusef to the:

LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

YUSEF

HEY! Couldya be a little careful!?

BUTCH

It's stuffed with cocktail napkins.
Look at these ridiculous sayings:
"Wine: a serving of fruit" and
"Champagne is always the answer."
What am I even looking for?

YUSEF

How the fuck should I know?

BUTCH

Richard gave you this house. I assumed you were close --

YUSEF

-- I own this stuff, so be careful.

BUTCH

Did he have an office in here? Filing cabinets and the like?

Yusef ignores him and squeezes to a small space excavated by Xenia. A drop-front desk appears to be her target.

XENIA

I want to run from this hoard.

YUSEF

The door's open.

XENIA

Am I'm raining on your parade? I'm sure I can find a volunteer to help --

YUSEF

-- No, Xenia. Please, I... I'm glad to see you. Always.

XENIA

You're not. But it would dishonor Richard if I did not at least try. We were besties in high school.

YUSEF

You hadn't seen Rich in years. What kind of "bestie" is that?

Xenia shoves a stack of boxes. It sways precariously.

YUSEF

You wanna ransack that cabinet?

He maneuvers boxes to give her access. She opens the front and discovers it jammed with papers.

XENIA

Oh, Richard -- you were always in control of life. What happened?

YUSEF

He gave up. I understand the feeling.

XENIA

Do you really? I doubt that.

Yusef is non-committal.

XENIA

You didn't exactly burnish your relationship with Audrey when I asked.

YUSEF

Audrey burnishes herself just fine.

XENIA

You are home after a year of fighting for our freedom. There's joy in that --

YUSEF

-- Would you please just search the damn cabinet already?

XENIA

Don't bully me! I am a congresswoman. I remember when you were fun.

YUSEF

War has a way of squeezing the fun out of you.

Yusef hears Butch empty a box onto the floor.

XENIA

The Quartermaster Corps can't be difficult. Pushing requisitions must be better than killing people.

YUSEF

I was a sharpshooter, not an assassin.

XENIA

Push requisitions. It is far safer.

Butch peers between two towers of crates.

BUTCH

You kids get on like oil and vinegar.

XENIA

Respect for the godmother is fleeting.

BUTCH
 Maybe you've lost your touch?

YUSEF
 We're not in the confessional, Father.

BUTCH
 Occupational hazard. Just tryin' to
 make a vinaigrette here.

XENIA
 Yusef was always a handful --

YUSEF
 -- Jesus --

XENIA
 -- Though he is a good patriot.

YUSEF
 What the fuck is a "good patriot"
 these days?

BUTCH
 Aren't you on the House Armed Services
 Committee, congresswoman? I imagine
 it's a short trip from gunner to
 paper chaser with those connections.

Yusef takes that in. He questions Xenia with his eyes.

BUTCH
 The godmother has touch after all --

XENIA
 -- That would be highly unethical.

She shoves a tower of boxes – and they begin to topple toward
 her. She screams as she holds them back.

YUSEF
 FATHER! HELP ME!

Butch helps Xenia and Yusef struggle with the unstable stack.

YUSEF
 Shove them against the wall to
 stabilize them.

Yusef and Butch heave several columns together to shore up
 the hoard. They survey their work.

BUTCH
You're still quite a handful.

YUSEF
Fuck off.

Breaking glass crashes in the dining room. Yusef shoves Butch out of the way and bolts toward the noise.

Butch considers Xenia.

BUTCH
I have yet to meet an ethical politician.

XENIA
I have yet to meet a moral priest.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Yusef gapes at the crystal shards on the floor as Leona shoves them beneath the table.

LEONA
It was an accident. If that bitch hadn't piled it so high...

Another crash, this time from the living room.

XENIA (O.S.)
I told you to leave that be!

YUSEF
I TOLD YOU ALL TO BE CAREFUL! God damn it...

Yusef abandons the chaos of the room.

EXT. PATIO - MOMENTS LATER

Yusef bursts onto the patio. He paces a moment to collect himself, savoring the silence, then yanks out his iPhone and makes a call. He waits. An odd voice answers.

YUSEF
(brusquely)
Hello? Who the fuck is..?

His tone quickly changes.

YUSEF

... Mae! How's my beautiful girl?
Yeah? I'm sorry, honey, I – what was
for lunch? Grilled cheese and soup...
that sounds wonderful. Did Mommy
braid your hair? No, I'll be home
tomorrow, sweet pea... I'll be home,
I promise – is Mommy there? What? I
love you, too, Pumpkin.

Yusef rubs his eyes as he waits.

YUSEF

I have company. Leona, Xenia, some
kid named Pauli – a regular rogue's
gallery... No, I didn't invite them.
I'm not on the best of terms with...
the kid was one of his models, I
think. And Richard's priest showed
up... what?

Yusef pauses.

YUSEF

I'm not confessing to the fucking
priest, Audrey... Hiding? I'm not
hiding anything from you... I'm not
running around on you..!
(a long, bitter pause)
Fuck you. We'll talk when you're not
being such a bitch.

Yusef hangs up. He heaves a yard gnome at the garage. It
smashes into satisfying pieces.

He pulls the maroon envelope from his back pocket and opens
the note inside it. It reads simply, "KILL THE PRIEST."

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Butch opens another box as Xenia paws through the desk.

XENIA

Every sheet of paper is empty. Why
is all this paper empty?

Yusef crashes into the room.

YUSEF

Everyone: get your asses over here!

They all join Xenia and Butch in the space beside the desk.

YUSEF

I should throw you all out of here,
but Richard clearly had a reason for
this so I'm giving you two choices.

Yusef produces an old alarm clock. He sets the alarm.

YUSEF

I'll give you each \$5,000 to leave
now. Otherwise, you have until
midnight.

XENIA

You want me out of your life? Fine...

YUSEF

Jesus, Xenia... it's not that --

LEONA

-- We're looking for hair pins in a
trash heap and we haven't any idea
what we're looking for.

YUSEF

Then take the five grand.

XENIA

Like Richard would leave bags of
gold for us.

PAULI

Probably an envelope. Like the one
we got already.

They're surprised that Pauli said something.

LEONA

What the hell would a two-bit hustler
know about it? If I hadn't picked
you up, you'd still be selling your
ass on Front Street.

BUTCH

Leave the kid alone!

LEONA

Oh, the reverend speaks. I bet you've
shucked your habit for rough trade a
time or two.

YUSEF

That's enough --

BUTCH

(to Leona)

-- What makes you so sanctimonious --
the wig and heels? You don't have
two dimes to rub together.

YUSEF

I said that's enough!

BUTCH

Queenie is looking for money. Pauli
wants a new life. What do you want,
Yusef? Absolution?

Yusef slams Butch against a stack of boxes.

BUTCH

What are you gonna do now, soldier?
Shoot me?

YUSEF

Don't disrespect the man who brought
you here. The man who taught me to
drive and gave me my first beer...

PAULI

... I know where the gifts are.

LEONA

You... what?

PAULI

I know where the gifts are hidden --
except for mine.

XENIA

You cannot be serious.

PAULI

You're lookin' for those purple
envelopes like the ones you got
already. It has a note inside that
tells about your gift and whatnot.

BUTCH

Richard, you sly dog --

YUSEF

-- Hold on. How do you know this?

PAULI
Because I hid them.

LEONA
You did what?

XENIA
What are they? WHERE ARE THEY?

PAULI
Richard told me to hide them and was
adamite <sic>...

BUTCH
Adamant?

PAULI
Yeah, that. And I couldn't tell no
one, no matter what people did to
me. And there's more. When you find
your gift, you get that plus \$100,000.
Bitcoin. He gave Yusef the key code.

YUSEF
He didn't... did he?
(aggravated)
Fuck...

Butch laughs.

XENIA
You find this funny?

BUTCH
You're saying that once we find our
gift in this morass, we also get a
100K bonus?

PAULI
Yeah. He said there were things we
needed to learn --

LEONA
-- I just learned that my partner
and my ex were fucking each other.

PAULI
No, we never --

LEONA
-- You bare-backing whore.

Hurt, Pauli flees the room.

YUSEF

You were always a bitch. I don't remember you being cruel.

LEONA

Says the assassin.

XENIA

Richard said "life-changing." What could that mean?

YUSEF

It sounds like new-age bullshit, but if Richard said it... your gifts will change everything.

He grabs Leona by the arm.

YUSEF

You. Come with me.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Yusef shoves Leona toward Pauli.

YUSEF

Ms. Thing needs some coffee.

LEONA

Yes. Please.

Pauli pours a mug of coffee. Adds two spoons of sugar and hands it to Leona.

Yusef finds a basement door and heads down the stairs.

LEONA

Pauli -- Richard was a persuasive man --

PAULI

-- I didn't have sex with him.

LEONA

I'm fine with whatever your relationship was, love. We can talk about where you met and how you got roped into all this. Now, however, I need your help.

PAULI

Doin' what?

LEONA

You know where my gift is hidden.
So, let's get my bonus and be on our
way, hmmm?

Pauli looks at Leona with immense disappointment.

PAULI

What about my gift?

LEONA

You've got me, hon. What else is
there?

Pauli abandons his mug – and Leona – and steps outside.

INT. BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Yusef clicks on a light.

The unfinished space runs beneath the house: joists above,
linoleum underfoot. Tight aisles separate columns of crates
and neat stacks of periodicals.

Yusef gapes at the clutter. Then, something catches his eye –
index cards, stapled to the joists. Each shows a handwritten
letter and number.

And he knows why.

Yusef quickly inventories the cellar: spare chairs, a packed
cedar closet, a workbench – he hefts a large mallet.

An empty chest sits beside the workbench. Yusef squats down
inside it to see if a human body would fit. It would.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Xenia slams a drawer shut.

XENIA

I cannot spend all day looking for –
whatever this is. I am a busy woman.

BUTCH

Every PAC needs money.

XENIA

My constituents expect me to work
tirelessly on --

BUTCH

-- Opposing rampant urbanization?

XENIA

Opposing eminent domain that steals
land and throws families from their
homes.

BUTCH

The town needs room to grow.

XENIA

Yes, but does the church?

BUTCH

Perhaps. So, Xenia, no ring, no kids
-- don't successful politicians
generally have families?

Xenia glares daggers at him.

XENIA

I am moving upstairs.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Yusef returns to the kitchen. Leona searches cabinets.

YUSEF

Where's Pauli?

LEONA

Sucking off a cigarette.

YUSEF

You should treat him better.

LEONA

Maybe the way you treat people --
with steel wool and battery acid --

YUSEF

-- Iraq isn't a fucking tea party,
Leona. Communication is... difficult.

Butch enters. Pauses to eavesdrop.

LEONA

War is a good excuse for a great many things, hon.

BUTCH

Man, the politics pile high and deep with this crowd. The congresswoman took hers upstairs.

YUSEF

She needs company. C'mon, auntie.

(to Butch)

You – get Pauli and search for those fucking gifts. Or get out.

EXT. PATIO - MOMENTS LATER

Butch steps onto the patio. Pauli smokes in silence.

BUTCH

You mind?

Pauli hands the cigarette to Butch, who takes a deep drag and hands it back.

BUTCH

I quit every week. Then someone needs consolation and I'm back at it.

Pauli studies the cigarette wistfully.

BUTCH

You miss him.

Pauli does, but tries not to show it.

BUTCH

He was a special man. Somehow, he had a way of drawing things from a guy. Maybe it was his creative soul.

Butch puts a hand on Pauli's shoulder.

BUTCH

No tears?

PAULI

One of my foster dads beat me every time I cried. It's been years since I did that shit.

BUTCH
 Someday, you'll let it go. In the
 meantime, we have envelopes to find.
 I thought we'd try the basement.

PAULI
 I didn't hide nuthin' in the basement.

BUTCH
 I bet there's something down there.

Butch returns to the house. Pauli stubs out the cigarette and hurries after him.

INT. STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER

Xenia takes in the mass of paintings with regret.

LEONA (O.S.)
 Really, what are you going to do
 with all this property? Raise llamas?

YUSEF (O.S.)
 Give it a rest already.

Yusef and Leona squeeze into the small space with Xenia.

LEONA
 Take the money and run, hon.

XENIA
 Spoken like someone who might reap
 the profits.

LEONA
 Is money a bad thing? It got you
 elected.

XENIA
 The people elected me.

LEONA
 The people with money.

XENIA
 You're just bitter --

LEONA
 -- I have reason to be bitter.

Leona reaches for the painting on the easel.

YUSEF

Don't touch that! It's still wet.

LEONA

Richard definitely had talent.
Painter, entertainer...

Leona pulls a painting from the wall.

LEONA

This looks like you.

XENIA

It is me.

Yusef takes the painting from Leona. Examines the date.

YUSEF

This was painted nine months ago.

XENIA

Odd — since I have never been to his studio. What in the world will you do with this place?

LEONA

I told him to sell it, but he doesn't listen to me.

YUSEF

I do --

LEONA

-- Then listen to me. You have a family to consider.

XENIA

Word on the street says Kennedy Enterprises wants to buy that church behind you. A redevelopment plan --

YUSEF

-- They're not plowing all this under.

XENIA

I agree completely, but it is worth a fortune: a new house, an education for your daughter.

YUSEF

I'm taking care of my daughter.

LEONA

Hon, he's beyond reasoning with --

YUSEF

-- Damn it, you two have beaten me up since you got here. Why don't you search across the hall?

XENIA

Yusef, don't be rude --

YUSEF

-- GET OUT!

Yusef shoves them out the door and slams it behind them.

He sits at the easel to calm down, then removes the file of documents and the nude photos from the file cabinet.

Yusef roughly sorts the photos. He holds one up, surprised.

CLOSE ON the photo: Butch, nude, a teddy bear over his crotch.

At the back of the folder, Yusef finds a chart with letters, numbers and words. He studies the chart closely.

INT. COSTUME ROOM - LATER

A former bedroom, now an overstuffed closet. Racks of clothes, shelves of wigs and cabinets of accessories crowd the space.

Blocking the window, two mannequins display couture dresses in florid pastel colors. A tufted ottoman centers a space fit for just two people.

Leona runs her hand along a row of elegant gowns.

LEONA

It's like a dream.

XENIA

How will Yusef rid himself of all this debris?

LEONA

Hon, one word to the drag community and they'll descend on this house like locusts.

XENIA

I never understood Richard's
fascination with drag.

LEONA

What's to understand? It's art,
entertainment, fashion, personality
— all mashed together. For some,
it's freedom.

XENIA

I understand that, but Richard was
so manly. So virile --

LEONA

-- Was that what stole him from me?

XENIA

He was a man of many appetites.

LEONA

He was MY man, satisfying my
appetites. I was supposed to be his
main course.

XENIA

It was one night.

LEONA

It was a betrayal of everything I
believed in!

Leona studies the mannequins.

LEONA

Easter, 1991. We wore those dresses
to a ball that night.

XENIA

I apologize. We should never have
done what we did.

LEONA

That and two bucks will buy me a
Lotto ticket.

Leona discovers a box of photographs.

LEONA

Oh, my God. These take me back.

She sits on the ottoman.

LEONA
Our Palm Springs trip! One of many,
but this was...

For Leona, tears come quickly.

LEONA
I was a fool to shove him away.

Xenia gives Leona a handkerchief. Sits beside her.

XENIA
Tell me a story about him.

INT. BASEMENT - LATER

Butch rambles through the space. Pauli follows him. Tense.

BUTCH
Who collects this much crap? Richard
didn't seem the type.

Butch notes the index cards stapled to the joists.

BUTCH
Odd to have a catalogued hoard, don't
you think?

PAULI
Some hoarders try to organize their
shit but just, you know, lose control.

BUTCH
Richard was in complete control -
always.

Butch examines a stack of newspapers. Pauli shadows him.

BUTCH
I think you're way smarter than you
let on, kid.

Yusef pads down the steps. He halts when he sees Pauli.

Pauli urges Yusef out. Yusef backtracks up the stairs. Butch
sorts through the newspapers and never notices.

BUTCH
How did you meet Richard?

PAULI

What? Um – what say we swap questions?
Learn somethin' about each other?

BUTCH

(cautiously)
Okay...

PAULI

A little give and take, age before
beauty. You really celibate like
Leona asked?

BUTCH

Damn, son, you play for keeps.

Butch takes in Pauli. Pauli makes it easy for him.

BUTCH

I have a wandering eye – and hand if
it comes to that. You and Richard?

PAULI

I was hustlin' and he picked me up –
said he was lookin' for me. I figured
he wanted a trick who looked like
me. We had dinner, and I left.

BUTCH

He stopped at just dinner?

Pauli indicates it's his turn.

PAULI

You ever cruise Front Street?

BUTCH

Okay, yeah. Not dressed like this,
mind you, but in leather jacket,
jeans, work boots. Rough trade drag,
you might say. Discretion is paramount
in my line of work.

He moves to a stack of boxes closer to Pauli.

BUTCH

Young guys seem to like bearish men
like me. Maybe I saw you there.

PAULI

Maybe.

BUTCH
You and Ms. Leona?

PAULI
At a club. Gettin' outta the cold,
y'know? Slow night on the street,
and I knew the bouncer. There was a
drag show goin' on - not my thing
usually, but it was fun. Kind of a,
I dunno, relief from the usual shit.
Olivia was M.C. and Leona was workin'
the room...

Butch opens the box as he listens. Pauli glances at the index
card above the stack.

PAULI
... And came on to me. She took me
back to her place, showed me the
kitchen, I made dinner - Leona had
me for dessert. I stayed the night.
Been there ever since.

BUTCH
You still believe in your -
arrangement?

PAULI
My turn. You still believe in God?

BUTCH
Of course.

Pauli is skeptical.

BUTCH
It's the priesthood I have trouble
with. You still believe in Leona?

PAULI
I ain't sure it'll work out --

BUTCH
-- Did you meet Richard slash Olivia
after you met Leona, or before?

PAULI
You're pushin'. Pitcher or catcher?

BUTCH
And we've moved on to baseball...

Pauli shrugs. Pulls down a box from a different stack.

BUTCH
Pitcher.

PAULI
I met Richard after Leona.

BUTCH
You play the field.

PAULI
I work the room.

BUTCH
You do indeed. Let's keep looking.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Yusef eavesdrops at the top of the stairs, then carefully shuts the basement door.

He sits at the table. Pages through the nude photos.

YUSEF
Xenia, Leona, Butch - a lot of Butch
- other people but... huh.

INT. COSTUME ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Xenia poses with a floor-length gown.

LEONA
I remember the ball where she wore
that. It was colder than a bear's
tit in chain mail. The room was
mobbed, and the tips were fabulous.

XENIA
How did you leave it when you
separated from Richard?

LEONA
We were fierce rivals on stage but -
let's say we re-warmed to each other.
I knew the real Richard and we had
"herstory" as it were.

XENIA
That's good to hear.

LEONA

And you dropped off the face of the earth. Why?

Xenia holds up another dress.

XENIA

After our encounter I started drinking and broke with Richard. And, Yusef. My life went into the toilet.

Leona urges her to stand at a full length mirror. Holds the dress in front of her.

LEONA

Beautiful.

XENIA

Yes. It is.

LEONA

Do you think Yusef missed us?

XENIA

I do. I - sorry, I need some air.

Xenia strides quickly from the room.

INT. BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Butch searches different boxes. Pauli chews his fingernails as he watches Butch.

PAULI

Let's check these over here.

BUTCH

I'm good right here.

PAULI

(deciding to act)

You, um, find anything interestin'?

BUTCH (O.S.)

No. You?

PAULI

That depends on you.

Pauli saunters up to Butch and encourages Butch to explore his muscular torso.

Butch strips off Pauli's shirt and pulls Pauli against him.

PAULI

Do you think God forgives sinners
like us?

BUTCH

If you ask for forgiveness.

PAULI

Will you take my confession?

BUTCH

Of course. With proper contrition.

Pauli kneels in front of Butch.

BUTCH

You knew Richard. Came to this house.
Worked for him. Made him dinner...

Pauli unbuckles Butch's belt. Opens his pants.

BUTCH

... Sat at that kitchen table and
talked about food, wine, your future
- Yusef's future...

Butch reacts with pleasure as Pauli fellates him.

BUTCH

Is that what you confess to, my son?

PAULI (O.S.)

Yes, Papi. Forgive me?

BUTCH

You are forgiven. And you can, ohh...
can skip the Hail Marys.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Yusef studies the file of nude photos, specifically a raw,
sensual photograph of himself.

Xenia watches Yusef a moment. Yusef closes the file as she
sits with him at the table.

YUSEF

Find your gift yet?

XENIA

Not yet.

YUSEF

How about your humility?

XENIA

As soon as you find a sense of humor.

YUSEF

The Army killed that too.

XENIA

Tell me what happens over there.

YUSEF

Sweat happens. Sand happens. Boredom and loneliness happen. Death happens. You want to know? I've killed seven enemy combatants: two women, one child my daughter's age, all bomb mules. Long range. Cold and indifferent. Get them in the cross-hairs and POW! One less Iraqi problem.

XENIA

We're there to help.

YUSEF

It's a fairy tale, Xenia. A bottomless pit to pour men and money into. I thought I could help, right? I'm Chaldean and these are my people, or were before the Christians were forced out or butchered. I didn't sign up to kill innocents.

XENIA

Collateral damage.

YUSEF

Spoken like someone on the stump.

Xenia shoves her chair away. Yusef grabs her hand.

XENIA

You used to be so gung ho --

YUSEF

-- I can't kill one more person, Xenia. I just can't.

Xenia takes that in.

XENIA

Are you okay? Have you seen anyone about this?

YUSEF

About not being able to kill people? Yeah. 'Course, the VA shelved my PTSD claim. Apparently the Army prefers me in the desert with a gun.

Xenia moves to the door.

YUSEF

Don't leave like this...

XENIA

I'm not leaving. I'm done leaving. I just need some air.

YUSEF

Hold on. You should take these.

Yusef hands Xenia a stack of photos. She scans them in horror.

YUSEF

Hide them in your purse. I'll let you know if I find more.

Yusef splashes whiskey into his glass. Leona enters.

LEONA

I feel like the only contestant at a scavenger hunt. Where is everyone?

YUSEF

Xenia is outside. Pauli and the priest are in the basement.

LEONA

I should apologize to Pauli... again --

YUSEF

-- Drink with your nephew instead.

Leona sits. Yusef pours a whiskey for her.

LEONA

How are you, hon?

YUSEF

There's a lasagna in the fridge.

LEONA

You look terrible.

YUSEF

Salad, garlic bread, tiramisu -- this is a well-planned party --

LEONA

-- I'm not here to approve the menu.

YUSEF

Beats talking about the house.

LEONA

I really give two shits about what you do with this house.

YUSEF

How well did Richard know Pauli?

LEONA

Well enough, apparently.

Yusef slams his whiskey and moves to refill it. Leona keeps the bottle away from him.

LEONA

You don't need this.

YUSEF

Sharpshooters are discouraged from drinking, did you know that? We need perfect control so we make the kill with the first shot. No shakes.

LEONA

I would think all that death would fairly demand a tippie or two.

YUSEF

I never drank in Iraq. Here? There's nothing to stop me.

LEONA

Perhaps your family?

YUSEF

The great family man. Maybe I'm best at a distance.

Yusef considers his empty glass.

YUSEF

Life requires more booze than death does.

LEONA

You chose Richard instead of me when we split. That hurt.

YUSEF

Richard saw me. You always preferred your audience.

Leona contemplates her whiskey, then shoves it toward Yusef.

LEONA

Shit, there's more clutter in our lives than in this damn house.

Yusef takes her hands in his.

YUSEF

Look, let's say I did sell this property. Give me a ballpark estimate.

INT. BASEMENT - LATER

Pauli pulls up his pants. Sweaty. A used object.

Butch appreciates Pauli as he buttons his shirt. He discovers his priest's collar missing.

PAULI

You seen my shirt?

Butch assesses the crates as Pauli searches.

PAULI

It's not here.

BUTCH

You dropped it somewhere.

Pauli increases his search with concern.

Butch opens a crate. He pulls away some packing material – an ancient amphora glows from the crate.

BUTCH

Sweet Lord in heaven.

Butch's discovery horrifies Pauli.

PAULI

Don't --

BUTCH

-- This looks old, Pauli -- so old
that it shouldn't be here.

Pauli sees his shirt, intentionally wedged between two boxes.
He snatches it out and dons it angrily.

BUTCH

Huh. I imagined your ass as a prize,
not a distraction...

PAULI

You want a fucking distraction?

Pauli stomps up the stairs.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Pauli crashes into the room. Butch follows him.

YUSEF

Find anything, gentlemen?

BUTCH

Nothing of immediate interest.

Leona stops Pauli.

LEONA

Hon, about what I said --

PAULI

-- Save it.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Pauli makes a beeline to the drop-front desk. Reaches behind
it. Pulls something off the back -- a maroon envelope.

PAULI

(calling out)

Yo! I have one of the envelopes.

Butch leads the others as they hurry into the room. He snatches
the envelope from Pauli's hand.

BUTCH
Five names on it...

Yusef grabs the envelope from Butch over his objections, and pulls a note from it. The others clamor for information.

YUSEF
Hold on! I'll read it out loud.

The unknown fills Yusef with trepidation, but:

YUSEF
"Dear friends: Thank you for coming and embracing my eccentricity. Know that you were all loved and will be rewarded for your efforts here today. I deeply cherish the times that the five of you spent in my life, and four of you...
(a pregnant pause)
... Spent in my bed."

LEONA
WHAT!?

YUSEF
"While I enjoyed many lovers, the best are standing in this room. Thank you, dear ones, and remember to embrace the journey. Richard."

LEONA
That can't be true. Who didn't..?

Butch slips out of the room. Yusef follows him. Leona stares daggers at Pauli.

LEONA
I want you out of my house.

EXT. PATIO - MOMENTS LATER

Butch steps onto the patio, lost in thought. Yusef watches him a moment before joining stepping outside.

YUSEF
Problem, Father?

BUTCH

Not at all. Beautiful night, eh?

YUSEF

So you're human like the rest of us.

Butch studies Yusef. The wheels turning...

BUTCH

At the seminary, they require study of the usual ecclesiastic subjects, world religions, some psychology, a bunch of electives.

YUSEF

Human sexuality?

BUTCH

Cute, but no. I chose art history, specifically ancient civilizations.

Yusef takes that in. Butch watches him.

BUTCH

I found an amphora in the basement, in all likelihood from Mesopotamia. Currently --

YUSEF

-- Iraq. What's your point?

BUTCH

You were close to the source.

YUSEF

I'm Chaldean -- a descendent of Iraqi Christians. It's part of my heritage.

BUTCH

Richard was German-Irish. This was his house.

YUSEF

Now my house.

BUTCH

It's illegal to import antiquities from the Middle East --

YUSEF

-- Best lover is a high bar for a priest, isn't it? That kind of bedside manner might surprise the diocese.

BUTCH

Some would consider sexual fluidity surprising in a husband. Would your wife -- or daughter?

Yusef takes his attack without comment, but it hits home.

BUTCH

I wasn't just Richard's priest and friend but also his confessor -- and he talked about you a lot.

Butch moves to the back door. Yusef stops him.

YUSEF

What Richard told you is private. You can't just --

BUTCH

-- The pile of newspapers downstairs aren't even a month old. I think they're staged. I think this hoard is hiding something.

YUSEF

You don't know what you're talking about.

BUTCH

Well -- I have a life-changing gift to find. Perhaps in the basement?

Butch leaves Yusef alone on the patio.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Butch enters the kitchen.

LEONA

-- I put a roof over your head. Gave you a place for all your crap...

BUTCH

Pauli, I may be better company.

Pauli, lasagna in hand, sees Butch at the cellar door.

PAULI

I didn't hide anything down there..!

Butch exits to the basement anyway. Pauli dumps too much cheese on the lasagna. Clearly distracted.

LEONA

Succumbed to the charms of the clergy, have we? So, what, you came over here, drank coffee with Richard and – played chess?

PAULI

We played Monopoly --

LEONA

-- You played house. I feel it in my bones. Richard was a smooth talker --

PAULI

-- You're wrong --

LEONA

-- Especially when he wanted something. Or someone.

Pauli slams the lasagna into the oven. Sets a timer.

LEONA

Where'd you get money to buy lasagna?

PAULI

I didn't buy it. I made it.

LEONA

The money or the lasagna --

PAULI

-- You remember a couple nights ago? I was in the kitchen – making lasagna.

He grabs salad greens and vegetables from the fridge. Finds a large bowl in a cupboard.

PAULI

I made two. One for here – which I dropped off before my lunch shift – and one sittin' in our fridge. You do like to eat.

LEONA
You dare to judge. Where was I through
all this?

PAULI
Watching TV with Ben and Jerry.

Pauli dumps the greens into the bowl. Grabs a knife from a
knife block.

PAULI
Look, you got me off the streets.
Gave me an address. I'm grateful.

Pauli reaches for a tomato. Leona grabs his arm.

LEONA
You have an shady way of showing
your gratitude --

PAULI
-- Richard never called me a whore.
And never treated me like one.

Leona releases Pauli's arm. Surprised at his directness.

LEONA
But you slept with him.

PAULI
Never.

Pauli chops the tomatoes like a pro.

PAULI
I had a home, a warm bed -- your bed
until you got tired of me. We had
fun, remember? That trip to Europe --
Paris was a fairy tale. The food...

He slides the tomatoes into the bowl.

PAULI
I felt safe. And loved.

LEONA
You were loved, stupid. I paid for
everything.

PAULI
Even the hustlers you brought in
when I was workin' --

LEONA

-- I did nothing of the sort --

PAULI

-- We talk, girlie. We trade johns, we protect each other.

LEONA

And you went to Richard.

PAULI

Not for sex. Never for sex.

LEONA

No, never for sex. Pure as fucking snow, you are.

Pauli slices a carrot.

PAULI

Drag became your life. You sold less houses, bought more dresses – more shit to cover yourself up.

LEONA

This is a profession --

PAULI

-- The money dried up. You got a second mortgage, I got a job but – but it wasn't enough so I...

Pauli drops a handful of carrot slices into the bowl.

PAULI

I made the lasagna and the money. I think his name was Clarence.

LEONA

You sold yourself? Pauli, why..?

The kitchen door shuts behind them. Yusef stands inside.

YUSEF

I need to talk to Pauli.

LEONA

(to Pauli)

I need that \$100,000. Please – tell me where my gift is hidden.

PAULI
You better start lookin' --

LEONA
-- WHERE SHOULD I START LOOKING..?

PAULI
-- Richard saw something in you.
Start lookin' for that too.

Though shattered, Leona strides from the room with all the poise she can muster.

YUSEF
Tell her where it is.

Pauli replaces the knife in the knife block.

PAULI
Butch is in the cellar. If he finds
enough, you won't make it to dinner.

INT. DINING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Yusef finds Leona staring at herself in a mirror.

LEONA
I'm a real peach of a pussy, eh?
Tossing a kid back onto the street.

YUSEF
A second mortgage? Leona, Audrey and
I would have helped.

LEONA
The bank forecloses in thirty days.
I pissed it away for, what - this?

Leona feels adrift.

LEONA
The commission on this property would
save my house.

YUSEF
I couldn't sell it that fast...

Yusef has a realization.

YUSEF
You have a buyer.

LEONA
I have a gift to find --

YUSEF
-- Who the fuck is it?

LEONA
The kind of fuck who hires losers
like me.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A sleek and surprisingly uncluttered space. Pink and white tile, gray fixtures. A collection of perfume bottles.

Xenia sits on the stool and weeps. Someone knocks on the door and Xenia quickly blots her eyes.

XENIA
Go away.

YUSEF (O.S.)
It's Yusef.

Xenia grudgingly admits Yusef and returns to the stool.

YUSEF
I need help controlling Butch.

XENIA
Now you need my help.

YUSEF
Xenia, I'm trying here.

XENIA
You're a selfish jerk.

Yusef leans back against the door, rubbing his eyes.

XENIA
Why would Richard leave such a humiliating note? He brought four of us into his bed? Leona, of course. That Pauli. And... the priest?

YUSEF
And... you?

XENIA
Father Butch is an enigma.

YUSEF

Not so much. But he's holding
something over my head...

Yusef looks at Xenia for the first time. Really looks.

YUSEF

You've been crying!

XENIA

Tears are the kiss of death for a
politician. I usually bury...

But she begins to cry again. Yusef perches on the edge of the
tub. Hands her some tissue.

XENIA

Did Richard... I mean, he never abused
you, did he? Growing up?

YUSEF

No.

XENIA

But he took photos.

YUSEF

No, never.

Xenia hands a print to him. Color rises in Yusef's cheeks.

XENIA

You lie like your life depends on
it. It was mixed in with mine.

YUSEF

I had just enlisted. Richard wanted
to record the "unsullied me" as he
called it. Maybe was feeling cocky...

XENIA

But his nephew?

YUSEF

Leona's nephew. I was just some jock
to Richard.

XENIA

No, not "just"... did he give you
that necklace your wearing?

YUSEF

I shouldn't have worn this...

Yusef yanks off the necklace and stuffs it into his pocket.

Xenia doesn't pry. She assesses her make-up and finds a stash of cosmetics.

XENIA

Leave it to Richard – Olivia – to buy the best.

She reapplies mascara.

XENIA

I spent a weekend with Richard once. We went to Petosky.

YUSEF

The Apple Tree.

XENIA

That was where we stayed! How..?

YUSEF

He loved that place. Talked about it a lot, even in his stage act.

XENIA

We had known each other for years, but never like that. It was magical. But – Leona found out and it destroyed them. Neither deserved that.

YUSEF

You and Leona made the top four. And Pauli, and the priest.

Yusef admires Xenia in the mirror.

YUSEF

Hurting people seems to be my super power. I'm sorry...

Xenia hugs Yusef fiercely.

XENIA

I'll deal with Butch.

She moves to the door.

YUSEF

Xenia, what do you know about that company, Kennedy Enterprises?

XENIA

Local developer. Deep pockets. Pitching Amazon for that distribution center. Why?

YUSEF

Give me the CliffsNotes, would ya?

INT. STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER

Yusef finds the room uninhabited. He sits and accesses a photo on his iPhone.

CLOSE ON a selfie of Yusef and an Iraqi man, both in camo. Arms thrown over each other's shoulders. Smiling broadly.

Yusef enlarges the man's image.

PAULI (O.S.)

Oh, sorry...

Pauli stands in the doorway. Yusef quickly pockets the iPhone.

YUSEF

... No, no. Come in.

He shoves a chair toward Pauli. Pauli closes the door and squeezes in by Yusef.

PAULI

I used to pose here for Richard. I'd put somethin' in the oven that would take a while, y'know? Then we'd come in here and I'd sit for him.

YUSEF

He liked your assets.

PAULI

I work out, that what you're sayin'?

Pauli flexes a bicep. Then reaches for Yusef...

PAULI

You got nuthin' to be ashamed of. C'mon, flex for me.

YUSEF

Don't.

Yusef stands. Puts his chair between them.

PAULI

Don't worry, I got you.

YUSEF

Tell me about Butch.

PAULI

First I've met him.

YUSEF

But... in the basement..?

PAULI

You listening in? Next time I'll sell tickets.

YUSEF

Were you getting info on Butch?

PAULI

I was tryin' to protect your investment. And you're welcome.

YUSEF

What investment?

PAULI

We're playin' it that way, are we?

YUSEF

Why didn't he take pics of you? He had nudes of everyone but you.

PAULI

Including you. He showed me. You're smokin' hot in the raw, y'know?

Blushing, Yusef sits again.

YUSEF

Tell me what happened to Richard.

PAULI

Why? You ain't trustin' me --

YUSEF

-- Richard trusted you completely.
You're the only one I can ask.

Pauli leans back, unmoving.

YUSEF

Please, Pauli...

PAULI

I... Jesus... Okay, so, I came over
three, four nights a week. After the
gym, before a shift at Olive Garden.
I'd cook, we'd have a drink. I'd
work on the project.

YUSEF

You built the hoard?

PAULI

Around other things of which you
have a certain acquaintance. Anyhoo,
he taught me about life, y'know? His
time with Leona. Drag shows. Art
openings. Paintin'...

Pauli sits up. An act of respect.

PAULI

He had cancer. Pannacotic? <Sic>

YUSEF

Pancreatic?

PAULI

Yeah, that one. It was bad.

YUSEF

I never knew.

PAULI

No one did.

Pauli gets animated as he talks, holding Yusef's attention.

PAULI

One night he left me a buncha
instructions. The notes. When to
send them and where to hide them.
Your name and address and shit.

(MORE)

PAULI (CONT'D)

He had a drag show that night, see,
and I hadta work. I said I'd see him
there, but I went to the club and
they said he called in so Leona was
headlinin'. I checked my phone and,
and had sent a, um, a heart emoji.

Pauli's voice breaks.

PAULI

I got here and saw a light in the
garage. He kept his Mercedes in there,
and a sweet 1965 Country Squire. The
year he was born. It was mint, y'know?
It was running and, and Richard was
lying in the back seat...

Pauli breaks into tears and Yusef pulls him into a hug. Pauli's
body shakes as he sobs.

PAULI

I never told anyone. Not Leona. Not
the cops. I didn't want them in here.

Pauli shoves Yusef away.

PAULI

Shit. What a weak-ass fag.

YUSEF

You're the strongest guy I know.
Richard must have loved you so much --

PAULI

-- I never slept with him. Honest.

YUSEF

I know.

His admission surprises Pauli.

PAULI

Richard gave you options.

YUSEF

You search in here for your gift?

PAULI

I haven't had time.

YUSEF
Give it a good look.

INT. BASEMENT - LATER

Butch's methodical search has rearranged the basement. He checks the index cards and makes notes on a piece of paper.

The amphora sits on a table in plain sight.

BUTCH
(to himself)
You were one shady bitch, Richard...

XENIA (O.S.)
Speaking with spirits?

Xenia steps into the chaotic space.

BUTCH
Leave it to a politician to eavesdrop.

She takes in the space. Sees the amphora.

XENIA
What in the world?

BUTCH
Mesopotamian, probably 450 B.C.

XENIA
But how did it get here?

BUTCH
Richard had a connection in Iraq –
probably in logistics.

Xenia gets it – and doesn't like it.

XENIA
Did you find what Richard left you?

BUTCH
I'll get back to that.

XENIA
Do you have an endgame here?

BUTCH
TBD. Does that surprise you?

XENIA

It does not. You strike me as...

Xenia sees something on the floor and picks it up.

XENIA

... Morally fungible. Is this yours?

She hands Butch his mangled white tab collar. He pockets it.

XENIA

The diocese is selling your church.

BUTCH

My congregation is shrinking, the upkeep a financial drain...

XENIA

Amazon brings more cash.

BUTCH

Economics 101. Much like corporate favor for a politician, the church reassesses when demand declines. We're looking for buyers.

Butch pulls down another crate.

BUTCH

I meant to offer my condolences.

XENIA

I'll miss Richard. He was a fine man --

BUTCH

-- I meant about your child.

Xenia blanches.

BUTCH

I know it was two decades ago -- and bless you for going the adoption route -- but I'm sure the pain lingers --

XENIA

-- How do you know about that!?

BUTCH

From Richard. In the confessional, guilt fairly screams for absolution.

XENIA

That is privileged information.

BUTCH

I'm giving you the chance to unburden yourself. It's kind of my job.

XENIA

It was a weekend fling. A mistake. Suddenly, there I was. End of story.

BUTCH

I'm sorry.

XENIA

Are you?

BUTCH

Empathy comes with the job.

XENIA

Is it ever genuine?

BUTCH

You think I'm cruel.

She does – this surprises Butch. He pries open the crate.

XENIA

I held him for just a moment. I wanted him to feel loved, to be – sustained by my love. Funny that Richard brought Yusef to see him. Yusef was ten. He kissed the boy on his forehead.

Butch pulls a bust from the crate.

BUTCH

Hammurabi, a Babylonian king. 1750 B.C., and in fine shape. Amazing.

XENIA

How much of that is down here?

BUTCH

Enough to fund a child's education – or, perhaps, a re-election campaign.

XENIA

What are you implying?

BUTCH

The church wants this property. Get it, and I'll get you a hefty donation.

XENIA

For my PAC. My campaign.

BUTCH

It helps Yusef, helps you, helps the church. It's a win, win, win.

XENIA

You're not much of an enigma, are you...

BUTCH

Even a muddy lake is clear sometimes.

XENIA

You can go to Hell.

BUTCH

Huh. An ethical politician --

PAULI (O.S.)

-- HEY! I FOUND IT!

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Everyone crowds into the living room. Pauli shows off a maroon envelope with his name on it. He rips it open. Reads the note inside. He lights up.

XENIA

What is it?

PAULI

He got me a place at Le Cordon Bleu in Paris. I start this fall - I always talked about becomin' a chef.

YUSEF

Plus the bitcoin. I have the key.

LEONA

Funny that you found yours first.

YUSEF

He didn't know where his was.

LEONA

Luck seems to stick to some people.
But I'm glad for you, Pauli.

Pauli feels Leona's desolation. He squeezes her hand.

XENIA

I need to keep looking.

YUSEF

The basement is off limits.

BUTCH

Just when things got interesting --

PAULI

-- I didn't hide nuthin' down there,
papi. Listen to the man.

BUTCH

Don't get excited. Plenty of time
for that later.

They disperse once again. Leona catches Butch's arm.

LEONA

It gives me no pleasure, but I may
have won over Yusef.

Yusef eavesdrops behind some crates. Xenia joins him.

XENIA

Yusef, those antiquities in the --

YUSEF

-- Not here.

Yusef leads Xenia upstairs.

INT. ON THE LANDING - MOMENTS LATER

They squeeze together between some boxes.

XENIA

The priest knows about your little
import enterprise.

YUSEF

Yeah, he does.

XENIA
He'll send you to jail.

YUSEF
He won't have a chance to. Xenia –
would you lie for me?

XENIA
Lie? No --

YUSEF
-- If the cops ask questions about
tonight... we went back to your place
to catch up, I slept on the couch,
and we had breakfast in the morning.
Pancakes – like you used to make.

XENIA
With chocolate chips.

Yusef kisses Xenia's cheek. Heads down the stairs.

EXT. PICKUP TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Yusef strides to the passenger side of his pickup. He gazes
at the house in the fading sunlight. Sends a text. We see:

TEXT MESSAGE
Staying at Xenia's tonight. Kiss Mae
goodnight for me. TTYL.

He pockets the iPhone. Grabs a heavy black duffle bag from
behind the pickup's seat.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Pauli smokes as he contemplates his new life. Butch saunters
onto the porch, whiskey and two glasses in hand.

BUTCH
So the young man wins his own personal
lottery. Good on you, lad.

He pours two shots and gives one to Pauli. Offers a toast.

BUTCH
To hidden treasure.

He clicks glasses with Pauli. Downs it. Pauli sips his.

BUTCH

Olive Garden's loss is your gain.
When do you leave?

PAULI

Soon. There's nothing for me here.

BUTCH

What do you suppose Richard gave me?
Something for the collection plate?

PAULI

What do ya want?

BUTCH

A change.

PAULI

You don't wanna be a priest no more?

BUTCH

My father wanted me to take the vows
for the "prestige" of the family. He
knew the church was auguring in and
wanted a man on the inside. "Fuck
your way through the diocese," he
said, but be there for the family.

PAULI

He sounds like a prick.

BUTCH

He's a businessman. And he was right
— Jesus, they didn't care who I boned
as long as I forgave some sins. Turns
out, it's hard to give absolution
when you're a grade-A hypocrite but
I manage. And I discovered I like
helping people. Life is strange.

Butch stares at Pauli — long enough to make Pauli squirm.

BUTCH

Maybe I'll join you in Paris.

PAULI

No, I don't wanna --

Butch circles Pauli as he talks.

BUTCH

-- No, think about it. The museums, the cafés. You'll have school and we'll have money, right? We rent a pied-à-terre, you'd cook, I'd volunteer. We'd drink wine and fuck like rabbits...

PAULI

-- Nuh-uh. I'm startin' over.

BUTCH

Boys like you never start over, kid. When you wash out at Le Cordon Bleu, you'll sell your ass to Le Parisiens until they won't buy it.

PAULI

Fuck you. I'm gonna make it --

BUTCH

-- How many hustlers do you think they let into Le Cordon Bleu?

PAULI

How would they figure that out..?

Pauli figures it out. He throws down his glass and tackles Butch to the ground.

They wrestle, evenly matched, until Butch gets Pauli onto his stomach and pins him.

BUTCH

Turns out, the special ops guys geeked out on teaching me defense techniques.

Pauli struggles, but has no leverage.

BUTCH

Time for confession, son. I'm guessing you were the muscle for Richard and Yusef's little enterprise...

Yusef hauls Butch off of Pauli and throws him to the pavement. Butch spins into a defensive crouch.

YUSEF

Get the fuck out.

BUTCH

And visit the police station? Gladly.

Yusef pulls Pauli to his feet.

BUTCH
Did I smell lasagna?

Butch saunters back to the house. Yusef gently nudges Pauli to follow him.

YUSEF
I'll be right in.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Xenia slices the lasagna as Leona dresses the salad.

Butch enters the back door in a rush. Smiles broadly.

BUTCH
Smells great in here. Did Pauli make all this?

LEONA
Yes - he's a wonder. Where is he?

Pauli crashes in, disheveled, and takes over the kitchen duties. Leona raises an eyebrow.

INT. GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Yusef turns on the light.

He finds lawn furniture, a workbench, gardening tools. Soot covers the Country Squire station wagon and everything else.

Yusef unzips the duffle bag on the workbench. Pulls out plastic drop cloths. Duck tape. A reciprocating saw.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

They all eat in silence. Leona and Xenia eat at the table, on edge. Yusef and Pauli stand and watch.

Butch chews calmly.

XENIA
Delicious, Pauli. Thank you.

YUSEF
So, Father, we haven't heard much about your relationship with Richard.

BUTCH
I was his confessor.

YUSEF
And lover, apparently.

BUTCH
He had a sense of humor, didn't he?
I will say I knew a bit about his
hopes and dreams – and misdeeds.

LEONA
Did he bribe judges at the drag balls?

XENIA
The dead should take their secrets
with them.

BUTCH
Richard talked a lot about Yusef.
Four tours in Iraq, the body count --

LEONA
-- Leave my nephew alone --

BUTCH
-- I bet you remember every face in
your crosshairs, eh, Yusef..?

XENIA
-- STOP IT! For God's sake.

BUTCH
(to Xenia)
And you had your fun with Richard –
and a baby to boot.

LEONA
I beg your pardon!

BUTCH
And Leona, of course you had the old
bitch – and everyone has fucked Pauli.
So he nailed you too, Yusef?

Yusef tosses photos onto the floor. Butch gapes at them.

YUSEF
A gift from Richard.

Butch scrambles for the photos. Xenia and Leona grab a few.

LEONA
My God, is that a Prince Albert? And
where did Richard have a sling?

XENIA
Imagine this in the church bulletin.

Butch snatches the photo from her hand.

BUTCH
Is this all of them?

YUSEF
Nope.

BUTCH
Tit for tat, is that it?

Butch calmly hands the photos back to Yusef.

BUTCH
Okay, yeah – we had an ongoing affair.

YUSEF
Sex. You had sex.

BUTCH
He lured me to his studio to pose
for him – as you all have – and
seduced me. Like the rest of you.

Butch considers Yusef and Pauli for a moment.

BUTCH
We had a great time.

YUSEF
You're a hypocrite.

BUTCH
I seek truth.

XENIA
You sit for confessions and sell
them to the highest bidder --

BUTCH
(to Xenia)
-- Says the woman who used her power
to get a serviceman transferred...
(MORE)

BUTCH (CONT'D)

(to Leona)

Or the "auntie" who sold out her
nephew for a pay day...

(to Pauli)

Or the whore and accessory to theft
and smuggling --

YUSEF

-- THAT'S ENOUGH --

BUTCH

-- Or the soldier who cheated on his
wife with an Iraqi interpreter.

His statement sits like an unexploded bomb.

BUTCH

You like your men bearish, Yusef..?

Yusef yanks a knife from the knife block and attacks Butch,
pinning him to the table with the knife at his throat.

BUTCH

I guess that's a yes --

XENIA

-- Yusef, let him go!

LEONA

-- He's not worth it!

BUTCH

I want this house and its contents
signed over to me.

Yusef has lost. He releases Butch and jams the knife into the
drywall with an angry howl.

BUTCH

If not, Xenia faces influence peddling
charges, Leona faces bankruptcy and
you face prison time for smuggling.

PAULI

What about me, tough guy?

BUTCH

Life on the streets.

PAULI

Try again.

BUTCH

Collect every painting and picture
of me in this dump. We're gonna have
a bonfire.

YUSEF

If we don't?

BUTCH

Then I will destroy four good people
– in the name of God the Father,
Jesus, the Holy Spirit and whoever
the fuck else is listening.

INT. STUDIO - LATER

Xenia and Yusef collect paintings of Butch. Butch watches
with satisfaction.

XENIA

Why did you become a priest?

BUTCH

Personal profit.

XENIA

God won't be kind to you.

BUTCH

My relationship with God is
complicated.

XENIA

Not that complicated. You're a creep.

YUSEF

Leave him. Let's take these out.

He and Xenia maneuver their load from the room.

Butch appreciates the wet portrait of Pauli – and gets paint
on his shirt.

BUTCH

This shit jumps right off the canvas.

Leona peeks in and joins Butch.

BUTCH

Don't worry, dearie – you'll get the
commission we agreed to.

LEONA

Shove it up your cassock.

BUTCH

Huh. Fear does odd things to people.

LEONA

(with a laugh)

Honey, you think I'm afraid of you?

BUTCH

Destitution has a way of tarnishing the rhinestones.

LEONA

I grew up dirt poor, priest. Tea toast for breakfast and stone soup for dinner. I lived on the streets. I hustled to eat. Bankruptcy is just another word for cleaning house.

BUTCH

What about Pauli?

LEONA

What about him? I was shitty to him for God knows what reason and that's on me. But he has a fresh start, and a bigger heart than you'll ever have. You can't touch him.

BUTCH

You have zero leverage.

Leona laughs again.

LEONA

Find another agent, and try to explain how this lot ended up in your name.

BUTCH

I'll hurt Yusef.

LEONA

You want the "T", hon? You're an asshole, but you're still too good to hurt anyone.

Leona points at the wall.

LEONA

And that's a lovely painting of you.
Very... butch. We'll burn it first.

EXT. BACKYARD BONFIRE - THAT NIGHT

Yusef and Pauli confer with each other quietly as they build a pile. Xenia examines some of the paintings.

XENIA

Have we not kept enough secrets?

PAULI

Um, so, you and Ms. Leona need to spend more time in the costume room.

XENIA

And find what?

PAULI

I don't know. I just hid them.

Yusef adds branches to the pile.

YUSEF

You had me transferred to the Quartermaster Corps?

XENIA

I did.

YUSEF

I wouldn't have met Walid otherwise.

XENIA

The interpreter?

Yusef pauses, torn, then accesses the photo on his iPhone. Pauli joins them.

XENIA

He is very handsome.

PAULI

You look good together.

Xenia sees Yusef's necklace poking from his shirt pocket. She slips it out. Examines it with care.

XENIA

The symbol of the Nazarene. ISIS terrorists marked Christian homes with it. Did Walid gave it to you?

Yusef nods. Gently takes back the necklace. Pockets it.

XENIA

But, Audrey... was he worth it?

YUSEF

He was the greatest gift of my life.

Leona struggles across the lawn with the painting.

LEONA

Starting with this one would give me the greatest pleasure.

YUSEF

Xenia, help me collect some wood.

They leave Leona with Pauli. Pauli takes the painting from Leona and heaves it onto the pile.

LEONA

Always the gentleman.

Pauli stuffs his hands in his pockets.

LEONA

I'm not throwing you out. You need that hassle like I need dreadlocks.

PAULI

Thanks.

LEONA

And for the record, I always knew you were special. I never have been --

PAULI

-- Hey --

LEONA

-- No, listen. I was beastly to you after living through the same shit. I saw you moving forward while I just stayed in one place.

PAULI

And now?

LEONA
Bankruptcy. Learn to sell again. And
use what I have to be more fabulous.

PAULI
You're always fabulous.

LEONA
I love you, Pauli. I always will.

They hug each other as Butch strolls out, whiskey in hand.

BUTCH
So fucking cute. Richard has made
real progress here.

Yusef and Xenia toss more branches on the pile.

BUTCH
Anyone got a match?
(silence)
Pauli, give me your lighter.

Pauli tosses his Zippo at Butch's feet. Butch pours whiskey
onto the pile, then lights it.

BUTCH
The photos?

Yusef throws a thick envelope to Butch. He examines them with
some satisfaction, then adds them to the blaze.

BUTCH
There are more paintings --

YUSEF
-- I'll do it tomorrow.

BUTCH
I should trust you?

YUSEF
Let them look for their gifts. It's
the Christian thing to do.

Butch okays it. Xenia pulls Leona into the house.

BUTCH
Those paintings better be ashes. And
get me the deed to this dump while I
search for whatever the queen of
hoards left me.

PAULI

Let the ladies look in peace.

BUTCH

I'll be quiet as a church mouse. You two stay put.

YUSEF

And leave your effigies untended?
Not a chance in hell.

INT. COSTUME ROOM - LATER

Leona and Xenia conduct a meticulous search. Xenia attacks a cabinet of accessories.

XENIA

Look at these purses! Coach, Louis Vuitton – was his art that popular?

LEONA

He did commissions, drag appearances, other business – if I had stayed with him I would want for nothing.

Xenia continues her search without comment. But it hurts.

LEONA

Thank you for pulling our Yusef off the front lines.

XENIA

I pushed him there, then couldn't bear the thought of him dying.

LEONA

You acted with love. Same reason I didn't want him there.

XENIA

Leona, I am so sorry for what I did.

LEONA

Richard would say we grow from our mistakes. Can you hear the bitch?

Leona embraces Xenia without malice.

LEONA

I forgive you, hon. There's enough pain in this crappy world.

Lightened, Xenia returns to the search. She opens a purse and sees a flash of maroon.

XENIA
Leona! I found one!

LEONA
I remember that purse. I gave it to
Richard on our tenth anniversary.

Xenia shows Leona the envelope.

XENIA
Yours.

Leona's hands shake as she opens it. She reads it.

LEONA
He's given me everything in this
room: dresses, purses, jewelry.

XENIA
(unimpressed)
Wow. Really?

LEONA
After Olivia left the stage, I got
more bookings. My drag career took
off, but I couldn't afford it. I
won't have to buy dresses for years.

XENIA
A fresh start.

Leona can't believe it. She pulls a dress out and models it.

LEONA
I'll take this in a size 20.

XENIA
I am thrilled for you.

LEONA
But, you! Somewhere in here is a
gift for you!

XENIA
It's too much to hope for.

LEONA

Mine was in a purse with great personal memories. Happy ones. What might that be for you?

XENIA

Happiest? I guess high school. We had the best times together --

LEONA

-- Focus on that! Those photo boxes, maybe? Or scrapbooks? Keep looking!

Xenia paws through photo boxes. Leona digs through a chest of drawers.

LEONA

Here's a whole drawer of memorabilia. Invitations, programs -- wait...

Leona holds up a book.

XENIA

Our high school yearbook.

Xenia caresses the cover reverently. She opens it and a maroon envelope falls out.

XENIA

Leona, it's --

LEONA

-- Deep breaths, darling.

Xenia rips it open.

XENIA

"My darling Xenia: you need little financial help from me. But I know there is a hole in your life and if I can fill it..."

Xenia reads in silence, tears welling up.

LEONA

Tell me.

XENIA

Richard found our son. He lives in town and wants to meet me!

LEONA
My God, *how?* What do you do?

Leona takes the envelope from Xenia. Finds a polaroid inside.

LEONA
Oh, Xenia...

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Xenia and Leona rush through the kitchen as Butch scrubs oil paint off his shirt. He follows them to the:

BACKYARD BONFIRE - CONTINUOUS

Yusef and Pauli feed the fire as Xenia and Leona run to them. Xenia shoves the polaroid into Pauli's face.

XENIA
When was this taken?

PAULI
Richard took it a couple weeks ago.
He had this weird-ass camera...

Xenia shows the letter to Pauli. He reads it.

PAULI
Mom?

Pauli hugs her tightly as Butch saunters up to the fire.

YUSEF
They found their gifts.

BUTCH
Really? Do tell.

XENIA
Pauli is Richard's son — our son.

BUTCH
Shit, I banged Richard's kid?

XENIA
You WHAT??

Xenia attacks Butch. Punches him hard in the face. Yusef and Pauli struggle to restrain her.

XENIA

You stay away from him, you hear me?! I'll bring a world of hurt down on you --

BUTCH

-- You got your reward, chica. Now get the fuck out.

Butch stomps back to the house.

YUSEF

Get out of here. The good father and I have business.

PAULI

Yeah. But I got one more piece of business myself.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Butch wraps ice in a towel for his face. Pauli enters.

BUTCH

I knew you wanted more of me.

PAULI

Not in this lifetime, papi.

BUTCH

I might still come to Paris.

Pauli yanks the knife from the wall. He brandishes it for Butch's benefit before heading to the door.

BUTCH

For what it's worth, you were the hottest fuck I've had in months.

PAULI

Huh. You barely hit my top hundred.

And Pauli is out the door.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Leona takes Yusef's arm as they walk down the driveway. Pauli jogs to catch up with Xenia.

LEONA

Butch hired me – ah, Sebastian...

YUSEF

Pronouns.

LEONA

Always the pronouns... to cajole the new owner into selling. Playing both ends against the center. I didn't imagine it would be you.

YUSEF

Maybe I'll sell someday. I have things to wrap up first.

LEONA

That fiend has us by the short and curlies, hon. He's untouchable.

YUSEF

Maybe.

LEONA

Come see my show, hon. A queen needs her audience. And an auntie needs her nephew.

(to Xenia and Pauli)

Let's get breakfast. If I'm declaring bankruptcy, I might as well charge my last good meal.

XENIA

You'll be okay with that sociopath?

YUSEF

The Army has much worse.

XENIA

Richard loved you very much.

YUSEF

I know.

Leona and Xenia walk to their cars. Pauli lingers.

YUSEF

All grown up. You were just a baby when I – the only time I met you.

PAULI

I was an ugly kid.

YUSEF

Not so much.

Yusef kisses Pauli's forehead. Pauli hugs Yusef tightly.

PAULI

You're my half-step-brother or cousin
or something, right?

YUSEF

Our DNA wouldn't recognize each other.

PAULI

Then, come visit me in Paris? I'll
make you hummus and... and whatever
you want for dessert.

Pauli whispers something in Yusef's ear, then jogs to Xenia's car. Yusef waves as they drive away.

Then turns to consider the farmhouse.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Butch scoops tiramisu from a glass dish.

BUTCH

That kid is a helluva cook.

YUSEF

Make it two.

BUTCH

You warming to me, stud?

YUSEF

We need to keep searching.

BUTCH

You can find your gift tomorrow --

YUSEF

-- You're stealing my house. The
clock is ticking.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Yusef and Butch maneuver piles of crates in a tense search.

BUTCH

I found some of your loot in the basement. It's exquisite stuff.

Yusef stands mute.

BUTCH

I didn't take a vow of silence and neither did you. Say something.

YUSEF

Thanks for the blackmail.

BUTCH

What say we trade questions to move the agony along. A bit of give and take - but you gotta be honest.

YUSEF

I think you've fucked me enough for one day, thanks.

BUTCH

You've never experienced a Prince Albert. Or have you?

YUSEF

I get it. This is the confessional where I pour out my sins and you hang me with them --

BUTCH

-- I said give and take. Honest.

YUSEF

(derisive)
Shit.

BUTCH

For Richard?

For Richard, Yusef agrees.

YUSEF

What did you find down there?

BUTCH

An amphora. A bust of Hammurabi. I know there's more. Where did you find them?

YUSEF

They were part of the state museum collection. A source discovered them and asked me to ship them out.

BUTCH

Through Army mail?

YUSEF

You said we trade questions.

BUTCH

I'm terrible at this. Yes, please.

YUSEF

Why is this property so important?

BUTCH

The church property isn't big enough. Add your – add this property and it gives companies...

YUSEF

... Like Amazon...

BUTCH

... More options. Did that Iraqi interpreter help you?

YUSEF

He had connections. They wanted to get antiquities out of Iraqi.

Yusef opens a box of New Year's Eve party favors.

YUSEF

Have you ever been in love?

BUTCH

I love God with all my heart.

YUSEF

He must be so disappointed.

Butch ponders that, uncertain, as he pulls down another box.

YUSEF

Too obvious a question, but a surprising answer.

BUTCH

You're Richard's fourth lover, right?

YUSEF

It wasn't Pauli, so you do the math.
Did you love Richard, or is that
concept too foreign for you?

BUTCH

You make me sound inhuman.

YUSEF

If the shoe fits.

Butch carefully opens the box, considering his answer.

BUTCH

Priests aren't supposed to feel love
that way, so I replaced love with
sex. Back alleys, dark corners --

YUSEF

-- You're evading --

BUTCH

-- I didn't love Richard.

Butch pulls a familiar teddy bear from the box. He examines
the teddy bear as he remembers.

BUTCH

He invited me to his studio for a
drink. Then for dinner. Then again,
until I was posing butt naked like a
big, hairy cherub. The trip from
model to friend-with-benefits was a
short one. We tried new positions,
sex toys, bondage... but it was just
physical. Just sex. How did he get
you in the sack?

YUSEF

It wasn't him. It was me.

BUTCH

Not a nephew by blood, but --

YUSEF

-- A trusted friend. He became that
after he broke with my uncle. He did
the father things. Taught me to ride
a bike. Taught me about girls.

BUTCH

I'm not sure it took --

YUSEF
-- Is this fun for you, dragging me
through the shit?

BUTCH
Good question.

YUSEF
Fuck.

BUTCH
A guy either sinks into sin or rises
from it. It's a priest's mission to
raise them up through absolution.

YUSEF
Sure it is.

He grabs the teddy bear from Butch, as if Butch is somehow
contaminating it.

YUSEF
It's your turn. Ask something.

BUTCH
You never told anyone about you and
Richard?

YUSEF
Like anyone would get it. Like they'd
get a priest cruising for cock.

Yusef examines the teddy bear. It feels good in his hands.

YUSEF
I was a big jock in high school, so
getting pussy was easy. Women get me
off, and I love my wife but... before
I shipped out to Iraq the first time,
I asked Richard – I wanted to try
sex with a guy, and I wanted to try
it with someone I trusted. So he
took me to this B&B, The Apple Tree.
I was nineteen, and it was...

Yusef pauses with the memory.

YUSEF
Do you believe in heaven and hell?

BUTCH
No. I'm more a reincarnation guy.

YUSEF

You're the worst priest ever.

BUTCH

Did you and the Iraqi guy ever –
consummate your love?

Yusef sets the teddy bear aside.

YUSEF

Walid. His name was Walid. And no.
We didn't dare --

BUTCH

-- But you wanted to?

YUSEF

That's two questions in a row.

BUTCH

Damn it.

YUSEF

Yeah, but there was no place private
enough. We used winks, looks. Carnal
glances. We fucked each other with
our eyes, in rooms crammed with
people. I snuck a kiss one time. He
had just given me – something – and
I... it just... I had never felt
such overwhelming love for someone.
But he... he was frustrated and horny
and picked up another guy on a whim.
And, the guy was a police mole.

BUTCH

Oh God...

YUSEF

(hardened)

They jailed Walid overnight. His
brother – a U.S. Army contractor –
paid for his release, then took him
into the desert and slit his throat.
An honor killing to protect his
family's reputation.

BUTCH

Yusef, I'm sorry --

YUSEF

-- You owe me two questions.

BUTCH
 You're still giving up that deed.
 I'll burn this shack to the ground --

YUSEF
 -- Do you have a soul?

BUTCH
 I... everyone has a soul --

YUSEF
 -- Answer the question.

BUTCH
 I don't know --

YUSEF
 -- If you have no soul, what could
 you possibly be reincarnated as?

BUTCH
 Nothing. I'd cease to exist.

YUSEF
 God-willing --

BUTCH
 -- Would you have left your family
 for Walid?

Butch's question surprises Yusef, but...

YUSEF
 Yes. Now tell me the truth -- did you
 love Richard?

The question hangs in the air.

BUTCH
 (meaning it)
 Yes. More than God himself.

Yusef understands. He moves to a sketch of Butch and yanks it
 off the wall. A maroon envelope falls from it.

Butch picks it up, reads the name and hands it to Yusef.

BUTCH
 Kismet?

Yusef reads the enclosed note.

YUSEF

Options, mister... Ryan Kennedy. The family behind Kennedy Enterprises?

BUTCH

I'm Father Butch now, but --

YUSEF

-- I shipped every antiquity to a Ryan Kennedy at the UPS store. Pauli picked them up with a fake ID.

BUTCH

So what?

YUSEF

Your name is on every box in this house. Every smuggled box.

BUTCH

But you sent them...

YUSEF

Did I?

Butch realizes he's been had. He rips the head off the teddy bear in a fit of pique. Then, a realization.

BUTCH

You sell those antiquities, you won't have anything to hold over me.

YUSEF

Neither will you.

BUTCH

Not over you...

The alarm clock suddenly goes off, startling the shit out of them. Yusef turns it off.

YUSEF

And your time is up.

EXT. PATIO - MOMENTS LATER

The moon rises, bathing Butch in cold light as he crosses the patio. He retrieves the clerical tab collar from his pocket and examines it.

Yusef follows him out.

BUTCH
Kennedy Enterprises and Amazon will
have this property one way or another.

YUSEF
And your gift from Richard?

BUTCH
What could he possibly have left me?

Yusef nods toward the garage. The kitchen knife pins a maroon envelope to the siding.

Butch saunters to it with some swagger. Sees the name on it in big letters.

BUTCH
"RYAN". Nice touch.

He rips it open and reads the enclosed letter.

BUTCH
The gift of life? What the fuck does
that mean?

Butch hears Yusef chamber a round. He turns slowly.

Yusef aims the pistol at Butch with a very steady hand. A long moment passes.

BUTCH
Please don't...

Yusef lowers it.

YUSEF
So we understand each other. You'll
never know what antiquities I sell
and I can hit a sparrow at 500 feet.
Your life now belongs to me.

Butch drops his clerical tab collar on the ground and breathes in the night air, a weight lifted. He considers Yusef.

BUTCH
All that stuff you said. It really
was a confession. We just didn't
finish it.

YUSEF
What part?

BUTCH
The absolution.

Butch gestures for Yusef to join him. Yusef approaches Butch cautiously, gun in hand, but Butch is magnanimous.

He places a hand on Yusef's head.

BUTCH
God, the Father of mercies, through
the death and resurrection of his
Son has reconciled the world to
himself and poured out the Holy Spirit
among us for the forgiveness of sins;
through the ministry of the Church
may God grant you pardon and peace.
I absolve you of your sins in the
name of the Father, the Son and the
Holy Spirit.

Butch squeezes Yusef's shoulder.

BUTCH
And make sure you forgive yourself.

Butch walks back toward his church.

YUSEF
(calling after him)
You still get the bitcoin.

BUTCH
Put it in the collection plate... if
you can figure out how.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Dawn sunlight creeps into the room.

Yusef enters with a box of mementos. He sets it on the cafe table and looks around the kitchen. Then, he makes a call.

YUSEF
Hi. It's your asshole calling...

He listens without comment to Audrey's string of vitriol.
Opens the whiskey bottle and pours it into the sink.

YUSEF

I deserve that. And you deserve better, so I, um... I want you to find someone better. I'll take care of you and Mae, always, it's just... I know who I am now and it's not the guy you need me to be...

Tears come suddenly and Yusef weeps freely.

YUSEF

I do love you, Audrey – you know that, right? I always will... yeah, I'll be home soon. We have a lot to talk about. Bye.

Yusef hangs up. Wipes his eyes. Pockets the tarnished key from the ash tray. Then notices Walid's necklace in his shirt pocket. He rubs the medallion gently.

YUSEF

Watch over him, Lord... and watch over me.

Yusef kisses the medallion and hangs it around his neck. He removes Olivia's photo from the wall and puts it in the box.

EXT. PATIO - CONTINUOUS

Yusef slams the door shut. He takes in the crowd of yard gnomes on the porch and notices one in particular: a gnome painted in Army camouflage.

He picks it up. His name shines from the gnome's chest.

Yusef adds the gnome to the box, smiles up at the sunrise, and strides to his pickup truck.

FADE OUT