

IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS

by

Bob Bowersox

copyright R. T. Bowersox
Registered WGA/E

Robert T. Bowersox
1408 Duncan Street
Key West, FL 33040
302-540-6102
bob@bobowersox.com

FADE IN

1 INT. ILLICIT GAMBLING HALL - NIGHT - DREAM SEQUENCE

A dim, smoky space, punctuated with cones of light that halo gaming tables.

A crowd of GAMBLERS surrounds a craps table. They move in the slow motion of dreams, dropping chips on the felt, reaching for drinks, laughing.

A Croupier's stick slides several dice toward the end of the table.

CROUPIER

New shooter comin' out!

A pair of hands slowly shove several tall stacks of \$100 chips to the "Pass" line. One of the hands carefully selects two dice from the pack.

The hand rubs the dice on the table felt, lets them fly.

The dice tumble in slow motion over the length of the table, then land, bounce, bank off the back bumper, and take an agonizingly slow roll to a stop.

One dot up on each.

Above the groan of the Gamblers is heard...

CROUPIER

Snake-eyes! Craps! A loser!

END DREAM SEQUENCE

2 INT. ST. CAMILLUS CATHOLIC CHURCH - RECTORY BEDROOM - DAY

The eyes of FATHER NICHOLAS CROSS snap open, stare at the ceiling several moments as his breathing calms.

Cross, late 40's, handsome but creased enough to show that life hasn't been all easy road, wipes sweat from his face with a shaking hand. He glances to the clock as it clicks to 5:15 AM, then rises.

3 INT. SHOWER - DAY

Cross leans against the wall, head hanging, as the steaming water pummels his neck and shoulders.

4 INT. RECTORY BEDROOM DRESSING AREA - DAY

Cross stands before a mirror, snaps a priest's collar onto his black shirt, slides on a black jacket.

Cross picks up an old, tarnished silver picture frame from the dresser.

It holds a picture of a young woman with a little girl about five years old on her lap.

Cross kisses his fingertips, then touches them to the faces in the photo.

CROSS
(almost whispered)
I'm sorry.

A heavy knock hits the door.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA (O.S.)
Father Nick! You up yet? You're
gonna be late!

Cross sets the frame down. More pounding.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA (O.S.)
You hear me, Father?

Cross opens the door. SISTER ANNA JULIANA, 50's and resembling a black and white pumpkin, stands before him.

CROSS
I'm sure the dead could hear you in
Paradise, AJ.

Sister Anna Juliana sniffs her disapproval, then turns and huffs down the hall.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
(over her shoulder)
I'll have breakfast ready for you
after Mass.

Cross smiles to himself, closes the door, and follows her.

5 INT. ST. CAMILLUS CHURCH - DAY

Cross, in priest's robes, stands at the altar conducting Mass. The church is nearly empty -- only about 20 WORSHIPERS.

6 EXT. ST. CAMILLUS CHURCH - DAY

Cross greets the Worshipers as they leave.

A man about 45, clean cut, jacket and tie, stops and guy-nods to Cross. A gust of wind blows open the flap of his jacket, revealing a gun in a holster and a badge on his belt. This is LT. JACK RIGGS.

CROSS
Jack.

RIGGS
Nick.

CROSS

How's the law enforcement business?

RIGGS

Same as the soul-saving business, I suppose. You win some, you lose some.

CROSS

Hopefully we're winning more than we're losing.

RIGGS

You've always had higher expectations than me, Nick.

They smile at each other, then Riggs moves down the steps to the street.

7 INT. RECTORY KITCHEN - DAY

Cross sits at the table, reading the paper, eating bacon and eggs. Sister Anna Juliana futzes around the kitchen.

CROSS

You see this, AJ?

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

What's that?

Cross holds up the newspaper, points to a picture.

INSERT -- THE PICTURE

showing a line of people waiting at a lottery window.

BACK TO SCENE

Sister Anna Juliana peers over her glasses at the picture, snorts a disapproving huff, turns away.

CROSS

You buy any tickets to that Keyball lottery, AJ?

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

If I wanted to waste money, Father, I'd simply burn it.

CROSS

Too bad. You might've been the richest nun in Philadelphia. One of them won \$300 million yesterday.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

Who?

CROSS
Haven't come forward yet.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
If they were smart, they wouldn't.

CROSS
Any why's that?

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
Money's not necessarily a blessing,
Father.

CROSS
Depends on which poor parish God
sends it to.

Sister Anna Juliana sits across from him, a datebook in her hand.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
We're doing all right.
(opening the datebook)
You ready?

CROSS
Shoot.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
Morning confessions. Then a marriage
counseling -- Bridgit Connor, Stephen
Gaitz. Got your G.A. meeting in the
Fellowship Hall at eleven, and a
meeting at the Diocese at one. What's
that about?

CROSS
I have no idea. I'm just a priest.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
Uh-huh. After that--

CROSS
--You have an entry in there that
lets me just sit and be Holy?

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
Don't start. You're the one who
answered the Call.

CROSS
(almost to himself)
Yes. I did. Should probably have
asked for clarification.

Sister Anna Juliana closes the datebook and stands.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
 And you have to talk with Little
 Michael today, Father.

Cross rises and moves to the back door, taking a piece of
 bacon with him.

CROSS
 What now?

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
 His tongue continues to wag. Seems
 he's now let the entire neighborhood
 know about that incident in the choir
 loft last week.

CROSS
 No.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
 Yes. Mrs. Aubrey was not pleased
 when her husband asked her why she
 was kissing the choir master after
 rehearsal Wednesday night.
 (watching him closely)
 So you'll talk to him?

CROSS
 (opening the door)
 Yes, AJ. I will talk to him.

Cross bends to greet a small dog who scampers into the
 kitchen. Cross feeds him the piece of bacon.

CROSS
 Here you go, Judas.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
 I don't know why you encourage that
 mangy animal. And to call him after
 the man who betrayed our Lord...

CROSS
 (rubbing Judas' head)
 New thinking is Judas was only doing
 Christ's bidding. And remember
 Matthew 25:40, AJ: "Inasmuch as ye
 have done it unto one of the least
 of these my brethren, ye have done
 it unto me."

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
 (not amused)
 That beast is not our Savior's
 brother!
 (flaps her apron)
 Out of my kitchen! Both of you!

Cross laughs as he goes through the door, the dog following.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
 (calling after him)
 And don't forget to go and see the
 children!

8 EXT. ST. CAMILLUS - OUTDOOR COLUMNED WALKWAY - DAY

Cross emerges from the Rectory, picks up a stick and throws it into the courtyard for Judas to chase. Cross's eyes are pulled to the line of trees at the edge of the St. Camillus property.

Towering into the sky are two large cranes, each swinging wrecking balls into the collapsing framework of an old abandoned factory that extends the length of the block.

CROSS
 (crossing himself)
 Please, Lord, preserve this home of
 Your servants, if it be Your will.

Cross turns and is startled to find LITTLE MICHAEL standing directly behind him, a broom in his hand. Little Michael is short and thin, maybe 20, a large smile breaking across the unmistakable face of a person with Down's Syndrome.

CROSS
 Whoa, Michael! I didn't see you
 there, buddy.

LITTLE MICHAEL
 (gleefully)
 Well, I was here, Father Nick. Here
 I am.

CROSS
 There you are. I see you've got
 your broom. Time for sweeping?

LITTLE MICHAEL
 Yup. Gonna sweep all over. Make
 St. Camillus shine. It's what I do,
 right, Father?

CROSS
 Absolutely. And it's very important
 to us. Say, Michael, sit with me a
 moment, will you?

Cross guides Little Michael to a stone bench along the walk. They sit.

CROSS
 I hear you've been talking to the
 neighbors again, Michael. Is that
 so?

LITTLE MICHAEL

Yeah. Some of them, I guess. I like to talk.

CROSS

I know you do. And we've spoken about this before, haven't we? About how sometimes things happen in God's house that maybe He doesn't want everyone to know? Remember? It's kind of like a secret, and we should--

LITTLE MICHAEL

(enthusiastic)

--I know a secret, Father Nick!

CROSS

You do?

LITTLE MICHAEL

(points to his feet)

Yeah! I got new sneakers. See? They're red.

Cross hesitates a moment, then smiles his capitulation.

CROSS

Oh, yeah. They're very red, Michael. Best red sneakers I've ever seen. You're a lucky guy.

LITTLE MICHAEL

Yup.

(standing)

I should go sweep now, right, Father Nick?

CROSS

Yes, Michael. Sweep away.

Little Michael takes off happily, broom swinging before him. Cross watches him go.

9 EXT. ST.CAMILLUS COURTYARD - DAY

Cross approaches and enters an older, grey stone building at the back of the property, nestled into and partly obscured by a grove of willow trees.

10 INT. GREY STONE BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

Cross moves past several small bedrooms on both sides. He emerges into the Main Room.

11 INT. GREY STONE BUILDING - MAIN ROOM - DAY

Several CHILDREN eat a meager breakfast. Two nuns, SISTER ANGELA and SISTER THERESA, both about 60, watch over them.

CROSS

Good morning, everyone!

Several of the children run to Cross, calling his name, hugging his legs, smiling up at him, grabbing his hands. Cross enjoys this immensely, greeting and touching each child individually.

CROSS

Ben. Amanda. Robert. Cilly. Hello, Sha'Quita. Oh, so much energy this morning! And Frankie...lookin' good! Jesse, how are you honey? Everybody okay?

SISTER THERESA

(herding them back)

All right, children. Let's finish our breakfasts. Let Father Nicholas be.

(to Cross)

Good Morning, Father.

CROSS

Morning, Theresa. They're full of it this morning, eh?

SISTER THERESA

Always. Most of them anyway. A few are still struggling.

CROSS

Sometimes it takes more than finding shelter from the storm. Especially when you're alone in the world.

SISTER THERESA

You have a moment, Father?

Cross nods. Sister Theresa walks him to a window, away from the children.

SISTER THERESA

(quietly)

We've reached that point we spoke of last week. Laundry soap. Toilet paper. Diapers. Food. We're simply running out of everything.

Cross sighs, nods.

SISTER THERESA

And we could use some more adult help. Sister Angela and I are overwhelmed here.

CROSS

I know you are. Perhaps we can find someone in the parish who'll volunteer for us.

SISTER THERESA

It's a small parish these days, Father. Not many to pick from.

CROSS

I'll give it some thought.

SISTER THERESA

(after a moment)

And if I may bring it up again, Father...It might be time to think about going public with the shelter. We can get city funding, donations...

CROSS

I know, Sister, I know. But we can't operate if we're in the public eye. Some of these unfortunates, the abused especially, would be in danger if someone knew where they were. It's why we must remain hidden, even from the Diocese. We must trust that God will provide.

Cross touches her shoulder. She nods. Cross then moves toward the children, picks up a deck of cards from a table.

CROSS

Hey! Who wants to see some magic?

The kids erupt in a chorus of "I do", and surround Cross as he sits on the carpet and fans the cards in his hand like a professional dealer at a blackjack table.

12 INT. ST. CAMILLUS CHURCH - DAY

Cross walks around the pews near the back of the Church and enters his side of the Confessional Booth.

MONTAGE - CROSS HEARING CONFESSIONS

-- An ELDERLY ITALIAN WOMAN:

ITALIAN WOMAN

--and he curses incessantly, Father, takes the Lord's name constantly. And every hour of every day, he smokes, he farts, he ogles the hussy next door. He's goin' to Hell, Father, if you don't give him absolution.

CROSS

Yes, but he's not here. So let's talk about you...

ITALIAN WOMAN

Why? I'm fine, Father. It's him that needs savin'--

-- A YOUNG BOY, maybe 12:

CROSS

How often do you--?

YOUNG BOY

(nervous, embarrassed)

Ten, twelve times a day. Sometimes more.

CROSS

(incredulous)

You're kidding--

-- A MIDDLE-AGED BUSINESSMAN:

BUSINESSMAN

--but I figure, hey, it's Caveat Emptor, right? So I charge 'em a little more than I should. So what? That's forgivable, right? Coupla' Hail Mary's?

CROSS

Leave now.

BUSINESSMAN

What?

CROSS

Leave this Confessional. Don't come back until you're ready to understand what we really do here.

-- A TEENAGE GIRL, 14:

TEENAGE GIRL

--and it seems like all the other girls are doing it, but--I'm afraid, Father, you know? I don't want to get pregnant. Which is the bigger sin? Lying to my friends or having sex with a boy before marriage? Can I confess confusion?

END MONTAGE

Cross pokes his head out of the Confessional, sees no one else waiting.

He walks to the Narthex at the front of the church, kneels, crosses himself, looks up at the Crucifix hanging above the altar.

CROSS

You hear all that? With all due respect, Lord, water to wine was child's play.

13 INT. ST. CAMILLUS - FELLOWSHIP HALL - DAY

A group of TEN MEN sit in a circle on folding chairs, Cross among them. They're all looking intently at WALTER FAULKNER, a forty-something blue collar type, whose body language and tone betray his anger.

FAULKNER

--and despite my comin' here for what? Four, five weeks? I still wanta grab them dice and roll 'til I'm busted. Why ain't this workin'?

CROSS

Walter, the first thing you have to give up is the belief that one day you'll be without your compulsion to gamble. That's an illusion, as most everyone in this room knows. Until you admit that, you're not--

FAULKNER

(interrupting)

--No offense, Father. It's nice you hold these meetings in the church here an' all, but what the hell you know about it?

Cross gazes at Faulkner a moment, then reaches into the pocket of his jacket. He extends his hand and opens it. In his palm sit two red dice.

CROSS

These are with me every second of every day. They remind me where Hell is. They were in my pocket the day I came home to an empty house, the only thing left me a silver frame with a picture of my wife and daughter in it. I still don't know where they are. And they were squeezed tight in my hand the night I came to my first meeting like this one. I carried them through seminary. I had them in my pocket the morning I took my vows.

(MORE)

CROSS (CONT'D)

There isn't a second go by that I don't want to throw them on green felt, and I pray to God every night that I don't find a reason to do so, right before I thank Him for bringing me to St. Camillus and giving me sanctuary.

(beat)

Does that answer your question?

No one says a word.

14 INT. DIOCESAN OFFICE - DAY

Rich woods, velvet drapes, gold and crystal. Cross sits in an overstuffed leather chair set before the desk of ARCHBISHOP VINCENTE REGALI, 60s, an imposing figure with a demeanor as slick and cold as Antarctic ice.

In a nearby chair sits BISHOP JOHN CARDINALE, 60's, an odd mix of kind eyes in a stern face.

REGALI

The problem, Father Nicholas, is in extracting maximum value from all assets at our disposal. As leaders of the Diocese, it is our responsibility to successfully manage the business of Mother Church.

CROSS

(glancing at Cardinale)

The business--?

CARDINALE

Let him finish, Nick.

REGALI

The simple fact is that, as the smallest parish in the Diocese, St. Camillus is not covering it's own financial requirements. This puts a drain on Diocesan funds to make up the difference. Which in turn limits our ability to maximize the returns on investments we might otherwise have made with those funds.

CROSS

(looks around)

I don't see any signs of destitution around here.

CARDINALE

Nicholas!

Cardinale steeples his fingers, puts them to his lips, very pointedly catching Cross's attention with the gesture.

REGALI

(sternly)

Heed your friend, Father Nicholas, and remember your place. Like it or not, the Catholic Church is a business. Which means we must balance assets and liabilities, and make the most of the one while limiting the other. To do that, we must consider all options. And one of those options is St. Camillus.

CROSS

Where are you going with this?

REGALI

No doubt you've seen the construction crews working adjacent to the St. Camillus property.

CROSS

(warily)

Yes.

REGALI

The organization initiating that construction has approached the Diocese about the parish property. It figures into their plans. They have made a very attractive offer--

CROSS

(jumps up)

--You're not seriously considering what I think you are?!

Cardinale stands, moves to Cross.

CARDINALE

Perhaps we should step outside a moment, Nick.

CROSS

(shrugging him off)

You're going to sell St. Camillus? How dare you?

Regali stands, his anger flaring.

REGALI

I am the Archbishop of this Diocese! And I will not be questioned by a priest barely out of Seminary!

CROSS

Then tell me something, Your Eminence. Educate me. When does one reach the point where the "business" we're in becomes money and not souls? Where "assets" are ciphers in ledgers instead of the people who come through our doors seeking refuge and guidance? At what point do we conveniently forget why we came here in the first place?

Regali stiffens, sets his jaw.

REGALI

We're finished here. The City has already rezoned the property. You will be notified as to the progress of the sale. My advice to you is to prepare yourself and your parishioners. Good day.

Regali sits, opens a file, and turns away. Cardinale takes Cross's arm.

CARDINALE

Nicholas. Come. Please.

They move to the door.

15 INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE DIOCESAN OFFICE - DAY

Cardinale pulls the door closed behind them as they enter the hallway.

CROSS

You're in agreement with this?

CARDINALE

It's not my decision.

CROSS

You're responsible for my being at St. Camillus, John. For my being here at all. You know what this means to me, what's at stake for me personally. How can you allow it?

CARDINALE

I advised against it. But I am one voice among many, Nicholas. And there are other forces, considerations.

CROSS

Forces. Considerations. Right. Explain that to Little Michael, John.

Cross turns and moves down the hallway.

16 INT. DIOCESAN OFFICE - DAY

Regali sits at his desk. A door to an adjacent room is heard opening behind him, footsteps approaching.

Regali reaches into an ornate cigarette box, takes a cigarette and puts it to his lips. A hand in a rich suit and Rolex watch reaches in and lights the cigarette for him.

VOICE (O.S.)

Trouble?

Regali exhales a plume of smoke.

REGALI

No. No trouble.

17 INT. RECTORY STUDY - NIGHT

Cross walks to a leather couch and chair arranged around a glass coffee table, two glasses of port in his hands. He offers one to STANLEY MARCUS, 40s and bald, in shirt and tie.

CROSS

Can they just rezone property like that?

MARCUS

It's been known to happen. Look, it's an inside thing, Nick. The rezoning, permits. Even the gaming license was let without bids.

CROSS

You're a city attorney, Stan. Isn't that illegal?

Marcus shrugs, makes a "what'd you expect" face.

CROSS

It's a casino operation, you're sure?

MARCUS

Yeah. One of two licenses the city's granting. It was bound to come, Nick. People want to gamble, the city wants the revenue.

CROSS

You've seen the plans?

(Marcus nods)

St. Camillus?

(another nod)

I don't suppose there's anything we can do.

MARCUS

From what I hear--and keep in mind that I'm not privy to the inside moves--but what I hear is that deals have been made across certain, shall we say, lines?

CROSS

Meaning what?

MARCUS

Meaning that certain parties on one side of a legal line are using this deal to move across to the other side. Legitimization, I suppose you could call it. There's a lot of money involved, a lot of hands in the pie, a lot of promises made.

CROSS

By who?

MARCUS

(after a moment)

I'm only telling you this because the church is my client and you're my priest and you can't tell anyone what we're talking about. Right?

CROSS

Consider this a Confessional. Who?

MARCUS

You ever hear the name Strazzi?

Cross's face reveals nothing, but his eyes don't blink.

18 INT. RECTORY - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sister Anna Juliana stops at the door to the Rectory Study, listens a moment, then knocks.

CROSS (O.S.)

Yes. Come in.

Anna Juliana turns the doorknob.

19 INT. RECTORY STUDY - NIGHT

Sister Anna Juliana cracks the door, sticks her head in.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

I'm sorry, Father, but there's someone in the Foyer who needs to speak with you. Says it's urgent.

CROSS

Is it?

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
 White knuckled hands wringing the
 life out of a hankie?

Cross nods. Sister Anna Juliana closes the door. Cross and Marcus stand.

MARCUS
 I'll let myself out the back.

CROSS
 God brought me to this parish and
 sent me those children out there to
 protect, Stan. With your help and
 guidance, I've been able to do it.
 But now--I just can't believe God
 will allow it to be taken away.

MARCUS
 God may have no say in it, Nick.

20 INT. RECTORY FOYER - NIGHT

Cross enters from the office. Sister Anna Juliana stands in the Foyer with MARIE FAULKNER, wife of Walter. She's a middle-aged, slightly pudgy, blue-collar wife. And she's very distraught.

CROSS
 What is it, Marie? What's wrong?

MARIE
 It's Walter, Father. We had a another
 fight tonight about his gamblin'.
 He says you told him in the meetin'
 today that he'll never get over it.
 You tell him that, Father?

CROSS
 (off a glance to AJ)
 I suppose I did, but it was in the
 context of--well, that doesn't matter
 now. Where is he, Marie?

MARIE
 Don't know. He got so pissed. He
 took the money jar, Father. It's all
 the money we got.

Cross puts his arm around Marie, guides her to the door.

CROSS
 It'll be alright, Marie. I think I
 may know where he's gone. But it's
 best that you go home now. I'll
 send him there when I find him.

MARIE

Thank you, Father. Bless you.

Marie leaves. Cross glances at Sister Anna Juliana.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

(firmly)

You can't go there, Nicholas.

CROSS

I don't have a choice.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

We all have choices. You made a promise. To yourself, and to God.

CROSS

And I'll keep it, AJ. That I promise to you.

(opening the door)

Don't wait up.

Sister Anna Juliana closes the door after him, makes the sign of the cross on her chest.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

Stand next to him, Lord. Keep his hands in his pockets.

21 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Cross stands across the street from the Illicit Gambling Hall. He looks around, catches sight of his reflection in a store window.

Cross reaches up to his priest's collar, as though to remove it, decides not to. But a second later, he reaches again, and this time he pulls the collar from his shirt. He stuffs it in his pocket as he crosses the street.

Cross raps a patterned knock. The door cracks open. FRANKIE MANCUSI, a burly goombah in his 40s, looks out at Cross, then smiles and opens the door wide.

MANCUSI

Well, look what the wind blew down the street. I thought you was dead, Nicky.

CROSS

Depends on how you define dead.

MANCUSI

You don't want my definition. Come on in.

Cross hesitates momentarily, then steps through the door.

22 INT. ILLICIT GAMBLING HALL - NIGHT

It's exactly as Cross's dream--a dim, smoky room, cones of light that halo gaming tables, large noisy crowd.

MANCUSI

Pick yer poison.

Cross nods, moves down an aisle of blackjack tables on his right, poker on his left. A BLACKJACK DEALER notices him.

BLACKJACK DEALER

Hey, Nick. Long time.

CROSS

Josh.

Cross's attention is caught by a raucous crowd of GAMBLERS around a craps table at the back of the room. Walter Faulkner stands at one end.

As Cross steps to the table, a CROUPIER sitting behind it sees him.

CROUPIER

Well, as I live and breathe--how you doin', Nicky?

The Croupier pushes his stick between two GAMBLERS across from him.

CROUPIER

Make some room, folks. Got an old friend here who needs some space.

The Gamblers shuffle, and Cross steps to the rail. He rests his hands on the polished mahogany, runs them slowly along it.

CROUPIER

Check-change, Nicky?

Cross lets his gaze flow down the green felt. His eyes come to rest on Walter Faulkner, who is watching him intently.

Cross slides his hand into his jacket pocket.

CROSS

(eyes still on Faulkner)

No.

CROUPIER

Okay, then. New shooter comin' out!

Cross looks to Faulkner, who stands like a statue.

CROSS

Walter--

Cross nods toward the door, but a sudden tap on his shoulder pulls Cross's attention to the PIT BOSS standing behind him.

PIT BOSS
Somebody wants to talk to ya.

Cross's eyes follow the Pit Boss's finger pointing to a figure silhouetted in a second floor office window overlooking the gaming floor.

CROSS
(turning to the table)
I'm busy.

PIT BOSS
He wasn't askin'.

Cross follows the Pit Boss, but as he passes Faulkner, he stops.

CROSS
Walk away, Walter. Walk away now.

FAULKNER
Leave me be.

CROSS
Listen to me. Don't do this. It's the wrong road.

FAULKNER
There ain't no other road. You know it and I know it. Not for us. Now leave me be!

PIT BOSS
Hey. Don't be botherin' the players.

Cross glances at the Pit Boss, then leans into Walter.

CROSS
(quietly)
Look at me.
(he doesn't)
Look at me, Walter.
(Walter glances up)
Marie is waiting for you at home,
Walter. She's frightened and crying.
That's where you need to be.

Faulkner stares at Cross, then his eyes drop. Cross leans over the rail, picks up the few bills in front of Faulkner and hands them to him.

Faulkner takes the bills.

FAULKNER
I--

Cross turns Faulkner toward the door.

CROSS

I know. I'll see you tomorrow at
St. Camillus. Eleven o'clock. Now
go home to Marie.

Cross watches Faulkner leave, then moves to the stairs.

23 INT. ILLICIT GAMBLING HALL - OFFICE - NIGHT

Cross enters. The small room reeks tasteless extravagance. Near the window stands JOE STRAZZI, 50s, sleek and steely, a drink in one hand, a cigar in the other, his back to Cross.

STRAZZI

I thought we had an arrangement.

CROSS

We still do.

STRAZZI

(turning to Cross)

Yeah? Then you must be here to pay
me the two hundred twenty grand you
owe me, 'cause if you're not--

CROSS

I'm helping a friend.

STRAZZI

You don't have any friends here,
Nick. Only reason you're still
standin' is you put on a white collar.

CROSS

The only reason I'm still standing
is that the white collar I put on
turned out to be an investment for
you. An investment that's about to
pay off, I hear.

Strazzi lets that sink in, then smiles and moves to a little bar, refreshes his drink.

STRAZZI

Well, you ever know me not to take
advantage of circumstances that
present themselves? Time's right
for me to come outta the shadows,
Nick. You were just a caretaker
while things worked out.

CROSS

I won't let you do this.

STRAZZI
 (suddenly vicious)
 You won't let me?! You got no choice.
 Less you wanna pay me what you owe
 me. Or maybe take the chance that
 I'll find Jenny and Sophie.

Cross blinks. Strazzi catches it.

STRAZZI
 Right. Thought so. Now put your
 collar back on and go back to your
 little church. You got some packin'
 to do, if I'm not mistaken.

They stand eye to eye for a long moment, jaws set.

CROSS
 This isn't over.

STRAZZI
 It was over a long time ago.

Cross turns and goes out the door. Strazzi turns back to
 the window, smiling.

24 INT. RECTORY FOYER - NIGHT

Cross steps in and closes the door, leans back against it,
 looks to the ceiling. He pulls the dice from his jacket
 pocket, squeezes them, puts them back. Then he crosses
 himself and kisses his necklace Crucifix.

Cross moves toward the stairs, but stops when he notices a
 note taped to the ball of the banister.

INSERT: THE NOTE: "Father. Come immediately. Stone house.
 AJ."

BACK TO SCENE

Cross glances at the grandfather clock behind him. 12:35
 AM. He sighs, goes back out the door.

25 INT. GREY STONE BUILDING - NIGHT

Cross steps into the entryway, and is met by Sister Anna
 Juliana, in nightgown and robe.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
 Did you find him?

CROSS
 Yes.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
 And?

CROSS
And I sent him home.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
And--?

CROSS
I kept my hands in my pockets.

Sister Anna Juliana looks up, crosses herself, mouths "Thank you."

Cross holds up the note.

CROSS
What's so important it couldn't wait?

Before she can answer, a child's anguished cry echoes from the hallway of bedrooms.

CHILD (O.S.)
Mommy! I want my mommy...!

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
That.

26 INT. GREY STONE BUILDING - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Cross and Sister Anna Juliana move toward the end of the hall.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
The doorbell rang about eleven. I thought it was you lost your key again. But it was a woman and-- this little girl she hands me.

CROSS
Hands you?

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
Her arms to mine.

CROSS
What did she say?

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
Not much. Just to please take care of her baby, she has everything she needs, she'll be back when she can.

CROSS
That's it?

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
Said she knew we took in kids, but wouldn't let me ask how.

(MORE)

SISTER ANNA JULIANA (CONT'D)

Just said the girl's name was Kylie
and that was it. She was gone.

27 INT. GREY STONE BUILDING - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cross enters the room, AJ behind him. He watches as Sister Theresa tucks a SMALL GIRL, maybe 6, into a bed. She looks tiny and lost under the covers, whimpering, tears running down her cheeks.

KYLIE

(a tiny, scared voice)
I want my Mommy.

Cross moves to the bed, sits on the edge.

CROSS

Hi, there.

KYLIE

I want my Mommy.

CROSS

I know, Kylie, I know. That's your
name, isn't it? Kylie?

Kylie nods, the tears still falling.

CROSS

I'm Nicholas. But you can call me
Nick. This is kind of like my house.
It's a magical house, did you know
that?

(shakes her head)

Well, it is. All kinds of magical
things happen here. Like--

Cross's hand moves from his jacket pocket to Kylie's ear.
He pulls a red die up into the light.

CROSS

Wha--? Look what was in your ear.
Is this yours?

Kylie looks at the die, shakes her head.

CROSS

No? Well--

Cross flips his hand, the die disappears.

CROSS

Whoops! Where did it go?

A slight smile on the corner of Kylie's mouth. The tears
have stopped.

CROSS

I'll bet it's safe in my magic pocket.
 What do you think? You want to look?
 (she nods)
 Go ahead.

Kylie reaches into Cross's breast pocket with her right hand, but only with a thumb and forefinger, as the rest of her fingers are holding a wadded up piece of paper in her palm. She comes out with the die, a smile on her face.

CROSS

Pretty cool magic pocket, huh?

Kylie nods, holding the die between her thumb and finger. Cross notices the wad.

CROSS

You want a new tissue?

KYLIE

It's not a tissue.

CROSS

Oh? What is it?

KYLIE

It's a present. My mommy gave it to me. She told me to keep it safe and not let anyone get it.

CROSS

Well, it will be safe here, because you're safe here, okay?
 (she nods)
 You want me to stay 'til you go to sleep?
 (she nods again)
 All right.

Kylie reaches out with the hand holding the wad and the die.

KYLIE

Can you keep these safe in your magic pocket tonight?

Cross smiles and nods. Kylie tucks the wad and the die into Cross's jacket pocket, then takes his hand. Cross slides to the floor, his arm across the bed, holding Kylie's hand.

CROSS

They'll be there tomorrow.

Cross looks over to Sister Anna Juliana. She smiles, then turns out the light, leaving the room lit only by moonlight through the window.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
Goodnight, Father.

28 INT. GREY STONE BUILDING - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Cross backs out of the bedroom, quietly pulls the door closed. He stands for a moment, his head bowed, then moves off.

29 INT. ST. CAMILLUS CHURCH - NARTHEX - NIGHT

Cross kneels at the railing, crosses himself, kisses the Crucifix around his neck, then looks to the larger Crucifix hanging above the altar.

CROSS

(quietly)

You heal me. You bring me here.
You give me a place to feel safe.
You give me people to care about
again, and children with no one else
to turn to--another one even tonight.
And now you are going to let it all
slip from my hands, let this sanctuary--
my sanctuary--be razed from the earth.
For what? So people can lose
themselves like I did? So a cruel
moment can touch a child's soul and
shriveled it because there's no refuge
in which to heal? Give me a reason.
Or better yet--help me save this
sanctuary. For them. For me. I'm
going to need a miracle, Lord, because
I'm about to enter a fight I have no
choice but to fight. And very little
chance to win. So think about that
miracle, will you?

30 INT. RECTORY BEDROOM - NIGHT - DREAM SEQUENCE

The long green felt of a craps table.

CROUPIER (O.S.)

Point is eight! Same shooter, lookin'
for an eight!

A pair of dice tumble in slow motion through the air and land on the felt, bouncing through stacks of chips. They roll to the end of the table and stop.

CROUPIER (O.S.)

Seven! Out! A loser!

Nick Cross, a bit younger and disheveled, looks in disbelief at the dice on the table, then his gaze slowly looks to his left and into the eyes of Joe Strazzi, who smiles through an exhaled cloud of cigar smoke.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

31 INT. RECTORY BEDROOM - DAY

Cross's eyes snap open. He pushes the heels of his hands into them and sits up in the bed.

32 INT. RECTORY BEDROOM DRESSING AREA - DAY

Cross stands before the mirror, dressed in his priest's shirt and jacket, holding the tarnished picture frame. He kisses his fingertips and touches them to the faces in the picture.

CROSS
(whispers)
I'm sorry.

Cross sets the frame down and adjusts his coat one last time, and as he does so, he feels something in the breast pocket. He pulls out the red die and the wadded piece of paper that Kylie had stuffed there the night before.

Cross puts the die in his side pocket, unfolds the wadded piece of paper, and looks down at it.

33 INT. RECTORY HALLWAY - DAY

Sister Anna Juliana walks to Cross's door, about to knock on it, when she notices that it's partially open. She peeks in. He's not in the room. She moves down the hall.

34 INT. RECTORY KITCHEN - DAY

Sister Anna Juliana finds Cross sitting at the table, looking over a newspaper, the crumpled piece of paper in his hand.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
This is a first--you beating me here.

Cross looks up at her, his face slack with a look of disbelief.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
What?

Cross hands her the newspaper.

CROSS
Read the numbers.
(points to the page)
Here.

Sister Anna Juliana squints at the page.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
Three. Six. Twelve. Fourteen.
Twenty-one. Something called the
Keyball is eleven.

CROSS

My God.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

What?

Sister Anna Juliana points at the wadded paper in Cross's hand.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

What is that?

CROSS

I think it's three hundred million dollars.

35 EXT. ST. CAMILLUS - OUTDOOR COLUMNED WALKWAY - DAY

Cross sits on the stone bench with Stanley Marcus, who is turning the winning lottery ticket over in his hands.

MARCUS

It's not signed, so technically, it belongs to whoever signs it. Morally, though, it belongs to the girl, since she came in with it. But there's a problem there.

CROSS

She's a minor?

MARCUS

She's a minor. A minor can't claim a lottery win, be it one dollar or three hundred million. A parent or guardian can claim the win, put it in trust for her. But not her. Gotta be eighteen or older.

CROSS

We don't know where her parents are. We don't even know her last name.

MARCUS

You asked for my advice. Here it is: Identify the girl. Find a next of kin. Get her and the ticket out of here as fast as you can. You don't need a public spotlight here right now.

Cross nods. Marcus and Cross rise and move toward the Rectory.

As they walk away, the business end of a broom appears from behind the columns nearest the stone bench, followed by a red sneaker.

36 INT. GREY STONE BUILDING - MAIN ROOM - DAY

Cross sits at a small table with Kylie. He magically pulls a penny from Kylie's ear, which makes her laugh, then starts to shuffle cards in a game of Three-Card Monty. His hands move expertly, setting the cards on the table.

CROSS

If you find the penny, you can keep it.

KYLIE

(pointing at a card)
This one.

Cross flips the card. No penny.

CROSS

Nope.

KYLIE

(sadly)
Oh-h-h-h.
(pointing at another)
This one?

Again, no penny.

CROSS

Nope.
(flips the last card)
Right here it is. Want to try again?

Kylie nods enthusiastically. Cross starts to toss the cards.

CROSS

So. Kylie's your first name. Do you have a last name?

KYLIE

Uh-huh. Lots of 'em.

CROSS

(sets up the cards)
Lots of them? What do you mean?

KYLIE

Kylie Wilson. Kylie Martin. Kylie Justice. Kylie Crawford. Lots of 'em.

CROSS

Are those family names? Maybe one is your daddy's name?

KYLIE

I just have a mommy. They're her names.

CROSS

I see. Well, how about where you live, then? You know that?

Kylie tries to peek under one of the cards.

CROSS

No cheating.

(beat)

Do you live in the city?

KYLIE

We move a lot.

CROSS

Do you?

KYLIE

Uh-huh. All the time.

(she points at a card)

This one.

Cross flips the card. Kylie squeals with delight, grabs the penny shining beneath it.

CROSS

Wow. Not bad, Kylie. Want to give me another chance?

Kylie holds the coin tight in her fist. She smiles broadly and shakes her head "no".

37 EXT. GREY STONE BUILDING - DAY

Cross has Kylie by the hand as they exit the building. Sister Anna Juliana approaches from the courtyard, where several other children are kicking a soccer ball with Sister Theresa.

CROSS

(to Kylie)

Why don't you go play with the other kids.

KYLIE

(grabbing his leg)

I want to stay with you.

CROSS

I'll be right here. You'll be able to see me. Looks like they're having a lot of fun, doesn't it?

(off her nod)

Go ahead. I'm sure they'll like you.

Kylie takes a few tentative steps and looks back. Cross smiles and nods. Kylie takes off into the courtyard area.

Sister Anna Juliana falls into step with Cross as he heads toward the Rectory.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

Any luck?

CROSS

(shakes his head)

If anything, it's gotten more confusing. Her mother said nothing else to you?

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

Just what I told you: "Take care of my baby. She has everything you'll need."

CROSS

Meaning the ticket.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

Mm-hmm. And I've been thinking about that.

38 INT. RECTORY KITCHEN - DAY

Sister Anna Juliana picks up a tea kettle, moves to the stove.

CROSS

You've been thinking about what? The ticket?

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

Yes.

Cross sits at the table, pulls the red dice from his pocket and starts to roll them in his hand.

CROSS

What about it?

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

It frightens me, Father.

CROSS

How can something like that frighten you? Think of what that money could do for St. Camillus. For these children. For our mission here.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

(sitting)

Since when was it our money? And what does it have to do with why we're here? That kind of money-- well, it's obscene to me.

(MORE)

SISTER ANNA JULIANA (CONT'D)

But more than that, Father, you have to cash that ticket to get that money, and I fear for what might happen if you have access to it.

CROSS

(incredulous)

You're worried about me?

Sister Anna Juliana rises. She points to the dice rolling in the palm of Cross's hand.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

You haven't had those out of your pocket since you came here, Nicholas.

39 INT. RECTORY OFFICE - DAY

Cross watches the children play in the courtyard. He's still absentmindedly rolling the dice around in his hand.

Cross turns at a knock on the doorjamb. Jack Riggs enters.

RIGGS

Got a minute?

CROSS

Need some absolution?

RIGGS

Probably. But this is about my business, not yours.

CROSS

Okay.

Riggs drops into a chair.

RIGGS

Woman was shot last night. Over by 30th Street Station. Assailant unknown. Died on the table an hour later.

CROSS

One of our parishioners?

RIGGS

Don't think so. But on the way in, she said something to one of my guys.
(beat)
She said, "Kyle." Or "Try Lee."
Something like that. Then she said, "St. Camillus. Tell her I love her."
Then she went out, never regained consciousness.

Riggs looks at Cross looking at him.

RIGGS
You got something I should know?

40 EXT. RECTORY PATIO - DAY

Cross stands with Riggs.

CROSS
On the left, just kicking the ball.
Her name's Kylie.

RIGGS
This her?

Cross looks down at a small wallet-sized picture of Kylie Riggs is holding out.

CROSS
Yes.

RIGGS
This was in the woman's purse. The girl know anything?

CROSS
Just her name. Names. Seems she has a lot of them. She doesn't know anything beyond that as far as I can tell. She was dropped off just before midnight by a woman claiming to be her mother.

Riggs pulls a sheet of paper from his pocket, unfolds it and hands it to Cross.

RIGGS
This the woman?

INSERT - THE PAPER

which shows photocopies of four drivers-license-like ID's, identical in all ways except the names -- Wilson, Martin, Justice, Crawford. The picture on all of them is of the same woman.

BACK TO SCENE

CROSS
I wouldn't know. I wasn't here when she came.

RIGGS
Who was?

41 INT. RECTORY KITCHEN - DAY

Sister Anna Juliana looks at the paper of ID's.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

Yes. That's the woman who brought
Kylie to us.

RIGGS

She talk about anything other than
the girl?

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

We didn't chat.

RIGGS

Just dropped her off and left? Said
nothing, gave you nothing?

Sister Anna Juliana glances at Cross, who doesn't look up.
Then she looks back to Riggs, shakes her head.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

No. Nothing.

CROSS

(to Riggs)

She looks familiar to me somehow.
But I don't think she's connected to
St. Camillus. Maybe she just looks
like Kylie, I don't know.

RIGGS

The only things she had on her were
these ID's, some pretty expensive-
looking jewelry, two grand in cash,
and some kinda symbol ring on her
right ring finger. We're tryin' to
trace that. Fingerprints came up
zip.

CROSS

Four ID's. Different names, different
states. Maybe she was into something
illegal?

RIGGS

Maybe. She obviously didn't want
anybody to know who she really was.

CROSS

Or to find her.

Riggs moves to the door.

RIGGS

Well, somebody did.

42 EXT. OUTDOOR COLUMNED WALKWAY - NIGHT

Dusk. Cross and Riggs walk down the columned walkway toward the front of St. Camillus.

RIGGS

We better figure that the kid might be in danger too. We don't know enough not to be careful. You alright with keeping her here?

CROSS

She's fine. As far as I know, we're the only ones who know she's here.

RIGGS

Keep it that way.

43 INT. ST. CAMILLUS CHURCH - DAY

Cross is laying out hymnals and scripture pamphlets in the pews.

The doors to the church open quietly. Walter Faulkner steps in, and moves up the center aisle toward Cross.

FAULKNER

Hello, Father.

CROSS

(surprised)

Walter.

(checks his watch)

Meeting's not 'til eleven. You're a little early.

FAULKNER

Yeah. Yeah, I know. But I, uh--I wanted to thank you for the other night, Father. Prob'ly saved my marriage.

Cross sets the hymnals down, sits in a pew with Faulkner.

CROSS

You've been going to Strazzi's this whole time?

FAULKNER

Yeah.

CROSS

I had a feeling.

FAULKNER

Yeah, well. I'm kinda behind the eight ball with them guys, Father.

(MORE)

FAULKNER (CONT'D)

In kinda deep. You know how it is-- you gotta keep playin'. Only way you got a chance to pull even, you know?

CROSS

It'll never happen, Walter. Because if you ever do pull even, you'll lose it all back trying to pull ahead.

Walter fidgets in silence a moment.

FAULKNER

Listen, Father. I got to ask you something. And I only ask it 'cause I know you always wanta help. I was wonderin'--I heard about that ticket you got--the Keyball? Lotta money, that, and--

(shock on Cross's face)

And I was thinkin'--maybe I could borrow a little of it. I mean, just for a week or two, you know? Get those guys off my back? I could do some extra work around here, and--

CROSS

--Where did you hear this, Walter?

FAULKNER

Neighborhood. It's goin' 'round.

CROSS

How many people have you talked to about it?

FAULKNER

Couple. Stony Benson over at Johnson's Pub told me. Why? Ain't it true?

Cross stands, takes Walter's arm, guides him toward the door.

CROSS

Walter, I want you to do something for me. It's very important, alright?

FAULKNER

Yeah, sure, Father. Somethin' wrong?

CROSS

I need you to keep this business about the lottery ticket to yourself, okay? I don't want you to talk about it with anyone else.

FAULKNER

But you got the ticket, right? You
can help me out?

Cross stops at the door, considers a moment.

CROSS

Walter, I'm sorry, but I don't own
any ticket. There's been a
misunderstanding.

Walter's face is a mix of fear and desolation.

FAULKNER

What am I gonna do, then, Father?
Where am I gonna get what I owe 'em?
I gotta pay 'em somethin' tomorrow,
or--

CROSS

--You just be at the meeting this
morning, Walter. We'll see what can
be done then. For now, go back to
work. And do what I asked of you.

44 EXT. ST. CAMILLUS CHURCH - DAY

Walter heads down the steps to the street. He passes two
older Italian ladies coming up toward the church, SADIE
COFRANCESCO, 60's, and DONNA MANGHISI, 70's. They wave at
Cross.

SADIE

Father! Father Nick!

Sadie and Donna corner Cross at the church doors, Sadie
grabbing Cross's arm a moment while she catches her breath.

CROSS

Hello, Donna. Sadie. Time to change
the vestments, is it?

DONNA

(ignoring his question)
It's a miracle, isn't it, Father?

CROSS

What's a miracle? What happened?

SADIE

Don't tease, Father. It's unbecoming
a man of the cloth.
(a confidential tone)
Though it's kind of cute for such a
good-looking young man.

CROSS

What are you two talking about?

SADIE

The lottery, Father! The lottery!
God sent us all a miracle, didn't
he?

45 INT. RECTORY KITCHEN - NIGHT

Cross, Sister Anna Juliana, and Sister Theresa sit at the table, eating dinner.

CROSS

She said Little Michael's been saying that everybody at St. Camillus is going to be rich, that God sent an angel with the winning lottery ticket.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

Oh, my sweet Jesus. Where would he have gotten that?

CROSS

Where does he get any of the information he broadcasts?

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

I'm sure Mrs. Aubrey would like to know that same thing.

SISTER THERESA

Did Sadie mention Kylie, Father?

CROSS

No. They didn't seem to know anything about her.

SISTER THERESA

Small blessing.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

We'd best pray that no one starts looking around for a lottery ticket and instead finds the little angel that brought it.

CROSS

Prayer is good. But we may have to be prepared to do a little more.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

Meaning what?

CROSS

Prevarication comes to mind.

46 INT. RECTORY OFFICE - NIGHT

Cross sits at his desk. He looks at the page of ID's of Kylie's mother. He sets the page aside, rubs his temples.

Cross picks up the newspaper, sits back in the chair to read. A moment or two later, he looks over at the photocopy page again, then back at the paper. Recognition hits his face.

Cross gets up and leaves the office.

47 EXT. ALLEY BEHIND THE RECTORY - NIGHT

Cross goes through the stack of newspapers in the recycle bin. He finds the one he's looking for, goes back inside.

48 INT. RECTORY OFFICE - NIGHT

Cross spreads the paper on his desk, opens it to a specific page.

Cross pulls a magnifying glass from a drawer, leans over the paper and looks at the picture he pointed out to Anna Juliana the day before of lottery hopefuls lined up to buy tickets.

INSERT -- THE PICTURE IN THE CIRCLE OF THE MAGNIFYING GLASS

The name of the nearby neighborhood store is clearly visible. Also clearly seen, standing in the line, are Kylie and her mother.

BACK TO SCENE

Cross reaches for the phone, dials.

49 INT. JACK RIGG'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Riggs sits at a workshop table, amid the tools and materials of a woodworker. He wears magnifying glasses as he works on an intricately-detailed model of a four-masted schooner. A small radio plays cool jazz.

Riggs picks up his cell phone on the first ring.

RIGGS

Riggs.

INTERCUT -- TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

CROSS

Jack, it's Nick.

RIGGS

(continuing to work)

Not Father Cross, eh? Must not be God's business we're gonna talk about.

CROSS

Ultimately it's all God's business, isn't it?

Riggs smiles and waits.

CROSS

I think I know why Kylie's mother was running, Jack.

RIGGS

Yeah?

CROSS

Her picture was in the "Examiner" a couple of days ago...story about people lining up for lottery tickets. She was in Melton's Grocery, about 3 blocks from here.

Riggs sets his tools down, flips up the magnifiers.

RIGGS

Do tell.

CROSS

Now if she was trying to hide from someone, and they happened to read the paper that day--

RIGGS

Uh-huh. What day was this?

CROSS

Tuesday.

RIGGS

I'll take a look at it. And since you called--You have any time you can drop by tomorrow afternoon? I have something else I want to ask you about.

CROSS

Sure. Noon okay?

RIGGS

Fine. And Nick--just curious--Kylie's mother--she make any mention of the lottery to the Sister last night? Since she was in the picture and all, I was thinking maybe--

CROSS

--We can talk about that tomorrow, Jack. See you then.

Cross hangs up.

Riggs flips his magnifying glasses back over his eyes, leans into his work.

RIGGS
 (to himself, quietly)
 What aren't you telling me, Father
 Cross?

50 INT. RECTORY OFFICE - NIGHT

Cross cradles the phone, sits down at the desk. He picks up his Bible and flips it open, pulls the lottery ticket from the pages. He turns it over and over, staring at it.

In a slow move, almost absentmindedly, his right hand slides down into his jacket pocket, comes out with the pair of red dice, rolling them around in his hand.

Cross's eyes move from the lottery ticket in his left hand to the dice in his right. Then he hesitantly lets the dice fall from his hand onto the desk. Nine.

He picks up the dice, rolls them again. Six.

He picks them up a little quicker this time, rolls them with a little more intention. Ten.

A quick pick up and roll. Three. Another. Ten. His hand now moving smoothly in an arc from pick up to roll--two, pick up and roll--eight, pick up and roll--eight--

CROSS
 (whispered)
 Come on, nine.

Pick up and roll--three, pick up and roll--
 Seven.

Cross's hand freezes over the desk, his eyes locked on the dice. Then in one motion, his right hand sweeps the dice from the desk and into his pocket as he bolts from his chair and out of the office.

51 INT. ST. CAMILLUS CHURCH - NARTHEX - NIGHT

Cross kneels at the railing before the altar in the dim church, his forehead on his folded hands.

Cross hears a noise, looks up and sees Kylie standing next to him. He looks around, sees Sister Anna Juliana sitting in the back of the church.

KYLIE
 Sister thought you might be lonely.
 Are you lonely?

52 INT. ST. CAMILLUS CHURCH - FRONT PEW - NIGHT

Cross and Kylie sit beside one another, facing the candlelit altar.

CROSS
I had a little girl once. She was a
lot like you.

KYLIE
What was her name?

CROSS
Sophie.

KYLIE
That's a pretty name.

CROSS
Yes. It is. So is Kylie.

KYLIE
It means "shining crown."

CROSS
That's very special.

KYLIE
Where's Sophie now?

CROSS
Somewhere safe, I hope. Like you're
safe here.

KYLIE
Do you miss her?

CROSS
Oh, yes.

KYLIE
I miss my mom.

CROSS
I know. We all have people we miss
when they're not with us. But if we
love them, they're always with us in
our hearts, right?

KYLIE
I guess.

CROSS
And I think that's why we're never
really alone.

KYLIE
So we can't be lonely.

CROSS
Right. I'm certainly not lonely
right now.

Kylie leans her head on Cross's arm.

KYLIE

Me neither.

53 EXT. PHILADELPHIA ROWHOUSE - DAY - DREAM SEQUENCE

Cross, disheveled in a wrinkled shirt and ratty jacket, and looking like he's been up all night, walks up to the house. He searches his pockets, pulls out a key, surrounded by a few coins.

Cross goes to insert the key into the lock, but notices that the door is only pulled to, not closed. Warily, he pushes the door open and enters.

54 INT. PHILADELPHIA ROWHOUSE - FOYER - DAY - DREAM SEQUENCE
CONTINUED

Cross notices the coat closet door is open. Only his one wool overcoat hangs inside. He moves into...

55 INT. PHILADELPHIA ROWHOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY - DREAM
SEQUENCE CONTINUED

Light square spaces on the wall indicate missing pictures. The mantelpiece is bare. Cross runs to the stairs, bounds up. He runs into...

56 INT. PHILADELPHIA ROWHOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY - DREAM
SEQUENCE CONTINUED

The closet holds only his clothes. The dresser drawers are empty. He runs out...

57 INT. PHILADELPHIA ROWHOUSE - SECOND BEDROOM - DAY - DREAM
SEQUENCE CONTINUED

Pink wallpaper with bunnies tells us this was where a child slept, but everything save the bed and dresser is gone.

Cross's devastated gaze falls to the top of the dresser, where sits the silver frame with the picture of the woman and child that he has on his Rectory bedroom dresser.

Cross picks up the frame as tears begin to trace down his face. He reaches into his jacket pocket and pulls out two red dice. He stands a moment with the dice in one hand and the picture in the other.

Then Cross slowly sinks to his knees, sobbing.

END DREAM SEQUENCE

58 INT. RECTORY BEDROOM - NIGHT

Father Nicholas Cross sits bolt upright in his bed, tears streaming down his face.

59 INT. RECTORY BEDROOM -- DAY

A phone is ringing in the distance. Cross sets down the silver picture frame, exits his bedroom, closes the door.

60 INT. RECTORY HALLWAY - DAY

The phone continues to ring as Cross moves to the stairs and down.

61 INT. RECTORY KITCHEN - DAY

Cross enters. The phone on the wall is ringing. Sister Anna Juliana sits at the table, buttering a slice of toast. She looks up at Cross, who nods at the phone.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
I hear it. Been hearing it since
five-thirty.

Cross moves toward the phone.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
I wouldn't, if I were you. Not unless
you want to practice that
prevarication you mentioned.

62 INT. ST. CAMILLUS CHURCH - DAY

Cross enters through the side door from the Rectory. He stops short when he sees about sixty MEN and WOMEN in the pews, several others near the Confessional. Some are praying, others just sitting.

A hundred and twenty eyes watch Cross as he makes his way in front of the Narthex. An occasional "Good Morning, Father" is heard.

MARTIN, 70's, bent and wrinkled, with a cane, stands and falls into step with Cross as he turns down the aisle toward the Confessional.

MARTIN
(confidentially)
You got a minute, Father Nicholas?

CROSS
Just about that, Martin.

MARTIN
You know my Dottie's had a rough
time of it lately.

CROSS
I heard. How is she?

MARTIN

Not good, Father, not good. Doctor says she needs an operation. Hospital, nurses, God knows what else, and--and I been hearin' 'bout, you know, that St. Camillus come into some money--

63 INT. CONFESSIONAL -- DAY

Cross sits listening to a MAN on the other side of the screen.

MAN

--so I was hopin' you might come by and give the business a blessin', get it started right, you know?

CROSS

We can certainly discuss that. But why don't we focus on what we're supposed to be doing in here?

MAN

(not even hearing him)
And if by chance you or St. Camillus wants to think about a small investment, I'm sure we can come to an agreement--

Cross lets his head fall back against the booth wall, closes his eyes.

MAN

--Like you could be a silent partner, you know?

64 INT. ST. CAMILLUS CHURCH - DAY

Cross peeks his head out of the Confessional. No one else waiting on the bench. He moves quickly to the front doors.

65 EXT. ST. CAMILLUS CHURCH - DAY

Cross emerges from the church and runs smack into a crowd of REPORTERS and CAMERAMEN who shove microphones and television cameras in his face.

REPORTERS

Father! Can you answer a few questions for us, Father?

CROSS

(taken aback)
What--?

REPORTER #1

(pushing)

--Is it true about the Keyball ticket, Father? Has someone at St. Camillus won three hundred million dollars?

CROSS

This is neither the time nor the place--

REPORTER #2

(pushing harder)

--Do you have the ticket, Father? Are you the winner?

CROSS

No, I'm not the winner.

REPORTER #2

Who is, then? Can we talk to them?

Cross looks for a way out, tries to move toward the columned walkway toward the back of the church. As he does so, he sees a television CREW on the courtyard, shooting video of several children playing. One of them is Kylie.

Cross immediately pushes through the crowd of Reporters and Cameramen, moving out onto the courtyard.

CROSS

Stop! This is private church property, you can't tape here!

REPORTER #1

(calling after Cross)

Father, what about the lottery ticket?

66 INT. DIOCESAN OFFICE - DAY

Regali sits in front of a television, watching the live news broadcast of Cross in front of St. Camillus.

Regali clicks off the TV with a remote, turns to Bishop Cardinale, sitting near him.

REGALI

This could complicate matters. We don't need complications.

CARDINALE

Yes, Your Eminence.

67 INT. STRAZZI'S OFFICE - DAY

Strazzi sits at a poker table with several GOODFELLAS. He tosses in a stack of chips.

STRAZZI

Call.
 (more chips)
 And raise two grand.

Strazzi glances at a TV in the corner. The live broadcast of Cross at St. Camillus is on.

STRAZZI

What the fuck?

Strazzi grabs the remote, turns up the volume. On the screen are the shots of the children playing in the courtyard.

GOODFELLA #1

(tossing in chips)
 See your two grand, raise you another
 two grand.

Strazzi rises and moves closer to the TV.

GOODFELLA #1 (O.S.)

Straz. I'm callin' you here.

Strazzi kneels in front of the TV.

GOODFELLA #1 (O.S.)

Come, on Straz. Whattaya doin'? We
 playin' poker or what?

Strazzi reaches out and touches the screen. His fingers trace the image of Kylie in the courtyard as Cross takes her hand and moves her away from the camera.

STRAZZI

Son of a bitch.

68 INT. POLICE CENTER - SQUADROOM - DAY

Cross is escorted through the room by a UNIFORMED OFFICER to a glassed office along the back wall.

The Uniformed Officer raps on the doorjamb.

UNIFORMED OFFICER

Someone to see you, Loot.

69 INT. POLICE CENTER - RIGGS' OFFICE - DAY

Riggs leans back in his chair.

RIGGS

I saw two things on TV a while ago
 I didn't like seeing. One was a
 little girl named Kylie. The other
 was a priest squirmin', tryin' not
 to lie.

CROSS
I was ambushed.

RIGGS
Vipers. Welcome to my world.
(sighs heavily)
Can't leave her there now, you know.

CROSS
I know.

RIGGS
I got a friend in Child Welfare.
Could place her somewhere--

CROSS
--The system's not for her, Jack.

RIGGS
What then? She could be in real
danger. We got no way a' knowin'.

CROSS
You've found nothing on her mother?
Nothing that could lead to a relative?

Riggs sits forward, grabs a large manila envelope.

RIGGS
All those ID's she had were fakes.
Real good ones, but all dead ends.
Take a look at this, will you?

Riggs removes something from the envelope, tosses it to Cross.

INSERT - THE OBJECT

A gold ring, with a flat top into which is etched the figure
of a man in robes with a staff. The flat top is surrounded
by small red stones.

BACK TO SCENE

RIGGS
What do you make of that?

CROSS
It's Saint Anthony of Padua.

RIGGS
Yeah? Why would someone wear a ring
with him on it? What's the
significance?

CROSS
He's the patron saint of travelers.
Sailors keep him close, among others.

RIGGS

She didn't look like a sailor to me.

CROSS

I have someone who might know something about it. Can I keep this 'til tomorrow?

RIGGS

Don't see why not. You may lean toward bendin' the truth a little, but I doubt you're a thief.

Cross rises, moves to the door.

RIGGS

One more thing, Nick.
(off Cross's look)
That ticket the reporters were asking about. Anything to that?

CROSS

I'm surprised, Jack. You should know you can't always put your faith in what those vipers say on TV.

70 INT. RECTORY FOYER - DAY

Cross enters and is immediately met by Sister Anna Juliana coming down the hall.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

(hushed, perturbed)
Where have you been?
(before he can answer)
Never mind. Just get in there.
He's been waiting 45 minutes.

CROSS

Who?

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

Bishop Cardinale, that's who.

Sister Anna Juliana trundles back up the hall. Cross goes into his office.

71 INT. RECTORY OFFICE - DAY

Bishop John Cardinale stands looking out the window into the courtyard. He looks to Cross as he enters, then back out the window.

CARDINALE

Imagine my surprise this morning when I saw that courtyard full of children, Nicholas.

(MORE)

CARDINALE (CONT'D)

And this business about a lottery ticket, what is this? Is it true?

CROSS

(after a moment)

Yes.

CARDINALE

You have a three hundred million dollar lottery ticket here?

CROSS

Yes.

CARDINALE

My God.

(then with concern)

You're not gambling again, are you?

CROSS

No. Nothing like that. The ticket's not mine. It's...complicated, John.

CARDINALE

Simplify it for me. Start with the children.

CROSS

A couple of them were here when I arrived. Abandoned, I'm told. The others...well, they just...came. One reason or another. We try to find Christian families for them. We couldn't turn them away.

CARDINALE

The city has agencies.

CROSS

Would you send a child into that, John? Have you forgotten? I haven't.

CARDINALE

We didn't turn out so bad, Nicholas. But that's beside the point. You've overstepped your bounds here. There are legal ramifications to running an unlicensed shelter. You may have compromised the Diocese.

CROSS

Oh, come on, John! We were helping innocents here--

CARDINALE

--And now this public spotlight at a most delicate moment.

CROSS

That's what this is really all about, isn't it? It's not about an illegal shelter. It's about a real estate deal worth millions to Regali. Something you don't need anybody looking at.

CARDINALE

Remember who you're talking to, Nicholas.

Cardinale turns, looks out the window.

CROSS

(quietly)

Why did you send me here, John?

CARDINALE

(reflective)

Because St. Camillus was wounded too. I suppose I thought you might be able to heal one another.

CROSS

We are. And we're helping to heal others in the process.

CARDINALE

(suddenly firm again)

That may be true. But it can no longer happen here. You are to be at the Diocese in the morning, Father Nicholas. The appropriate city agencies are being notified about the children. And Nicholas--give me that ticket. I will take it back to the Diocese, get it out of here, stop this nonsense with the press.

CROSS

I...I don't have it. I gave it to someone for safe keeping.

CARDINALE

Who?

CROSS

Someone trustworthy.

CARDINALE

Then get it back. Bring it with you tomorrow. His Eminence will decide its disposition.

(buttons his coat)

I'll show myself out.

(then quietly)

I'm sorry, Nick.

Cardinale leaves.

Cross moves to the desk, picks up his Bible. He opens it to the Book of St. Matthew, looks at the ticket sitting between the pages.

CROSS

You are trustworthy, aren't you,
Matthew?

72 INT. GREY STONE BUILDING - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Cross walks with Sister Anna Juliana toward Kylie's bedroom.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

Where will they go?

CROSS

Various foster homes. Dormitory
facilities. Depends on what's
available.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

The poor dears.

(then with spleen)

I'd like to give our Archbishop a
piece of my mind.

CROSS

Maybe I should turn you loose on
him, AJ. He wouldn't know what hit
him.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

And what of Little Michael? What do
we tell him? His whole life is
wrapped up in St. Camillus.

Cross shakes his head.

When they reach Kylie's bedroom, Sister Anna Juliana takes
Cross's arm, stops him.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

(hushed)

She's been asking about her mother.
Are you going to tell her?

CROSS

I don't have a choice now, do I?

73 INT. GREY STONE BUILDING - KYLIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kylie sits on the floor, playing Jacks. As Cross sits down
beside her, she sets the ball down, turns to him.

KYLIE

What's in your magic pocket today?

CROSS
Oh, I don't know. Want to look?

KYLIE
Yeah!

Kylie reaches into Cross's jacket breast pocket. Her eyes widen as she pulls her Jacks ball out. She looks down to the floor, where the ball just was.

KYLIE
How'd you do that?

CROSS
Same way I did this--

Cross reaches out and touches Kylie's ear, pulls his hand back with a Jack between his fingers. Kylie laughs.

CROSS
Want to play a game?

Kylie nods.

CROSS
You first.

Kylie rolls out the Jacks, starts to play.

CROSS
I want to talk to you about your Mom, Kylie. Can I do that?
(Kylie nods)
Did your Mom ever talk to you about Heaven?

KYLIE
(bouncing the ball)
Uh-huh.

CROSS
What did she tell you?

KYLIE
That's where we go when we don't live here anymore. That's where my Gramma is.

CROSS
(struggling)
Did she..ever talk about when she might..go there?

Kylie stops playing. She looks up at Cross, her demeanor suddenly different, somehow more mature.

KYLIE
Mommy's not coming back, is she?

CROSS

No. Did she tell you she might not?

Kylie nods, then gets up, sits on the bed, grabs her stuffed rabbit, hugs it tightly. Cross rises and sits next to her, puts his arm around her.

KYLIE

Can I stay with you and Sister AJ?

CROSS

I don't think--

Kylie suddenly throws her arms around Cross, tears falling from her eyes.

KYLIE

--I want to stay with you! I want to stay here!

Cross picks Kylie up, holds her tight as she throws her arms around his neck and holds on for dear life.

CROSS

I know, little one, I know.

74 INT. RECTORY FOYER - DAY

Cross hands Sister Anna Juliana his coffee cup, then slips on his jacket.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

Where will you be?

CROSS

I can't let Kylie into the system. I need to find someone who knows her. Stay with the children, don't answer the phones.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

Yes, Father.

Cross is out the door.

75 EXT. PADUA SCHOOL - MAIN BUILDING - WILMINGTON, DE -- DAY

Cross walks up to the entrance, pulls open the doors and goes in.

76 INT. ST. ANTHONY OF PADUA SCHOOL - OFFICE - DAY

Cross sits with FATHER FRANK TERRANOVA, late 40s, trim and angular, in a pair of plush leather chairs.

Terranova is looking at the ring Cross got from Riggs.

TERRANOVA

I remember this design because we changed it the year after I became Headmaster here. That was in '95. I think they used this one for only a couple of years before that, so the window would be 1993 to '95.

CROSS

Could anyone get these?

TERRANOVA

Only graduates. They received it with their diplomas.

Cross unfolds the photocopy of ID's of the Woman.

CROSS

Does she look familiar?

Terranova shakes his head.

TERRANOVA

No. But if she graduated before I came--

CROSS

Right. I assume you have yearbooks from those years?

TERRANOVA

In the library.

77 INT. PADUA SCHOOL - LIBRARY - DAY

Cross and Terranova sit at the corner of a long table, each flipping pages in a yearbook. The photocopy ID sheet lies on the table between them.

FRANCIS, a 60's-something, picture-perfect Librarian right down to the pencil in the hair bun, places another book on the table.

FRANCIS

And here's 1995.

TERRANOVA

Thank you, Francis.

Terranova picks up the 1995 book, opens it to the senior class section, begins looking at the pictures. About the third page in, he stops.

TERRANOVA

I think this might be her.

Cross looks at the picture.

INSERT -- THE PICTURE IN THE YEARBOOK

A young woman in cap and gown, her hair longer than in the photocopy ID's, but the facial features are the same. The name beneath the photo is "Stephanie Hess".

BACK TO SCENE

CROSS

Stephanie Hess. You know her?

TERRANOVA

No. Before my time.

FRANCIS

(walking back to table)

Did you say Stephanie Hess?

CROSS

Yes. Do you know her?

FRANCIS

I knew her, yes. Nice girl. Played field hockey. Kind of a wild one, though. Ran with a fast crowd.

CROSS

Would you by any chance know where her family might be now?

FRANCIS

Her parents were killed in a car accident not too long after she graduated. The last time I saw her was at her wedding.

TERRANOVA

When was that, Francis?

FRANCIS

1998. The year my Henry died. The only reason I know is that it was at my church, you see. I was on the Narthex committee. Such a big wedding. So many flowers.

CROSS

What church was this?

FRANCIS

St. Mary Magdelene's here in town.

CROSS

(somewhat surprised)

St. Mary's?

TERRANOVA

You know it?

Cross nods.

CROSS

I know the priest who was at St. Mary's about that time. He arranged for my entrance to Seminary.

78 INT. ST. MARY MAGDELENE'S - HALLWAY - DAY

Cross walks with FATHER THOMAS QUINN, 30's, redheaded and portly.

QUINN

St. Mary's is a big church, Father. Over 2000 parishioners. I took over in 2002, when my predecessor was elevated. All the records are here, though.

Quinn opens a door, he and Cross enter a small room.

79 INT. ST. MARY MAGDELENE'S - STUDY/RECORDS ROOM - DAY

Quinn walks to a long row of record books, checking the spines.

QUINN

We have them by category and year.
(finds a book)
Yes...here it is. 1998.

Quinn plops the book on a table, thumbs through the pages.

QUINN

Hess, Hess, Hess--Ah, yes. Stephanie Hess. June 4, 1998. Married one John Joseph Strazzi.

CROSS

(stunned)
Strazzi? Joe Strazzi?

QUINN

John Joseph, yes. And there's a notation here--
(flips some pages)
Yes. They had a daughter baptized here on April 2, 2003. Kyle Deborah Strazzi.

Cross sits in a nearby chair.

CROSS

And the priest?

Quinn looks in the book.

QUINN

In both cases, Father John Cardinale.
Now Bishop John Cardinale, of course.

80 EXT. ST. CAMILLUS - DAY

Cross pulls his car into the small church lot, gets out and walks toward the entrance of the church.

As he does so, the door of a black stretch limousine at the curb opens, and C. ARTHUR RETTSON, 50s, impeccably-dressed in pinstripe suit and power tie, emerges.

RETTSON

Father Cross. May I have a moment?

Cross turns as Rettson approaches him.

CROSS

I'm sorry, do I know you?

RETTSON

No. But we share a mutual acquaintance. I'm legal counsel for Gaming Entertainment Partners.

CROSS

Who?

Rettson points toward the partially demolished factory beyond the St. Camillus courtyard trees.

CROSS

(realizing)
Strazzi.

RETTSON

Mr. Strazzi is a shareholder, yes.

CROSS

I don't have any business with Joe Strazzi.

Cross turns toward the church entrance. Rettson falls into step with him.

RETTSON

That's not exactly true, is it, Father? There's the small matter of a quarter million dollars--

Cross stops.

CROSS

What do you want, Mr. Rettson?

RETTSON

My client wishes to speak with you about certain specific items that have recently come into your possession. Items that Mr. Strazzi feels he has a proprietary--

CROSS

--What items would those be?

RETTSON

A lottery ticket and one Kyle Deborah Strazzi.

CROSS

An "item". Figures that's how he'd see her.

RETTSON

Nevertheless. Now, Mr. Strazzi would prefer this to be a simple transaction. No need to make a public spectacle of it.

CROSS

I bet he would.

RETTSON

Now if you would--

CROSS

--Look, Mr. Rettson. Tell Joe Strazzi that any business we have is between us and us alone. Beyond that, we have nothing to talk about. Now if you'll excuse me.

Cross climbs the steps to St. Camillus and enters the church.

81 INT. RECTORY KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sister Anna Juliana pours boiling water over a teabag in a cup, then sets it on a tray. She carries it from the room.

82 INT. RECTORY HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sister Anna Juliana comes down the hall to the Rectory office door. She stops, leans into the door a moment, listening.

83 INT. ST. CAMILLUS - RECTORY OFFICE - NIGHT

Cross sits at his desk, looking out at the darkening courtyard, lost in thought. His right hand absentmindedly rolls the red dice on the blotter. The move is automatic--roll, sweep, roll, sweep, roll.

Cross looks up as the office door opens, his hand sweeping up the dice and holding them.

Sister Anna Juliana carries the cup of tea to the desk, the teabag string and tag flapping as she walks.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
Awfully quiet in here.

CROSS
Sanctuaries tend to be on the quiet side.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
That what this is?

CROSS
Used to be.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
Mm-hmm.
(moves to the door)
I'm ready to man the parapets if you are, Father.

CROSS
Just what the world needs. Another pair of Christian martyrs.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
What if that's what it takes?

Cross doesn't answer. Sister Anna Juliana gives him a slight smile, then leaves and closes the door.

Cross sits at the desk another moment or two, then opens his hand, looks at the dice. He puts them into his jacket pocket as he rises.

Cross walks to a bookshelf, picks out a large album. He carries it to a leather chair and sits, turns on a lamp nearby.

Cross opens the book. It's a photo album. He turns the pages slowly, studying the photos.

INSERT -- THE BOOK

A traditional family portrait, with silver ink on the page margin, reading "Nick, Jenny, and Sophie, June 2002."

A page turn. More family shots: A younger-looking Cross, in sweatshirt and jeans, tackled on a lawn by Jenny and Sophie; another of them sitting on a front stoop; another with Sophie held up between Cross and Jenny, all of them laughing.

The page turns again: Christmas shots, of trees and presents; Sophie on a mall Santa's lap; Cross with reindeer antlers on his head, Sophie hysterical next to him.

The page turns. No photos here. Just a single folded sheet of paper. Cross's fingers partially open it. The first line is readable: "I can't let you do this to us anymore...". Cross's fingers gently close the paper, turn the page.

Two photographs: The larger shows Cross in priest's robes, outside of St. Mary Magdelene's, shaking hands with John Cardinale with one hand, accepting a Bible with the other.

The second is Cross with Cardinale and Sister Anna Juliana at the front door of St. Camillus. In the background corner of the photo stands Little Michael with his broom.

BACK TO SCENE

Cross closes the photo album, lets his head fall back on the chair. Then he reaches for the phone, dials.

CARDINALE (filtered)
 (answering machine)
 This is Bishop John Cardinale. Please
 leave a message. I'll get back to
 you.

At the beep, Cross appears ready to say something, but doesn't. Instead, he quietly clicks off the phone, sets it down, and leaves the room.

84 INT. RECTORY KITCHEN - NIGHT

Cross sits at the table, a cup of tea before him.

Sister Anna Juliana passes the kitchen door in her nightgown, catches sight of Cross, comes back and enters.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
 You all right, Father?

Cross nods. Sister Anna Juliana sits at the table.

CROSS
 (after a moment)
 May I ask you a personal question,
 AJ?

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
 Certainly.

CROSS
 What brought you to the Order?

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
 (without hesitation)
 Emptiness.

CROSS
 Emptiness?

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

Not necessarily a physical emptiness, mind you. Or a spiritual one either, for that matter. But more than both. A complete vacuum. A total sense of disconnection, of being without power.

CROSS

You were conscious of this within yourself?

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

I wasn't aware of it at all. Not until the moment I stepped into St. Alban's in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania twenty some-odd years ago. I was going to a friend's wedding--happy, directionless, frivolous about life's serious matters. Oblivious.

CROSS

And in that moment?

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

In that moment, in that church--why, I'll never know--I was filled with something that made me aware of what emptiness was. Or more directly to the point, what it wasn't.

CROSS

What did you do?

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

I couldn't leave. I stayed for hours. Missed the reception, everything. When I finally did step out of the church, I was acutely aware that the world was no longer the same. Being oblivious had been taken from me. I went back the next morning, prayed for hours--something I'd not done since I was a little girl. The feeling rose more strongly within me--a sense of connection, fullness, belonging, responsibility. And a clarity. I knew without a shadow of a doubt that this was where I was to be. Here was where my power lay, my ability to make a difference. I went to the convent that night.

CROSS

I could use such clarity.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

You have it, Nicholas. We all do.

(MORE)

SISTER ANNA JULIANA (CONT'D)

Perhaps you're just not trusting it.
It's when you trust it that the power
comes.

85 INT. RECTORY BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cross tosses in bed, unable to sleep. He looks at the clock--
a neon 4:12 glows on it's face.

Cross sits up, turns on the nightstand light. He picks up
his Bible, opens it to St. Matthew. He picks out the lottery
ticket, turns it over and over in his hand, then puts it
back in the Bible.

CROSS

Today, Matthew. Maybe today I'll
relieve you of this burden.

Cross sets the Bible down and leaves the bed.

86 INT. REGALI'S DIOCESAN OFFICES -- DAY

Cross stands before Archbishop Regali, who sits behind his
desk. Cardinale sits behind Cross and to his left. Regali's
just lit a cigarette, exhales a blue cloud of smoke.

REGALI

Sit, Father.

CROSS

I'd rather stand, Your Eminence.

REGALI

Suit yourself. You know why you're
here, Father Nicholas, so let's not--

CROSS

--I know why you called me here.
Why I'm here is another matter.

Regali casts a glance at Cardinale, who almost imperceptibly
shakes his head.

REGALI

And that would be?

CROSS

I'm here to buy St. Camillus.

REGALI

What?!

CARDINALE

(standing, jolted)
You're not serious, Nicholas.

CROSS

(he stares at Regali)
I've never been more serious about
anything in my life.

REGALI

Don't be ludicrous. You can't buy a
church.

CROSS

Why not? You can obviously sell
one. I just want you to sell it to
me.

REGALI

How do you propose to pay for it?

CROSS

Let's just say I've come into some
money.

REGALI

(dismissive)

You are already a liability and an
embarrassment to this Diocese, now
you've become an embarrassment to
yourself.

CROSS

I'm an embarrassment? Who's hiding
in the shadows of the cross, dealing
with men our Lord Himself would not
speak with were He here today?

Regali leaps to his feet.

REGALI

How dare you!

CARDINALE

You go too far, Nicholas.

CROSS

(turning to Cardinale)

I haven't gone far enough. I've
been to St. Mary's, John. I've seen
the records. You knew who Stephanie
Hess was. You knew who Kylie is.
Yet you stood in my office and said
nothing. And you were the only person
I told that I did, indeed, have the
lottery ticket. No one else knew
for sure but AJ, and she wouldn't
have told anyone.

CARDINALE

Nicholas--

CROSS

--Was it you or His Eminence here
that called Strazzi?

Cardinale is silent.

CROSS

Well, it doesn't matter.

(turns to Regali)

I do have the ticket. And I'm ready
to cash it. What's Strazzi offering?
I'll beat it.

REGALI

No. You can't. Nor will you try.
You still work for this Diocese,
Father Cross, and that means me.
Let this go. Move on. We will find
you another church. A bigger, finer
church. One where you can--

CROSS

(quietly, determined)

--St. Camillus is my church.

REGALI

Not anymore. It's over. Finished.
Child Welfare will be at St. Camillus
tomorrow afternoon for the children
you have been harboring there. You
will give them to the Welfare Agents.

CROSS

No, I will not.

REGALI

You will if you don't want them
harmed. You see, demolition of St.
Camillus has been set to begin the
next morning. That's what you were
called here to be told. You will be
reassigned a parish shortly. Now,
leave us. There is no more to say.

Regali turns and goes out the door at the back of the room.

Cardinale looks to Cross, who moves to the door.

CARDINALE

Where are you going, Nicholas?

CROSS

To the only other place I can go.

CARDINALE

Is there anything I can do or say?

CROSS
 (stops, turns)
 I have a dog at St. Camillus, John.
 He'll need a home. You two should
 suit each other. Especially in name.

87 EXT. ILLICIT GAMBLING HALL - DAY

Cross walks directly to the door, raps the signal. Joey Mancusi opens the door, smiles.

MANCUSI
 Nicky. How's things?
 (notices the collar)
 What's with the bib? Ain't Halloween.

CROSS
 I need to see him.

MAN
 Well, we ain't open right now, Nicky.
 You know that. Come back 'round 10
 tonight.

CROSS
 I need to see him now. Tell him I'm
 here. He'll see me.

Mancusi studies Cross a second.

MANCUSI
 Hold on.

Mancusi props the door open with his foot as he reaches for a phone, dials an extension.

MANCUSI
 Yeah. It's me. I got Nicky Cross
 down here. Says he wants to see ya.
 You won't believe what he's wearin'.
 (the smile fades)
 How'd you know?
 (beat)
 Okay, yeah. Sure.

MANCUSI
 (opening the door)
 Go on up.
 (smiles)
 Father.

88 INT. STRAZZI'S OFFICE - DAY

Cross enters. Strazzi sits at the poker table, counting a stack of money.

STRAZZI

Wasn't nice a' you to blow off my attorney, Nick. I was tryin' to be decent about things.

CROSS

Anything you want to say to me, you can say to my face.

STRAZZI

Okay. Try this: this is the second time this week you're breakin' our arrangement. You ain't s'posed to be comin' here, remember?

Cross sits down across the poker table from Strazzi.

STRAZZI

But I'm gonna let it slide, Nicky. 'Cause you found my little girl for me. She's comin' home tomorrow.

CROSS

This is no place for a child.

STRAZZI

Hey, so I'll get an apartment or somethin'. Or better yet--I'll build some condos over by the new casino. Maybe where your church is now. How 'bout that? She'll feel right at home.

CROSS

You don't want her. You want the money.

STRAZZI

(suddenly steel)

Don't tell me what I want. You're in no position to tell me shit.

Strazzi gets up, moves to the safe behind his desk, puts the stack of money into it.

CROSS

What happened to Stephanie Hess, Joe?

STRAZZI

(light again)

Ah, you know--we drifted apart. She started questionin' how I made the money she was livin' off of. Got all moral on me. Catholic girls. Whattaya gonna do? Guess she thought life would be sweeter somewheres else.

CROSS

But you found her.

STRAZZI

Got herself in the newspaper. Not too swift. But I didn't marry her for her brains.

CROSS

She was terrified when she came to St. Camillus.

STRAZZI

Go figure.

CROSS

Tell me, Joe. Just between you and me. Did you kill her?

STRAZZI

Kill her? Me? Nah. I don't kill nobody. Let's just say I let it be known I wasn't too happy with 'er. And the thing is--I can't always control what my friends might do, you know? But, hell, she shoulda known better. What'd she think I'd do? Go "Oh, sure, go 'head. Take my kid, don't share the \$300 mill. No skin off my ass."

(the steel returns)

You, above all people, know I don't forget, and I don't forgive debts.

Strazzi moves to the bar, picks up a glass.

STRAZZI

You wanta drink? Scotch? Bourbon?

Cross shakes his head. Strazzi makes a drink, sits down at the poker table again.

STRAZZI

Look, Nick. Let's cut the shit. You got two things I consider mine. Kylie, and a \$300 million dollar lottery ticket my wife bought. Tomorrow the city gives me the one. You're gonna bring me the other. And that's it. Got it?

Cross sits quietly for a moment, staring at Strazzi, who stares back, unblinking.

CROSS

I'll make you a deal. I'll give you the lottery ticket for St. Camillus.

STRAZZI

Now why would I do that? Way I see it, half the ticket's already mine--spousal property and all. Other half was Steph's, now Kylie's. But the kid can't own it. And my wife--well, she's dead, ain't she? What was hers is now mine. Hunnerd percent. I don't have to trade you for nothin'.

CROSS

What will it take?

STRAZZI

Nothin' you got. So forget it.

(suddenly animated)

Hey, let's play a little cards, whattaya say? I feel like gamblin' a little. Wanna play a little stud? I'll spot ya some cash.

Cross rises from the table, moves to the door.

STRAZZI

Ah, come on. Don't be that way. Play some cards. You might win--

Cross closes the door behind him, leaving Strazzi alone.

STRAZZI

(to himself)

--but I doubt it. Fuckin' loser.

89 EXT. ILLICIT GAMBLING HALL - DAY

Cross emerges, pulls out his cell phone, and dials.

RIGGS (filtered)

(through phone)

Riggs.

CROSS

You at your office?

RIGGS (filtered)

No. Downtown.

CROSS

Where? We need to talk.

RIGGS (filtered)

518 South Street. Vandever's Hobby.

CROSS

See you in ten minutes.

90 INT. VANDEVER'S HOBBY SHOP - DAY

Cross enters the store. It's packed floor to ceiling with anything and everything to do with woodworking.

Cross moves to the rear of the store, where he finds Riggs sitting at a bench with CHARLIE VANDEVER, 70s, who looks remarkably like Pinocchio's father, Geppetto. They're working on Riggs's four-masted schooner model.

Neither Riggs nor Vandever look up or stop what they're doing.

RIGGS

Nick. You know Charlie?

CROSS

Nice to meet you.

VANDEVER

Pleasure.

RIGGS

(to Vandever)

Gimme a sec, will you, Charlie?

Charlie nods, moves out to the front of the store.

CROSS

(points to the model)

Pretty impressive.

RIGGS

Therapy. Makes me think about the interconnectivity of everything. Good exercise for a homicide cop. What's up?

CROSS

Her name was Stephanie Hess.

RIGGS

Yeah?

CROSS

Married to Joe Strazzi.

RIGGS

No kidding.

CROSS

Left him ten months ago. He as much as told me he had her killed.

RIGGS

Yeah, well, sayin' it and provin' it-- two different things. Strazzi doesn't make mistakes.

CROSS

There's more.

RIGGS

I had a feeling.

CROSS

Strazzi's behind the deal that's closing St. Camillus. He's buying it from the Diocese for his casino.

RIGGS

Uh-huh. And?

CROSS

And they're coming for the children tomorrow.

RIGGS

That's not good.

CROSS

I'm wondering if there's any way you can stop it.

RIGGS

Not my area, Nick.

CROSS

You don't have any friends over there?

RIGGS

Plenty. But you gotta remember--St. Camillus has been operating under the radar. We knew it could blow open if it got on the screens. I'll make some calls, but--

CROSS

Thanks. I had to ask.

RIGGS

Sure you did.

CROSS

(nods at the ship)
Problems?

RIGGS

Nothing a lot of time and rebuilding won't fix. But I look forward to it.

CROSS

Yeah. Wish I could say the same.

91 INT. GREY STONE BUILDING - DAY

Sisters Anna Juliana and Theresa settle the children into their dinners.

Cross enters and there's a chorus of "Hi, Father Nick"s. Kylie jumps up and runs to Cross, practically jumping into his arms.

KYLIE

Hi, Father! I missed you! Where have you been?

CROSS

Oh, here and there. Looking for some magic.

Kylie sticks her hand into Cross's jacket pocket.

KYLIE

Did you find any?

CROSS

Not yet. But I'll let you know when I do.

(sets her down)

Go finish your dinner, honey. We'll play later.

Kylie runs off to the dinner table.

CROSS

(to the Sisters)

I need to see you both a moment.

Sisters Anna Juliana and Theresa join Cross in the corner of the room.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

Time for the parapets?

CROSS

In a manner of speaking. Child Welfare will be here tomorrow. They're to take the children. St. Camillus is to be demolished the next day.

SISTER THERESA

(crossing herself)

Oh, my Lord, no. These poor children.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

What can we do? We can't let them have these children.

CROSS

No, we can't. So we're going to move them.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

Move them? Where?

CROSS

Just get them ready to leave as soon as it gets darker. Bring whatever they have, whatever they'll need.

Cross moves into the hall and leaves. Sister Anna Juliana looks at Theresa. They both raise their eyebrows at the same moment.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

(to the children)

Eat up children. We have a surprise for you. We're all going on a trip!

92 EXT. FAULKNER HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Marie Faulkner opens the door. Standing before her are Cross, Sisters Anna Juliana and Theresa, Kylie, and seven other children.

MARIE

Father Cross. What--?

CROSS

I have a favor to ask of you, Marie.

93 INT. FAULKNER HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Sister Anna Juliana tucks a blanket around Kylie and three other kids in a queen size bed.

Cross sits on the edge of the bed near Kylie, gently pushes her hair from her face.

CROSS

You okay?

KYLIE

Uh, huh. Is this where I'm gonna stay now?

CROSS

For a little while.

KYLIE

(whispers)

Is there magic here?

CROSS

Oh, yes. Lots of it. Want to see?

Kylie nods, reaches up and into Cross's jacket breast pocket. When she pulls her hand out, she has a small silver cross on a chain.

KYLIE
(eyes bright)
Wow!

CROSS
That's a special cross, Kylie. It stands for all those who love you, especially me.

KYLIE
'Cause it's your name.

CROSS
Right.
(puts it on her neck)
If you ever get scared, just hold it tight, and you'll feel me with you. Okay?

Kylie nods. Cross bends and kisses her forehead, then stands.

CROSS
Goodnight, children.

CHILDREN
Goodnight, Father Nick.

Cross smiles at Sister Anna Juliana, then joins Marie, who stands in the hallway.

94 INT. FAULKNER HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Cross and Marie move down the hall. They pass another bedroom where Sister Theresa is getting the rest of the kids into a pair of beds.

95 INT. FAULKNER HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Cross and Marie emerge from the hallway, move toward the front door.

CROSS
Bless you, Marie. I know this is a lot to ask.

MARIE
This house hasn't heard these sounds in almost twenty years, Father. It's nice to hear them again.

CROSS
I don't know how long they'll need to stay. Will it be hard explaining eight kids?

MARIE

Not that it's anybody's business,
Father, but if they ask, I'll just
tell 'em they're the grandkids.
It'll make 'em jealous.

CROSS

All right, then.
(opens the door)
How's Walter, by the way?

MARIE

S'pose he's okay. He ain't home
much to know. Workin' a lot of
overtime, so he says.

Cross and Marie hold each other's eyes a moment, understanding
one another clearly. Cross smiles, moves into the night.

Marie closes the door, bows her head a moment in thought,
perhaps prayer, then hears a childish giggle from the hallway.
She turns, smiling, and moves toward the bedrooms.

96 EXT. ST. CAMILLUS - RECTORY - DAY

Jack Riggs approaches the Rectory entrance. As he's about
to knock, the door opens.

JACQUELINE REYNARD, 30's, petite and proper, OLIVIA BROWN,
40s, as tall as Jacqueline but twice as wide, emerge. Riggs
steps aside to let them pass.

REYNARD

(not pleased, to Cross)
--and I'm sure you understand this
is totally unacceptable, Father Cross.

CROSS

No, actually, I don't understand.

REYNARD

Those children should not have been
moved. Period. They were to be
processed by our agency this morning.

CROSS

Those children have been through
enough already, Miss Reynard. I
assure you they're safe and well
taken care of.

BROWN

That is for us to decide, sir. Not
you.

CROSS

I've been there. Who better to
decide?

REYNARD

This may well have personal legal consequences for you, Father Cross. I highly recommend you reconsider your actions. Our next step is the courts.

Reynard and Brown move briskly toward a van parked in the St. Camillus lot.

RIGGS

Jacqueline Reynard?

CROSS

(nodding)
You know her?

RIGGS

Know of her. Not a good person to be tangling with, I hear.

CROSS

You want a cup of coffee?

RIGGS

Desperately.

97 INT. RECTORY KITCHEN - DAY

Cross and Riggs sit at the kitchen table, coffees before them.

RIGGS

A case could be made for Obstruction. Depends on the judge. If somebody's really got a bug up, they could even think about kidnapping.

CROSS

Oh, come on.

RIGGS

(shrugging)
It's why I told you to be careful, Nick.

CROSS

I really didn't have a choice, Jack.

RIGGS

Experience can define action. I understand.

CROSS

That's part of it.
(MORE)

CROSS (CONT'D)

(sips his coffee)

Four years ago I took my family for granted. I put myself before them. St. Camillus and it's people are my family now. I won't make the same mistake twice.

RIGGS

I won't be able to help you if it gets sticky.

CROSS

I know.

98 EXT. ST. CAMILLUS - DAY

Cross watches Riggs pull out of the lot and up the street.

Cross moves around the side of the church into the columned walkway.

99 EXT. COLUMNED WALKWAY -- DAY

As Cross comes around the corner into the walkway, he notices Little Michael sitting alone on the concrete bench. As Cross gets closer, he realizes Little Michael is crying.

Cross sits next to Little Michael.

CROSS

What is it, Michael? What's the matter?

LITTLE MICHAEL

(sobbing)

I ruined it, Father Nick. I'm sorry...I ruined it for everybody...

CROSS

Ruined what, Michael?

LITTLE MICHAEL

(sobbing)

St. Camillus.

CROSS

Where did you hear that, Michael?

LITTLE MICHAEL

(sobbing)

I hear people talking. St. Camillus is closing. It's because of me.

CROSS

No, Michael, believe me, it's not.

LITTLE MICHAEL

I didn't do what you said. I shouldn't have said anything. And now St. Camillus won't be here anymore, and there's no place for Anna Juliana and Theresa and the kids and you and me and--

Cross puts his arm around Little Michael.

CROSS

Michael, listen. Do you remember the story of Noah and the Ark?

LITTLE MICHAEL

(sniffing)

Yes--

*

CROSS

When God sent the rain to cleanse the Earth?

(off Michael's nod)

But he told Noah to build the ark, and because of that, all of God's precious creatures were saved for a better world, right?

(another nod)

You see, Michael, God sometimes disguises blessings as things that frighten us at first, that we don't understand. But in the end, something better comes of it. Maybe you just did what God needed someone to do. Maybe you were Noah.

LITTLE MICHAEL

You think?

CROSS

Maybe. We'll have to wait and see, won't we?

Little Michael wipes his nose on his sleeve.

LITTLE MICHAEL

Okay, Father Nick. I'd like being Noah.

A banging out front of the church draws their attention. Cross rises and moves up the walkway. Michael follows him.

100 EXT. ST. CAMILLUS - DAY

Cross, followed by Little Michael, comes upon a CONSTRUCTION FOREMAN hammering a sign into the ground in front of the church. A large construction trailer has been parked in the small lot.

The sign is from a demolition company. On it hangs a notice that demolition of the property is to begin.

CROSS

Excuse me.

FOREMAN

Yeah.

CROSS

You can't be doing this. This property hasn't been sold yet.

FOREMAN

Papers were signed this mornin', as I understand it.

CROSS

What?

FOREMAN

Got a call about noon, told me to come on out here. We're takin' her down tomorrow.

LITTLE MICHAEL

(losing it completely)

NO! No, you can't!

(turns to Cross)

You said I was Noah! You said!

CROSS

Michael--

But Michael is already running down the street, crying.

CROSS

Michael! Michael, come back!

FOREMAN

Jesus. I'm sorry, Father.

Cross watches Michael turn the corner at the end of the block. He hangs his head, then turns back toward the church.

FOREMAN

If it was somethin' I said--

CROSS

No. You didn't do anything.

(looks up the block)

And neither have I.

101 INT. STRAZZI'S OFFICE - DAY

Rettson stands near the poker table where Strazzi plays poker with his Goodfellas.

STRAZZI

He did what!?

RETTSON

Moved the kids somewhere. Wouldn't tell Child Welfare where they are.

STRAZZI

Kylie too?

RETTSON

Yes.

Strazzi slams his cards on the table.

STRAZZI

Fuck! Who the hell does he think he's screwin' with?

(stands, goes to bar)

What are you doin' about it?

RETTSON

Child Welfare's got some legal options, but that'll take some time. We could file a habeas corpus--

STRAZZI

Speak English.

RETTSON

Get a judge to force him to produce the child.

STRAZZI

Don't mean he will.

RETTSON

No, it doesn't.

Strazzi reaches into his jacket pocket, pulls out an envelope, holds it up.

STRAZZI

Yeah, well--somethin' I just got might change his mind.

102 EXT. STANLEY MARCUS'S HOME - NIGHT

The front door opens. Stanley Marcus is surprised to see Cross.

MARCUS

Nick.

CROSS

Got a minute, Stan?

MARCUS

Yeah, sure. Come on in.

103 INT. STANLEY MARCUS'S HOME - NIGHT

A comfortable family room. Marcus and Cross sit adjacent to one another on a couch and chair.

MARCUS

Jack is correct. As far as the children are concerned, in the eyes of the law, you're culpable. Maybe criminally so. If I were you--

CROSS

--And the church? Can you stop that?

MARCUS

Short of proving there's been some impropriety, no.

CROSS

What about an injunction? Imply some impropriety, stall things?

MARCUS

No grounds. Look, Nick--I went through the records. Strazzi planned this well. Meticulously, in fact. Four years of work is about to pay off for him. He lined things up perfectly.

CROSS

Four years?

MARCUS

Uh-huh. Strazzi quietly filed plans for this casino operation four years ago. Before I started work with the city.

CROSS

(realization)

Did the plans include St. Camillus even then?

MARCUS

Yes.

CROSS

(resignation now)

So they knew what they were going to do with the church four years ago.

MARCUS

Absolutely.

Cross weighs this a moment, then slams his fist on the chair arm, rises and moves toward the door.

MARCUS

Where are you going?

Cross pauses at the door, looks to Marcus.

CROSS

Gethsemane. I'm going back to my
Gethsemane.

104 EXT. BISHOP JOHN CARDINALE'S HOME - NIGHT

Cross walks onto the porch, rings the doorbell. No answer.

Cross moves to his right, looks into the front room window.

THROUGH THE WINDOW

Cardinale can be seen sitting at a table, a bottle in front of him. His head is in his hands.

BACK TO SCENE

Cross goes back to the door, tries the knob. It turns.
Cross goes into the house.

105 INT. BISHOP JOHN CARDINALE'S HOME - NIGHT

Cardinale looks up as Cross sits down across from him.
Cardinale's difficulty focusing his eyes betrays his
condition.

CARDINALE

Hello, Nicholas. I figured you would
come. Sooner or later.

Cardinale picks up the bottle, pours into a glass in front of him, offers it to Cross

CARDINALE

Little sacrament?

Cross says nothing.

CARDINALE

No? Well, I'll have a little. More.
(slurps a sip)
So what can I--?

CROSS

--I was part of the plan from the
beginning, wasn't I?

Cardinale's face wrinkles, as if in pain. He reaches for the bottle. But Cross takes it from his hand.

CROSS

Wasn't I?

Cardinale nods almost imperceptibly. He can't look up at Cross.

CROSS

(disbelieving)

Why would you do this?

Cardinale stares at the floor several moments.

CARDINALE

I believed I could save his soul,
Nicholas. I was his parish priest
when he was a young man.

CROSS

Mary Magdelene's.

CARDINALE

(nods)

I watched him developing into--
(a touch of disgust)
--what he is today. I thought I
could make a difference. And I
thought I was. I really thought I
was. But I was blinded by my own
hubris. He was manipulative even
then, you see. Always at Mass.
Generous to the causes. The mask
was beguiling. When he married
Stephanie--so sweet and devout, so
unaware--I was sure that I'd brought
him back to the better life. But
instead, he was pulling me in, little
by little. And then--

CROSS

--Your elevation.

CARDINALE

(looks to Cross, nods)

Bishop. Arranged by Strazzi. By
the time I realized that he and Regali
were in bed--well--it was too late.

CROSS

Why didn't you just leave, John?

CARDINALE

Being a Bishop--a good possibility
of Archbishop--you know what that
can mean. So I convinced myself
that God would look the other way if
I could garner something for His
church.

(MORE)

CARDINALE (CONT'D)

I told myself I could influence how the Archdiocese would use the income from Strazzi's operation. I was naive, Nicholas.

CROSS

And me? Why me?

Cardinale's face wrinkles again. His eyes become moist.

CARDINALE

I think I saw you as a tool God sent me to do what I thought was necessary. Strazzi needed somebody at St. Camillus who wouldn't cause trouble, who could just watch over it until the time came, and then just move on. And that day you came to the Outreach seeking refuge and help--

CROSS

They needed a patsy. You gave them me. You manipulated me--steered me to the Seminary.

CARDINALE

You steered yourself. I only planted the seed. And the financial mess you'd gotten yourself in with Strazzi only made the fit more perfect in his eyes.

CROSS

I was a pawn all the way. To you. Regali. Strazzi. A piece of the game, that's all.

A tear traces down Cardinale's cheek.

CARDINALE

I'm so sorry. Try to find it in your heart to forgive a foolish man.

CROSS

(stands)

It's not my forgiveness you're going to need, John.

Cross turns and moves to the door. As he goes out and closes the door, Cardinale looks up, yells after him.

CARDINALE

You can't win this game, Nicholas! It's rigged! And Strazzi owns all the pieces!

106 EXT. ST. CAMILLUS - NIGHT

The St. Camillus bell tower chimes 1 a.m.

Cross parks his car near the construction trailer in the small lot, and walks around the corner into the columned walkway leading to the Rectory.

107 EXT. COLUMNED WALKWAY - NIGHT

Cross turns the corner into the walkway.

Cross is grabbed suddenly from behind, thrown up against the wall, a hand tight on his throat. Cross struggles with his ASSAILANT, who is large and strong, with a black ski mask over his face.

ASSAILANT

Give me the ticket!

CROSS

I don't--

ASSAILANT

Give me the damn ticket! I don't want to hurt you!

Cross continues to struggle, and manages to get a hand on the ski mask and pull it from the Assailant's head.

CROSS

(incredulous)

Walter!?

Faulkner staggers back, fear on his face.

FAULKNER

You gotta give me that ticket, Father. They're gonna kill me.

CROSS

Walter--

FAULKNER

--No! Just give me the ticket! I'll donate whatever I don't need to wherever you want--but Strazzi said I pay tonight--with either the money or my life.

CROSS

I can't give you the ticket, Walter. It's not mine to give.

FAULKNER

They're gonna kill me!

CROSS

We'll go to the police. I have a friend--

FAULKNER

--You think that's going to make any difference?! I'm a dead man, Father! You're talkin' to a dead man!

Faulkner turns and runs. Cross runs a few steps after him.

CROSS

Walter! Walter!

But Faulkner's gone into the night.

Cross looks to the sky, raises his arms.

CROSS

What are You doing!? How can this be Your will!? Why have You led me here!?

108 INT. RECTORY KITCHEN -- DAY

Sister Anna Juliana is packing a box and a cooler with foodstuffs from the cabinets and refrigerator.

Cross enters. He looks like he hasn't slept.

Sister Anna Juliana turns from the cabinet with cans in her hands.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

Peas and carrots. I hope Marie has better luck getting the children to eat them than I have.

CROSS

Weren't my favorite, either.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

How much should we leave here?

CROSS

Let's just take it all. No sense leaving anything here.

Cross and Sister Anna Juliana look at each other, the expression on their faces a clear picture of the sadness they feel.

109 EXT. ST. CAMILLUS - DAY

Cross loads the box of food into the trunk of the car next to the cooler already there. He closes the trunk lid, walks to Sister Anna Juliana, who waits by the driver's door.

A black limo pulls to the curb nearby. Frankie Mancusi climbs out of the limo, points to Cross, then points to the open door.

MANCUSI

Get in.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

(touching Cross's arm)

No, Father--

MAN

(louder)

This ain't a choice thing, Nicky.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

Nicholas--

CROSS

(to Sister Anna Juliana)

I'll be all right, AJ.

(hands her the keys)

Take care of things here. I'll meet you for dinner. You understand?

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

(nodding)

God be with you.

CROSS

You too.

Cross walks to the limo, gets in. Mancusi climbs in after him, closes the door, and the limo pulls from the curb.

110 INT. LIMOUSINE - DAY

Cross sits with Mancusi beside him. Across the limo compartment sit Joe Strazzi and C. Arthur Rettson.

Rettson hands Cross a folded document in legal blue cover.

RETTSON

Consider yourself served. That states you're to deliver Kyle Deborah Strazzi and a lottery ticket to me by 8 a.m. tomorrow morning or be in contempt of court.

Cross unfolds the document and looks at it. Then he tears it in half and tosses it back to Rettson.

Strazzi almost laughs.

STRAZZI

I didn't think that'd work.

(MORE)

STRAZZI (CONT'D)

Somewhere, somehow, you came up with some balls, Nicky. Well, see how you feel about this.

Strazzi holds out the envelope he had earlier. Cross slowly reaches out and takes it, looks inside. Two photographs.

INSERT -- THE PHOTOGRAPHS

Each is a slightly grainy telephoto shot of Jenny and Sophie playing on a swingset in what looks like a backyard.

BACK TO SCENE

Cross looks up at Strazzi, stricken.

STRAZZI

Thought that might get your attention.

Strazzi pulls a cigar from his pocket, lips it.

STRAZZI

Took me a while, but I found 'em, Nicky. Not far from here, actually-- outside a' Chicago. Nice little setup. Kid's in school. Jenny's teachin'. Real happy, looks like.

CROSS

You bastard.

STRAZZI

Yeah, well--

Strazzi bites the tip off the cigar, spits it on the floor.

STRAZZI

We are what we are.

(steel in his voice)

I'm not fuckin' with you anymore. You're startin' to get in my way. Hear this and hear it good. You got until tonight to deliver everything. Kylie, the ticket, that fuckin' church. All of it.

CROSS

And if I don't?

STRAZZI

(points at the photos)

Take a good fuckin' look at 'em, Cross! It'll be the last you'll ever get. 'Cause if I make 'em disappear, nobody--and I mean nobody--is ever gonna find 'em again.

(MORE)

STRAZZI (CONT'D)
 You catchin' my drift here?
 (yells at the driver)
 Stop the fuckin' car!

The limo swerves to the curb, stops abruptly. Mancusi reaches over Cross and opens the door next to him.

STRAZZI
 Get the fuck out. And one more thing--
 you tell anybody anything about this,
 I can't guarantee those friends of
 mine that ran into Stephanie won't
 do somethin' on their own again, you
 hear what I'm sayin'?

111 EXT. STREET - DAY

Cross stumbles from the limo. Mancusi pulls the door closed. The limousine guns it from the curb.

Cross watches it go, then realizes he's still got the photos in his hand. He looks down at them for a long moment, then his free hand covers his eyes and his shoulders begin to shake.

112 INT. FAULKNER HOME - DAY

Cross enters.

CROSS
 Marie?
 (no answer)
 AJ?

SISTER THERESA (O.S.)
 Back here!

Cross walks to the kitchen.

113 INT. FAULKNER HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Kylie and the other children are sitting at the table with Sister Theresa, doing artwork, making kid conversation.

Kylie looks up.

KYLIE
 Look, Father Nick. I put you in my
 picture.

Cross leans over, looks at the picture Kylie has drawn.

INSERT -- THE PICTURE

Stick figures. A small figure in red next to a tall figure in black. Another tall yellow figure stands near a green tree, with a small blue figure nearby.

Kylie's finger points to the red figure.

KYLIE (O.S.)

That's me.

(points to the black
figure)

That's you.

BACK TO SCENE

CROSS

Who are these others?

KYLIE

That's my Mom. And that's my sister.

CROSS

(caught off guard)

You have a sister?

KYLIE

Well--not yet. But I will. Someday.

SISTER THERESA

Father--

Sister Theresa nods to the hallway, stands and moves toward it.

114 INT. FAULKNER HOME - HALLWAY - DAY

Cross joins Sister Theresa.

THERESA

Marie got a call about an hour ago.
She and Anna Juliana have gone to
the hospital.

CROSS

The hospital?

SISTER THERESA

It's Walter, Father.

115 INT. HOSPITAL INTENSIVE CARE ROOM - DAY

Cross enters, winces at what he sees.

Walter Faulkner lies in the bed. Wires snake from his chest,
an IV runs to an arm. What little skin shows beneath the
head bandages is purple.

Marie sits at Walter's side, holding his hand and weeping.
Sister Anna Juliana stands next to Marie, her hand on Marie's
shoulder. Jack Riggs leans against the windowsill.

CROSS
 (to Riggs)
 What happened?

RIGGS
 Two kids found him beneath the Platt
 Bridge about one, one-thirty. Thought
 he was dead.

CROSS
 How bad?

RIGGS
 Somebody beat him 'til they got bored,
 then shot him. Left him for dead.

CROSS
 What do the doctors say?

RIGGS
 Deep coma, but he's got a chance.

Marie looks up at Cross, tears streaking her face.

MARIE
 Why, Father? Why would they do this?
 Why does God let animals like them
 walk the earth?

Marie's head falls back weeping on the bed, Walter's hand
 held tightly to the side of her face.

RIGGS
 (quietly, to Cross)
 Who's "they", Nick?

Cross stares at Walter and Marie, says nothing.

RIGGS
 Nick?

Cross finally looks up at Riggs, slowly shakes his head.
 Then Cross turns and leaves the room.

116 EXT. ST. CAMILLUS - NIGHT

Cross walks toward the church entrance. Something catches
 his eye. He takes a few steps toward the courtyard.

Just visible in the darkness are a bulldozer and a large
 wrecking crane parked on the courtyard grass.

Cross stares at them a moment, then moves to the church doors
 and enters.

117 INT. ST. CAMILLUS CHURCH - NIGHT

Cross sits in a pew, head bowed.

The church door opens. Sister Anna Juliana makes her way up the center aisle, stoops and crosses herself, then slides into the pew with Cross.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
I figured I'd find you here.

CROSS
How's Walter?

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
Same. But he's strong. He's got Marie. They'll pull through it together.

CROSS
(after a moment)
Sometimes I think God is hiding from us, AJ.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
He isn't hiding, Nicholas. But neither is He without expectations. Perhaps He's just waiting.

CROSS
For what?

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
For Man to first show that he's willing to work at saving himself before God will pay attention.

118 INT. ST. CAMILLUS - NARTHEX RAILING - NIGHT

Cross stands before the altar. He removes his jacket, drapes it over the railing, kneels, begins to pray silently.

After a few moments, Cross looks up at the Crucifix.

CROSS
I know I've been weak, and allowed others to use my weakness. I know I've failed You here. But that is my sin, not Anna Juliana's, or Theresa's, Little Michael's, or Kylie's. They shouldn't suffer for it. Please, I beg of You, if AJ is right, then just show me where to stand, give me something to fight with. I'll get your attention.

Cross stares at the Crucifix behind the altar for several moments longer, then drops his head, unfolds his hands. His shoulders slump.

Cross slowly pushes himself up from the railing, reaches down for his jacket but grabs it from the bottom instead of the top. Something falls from the pocket.

Cross looks to the sound, and sees his pair of red dice scittering across the marble tile of the Narthex. They bounce against the railing, tumble to a stop.

Seven.

Cross bends and picks up the dice, then slowly looks to the altar and the Crucifix above it. One corner of his mouth turns up ever so slightly.

119 EXT. STANLEY MARCUS'S HOME - NIGHT

Cross knocks on the door. Impatiently knocks again.

Stanley Marcus opens the door.

MARCUS

Father Nick. What...?

CROSS

I need you to do something for me,
Stan.

Cross hands Marcus his Bible, steps past him into the house.

120 INT. ILLICIT GAMBLING HALL - BAR - NIGHT

Joe Strazzi holds court at one end of the bar, surrounded by a few GOOMBAHS, and several STRIKING YOUNG WOMEN, one of them hanging on his arm.

STRAZZI

So I says to 'im, "You're tapped,
and this ain't a bank. Come back
when you got somethin' to bet with."

GOOMBAH #1

(laughing)

So the guy says to Joey, "Take my
wife as my marker."

YOUNG WOMAN #1

(on Strazzi's arm)

He said what?!

GOOMBAH #1

No shit. "Take my wife as my marker,"
he says. "Give me ten grand against
her."

They all laugh loudly at the absurdity.

YOUNG WOMAN #1

You didn't take him up on it, right?

STRAZZI

I'm a gamblin' man, sweetheart.
This's a gamblin' establishment.

YOUNG WOMAN #1

You gave it to him?

Strazzi points across the gaming floor to the Coat Check room, where a MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN is taking a CUSTOMER's coat and handing him a check stub.

STRAZZI

She's got another coupla years to go
on the marker.

YOUNG WOMAN #2

You won his wife?!

STRAZZI

Never met a bet I didn't think I
could win, baby. Especially from
losers like her old man.

CROSS (O.S.)

I've got a bet for you.

Strazzi and his group turn to see Cross. Strazzi smirks.

STRAZZI

Well, well. You surprise me, Nick.
Frankly, I didn't expect to see you
tonight. Boys, you remember--

CROSS

--You interested in a some action or
not?

STRAZZI

I thought you was over makin' bets.
Besides, whatta you got to lay on
the table I'd be interested in?

CROSS

Three hundred million dollars.

A hush falls over the immediate vicinity. Everyone heard that. And Strazzi sees that they did.

STRAZZI

The ticket.
(off Cross's nod)
You got it with you?

Cross shakes his head.

STRAZZI

That's my ticket, Cross. We talked
about this--

CROSS

It's not yours if you don't sign it.
And if I don't make a call by
midnight, somebody else's signature
will be on it. We playing or not?

Strazzi feels the eyes of the crowd on him. He stares at Cross.

CROSS

Thought you never met a bet you didn't
think you could win, Joe. Especially
from losers like me.

Strazzi leans in close to Cross, whispers in his ear.

STRAZZI

Fuck you. Father.

Strazzi shrugs off the Young Woman on his arm, pushes through the crowd toward the corner of the casino.

121 INT. ILLICIT GAMBLING HALL - CRAPS TABLE - NIGHT

Strazzi moves the Croupier out of the way, takes his stick.

STRAZZI

Table's closed. Everybody back off.

Strazzi pulls all the chips from the felt, leaving the entire table empty.

STRAZZI

(to Cross)
What's the game?

CROSS

Three bets. Three rolls. Straight
craps.

STRAZZI

What're we playin' for?

CROSS

First bet--the quarter million I owe
you.

STRAZZI

(thinks about it)
All right. Good a place as any to
start.

Cross reaches into his pocket, pulls out his red dice, puts them on the felt.

STRAZZI

Uh-uh, Cross. You shoot with my
dice.

CROSS

These are your dice. I lost the
quarter million to you with them.

Cross tosses the dice to Strazzi.

CROSS

Check them if you want.

Strazzi looks at the dice, hands them to his Croupier.

STRAZZI

(to Croupier)

They legit?

The Croupier looks them over carefully, hands them back to Strazzi, nods.

Strazzi tosses the dice on the felt in front of Cross.

STRAZZI

Okay, Nicky. I'll wager a quarter
mill to win three hundred.

(smiles confidently)

Roll away, loser.

Cross stands at the end of the craps table, looks down it's length. He rests his hands on the mahogany rail, feels the polish on the wood.

As Cross reaches down for the dice, his hand stops midway, his fingers nervously rubbing against the palm of his hand. He withdraws his hand to the railing.

Strazzi smirks, taps a Goombah near him.

STRAZZI

(to Cross)

Little hard climbin' back in the
saddle, eh?

Several Goombahs around Strazzi laugh with him.

Cross stares down at the dice. Then he reaches out, takes them, quickly rubs them on the felt, lets them fly.

The dice tumble through the air the length of the table, bounce once, hit the back rail, and roll to a stop.

Seven.

A whoop goes up from the crowd. Cross leans on the railing, looks at Strazzi, who stares at the dice, then looks at Cross.

STRAZZI

Okay, Nicky. Okay. Lucky tumble,
that's all. I'll get it back. What's
next?

CROSS

Kylie.

STRAZZI

What?! I ain't puttin' up my daughter
on a bet!

CROSS

Why not, Joe?

Cross nods toward the Woman in the coat room.

CROSS

You were just bragging about betting
with her. What's the difference?
You win, Kylie stays with you. You
lose, you stay out of her life.

Strazzi squirms a little, notices all the eyes in the room
on him, especially those of the Goombah who was telling the
story with him earlier. He realizes he's been cornered.

STRAZZI

What the hell. But you're puttin'
up both the ticket and the quarter
mill you just won. Otherwise--

CROSS

--Fine.

Cross reaches down, grabs the two red dice, rubs them on the
felt, throws them.

The dice hit the back rail and tumble halfway back the length
of the table before stopping.

Seven.

The crowd roars. Strazzi stares at the dice in disbelief,
then looks angrily to Cross, who stands coolly at the end of
the table, staring directly back at him.

CROSS

St. Camillus. And not just the
church. The whole block. You lose,
you find another place for your
operation.

Dead silence in the room. All eyes are on Strazzi, and he
feels each and every one of them. Beads of sweat have formed
on his forehead. He stares long and hard at Cross.

STRAZZI

All I got against all you got.

CROSS

Right.

STRAZZI

There ain't no way you're rollin'
three sevens in a row, Cross. Never
seen a loser like you get that lucky.

(beat)

Roll the fuckin' dice.

Cross reaches down for his dice, but the croupier's stick blocks him.

STRAZZI

But you're usin' my dice on this
one.

Strazzi pulls a pair of dice from the box at the Croupier's area. He tosses them on the table.

All eyes in the room shift to Cross. He stares at the new dice, looks up at Strazzi. He hesitates.

STRAZZI

What's the matter, Nick? Feelin'
cold all of a sudden?

Cross stares again at Strazzi. Then he reaches down, takes the dice, rolls them in his hand, feeling their weight. Then he rubs them once on the felt, tosses them.

The dice fly over the table, bounce, roll into the corner, and stop.

Ten.

A hush moves through the crowd. A smile explodes on Strazzi's face as he looks to Cross, who appears shaken.

STRAZZI

Ten. Toughest odds on the table,
Nicky.

(shoves the dice back)

Roll.

Cross slowly takes the dice, holds them a moment, then rubs them on the felt and throws.

It's a low throw. The dice bounce the length of the table, hit the rail and come back. One die turns up a five. The other rolls a bit further, a two showing up, but at the last moment, it rolls over. One.

The crowd exhales in relief. Strazzi smiles.

STRAZZI

Six ain't a ten. Last legs, Nicky.
This next one ain't gonna roll over.
A seven's comin'. I can feel it,
can't you? That loser shiver movin'
up your spine?

Cross stands stock still a moment, then rubs his hands together as he looks upward.

STRAZZI

(laughs)

Prayin' ain't gonna help you on this one, Nick. God don't listen to gamblers.

Cross's eyes fall back onto Strazzi.

CROSS

You're feeling so good, Joe, why don't we make it a bit more interesting? The ticket, the quarter million, Kylie, St. Camillus...and throw in whatever Walter Faulkner owes you.

STRAZZI

Faulkner? Who's that?

Cross just stares at Strazzi. Each second that passes seems to weigh on Strazzi exponentially. Cross stands too coolly for him.

STRAZZI

(agitated)

All right, all right. Faulkner too.

(pushes the dice to
Cross)

The point is ten. Not that it's gonna matter.

Dead silence in the room. No one dares even breathe.

Cross leans down and touches the dice. He holds them a moment, then rubs them on the felt and lets them go.

The dice fly in slow motion above the table. All eyes in the room seem tied to them with invisible strings. The numbers roll as they arc--two's, six's, four's, one's, threes, five's.

The dice hit the felt and bounce, arc another foot and bounce again. They hit the back rail, and roll apart, coming back up the table. One die stops--a five up.

The other die continues it's agonizing tumble. A two rolls into sight, the die hangs on it's edge--then tumbles one more turn--

A five! Ten the hard way sits directly in front of Strazzi.

The crowd explodes. Chaotic motion around all four sides of the table accentuate two statuesque figures, both of whom stare at the two fives sitting on the felt.

Cross moves first. He looks up at the ceiling.

CROSS
(whispered, to himself)
Guess I got your attention.

Cross drops his eyes, looks at Strazzi. Their eyes lock.
Their jaws set.

CROSS
We square?

A long beat, then...

STRAZZI
(a steely glare)
Yeah. We're square.

Cross turns from the table.

STRAZZI
Hey, Nicky.
(Cross looks back)
I wouldn't be comin' back here if I
were you.

Cross shakes his head.

The two men turn from one another, Strazzi to the bar, Cross
to the door.

Mancusi opens the door for Cross.

MANCUSI
Nice rollin', Nick. See ya next
time.

CROSS
I don't think so, Frankie.

122 INT. RECTORY OFFICE - DAY

Cross stands at the window, watching Kylie and the children
playing on the courtyard with Sister Theresa and Little
Michael.

SUPER -- FOUR WEEKS LATER

MARCUS (O.S.)
I set up the one trust in Kylie's
name, the other in the school's
Foundation name, like you wanted.

Cross turns, moves to the desk, looks at the papers Marcus
hands him.

CROSS
Good. Thanks.

MARCUS

Never seen a kid that poised, Nick.
Told the judge exactly what she wanted
to do. Convinced him completely.
She'll make a great lawyer someday.

Cross laughs, walks around the desk, joins Marcus in front
of a large easel with an architect's rendering of a complex
of buildings covering the block next to St. Camillus.

Across the top of the easel reads "The Stephanie M. Hess
Home and School at St. Camillus."

CROSS

Yeah, she was very clear on this.
Said it was her way of making magic.

MARCUS

Magic?

CROSS

(smiling to himself)
Yeah.

Cross takes Marcus's arm, leads him out the door.

123 EXT. COLUMNED WALKWAY - DAY

Cross and Marcus walk along the courtyard toward the front
of the church.

MARCUS

The bank will serve as investment
advisors for both trusts. Neither
Kylie nor the school will ever have
to worry about anything.

CROSS

Child Welfare accept the Trustee and
Guardianship arrangement for Kylie?

MARCUS

Temporarily.

Marcus hands Cross two thick files of papers.

MARCUS

These are marked where they need to
be signed. And they need to be back
at Child Welfare by the end of the
week.

(Cross nods)

You're sure she's going to go for
it?

CROSS

I have no idea. We'll find out
tomorrow.

Marcus stops, shakes Cross's hand.

MARCUS

Well, good luck. Call me when you get back.

CROSS

Thank you, Stan. For everything.

MARCUS

How could I say no to my priest?

They smile at each other, Marcus moves off toward his car in the lot.

Cross moves back toward the courtyard.

124 EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

Cross walks to the children and Sister Theresa.

CROSS

Okay, Kylie. Time for us to get ready to go.

Kylie runs over to Cross and Theresa. Theresa picks her up and hugs her tightly.

THERESA

Oh, I'm going to miss you, Kylie. You come back and visit, you hear?

KYLIE

I will, Sister T.

Kylie hops down, takes Cross's hand.

CROSS

You ready?

Kylie nods her head vigorously.

CROSS

Okay. Let's go.

They move off toward the Rectory.

125 INT. RECTORY FOYER - DAY

Sister Anna Juliana wrestles two suitcases down the stairs, sets them by the door.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

Father Nicholas! You're going to be late!

(to herself)

That man will be late to his own funeral.

A knock on the door interrupts her huff. She opens the door. Jack Riggs smiles at her.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
Hello, Lieutenant.

RIGGS
Sister. Father Nick around?

SISTER ANNA JULIANA
You're a detective. Maybe you can find him.
(walks down the hall)
Father Nick! For the Lord's sake!

Riggs stands in the doorway for a moment or two before Cross comes down the stairs, a jacket over his arm.

CROSS
Jack.

RIGGS
Nick. Got a minute?

CROSS
Just about that. Walk me out.

126 EXT. COLUMNED WALKWAY - DAY

Cross and Riggs walk toward the front of the church.

RIGGS
Ran into an acquaintance of yours last night.

CROSS
Oh?

RIGGS
Yeah. One John Joseph Strazzi.

CROSS
Really? Where?

RIGGS
We found him in a building over on Fairmount in the warehouse district. Quite a place he had over there. Ever been there?

CROSS
(smiles)
What took you over that way?

RIGGS
Walter Faulkner came out of his coma couple days ago.

CROSS

Yes. I was over to see him. We were very happy he pulled through.

RIGGS

Uh-huh. Turns out he remembered quite a bit about the night he was assaulted. Fingered Strazzi and a guy named Mancusi, couple others. Told us about the warehouse.

Cross and Riggs toss the bags in the trunk of Cross's car.

RIGGS

Strazzi bent over backwards tryin' to make a deal. He'll do some time. Had a lot to say about some guys up in the Archdiocese, though. Regali, Cardinale. Know 'em?

(Cross smiles)

Yeah, figured you did. Well, just thought you should know we're gonna be talkin' to 'em. Some financial improprieties they're gonna have to try to explain. Might need you to stop by.

Cross closes the trunk.

CROSS

Sure. I'll be out of town for a couple of days.

RIGGS

No problem.

Kylie and Sister Anna Juliana come around the corner from the columned walkway. Kylie runs to Cross.

KYLIE

Come on, Father Nick! Let's go!

CROSS

(to Riggs)

See you when I get back.

Cross puts Kylie in the back seat of the car, buckles her in.

Sister Anna Juliana hands Cross two airline tickets.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

The Lord keep you both safe.

Cross smiles, gives her a hug, climbs in the car, backs out.

Kylie waves from the window as the car pulls up the street.

127 INT. AIRPLANE - IN FLIGHT - DAY

Cross puts down a magazine, looks up as a STEWARDESS comes by. She smiles down at Kylie, curled up asleep in the seat next to Cross, her head on a pillow in his lap.

128 EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE - DAY

Cross pulls the rental car into the driveway. He and Kylie get out, move up the walkway to the front porch.

129 EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Cross stands with Kylie's hand in his. He rings the doorbell.

A moment later, the door opens. JENNY CROSS stands stock still a few seconds, then smiles.

JENNY

Hello, Nick.

CROSS

(fighting back emotion)

Jenny.

Jenny bends down, smiles at Kylie.

JENNY

And you must be Kylie.

KYLIE

Yes, Ma'am.

(extends her hand)

Kylie Hess.

JENNY

(to Cross)

Why don't we go out back. I have some lemonade, and Sophie can't wait to show Kylie her swingset.

Cross nods. They move into the house.

130 EXT. BACK DECK - DAY

Jenny, Cross, and Kylie come out from the house.

The moment she sees him, SOPHIE is running.

SOPHIE

Daddy! Daddy!

Sophie leaps into Cross's arms, her arms wrapped around his neck tight enough to choke him.

CROSS

Hey, Smidgeon! How's my girl?

Cross drops to his knees, his face buried into Sophie's neck, hiding the tear tracing down his cheek.

131 EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

Kylie and Sophie swing and laugh together on the swingset.

In the background, sitting at a picnic table under a tree, Cross and Jenny sit leaning into one another, talking, a laugh now and again. The files of papers sit between them on the table.

Jenny reaches out and takes Cross's hand a moment, then smiles and nods. She begins to sign the papers in the files.

132 EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Cross sits with Kylie on the porch steps. Jenny and Sophie stand nearby.

KYLIE

You'll come back and visit me, right?

CROSS

(glancing at Jenny)

I'll be back a lot.

(Jenny smiles)

And maybe you and Sophie can come see me when the new school opens at St. Camillus. Would you like that?

Kylie nods, gives Cross a hug.

CROSS

Oh--I almost forgot.

(points to his pocket)

You left a little magic in here.

KYLIE

I did?

CROSS

Uh-huh.

Kylie reaches up and dips into Cross's jacket breast pocket. She pulls out a folded piece of paper.

Kylie opens the paper. It's her drawing of stick figures.

KYLIE

It's my picture. This isn't magic.

CROSS

You sure about that?

Cross points to the yellow and blue stick figures that Kylie had drawn and called her "Mom" and her "Sister". Then he points to Jenny and Sophie.

Kylie looks from the page to Jenny and Sophie, then up to Cross. A big smile appears on her face.

KYLIE

I did magic!

CROSS

(smiles at her)

More than you know, Kylie. More than you know.

133 INT. RECTORY HALLWAY - DAY

Cross enters, drops his suitcase by the door.

CROSS

AJ?

SISTER ANNA JULIANA (O.S.)

In the kitchen, Father!

134 INT. RECTORY KITCHEN - DAY

Sister Anna Juliana sets a plate of bacon and eggs on the table, pours a cup of coffee.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

I was about to give up on you.

CROSS

Lot of traffic from the airport.
Sorry.

Cross sits, takes a sip of coffee, puts a napkin in his lap. He hands a piece of bacon to Judas, who sits patiently by the table, tail wagging.

Sister Anna Juliana frowns at this, but says nothing. She sits across from Cross, plops the schedule book on the table.

SISTER ANNA JULIANA

You ready?

CROSS

(smiling)

Completely. How are we going to get God's attention today, AJ?

FADE OUT:

THE END