

ACT ONE

Rolls in thorn bush next to Basilica di San Bartolomeo



1

EXT. GARDEN - MAGIC HOUR

1

EXTREME CLOSE ON FERDINAND

We only see body parts and branches and thorns of a bougainvillea bush cutting in to skin. Blood trickles down a young cheek, arms and legs. We pull out slowly to see FERDINAND, 7, rolling in a bougainvillea bush, BRANCHES CRUNCHING, and reciting the "HAIL MARY" PRAYER. He's in a trancelike state.

FERDINAND

Hail Mary, full of grace, blessed
art thou among women (wince) and
blessed is the fruit of thy womb
Jesus...

(lost in his prayer and
trying to overcome the
pain)

Holy Mary Mother of God...

A DUSTY, BEAUTIFUL CHURCH COURTYARD, past the feet of a group of young children 20-feet away. They watch him in horror as they WHISPER and wonder what is going on. We see from their POV.

ROSA, 5, is trembling in a mixture of shock embarrassment and concern.

ROSA

Oh no...

She starts walking towards FERDINAND in the bushes.

DONATO THE BULLY
Your brother is a lunatic.

ROSA walks back to hit DONATO, 10, but he grabs her little arm violently mid-swing and aggressively pushes her down. Smaller than him she hits the ground hard in pain and trying not to cry. We get the sense they've done this before. Defeated she gets up, glaring at Donato, and dusts off and limps towards FERDINAND still rolling in bushes. The kids, LAUGHING AND MOCKING run away. ROSA approaching her older brother still rolling in the bush as he finishes praying, is now crying.

CLOSE ON ROSA'S EYES

ROSA
(Mixture of mad then
scared then sad)
Ferdinand please stop you are
bleeding everywhere! Oh my God
please stop.

FERDINAND
(Trancelike mumbling)
Thou shalt not use thy Lord's name
in vain...

ROSA, although smaller than Ferdinand helps him out of the bushes and gets him to his feet trying to wipe off the dirt and blood and pulling him towards home.

WIDE EXT CHURCH

We now see we are outside the stunning Basilica San Mateo di Bartolomeo, on a country hillside over a beautiful rolling Italian village in the early 1900s. The magic hour glows everything fire red and all becomes oddly serene. Ferdinand goes to walk in to the church but Rosa pulls him towards home.

ROSA
Please brother come home and clean
up! Father will kill you for this
if he gets home first.

Ferdinand pauses, he really wants to go in the church but softens as he sees how upset his little sister is, and agrees to head home. It's very QUIET as the sun settles behind them and the church looks like it's on fire from the color of the sky. They walk through the cobblestone streets amidst closely-built Italian buildings, and pass the same group of children hiding around a corner. We hear low insults.

JOEY THE BULLY
What is wrong with him?

DONATO THE BULLY
Pazzo.
(Subtitle: Crazy)

The other children laugh and mutter more insults. Rosa's heart is breaking and she looks up at FERDINAND as they walk hand in hand. He is glowing serenely. He is not bothered. She shakes her head in disbelief.

FERDINAND
My tough little sister!

Mama Cecliia and Aunt Checca cover for him

Father says no more - he will work

Mother and father in bed - she's crying - father takes him out of school and to work

2 INT. THE SANTAMARIA HOME - NIGHT

2

A modest and cozy wooden-walled Italian home, decorated in the 1900s, oil lamps and a few nice pieces of furniture but overall modest and rustic surroundings. Ferdinand and Rosa's MOTHER CECILIA, early 30s, is an attractive and natural Italian beauty with Princess Leia buns of black, silky hair. She is yelling and praying as she wipes Ferdinand's bloody cuts. It's Italian mother kind of chaos where they're yelling sounds mad but yet is filled with tender love. Her sister MARIA, who looks much like her beauty of a sister, is in tandem yelling and praying at the same time, and a cacophony of Italian-Mama sounds. Aunt Maria consoles little Rosa who is in a state of disbelief and tearful worry for her big brother. Ferdinand stoically lets his mother clean him up with a Mona Lisa-like smile on his face. His expression is the only calm in the chaotic room.

MAMA CECILIA
My love, why? Why?! Why would you do this?!

(Ferdinand rubs his thumb slowly on the gold cross necklace that hangs on his mother's neck)

AUNT CHECCA
Cecilia you need to have him checked. This is too much...he is hurting himself, again.

MAMA CECILIA

(Shoots her a dirty look) I know...but...let's just get cleaned up before PIETRO gets home. Oh mio dio!

She does the Italian pinched fingers wave to the heavens.

3

INT. THE SANTAMARIA HOME/DINNER TABLE - SLIGHTLY LATER THAT 3 NIGHT

CECILIA and her 4 children, Ferdinand,7, Rosa,5, Vincenzo,4 and Vincenzina, 2 are quickly, and quietly setting a modest but beautifully set Italian dinner table. White linens and candle sticks on a raw wooden table - the candles light a small feast of Italian sausage, roasted peppers, potatoes and a fennel salad. You can smell the sauce. Ferdinand pulls fresh, golden crusted Italian bread out of the big iron oven that lies fairly close to the table in this cozy kitchen/dining room. A gold cross gleams on a little altar in window. Through it we also see PAPA PIETRO walking up and in the front door. He's 30s, dark, weathered and stern looking, yet you can see he was a handsome boy. The hard life of being the regions Rope-Maker, and smoking all day long, has weathered him deeply. The children spring to life - happily greet him and quickly sit at the table. Pietro kisses Cecilia on the cheek, distractedly, and goes to the sink to wash, with his back to them. Mama Cecilia looks at Ferdinand, with obvious cuts on his face, then to the children sitting quietly and with a loving-look, just slowly shakes her head no. Ferdinand pulls a platter of bread from the sideboard and little Vincenzina toddles over to help.

VINCENZINA

I do it...I bring the bread.

FERDINAND

Go little sister, you have it, you are so strong (he squeezes her little muscle).

Pietro sits down next to Ferdinand. He notices the cuts on Ferdinand's cheek and gives them a tender fatherly rub with the the back of his hand. But he can't be bothered to ask what happened, or doesn't want to know, and tucks in to his meal. Cecilia and Rosa look at each other big-eyed and sigh in relief. Vincenzina, 2, reaches up to her brother, now sitting next to him on the other side and rubs his cheek like Papa did. He sweetly hugs her and they all hold hands and say grace.

4

INT. FERDINAND & VINCENZO'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

4

Ferdinand kneels and with eyes closed and hands in perfect prayer posture is saying the "Hail Mary" again. The candle light licks his cuts on his arms and hands - they are red and sore looking. His little brother, Vincenzo reads a little book by the light of an oil lamp. He looks annoyed that Ferdinand is praying so loudly, again.

MAMA & PAPA ENTER THE DOORWAY

PAPA

Ferdinand! (at first abrupt but then softens) time to sleep.

MAMA

Let's pray...come on Vincenzo and come Papa.

They kneel together, eyes closed, except for Pietro who stays in the doorway. They're reciting the "Our Father". Whilst the sound of the PRAYER FADES OUT we see mother glance over at her husband with a disapproving look and he gives her the chin snub.

5

INT. CECILIA AND PIETRO'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

5

Pietro and Cecilia lay in bed. He holds her and stares at the ceiling. We feel her pain and she talks in to his white, bed shirt, gripping it and somewhat covering her mouth and wiping her tears with it.

MAMA CECILIA

(Crying softly, mumbling)

I know in my heart he is right to be so devoted but I worry so much... He has no friends, the kids pick on him...spends all his days in church...he is hurting himself...he believes this is devotion. But to tell him he can't... I was raised so devoutly but this is another level that even I have never seen. The town whispers as we walk by but then they ask him to pray for their intentions.

(MORE)

MAMA CECELIA (CONT'D)

Signora Colucci stopped me in the street the other day again and I thought it was about her sick mother, always about her sick mother but instead she was so happy because her sick mother is doing so much better and even walking to the market on some days with her!... and she told me to thank Ferdinand "The Little Saint".. (babbling now) of course I was so proud but then one of the other women laughed as if it was all ridiculous and said "only God can heal"... so, I found myself trying to explain that some people think his prayers are just stronger and some people think because he's in church all the time...they say it's like he's in a trance...

PIETRO

(abruptly cutting her off)
I'm taking him to work with me - no more church, except on Sundays, no more of this...it's too much. He doesn't need an education I'm giving him the family business. He doesn't need friends, those kids are idiots. I will take care of MY boy and raise him to be strong and successful, like me. No more of the over the top religion that you're family pushes on him...he's taken it too far. This is your family's fault, now I will fix it.

Cecilia cries harder in to her pillow as she rubs the gold cross on her neck that earlier Ferdinand was rubbing. Pietro stares at the rough wooden ceiling as the light fades out.

INT. SANTAMARIA KITCHEN

Mama Cecilia makes pasta with her sister Checca. They knead the dough and flour the table and cut the pasta together like a dance. They're movements are seamless and in tandem as they've done this so many times before. They chat whilst doing it and their conversation is their focus as their actions are secondary and take no thought but still fluid and flowing effortlessly in their pasta making.

AUNT CHECCA

Why do you let him make you feel so badly about the boy? Or at all. That man is such a brute. Seriously my beautiful sister why do you put up with it? Tell me what you see in that man?

CECILIA - MOTHER

Sister he provided me with 5 beautiful children and he takes good care of us. This house, this food is all from his hardwork.

AUNT CHECCA

Yes sister but it comes at what price? Everyday he berates you about Ferdinand. It makes me crazy that he is the one man in all of Italy who is actually upset that his son wants to take a life of religious vocation! I mean I don't get it but it's the highest honor in the land to have a son, and a first born son, who wants to be a priest! It's so backwards. It's not fair to you, or the beautiful Ferdinand. The boy is the kindest, sweetest and so patient with his father. You are both so patient. You never fight back! I'd kill him.

CECILIA - MOTHER

Checca never speak like that! I thank God you are with us and here with me as you and the children are my joy but I can't let you speak like that about Pietro! He knows you dislike him and I am so caught between all of you.

Cecilia is not rambling and starting to be brutal in her actions with the pasta dough...

AUNT CHECCA

Careful sister you will make this the toughest pasta dough if you punch it like that...

CECILIA - MOTHER

I am so angry at him Checca. I am so angry every day but can't say anything against him. You know that..

AUNT CHECCA

I do know that sister and I'm sorry I don't mean to make it worse, but it just breaks my heart to see this every day on display in front of my face. We were raised with such love by our parents and especially our father and now I see, unfortunately, a man has chosen you who treats his wife and children the opposite. And he was supposed to be a good Catholic man yet he is going against one of the highest earners in the church. He has to be dragged to mass and I know how important your religion is to you. And we know how important religion is to your son and so I'm just watching this crazy play this crazy theater play out in front of me that just doesn't make sense. It's truly a family tragedy. This is just absurdity at the highest order that After your perfect shining, devoted to the cross childhood and devotion to your Lord, that you should end up with someone who challenges it in the worst way. Life is just so crazy and backwards. I guess my frustration is also out of not being able to help you. Or to help Ferdinand become who he wants to be. Someone like me should have ended up with someone like him.

CECILIA - MOTHER

Hah and instead you can't stand eachother! We need more oil can you please fetch some from the chellar... thank you love.

AUNT CHECCA

Yes yes back soon...

Checca exits and Cecilia is visibly shaking and trying to be gentler as she cuts the pasta.

CECILIA - MOTHER

God! God, please listen to me. I know you're listening, but I need answers.

(MORE)

CECILIA - MOTHER (CONT'D)

I need to know why why this is so difficult why you can't strike his heart with some joy about his religion enjoy about his sons strong calling. Ron and I are given a Sun by you that wants nothing more than to be a priest. He practically came out that way Pietro is , defiant and the more the years go by he digs in. I really thought that you had brought us together because I could affect his life and lead him closer to you but God right now the opposite is happening. I am so torn between my love for you and my love for my husband and my love for my son. Why is this my path? What did I do wrong , I really please help me and guide me. I really really don't understand why you would give me this burden. We have a beautiful life yet. I feel like I can't enjoy it because my heart is so sick and so sad. And every day I have to maneuver between Ferdinand spending his days in church and hiding it from Pietro. And it's like a really good thing. Any other father would be happy that their son wants to be a priest! OH dio, please help this to get better. Please help me to understand. Please help me to handle this. Help me to carry this burden God please... I am so tired...

AUNT CHECCA

(Hears her) Sister let me finish, go lay down if you are tired. Little Vincenzo and 'Zina are still sleeping. Nap while they do... I will finish before Rosa and Marietta get home from school and I will wake you.

CECILIA - MOTHER

Oh no it's okay...

AUNT CHECCA

Sister I insist! With Marietta being so sick off and on lately, you're not sleeping much as it is.

(MORE)

AUNT CHECCA (CONT'D)

You're tired, now go rest! I have this...

CECILIA - MOTHER

Okay okay thank you my love.

Cecilia does the sign of the cross and kisses the crucifix hanging in the kitchen doorway as she exits and goes up stairs.

INT

Grimaoldo cries - in

In Hemp Mill with father

Ferdinand working hard - hears bells and kids outside - Father says go play...

6 INT. HEMP MILL - DAY

6

A dark cavernous rock mill. It's cold and dark and water runs down a rock wall in to a deep well. Ferdinand pulls wet hemp reeds out of it and twists them together. It's hard work for a young boy. He's tired and dirty. His father works closely and is happily whistling a tune. He loves that his boy is here but Ferdinand looks miserable. A school bell RINGS and we soon hear CHILDREN'S VOICES laughing, and running FOOT STEPS go past from what seems to be upstairs and outside.

PIETRO

Go boy, go play...

Ferdinand twists a few more, now happier and looks at his father, who again nods "go". Ferdinand hugs his father and runs up the stairs and out the front door to the village cobble stone street. Some of the kids are running off to a field kicking a ball and his siblings Rosa and Vincenzo see him, excitedly.

VINCENZINA

Brother come, come we are going to play football and need you!

FERDINAND

(Laughing) You don't need my help you're the toughest, and fastest, kid in town but okay... I will help and keep score.

Little Rosa tries to keep up with the other bigger kids and Ferdinand, a young boy still, yet he awkwardly scoops them both up in his arms and carries them together laughing.

In Church

Helping Priest in Church - kneels on corn kernels - woman come in to light candles - call him the Little Saint



7

INT. CHURCH - DAY

7

Ferdinand runs up the church STEPS. He enters and quickly kneels in the middle of the aisle and looks up at the altar. Everything slows down and he does the perfect sign of the cross whilst his gaze zooms in to the huge CRUCIFIX over the altar. He relaxes and sighs as he stands up. Running he ascends the BELL TOWER STAIRS and as he reaches the top he looks out over the amazing Italian village vista. He rings the evening bell so fervently that the men down below on the square playing checkers yell up.

CHECKER PLAYER 1

Aye that kid - what is he doing? Pazzo. Any harder he's going to fly up in to heaven on that bell cord and never come back.

CHECKER PLAYER 2

That is exactly what he wants. He's the Santamaria boy, you know all he wants to do is be a priest but his father says no.

CHECKER PLAYER 1

Yeah I now Pietro, great man. Hardest worker but beyond stubborn and has always been. His father was a Rope Maker, and now his son will be. It's how it goes. Kids have to understand it's what we say goes, and they are lucky to be able to follow in our footsteps and take on a familia business. It's the Italian Dream! That kid needs to be told how lucky he is.

CHECKER PLAYER 2

Well if he ever stops ringing that stuned bell and comes down from that bell tower you be sure to let him know.



INT. CHURCH - A FEW MINUTES LATER.

He then goes to the side altar where a statue of Mary has a small bank of lit votive candles in front of it. He pulls a handful of CORN KERNELS out of his pocket and puts on the kneeler and wearing shorts, kneels with bare knees on the kernels. (Sound of kernels crunching (ASMR)). He closes his eyes and WINCES and puts his clasped, prayer position hands to his forehead, muttering a prayer to himself. He takes a small whip with rough, large knotted rope ends out of his pocket and hits himself hard on the back with it.

The SLAP of the rope against his light cotton shirt is LOUD. He's beating himself hard.

FERDINAND

Hail Mary full of grace the Lord is
with thee...(he whispers the pray).

He then looks up and face glowing he talks to Mary. We see they are "looking" at each other. It's mystical. They converse.

FERDINAND (CONT'D)

Yes Holy Mother Mary I am well. I am good and I am happy. My family is so good. I am not lonely anymore. I owe my peace and full, joyful heart to you. Thank you for filling my heart so that none of the daily trials and tribulations make me feel bad. These kids don't bother me (he shakes his head as if reassuring his own mother). Instead they make me feel good because I know that no matter what, I can come here to you and God and Jesus and find such a great feeling.
(Pause) Yes, right, exactly it's serenity (as if Mary said the word to him).

Three local towns-women, Signoras Mollicone, Santora and Palozzi, dressed in all black ENTER the church and walk over to where Ferdinand is kneeling. He doesn't notice them. He's in a trance-like state.

The women see he's self-flagellating, but are used to seeing it and they quietly light votives and begin praying. Ferdinand soon stops and looks up at them, making room on the kneeler for them. He again does the perfect sign of the cross. He gets up and as he greets the women, he is also trying to pick up the kernels nonchalantly. Signora Santora puts a picture of her deceased husband on the side altar.

FERDINAND (CONT'D)

Signora Santora, I am so sorry for your loss. He was a great man (like an adult would talk).

SIGNORA SANTORA

Thank you Ferdinand. He always loved you and your family.

Ferdinand hugs her and walks up to the altar where Padre Don Vincenzo Romano is setting up the altar for mass later.

He is happy to see Ferdinand and hands him the bible to mark pages.

CUT TO:

The women kneeling notice a few kernels left on the kneeler, and pick them up with a look of concern, except for Sgr Santora, who has a look of pride for Ferdinand's devotion.

SIGNORA SANTORA (CONT'D)

He's such a Little Saint.

CUT TO:

8 INT. ALTAR - A FEW MINUTES LATER

8

Ferdinand helps the priest prep the altar for mass. The Schola-Cantorum choir has set up all the while in the background and now begin to practice SINGING "AVE MARIA". It's a transcendent mixture of piano, boys' voices and guitar strums. The female choir director's voice is a stunning intermix of sound. Ferdinand starts to sing along quietly and his young face starts to glow. He walks over and takes his regular place piously in the choir.

CUT TO:

9 MEDIUM WIDE ON THE ALTAR - LATER THAT NIGHT

9

The church is a little darker now with more candles burning and more people in the pews. A low chatter fills the cavernous room with warmth. The band warms up their guitars and violins...Ferdinand kneels on the altar as we slowly reveal just the mid-sections of people entering the church and coming up the main aisle taking a seat. We see his choir-mates in a pew up front and chatting with each other. One of them points out that Ferdinand is on the altar kneeling and shakes his head. The others snicker like it's odd business as usual. We dolly past pulling out down the aisle at knee height of people entering as their dresses and coats flutter, dreamily past the camera. We pull out through the church doors on to the courtyard as more people enter. We see only body parts, shoes and coats from behind as they enter and find their seat in the pews. CHURCH BELLS RING again and Ferdinand startles and runs down the main aisle towards camera, and then past camera in to the now dusk night air. Father Don Vincenzo Romano sees him leaving and is sad as he begins mass.

Ferdinand is running home at top speed. He mutters...

FERDINAND

Late again...

10

EXT. SANTAMARIA HOME

10

Ferdinand runs up to the house and hesitates looking in the front window. He sees his father going to climb the stairs and he runs around the back and quietly sneaks in the back door. He hurriedly sits down at the little desk in the living room and opens his books to study. Little Vincenzina sneaks him a sandwich wrapped in a cloth - we can tell he has missed dinner, again. He gives her a huge hug and pats her on the head.

FERDINAND

Thank you my little sister. You are so brave to go against father like this. I appreciate you but you can put it back in the kitchen, it is not worth the trouble it will get you in with Papa.

VINCENZINA

NO! You must eat Ferdinand and I am not afraid of him... (she dances a little). Papa only mad on you and Vincenzino. I take care of you!

FERDINAND

Okay, yes you are my protector little one...so brave (they laugh slyly).

Vincenzina leaves the room, so proud of herself, and toddles upstairs. Ferdinand makes the sign of the cross and closes his eyes to say grace. He then sneakily eats the sandwich and studies and writes by the flickering candle light.

INT. SANTAMARIA KITCHEN

Aunt Checca is putting bowls of hot porridge on the table for all the children. Ferdinand is the first one down to breakfast and grabs a loaf of rough brown bread from the bread drawer. Aunt Checca grabs it from him, lovingly but firmly.

AUNT CHECCA

No! Ferdinand you need to eat the delicious bread we made yesterday, not this rough, coarse bread that we feed to the birds!

FERDINAND

Aunt Checca I know how delicious your bread is, and love it. Thank you for making it but I have to prepare for the Passionists and live an ascetic life.

AUNT CHECCA

Asceticism! What is this and for a little boy? Okay little man. Oy Ferdinand. Okay what is asceticism? Tell Aunt Checca what this means to you...

FERDINAND

To live like the monks do to be closer to enlightenment. And don't hurt anyone, always tell the truth, never take someone's property, be extra kind and always gentle in actions.

AUNT CHECCA

Well those are great rules for life...

Rosa, Vincenzo and Vincenzina all come down and sit at the breakfast table. Pietro and Cecilia come in and they all begin to eat and chat as Ferdinand continues directly to Aunt Checca.

FERDINAND

...and never be angry, always obey God's rules and the ten commandments, and always strive for cleanliness and be pure in what I eat. So brown, course bread is simple and pure.

AUNT CHECCA

You my sweet are simple and pure. Those are wonderful vows but as a little man you should jsut be concerned with playing and learning and eating your mother's delicious cooking!

PIETRO

What is this about? Son, (he smacks Ferdinand lightly on the back of the head) mangia!

CECILIA - MOTHER

Yes sweet boy it's time to get to
school. Eat up.

The family all tucks in to their breakfasts.

ACT TWO*ACT TWO**Climbs hill to monastery - freezing rain*

Driven to join the Passionists - very strict order - takes Oath of Asceticism

11 EXT. STEEP, MUDDY ROAD - LATE AFTERNOON

11

It's pouring rain and freezing. **Ferdinand**, now about **12-years old** is walking up a very steep, muddy road surrounded by trees that are blowing almost sideways it's so windy. He looks at the road ahead and trudges up excitedly. He is so happy to be going where he is going that he doesn't notice the miserable, freezing weather. At the top is a beautiful monastery and he goes inside. It has a warm, welcoming glow. Two older priests in brown PASSIONIST ROBES are at the altar and see Ferdinand come in and kneel in a pew to pray. Ferdinand closes his eye. The PRIESTS WHISPER to each other.

PRIEST 1

Ah here is Ferdinand again today.
Even in this weather!

PRIEST 2

I wonder if his father knows he is here. It's a pity he is not getting the education he needs to be able to join us here...(pause) he is so far, almost too far, behind in his studies now.

Ferdinand can hear them and winces in sorrow, eyes still closed.

FERDINAND

Conviction, Belief, Devotion.
Conviction, Belief, Devotion (he mantras over and over). I will become a Passionist, I will become a Passionist. They will see. Mother Mary please help me...

The Priests walk away from Ferdinand out of ear shot.

PRIEST 1

The Holy Spirit will win this one. His calling is the strongest I've seen. His heart is pure and his devotion is unfaltering all of his little life so far. I would be so surprised if his father did not come around. How can a father keep his son from such an honorable, spiritual future?

PRIEST 2

I know not to mention the power and the privilege (they laugh sarcastically but also agreeably). But seriously a boy could do much worse than wanting to be a priest. Does the family have other clerics? I do know that Pietro is a very stubborn man but does come from a devoted family. And Ferdinand's mother might as well be a nun herself she is so pious and devoted to our Lord (they both do the sign of the cross).

PRIEST 1

When was the last time we asked Ferdinand, what he wanted, or how we can help? We should get with Padre Don Antonio at the boy's parish and confer on how we can support the boy in his mission to become a Passionist. This order would be honored by him.

PRIEST 2

Yes, but what about the fact that he is not being educated and prepared for this? We cannot just take someone who is so far behind and expect them to catch up and not hold the others back at monastery in their studies. He is now years behind in the learnings that he needs to even be considered! It's all such a shame...We see Ferdinand around the corner, listening solemnly. He quietly collects his things and leaves.

(MORE)

PRIEST 2 (CONT'D)

The priests hear him exit and see Ferdinand running home through the pouring rain.

12

INT. SANTAMARIA LIVING ROOM

12

Ferdinand is at a small side table while the rest of the family is listening to an Italian radio music show and some dance, they all talk and chatter. Pietro and Mama Cecilia sit in side by side rocking chairs holding hands. Papa smokes a pipe and the children are snuggled at their feet, or up dancing. It's lively and lovely. Ferdinand is writing in a big leather book and there is a stack of bibles and Passionist texts on the table, all of them open. He is concentrating as if there is no one else in the room and the lively chaos behind him is not there.

FERDINAND

(Talking to himself) I am not years behind. I am not years behind. Please God help me to not be years behind! Please Mother Mary help me to take this in (he shakes the books). I know I'm not the smartest that you have made but I now need to be the quickest learner. Please God help me to catch up and be prepared and be accepted so that I can do your work for my life's work and bring your joy to those that need it... to fill their hearts like you have filled mine. Please God please. I take the vow of asceticism. I vow to only consume and partake in the absolute necessities and forego all comforts if you will just help me to academically be prepared!

Vincent Zino tries to get Ferdinand to get up and dance and Ferdinand gently but firmly pushes him away. And turns back to his studies. Pietro notices their interaction. Mama Cecilia also now notices that her husband has gone from happy, watching the children dancing to being upset that Ferdinand will not partake and is choosing to study. The children continue having fun unaware, but the parents' energy has now soured. Pietro goes to get up to talk to Ferdinand and Cecilia holds onto him with a pleading in her face to just let Ferdinand study. Pietro begrudgingly sits back down.

FADE OUT

*Towns people ask him to pray for them**Woman at church ask him to pray for him - call him the Little Saint, father gets upset*

13

EXT. CHURCH COURTYARD - DAY

13

It's Sunday Mass and the whole town of Pontecorvo is dressed up and streaming through the sunlit morning streets to mass. CHURCH BELLS beckon them and children happily run ahead and lead the way. Towns people greet each other joyfully. Ferdinand walks with his parents, as a woman comes up to them, walking with them and talking.

SIGNORA VALVANO

Ciao Santamarias! Such a beautiful family on a beautiful Sunday morning! How are you all? (they nod and smile and start to talk but she interrupts). Ferdinand sorry to bother you but I hear you prayed for Donatella Colopietro's daughter in Rome and she is doing so much better. It's like a miracle, (she turns to the parents almost gossiping), she wasn't supposed to live another week and she is almost totally recovered! Please Ferdinand can you pray for my mother in Civita, she is having a terrible time with her heart.

Ferdinand is yes-ing her and holding her hand now. With an air of an adult, and confidence of a doctor, but humility of a priest.

FERDINAND

Of course Signora but...

PIETRO

Signora Valvano that is a lot of responsibility to put on our boy and how can you ask this of him? (he's upset). I thought only God answers prayers!...(looks at his wife/Ferdinand's mother).

SIGNORA VALVANO

Well pardon me Pietro but I am desperate and I am asking him to talk to God FOR ME because I have been praying and praying and my mother suffers so badly it's heartbreaking.

(MORE)

SIGNORA VALVANO (CONT'D)

I hear our Little Saint is close to the Big One up there (pointing to the heavens) and I will try anything, anything for my mama!

They are now at the church doors and she is still being loud. Other parishioners are already seated and quiet and they turn around to see who's making noise. They quickly quiet down to enter, as they gather the younger children and Pietro shoots Cecilia an angry look. She beams with pride anyways.

14

EXT. CHURCH COURTYARD - LATER

14

Parishioners file out of the mass, somewhat reverent, but in that loud Italian way. Men are lighting up cigars and patting each other on the back. Woman group together and gab. The children find a ball and are rallying each other to a game of soccer/football. Ferdinand stands at the church steps with Padre Don Vincenzo Romano and looks as they he runs the place. He greets Signoras Mollicone, Santora and Polozzi as they gush over him and pinch his cheek and ask how he is.

SIGNORA POLOZZI

Ferdinand my daughter Mary, she's such a nice girl(pointing to her in the courtyard as she's surprised and shocked her mother would point her out), and says how kind and handsome you are, and you know adores you from afar...why don't you come calling to see...(she's cut off).

VINCENZINA

Brother come, come we are going to play football and need you!

FERDINAND

(Laughing and relieved) You don't need my help...we ALL KNOW you're the toughest kid in town! And the fastest (he winks). And I still don't know the rules to this new game...

VINCENZINO

Please Ferdinand we need someone to goalie, just stop their balls going in our net...you have the longest arms! (As he slings one of them over his shoulder, adoring of his older brother).

FERDINAND

I have to help Padre after mass you know that...

VINCENZINO

(Whining slyly) Brother please you always "have to" and have an excuse and we never get to play with you, you're either here or working the mill and it's not okay. We need our big brother to defend us in battle!

FERDINAND

Okay let me talk to Padre(who is next to him and he nods go)...okay but like before, I will referee.

VINCENZINA

No you must play you must defend us!

VINCENZINO

Yes defend our honor against the Polozzi's they always cheat...although that sister of theirs is fast and cute...(he winks).

FERDINAND

Brother you know I am not distracted by females as I am going to be a priest (everyone hears this).

VINCENZINO

Fine I'll take her...(he says with all the confidence and everyone laughs).

They all hustle off towards the field, including the Polozzi girl surrounded by friends giggling and she's looking back to see if Ferdinand is coming. Vincenzino waves at her instead and she's embarrassed and gives him a bit of a dirty look and turns back around. Little Vincenzina, now 7, tries to keep up with the other bigger kids and Ferdinand scoops her up to a piggy back ride.

MAMA CECILIA

(Happy that Ferdinand is going with the children) Have fun but oh don't ruin your Sunday clothes and Vincenzina put your hair up! Vincenzino don't be tackling the girls and...

PIETRO

Be home in two hours to help with the gravy!

MAMA CECILIA

No, just go children come home for supper! All is good I will do the gravy. Aunt Checca can help instead. This is great...(Turns to Papa) Let them go... this is the first time in forever that Ferdinand has time to just actually play with his brother and sisters. This means the world to them...and to me and will do his soul good. Checca come help me... And Pietro you can do the bread! (Papa frowns).

PIETRO

You're right...this is good...maybe he will feel like a real boy. A real young man in the making!... that girl, the Polozzi girl... she likes him?! Our Ferdinand? Is she a good girl?

MAMA CECILIA

Aye they're so young still! Well it won't hurt for them to play and have some fun together...but...

PIETRO

But what?

MAMA CECILIA

His heart and soul are set on being a Passionist. You know that.

PIETRO

Yes I know! Ay yi yi, like I don't know that and live that and feel that and know that my denying him that are killing him. And probably sentencing me to hell (he looks up at the church steeple and Padre)...

MAMA CECILIA

(Scoffs at this and she makes the sign of the cross.)

PIETRO

You know I feel it in my bones that that boy should be a priest, in my heart I know it. BUT in my head I forbid it and can't get over the thought of him taking on the business and taking care of his family like the eldest son does! WHY couldn't it have been Vincenzino struck with his priestly, heavenly desire...God got it backwards! (Mama again scoffs and does another sign of cross). If Ferdinand had half the desire of a normal life that our little Vincenzino already does to rule the world and marry the most beautiful woman in all of Italy, all would be okay... but no... (again looks at church steeple as the cross is backlit from the high sun and glows). Our Ferdinand is still so young! He will change his mind. Once old enough and he is traveling and selling and partaking in the wonderful spoils this world has to offer, he will forget about being a priest.

Padre Don Vincenzo Romano notices the Santamarias in deep discussion and approaches from the side hearing some of what Pietro is ranting. He interrupts.

PADRE DON VINCENZO ROMANO

Signor Santamaria, the fact that you find it a burden and a curse that your blessed, young son is so devoted to the Holy Trinity breaks my heart. And you know it breaks Ferdinand's too. This is a blessing and you have now for a decade fought this. Do you need to come see me?... it's been how many years since you've actually done confession? I see you taking communion, so praise God you're getting one of the sacraments. But a true devoted Catholic with such a fantastic family, and devoted wife that you are blessed with, should do more and dig more deep into his heart and soul and look for the divine callings of our Lord.

(MORE)

PADRE DON VINCENZO ROMANO (CONT'D)

Your spirituality is there to guide you to find the blessings in life and all things. I've known you all your life, Pietro Paulo Santamaria and I've watched you fight against what other men would consider the biggest gifts from above. You take your religion for granted. Jesus says let the children come to me...When are you going to stop fighting it? When will you realize how blessed you are? Ferdinand is still young, yes. But why in this day and age when becoming a priest is an honor to a family, would you decide it's not? What kind of darkness is there in your head that makes you think when a boy, so young, all his life, is so called to the Father above, that you should decide for him that he will take on the family business instead? I think it's time for you to really pray and dig deep and hit your knees and ask God what HE wants. Instead of what Pietro wants, it's time to do what God wants...(Cecilia slowly backs away). Maybe then you'll have peace. Maybe then your family will have nothing but joy. Maybe then the heavens will shine upon you.

Pietro cocks his head and looks at Padre Don Vincenzo Romano with a bit of shock, some anger, and some humility.

PIETRO

It shines upon us now, we have a good life...

CECILIA - MOTHER

Pietro you know what padre means...

PADRE DON VINCENZO ROMANO

Good day Santamarias.

Padre shakes their hands warmly and moves on to the next family as the church courtyard continues to thin out.

Years Later - Fire conversation

*How do you know if it's God or not... conviction, belief, devotion.
Walking home with father tells him about flame growing bigger - lames -
Fire burns in soul - warmth
"Neither Divine assistance, nor the modification of the flash insure the*

attainment of freedom from sin. When the perils are great, that is why I avoid occasions of sin and confusion of spirit." p40

EXT. BUSTLING ITALIAN MARKET - MIDDAY

Ferdinand, now **16-years old** is at a bustling Italian Market Stall on the side of a more "modern" city. Ferdinand is finishing up a sale as heaping piles of HEMP ROPE SPOOLS surround him. Pietro walks up and hands him a steaming latte and sandwich heaping with salami and cheese. They sit down on a pile of hemp to lunch.

FERDINAND

Thank you Papa. So hungry but so happy just made a huge sale. They will be back end of day to collect their 50, 500 foot bales for the new ship yard.

He throws Pietro a bag of coins and then pulls out of his pocket paper money.

FERDINAND (CONT'D)

And look at this beautiful paper money! I haven't seen this yet! Have you? It's amazing...so light. What a difference for our pockets.

PIETRO

I know lire is very exciting isn't it. I am happy to see it makes you so happy my boy. Very happy...

15 EXT. WIDE OF IDYLIC ROLLING HILLS/LONG WINDING DIRT ROAD 15
RUNNING THROUGH IT - LATER THAT EVENING

Pietro walks beside an old but beautiful wooden wagon with just a few remaining HEMP ROPE SPOOLS. He leads a gorgeous black horse pulling the wagon, down the long road. He has grown in to a tall, handsome and strong Italian boy. His head is to the sky, staring at the clouds as he walks along and looks as if having a silent conversation with someone up there. He is happy.

PIETRO

Great job at the market today. You are really becoming such a great salesman and learning all of the best ways to take care of our customers. The way you treated Signore Tomaselli when he tried to undercut us again was perfect.

(MORE)

PIETRO (CONT'D)

And you know you're making some of the finest rope...

Ferdinand hangs his head looking down to the ground as if now defeated. He looks at his overworked, but strong, blistered hands. He hears his father's praise and at first is honored but then quickly remembers it's not at all what he wants and it shows on his grimacing face. Pietro saw the sudden change in attitude, and looks concerned, but then turns to anger.

PIETRO (CONT'D)

Boy stop it. I have to remind you again pazzo? You are so blessed by all that we are giving you! You never have to worry about a job or making a living. I am giving you that. Make me proud and stop your pouting. This is an honor to give you this business I've literally built with my own hands, after coming from nothing. Everyone needs and respects us, and in turn you, and your mother and your brother and sisters. It's because we run an honest business that makes money to keep that home over your head and great food on our table. How can you prefer and dream about such an uncomfortable life of being a Passionist Priest over what I am handing you? The Passionists sleep on the cold, hard floor and wear rough brown rags eating their rough brown bread! They are respected for their piety but why is that a life better than the comfortable and delicious one I want you to have?

FERDINAND

(Walking slow and calmly
staring at sunset)

I have been trying and trying to accept this Papa. (His eyes tearing up). And imagining my life and the years to come running this business. And I am so grateful, but it's all wrong! How do you not know that by now?

PIETRO

I do know, I know what is RIGHT for you and I've seen you grow in to this strong, handsome, intelligent man who I am so proud of. I am glad you have accepted to take on the role that a first born son should take on!...

FERDINAND

But have I?...that is just it, you haven't been paying attention. I am so unhappy but you're okay with that as long as you have your way! (Bolder than he has ever talked to his father or anyone). All my life I have felt a calling. My devotion to Our Mother Mary is as natural as...breathing.(Talking to himself and the sky) But how do you know if it's real and what is meant to be?...don't you ever feel a burning in your soul?... ever?! (Back to father) What fills your gut and makes you feel whole father? How do you know if I am NOT supposed to devote my life to God and the Passionists and Holy Mother Mary? What if I AM? And YOU are stopping me... How does ANYONE KNOW?... when I am in church, or even just looking at the sky, or when I have a chance to just connect (getting frustrated), and take a minute and tune in even deeper to the Holy Spirit (he motions from top of his head to the sky) it fills me up so completely with a burning, beautiful intensity and I am happier than you can imagine...if it's not God or a Higher Power, something greater than us, then what is it?... (now getting angry).

PIETRO

Maybe your mother's cooking...sorry kidding, but son, it's so hard to imagine you just become a priest! Especially a Passionist and live in such piety, such meager means and existence...I just don't understand it. It's not what I WANT FOR YOU! (angry again)...

(MORE)

PIETRO (CONT'D)

and you are my eldest you need to do what I NEED YOU to do. Your brother is too young to take the business and he doesn't have the drive you do. And your sisters... (He softens as he sees Ferdinand tearing up even more). You will be okay with it someday...I want you to go out and make friends and enjoy your young life! Not flagellating yourself and kneeling on pebbles! Everyone talks about it Ferdinand!

FERDINAND

(Almost robotically) Neither divine assistance, nor the modification of the flesh insure the attainment of freedom from sin. When the perils are great, that is why I avoid occasions of sin and confusion of spirit (he proudly walks on).

Pietro looks at him confused somewhat and concerned.

PIETRO

Where did that come from?

FERDINAND

Papa there are so many amazing thoughts in my head and my soul I wish I could share with you...

PIETRO

You can my son. I just...

FERDINAND

No, you would only shut me down and want to change the subject to Rope!

PIETRO

I think I know what is best for you. We are your parents and you want to make sure your children, because we love you so much, end up living out their life they were destined for. I love what I do and want to make sure you are taken care of. Those Priests living like paupers is not what I imagined for you. I can't help but think it's wrong...even though you and your mother are so convince I AM the one who is wrong.

FERDINAND

Life flows like water ... Our days
go by fast ... then what?

PIETRO

Then what indeed, but life does not
go by fast, it is very long and
sometimes very tiring (he pulls
harder on the horses as it's
getting dark out soon).

FERDINAND

Papa the only thing that makes me
feel tired is when I imagine a life
outside of the Passionist
Order...it makes me feel like my
soul is empty and my purpose will
never be fulfilled here on earth.
Life is short.

PIETRO

No, no son, life is long.

We pull out from a CU of Ferdinand's face and boom up wide
and over the top of them as they continue their walk home in
silence. It's a stunning, fiery red sky night.

FADE OUT.

Confraternity run by Don Antonio

1892 - Padre Don Vincenzo Romano - Pastor of St. Mary di Porto - Marian Society in Honor of Immaculate Mother - Ferdinand chosen to wear robes . He took ridicule as a joke and "I must practice for when I am a Passionist." Mocked zealotness of punctuality and faithfulness and inspired ringing of bells. Kneeled to Mary whilst others chatted. p35

Call the Little Saint

15 - Bullies mockingly call him the Little Saint - sister Rosa now tries to defend but she's 5

16

EXT. STREET IN TOWN - DAY

16

The Town Bullies, Donato, Joey, etc. are gathered outside a market. They're now older and smoking and trying to look tough. They're about the same age as Ferdinand, 16. Ferdinand is walking by with his younger siblings, Rosa, 10, Vincenzino 8, and Vincenzina, 5. They carry fresh breads and groceries and school books.

DONATO THE BULLY

Heyyyyyy pazzo! Here you are...
it's been too long...where have you
been? Oh right church! (He points
towards it)

JOEY THE BULLY

Hey Little Saint (somewhat mocking,
somewhat mean). My mother thinks
you answer prayers.

Ferdinand stops but motions to the other kids to keep going.

FERDINAND

I don't answer prayers, as you know
only God, Mary, Jesus and the Holy
Spirit can...

He cuts him off.

JOEY THE BULLY

I don't know what I know - we
learned the same things in Sunday
school and you have taken them so
far. What is wrong with you?
(Starts to ramble) Don't you like
girls? You want to just be around
priests all day? Why are you so
afraid to come out and do things
with all of us?

Ferdinand tries to speak.

FERDINAND

You never invited...

JOEY THE BULLY

You're always floating around here
like you're better than all of us,
and yet you have nothing going on.

His friends, and seemingly girlfriend lean in to him, and
scowl at Ferdinand in support. One girl however moves away
and smiles at Ferdinand as if to say "ignore this".

JOEY THE BULLY (CONT'D)

(Angry) And now you have my mom
believing God is going to save my
Nonna because YOU ask him to...it's
all such bullshit and you have
everyone snowed! But not me...All
this God stuff! Hah you think God
is going to give you everything you
need? He didn't give you any
friends, or women, he's not
showering loaves and fishes down on
you, or any of us! He didn't keep
my father from being an asshole and
my mother from being a drunk.

(MORE)

JOEY THE BULLY (CONT'D)

God doesn't "have you" and he doesn't have any of us. What has he done for you that's so wonderful? We've been watching you spend all your time in church - is it because we never invited you out? Well I'm inviting you now! Come with us, come hang out, I promise I'll be nice to you (somewhat sarcastic)... (friends laugh). I want to spend time with you and see what you're like and end this mystery - or are you too good for us? You think you're too good? Is that it?

Ferdinand laughs.

He gently slaps his face and Ferdinand braces himself and closes his eyes, as if more is coming. Joey is now right up in his face - holding his hand out as if he will slap again.

JOEY THE BULLY (CONT'D)

Get a life Ferdinand. Before it's too late.

FERDINAND

I must practice patience for when I am a Passionist.

Joey just scoffs at him and grabs his girlfriend, somewhat inappropriately for the times by grabbing her butt and pushes her along down the road. The friends all follow. The kind-girl gives Ferdinand a gentle look and pout as if to say sorry with her eyes. Ferdinand is unfazed by the cruelty and just gazes back at her.

KIND GIRL

(To Joey walking) You believe in God... don't you?

BULLY #2

Yeah, he believes in God...his vision of God is a man up there with a big white beard and a fist full of connolis. His God has to be useful.

KIND GIRL

Apparently so...(they laugh).

Ferdinand continues up the road and sees his siblings, Rosa and Vincenzina, hiding around a corner and they've seen the whole thing. They are teary eyed for their big brother. He puts his arms around them to guide them home.

Again his face only shows peace. They turn to expressions of anger and raise fists. He shakes his head no.

FERDINAND

I must practice for when I am a
Passionist...

We see the Ferdinand siblings walking in to the distance towards home.

EXT. STREET IN TOWN - MOMENTS LATER

Around the corner comes Signora Mariano towards the group of miscreants. She's the town blind-widow. She's stately and poised as she finds her way along with a cane. She's comfortable navigating but something about her, her tells us that she was not always blind. She is extremely well put together, and even though she's wearing all black as in mourning for her husband, she is elegant as she almost flows along, checking her route with her cane. She walks right into the pack of bully-teenagers as they round the corner at the same time.

JOEY

Watch it.

SIGNORA MARIANO

Pardon me, pardon me! And why so
rude?! (She raises her cane) you
don't speak to a lady that way boy.
Who are you?

They all laugh and walk off in the other direction.

SIGNORA MARIANO (CONT'D)

Come back here!

She hurries after them and Donato sticks his foot out jokingly, but accidentally, actually does trip her!

SIGNORA MARIANO (CONT'D)

Ahhhh (hitting her knees) oh Dios,
why would you be so cruel. Who is
that? Who did that.

They're laughing and running away.

SIGNORA MARIANO (CONT'D)

Help, help... oh Dios. What is
wrong with children these days? How
can you do this to me and to any
woman and to anyone...what is wrong
with humanity...

A neighbor comes out of his house hearing her and helps her up.



17 EXT. STREET IN TOWN - MOMENTS LATER

Mama Cecilia is carrying net hemp bags of fruits, breads and vegetables. Her long black hair somewhat loosely in a silky bun at the nape of her neck hits her shoulders as she happily walks along the road to home through the mazelike, building lined, small cobblestone streets of Pontecorvo. She hears the whimpering commotion and runs up to Signora Mariano and brushes her off. They are somewhat acquainted but not fully. Signora Mariano is so rattled she somewhat denies the kindness of Cecilia, and walks off still rambling to herself. Her composure is challenged but she straightens up and walks tall again.

NEIGHBOR

It's the bunch of no good hoodlums.
Donato and his crew. They're going
to get theirs one of these day.
Had I seen this (he makes a fist).

CECILIA - MOTHER

Well thank goodness you saw, or
heard, and could come help her.
You're a good man, but yes those
kids...if their mothers only knew.
But God knows. No one gets away
with this behavior.

NEIGHBOR

Yeah I hate to tell you but I've
seen them give it to Ferdinand too
Cecilia. Your boy has the patience
of a Saint. They've picked on him
for years. They're rotten.

CECILIA - MOTHER

I have heard, but never from Ferdinand. He somehow rises above. And he would never gossip or tattle. He somehow doesn't let them get to him. In fact not much gets to that boy. He is so focused and has a contrite heart. He was born that way. I'm blessed. Nothing, or very little, bothers him. I'm sure you've heard of his disagreements with his father, but only because it's a roadblock from his mission in life. I think Ferdinand was also born with this divine sense of discernment. He truly knows instantly what to spend his time on, and what to just let go. He's a lesson to us all. He never even engages in petty conversations if it's not something that is building someone up, or positive in nature, or promoting peace, or someone's inner-faith.

NEIGHBOR

I hear he is studying to be a Priest?

CECILIA - MOTHER

Well he hopes so. Not yet officially. And I hope so too... But he is working after hours so hard, as if he is in preparation for divinity school. Every given minute when he's not at the Mill or at church helping Padre Domano he has his face in a theology book. Pietro won't give him his blessing yet to join the monastery. But I know in my heart that there is hope that he will get to go and study. It's so very important to him. I do pray for it every day, but it's so conflicting because that also means my precious boy will be far away from me at the seminary. It's unimaginable, life without my son Ferdinand around every day...

NEIGHBOR

Yes but every mother says that and every mother survives when their bambino leaves...

CECILIA - MOTHER

Yes, yes true...(she lightens up)... well good day and lovely to see you. And I hope Signora is okay.

NEIGHBOR

Nice to chat again Cecilia, it's been too many years.

Mama Cecilia continues down the maze-like roads towards home and now she also runs in to JOEY THE BULLY and his girlfriend and the NICE GIRL (the rest have gone).

MAMA CECILIA

Joey come here darling boy...just Who I want to see!(she says sarcastically).

JOEY

(Looks worried and somewhat confused by her addressing him, but tries to keep his tough demeanor) Yeah?

MAMA CECILIA

Come here boy... how is your mother? She must be so proud of you. (Sarcastically as she grabs his ear hastily and whispers in to it dropping some of her fruit) Ferdinand has never broken my heart like you break your mothers(she says almost with a hiss as it's one of the meanest things she has ever, or ever, will say).

Mama Cecilia picks up some of her fruit and the Nice Girl has scrambled over trying to help her. She straightens her hair as she looks in Joey's eyes who actually looks really stunned and hurt by her. He tilts his head to the side as she nods her chin up at him with a "think about that" and slowly heads towards home.

18

INT. CHURCH - LATER THAT NIGHT

18

Ferdinand, dressed in same clothes, is at Basilica of San Bartolomeo church and altar-serving. It's the end of mass and he carries the cross off the altar to the side tabernacle. The priest, Padre Romano, finishes performing the mass and walks ahead of him and they enter the side room to put away the chalice and clean up after the mass.

We hear the congregation, only a few dozen as it's a weekday evening mass, chattering in the distance of the main church and slowly filing out until it's silent out there. Padre Don Vincenzo Romano turns to see Ferdinand rushing to put things away.

PADRE DON VINCENZO ROMANO

Boy slow down the chalice and crucifix are sacred treasures that deserve the care and respect, (pauses) that you usually give them...

FERDINAND

I have to hurry I am so sorry Father but my father doesn't know I'm here. He wants me to focus more on work and the business of the family and you know this is what I want to be doing, you know this is where my focus and heart is. He doesn't understand...and it's getting worse. Now he really doesn't want me here during the week because he was hoping I would grow up and get more interested in girls and sports and friendships. (He's rambling) But my yearning for a Passionist life is only growing stronger. He is starting to forbid me to come...

PADRE DON VINCENZO ROMANO

I am so sorry to hear it boy, and I know this has been the situation for many years. I apologize because I spoke to your father and I thought it would help but now I see that it's only hurting. I've added him to my prayers that God will soften his heart and you'll be able to embrace the Passionist life that you so yearn for and deserve, and the Passionist Order will be honored to have you. But you also have to listen to your father and I am sorry about that, but you do. You have to listen to your father until you are legally out of the house...and even then...

(MORE)

PADRE DON VINCENZO ROMANO (CONT'D)

It's one of those big conflicts in life you're so driven and you're so convinced of what is right for you, but you've had nothing but discouragement and blockades. It is one of the honors of my life to work with you and know that you find such peace here. I know that I am lucky to have you and this town knows they are blessed by your presence even if some of your peers don't show it. I think they're afraid of you. I think you make them feel bad about themselves and it's actually some of them have even said that you make them feel like sinners the way you float around here. Please don't tell them but I think that's funny and maybe you're inspiring them to be better people. Nothing wrong with that. In fact, that's a lot of responsibility for you, but you do it so easily and with such humility, you really have been graced Ferdinand. How fantastic that you insist on living it. You don't let Temptations of the flesh or sins of your father stop you from what you know is right. I know you also have to follow your heart and I know you have been in deep thought about this your whole life...

FERDINAND

Scuzi Padre, scuzi I don't mean to cut you off and I thank you for you're kindest words that mean so much to me, and all of your divine support, all my life! But I have to go. My father...

The clock in town square is gonging 8 times as Ferdinand runs out of the church in to the night and through the streets of town that glow red from the summer late sunset.

CUT TO:

19 INT. SANTAMARIA KITCHEN

19

The children are cleaning up the dinner table and Pietro takes his newspaper and goes to go in the other room, but turns back and locks the kitchen door. Cecilia and the children pause in a bit of shock, Vincenzina,6, gets teary eyed looking at the door, knowing he locked out Ferdinand. Cecilia goes to say something and then stops herself in a bit of fear...

CUT TO:

*Home late from evening mass - Father locks him out in the rain
The neighbor takes him in - he is heartbroken that his father does not understand*

20 INT. SANTAMARIA LIVING ROOM

20

Pietro enters and locks the front door of the house and closes a curtain. He grabs his pipe and paper and sits down to read. Cecilia comes in to the door, drying a plate and looking at him but he won't look back at her.

CUT TO:

21 EXT. THE SANTAMARIA HOME - KITCHEN DOOR - A FEW MINUTES LATER

It's now almost dark out, and Ferdinand goes to enter the kitchen door but it's locked. He looks in the window and sees his siblings pouting and looking sadly at him. Rosa goes to unlock the door and he shakes his head and finger aggressively "no"...

He goes around the other side of the house as the street lamps glow a beautiful gold on the cobblestone streets. It's so quiet out and we can hear his crunching footsteps and heavy breath. He is nervous and has been running. He lightly knocks on the front door. He looks to the window to the side of the door noticing the curtain drawn. He knocks again. No one answers. It's now fully dark out and very quiet except for crickets. We hear the crunch of his feet on the grass and gravel and his loud breathing which gets slower and slower (ASMR). He sighs heavily and so sadly.

CUT TO:

22 INT. SANTAMARIA KITCHEN

22

Cecilia and the children quietly cry as they clean up...

CUT TO:

23

EXT. SIDE STREET OF SANTAMARIA HOME

23

Ferdinand looks around, not sure what to do and looks up to the sky looks down at the ground looks at the garden and walks again behind the house to the garden. Well groomed camelia and bouganvillea bushes ring the small yard. There is a wooden hemp wheel and large metal rope making machine off to the side. Huge bags of hemp fiber are sitting next to it, and a wheel of hemp rope is off to the side closer to the bushes. He's looking for a place to sleep outside for the night. Through the window we see one of the children pull the curtain aside, seeing him out there. He starts to pull hemp bags to make a bed for the night and makes a bit of noise. The next-door neighbor, SIGNORA VALVANO, looks out her window. She watches for a bit and sees him lay down in the garden under the camelias. Signora Valvano motions to him to come with her. He slowly gets up and walks into her house, brining her camelias, but she sees he's defeated and heartbroken.

Pietro drinks at Hostel of Pirinella

*Drunk says Ferdinand prayers
saved his child*

25

EXT. HOSTEL PIRINELLA BAR, PONTECORVO

25

The streets of Pontecorvo are almost empty as the sun is setting on a cold evening. Paolo Pietro enters and shakes off the cold. He sits at the bar and the bartender pulls him a familiar beer without ordering. A man next to him, Neighbor Giuseppe, asks how the family is. He answers happily but a bit distant and lost in thought.

PIETRO

They are great thank you and yours?
(before the man can answer he
continues)... except for my oldest
you know him, Ferdinand, he still
won't give up on these foolish
ideas of being a priest. I know I
should be honored to have a priest
in the family, or so Padre Don
Vincenzo Romano and my wife's
family tells me and has since he
was born. But I know he will make
the family business even more
successful and take care of his
mother and sisters when I'm gone
(pauses and reflects as this is
really important). But he's going
to give me an early death - he
causes me so much frustration and
anxiety over it.

(MORE)

PIETRO (CONT'D)

But I know I am right and I need him to just... another beer...

GIUSEPPE

Pietro, did you not hear today about your neighbor, Signora Valvano's mother that he was praying for? Pietro she is fully recovered. The doctors are saying it's a miracle. What if it is? (A little tipsy and getting more exuberant and touchy as Pietro shrugs him off), what if your boy is truly a "Little Saint"? (He says almost mockingly in the tone that so many say it).

We zoom in slowly to Pietro's face, then eyes, as the light around him warms and the sound of the bar fades away to just hearing his own heartbeat and his own breath. He is struck, like a divine intervention. He looks at his tipsy neighbor and does a Mona Lisa smile, like his son's expression years ago - knowing of all people, and all places to finally get the message that he needs to concede, is here and now. As the sound fades back up we hear it is now raining and wind is howling outside the pub. He chugs the rest of the beer, throws down money and leaves.

26

EXT. STREET IN TOWN - A FEW MINUTES LATER

26

Signora Valvano is walking towards Pietro who is on the way home. He's whistling. Signora Valvano notices him and hurriedly walks towards him.

SIGNORA VALVANO

Oh good Pietro! Father of the Year! What are you thinking locking that boy out in the cold last week? I have been looking for you somewhere away from your home this whole week so as not to embarrass you in front of your children whilst I give you a piece of my mind! What are you thinking? What kind of father are you? Locking your child out in the cold and for what? To prove what point? You are the only man in the world who locks his kid out for being at church. He is at church Paolo Pietro! He is amazing and you deserve a piece of my foot - how can you treat your child like that?

(MORE)

SIGNORA VALVANO (CONT'D)

Even IF he was a bad kid you can't lock him out all night, again and again. He was in church...What is wrong with you? You are blocking him from God, Pietro who has the audacity to block their blessed child who is so called to a life of devotion, from God? You are unbelievable and you are angering God (now rambling and make the sign of the cross but she's not slowing down she's ramping up).

PIETRO

Signora...

SIGNORA VALVANO

...Are you trying to go against the heavens?! Oh my God it's scary living next door to you because one of these days the lightning bolts are finally coming down to take you out and I am way too close next door! That boy, your boy is a Saint in the making! My mother is healed Pietro - we've taken her to every doctor and prayed and prayed, until your Ferdinand prayed for her! Believe it or not but I know in my little Catholic heart it's true. Pope Leo himself (making sign of cross) would bend a knee if he knew how many of us Ferdinand has brought heavenly graces to!

PIETRO

Signora, signora, please... (he cries and drops his head in shame and grabs her hand). Just a bit ago Giuseppe told me about your mother. I was rocked to the core and now overwhelmed with sadness that I didn't believe before in the power of his prayers - I hear all of you and it sounds so ridiculous that my boy's prayers are so strong- I thought all these years you believe what you need to believe to get you through this merda life, but now I see that your belief is magical and makes the world a better place.

(MORE)

PIETRO (CONT'D)

My default was to go against it instead of just going with the flow of what makes my family happy, my bellissima Cecilia happy, and my beloved, my eldest, my Ferdinand, happy. And in turn I finally see that this is right and good...I Believe. (Perking up) I can't wait to tell Ferdinand he has my blessing.

Still crying, Pietro runs off down the street to home.

SIGNORA VALVANO

Oh dios mio it's about time! And you apologize to him for locking him out again! Pazzo.

She does the sign of the cross and chef's kiss up to the sky, smiling and walks down the gorgeous evening street victoriously.

Pietro gives him blessing to join Passionists

28

INT. SANTAMARIA LIVING ROOM - LATER

28

Ferdinand and his younger siblings are sitting by the small fireplace in the cozy, humble living room. He is reading to them, as they look at him lovingly, and are winding down the evening. Suddenly the front door swings open, and their father enters. As he's shaking off the winter's cold rain, they see he has a book in his hand. He has missed dinner, and the children jump up and hug him. Everyone except Ferdinand, who stands with reverence, but does not rush over to his father. The father hugs the other children a little more lovingly than the usual, and then walks over to Ferdinand and hands him what we see now as a beautiful, new, shiny, leather-bound Bible with the Passionist order logo on it. Ferdinand breaks down in tears.

FERDINAND

Father where did you get this?
Why...

PIETRO

Son I am so, so sorry that my heart was not struck sooner with the importance of you doing God's bidding. I am so so sorry it took me all these years! This long. Who am I to stand in the way of your will, and maybe God's will?!

(MORE)

PIETRO (CONT'D)

I don't know why I finally get it
but I get it and I give you...

Mother enters the room with dish towel in hand and Aunt Checca in tow. They rush to the family huddling together now-Ferdinand looking at his father with disbelief mixes with relief and some joy.

PIETRO (CONT'D)

...my blessing!

MAMA CECILIA

Oh thank God. Mi Dios! Amen.

Mama almost faints catching herself on the wall - with relief then joy.

AUNT CHECCA

It's about time Pietro! Wait are you drunk?...Jesus... (she starts to use the Lord's name in vain and Ferdinand and Mama shoot her a look-she changes her words), Mary and Joseph...doesn't matter. Amen!

29

INT. FERDINAND & VINCENZO'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT 29

Ferdinand holds the new Passionist Bible to his chest as he lay in bed starting at ceiling. We see little Vincenzo asleep nearby. One tear falls from Ferdinand's eye to the pillow. He has that Mona Lisa smile again. In ECU we follow the tear til it evaporates in the bright white cotton sheet. Fade to black.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE ITALIAN FESTIVAL - LATE FALL

All of the Santamarias, including Aunt Checca are dressed and at town Italian Fest. It's a sunny day Fall Day and the fair is teeming with food, music, art and games and children running around. It's A beautiful sight of local Italian leagues feeding everyone sausages and breads loaded with mozzarella. A huge statue of Mary is set up on a stage in the distance. And we see there's a Horse Judging competition going on at that end of the festival. Pietro gives the young ones a couple coins to go and play games. We see many of the town regulars, young and old, and Ferdinand goes to a tent nearby. He sits down next to Signora Mariano, the blind window who is sitting alone happily listening to music.

FERDINAND

Hello Signora Mariano, how are you today? Can I get you anything to eat?

SIGNORA MARIANO

Who is that? Is that my nephew?

FERDINAND

No Signora, it's Ferdinand Santa Maria. how are you today?

SIGNORA MARIANO

Oh, Ferdinand just the boy I've been looking for! She hit him with her cane her walking stick. Why would you be so cruel as to push by me in the street the other day and not helping me up? I cannot believe your parents raised you that way. I told my neighbor to go and tell your parents but obviously she didn't get or you would've come to say sorry to me a long time ago. How can you be so cruel?

FERDINAND

(Ferdinand shakes his head) no no señora that was not me. I'm so sorry I don't know what you're talking about. But I'm so sorry it happened to you. I am really sad that anybody could treat you that way.

SIGNORA MARIANO

Well, who was it? You need to find out who it was because they need to be punished. Whoever would have the darkness in their heart to push past the blind woman and knock me over and then you all laugh and you walk away. As I was laying there, I I was saying who is that who is that and they said Ferdinand Santmaria! I've been so upset, so very upset, but you know I'm alone. I don't have my Joseph anymore to take care of me and my children they live so far away and so here I am trying to find my for myself and just have a little joy in the world. And instead I get pushed over in the street by you.

FERDINAND

I'm so sorry I'm oh my gosh I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry you went through that. I'm so sorry you were hurt. I'm so sorry you were alone. How can I help? How can I make it better? no one should be treated this way, but I do understand... I understand how you feel.

SIGNORA MARIANO

OK well I believe you I mean I guess I have to believe you because I couldn't see who it was and I didn't recognize the voices. But you seem like a good boy and I've always heard you are a good boy. In fact, I hear you are a little saint. If you're a little saint, can you pray that I get my site back ? Why don't you do that for me let's just see what happens. Why don't you pray I get my cell my side back you know that I love the above, and I have heard he helps the blind see.

FERDINAND

Well, Signora, I think when you hear the passages of helping the blind see the way I've taken it, and I the way that I think it is meant is that when we clear our conscious and enlighten our hearts with the word of the Lord and develop a deep belief in him, then it helps the spiritually blind and lost to "see" the way to salvation.

SIGNORA MARIANO

Yes, yes (the tone is much lighter and lively now) perhaps that is what the Bible means but I still would like to see if your prayers work and you know maybe a miracle could happen...can't hurt I can't go more blind.

FERDINAND

(Laughs) OK Signora if you promise not to tell anyone it could just be between us I will pray that you will again see.

(MORE)

FERDINAND (CONT'D)

But I'm not gonna be specific as to whether it's spiritually seeing or literally physically seeing. We will let God decide that.

SIGNORA MARIANO

Bravo boy - understood. Now I would love some sausage with onions and pepper and extra sauce.

FERDINAND

Yes going now!

Ferdinand's Parents walk up and greet Signora Mariano.

PIETRO

Ferdinand the kids are playing football in the field and want you to join them.

FERDINAND

I can't I am getting Signora Mariano some food and having lunch with her. But when I have finished eating and she's all settled, I will go join them. Mother and father can I get you some thing I'm getting sausages for Signora.

CECILIA - MOTHER

Ferdinando play we will take care of Signora.

FERDINAND

It's okay mother you know I prefer your company and hers, and in a few months I will be far away, so I'm spending all my time with the people who matter most.

SIGNORA MARIANO

Oh, that is right for Dayn. Congratulations. I did hear that you're finally going off to study to be a Passionist is that right? How wonderful of you such a fantastic ocean. Not easy either kind of one of the hardest orders, but good for you. We are all very proud of you. Well, I was a little mad at you for a while but I'm sorry I was casting blame Falsely upon you.

(MORE)

SIGNORA MARIANO (CONT'D)

I do still want to find out who that was (she says to herself). Anyways, yes, it is so amazing that finally you get to do what I hear you've always wanted to do and I've seen you in church your whole life since you were a little boy you must be so excited and proud.

FERDINAND

Yes, I have a lot of studying to do to catch up but I'm also getting a lot of help from Padre Don Antonio and momma and Aunt Checca. And you too papa thank you for giving me a little extra time away from The Mill even though I do cherish all of my time working there, Especially now, knowing that I have an out. It's funny how it's much more enjoyable, making rope with you all day, knowing that I actually still get to do what I've always dreamed of doing, and joining the Passionist.

He turns directly to his father,

looking deeply in his eyes.FERDINAND

I cannot thank you enough father. I can't believe I never asked you this shit, but what changed your mind?

PIETRO

I'm so moved by your gratitude for Eide and In. I think in this setting that is so loud and So joyous yet when I think of you leaving my heart is so heavy. Yet when I think of you staying, I know it's no longer right. And every time I think of it, I just want to weep that I made you so unhappy all those years Ferdinand. (Grabs Ferdinand's shoulders). My son I am so proud of you and it is giving me such peace in my heart that you are following your life calling.

CECILIA - MOTHER

This is a festival both of you need to celebrate and stop crying.

(MORE)

CECILIA - MOTHER (CONT'D)

Although I do love you both and I thank you so much P'Etra for letting your heart be warmed, and your soul be filled finally by Being open and listening and feeling what God's calling is. not just for for our son but for you.

SIGNORA MARIANO

What a beautiful family moment, amen! I miss my family and I'm sorry I haven't spent more time with yours but thank you for letting me be a part of this today. Ferdinand you're such an amazing wonderful child to come over and sit with me and now your family. And sorry if I kind of accused you of something you didn't do.

CECILIA - MOTHER

What happened...?

FERDINAND

It's all good mama it's all good.

CUT TO:

EXT. FESTIVAL - A FEW MINUTES LATER - SAUSAGE AND PEPPERS FOOD BOOTH

Ferdinand sees the cute girl who has a crush on him, Mary Pollozi. She walks up beside him to order. He won't look directly at her but out of his side-eye he is struck for a moment by her beauty. She makes him nervous but he remembers himself and shakes it off - almost like a chill.

FERDINAND

Hello Mary...

MARY POLOZZI

Hello Ferdinand, how are you today?

FERDINAND

Well and you, I am well thank you. Getting some food for the family.

MARY POLOZZI

Great but I just saw your brother and sisters down at the field fighting with Joey again.

FERDINAND

What? NO! Thank you...I'll be back!

Ferdinand runs across the festival through the horses, and behind the stage to a wide open field and sees Vincenzina, Vincenzo and Rosa walking up his way all dirty and ruffled. Vincenzo has a mark on his face like the beginnings of a black eye.

FERDINAND (CONT'D)

Children what now? When are you just going to let them be their own brutish selves and rise above?

Mary Polozzi now joins them.

VINCENZINO

First off don't call us children big brother, and secondly why would we let them be such stunads all our lives!...there's no reason to let anyone get away with that. I can't turn the other cheek like the Bible says. Does the Bible really even mean it?... well, I don't think they mean it when it comes to these hooligans. Anyway, Vincenzina gave them a really good right hook. So good work on that, you telling her she's so strong all the time she believes it and uses it.

ROSA

Well done little sister so proud of you. Since I'm taller than Joey, I felt like I shouldn't be beating on him although it's very tempting.

They all laugh.

FERDINAND

OK well you need to clean up you know what this will do to mother and father. And meet us at the food tent I will get you all sausages. We are sitting with Signora Mariano, who, by the way, thinks I pushed her over in the road the other day and left her there. She's insisting on knowing who it is... I just keep saying I'm sorry. Do not tell on them!

MARY POLOZZI

And why would you take the blame for something you didn't do? You are really something else. This town is going to miss you. You're like the only example of a true Christian... OK your mother is too. But seriously, why take the blame for something you didn't do? I don't understand how, or why you do it...

FERDINAND

I will miss this place too. I go in just 5 more months. So much to do before then... so much to do.

ROSA

Being here, without you, big brother is unimaginable. But you will be back and we will come visit and you will come back and be the town priest and Padre Domino was telling us again how he thinks someday you will be Pope! (She yells and they walk off to the food booth). Clear the way for Pope Santamaria!

CUT TO:

INT. FESTIVAL FOOD TENT

The Santamarias, Polozzis and Signora Mariano sit and eat and laugh together. Italian music plays as they make toasts and the late Fall sky glows in the distance.

INT. SANTAMARIA HOME - NIGHT TIME - FAREWELL DINNER

PIETRO

(Holds glass of red wine high) To my eldest son, Ferdinand, and to his health and his future and his faith. We will miss you and we are proud of you... Our boy has no interest in making rope. His only interest is in the church.

The crowded room cheers and toasts and laughs and smiles all around.

FERDINAND

Thank you all I am so happy...but there is much work to do. I have to finish my primary studies but I am so behind, so please pray for me. More than ever I have to focus and do nothing but study so I can catch up to the others in the seminary. A huge task but I know my God is with me and nothing has ever felt so right. I have 3 years of studies to do in a few months.

VINCENZINA

Brother I don't want you to leave but I will help you. I know this is what you are meant to do.

FERDINAND

Not only are you the strongest kid in town (flexes) but you are the smartest sister. So I will take you up on that fine offer.

VINCENZINO

Well I am happy to see you go brother (joking)...finally the town will talk about me, in a good way, instead of all about you "The Little Saint this...the Little Saint that...". Finally my beauty and strength (flexes and kisses muscle) will be appreciated.

ROSA

Yeah and now MAYBE you will have a chance with the Pollozi girl. She's only ever had eyes for Ferdinand despite his never noticing her and you drooling over her every move. You look enough like him that maybe, just maybe you have a shot...tiny one but nonetheless...

The Party continues around them. Rosa raises her glass to Ferdinand and the room follows and glasses clink and candles flicker.

SANTAMARIA KITCHEN

31 Signora Valvano just walks right in the back kitchen door. 31
Mama Cecilia, Checca and Vincenzina are getting more food on
to platters. Neighbors and Priests are mingling and eating
like kings. It's joyous.

SIGNORA VALVANO

Santamarias! Oh what a glorious
reason to celebrate! Ferdinand
where is Ferdinand? (She kisses
Checca, Cecelia and Vincenzina
cheeks). Ferdinand! Mama is here to
thank you herself for your prayers
and send you off with her big old
Italian lady blessings.

They push through revelers and find Ferdinand. He focuses
now on her mother as she sits in an empty chair and pulls him
closer.

SIGNORA VALVANO'S MOTHER

Ferdinand dearest boy. What you
have done for me, and what you are
able to do is so profound. Don't
forget that boy. Your prayers are
so strong and your faith even
stronger. God has blessed you. And
we who know you benefit from it. I
was dying Ferdinand and my Elisa
told me you were praying for me and
that brought me a new peace. I was
no longer afraid to go to The
Maker. But in that peace was
healing. I know in my heart your
prayers turned it all around.
You've blessed me. All the years
we have seen you in church, and
devoting so much time and penance
to Mother Mary and forgoing all of
the earthly pleasures these others
(she motions to everyone) partake
in has elevated you. You're
enlightened and not even a grown
man yet. Amen Ferdinand. I can't
wait to see all you do. You've
inspired me and all of us.

Mama Cecilia is with Signora Valvano and they raise a glass
to Ferdinand.

SIGNORA VALVANO

To your health! Come, come eat you
two.

(MORE)

SIGNORA VALVANO (CONT'D)

Our Heavenly Father wants both of you to mangia! For your health...

SIGNORA VALVANO'S MOTHER

Ferdinand promise you'll visit me when you come back.

FERDINAND

Oh Signora I will not be back...

SIGNORA VALVANO'S MOTHER

Well then I will come visit you!

FERDINAND

Yes please...

SIGNORA VALVANO'S MOTHER

Ferdinand you can not leave us all here without praying for all this iragazzi (bad) to become good. What will this town be without you to pray for us?

FERDINAND

I will be praying even harder for you and all in the badia during my studies and certainly when I reach my ultimate life goal and am a Passionist.

PADRE DON VINCENZO ROMANO

(Entering the room and hearing) Yes the boys prayers will be even stronger when he is our Pope!

PIETRO

Ah so your ulterior motive is seen after all Padre.

The room erupts in more toasting and celebration as Mama heaps pasta on everyone's plate.

EXT. TRAIN STATION AT AQUINO - ASH WEDNESDAY - FEBRUARY 15, 1899

33

Ferdinand and family do their goodbyes. He hugs Rosa and Vincenzino and they won't let go. He squeezes Vincenzina's muscle and practically bows to his father and mother. Other neighbors and friends give him sacks of food and treats for the journey. It's joyous but Cecilia, Rosa and Vincenzina all have huge tears running down their faces.

VINCENZINA

When you will be back brother?

FERDINAND

I won't be back but you will come to visit me little one.

ROSA

Don't say that Ferdinand, surely you will be back for all of the big life events. Like when you marry Vincenzino to Nicole! (laughter)

VINCENZINO

A man can dream...

MAMA CECILIA

Ferdinand my love you will be back yes but we will come to visit first. Very soon. Go, go focus on your studies. This is your dream, finally here. I am so happy and so proud of you my blessed boy. My Little Saint.

PIETRO

So proud and again I am so sorry it took me so long...

FERDINAND

Father no apologies. All happens in due time. I will catch up in my studies, I already am and I will make YOU so proud.

PIETRO

I will never forgive myself for holding you back son. Now I see, now I understand.

PADRE DOMASO

Goodbye family and friends. Ferdinand will soon return a Passionist priest... well in a few years but it will come soon enough.

FERDINAND

No I will never return but I will see them all again.

PADRE DOMASO

Yes boy, time to go we have a long journey on to the Passionists at Paliano!

Ash Wednesday -

Even the next morning as they watched his carriage pull away, they said he'll be back your return, and he insistently repeated that he would not. Monsignor Zompi said he leaves behind the highest steam in which he we hell hold him for his saintly example. He is surrounded by a luminous halo virtue. Rides with Padre Domaso

Visits Madonna Statue - St Mary di Portia

Don Vincent Romano places upon the foreheads of the congregations ashes, and says *Memento homo, pulvis es et in pulverem creverteris!* Dust thou at and unto dust thou shall return! Ferdinand receives ashes and prays to Mary statue that he loves.

He boards the carriage his father drives for the new life and comment that this carriage is like the one he could have had if he had taken the familia business... on to the Aquino Station for the Napoli-Cassino-Roma railroad

1898 - 16 years old

After completing his primary studies, under the direction of Don Antonio Roscia, he entered the novitiate of the Passionists at Paliano at the age of sixteen (February 15, 1899). After the year of probation, he was admitted to the profession of vows, with the name of Grimoaldo de la Purificación de Santa María. He moved to Badia Ceccano to continue his studies for the priesthood.

FESTIVAL or

ACT THREE

EXT. GARDEN OF THE MONASTERY AT CECCANO

34 Ferdinand, now known as Brother Grimoaldo de la Purificaci³⁴
(of the Purification), is now 18 years old. He's more mature
with hair cut very short and monk-like. He tends to a camelia
bush in the garden with intimate care and attention to each
flower and leaf. A bee buzzes the flowers and he listens
intensely to it's buzz (ASMR). He is then aware that two
older Passionist Priests in their long black robes pass by
quietly.

FERDINAND

Brother Guerra the camelia bush is
doing fantastic. It loves it here.

BROTHER GUERRA

(Nodding to Brother Grimoaldo as
they continue passing by) Yes, it
is a divine creation you have
planted and nurtured. Like your
studies... keep up the good work
Brother.

As they get further away he turns to the other Brother and
continues under his breath.

BROTHER GUERRA (CONT'D)

What he lacks in education he makes
up for in devotion and passion.

The other Brother nods and smirks a bit showing their
adoration of the young Passionist Brother Grimoaldo.

INT. CECCANO MONASTERY NIGHT

35 Brother Tomassino, 90, scuffles slowly down the long yellow³⁵
dimly lit by candle light, hallway of the quiet monastery.
The scuffling is loud in the otherwise empty hallways. He
passes Brother Grimoaldo's small bedroom and we see Grimolado
at his desk writing in his journal. The room glows warm, and
he is dressed in his heavy, course, black Passionist robe.
Grimoaldo sees that he is having a harder time than usual
walking. He gets up and takes his harm and slowly walks with
him.

PADRE TOMASSINO

I am sorry to wake you boy but I have to use the bathroom again and I know it's a bother how many times a night I go by your door.

FERDINAND/BROTHER GRIMOALDO

No it's not ever a problem I don't even hear you - (Padre Tomassino scoffs in disbelief) - okay, okay I have gotten used to it so I really don't hear it... (they both laugh quietly so as not to wake the others).

He helps him in to the bathroom and shuts the door behind him and waits for him. He looks up and down the candle lit hall with the statues of Mary and Jesus and religious art on the walls, and smiles. He loves where he is.

Suddenly we hear a loud thud and moan. He goes in and see Padre Tomassino on the floor of the bathroom and his robes are wet - he is mortified but can't get up. He is laying in his own urine. Brother Grimoaldo still whispering calms him and lifts him up with the wet robes and helps him walk back to his room - he gets him changed and takes him robes and rinses and rings them out and hangs them at his door. He sees Padre Tomassino is now soundly sleeping in his bed. He goes back his room and we see it's not 2AM and he sits at his desk again and picks up his pencil.

INT. GRIMOALDO'S BEDROOM - 6AM - SUNRISE

36 A ROOSTER CROWS IN THE GARDEN AS CLOSE UP OF GRIMOALDO'S EYES OPENING SUDDENLY.

He is tired but enthusiastically gets out of bed and makes up his room and gets dressed. The hall begins to fill with other Brothers and Priests and morning chanting begins. Brother Grimoaldo goes to Padre Tomassino's room to make sure he is okay and sees he is getting dressed. They all continue to the chapel as the chanting becomes singing and a morning mass begins. Grimoaldo is glowing with happiness as he sings out- but his eyes are red with little sleep.

BROTHER GRIMOALDO

(Singing a classic Passionist Hymn from this era)

INT. DAY - ANTONUCCI HOUSE - PONTECORVO

37 Joey Antonucci, one of the teens we recognize who torment 37 Ferdinand/Grimoaldo, is sitting next to the bed of his very ill little sister. His mother cries in the other room as a doctor consoles her and packs up his tools.

JOEY'S MOTHER

Joey! (through tears and entering the room) YOU PRAY to that boy who helps everyone - you pray to him now. How dare you torture him all these years! You brought this on our house. The Little Saint never did anything to bother all of you - he was always so good and kind and they say he has a deep relationship with the Madonna and God and you mocked him! ...for what? Being too good? You and your pazzo friends have brought shame and this upon us! Fix it. You go see him - you go pray to him and ask him for forgiveness. Save your sister!

JOEY

Ma! I don't know where he is - he is just gone. (Tears now in his eyes)

JOEY'S MOTHER

No no no! You find out!... you find him! He went to the monastery somewhere -the Passionist one in Ceccano maybe. You find him and ask him for forgiveness and prayers for your sister Elena. Gooooooo!

Joey runs down the stairs of his gorgeous Italian home and out the front door.

Plants Camelia & Joey Visit



EXT. MONASTERY AT CECCANO

38 Brother Grimoaldo (Ferdinand) is pruning his beloved little³⁸ camelia bush and stares in wonder at a bird that has landed on it and seems to be looking at him.

FERDINAND/BROTHER GRIMOALDO

What do you know little one? What are you trying to tell me? Maybe you have brought word from the heavens? Maybe you can go tell my mother and father I love them. My sisters and brother too. Oh and Aunt Checca (he laughs)! Tell father thank you...

He is interrupted by another Brother.

BROTHER GUERRA

Brother your friend is here.

Grimoaldo see the bully, Joey, and gives a look of surprise and confusion at first and then softens and smiles and shakes his hand welcoming him.

JOEY

(Quickly as if to just get it out) Ferdinand, I mean Brother, what is your name now? (almost uncomfortably), anyways I came to say sorry. My sister is sick and my mother is devastated and they believe your prayers have more power than ours. You know that right? You know all the elders in our town think you have some direct connection to the big Cannoli up there right? So now I need to tell my mom you will pray for my sister because if she dies we will be...he tears up and is angry. I'm so sorry all those years we have been terrible to you. But you didnt' make it easy you never talked to us or, or fought back... what is your deal? And now you are here and, and are you okay? Are you happy?

He grabs Brother Grimoaldo's robe and continues...

JOEY (CONT'D)

I mean wow man this is serious...this is rough! (Rambling) Do you have to wear this?

(MORE)

JOEY (CONT'D)

Why would you choose this? This is like sandpaper on your skin! And my sister...oh my God...

BROTHER GRIMOALDO

No need to use our Lord's name in vain Joseph. I know you are upset.

JOEY

Joey- everyone calls me Joey - do you not even know that? 18 years in the same little town and I think this is the first time we have really talked...

BROTHER GRIMOALDO

If you call this talking... (he makes himself laugh but respectful of Joey's pain).

JOEY

(He laughs)...oh my dio, yeah okay I will calm down. Let's talk...

BROTHER GRIMOALDO

Please come join us for lunch.



INT. MONASTERY AT CECCANO'S DINING ROOM - PONTECORVO JOEY VISITS

39

15 Priests and Brothers of all ages and sizes and races sit around a huge U-shaped table with a brilliant lemon yellow table cloth. Carafes of blood-red wine and warm loaves of Italian bread are scattered about amongst bottles of oil and vinegar. Huge plates of steaming white pasta are being brought in and served by 2 older Italian woman. A young girl carries in a huge green salad bowl and is dishing it out to the seated priests.

The elder priests sit at the head table under the window - outside the window we see the beautiful Italian hillside and gardens. It's a beautiful, luxurious Italian feast scene.

JOEY

Wow okay you eat well. Is it this every meal?...

BROTHER GRIMOALDO

Please sit here next to Padre Guerra. (In the middle of the table on right).

JOEY

Hello Padre Guerra, I'm Joey from Pontecorvo. Ferdinand Brother Grimoaldo and I grew up together. Well I was an asshole to him and now came to ask for forgiveness so he will pray for my sick little sister. I know, an asshole again. But my mother believes...

PADRE GUERRA

No not an a-hole at all... I am happy to hear your mother "believes". And we will pray for your sister. What is her name?

JOEY

(Turning to Brother Grimoaldo) God you're all so understanding... if only our school priests were so...

BROTHER GRIMOALDO

Haha he is you were just always testing him...Joe your sister is going to be okay, either way she is going to be okay. It's so scary I know but because your mother has faith you can go home and pray with her and comfort her by your faith. Do you believe in God? Do you believe miracles can happen? I see you in church all these years and you still go so there must be some belief there. The wonderful gift of faith is that when darkness comes, when life feels unbearable, when we have no one to turn to, when our obsessive worries won't let us go, we pray.

(MORE)

BROTHER GRIMOALDO (CONT'D)

When i was very little my mother said that someday when all else fails, and i am very alone, and there is no one else, God will be there. I have always been so deeply comforted by that. I now realize it was the greatest gift anyone can give anyone. Faith. Some say you don't even have to believe in God, you can just have faith in something, a power greater than ourselves... and maybe that too is true but I think it becomes all the same and is semantics. A power greater than ourselves to me is God. And my God looks like a white haired man in flowing white robes holding a cannoli. I love God and I love cannolis so it's what works for me. What does you God look like?

JOEY

Oh my god (Grimoaldo gives him a look to stop using "God" in vain), I mean oh my gosh, dunno - maybe my God looks like yours but is driving a Ferrari! (They, and Padre Guerra, laugh). Elena, her name is Elena.

They eat their lunch.

EXT MONASTERY FRONT DRIVEWAY - DAY - FAMILY VISIT

40 Brother Grimoaldo's parents and little sister Vincenzina 40 arrive. They tired and dusty walking up the road to the monastery carrying small suitcases. Vincenzina runs up and jumps in to her big brothers arms. Two older Brothers come out to greet the parents. Grimoaldo laughs and smiles with his sisters delight at seeing him, but is also somewhat reserved in his new found home. Pietro and Cecilia hug him whilst he is still holding his sister. They are overjoyed to see him. The Brothers look on and crack a smile. But his mother notices how rough the cloak is he wears and her smile quickly turns to a mother's-worried look.

MAMA

O' dios child your wearing a cloak of thorns... how my child can you stand this and in this heat...oh Ferdinand my love...

FERDINAND/BROTHER GRIMOALDO

Oh mother it's okay it's our
ascetic gesture to the heavens to
do penance in all things...

He notices how rough her hands are on his cheek and grabs and
kisses them and is somewhat alarmed.

FERDINAND/BROTHER GRIMOALDO (CONT'D)

Oh mama! Look at your poor twisted,
wasted fingers, which are deformed
from great labor. How much they
have labored for me!

VINCENZINA

Why won't you look at me?

PIETRO

We are proud of you...and we miss
you... your brother sends his love.
And the men at the market miss you
too... everyone wants to know when
you will come visit...

Padre Felice, a new friend to Grimoaldo enters. He notices
Vincenzina and greets her.

PADRE FELICE

(In a serious manner) Little one
your brother is famous here. We
call him Brother Colossus. His job
is to pull a huge stone through the
hallways at matins (early morning
singing before sunrise) to rouse
the brothers.

Grimoaldo smiles and shakes his head to his sisters
indicating this is not true. The Family walks in to the
monastery together arm in arm.

INT. CHAPEL AT CECCANO MONESTARY - LATE NIGHT

41 Candles fill the upstairs chapel and we see Brother Grimoaldo
places kernels on the kneeler. He kneels in front of a
Statue of Mary and does the perfect sign of the cross. He
takes out his little bible and flips through it but is
distracted. He looks up and talks to Mary.

FERDINAND/BROTHER GRIMOALDO

Yes Blessed Mother I understand.
But I must follow your Holy Son
Jesus in his sufferings.

(MORE)

FERDINAND/BROTHER GRIMOALDO (CONT'D)

I want only to prove I am worthy of
 your divine graces and love.
 Please bless me, please guide me
 and help me to do God's Will and
 deepen the faith of us here on
 earth. Some day to share the
 infinite love and the soul filling
 presence of your holy mercy with
 those who do not fully know it, or
 understand it. But in the meantime
 I must go deeper and find the
 ultimate point of enlightenment
 with your divine mercy.

A candle blows out on the altar. He notices and buries in
 face in his praying hands.



EXT MONASTERY GARDENS - LATE FALL - EARLY EVENING - OCTOBER
 31ST, 1902

Brother Grimoaldo walks with a handful of other Brothers, all
 gazing forward and down, through the late fall garden. The
 Autumn late afternoon sun sparks the remaining blooms and
 leaves now turning to look like they're on fire.

The Brothers black robes glow warmly, and their black wool hats pulled down to the ears and rosy cheeks, show us there's a chill in the air. We hear crunching leaves and dirt beneath their hard, leather shoes, they mumble in prayers and it's almost melodic. Some of them grab reeds of wheat and chew them as they walk and prayer, breaking their solemnity, but Grimoaldo keeps hands folded in prayer and a rigid devotion as the others are a bit lax.

A gardener is a few rows of plants over and greets the Brothers. Some give a nod, but at this Grimoaldo looks up and gives a big, warm smile and nod and prayers hands shake of a hello to the lonely gardener, which makes the man smile and keep hoeing. The Brothers continue to walk and chant.

BROTHER FELICE

Should we turn back Brothers it is supper time soon.

BROTHER GRIMOALDO

Let's finish with the The Way of the Cross.

BROTHERS

We adore you, O Christ, and we praise you, because we are inspired and energized by the memory of Your Passion, and so we take action with the crucified of today. We share in the joys and sorrows of our brothers and sisters who are marginalized, and so we announce the Gospel of the Passion of Jesus the Christ.

BROTHER GRIMOALDO

Thank you for that... (he grips his head with both hands at the temples and crumbles forward). Abba Father! Yes Father I hear you...(he looks up) I see you.

He passes out. The Brothers panic and the gardener drops his rake with intensity and runs over. They pick him up and all carry him, face up, as his robes drag along the garden flowers and path... the fiery sun is lower now and falling behind the nearby hill behind them. The rays are blinding.

INT. UPPER CHAPEL - CECCANO MONESTARY LATE AFTERNOON

42

Brother Grimoaldo sits alone in an elevated pew, looking 42 longingly towards a mesh hole in the wall. We hear the mass going on below and his Brothers praying and singing below.

We see a few lit candles and beautiful cross and small altar of gold. He holds a small bible and his hands shake. HIS face is red and we see he's feeling very, very ill as he can barely sit up. He tries to sing but his head is excruciating. The mass music fills the church and he tries to swoon in to it and sway with it for some comforting. It only lasts a minute and then he nearly passes out but catches himself. Another Brother comes up and helps him back to his tiny room and tiny bed.

BROTHER GRIMOALDO

I am happy to do the will of God.

INT. BROTHER GRIMOALDO'S BEDROOM

43

A small white room, dimly lit and barely big enough for a 43 single metal frame bed and a small desk. A tall window looks out to the beautiful garden. But the curtains are drawn tight. His big black cloak and hat hang on a rack. His bible and some of his writings are on the desk next to a small, simple cross. He's in bed shivering, eyes closed with big rough grey blankets covering him like a cocoon.

Two older Brothers look over him as a doctor enters.

PADRE GUERRA

Doctor the boy has been like this since you saw him 5 days ago. Will he not get better soon?

DOCTOR

He should soon, unless it's terminal but it doesn't seem to be. Just try to keep the cold rags on him and the elixirs I left for you to bring down the fevers.

PADRE GUERRA

We have been doing so, and they were working the other day but now they are not...and he's not eating or drinking. Is he in a coma?

DOCTOR

Oh you say they do not lower it anymore? Oh that is far more serious... we need to take some fluids and test. I fear meningitis...

The Brothers brows are furled and they shake their heads and lower their eyes at this.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

...because there is no cure. Yet.
So pray extra hard Brothers because
if nothing is bringing down his
fever... have you summoned the boys
family yet?

A WEEK LATER - MAGIC HOUR

44 Brother Grimoaldo's window blinds are up and the window is 44
open even though there is frost on it. Outside we can see it
is deep fall colors and turning to Winter. His room glows
white and he lays there, coma-like but with that Mona Lisa
smile. A Brother Felice comes in to touch his forehead and
it's not as hot as it's been.

BROTHER FELICE

Oh this is great Brother Grimoaldo
you are getting better dear friend.
Come on you can do this, every day
a little better... need you to pull
the morning stone soon... it's been
so boring around here with no one
to make me feel like I'm less holy
than thou...

Brother Grimoaldo's smile grows a little bigger as if maybe
he hears him but maybe not. Brother Felice makes a little
sign of the cross on Grimoaldo's forehead and lights his desk
candle and tucks him in and leaves the room.

The light outside and in glows gold, then red as if we are in
a timelapse to sunset.

BROTHER GRIMOALDO

Father...Holy Father...Blessed
Mother...I am here.

He turns his head to his candle and cross and opens his eyes
then fixes them on the cross on his wall. Then looking cozy
and bundled and calm, eyes still staring, he sublimely slips
on to the heavens. The room goes red with sunlight then
dark.



EXT. NEXT DAY - SANTAMARIA Home - WS FRONT OF HOUSE AND YARD

A Brother walks slowly up and gently knocks at the front door almost as if he hopes no one will answer. Vincenzina answers excitedly and lets him in. After a minute, we hear Mama Cecilia scream and a thud. The children and Aunt Checca start to wail.

MAMA CECILIA

(Horried and broken cry) No it is not true! Tell me it is not true! My boy is not dead! My boy, my blessed boy! Noooooooo...

The neighbors run over... Little Vincenzo runs out the front door. The sky goes dark. The windows are aflame with light.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE TOWARDS SAN BARTOLOMEO ON THE HILL.

45 The entire town, and then some, are dressed in black, 45 carrying crosses and candles and solemnly walking towards the church up ahead. The throngs of people quietly cry. Mama Cecilia and Papa Pietro are walking hand in hand with Rosa, Vincenzo and Vincenzina. Their heads are a mixture of hanging low and looking up to acknowledge those they pass by.

Signora Mariano approaches with the Nice Girl helping her walk without her cane that she still carries.

SIGNORA MARIANO

Santamarias I don't know what to say. Condolences are not enough. They boy was a Saint, he was the best of us. (She tears at her coat chest) my heart bleeds for you. Please tell me how I can help.

CECILIA - MOTHER

Walk with us and sit with us. You
 bless us and our pain with your
 company Signora Mariano.
 Ferdinand, (she catches herself)
 Brother Grimoaldo, is always with
 us. Just help us to remember that
 always...help tell his story.

They continue on in to the packed, candle lit church. Ave Maria is sung low by a boys choir. All the priests from his youth and seminary school and the Brothers from Ceccano are here together now. His casket lay open on the altar. His family approaches and Pietro sees a small piece of paper on his chest. It reads: Gabriel of the Venerable Dress". He recognizes it and kisses it then tucks it in his still sons pocket. Cecilia and the children kiss his forehead and cheeks. They don't want to let go but Padre Domaso begins.

PADRE DOMASO

We gather here this evening for a mass that our young Ferdinand, now Brother Grimoaldo would have said was of highest importance, to celebrate a life well-lived. And he would normally be standing beside me, eager to be sure that every sacred detail of the mass and sacraments was performed in the highest order. He held all of us to our highest potential, because he believed so deeply in the best of us all. But not today, no today he is before us. Or his mortal coil lays here as he most certainly is with God above us, he was instantly there on the fastest wagon to the heavens because every day of his young, blessed life were in preparation for that day. But I digress, let us begin...

The mass goes on and we scan the faces of the grieving. Some weep, some stare, some hold others. They are all there - every character we have seen, and the tough kids, Joey the Bully and crew, are trying to hide tears.

PADRE GUERRA

Brother Grimoaldo's sanctity and delight in being in front of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, sometimes time passing for hours, showing fervor in his recitation of the divine praises, is an inspiration to us all.

We are in the town village cemetery as they lower his casket in to the ground. It's not dark out and torches burn brightly as we hear Padre Guerra's VO continues:

PADRE GUERRA (CONT'D)

(VO) We will be forever touched by him and we imagine his story will touch generations to come. We believe we have lost a brother but have bought a Saint".

EPILOGUE

ENDING EPILOGUE

A quick edit of stock footage clips, and a mixture of VO from family members tells what happened next. We see some family members faces but quickly, and some speak in Italian with English Subtitles and the US contingent in English. Great graphic treatments tell us the years and names and titles of those we are seeing:

VINCENZINA MOVES TO NEW YORK - TOLD BY NEPHEW RICHARD

CECILIA JOINS THEM IN 1938 AND SAYS HER SON HELPED HER FIND HER WAY ACROSS THE OCEAN AND TO THE HOUSE- TOLD BY NIECE IRIS

WWII The Mary Statue Survives

HIS STORY SPREADS ACROSS THE PLANET AND HUNDREDS WRITE TO THE FAMILY AND THE VATICAN ABOUT THEIR PRAYERS BEING ANSWERED WITH HEAVENLY GRACES AND MIRACLES - TOLD BY NEPHEW ROBERT

VINCENZINA KNEELS IN FRONT OF HER HOME ALTAR WITH SOME FAMILY
- TOLD BY NEPHEW IN ITALY



1962 THE EXHUMATION INCORRUPTIBLE CEREMONY



FOOTAGE AND THEN HE IS INTERNED AT CECCANO - NOTE FOUND IN
POCKET - RELICS VO BY NIECE.

