

PIO

Written by:

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NOTE: Chronological and creative liberties were taken with historical events and characters for the sake of drama.

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FADE IN:

INT. CANCER WARD - MILAN - DAY - PRESENT

GIOVANNA RIZANNI, 80s, thick white hair, tiny smile, big brown eyes, peers up at the blue sky, the circumference of her neck bulges in the throes of terminal thyroid carcinoma.

A POST OFFICE WORKER steps in, young, tall, blond, barrel chest, square jaw. Takes a knee and puts his hand on her shoulder.

POSTMAN

Right on schedule, Signora Rizzani.

Giovanna smiles and hands him a letter.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY - WALKING

The energetic young postman climbs into his truck with an overflowing mail sack and peels out, leaving Giovanna's letter twirling in the wind, it floats off down the street.

EXT. PRESTINE LOOKING BUNGALOW - DAY

The letter tumbles to a stop at the high fashion heels of GIANCARLA, 30s, green eyes, long black hair, breathtaking to look at, if only for a moment, she picks up the letter and looks at it, then back at her house to see TWO KIDS watching her through living room windows.

Giancarla sighs, storms to her car and opens the door.

SLAM:

EXT. CELESTIAL SKY, HEAVEN - DAY - A VISION

Rays of red and white roses swirl from a resplendent prism of heavenly panoramas.

A TRANSFIGURED MONK, wrapped in jewels, floats, absorbed inside the vast expanse of unspeakable beauty, lost in prayer.

A Jet engine roars OFF SCREEN.

EXT. SKY - DAY - REALITY

Gray. A black, Messerschmitt 262 German bomber, tears through a string of Stratus clouds.

INT. FRIARY, KITCHEN - DAY

A fork juts from a plate of boiled greens and a half-drunk glass of lemon juice rests in the middle of a big wooden table.

Mugs, plates and silver ware hover, suspended in air by an invisible force.

INT. BOMBER JET - DAY

THE PILOT'S eyes widen like he just won the lottery. He screams through his air mask and rips off his goggles.

EXT. SKY - DAY

A BROWN ROBED FIGURE floats in the clouds a few feet from the jet's windshield, raising the hands and thrusting them downward.

The jet dips, and:

INT. FRIARY, DINING ROOM - DAY

Plates and mugs plummet, shattering all over the table.

EXT. SAN GIOVANNI ROTONDO - HILLSIDE - DAY

The jet soars over the Gargano mountains, meeting the sky in the distance at the end of a trail.

PILGRIMS AND SOLDIERS from all over the world lay with their hands over their ears and heads.

They creep to their feet and continue up the trail, lined with flowers and a profusion of Magnolia trees.

EXT. OUR LADY OF GRACE CHURCH - DAY

Graceful, plain, and flat faced with narrow stained glass windows, resting on a square that overlooks town proper and the gulf of the Manfredonia sea.

The Pilgrims and soldiers reach the church, taking note of a LINE OF PEOPLE leading inside a modest CAPUCHIN FRIARY to the church's right.

Everyone turns around at the top of the hill, catching their breath as it raises into the air in big billows.

They take in the sight way down below:

In the distance, not far from the beach, is the Foggia airfield, torn apart and black.

Before the airfield lays Foggia, San Giovanni Rotondo's neighboring town, reduced to smoldering rubble.

INT. FRIARY, CLAUSURA - DAY

Arched ceilings, cracked walls, whitewash.

Everything rattles and shakes as the jet continues overhead.

CLOSE-SHAVEN MEN, Sunday best, tremble with their eyes glued to the ceiling.

INT. FRIARY, FRONT WINDOW - DAY

WOMEN IN DRESSES stand like upright corpses, eyes averting everywhere.

The jet engine dissipates into silence.

Then, as if on cue, denouement: The women scramble for the entrance to the clausura, waving little notes in their hands.

The doorman-Brother, BROTHER NICOLA, 40s, wiry, thick blonde beard, thick glasses, hands out religious items wrapped in transparent paper.

NICOLA

This is yours, this is yours.

The women clamor around him, waving their little notes.

NICOLA (CONT'D)

Please, you are not allowed in here. Please close this door, I beg you! It was this draft that gave him that bad cold! The draft is very dangerous!

Brother Nicola grabs a bamboo cane and waves it at the women.

NICOLA (CONT'D)

But good women, this draft may give
him pneumonia. Step back, step
back!

INT. CLAUSURA - DAY

Several hands manage to slip through the clausura door,
waving the little pieces of paper.

The close-shaven men grab the pieces of paper, read them and
begin writing on the wall with black pastels.

The walls are covered in prayers.

INT. CORRIDOR, SLEEPING QUARTERS - DAY

A candle burns on top of a little night stand and lights up
the hall.

INT. CELL FIVE, DOOR - DAY

Riddled with little ink blessings and passages, most notably:
"The glory of the world has always sadness for a companion."

INT. CELL FIVE - DAY

A heap of bloody bandages, gauze, socks and gloves lay next
to a hamper.

A voice, sonorous, mutters in repetitious prayer.

A plaque of Saint Francis of Assisi rests next to a little
lamp on a desk.

INT. CORRIDOR, CLAUSURA - DAY - WALKING

A brown robe brushes against sandal-clad feet as they waver
and waddle past the close-shaven men and toward the chapel.

INT. CHAPEL, CONFESSIONAL - DAY

The confessional door shuts. Hushed voices echo throughout
the chapel.

INT. CONFESSIONAL - DAY

A gloved hand slides opens a little metal box filled with herbs and wafts the contents upward.

A kneeler creaks on the other side.

The hand opens the screen and raises upward.

PIO (VOICE)
In nomine Patris et Filii et
Spiritus Sancti. Amen.

As the hand finishes the sign of the cross we...

WIPE TO:

EXT. ITALIAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Dire. A mule trail at the base of a mountain leads to a cluster of stone huts and a small piazza at the entrance.

A church, small, stands above the rest of the buildings.

SUPER: Pietrelcina, Italy - 1887.

INT. SAINT MARY OF THE ANGELS CHURCH - DAY

DON SALVATORE PANNULO, 60s, archpriest, pale, large nose, caring brows, beady eyes, crows feet, plunges an infant, FRANCESCO FORGIONE, into a marble font of holy water.

GIUSEPPA FORGIONE, 20s, thin, brown skin, narrow wind burnt lips, white shawl, grey eyes, takes her baptized son in her hands.

Giuseppa hands Francesco to her husband, ORAZIO FORGIONE, 20s, handsome with strong facial features, thick black eyebrows, a crooked grin and dimples.

EXT. FORGIONE HOUSE, FARM - DAY

Orazio sits atop a Donkey, Giuseppa behind him, balancing a basket of vegetables, bread, and wine on top of her head.

ORAZIO
Should have enough for a passport
and a meal.

Giuseppa looks up at him, nods. He winks.

EXT. FARM - DAY

Orazio and Giuseppa stand in a clearing with pitchforks and lift straw into the breeze, separating stalk from grain.

White rings of dry sweat cover their garments.

FRANCESCO, 7, big round head of brown hair, teeter totters over to his parents with a pail of water from a well.

Orazio pats Francesco on the head and hands the pail of water to his wife to drink. Francesco runs off. Orazio smiles.

ORAZIO

Franci looks at me too much.

Giuseppa hands Orazio the pail and ladle. He sips.

GIUSEPPA

There's always this talk about the Erie railroad, about America. It seems he wants to say something to you. So, you have noticed, huh?

Orazio nods.

INT. FORGIONE HOUSE - NIGHT

Simple, efficient, charming. Little fireplace. Kind of like a fairy tale.

The year's harvest sits wedged in baskets beneath wooden beds.

FELICIA, MICHELE and GRAZIA, Francesco's siblings, close in age and mirroring their parents like Francesco, all join at the dinner table, taking turns to reach out to a stone platter of root vegetables, bread, olive oil and wine.

ORAZIO

I will help build a railroad. You know why?

Giuseppa and family groans.

GIUSEPPA

Because your mother and I cannot read or write, but our children will, and I am going to pay for it, God willing.

Francesco raises his eyes to the ceiling.

GIUSEPPA (CONT'D)
Why does he look up when we mention
Christ?

ORAZIO
Who knows, he just looks up. Poor
little Christian.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

Orazio takes Francesco by the hand and leads him down the
hall toward the classroom.

DOMENICO TEZZANI, teacher, erect, dour, quiet, greets Orazio
and looks down at Francesco.

Francesco's smile wipes off his face like a slate, he grips
his father's hand tight.

Orazio looks down at Francesco then up at Tezzani, shrugs,
smiles.

EXT. SCHOOL, HILLSIDE - DAY

Francesco runs with a group of CHILDREN as they bound for the
wood line, picking up sticks and rocks.

Francesco slows to a stop and looks up, watching the kids
disappear over the hill.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Orazio swings a pick axe, or "zappa," into a boulder and
splits it into stones. Giuseppa stacks them into a pile.

Orazio picks up the zappa, looks down at the blade, sparkling
with minerals.

ORAZIO
The zappa should be the flag of
Italy.

He swings again.

ORAZIO (CONT'D)
I am afraid that Francesco will not
do well in school because of Signor
Tezzani. Why does he not like him?

Giuseppa shrugs and smacks a rock down on top of the basket.

GIUSEPPA

Who likes him? He said he was going to be a priest and studied to be a priest. But when it came time to be a priest, he said he wasn't going to be. Now, what is he? Ex-priest.

Orazio points up toward the hill. Giuseppa turns.

EXT. HILL - DAY

Francesco plunges a crudely made crucifix of twigs into the ground and curls up in front of it.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Orazio and Giuseppa marvel at their son in the distance.

ORAZIO

Poor little Christian.

Orazio kisses Giuseppa on the cheek, she laughs and swats at him.

EXT. PIAZZA - DAY

Orazio makes his rounds to the family in front of a big fountain in the middle of the town square. He kisses his children, one by one, then Giuseppa.

Orazio steps up on a wheel and into a horse-drawn carrozza.

FRANCESCO

I pray for you!

Orazio smiles and climbs on board.

Giuseppa gathers her children at her skirt, her hands moving from head to head, her eyes filling with tears.

A townswoman, short, bow-legged, taps Giuseppa on the shoulder, peering up out of a SILK BONNET.

SILK BONNET

You are so quiet for your husband's departure.

GIUSEPPA

It's enough that they have lost their father.

Should they also see that their
mother has gone to pieces?

Orazio stands up in the distance, balancing himself on the
wobbling cart, waving goodbye.

TAZZANI (O.S.)
Since your husband has found work
in America, you have no money
troubles, of course.

INT. TEZZANI'S OFFICE - DAY

Giuseppa and FRANCESCO, 10, uniform, bow tie, sit across from
Tezzani.

TAZZANI
But there are other difficulties, I
am sorry to say. Francesco is good
only to watch the goats. Put a
zappa on his shoulder and you will
see he will be a happy farmer.

GIUSEPPA
Signor Maestro Tezzani, how will I
let Don Salvatore write this to my
husband? It would crush him.

TAZZANI
For the same reason that you cannot
write your husband yourself.

Giuseppa grits her teeth and nods.

GIUSEPPA
I understand, Signor Maestro. Thank
you.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD, VILLAGE - DAY

Bells, bright and sharp, ring out through the air. Francesco
leaps and skips along the road as NEIGHBORHOOD KIDS look at
him and talk and point.

Francesco slows to a stop, takes a deep breath and then
realizes it's completely silent.

He turns around to face the kids, they fall over laughing at
him.

Don Salvatore, the big priest who baptized him, hurries to
catch up with the kids after speaking to A NEIGHBOR.

DON SALVATORE
What is it, Franci?

FRANCESCO
I heard bells ringing loudly and they are laughing because they do not hear them.

DON SALVATORE
Bells? What bells?

FRANCESCO
Church bells right here. I think a great church will be built. A big house, for monks with beards!

Don Salvatore plays along.

DON SALVATORE
A great church? Right here?

Francesco nods. Don Salvatore takes note of his conviction.

DON SALVATORE (CONT'D)
If it is the desire of Heaven, it would be the greatest fortune for Pietrelcina, Francesco.

Francesco keeps on. Don Salvatore watches him, concerned.

DON SALVATORE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Giuseppa. I cannot truly say that I understand Francesco very well.

EXT. SAINT MARY OF THE ANGELS CHURCH - DAY

Giuseppa sits next to Don Salvatore on marble steps, enjoying little cups of Espresso.

GIUSEPPA
Who understands Franci, Don Salvatore? He sits and builds a cross with sticks.

OTHER PREISTS AND LAYPEOPLE chat, leave or mosey around the courtyard. Giuseppa sips, people watches and smiles.

GIUSEPPA (CONT'D)
I say to the women at the fountain that he is your best altar boy.

Don Salvatore thinks on that, rubs his chin.

DON SALVATORE

This is true. Yes, he is my best altar boy.

GIUSEPPA

My son has intelligence, courage and compassion, Don Salvatore. Something to sell. So, tell me what is wrong.

DON SALVATORE

He longs for Orazio. Perhaps it is this longing that distracts him. He's all mixed up with the church bells he hears, and a big monastery that he thinks will be built in Pietrelcina. He seems to have replaced his father with Our Father.

They cheers to that.

EXT. HILLSIDE, TOP OF TOWN - DAY

Francesco plops down on a boulder beneath a tree overlooking Pietrelcina.

He peers down at WOMEN TENDING GOATS, on the edges of barren trails, dressed in shawls, black handkerchiefs flapping at their faces.

Goats bleat in the distance.

Francesco cocks his head as the bleating becomes dull, echoed and completely silent.

Francesco's eyes blast open as the grass is blown against the earth horizontally, touching it.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY - A VISION

An ANGELIC BEING, near-indecipherable, hovers above the hill, absorbing the grass and sky with white sparks, reflecting a humanoid form.

The angelic being radiates a brilliant gold, blue and green, speaking, as it were, in a language that is best described as a kind of rhythmic, bell-like chime.

ANGELIC BEING (SUBTITLE)

Come with me, Francesco. Look.

Francesco trembles, transfixed. A smile slowly stretches across his face as he is lifted up above the tree, higher, into the sky.

Francesco looks down at a wide open space, like a pasture, and sees a MULTITUDE OF MEN divided into two groups.

Machine gun fire and tortured screams cut through the air.

The angelic being holds Francesco up and points at the military style blockade which storms in place on the left: contorted and horrendous, like shadows, dressed in black, a twisted aspect, roaring and screaming.

Francesco shudders and jerks right: men, much taller, aflame in dazzling white, deflect the blows from the opposing side.

Francesco bursts into tears.

ANGELIC BEING (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)
You will have to fight this man.

The angel lowers Francesco between the two groups.

Francesco implodes in horror as he sees, storming over the hillside between the two groups, a DARK HUMANOID FIGURE, a hideous black monster, strange, rapidly advancing.

FRANCESCO
No! Please! Help me! I can't!

The grandeur of the ecstatic panorama vanishes completely as the HAND OF CHRIST lowers onto Francesco's shoulder. It's not resplendent or angelic, but completely of the flesh.

CHRIST (VOICE)
If you fight with this demon to the death, with countless assaults all along the way, you will be rewarded with a crown that is splendid, a crown that is incomprehensible. I'll always be close to you and help you so that you will succeed in overcoming him.

Then like a lightning bolt, the vision crashes back into Francesco's mind's eye. He shudders in horror.

Just as the dark figure reaches out to Francesco with a claw dripping fire, it screams in pain and recoils, swivels and charges the mountain top with leathery black wings.

The shredded black skin of the skull touches the clouds as it -- SHOOMP -- disappears over the crest.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Francesco, wakes, drenched in sweat. He gets up on his knees and prays.

INT. FORGIONE HOUSE - DAY

Giuseppa, holding back tears, stuffs a nap sack with a host of uncomplimentary things; bread, underwear, paper, a carrot.

She hurries over to FRANCESCO, 18, skinny, a thick brown beard runs along the edge of his chin from ear to ear, a thin mustache rests beneath a narrow nose. His hair is short, eyes big and brown, expressive. He's handsome like his father.

Giuseppa hands Francesco the valise and kisses his cheeks.

Francesco smiles, slings his valise over his shoulder and is greeted by Don Salvatore at the top of the driveway.

DON SALVATORE

For Neapolitans, a friar of their own region is rare. Your decision is in the realm of great courage, Francesco.

Don Salvatore and Francesco wave goodbye to Giuseppa and walk off down the road.

FIVE BLACK CLAD WOMEN walk past the house with rosaries, smiling at Giuseppa.

EXT. PIAZZA, FOUNTAIN - DAY

Don Salvatore and Francesco approach a horse-drawn carrozza as it lulls to a stop at the entrance.

DON SALVATORE

Franci, you are going into secluded meditation. Promise me you will not completely forget and abandon your body for your soul. Even the most devout monk, who needs so little, still needs his strength. Alright?

Francesco nods, climbs onto the cart and he's off.

DON SALVATORE (CONT'D)

Courage, Franci.

Don Salvatore waves.

INT. FRIARY CHAPEL - DAY

FRANCESCO, 20s, brown habit, lays prostrate on a stone floor with the signature three-knotted cord of the Franciscan order hanging at his side.

INT. FRIARY CHAPEL, ALTAR - DAY

Francesco kneels, holding the hands of PADRE BENEDETTO, heavy, mutten chops, bald, glasses, dignified.

FRANCESCO

I, Frate Pio, swear to live all the days of my life in obedience, without anything of my own, and in chastity...(indistinct).

INT. FRATE PIO'S CELL - DAY

Frate Pio kneels and folds his hands in prayer.

FRANCESCO

Infinite praise and thanks to you, my God. For you have hidden me from the eyes of everyone. A most lofty mission You have entrusted to Your son. A mission that is known only to You and to me.

VOICE (WHISPER)

Francesco..Franceeesscoooo.

INT. FRIARY, DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Padre Benedetto and SOME BROTHERS sit around the table, Frate Pio is not present, only a meal in front of a chair.

BENEDETTO

Where is Frate Pio?

INT. FRATE PIO'S ROOM - DAY

Frate Pio lays curled beside the bed, coughing up blood into a handkerchief.

Padre Benedetto enters, looks up, jaw dropping, trembling.

The iron curtain rod hangs from a hook above the window, twisted into a spiral.

Frate Pio's mattress stands flush to the wall.

BENEDETTO
I'll send a letter to your father.

A SERIES OF SHOTS - ORAZIO, FULL PANIC MODE - DAY/NIGHT

- 1) Orazio boards a boat.
- 2) Orazio boards a train.
- 3) Orazio boards a bus.

INT. FRIARY, WAITING ROOM - DAY

Orazio sits down and lowers his head, his calloused hands resting on his knees.

Padre Benedetto steps out and they trade a look.

BENEDETTO
Mr. Forgione.

ORAZIO
Orazio, Padre Benedetto, please.
Call me Orazio.

BENEDETTO
It seems Frate Pio has not touched
food for twenty one days. It is
incredible.

Orazio shoots up out of the chair and his white-crusted slouch hat flings right out of hands.

ORAZIO
Twenty one days?

BENEDETTO
You have to take him home.

ORAZIO
He has not eaten because of the
sickness?

BENEDETTO
His appetite is very poor, but
aside from that, there is something
else....Frate Pio does not eat
because he prays without
interruption.

He continues to pray as if he did not need anything but prayer itself as nourishment. We have...begged him to stop praying and take some food. We love him, but he has refused to interrupt his fasting. We wonder how he keeps the strength to rise from his knees.

ORAZIO

Has the boy offended you then? Can he never return?

BENEDETTO

You misunderstand me, Orazio. Frate Pio offends no one, only his own health. If he were to recover, we would welcome him back and with all our hearts.

Padre Benedetto exits and returns with Frate Pio, his hair now groomed into a tonsure, sunken cheeks, eyes deep in the rim of his sockets, looking at the floor.

BENEDETTO (CONT'D)

Frate Pio, look up. You can freely speak to your father.

Orazio and Frate Pio embrace, bursting into tears.

ORAZIO

But my son, you have reduced yourself like this? No food for twenty one days? Hunger will kill you! How can it be, all those days without food?

Orazio looks over at Padre Benedetto, nods.

EXT. FORGIONE HOUSE - DAY

DOCTOR FERRANTE, 70s, white cue-bald hair, sympathetic, hunched, knocks on the door. Orazio answers. Ferrante follows him in.

ORAZIO

High fevers strike him in the evening and then subside every morning, on the hour.

INT. FRATE PIO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ferrante lifts a stethoscope from Frate Pio's chest. Giuseppa puts her palm to his forehead.

FERRANTE

No sign of tuberculosis, for now.
He can't spend hours locked in his
room, praying and studying, no
matter how he wishes to.

Ferrante switches his attention back to Frate Pio.

FERRANTE (CONT'D)

You must get out of the house and
walk in the country air, and
exercise to improve your appetite.
Is there anything else I should
know about?

Giuseppa looks at the ground. Orazio picks up on it.

INT. FORGIONE HOUSE - NIGHT

Frate Pio slurps up a bowl of sautéed turnips, hot peppers and radish leaves. He sucks it down, ravenous, drinks the broth, wipes his mouth, sighs, lets out a little burp.

PIO

Exactly what I wanted. Thank you,
mamma.

Frate Pio slaps his hands on his knees and shoots up out of the chair, he seems like a different person, jovial. Near a glow.

PIO (CONT'D)

Well, then. Off to pray.

He smiles and walks over to the spare bedroom, shuts the door and latches it.

Giuseppa looks at the ground.

ORAZIO

Giuseppa, what is it?

--- CRAGKLLLLL -- Orazio and Giuseppa jump back as an other worldly explosion blasts through the house, coming straight from Frate Pio's room.

Orazio runs to his room and bangs on the door.

ORAZIO (CONT'D)
Francesco? Frate Pio, what is it?

INT. FRATE PIO'S ROOM - NIGHT

Frate Pio picks himself up off the floor, rolls his arm in his socket, cocks his head and jaw.

PIO
It's nothing Papa. No more noises tonight.

Frate Pio does the sign of the cross.

EXT. FORGIONE HOUSE - DAY

Frate Pio steps outside and takes a deep breath of fresh air, smiles.

INT. FORGIONE HOUSE - DAY

Orazio walks past Frate Pio's room and taps his knuckle on the door.

ORAZIO
Franci? You in there?

Orazio pushes the door open.

The room remains put in order, but the window panes are smashed, the desk and chair lay pushed into a pile of scraps, black ink is splattered across the wall and ceiling.

Orazio rushes outside.

ORAZIO (CONT'D)
Giuseppa! Giuseppa!

EXT. FORGIONE HOUSE - NIGHT

Orazio leaps out onto the stoop.

ORAZIO
Giusepp --

He cuts himself short, waves at NEIGHBORS passing by, catches his breath through a smile.

He looks up the hill and sees Giuseppa working, decides against it.

EXT. SAINT MARY OF THE ANGELS CHURCH - DAY

Before Frate Pio can make it up the steps to the church, Don Salvatore is already out the door, he hugs Frate Pio tight and gets a good look at him.

DON SALVATORE
 You don't look ill to me, Frate Pio. "Frate Pio!" Humble choice, choosing the patron saint of your hometown!

Frate Pio smiles. Motions toward the direction of home.

PIO
 Would you come for Dinner?

DON SALVATORE
 Is Giuseppa's cooking?

EXT. ROAD, FORGIONE HOUSE - NIGHT - WALKING

Don Salvatore glances inside the window of the family home and then to Frate Pio, stops him.

DON SALVATORE
 When you are ordained, would you agree to be a priest in Pietrelcina? Your mother wants to know. It would only be wise, Frate Pio. Considering how often you have felt much better here.

PIO
 No.

DON SALVATORE
 Anyway, there is time.

Frate Pio smiles.

PIO
 It will be the same answer later, Uncle 'tore. There are today ten thousand monks. I am one of them, and one of them I will be up to the last.

Frate Pio's smile fades as he motions toward the house.

Don Salvatore and Frate Pio turn the corner and walk down the driveway, no sooner than halfway to the door, Giuseppa rips it open and screams bloody murder.

Orazio sprints across the driveway and grabs Giuseppa and presses her into his chest.

ORAZIO
 Francesco. Please, what has
 happened? Tell me.

A demonic roar belches out of the house.

ROAR (INSIDE)
Here comes the Holy!

PIO
 Yes, I am here.

Frate Pio walks inside, calm. Giuseppa grabs for her son. He turns around.

PIO (CONT'D)
 I must always remain alone while
 these disturbances take place.

He looks back at Don Salvatore, who is stunned.

Frate Pio makes his way inside the house.

Orazio storms after him inside.

INT. FORGIONE HOUSE, FRATE PIO'S ROOM - NIGHT

Frate Pio shuts himself in his room and latches the door. Deep, violent, guttural laughter cuts through the walls from the other side and through the house as Orazio bangs on the door.

ORAZIO
 What is it? What happens? Tell your
 father what happens! Is the devil
 in my house?

Cursing and screaming reaches an incomprehensible pitch from the infernal hegemony on the other side.

PIO (FROM OTHER SIDE)
 Viva Jesu! Viva Jesu! Viva Jesu!

A thud. Silence.

EXT. FORGIONE HOUSE - NIGHT

Giuseppa trembles. Orazio comes back out and holds her.

GIUSEPPA
Every night at nine-thirty.

ORAZIO
It is said that one finds strange
things in America, but then I come
home and find even stranger things.

Don Salvatore heads inside.

Orazio and Giuseppa turn and follow.

INT. FRATE PIO'S ROOM - NIGHT

Don Salvatore stops in the hallway, goes to knock, hesitates.

DON SALVATORE
Frate Pio?

PIO
Come in, Uncle 'tore.

Don Salvatore pushes the door open to find Frate Pio sitting
at the edge of his bed.

PIO (CONT'D)
He's like a mad dog tied to a
chain. Beyond the limit of the
chain, the dog cannot go, so you
should stay far from where the
chain reaches you, or you will be
bitten.

Orazio and Giuseppa huddle in behind Don Salvatore.

INT. FRATE PIO'S ROOM - DAY

Frate Pio gathers his belongings and puts them inside a
wooden milk crate: a brown habit, rosary, porcelain Blessed
Mother, school books, Bible and a Crucifix.

Frate Pio plunges a rag into a bucket of soapy water and
scrubs at the ink splattered against the wall and ceiling.

EXT. FORGIONE HOUSE, FARM - DAY

Frate Pio lugs his box of belongings up the hill toward a
little straw hut, spots Giuseppa standing in the field, still
as a pond.

Frate Pio smiles.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Giuseppa blows a kiss toward the mountains.

EXT. BOAT - OPEN SEA - DAY

Orazio blows a kiss toward Italy as it disappears behind rolling waves.

INT. STRAW HUT - DAY

Frate Pio slings his brown habit over one of the rafters, places his rosary and Blessed Mother figurine on a stool, along with his Bible, tucks his school books away in the corner against the wall, hangs the crucifix and kneels down before it.

INT. FORGIONE HOUSE - NIGHT

Giuseppa puts her ear to the door, looks around and pushes it open.

She sees that the room has been cleared and rushes to the front door.

GIUSEPPA
Frate Pio??

EXT. FORGIONE HOUSE - NIGHT

Giuseppa runs the circumference of the house.

GIUSEPPA
Francesco! Dinner!

She puts her hands on her hips, looks up at the straw hut, a faint candlelight trembling in the opening above the door.

Frate Pio screams inside.

Giuseppa tears up the hill.

INT. STRAW HUT - NIGHT

Giuseppa enters and sees Padre Pio, kneeling on the ground in front of the crucifix, balling his hands and grasping at his scalp.

GIUSEPPA

Frate Pio! What are you doing?

Frate Pio drops to the floor.

She moves to him, peers over his shoulder and shrinks back in terror.

Frate Pio's face is completely contorted, not in any way demonic, but desperate and agonized.

EXT. STRAW HUT - NIGHT

Giuseppa sprints down the hill screaming.

INT. STRAW HUT - NIGHT

Frate Pio forces himself back up onto his knees, closes his eyes and --

EXT. MANSION, GARDEN - UDINE - NIGHT

-- Opens them looking straight at the name "Rizzani" engraved into a gold plaque on a stone wall covered in ivy.

Deep barks bellow throughout the backyard as Frate Pio rises and looks down to find himself standing in the center of a mulch bed, surrounded by Marigolds and Lilies.

Frate Pio steps out onto the grass as FOUR NEAPOLITAN MASTIFFS tear around the corner of the towering brick structure in full instinct mode, foaming at the mouth and snapping at him.

Frate Pio jerks his head up as a female scream shoots out of an open window above.

Frate Pio takes off, the mastiffs snap and nip at his heels and calves as he rears around the mansion.

EXT. RIZANNI ESTATE, FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

Frate Pio reaches the steps and finds himself blocked by a group of FREE MASONS, brooding in front of the door in full ceremonial garb. They don't notice him.

A PASTOR, rail thin, tall, lumbers down the driveway and around the free masons to get to the door, they block him.

PASTOR

Please! Leonilde begged me! She
begged me!

THE CASTALDO, the leader, pink, grizzled, takes a good long
look at the pastor.

CASTALDO

Let the priest enter. You may stop
him from assisting Giovanni, but
you cannot stop him from baptizing
the child.

They part just enough for the pastor to enter, Frate Pio
gulps and follows, they don't notice him.

The female screams increase in intensity and volume as Frate
Pio and the pastor enter the house.

INT. RIZANNI ESTATE , STAIRS - NIGHT - BOUNDING

Frate Pio reaches out for the pastor's shoulder but he's just
out of reach.

PIO

Father, what is happening?

The pastor enters a room to the left of the hall, Frate Pio
follows and peers inside to find the pastor sitting at the
heels of a dying man, GIOVANNI RIZANNI, pale, thin, a deep
bronchial retch forcing its way out of his lungs.

The Pastor places his hand on Giovanni's head.

Frate Pio swivels as he hears an infant wailing behind him, a
shimmering blue ray of light pours out of the room and fills
up the hallway. Frate Pio cups his hand over his brow and
steps inside.

INT. DELIVERY ROOM - NIGHT

LEONILDE RIZANNI, 50s, dark brown sweat pressed hair to the
temples, green eyes, a rare beauty, holds her infant child,
GIOVANNA RIZZANI in her arms.

MARY'S VOICE (SUBTITLES)

I entrust this creature to you.

Frate Pio stops, frozen stiff as A FLOWING, STAR-RIDDEN SHAWL
caresses his shoulders, an astounding, shining, navy blue,
shielding a flowing shock of resplendent hair, as the voice
continues in hushed, repetitious chants.

MARY'S VOICE (SUBTITLES) (CONT'D)

She is a precious stone, still in a rough state; work on her, polish her, render her as brilliant as possible, because one day I wish to adorn myself with her.

PIO

How can this be possible? For I am still a poor clerk and I do not know if one day I will have the good fortune of becoming a priest. How can I care for this child since I am so far away from here?

MARY'S VOICE (SUBTITLES)

Do not doubt, Franci. She will come to you, but first, you must meet her in St. Peter's in Rome.

Frate Pio follows Leonilde, fresh with child as she lurches toward the door and across the hall, blood running around her bare calves.

GIOVANNI (FROM ROOM)

My God, My God, forgive me!

INT. GIOVANNI'S ROOM - NIGHT

The Pastor blesses Giovanni as he looks up and sees his daughter and wife. Leonilde hands Giovanna to Giovanni and he dies with a smile on his face.

INT. STRAW HUT - NIGHT

Don Salvatore and Giuseppa enter and find Padre Pio back on his knees again, hands clasped and raised toward the heavens. Perfectly serene. Meditating. His cheeks lined with tears.

PIO

The pain is all gone. It is nothing, don't worry.

Frate Pio does the sign of the cross and gets up off the floor, turns to them and smiles.

DON SALVATORE

But what is it, Frate Pio?

PIO

My hands were burning, right here in the palms.

DON SALVATORE

Burning?

Don Salvatore leaves the hut, Giuseppa follows.

EXT. STRAW HUT - NIGHT

Don Salvatore fights a smile as he makes his way down the hillside. Giuseppa catches up to him. He turns.

DON SALVATORE

Let the Lord do what He wishes.

GIUSEPPA

You don't understand, Don Salvatore. His face was --

DON SALVATORE

-- Glowing. It was glowing.

Don Salvatore turns back around.

GIUSEPPA

Tell me what the burning is, please!

DON SALVATORE

Shhhhh!!! Giuseppa, Frate Pio has received the invisible stigmata; the secret of the Lord. I for one wish to keep a secret a secret. If the Lord wanted anyone to know, he would have made them visible.

Giuseppa watches Don Salvatore reach the road.

She turns back to see Frate Pio walking into the house.

INT. FORGIONE HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Frate Pio winces as he struggles to lower his spoon into a bowl of piping-hot vegetable stew.

He manages get the spoon inside the bowl, but as he lifts it to his lips his hand drops it after a trembling battle with gravity.

The spoon clangs against the table.

Frate Pio rubs his hands together and grits his teeth.

PIO
 Sorry, mamma.

Maria's eyes well up with tears and she smiles, rubs her son on top of his head.

PIO (CONT'D)
 Come, on, Mamma! My tonsure!

INT. CATHEDRAL - BENEVENTO - DAY

MONSIGNOR PAOLO SCHINOSI, archbishop, serene, slender, regal, bald, places his hands on Frate Pio's head as Frate Pio kneels and becomes...

PADRE PIO, 23, his face is sunken by sickness but glowing, and his beard is fuller.

SCHINOSI
 ...The Lord Jesus Christ, whom the
 Father anointed with the Holy
 Spirit, guard and preserve you,
 that you may sanctify the Christian
 people and offer sacrifices to God.

INT. CATHEDRAL, PEW - BENEVENTO - DAY

Giuseppa, Michele, Felicia, Grazia and Don Salvatore look up toward the altar, proud, moved.

INT. CATHEDRAL, ALTAR - BENEVENTO - DAY

Padre Pio assists Monsignor Schinosi with Mass, candle light shines in his eyes, blurred with tears.

EXT. PIETRELCINA, PIAZZA - DAY

Padre Pio enters town with his family and Don Salvatore.

TOWNSFOLK toss money and "raffioli" (Italian candy) at them, hoot and holler.

EXT. SAINT MARY OF THE ANGELS CHURCH - DAY

Don Salvatore picks up a newspaper in the stoop by the chapel doors. HEADLINE: ARCHDUKE FERDINAND MURDERED, THREATS OF WAR.

The bowlegged lady with the silk bonnet approaches with a FEW OTHER WOMEN. They stand there and watch Don Salvatore read.

SILK BONNET
What is wrong, Don Salvatore?

Don Salvatore rolls up the newspaper and stuffs it in his back pocket.

DON SALVATORE
Nothing, signora.

They sigh and trade eyes with him.

DON SALVATORE (CONT'D)
Is something troubling you, good women?

The lady in the silk bonnet peers past the shoulder of Don Salvatore and into the church, Padre Pio kneels in the front pew.

SILK BONNET
We're country people, Don Salvatore. We have landowners who are pressed for our work.

DON SALVATORE
I know you must work. What's the matter?

OTHER WOMEN
Padre Pio --

Don salvatore shushes them, turns to the chapel, then back to the ladies.

DON SALVATORE
Go on.

SILK BONNET
Good Mass goes fast, and surely he says a good Mass, but it never ends. We do not know what to do; wait for the end, or be late for work. We can't wait this long during the warmer season. Will you say something to him? We love him, but, please, Don Salvatore.

Don Salvatore nods, heads inside.

INT. SAINT MARY OF THE ANGELS CHURCH - DAY

Don Salvatore approaches Padre Pio and notices his shoulders bobbing. As he genuflects he sees that racking sobs pulse through Padre Pio's body.

DON SALVATORE
Padre Pio, what is wrong?

PIO
It's too much, Uncle 'tore.

DON SALVATORE
What? What is too much?

PIO
San Giovanni Rotondo, the hospital,
it's too much. I'm not worthy.

Don Salvatore puts his hand on Padre Pio's shoulder.

DON SALVATORE
I have asked the Capuchins to
release you from the hard rules of
the order. You stay in Pietrelcina.
It will be a life better suited to
your health.

PIO
I was five years old when I swore
my loyalty to San Francesco. I
cannot take my word back.

DON SALVATORE
Padre Pio, It's cold and humid in
the winter and hot and heavy in the
Summer. It'll destroy you. Why
would you ever go to San Giovanni
Rotondo?

PIO
Obedience compels me, father.
Nothing else. I'm sorry.

Padre Pio forces himself up off the pew and genuflects, makes his way toward the sacristy, turns.

PIO (CONT'D)
Don Salvatore. Did you want to tell
me anything?

Don Salvatore shakes his head.

INT. SAINT MARY OF THE ANGELS, ALTAR - DAY

Padre Pio lifts the holy host and brings it back down to the plate. Slow. Methodic.

Padre Pio leans against the altar, outside of himself, his eyes close.

INT. CHAPEL, PEW - DAY

The lady with the silk bonnet and the other women sit in front. They glance up at the altar toward Don Salvatore.

INT. ALTAR - DAY

Don Salvatore catches the eyes of the women, averts them.

Padre Pio, suddenly, stops his meditation. His eye lids lift open at a crawl, as if pried.

Padre Pio smiles at the women, exhales.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN STATION - MILAN - PRESENT DAY

Giancarla wanders across the train station, lost with a purpose, her eyes swimming across various destinations on big transit maps.

INT. TRAIN STATION, TICKET WINDOW - PRESENT DAY

Giancarla stands behind FIVE BLACK CLAD WOMEN wearing shawls, chatty, jovial, all smiles.

GIANCARLA

Excuse me, excuse me?? Yeah, hi,
hello.

One of the black clad ladies turns around.

GIANCARLA (CONT'D)

Did you say Pietrelcina?

She nods. Giancarla looks down at the envelope. Walks up to the window. THE TELLER stares at her, mouth breathing.

GIANCARLA (CONT'D)

Pietrelcina, okay? Pietrelcina.

She snatches the ticket.

ON TICKET
SNATCH:

EXT. SAN GIOVANNI ROTONDO, PIAZZA - DAY

A SAN GIOVANNI ROTONDO RESIDENT snatches a newspaper out of a bin, lifts it to his face.

The entire town sits wedged in a chain of mountains, engulfed in a breathtaking panorama of rocky green ridges.

SAN GIOVANNI ROTONDO CITIZENS hustle and bustle, in the throes of a post-world war I economy.

FAMILIES are forced from their homes by TAX COLLECTORS.

SHOPS sit closed, with Bolshevist propoganda posters, hanging from the windows.

LABOR UNIONS corral citizens together and are shouted at by ITALIAN PATRIOTS. Fists fights break out.

CORPSES are carried in on carts.

WIDOWS AND FAMILIES mourn DEAD FATHERS AND SONS as they are informed by POSTMEN or SOLDIERS.

SOLDIERS wander the streets with amputated limbs and dirty uniforms.

PILGRIMS head up the hill toward OUR LADY OF GRACE CHURCH and the CAPUCHIN FRIARY in the distance.

INT. CAPUCHIN FRIARY, CHAPEL - NIGHT

Niches of wooden Franciscan saints litter the church, adorned in drapes of red, yellow or violet silk.

INT. FRIARY, LOBBY - DAY

FATHER AGOSTINO, 30s, guardian father, thick grey beard, circular rose colored glasses, button nose, dignified, corrals FRANTIC PILGRIMS with his fellow confreres:

BROTHER GUADENZIO, 20s, cherry red cheeks and a big toothy grin.

BROTHER NICOLA, 20s, narrow face, blonde beard, green eyes

BROTHER FERDINANDO, 70s, long white beard, mountainous, tries his best to help BROTHER CARMELO, 30s and BROTHER ARCANGELO, 40s, as they attempt to appease the people with Father Agostino.

The wisdom of the confreres wisdom is coalescent and well earned.

Rosaries and habits whip at their waists and ankles as they assist PILGRIMS with prayer requests and hand out terrible looking bread, little trinkets and other gifts.

EXT. SAN GIOVANNI ROTONDO, PIAZZA - DAY

SIX HUNDRED MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN run down the hillside and into the town square as a Neapolitan folk band blisters through a little diddy with mandolins and hand drums.

SOCIALIST OFFICIALS AND PARTY WORKERS arrive in front of the town hall with little red flags.

As all the residents gather around their new found government, the music halts and the crowd goes silent as they find the entrance to the town hall barred by POLICE with machine guns, drawn.

DI MAGGIO, provincial counselor, and LUIGI TAMBURRANO, mayor elect, motion to the workers to stand back.

As the people funnel out of the piazza, a large group of able bodied and injured men, the ARDITI DI CRISTO, fascists, walk through the crowd with black pendants around their necks with the papal coat of arms.

ARDITI DI CRISTO

If that red flag is erected on the balcony of our town hall, blood will spill, and it won't be on our hands. It will be on the hands of you; Di Maggio and Tamburrano!

THE CROWD CLAMOURS, confused and angry, then --

Silence.

A WOMAN, dressed in black, presses through the crowd, holding the socialist flag to be erected and walks, dour, toward the police blocking the entrance.

UNION WORKERS AND PARTISANS, packing, follow close behind her.

POLICE

Stop. Stop!

A policeman, VITO IMBRIANI fires into the air, people lose it and scatter in all directions.

In the onslaught of commotion, a civilian tackles Vito and shoots him, point blank, in the face.

The police fire into the crowd as a wave of fascists and socialists merge in a fury of flying fists and gnashing teeth.

Sticks, stones and knives. Vicious.

The cracks of the cobblestone piazza fill with blood and teeth.

EXT. FRIARY, GARDEN - DAY

PADRE PIO, mid 20s, grey already showing in his beard, weeps as he picks wild greens, praying under his breath.

Padre Pio grunts in pain, picks, prays, wincing and gritting his teeth as shouts of violence cut through the air on the other side of the friary wall, echoing up from town below.

Padre Pio drops to his knees, grunting, wincing.

With limited strength, Padre Pio blesses the catastrophe in the distance, grabs his basket of meager vegetation and lurches up toward the friary doors.

INT. FRIARY, DINING ROOM - DAY

The Capuchins chow down on basic, but heavy sustenance: pasta, tomato sauce and fresh bread with olive oil and garlic.

Padre Pio squeezes a lemon into a small glass, then squeezes some into a bowl of boiled greens, adds salt, slurps away.

PIO

We need to --

Everyone stops eating.

PIO (CONT'D)

A road, we need a road. Better toilets. Relief programs, telephones.

Better sewage and water. Language centers. I'll pray about it.

They look at each other and then Padre Pio. Father Agostino nods.

AGOSTINO

Write a proposal, Padre Pio. I'll see that the mayor gets it.

Padre Pio stares at the table, nods.

INT. CHAPEL, CHOIR - DAY

Padre Pio leans over the pew, rosary beads wrapped around his hands. He mutters to himself then looks over to the window.

Padre Pio waddles over to the sill and looks out at a HUGE CROWD OF ANGRY FACES, glaring.

PIO

What do you want?

They reply in a demonic cacophony of repetitious whispers, bouncing the same phrase among the crowd.

CROWD

The death of Padre Pio, the death of padre pio -- Padre Pio, death, death, Padre Pio -- the death of Padre Pio.

Padre Pio lifts his rosary toward the window pain. The angry crowd crumples and screams, billowing up into the sky as a wisp of black vapor.

Padre Pio retches at the stench and --

INT. CHAPEL, CHOIR - DAY

-- Opens his eyes and walks over to the window, low and behold, there stands A CROWD OF PILGRIMS: families, soldiers, and wanderers, looking right at him.

EXT. OUR LADY OF THE GRACES, STEPS - DAY

Padre Pio reaches the bottom as a BATTLE WEARY ITALIAN SOLDIER steps out from the crowd and gets on a knee.

ITALIAN SOLDIER

Are you the holy monk?

Padre Pio lifts the young soldier off the ground and hugs him.

ALBERTO, 10, skinny with a narrow head of thick red hair and knobby knees, stands there with a COUPLE FRIENDS, looking up at the tender exchange. He shrugs.

Alberto and his friends turn to leave, but a sharp whistle cuts through the air, Alberto turns and sees Padre Pio motioning toward the chapel.

Pilgrims, with Alberto and friends in tow, follow Padre Pio inside.

PIO (O.S.)
Do you often tell lies, Alberto?

INT. CONFESSIONAL - DAY

Alberto sits across from Padre Pio, eyes glued to the floor.

ALBERTO
Yes.

Padre Pio chuckles and gives him a light slap on the top of the head.

PIO
Stop doing it. Even the smallest lie is a direct affront to the Lord. Do you know how to serve Mass?

ALBERTO
No.

PIO
You must promise me that you will learn to serve Mass, to go often to church and to love Jesus and the Blessed Mother very much.

ALBERTO
Okay, Padre Pio.

INT. FRIARY CHAPEL - DAY

Brother Nicola walks in behind the altar and sees Padre Pio kneeling in the shadows, only visible by the faint candle light washing over the chapel.

Brother Nicola retreats back into the friary.

Brother Nicola peers around the door a few moments later and sees Padre Pio there, still kneeling.

EXT. FRIARY CHAPEL, GARDEN - DAY

Brother Nicola takes a few steps toward the garden wall and stops as Sparrows flutter into an elm trees.

Morning sun shines against one of the trees, offering its little shade to a bed of white roses.

Brother Nicola looks out beyond the clearing at the mountain.

Silence. Brother Nicola thinks.

INT. FRIARY CHAPEL - DAY

Brother Nicola carries the sunlight with him as he reenters and peers around the corner of the door behind the altar, facing the pews.

His eyes focus to the darkness, blinking as he looks in.

He walks up to the altar and freezes.

INT. CHAPEL PEWS - DAY

Brother Nicola sees, in the trembling candlelight, Padre Pio on the floor, laying half turned, face down, laying in a pool of blood. One arm curled under him, the other spread out in front.

Both of Padre Pio's hands are bleeding, his knees still bent in the position of kneeling, his feet gathered one next to the other, dripping blood into the hem of his robe.

Brother Nicola leans over him and puts his hands on him.

NICOLA

Padre Pio?

Brother Nicola sees that the blood has soaked through the material of Padre Pio's robe.

Padre Pio groans and tries to move. He turns and opens his eyes, revealing a lost gaze, he doesn't seem to recognize Brother Nicola.

After a moment, Padre Pio comes to and looks into Brother Nicola's eyes.

NICOLA (CONT'D)

Padre Pio. What is happening to you?

Padre Pio attempts to rise from the floor, fails, tries again, his hands slipping on the blood.

Padre Pio grips the stalls of the chorus and pulls himself to his feet.

Padre Pio brings his bleeding hands up to the level of his chest, over the bloody robe, both palms gleaming with blood in the light of the candles.

Brother Nicola stands there, breathless.

NICOLA (CONT'D)

What has happened to you?

Padre Pio doesn't answer and staggers behind the altar and through the door to the friary.

INT. CORRRIDOR, STAIRS - DAY

Padre Pio forces himself up into the hallway with Brother Nicola close behind, trembling.

INT. CORRIDOR, SLEEPING QAURTERS - DAY

Padre Pio brushes his shoulder alongside the wall for support, leaving a trail of blood smeared behind him.

Brother Nicola watches Padre Pio open his door, stagger inside and shut it, he looks up at the quote written beneath: "The glory of the world has always sadness for a companion."

INT. FRIARY, DINING ROOM - DAY

Brother Nicola bursts in through the door almost falling onto the table.

NICOLA

Padre Pio is bleeding to death.

As quickly as he says it, chairs shoot out from under the confreres and cutlery hits plates with a clang.

INT. STAIRS, CORRIDOR - DAY

The friars run up the stairs and down the hall, huddling around Father Agostino in front of Padre Pio's cell.

INT. PADRE PIO'S CELL DOOR - DAY

Father Agostino opens the door and walks inside. The brothers' lips tremble in rapid prayer.

Father Agostino comes back out and shuts the door behind him.

FATHER AGOSTINO

He is still bleeding. Return to the kitchen and then start your tasks.

INT. FRIARY, LOBBY - DAY

The friars blink at a frightened looking PHOTOGRAPHER, out of breath, sweating, small stature, wiry, with thick black glasses, struggling to keep hold of his tripod, his boxes and leather straps.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Good morning, I'm a photographer.

Brother Guadenzio looks at the rest of the brothers, then the photographer, then curtseys.

GUADENZIO

Good morning, I'm a friar.

The brothers get a good laugh until Father Agostino walks in and they shut up.

Father Agostino motions to the stairs, they show the photographer the way.

INT. STAIRS, CORRIDOR - DAY

The photographer stumbles on his straps and his tools go tumbling down the stairs.

The friars smile and pick up the tools behind him as they make their way up.

INT. CORRIDOR, PADRE PIO'S CELL - DAY

Brother Ferdinando knocks on the door and enters, comes back out.

FERDINANDO
It's all right.

The photographer doesn't budge.

PHOTOGRAPHER
Padre Casscalente asked me to do this, as for myself, I do not wish to disturb. I can back some other time. Any time. Please.

Brother Ferdinando smiles.

FERDINANDO
You are here now, enter.

The photographer bows his head, sweating, still unmoving.

FERDINANDO (CONT'D)
Let us help you carry your machines. Be at ease, Padre Pio is glad to meet you.

The friars take his things and walk into Padre Pio's room. Padre Pio sits on the edge of his bed and looks up at the photographer standing in the door way.

PHOTOGRAPHER
I've taken all kinds of pictures, but naturally never...never, of course...and so I am confused, and, please forgive me.

PIO
Come in.

INT. PADRE PIO'S CELL - DAY

The photographer sets up his tripod and mounts a pristine Kodiak Autographic camera, swivels a nut to the base, flush with the tripod.

PIO
The pictures won't come out as clear as you want if you tremble.

Padre Pio pats the edge of the bed. The photographer sits down next to him and looks out the window.

PHOTOGRAPHER
All my equipment is heavy to carry, that is all.

The photographer looks over at Padre Pio, then the floor.

PHOTOGRAPHER (CONT'D)

It is the emotion Padre. It is, all at once, like a beautiful day in the winter of my life. My work will be seen by His Holiness the Pope.

Padre Pio smiles. The photographer gets up and back traces behind his camera.

PHOTOGRAPHER (CONT'D)

If you please, Padre Pio, let us take your hands first, secondly the picture at your side, then your feet.

PIO

All right. Here are my hands.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Put them in the sun, if you will. Like this. Right by the window.

The Photographer looks at the wounds from behind the camera, chokes up, and takes the photo.

EXT. CATHEDRAL - VIESTE - DAY

ARCHBISHOP PASQUALE GAGLIARDI, 60s, close-cropped salt and pepper hair, beetle brows, deep set eyes, Roman nose, walks out of his castle unwrapping a fresh pastry.

Gagliardi stops, looks up, grins, dwarfed by the colorful stone mammoth of Christendom, looming over him. He keeps on.

He grins and bites into his pastry, ignoring the eyes of ANGRY LAYPEOPLE following him all the way down the stairs.

LAYPERSON

Where's the statue, pederast?

Gagliardi stops, shakes his head and keeps on.

INT. PLAYROOM - VIESTE - DAY

Gagliardi enters and strains as he sits on the floor next to his DEAF NEICE, curly brown hair, brushing the hair of a porcelain doll, lost in thought.

She turns and they share a conversation in sign language.

DEAF NEICE
*Why do all the people look at you
 mean?*

Gagliardi responds with a gentle gesture of syntax.

GAGLIARDI
*They think that I am stealing from
 the church.*

DEAF NEICE
Are you?

GAGLIARDI
*Oh, yes. Day in and day out. That's
 all us bishops do, you know?*

His deaf neice smiles.

DEAF NEICE
Will you still pray for me?

GAGLIARDI
Of course!

DEAF NEICE
I asked Padre Pio to pray me.

GAGLIARDI
Who?

DEAF NEICE
Padre Pio.

GAGLIARDI
Padre Pio? Who is Padre Pio?

DEAF NEICE
*Mommy and daddy say he's got the
 wounds like San Francesco.*

GAGLIARDI
*Don't believe everything they tell
 you, okay? They think their family
 is cursed because of me.*

She nods.

EXT. BISHOP'S MANSION, MAILBOX - DAY

Gagliardi pulls out a fresh newspaper, hot off the press, he unrolls it and there it is, screaming right in his face:
Padre Pio, Stigmatic priest of San Giovanni Rotondo!

Gagliardi rolls his eyes.

GAGLIARDI
Okay, my beautiful neice.

INT. FRIARY - DAY

PADRE CLAMENTE, 40s, Franciscan, jolly, blond, barrel chest, walks up to the window with his nephew, low and behold it's ALBERTO, fourteen, he's grown into his bones a bit more, but he's still awkward as can be.

Deep laughter echoes down the hall.

PIO (O.S.)
Greetings, little Clamente!!

Padre Pio bursts through the door and sees Padre Clemente standing there with Alberto.

CLAMENTE
Greetings, little Pio!

They hug.

Alberto walks up and kisses Padre Pio's wounded hand, wipes the blood off of his lips.

CLAMENTE (CONT'D)
Alberto is attending the Seraphic boarding school after the Summer's end.

Padre Pio looks at Alberto, then Clamente --

PIO
Proud uncle.

-- Then Alberto.

PIO (CONT'D)
Do you want to become a friar?

ALBERTO
I want to be a Salesian priest.

...

PIO
You want to discover Rome. I understand. Will you wait for us in the garden? Pray a little?

ALBERTO

Of course.

Alberto turns to leave, Padre Pio whistles.

Alberto turns around to see a Holy Card of Saint Michael the Archangel shoved directly in his face.

PIO

You will be a friar, like your
uncle. I await you in this
seminary.

Padre Pio winks and throws his arm around Padre Clamente,
they walk through the door.

PIO (CONT'D)

Come and meet the vultures.

CLAMENTE

The who?

PIO

The doctors, Padre Clamente!

Their laughter echoes down the hall.

Alberto flips the holy card over, reads: *Priests are the
privileged and the beloved of God, and we occupy the first
places in his heart.*

EXT. FRIARY - DAY

DR. AMICO BIGNAMI, 30s, tall, broad mustache with waxed tips,
thick goatee, sweat drenched designer suit, reaches the crest
of the hill right outside the front entrance, out of breath,
aggravated.

He storms over to the friary.

INT. FRIARY, WAITING ROOM - DAY

Brother Nicola hurries out into the lobby and extends his
hand for a shake, all smiles.

NICOLA

Dr. Bignami? Good afternoon.

Dr. Bignami doesn't reciprocate and moves past him without
looking.

BIGNAMI
Cell five, correct?

NICOLA
Yes, doctor.

INT. PADRE PIO'S CELL - DAY

After a knock, Dr. Bignami enters the room, interrupting Padre Pio and Padre Clamente.

BIGNAMI
Will you excuse us, please?

Padre Pio smiles, Clamente, not so much.

CLAMENTE
Who are you, doctor, and what are your credentials?

BIGNAMI
I am Doctor Amico Bignami, graduated from Rome in 1882, appointed professor of extraordinary pathology at the university of Vieste. I have put forth the hypothesis of infection by mosquitoes and Malaria, and I am currently attempting to prove the mosquito theory in man.

CLAMENTE
My boy, I believe you are the mosquito theory in man.

Padre Pio purses his lips as Clemente looks back with the glint-iest of glints in his eye. He shuts the door.

BIGNAMI
I've been sent by the Provincial Father to examine you at great length. Tell me, Mr. Forgione, can you explain why these wounds have appeared where they are and not anywhere else on your body?

Dr. Bignami pulls up a chair and lifts one of Padre Pio's hands without permission and double takes, looking at the gray paint of the wall behind the hand, through a small hole inside a reddish brown membrane the size of a Penny.

PIO
 Doctor, it should be you to tell me
 why the wounds are where they are.

BIGNAMI
 Are they painful?

PIO
 When you apply pressure. You may if
 you need to.

Bignami nods and takes his thumb and presses it to the wound on the palm and his index finger on the wound above the hand in between the metacarpals.

Padre Pio hides his agony, Dr. Bignami stops, alarmed, right before his finger and thumb touch.

BIGNAMI
 Did you apply Iodine to the wounds?

Padre Pio nods.

PIO
 Stops the bleeding.

BIGNAMI
 How old is the Iodine?

Padre Pio chuckles.

PIO
 Old.

BIGNAMI
 Old Iodine is caustic and can
 easily burn flesh if enough is
 applied, not that you knew. May I
 clean the wounds?

Padre Pio nods.

Bignami daps gauze with alcohol and rubs away a brown crust, leaving just the red membranes around the holes: no sign of festering, and the flesh is undamaged by any kind of trauma.

Bignami wraps Padre Pio's wounds with bandages -- PLUNGK -- he seals the big bandages with a big bold stamp: BIGNAMI.

BIGNAMI (CONT'D)
 Keep these on until I come back,
 please.

Bignami, sigh and backs out the door.

BIGNAMI (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 About the nature of the lesions it can be asserted that they are a pathological product. The origin of which, the following hypotheses are possible:

INT. CORRIDOR, PADRE PIO'S CELL - DAY

THE HIERARCHY OF THE CAPUCHIN ORDER populates outside the cell, chatting and peeking inside.

BIGNAMI (O.S.)
 One: they might have been artificially and voluntarily produced. Two: they might be the outcome of a morbid state.

INT. FRIARY, WAITING ROOM - DAY

Dr. Bignami walks in and sees Brother Nicola, Bignami nods this time around.

BIGNAMI (O.S.)
 Three: they might be in part the outcome of a morbid state, and, in part artificial. I definitely can't support the first hypothesis, especially lacking a direct proof.

INT. PADRE PIO'S CELL - DAY

Dr. Bignami breaks the seals of Padre Pio's bandages to see the wounds still fresh and pumping blood.

BIGNAMI (O.S.)
 The impression of sincerity that Padre Pio gives me, keeps me from thinking of simulation. The second hypothesis remains, at least partially, reliable.

PAOLINO CASCALENTE, 50s, Provincial Father of Foggia, big round nose, a grizzly bear of a man, broad facial bones, a strip of white hair in center of a brown beard, scrutinizes Padre Pio's wounds.

Padre Pio presents his feet, wider wounds on top, narrow holes open up in the center of his soles.

BIGNAMI (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 The alterations in the hands and feet of Padre Pio are nothing else than the result of a superficial necrosis of the epidermis.

A REGIONAL SUPERIOR and other AUTHORITATIVE VISITORS rub chins and speculate.

Padre Pio lifts his robe to reveal a wound of two and half inches above his fifth rib, shaped like an upside down cross, the vertical line vanishes after a light mark at the end.

BIGNAMI (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 What cannot be explained about the neurotic necrosis is the perfectly symmetrical localization of the described lesions.

Padre Pio takes a bundle of gauze and wipes his side wound, leaving the flesh stained pink with residual blood, the wound spills moments later.

BIGNAMI (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Or their persistence without noticeable changes, as the patient states.

Authorities touch his garments, his robe, his socks, his sandals.

INT. CASCALENTE'S OFFICE - DAY

Bignami tosses a clipboard with his report in front of Provincial Father Cascalente. Cascalente flips through it.

BIGNAMI
 But these facts, in my opinion, can have a satisfactory explanation with the third above mentioned hypothesis. In fact we can assume that the lesions started as a pathological product, then, maybe unconsciously and by suggestion --

Cascalente presents his hand, as in "shut up, now."

CASCALENTE
 I know you don't care either way, doctor, but I'm relieved you find this so fascinating.

If Padre Pio is crazy, I will love the man just the same. So, tell me; did he, or did he not, do this to himself?

BIGNAMI

In the days of Saint Francis, I'd have believed it. They should be healed by the time I get back.

INT. PADRE PIO'S CELL - DAY

Dr. Bignami studies Padre Pio's wounds, they still haven't healed even slightly.

Dr. Bignami walks over to the window, opens it, wafts at the air.

BIGNAMI

Padre Pio, do you approve of friars using perfume?

PIO

Perfume?

BIGNAMI

Well, yes. I smell it right here.

Padre Pio gets up and shuts the window.

PIO

Do you still smell perfume?

BIGNAMI

I do, and if you do not mind me saying so, it does not come from outside. It comes from you. From your clothes, Padre Pio.

PIO

My robe?

Padre Pio pinches the chest of his robe and lifts it to his nose, shrugs.

Padre Pio sits, Bignami hovers his hand above Padre Pio's palm and wafts it upward, almost hits the floor.

BIGNAMI

It's your hands. Surely you can smell that. It's pungent. You cannot fail to notice that.

Bignami dips his finger in the blood of his palm and raises it to his nose.

BIGNAMI (CONT'D)
It's your blood. Incredible. I
can't believe it.

Bignami's childlike amazement quickly fades from his face.

BIGNAMI (CONT'D)
You understand, Padre, I am not
much of a believer. I hardly ever
think of God. I want to be honest.
I am confused. I do not think of
God.

PIO
God thinks of you, Amico.

Dr. Bignami chuckles, then coughs, which gives way to a full fledged hacking fit. He manages to catch his breath for a moment before rasping and wheezing.

He stumbles out of the room.

BIGNAMI
Excuse me, Padre.

Padre Pio looks out the window.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - FOGGIA - DAY

Archbishop Gagliardi, dressed in a priest's cassock, steps out of the cab and is surprised by Brother Nicola and Brother Gaudenzio.

NICOLA
Your eminence!

Gagliardi looks around for other bishops behind him as the two Friars approach.

NICOLA (CONT'D)
Archbishop Gagliardi? Yes?

GAGLIARDI
How did -- Do I know you?

NICOLA
My apologies. I'm Brother Nicola
and this is Brother Guadenzio.
We're Capuchins.

Gagliardi nods.

GAGLIARDI

No doubt.

NICOLA

I'm a little confused. Did Padre Pio say he wasn't expecting you?

GAGLIARDI

Why would he -- what?

GUADENZIO

Well, he told us to greet you, your eminence. He said you'd show up looking like a priest. I didn't believe him when he told me.

Brother Guadenzio chuckles and reaches for Gagliardi's bags, Gagliardi moves them from his grasp.

GAGLIARDI

If Padre Pio is clairvoyant enough to know that I was coming, then there's no need for me to be here.

Gagliardi turns back to the train, Brother Nicola reaches and touches his garment, Gagliardi looks down at Brother Nicola's hand.

NICOLA

I'm sorry.

GUADENZIO

He didn't mean it, your eminence. Will you come, please? Padre Pio is expecting you.

INT. OUR LADY OF THE GRACES, CHAPEL - DAY

Midday, packed. Gagliardi steps inside, studies Padre Pio's world.

Brother Nicola and Brother Guadenzio stand behind him on either side of the entrance, Gagliardi looks back at them and they look away, caught.

Gagliardi looks up at the crossed-arms symbol of the Franciscans, carved above the entrance to the chapel.

He studies the colorful tile portrait of Saint Francis of Assisi, hanging next to the Madonna and Child, and Saint Michael the Archangel.

Big tiles make up the floor supporting two small rows of chunky wooden pews.

Gagliardi looks through the crowd at the altar: modest, marble, with a golden tabernacle behind it.

A painting of Saint John the Baptist, dressed in animal skins, hangs behind the altar to the left.

Our Lady of Grace, holds the Christ Child in center.

Saint Paul the Apostle hangs to her left, holding a spear.

Gagliardi walks to the front of the line and trades eyes with a layperson, wearing a SUIT AND TIE, who smiles and motions for him to cut.

Gagliardi forces a nod and heads inside the confessional.

INT. OUR LADY OF GRACE, CONFESSIONAL - DAY

Gagliardi kneels and does the sign of the cross.

PIO

Your eminence. So glad you are here.

GAGLIARDI

How did you know?...Hello? Are you there?

PIO

I will pray for your neice.

GAGLIARDI

May I see your wounds, Padre Pio?

PIO

I'm sorry. I can't right now.

GAGLIARDI

Put your hand through the window and show me, Padre Pio.

PIO

Is that an order?

GAGLIARDI

Certainly is.

Padre Pio obliges, Gagliardi removes Padre Pio's fingerless glove and looks at the wound. Shrugs.

GAGLIARDI (CONT'D)
 I have one more favor to ask. If
 you could, please. Write me a
 blessing, would you?

Gagliardi hands a pen and paper through the window. Padre Pio
 hands it back moments later. Gagliardi stuffs it in his
 pocket and leaves.

GAGLIARDI (CONT'D)
 God bless you.

INT. OUR LADY OF GRACE, CHAPEL - DAY

Gagliardi leaves and the guy in the suit and tie steps inside
 -- SMASSSGKRLLLL -- the guy shoots out of the confessional
 just as quickly as he goes in, Padre Pio points and shouts,
 his sleeves whipping at his forearms as he points, beet red.

PIO
 Get out! You get out of here!

Suit and tie stumbles for the exit.

EXT. OUR LADY OF GRACE - DAY

Suit and tie collapses on the stairs and weeps. Gagliardi
 runs up to him with Brother Nicola and Brother Guadenzio
 trailing behind.

Gagliardi kneels down and pats the man on the shoulder.

GAGLIARDI
 Hey, hey. What just happened in
 there?

SUIT AND TIE
 He knew.

GAGLIARDI
 He knew what?

NICOLA
 Your eminence --

GAGLIARDI
 -- Shut up! Go back inside the
 church, now!

They oblige and head back to the church, heads slumped.

GAGLIARDI (CONT'D)

Do you know who I am? I am Pasquale
Gagliardi, archbishop of
Manfredonia. You will tell me what
happened. Do you understand me?

Gagliardi grabs the guy by his lapels, shakes him, he weeps
in a foreign tongue.

SUIT AND TIE (SUBTITLES)

I was planning to kill my wife.
Padre Pio knew. He knew. How?

Gagliardi releases him, blesses him and walks away.

GAGLIARDI

Your sins are forgiven, go in
peace.

EXT. VATICAN SQUARE - ROME - DAY

Gagliardi Marches past a group of YOUNG WOMEN, among them is
GIOVANNA RIZZANI, 20s, round face, black hair fastened tight
with bobby pins, big brown eyes and a little mouth.

She picks up a little piece of paper that blows past her and
rushes after Gagliardi.

GIOVANNA

Excuse me?

Gagliardi turns around.

GAGLIARDI

Yes?

GIOVANNA

You dropped this.

She hands him the blessing that Padre Pio gave to him.

GAGLIARDI

Forgot I had it. Thank you.

She watches him walk off, as he reads the contents of the
blessing he stops dead in his tracks, pockets it, walks
faster.

GAGLIARDI (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Truly you must be horrified by the
cult that surrounds this man, your
holiness.

Giovanna motions to her friends and they head toward the Basilica.

GAGLIARDI (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Their religious conceptions
oscillate between superstitions and
magic.

EXT. VATICAN, POPE BENEDICT'S OFFICE - DAY

Gagliardi leans over a massive cherry wood desk, pleading with POPE BENEDICT XV, 60s, broad forehead, slender, raised dark eyebrows, strong pointed chin, pouring over a medical document.

GAGLIARDI

How is it that a man who has no
exceptional natural qualities and
who is anything but free of shadows
and defects, has been able to build
a popularity that has few equals in
the religious history of our times?

Benedict tosses Gagliardi Bignami's medical document.

BENEDICT

Padre Pio is truly a man of God,
Pasquale. You apparently have not
seen what is actually happening in
San Giovanni Rotondo.

Gagliardi scans the document and slaps it down on the pope's desk.

GAGLIARDI

Oh, I've seen it all right. He
gives blessings to the Ariditi Di
Christo. Fascists who mock the
papal seal!

BENEDICT

He blesses the communists as well.
What is a priest to do? Not bless
people?

GAGLIARDI

The whole thing is demonic. His
confreres put him on display to
make money. Quite a lucrative
business, hawking a man's rags!

INT. SAINT PETER'S BASILICA - DAY

Deserted, save Giovanna and her friends, walking along the hall, looking, searching. She checks her watch and looks up just in time to see the skirt of a brown habit float around the corner up ahead. She points.

GIOVANNA

Aha!

INT. CHAPEL - VATICAN - DAY

Giovanna enters and sees A FRIAR, his back turned, about to open the confessional. Giovanna approaches him with a sterling smile.

GIOVANNA

Padre, my spirit is torn. Could you listen to me?

The friar nods without turning around and heads inside the confessional. She turns to her friends and shrugs, heads inside.

GIOVANNA (CONT'D)

Padre, I did not come for confession, but to be enlightened in so many doubts of faith that torment me.

INT. CONFESSIONAL - VATICAN - DAY

Giovanna kneels, sighs. The friar opens the door to the screen.

FRIAR (BRUSQUE)

Like what?

GIOVANNA

Um, well, first; the Holy Trinity. Padre, are you there?

FRIAR

They are called mysteries because they cannot be comprehended by our small intelligence. We can have a faint idea of them by simile. May I ask you a question?

GIOVANA

Of course.

FRIAR

How does one make bread? With three distinct elements, of course. The flour is not leaven, nor water. The leaven is not flour nor water, and the water is not flour nor leaven, but gathered together they form one sole substance with three elements. With this dough, three loaves are made, which have the same identical substance, but are distinct in form, one from the other. Therefore, three distinct elements, gathered together, give one sole substance.

Giovanna smiles.

INT. POPE BENEDICT'S OFFICE - DAY

Gagliardi leans up off the desk and puts his hands on his hips, staring at the floor.

GAGLIARDI

Your Holiness; there are those who, with pitiful ignorance, declare that Padre Pio is Jesus Christ himself. I believe it would be best if Padre Pio could be transferred to another friary where he could live far from public notice. He would be purified, he would become more saintly, if he already is a saint.

Gagliardi turns and heads to the door.

GAGLIARDI (CONT'D)

...If not, a pernicious fraud, a world class enterprise, to which the faithful are prey, would be eliminated. The words "get out," should never leave the lips of a priest.

INT. HALLWAY, POPES OFFICE - DAY - WALKING

Gagliardi takes the blessing out of his pocket and reads it again, shoves it back in his coat, shakes his head.

INT. ST. PETER'S BASILICA - DAY - WALKING

Gagliardi hears female laughter echoing from a side chapel, rolls his eyes.

EXT. CONFESSIONAL - VATICAN - DAY

Giovanna exits, beaming. Hugs her friends.

GIOVANNA

How kind that friar is! Let us wait for him to leave the confessional so we can ask for his address.

GAGLIARDI

Young ladies?

They turn to see Gagliardi standing there, arms crossed.

GAGLIARDI (CONT'D)

Please leave the basilica, it is time to close. Come back tomorrow and you can go to confession. Okay?

Giovanna cocks her head, points her thumb behind her.

GIOVANNA

There's a..Capuchin priest in the confessional, your eminence. I just confessed to him. We're waiting for him to come out so we can kiss his hand.

Gagliardi walks over and knocks on the confessional door, puts his ear to it, opens it, empty.

Gagliardi turns to the girls. They shrug.

PIO (O.S)

There are two fundamental virtues of holiness.

INT. OUR LADY OF GRACE, CHAPEL - NIGHT

Padre Pio looks up at the crucifix, bows, wavers to the chapel exit.

Padre Pio exits the stairs, through the door, we see a SWARM OF PILGRIMS clamor around him and tear at his robe like zombies.

PIO (O.S.)
 They are the main supports of the
 whole vast building on which all
 the rest depends.

EXT. OUR LADY OF GRACE - NIGHT

Padre Pio tries to pacify the CROWD, but they don't relent,
 they rub his face and shoulders.

A pair of scissors shoots through a space between bodies and
 cuts the cord of Padre Pio's robe.

PIO (O.S.)
 Humility is the foundation, charity
 is the roof. Consider for a moment
 what we really are. Nothing,
 weakness, a perversion without end.

Padre Pio looks to the sky and weeps as the people press on
 him. He stands there powerless.

INT. BOARDING SCHOOL, CLASSROOM - DAY

Padre Pio tosses a piece of chalk on the sill at the base of
 the board.

ALBERTO, 17, novitiate, scraggly beard, tall, brown habit and
 the REST OF THE NOVITIATES watch Padre Pio as he wavers back
 and forth in front of the desks.

PIO
 If you can consider this, you will
 see that humility is the virtue
 which recognizes our nothingness,
 our abjection, but...

-- RINGGGGGG -- The novitiates shoot out of their seats,
 Padre Pio puts his hands up for them to stop. They sit.

PIO (CONT'D)
 Humility becomes a sublime virtue
 when one can not only recognize
 one's abjection, but also loves it.

Padre Pio pulls a handkerchief out of his robe and wipes a
 way a few tears, his chin quivers and he exhales, composing
 himself.

PIO (CONT'D)

One of you has received the sacrament of Holy Communion sacrilegiously. I have awaited your confession for days.

The students look at each other and funnel out into the hallway.

INT. BOARDING SCHOOL, CAFETERIA - DAY

Padre Clamente sits reading a paper, enjoying a plate of cookies, he peers over the paper at Alberto, kneeling on the floor beside the table, eating his lunch with OTHER NOVITIATES.

Padre Pio wavers in with a plate of piping hot spaghetti and looks down at Alberto.

Clamente looks up over the newspaper and doubletakes when he sees Padre Pio.

CLAMENTE

Padre Pio! What a beautiful face you have today! I have never seen you look so handsome!

Padre Pio looks at his spaghetti, twirls it with a fork, scoots his plate away, smiles.

PIO

Padre Clamente. Let us do this; I will give you my beautiful face and you give me your good health.

The boys stifle laughter, except for Alberto. Clamente shoots them a look.

CLAMENTE

Each one must keep what they have received from God.

Clamente takes a bite of his cookie.

CLAMENTE (CONT'D)

Padre Pio, I would like to know who will die first. By the law of nature, I was born first and I should die first.

PIO

We will both live a long time, but I will die first.

CLAMENTE

But I will soon after?

Padre Pio looks down at Alberto, then the ceiling.

PLACIDO

Well, if God has decreed in such a manner, will you give me the authority to impart your blessing to those who will pray on your tomb?

PIO

Yes, but always leave a kind word.

Placido nods, rolls up his paper and leaves.

Padre Pio walks over to the Alberto and the gang.

PIO (CONT'D)

Will any of you be assisting with mass?

Alberto nods and stares at the floor, Padre Pio's plate of Spaghetti slides into view. Alberto looks at the plate then up at Padre Pio.

PIO (CONT'D)

I'm afraid you'll have to eat dutifully, on the floor. So as to not breach obedience, hmm?

Alberto nods.

PIO (CONT'D)

See you at Mass.

As Padre Pio leaves he hears hushed crying, he turns around and sees Alberto, breaking down into tears.

ALBERTO

It was me, Padre. I was afraid you'd be angry.

Padre Pio gets down on a knee and hugs Alberto.

PIO

Do not doubt the Lord's mercy, Alberto. Ever.

INT. POPE BENEDICT'S BEDROOM - DAY

A PAPAL CHAMBERLAIN, 40s, dressed to the nines in garb of the papal court, gulps and looks over to his FELLOW CHAMBERLAIN, who hands him a little silver hammer.

Pope Benedict, lays, serene, peaceful, hands on his belly, the faintest of a grin, not breathing.

The chamberlain takes the hammer and taps the pope on the forehead three times.

CHAMBERLAIN

The pope is truly dead.

EXT. ST. PETER'S BASILICA, EXPOSED VENERATION - DAY

THOUSANDS OF HOLY FAITHFUL AND CLERGY funnel in and out and pay their respects to Pope Benedict's body.

A single white rose lands in a mountain of red beside the casket, dropped from the hand of Gagliardi.

CASCALENTE (O.S.)

Your eminence, I would like to respectfully request that you leave my office and come back at another time.

INT. CASCALENTE'S OFFICE - DAY

Provincial Father Cascalente, that grizzly bear of a man, stares at his desk, then slowly raises his eyes to meet those of Gagliardi.

GAGLIARDI (O.S.)

Of course. Let me ask you something first, Padre Cascalente; Is Padre Pio a doctor?

CASCALENTE

He does not possess a degree in medicine, no.

GAGLIARDI

Have you read the report by Doctor Amico Bignami?

CASCALENTE

I was there while it was written.

GAGLIARDI

Well, then you must know about the pharmacist?

CASCALENTE

Your eminence, I'll have to politely recommend that you get to the point.

GAGLIARDI

Of course, Padre. I would never waste the time of a man like you.

Gagliardi winks and slides a letter across the table.

GAGLIARDI (CONT'D)

This was received by Maria De Vito. She comes from a lovely little family in Foggia. Runs a pharmacy in town. May I request that you read the letter out loud?

Cascalente pushes his glasses to the bridge of his nose and reads.

CASCALENTE (READING)

"Maria, my lovely spiritual daughter. I hope you are well. Your poor servant humbly requests a bottle containing one hundred grams of carbolic acid. For no reason other than administering shots to the sick who frequent the friary. Please send my love to the family. Yours in Christ, Padre Pio."

GAGLIARDI

So, I ask you again; Is Padre Pio a doctor?

CASCALENTE

We use carbolic acid for Spanish flu needles, and why should I believe he wrote this?

GAGLIARDI

I was afraid you'd ask that.

Gagliardi hands him the blessing that Padre Pio wrote for him: *I will pray for the children of your diocese.*

GAGLIARDI (CONT'D)
 I felt terrible for being so
 suspicious, but, I had him write me
 a blessing in case I was wrong, or
 right...

Cascalente looks at both letters.

GAGLIARDI (CONT'D)
 Padre Pio seems so anachronistic
 because he's so poor without a
 human means of propaganda, living
 in his prayer, his suffering, the
 confessional. It's at once, so up
 to date as to attract the entire
 world. You'd think if he'd been
 antiquated, mankind would've
 forgotten him, but the opposite has
 happened and fanaticism has become
 a problem on part of the people. I
 don't hate the man, Padre. I don't
 even dislike him. I just thinks
 that he is incredibly dangerous and
 that he should be relocated.

Cascalente drops the letters and sighs.

CASCALENTE
 Where?

EXT. FRIARY - NIGHT

A black automobile crawls up the trail to the friary, lulling
 to a stop in front of A HUGE CROWD OF PILGRIMS.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Cascalente, Gagliardi and the regional superior, sit in back.

GAGLIARDI
 Keep driving, they'll move.

THE DRIVER obliges and the people slowly part ways to reveal
 EIGHT FASCISTS HOLDING BASEBALL BATS, not moving a muscle.

CASCALENTE
 Roll down the windows.

PARTISANS step up behind the fascists with rifles and
 pitchforks, Italian Flag patches with the initials stitched
 to their jackets.

The fascists and partisans glare at each other, then switch their attention to the car.

EXT. FRIARY - DAY

Father Agostino runs out and beckons for the men to lower their weapons.

AGOSTINO

Stop! There is no need for this!

FASCIST

A saint is the glory of the country, dead or alive, Padre Agostino. Padre Pio is an Italian, and in Italy he will remain. He will not step one foot in Spain.

FATHER AGOSTINO

Spain? What are you talking about. Send him to Spain?

FASCIST

These high and mighty priests think they can just remove anyone at their convenience. I see you in there! We'll kill him before you take him! A saint belongs in his country!

The crowd erupts in wild applause.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Cascalente sighs and looks over the regional superior.

REGIONAL SUPERIOR

They should mount a sign out front that says insane asylum.

Cascalente sinks back into his seat. A fascist smashes a bat into the hood of the car. The driver peels off.

INT. PADRE PIO'S CELL - DAY

Padre Pio rears awake in a crunchy, bronchial, coughing fit.

Padre Pio falls out of bed and hawks into a spittoon, pulls himself up to the window, looks out at the massive crowd.

Tents take up the clearing.

MORE TOWNFOLK have arrived by this point, it seems to be the entire population of San Giovanni Rotondo. All armed, all angry.

EXT. FRIARY - DAY

SENTRIES stand at the front doors, shoving people back with machine guns.

Padre Pio lifts his hands and quiets the clamor. There, walking through the crowd is the man he's been waiting for.

PIO

I am not going anywhere. I stay here. Please, go home.

The people don't budge.

DR. GUGLIELMO SANGUINETTI, 50s, tougher than nails, bald, pale, polo shirt, built like a cinder block with piercing blue eyes, big ears and a crease between his eyebrows, holds hands with his wife, EMILIA SANGUINETTI, 50s, she's his female equivalent, but way better looking.

They ease through the CROWD and take in the palpable misery, neither of them fazed.

Sanguinetti looks up at the window and Padre Pio waves to him. He nods and turns to his wife.

SANGUINETTI

That him?

EMILIA

Yes!

SANGUINETTI

Let's not forget, my dear Emilia. I come only to be your chauffer.

She looks at him and smiles, melting the tough exterior of his face.

INT. PADRE PIO'S CELL - DAY

Father Agostino sits behind Sanguinetti next to Emilia as Sanguinetti listens to Padre Pio's chest with a stethoscope.

SANGUINETTI

You say it comes and goes?

PIO
Twice a week it seems.

SANGUINETTI
Your breathing is tubercular,
Padre. It doesn't just come and go.
That not possible.

PIO
I'm tired of hearing that,
"impossible."

Padre Pio hawks into his spittoon.

PIO (CONT'D)
The cough will be gone tomorrow.
I'm sick. I'm always sick.

Padre Pio puts his hand on Sanguinetti's shoulder.

PIO (CONT'D)
You will come to live in San
Giovanni Rotondo, and you will be
of much help.

SANGUINETTI
That sounds lovely, Padre Pio, but
my practice is in Borgo San
Lorenzo. I have to make a living.

PIO
You'll make a living here, at the
hospital.

SANGUINETTI
There is no hospital here.

Padre Pio gets up and looks out the window.

PIO
Faith and hope will make their
spirits well, but with charity we
will build a roof over the heads of
these pilgrims. Then science, if it
can, will do the rest.

Sanguinetti chuckles.

SANGUINETTI
Will it be a small hospital?

Padre Pio shakes his head and smiles.

PIO

Don't call it that, Doctor Sanguinetti. I do not want to call it a hospital. It will have genuine Christian meaning, rather than the usual hospital with its cold mechanics.

SANGUINETTI

That's a beautiful idea, Padre, but the expense of such an undertaking would be staggering, at anytime, let alone approaching war. How can it be thought of?

Padre Pio rummages through the pockets of his robe.

PIO

Tonight starts my great earthly work. I bless you and all who will donate to my work, which will be very beautiful and very big. Where did I -- oh.

Padre pio lifts a single gold coin out of his pocket.

PIO (CONT'D)

A southerner always keeps a gold coin in his pocket for occasions just like these. Therefore, I would like to make the first donation for the right equipment and materials to build...the house for the relief of suffering.

Sanguinetti looks at him in disbelief, then his wife.

SANGUINETTI

We agree to help. Even if we don't know how.

PIO

Well, there is the ticket.

SANGUINETTI

Ticket? What ticket?

PIO

You must agree to stay, for a while at least. There is lodging prepared for you in town. Here, put this in savings.

Padre Pio brings the gold coin over to Sanguinetti and as he places it in his hand...

CUT TO:

INT. BUS - COUNTRY - PRESENT DAY

Giancarla places a coin in the DRIVER'S hand and makes her way to the back.

As she sits:

INT. GIANCARLA'S HOUSE - FLASHBACK, THAT MORNING - DAY

Giancarla's husband sits, just as he does he narrowly avoids a bowl of fake fruit soaring straight for his face.

He gathers the TWO KIDS to himself as they cry.

Giancarla is in a frenzy, veins bulging in her neck.

GIANCARLA

Oh, he's got you fooled too, huh?
My sweet children? My spoiled
fucking brats!

Giancarla snatches up a gargantuan designer bag, storms to the front door and rips it open.

INT. BUS - COUNTRY - DRIVING - PRESENT DAY

Giancarla looks out the window.

EXT. BUS - PIETRELCINA - PRESENT DAY

Giancarla steps off the bus and as the bus drives off...

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - VIESTE - DAY

A 1930s LANCIA TRASNIT BUS trundles off down the square, and past an apartment building.

INT. ELEGANT APARTMENT - VIESTE - DAY

Doctor Bignami lays in bed with a sweaty white pallor, reeling from a deadly cough.

He looks out the window, overlooking the Cathedral, FLOCKS OF PEOPLE GATHER outside of it.

Bignami's WIFE sits next to him, legs crossed, perfect looking, brown hair, cheeks red and swollen.

BIGNAMI'S WIFE

Since there is nothing to be done
for your body, what about your
soul?

BIGNAMI

I will throw out any priest you
send in here. Please, my love. Do
not put me in the hands of fakes.

Bignami's kids walk in, daughter and son, dressed in the highest of fashions, tall, attractive, just like their parents. Mrs. Bignami looks at them, nods.

BIGNAMI (CONT'D)

Why am I getting the feeling you're
going to mention Padre Pio?

BIGNAMI'S SON

Perhaps he could comfort you,
although we do not say there will
be a miracle.

BIGNAMI

Good thing he is under restriction.

BIGNAMI'S WIFE

Yes, he us under restriction, but
we could summon another --

BIGNAMI

-- Absolutely not.

Just then an uproar fills the street outside.

Bignami's wife looks out the window as TOWNIES charge the doors and rip them open, people sprinting in and out.

INT. CATHEDRAL - VIESTE - DAY

Gagliardi, mid Mass, rears back as PEOPLE storm the isles. He rushes off of the altar as SACRISTANS AND PRIESTS ASSIST him into the side chapel.

INT. SIDE CHAPEL - DAY

Gagliardi paces back and forth as the doors swell from weight being pushed against it from the other side.

The sacristans and priests press against the doors with their backs.

PRIEST

They think we stole the statue.

GAGLIARDI

Which one? The Madonna!?

A SACRISTAN gathers the courage to open the doors.

SACRISTAN

Wait! Wait! It's being repaired!

The crowd holds back temporarily.

INT. CHAPEL, STORAGE - DAY

The Sacristan manages to get inside and produce the statue.

The crowd looks over to see Gagliardi sneaking around the corner back into the side chapel, they charge after him.

CROWD

That statue is miraculous! You
cannot touch it! You cannot!

INT. SIDE CHAPEL - DAY

PROTESTORS throw rocks at Gagliardi, SOME approach, kick and punch him.

The priests manage to pull PROTESTORS off and get them outside the chapel and shut the doors.

INT. MAIN CHAPEL - DAY

POLICE pour in as the protestors smash through the doors to the side chapel.

INT. SIDE CHAPEL - DAY

AN ANGRY VIESTE RESIDENT takes the heel of his boot and smashes Gagliardi's nose, then kneels down and shows him a big, gold, heart shaped locket, with a picture of a YOUNG TEENAGED GIRL.

VIESTE RESIDENT
Look familiar? Your eminence?

Gagliardi curls into the fetal position as people continue to assault him and the priests.

THE POLICE fight their way through the crowd and carry Gagliardi and other clergy members out, bloodied and bruised.

EXT. BISHOP'S MANSION - DAY

Gagliardi is wheeled into his home on a stretcher.

INT. GAGLIARDI'S BEDROOM - DAY

Gagliardi lays reading a newspaper, in traction. Strung up with a cast on his left leg, his face covered in welts and bruises.

A FELLOW CLERGYMAN walks in with Dr. Bignami's wife. Gagliardi nods to the fellow clergyman. He leaves her standing there. Alone.

GAGLIARDI
Signora.

BIGNAMI'S WIFE
I should come back shouldn't I?

GAGLIARDI
You've managed to get this far.

He puts down the paper.

GAGLIARDI (CONT'D)
How can I be of assistance?

BIGNAMI'S WIFE
All the churches are closed. I can't find a priest for my husband.

GAGLIARDI
Did you try San Giovanni Rotondo?

BIGNAMI'S WIFE

Not yet, should I?

Gagliardi sighs and lifts the newspaper back up to his face.

GAGLIARDI

Couldn't hurt. I hear there's a mystic priest up there. A friar who negotiates with the local government to build roads and to set up committees to aid the children of soldiers killed in war. Who also sees to it that a telephone network is constructed. All while ensconced in a convent. Have you heard of this man?

She nods and fights a smile. He glares at the ceiling.

PIUS XI (O.S.)

Do you know what Herman Goering said about me, Pasquale?

INT. POPE PIUS XI OFFICE - DAY

POPE PIUS XI, 80s, severe, distant, round faced, round glasses looks across the desk at Gagliardi, black eyes, bandaged nose and crutches across his lap.

PIUS XI

"I've never in my life lacked courage; but before that little figure robed all in white, I felt my heart jump as never before. For the first time in my life, I believe I was afraid." Can you believe that?

Pius XI chuckles.

GAGLIARDI

You do have a presence about you, your holiness. Even your relatives petition like total strangers for an audience with you, then wait for a card of invitation. May I ask what you are trying to say?

PIUS XI

Italy is on the eve of a fascist take over. Currently, a holy monk isn't a high priority for this office.

GAGLIARDI

Forgive me, your holiness. I haven't been completely honest with you. It is true, like I stated, that these injuries were sustained because the people of Vieste are convinced I am against them, but there are rumors of witch craft, spells casted by the Capuchins of San Giovanni Rotondo. Padre Pio is convinced of my past, false, allegations.

He shows him the blessing that Padre Pio wrote.

GAGLIARDI (CONT'D)

Who knows how far these lies have spread?

INT. KITCHEN - VIESTE - DAY

Gagliardi's DEAF NEICE, 14, sits reading a book and sipping on an espresso, Gagliardi walks in without making his presence known.

GAGLIARDI

Can you hear me?

She looks up at the window.

GAGLIARDI (TOP OF LUNGS) (CONT'D)

I said can you HEAR ME!?

She looks down from the window and back to her book.

Gagliardi collapses against the door frame and drops to the floor. She turns around and runs over, hugs him. He weeps.

INT. FRIARY, CHAPEL - DAY

Padre Pio kneels, rosary beads strung around his knuckles.

PIETRUCCHIO, blind, postman, a tall, lumbering man with huge hands and a narrow face, stops just as Padre Pio turns around to face him.

PIETRUCCHIO

Sorry, Padre Pio. Shall I come back?

PIO
I need to ask you something,
Pietruccio. Here, you give me your
arm and I'll give you my eyes.

Padre Pio lurches up and wavers over to Pietruccio, he
assists Padre Pio back to the pew and they sit.

PIO (CONT'D)
Do you sometimes want to get your
sight back?

PIETRUCCHIO
I never thought about it.

PIO
Would you like to have it back?

PIETRUCCHIO
I do not know what to answer.

Padre Pio smiles.

PIO
How do you not know! Do you or do
you not want to see?

PIETRUCCHIO
Padre Pio, I must think about it.

PIO
If you want it, we will pray to Our
Lady, who is so good and powerful
on the heart of her son Jesus.

PIETRUCCHIO
If the Lord has taken my sight, he
has his reasons. Now why pray
against the will of God? Why
request what he first gave me and
then took away?

PIO
Pietruccio, do you or do you not
want your sight back?

Pietruccio sighs and fingers through his mail, hands a letter
to Padre Pio.

PIETRUCCHIO
Here. Padre, the Lord knows what he
does. I want to always do the Will
of God.

If the Lord should restore my sight
and this should be an occasion for
sin, I renounce it.

PIO
Ahaaa! Yes!

Padre Pio hugs him hard.

PIO (CONT'D)
Blessed are you, Pietruccio. You
don't have to see the mud or rot of
this world. You have less
opportunity to offend the Lord!

Padre Pio shows Pietruccio to the door.

Padre Pio looks down at the envelope, sees Bignami's name,
opens.

INT. PADRE PIO'S CELL - DAY

Padre Pio rummages through his drawers and grabs a bottle of
Holy oil and his chasuble, hurries to the door, just as
Cascalente walks in, blocking him, hands on hips, eyes on the
floor.

Cascalente looks up at him -- SMASH -- the holy falls out of
Padre Pio's hand.

PIO
Are they taking the eucharist from
me?

...

CASCALENTE
No, of course not.

Padre Pio smiles.

PIO
Then I bow my head in humble
obedience to the succession of
Peter. Please, Padre, if you will,
tell me my restrictions. If there
are any?

...

CASCALENTE

You cannot celebrate mass in public, you cannot perform the marriage ceremony, you cannot baptize and you cannot hear confessions. You cannot leave the friary.

PIO

Padre, you're shaking.

Cascalente breaks down into tears. Padre Pio hugs him and Cascalente buries his head in Padre Pio's shoulder.

INT. FRIARY CHAPEL - NIGHT

Padre Pio eats the holy eucharist, utterly alone, and weeps.

INT. FRIARY, LIBRARY - DAY

Padre Pio moves his bed and belongings into the library in a section separated off from the rest of the confrere public.

EXT. SAN GIOVANNI ROTONDO - HILL - DAY

BLACK CLAD WOMEN in shawls, five of them, trek their way up toward the church as machine gun fire echoes in the distance.

TOWNSPEOPLE stand in a breadline as the friars hand out food, the line stretches across town and out of the piazza.

ITALIAN TROOPS march in and out of San Giovanni Rotondo and the Foggia province.

FRANTIC REFUGEES collapse on the cobblestone street.

A MAN grips a parapet at the base of the town, A SOLDIER waves him on, not realizing it's a corpse until he kicks it.

EXT. FOGGIA AIRSTRIP, BEACH - NIGHT

Machine gun blasts rip through stars and sand.

White and red flares light up the shore, strobing against GERMAN TROOPS funneling into the airfield off of Siebel ferries.

THE ITALIAN CO-BELIGERENT ARMY stands toe to toe with the NAZIS on the battlefield and trade fire as ITALIAN INSURGENTS, UNION WORKERS, FARMERS, CARPENTERS snipe from the mountains and chuck homemade bombs.

GERMAN MILITARY COLUMNS pour out across the valley and climb the mountains.

Turrets are mounted and TROOPS are turned to face the beach which juts out from the airstrips.

GERMAN SOLDIERS drag ANTIFASCISTS out of the woods, line them up and execute them.

EXT. FRIARY - NIGHT

ANTIFASCISTS, hundreds of them, young and old, dressed in rags with rifles, pour out of the woodwork and bang on the doors, screaming for help.

INT. FRIARY, LOBBY - NIGHT

The Confreres, Agostino, Gaudenzio, Nicola, Ferdinando, and others, pace in front of the door.

Alberto paces with them, now PADRE ALBERTO, late 20s, gray just starting to show in his beard, glasses resting on his nose, standing behind the door as the antifascists bang on it from the other side.

Down the hall they hear yelps and screams coming from the library. They take off.

INT. FRIARY, LIBRARY - NIGHT

Padre Pio, pushes himself up off the floor, his lip bloody, his bed overturned, books thrown about everywhere.

He kneels in front of his bed, exhales, prays, looks down and realizes his pinky finger is completely snapped in half.

A scornful smile stretches across his face.

PIO

Might one of you reset this for me?

They don't reply. He takes a deep breath -- CRUNCH -- he grunts and refolds his hands in prayer.

VOICE

Do you realize, Francesco, how absurd it is to think that God would allow these things to happen to you? God has nothing to do with it.

Padre Pio smirks.

PIO

You're right. I must admit my error. Up to the present I have been acting on a mistaken assumption. I did not know you were such a good spiritual director --

Padre Pio shoots up into the air -- CRUNGK, CRUNGK, CRUNGK, CRUNGK -- Padre Pio's face is smashed into the book shelf, one shelf at a time, until he hits the bottom and spits out blood.

PIO (CONT'D)

I am sorry not to be able to have you for my own spiritual director, father Agostino has fulfilled this office for a long time and our relations have reached a point at which I cannot suddenly break them off.

Metal chains rattle across the library, thick, iron, as if dragged along a sheet of bell metal, like hail raining against copper. Padre Pio cries.

PIO (CONT'D)

Look around, please, I beg you! Look around! You will find souls who will take you as their spiritual director since you are so proficient in this field!

The chains stop.

VOICE

Him it is, it is him. Don't take the doctor. Less will die in war. Let us knock him down, he is crushed. More will suffer. He is weak. He cannot hold out much longer.

Padre Pio freezes, his limbs paralyzed, his mouth stuck open.

Behind him, a black mass of shoulders lifts off the floor.

Fur raises between the haunches.

A low growl raises in volume with each exhale, smoke, sparks, a higher growl, fire, then a roar, then a scream, then an incomprehensible tortured scream exiting whatever lungs and throat are capable of making it.

PIO

Lord, please! I can't! I cannot
hold out much longer!

Silence.

AGOSTINO

Franci, what have you done?

Padre Pio turns around to see Padre Agostino, standing there.

AGOSTINO (CONT'D)

What has happened?

Padre Pio looks down from Padre Agostino's face to see that his chin is resting above the back of his shoulders, his arms folded behind him, observant.

AGOSTINO (CONT'D)

If you build the hospital, I will
do things to you that the human
mind cannot conceive.

INT. FRIARY HALLWAY, LIBRARY - DOOR

Alberto shushes the confrères, trembling and praying in the flickering light of an oil lamp.

Muffled machine gun fire echoes across the country side through the windows.

Padre Alberto pushes the door open, slowly, to see the bookshelves standing neat and intact -- SHOOMPK-- Padre Pio is pushed into one of the shelves with such force that his arms and legs shoot back behind him like a star fish and the shelves domino into one another across the library, from right to left.

The Friars rush in screaming.

Padre Pio rolls over, coughing up blood.

EXT. FOGGIA - TOWN PROPER - NIGHT

Bombs level the entire infrastructure of Foggia.

Walls over a thousand years old, historical monuments, churches and government buildings collapse and crumble.

FOGGIANS run to the hills and are picked off by stray bullets.

INT. CAVE - FOGGIA - NIGHT

FLEEING FOGGIANS stuff themselves inside. Shoulders rub against shoulders. CHILDREN wail as FATHERS attempt to start fires.

EXT. SAN GIOVANNI ROTONDO - HILLSIDE - NIGHT

TOWNSPEOPLE burn cribs and matrimonial beds, warming their hands over the fire as explosions blossom up from Foggia way down below, turning the night red and purple.

EXT. FOGGIA, HIGHWAY - ADRIATIC SEA - NIGHT

Italian, British and German FIGHTER JETS swirl in a hail of machine gun fire above crags and guard rails.

Missiles soar across the starry sky like flaming orange meteors.

Low and behold, a Sports car tears around the bend, a 1937 CHERRY RED ALFA ROMERO SPIDER CONVERTIBLE.

INT. CONVERTIBLE - NIGHT - SEEDING

DR. CARLO KISVARDAY, 30s, slicked wavy black hair, prominent straight nose and a puffy upper lip, tries his best to keep control of the wheel as he makes turns so sharp they're almost corners.

His wife, MARY KISVARDAY, 30s, thick blond hair, square, cute face, streaked mascara, pulls her bonnet over her head and holds onto her husband for dear life.

Suitcases shift in back, half zipped with clothing spewing out of them.

Kisvarday looks down at the gas gage, empty, then he looks up to see a FRIAR'S SILLHOUETE, kneeling in the middle of the road with his back turned.

Kisvarday panics and swerves.

EXT. GAURD RAIL, HILL - NIGHT

The cherry red convertible goes soaring through the air and plummets into the sea.

As the convertible plummets into the water...

CUT TO:

INT. MOTEL BATHROOM - PRESENT DAY

Giancarla submerges herself in the tub, lost in thought. She looks over at the envelope resting on the counter.

INT. MOTEL, TELEPHONE - DAY - PRESENT DAY

She picks up and dials.

INT. GIANCARLA'S HOUSE - PRESENT DAY

The phone rings, her husband just stares at it.

INT. MOTEL, TELEPHONE - PRESENT DAY

Giancarla opens the phone book, dials. Busy, dead line, rings.

GIANCARLA

Hi, yes. Um, have you mailed anything recently?

CLICK. Giancarla dials.

GIANCARLA (CONT'D)

Hi, I know this is strange, but I don't know you. I'm looking for Giovanna Rizzani.

MARY PYLE (FILTERED V.O.)

Who is this?

GIANCARLA

I found a letter with your name.

MARY PYLE (FILTERED V.O.)

Giovanna died this morning, honey. Tell you what; meet me at St. Anthony's in an hour. You know where that is?

GIANCARLA
I'll find it.

Giancarla grabs the letter.

INT. ST. ANTHONY'S - PIETRELCINA - DAY

Giancarla goes to sit in the pew, but stops, sighs a cavernous breath, genuflects. She looks up at the crucifix, and kneels.

As she kneels....

CUT TO:

INT. VATICAN GROTTA, POPE SARTO'S TOMB - NIGHT

Cascalente kneels, praying, the pew glistens with his tears. Cascalente jerks his head and focuses, there, in the in the semi dark, the figure of Capuchin Friar, kneels praying with him.

FRIAR
God Bless you, Provincial Father
Cascalente. Everything will be
well.

CASCALENTE
Pio? Is that you?

Cascalente focuses and realizes he's smiling at a strip of bare bricks. He rubs his face, amazed, gets up, runs out.

CASCALENTE (CONT'D)
Haha! Haaa! Woohoooo!

INT. POPE PIUS XI OFFICE - DAY

Cascalente, is back on his knees, kneeling at the desk of the pope, hands folded.

PIUS
How can what you say be true,
Paolino? Is he not in the convent
of San Giovanni Rotondo?

ORIONE
Certainly, he is there. He's never
moved from there.

PIUS XI

There are still rumors of hysteria.

Padre Orione's eyes well with tears and he smiles.

ORIONE

This is not fanaticism. Padre Pio
is no longer here. This is the hand
of God.

Pius XI sighs.

EXT. OUR LADY OF THE GRACES - DAY

THE PEOPLE OF SAN GIOVANNI form a huge crowd in front of the
church and cheer when Padre Pio steps out onto the veranda.

One by one they step up to Padre Pio and kiss his wounded
hand.

Padre Pio weeps, his face flushed with humility and joy.

A couple walks up to him, drenched, tired, out of breath.
They are Dr. Carlo Kisvarday and his wife, Mary.

KISVARDAY

I'm a pharmacist from Zora. Carlo
Kisvarday. This is my wife, Mary.

Kisvarday and Mary kiss Padre Pio's hands.

PIO

I want you close to me. I want you
to live here. We will do great
things together.

KISVARDAY

Great things?

PIO

We're going to build a big house
for all the suffering people in the
world.

KISVARDAY

Where?

Padre Pio points.

KISVARDAY (CONT'D)

But Padre Pio. There's a mountain
over there.

Padre Pio puts his hand on Kisvardays shoulder.

PIO
...and we shall level that
mountain, my son.

Kisvarday looks at Mary, his wife, she nods. He picks her up and twirls her around.

EXT. OUR LADY OF GRACE - DAY

Dr. Sanguinetti administers shots to SICK PILGRIMS.

Dr. Kisvarday walks over with Mary.

Sanguinetti motions to the friars and a couple other doctors who are giving shots.

Dr. Kisvarday slaps on some gloves and gets to it.

Dr. Sanguinetti hops in a little 30s beater, kicks up gravel.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

A brochure for the house of the relief of suffering lands on the door mat.

Sanguinetti takes off.

INT. 30S BEATER - DRIVING

Sanguinetti chucks brochures in plastic bags -- PLUNGK, PLUNGK, PLUNGK -- one house after the other.

EXT. KISVARDAY'S BUNGALOW - DAY

Dr. Sanguinetti, Emilia, his wife, Dr. Kisvarday, Mary and the Capuchins assist Dr. Kisvarday as he moves furniture into his new home.

EXT. FRIARY CHAPEL - NIGHT

Padre Pio wavers back and forth, holy oils in hand, down the hill toward the town, making his way through PILGRIMS AND SOLDIERS, desperate, starving.

INT. BIGNAMI'S BEDROOM - VIESTE - NIGHT

Dr. Bignami and his wife look out his window, what was once a charming town is now shot full of holes and smoldering.

PIO
Peace to this house and to those
who inhabit it.

Padre Pio stands, framed in the door way, looking down at the Dr. Bignami. His wife rushes over and hugs him.

BIGNAMI
Who has called you? Who has called
you?

Padre Pio steps in and sits at the doctor's bedside. Places the holy oils on the nightstand.

PIO
Enter, Oh Lord, together with us,
and in our humble entrance let come
in everlasting happiness, Divine
prosperity, joy and fruitful
charity. Let the demons run out.
Let the angels come.

Padre Pio uncorks the holy oil.

PIO (CONT'D)
Do you accept?

Bignami reaches out and grasps Padre Pio's hand, nods, smiles. Padre Pio blesses him with the oil.

PIO (CONT'D)
Your soul is right.

BIGNAMI'S WIFE
Padre?

PIO
Yes, signora?

BIGNAMI'S WIFE
I have one more prayer request. One
that no one will accept. Will you?

INT. PADRE PIO'S CELL - NIGHT

Brother Nicola, Ferdinando and Guadenzio help carry in the rest of Padre Pio's belongings inside as Padre Alberto sits on the edge of his bed, holding a plate with a spoonful of jelly and vitamins.

Padre Pio looks at it, then out the window.

Padre Pio forces himself to eat the vitamins and jelly, fights a retch, washes it down with a sip from a half full glass of orange juice.

ALBERTO

Spiritual Father, would you be offended if I were to tell you that Archbishop Gagliardi said some unkind things about you?

PIO

I'm dedicating the Mass to him, Padre Alberto.

ALBERTO

But why? Can't we just pray for him instead?

PIO

The man is dead, and before he died, he forbade prayer groups within his diocese and forbade the faithful to come to San Giovanni Rotondo, or send offerings for the house of the relief of suffering.

ALBERTO

Yet you want to dedicate a mass --

PIO

-- Yes. Stop it.

ALBERTO

Spiritual father. I do not think you are being honest with your feelings.

PIO

One should be so lucky.

Padre Pio drinks the rest of his Orange Juice, changes his gloves and puts on his chasuble.

ALBERTO

A miracle is needed for a dying woman, her husband, a rich industrialist, said he'd offer a great deal of money if we obtain a cure from her.

Padre Pio sits down on the bed.

PIO

Get out.

ALBERTO

What reply should I give, Padre Pio
--

PIO

-- I said get out! One wants to buy a miracle with money! One does not bargain with the Lord. Satanic pride caused the war outside these walls. I don't want a battle raging inside them!

Padre Pio sees that Padre Alberto has effectively pressed himself against the wall of Padre Pio's cell. Padre Pio sighs, relents.

PIO (CONT'D)

Write back that I bless the lady and will pray for the salvation of her soul and that no money is needed for doing so.

EXT. OUR LADY OF THE GRACES - NIGHT

Machine gun fire echoes in the distance as an ADORING CROWD watches a real life nativity scene unfold at the base of the steps to the church.

Snow billows outside the chapel on the street as GIUSEPPA, 70s, wrapped up tight in a wool shawl and fur coat, makes her way up the steps and into the church.

INT. OUR LADY OF GRACE, CHAPEL - NIGHT

Padre Pio celebrates the mass with Padre Alberto, Padre Agostino and the others.

Padre Pio looks down and sees Giuseppa sitting in the back, he smiles.

Dr. Sanguinetti and Emilia sit down next to Dr. Kisvarday and Mary.

Pietruccio, the blind postman kneels on the marble floor up front.

A young lady kneels, nestled close to the blind postman, it's Giovanna Rizzani, from the confessional at St. Peter's.

We see for the first time, just how incredible Padre Pio's Mass actually is.

INT. OUR LADY OF GRACE, ALTAR - NIGHT

Padre Pio hesitates, shifting his weight from side to side as he begins the consecration.

His cheek muscles twitch as he reaches for the chalice, he jerks back his hand, clenches his teeth. Follows through with the words of consecration.

His face undergoes visible, physical changes as he lifts the bread and wine. His cheeks streak with tears as artillery shells blast outside way off in the distance.

INT. CHAPEL - NIGHT

Giuseppa coughs into a handkerchief, trying to control it as much as she can before it turns violent. She excuses herself.

EXT. OUR LADY OF THE GRACES - NIGHT

Giuseppa exits the church and collapses in a coughing fit.

INT. T.O.R. SISTERS HOUSE - DAY

Huge and halfway constructed, some of the rooms are already in use.

A sign out front: *Franciscan Sisters of the Third order.*

INT. GIUSEPPA'S ROOM - DAY

Giuseppa lays in bed, pale, sallow. Very sick. Dr. Sanguinetti and Dr. Kisvarday tend to her.

Seeing that she's asleep, Sanguinetti turns to Kisvarday.

SANGUINETTI

What do you say?

KISVARDAY

I think you're all crazy down here.

SANGUINETTI

Are you surprised? We've been bypassed since the two Sicilies, Carlo. We've been a burden on the shoulders of the last one hundred governments. Unless now --

KISVARDAY

-- How? How can we possibly raise the money?

SANGUINETTI

Look at this woman. She is Southern Italy; broken down and forgotten about. Unless now, with the new spirit of renewal, freedom and democracy, a common ground can be found. We must unite, and the southerner must no longer be a second-class citizen.

Giuseppa stirs awake, confused, she looks up at the two strange men and her eyes well with tears.

GIUSEPPA

Francesco? Where is Francesco?
Where is my son?

They look down at the poor woman, then each other. Kisvarday nods.

EXT. SAN GIOVANNI ROTONDO - PIAZZA - DAY

Padre Pio stands at the entrance to the town and runs as Orazio, much older and thinner, steps down off a Bus. They embrace.

INT. GIUSEPPA'S ROOM - DAY

Padre Pio and Orazio sit next to Giuseppa, on her death bed. Orazio holds her hand, weeping.

They pray the rosary, Giuseppa's hand lets go of the rosary and it rests on the border of the bed sheet.

EXT. OUR LADY OF THE GRACES - DAY

PALLBEARERS carry Giuseppa's coffin out of the church as big snowflakes begin to fall and collect on top of the coffin.

EXT. SAN GIOVANNI ROTONDO CEMETERY - DAY

Giuseppa's coffin is lowered under the eyes of a host of people: Orazio, the Capuchin brothers, Padre Alberto, Kisvarday, Sanguinetti, their wives.

EXT. FOGGIA AIRSTRIP - DAY

DEAD SOLDIERS litter the beach: Germans, Allies, Italian Partisans.

EXT. FOGGIA, TOWN PROPER - DAY

Utter ruin. Smoke billows out of bloody concrete.

EXT. CAVE - FOGGIA - DAY

FAMILIES creep out into the sunlight, smudged with grime and blood.

EXT. SAN GIOVANNI ROTONDO - NIGHT

No power. Pockets of the town shimmer under the moonlight and from fires, peppered throughout the town on the streets and hillsides.

EXT. FRIARY - NIGHT

The friars hand out pieces of bread. Padre Pio calms the worried crowd.

PIO

Go back to your homes. Not one bomb will drop on San Giovanni Rotondo.

CROWD MEMBER

Not one bomb? Why not? There's an airstrip right at the bottom of the mountain. They've been dropping bombs on it all month!!!

PIO

Listen to me. Not one bomb, all
right? This madman will die.

Brother Guadenzio runs inside the friary.

INT. FRIARY DINING ROOM - DAY

Brother Guadenzio steps in to find Padre Agostino and others
with their heads down. Padre Agostino looks up at him.

FATHER AGOSTINO

That's all of it. We don't have
anymore bread.

INT. PADRE PIO'S CELL - DAY

Padre Pio prays. Looks up out of the window, hears something
getting closer. A faint rumbling, mechanical, gas-fed.

Padre Pio jumps to his feet and leans out the window, waves.

American Jeeps tear up the hill toward the friary, a whole
line of them.

EXT. FRIARY - DAY

Jeeps and trucks screech to a stop and AMERICAN SOLDIERS jump
out and begin unloading bread and water.

EXT. SAN GIOVANNI ROTONDO - PIAZZA - DAY

FIVE BLACK CLAD WOMEN with rosary beads and prayer books lead
a GROUP OF AMERICAN SOLDIERS to the clearing of Our Lady of
Grace Church.

EXT. OUR LADY OF GRACE - DAY

Padre Pio steps out and sees the AMERICAN SOLDIERS, battle
weary, but still in touch with humanity.

A SOLDIER, blond, medic, dirty red cross patch sewn to his
shoulder takes a knee in front of Padre Pio, he has a deep
booming, bass of a voice and kind blue eyes.

BARRY

Padre Pio, I'm Barry, from St.
Louis.

Padre Pio puts his hands on Barry's head, then THE REST OF THE SOLDIERS, one by one.

INT. OUR LADY OF GRACE, CHAPEL - DAY

SOLDIERS take a knee and look up at the altar.

INT. OUR LADY OF GRACE, ALTAR - DAY

Padre Pio's face contorts and glows as he fights his way through the Mass, commanding the celebration, the suffering of Calvary alive on his face.

Padre Pio's uplifted hands point toward the heavens and his wounded palms look out across the PACKED CHURCH.

EXT. FRIARY - DAY

AMERICAN SOLDIERS lull to a stop in the clearing out front, stepping down off of Jeeps, Camions and Lorries, unloading more bread, water, chocolate, candy bars, cigarettes, snuff.

Padre Alberto and Orazio help the Americans unload the goods and bring them to the TOWNSPEOPLE AND PILGRIMS.

ALBERTO

Sir?

Barry turns to him.

BARRY

English?

ALBERTO

Pietrelcina. Pietrelcina??

BARRY

Never heard of it.

ALBERTO

Uh.

He motions "one second" and grabs Orazio, whispers in his ear.

ORAZIO

Ah.

Orazio walks up to Barry.

ORAZIO (ENGLISH) (CONT'D)
 Uh, Pietrelcina. Um. It is a small
 town. Not far.

Barry smiles.

BARRY
 There's a lot of those, old man.

ORAZIO
 Naples?

Barry stops.

BARRY
 Saved some of it. Here.

Barry hands them bread.

ORAZIO (ENGLISH)
 Bread? Yes, you have brought bread
 up, but please, if you can, since
 the Nazi troops have taken all the
 wine..if you can bring up a little
 wine for my son's Mass. The wine is
 about finished the friars say, can
 you?

Barry nods, chewing gum. Turns to A DIFFERENT AMERICAN
 SOLDIER.

BARRY
 There's a monk up there, a priest
 the folks here call a saint, and
 he's got bleeding hands. I've seen
 him myself. Be sure you see that
 monk. Be sure of it, and when you
 do, bring that man some wine!

Orazio turns to Padre Agostino.

AGOSTINO
 What?

ORAZIO
 The South. We're finally free,
 father. Finally free.

EXT. SAN GIOVANNI ROTONDO - DAY

From top to bottom, PILGRIMS AND SOLDIERS flow in and out of
 the town. Thousands of them.

Suddenly, the human train comes to a standstill as a Jet roars overhead...A black, Messerschmitt 262 German bomber.

HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE hit the deck as the jet soars overhead across the Gargano mountain.

Slowly, at a crawl, people get back on their feet.

INT. FRIARY, FRONT DOORS - DAY

Brother Nicola is back at it again with the bamboo cane, trying to keep the women from entering the clausura on the other side of the door.

A few ladies slide their hands in the crack with little notes inside their hands.

INT. OUR LADY OF GRACE, CHAPEL - DAY

Padre Pio wavers past a PACKED HOUSE, every Catholic from here to Haiti stands waiting.

Up at the front, a young woman waits with her AUNT, 50s. The young woman is Giovanna.

Padre Pio walks past her and stops, without turning around:

PIO
I know you. You were born on the
day your father died.

Padre Pio enters the confessional. Giovanna turns and looks at her aunt, stunned.

Giovanna makes her way to the confessional and steps inside.

INT. OUR LADY OF GRACE, CONFESSIONAL - DAY

Giovanna kneels.

PIO
In nomine Patris et Filii et
Spiritus Sancti. Amen.

GIOVANNA
Padre, I'm sorry, but, I do not
know you. This is the first time I
have come to San Giovanni Rotondo.
Perhaps you have mistaken me for
another girl?

...

PIO

Need I remind you the process of making bread? Hmm?

Her eyes widen.

PIO (CONT'D)

My daughter, listen to me. As you were being born, the Madonna brought me to Udine, to a palazzo. She made me assist at your father's death, saying to me: "You see in that room, a man is dying, he is the head of the family. He is saved through the prayers and tears of his wife, and by intercession. Pray for him. The wife of the man is about to give birth to a baby girl. I entrust this creature to you."

Giovanna cups her mouth and bursts into tears.

GIOVANNA

My mother used to tell me that all the time, but I never believed her. It's you. It's really you!

PIO

My daughter, you belong to me. You have been entrusted to my care by Our Lady. It is time for me to take care of your soul, as our Heavenly Mother desires.

GIOVANNA

Tell me what I should do. Should I become a nun?

PIO

No. You will come often to San Giovanni Rotondo and I will have care of your soul, and you will know the will of God.

INT. OUR LADY OF GRACE, CHAPEL - DAY

Giovanna walks out, wiping tears from her face and smiling, she runs and hugs her aunt, laughing.

AUNT

Must have been a good one.

EXT. FRIARY GARDEN - DAY

Padre Pio walks out onto the patio with his rosary and looks out across the plains of San Giovanni Rotondo where all the wreckage, from Foggia to Manfredonia spreads out across the land and sea.

A church bell pangs across the devastation.

Padre Pio surveys the ruins of his country as THOUSANDS OF INVALIDS make their way up toward the Friary.

He then picks a part of the mountain and points at it.

EXT. FRIARY, FRONT DOORS - DAY

YOUNG MEN IN BROWN AND BLACK RAGS make their way to the front doors of the friary.

Padre Pio steps out with father Agostino and father Alberto beside him.

PIO
Who are you?

COMMIE
Political exiles, rejected fascism.

PIO
Are you communists?

Commie shakes his head.

PIO (CONT'D)
Are you sure?

COMMIE
Yes, Padre.

PIO
Give me the card that is in your pocket.

Commie turns red as a pepper and hands Padre Pio the card. He tears it up.

PIO (CONT'D)
You won't need this in heaven.

COMMIE

But Padre, I am not in heaven, I am here and I am unemployed, and you just tore up my card for a promise of a job.

PIO

If Christians were Christians there would be no need for communism. You do not need this. Neither can you live on promises.

They communists walk off. Padre Pio whistles, they turn around and groan.

THE OTHER TWO GUYS pull out communist membership cards and hand them to Padre Pio. He tears them up and tosses them.

PIO (CONT'D)

Accept the work from Saint Francis. Go now and come back and be ready to work on the road.

COMMIE

Road? What road?

INT. AMERICAN GOVERNMENT OCCUPATION BUILDING - DAY

Padre Pio, Sanguinetti and Kisvarday meet with an American Official, MR. DAYTON, butt chin, thick brown combover cut, sweating red, white and blue.

An ITALIAN AMERICAN SOLDIER translates for Sanguinetti in English as Mr. Dayton and OTHER AMERICAN OFFICIALS look back and forth from Sanguinetti and the humble friar across a large table.

ITALIAN DEVELOPERS point at sweeping infrastructure documentation of construction materials and jobs.

SANGUINETTI

We'll need heavy machinery to cut away the mountain that rises so close to the monastery, the base of which is only a few yards from the left side of the friary chapel.

The officials look at each other and converse for a moment, Mr. Dayton nods to the translator.

SANGUINETTI (CONT'D)

Thousands of tons of earth and rock will have to be blasted and removed if building is to be done on this site.

MR. DAYTON

We promise we will let you know if we can find a way to help.

Sanguinetti turns to Padre Pio.

SANGUINETTI

I think they just said no.

PIO

Don't worry. We still have the ticket.

Sanguinetti turns to Kisvarday, throws up his hands.

SANGUINETTI

There he goes with the ticket again. What ticket? Did he talk to you about a ticket?

KISVARDAY

No. I didn't hear of any ticket.

They both look at Padre Pio, he laughs.

PIO

Stop worrying! All this worry. I cannot tell you what the ticket is because I would be lacking in charity.

INT. SACHETTI ESTATE - BORGO SAN LORENZO - DAY

GIOVANNI SACHETTI, 50s, nobleman, refined, worried sick, watches Dr. Sanguinetti tend to SACHETTI'S SON, a young teenager, drenched in sweat and pale.

SANGUINETTI

I have been wondering since early January, asking myself; "what can this ticket be?" I'm sure it will be something.

Sanguinetti administers a shot to Sachetti's son.

SANGUINETTI (CONT'D)

Padre Pio and the rest of the Capuchin friars have a remarkable power over the town of San Giovanni Rotondo, and with the right hospital, we could save the South.

SACHETTI

Are you asking me to donate, Doctor?

Dr. Sanguinetti looks over at Sachetti and back over to his son. Stroking his forehead.

SANGUINETTI

Your son will be well.

Dr. Sanguinetti gathers his things and heads for the door.

SACHETTI

Do be sure to tell me what the ticket is, when you find out.

Dr. Sanguinetti, stops, turns to see Sachetti shaking his head and chuckling.

INT. OUR LADY OF GRACE CHURCH - DAY

Padre Pio, with tears in his eyes, imposes on Giovanna a brown scapular and cord.

PIO

My daughter! Now you can draw from the evangelic spirit of the seraphic father, Saint Francis. It is my ardent desire that all of my spiritual children belong to one of the Franciscan families, so that I can truly feel I am their father and brother. Come.

She assists Padre Pio over to a little Statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary, they kneel down before her. Padre Pio shuts his eyes.

GIOVANNA

Padre --

Padre puts up his hand "shh." She obeys and turns her head, bows it in prayer.

PIO

Jacopa.

GIOVANNA

Jacopa?

PIO

That is your name now.

GIOVANNA

Jacopa! What an ugly name, Padre Pio. Give me another name. How about sister Claire, I'll take Sister Claire.

PIO

No, there's already a girl in another order named sister Claire. You're sister Jacopa.

GIOVANNA

Padre Pio, why have you given me this name?

PIO

Help me up.

They walk toward the exit.

PIO (CONT'D)

Have you read the life of Saint Francis? No? Well, if you had, you would know of the Roman noblewoman Jacopa de'Settesoli, known for her great charity and generosity towards the friars and for her strong character in protecting and defending the order.

GIOVANNA

Okay, okay, I get it. It's a good name.

PIO

Jacopa had the privilege of assisting at the death of the Seraphic Father Saint Francis. Remember this, one day you will assist at my death.

He smiles and leaves her standing there, stunned.

INT. KISVARDAY'S HOUSE, DINING ROOM - DAY

Gifts and envelopes take up most of the floor, all around the house.

The table and buffet are covered with correspondence and a type writer.

Dr. Kisvarday hands out sleeves of brochures to Dr. Sanguinetti, DR. SANVICO, a short, bald man with a commanding business inducing smile and Padre Pio.

Kisvarday takes out one of the brochures and presents it: the first page picturing a reproduction of a painting by Giotto showing St. Francis giving his coat to a poor man.

KISVARDAY

Padre Pio does not wish to be mentioned legally at the moment. I, myself, will be elected accountant and treasurer, Dr. Sanguinetti will be head of the clinic, Dr. Sanvico, a dear benefactor, will be vice-president, and, if we can get him on board, Giovanni Sachetti will be involved in some way or another.

EXT. GUEST HOUSE - DAY

Pietruccio, the blind postman, feels his way to the driveway and up to the door, knocks.

Dr. Sanguinetti answers.

PIETRUCCHIO

Do you see?

SANGUINETTI

Yes.

PIETRUCCHIO

I am blind, Doctor, but I can see. You, on the other hand, cannot. I will pray for you.

Sanguinetti accepts the envelope, watches Pietruccio makes his way back to the road.

INT. SANGUINETTI'S HOUSE - DAY

Dr. Sanguinetti tosses the envelope on the table, brews an espresso, brushes off his hands and stops mid brush. He walks over to the envelope and opens it.

His eyes light up as he reads, he jumps into the air. Emilia walks in to see what the fuss is about and he picks her up, spins her around.

EXT. SACHETTI ESTATE - BORGO SAN LORENZO - DAY

Dr. Sanguinetti knocks on the door, Sachetti answers and smiles. Sanguinetti claps his hands together.

SANGUINETTI

It was a bond, a government bond I bought years ago, and now I received news that my bond has won a number state prize.

SACHETTI

This is the ticket Padre Pio mentioned?

SANGUINETTI

Yes! Now I am free to leave my office and help Padre Pio. Ask yourself: How could Padre Pio have known that my bond would win a prize?

Sachetti stops chuckling.

SANGUINETTI (CONT'D)

How would he know that I bought a bond to begin with? I never mentioned it to him! Mr. Sachetti, it's a miracle.

EXT. KISVARDAY'S HOUSE - SAN GIOVANNIR ROTONDO - DAY

ITALIAN AND AMERICAN OFFICIALS walk in and out of the modest two story bungalow as Dr. Sanguinetti and Giovanni Sachetti make their way inside.

KISVARDAY (O.S.)

The organization is proud to present Mr. Giovanni Sachetti as the project president and key benefactor.

INT. KISVARDAY'S HOUSE - DAY

More gifts have piled up, to the point where Sanguinetti and Kisvarday have to step over things to get around the table.

Dr. Sanvico, Dr. Sanguinetti, Dr. Kisvarday and Padre Pio all clap and smile.

KISVARDAY

Dr. Sanguinetti has agreed to donate most of his small fortune to the funding of the equipment. Good men...you are witnessing the official committee for building a clinic according to the intentions of Padre Pio.

SACHETTI

Who am I paying to start building this thing?

KISVARDAY

Shareholders, Mr. Sachetti. An act will be signed to establish a shareholding company. The capital? One million Lira. A thousand shares of one thousand Lira each, divided among the same number of shareholders. For greater clarity, each shareholder will sign a document in which they renounce any profit --

Sachetti raises his hand.

SACHETTI

That's all fine, Carlo. Who is the architect???

PIO

His name is Angelo Lupi, he will oversee the entire construction of the hospital.

The doctors look at Padre Pio like he's crazy. Padre Pio exits the room and returns with ANGELO LUPI, 40s, big and built with a square head, wearing knickerbockers with a jumper and big boots. He clears his throat.

ANGELO

Gentleman. I think it is worth mentioning that I am neither an engineer nor land surveyor, but Padre Pio thinks my design is most convincing. It is in harmony with the nature of the place.

SACHETTI

May we see it?

Sachetti looks over to Padre Pio, who nods.

ANGELO

I haven't drawn it out yet. I merely spoke of it.

KISVARDAY

How can we start work without a plan?

Padre Pio stands, hands folded and resting on his belly, stepping over gifts and donations as he circles the table.

PIO

Angelo is architect, contractor, superintendent and a lot of other things for the hospital. Through his genius, all manner of necessary equipment and supplies will be made here, right here in San Giovanni Rotondo. This will save money and give work to the poor.

EXT. FRIARY - DAY

Padre Pio and Angelo make their way up the hill toward the front doors. Padre Pio elbows him.

PIO

Do you understand that you must start the work?

ANGELO

Padre, I do not even have a degree. Not for a few months. Would you not prefer someone else?

Padre Pio stops him.

PIO

Where were you before you came here?

ANGELO

I don't understand. You mean before San Giovanni Rotondo?

Padre Pio nods.

ANGELO (CONT'D)

In the middle of a war.

PIO

Do you know where the doctors were before they came here?

ANGELO

The war?

PIO

In the midst of battle, yes, but the war isn't over. Do not worry about your degree, Angelo. God will give you your degree. Come, I have one of the rooms cleared for you.

EXT. FARMHOUSES, COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Angelo, much like a sergeant, leads a group of FARM LABORERS, solid muscles, leathery sun blanching skin, real tough, up the hill toward the friary in the distance.

As Angelo and his army of workers trudge on, low and behold, other men join the line:

PARTISANS, ARMY VETS, EX FASCISTS, PILGRIMS, COMMUNISTS, EXILES, all with rolled sleeves and faces of stone-cold dignity, some still bleed, literally from scabs sustained from war time.

All together, the men start chanting an old time Neapolitan folk song: "Palummella"

INT. ANGELO'S ROOM - FRIARY - DAY

Angelo runs a pencil along a blue print, set up on a large wooden table with a lamp hanging over it from the ceiling.

Piles of balled up pieces of paper cover the floor.

Thick stacks of diagrams are shoved into big folders beneath the window.

Angelo finishes tracing the last line of the blue print and exhales.

EXT. FRIARY, HILLSIDE - DAY

Muddy and exhausted, LABORERS construct and lift beams to build supporting walls on the downhill side of a drainage system.

OTHER LABORERS work above them, knee deep in a trench, digging all the way down the hill that leads to town.

Hammers and chisels puncture draining ports into a massive dry well cover.

Bloody fingers pull drain tubing along crushed rock.
 Wheelbarrows roll in and out of a maze of line levels.
 A Siren wails OFF SCREEN, filling the whole countryside.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY

LABORERS huddle behind a ditch as the siren slows to silence.
 They breath through excited smiles, peering up at the base of
 the hill a few hundred yards away -- KABOOOOMMMMMMM -- their
 view is lost in an explosive cloud of red dirt and rock.

EXT. BLASTING SITE - DAY

Under the direction of Angelo, LABORERS chisel and dig at the
 raw earth, lifting up tons of dirt and crushed boulders,
 slicing through red clay and jackhammering manmade crags a
 few feet at a time.

The work is tremendous, but there is an air of enthusiasm and
 determination on the faces of men who partake in it,
 including Orazio, who can't help himself but lend a hand with
 the young men, as he looks, beaming, over a plummeting
 manmade precipice.

ORAZIO

It is like I'm still in America!

INT. AMERICAN GOVERNMENT OCCUPATION BUILDING - DAY

Mr. Dayton flips through envelopes, as he does we see that
 each and everyone one of them is full of some kind of
 donation.

Mailbag upon mailbag sits on the ground next to the desk.

AN AMERICAN OFFICIAL, secretary, walks in and sees the
 gigantic amount of mail.

SECRETARY

Where's this all coming from?

OFFICIAL

Soldiers. Their families in
 America.

INT. MOTOR CAR - DAY - DRIVING

Padre Pio rides shotgun down the hill toward a huge, freshly built Lime kiln.

PILGRIMS AND TOWNSPEOPLE follow the car as it bounces and weaves through the country side.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE, LIME KILN - DAY

Padre Pio wavers through the DENSE CROWD, prayer book in hand, chasuble hanging over his shoulders.

Padre Alberto and Father Agostino walk beside him, making room as Padre Pio presses toward the large brick laden dome; powerful, hot, artisan.

Padre Pio blesses the kiln as people crowd around him.

INT. PADRE PIO'S CELL, WINDOW - DAY

Padre Pio looks out and watches Angelo in the distance, pouring over the blue print in his hands, overlooking the jobsite.

Angelo turns and nods at Padre Pio as white-gray and red dust billows into the air and falls down behind him around the town during repeated blasts of dynamite.

Singing emits from the ditches as LABORERS roar another folk tune.

INT. CONFESSIONAL - DAY

Padre Pio sits, leaning his head to the left and right, his hands returning to adjust the confessional doors, his finger delving from time to time into the tiny box of cedarwood herbs.

The confessional quivers as -- KABOOOOM -- explosions thunder through the walls from the jobsite somewhere in the distance.

INT. OUR LADY OF GRACE, CHAPEL - DAY

Giovanna heads to the confessional and goes to open the door, hesitates, enters.

PIO (O.S.)
My daughter, Christ does not want
you on Mount Tabor, but on Calvary.

INT. OUR LADY OF GRACE, CONFESSIOANL - DAY

Giovanna sighs, frustrated.

PIO

Religious life is Tabor. Matrimony is Calvary. On Tabor one seeks, one finds and one lives united with God in Prayer and in contemplation. On Calvary one finds suffering in crucifixion with Jesus.

GIOVANNA

Tell me what to do, Padre.

PIO

My daughter, if you feel like embracing the cross, take this step. There is a youth entrusted to you by Divine Providence. Otherwise, don't think of it anymore. Okay?

Giovanna nods.

PIO (CONT'D)

You forgot one of your sins.

GIOVANNA

I did?

PIO

Yes, sinning while intending to confess, is a sin in and of itself.

GIOVANNA

I confess it then.

PIO

Giovanna, if you do not stop this constant repetition of the same sins, I will come to wherever you are and give you a slap which you will remember for the rest of your life.

EXT. BANQUET TABLE - DAY

LABORERS AND CONTRUCTION WORKERS line an expanse of wooden benches, sitting before the table with their daily meal on metal plates.

Young, old, all smiles. Orazio among them. A WORKER turns to him.

WORKER

You smile a lot, Orazio. I can't blame you.

ORAZIO

How often during the war, did I suffer when people told me: "look what your American friends have done." Now they help build this hospital.

WORKER

Americans, yes. Well, we have too many communists in San Giovanni Rotondo anyway, Orazio.

ORAZIO

Yes, it's incredible. Just where Padre Pio, my son, has never stopped proving that there is God.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE, KILN - DAY

Tool sheds litter the construction site, LABORERS manufacture bricks and other materials on the spot, on site.

Hammerheads snap off hammers, zappa handles break in half. Rocks tear through rust holes on wheelbarrows.

Angelo storms over and observes all the broken equipment. He picks up a zappa and chucks it. Screams at the top of his lungs.

ANGELO

We are on a very tight budget! If Padre yells at Guglielmo, Guglielmo yells at Carlo, if Guglielmo yells at Carlo, Carlo yells at me, and if Carlo yells at me, I yell at you!

EXT. OUR LADY OF THE GRACES - DAY

Padre Pio greets PILGRIMS AND TOWNSPEOPLE as they exit the church. Dr. Kisvarday comes out and shakes his hand, looks out across the town and up toward the hill, watching Angelo lose his shit.

The sun has just begun to shine.

KISVARDAY

Angelo is working too hard, Padre.
He should take a few days rest, not
just one day.

Padre Pio turns and looks up the hill. Chuckles.

PIO

I assure you that he is the sort of
man that gains in health as he
works, and does not eat bread as
well when he rests.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE, LIME KILN - DAY

Angelo spits on the ground and raises his hands presenting
their work done thus far.

ANGELO

Just like in the army! We're an
army out here! Sound good!

LABORERS

Sir, yes sir!!!!!!

EXT. FRANCISCAN THIRD ORDER BUILDING - DAY

A revolving door of FRANCISCAN SISTERS, TOR LAY PEOPLE and
PILGRIMS take up the front entrance and sidewalk.

BARBARA WARD, 20s, fair skinned, plain, beautiful, pearl
necklace, upkept hair, steps out of a cab and hurries to the
front door with a messenger bag, chock full of files.

INT. FRANCISCAN THIRD ORDER BUILDING - DAY

Giovanna works the front desk, taking telephone calls,
filling out paperwork and accepting donations.

Barbara approaches and speaks with an English accent.

BARBARA

Hi! English?

Giovanna nods.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

I'm a journalist for the economist
in England.

I was sent here by the paper to
tour various countries recovering
from the destructions of war.
Marquis Patrizi referred me to...

She looks through her documents.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Um..

GIOVANNA

Padre Pio?

Barbara smiles and nods.

EXT. OUR LADY OF THE GRACES - DAY

Padre Pio walks out of the church and finds Angelo there,
sitting, facing toward the town with his shoulders slumped.

ANGELO

Padre Pio. Why must I make people
laugh behind my back and yours?

PIO

Let them laugh. What is the
problem?

ANGELO

If men have to work with this
equipment it will take twenty years
to finish the job. There's such a
lack of machinery and equipment. I
very much doubt that we can do it
all.

FIVE WOMEN IN BLACK SHAWLS walk up the steps. One of the
women in black shawls hands Padre Pio five lire.

BLACK SHAWL

For the house of relief of
suffering.

Pietruccio walks up behind them and up to Angelo.

PIETRUCCIO

This too.

He hands Angelo five lire. Then a female British accent
speaks up.

BARBARA

I too would like to make an offer,
Padre Pio.

Padre Pio and Angelo look down and see Barbara, standing next to Giovanna.

GIOVANNA

Sorry for the surprise, Padre.

BARBARA

Barbara. Barbara Ward.

GIOVANNA

She wants to write about the
hospital for her newspaper.

She walks up and kisses Padre Pio's hand.

PIO

Your fiancé is protestant. No one
is perfect. What did she say? Can
you speak Italian?

BARBARA

What's he saying?

GIOVANNA (TO PIO)

She wants to write about the
hospital for the newspaper.

PIO

That's fine. I shall pray for your
fiancé.

GIOVANNA (TO PIO)

She can't speak Italian, but she
can speak French and German.

PIO (TO BARBARA)

French? I have my spiritual
director write me in French. It
infuriates the devil.

-- KABOOOOOM -- she hits the ground at an explosion in the
distance. Padre Pio and Angelo remain unfazed.

PIO (CONT'D)

See? Come. Let us talk after
confession.

Padre Pio motions for Barbara to follow him in.

GIOVANNA

Confession. He wants you to confess.

Barbara smiles as Padre Pio leads her inside the church. Angelo walks off toward the construction site.

INT. OUR LADY OF GRACE, PEW - DAY

Mary sits next to Padre Pio by the entrance to the church, Giovanna on his other side, translating for them.

PIO

What is it called?

GIOVANNA

UNNRA. United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. They give aid for purposes of reconstructing countries that have been hit by the war. Her fiancé is a delegate-advisor.

PIO

..and a hospital is also a work of construction?

Giovanna relates this info to Barbara, who nods. Padre thinks on that, looks up at Christ crucified, the crucifix above the altar.

PIO (CONT'D)

Fiorello La Guardia.

BARBARA

What?

PIO

Tell them that name.

GIOVANNA

Tell Who?

INT. UNITED NATIONS - DAY

Barbara speaks into a microphone, surrounded by AMERICAN CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS.

BARBARA

...With the clinic being dedicated to the memory of an illustrious Italian-American, who knew well the conditions of Southern Italy, saw them with his own eyes, but also because his father was born and raised in Foggia, who used to describe the squalor to him as a young child. This man is none other than Fiorello La Guardia.

The American congressional leaders look at themselves, then Barbara.

CONGRESSIONAL LEADER

We'll let you know.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE, BLASTING SITE - DAY

Most of the base of the hill remains rough and daunting.

A little down the way, however, some of the scape has been smoothed and ropes have been twined around boards making up the beginnings of a base.

Concrete pours, LABORERS cheer.

Angelo can't believe it. Construction begins.

EXT. HALF CONSTRUCTED HOME - DAY

Sanguinetti presents their new found home, a modest little one story abode with a beautiful lawn of fresh flowers to his wife, Emilia, who is all smiles.

INT. SAINT MARY OF THE ANGELS CHURCH - PIETRELCINA - DAY

Giovanna exits a confessional as a YOUNG HANDSOME SACRISTAN, fights to keep his eyes off of her as she makes her way over to the pew, she looks back and catches him, his face shoots to the floor, he whistles.

INT. SAINT MARY OF THE ANGELS CHURCH, PEW - DAY

Giovanna smiles as she kneels, does the sign of the cross. Without further adieu, starts her penance.

GIOVANNA

Hail mary, full of grace, the Lord
is with thee, blessed art though
among women and blessed is the
fruit of thy womb, Jesus, Holy
Mary, Mother of --

SMACK!!! Giovanna's head jerks from the force of an invisible hand. She screams.

The handsome Sacristan runs over.

HANDSOME SACRISTAN

Signora! Are you okay? I saw it! I
saw it happen!

She calms down, deep breath. Then starts laughing. The young handsome sacristan is confused, but his heart melts when she looks up at him and smiles.

GIOVANNA

My name is Giovanna.

INT. OUR LADY OF THE GRACES, CHAPEL - DAY

HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE funnel in and out of the chapel as Giovanna and the handsome Young sacristan are married.

Padre Pio marvels as she and her new husband walks down the isle, pelted with grain and candy.

INT. OUR LADY OF THE GRACES, CHAPEL - DAY

A HUGE PRAYER GROUP recites in unison, Sanguinetti, Kasvarday, Dr. Sanvico with his award winning smile, Pietruccio, Bignami's wife and son, Angelo and LABORERS.

T.O.R. Sisters and T.O.R. Laypeople take up the other side: Giovanna and her husband among them, Barbara Ward, and lastly Orazio, kneeling on the floor, looking up at his son, the saint, Padre Pio, surrounded by his dear Confreres, marveling, especially Padre Alberto, who is moved to tears.

CUT TO:

INT. ST. ANTHONY'S - PIETRELCINA - PRESENT DAY

Giancarla leans back off the kneeler and sits, sighs.

MARY PYLE

You're looking for Giovanna, huh?

Giancarla turns and sees MARY PYLE, 80s, weathered whitish blond hair, a square face, with a big smile and crows feet.

MARY PYLE (CONT'D)
Can I see the letter?

Giancarla hands it to her. Mary Pyle reads it, smiles.

MARY PYLE (CONT'D)
Follow me.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE, CHURCH - PIETRELCINA - DAY

Giancarla and Mary Pyle walk up to a half constructed church, with the left wing, wrapped up and aging.

MARY PYLE
This was our dream.

GIANCARLA
Who.

MARY PYLE
Me, Giovanna and Padre Alberto. I met them a couple years ago. Padre Alberto had been dead set on building this friary since, well, ever since an old friend of his came to him in a dream and told him to.

MARY PYLE (CONT'D)
You see that church over there? That's Saint Mary of the Angels. The oldest church in Pietrelcina. Can I see the envelope again?

Giancarla obliges. Mary looks at it and hands it back to her

MARY PYLE (CONT'D)
I'd like to open it, but it doesn't belong to me, it belongs to Padre Alberto.

GIANCARLA
Where can I find him?

CUT TO:

EXT. FRIARY - DAY

The sun beams down against an elm tree by the clearing as Orazio and MICHELE, 60s, Orazio's eldest, look proudly at his GRANDCHILDREN, all five of them. They are Orazio's great grandchildren.

ORAZIO

Michele.

MICHELE

Yes, father?

ORAZIO

Tell Franci I want to die in San Giovanni Rotondo, not in Pietrelcina. I want to die where your mother died.

Michele, slightly alarmed at first, smiles and pats his father on the shoulder.

MICHELE

Of course.

Michele turns back to his grandchildren and walks over to them, tending to them and playing.

Orazio collapses on the ground behind them.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

PALLBEARERS carry Orazio's casket through the beehive of the construction site.

Padre Pio, Michele and the rest of the family, Father Agostino and the Capuchins, Padre Alberto, Barbara Ward, Sanguinetti, Kisvarday, Giovanna and her husband, Angelo and other committee members walk behind the coffin.

The procession winds through streets heaped to the sides with fresh earth from a gash in the ground, extending for miles to the regional water system.

They move past ovens of baking bricks, past furnaces of lime, past gravel machinery, past gravel stored twenty feet high.

They move past the yard for cement production, the yard for artificial marble, the yard for lumber, for carpentry and over to the cemetery.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Orazio's coffin is lowered into a grave next to Maria Giuseppa's. Snow begins to fall, just as it did when she was buried.

EXT. BUILDING SITE - DAY

The foundation of the hospital lays complete in the ground.

With HUNDREDS watching, Angelo steps over to the corner of the foundation and lays the first cornerstone of pink rock, beginning the visible face of the building.

LABORERS cheer and chug from bottles of wine.

KISVARDAY (O.S.)

Just how many wards will the clinic have?

INT. AMERICAN OCCUPATION BUILDING, CEREMONY - NIGHT

Padre Pio walks toward a GATHERING in the main room down the hall, Kisvarday hot on his heels.

PIO

Wards? No wards. The House for the Relief of Suffering must not be too much like a hospital. It would be all right to have four beds in each large, comfortable room, but there must be no wards.

KISVARDAY

How many patients will you want in the clinic, Padre Pio?

PIO

All the people who need it.

KISVARDAY

But Padre, as it is, it looks as if the hospital will cost millions. Besides, it is a building and any building will contain just so many people and no more.

PIO

The main building can have wings later on.

We are leaving room at the sides for such wings, because no one who wishes to come here should be turned away. The present plan calls for a large library too. In case more room is needed.

KISVARDAY

We will end up broke if the roof is put on. After looking through the books, I suggest using other marble rather than this costly Carrara marble for all the stairways, and the costly red Carso marble.

Padre Pio turns and stops him.

PIO

The eye must be pleased, Carlo. Why should the scale be so heavy on the side of crime and depredation, and so light on the side of comfort for the sick? When will the man with a little something left over stop running to those who have already eaten plenty and turn to the needy?

KISVARDAY

But Padre Pio, what about the convent? The walls are in desperate need of --

PIO

-- San Francesco thinks about the monastery. Put the money into the house for the relief of suffering. It might inspire the rest of the country to commence great works again. Who knows?

They enter the ceremony.

INT. STAGE - NIGHT

Dr. Sanguinetti steps up to the podium. Behind him, sitting in a long line of chairs are Casacalente and other CAPHUCIN AUTHORITIES.

SOME FIFTY OFFICIALS of the Italian democratic government take up the front rows of the gathering. The rest are LABORERS AND TOWNSPEOPLE behind them.

SANGUINETTI

Thank you and welcome to the
cornerstone ceremony of the house
for the relief of suffering.

People stand and applaud. Sanguinetti smiles and motions for everyone to sit.

SANGUINETTI (CONT'D)

It wasn't my idea.

People laugh.

SANGUINETTI (CONT'D)

The house for the relief of suffering will accept sick people from everywhere in the world, whatever their race. Fees will be the same for the rich as for the poor, in that there will be no fees. Once completed, the site of the hospital will be as beautiful as the Italian Riviera. The clinic will overlook a chain of rugged mountains, and the Manfredonia sea, visible in the distance, will complete the view.

Dr. Sanguinetti sees Padre Pio wavering toward a chair in the back, followed by Dr. Kisvardi, he smiles.

SANGUINETTI (CONT'D)

It seems that every million we spend, we somehow find another five hundred thousand. Padre Pio was right when he said that the grace of God is enormous, and a single act of love toward God has so much value in His eyes that He would consider small things given as big as the universe. Thank you.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY - DRIVING

Angelo shuttles between tool sheds and LABORERS, eating bread and cheese in one hand, with a blue print in the other, gripped against the steering wheel.

Angelo pauses mid chew and slows to a stop, takes in the mountain, half excavated, the building and the whole construction ground with its machinery.

Angelo squints, swallows, smiles and returns to the blue print.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - SUMMER - DAY

Machines pour lime and cement into crevasses and chasms of wood and metal.

Trucks bring in huge chords of lumber and steel by the ton.

SHIRTLESS LABORERS sling gravel and hammers in the hot evening sun.

Angelo directs the trucks where to go, drenched in sweat.

Padre pours holy water on one of the beams.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

Lime is accumulated into pillars and archways as Angelo trudges down the line in a raincoat during a torrential downpour, lifting the flap of the raincoat over a blueprint in his hand, studying it.

The whole site is covered in a massive tent to keep workflow.

LABORERS, without missing a beat, hammer away and keep on with the construction, ankle or knee deep in mud, sloshing through water and grime, elbows bloody, lifting planks, beams and stones.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - WINTER - DAY

Angelo marches through the site, most of the tool sheds lay choked in snow.

Along the bottom of the hill, bricks have begun to form walls and arches, pine scaffolding stands tall and aims at the heavens.

Angelo looks back at the friary, Padre Pio waves and nods.

Padre Alberto, Padre Agostino, Brother Guadenzio, Brother Nicola and the rest all sprint out of the church and over to the friary.

Padre Pio listens to them, then looks up at Angelo.

INT. FRIARY CHAPEL, PEW - DAY

A working class, ROUGH CUT MAN, 40, the angry Vieste resident. The one that kicked Gagliardi in the face, looks down at a large, golden, heart shaped locket, open with the picture of the young teenaged girl.

The ROUGH CUT WIFE, 40s, also from the town of Vieste, leans her head against her husband's shoulder, her cheeks are puffy and swollen from tears.

Their daughter, the young teenaged girl from the picture, at once a thing of beauty, is now possessed, ugly, defiant, with eyes lowered and lips curled back over the teeth, restrained by relatives.

Padre Pio walks up to the demon, kneels.

PIO

Quiet.

Padre Pio looks into its eyes, then up at the parents, then back at Padre Placido and Padre Alberto.

PIO (CONT'D)

Bring her to mass tonight.

Padre Pio walks off.

INT. OUR LADY OF GRACE, PEW - NIGHT

The possessed girl, unbeknown to the PACKED CHURCH, sleeps against her father's shoulder, twitching.

INT. OUR LADY OF GRACE, STAGE - NIGHT

Padre Pio steps up to the podium. Sighs.

PIO

Jesus tells us in the gospel that the prize is promised, not to those who start well, nor to those who continue for a certain time, but to those who persevere until the end. Therefore, who started; needs to persevere always better, who continued, needs to try to reach the end, and who didn't start yet, disgracefully, may put himself on the good path. Let's do the effort to persevere. I know it is pretty difficult work, but;

the example of the Saints, the help of the most Blessed Virgin, the Grace of God, which is always ready for those who ask, won't be missing for us. So let us clothe ourselves of constancy, patience and perseverance, and then the words will come to us, what Jesus Himself said: "But he that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved." I wish you all good night, full of graces and benediction, not only to you, but also for your beloved ones, especially your families, and those whom you care, but especially the poor, invalid and suffering ones, and grant them health, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Be praised Jesus and Mary, now and forever.

CHURCH GOERS scream and pile out of the pews.

INT. OUR LADY OF GRACE, CHAPEL - NIGHT

The possessed girl hovers above the pews in the center of the chapel.

DEMON

We'll see each other tonight.

The girl faints and her body hits the pew with a loud thud.

EXT. OUR ADY OF GRACE - NIGHT

CHURCH GOERS pour out of the church, screaming.

INT. FRIARY CHAPEL, PEW - NIGHT

Padre Pio looks up at the crucifix, does the sign of the cross, genuflects and wavers up behind the altar and into the door leading to the friary.

INT. STAIRS, CORRIDOR - NIGHT - WALKING

Padre Pio prays, sweating.

INT. CORRIDOR, SLEEPING QUARTERS - NIGHT

Padre Pio makes his way to his door. The little candle on the night stand that illuminates the hallway is blown out by a quick, hushed, gust.

INT. PADRE PIO'S CELL DOOR - NIGHT

Padre Pio pauses in front of his door, hangs his head and goes inside.

INT. PADRE PIO'S CELL - NIGHT

Padre Pio drops to his knees, doing the sign of the cross as drawers are pulled out of dresser and the bed is thrown back against the wall.

He lowers his head in prayer, and as he looks up toward the heavens his night shirt is ripped in half and slung off of his body.

SMACK -- Padre Pio hits the floor, hard. Spits out blood, a gash above his eyebrow gushes all over his face and floor.

He attempts to lift himself from the ground, but is slammed back down, and his face is dragged along the concrete.

The demon relents. Padre Pio sits up, catches his breath, then his arm is lifted up violently, strained and ripped out of the socket.

Padre Pio screams in pain, gets back onto his knees, prays -- CRUNCH -- Padre Pio is sent flying into his dresser and rolls over, grasping at his back.

PIO (WHISPER)
Brothers. Brothers, help me.

PIO (CONT'D)
Help.

PIO (CONT'D)
HELP ME! BROTHERS HELP ME!

Padre Agostino runs in and drops to the floor when he sees Padre Pio's state.

The rest of the confreres run in and look down to see Padre Pio, bleeding to death with his head, gently nestled against a pillow.

AGOSTINO

Padre. Who put this pillow beneath
your head?

Padre Agostino lifts Padre up into his arms.

PIO

Mother Mary..

Padre Pio's head slumps back.

AGOSTINO

Little Pio! Little Pio! Wake up, my
son! Wake up!!!!

Padre Alberto stands there, shaking.

ALBERTO

You can't keep doing this to
yourself!! I am not afraid of the
devil! Send him to me and I will
put him to flight! Do you hear
me!?!?

PIO

You do not know what you are
saying, Padre Alberto...If you....
saw him for what he really is, you
would die of fright.

INT. HALLWAY, OUTSIDE CELL - NIGHT

Padre Alberto steps out of the room, walks over to the wall
and buries a frenzy of haymakers against the concrete.

He sinks to the floor, gripping his hand as he sobs.

EXT. OUR LADY OF GRACE - DAY

PILGRIMS gather outside the church square as Angelo steps up
through the crowd with LABORERS in tow.

Father Agostino walks up over to the stairs from the friary,
looks out over the people.

AGOSTINO

Padre Pio will not be celebrating
mass today. He is very ill.

Angelo's face drops like a sack of anvils. People turn to
themselves and chatter.

A deep, gravelly cackle cuts across the courtyard, people jump out of the way as those same poor parents hold back their possessed daughter.

The demon looks up at Father Agostino.

DEMON

I really hit the old man last night. I would have hurt him more if the lady in white hadn't have stopped me!

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

LABORERS stop when they see Angelo, sitting on a drum, looking off over the mountain. He looks over at them, shakes his head and then fixes his gaze on the distance.

The laborers look at themselves.

INT. FRIARY, FRONT LOBBY - DAY

The friars stand clustered by the window, looking out at Angelo, sitting on the drum, slumped.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - NIGHT

Angelo looks back at the friary and sees Dr. Sanguinetti heading toward the front doors.

Angelo pushes himself up off of the drum and walks off toward the friary up the hill.

INT. PADRE PIO'S CELL DOOR - NIGHT

Angelo walks up to Father Agostino, sitting, lost in prayer next to the door.

ANGELO

Is Padre Pio dying?

Father Agostino doesn't answer. Sanguinetti and Kisvarday step out of the room and look at Angelo.

Sanguinetti walks down the hall, Kisvarday collapses on a chair and looks up at Angelo.

KISVARDAY

I know it's not the best time, but you deserve to know now.

We're out of money. Dr. Sanvico has left for Venice to retrieve more funds, but it won't be enough to sustain the rest of construction.

ANGELO

Everything will be fine, doctor.
I'll finish what I can.

Kisvarday pushes himself up off the chair and follows Sanguinetti down the hall.

Angelo collapses on the chair next to Father Agostino and stifles sobs.

ANGELO (CONT'D)

I have no talent. Without the power and well wishes of Padre Pio my destiny on earth is left so naked. Any further work on the house for the relief of suffering is impossible.

Brother Guadenzio walks out of the room and sees Angelo.

GAUDENZIO

Come with me.

INT. FRAIRY CHAPEL - NIGHT

Brother Guadenzio kneels down next to Angelo. Brother Nicola, Brother Ferdinando, Brother Arcangelo, Padre Alberto, Padre Placido and Padre Agostino all kneel.

GUADENZIO

We're going to pray until he's well.

EXT. FRIARY - NIGHT

PILGRIMS kneel and pray as hundreds of candles light up the clearing, a little sea of orange flames glows all the way down to the base of the town. One big voice, all together, praying the Hail Mary.

A phone rings OFF SCREEN.

INT. FRANCISCAN THIRD ORDER BUILDING, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Barbara coils out of a heap of blankets, fumbles for the phone on the nightstand, finally grips it and smacks it against her ear.

BARBARA
Barbara Ward. Who?

Her lamp clicks on, her face lit up, eyes wide.

BARBARA (CONT'D)
Um, yes! Okay! Um! No Italiano, no italiano. One minute!!!!

Barbara rushes out and returns momentarily with Giovanna.

GIOVANNA
Good morning Miss La Guardia. Yes?
You what? When?

Giovanna and Barbara scream and smile, Giovanna's husband rushes in. Giovanna leaps into his arms.

EXT. FIRARY - DAY

PILGRIMS continue to pray. Hundreds of melted candles lay scattered on the ground.

They look up, eyes widen, smiles stretch across faces and people cheer.

Padre Pio stands in the window, waving to them with a white handkerchief.

Angelo and Brother Guadenzio exit Our lady of Grace and check out the commotion.

Angelo looks up at the window and sees Padre Pio, then looks down to see Sanvico walking towards him.

INT. FRIARY, CHAPEL - DAY

The parents of the Possessed girl bring her in. Like clockwork, she snarls and spits as Padre Pio approaches, busted up and bandaged with black eyes and stitches across his forehead.

Padre kneels down before her, looks to his left, sees, in the candle light, the faintest of a GREY APPARITION, which then molds into the form of a humanoid face, narrow, appalling, taking a flesh tone with long eyebrows that seem to go all the way up the scalp.

PIO

In the name of Jesus Christ. I order you, Satan, to leave her in peace. Leave her in peace. In Jesus' name. Leave her, in peace.

A DEEP TORTURED SHRIEK fills the chapel and the demon finally relents, the girl falls limp. Her dad picks her up and carries her out of the chapel.

MR. DAYTON (O.S.)

Four hundred million Lira is an astronomical amount of money Ms. Ward. We all express our gratitude to Mr. and Mrs. Fiorello La Guardia. Not only that, but the spirit of the Italian virtues that are overcoming the difficulties of postwar Italy's hard-put econom.

INT. AMERICAN GOVERNMENT OCCUPATION BUILDING - DAY

Barbara, Sanguinetti, Kisvarday, Giovanna and FIORELLO LA GUARDIA'S WIDOW, short, old, all smiles, sit across from Mr. Dayton, as the Italian American soldier translates for him.

MR. DAYTON

...but I'll tell you right now; a lot of controls and bureaucratic red tape will have to be got through before the fund can be used. No government anywhere lets that kind of money flood into their country without getting their hands on it, let alone the Italian government. After all, they just decided to be a republic, and the relief programs here show no sign of slowing, those programs cost money.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

Avenues, ramps, clearings and driveways have now been cut around the Fiorello La Guardia clinic.

Although not complete, the semblance of what is to come appears striking: a large, light pink, almost white stone structure with one hundred-fifty windows on the front wall.

Pallets of marble unload out of huge trucks onto the land, ranging from white, pink, black or rose red.

Laborers watch as Angelo smashes a sledgehammer against a rock, screaming at the top of his lungs, Padre Pio lets it run its course.

PIO

Angelo, please. Two-hundred fifty million Lira is still a lot. Look at all the work we've done.

ANGELO

I know that, Padre Pio. It isn't greed that compels my temper. It is time. Two hundred-fifty million, great; when? How much at a time? Installments? Fine. When? When? When? When!? The American government cares more about Italy than Italy does! This isn't impropriety, it's downright theft!

EXT. FRIARY - DAY

CROWDS OF PILGRIMS drift in and out of the clearing in front of the friary and Our Lady of the Graces Church. Pietruccio walks past Father Agostino and Father Guadenzio, who sit with some of the pilgrims and pray.

PIETRUCCHIO

The architect says he will be finished in 1956. Is that true?

FATHER AGOSTINO

Yes, that's correct.

PIETRUCCHIO

That is seven years from now. Just imagine if he were not capable and fast. Can you imagine what would happen then?

The Pilgrims and monks turn toward the construction site and watch Angelo break down into tears and hug Padre Pio.

Brother Guadenzio turns to Brother Nicola and Brother Ferdinando.

GUADENZIO

For an architect, Angelo collapses
like a house of cards.

Father Agostino elbows him in the rib.

EXT. BEAUTIFUL COURTSIDE APARTMENT - VENICE - DAY

A RICH MERCHANT RELATIVE, wrapped in silk, looks at Dr. Sanvico, with the all business grin. His relative thinks. Looks at him. Writes out a check.

EXT. CITY STREET - VENICE - DAY

Dr. Sanvico removes the check from an envelope and looks at the contents.

Dr. Sanvico collapses on a bench and weeps as he watches A FAMILY drift by on a boat.

Dr. Sanvico looks back down at the check and sees that there, on top of it, is a black silk handkerchief, confused, he pulls at one of the corners, and sees the edge of a piece of paper, pulls a little more, and sees that it is another check, a different check, written to Padre Pio.

Amazed, he looks up and sees, almost drifting through the BUSTLING VENITIAN CROWD, a group of FOUR WOMEN IN BLACK SHAWLS and a FIFTH WOMAN, bareheaded, shuffling after them.

Dr. Sanvico shoots up off the bench.

DR. SANVICO

Signora! Signora!

The bustling crowd continues in all directions blocking him from their path, as he finally breaks through he sees that the black clad women have disappeared.

EXT. FRIARY - DAY

Sanvico sprints up the hill holding the black handkerchief in the air like a victory flag.

The confreres rush outside and look at the check, pick Sanvico up and carry him inside, yelling and cheering.

EXT. ROOF - DAY

Dr. Sanguinetti stands at the left side of the roof, facing the broad marble expanse with a hammer and chisel, tip-tapping away at a big letter C, to his right, A UNION STONE MASON wipes away at the rest of the marble, revealing a big broad, powerful font that stretches across the roof facing out: CASA SOLLIEVO DELLA SOFFERENZA.

Angelo walks down the little walkway, pats Dr. Sanguinetti on the shoulder and leans over the stone parapet, looking down at Padre Pio and the two church authorities, he waves and nods.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE - DAY

Padre Pio, Padre Agostino, Padre Alberto and Provincial Cascalente look up, marveling.

They wave and head back to the friary.

EXT. ROOF - DAY

Sanguinetti looks out at the sunset and smiles.

EXT. FRIARY - DAY

As Padre Pio reaches for the door he hears Angelo yelling in the distance.

INT. HALLWAY, PADRE PIO'S CELL - DAY

Padre Alberto rushes toward Padre Pio's door as pent-up sobbing unleashes across the hall.

INT. PADRE PIO'S CELL - DAY

Padre Alberto bursts in to see Padre Pio slamming his fists up and down on his desk.

Padre Pio turns and collapses on the floor beneath his crucifix.

PIO
 Jesus, you know how much I love
 you. Do not be offended if I tell
 you that this time you have been
 cruel to me!

You took my friend unto yourself,
without telling me first, as you
have done many times before with
other people. I know that if you
had told me before, I would not
have given him to you. I would have
snatched him away from your hands!

Padre Pio shoots up and flips over his mattress, kicks the bed frame.

Padre Alberto lets himself out.

EXT. HOUSE FOR THE RELIEF OF SUFFERING - DAY

Barbara Ward, the friars, the T.O.R SISTERS and other THIRD ORDER FRANCISCANS, Giovanna and her husband among them, look up.

LABORERS crowd behind Emilia, Kisvarday and his wife, Mary, Dr. Sanvico, Sachetti and his son look up at the roof.

Cascalente, Mayor Morcaldi, Mr. Dayton and other AUTHORITATIVE FIGURES cup their brows in awe.

EXT. ROOF - DAY

Angelo walks over to the edge of the roof and looks down at a single bare spot, just enough room for one last tile.

Angelo picks up a tile, presents it to the crowd, leans down and presses it into the mortar.

People go nuts.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUS - SAN GIOVANNI ROTONDO - PRESENT DAY

Giancarla steps off and makes her way over to a little pay phone next to a gas station, dials.

INT. GIANCARLA'S HOUSE - DAY

Her husband stares at the phone as it rings.

EXT. GAS STATION - SAN GIOVANNI ROTONDO - DAY

Giancarla spots FIVE BLACK CLAD women waking past the pumps and up the hill toward the church in the distance.

GIANCARLA
Excuse me. Excuse me???

They turn. Giancarla holds up the envelope.

GIANCARLA (CONT'D)
I'm looking for Padre Alberto
D'Apolito. Do you know where I can
find him.

They point up toward the hill and make their way up it.

EXT. OUR LADY OF THE GRACES - PRESENT DAY

Giancarla watches the five black clad women go inside. She follows.

INT. OUR LADY OF GRACE, CHAPEL - PRESENT DAY

Giancarla walks up and sees in the corner, Padre Pio's exposed casket, revealing his incorruptible body, she drops to her knees and weeps, uncontrollably. Hugging the side of the casket.

Giancarla turns around and looks up at the sky through the window.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIORELLO LA GUARDIA CLINIC - DAY

Military planes from the Manfredonia airbase fly overhead, looking down at FIFTEEN THOUSAND PEOPLE, standing on the twelve acre grounds in front of the hospital.

SUPER: MAY 5th, 1956 -- INAUGURATION DAY -- HOUSE FOR RELIEF OF SUFFERING.

EXT. STAGE, PODIUM - DAY

Padre Pio, father Agostino, brother Gaudenzio, brother Carmelo, Brother Nicola and the rest of the friars sit in chairs behind --

His eminence, CARDINAL GIACOMO LERCARO, wide, kind face, joyful unfading smile, blue eyes, as he speaks to the crowd.

Other CATHOLIC AUTHORITIES: Cascalente, Regional Superior and A HOST OF OTHERS, sit behind the cardinal.

Padre Pio turns to brother Gaudenzio.

PIO

But where is Angelo?

CARMELO

He's discussing repairs with Pietruccio. No one else will listen.

Padre Pio looks out and sees Angelo in the back speaking with Pietruccio, pointing at a corner of the building.

Cardinal Lercaro finishes speaking and turns to Padre Pio, motions for him to come speak. Padre Pio puts his hand on Padre Alberto's shoulder.

PIO

Hold me up while I speak, would you? I feel very weak.

Padre Pio sways over toward the podium with Padre Alberto, holding him up as he searches his robe and removes a couple pieces of paper.

PIO (CONT'D)

The life of a Christian is an unceasing reaction against himself and produces beauty at the price of sorrow. Until you fear, you will not sin. In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti --

CROWD

Amen.

PIO

People and brothers in Christ, the Casa Sollievo della Soferenza is complete. I thank the benefactors from every part of the world that cooperated. This is what Providence, helped by you, created. I give it to you. Admire it and bless it together in the name of God. A seed has been placed in the earth which He will warm with His rays of love.

A new army formed through sacrifice and love is about to rise up to the glory of God, and to comfort sick souls and bodies. Do not deprive us of your help, collaborate with this apostolate for the relief of human suffering, and the Divine Charity which knows no bounds and which is the very light of God and the Eternal Life. This Work which you see today is only starting out on its life, but this creature to grow and become adult needs and asks for your generosity so that it does not perish from inanition, and so that it may become a hospital city, technically adapted to the most demanding needs and also to the disciplined order demanded by militant Franciscanism. A place of prayer and science where human beings can be united in Christ Crucified, as a single flock with a single Shepherd. A stage on the path to be completed has been accomplished. Let us not slow our step, let us answer the solicitations and the call of God for the cause of the good of all, each of us carrying out his duty. I, a useless servant of our Lord, Jesus Christ, in incessant prayer beg you with the striving desire to pull to your hearts all of suffering humanity to present it with me to the Mercy of our Heavenly Father, you whose action is illuminated with Grace, with liberality, with the perseverance of good, with the rectitude of intention. Forward in the humility of spirit with hearts held high. May the Lord bless those who have worked, are working and will work for this hospital and remunerate you a thousand times in this life, together with your families, and with eternal joy in the next life. May the Blessed Virgin of Grace and the Seraphic Father St. Francis in Heaven, and Christ's Vicar on earth, the Pope, intercede that our wishes may be granted.

INT. OUR LADY OF GRACE, CHAPEL - DAY

Padre Pio wavers down the aisle, shuffling past PILGRIMS, hands clasped and resting on his belly. He enters the confessional.

INT. HOUSE FOR THE RELIEF OF SUFFERING - DAY

GUEST AND OFFICIALS pour into one of the enormous surgery salons of the building.

TWENTY FOUR DOCTORS AND EIGHTY NURSES file, ascending and descending to the various floors.

MEDICAL STAFF hustle and bustle about the lobby as HUNDREDS OF PATIENTS are wheeled in and assisted.

EXT. HOUSE FOR THE RELIEF OF SUFFERING - DAY

Cars drive up from clearings in front of the church, along wide ramps that lead to the hospital.

PILGRIMS AND PATIENTS walk through gardens landscaped on the front and to the sides of the magnificent building.

A GROUP OF PILGRIMS turns to FIVE WOMEN IN BLACK SHAWLS with prayer books and beads.

PILGRIM

Where is San Giovanni Rotondo?

BLACK SHAWL

Up that way. Up that way is Padre Pio.

She smiles and points.

EXT. OUR LADY OF GRACE - DAY

CROWDS fill the courtyard, offering an expanse of heads that covers the town all the way down to the bottom of the Foggia Province.

EXT. FOGGIA, ENTRANCE - DAY

Busses lull and hiss, traffic honks and jams as PILGRIMS from all over the planet make their way up the hill.

INT. OUR LADY OF GRACE, CHAPEL - DAY

Packed. SHOULDERS RUB, not a space to be had, in fact, people have to force themselves against each other to make just enough room for PADRE PIO, 80s, dying, assisted by Padre Alberto and Padre Agostino and the other friars behind him, as he staggers toward the altar.

INT. OUR LADY OF GRACE, ALTAR - DAY

Padre Pio sits, lurched forward as he initiates the eucharist.

EXT. FRIARY, GARDEN - NIGHT

Padre Alberto walks up and kneels down in front of Padre Pio, who drifts in and out of consciousness.

ALBERTO

Padre Pio. I am sorry. Can you
bless this for Padre Clamente?

Padre Pio reaches out for the rosary and presses to his lips and kisses it repeatedly.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)

Padre. May I have it now?

PIO

These are mine.

ALBERTO

No Spiritual Father. I brought them
for your blessing because I want to
give them to Padre Clamente.

PIO

Who took my rosary?

Padre Alberto kisses Padre Pio on top of his head.

ALBERTO

Keep it, Padre. I'll go and get
another one.

INT. PADRE PIO'S CELL - NIGHT

Padre Pio looks out his window, at the SEA OF PILGRIMS, bathed in the light of their individual candles. He blesses them, turns and Padre Alberto and Padre Agostino help him to his chair.

Padre Pio plops down, fights with a bronchial cough until retching. He laughs.

PIO
I cannot take it anymore! Lord,
what am I doing down on earth now.
Come and get me.

Padre Pio looks up.

PIO (CONT'D)
Two mothers. I see two mothers.

Padre Pio grabs at Padre Agostino and Padre Alberto's hands. Brother Guadenzio, brother Nicola and the others are all behind them, fighting for strength.

PIO (CONT'D)
Pray for me brethren. I am afraid
to meet Christ. Fifty years of the
stigmata. Fifty years of
unworthiness. I have not
corresponded to his love and
infinite graces.

ALBERTO
Spiritual Father. Your hands,
they're like ice.

Padre Pio's eyes flutter shut.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)
Padre Pio! Padre Pio!

Padre Pio opens them one last time, looks over at Padre Agostino then closes them forever.

INT. THIRD ORDER LODGING - SAN GIOVANNI ROTONDO - NIGHT

Giovanna wakes up screaming. Her husband grabs her and shakes her, brings her close.

GIOVANNA
Padre Pio is dead! Padre Pio is
dead!

She buries her head in his shoulder.

EXT. SAN GIOVANNI ROTONDO - DAY

Padre Alberto, Padre Agostino, and the rest of the brothers, along with Padre Clamente, carry Padre Pio's exposed casket up to Our Lady of Grace.

Padre Clamente turns to Padre Alberto.

CLAMENTE

All my companions have gone,
Alberto. Now it is my turn. He told
me I would die soon after.

ALBERTO

He told you he would die first. You
still have me, by the way.

CLAMENTE

Little Alberto. I'm telling you; my
hour has arrived! Bury me in
Pietrelcina, would you?

Padre Alberto rolls his eyes.

ALBERTO

You really have a fixed idea, Padre
Clamente.

Giovanna, her husband, Kisvarday and his wife, Sanguinetti's widow Emilia, Barbara ward and the rest of the Capuchins follow close behind.

THOUSANDS of people take up the entire region, chanting at the top of their lungs: "Hooray for Padre Pio."

CUT TO:

EXT. OUR LADY OF GRACE - PRESENT DAY

Not quite as packed, but just as enthusiastic, PILGRIMS AND TOURISTS from all over walk in and out of the modest little church.

An old man with a cane makes his way up the steps.

INT. OUR LADY OF GRACE - DAY

The old man with the cane, PADRE ALBERTO, 80s, weathered but jovial and energetic still, canes his way over to Giancarla, who is just now starting to pull herself together.

ALBERTO

Young lady? Why are you crying?

GIANCARLA

I always had this unexplainable animosity toward Padre Pio. I even spoke ill of him. My husband loves Padre Pio. There was always so much talk about him, about his holiness, that I felt it as a reproach, and I developed a repugnance for him.

ALBERTO

Did he offend you in some way?

GIANCARLA

I've never met him.

ALBERTO

Signora, to speak ill of a person one does not know is foolish.

GIANCARLA

Yeah, that or taking two trains and two buses on a whim, looking for a dead woman and a priest. Your name isn't Alberto by any chance is it?

Giancarla holds up an envelope.

ALBERTO

May I see the last name please?

She hands it to him, his eyes light up. He opens it. Sees the check.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)

We can finish it.

GIANCARLA

Finish what, Padre?

ALBERTO

The friary in Pietrelcina, with the big bells. Padre Pio always talked about that. Come on, I'll show you around.

EXT. CONVENT OF FRIARS MINOR - PIETRELCINA - REAL TIME

Bells ring out across the courtyard as TOURISTS and DISCERNING RELIGIOUS walk in and out of the building.

Plaques stand out front by the entrance, engraved with the faces of Giovanna Rizzani, Mary Pyle and Padre Alberto D'Apolito.

Padre Clamente and Don Salvatore are buried next to the entrance.

GIANCARLA, 50s, walks out with her family and they head towards Saint Mary of the Angels church, just a few streets down.

FADE OUT.

THE END.