

***NOLI TIMERE***  
***(Don't Be Afraid)***

*A play*



***"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."***

*1 Peter 5:8, King James Bible*

***"These are truths, these are not facts,"***

*Rev. Gary Thomas, Vatican-certified exorcist on the Catholic teachings of exorcism, 10/5/2012*

***"It's just that demon life that's got you in its sway."***

*Jagger/Richards, "Sway," Sticky Fingers, 1971*

***"Everybody's Lucifer."***

*Keith Richards, interview with Rolling Stone Magazine, 1971*

**CAST:**

***Thomas, a man in his 30s***

***Mary, his sister, in her late 20s-early 30s***

***A Man, age indeterminate***

**SCENE 1:**

*Darkness.*

*Lights rise slowly on a sparsely, but well-furnished room. There is a lot of dark, old, polished wood and dark carpets. There is a stairway up left leading to a second floor. Stage right is a front door. Stage left is another door, leading to the rest of the house. There are two formal-looking chairs and a simple coffee-table between them. It is a room that smells like Murphy's Oil Soap and incense. The lights do not rise very high. It is very late.*

*The room is silent and empty for a moment after the lights rise. There is no movement. Abruptly, there is a knock at the front door. It echoes through the room. There is no response. After a moment, the knocking comes again. Stronger, more urgent.*

*A brief pause and through the stage left door enters Thomas, dressed in a robe and half-asleep. He answers the door. A man is standing there, agitated.*

**THOMAS:** Yeah, yes- can I--

MAN: Are you- are you the-

THOMAS: Yes, I'm the- what do you need?

MAN: It's late, I know it's late.

THOMAS: Yes, it's late. Yes. What can I--

MAN: You're young.

THOMAS: I'm...?

MAN: You're young. You're younger than...

THOMAS: Younger than what?

MAN: Than I thought.

*An odd pause.*

THOMAS: Sir, it *is* late. So is there something that I can--

MAN: Is the Monsignor here?

THOMAS: The Monsignor? He...yes, but he's sleeping so--

MAN: I need the Monsignor.

THOMAS: Are you a parishioner here?

MAN: Am I...?

THOMAS: Are you a member of this congregation?

MAN: I..no. No, I'm not.

THOMAS: Ok. All right. Listen, it's very late, it's, it's after 3, so if this could--

MAN: *(with urgency)* No no, it can't. It can't wait.

THOMAS: All right. Listen if you won't tell me what the problem is, then I can't--

MAN: There's something. Something is *inside* me. Something is--

THOMAS: What? Something is..?

MAN: Possessed. I'm possessed.

*A pause.*

*THOMAS:* You're possessed.

*MAN:* Yes.

*A beat.*

*THOMAS:* ...possessed by what?

*MAN:* Don't.

*THOMAS:* Possessed by what?

*MAN:* Don't do that.

*THOMAS:* Don't do what?

*MAN:* Don't...NOT...believe me. You're supposed to..

*THOMAS:* Supposed to what?

*MAN:* I need help. I need the Monsignor.

*THOMAS:* Because you're possessed.

*MAN:* YES!

*A beat.*

*THOMAS:* Where were you?

*MAN:* What?

*THOMAS:* Before this. Where were you.

*MAN:* I was--what does it matter where I was?

*THOMAS:* Were you at a party? A bar?

*MAN:* I'm not...I wasn't...

*THOMAS:* What's your name?

*MAN:* Why...

*THOMAS:* I don't know you. You don't go here.

*MAN:* I can't remember.

THOMAS: You don't remember your name?

MAN: I can't.

THOMAS: But you remember to come here. You know to come here.

MAN: The light. I saw the light in the--

THOMAS: What light? There isn't a light.

MAN: Just...help me. Help me.

THOMAS: Why don't you go home? And try to sleep--

MAN: I don't know how to--I don't know the last time I slept.

THOMAS: Yeah, I'm sure you don't. Good night now.

*Thomas takes the man by the arm and tries to steer him toward the door.*

MAN: *(whirling around and gripping Thomas by both arms)* LISTEN TO ME. Something is wrong. Something is very wrong with me. And I need help. I need you to listen.

THOMAS: *(taken aback by the sudden violence)* All right. Ok. Try to calm down.

*The Man is still holding tightly to Thomas.*

THOMAS: *(gently)* It's all right now. Just let go. I need you to let go.

*The Man slowly releases his grip on Thomas's arms.*

THOMAS: Good. That's good. Now why don't we--how about we just...sit...for a moment? Ok? Let's sit down.

*The Man nods and he moves to one of the chair. Thomas takes the opposite one. A pause.*

THOMAS: Tell me what happened.

*Light fade.*

SCENE 2:

*Lights rise. Some time in the past. Sounds of distant music. Thomas sits with his sister Mary in a bar, sharing a drink. There is a moment of expectant silence, Thomas looking intently at his sister.*

MARY: You're not serious.

THOMAS: I am though.

MARY: You're going to be a priest.

THOMAS: Yeah.

*A beat.*

MARY: ...why?

THOMAS: *(laughing)* I don't know, exactly. Because.

MARY: *Because?!?* That's what a little boy says.

THOMAS: *(teasing)* Probably shouldn't bring up little boys.

MARY: That's not funny.

THOMAS: Right. Yes. Sorry.

MARY: It's really not.

THOMAS: I hear you.

*A beat.*

THOMAS: It's a little funny.

MARY: Not even a little.

*A pause.*

MARY: Tell me why. Really.

THOMAS: I don't know why, really. It's...I don't know. It's hard to elucidate.

MARY: Try.

THOMAS: Mary--

MARY: Try Tommy.

THOMAS: Don't.

MARY: Sorry. *Thomas.* Jesus. *(catching herself)* Oh shit, am I not supposed to say that now?

THOMAS: Say what?

MARY: Jesus.

THOMAS: What?

MARY: Are you going to be upset if I say "*Jesus*" like an expletive?

THOMAS: *(mocking)* "Expletive"?

MARY: *(giving it right back)* "Elucidate"?

THOMAS: Fair point.

MARY: Well are you?

THOMAS: Am I what?

MARY: Gonna be upset?

THOMAS: For fuck's sake, no. I'm going to be a priest. Not a Christian.

*He smirks at her.*

MARY: Now that's funny.

THOMAS: I'm a funny guy.

*A pause. They look at each other.*

THOMAS: It's hard to explain. They talk about a..a..*calling*. Something you just *feel*. This is just...what I feel.

MARY: I see.

THOMAS: What?

MARY: What?

THOMAS: What do you see?

MARY: Fuck Tommy, I don't know. It's just something people say.

THOMAS: Stop calling me that, ok? You know how I--

MARY: Yeah yeah. I know. You hate it.

THOMAS: I hate it.

*A pause.*

MARY: Is this because of Mom?

THOMAS: Mary--

MARY: I'm just asking. I wasn't there when she died. You were. Does this...this choice...have something to do with that?

THOMAS: Why would it--

MARY: Because she was devout. Because you felt guilty. Because you wanted to give her something to be proud of before she went.

THOMAS: No, it doesn't. It's nothing to do with that at all.

MARY: Tom--

THOMAS: What?

MARY: Nothing. I don't know. Nothing.

THOMAS: Ok.

*A pause.*

MARY: When was the last time you went to mass?

*Thomas shrugs.*

THOMAS: What does that matter?

MARY: *(laughing)* Yeah I'm sure it's unimportant.

THOMAS: It's how I feel that's important. That's what counts.

MARY: Yeah. Ok.

*A pause*

MARY: It's just the two of us you know.

THOMAS: I know.

MARY: And you're gonna be a priest.

THOMAS: Yep.

MARY: Could be the end of the line.

THOMAS: What?

MARY: I'm just saying it could be the end. Of us. The family.

THOMAS: What about you?

MARY: What about me?

THOMAS: You could get yourself knocked up. It's not all on me.

MARY: Uh huh. And what's been your evaluation of my recent romantic history?

*A beat.*

THOMAS: *(raising his glass)* To the end of the line!

MARY: *(raising hers)* To the end of the line.

*Glasses clink. They sit looking at each other, perhaps chuckling a bit.*

*Lights fade.*

### SCENE 3:

*Back in the rectory. Late at night. Thomas is sitting across from the Man, as before. A pause. The man abruptly gets up and looks at the window.*

THOMAS: It's late.

*The man says nothing.*

THOMAS: Very late, in fact.

*The man says nothing.*

THOMAS: It's almost early. That's how late it is.

*The man says nothing.*

THOMAS: Are you Catholic?

MAN: ...what?

THOMAS: I'm asking if you're Catholic. If that's what brought you here.

MAN: I don't...

THOMAS: You're looking for an exorcism, yes?

MAN: Yes. I don't know. Yes.

THOMAS: The rite of exorcism is Catholic.

MAN: Yes.

THOMAS: That's why I'm asking. Asking if you're Catholic.

*The man says nothing.*

THOMAS: All right. When did it start?

MAN: The--

THOMAS: Yes. The...possession.

MAN: Weeks ago. A month, maybe.

THOMAS: You've been possessed for a month-

MAN: Yes. Maybe. Yes.

THOMAS: So why now?

MAN: What?

THOMAS: Why now? What's making you seek help now? What happened?

MAN: It became...it's darker.

THOMAS: Darker?

MAN: Yes.

THOMAS: What does that mean? Darker?

MAN: *(with a hint of threat)* It means that you should believe me.

THOMAS: Should I?

MAN: Yes.

THOMAS: Why?

MAN: What?

THOMAS: Why should I believe you? You don't appear possessed.

MAN: How do you know?

*A beat.*

THOMAS: Speak in a language you don't know.

MAN: What?

THOMAS: Prove it to me. Speak in a language you don't know. That you couldn't know.

MAN: Like what?

THOMAS: I don't know. Farsi?

MAN: I can't.

THOMAS: Armenian?

MAN: I don't know that.

THOMAS: Klingon?

*The man glares at him for this.*

THOMAS: C'mon. You don't know a little Klingon? How about Rommulan? Or Vulcan?

MAN: Stop it.

THOMAS: I grant you, Rommulan and Vulcan *are* related, so if you know one--

MAN: *(angry)* Stop.

THOMAS: Not a *Star Trek* fan, huh?

*MAN:* Please...don't taunt me.

*THOMAS:* Prove it to me. How can I help you if you don't--

*MAN:* I murdered someone.

*A pause.*

*THOMAS:* Hardly need be possessed to do that.

*MAN:* I'm not joking,

*THOMAS:* I didn't say that you were.

*MAN:* Yes. All right.

*THOMAS:* You murdered someone.

*MAN:* Yes,

*THOMAS:* Who?

*MAN:* What?

*THOMAS:* Who was it? Who did you kill?

*MAN:* I don't know.

*THOMAS:* You didn't know this person?

*MAN:* No.

*THOMAS:* Was it a man or woman?

*MAN:* I don't know.

*A pause.*

*THOMAS:* You don't remember?

*MAN:* No.

*THOMAS:* Like you don't remember your name.

*MAN:* Yes.

*THOMAS:* I see. Do you remember anything at all?

*MAN:* Dark. And red. And violence.

THOMAS: Right.

*A pause.*

THOMAS: So it's possible this didn't happen.

MAN: No.

THOMAS: You can't prove it to me.

MAN: But-

THOMAS: No name. No body. Nothing but dark and violent.

MAN: Yes. No, I mean that's what-

THOMAS: You think that murdering someone, if you did, is proof of possession?

MAN: Isn't it?

THOMAS: Do you think everyone who has ever murdered anyone is demonically possessed?

MAN: I don't know.

THOMAS: Is the mother that kills to protect her children possessed?

MAN: ...what?

THOMAS: Is the man who kills in self-defense possessed?

MAN: It isn't always...

THOMAS: You haven't told me anything yet. You haven't told me what happened to you. If you want me to help, you have to talk to me. And if you don't, I'm going to ask you to leave and go to hospital. Or the police station. Or the circus, maybe.

MAN: *(suddenly lunging at Thomas)* You think this is funny? You think this isn't real? You think I want to be here? To feel this way?

THOMAS:*(not backing down)* What do you want right now?

MAN: What?

THOMAS: Do you want to hit me? Do you want me to be afraid?

MAN: I don't know.

THOMAS: I'm not afraid.

*A pause.*

*MAN:* You should be.

*Lights fade.*

*SCENE 4:*

*Sometime in the future of Scene 2. Hospital sounds. Mary is sitting, waiting. After a moment, Thomas comes out, looking worse for wear. He is wearing the blacks of a diocesan priest.*

*MARY:* Tommy! Are you all-

*THOMAS: (wincing and holding his head) Mary, don't-*

*MARY:* Fuck that. Are you all right?

*THOMAS:* Yeah. I'm fine. I mean, my head hurts, but no concussion, no fractures or anything. Just banged up.

*MARY:* What the hell happened?

*THOMAS:* I was at the shelter. Helping to give out food and clothes, maybe offer a blessing. Hear a confession sometimes. Normally, I like it. It feels good. It feels like I'm actually doing something instead of talking. Just always talking and no real action.

*MARY:* Yeah I've heard you say this before.

*THOMAS:* Right, yeah. Sorry to repeat myself.

*MARY:* It's fine. Just...what happened today?

*A pause.*

*THOMAS:* It was odd. It was..

*A beat.*

*THOMAS:* A man came in, someone I hadn't seen before. It's a lot of the same faces, you know. You get to know them. But this guy was new. And not just to me. No one at the shelter seemed to know this dude. Anyway, he was dressed in so many layers that he looked huge. You know? When they just pile layer upon layer of rags and clothes and whatever they can find to keep themselves warm. I have no idea how big he really was. It was impossible to tell. He

just...loomed...over everything. Like a cloud. He walked in. And came right into the center of the room. And just stood there. For the longest time. And he didn't say anything at all. Just stood. I didn't notice him right away, I was giving out food. Then someone pointed him out to me. And I watched him for a minute, you know? A lot of times people come in the first time and they're shaky. They need food or they've got the DTs or something. Or they're nervous or cold or whatever it is. But this guy. He was stock still. Nothing moved after he stopped moving. He may as well have been a statue. Or some weird stalactite that grew from the floor. So I finished what I was doing and I walked over to him and 'Can I help you?' And for the second there was nothing. No response. 'Sir?' I said. And he slowly looked at me. 'What do you need?' I said. And he opened his mouth and nothing came out.

MARY: What do you mean, nothing? No sound?

THOMAS: I mean nothing. No sound. No breath. No smell. Nothing.

MARY: No...

THOMAS: Yeah no smell. I mean...you can imagine, right? The smells in that place. Body odor and booze and smoke and drugs and...and....just...*unwellness*. It's everywhere. When you first walk in, the smells can knock you out. Truly. But you get used to it. It's not that it's not there. It's that you can tolerate it. Can roll with it. But this man, this *giant*. There was no smell. Which isn't to say he was clean or washed. Because that has its own smell too. There was literally nothing. And what's even weirder is that when I got closer to him, I couldn't smell anything else either. Because when you're used to something, even something terrible, maybe *especially* something terrible, when it's not there, you notice it. You note its absence. It was as if he was in a plastic bubble where nothing existed but him.

MARY: *(not sure what to make of this)* Ok...

THOMAS: Anyway...I asked again if I could help him. And then finally he said "You're the priest." Not a question. A statement. And I said 'yes, I am. Do you need a priest?' And he grinned. And it was awful. It was like there was too many teeth in his head. Teeth that went on forever. And he said "Do you know the moon?" And thinking maybe he was mentally....I don't know, not right, I figured I should agree with whatever he said. 'Yes,' I said. 'I know the moon.' And he leaned forward, like bent at the waist. A perfect ninety degree angle. Which you wouldn't think a man his size could do. And that brought his face and all his teeth right in front of mine. He said "The moon is the devil's eye. God created the sun to block him out. But it can't burn all day. And when the moon rises, the devil sees you. He looks at you."

MARY: *(quietly)* What the fuck does that mean?

THOMAS: *(shrugging)* I don't know. I don't...*(he collects himself)* I mean it *was* a full moon the night before. And I've taken psych and I *know* that moon isn't supposed to actually influence people's behavior, but something happens when the moon is full. Whether its psychosomatic or what. I don't know. But I've seen it. At the shelter. At the church. Hell, even the kids in school get squirrely during a full moon. So...whatever. I was just gonna chalk it up to that. So I said 'All right.' And he was still bent over you know? And he had these glasses on. You know like the glasses they give to people that have had eye surgery or something? Those big black wrap around ones?

MARY: Yeah sure. Like Bono glasses but not cool.

THOMAS: Ha, yeah. That's what he had. So there he is, in my face, bent over and he brings up a truly massive hand and takes his glasses off. And underneath...it was...Jesus, I don't know. It was terrible. It was like his eyes had been burnt with something. Acid or... And I couldn't tell if he could see or not. It was just...So anyway, I said 'Your face. Let's get you some help.' And I reached out to touch him and that's when I got tackled.

MARY: This fucking guy tackled you?

THOMAS: No. It wasn't him. It was St. James.

MARY: Who?

THOMAS: St. James. Jimmy. This guy who comes in every day. He's this...he's a grown man, but he has some mental development issues. So he's got the mind of about a 10-year-old and he's in his late 40s. He lives in a group home and he comes in to volunteer. He serves food or takes out trash and always helps the older folks who come in sit down or whatever. He's...he's a very kind soul. And so I started calling him St. James and he likes it. It makes him proud.

MARY: And he's the one that hit you?

THOMAS: Yeah. It came out of nowhere. Just as I was about to touch the giant, Jimmy tackled me hard onto the floor and I whacked my head. Saw stars for a minute. And Jimmy kept say "No Father T, no Father T!" and he wouldn't get off me. Some of the staff pulled him up and he was crying and I stood up and the giant straightened up, put his glasses back on and grinned again. All those teeth again. And he said "They're coming for you." And he turned and walked away. And I passed out. Didn't come to until I was here.

*A longish pause.*

MARY: Are you sure you're all right?

THOMAS: Yes. I mean, I'm sorry they called you, but you're my emergency contact and-

MARY: Shut the fuck up. That doesn't matter.

THOMAS: Ok.

*A pause.*

MARY: Tom?

THOMAS: Yeah?

MARY: What does that mean? 'They're coming for you?'

*A beat.*

*THOMAS:* I don't know. I'm sure it's nothing. The guy was just...he was weird, that's all. He needs help of some kind. Help I couldn't give.

*MARY:* Yeah. Maybe. I guess.

*A beat.*

*MARY:* Why don't you come and stay with me tonight?

*THOMAS:* No, that's ok. I don't want to be-

*MARY:* Oh shut up. What would Mom say?

*A beat.*

*THOMAS:* Yeah. What would she say.

*MARY:* Listen. The dude was creepy. You got tackled by a saint. You banged up your head. You've had a rough day. Just come with me and rest at my place, ok? I will make that lasagna you like.

*THOMAS: (swayed)* Hey how can I pass that up?

*MARY:* Damn right. Let's go.

*She helps him to his feet.*

*THOMAS:* Thanks Mar.

*MARY:* Whatever.

*She takes his hand and gives it a squeeze.*

*Lights fade.*

*SCENE 5:*

*Back in the rectory*

*MAN:* I remember that I was at...home. I think it was home.

*THOMAS:* Can you recall where that is? Home?

*MAN:* I'm not sure now. It's here. It's in this city.

THOMAS: All right. That's a start.

MAN: I was looking at...pictures.

THOMAS: Photos?

MAN: Yes.

THOMAS: On a phone? A computer?

MAN: No. An album. Like we used to. A photo album.

THOMAS: Do you remember what they were?

MAN: It was people. It was...(struggling) my father?

THOMAS: That's good. This is good.

MAN: And he was somewhere. That wasn't. Here. It wasn't here.

THOMAS: Ok.

*A pause.*

THOMAS: You were looking at pictures of your father when he was...not here. On vacation maybe? Out of the country?

*A pause. There is a shift here in the Man. Something changes in him.*

MAN: Something like that.

THOMAS: Can you remember his name?

*A beat.*

MAN: Thomas.

*A beat.*

THOMAS: Your father's name was Thomas?

MAN: Yes.

THOMAS: You're sure.

MAN: Yes. Thomas. The Doubter. I'm sure.

*A beat.*

THOMAS: My father's name was Thomas.

MAN: Was it?

THOMAS: Yes. My name is Thomas too.

MAN: Is it.

THOMAS: Yes.

*A pause. They stare at each other.*

MAN: It fits.

THOMAS: It fits?

MAN: You're a doubter. ...was your father a doubter too?

THOMAS: Was yours?

MAN: Oh my father doubted a great many things.

*A pause.*

THOMAS: What happened next?

MAN: What?

THOMAS: After looking at these photographs. What happened.

MAN: My head hurt.

THOMAS: Hurt how?

MAN: It felt like...like my brain was forcing its way out of my eyes. Like it was too tight inside my skull.

THOMAS: A migraine. Do you get migraines?

MAN: It *wasn't* a migraine. It was something more than that.

THOMAS: Do you remember taking something? Tylenol? Advil?

MAN: No. There was nothing to take. I didn't take anything.

THOMAS: All right. You head hurt. Then what?

MAN: Then it was...dark and-

*THOMAS:* Dark and violent. Yes. Got that. But I need you to specific. If you're not specific, I can't help you. Do understand that?

*A beat.*

*MAN:* Yes Thomas.

*A beat.*

*THOMAS:* Father Thomas.

*MAN:* Yes. Of course.

*A pause.*

*MAN:* Why are you a priest?

*THOMAS:* What?

*MAN:* Why are you a priest?

*THOMAS:* It doesn't matter why. What matters is that I am.

*MAN:* Hm.

*A pause.*

*THOMAS:* What happens after the headache?

*MAN:* I can feel something. Banging around in my head. Something ricocheting back and forth. And it's talking. It's saying awful things. Terrible things. It's a whisper that is deafening. I can't hear anything else.

*THOMAS:* You hear voices?

*MAN:* Not voices. Voice. Singular. One. All.

*THOMAS:* One voice. And does it tell you to do things?

*MAN:* It tells me what is.

*THOMAS:* And what will never be?

*A beat.*

*MAN:* You think I don't know Zeppelin?

*THOMAS:* It's the devil's music, after all.

*A long pause.*

*MAN:* Sarcasm.

*THOMAS:* Just a touch.

*MAN:* You know what they say about that don't you. About sarcasm.

*THOMAS:* What's that?

*MAN:* It's the devil's weapon.

*A beat.*

*THOMAS:* Huh. Never heard that one.

*A pause.*

*MAN:* Aren't you supposed to be a warrior for Christ?

*THOMAS:* I'm supposed to help people in Christ's name. Christ doesn't wage war. He's a man of peace.

*MAN:* See now. That's where you're wrong. He is a warrior-king and the battle rages endlessly.

*A beat. Thomas says nothing.*

*MAN:* Isn't being cast from your home and made a refugee an act of war? Isn't the refusal to listen to voices of dissension the act of a dictator? Isn't the punishment of the free cruel and unusual?

*THOMAS:* Tell me who you murdered.

*MAN:* I can't remember.

*THOMAS:* Uh huh. I see. You know, for a man who is claiming demonic possession, you vacillate pretty wildly from grand philosophizing to total amnesia.

*MAN:* Who said that it's the man speaking to you now?

*A pause.*

*THOMAS:* Then who is it.

*MAN:* You wouldn't believe me, Doubter.

*THOMAS:* Try me.

MAN: Could be that dead friend from college.

THOMAS: Heh, could be. Everybody's got one of those, don't they?

MAN: Perhaps it's that ex you didn't stop from getting into the car drunk.

THOMAS: No. Never happened. What else you got?

*A pause.*

MAN: Maybe it's your mother.

*A beat.*

THOMAS: My mother.

MAN: She's dead.

*A beat.*

MAN: Isn't she?

THOMAS: Lots of peoples' mothers are dead.

MAN: Too true. *(quietly)* Too true.

THOMAS: It's a good effort. The effect is unsettling, for sure. But you're not my mother.

MAN: Is that right?

THOMAS: My mother would never speak to me this way.

MAN: Except when she's disappointed.

*A beat.*

MAN: Was she disappointed in you, Thomas?

*Lights fade.*

SCENE 6:

*Mary meets up with Thomas as they walk out of Mass together. Thomas is dressed in his liturgical vestments. It is a bright morning.*

MARY: That was nice, Tom.

THOMAS: Yeah. Thanks.

MARY: She would've loved it.

THOMAS: Yeah. Maybe. You think so?

MARY: Our super Catholic mother? Of course! Have a memorial mass for her would be like a dream. She'd be so moved by it.

*A beat.*

THOMAS: Yeah. I hope so. I wanted to. Wanted to give her something after...

MARY: Yeah. I know.

*A pause. They walk in silence for a moment.*

MARY: Hard to believe it's been 6 years.

THOMAS: Yeah, I know.

MARY: What made you think of it?

THOMAS: I don't know exactly. I just thinking that the anniversary of her death was coming up and it would be nice to say a Mass in her name. Now that I could.

MARY: She would've been proud of you.

THOMAS: Ah. Thanks.

MARY: You're welcome. Thanks for doing it.

THOMAS: You're welcome.

*They share a smile. A beat wherein Mary tries to muster up to say something.*

MARY: Tommy- can I ask you something that's ridiculous?

THOMAS: *(an exasperated sigh at the use of "Tommy")* Have you ever asked me something that wasn't ridiculous?

MARY: *(chuckling)* Ha, yeah. Fair point.

THOMAS: What's up?

*A beat as Mary gathers herself a bit.*

*MARY:* Ok. Well. Ok, I know how this going to sound, right? But this new person moved into my building a few weeks ago.

*THOMAS:* And you've already slept with him and it was terrible and you want me to absolve you of the sin of bad sex.

*MARY:* You have surprising lack of empathy for a man of the cloth.

*THOMAS:* I know, right?

*MARY:* Annnnnnyway! So, she's this older woman, I'd say in her mid-70s maybe. Something like that.

*THOMAS:* Watch yourself now. She may try to steal your dates when you bring them home.

*MARY:* Please. She'd be welcome to them.

*THOMAS:* Ha truth!

*MARY:* Church!

*THOMAS:* Preach!

*They hi-five and bump fists, as brothers and sisters do.*

*THOMAS:* Ok, so what's up with this dirty old maid?

*MARY:* Yeah, so ok. I run into her in the foyer once in a while. And you know, I say hello and welcome her to the building and all those things. Learn a little about her. She's a widow. No kids. Trying to start over after the death of her husband.

*THOMAS:* Right.

*MARY:* And last week, she invited me in. Asked me if I'd like some coffee and some pumpkin bread she'd just baked.

*THOMAS:* You love pumpkin bread.

*MARY:* I love pumpkin bread. So I went over to her apartment.

*As they are speaking, they sit down on a bench. Thomas pulls his vestments over his head, folding them carefully and puts them in his lap. He is dressed in his priestly blacks.*

*THOMAS:* Ok. So you go over.

MARY: Yeah. And she's lovely and all that. But i can't get her to say much about herself. I ask her about her husband and she says she'd rather not discuss it and shifts it back to me.

THOMAS: Well there's nothing weird about that. It's probably too raw for her to discuss.

MARY: Yeah, but listen: there are no pictures of him. Anywhere in her place. Nothing.

THOMAS: So what? Again, maybe it hurts too much.

MARY: Maybe, but there were no pictures of *anyone*. No family. No friends. No one. Isn't that strange to you?

THOMAS: Uhhhh...I don't know. Maybe. Yeah I guess, it's a little weird. But maybe she doesn't have any friends. Maybe she lost her photographs in a fire, or something.

MARY: What are the chances of that?

THOMAS: (*exasperated*) Mary-

MARY: Ok, ok, I know. It's just that it was...I don't know. It was empty. Blank.

THOMAS: She just moved there.

MARY: All right, but it gets weirder. And it involves you.

THOMAS: Me?

MARY: Yeah. Ok, so here's what happens. She asking me questions about what I do and career and things like that. Right? Normal stuff. And then out of nowhere she says "Are you Catholic?" And I said, yeah how'd you know that? And she said she could tell because of how I spoke.

THOMAS: Benefits of a parochial education.

MARY: Stop being a smart-ass Tommy. Just...just listen. So I tell her that I am. And she says "You must go to St. Dominic's." And I said yeah I do.

THOMAS: There's not that many Catholic churches around here.

MARY: (*running over him*) And out of the blue she says "Your brother is the priest there."

*A beat.*

THOMAS: What?

MARY: Swear to God.

THOMAS: Does she go here?

MARY: She said she doesn't go to church. Too many problems with organized religion, she said.

THOMAS: You must have mentioned me at some point.

MARY: Never.

THOMAS: Well...she just made a stab in the dark. I mean how could she know that?

MARY: I don't know.

THOMAS: Ok, yeah. That's strange. But who knows? Maybe you've got "*My brother is a Catholic priest*" written all over your face.

MARY: I don't think so.

THOMAS: I'm not sure what you want me to say about it. Yeah, its definitely odd but-

MARY: And then she asked me if you were the exorcist.

*A beat.*

THOMAS: What?

MARY: She said that all Catholic dioceses have an exorcist. And that it's someone who is kept anonymous. That only the Bishop and the exorcist know who it is. That they do that for protection. So that...that...the forces of evil or whatever can't find him. That they can't target him. That they can't go after his family.

THOMAS:(*laughing it off*) I thought you said she didn't go to church.

MARY: She said she studied Catholicism a lot. That she didn't agree with it. But that it was fascinating.

*An awkward beat. Thomas tries to smile and wave it away.*

THOMAS: That's not true.

MARY: What is? That the church does that or that you're the exorcist?

THOMAS: Either. Both.

MARY: You're not the exorcist?

THOMAS: Mary- do you know what goes into an exorcism?

MARY: Only what I saw through my fingers the first time I saw the movie.

THOMAS: Ha, yes. Exactly. That's my point. I don't know who this woman is, but she's just spooking you. I mean, getting an exorcism is like when the Church tries to confirm a miracle. There is a rigorous process. Evaluations. Psychological. Physical. All kinds of tests. You can't

just walk up to a priest and say "I'm possessed and I need an exorcism." They are *extraordinarily* rare. And even then, I'm not sure how valid it is. It's not like the movie.

*MARY:* But aren't you supposed to believe in it?

*THOMAS:* Listen, just because I believe in..in *something*...doesn't mean that I have to abandon all rational thought. Faith can exist with intellect, with reason. God gave us the gift of consciousness for that very reason. The greatest miracle of all is human thought. We can do and create and convince ourselves of *anything* because of our mind. That's where the supernatural lives. Not in demons in the closet and monsters under the bed.

*A pause. Mary stares at Thomas.*

*THOMAS:* What?

*MARY:* You didn't answer my question.

*THOMAS:* What question?

*MARY:* Are you the exorcist?

*A beat.*

*THOMAS:* No. Of course I'm not.

*A beat.*

*MARY:* Is there one? An exorcist? In the diocese?

*THOMAS:(smirking)* Well if he's anonymous how would I know?

*MARY:* Fuck Tom, don't you take this seriously at all?

*THOMAS:* There's nothing to take seriously! What, you want me to believe some crazy old lady who is good at guessing? Who's probably sick with grief and desperately lonely?

*MARY:* I'm not saying--

*THOMAS:* Well, what *are* you saying Mare? I mean, c'mon. This is ridiculous.

*He gets up to walk away.*

*MARY:* Wait a minute! If this is nothing, then why are you angry? Why are you walking away?

*THOMAS:* I'm angry because I thought you knew better than this. I'm walking away because I have to get back the rectory. All right?

MARY: Hold on, Tom. Listen, I'm sorry, ok? I wasn't trying to annoy you, I just...I just think it was really strange. And it made me worry for you, you know? You're my only brother. You're my only family.

THOMAS: There's nothing to worry about it. Everything's fine. I'm fine.

MARY: If Mom were here--

THOMAS: (*lashing a bit*) Mom's *not* here! She's been gone a long time and the world keeps spinning. Things move forward without her. So don't throw her in my face, do you understand?

*A beat. Mary stares at her brother.*

MARY: (*quietly*) What was that Mass for today then?

*A beat. Thomas looks at his sister. And then turns and walks away.*

*Lights fade.*

## SCENE 7

*Back in the rectory. A moment after we left them. Thomas staring at the Man.*

MAN: It was hard, wasn't it?

*A beat*

THOMAS: ...what was?

MAN: Listening to her breathe like that.

*A pause.*

THOMAS: Who are you?

MAN:(*grinning*) You already know.

*A pause.*

THOMAS: I see. And so that makes you...what? The devil? Lucifer? Beelzebub? Mephistopheles?

MAN: We are all of that and more.

*THOMAS: (sarcastically)* Is that the royal "we"?

*A tense pause.*

*THOMAS:* I don't believe you. You talk about needing help, about needing a priest. And then your entire attitude changes. You threaten, claim murder, start talking like a bad Hammer horror film and think you can frighten me with talk of my mother. You seem a man in need of attention. Like a teenage boy learning how to flirt. Clumsy, awkward and sure as hell not going to get laid.

*A beat.*

*MAN:* I'd be careful if I were you.

*THOMAS:* Careful of...what, exactly?

*The Man says nothing.*

*THOMAS:* You've showed me *nothing*. Nothing that proves anything. And frankly, nothing that's very frightening either.

*MAN:* Your mother-

*THOMAS:* Yeah yeah my mother. She's dead. Everyone's mother dies. Everyone misses their mother. Everyone is afraid that they disappointed her. But that's it. Just fear. Just life. Do you understand that? It's just life. Life is hard enough, scary enough. It doesn't need devils and demons to make it worse. You think Satan is scary? Try *Republicans*. Try *cancer*. Try terrorism and fanaticism and children starving and elephants being slaughtered and oil rigs exploding and shootings in schools. *That's* frightening. *That's* fear.

*The Man says nothing.*

*THOMAS:* You know what you are?

*The Man says nothing.*

*THOMAS:* You're a Saturday morning cartoon.

*A long pause.*

*MAN:* 10 years ago, your mother went on a trip overseas with two friends. The first time she ever left the country. They travelled around Europe. Germany, Spain. She sent you a postcard from Lisbon and from Florence. She was gone for 6 weeks. She was retired and deserved the break. You told her to go. To have fun. To live life a little. You and your sister, Mary, even

chipped in and bought her new luggage for the trip and a new camera to take all the pictures that she would cherish the rest of her life. Do you remember that, Thomas?

*Thomas says nothing.*

*MAN:* And then they went to Lourdes.

*Thomas say nothing.*

*MAN:* Those healing waters! That sacred fountain. From which wellness springs. Do you think she felt anything when she took that little dip? A tingle? A shivering up the spine? Saw stars behind her eyes?

*Thomas says nothing.*

*MAN:* They laughed, the old ladies did. Laughing at their superstition. Laughing at each other splashing in an old rock pool like children. But quietly hoping. Each of them. That the aches would fade. That the sight would improve. And maybe...maybe a small prayer...that they would grow younger. Not too much younger, you understand. Just enough to extend their lives slightly beyond its ordained place. Maybe long enough to see those grandbabies their ne'er-do-well children seemed unable to provide in a timely fashion.

*Thomas says nothing.*

*MAN:* And then she came home. Your mother came home. Full of adventure and life. Telling such tall tales. Do you remember, Thomas? You would roll your eyes when she would say "Did I tell you about the food in Madrid?" "We were walking through Nice when this man gave us flowers and he..." You smiled and indulged her. Secretly wishing she would shut her old mouth. That you wouldn't have sent her on that trip if you knew she was going to go on and on like this. Remember?

*Thomas says nothing.*

*MAN:* I asked you if you remember, Thomas. Answer me.

*He looks at Thomas and holds his gaze until Thomas is compelled to respond.*

*THOMAS:* Yes. I remember.

*MAN:* Good. Yes. All that chattering away. And then coughing. Chattering and coughing. And then chattering and coughing and blood. And she would wave it away. Saying it was nothing. It was allergies. The air was so dry. Something caught in the throat. She wasn't sick. Stop saying she was sick, Thomas! But the coughing continued. And the blood turned black. And she collapsed. Right in the kitchen. Hit her head on the counter. Lucky she didn't split her skull open like a melon! Ha. Remember her saying that, Thomas?

*THOMAS:* Yes.

*MAN:* A rare blood disorder, they said. Not able to catch it, they said. Conventional therapies a stop-gap at best, they said. A condition so rare that they would bring in students and other physicians to study her. To look at her. And she answered the same questions again and again and again. Always with a smile. Wanting to help them. When no one was helping her. And there she would lie. There in the hospital. Trying to keep up appearances. But so tired. And in so much pain.

*Thomas says nothing.*

*MAN:* So much for those healing waters, eh Thomas? So much for that fountain of youth. So much for that holy spring. Heh. Oh my. Disease is nothing if not ironic. Wouldn't you say?

*THOMAS:* *(meeting his gaze, with some strength)* I would.

*MAN:* *(grinning)* I thought you might. Then what happened Thomas?

*A beat.*

*THOMAS:* She died.

*MAN:* *(with playful exasperation)* Well, yes, sure. We all know that. But she didn't *just* die. Right? I mean, *c'mon*. It wasn't as simple as all that, am I wrong?

*THOMAS:* ...what is it you want from me? Why did you come here?

*MAN:* *(ignoring this)* Didn't she ask you something, Thomas? During those last days. She asked you something. Didn't she? What was it? What did she ask?

*THOMAS:* She didn't ask me anything.

*MAN:* She asked something *of* you.

*THOMAS:* No.

*A beat.*

*MAN:* *(drawing it out slowly and quietly)* Liar.

*Thomas says nothing.*

*MAN:* I understand. Completely. It must have been awful. Terrifying. You must have been so afraid. Who could blame you? But still. Fear is what keeps us alive, isn't it, Thomas? Keeps us in line. Without fear to keep us in check, we'd be running about like madmen, perpetrating *unspeakable* acts on the general populace. Now wouldn't that just be a sight to see?

*Thomas says nothing.*

*MAN:* Yes sir. That would surely be a sight to see.

*He grins. Widely. Like a man with too many teeth in his head. Thomas meets his gaze and holds it.*

*Lights fade.*

### SCENE 8

*Something like a cafe. Mary sits, fidgeting. Anxious. Looking at her phone. Her watch. After a time, Thomas arrives.*

*THOMAS: Hey! Hey, I'm so sorry. I got caught up in something. It made me late and the traffic here was just nuts and-*

*MARY: With what?*

*THOMAS: Huh?*

*MARY: What was it? What did you get caught up in?*

*THOMAS: Hmm? What? Oh! Confession.*

*MARY: Confession.*

*THOMAS: Yeah, I was hearing confessions.*

*MARY: Were you?*

*THOMAS: Yeah. Every Saturday. What?*

*MARY: What?*

*THOMAS: I don't know. You seem like...I don't know. Forget it.*

*A beat. Mary says nothing.*

*THOMAS: Anyway, I'm sorry I'm late. Some folks just like to go on and on. Ha.*

*MARY: Do they?*

*THOMAS: Huh?*

*MARY: Do they? Go on and on?*

*THOMAS: Uh. Yeah, sometimes. Yeah.*

MARY: Why is that?

THOMAS: Why...? I don't know. To get things off their chests. Their consciences. To have someone to talk to. Someone to listen to them.

MARY: I see.

THOMAS: I think its therapeutic, sometimes. I mean, not everyone can afford a psychologist or whatever. So they come and talk to the priest. They come and talk to me.

*A beat.*

MARY: It's weird, isn't it.

THOMAS: What is?

MARY: That they come and talk to you. It's not like you have any training.

THOMAS: Hey, I studied psych! And sociology.

MARY: Yeah. But you're *not* a psychologist. Or a therapist. You're a priest.

THOMAS: What?

MARY: People are telling you all these...things. These secrets. Shames. Fears. *Sins*. And who are you? You're just a person. You're a person dressed in black with a white collar. What makes you any more qualified to hear it? Haven't you ever thought about that? Isn't it at all weird to you?

*A puzzled beat for Thomas.*

THOMAS: I have *zero* idea what you're talking-

MARY: I'm asking you. I'm just asking.

THOMAS: I don't get this. Why am I defending this to you? You've gone to confession.

MARY: When I was ten. When the nuns made us. I'm a fucking adult now. I talk to a therapist.

THOMAS: You do?

MARY: Yeah, sometimes. So?

THOMAS: So...nothing. I just--I just didn't know that, that's all.

MARY: Do have a problem with it?

THOMAS: What? No! Of course I don't. Mare- what the hell is the matter with you today?

*A beat.*

MARY: Are you angry with me?

THOMAS: Angry? What? No. Why would I be?

MARY: Because of Mom. Because I wasn't there.

THOMAS: Mare--

MARY: Because I couldn't get there in time. And left you with her alone.

THOMAS: No. I'm not angry. What's making you ask this?

MARY: It would make sense to me if you were, you know. I wouldn't blame you.

THOMAS: Mary- it was--this is *years* ago we're talking about now. I'm not angry. I never held it against you. You got here as fast as you could. I know that.

*A beat.*

MARY: Do you?

THOMAS: Yes! Jesus. What the fuck *is* this?

MARY: Why don't you ever talk about it?

THOMAS: About what?

MARY: About IT! The end. About what happened. What she said. What she looked like.

*A beat.*

THOMAS: (*struggling*) She didn't--I don't know what it is you want here. She didn't say...*anything*. It was peaceful, it was--

MARY: You're lying.

THOMAS: What?!?

MARY: You're lying about this. You're lying about Mom. About what happened to her. What happened to you.

THOMAS: All right. That's enough. I don't know what the fuck is going on with you, but I've had it. I'm sorry I was late and I will see you later.

*Thomas stands up to leave.*

MARY: Did you kill her?

*A long pause.*

THOMAS:(quietly) What?

MARY: She was hurting. She was in pain. I remember how she would talk. When Dad was dying. How she would never want that. Never want it to linger on and on. That we should remember that.

THOMAS: That was just--she didn't *mean*--

MARY: Yes she did. You know she did.

THOMAS: Mary, I--

MARY: I wouldn't hate you for it, Tommy. I wouldn't curse you for it and never bake you brownies again. Just tell me if it's true.

*A beat.*

THOMAS: Why...in the name of everything that's holy...why are you asking me this?

MARY: I think I have a right to know.

THOMAS: No! I mean, *why* are you asking? What prompted you to ask these...these things?

*A beat.*

MARY: A dream.

*A beat.*

THOMAS: A dream?

MARY: Yeah.

*A beat.*

THOMAS: Yeah ok. Fuck this.

*He gets up to leave,*

MARY: Where are you going?

THOMAS: Where am I going? I'm leaving! I'm going home.

MARY: You mean the church.

THOMAS: Yes! No, not the *church*, the rectory. Where I live. Where I--

MARY: That's not your home.

THOMAS: I've had it with this, Mare. You come here, act you like you fucking hate me, ask me these *terrible--*

MARY: *I'm* your home! I'm the only family you fucking have! So fucking act like it.

THOMAS: You know what, Mare? Why don't you go talk to that therapist of yours. See what he thinks of your fucking dream.

MARY: She's a *she*, asshole. And don't you *dare* mock me.

THOMAS: Why not? You're drumming up murder charges from dreams!

MARY: Is that any less crazy than total strangers coming to you and confessing their darkest things and imagining that you can wave it away like you're Harry fucking Potter?

THOMAS: Fuck you.

MARY: No, fuck *you* Tommy. Now sit the fuck down and *listen* to me, for fuck's sake. Listen to me!

*A pause. The siblings are heated and trying to calm down. Thomas looks around. Makes a decision. Sits.*

MARY: Thank you.

THOMAS: Just...just tell me. Let's hear the damn thing.

*A beat.*

MARY: It was the old house. Remember? The one that had the window at the end of the hall on the second floor?

THOMAS: Yeah. Yeah, when we were kids.

MARY: Yeah. That's where...that's where I was. In that house. In that hall. And it was bright. It was like...I don't know. Like late-morning sunlight. In spring. Right before summer. Right before it's too hot. When sunlight feels *clean* somehow. The light was spilling through the window, like milk. And all over that small rug that was there. That grey one. It looked like it was glowing, from the light. Do you know what I mean?

*Thomas says nothing.*

MARY: And it was *quiet*. Which isn't to say there wasn't sound. There was! But it was so quiet you could hear *every* sound. You know? The wind. The leaves moving. The sounds of the house, settling. Wood creaking. That delicious creaking sound. Somewhere, far far off, there was laughter and then a crack. A bat maybe? I don't know what it was. But it was good. It was a good thing, the quiet and all the sounds. And I was walking down the hall towards that window. I wanted to look out it. I wanted to see what was outside. Out in the sun. But it was so long. So much longer than it had been. I remember being a kid and thinking we had the longest hallway in the world. I would count my steps from one end to the other, feeling the floorboards under my bare feet. I liked how smooth they felt. How worn. Do you remember there was that small bench under the window? You and I would read there sometimes. Do you remember?

*Thomas says nothing, but nods.*

MARY: And it was very important that I make it to the bench. I *had* to get there. I *had* to look out the window. After walking what felt like hours, I reached the bench, to the end of the hall. I had to climb on top of it, like when I was small. Like a mountain top. And I looked out the window. The sun was so bright, that I had to cover my eyes, like it was bouncing off something, like a mirror or metal. I could feel the light fade and I opened my eyes, and clouds had covered the sun. And I looked out and then down. I saw the big oak that was in our yard and it was our yard, but *not* our yard. It was stretching out wider that I remember. It went on and on. And the grass was thick, but not green. It looked, I'm not sure...dark. Because the light was shaded, I guess. And I looked down and there, like a million miles away, was Mom. Looking like she did when we were young. She was smiling and waving at me. But she was so far away. I waved back and banged on the window, but I couldn't open it. And she kept smiling and waving. And then she turned and started to walk away. And I knew that if I didn't get the window open, I'd never see her again. So I slammed my fists on it and it wouldn't give, it just wouldn't..*fucking give*. My hands were bleeding and smearing the glass and there were splinters in my fingers from the old wood in the frame and it wouldn't open. And she was walking away. So I jumped off the bench and fell forever and when I landed, the bench was bench-sized again, or was I normal-sized again and I picked it up and threw it through the window. It shattered into a thousand pieces and it sounded like piano keys. Light was everywhere and I couldn't see and I grabbed either side of the window frame with my hands and they hurt and I screamed "MOM! MOM WAIT!" And I blinked and I could see and then...there she was. She was right in front of me and we were in a field. She took my hands and kissed them and there was blood on her face. But she was smiling and looked so...she looked so sad. And she turned and walked away. And I was crying and I begged her not to go. I *fucking* begged her. Then she was on the other side of the field and I knew I'd never reach her. And I fell down. I watched her and she turned around and I could see her mouth move but I couldn't hear her. And I was sobbing and she was gone. And then I heard it. I heard her voice. In my ear. Like she was next to me. Like it took that much time for her voice to travel the space from her to me.

*A beat.*

MARY: And she said..she said... "Tell Thomas I'm sorry."

*A pause. Thomas is clearly shaken. He says nothing.*

MARY: Sorry for what Tommy?

*He says nothing.*

*MARY: (near hysterics and hitting him) SORRY FOR WHAT?!?*

*He says nothing.*

*MARY: She said NOTHING to me and only was talking to you!*

*He says nothing.*

*MARY: Answer me, goddammit, please! Sorry for what?*

*He says nothing.*

*Lights fade.*

**SCENE 9:**

*As before.*

*The Man and Thomas sit, facing each other. There is no sound. This moment lasts for quite a while. They are engaging in a battle of some kind. It passes. Thomas turns away, defeated.*

*MAN: Terrible thing, to be afraid, isn't it, Tommy?*

*Thomas says nothing.*

*MAN: I know it all too well. To be afraid. To be afraid of your life. Of your family. Afraid of regret. Of failure. Of disappointment. My lord, how we fear that, don't we? It's not all boogeymen in the closet, is it? Surely not. Those monsters can be slain. Dragons can be defeated. But the look in a mother's eyes when she sees you as you truly are. A coward. Weak. Not the man she raised! No sir! But that sorrow in her eyes...hard to live with, isn't it?*

*Thomas says nothing. He is crumbling.*

*MAN: Not that I'm not sympathetic, you understand. Oh my, no. When that door shut on me the first time, I was so afraid. In the dark. The smallest bit of light coming through the crack. Light that barely made it to my eyes. It was awful. Truly. It was simply awful. Hearing voices raised in joy, just on the other side. Oh yes. Very difficult indeed.*

*Thomas doesn't know what to do.*

*MAN: But there is something good here Thomas! Don't you see it? You don't have to pretend anymore. You know yourself now. A coward. A fearful man. A man who fails. Know thyself, eh, Thomas? That's the thick of it, isn't it. Know thyself.*

*Thomas turns his eye away and the Man grabs his face by the chin and makes Thomas face him.*

*MAN:* No no no. Don't turn away now, Thomas. *Embrace* your fear. Revel in it. Fear makes you whole. That's what cowards like you are made for! You sweat it out of your pores and it drips on the floor like wax. It's everywhere, your fear. So don't be ashamed. This is it. This is your place.

*A beat.*

*MAN:* Your mother knew her place. Giving birth to bastard cowards who weren't worth her time. Who only let her down in the end.

*Thomas reaches within himself and summons some strength. He wrenches his face out of the Man's hand. He backs away from the Man, not quite in a retreat, but in a marshaling of forces.*

*MAN:* Not quite able to surrender yet, eh, Thomas? That's all right. I have all the time in the world. Simply all the time.

*Thomas mutters under his breath.*

*MAN:* What was that, Thomas?

*Thomas mutters again.*

*MAN:* Are you praying, Thomas? Are you asking for help?

*Thomas mutters again.*

*MAN:* There is no help here. There are no hosts of angels. No Michael and his mighty spear. No savior from on high coming for to rescue. There is only *this* world. *This* moment. And you are alone.

*A pause. Thomas makes eye contact with the Man and holds it. He gathers himself and then exhales.*

*THOMAS(with an odd casualness):* Have you ever been to the sea?

*A beat.*

*MAN:* What?

*THOMAS:* The sea. The ocean. Have you ever been there?

*MAN:* ...the sea.

*THOMAS:* I'm guessing you haven't.

*It is the Man's turn to be quiet.*

*THOMAS:* My mother loved the sea. We would go to the shore every summer. Late summer. Almost fall. She would take us out of school for a week so we could go. She liked it then. When it was quieter. No screaming hordes of kids. No teenagers blasting music. Not too crowded. Not too hot. But you know what she liked most?

*The Man says nothing.*

*THOMAS:* I'm asking you. Answer me.

*A beat.*

*MAN:* ...I don't know.

*THOMAS:* The light. She liked the light. Something about the quality of the light in late summer. When the sun hangs in the sky like it's on a wire. Just barely hanging there. Like it may drop and shatter on the floor. Like a glass ornament. My mother liked that light. She said it was the best thing about the end of summer. How the light melts over you as it sinks. She would take us out for walks on the beach, in the late afternoon. She would smile and close her eyes and say to us that we could *feel* the light. That it was good for us. And how the light reflected off the sea made you know that there was something of worth in the world. Some truth. My mother would go sit on the sand and close her eyes, feel the light and smell the sea. And she would come back to the little cottage we rented and she'd be...rejuvenated. She'd sing and make dinner and then we'd sit and play cards and Monopoly and laugh. Those are my best memories of her.

*A pause.*

*MAN:* And?

*THOMAS:* Nothing. Just wondering if you'd been to the sea.

*A beat.*

*THOMAS:* It's such a place of peace. I think that's true for everyone. Everyone on Earth. You know, they say that people who live near the sea are happier. Any moving water, really. But especially the sea. I wonder why that is?

*MAN:* Why..?

*THOMAS:* Why that makes people happier. Like my mother. How it made her happier. Maybe it's because *we* are... mostly water. You think?

*The Man, for the first time since his "shift," looks at a loss.*

*MAN:* ...water?

*THOMAS:* Yes. Water. Us. We. Humanity. Mostly made of water. Something like 90% of our mass. Maybe that's why we like being near it. It *feels* like us. We breathed water for nine

months, after all. Maybe that's why we are drawn to it. It reminds us of home. Our first home. Our mothers.

*A beat.*

THOMAS: Do you remember the sea?

*A beat.*

THOMAS: Do you remember your mother?

MAN: I have no mother.

THOMAS: Lift up your shirt.

MAN: What?

THOMAS: Your shirt. Lift it up.

*The Man does nothing. He looks at Thomas blankly.*

THOMAS: What's the matter? What are you afraid of?

MAN: We fear nothing. We are fear.

THOMAS: *(laughing)* Please. Give me a break. Lift up your fucking shirt, you coward.

*The Man stands confused. Thomas lunges at him and wraps his arms around the Man's. Thomas gets an arm free and pulls up the Man's shirt from the waist, exposing his abdomen. Thomas then runs his hand on it. The Man struggles.*

THOMAS: What's that? Your navel? Your *belly-button*? Now how on *earth* do you have that but not have a mother?

MAN: I--we--

THOMAS: That's where the cord was. The cord that fed you, that pumped blood for you, that kept you alive. That's where it was *cut* from you, while you wailed helplessly. Your mother's cord!

*The Man appears to struggle with something. Whatever has a hold on him weakens. It doesn't dissipate, but lessens somehow. Thomas releases him and steps back away. The Man runs his hands along his own belly.*

MAN: ...my...mother...

THOMAS: Do you remember her?

*Thomas steps toward the Man. Slowly.*

*THOMAS:* You must. You must remember her. Everyone remembers his mother.

*MAN:* Yes. I remember her.

*THOMAS:* That's good. That's a good thing.

*Thomas has gotten closer to the Man.*

*THOMAS:* Is she gone? Your mother?

*MAN:* ...yes. She's gone.

*THOMAS:* Well. I'm sorry for that.

*MAN:* Are you?

*THOMAS:* I am.

*A beat.*

*MAN:* Thank you.

*THOMAS:* You're welcome.

*A beat.*

*MAN:* It doesn't matter. My mother doesn't matter.

*THOMAS:* Doesn't it?

*MAN:* No.

*THOMAS:* Huh.

*A beat.*

*MAN:* Something curious?

*THOMAS:* Maybe. I'm not sure. I would argue that everyone's mother matters. For good or for ill.

*MAN:* What do you think this--

*THOMAS: (interrupting)* I mean, even *Jesus* had a mother. We all know how that turned out, right?

*MAN:* The Son has nothing to--

*THOMAS: (ignoring him)* You have to ask yourself, would Christ have sacrificed himself if not for his mother? If Mary hadn't raised him the way she had?

*MAN: (clearly confused)* How she--

*THOMAS:* It's possible she *wasn't* a good mom. I mean, who the fuck really knows, am I right? We hear about her giving birth and then next thing you know she ordering her son to perform party tricks at a wedding. I mean *Jesus*, haha, what a pain in the ass. That's just terrible. *FUCK!* You're the son of God and you still get embarrassed by your folks. Your mom ever make you do that?

*MAN:* What?

*THOMAS:* My mom would. I can play the guitar, you know? And sing a little bit. Used to do the musicals in high school. And my mother, like goddamn clockwork, whenever she had friends over, would make me sing. "*Come on,*" she'd say. "*Sing something for my friends.*" Used to drive me fucking crazy. It was humiliating. I hated it. I hated *her*. In those moments. Just hated her for it.

*A beat.*

*THOMAS:* How about you? You ever hate your mother?

*A confused beat for the Man.*

*THOMAS:* I bet you did. Of course you did. How couldn't you? We *all* do. At some time, at some breaking point, we just. Can't. Take. It. It's human. Its the most human thing. To feel like that. To hate something you *love* so much. It's so much more complicated than we tell ourselves. It's all shades of grey. Tell me. Tell me about your mother.

*The Man says nothing. He is struggling with something.*

*THOMAS:* Did you hear me? I said tell me. Tell me about your mother,

*The Man says nothing. During this next exchange, Thomas physically advances on the Man, backing him up.*

*THOMAS:* Did you love her? Hate her? Want to kill her? Want to fuck her? Want her to shut the hell up? Want her to hold you and tell you it was al right? That everything is going to be all right? When you *knew!* When you *knew* it wouldn't be all right!

*The Man has backed up away from Thomas, as if in fear.*

*THOMAS: (gripping the Man by the face)* And it wasn't all right! She didn't protect you! From anything. Not from the dark. Not from the things in the dark. And she left you alone. You're alone. No "legion." No help. Nothing. Alone. Now. Alone.

*The Man is trying to squirm away, but he can't escape Thomas's grip. It's almost as if Thomas's touch hurts him. To be clear, Thomas is not being violent, but rather, he is forceful.*

*THOMAS: But she loved you. She still loved you. Even when she left you alone. Even when you became something she couldn't recognize. She still loved you. And she is waiting for you now. Even now. She is hammering the gates until they open for you. She beats the gates with fists of anger, a mother's anger, until they let you in. She won't stop until they let you in.*

*The Man has crumpled to the ground, his face still in Thomas's hands.*

*THOMAS: That's what mothers are. This is what they do for their sons. Even my mother. Even yours. Do you remember?*

*MAN: (his face still being held by Thomas) ...yes.*

*A pause. The Man still on the ground, Thomas picks him up gently, still holding his face, with the Man's hands on Thomas's wrists.*

*THOMAS: (almost whispering) Now...leave. Leave here. Whatever this is, whatever you are. Leave. Now.*

*The Man stares wide-eyed at Thomas, fearful and in pain.*

*THOMAS: You have no place here. Leave. And never come back. Do you understand?*

*The Man nods, shattered. Whatever had him is gone. Thomas releases him. Sunlight has started to creep through into the room.*

*THOMAS: Go.*

*The Man hesitates, looks to the door, looks to Thomas and then leaves.*

*After a moment, Thomas follows him and opens the door. Sunlight floods him. He soaks it in for a moment. But it's more than he can bear. He shuts the door and walks to the middle of the room. The strength he found has left. He starts to shake and weep softly. It becomes more intense and his body is wracked with grief and release. He collapses to the floor.*

*THOMAS:(barely able to get it out) I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.*

*Thomas stays in a heap in the floor, releasing everything inside. He continues to repeat variations of "I'm sorry"*

*Lights fade.*

*Scene 10:*

*Outside. There is bright light. A clear day. Another bench. There is the sounds of birds and wind in trees, the distant sounds of voices and traffic. Thomas sits quietly. He looks spent and somehow empty. As if he were to move too much or too suddenly, he would break. After a moment, Mary walks in. She stands looking at him. He looks at her. They do not speak. She sits down beside him.*

MARY: Hey.

THOMAS: Hey.

MARY: You don't look so great.

THOMAS: *(laughing slightly)* No?

MARY: Not really, no.

*A beat.*

THOMAS: Yeah. It was a rough night.

MARY: That's what you said when you called.

THOMAS: I didn't...I didn't sleep much.

MARY: Did something happen or--

THOMAS: Don't worry about that. That's not why I wanted to see you.

MARY: Ok.

*A pause.*

MARY: So..why did you want to--

*A pause.*

MARY: Tommy? Are you--

THOMAS: Sometimes Mare- there's just things that you're better off--things that you, that *one* shouldn't ask about. Do you know what I mean?

MARY: I--I'm not sure, I mean, yes, I suppose. What are you--

THOMAS: Like there are things that are too...I don't know. Too big. Too hard to wrap your head around. Just too much. ...does that make sense?

MARY: Yes. I think so.

THOMAS: Good. That's good.

*A beat.*

MARY: Tom- what *is* this? What happened?

*A beat.*

THOMAS: Sometimes there are...events...moments that occur. These things that the world slows down around. These moments when you're aware that...*something* is happening here. A thing, a real thing. Moments that you know define history, right? Your own personal history. A personal Pearl Harbor. And you can feel it. That after this moment passes, your life won't be the same. That your history will be altered completely. From this point on. And there can be something good about that. Having that clarity. Even if it's from a frightening or saddening place. You know?

MARY: *(not sure what to make of this)* Yeah. Maybe.

THOMAS: And you do what you can to preserve that moment, to remember the details, the minute details, that make it what it is. Which, ha, which is funny. As if there was any possible way that you would forget this, forget the intimacy of it all.

MARY: Tom-

THOMAS: But it's just for *you*, right? It's not for anyone else to share or help carry. And you know that. It's part of that clarity. This moment is only for you to see and no one else. Because you're the only one who *can* carry it. No one else is supposed to. It's only for you.

MARY: I'm not following you here Tommy-

THOMAS: I'm sorry Mare.

*A beat.*

MARY: ...sorry for what?

THOMAS: I was angry at you. I was furious at you. For not being there. When Mom- for making me be alone with her and--I'm sorry I was angry. It wasn't fair.

*A beat.*

MARY: I'm sorry too. I didn't mean for you to be alone. I'm sorry too.

*Thomas nods his head. They sit quietly for a moment.*

MARY: You know what I keep thinking?

THOMAS: What's that?

MARY: How scary it must have been. For her.

THOMAS: Yeah.

MARY: To see it coming. Like a train. Like a black horse stampeding at you. I worry about that. I worry about her being so afraid. I've had that thought for so long.

*Thomas says nothing.*

MARY: Was she afraid Tommy?

*A pause.*

THOMAS: I can't say. I held her hand and I felt her squeezing. I told her that I was there and that everything would be all right. That she'd see Dad again soon. And her own mother. That they were waiting for her. I told her it would all be all right.

*A beat.*

MARY: ...did she say anything?

THOMAS: *(shaking his head)* No. She didn't. She squeezed my hand tightly, as hard as she could. Then the pressure released. And she was gone. And there were the noises of the hospital and people talking and walking in the halls and sounds of the traffic outside. And she was gone.

*A pause. The siblings look at each other.*

MARY: All right.

*A pause. Sounds of the city. Birds. Passers-by.*

MARY: Do you she think she is ok? Wherever she is?

*A beat.*

THOMAS: I don't know Mary. I hope so. That's what I hope.

*Thomas looks out. Mary looks at him for a moment. Then she reaches over and takes her brother's hand. He doesn't look at her. Thomas starts to shake again, slightly. His sister grips his hand tighter. He starts to sob lightly. Mary looks out, just holding his hand.*

*Lights and sound fade very slowly.*

SCENE 11:

*Light rise slowly, revealing a hospital room. The beep of monitors. A breathing machine perhaps. A woman lies in the bed, back to the audience. She lies on her side, facing upstage. Thomas is standing in front of her. He stands looking at her for a long time.*

THOMAS:(quietly) Hey Mom.

THOMAS: Mom? Are you awake?

*She says nothing. The sounds of machines.*

THOMAS: I'm here. I'm here with you. Mary couldn't--

*He hesitates.*

THOMAS: Mary's coming. She's on her way. She'll be here soon.

*Thomas sighs heavily. It is a sound full exhaustion and grief.*

THOMAS:(turning away from her) Goddamn it, Mom. Fucking goddamn it all.

*She says nothing. Sounds of machines. Thomas sits heavily in a chair. The weight of everything is on him. After a few moments, his mother raises a hand. Not much. Just off the bed, just enough to see. It hangs in the air, with supreme effort. Thomas doesn't notice for a moment.*

THOMAS: Mom? What is it Mom? I'm here. What is it?

*She whispers something inaudible. Thomas straightens, taken aback.*

THOMAS: Mom- mother-- don't--

*He feels a squeeze on his hand. A beat.*

THOMAS: (gently) All right.

*He leans in and kisses her forehead*

THOMAS: Don't be afraid.

*Lights fade slightly on Thomas and his mother. In a doorway upstage right, we see a figure enter, perhaps dressed as an orderly or nurse. The lights reveal enough of the figure's face to show us it is the Man. He stands, watching silently. Thomas does not see him.*

THOMAS:(kindly) Don't be afraid.

*He leans in again to his mother and turns towards the machines.*

*Lights and sound fade to black and silence.*

*END OF PLAY.*