

Of God and Country

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FADE IN:

EXT. BATTLE FIELD - NEAR TOUL, FR - DAY - 1944

Gray and black hazy SMOKE billows upward and outward as the CAMERA pans through it.

SOUNDS of battle. Mortar - - EXPLOSIONS (O.S.)

More smoke as war sounds GROW.

SUPERIMPOSE: "France 1944"

Sharp bright FLASHES of German hand grenades. A soldier emerges from a wall of yellow-brown clouds and crawls through the war hammered terrain. He rises to a crouch, moving quick, by a disabled tank, a reverberating chamber of engine NOISE.

A gush of dense white smoke WASHES over the tank.

RAT-A-TAT-TAT - - more machine gun FIRE.

Hunched over, the soldier proceeds. The CAMERA pulls in towards him - - to a close up of the his face mired with sweat, dirt and blood. His eyes sharp and focused dart right to left urgently. His "Army OD Green" helmet has a small white CROSS on its front . . . the camera zooms in on it.

CUT TO:

A LOUD mortar lands right behind him with a RAUCOUS burst, knocking him forward to the ground. He SKIDS upon landing, revealing a metal plate.

CHAPLAIN (V.O.)

(to himself)

A MINE - - my chest is square on it.

If he lifts up, it would engage the explosive. He freezes as blood rushes to his head.

More GUNFIRE spark against the tank steel.

Thinking fast, he reaches for a dead soldier. Pulls him close and grabs his rifle. It has a bayonet attached to the barrel. He takes that bayonet end and slowly inserts it between his chest and the mine, keeping the mine trigger-spring down.

Across the BATTLEFIELD, 200 meters away, in a machine gun nest are two German soldiers. One on a mounted gun, the other with binoculars. They watch.

CAMERA lowers behind them, revealing the tank and the Chaplain in the distance, and the back of the two German helmets in the foreground.

SPEAKING in German - - SUBTITLED:

GERMAN #1  
He's laying on the explosive.  
He's crazy. Ready?

GERMAN #2  
Copy, just a second . . .

JUMP CUT TO:

Close up of the Chaplain. He puts his left forearm on the rifle in its middle. Now, carefully reaching for the rifle's butt (the other end) with his right hand, he LIFTS the butt, keeping his left forearm holding down - forcing the bayonet end downward, keeping the mine trigger spring down and not engaged.

JUMP CUT TO:

The machine gun nest.

GERMAN #1  
(shouting)  
NOW!

JUMP CUT TO:

Instantaneously the Priest rolls (somersaults) and leaps forward, a split second before the upward EXPLOSION of the mine and the German machine gun FIRES.  
He CLEARS IT and he keeps rolling. The Germans miss.  
A deep dread crushes his chest.

SLOW MOTION FADE OUT into the smoke and haze of the battlefield.

END SUBTITLE:

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MEXICO - MORNING - 1970

SUPERIMPOSE: "Matamoros, Mexico 1970"

Arthur (Fr Ben) lying prone in bed. He's in traction, bandages wrapped loosely around his head. A somber room with dirty light walls, peeling paint, aged medical gear, and a four-post metal bed frame. A faint light illuminates the walls. Flickering, we see a concrete block mantelpiece above which hangs a handsome cross in oak-wood, bearing the figure of a severe Christ. Seated bed-side, in a raggedly upholstered metal chair, is Neil (20) his nephew. A touring musician who rushed to the aid of his favorite uncle ARTHUR upon hearing of the car accident.

NEIL

Why were you driving at night in Mexico? Jeeze!

ARTHUR (FR BEN)

(weak softly)

I needed to get to Texas.

NEIL

Was someone chasing you?  
Is something dreadful going on?

(pause)

You are a war hero.

Please, talk to me.

(pause)

You are a priest. What is up?

What is God up to?

A very long pause.

Arthur (Fr Ben) stares above his nephew, seemingly lost in his own private world.

ARTHUR (FR BEN)

Being tested . . . ?

We are always tested.

I am no hero!

I am ordinary.

Arthur (Fr Ben) drops his head.

Neil inclines his head to Christ on the wall. Then stands with his hands in his pockets, worried. We see a small angelight worry stone in his hand.

NEIL

You are not every man. You're my idol! Always . . . my true hero.

(MORE)

NEIL (cont'd)

(pause)

You were just in a horrible accident.

ARTHUR (FR BEN)

Instinct. It's instinct I think.  
But . . . is instinct a learned  
trait or are we born with it?

NEIL

You mean . . . are we born with  
integrity or do we somehow learn it.

ARTHUR (FR BEN)

Both I think.  
With the help of God, we are who we  
are. We absorb from experience and  
upbringing - - struggle to do right  
and know the difference between right  
and wrong . . . discernment.  
It helps to look at life positively.

Pauses and looks at intently into Neil's eyes . . .

ARTHUR (FR BEN) (cont'd)

We have a strong line, you and I.  
A family line. Let me tell you . . .

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FROZEN OVER RIVER - DAY - 1925

WHITEOUT - - an eerie north wind HOWLING.

Power increase and CRIES through the body blows back the  
hair and then subsides.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Peace River, Alberta Canada, 1925"

SLOW PAN: Blizzard. Wind intensifies, again.

A crack in the ice. A fistful glove breaks upward. A hand  
then an arm pokes out. A rope lands around the arm and draws  
taunt. A second rope flies off a bridge. In slow-motion, it  
falls.

Two workmen scramble on a bridge, joined by others. The hand  
in the river grabs the new rope and holds both tight.

A CLOSE UP of two men on the bridge pulling as others join.  
An immense tug. GRUNTS.

The body emerges from the river. Ice CRACKLING and falls off the man, his arm shivers uncontrollably.

PAN OUT TO:

Panoramic view of the scene, a crowd gathers. The man is carried away in a 1900's "horse cart" ambulance.

SUPERIMPOSE: "The following is based on a true story"

DISSOLVE TO:

INT./EXT. FRONTIER HOME - CANADA - DAY - 1925

The homestead consists of a house, a small barn, cows spread around a pasture, in a snowy landscape.

CUT TO:

Faces of the family.

CHARLES HENDERSON, an athletic appearing gentleman, (40s). Hard-working and now bedridden. Unshaven, a bit grizzly, and leaden.

Family surrounds his bed.

BLANCH HENDERSON, wife (40s), pioneer woman, pretty with long brown hair, sunken cheeks in a full-length country dress.

ARTHUR HENDERSON, (16), the eldest son, stands in the corner with hands in pocket, skinny over 6 feet tall. His eyes dart around the room absorbing the family's emotion.

WADE, (12) middle son, stands with his mother. A mischievous look in his eyes, dirty face. A little rascal.

Blanch holds youngest son, WILBUR (6), on her hip. She multi-tasks between cooking and care-giving.

All move closer to the bed.

CHARLES

Artie, you seem distant.  
Come over here. Come closer.

ARTHUR

(slowly shuffles)  
Okay.

CHARLES  
It's all going to be fine. I'll be  
back up in no time. Feeling better  
every minute.

ARTHUR  
Yeah. You feel cold?

CHARLES  
Only when I laugh.  
(pause)  
Your mother and brothers need you.  
Time to step up. You have the gift.  
God has his finger on your heart.

ARTHUR  
(shyly, thin smile)  
Yeah!

CHARLES  
Come closer.

Charles grabs his forearm, PULLS him close, looks into his  
eyes. Arthur LEANS in.

CHARLES (cont'd)  
(whispers)  
Don't be late to follow your path to  
destiny.

Arthur stands up startled and clangs around the room  
sparkling his sweet smile then it turns into a quirky "HALF  
SMILE". Eric, the dog, limps into the doorway wagging his  
tail enthusiastically. Arthur pats him on the head.  
Confidently, Arthur SNAPS his boot heels once and walks out.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN STREAM - SPRING - CANADA - DAY - 1925

SUPERIMPOSE: "Alberta Canada 1925"

Through green meadow grasses, Arthur and Wade meander on a  
summer day. Fishing poles in hand and shabbily dressed, Eric  
makes an arthritic attempt to keep up.

ARTHUR  
The Rolands that ran the general  
store, the one in town, they're not  
doing so good. Did they closed?

WADE

Yeah, Peters' a friend. They're Methodists.

ARTHUR

Dad calls them "Baptists who could read."

WADE

Molly too, 'member she dropped out. Yeah, she could really learn from you, that "Stick-to-it-ivity".

Fishing in time with the BABBLING stream Wade sees a friend.

WADE (cont'd)

Hey, isn't that Josh?

Wade picks up a rock intent to throw it. Arthur stops him.

ARTHUR

Don't do or say anything, let him go.

WADE

(giggling)

Yeah, but he's got chicken salad sandwiches in that knapsack, he always does. His mom bakes pies, and she gives us cherries, ya know?

ARTHUR

They're from Montana, they spin a yarn about fishing.

WADE

Let's go down a ways.

(pointing)

The fish are all over there.

Arthur smiles, they go down stream running over rocks pushing each other, LAUGHING. Arthur finds a small unusual rock, perfect to his liking and rubs it. A worry stone.

ARTHUR

'member Freddy? He was the craziest kid in school. His Dad was given to fits of rage. One time he put a fork up Freddy's nose to pull him outside, for a whipping. Even Dad would cringe around him. He used to fish for brownies right out there!



WADE

He "bad talked" Dad once.

ARTHUR

Dad never laid a hand on me since I was three and then I was eating Borax from under the sink. We are lucky. Our folks are good.

(pause)

Fishing is close to God.

CUT TO:

EXT. FAMILY HOME - YARD - DAY - 1926

Arthur and Wade CHOPPING firewood. A crisp clear day. The porch in the distance and the yard is sprinkled with old wheelbarrows, buttermilk churn, fence posts, and tools.

The two are bickering.

All of a sudden a loud BANG. A gun BLAST. Arthur and Wade whip around and see Blanch on the porch holding a shotgun. Smoke engulfs her. Sound of a goose CACKLES, then PLOPS to the ground.

ARTHUR

(disgusted)

Godless land.

Wade SNICKERS.

ARTHUR ((O.S.))

(mumbling to himself)

Why would God keep me in this hinterland? If he knows me, he knows I hate it here.

Arthur turns to Wade.

ARTHUR

There are people in this world that have other Gods they worship.

WADE

Yeah, like who?

ARTHUR

Like the MAGISTARS. They lived here on earth thousands of years ago and believed the world was created by two Gods doing battle.

(MORE)

ARTHUR (cont'd)  
 The winner cut the other into pieces  
 and flung him in the air. The pieces  
 stayed and became the planets.

WADE  
 No Artie, that's not right.

Arthur looks to the sky with a twinkle in his eye.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAWN - 1925

SUPERPOSE: "Two Days Later"

A withered wooden shelf holds the "Good Book", a "Koran",  
 "Tibetan Book of the Dead", and poetry by Yeats and T. S.  
 Elliot. Arthur stands in the early morning hours reading  
 them unnoticed by his family. Then early one morning . . .

BLANCH  
 Are you still believing?  
 A doubting Thomas, maybe?

ARTHUR  
 Just being inquisitive.

BLANCH  
 Is that a yes?

ARTHUR  
 More or less . . .

BLANCH  
 Why? Does the more you learn diminish  
 the likelihood of Christianity being  
 true?

ARTHUR  
 (sneeringly)  
 What about free will, Mom?

BLANCH  
 The world is a frightening place.  
 War, suffering . . .

Arthur interrupts.

ARTHUR  
 . . . and yes and it's not fair.

BLANCH  
But through it all, God exists!

ARTHUR  
You can't just tell someone that.  
(holds up the Bible)  
God is not information.  
(slams it down)  
God is conviction.

BLANCH  
You are so right, it's like love.  
You can't tell love, you feel love.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY - 1927

Winter. A stormy gloom as Arthur gazes out the window, now eighteen. He turns to see Wade, dreadfully sick and blue in color. Wilbur is whimpering. Parents are gone. Serious concern as he paces back and forth. Wind howls as time passes.

ARTHUR (V.O.)  
Indecision is killing me. Where are they?

I feel clumsy and dull. He covers his face and cries.

ARTHUR  
Your brother is bad off. Mom and Dad won't be home for hours.

Wilbur becomes SILENT and anxious.

ARTHUR (cont'd)  
Up to us to get him to the doctor.  
Look at him, he's turning blue.  
(pause)  
But we should wait. Make sure he needs a doctor.

Wade is getting worse. Hours go by as Wilbur cries and hesitation follows Arthur.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ICE COVERED TUNDRA - LATER - 1927

Arthur and Wilbur slowly walking with Wade on horseback. They slosh along through the blizzard to the town and the doctors office. Arriving they all three enter the small cabin-like structure. Soon the family arrives.

Suddenly Arthur rushes out CRYING, he marches towards home.

ARTHUR (V.O.)  
I can never forgive myself.

Young Wade has died. Heartbroken and shaken he pulls out his worry stone.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MEXICO - MORNING - 1970 (V.O.)

While rubbing the stone in both time frames we HEAR the conversation from the hospital room (V.O.) . . .

NEIL (V.O.)  
Wade was your best friend.

ARTHUR (FR BEN) (V.O.)  
I felt guilty and wanted to run.

NEIL (V.O.)  
Did you have others then you could talk to besides family?  
(pause)  
A social life, girlfriends?

ARTHUR (FR BEN) (V.O.)  
Yes - -  
(pause)  
but this sent me all the way to New York.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CANADIAN LANDSCAPE - MOVING TRAIN - DAY - 1928

SUPERIMPOSE: "1928"

Arthur embarks on his journey. Intense, full of confusion and absolute fear. Yet, at the same, leers with exuberance and anticipation. He is wearing an old suit overcoat, tie, slacks and topped of with a fedora. Steam pumps as the locomotive moves through the vast Canadian terrain, CLICK-ATY CLACK. He settles in, and reads the Bible, Sigmund Freud, Comic books. Gazing out the window he rubs his worry stone.

ARTHUR (V.O.)  
 Don't be late to follow your path to  
 destiny.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MEXICO - MORNING - 1970

Neil walks to the window. A cat scuttles swiftly under his legs as a petite Mexican nurse enters speaking in Spanish. Arthur answers in Spanish and grins.

NEIL  
 Were you afraid to go to the Big  
 Apple? You were like 20.

ARTHUR (FR BEN)  
 Fear is the beginning of wisdom.  
 And you? Off to Seattle at 20?  
 (pause)  
 Yes, I was afraid, apprehensive but  
 always, I always had a feeling that  
 something or someone was watching  
 over me. Like a veil.  
 I've felt that most of my life.  
 (to the nurse)  
 You move like an angel.  
 (pause)  
 . . . wait, I have to tell my story  
 to my nephew.

Arthur drifts for a moment.

ARTHUR (FR BEN) (cont'd)  
 Ambition takes you where you might  
 not want to go.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - NYC - TRAIN - DAY - 1928

SUPERIMPOSE: "New York City 1928"

They CHURN into Grand Central Station revealing the City full of bustling activity, tall buildings and steam rising from manholes. Overwhelmed, Arthur turns to a lady. ELIZABETH, (20's) a young attractive tall and athletic woman sitting a vacant seat away from him. She is well dressed, short blond hair. Speaking with a transatlantic accent, she is trendy for the time, outgoing, comfortable with herself.

Arthur points out the window.

ARTHUR  
WOW! Just look at that would you?  
Unbelievable.

ELIZABETH  
(a bit startled)  
Yeah, that is the cat's meow.

ARTHUR  
Not real.

ELIZABETH  
Ever been here before?

ARTHUR  
No.

ELIZABETH  
I'm Elizabeth. I came with my family  
a few years ago. It is spectacular.  
I'm from Buffalo and all I want is to  
dance. Where are you from?

ARTHUR  
Peace River, way up in Canada.  
North country.

ELIZABETH  
Never heard of it.

ARTHUR  
(points to the city)  
It's not that swank.  
It's a thousand miles out in the  
wilderness. Cowboys and all. Silly.  
(pauses, whimsical)  
What do you call a happy cowboy?

ELIZABETH  
Should I know this?

ARTHUR  
(a grin)  
A jolly rancher.

Elizabeth shakes her head giggling, either with him or at  
him.

ELIZABETH  
I see.

ARTHUR

I needed a change. To get out. To feel creative. Feel excitement. To feel. . . I want to be artistic.

ELIZABETH

This is the "Real McCoy", exciting.

Steam bellows as the train SCREECHES, to a stop.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - NYC - CONTINUOUS

They exit together. The crowd overwhelms Arthur.

ELIZABETH

I am looking for my aunt and uncle.

Arthur puts coins in a beggar's cup.

ARTHUR

(turning in circles)  
I'm looking for a city map.

ELIZABETH

Where you off to?

ARTHUR

43rd street. An actor's bunkhouse a friend told me about.

ELIZABETH

(laughing)  
Bunkhouse? Ha, we are not cowboys here. This is the big apple, the big time. It's called a "boarding house".

She sets her bags down. Puts on her coat, Arthur helps.

ELIZABETH

I'm staying with my uncle over by Columbus Circle. Looking for a dancing job on Broadway.

Arthur is stares at her, jealous of the wind playing with her hair. Her face lifted, ever so slightly, towards the sky. They begin to walk again.

There is a swastika sprayed on a building.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)  
What is that, I've seen it before.

ARTHUR  
Mother says it's no good.

ELIZABETH  
Maybe you - - Oh, there they are.  
Bye, Good luck.

She rushes off, Arthur waves and sighs.

He adjusts his tie, picks up his bags, walks away. A smirk dances across his face as he looks to the sky thinking "Don't be late for Destiny".

He walks absorbing all the NOISES, CHATTER of sidewalk hawkers, smells, the feel, hordes of people the likes he has never seen. He walks alone.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

INT. ONE ROOM APARTMENT - NYC - DAY - 1930

SUPERIMPOSE: "NYC 1930"

A messy lived-in apartment, piled with paintings, a cello, guitars, theater posters, and scripts. A close-up of an "Actors Wanted" flier on the make-shift coffee table.

"ALL SOULS EVE"  
Auditioning Actors  
Tuesday 10 AM  
at Maxine Elliott  
Theater, 109 W 39TH"

Arthur trudging around.

ARTHUR  
(under his breath)  
I can do this. I can do this.  
(in a mirror)  
"All souls dance tonight  
for tomorrow we shall pray alike".

He sighs and looks at himself in the mirror, pauses.

KNOCKING at the door.



ARTHUR (cont'd)

Who's there?

He opens the door.

JOHN ROONEY, (JOHNJOHN), (20s) a good-looking seasoned actor and a great sense of humor with a whimsical attitude. Friend to all. Boisterous, LOUD, a born entertainer. Has a lead part in the play that Arthur is auditioning for. They are friends.

Arthur opens the door and JohnJohn bursts in, arms flailing.

JOHNJOHN

'tis me, JohnJohn.  
Is that you, Raul Ben-Gay?  
A name in lights? The Inevitable!

Arthur has tagged himself "RAUL BEN-GAY", a stage name.

ARTHUR

(looking skyward)  
I'm over my head.

JOHNJOHN

You're a natural. Relax.  
Everything's jake. You got this.  
You're good-looking. Great presence.  
Great voice. Just gotta read this  
paragraph and sing a little. But  
please, not "Home on the Range".

JohnJohn points downstairs.

JOHNJOHN (cont'd)

Let's go for a toddy at Paddys.

ARTHUR

Oh, I need to memorize this.

JOHNJOHN

You got it. It's only a line or two.

JohnJohn opens the door as Arthur cracks a smile and succumbs. LAUGHING, they leave.

CUT TO:

INT. PADDY'S - NYC - LATE AFTERNOON - 1930

A small "speakeasy bar" on Lexington and 38th. Popular to locals, actors, and artists. Ignored by law enforcement.

We see the "behind-the-bar" liquor display, the hand-drawn CARICATURES of regular patrons on the wall. It's dirty, run-down, heavy with the haze of cigarettes, last night's beer and peanut shells on the floor. Along one side of the long room is the bar, tables string along the other leading up to the front window onlooking the street. JohnJohn and Arthur are seated at the bar, deep in discussion.

ARTHUR

The soul doesn't die, it goes back to the universe.

JOHNJOHN

That's not Christian.  
It's like - - Hindu or something.

ARTHUR

(a bit tipsy)  
That's my point. It is all the opinion of people. People.

JOHNJOHN

(also a bit tipsy)  
Yeah, doesn't really matter. What matters is you gotta get this gig. It's my play. I'm the lead. We are going on the road for six weeks across this beautiful land. You have GOT to be there.

ARTHUR

I'll get it. It'll be the "bee's knees". Alice coming too, right?

ALICE ROSSIN, (20s), a thin, polished actress. Chic and charming, wit quick as a cat and wisdom beyond her age. She's in the play that Arthur is auditioning for. A friend of both. Speaks with an "up-state" New York accent.

JOHNJOHN

Yeah, she's the main attraction and supporting actress.  
(points to the door)  
Look, look some tomatoes.

ARTHUR

(grinning)  
Flappers.

Three athletic, good-looking ladies prance into the bar. They take a seat at a table by the window, being noticed and LAUGHING. Arthur recognizes one of them.

ARTHUR (cont'd)  
 (approaches)  
 Elizabeth, is that you?

ELIZABETH  
 (turning)  
 Oh, Oh Arthur. How are you?  
 (stands and hugs)  
 Terrific to see you.  
 (talking fast)  
 These are my dancing friends. We're  
 rehearsing over at the Liberty  
 Theater. What are you doing? Gosh, it  
 seems so long ago we got here.  
 How are you doing? I have been  
 thinking about you getting used to  
 the big city and all.

ARTHUR  
 (with a big smile)  
 I'm doing fine. Good to see you. I'm  
 auditioning this week for a road  
 company: "All Souls Eve".  
 I am a bit nervous.

JohnJohn interrupts the conversation.

JOHNJOHN  
 He's going to be great. Has the gift,  
 the looks, the voice.

ARTHUR  
 (to JohnJohn)  
 This is the lady I met on the train,  
 Elizabeth.

JohnJohn bows like a jester and in an English accent.

JOHNJOHN  
 Ah, Madame 'tis a pleasure.  
 What brings you to this fine pub?  
 Could it be for the warm pints?

ELIZABETH  
 (playing along)  
 My Lord, I come to dance.  
 (in normal speech)  
 We are rehearsing a new musical  
 called "Lady, Be Good" by some new  
 guys, the Gershwin's?

JOHNJOHN  
 Splendid, never heard of them.  
 (MORE)

JOHNJOHN (cont'd)  
I hope to see it. And you too.

Elizabeth blushes, cheeks turn red.

ARTHUR  
(to JohnJohn)  
She's a real Oliver Twist.  
(to Elizabeth)  
Are you staying with your uncle?

ELIZABETH  
For now, us girls are looking to move  
in together. How about you?

ARTHUR  
I have a room, right above here. It's  
not great but it's in the middle of  
the action.

Arthur and Elizabeth get lost in chit chat meanwhile  
Johnjohn works the room talking and LAUGHING. MUSIC grows  
louder, the bar fills and turns crazy. Dancing, toasting,  
musicians playing Irish JIGS. Sound fades.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ONE ROOM FLAT - LATER

Arthur and JohnJohn invite the party up to his flat. Patrons  
from the bar are sitting, standing, drinking, and frolicking  
about. A mime explaining hand techniques and Elizabeth  
showing her "Charleston" chops. Arthur PLAYS guitar, people  
are fascinated and APPLAUD. JohnJohn shows off Arthur's  
paintings, embarrassing him which in turn endears Arthur to  
all.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MAXINE ELLIOTT THEATER - LOBBY - DAY - 1930

Arthur's face is full of anxiety. Standing, sitting,  
standing, other young people, all waiting. Takes a deep  
breath, he mumbles to himself. A receptionist is at a desk.

RECEPTIONIST  
(stands and announces)  
Raul Ben-Gay, Raul Ben-Gay, next.

ARTHUR  
(Arthur stands)  
That's me.

RECEPTIONIST  
Follow me. You'll be seeing Hal  
Sanders. Don't mention his wig.

ARTHUR  
(under his breath)  
Don't be late to follow your path to  
destiny.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MEXICO - MORNING - 1970

Arthur (Fr Ben) shivers, struggles, and gains conscience.

NEIL  
Are you doing OK?

Arthur (Fr Ben) nods affirmative, with a struggle.

ARTHUR  
All my life, searching the meaning.

NEIL  
Meaning?

ARTHUR  
Of God.

NEIL  
Why?

ARTHUR  
To fill the hole, with a reason for  
being a reason for suffering.  
I think too much. Silly ambition.  
(pause and shakes)  
You should know more about the war. I  
have not spoken to the family too  
much about it . . .

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - NEAR TOUL, FR - DAY - 1944

SUPERIMPOSE: "France 1944"

The immense SOUNDS of a massive BARRAGE. The force is  
astounding. It jolts through the body, blows back the helmet  
and rattles, the ears.

CUT TO:

SUPERIMPOSED: "Fort Villey le Sac, France 1944"

A burned-out Sherman Tank, still smoldering. The steel side ripped open like tin foil. More ROAR of tanks and guns.

A hail-storm of mortar and machine-guns. Soldiers scatter. Casualties strewn about, so many medics can not take care of them all.

Massive EXPLOSIONS from German artillery shells and mines tear apart the landscape. Guns loaded with tracers pour out a red SNOWSTORM of bullets.

Arthur (Fr Ben) heads directly into a nightmare.

GI #1  
(shouting)  
Chaplain, there is a wounded man in  
that tank.

ARTHUR (FR BEN)  
(shouting back)  
I see I got it. You retreat.

TERROR on dirt-covered faces of the soldiers. Boys, eighteen, nineteen years old. Tough and well-trained. Startled with blank stares, trying to block out the madness around them.

Arthur (Fr Ben) rushes from tree to tree. Getting to a clearing, he evaluates the burning tank some 200 meters away with field glasses. Despite the heavy FIRE, he falls to the ground and uses the military "leopard" crawl. Has no weapon of any kind, as all Chaplains do.

As he moves on he comes to a soldier face down and still. Sticks his nose into the GI's cheek - - Stops, traces the Sign of the Cross with his thumb on the soldier forehead, crawls on.

BOOM-BOOM-KABOOM! -- Shells EXPLODE around the tank. Rocking it. For the moment he is safe and rests face down.

Continuing, he comes to another GI, grabs and pulls an arm towards him, and comes up with half a torso. A dog tag with "Saul Abelman" with a "Star of David", falls out. He puts it in his pocket.

He crawls on and yells out towards the tank.

ARTHUR (FR BEN) (cont'd)  
 Soldier! Soldier!

He's met with gun FIRE grazing his helmet. SHAA-WANG! Rolls over freezes briefly and crawls on.

GI #2  
 (faintly)  
 Here - - in here!

Arthur (Fr Ben) now knows the GI is alive. His finely tuned instincts kick in, again. He situates himself on the back side of the tank and receives incoming FIRE. Pulls himself up, and shimmies towards the hatch. A loud BLAST on the tank's far side, he is thrown back on the ground.

GI #2 (cont'd)  
 (screaming)  
 God Damn. Shit. Fuck. AHHHHH!!!

He crawls back up on the tank.

ARTHUR (FR BEN)  
 Coming . . . hold tight.

Back up to the hatch, reaches down grabs the soft-faced boy infantryman by the arm, hauls him out, and pulls him to the ground. The GI looks dehumanized, fear surrounds his heart.

Mortar EXPLODES nearby. Another STORM of bullets from machine-gun nests in another thicket of trees.

ARTHUR (FR BEN) (cont'd)  
 (calmly)  
 Put your good arm around my neck,  
 I'll crawl on my belly, you roll on  
 top of me. Do it . . . do it now!

GI #2  
 (in agony)  
 Jerry is still in there.

ARTHUR (FR BEN)  
 (strongly)  
 Here we go. I'll come back for him.

Fr Ben crawls with GI #2 on his back.

More SOUNDS of battle. Grenades EXPLODE.

After 100 meters, GI #2 loses grip of Arthur's (Fr Ben's) neck. The priest bites the GIs' wrist, holds tight with his jaws, and pulls the man along, lurching as they go.

Blood streaming down his face and squirting out the wrist. They get to the safety of the trees. A medic litter squad scurry to rescue them.

GI #2  
(wildly pointing)  
My buddy!

Arthur (Fr Ben) immediately starts to crawl back to the inflamed tank while machine-gun bullets SPLATTER around him. He sheds binoculars and other bothersome gear.

Moving surprisingly fast he ignores the EXPLOSIONS and BULLETS.

He crawls by a soldier who's vomiting, touches his back to calm him. Uses hand signals to alert the litter squad.

Aerial view. SHOCK waves. The sky fills with flak puffs and smoke.

He approaches the tank, lifts himself up to the hatch. CHUNK-CHUNK as holes being punched into the tank.

A man running, RAT-AT-AT-AT. The man bursts like a water balloon.

He ducks then stretches into the hatch, drags the soldier to the ground and on hands and knees, pulls him to safety. Crawling with GI #3 on his back the CAMERA FOLLOWS.

Continuous aerial view.

GUNFIRE is sporadic now. An occasional MORTAR round SCREAMS in. A CHILL comes over the scene, revealing the smoldering, crushed, and beaten battlefield.

All existence is exhausted and spent.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

EXT. PASSENGER TRAIN - DAY - 1930

Traveling middle America.

SUPERIMPOSE: "Canton, Chicago, Peoria, St. Louis 1930"

DISSOLVE TO:



INT. PASSENGER TRAIN - DINER CAR - CONTINUOUS - 1930

Conversational CHATTER as the train CLICKS and CHUGS along. Arthur revels his charming infectious personality becoming a leader that everyone admires, respects, and confides in.

SEAN MCGUIRE (CHIEF), (42), chiseled face, nicely dressed, and fairly muscular. He is one of the directors of the play. Everyone calls him "CHIEF". Arthur notices Chief sitting alone in solitude.

ARTHUR  
(thoughtful)  
Hey Chief, everything alright?

CHIEF  
(looking up)  
Feeling a bit detached.

Arthur stares out the moving trains window eyes darting with thought. Then turns back to Chief.

ARTHUR  
We had a great run in St. Louis.

CHIEF  
Yeah, nice work.  
(pause)  
I have concerns.

ARTHUR  
I've had odd feelings too like maybe this life is not really who I am.

CHIEF  
I need more. I miss my family.  
(pause)  
I was brought up Catholic. Entire family all devote. I still go when I can. I'm beginning to understand how they feel. Happily accepting things.

JohnJohn notices the two talking and approaches them.

JOHNJOHN  
(speaking in jest)  
Now Chief, are you letting Raul talk you into putting him into the lead role?

ARTHUR  
Far from it, like the meaning of life.

JOHNJOHN

Oh, you still poking that snake?

ARTHUR

It's never been resolved. Chief is giving me thoughts.

JOHNJOHN

(holding his hands up)

Don't twist yourself into knots.

(waves to the waiter)

I need to meditate too. Meditate with a French Lady that I know, called Martini. Or is that Italian?

CHIEF

I need to eek out a bit more meaning than a French lady.

JohnJohn wanders back to the bar.

ARTHUR

Religion "the great opioid of the people" well that is persuasive.

CHIEF

Yeah, that's kinda. It can put your mind at ease. No stress on future worries because the future is happening anyway.

ARTHUR

Que sera sera.

CHIEF

(nods)

Mom would just put things in the "hands of the Lord". She didn't worry 'bout the small stuff.

(sighs)

Stop by my cabin, I'll give you a book.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MEXICO - DAY - 1970

NEIL

You once said, "Fear is the beginning of wisdom".

ARTHUR (FR BEN)

It's HOW a person overcomes fear,  
that is the "excellence" of it.

NEIL

Is "fear of God" the beginning of  
wisdom.

ARTHUR (FR BEN)

God is the beginning of everything.  
Fear of God? Well, sometimes that  
makes you afraid of everything. Some  
people are good at being afraid.

(pause)

You do still believe?

NEIL

I do. You say God is mysterious, yet  
merciful. I have recently felt God  
only stands up for power grabbers  
like warmongers. Are we supposed to  
worship such a Deity? Then "Jesus",  
the Lord of the poverty class?

Dogs are barking wickedly out in the street below.  
Neil stands looking bewildered. He gazes out the second-  
story window at peasant children with boxes of "chick-  
leets", an old woman on the boulevard. Neil reflex on his  
own sadness. Distant Mexican radio MUSIC.

ARTHUR

Ageless quest for a God, and  
afterlife.

NEIL

What is your conclusion?  
(stares blankly)

ARTHUR

Perhaps answers are with the poor.  
(long pause)  
I learned a lot from "Chiefs" book.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TRAIN - PASSENGER CAR - DAY - 1930

SUPERIMPOSE: "Mid-America 1930"

Train CLICKY-CLICKS and Arthur seated reads "Understanding  
Catholicism".

Suddenly the whole crew is dancing up and down the aisle. Arthur laughs at the absurdity of pirouettes, arms waiving and veils fluttering.

JOHNJOHN  
 (with excitement)  
 Look, Look, it's "The Bay".  
 We're loving it, it's Regal!

Arthur stands up and hugs JohnJohn, Alice, and the cast.

ARTHUR  
 WOW! It's the glitz.  
 The City of the Golden Gate!

Arthur sits and JohnJohn plops down beside him as we see the City.

JOHNJOHN  
 I am charged up, abuzz.  
 (points at the book)  
 Are you getting anything out of that?

ARTHUR  
 Yes. Interesting . . . like it.

JOHNJOHN  
 You know, I was brought up Catholic.  
 School, the whole thing. Great  
 memories. You should look into it,  
 Raul. But for now, "We jitterbug"!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TRATTORIA RESTAURANT - SAN FRANCISCO - AFTERNOON - 1930

In a booth, Arthur and Chief sit as JohnJohn enters.

CHIEF  
 This is the best of the best  
 minestrone anywhere, bar none.

Indicating he is the connoisseur of Italian cuisine.

CHIEF (cont'd)  
 I know Italian-o!

Then Chief speaks quietly.

CHIEF (cont'd)  
 OK Gang, this is our last two weeks  
 in this marvelous city. I have news.

JOHNJOHN

(excited)

What, What?

CHIEF

Might be ending our run right here in the Golden Gate. Investors are concerned about economic upheaval. Unsure right now. Beware. Think about your future.

ARTHUR

Will we be stranded here?

CHIEF

Most likely. But, we will get paid. Most are going back. Some will stay. Some will go to L.A. and Hollywood. You guys might consider that.

JOHNJOHN

What 'bout you?

CHIEF

Going home to my wife and kids.

JOHNJOHN

We will get paid, right Chief?

CHIEF

Yes, I'll see to it. I think?

JOHNJOHN

(to Arthur)

Let's go to L.A. and go by my uncles in Santa Barbara. It's amazing.

Chief leaves. Alice enters, takes a seat.

JOHNJOHN (cont'd)

Hi Alice, top 'o the morning to you!

ALICE

Boy, you guys look startled.

JOHNJOHN

Oh, it's nothing. Considering the world as it is. Odd feelings ya know.

ARTHUR

I feel strange, too. Not sure what I make of it.

Alice takes a menu and flips her hair.

ALICE

Got a letter from my big sister in Paris. Said it's peculiar all over Europe. Despair, anxiety. Not calm.

ARTHUR

See you guys. I got to catch up on some things.

Arthur saunters off.

ALICE

Gosh. Is he OK?

JOHNJOHN

He's reading Catholic stuff. I'm more troubled with what Chief said.

ALICE

Artie might have it right. Time to grow up.

JOHNJOHN

Easy for you. I can't grow up.

ALICE

Might be forced to, we all might be forced to. Let's get out of here.

JOHNJOHN

It's going to be fine. Should be celebrating . . . this, the last week of the play. Whoops! Well, rumor has it . . . ?

ALICE

Not surprised.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY - 1930

Arthur reading. A KNOCK on the door.

VOICE (O.S.)

Telegram - Mr. Henderson.  
Telegram!

ARTHUR  
 (opens door)  
 Hello? . . . Where do I sign?

Arthur grabs the envelope and freezes. Takes a deep breath and FLOPS back on the bed. Adrenaline rush and agitation grows on his face. Opens the Telegram. From his little brother Bill (Wilbur):

ARTHUR (O.S.)  
 "Artie, bad news. Mom has died.  
 Medical problems. Please call.  
 Bill."

Arthur is devastated, leans back on the bed. CRIES. A flash of nausea and then he quickly storms out.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS - 1930

Approaching the desk he calls his brother. Alice enters, hears the conversation. She sits down on an overstuffed couch and picks up a Marie Claire Fashion Magazine, nervously rifles through it. Arthur hangs up. His brow furrows. PANIC crosses his face.

ALICE  
 (concerned)  
 What is it?

ARTHUR  
 (head down)  
 Let's walk.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS - 1930

Walking, Arthur exaggerates with his hands. Passing the Presidio, cable cars, Telegraph Hill, and a statue of "Christ the Redeemer". Arthur stops and glares.

ARTHUR  
 (angrily)  
 What are you looking at?

CUT TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE THEATER - EVENING - 1930

Alice and Arthur still talking before going on stage.

ALICE

The show must go on. Do it for your mother, your family.

ARTHUR

(softly)

Yes, I can.

(pause)

I've got to go up there. To Oregon.

ALICE

When did they go to Oregon?

ARTHUR

Last year. Dad never really recovered from the accident.

ALICE

We close next week. Four days off then its next weekend. That's it!

JohnJohn enters.

JOHNJOHN

Sorry about your mom, Artie.

ARTHUR

Thanks, John. I'm going north tomorrow. I'll be back to finish.

JOHNJOHN

In four days you are going to Oregon and back just to finish the tour? That's crazy.

ARTHUR

I have to go. And I'm committed to finishing this up plus I feel the calling to go south with you guys.

JOHNJOHN

Hey, that's it. Us three to L.A.

ALICE

(sarcastically)

Remember, bad things come in threes. One, the play ends.

Two, his Mom's death.

What's next? Number three?



JOHNJOHN  
 (shaking his head)  
 Ooh, thanks, Alice.

ALICE  
 (under her breath)  
 Yeah, the Supreme Being at work.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MEXICO - DAY - 1970

Standing at the foot of the bed, Neil is face to face with his Uncle.

NEIL  
 You went to Oregon and back in four days?

ARTHUR (FR BEN)  
 Obligations are strong . . . for blood family and extended family.

NEIL  
 I know that feeling. Like in a band.

ARTHUR (FR BEN)  
 When people are touched by your passion, it is god-like. You know what is right. In your heart.  
 (pause)  
 Concerned about my family, and guilt for the delay in taking Wade to the doctor.  
 (pauses and stares skyward)  
 Decisions to make . . . Anyway, after Saturday night's final show the crew assembles in the grand lobby of the hotel. Hugs and condolences as Chief TAPS his wine glass with a spoon to command the room.  
 Everything gets BOISTEROUS. All get envelopes. There was a party at a chateau overlooking China Beach the next day but we decided to head to L.A. plus JohnJohn had an Uncle in Santa Barbara and a guest house.

Arthur has a sparkle in his eyes talking about the California road trip. Scenes of the California coast.

ARTHUR (FR BEN) (V.O.)  
 We bought an old Ford Model "T"  
 convertible. We were proud, driving  
 up to the hotel. Packed up. JohnJohn  
 grabbed Alice by the hand, jumped in  
 the rumble seat.

NEIL(V.O.)  
 Seems you might have had feelings for  
 Alice.

ARTHUR (FR BEN) (V.O.)  
 I did. We had developed a wonderful  
 friendship and I had thought it might  
 go further. I kept noticing her and  
 JohnJohn together - - And that began  
 to annoy me. I did not show it.  
 I was always concerned my actions  
 would hurt someone. I worked better  
 on instinct.

NEIL (V.O.)  
 Do you ever lust?

ARTHUR(V.O.)  
 Of course . . . A constant struggle.

CUT TO:

EXT. SANTA BARBARA ESTATE - FRONT GATE - DAY - 1930

SUPERIMPOSE: "Santa Barbara, CA 1930"

The Classic California styled gate looms large as it slowly  
 opens. A man stands in the driveway.

EDMOND ROONEY, JohnJohn's uncle, (40s), overly gracious and  
 welcoming, gives hugs to all. Big belly with cocktail in  
 hand. Infectious laughter.

EDMOND  
 My favorite Nephew.  
 Oh, What a nice jalopy!

JOHNJOHN  
 Uncle Ed, hey hey!  
 Where's Aunt Ruth?

EDMOND  
 Shopping. Always shopping.  
 Getting something special.  
 (MORE)

EDMOND (cont'd)  
 We want a nice dinner for our famous  
 "Stars of the Stage".

Both LAUGH as Alice and Arthur are introduced. Edmond leads them through the house into the well-manicured backyard. Statues of St. Francis, Our Lady of Guadalupe, brilliant flowers, and palms. The guest house has cathedral ceilings, stained glass, and elegant furnishings.

EDMOND (cont'd)  
 Hope this will do.  
 However, Alice, you'll need to take a  
 room in the house. Orders from my  
 wife. You understand.

ALICE  
 It's so beautiful here.  
 I appreciate your warm hospitality.

EDMOND  
 We are pretty devoted Catholics.

ALICE  
 My folks too.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. GUEST HOUSE - EARLY MORNING - 1930

The light shines through the stained glass windows onto a serene setting.

Suddenly panting, groans, and footsteps. Edmond scurries down the path, out of a dream with newspaper in hand. KNOCKS frantically.

EDMOND  
 (almost shouting)  
 JohnJohn get up. GET UP!

JohnJohn opens a crack in the door.

JOHNJOHN  
 (sleepy-eyed)  
 What is it?

EDMOND  
 (excitable)  
 Was that play you were in called  
 "All Souls Eve"?

JOHNJOHN

Yeah. So?

EDMOND

The paper here says there was an accident involving members of the cast of "All Souls Eve" two days ago. Sunday. They were swimming in the ocean and a riptide pulled them to sea.

JOHNJOHN

(shocked)

What? Let me see.

Edmond shows him the front page.

JOHNJOHN (cont'd)

(with tears)

It's not so. No, it can't be true.

No! No!

Arthur pokes his head out of the bedroom, stops and, stares. Takes the paper and sits. Alice stands at the door entrance now, teary-eyed. All are weeping.

EDMOND

What can we do son?

JOHNJOHN

No. . . I don't know.

EDMOND

My house is your house. I have made a call to someone I want you to meet. He will be here soon.

Edmond leaves. JohnJohn stands. Arthur's jaw is taunt, eyes squint. All three are desolate and silent, taking it hard. The front door in the background, open as the sun streams in. Heavy arduous beams surround them, ghostly and spiritual at the same time. A celestial wind grows, then calms.

Suddenly a tall figure appears semi silhouetted. Dressed in a long dark brown hooded robe as sunbeams encompassing the whole room. A low deep VOICE . . .

VOICE

Welcome. Welcome to the serenity and sanctuary of Santa Barbara. May God Bless you.

FR THEODOR MCDANIELS, (50s), standing in the doorway. The Catholic Rector of Santa Barbara. Has a soft manner with strong character. Tall, silver-white hair. He enters as Edmond follows.

EDMOND

I want you to meet "Friar Theo".

JOHNJOHN

Oh, I've met you before. We visited about 5 years ago.

EDMOND

Oh yes, the Friar is now the Senior Rector of Santa Barbara and the Mission.

JOHNJOHN

Woo! I remember you as Friar "T"

FR THEO

Yes JohnJohn, I am still Friar Theo. Not Friar Tuck as you use to call me.

Slight LAUGHTER by all.

FR THEO (cont'd)

So, you are actors and are going through a tough ordeal?

ARTHUR

(sarcastically)

To say the least.

FR THEO

It is difficult to understand what this world can throw at you sometimes. Not fair.

ARTHUR

(raises voice)

Fair? What is fairness? Who understands fair? It plain does not make sense. Betrayal by God.

FR THEO

Dealing with this roller coaster of feelings is upon you. Sadness, anger, guilt, emptiness. You'll feel these in the hours, days, and months to come. It will decrease. You are lucky to have each other. Discuss these feelings. It is important. Talk.

Silence. Placidity grows on everyone's face. Arthur is still contemptuous.

ARTHUR

You think bad things come in three's?

FR THEO

No, it is random. Things happen. It's not a bad omen or deliberate mischief by any force. And if it is, so be it. Your will is as free as Eve in the Garden. Pray or meditate to the calmness of the Universe. We know what is right and wrong. Sometimes it takes a while to discern.

(pause)

What can you tell me about those who perished?

ARTHUR

Chief was funny and in command. He just wanted to go home. Sad. I feel like a hobo who just fell out of a boxcar.

Arthur then goes into a fit of rage. Sweating, fists slug the air and he jogs in place.

Then a pause as he becomes composed.

ARTHUR

(with tears)

Chief was my mentor. Showed me the spiritual aspect of the arts. I loved him.

FR THEO

The grieving process can be many things. Talk. God is there.

Fr Theo filled the room with calm. Arthur puts his head down, closes his eyes as Alice begins to cry softly.

FR THEO (cont'd)

(extends his hand)

Let me take you to a place of healing.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SANTA BARBARA MISSION - DAY - 1930

SUPERIMPOSE: "Mission Santa Barbara 1930"

Alice, JohnJohn, Arthur, and Fr Theo walk through the arches then sit in the garden courtyard.

Fr Theo recognizes Arthur's qualities. His intellect, charming infectious personality, leadership, intangibles.

ARTHUR  
I feel calm here.

FR THEO  
(looking around)  
This is my life, here and now.  
Helping people learn scripture,  
interpreting it in hopes it helps.

ARTHUR  
Helping mankind. Pretty overwhelming.

FR THEO  
Join me in a class, learn more about  
all this.

ARTHUR  
That's an option.

Alice and JohnJohn have quirky looks on their faces.

FR THEO  
Yeah, a simple class.

ARTHUR  
What would that involve?

FR THEO  
As much as needed.

JOHNJOHN  
(speaking up)  
We are going to stick around a few  
more days, maybe a week or so.

Arthur looks across the courtyard garden.

ARTHUR  
What's that? . . . music?

FR THEO  
They are rehearsing for an event.  
Excellent singers.

ARTHUR  
Can I peek in and listen?

FR THEO  
Sure.

CUT TO:

INT. CHAPEL - MISSION OF SANTA BARBARA - CONTINUOUS - 1930

Arthur stands alone in the rear of the chapel, watching a Nun sing a moving rendition of "**The Only One Who Can**". Emotions swell. The adrenaline rushes, heart, and breathing increase. The camera swirls around him, the Nun and the Crucifix. A fog appears. Out of this wretched fog comes rage, anger, then stillness. . . back to his soul, more organized. One brave step through the fog.

As the camera focuses on the Crucifix, the music subsides. Arthur walks back out into the courtyard and sees Fr Theo.

FR THEO  
You seem troubled.  
More than you show.

ARTHUR  
I have a constant ache in my heart.  
(he looks down)  
Like I'm being punished for my  
ambition. Leaving my parents, and  
silly youth blunders.  
Now this accident, the crew . . .  
Chief.

FR THEO  
I am dishearten to hear this.  
The blues are hard to navigate.  
(pauses)  
Nothing last forever and we have an  
inherent desire to move forward as  
positive as possible.  
(pauses)  
Is this angst locked in or locked out  
of your heart?

ARTHUR  
I can't say.

Another pause as we hear music again. Arthur looks toward the Chapel hearing it.



FR THEO  
Remember those who live in fear are  
in a jail all their own.

ARTHUR  
Seems so enormous.

FR THEO  
Don't confuse your will with Gods.

CUT TO:

INT. CHAPEL - MISSION OF SANTA BARBARA - NEXT DAY

Arthur, pale with angst, sits alone, staring at the altar. Stressed and eyes closed, he waits pondering in his private universe. A SLOW calm grows within him. It engulfs his entire body. He stands abruptly. TWIRLS around. Stretches arms ABOVE his head. Takes a deep breath and walks out the large Spanish doors.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MEXICO - DAY - 1970

ARTHUR (FR BEN)  
That was a colossal flood of  
emotions. I was at a crossroads. No  
life raft. No escape. Only move  
forward. But what was that direction?

NEIL  
A sudden awakening?

ARTHUR (FR BEN)  
It was a long time coming. It became  
clear, a vision of what my life was  
to be. Father Theo was an influence,  
a big influence.

NEIL  
He was your guide or Shaman.

ARTHUR (FR BEN)  
Yes, I needed it. His outlook on  
life, peace, values, and beliefs.  
Views on art, culture politics, and  
equality for all.  
I was now a pupil of the Friar.

NEIL  
 WOW. Must a been a really heavy time.  
 Life-changing and all.

ARTHUR (FR BEN)  
 You could say that. Theo gave me his  
 Bible with handwritten notes. I made  
 my decision.

Neil walks to the window.

NEIL  
 So then, JohnJohn and Alice went to  
 L.A.?

ARTHUR (FR BEN)  
 They did. It was a tearful departure.  
 I was ready for the change. And they  
 we're ready for their future.

A fire alarm goes off and the hospital room is getting  
 sprinkled with water it stops and the confusion settles.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

SUPERIMPOSE: "Santa Barbara Mission, St. Anthony Seminary"

Over IMAGE: Santa Barbara Mission, California

ARTHUR (FR BEN) (V.O.)  
 It was a long 8 years and finally, I  
 became "Father Benedict Henderson".  
 (pause)  
 My first appointment was Mission work  
 at the Apache Reservation, Arizona.  
 Some of my best memories.

FADE TO:

EXT. WHITERIVER AZ - DAY - 1931

SUPERIMPOSE: "Whiteriver St Francis Mission, AZ 1931"

Sand storm. Wind HOWLING. A solo FLUTE. Silhouettes of  
**Arthur**, now **FR. BEN**, in his brown Franciscan "robe", hood up  
 walking with a small boy dressed in typical Native Indian  
 attire. The wind subsides.

BOY  
 Do you like sand?

FR BEN (ARTHUR)  
Not this much.

BOY  
Do you like to fish?

FR BEN (ARTHUR)  
Certainly.

BOY  
Do you have a wife?

FR BEN (ARTHUR)  
No, but I have family.

BOY  
Good, wanna go fishing?

FR BEN (ARTHUR)  
Maybe in the morning.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MEXICO - DAY - 1970 (V.O.)

FR BEN (ARTHUR) (V.O.)  
These people, one with nature, were  
eye-opening. Deep spiritual  
awareness. Lessons learned well.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MISSION - WHITERIVER, AZ - AFTERNOON - 1931

In the Mission courtyard, under shade trees, Fr Ben (Arthur) is with several Native children. Clowning, wearing masks, and being silly. He plays GUITAR and SINGS "Old MacDonald Had A Farm". They all SING along, dancing and LAUGHING.

CUT TO:

INT. MISSION - WHITERIVER, AZ - MORNING - 1940

In the Mission Church Rectory, pecking on an old Remington typewriter, Fr Ben (Arthur) writes to the Provincial Minister of the Franciscan Order, Oakland CA.

FR BEN (ARTHUR) (O.S.)  
 Reverend and Dear Father, As you are aware, there is a major conflict in Europe and our country is postured to enter it. For the past years, a ranking Army official has constantly urged me to join as a Chaplain. Now he has contacted me again and promised to procure for me the highest-ranking commission in the best regiment possible. The only reason why I have not is that to me, it would seem like desertion from the Order which has done so much for me. Now I'd like to leave this whole business in your hands . . .

FADE OUT/IN:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MEXICO - DAY - 1970

NEIL  
 Dose War fit with your principles?

FR BEN (ARTHUR)  
 No, but learning news that Germany was exterminating people, I had to do my part.

(pause)  
 They put me through camp then schooling, schooling and more schooling . . . Harvard, Army School, War College. Only then did they figured I was ready.

FADE TO BLACK:

SUPERIMPOSE: "Chaplain Arthur Benedict Henderson"

FADE IN:

EXT. AID STATION - NEAR LIVERDUN, FR - LATE NIGHT - 1944

SUPERIMPOSE: "France 1944"

A thick ghostly gloom blankets all. A faint glow in the East. It is quiet but for a DISTANT RUMBLE of artillery.

A runner comes out of the dark and approaches the Army Medical tent.

PRIVATE TERRY JAMES (19) handsome, sharp, and cocky. Exhausted, disheveled, and unshaven, smeared with dirt and blood. His eyes shine. He is out of breath and excited.

PFC TERRY  
Who's in the tent?  
Evacuate, Evacuate - - NOW!

Movement and MUTTERS as flashlights CLICK on and illuminate the the tent walls. Fr Ben (Arthur) and three wounded GIs rise up, look outside.

PFC TERRY (cont'd)  
(shouting)  
Enemy advancing !!!  
(pauses and points)  
Does that ambulance work?

FR BEN (ARTHUR)  
(calm, loud and stern)  
Help me get these soldiers in.

They scramble pushing the soldiers to the ambulance.

PFC TERRY  
(to Fr Ben)  
You get in.

FR BEN (ARTHUR)  
(forcefully points)  
There are wounded soldiers up on that rise, in a tent.

Fr Ben (Arthur) jumps into a nearby jeep.

PFC TERRY  
Sir, I don't mean to be disrespectful but that is behind the enemy lines.

FR BEN (ARTHUR)  
(shouts and points)  
So are those soldiers. Keep moving, a sitting duck is a dead one.

Fr Ben (Arthur) drives intensely through the dark rain. SCREECHING to the tents a half-mile away, he yanks four wounded Americans out of with the aid of an onsite medic. All hang on as he frantically drives in a zig-zag pattern to safety.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORET DE FACQ - AID STATION - CONTINUOUS - 1944

With breaks SHRIEKING, the jeep arrives.

PFC TERRY  
Chaplain, Sir. You saved those lives.

FR BEN (ARTHUR)  
At ease Private. What is your name?

PFC TERRY  
Terry Sir, Private Terry.

FR BEN (ARTHUR)  
Private, you are a strong soldier.  
You have done an outstanding job.

Enter MEDIC RACHAEL GROSSMAN, a stern no-nonsense woman with dark "pit bull" circles under her eyes, wide hips, an air of authority. "Nurse Ratched" type. She speaks in broken English.

MEDIC RACHAEL  
(pointing)  
Clean up after yourself.  
We keep this clean.  
(notices Fr Ben)  
Oh, you're the Padre.  
You are quite the hero.  
(picking up chairs)  
What makes you tick?

FR BEN (ARTHUR)  
Reaction . . . like you, a reaction.

MEDIC RACHAEL  
(shakes her head)  
Or stupidity. "Nothing is true,  
everything is permitted."

PFC TERRY  
(asking Fr Ben)  
How can you not question God?

MEDIC RACHAEL  
(sarcastically)  
If God be for us, Who be against us?  
Right Padre?

FR BEN (ARTHUR)  
A bit cynical, medic?  
War makes it subjective.  
Ours is not to reason why.

Fr Ben does not elaborate, being a bit elusive. Rachael's breath becomes hard as she barks with snake-like viper.

MEDIC RACHAEL  
Those fucking Krauts. God?  
Reason?

Rachael storms off.

PFC TERRY  
Can't blame her. Saw her family  
gunned down and she hid for a week in  
a suitcase. Captain McCully found her  
and has her helping out here.

FR BEN (ARTHUR)  
God bless her.

PFC TERRY  
She's the best.

FR BEN (ARTHUR)  
You alright?

PFC TERRY  
(pause)  
Ya' know Emerson?  
"War educates the senses, activates  
the will, perfects the physical  
constitution and it's a way to make  
men measure men."  
What do you make of that, Sir?

FR BEN (ARTHUR)  
A way to help make sense of it all.  
Doesn't work for me. War doesn't  
educate it degenerates man.

PFC TERRY  
Devils work?

FR BEN (ARTHUR)  
You might say,  
(pausing)  
Indeed . . . could say "FUBAR".

PFC TERRY  
(laughing)  
Did I hear you say that?

FR BEN (ARTHUR)  
Where are you from Private?

PFC TERRY  
Nebraska, Sir. Podunk Nebraska

FR BEN (ARTHUR)  
Ah, a Cornhusker. Good football.

PFC TERRY  
Of course sir, I was planning to play. Coaches came to watch me in High School. They were coming back, then the war happened.

FR BEN (ARTHUR)  
You know son, they just might still come back. I'm a little physic about these things.

(pause)  
We need to get some sleep. Think about cornfields, and touchdown passes.

PFC TERRY  
Agreed.

Fr Ben (Arthur) leans back and falls asleep quickly.  
We hear FAINT SOUNDS of war.

FADE TO BLACK:

SLOW FADE IN:

EXT. FORET DE FACQ - AID STATION - DAWN - 1944

Morning shines clean after the nights' rain. The sun breaks over the tents to the sound of SINGING. The battlefield is strewn with wreckage. Fr Ben, in the distance, is singing HIGH MASS.

CAMERA PULLS closer to him, then CUTS TO:

Soldiers, medics, and patients awakening up and drawing back their tent flaps. They peer out one by one.

FR BEN  
(singing Latin)  
Ad Deum qui lætificat . . .

People gawking, slow walking towards the makeshift altar the Priest has built with debris from the battle zone. With a passionate BOOMING theater voice, he sings louder.



FR BEN  
 (singing Latin)  
 Kýrie, eléison.

Troops gather closer. Some kneel, some sit on their helmets, others stand. Some on crutches. Others bandaged up in splints.

FR BEN (cont'd)  
 (singing Latin)  
 Panem de cælo præstitisti eis.

SINGING is all we hear and it intensifies. CLOSE UPS of PFC Terry with Medic Rachael.

FR BEN (cont'd)  
 (singing Latin)  
 Kýrie, eléison. Christe, eléison.

Sun shines on the Priest as he holds his hands out to the side, and slowly brings them together. Then he blesses those who are there.

FADE into the SUN.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - NEAR PONT-A-MOUSSON - DAY - 1944

SUPERIMPOSE: "Two Days Later"

On a mission to take plasma to an Aid Station, Fr Ben and Terry pass wreckage of several of jeeps, surrounded by charred bodies. American troops. A nightmare vision. All six Americans dead. Fr Ben calls in the location. They continue.

Heavy rain. The Priest walks 20 feet in front of the jeep directing PFC Terry through and around rain exposed mines in the roadway. The Aid Station is a few miles away.

Fr Ben SHOUTS and points.

FR BEN  
 Watch this one, jump to the right.  
 Veer left, 10 feet - back, left . . .

The jeep follows direction inch by inch.

A German Squad spots them and opens SPORADIC small arms FIRE. Fr Ben dives face down in the mud.

The jeep stops. They listen, trying to pinpoint the exact source. Up on one knee, Fr Ben points out his best guess.

Bullets SPLATTER into the mud around him. He goes back down.

A huge EXPLOSION. Mortar lands in front of him. Shrapnel knocks him back. A violent CRACK jolts the air. He knows he has been hit. Landing back in the mud, he is still. Stunned, in shock he voids his mind of thought.

PFC Terry locates the German Squad, and after an intense FURY of MACHINE GUN BLITZ, he disables them.

Terry JUMPS in the mud.

PFC TERRY  
(screaming)  
Say something! Say something!

Fr Ben dazed, muddied and stiffed-jaw looks skyward.

FR BEN  
(softly)  
. . . protect yourself.

PFC TERRY  
Yes, Sir, you'll be right as rain.

Carefully PFC Terry helps him into the jeep and they backtrack. Fr Ben squints in pain. Slumps down in the seat. Blood slowly soaks his uniform and covers his body.

The Priest does not utter another sound.

CUT TO:

INT. AID STATION TENT - LATER

Diagnosed with three gunshot wounds and a concussion, Fr Ben lies on the table, awake. With a kind smile, Medic Rachael stands over him.

FR BEN  
(slurred)  
You get the plasma?

MEDIC RACHAEL  
Padre, we have the blood.  
(points at the I-V)  
You bring it yourself.

FR BEN  
 (lifts his head)  
 What? Not for me nurse.

MEDIC RACHAEL  
 Yes, for you Padre. You need to be  
 well. So you can keep to liberate.

Fr Ben lies back and closes his eyes. He gets an injection  
 and as the gloom begins to fall he thinks over and over - -

FR BEN (O.S.)  
 Keep to liberate . . . keep to  
 liberate . . . keep to liberate . . .

FADES, sees only aureole.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MEXICO - DAY - 1970

As Fr Ben relives the war Neil looks at him horrified.

FR BEN  
 I do not understand war. I do not  
 claim to unravel those mysteries.  
 I treasure the good. As you should.

Neil stares at him, trying to understand.

FR BEN (cont'd)  
 I more fully understood my lot in  
 life.  
 (pause) (O.S.)  
 A month or so later I was feeling  
 much better. Medic Rachael brought me  
 some paints and canvas for artwork.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BUNKER - BATTLEFIELD - PONT-A-MOUSSON - DAY - 1944

Fr Ben walks the trenches alone after sending soldiers on  
 recon missions. Noticing the acrid smell of stale gunpowder,  
 he slowly and cautiously moves along the foxhole.

He SUDDENLY finds himself face to face, and at gunpoint with  
 two German soldiers. Both extremely young, seventeen or  
 eighteen. Both scared and anxious.

FR BEN (O.S.)  
 (to himself)  
 Think like a German kid.  
 God, thank you for insisting I learn  
 colloquial German in War School.

German #1 puts his gun against Fr Ben's temple.

SPEAKING in German - - SUBTITLED:

GERMAN #1  
 On your knees Amis, NOW! Danke!

GERMAN #2  
 (angrily)  
 Dirty Yankee!

Recognizing their youth and fear the Chaplain looks into their eyes.

FR BEN  
 You should be ashamed of yourself.  
 I am a Priest.  
 Do you know what that is?

German #1 pulls the gun back, SPOOKED and DAZED.

GERMAN #1  
 Religion? What? Yankee Religion!

FR BEN  
 (sternly)  
 Your mother did not tell you?  
 Clergy. We do not fight. We carry no  
 weapons. We represent peace.

GERMAN #2  
 The Pope? Ha, a trick.

FR BEN  
 Catholic, Yes. Are you boys Catholic?

GERMAN #2  
 Ah . . .

GERMAN #1  
 Hush.

Fr Ben senses a Catholic connection.

FR BEN  
 I am a Catholic Priest.  
 You should not threaten me.  
 (MORE)

FR BEN (cont'd)  
I am not a threat to you.

Puts his hands together with a pious look.

German #2 looks petrified, a tear grows in his eye.  
German #1 speaking to German #2.

GERMAN #1  
Quit, Quit. Stop your sobbing.

GERMAN #2  
No, I will not do this.  
This is a Priest.  
Mother will never forgive me, NEVER.

GERMAN #1  
(to German #2)  
Stop it!

GERMAN #2  
(to German #1)  
Your mother too, Kommandeur.

FR BEN  
(shouts)  
God is your Father. He and only He is  
who we ALL answer to.

GERMAN #1  
We answer to the Fuhrer.

FR BEN  
(strongly)  
You don't know God.  
God does not put a gun to someone's  
face, you don't know God!

GERMAN #1  
What makes you have all the answers?

FR BEN  
(strongly)  
Jesus died for you.  
That is the Truth. I have Truth.  
From now on, when you put your head  
on your pillow you will be tortured  
by your subconscious.

GERMAN #1  
I die for the Fuhrer, he is God.  
He is God to us.

Fr Ben responds with empathy - -

FR BEN

You are a German child. Not a Nazi.  
Look around you. This war, this  
destruction.

(shakes his head)

The Fuhrer is not God.  
The Fuhrer hates Jews.  
Did you know Jesus was a Jew?  
This is not you. This is not right.

Fr Ben puts his hand on his heart.

FR BEN (cont'd)

In your heart, you know the truth.

Fr Ben looks to German #2

FR BEN (cont'd)

You both know what is right.  
Look at each other.  
LOOK, you are good, you are  
brothers - you are German.

Fr Ben points to German #1

FR BEN (cont'd)

Jesus died for you.  
And above all Jesus will forgive you.  
Are you sure you would die for this  
Fuhrer?

Fr Ben turns and points to German #2

FR BEN (cont'd)

ARE YOU?  
What would your mothers say?  
(pause)  
. . . I think we know.

Both boys look to the ground, then to each other. SOBBING,  
they drop their guns.

FR BEN (cont'd)

You should be playing futbol,  
basketball. Be the kids you are.  
Come home to your Mother. I will get  
you home and to your families.

The boys look downtrodden, defeated. Fr Ben kneels. They  
kneel, all pray.

END SUBTITLES:

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MEADOW - PONT-A-MOUSSON - DAY - 1944

A week later on a beautiful French day, Fr Ben sits under a prune tree calmly reading. Suddenly, a MORTAR shell hits the tree with a THUD. It's a DUD and showers him with prunes. He rises, looks to the heavens - making the sign of the cross as he strolls off.

FR BEN (O.S.)  
Follow the path to your destiny.

Through fields and hedges, he wanders by a thicket of brush. He hears MOANS, MOVING brush, and MUFFLED talk. A bull ox BELLOWS in the distance.

FR BEN  
Who goes there, Wehrmacht?  
Hello?

They speak in German - - Begin SUBTITLED:

GERMAN #3  
Here. We are wounded.

Following the VOICES he proceeds with caution. Slowly, step by step he finds twelve wounded German soldiers. They are in and under a hay wagon hidden in enormous underbrush and piles of rubble.

MOANS and SIGHS, they put hands in the air. Depleted and defeated, they seemingly want to surrender.

FR BEN  
Can I help? Are you impaired?

GERMAN #3  
We are weak. We do not want a fight.  
Please, do you have medicine?

Fr Ben anxiously approaches.

FR BEN  
Be still.  
(points)  
Clear out that wagon, you all get in.

Fr Ben grabs the harness of the ox close by and hitches it up.

He begins to walk the ox slowly through battlefields and green meadows with the twelve wounded Germans towards the Aid Station.

GERMAN #3

OK - No weapon, is the war over?  
(shows wounds)  
Comrade, do you have medicine?

FR BEN

We will take care of you.

GERMAN #3

Not Russian? Russians have no food or medicine for Germans.

GERMAN #4

Russians are not kind.  
They're ass holes.

FR BEN

I am American. We all require dignity.

GERMAN #4

Profound talk coming from invaders.

FR BEN

We are no invaders. We are liberators. We free France from an invasion. Liberate Germans from autocracy.

He leads the wagon through a war-torn meadow with various ANGLES and the sound of HOOFS.

GERMAN #3

Do Americans have beautiful Frauen nurses?

GERMAN #4

How about Borscht?

FR BEN

We will feed you.

GERMAN #3

(in English)  
Brew?

FR BEN

(in English)  
We will feed you.



GERMAN #4  
 (in English)  
 Sausages?

FR BEN  
 (in German)  
 WE WILL FEED YOU.

They pass a hedgerow that parallels a cow's path. The Germans talk amongst themselves, then one asks . . .

GERMAN #5  
 (German, subtitled)  
 Comrade American, Do you know how we  
 conquered Poland so fast?

FR BEN  
 How?

GERMAN #5  
 We marched in backward and the Polish  
 thought we were leaving.

Ruckus LAUGHTER erupts.

A slight smile appears on Fr Ben's face.

GERMAN #5 (cont'd)  
 Comrade American,  
 Do you know Mae West?

More LAUGHTER. The atmosphere becomes relaxed as they bounce along the trail. Fr Ben starts to SING an old German Folk Song: "Kein schöner Land"

FR BEN  
 (German, subtitled)  
 Kein schöner Land  
 Kein schöner Land in dieser Zeit,

One by one the Germans join in SINGING.  
 Louder and louder they all SING . . .

Als hier das unsre weit und breit,  
 Wo wir uns finden  
 Wohl unter Linden  
 Zur Abendzeit, Abendzeit.

PAN OUT: The SINGING hay wagon with twelve seriously wounded German soldiers, led by Fr Ben approaching the Aid Station.

END SUBTITLES:

Medics, patients, and soldiers come and look at the incoming  
VOCAL ensemble.

MEDIC RACHAEL  
(slightly shouting)  
Looks like the Padre is gathering his  
flock.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MEXICO - AFTERNOON - 1970

Fr Ben looking straight ahead from the bed.

FR BEN  
Mercy . . . Mercy !

NEIL  
War is over.

FR BEN (V.O.)  
Yes. I was numb. Too much input. Hard  
to assimilate it all. They wanted to  
fill me with awards but I was unsure.

MONTAGE - BATTLEFIELD

- A) Chaplains identifying hundreds of bodies.
- B) The Grave Registration Unit.
- C) Fr Ben in a slow RAGE HURLS letters into the air.
- D) He writes over 3000 in all.

FR BEN (V.O.) (cont'd)  
I became obsessed with writing  
letters to the families of the dead.  
(pause)

Government incompetence. This, this  
failing called WAR. And now I write  
the paperwork of death.

(pause)  
One letter to the family of Saul  
Abelman. I enclosed DOG TAGS and the  
STAR of DAVID.

NEIL (V.O.)  
Dad said you had some hard times  
right after the war. He did too.

FR BEN (V.O.)  
 Yes he did, we both did. I was lucky  
 to go to the Trappist Retreat. He,  
 lucky too, went home to your mother.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

EXT. TRAPPIST MONASTERY - KENTUCKY - DAY - 1948

SUPERIMPOSE: "Trappist Monastery, KY 1948"

A 1941 Packard Staff Car, "OD Green" with the "Five Point"  
 Army Star on the door, pulls up to the Grand Abby entrance.  
 A fully decorated General steps out and is greeted by Fr.  
 Ben, in his humble brown Franciscan robe.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MEXICO - AFTERNOON - 1970

FR BEN (V.O.)  
 The Monastery was a welcome, I  
 painted and played music and prayed.

(pause)

The Army wanted to give me more  
 awards and I refused. I did accept  
 the offer to finish my Military work  
 at the Pentagon.

(pause)

I sought out my old friend who was in  
 D.C. working with the government, he  
 too was in the war. Rad, he came out  
 to Eugene.

NEIL (V.O.)  
 Yeah - Mom called him "Father  
 Grumpy".

FR BEN (V.O.)  
 Your Mom, quite the personality.  
 Rad enjoyed elegance of a diocesan,  
 and I took the Franciscan vow of  
 poverty. Anyway, we met . . .

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TABLE - BILLY MARTIN'S TAVERN - DAY - 1950

SUPERIMPOSE: "Washington D.C. 1950"

FR. JOHN RADLINSKI, (40s), a ranking official in the Church and a consultant at the U.S State Department, has an aristocratic air. They seat across from each other. The waitress brings wine.

FR RAD

You look good, kinda.  
 (smile and pause)  
 What are your thoughts?  
 These times are changing in a twist.  
 We last spoke about seagulls on the beach and why they follow boats.  
 How to to become boats leading the flocks.

FR BEN

(nodding)  
 Just before being ordained.  
 Now, oh boy, look now . . .  
 (looking down)  
 Circumstances. Time catches you.  
 (pause)  
 Good to see you, old friend.

They embrace with warm expressions on their faces.

FR RAD

Any sea under the gull? Or only land?

FR BEN

(smiles)  
 The gull glides with nature, in the moment, land or sea, following the boat. Reaction. No time to wonder.  
 "God, get me to the next moment".

Fr Ben takes a long drink of wine. Sighs and looks towards the patrons along the bar, over his right, then left shoulder.

FR BEN (cont'd)

If you keep your head when those all around you are losing theirs, and they blame it all on you?  
 If you can trust yourself when all doubt you? Then you are the Boat and the Gull knows.

FR RAD

Call the gull instinct. Call the boat character.

FR BEN

The Monastery was a welcome rest,  
physically. Spiritually good too, a  
recharge. Not so much for the mind.

FR RAD

The mind is tricky.

FR BEN

Shadows chase me like "cruel ravens"  
of grief. The more I reflect the more  
frightened I get.

FR RAD

Not ready to put it to rest?  
Pesky Ravens!

FR BEN

It's funny, I go for a walk and find  
myself searching for mines.  
I keep hearing mortar. Gunfire.

(pauses)

Takes time. I remember the eyes of  
the soldiers as they realized I'm  
here to help. There were many moments  
for passionate action and many for  
ruthless action.

FR RAD

What does the "Brass" want?  
You to jump back in? Or, do you want  
to go back to the Trappists?

FR BEN

My work is not done. We've got to  
deal with the aftermath. The people,  
the souls. Not the regimes nor  
governments. It's baffling.

I have got to put my two cents in.

(pause)

Still, it follows me like a cold  
wind. A damp draft of lost souls.

FR RAD

And then these Generals . . .  
are they good, bad, or what?

FR BEN

The most terrifying monster is the  
one you invite into your own home.  
Destroying balance of inner harbor  
while attempting to lock in  
rationalizations.

FR RAD

Do you get immune to stories of the soldiers?

FR BEN

NEVER! You never get immune to that. One soldier told me:

"Every time I kill someone I feel farther away from home."

Extreme close up of Fr Ben, steely-eyed his voice cracking with emotion.

FR BEN (cont'd)

Then, that same GI said to me:  
"When you end up killing one of your own men, you tell yourself it happened - to save two lives or three or maybe even ten. If I've killed fifty, that means I've saved 1000, right? That's how simple it is. How to rationalize it - mission over men."

A long pause.

I console these soldiers for killing, yet scripture says not to kill. But if they are the enemy, that's okay. Where is humanity? We are not the "Saber Cat" killing the "Rabbit". We are Humans. Aren't we above that? It is MY fault for propagating this.

Fr Ben STANDS walks to a window in the restaurant, away from the patrons.

FR RAD

It is not your fault.

FR BEN

(raising his voice)

It is my fault, I AM AT FAULT!

Fr Rad gets up walks in front of Fr Ben, RED INTENSITY overcomes both faces.

FR RAD

It is not your fault Arthur.

FR BEN  
 (shouting angrily)  
 IT IS MY FAULT !

Everyone turns and looks. Fr Ben has tears in his eyes. Fr Rad grabs him by the shoulders . . .

FR RAD  
 (whispers)  
 Listen, don't let the past over  
 define your future.  
 (pause)  
 Remember you are the BOAT, leading  
 the GULL.

Fr Rad takes a deep breath, Fr Ben looks skyward.

FR RAD (cont'd)  
 Always remember . . . these soldiers  
 may not believe the same as you but  
 they believe so much in how much you  
 believe.

Both slowly get a grip - - two war-torn souls.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MEXICO - AFTERNOON - 1970

The nurse walks out and Fr Ben (Arthur) looks at his nephew with gratitude that he is here. Mexican fireworks go off in the street outside.

FR BEN  
 I got settled into the Pentagon, and  
 had some good times. My receptionist  
 was lively, silly, and smart. She  
 would sing in the halls to hear her  
 voice echo. She loved the arts.

INT. THE PENTAGON OFFICE - WASHINGTON DC - DAY - 1951

SUPERIMPOSE: "Pentagon 1951"

NEIL (V.O.)  
 This was the fifties? Were you  
 concerned with the red scare?

KATIE DEL TORRE is a young, "on point" receptionist assigned to Fr Ben's office. Flamboyantly dressed and flirtatious. She knows the comings and goings of all, making it her business. She flips around the office.

FR BEN (V.O.)

At that time I was not. I was into my job and Rad pushed me to play cello in the philharmonic. I was enthralled with culture.

(pause)

At some point, I did start to take notice and . . .

SERGEANT JOHN QUINCY, (20s), dark hair and shifty. A mystery man. An odd air surrounds him. Fr Ben has heard chatter about him. He enters the office.

FR BEN

Sergeant, John.

QUINCY

Yes Sir.

FR BEN

You were in that musical at the Arts Center last week, right? Good work.

QUINCY

Yes Sir, and thank you, sir.  
Is Col. Tracy around?

FR BEN

Yeah, just a minute.

QUINCY

I have a question Sir.

FR BEN

What's that Sergeant?

QUINCY

Are you aware of curious activities around the Arts Center?

FR BEN

Oh, I've heard rumors. Haven't paid too much attention.

He pauses, squints and looks Quincy in the eye.



FR BEN (cont'd)  
What activities?

Quincy quickly looks away.

Fr Ben is aware of investigations and has forwarded intel to superiors, all the while knowing the Vatican is not happy with Priests as operatives.

QUINCY  
Communists. Soviets. Turks, covert activities, espionage, those type things.

FR BEN  
Yes. Investigations of writers and actors? Blacklists? Rumors are rampant, keep focused.

QUINCY  
Vigilant.

FR BEN  
Always vigilant.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MEXICO - AFTERNOON - 1970 (V.O.)

FR BEN (V.O.)  
That struck me as odd, Quincy, the arts, secrets? Then I got called into Gen. Bradley's office . . .

CUT TO:

INT. MEETING ROOM - PENTAGON - WASHINGTON - AFTERNOON - 1951

SUPERIMPOSE: "The Pentagon Boardroom 1951"

Official Pentagon Seal, several Generals' portraits along with the President framed on the wall. Five military two civilians are seated around a long boardroom table.

GENERAL OMAR N. BRADLEY, (50s) a solid looking man with a strong jaw. Impressive chest honors that can't be missed, as he shows them off.

Fr Ben walks in and everyone stands. The General and Fr Ben salute, then sit at the table. Fr Ben adjusts his seat and takes his hat off.

GENERAL BRADLEY

Good Afternoon Chaplain.  
Pleased you are here.  
On behalf of the Army and United  
States of America I would like to  
thank you for your heroic service.

FR BEN

Thank you General.  
It is good to be here.

GENERAL BRADLEY

I have requested this meeting because  
of your military insight and service.  
I have been briefed on your writings  
regarding "Soviet Indoctrination",  
with regard to Christianity vs  
Communistic Imperialism.  
We are in a very sensitive operation  
dealing with post war Germany.

FR BEN

Yes, General.

GENERAL BRADLEY

Did you get the documents I sent?

FR BEN

I did.

GENERAL BRADLEY

We continue in depth studies on  
international relations, foreign  
policy and national security  
emphasizing the Soviet Bloc.  
The Soviets, the Allies wrestling  
over Germany. Germany struggles to  
rebuild. Everyone has their own  
agendas. Can you speak to that?

FR BEN

Yes, and my agenda is Freedom and  
Human Rights as always. The  
current populace of Germany is torn.  
They are good human beings. Good  
souls. They are spiritually  
decomposed. It's a land of multiple  
outrage.

GENERAL BRADLEY

Suggestions?

FR BEN

Well, the Soviets want control of ideology, government, geography, social structure, economy, political relationships, and the police state. They hold nothing back, as we know.

(pauses a beat)

So right there emerges a dismal, dramatic picture of civilization. I am a liaison between Church and State. My interests are promoting freedom, a Catholic viewpoint in the formation of policy.

GENERAL ARNOLD

The situation is tearing apart the German infrastructure.

FR BEN

(stands)

Look, a big difference between Christendom and Communism is freedom. We're at a crossroads. Soviets are not stopping, they continue war, a "cold war", all are playing secrets. Playing with freedom, propaganda and manipulating the press. Politicians want that cold war as to not to run up causalities. Again this condemns those under the Soviet influence to a spiritual death, artistic death, a human rights death. DEATH TO FREEDOM. Communists DO NOT BELIEVE IN GOD and will incarcerate those who do.

GENERAL BRADLEY

What is realistic?

FR BEN

A human rights policy PROMOTED more intensely. Enhancing Radio Free Europe adding TV and such.

GENERAL BRADLEY

Isn't that just "cold war"? Politicians do not understand what you and I understand.

Fr Ben becoming passionate, intense and LOUD.

FR BEN

(standing)

It's exasperating to see useless attention and energy focused on minor issues. Does peace really exist anymore?

When we ask questions as to why we can't pull nations to our side, we find our tariffs and economy forbid it. WHY? - - Oh? We are told congressmen want it that way. Short term titillation instead of long term nurturing. That amounts to ignorance, misunderstanding and indifference of "We The People".

Are they not informed of the terrible issues at stake?

If they are informed, and do nothing, WHY? - - Oh, They say our standard of living must be kept rising. We must keep that at all costs. The only good answer I can find is selfishness, lack of international charity and lack of spirituality. We must keep these values.

We must let Germany be free. Free to govern itself, with our assistance. We can not slice it up like Solomon. Each life is too precious. Each life must have freedom.

GENERAL BRADLEY

Keep pushing Germany into a free Democratic Society.

FR BEN

(loudly)

Yes Sir. That's my opinion. Sir.

GENERAL BRADLEY

Good. Agreed. Please sit Chaplain.

(pause)

You are involved in the arts, correct?

Fr Ben takes a breath gathering himself.

FR BEN

Yes, sir.

GENERAL BRADLEY

That makes you a pseudo liberal.

The General throws a quirky smile at Fr Ben.

FR BEN

(serious)

Not so fast, Sir. I have no political bias. I am neither conservative nor liberal.

GENERAL BRADLEY

Liberal is not a bad thing, I like "Miracle on 42nd St." And John Wayne. But "art" people are easy pray for unsavory regimes.

FR BEN

Perhaps.

GENERAL BRADLEY

You as an art person - -

Fr Ben interrupts with a sneer.

FR BEN

An ARTIST, sir.

GENERAL BRADLEY

Yeah. You as and ARTIST should keep watchful diligence on unusual infiltration.

FR BEN

Watchful eye?

GENERAL BRADLEY

An instinct on things not being, say - as they should.

FR BEN

I am forbidden to spy.

GENERAL BRADLEY

Not spy. You, being a Chaplain and an ARTIST, have a unique position. I would never ask you to go against your convictions.

(pause a beat)

So with that, the Joint Chiefs are meeting this afternoon. I will forward your input. Furthermore, I am requesting you to become Personnel Officer for the Chief of Chaplains.

(MORE)

GENERAL BRADLEY (cont'd)  
 You'll be reporting to me, Joint  
 Chiefs, Secretary of Defense and The  
 President. I would like you to start  
 a dialog with Colonel Scott here,  
 regarding Artwork lost. See the Major  
 General in my office for your orders.  
 Look forward working with you.

They stand salute.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MEXICO - AFTERNOON - 1970

NEIL  
 Was Bradley intense?

FR BEN  
 Not really, I was.  
 I was out of line, but didn't care. I  
 was tired of this government stuff  
 but was obligated. I indulged myself  
 in music and painting for the next  
 few years.  
 (pause)  
 I was preparing for my first concert  
 with the Symphony. The National  
 Symphony Orchestra. That was a  
 priority.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BACKSTAGE - PERFORMING ARTS - WASH. DC - NIGHT - 1955

SUPERIMPOSE: "Performing Arts Center, D.C. 1955"

Distant conversations. Excitement in the air. The Conductor,  
 musicians, Fr Rad and, Fr Ben huddled in talk. Quincy and  
 Katie walk up to join in the gathering.

FR RAD  
 . . . the Opera houses in Château de  
 Lunéville are astounding.

CONDUCTOR  
 Impeccable sound.

FR RAD

The acoustics here are good but not  
as warm as Europeans houses.

Quincy LAUGH'S and interjects into the conversation.

QUINCY

It was the aristocrats that had those  
old structures built. Slave labor.

Uncomfortable SILENCE.

Suddenly a loud scream and yell.

UNKNOWN MAN

(shouting)

We are being experimented on.  
They want to exterminate us all!

SLAM and a loud THUMP. SILENCE as all look around appalled.  
Then a woman GASPS pointing to a rope hanging from the  
theater rigging. We follow it down to a body hanging by the  
neck. A sign on the naked body: "**THE FUHRER IS NOT DEAD**".

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MEXICO - AFTERNOON - 1970 (V.O.)

We see the the full Auditorium from the back and hear the  
following dialogue: (V.O.)

FR BEN (V.O.)

We gathered our emotions and decided  
that the show must go on.  
So after a delay, not telling the  
audience until afterword, we  
performed.

INT. PERFORMING ARTS - WASH. DC - CONTINUOUS - 1955

"1812 OVERTURE" is playing and through the audience, we see  
faces. Katie, Tracy, Fr Rad, and others . . . finally to a  
close up of Fr Ben.

CUT TO:

A close up of QUINCY as he gives an acknowledging nod to an  
UNKNOWN MAN.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

EXT. OLD WORLD COFFEE HOUSE - GEORGETOWN - EVENING - 1956

SUPERIMPOSE: "Georgetown 1956"

Katie invites Fr Ben and Fr Rad to see her folk-singing brother performing nearby. It's a scrappy place with a Beatnik feel, over-stuffed with funky art, music, actor & cinema posters. Patchouli oil in the air. Katie is decked out in bohemian gear, Fr Ben in funky "down-home" clothes, Fr Rad in a Roman Collar. Mod squad 50's style. They enter seating themselves in the packed house among all kinds of eccentric types.

FR BEN  
(looking around)  
Great energy here. Love it.

FR RAD  
That's debatable.

PETER, (20's), Katie's brother sports a "GO-T", long brownish hair and comes quickly to the table. Very NOISY, conversations nearly YELLED.

FR RAD (cont'd)  
You're the performer.

PETER  
Yeah. Cool. Happy you all came out.

KATIE  
Is Vincent here?

PETER  
Oh, somewhere.  
(to the group)  
Hey, thanks for coming, man.

FR RAD  
(dry as chalk)  
Did he just call us "man"?

KATIE  
Hey, when in Rome . . .  
(she stands)  
I'll go get some drinks.  
Padre, what'll you have?

FR BEN  
Earl Gray hot.  
(MORE)



FR BEN (cont'd)  
 (looking at Fr Rad)  
 You, Father Grumpy?

FR RAD  
 Me to.

KATIE  
 Coming right up.

Katie heads for the counter through people and smoke.  
 Fr. Rad gets his handkerchief out, cleans the utensils and  
 glassware vigorously.

FR RAD  
 Don't trust this place.

FR BEN  
 Get in the spirit. We've had it  
 worse. This, the front lines of  
 humanity, not bad.

FR RAD  
 (sarcastically)  
 I guess so.

A hand TAPS Fr Ben on the shoulder.

VOICE  
 Chaplain Henderson?

FR BEN  
 (turning around)  
 Ahhh - John, John Quincy.

QUINCY  
 Of all the places. What brings you  
 here?

FR BEN  
 Katie to hear some folk music. I'm  
 looking forward to it. And You?

QUINCY  
 Yeah? I come here all the time.  
 It's invigorating. This is a friend,  
 Jack. He owns a club in Texas.

People push by.

QUINCY (cont'd)  
 Stick around, a modern rendition of  
 "Mozart High Mass in C".  
 Worth a listen.

FR BEN  
 Hmm, - - perhaps.  
 (face flushes)

QUINCY  
 Catch ya later.

Fr Ben stares unfocused in a daydream. Then he squirms in his chair and looks over both shoulders.

FR BEN (V.O.)  
 Invigorating? . . . interesting.

Katie returns.

KATIE  
 Here you go. Was that Quincy?

FR BEN  
 An odd duck.  
 He sows the seeds of unrest in me.

KATIE  
 Mysterious.  
 Oh, there's Vince.

She waves, he waves back. The CAMERA MOVES IN towards the stage as the MUSIC begins.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SIDEWALK - WASHINGTON DC - LATER NIGHT - 1956

Fr Rad and Fr Ben walk on a dark SILENT night.

FR BEN  
 Things are heating up, it's alarming.

FR RAD  
 Blacklisting? Who's communists or  
 socialistic - am I missing something?  
 Who's cheating who?

FR BEN  
 The Communist Party is a double-edged  
 sword. It wants to elevate the poor  
 to minimal living standards while  
 eliminating any spiritual beliefs.  
 The rulers get the spoils.  
 Here the Right accuses the Left of  
 being communist? A "political stew"  
 and becoming evil.

(MORE)

FR BEN (cont'd)  
Congress investigating military and  
citizens for being communists. With  
no evidence.

FR RAD  
Evidence can speak with forked  
tongue, anyway.

FR BEN  
I've been told to be on the alert for  
anything relating to "Mozart's High  
Mass in C" as a code or something.  
Have you ever heard of a Sargent  
Quincy?

Shaking his head, Fr Rad does not respond and walks home. Fr  
Ben heads to his apartment closer to the Pentagon, with a  
secure phone.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MEXICO - EVENING - 1970

The sun is setting outside the window.

FR BEN  
I was beginning to realize the  
abundance of suspicious people around  
me. This was not like the war. A new  
reality was becoming obvious.

NEIL  
The whole spy thing?

FR BEN  
Yeah, Rad said he was questioned  
about me by some guys in black.  
Government folks. He said that I  
speak for the poor involved in the  
arts. They asked him if I might be  
adversely influenced. I got pretty  
upset.

NEIL  
I would think!

FR BEN  
It started me becoming paranoid.  
Thinking, "what's Quincy up to  
anyway".

NEIL  
Looking over your shoulder.

FR BEN  
Yeah, I would see people in the  
landscape and in the bushes too.

CUT TO:

INT. MODERN ART MUSEUM - WASHINGTON DC - DAY - 1956

Fr Ben gazes at a "Monet". Someone speaks up behind him -

UNKNOWN PERSON  
Beautiful.

FR BEN  
Agreed.

UNKNOWN PERSON  
Visiting or from D.C.?

FR BEN  
Work here.

UNKNOWN PERSON  
I see you are a Chaplain.

FR BEN  
Indeed. Do you paint?

UNKNOWN PERSON  
A bit, I sell.

FR BEN  
I paint. Mostly oils but not like  
that.

UNKNOWN PERSON  
What's your name Chaplain?

FR BEN  
Ben.

UNKNOWN PERSON  
I'm Tony, visiting my sister.

TONY TAYLOR, (50's) a Santa Fe Merchant and Philanthropist.  
Fun-loving with a joyful eye and a bit overweight.

TONY  
These are unusual times.  
(MORE)

TONY (cont'd)  
An art walk is nice.

FR BEN  
Yes sir.

TONY  
Are you serious about painting?

FR BEN  
It's a great outlet for me, as is music.

TONY  
Music too?

FR BEN  
Yeah. Cellist in the D.C. Philharmonic.

TONY  
I sell paintings and artifacts in Santa Fe. But I'm a Texan.

FR BEN  
In D.C. to buy and sell?

TONY  
Along with seeing my Sis, I'm always looking. I specialize in Southwestern Art, Mexican & Indian Art.

FR BEN  
Love that style, my first assignment as a Priest was at White River AZ.

TONY  
Know it well. Apaches!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FR BEN'S OFFICE - PENTAGON - DAY - 1958

Fr Ben is meeting with MR FORRESTAL, (40s), a lobbyist who is organizing a National Military Act. Called a professional "wall-a-wer", around the office.

FR BEN  
Make yourself comfortable.

MR FORRESTAL  
I have some intel reports here. These papers . . .  
(MORE)

MR FORRESTAL (cont'd)

(looking up)

show Jewish families as well as Cathedrals of all faiths having artwork and treasures missing. Ending up in Latin America, Russia or, just vanished. This leads me to the conclusion they've either made a good escape or someone is hiding them. What have you heard about this?

FR BEN

Only Rumors, however both the Vatican and Army are concerned.

MR FORRESTAL

Rumors, I love rumors! Facts can be so misleading, rumors are often revealing. What rumors have you heard?

FR BEN

Again, rumors suggesting artworks have made way to Latin America.

MR FORRESTAL

So the rumors you've heard have been of Germans taking articles to South America? More specific, please.

FR BEN

Rumors, just rumors - we act with due diligence here.

MR FORRESTAL

Adolf Eichman is rumored to be in Argentina.

FR BEN

(sigh)

. . . due diligence.

MR FORRESTAL

Chaplain, just so you know, I am requesting information from faithful Clergy and Military. It is a request of sacrifice and patriotism.

FR BEN

Looking for "crypto-Marxists' "?

(smiles and pauses)

What is your background?

MR FORRESTAL  
 FBI for fifteen years worked  
 primarily in recovering stolen art.

FR BEN  
 I see. What do you request of me?

MR FORRESTAL  
 To invite you, as Fr Ben, to a gala  
 event at the Argentina embassy.

FR BEN  
 I can do that, what's the catch?

MR FORRESTAL  
 Wear your "Roman Collar", not  
 Military.

CUT TO:

INT. ARGENTINA EMBASSY - WASHINGTON DC - EVENING - 1958

SUPERIMPOSE: "Argentina Embassy 1958"

Fr Ben, in Roman Collar, meets Mr. Forrestal, in a tux, and  
 walk-in together, mingling with D.C. and foreign elite.  
 Tango MUSIC is heard.

FR BEN  
 Love the tango.

MR FORRESTAL  
 Come, Father, I want you to meet  
 Congressman Mathew Ellsworth.

REP. ELLSWORTH, (40's) a stern conservative appearing man,  
 wears a bow-tie, represents a district in Oregon.

FR BEN  
 It is an honor to meet you.

ELLSWORTH  
 My wife Deloris.

MR FORRESTAL  
 Father Ben is an Army Chaplain,  
 A War Hero, and from Oregon.

ELLSWORTH  
 Ain't that the limit and impressive.  
 Ya know, I've read about you in the  
 Oregonian newspaper.

FR BEN

Mr. Forrestal follows the ups and  
downs of politics, even Oregon  
politics as do you, Congressman.

ELLSWORTH

Yes, until my death, my dear  
Chaplain.

Fr Ben sees Tony Taylor. Both smile and approach.

FR BEN

Tony, looking for Tango Art?

TONY

Ah, my artist friend. I find you at  
the most interesting events.

FR BEN

My job is to facilitate.

TONY

May I present my little sister  
"Claudia".

CLAUDIA TAYLOR "Lady Bird" JOHNSON, (40s) the wife of the  
distinguished Senator Johnson (D-TX). Refined and petite.  
Once a nursemaid said, "She's as purty as a ladybird", the  
rest is history.

FR BEN

My pleasure Miss Claudia, this is  
Rep. Ellsworth.

ELLSWORTH

Good evening Miss "Lady Bird",  
nice to see you again.

An awkward pause. Fr Ben turns to Tony.

FR BEN

(whispering)  
Something's stirring in the weeds.

TONY

(whispering)  
A beast in the shadow of Bethlehem.

They give each other an ambiguous look.

CUT TO:



RUSSELL QUANDT, (60's) a short and aloof gentleman with a thin mustache. He is a professor and historian at the National Art Museum. He sees Fr. Ben strolling around the Gala.

FR BEN

This painting has a slightly European feel with brilliant Latin colors.

RUSSELL

His name is Xul Solar, from Buenos Aires. Yeah, I enjoy his colorful emotion, too.

FR BEN

You are a student of the arts?

RUSSELL

I am a Professor and Historian at the National Art Museum.

FR BEN

Ah . . . You know the art world.

RUSSELL

Of course.

(pauses)

Any artists in particular?

FR BEN

Like works that might be missing.

Russell is startled, eyes wide with a peculiar look.

RUSSELL

Post-war . . . Ahh, yes indeed.

(pause)

Some greats are unaccounted for.

FR BEN

Too many!

RUSSELL

Yes, the list grows.

FR BEN

I have questions. Could we further this dialogue at some point?

RUSSELL

Anytime, come by the Museum. Ask for me.

Russell hands him a business card.

FR BEN

Soon!

They nod in agreement.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. NATIONAL ART MUSEUM - WASHINGTON DC - AFTERNOON - 1958

The Chaplain, in Army uniform, and Russell Quandt meet.

RUSSELL

I have been doing a little poking.  
You're a Chaplain and I have some  
interesting data.

FR BEN

This is getting complicated.

Russell gives him a large envelope, inside is a partial list  
of lost artworks.

RUSSELL

A good friend of mine is with the  
CIA. He works on lost and stolen art.  
Apparently, some of the priceless art  
in European Churches were taken and  
stored by a Rabbi in France for  
safekeeping until after the war.  
Then, some were believed to be taken,  
to Latin America.

FR BEN

Christian masterpieces stored by a  
Rabbi then stolen by Germans now in  
the Americas.

RUSSELL

Precisely. AND you are looking for  
art ... you might stumble upon what  
they want.

FR BEN

Why would they want it and why would  
I not give it to them?

RUSSELL

They want leverage over the Zionists,  
who are forming talks with the Arab  
States.

FR BEN

So - the Jewish State wants Christian Masterpieces?

RUSSELL

They think they are the Rabbi's property. They may be right.

Abruptly, an over-ripe tomato hits Fr Ben directly in the face forcing him back several steps. Russell jumps with hands held high. Protesters out in the street are raising a ruckus over "prayer in school" issues and the two are caught up in the skirmish. Several tomatoes follow - messy.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MEXICO - EVENING - 1970 (V.O.)

FR BEN (V.O.)

A protest and we walked straight into it. Protesting a book called "The Naked Communist", prayer in school. Looking back it seems funny now. Except for dry-cleaning.

He begins to laugh and it turns quickly into a cough. A nurse rushes in and takes bandages off and replaces them with new ones.

NEIL

I can come back in the morning.

FR BEN

(choking speech)

No - No. I need to finish telling you this.

NEIL

OK. So, through protests and espionage you unwillingly go with the flow.

FR BEN

Yeah, things happened. I had faith it was leading me into something good. Faith begins at the edge of understanding.

Fr Ben's jaw tightens, then a relaxing pause.

FR BEN (cont'd)

You remember those fishing trips?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. METOLIUS RIVER - OREGON - DAY - 1960

A beautiful mountain stream. Peaceful, WIND, birds and sunshine, a spectacular day. Fr Ben fly fishing in time with the babbling brook. His young nephew, YOUNG NEIL, (11), is downstream also fly fishing. Their faces filled with peace.

Fr Ben beams as he casts his fly. Both smile then he rescues his line from the trees. Struggling he slips and falls in the water. LAUGHING.

YOUNG NEIL

Do you know important people?

FR BEN

Yeah, some.

YOUNG NEIL

Presidents?

FR BEN

Yes and his people, cabinet, and senate.

YOUNG NEIL

Wow - that's kinda fun.

FR BEN

I guess. Gets stressful.

YOUNG NEIL

Not like here?

Neil points to the snow-caped mountains.

YOUNG NEIL (cont'd)

Do you know any spies?  
Like Boris and Natasha?

FR BEN

No, sometimes it seems that corny.

YOUNG NEIL

You like it?

FR BEN

When I feel I'm doing something right. Not always. Doing the right thing, that feels good.

YOUNG NEIL  
Can you vote?

FR BEN  
Sure I can!

YOUNG NEIL  
Wanna tuna fish sandwich mom made?

FR BEN  
Yeah.

YOUNG NEIL  
Nixon or Kennedy?

FR BEN  
Kennedy.

FADE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MEXICO - EVENING - 1970 (V.O.)

Continuing the "mountain/stream" visual we hear the Hospital  
V.O.

FR BEN (V.O.)  
A wonderful time!

NEIL (V.O.)  
Indeed.

Visual of Fr Ben driving cross country (U.S.A.)

FR BEN (V.O.)  
I was off to Japan. After that, I  
bought that Oldsmobile up in Oregon  
and drove it back to D.C., stopping  
in Santa Fe to see Tony. He invited  
me to a dinner with his sister at a  
Grand Hotel.

NEIL (V.O.)  
Did you keep in touch with Alice?

FR BEN (V.O.)  
Sure did. And we are still in touch  
and it's most enjoyable.

NEIL (V.O.)  
How about Quincy. He kept showing up  
at bizarre times?

FR BEN (V.O.)

Yeah, he did.  
Let me continue . . .

DISSOLVE TO:

INT./EXT. HOTEL ST. FRANCIS - SANTA FE, NM - NIGHT - 1963

SUPERIMPOSE: "Santa Fe 1963

Entering the old elegant hotel, Fr Ben is met by agents.  
Tony waves him in.

TONY

Not like the old days at the saloon.  
(points to the back)  
Come on, we have a table.  
My Sis has quite the entourage now.

They are escorted through a palette of natural colors echoing the days of early Franciscan missionaries. Spanish GUITAR music fills the space. They are seated with LT Governor of New Mexico, MACK EASLEY, (50s) and his wife LOYCE ANN EASLEY, (50s) a renowned artist. She is well dressed, trendy haircut, gloves, matching handbag, and shoes. Lady Bird sits at the table's head. Bodyguards stand behind.

FR BEN

Your following has become quite enormous, Mrs. Vice President.

LADY BIRD

(laughing)  
Indeed, a lot has happened in the last few years.

TONY

More than one would expect.

FR BEN

Times moving fast, and I'm looking forward to retirement.

LADY BIRD

Any plans Padre?

FR BEN

I'm not out to pasture yet.  
I am looking into a project the Vatican has floated.

(MORE)

FR BEN (cont'd)  
Restoring artwork in Latin America.  
(looking to Loyce)  
Something you may know about Loyce?

LOYCE  
I do, a matter of fact.  
A good friend has restored many  
objects of Apache and Navajo origins  
and he continues to develop his  
technique.

FR BEN  
Does he have any publications?

LOYCE  
Yes indeed, I can get them for you.

TONY  
Get them to me. I can send them  
along. Padre is off to D.C. tomorrow.

FR BEN  
Yes, announcing retirement.

LADY BIRD  
Your heroism will be missed by me and  
Lyndon. You must come to dinner  
before your new adventure.

FR BEN  
Yes.  
(pause)  
Ya know, I was spending time at the  
"All Saints Catholic Church" in  
Houston a few years back.  
The Monsieur wanted to get his  
Drivers License renewed, so we took  
off to the State Offices.  
We stopped and asked a gas attendant  
for Kuykendahl St.  
He said, "Oh Kirk-in-doll is a few  
blocks that-a-way." I said, "no  
Kuykendahl" - he said "yep!"

TONY  
I know where this is going.

FR BEN  
The Monsieur says to me -  
(MORE)

FR BEN (cont'd)

"There is no "r" in the word at all".  
"We could send in troops on a search  
and rescue mission and they'd never  
find an "R". Texans just throw one in  
for the hell of it, I guess."

TONY

And many of us do it with prostate,  
saying prostrate instead of prostate.  
Extra "R" slipped in. We streamline  
a way to better suit our Texas-style.

FR BEN

I'm glad to hear that. And that it  
doesn't stand for "Republican".

LOUD LAUGHTER by all at the table, especially "Lady Bird",  
as she puts her hand over her mouth in a dignified way.

LADY BIRD

Oh funny. Lyndon will love that  
story.

TONY

We got our own lingo - "R's" for free  
and Spanglish too!

Fr Ben puts his head back with a BURST of laughter. His  
cheeks are rosy with wine.

There is a quiet guard standing mysteriously behind the  
senator's wife. QUINCY.

FR Ben goes to the restroom and on the way back Quincy stops  
him in the the hall . . .

QUINCY

Padre!

FR BEN

Sargent Quincy is that you? In street  
clothes.

QUINCY

I'm a Sargent Major now, Sir. On  
special duty, V. P.'s family.

FR BEN

Congrats John, why the turtle neck in  
Santa Fe?



QUINCY

It's a Nehru jacket, gonna be fashionable.

FR BEN

Don't you think it looks a bit fascist?

QUINCY

. . . works for the devil.

FR BEN

That's a bit dramatic ...

Intense sarcastic smiles. Fr Ben returns to the group table.

LADY BIRD

Padre, you must find yourself in some interesting situations.

FR BEN

I do. I know how to dance around. Like, if I get stopped by a D.C. cop, I tell them I'm an Army Colonel. In New York, I say I'm a Priest. New York cops are usually Irish or Italian-o.

TONY

Best of both worlds . . .  
And you say your not a politician.

LAUGHTER.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MEXICO - EVENING - 1970

Fr Ben squirms and grows uncomfortable but wants to continue.

FR BEN

So back D.C. I announced my retirement, late summer 1963. Then off to Italy for study.

NEIL

That was way cool about Lady Bird.

FR BEN

Yeah, again I was not expecting it.

NEIL  
You feeling alright . . . ?

FR BEN  
Yes,  
(pause)  
I need to tell you about the extraordinary thing that happened before I left for Europe. I was helping Rad out at the Church and while saying Mass one Friday I noticed Mr. Forrestal and Quincy with two others.  
Then the following day . . .

CUT TO:

INT. ST. CHARLES CATHOLIC CHURCH - ARLINGTON - DAY - 1963

SUPERIMPOSE: "St. Charles, Arlington 1963"

At Saturday confessions, Fr Ben becomes UNSETTLED and UPSET by a penitent. His mouth drops and shutters at what he has heard. He STORMS out of the confessional. Angst across his face. Kneels looks towards the crucifix, tears up slamming his fist on the pew, beads of sweat on his forehead . . . He prays then hears the MUSIC of "The Only One", that beckoned him to the priesthood.

The camera circles him and FADES into the crucifix . . .

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MEXICO - EVENING - 1970

FR BEN  
It was that confession that moment that shook me to my roots. I wrestled with it knowing I could say nothing. THEN, NOW or ever. Haunting me, always.

NEIL  
The SACRAMENT. Why do you think you were put into that situation?

FR BEN  
It was necessary, I guess. I did not fully understand, but no regrets.

NEIL

Didn't this make you question faith?

FR BEN

As it turned out it strengthened it. I reacted unconsciously - that's what I always do. That reaction is GOD, you know.

(pause)

The next day I was with Rad, a Nun, and this guy and his wife at the rectory. His name was George and he knew a lot about me. I noticed a birthmark under his left ear, that looked like a small brown byzantine cross. He then insinuated I had information. I knew that voice.

NEIL

Again you were thrown into something you didn't understand.

FR BEN

Kinda. I KNEW the confession. I had a bad feeling about the guy. A mobster type. Unsettling! I asked him what he thought I knew. He said "balance, world balance". Again, that shook me.

NEIL

Did Rad and the Nun feel it?

FR BEN

Oh Yeah. They both had sour feelings. A few days later I received an urgent message from Quincy. Now, he wanted a meeting . . .

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WASHINGTON DC, BILLY MARTIN'S TAVERN - AFTERNOON - 1963

SUPERIMPOSE: "Billy Martin's Tavern, D.C. 1963"

Fr Ben enters, takes a seat facing Quincy and Mr. Forrestal. Light restaurant sounds and rumblings with distant MUSIC.

FR BEN

Gentlemen, nice to see you again.

QUINCY

Rumor has it you are going to retire?

FR BEN

Rumors - I love rumors! Facts can be so misleading, where rumors are often revealing. Isn't that correct Mr. Forrestal?

MR FORRESTAL

You have an impeccable memory and that's why we are here.

Quincy squares up looks "deadpan" at Fr Ben and talks with an agitated tone.

QUINCY

I'm no longer assigned to the V.P detail. I'm with special forces.

(pauses)

You have been exposed to numerous insidious circumstances. These can be turned into gold for our country.

FR BEN

Is this inquisition political in nature? I never can be involved in politics. You know that.

MR FORRESTAL

You are sworn to uphold the constitution.

QUINCY

And to God. We are the people under God.

FR BEN

Nice try guys. I am a Chaplain. Clean conscience. I will be a full-time Franciscan Monk soon.

QUINCY

Consider the help you can give our democracy.

MR FORRESTAL

As a Catholic all my life, I am a bit disturbed by a systemic feeling that the ruling class is losing authority to a new lazy class.

FR BEN

Plantation capitalism?  
(MORE)

FR BEN (cont'd)

(loud)

Times are changing, out of this change comes new life.

MR FORRESTAL

(louder)

We are losing our way of life.

FR BEN

(quieter on point)

We are gaining a new reality. Incredible things grow out of corpses.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MEXICO - EVENING - 1970

Neil pacing, then ask the nurse to come in.

FR BEN

OK - I'll be fine.

(pause)

But listen, I went to the Vice Presidents Mansion, Number One Observatory Circle, at an event attended by 25 dignitaries and friends.

NEIL

You met Johnson?

FR BEN

Yes, Yes thanks to Tony and his Sister. Quite an experience. The V.P., Lady Bird, Senators, and Congressmen. Even General Bradley and Military folks were there. That "George" was there too and I think he got asked to leave. Tony mentioned that the V.P. didn't like him and thought he was a spy or something. When the V.P. stomps his heels the rats are scared away.

NEIL

Was it intense?

FR BEN

Profound. All these coincidences. I thought it might be a joke. Then I got scared . . . is God a joke?

(MORE)

FR BEN (cont'd)  
 Can't God just speak without riddle?  
 My stomach was in knots.  
 I was ready to leave D.C.  
 The next day I was going to tell Rad  
 about it.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ST. CHARLES CATHOLIC CHURCH - ARLINGTON - DAY - 1963

Fr Ben and Fr Rad in Rectory's living room. The two discuss  
 the future over a glass of red wine.

FR RAD  
 Exciting times, life-changing.

FR BEN  
 I'd like to change things in another  
 direction. I've got a heavy heart.  
 A heavy mind,  
 (pause a beat)  
 A maze to unwind.

Suddenly Fr Ben stands, cracks his knuckles.

FR BEN (cont'd)  
 Okay, I have something to get off my  
 chest. I don't know what to do. I'd  
 like your advice.  
 I am handcuffed by Canon Law not to  
 disclose it to anyone. I am weary.

FR RAD  
 Canon Law? Is it that serious, Ben?  
 What's the nature?

FR BEN  
 Between my commitment to God and my  
 commitment to the Country.

FR RAD  
 Oh God - the confessional!

FR BEN  
 The sanctity of the Sacrament.  
 I cannot betray that command.  
 Serious truths, I'll forever hold in  
 my heart.

FR RAD

If you can say, in non-specifics,  
without betrayal, you need to do  
that.  
Pray then act one way or another.  
Remember not to take the law too far.

FR BEN

Agreed, but the spirit of the law  
does not rub well with my heart.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MEXICO - EVENING - 1970 (V.O.)

Scenes of Italy.

FR BEN (V.O.)

After that, I went to the Vatican. I  
had an audience with the Pope then  
off to Florence for study.

NEIL (V.O.)

Wow!

FR BEN (V.O.)

Yeah, I still find it glorious.  
(pause)  
I began to forget about the nightmare  
in D.C., for the time being anyway.

FADE IN:

EXT. FLORENCE ITALY - ARNO RIVER PONTE VECCHIO - DAY - 1963

SUPERIMPOSE: "Florence, Italy 1963"

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FR BEN'S APARTMENT - FLORENCE - EARLY MORNING - 1963

A small old European flat cluttered with artwork and  
antiquities. Fr Ben studies art restoration. He is asleep  
with books strewn on his bed.

SUPERIMPOSE: "November 23, 3:AM"

The phone CHIMES an unusual ring. He answers . . .

FR BEN

(sleepy)  
Buongiorno.

SISTER FRANCIS his assistant.

SR FRANCIS (V.O.)  
 (frantically)  
 Padre, Padre, have you heard the news?

FR BEN  
 No, what?

SR FRANCIS (V.O.)  
 It's the President. He has been killed . . . "assassinated".

Horror crosses his face. He drops the phone. THUMP. Struggles to stand. Perplexed and bewildered, he gathers himself, picks up the phone . . .

FR BEN  
 (astonished)  
 Oh - God be with us.

SR FRANCIS (V.O.)  
 I am going by the chapel then the studio.

FR BEN  
 I will meet you.

Hangs up, then the phone rings again . . .

FR BEN (cont'd)  
 Yes.

FR RAD (V.O.)  
 Ben?

FR BEN  
 Yes, John, I'm devastated.  
 (pause)  
 How's the atmosphere there?

FR RAD (V.O.)  
 Scary. All I can say is confusion, trauma, "astonishment".  
 Are you alright?  
 (pause)  
 Are you surprised?

Pause a beat. Tears in Fr Ben's eyes, he looks skyward.

FR BEN  
 Not surprised and yes, I'm okay.  
 (MORE)



FR BEN (cont'd)  
 (sigh)  
 How's the V.P. and Lady Bird?

FR RAD (V.O.)  
 Fine. Both Johnson and Lady Bird are  
 fine. Kennedy was killed and Gov  
 Connally was shot. That's all I know.  
 (pause)  
 Lady Bird is the FIRST LADY.

FR BEN  
 WOW!

He hangs up, shakes his head while his hands tremble.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BASILICA DI SANTO SPIRITO - FLORENCE - DAWN - 1963

SUPERIMPOSE: "Basilica di Santo Spirito, Florence 1963"

The upper floor in the rear is the art-filled baroque-style studio. Sr Francis and Fr Sullivan, Fr Ben's assistants, talk. Fr Ben enters he is consoled by both.

SCREECHING outside. Through the window Fr Ben sees a black car on the cobblestone street. A vegetable truck flashes past, revealing a figure stepping out. Another truck pulls up. Another gets out pointing towards the Basilica.

Fr Ben quickly exits. Sprints downstairs and moves briskly out of the church. He realizes he can't let anxiety get the best of him, he breaths deep and slow walks on.

CUT TO:

INT. FR BEN'S APARTMENT - FLORENCE - LATER - 1963

KNOCK at the door. Two men identify themselves as U.S. Agents. They question him regarding: "Quincy", "Tony Taylor", "Lady Bird", emphasizing "George" and "Mr. Forrestal". SHAKEN he answering all questions truthfully, they leave. Fr Ben thinks to himself . . .

FR BEN (O.S.)  
 That confession. They will never get  
 it.  
 (pause)  
 Or is it about artwork?

He turns on an old black and white TV.

JUMP CUT TO:

Close up of the screen: "The Kennedy Saga"

DISSOLVE TO:

Two days pass he is still watching that TV. The footage and coverage. Still shocked and despondent he drifts into a depression. He sees photos of Oswald/Ruby and squints at the screen. Alarmed, he recognizes Ruby, who was with Quincy at the "Old World Cafe" in Georgetown.

CUT TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MEXICO - NIGHT - 1970

FR BEN

That picture, just shocking.

NEIL

I remember. Did you feel pressured?

FR BEN

Not from the Church but I felt constrained.

NEIL

Like what?

FR BEN

I felt protected by the Vatican. I did nothing wrong, and I knew that. Some circles thought I was somehow involved. A friend of mine, Brady, and I went skiing. Brady liked to have a few and one morning he told me he met a lady, the night before, who knew a lot about me and a guy named Quincy. That alarmed me. I said nothing at the time but later I did call Rad,

(pause)

"You remember George? He's a suspect with Oswald and Ruby in the Kennedy ordeal. Also, lots of information about stolen art by the Germans." I said I had a feeling Quincy was following me. He said, "Quincy? Strange man. I always had a feeling he was not straight up".

Neil walks to the window and sees night has overtaken the Mexican sky. Clean bright stars. He grits his teeth.

FR BEN

I finished up my studies and got the assignment I wanted. Restoring art in Latin America. Searching for works that have been lost or compromised AND looking for stolen and hidden masterpieces. I was thrilled.

NEIL

You seemed driven to do this work

FR BEN

I was guided by a muse of sorts. You see an art collector finds a path of redemption as he leaves behind a world of threats, grifters, and shattered lives to realize that this orphaned art lives in its own world and that we must transform ourselves to bear witness to its spiritual message. One collector told me I was in search of over a billion dollars worth of artwork and that he would not want to be me. I learned about forgeries and men behind them. How art is used to laundry money. Unwritten laws, governments work in secret - works are easily smuggled and protected by corruption on all levels .... church and state. Under paintings , stories and spies. Glimmer and glamour. Lies and truth.

NEIL

Exciting and scary. I came down for a visit and yes it was totally cool.

FR BEN

Fr Bill Wasson and the "NUESTROS PEQUENOS HERMANOS", all gracious and warming. Made me forget all about the anxiety stateside.

NEIL

They really love you there. That is where you were coming from ending up in this room?

FR BEN

Yes. Going to a function in Texas, and seeing someone about antiques I found. Anyway, I do love it down there, helping with the children, playing guitar and singing. The dinner parties, ooh those functions wonderful food and celebrities. So, I met this guy, "Hans" who was in the war and served not too far from me in France.

Pain shows on Fr Ben's face. Stress on Neil's. A nurse enters and asks Neil to leave. FR Ben objects.

FR BEN (cont'd)

It is urgent I finish my thoughts so my nephew knows the truth.

Neil looks dumbfounded and unsure what to make of the "Truth".

NURSE

Something for your pain, Padre?

The priest struggles with his words.

FR BEN

No no, I need a clear mind.

NEIL

(shouting)

Please leave us for a few minutes, please!

Fr Ben motions for Neil to come closer as he speaks softly with a strained effort.

FR BEN

I felt Hans knew things about me. It was unsettling.

NEIL

About the war?

FR BEN

Just everything. Meantime, I got a call from my associate in Puebla, Fr Víctor. It was about artifacts . . .

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FR BEN'S APARTMENT - CUERNAVACA MX - DAY - 1969

SUPERIMPOSE: "Cuernavaca, MX 1969"

FR VÍCTOR in Puebla calls excited yet tries to hold back.

VÍCTOR (V.O.)

Hola Father! We have found something.

FR BEN

Hola Víctor, what is it?

VÍCTOR (V.O.)

Deep under the main altar in a cavern that opens up into several chambers, I have discovered some paintings and other artifices.

FR BEN

Very good, have you seen the artworks before? Has anyone?

VÍCTOR (V.O.)

No, in my opinion, these are very old unknown and apparently untouched for years. I am not sure if the Bishop is aware of these.

FR BEN

I'll get there this week. Can you close up the chamber until I arrive?

VÍCTOR (V.O.)

Yes, Padre, I think you going to like this.

FR BEN

OK, two days max.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SMALL CANTINA DOWNTOWN, CUERNAVACA MX - DAY - 1969

At Hans' restaurant, Fr Ben seats alone. It is small with Mexican and German decor. Light LATIN music. Hans enters with an apron on, stands in conversation.

HANS

Munich, I was 23 when the movement started. A crusade from the third Reich slowly encircled our thoughts. Surprisingly quickly.

Fr Ben snacks on crazy little pretzel-tortillas chips.

FR BEN

Did it put a squeeze on your ethics?

(pause)

These are wonderfully salty.

HANS

It was cult-like and slowly overtook us. Satisfying at the time. Like those chips.

(pause)

We gained work. We believe in work and when the Fuhrer would speak, it was like a symphony. Total devotion.

FR BEN

Your friends were mesmerized too?

HANS

We had our group, our secrets. Youth camps and all. Slowly we begin to be in love with only Germans and only Germany. Everything else was an infection.

FR BEN

Did you understand what was going on?

HANS

I was not aware of the depth, only until afterward.

Hans takes a deep breath.

I feel good telling you all this.

(pause)

I came to Mexico after the war and began to understand what happened. They do not teach this, they do not talk about the war in Germany, for some reason.

FR BEN

We all are dealing with the aftermath.

HANS

People talk. I am grateful of those who have helped.

His breath speeds up, anxious.

HANS (cont'd)

As a matter of fact, one person has been here several times. He has talked about YOU. Specifically.

FR BEN

Me?

HANS

He has rented a room upstairs. Just yesterday.

(pauses a beat)

"Wurst Carnitas" is very good. I'll have it made for you.

(points upstairs)

I'll go find him.

Fr Ben motions to the waitress for another Cerveza and wonders "what's next" shaking his head. Through the front window along the street moves a familiar figure. The door opens to a back-lit silhouette . . . revealing QUINCY. A large smile ingratiates Quincy's face. A grimace on Fr Ben's. Quincy is followed by two other men as Hans rushes to close the door behind them.

QUINCY

Chaplain, how nice to see you here in Cuernavaca. I love this cafe.

FR BEN

Hans has made good of himself.

QUINCY

These are my good friends, Giuseppe, from Staten Island and Lev from Europe.

GIUSEPPE, (30s) Italian, speaks with a New York accent, short and muscular. LEV, (30s) speaks with a deep Russian accent, blond, tall, and thin. Both stern-faced.

All abruptly sit. Air is thick and tense.

QUINCY (cont'd)

We are working on this project, you see. We need to get some answers. You, my old friend, have information on events occurring some - eight years ago.

GIUSEPPE

Our understanding is that you are sitting on knowledge.

QUINCY

We would like to know who YOU might have told?

LEV

Or, are going to tell.

FR BEN

Unsure what you mean.  
Is it something to do with that "Mass In High C" you say is some code?

QUINCY

We represent individuals on the matter. Different but of mutual interests.

FR BEN

Still, I don't know what you mean. Was all that sneaking around done with the CIA?

GIUSEPPE

You got to be kidding.

FR BEN

Explain Quincy. What was that all about?

QUINCY

A confession you heard. It was not in the plan.  
We need to know who knows!

FR BEN

Confessions are between the penitent and God.

GIUSEPPE

But you know!

FR BEN

I am an instrument of a Sacrament.

GIUSEPPE

Not good enough.

FR BEN

(raises his voice)  
GOD is NOT good enough?  
Shameful!



Fr Ben feared this day. He sweats and his pulse increases. Slowly STANDS as if at the Vatican Papacy Pulpit. His toes curl in his shoes and he visualizes the Lord before him.

In a LOUD theater voice, he speaks.

FR BEN (cont'd)

Let it be known that whether you're from the U.S. Government, CIA, FBI, Gestapo, KGB, or Mafia - I will not betray God.

(pause)

I will not sacrifice integrity. My ultimate sacrifice is to my God.

(pause)

Do what you must.

SILENCE.

They stand and leave.

LEV

You're going to regret this Padre.

Hans opens the door.

Fr Ben sits down as a calm grows on his face.

HANS

(turns and says)

You are an honorable man, Padre.

FR BEN

Cantinas come and go.

Friends come and go.

God stays - - .

Love comes and goes.

Life comes and goes.

God stays - - .

Countries, civilizations, the Sun, mountains . . .

(pause)

I am patriotic to my country, I have always been . . . but in the end I choose God.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CATEDRAL DE PUEBLA - PUEBLA MX - DAY 1970

FR VÍCTOR, (40) a short, round Franciscan Friar with gray hair and a strong Mexican accent meet Fr Ben meet at the arched entrance of the old church.

VÍCTOR

Good to see you again Padre. I am excited.

FR BEN

Me too my friend.

Victor leads down several flights of steps then deep through a cobblestone tunnel. Down narrower steps and corridors opening up into several chambers. Dark, damp, and musty. In the corner of a room, he finds eight large paintings and an old locked chest. All covered in thick dust.

FR BEN (cont'd)

These are old and in good shape.

(looking close)

The frames appear European and maybe sixteenth century.

VÍCTOR

Look at these corners. The top layer is Indigenous in nature.

FR BEN

I'll peel a little from this corner . . . let's see, seems three or as many as five layers. Presumably, each is a painting of its own. The frame is old, meaning the first painting is too. Look here on the back, this appears to be some kind of etching. I can't quite make it out. Looks like a seal. I studied these . . . I'll brush off the dirt and grime, aah, it's the "Owl of Athena".

VÍCTOR

What is that?

FR BEN

It's from Greek mythology, German Philosophy, and Bavarian idealism.

VÍCTOR

This chest or coffer here is hardwood and brass. Extraordinary. The engravings on look Arabic.

FR BEN

That might be.

(pointing)

But that is Hebrew, it says  
"Solomon".

VÍCTOR

Opening this takes some kind of weird  
combination.

He wrestles with the box.

FR BEN

Look! A shield carved or engraved  
into the wood. Looks like a seal of  
. . . the "Knights Templar".

VÍCTOR

Wow . . . just WOW !!!  
Isn't that an old Catholic military  
order?

Victor's eyes open wide, hands tremble. Fr Ben fumbles  
around for a charcoal pencil. They hear a squawk and  
scrambling then a LOUD squeal that startles them. A large  
rat ambles across the stone floor.

FR BEN

Whew !

I will sketch these. Too dark for a  
camera. I will get answers.

(pause)

In the meantime, let's close it up  
and tell no one. You know these  
articles might be extremely valuable.

(pause)

Who else knows about this?

VÍCTOR

Not many. Aaaaah, myself, Fr Juan a  
few alter boys. Sargent Lorenzo knows  
what we are doing. Colonel Lopez,  
with the Federales, has stopped by  
explaining that the Mexican  
Government owns whatever we find, I  
more or less ignore him.

(pause)

And of course the bishop, Bishop  
Durán. He is senile.

FR BEN

I will make some calls. But it's like catching butterflies, we have to identify every location, time and date with detail. An excavation zone with plenty of media. So let's put this on ice until I get some answers.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. APARTMENT - CUERNAVACA, MX - THE NEXT DAY

Fr Ben with knots in his stomach calls Tony Taylor.

FR BEN

Hi Tony, I hope this finds you well.

TONY (V.O.)

I have been meaning to get in touch. Time has gotten the better of me.

FR BEN

Hope you all had a good Christmas. Listen, I have a request of you. It's kind of urgent.

TONY (V.O.)

Anything Padre and Merry Christmas to you. What is it?

FR BEN

Seems I have unearthed something that just might be consequential. I fear to elaborate on the phone, I am requesting a visit with you and LT. Gov. Mack, and Loyce, ASAP.

TONY (V.O.)

Wonderful, bring your fishing pole.

FR BEN

Could a meeting be arranged?

TONY (V.O.)

Yes, there is a barbecue planned at my sister's ranch, next weekend . . . Mack and Loyce will be there.

FR BEN

Can you see if a person knowledgeable in National Security is available?

TONY (V.O.)  
Sure I'll ask my Sis.

FR BEN  
Perfect.  
I'll call along the way.

Hangs up and leans back on his couch remembering his first notable journey . . . intense, full of confusion and absolute fear. Yet at the same time full of exuberance and anticipation.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MEXICO - NIGHT - 1970

Fr Ben raises his head.

FR BEN  
I still have guilt for not taking  
Wade to the doctor sooner.

Fr Ben struggles with breath as he drifts.

NEIL  
How offensive is it to reveal a  
confession?

FR BEN  
Mortal.

NEIL  
If it's a benefit to mankind?

FR BEN  
That is so subjective. Someones  
happiness is another ones grief.  
But who's to say in the end?  
(pause)  
The mystery could be unraveled by  
others, I suppose.

NEIL  
Me?

He nods. The nurse quickly enters and pushes a button. DR RAMFRES comes, he is also a commander in the Mexican Military. They scurry around in a confusing manner as Neil raises his voice in angst . . .

NEIL (cont'd)  
What's going on?

DR RAMFRES  
I am giving him something, he is  
having signs of seizure.

NEIL  
Seizure?

Fr Ben raises his head slowly looks with one eye at Neil.  
Horrified and candid he whispers . . .

FR BEN  
Byzantine cross . . . the cross.

His eye red, face white he lowers his head back onto the  
pillow.

DR RAMFRES  
He is not doing well.  
How long have you been here?  
Are you next of kin?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TWO LANE HIGHWAY - NORTHERN MEXICO - DUSK - 1970

Looking down at the Oldsmobile from OVERHEAD, through  
desolate terrain, Fr Ben drives content and determined. The  
sun sets on the rough road ahead.

DR RAMFRES (V.O.)  
. . . he was driving alone towards  
the states. Several vehicles were  
involved in a mysterious mishap . . .

Suddenly - - headlights BURST BRIGHT. Flashing, horn BLASTS,  
SCREECHING, and skids. Two trucks coming straight ahead.  
They swerve, he SWERVES. More Flashing LIGHTS - CRASH  
SOUNDS. The Oldsmobile HOBBLER to a stop.

In slow motion, Fr Ben is thrown up from his seat and out of  
the front window of the car, over what's left of the front  
hood - - onto the ground.

The truck driver, (person #1), remains slumped in the  
driver's seat.

Fr Ben lies still where he lands, a few feet ahead of the  
crumpled nose of his car.

A truck door opens and person #2 stumbles out, begins to  
walk around in a dazed agitated manner.

More CRASH BUZZING sounds. Then all goes silent again.

Person #3 walks away from the crash site and disappears into the shadows.

A photographer, (person #4), runs out of nowhere and kneels beside the apparently stricken Priest. It is not clear whether he is taking his picture or ministering to him.

It does become clear that several vehicles are involved. Persons #5 & #6, get into an apparent Military truck and leave the scene.

A manic and delirious spectacle - incoherent and BERSERK.

An OVERHEAD view - - revealing the wreckage of the Oldsmobile, two large trucks, another smaller van, and a Mexican Military truck driving away in the night.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MEXICO - NIGHT - 1970

Neil stares at the bed, dazed eyes.

DR RAMFRES (V.O.)

So tragic.

Investigations will be done.

(pause)

Please step in the hall, we have to adjust him.

NEIL

Okay . . . ?

DR RAMFRES

Change clothes and put him on another I.V. Just wait.

Neil waits in the hall . . . finally the nurse frantically appears.

NURSE

(shouts)

Señor Neil . . . come quick.

Rushing to the room he finds several people surrounding the bed including a priest.

NEIL

What?

DR RAMFRES

He is dying!!!

NEIL

(shouting)

You all know this was no accident !!!

He is escorted from the room. In the hall, he goes to a window and looks out to the night sky.

NEIL (V.O.)

It was a mysterious and somehow a political atmosphere that begin to emerge then and it engulf the hall. People in black, people in dark blue scrubs, people in uniform. Chaotic and unsettling. Not hostile as each one seem to be carrying out their own mission. More people came. One man in a black suit with a lady came walking down the hall . . . As he turned to enter the room I noticed a brown birthmark under his left ear. I got chills!

Neil turns back to the window and finds Jupiter and Saturn. With a gut-wrenching look in his eye his uncles worry stone in hand his voice quivers . . .

NEIL (O.S.)

Oh God, is this . . . THIS . . . his final Destiny?

SUPERIMPOSE: "Fr Ben's death officially ruled an accident"

Jupiter and Saturn shinning brightly -

FADE OUT:

THE END

Contact: [hptoohip@aol.com](mailto:hptoohip@aol.com) for more information on the life of

REV BENEDICT ARTHUR HENDERSON, O.F.M.

Thanks to Suzanne Kafoury-Henderson and Nick Bertram

"Of God and Country"

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