

WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Written by

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3rd Draft

FADE IN:

EXT. CORPORATE BUILDING - DAY

Tall skyline. A city hum runs through the streets. Busy figures glide past the windows of buildings.

A man looks at his reflection in one such window. This is BYRON HORN, 40s. Dry cleaned suit, sleepless eyes and a look of wavering assurance. A king of his world, dethroned.

He checks his watch. It's a statement watch, an expression of class. It's nearly 9 A.M.

He takes his eyes off the window and marches towards a corporate building. He stops in his tracks when he sees three men in suits at the entrance. They lay eyes on him and whisper among themselves.

Behind Byron, a woman weighs him up. This is RACHEL, 30s, brows still red from their morning plucking.

RACHEL

A ghost from the past. Who'd have thought?

Byron's eye line is unfazed. This visibly dents Rachel's ego.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Byron.

BYRON

What do you want?

RACHEL

How about those gentlemanly manners of yours.

BYRON

All the gentleman are dead.

RACHEL

How about a date then? To make up for my disappointment.

BYRON

Fool yourself once-

RACHEL

Come on, I won't tell.

Byron scoffs, he knows better.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

You know you're actually quite a lot of fun when I get you out of that suit.

BYRON

Maybe that's why I'm wearing it now.

RACHEL

Aw, wife got you by the balls?

Silence. Rachel scrutinizes his face. She turns dramatic-

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Oo, pray tell-

BYRON

A second ago you were all for not telling.

RACHEL

You know me, darling, shift like the tides.

BYRON

Well, I guess people don't always turn out like you expect.

RACHEL

At least she got interesting.

BYRON

I gotta go.

He looks towards the building, the three men still watching and gossiping. He heads towards it.

RACHEL

Maybe I'll see you out. Suit off, preferably.

BYRON

Not likely.

INT. CORPORATE BUILDING - DAY

Byron holds a cardboard box as he travels down in an elevator. Behind him, smirking men eyeball Byron.

INT. FANCY APARTMENT - DAY

Byron opens the door to his apartment. Scarcely decorated.

He enters, sets the cardboard box aside.

He shuffles into the bedroom. Double bed, one side untouched. Suitcase open on the floor. He opens a bedside cabinet and pulls out a photograph.

It's of Byron and a young woman. A happy couple.

INT. FANCY APARTMENT - DAY

The suitcase is zipped up. Packing light.

A wad of legal documents are flicked through and signed.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Byron squeezes through the aisle of an economy class train. Nose upturned.

There's an empty table. Four seats. Byron puts his suitcase across two. Lounges into a seat opposite and tucks in a briefcase in the seat next to him.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

The signal bars on his phone deplete.

Byron takes a hip flask out of his pocket and glugs.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

The station is a gust of wind away from being rubble. Rolling hills in the background.

Byron grumbles on the platform with his luggage. Tries to make a call, no luck.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Byron holds out a hand for taxis.

INT. TAXI - DAY

Byron looks out the window. A lost stare. Radio plays in background-

RADIO (O.S.)

The body of Tracey Holmes was found earlier today. Her family had reported her missing two weeks ago-

The Taxi Driver turns it off.

TAXI DRIVER

News reporters, ey. Never hear a good word. It's just bad news, bad news or even worse news.

Byron mumbles, already out the other ear. The Taxi Driver leans back and looks at Byron as if their conversation just got really interesting.

TAXI DRIVER (CONT'D)

I'd rather just be ignorant, you know?

CRASH.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Car at a standstill, blood on the bonnet. A dead stag lies flat out in front of the car, its antler piercing the windshield.

The Taxi Driver's in a panic. Dials furiously on his phone.

Byron grabs his stuff out the boot.

TAXI DRIVER

Hey man, can you help?

BYRON

I'll walk the rest.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Byron drags his suitcase along a road in the hills. A strong wind pulls him down the hill.

In the distance, a small town in the middle of a valley.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Byron takes in the country village. Smiling faces. An idyll.

The village is surrounded by tall hills. On one hill nearby, a cluster of large houses. Byron looks at them in longing.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

A map on a phone.

PHONE VOICE

In fifty yards, you have arrived at
your location.

Byron looks up from his phone. His eyes look at a house on the corner of a street. The front of it is shielded by high hedges.

He walks towards the house, through a tunnel, old disused train tracks above. Out of the tunnel, he trudges past a building. Tucked away from the street, surrounded by barbed wire gates.

Byron heads towards the gates and inspects the strange building. There is a sign outside, stained by mould and moss.

A suited figure creeps behind Byron.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - DAY

Byron is showed in by an estate agent. The house is quaint, a far cry from the apartment he came from.

The estate agent shows him each room, already fit with old fashioned furnishings. Byron looks disinterested.

The estate agent hands him a set of keys with a big smile.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - LATER

Suitcase unzipped. An expensive looking bottle of whiskey is taken out.

Byron cracks it open, down the hatch. He crashes into a sofa.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - LATER

Byron spins a ring on the dining table. Whiskey bottle is half empty. The rings carousels and falls.

Byron's eyes fixate on the photograph of the happy couple, set up on the table.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - LATER

Byron stares at himself in the bathroom mirror. He's out of it. He can't look anymore. Eyes dart down. His hand. Ringless.

Fist clenches. He smashes the mirror with his fist.

EXT. BYRON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Crescent moon.

Byron smokes a cigarette, singed to the butt. His hand crusty and scarlet. The end of the cigarette burns his mouth. He shakes it out of his hand.

BYRON

Shit.

He reaches down for the bottle of whiskey. He knocks it onto the floor.

BYRON (CONT'D)

Shit!

He voices consumes the silence. He picks up the bottle and lets the last few drops trickle into his gaping mouth.

The quiet is punctured by the rumble of a car engine. The car settles near his house, the lights turn off.

Another rumble. And another. More and more cars come to a stop near his house.

There is the scraping of a metal gate close by. The blow of a quiet whistle.

Byron tries to pick himself up and towards the gate in his front garden.

Hooded figures glide between the gap in his hedges.

Byron opens his gate and stumbles into the road.

The hooded figures gather through the barbed wire gates and into the strange building.

Byron peers at them from afar but slips. His bottle smashes onto the pavement and him with it.

A couple hooded figures swing round and close in on Byron.
 But he's already blacking out-
 Vision fading-
 Snippets of white masks-
 Darkness.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

The ring of the doorbell echoes throughout the house.
 Byron's eyes struggle to open. He is sprawled on his sofa.
 The door bell keeps ringing.

Byron opens to door to a beaming woman, MRS MOORS, 50s. She holds out an open white box with a decadent cake inside, the icing reading 'WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBOURHOOD'.

MRS MOORS
 Welcome to the neighbourhood!

Byron just looks at her, half-dead.

In her other hand, she holds the same expensive whisky that he was drinking last night. She holds it up to his eyes.

MRS MOORS (CONT'D)
 On behalf of the whole village.

He takes the whisky.

BYRON
 How did you afford this?

MRS MOORS
 Don't you worry about that, dear.

Byron looks at the bottle suspiciously.

MRS MOORS (CONT'D)
 Now, on behalf of the village, I would like to invite you to a little welcoming party.

BYRON
 I'm not one for parties.

MRS MOORS
 Oh, I very much doubt that.

She takes out an invitation, Byron doesn't take it. She leaves it on top of the cake.

MRS MOORS (CONT'D)

Well - welcome to the
neighbourhood!

With a big smile, Mrs Moors trots out of the garden.

Byron massages his head, puts down the whisky and-

EXT. BYRON'S STREET - CONTINUOUS

Follows her onto the street.

Nowhere to be seen.

His eyes line up to the strange building. He heads towards it, still in his clothes from the night before.

He scouts the building. One set of doors. No windows. A chimney. A big padlock on the gate, which is probably climbable if you don't mind ripping your pants.

His phone rings. He picks it up.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Byron?

BYRON

Who is this?

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Your new boss. You're late.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

An office that looks more like a utility room. Damp and lit by industrial lights with no cover.

Byron's boss, TONY, 50s, devours a sandwich in a high-vis. Tin foil and a Tupperware box sit atop forgotten paperwork.

Byron sits in a suit. Square peg, round hole.

A clock above them says its 10:30 AM.

TONY

Honestly, fuck knows what you did
to end up here, one day I'd like to
find out.

He talks with his mouth open. Byron can't take his eyes off him chewing - it's disgusting.

TONY (CONT'D)

But for now you're on my ship and it's damned tight which means you turn up on time or you're thrown overboard. Capeesh?

BYRON1

Look, about last night, I-

Tony scrunches up his tin foil as loud as possible. Message received.

TONY

Capeesh?

BYRON

Aye, captain.

TONY

Now get that suit off or you won't last one minute.

Tony throws Byron a high-vis.

INT. FACTORY - DAY

A worker, DAVID, 20s, escorts Byron through the lofty factory towards a conveyor belt. Byron has his high-vis on and his shirt sleeves rolled up.

Other workers sit along the conveyor belt, going about their business on auto-pilot. They come to an empty workbench along the conveyor belt.

DAVID

You sit 'ere, right. Insulation comes along the conveyor belt.

He points to one end of the conveyor belt.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Gets cut with 'ot wires down there, don't mess with them or you'll lose your finger.

He holds up his hand with four and a half fingers. He demonstrates the rest of the process as he talks.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Once it all comes down your way,
grab the excess off the belt and
throw it in the 'ogger.

He throws some excess insulation into a vacuum-style chute
behind the work benches.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Then you grab six bits o' cut
insulation, stick it on yer work
bench, put the plastic wrapping on
it then grab yer tape gun n wrap em
together.

He picks up his now wrapped up insulation. Heads away from
the workbench towards a slacker truck.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Then pop it on 'ere, label always
on the outside and make 'em four
high. Then you go again, got it?

David shows Byron back to his work bench.

BYRON

This is slave labour.

Another worker along the conveyor belt, ROB, 40s, can't help
but chime in-

ROB

This ain't slave labour, this is a
real job. So stop worrying about
ruining your manicure and work.

BYRON

How much you getting paid for this
'real job' then?

ROB

Same as you, dip shit.

BYRON

Yeah, not for long.

ROB

I been here twenty years, pal. You
ain't getting a pay rise before me.

BYRON

Twenty years, not one pay rise.
Ouch.

ROB

Tony said you were a lawyer or
summit, right? A real Sol Mudman.
Well you ain't anymore. People
here, people like you now, they
stay here. This is as good as
you're gettin, kid.

The look on Byron's face says it all - *fat chance*.

DAVID

(quiet)
Sol Mudman?

INT. CARE HOME - WINNIE'S ROOM - DAY

Byron perches on a rocking chair in a modest room with old
furnishings.

An older lady hands him a mug. This is Byron's mother, WINNIE
HORN, 80s. She eases onto her bed. There's a level of
separate between them, of years lost.

WINNIE

How's the new job?

BYRON

Good.

WINNIE

You always were the worst liar.

BYRON

I've got better.

WINNIE

Not around me, you haven't.

Byron smiles, concedes.

BYRON

It's awful.

WINNIE

It's normal.

BYRON

Normal is awful. I'm better than
normal.

A moment. Winnie scrutinizes him, wants to dig deeper.

WINNIE

Why have you come back, darling?

BYRON

I guess I did some thinking. I know I've not been the most attentive son.

WINNIE

Pfft, I don't need looking after.

BYRON

Why don't you just come and live with me? This place's a dump.

WINNIE

You'd be sick of me within a day.

BYRON

I wouldn't.

WINNIE

You would and you know it. Besides, us ladies here look after each other, I'm okay.

BYRON

It's like a prison here.

WINNIE

Your mind is the only prison you need be afraid of.

Byron is about to jump to his defense, but there's a knock at the door.

WINNIE (CONT'D)

Come in.

Another elderly lady walks in, BEE HIVE, 80s.

BEE

Wondered if you were ready for games, Winnie? Mrs Hunter smuggled us in some sherry.

Bee notices Byron.

BEE (CONT'D)

Oh hello, dear, you must be Byron.

BYRON

Lovely to meet you.

WINNIE

I'll be down in a minute, Bee.

Bee nods and shuffles out of the room.

WINNIE (CONT'D)

Now, you should take tips from your mother and go out for a drink.

BYRON

I can't. I have to check on something tonight.

WINNIE

And you call me imprisoned. Go out. And when you're drunk, maybe you can finally tell me what happened with you and Claire.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Byron sits alone at the bar of a quiet establishment. He downs his remaining whiskey.

He looks around the bar. Groups of people chatting.

Someone from behind the bar fills up his glass.

Byron turns to see a well-dressed man, MR SUTCLIFFE, 40s. Plastic face that hides his emotions, slit of a grin.

MR SUTCLIFFE

On the house for new residents.

BYRON

How do you know I'm new?

MR SUTCLIFFE

I've got a knack for remembering faces. Enjoy your drink, sir.

Byron raises his glass half-heartedly.

A woman at the bar eyes Byron up. This is NELLY BLYTH, 30s, the face of someone who doesn't have the time to look after herself, early signs of grey.

Upon inspecting Byron she sees his creased shirt, expensive watch, scabbing cuts on his hand. She takes a deep breath before speaking-

NELLY

That's one classy watch for someone who doesn't live on the hill.

BYRON

(unimpressed)

You're one of them, are you?

NELLY

On the hill? God no. None of them would drink here.

BYRON

No, I - what's wrong with here?

NELLY

It's not the hill.

A moment. Byron proving a tough nut to crack.

NELLY (CONT'D)

You need to disinfect that hand. I'm a nurse.

BYRON

I can look after it myself.

NELLY

I could look after it better. Besides, not everyone can look after themselves. That's why I do what I do.

BYRON

That's no way to live.

NELLY

So since you have a fancy watch you can lecture people on how to live?

BYRON

Money looks after people as well as any nurse.

NELLY

And yet the people who need looking after the most are the ones without money.

BYRON

So the best you can do is tell them everything's going to be okay, even though it's not. It's out of your hands. You're powerless.

NELLY

Still stronger than a man that
can't face someone he's talking to.

Byron still doesn't look at her. She's triggered.

NELLY (CONT'D)

You are horrifically ignorant.

BYRON

The best way to be.

NELLY

The family who were reassured their
little girl was going to be okay
might disagree. In fact, they
disagreed so much, that they blamed
me for their daughter's death.

Byron downs his drink.

BYRON

Look, I'm sorry. All I was saying
is that you should live your life a
little. Especially when you have to
go through that.

NELLY

And all I'm saying is that you're
in the exact same place as me.

BYRON

That I can't argue with.

Byron looks around again. Merry groups all around them. Byron
and Nelly are the only two people alone.

Mr Sutcliffe is watching them from the end of the bar.

Byron holds out his hand to Nelly.

BYRON (CONT'D)

Shall we start fresh? I'm Byron.

She places her empty glass in his hand.

NELLY

Nelly.

A glimmer of recollection from Byron.

BYRON

Nelly? Wait, you're not Jess
Blyth's little sister?

NELLY
Took you long enough.

BYRON
Well, let's hope the service is
quicker than me.

He motions towards a member of the bar staff. The barman shuffles towards Byron but Mr Sutcliffe slides in front of him and takes the glasses off Byron.

BYRON (CONT'D)
(to Mr Sutcliffe)
Same again for me and for the lady,
let's go with a martini.

NELLY
Actually, I'll have a larger.
Thanks.

MR SUTCLIFFE
I'd recommend our wine. Mother
Nature's miracle.

NELLY
Lager. Thanks.

Mr Sutcliffe concedes, turns around to make the drinks.

BYRON
So how is Jess?

Nelly waits to answer. Mr Sutcliffe hands them their drinks. Byron gives thanks and throws some money on the bar.

Nelly motions to a table.

NELLY
Shall we?

They get up and sit down at the table.

BYRON
So? How is she?

NELLY
She, um - look, I know you two were
like childhood sweethearts or
whatever, so this might be a little
heard to hear but Jess has been
missing.

Byron's face is shock-riddled, twinged with a sadness that for the first time hasn't been reserved for himself.

NELLY (CONT'D)

About a year now. She just went to the doctors one day and never came back. And yeah, we really have no clue. No one does. Kind of accepted the worst now, you know.

BYRON

I'm so sorry.

NELLY

So, yeah. Even if you worded it like a dick, I agree with you, I do need to live my life a bit.

BYRON

Well in the city, most good things start with a drink.

He raises his glass.

BYRON (CONT'D)

To Jess.

NELLY

To Jess.

They both guzzle their drinks. Byron's impressed.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

MONTAGE:

Drinks downed... Money flashed... Mr Sutcliffe watches on...

Laughs exchanged... drinks poured... vision blurred...

Numbers on napkins... Stories told... liquid dropped...

Byron coughs and splutters... Mr Sutcliffe pours some more...

Byron slips... the door to the bar swings open...

INT. FANCY APARTMENT - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Muffled arguing.

A glass is smashed. The fragments of glass sparkle like star dust.

A woman, early 40s, sobs angrily. This is CLAIRE, Byron's ex-wife, the woman from Byron's photograph.

Her face distorts, turns monstrous, demon-like.

INT. CORPORATE BUILDING - DAY - FLASHBACK

A dark void is littered with desks, chairs, telephones and computers. Everything unoccupied, the darkness infinite.

Mischievous laughter.

A pale shadow skips through the darkness towards a door.

CLOSE IN on the door. A plaque on the door reads 'BYRON HORN'.

The door slams shut. The plaque melts away.

Mischievous laughter. Darkness.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The ring of an alarm reverberates throughout the house.

Sunlight streams through the living room blinds. Bars of light stretch across Byron's face.

He's asleep. Flat out on the itchy looking sofa in the clothes he wore last night.

The light creeps over his eyes. He stirs awake with a groan.

His body rolls onto the floor with a thud, barely missing the coffee table in the middle of the room.

His hand holds his head. The alarm can still be heard.

He checks his wrist. His watch isn't there. There's red ink smudged onto the side of his hand.

He checks the coffee table. No watch. But there's a note. A phone number, signed 'NELLY'. Written in black ink.

He scrambles to his feet and into-

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

He goes to the sink, turns on the tap and shoves his head underneath it.

He rubs the water into his face. Drops of red ink trickle down the drain of the sink.

He turns the tap off.

The infernal noise of the alarm.

A clock behind Byron reads 10.00 A.M.

His phone buzzes in his pocket. 'TONY: 10 MISSED CALLS'.

INT. CAR - DAY

Byron sits in the back of a taxi, swig from his hip flask, he makes a call. Someone picks up.

BYRON
Hi, Nelly, listen-

NELLY (O.S.)
You're alive.

BYRON
Did I give you my number?

NELLY (O.S.)
No, hence why you're the one
calling me.

BYRON
So I didn't write anything down?

NELLY (O.S.)
Nope.

BYRON
Okay, so what actually happened
last night?

NELLY (O.S.)
You couldn't hack it, that's what.
Thought I was going to have to take
you to hospital.

BYRON
But you took me home instead?

NELLY (O.S.)
No, your friend did. You don't
remember anything?

INT. FACTORY - DAY

Byron rushes through the shutter door of the factory past workers on forklifts and towards the conveyor belt where David, Rob and others sit working.

BYRON
Did anyone see me last night?

ROB
Lemme guess, doing lines off
hookers' arses?

BYRON
No, I was at a bar in the village.

ROB
Lines at the bar then.

BYRON
Shut up and take this seriously.

A few of the workers snicker.

ROB
Take your job seriously.

BYRON
A bar in the village. Did anyone
see me?

David looks taken aback by how flustered Byron is.

DAVID
I didn't go out last night.

BYRON
One person answering a simple
fucking question, thank you.

ROB
Why would any of us go to the
village anyway?

BYRON
What do you mean?

ROB
That place is a black hole.

BYRON
Why?

At one end of the production line there are a set of stairs leading up to Tony's office. He watches from the stairs.

TONY
Byron. My office.

Byron skulks away. Rob imitates swishing a magic wand.

INT. FACTORY - DAY

Tony sticks a nicotine patch onto his forearm. Byron sits across from him looking indifferent.

TONY
Not making many friends here, are you?

BYRON
Tony, you don't get it, last night-

TONY
Why are you here?

BYRON
To work.

TONY
Yeah, but why here?

BYRON
There was no jobs going in the village.

TONY
And why the fuck do you want to be in Sleepy Hollow?

BYRON
What's wrong with the village? I grew up here. My mum's here.

TONY
(beat)
Why are you really here?

BYRON
What is this, therapy?

TONY
If you want, yeah, it can be. But you have to work hard and turn up on time.

BYRON
It's degrading.

TONY
For Atticus Finch, maybe yeah. But you knew that and you applied anyway. So I'll ask you one more time, why are you really here?

BYRON
I don't know, a fresh start.

TONY
Yeah well, round here, you've gotta earn that, okay? Now, I can help you but this is your last chance. Turn up on time tomorrow or I'm afraid you're out.

Byron takes it on the chin.

BYRON
Bad timing, I know - but I was thinking about a pay raise.

TONY
Absolutely fucking not.

Fair enough. Byron heads for the door.

TONY (CONT'D)
(to himself, pleased as punch)
Saul Goodman!

Byron looks back - *what the?*

EXT. BYRON'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Byron trudges to his front door. He clocks a letter stuck to the front door. He rips it off.

It's an invitation. The same invitation given to him by Mrs. Moors. Decorated with moon-like emblems.

A party. Tonight. The address reads 'The Hill'.

EXT. BYRON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Byron leaves his front door, looking sharp in a suit.

Nelly stands awkwardly in his garden, soothing the goose bumps on her arms. She wears a dress but nothing gaudy or designer, ill-fit for the occasion.

NELLY

You going to hospitalize yourself again, tonight?

BYRON

No, not somewhere like this.

NELLY

I feel underdressed.

BYRON

You look fine. Thanks for coming, by the way, events like these you come with a date or you leave a bum.

Charming.

EXT. THE HILL - NIGHT

An upper-middle class haven. Three story detached houses with a view of the village below and the valley around them.

Byron takes in the view as he escorts Nelly towards the biggest house of them all. He smiles - *this is more like it.*

They head to the front door of the big house and ring the bell.

A woman, 50s, opens the door with a welcoming smile. This is MRS CATHERINE HUNTER, she appears to be the lady that every woman in a mid-life crisis dreams of becoming.

MRS HUNTER

Byron Horn. King of the hill.

She takes Byron by the hand and guides him into her home -

INT. MRS HUNTERS' HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

A scattered crowd of well-dressed men and women turn and smile at Byron. Mrs Hunter then does the same with Nelly.

The house dwarves Byron's. Decor clings to an old-fashioned grandiosity.

MRS HUNTER
 (to Nelly)
 And who is this dashing surprise,
 may I ask?

Nelly chuckles nervously.

NELLY
 Nelly.

Mrs Hunter's eyes pierce for more.

NELLY (CONT'D)
 Nelly Rose.

MRS HUNTER
 A name befitting of your beauty.
 You must tell me where you got that
 dress when you get the time.

Mrs Hunter stands besides Byron and Nelly and addresses her guests.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
 Everyone, this is Byron, the man we
 have been so eager to meet. And
 this, is his stunning partner,
 Nelly.

BYRON
 Oh no-

NELLY
 Erm, we're not-

Mrs Hunter takes their hands and introduces them to the other guests.

MRS HUNTER
 This is Doctor Shipman, biggest
 brain in the village.

DOCTOR SHIPMAN, 50s, quirky tie, immaculate teeth - shakes Byron's hand. Extends the courtesy to Nelly, her hand wavers. She can't take her eyes off Shipman. His smile, his grandad-like gentility.

There's eyes on her now. She shakes Shipman's hand. She clocks something on his hand - a carved wooden ring.

DOCTOR SHIPMAN
 Drink your fill tonight, my
 remedies are magic.

Next is Mrs Moors.

MRS HUNTER

Mrs Moors, I believe you have met already, Byron. Headmistress of our esteemed school.

MRS MOORS

So glad you accepted my invitation.

Mr Sutcliffe steps up next, laughing.

MRS HUNTER

Mr Sutcliffe, he has quite some claims about you, Byron.

MR SUTCLIFFE

More like secrets I shall take to the grave. I'm glad you had a good night.

BYRON

You know good whisky.

MR SUTCLIFFE

And you know good watches.

Mr Sutcliffe pulls out Byron's watch from his suit pocket. He hands it to Byron. There's a crack in the glass. Byron looks almost broken hearted.

MR SUTCLIFFE (CONT'D)

A tragedy fitting of Aeschylus. Don't worry, I know a watch maker in town, he can see to restoring its glory.

BYRON

Thank you, I would appreciate that.

MR SUTCLIFFE

(to Nelly and Byron)

Please come again, you'll have my VIP treatment.

MRS HUNTER

And now I shall stop mothering you both. Enjoy yourselves and we shall chat later.

She kisses them both on the cheek, almost flirtatiously, and sashays into a crowd of guests.

INT. MRS HUNTERS' HOUSE - PARLOR ROOM - NIGHT

Nelly stands in the corner, cautiously sipping a drink. She watches Byron in a huddle of people, Mrs Moors and BRADY, 30s, are among them-

The person speaking in the huddle is MR BLACK, 60s, trimmed goatee, air of intellectual arrogance.

MR BLACK

The only thing Crowley did wrong was write too many damned books. You give the world something to read and they turn it into a weapon against you.

BYRON

(feigning understanding)
Totally.

MRS MOORS

Who was he again?

MR BLACK

Poet. Novelist. Founder of Thelema.

MRS MOORS

Thelma?

MR BLACK

Good god, how do you expect to teach our younglings when you're so ignorant.

MRS MOORS

I teach what I'm told.

BRADY

Don't we all.

MR BLACK

Meaning?

Brady takes his leave with an almost-teenage angst.

MR BLACK (CONT'D)

(to Mrs Moors)
Crowley, Gardner, write them down.

Mrs Moors appears frozen. Awkward moment.

BYRON

Does anyone want a drink whilst Mrs Moors fetches her pen?

Waves of hands, shakes of heads. Byron turns to rejoin Nelly, gives her a look - *couldn't get out of there soon enough.*

NELLY

You're in your element.

BYRON

Well, this is the living your life thing I was on about.

NELLY

I was thinking more along the lines of a holiday. You know, Asia, America-

BYRON

(not listening)

Jess would have liked this.

NELLY

You didn't know her.

BYRON

Never forgot her spirit though.

Nelly focuses her vision on a man on the opposite side of the room. This is CHIEF SAMUEL TIDE, 50s, imposing but twitchy amongst the gossiping rabble.

BYRON (CONT'D)

I expected you to shut me down by now.

Nelly gets close to Byron's ear, eyes still on Tide.

NELLY

That's your friend.

Byron gets a look at him.

BYRON

From last night? Never seen him before.

NELLY

I figured.

Chief Tide disperses from the crowd of people into another room. Byron and Nelly follow him in.

From the hallway - Mrs Hunter watches them.

INT. MRS HUNTERS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

In an empty kitchen - Chief Tide throws his alcohol down the sink and turns around, met by Nelly and Byron.

CHIEF TIDE

(to Byron)

Nice to see you woke up in one piece. Byron, isn't it?

NELLY

You should know, you're his friend.

Chief Tide extends a hand to Byron.

CHIEF TIDE

Chief Inspector Tide. It's my job to be everyone's friend in the village. I'm glad I could help last night.

Byron accepts the handshake.

BYRON

How'd you know where I live?

CHIEF TIDE

You told me. It took a couple of attempts for me to understand you, I admit.

Byron notices at Tide's empty glass.

BYRON

You don't drink?

CHIEF TIDE

Drunk police officers don't quite give off the right message.

Another man enters the kitchen, DENVER, 40s. Short, tough, cut from a more working class cloth than the rest of the guests, he is Tide's right hand man.

DENVER

You alright, Chief?

They all turn to look at him.

BYRON

Tide, here, is my friend. I'd say he's alright.

DENVER

Friend is an over-used word in my book.

BYRON

I'd love to read it sometime.

CHIEF TIDE

I'm fine, Denver, honestly.

DENVER

You okay if I jump ship?

CHIEF TIDE

Sure, say hello to Shiela for me.

Denver takes a last suspecting look at Nelly and Byron, then leaves. Nelly looks at Tide - he's wearing a wedding ring.

NELLY

Wife not invited?

Tide glimpses at Nelly. He's not been able to look at her this whole time.

CHIEF TIDE

Nelly, if I am allowed to call you Nelly?

NELLY

You make the rules.

CHIEF TIDE

I never reached out personally to apologize about Jessica, I still haven't given up.

BYRON

Why would you have to apologize?

CHIEF TIDE

My job was to find her. So far I've failed.

NELLY

Yep.

An admission of guilt stretches across Tide's face.

CHIEF TIDE

If it isn't too rude of me, is it okay if I speak to Byron privately?

Nelly takes a minute to move but eventually nods and goes.

INT. MRS HUNTERS' HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Nelly shuffles between people towards the back of the house, she finds a quiet spot and drinks by herself.

She watches as Chief Tide leads Byron through people and up a grand stair case. Nobody notices her, she may as well be a ghost.

She slinks around the back of the house, all the rooms are open, connected, no doors... *except that one.*

She approaches the locked room. Tries to door knob. Locked.

MRS HUNTER (O.S.)
Are you okay, dear?

This shocks Nelly, half to death.

NELLY
Sorry, I- I feel quite out of place.

MRS HUNTER
Let me apologize for my - 'friends' - they can be quite a cliquey bunch. Truth be told, they're out of touch.

Mrs Hunter smiles and puts her arms around Nelly's shoulders.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
And that is why I keep the best alcohol from them. How do you like the champagne?

Nelly has almost finished her glass.

NELLY
It's nice.

MRS HUNTER
Cat piss compared to what we're going to have now.

Mrs Hunter leads Nelly towards some cabinets, she opens them, revealing a large array of alcohol. She pulls bottles out and reaches into the back of the cabinet. She takes out a large sparkling bottle of champagne.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
Dom Pérignon, nineteen-ninety-eight. Our little secret, okay?

NELLY

I think it's a little wasted on me.

Mrs Hunter pops the cork and looks to the door, waiting for the hyenas.

MRS HUNTER

And I think you don't know what's good for you.

Mrs Hunter drinks straight from the bottle then hands the bottle to Nelly, who after a moment's thought, obliges.

INT. MRS HUNTERS' HOUSE - OFFICE - NIGHT

Chief Tide leads Byron to a dark office. Byron stops at the doorway, takes a moment to consider, then walks in.

CHIEF TIDE

This place has changed since you were last here.

BYRON

Excuse me?

CHIEF TIDE

And my guess is that you have too.

BYRON

What do you mean 'since I was last here'?

Chief Tide switches on a light. Byron squints.

CHIEF TIDE

I grew up here. Same as you. And that is why we have a responsibility for the village.

BYRON

I moved here yesterday, responsibility is a strong word.

CHIEF TIDE

Do you like your house?

BYRON

What?

CHIEF TIDE

Your new house - do you like it?

BYRON

Are you interrogating me?

CHIEF TIDE

Just asking. Such is my responsibility. To look after everyone who lives here.

BYRON

How did you know where I was last night?

CHIEF TIDE

Your house is nice. But there are people here who would help you relocate if that's what you would want.

BYRON

Relocate?

CHIEF TIDE

Here. The hill.

BYRON

What people?

CHIEF TIDE

You were invited here tonight by a caring society. A society born of love for our community and our land. We look after the village from this hill and we would like you to join us.

BYRON

And you would get me a house here, on the hill?

CHIEF TIDE

Among other benefits.

BYRON

And what would you want me to do?

CHIEF TIDE

Whatever is required for the sake of the village. For peace. Prosperity.

BYRON

Such as?

CHIEF TIDE

Tomorrow, you will go visit a woman, Mrs Hive. She lives at the care home.

BYRON

To do what?

CHIEF TIDE

Make sure she is okay. Soothe any fears of her. I told you, we care, protect. And in turn, we take care of one another.

BYRON

Sounds like a deal.

CHIEF TIDE

I'm glad we see eye to eye. Say Mrs Hunter sent you, they love her over there and oh, you've been asked to go in the morning, our Bee is apparently a bit of late riser so call round at ten o'clock.

BYRON

But I have work tomorrow.

CHIEF TIDE

Or, you could have everything.

INT. MRS HUNTERS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Nelly and Mrs Hunter sit in a quiet corner. Mrs Hunter fills up Nelly's glass with Dom Pérignon.

MRS HUNTER

So how did you meet Byron?

NELLY

Oh just in a bar the other night.

MRS HUNTER

(teasing)

And?

NELLY

No, I think he just wanted a date for tonight. Appearances and all that.

MRS HUNTER

You know, girl to girl, I've seen his type. Type you should stay away from.

NELLY

So how come you invited him?

MRS HUNTER

Courtesy. But seriously, I've heard things, whispers on the grapevine-

Nelly raises her glass.

NELLY

Funny.

Mrs Hunter conjures a laugh and smile.

MRS HUNTER

Anyway, apparently he's of the, er, promiscuous sort. According to his mother, he was married recently.

Nelly doesn't say anything.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I probably shouldn't have said anything, I just don't like to see people taken advantage of.

NELLY

No, no, it's okay.

MRS HUNTER

Tell you what, how about, you do a runner before he tries to on you? Then soon, you and I have a proper get together away from this rabble. That sound good?

Nelly nods, drinks the rest of her champagne in one. Mrs Hunter takes her hand and they stand up.

Mrs Hunter hands Nelly the bottle of champagne and ushers her out of the back room, towards the hallway and front door.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

You take this. Champagne in your pajamas is better than any night a man can provide.

NELLY
No, it's yours.

MRS HUNTER
You're too polite for your own
good.

They reach the front door.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
Would you like me to drive you?

NELLY
I'll get a taxi, thank you.

Mrs Hunter opens the front door.

MRS HUNTER
Well get home safe and if you ever
need anything, you just let me
know, okay?

Nelly nods. Mrs Hunter kisses her on the cheek. Nelly
shuffles out of the door, white knuckles gripped around the
neck of the champagne bottle.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
See you soon, Nelly.

Nelly smiles and wanders into the night.

Mrs Hunter slams the front door shut.

Behind her, Chief Tide escorts Byron down the stair case.
Tide and Mrs Hunter exchange a look. Fly in the web.

INT. CARE HOME - DAY

Byron scribbles his name on a log book. Next to it, his phone
rings: 'TONY'. Byron rejects the call.

INT. CARE HOME - BEE'S ROOM - DAY

Byron sits down on a rocking chair. A mug is handed to him.

BYRON
Mrs Hunter sent me.

BEE
She's been very kind in recent
years.

Bee picks up a picture from her mantel piece and hands it to Byron. It is a picture of the care home residents, including Bee and Winnie, with Mrs Hunter at the front. Mrs Hunter holds one of those big "oo look at me" cheques, it's labelled from 'The Hunter Trust Charity'.

BEE (CONT'D)

She's been very kind in recent years. Always bringing food, even a new television. Not many people have a care for their elders nowadays.

Bee sits down across from Byron and shakes a pack of biscuits in front of him. He takes one.

BYRON

Well that's why I'm here. To make sure you're all okay.

BEE

Nobody is ever just 'okay', dear.

BYRON

What about you then?

BEE

To be quite honest, I haven't been okay since my husband left but I stick to myself, I get by.

BYRON

What happened to your husband, if you don't mind me asking?

Bee fights her emotions.

BEE

I don't really know, to tell you the truth. He, erm, was just gone one day. Left late one night, fetched to the shops for milk and never came back.

BYRON

The police couldn't find him?

BEE

The police couldn't do anything according to that chief. It was just poof, gone. He was - er - he wouldn't have just left me.

(MORE)

BEE (CONT'D)

Not after fifty years and before you say it, he was happy, he had a mouth on him that he could never shut-

She stops herself before she gets too emotional.

BYRON

It's okay. I'm sorry, are you-

BEE

What on earth have you got to be sorry for, dear? Don't use that word empty.

She gets herself together. She's a tough nut.

BYRON

Have you managed to, you know, move on?

BEE

Sometimes it's easier to accept that he's gone. But none of us really move on. We're fixed. And I am fixed to my husband.

INT. CHIEF TIDE'S HOUSE - DAY

Byron sinks into a chair in a fancy kitchen. High brow furnishings, all curated with a woman's touch.

Chief Tide stands with his back to Byron at the sink. He turns on the tap. Fills two glasses of water.

BYRON

We should look for her husband.

CHIEF TIDE

It was years ago. There's nothing we can do. I mean, a man that old, I don't care how tough they are, they aren't making it.

Chief Tide takes two pills out of his pocket and puts them into one of the glasses of water.

BYRON

Come on, how big's this village? Someone has to know something. Same goes for Jess.

CHIEF TIDE

I didn't take you as the savior
type.

Tide stares at his reflection in the window above the sink.

BYRON

I'm not. I mean we could at least
lie, tell the woman he's dead. Give
her some sort of closure.

Tide turns around, walks towards Byron and hands him a glass.

CHIEF TIDE

We do nothing. We are carers, not
magicians. We are not asking you to
summon a dead body and tell Mrs
Hive it's her husband. We are
asking you to keep her content.
Quiet.

BYRON

Alright.

Byron doesn't touch his water. Chief Tide drinks his, hard to
swallow.

BYRON (CONT'D)

So any idea when I get my own
bachelor pad? Considering I don't
have a job anymore.

All of a sudden, the front door opens. In steps, MARY TIDE,
50s, unassuming, naive, dreams of Hollywood romance. She
smiles when she sees Byron.

MARY

Oh, hello. Sam, who's your new
friend?

CHIEF TIDE

This is, um, Byron, he's a, he's
our new officer. Just giving him a
briefing.

MARY

Well it's lovely to meet you,
Byron. I'm glad Sam has some more
hands on deck, always overstaffed,
aren't you, darling?

CHIEF TIDE

Honey, do you mind? Police
business.

MARY

Of course, sorry. Are you home tonight? There's a movie I'd like to watch.

CHIEF TIDE

On a late. All night, probably. Tomorrow, though, I promise.

Mary's smile fails to hide her disappointment.

MARY

I'll leave you to it.

Chief Tide watches her as she heads into another room.

BYRON

So, domestic bliss. When do I start?

CHIEF TIDE

Soon enough. But first I have something else to give you.

INT. CHIEF TIDE'S HOUSE - DAY

Chief Tide and Byron stand over a bed in an immaculate master bedroom.

CHIEF TIDE

There's a meeting tonight. I believe you know where it is. It's not very far.

On the bed, is a black hooded robe and sat atop of the robe, a grotesque white mask and a carved wooden ring.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - DAY

Staring into his broken bathroom mirror is Byron, cloaked in his robe and mask.

He looks down at his hands. He's wearing the wooden ring. It's prickled like thorns.

The door knocks. Panic.

Byron rips the mask off and throws his robe onto the floor and leaves the bathroom, slamming the door behind him.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Byron opens the door. It's Nelly. She's dressed up. Examines the look of shock on Byron's face. Awkward.

NELLY

Can I come in? It's freezing.

BYRON

Er, yeah. Yeah, sure.

She steps in, takes a second to muster up some courage. Suddenly, she coughs, quite violently. She tries to stifle it.

BYRON (CONT'D)

You okay?

She nods her head, collects herself.

NELLY

I thought that we could go out maybe. Considering I left early the other night.

BYRON

You don't really sound well enough to go out.

She coughs again.

NELLY

It's just a cough, part of my job. I'll be fine.

BYRON

Oh, I can't tonight. Another time.

NELLY

Why? You got plans?

BYRON

Yeah, someone from the party invited me out. Dinner or something.

NELLY

I could be your date again.

BYRON

It's not that sort of occasion.

NELLY

Fine. Well, do you mind if I use
your toilet? I'm busting.

BYRON

(quickly)
It's blocked.

Awkward laughter. She studies him.

NELLY

You seeing Mrs Hunter?

BYRON

No, why? Look, why do you care?

NELLY

I don't, jheeze, I was just asking.

Takes a moment. Decides to push more buttons.

NELLY (CONT'D)

She, er, heard some rumours about
you and your wife, sorry, ex-wife.
She said they were probably nothing-

BYRON

Is that why you care so much?

NELLY

What?

BYRON

You see my watch, imagine my wallet
and think, 'oh, my guardian angel
has appeared, now I should say
hello'!

NELLY

Of course not.

BYRON

Well, guess what? It's pretty
fucking empty now, she took
everything-

NELLY

I spoke to you because of Jess.
Because nobody even remembers her
anymore, so yes, you were a sort of
a guardian angel, I'm sorry that I
didn't just leave you at the bar
sulking into whiskey.

BYRON

And I'm sorry too. I'm no angel,
not for you. You want to do
something with your life, do it
yourself, don't rely on me.

A moment of quiet animosity.

NELLY

Thank god you left when you did.
She wanted to leave with you, you
know.

BYRON

Yeah, well, now she's gone.

NELLY

So is the boy she fell in love
with.

Byron paces, scratches his head. The wooden ring is still on
his finger. Nelly notices.

NELLY (CONT'D)

I'll let myself out.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

Nelly storms away from Byron's house. She heads past the
strange building, next to high railings where overgrown weeds
sprawl through the gaps and towards the tunnel.

She stops, gives out of little cry of shock and looks at her
hand. A small cut. She looks at the railings. Thorns.

She stops and collects herself. Looks around. Notices the
strange building.

She creeps towards it. Winces at the sign next to the door.
Too faded.

Checks the gate - locked. Considers scaling the gate - thinks
better of it. Looks closer... engravings. Moon-like symbols.
And another - a twisted, sharp vine. Just like the rings.

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

Clouds claw across the full moon. A crow caws. Metal scrapes
and clinks. Tires crunch. A low whistle blows.

A shoal of hooded figures file through the gate towards.
N.B. From now on the members of this society, when cloaked and masked, will be collectively referred to as 'Members'.

Two members stand guard at the gate, Denver and Chief Tide, lil and large. Each member hangs their head to them as they pass and raise their ring finger, which is kissed by Tide.

As each member passes, Denver clicks a digit click counter.

One by one they wade inside the meeting building, the inside remains dark and it seems impossible for so many people to fit inside such a small building.

Denver shows the number on the digit click counter to Tide. Content, they drag the gate closed.

WE SEE around the corner, hidden from sight-

Nelly stands still, silent, listening.

Her eyes turn troubled. Her body heaves slightly. Hand over her mouth, she can't hold it anymore, she lets out a cough.

At the gate, Tide stops Denver from closing the gate. Tide's head twists in Nelly's direction.

DENVER
 What's up, Chief?

Chief Tide raises his hand - *quiet*. He creeps towards her.

Ready to pounce-

He turns the corner. But she's nowhere to be seen.

EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT

We hear the gate scrape closed and doors creak shut.

Hidden behind the bushes of a random house, Nelly lets out a flurry of coughs.

INT. MEETING BUILDING - NIGHT

The building is a single long room, lit by candles. The walls are decked in mirrors. At the far end of the room is an elevated stage with a table, turned altar, atop it.

On the table: candles. A bowl filled with brown liquid. A pentacle made of vines and twigs.

All the members stand in uniform rows. Byron stands at the end of one row. He glances at the mirror next to him - unrecognizable.

One member steps onto the stage and next to the altar. They address the crowd-

HEAD MEMBER

Welcome, friends. I am happy to say
that we are flourishing. Growing.
And the earth, our mistress, is
happy for it. Let us give praise.
Make ourselves naked as nature.

The Head Member on stage takes off her mask - it's Mrs Hunter.

All the other members take off their masks. Byron is the last to do so, he watches and follows everyone else's lead.

MRS HUNTER

Kiss our mother's hand.

Mrs Hunter kisses the wooden ring on her finger. Everyone else follows suit.

Mrs Hunter takes a bowl off the altar and raises it aloft.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

Drink her blood.

At one end of each line, a member holds a bowl and drinks the liquid from it. After taking a sip, they pass the bowl to the next person.

Byron watches the process and then Mrs Hunter, who is yet to take a sip.

The bowl comes to Byron, inside a muddy mixture. He doesn't drink. Neither does Mrs Hunter.

Brady is stood next to Byron, he whispers in Byron's ear.

BRADY

Drink or she'll know.

Byron takes a sip, struggles to swallow it.

MRS HUNTER

And extinguish her enemies.

There's a candle at the end of each line. Everyone blows their candles out. Darkness.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
So we can come into the light.

Lights whizz on, illuminating the entire room.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
Today, we officially welcome our
newest member. Byron, stand next to
me please.

Eyes turn to him. He strides towards the stage, false air of confidence, past everyone we saw at the party. He joins Mrs Hunter.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
Praise her.

He puts his hands together, unsure.

BYRON
Praise her.

Satisfied, Mrs Hunter's eyes turn back to the congregation.

MRS HUNTER
Byron, here, has roots within our
home. He is part of the soil, part
of the earth and he will help us
fertilize it. He will help us
maintain the natural order and we,
her protectors, shall bloom in the
process.

Byron looks into the crowd.

BYRON'S POV: He notices Mr Black in the front row, perfect Peter type and then... the Members sway, mould into one, their faces brighten and twist.

Byron takes a step back, off balance. Mrs Hunter grabs his arm, stabilizes him. He looks at her. She's taller now, yet her face remains unchanged, almost angel-like.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
Byron's ceremony will be held in a
few days, after he continues to
prove his worth. Until then, we
continue to protect and preserve.
That is all. Mr Sutcliffe, the wine
please. Cleanse our palates.

Mr Sutcliffe, in the front row, nods and smiles.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
Glory to the Mother.

ALL
Glory to the Mother.

The Members stay still. Byron looks at their faces, but they all have the same face - his face.

Mrs Hunter whispers in his ear.

MRS HUNTER
There's someone who'd like to meet
you.

She escorts him off the stage, to the corner of the building. On the floor there's a hatch. Mrs Hunter bends down and opens it.

A dark hole. Stairs heading down into an unknown abyss.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
Don't be afraid.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT

The way ahead is lit by flaming torches, hung on the walls of the tunnel in medieval fire baskets. Mrs Hunter picks one torch up and leads the way through the indefinitely stretching tunnel, Byron stumbling close behind.

BYRON
What is this place?

MRS HUNTER
It's been here for years.
Millennium, I'd wager. The same
goes for our society. The earth,
the Mother, Gaia, The Triple
Goddess, call it what you want -
she is eternal. Our society remains
because of this natural wonder.

BYRON
And who knows about them?

MRS HUNTER
Only those who need to. And only
The Connected One knows all the
tunnels' secrets.

BYRON
'The Connected One'?

MRS HUNTER
What is it that you want, Byron?

BYRON
To- to feel normal again.

MRS HUNTER
On the contrary, how you usually
feel isn't normal. It's warped. We
are tainted by anxiety and
arrogance. Only when we allow
ourselves to be taken over by the
Mother and her medicine can we be
normal.

Byron's POV: the tunnel twists, closes in and expands. He
passes more pathways of tunnels.

Mrs Hunter sees him struggling to keep his balance.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
It comes in waves.

BYRON
What was in that drink?

MRS HUNTER
The earth.

BYRON
What did you say to Nelly?

Mrs Hunter slows down, processes this new information.

MRS HUNTER
You were wealthy, weren't you,
Byron?

BYRON
How did you know?

MRS HUNTER
Come, come, you know I visit your
mother and her friends. As I
understand it, and as is usually
the case, you accumulated your
wealth and respect because you
possess a certain drive, a certain
leadership. I simply wanted to make
sure that Nelly, however lovely she
may be, couldn't dim those
qualities before you were able to
rediscover them.

BYRON

Perhaps I don't want to rediscover them.

MRS HUNTER

If that was the case, you wouldn't be here. Let me ask another question, if I may. Do you want the life back that you once had?

BYRON

That's not why I came back here.

MRS HUNTER

No, you came back for a fresh start. A reset. And you have found more than that.

Byron stops, sticks his fingers in his mouth. Mrs Hunter turns and shine the torch on him.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

It will do you good. Trust me.

He stops, looks at her. She shines, incandescent. She offers her hand.

BYRON

What do you do here?

MRS HUNTER

You curious, I understand. But don't fret, there's always a light at one end of the tunnel.

He takes her hand and looks down the tunnels, that steadily appear to straighten and stay still.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT

Byron and Mrs Hunter reach a door in the wall of the tunnels.

MRS HUNTER

When you enter, bow and sit. Don't look at her until she allows you to. Understood?

BYRON

Understood.

Mrs Hunter opens the door and leads Byron into a room.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - THE HIVE - CONTINUOUS

It's cave-like, wet and overgrown. Vials lie on the floor, mud and red colored contents. The skulls of animals, antlers of a stag.

At the far end of the room - a twisting growth of vines and thorns that sags in the middle to make a sort of throne.

And sat facing it, crossed legged, the shape of a hagged old woman... THE CONNECTED ONE.

Mrs Hunter bows down and sits on a mat, facing the old woman's back, eyes closed. Byron copies her.

MRS HUNTER

Glory to you and the Mother, O
Connected One.

BYRON

Glory to you and the Mother.

A moment of quiet. The Connected One croaks-

THE CONNECTED ONE

Vines. Trees. Dirt. Human. Above.
Below. Maiden. Mother. Crone.

(beat)

Describe to me, Byron, what does a
lawyer do?

BYRON

We argue cases. Defend the
innocent. Uphold justice.

THE CONNECTED ONE

Who's justice?

BYRON

The authorities. The natural order.

THE CONNECTED ONE

The natural order. And where does
that reside?

BYRON

I don't understand what you mean.

THE CONNECTED ONE

Did you uphold your justice above
or below? The trees or the dirt? In
the air for all to see or in the
shadows that cripple thee?

BYRON
For all to see.

THE CONNECTED ONE
For all to see.

Her tone indicates that she knows he is lying.

BYRON
Well, no. But if people saw how
justice was done, it wouldn't be
justice at all.

THE CONNECTED ONE
What would it be?

BYRON'S POV: Darkness. An abyss.

BYRON
Nothing.

THE CONNECTED ONE
There is nothing but the Mother.
The natural order is the earth, the
Mother. People accept the order but
they don't understand it.

MRS HUNTER
And yet they follow it.

THE CONNECTED ONE
(cutting over Mrs Hunter)
They do not worship it. Even in
your old life, we were one and the
same. Like you we want change.

MRS HUNTER
We-

THE CONNECTED ONE
- Want change. Open your eyes.

He does so, The Connected One holds a bowl to his mouth. He
sips cautiously.

THE CONNECTED ONE (CONT'D)
Let's revisit your past.

BYRON
I don't want to.

THE CONNECTED ONE
It's all connected. You find it or
it will find you.

BYRON

I don't want to find it.

BYRON's POV: The throne of vines behind The Connected One writhes, vines slither towards Byron.

THE CONNECTED ONE

You picked fruit from the tree
didn't you, Byron?

BYRON

What? I- I can't move.

THE CONNECTED ONE

And you did wrong by some to do
right by others.

The vines wrap around Byron's arms, body and neck. Mrs Hunter looks at him calm and indifferent.

BYRON

They were the criminals. I did
nothing.

THE CONNECTED ONE

To pick the fruit is a sin.

Vice lock. Eyes bulge. Byron's fixed in place.

THE CONNECTED ONE (CONT'D)

A sin the Mother forgives you for.

The vines go limp and slide off his body.

THE CONNECTED ONE (CONT'D)

You maintained the natural order,
like us and for that, we are
granted the first fruit to fall to
the ground.

Byron moves his hand slowly, feels his neck.

THE CONNECTED ONE (CONT'D)

The visions are over. And the
Mother welcomes you. You can leave
us.

Byron looks to Mrs Hunter who offers a forced smile and motions at the door.

Byron stands up, feels his neck, takes in the druid-like scene once more, then opens the door, where a Member waits outside and guides him back down the tunnels.

Mrs Hunter closes the door.

MRS HUNTER
He can be trusted?

THE CONNECTED ONE
Trust the Mother.

Mrs Hunter is evidently unsatisfied.

THE CONNECTED ONE (CONT'D)
The vines are yet to tell me. But I
will feel their answer soon. Soon
everyone will feel their answers.

MRS HUNTER
They cannot.

THE CONNECTED ONE
You argue about things out of your
control.

MRS HUNTER
About something that I have built.

THE CONNECTED ONE
Something that you have done for
the Mother. Are you forgetting that
there is another thing you are to
do for her?

MRS HUNTER
No.

THE CONNECTED ONE
Then why does thou fret?

MRS HUNTER
To reveal our secrets to the
village will only lead to the
dilution and destruction of what we
have achieved.

The Connected One caresses the throne of vines, rubs her
cheek against it.

THE CONNECTED ONE
Vines. Trees. Dirt-

MRS HUNTER
Maiden. Mother. Crone. Don't ignore
me.

THE CONNECTED ONE

The veil is already being peeled away. Someone is bringing her into the light. Someone to bring order. But with your life, all will be well. All will be well.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

Byron looks at his broken reflection in the bathroom. He heaves the mirror off the wall.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Byron stands over a pan. Oil sizzles.

Behind him, Winnie peevs around his house. She finds a photo frame, upside down. She picks it up and looks - it's the photo of Byron and Claire.

WINNIE

I always loved this photo.

Byron turns around - *shit*. He snatches the photo from Winnie's hand and stashes it out of sight.

Whilst he does this, she takes over the cooking.

WINNIE (CONT'D)

You should call her.

BYRON

Why would I do that, mum?

WINNIE

Same reason why you still have the photo. If you don't want it, I'll have it. Only way I get to see you smile.

BYRON

I'm happy.

WINNIE

It was nice of you to see Bee. She isn't herself at the moment.

BYRON

I meant to see you, it's just that Mrs Hunter asked me to go and I had work, so I couldn't be round long.

WINNIE

Oh I don't care, knowing that
you're happy would be enough.

BYRON

I just told you, I am.

WINNIE

That job must be working wonders
then.

BYRON

Yeah, yeah, it is. You know, if
there's anything I can do to help
at the home, on the weekends or
something.

WINNIE

Not unless you have a few thousand
pounds in your pocket.

BYRON

You should ask Claire.

WINNIE

I would if I could.

Byron sinks into a chair at the dining table. Winnie plates
up the food and hands a plate to Byron.

WINNIE (CONT'D)

I salvaged it as best I could.

BYRON

Thanks.

Glimmer of a smile. She sits opposite him.

WINNIE

Look, I don't care what happened or
what you did. I just want you to
choose what makes you happy and do
it, okay?

He looks like he has already stopped listening.

BYRON

Okay.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Byron sits on his couch, drinking from his hip flask. He twiddles a note in his hand. It's the one Nelly wrote for him, with her name and number on.

Suddenly, Byron's letter box clangs.

He rises and goes to the front door. He opens it but there is no one outside.

He closes the door. A letter and a small parcel lie on the floor. He picks them up and rips open the parcel. Money.

He rips open the letter:

'GIVE MRS HIVE A VISIT. SHE WHISPERS TOO LOUD.'

INT. CARE HOME - DAY

Byron stands outside a door. He holds a plastic container. He knocks on the door.

Bee opens her door, her eyes red, her smile forced.

BYRON

Mum and I made something earlier,
thought you might want some.

INT. CARE HOME - BEE'S ROOM - DAY

Bee fumbles with tea bags, one falls onto the floor. Byron jumps up and picks the tea bag up for her.

BYRON

You can talk to me, Bee.

She wipes her eyes.

BYRON (CONT'D)

Sit down, I'll finish these off.

She creaks into a chair and takes out a handkerchief.

BEE

It's my son.

BYRON

Why, what's he done?

BEE

He says that people murdered
Harold.

BYRON

Harold. Your husband?

She nods. Sniffles.

BEE

He's insistent. He won't talk to me
about anything else. He's- he's-

INT. CHIEF TIDE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tide downs some pills and water. Cracks a window, takes out a
cigarette, offers one to Byron. Byron shakes his head.

CHIEF TIDE

He's mentally ill. A junkie.

BYRON

Sounds it.

CHIEF TIDE

Be homeless if it wasn't for Mrs
Hunter.

BYRON

So what's the deal, we give him
some money and hope he shuts up?

Tide takes a moment.

CHIEF TIDE

I am told, that your house is
nearly ready. Here. On the hill.

BYRON

I'm ready to earn it.

Chief Tide looks on edge but notices Byron scrutinizing him.
He throws his cigarette out of the window, grabs a can of air
freshener and sprays it liberally.

CHIEF TIDE

Good. So here's what we're gonna
do.

EXT. DEREK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tide and Byron approach the front door of a small house.

BYRON

I don't get why you're not bringing the pooch.

CHIEF TIDE

Denver was never meant to be part of the organization. He's loyal but the less he knows, the better. So for all intents and purposes, you're him today.

BYRON

Aye-aye, Chief.

Chief Tide rings the doorbell. Byron stands next to him. Dead flowers decorate the side of the house - Byron stares at them, lost in thought when the door opens a creak-

DEREK

What do you want?

The eye peering behind the door belongs to DEREK HIVE, 40s. Chief Tide smiles widely at him, shows him his police badge.

CHIEF TIDE

I was told you have some information regarding the disappearance of your father, Harold Hive. Can we come inside?

DEREK

Who's the other one?

Byron tries to fit a hand in the door.

BYRON

Detective Lilly, I'm new.

Derek twitches, begins to shut the door but Byron weighs in and forces himself through.

INT. DEREK'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

BYRON

Thank you.

Derek scrambles away from the door, into a living room and hides behind a sofa.

Tide walks in and closes the door. Tide and Byron sit down in the living room. It's a pig sty.

CHIEF TIDE

Derek, we want to help. I apologize for what just happened but we are prepared to do anything to find your father. You want to find him, don't you?

Derek nods, still hiding behind the sofa.

CHIEF TIDE (CONT'D)

Why don't you sit down? In fact, could I have some water, I'm parched. Detective Lilly, would you like some water?

BYRON

I'd love some.

Derek scurries away into the kitchen, eyes on the intruders the whole way.

Chief Tide reaches into his pocket and takes out two pills. He clasps them in his fist. Byron notices - *what's he getting himself in for?*

Byron fidgets, tries to peer into the kitchen... *where is he?*

CHIEF TIDE

Hey, Derek, how about that water?
Derek?

Nothing. Silence.

Chief Tide rises out of his seat and approaches the kitchen. Slowly, slowly, a footstep from the door when-

Derek springs out of the kitchen with a knife in hand. He lunges onto Tide who grabs Derek's wrist. They struggle and fall.

Byron jumps up towards them but as he gets there, they're already still. He gazes wide-eyed upon them, as Tide quivers upwards and Derek lies still and bloody.

An ugly pause.

Byron rushes into the kitchen and gags into the sink.

Tide barges him out of the way, sticks the tap on and frantically tries to wash the blood off his hands.

All over the kitchen, pictures of members are stuck to cupboards - Mrs Hunter, Dr Shepherd, Tide and others.

Crazed strokes of pen between them, moon-like symbols, pictures of the meeting building.

Tide turns off the tap and takes notice of the evidence.

CHIEF TIDE (CONT'D)
Take it all, we'll put them in the
carpet with him.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Both men remain silent as the car motors up a hill through the dark. The feint lights of the village behind them shrink.

EXT. CLIFF FACE - NIGHT

The car boot cracks open. A thick log of carpet with feet hanging out.

The fuel cap of the car is popped open.

EXT. CLIFF FACE - NIGHT

Chief Tide lights a cigarette in the moonlight. He offers Byron one, who accepts. Byron returns the favour with his hip flask. Byron notices how much Tide's hands are shaking.

They stand looking out to the sea, beneath them lies Derek's body rolled in the carpet.

CHIEF TIDE
It isn't meant to come to this.

BYRON
You sound like my clients.

Tide looks at him, confused.

BYRON (CONT'D)
I was a defense lawyer. They all
said the same. Yet they all stepped
over the edge.

Tide looks down the cliffs. Byron grabs Tide, gets his attention.

BYRON (CONT'D)
And I saved them before they fell.
For the Mother, yeah?

CHIEF TIDE
(unconvincing)
Yeah. For the Mother.

BYRON
Is this between us?

CHIEF TIDE
There's no point lying. It's done.

Byron throws away his cigarette and walks back to the car.

Chief Tide stares at the body, then back down the cliffs.

CHIEF TIDE (CONT'D)
No point at all.

He throws his cigarette onto the petrol soaked body and returns to the car.

The fire grows.

EXT. CLIFF FACE - DAY

The sun creeps onto the horizon. A heap of ash depletes. Speckles float towards the sea.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Sunlight penetrates the blinds of Byron's bedroom. Byron rolls in his bed. Checks his phone. It's the morning.

He launches the duvet off of him.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

Byron's cups his hands underneath a running tap. Throws water over his face and sleepless eyes.

He cranes his neck upwards towards where the mirror should be. All he can see is a blank wall.

A knock at the door.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Byron opens the door in his dressing gown to see Mrs Hunter standing before him.

BYRON
Oh, morning.

She looks up at the sun.

MRS HUNTER
Just about.

BYRON
Erm, yeah, come in. Gimme a second,
I'll go get changed.

MRS HUNTER
There's really no need.

She glides in past him, into-

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

MRS HUNTER
You should sleep after last night.

She takes a good look at Byron's expression. He doesn't give much away.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
After all, it's your big night.

BYRON
How so?

MRS HUNTER
Tonight, the Mother and I will
initiate you.

BYRON
Good.

MRS HUNTER
I will speak to Bee when things
come to light. Melancholy drove him
to the cliffs. There is no lie
there.

BYRON
I'll keep her quiet until then.

She smiles, almost impressed.

MRS HUNTER
One more favor, if you could. Check
up on Tide. Mrs Moors was worried
when she delivered his invitation.

BYRON
I don't think he's anything to
worry about.

MRS HUNTER
That's not what I said.

She reaches inside her handbag. Takes out a pot of pills.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
Prescribed by Doctor Shepherd for
me. Sleep. I'll see you tonight.

He takes them.

BYRON
Thank you.

Mrs Hunter eyeballs the kitchen before she leaves-

MRS HUNTER
At least you didn't unpack
properly. That'll make moving a lot
easier.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Byron throws the sleeping pills into the bin.

INT. WATCHMAKERS - DAY

Byron stands at a counter, the WATCHMAKER hands him a box. He
opens it, his watch, restored.

WATCHMAKER
It is quite the piece you have
there, Mr Horn.

BYRON
Thank you.

WATCHMAKER
A watch says a lot about a man.

BYRON
That it does.

EXT. CHIEF TIDE'S HOUSE - DAY

Byron rubs his eyes as he approaches Tide's front door. He
raises a fist to knock but loud voices can be heard inside.

He checks the coast is clear and puts an ear to the door-

MARY TIDE (O.S.)
None of what you say is making any sense!

CHIEF TIDE (O.S.)
Please, keep your voice down.

MARY TIDE (O.S.)
How can you say this is for the good of the village?

CHIEF TIDE (O.S.)
Because I believed it. I- I-

MARY TIDE (O.S.)
Have to do something, people look to you for security here, Sam. It's your responsibility. And this it's, it's lunacy.

CHIEF TIDE (O.S.)
It made sense once.

MARY TIDE (O.S.)
And I'm your wife, how can you keep this from me? How could-

A shrill of crying, a voice broken.

MARY TIDE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Get off of me! Get off!

CHIEF TIDE (O.S.)
Mary, please. Where are you going?

Footsteps. Byron bolts away from the door.

INT. CHIEF TIDE'S HOUSE - THE SAME TIME

Byron's bounding footsteps can be heard from inside. Mary freezes, gripped by terror. She sprints upstairs.

Chief Tide, who is on his knees, jumps up to the door. He swings it open-

EXT. CHIEF TIDE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Makes his way onto the pavement and looks up, down and up the street again. No one to be seen.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Nelly drinks by herself at the bar. Behind the bar, a barman chops lemon wedges with a knife, almost rhythmically.

Mr Sutcliffe smiles at her as he walks past towards another customer. Nelly looks closely - he's wearing his wooden ring.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Byron's freshly mended watch. An open pack of cigarettes. Empty bottle of whiskey. The picture of Byron and Claire.

The feint blow of a whistle.

A light turns off and the objects consumed in shadow.

INT. MEETING BUILDING - NIGHT

Byron is at the head of a procession of masked members, they trickle towards the stage holding candles.

On the stage, The Connected One and Mrs Hunter lie in wait.

Byron is lead up towards the stage as the rest of the members take their regimented positions in the hall.

Mrs Hunter prizes Byron's mask off his face and whispers in his ear-

MRS HUNTER

Close your eyes and when you open
them you will have the sight of a
thousand eyes.

He closes his eyes and he is led onto the middle of the stage, where he sits in between candles. We see from above, the candles organized into a pentacle.

The Connected One is surrounded by vials and plants. She grabs some moss and squeezes it into a bowl. She continues to make a concoction from the muddy vials as she recites archaic words. She takes a bug from a jar, holds it over a candle and crushes it into her mixture once it stops squirming.

Finally, she takes Byron's hand, which is deadly still. She handles a knife and slices both their hands, squeezing their blood into the brown mixture in the bowl.

She places the knife upon the altar then sticks her thumb in the bowl and with the liquid marks a moon-like symbol on Byron's forehead.

The Connected One keeps reciting her incoherent ritual as she brings the bowl to Byron's lips. He drinks until it is all gone.

She picks up the bowl and stands up, writhing a dance of savage ecstasy, she shoves her fingers into the bowl and flicks the remaining specks of liquid on Byron's face like crude holy water.

The rest of the members start humming in unison.

Byron's fists are clenched and bloody, his face twisted with convulsion.

THE CONNECTED ONE

Vines. Trees. Dirt. Human. Above.
Below. Maiden. Mother. Crone.
Arise, son of the earth. Open your
eyes to her glory and serve her
until your last day.

Byron opens his eyes.

BYRON'S POV: Everything spins, distorted, the sea of grotesque masks returns.

The Connected One bends down and whispers in his ear. Mrs Hunter watching closely.

THE CONNECTED ONE (CONT'D)

She's here.

BYRON'S POV: Flashing images of Claire's face, smiling then screaming and crying.

Mrs Hunter and The Connected One take Byron's hands and lift him to his feet.

MRS HUNTER

(to the congregation)
Extinguish her enemies and let her
child see light.

The members blow out their candles and the large lights are turned on.

Mrs Hunter goes to address them again but The Connected One hobbles in front of her and steals their attention.

THE CONNECTED ONE

This is a glorious day. The Mother
tells me how happy she is.
(MORE)

THE CONNECTED ONE (CONT'D)

And she has blessed us with
boundless treasures. For that, we
cannot let our festivities end so
soon.

The members look as bemused as Byron, who looks dangerously
high, but Mrs Hunter has a different look - concern, scorn.

THE CONNECTED ONE (CONT'D)

To begin anew, we must destroy the
old. We must praise, sacrifice. Her
vines have come to me and told me
that it is time for our dear Mrs
Hunter's ceremony. It is her time
to give herself to the earth.
Tomorrow, we shall give thanks to
her once more. And afterwards, the
Mother wishes us to move above, in
a new direction, under new
leadership, to let her be praised
by all our village and beyond.

The members all bow to her, a scattering of claps. Mrs Hunter
looks upon them in horror.

Silence falls upon the hall.

THE CONNECTED ONE (CONT'D)

(to Mrs Hunter)

Well? The ceremony is not over.

Mrs Hunter contains her fury. The Connected One staggers
towards the hatch in the corner of the hall.

MRS HUNTER

Sutcliffe, bring the wine.

There is silence but for the shuffle of The Connected One's
footsteps. Mrs Hunter scans the crowd, suspicion growing.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

Mister Sutcliffe, come, we are
thirsty. It is the mother's nectar,
all must drink.

The Connected One cracks the hatch open and begins to descend-

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

(to The Connected One)

Where are you going?

THE CONNECTED ONE

The Mother needs me.

MRS HUNTER

Stop!

The Connected One ignores her and goes into the tunnels.

Silence among the members.

Mrs Hunter slides the knife from the altar into her hand.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

Mister Sutcliffe!

INT. BAR - NIGHT

The men's toilet of a bar. Shards of glass on the floor.

Muffled screaming wanes to a whimper.

Inside a cubicle, Mr Sutcliffe is tied up. His head lulls back and forth, his eyes distant. His mouth gagged with a towel. He looks at the toilet bowl and grins goofily.

INT. MEETING BUILDING - NIGHT

Chief Tide whispers into Mrs Hunter's ear on stage. He holds the digit click counter. He shows her the number on it.

MRS HUNTER

Are you sure that's right?

He nods.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

Keys. Now.

He hands them over, bows his head slightly.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

Everyone unmask now.

The members hesitate.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

Now!

Sheep-like they begin peeling off their masks.

Mrs Hunter approaches each person, row upon row with the knife gripped in her hand - from perfect-Peter Mr Black at the front to the riling Denver at the back.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

If anyone knows where Mr Sutcliffe has gone, please speak now. Just because we have one new member does not mean we wish to lose another.

Shakes of heads, shrugs of shoulders.

Byron remains on stage. He caresses his head, squints his eyes closed. When he opens them we see-

INT. COURTROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

A full house, a frightful jury and weeping witnesses.

Byron stands beside an attractive woman, BYRON'S CLIENT, in handcuffs with a glint of a smile on her face.

A JUDGE bangs his gavel.

The sound of crying.

INT. MEETING BUILDING - NIGHT - PRESENT DAY

Members in robes replace the jury.

Mrs Hunter is at the back of the hall. She makes sure the doors are locked then stashes the keys in her pockets.

MRS HUNTER

Children of the Mother, we have an imposter among us. Everyone - to the tunnels. Root them out. And bring them to me. Now!

The Members put their masks on again and drift towards the hatch and into the tunnels.

She returns to the stage. Where Tide, Denver and Byron remain.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

Chief Inspector Tide, do you have anything to tell me?

CHIEF TIDE

Nothing.

MRS HUNTER

Do not let a single person leave until I say.

Denver keeps an icy gaze on her. She's got a look that could kill. Tide pulls Denver away to the doors.

Mrs Hunter approaches Byron.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
How are you feeling?

He can barely speak a word.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
Listen to me, Byron. We are surrounded by people more slippery than your thoughts. So I'll speak to you plainly. I need you to be strong. I need to trust you. I need you to find whoever this is and bring them to me. You do that and I promise you, you shall have everything you want, Mother, Maiden, Crone, I'll make you king of them all.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT

Byron bundles through the candle-lit tunnels in his mask and robe. He stumbles and touches the side of the tunnel for support - his hands touches a fungi, wet and mossy.

INT. BYRON'S OFFICE - DAY - FLASHBACK

Fingers on plump lips. We see Byron and his client from the last flashback in a sensual embrace. The sound of hissing and insects.

Byron, his shirt half-undone, goes towards the door of the office and slams it shut.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT - PRESENT DAY

A door in the tunnel is closed by a masked member.

The sound startles Byron and they stare at each other, uncertain.

MEMBER
Glory to the Mother.

BYRON
Glory to the Mother.

Byron shows his ring and rushes away.

He delves further into the tunnels. He's alone. He stops and holds his head. The hissing and insects can be heard.

He looks up. A shadow is up ahead. *A member or something else?*

Byron turns away from the shadow but a feminine whisper calls after him.

SHADOW (O.S.)
What did you do, Byron?

INT. BAR - DAY - FLASHBACK

A hotspot for the upper echelons of society. Byron is in a booth with the Judge from a previous flashback.

They laugh and joke together. Byron slips him an envelope underneath the table.

SHADOW (O.S.)
Who are you, Byron?

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT - PRESENT DAY

Byron turns around to face the shadow once more. The shadow splits into three.

He sees a blinding light at the end of the tunnel. The shadow figures walk towards it and disappear.

Byron chases after it, he is swallowed by the light-

INT. FANCY APARTMENT - DAY - FLASHBACK

Byron walks into his apartment, baffled. Empty and glowing with light. A wind blows towards a door.

Byron follows the wind, opens the door into his bedroom-

Claire and another man are in Byron's bed, naked. They turn to see Byron. A Mexican stand-off, each one of them wielding trauma, rage and horror on their faces.

The room begins to glow brighter and is lost in a fog of light. Byron stands in a vacuum of white. He sprint through it, grasping at nothing until-

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT - PRESENT DAY

He tumbles onto the damp floor, his momentum extinguishing a torch on the wall.

Byron scrambles to his feet and claws through the darkness hands first.

His hand hit something solid. Metal. He grabs it. A ladder.

Byron ascends the ladder into-

INT. LIBRARY ROOM - NIGHT

Byron swings open a hatch and heaves himself into a room. He takes his mask off to inspect. Bookshelves on all sides. Antiques, preserved flowers, animal skulls.

A painting: almost neolithic in design. A ritual of sorts. A crowd surrounding a bonfire and in the bonfire, a person.

There's a closed door leading somewhere. Byron tries it. Locked.

At the other end of the room is a desk with masses of paper organized on it.

Byron flicks through the papers. They're filed. Names. 'BRADY', 'MOORS', 'SHIPMAN'.

Byron stops on one file: 'HORN'. He opens it on the desk.

A last will and testament... 'all wealth and belongings will be given to The Hunter Trust Charity...'. Signed in red ink.

A 'PROFILE' on Byron. Date of birth, place of birth, year of marriage, several addresses.

In his heightened state, particular words loom larger and his eyes obsess over them:

'ADULTERER'... 'DIVORCED'... 'LOST WEALTH'...

'ATHEIST'... 'CROOKED LAWYER'... 'MURDER'...

'WEAKNESSES'... 'MATERIALISTIC'... 'FONDNESS OF MOTHER'...

Claire's address.

A picture of Nelly and Byron at his front door, taken from afar.

He flicks through more paper. Pages on Winnie, extensive documentation, her will, her life history.

He roots in more files... no... no... 'CARE HOME'. Bingo.

Accounts. Funds directed to 'The Hunter Trust Charity'.

Byron begins stashing whatever documents he can in his pockets.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT

Byron, mask on, speeds through the tunnels. He comes to a junction but suddenly-

Another member appears from the bend. They nearly bump into each other.

They stop, the member stares at Byron through their mask.

MEMBER

Glory to the Mother.

BYRON

Glory to the Mother.

They leave in separate directions.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT

Byron is another tunnel. Eerily quiet.

Another member appears from a bend and strides towards Byron. When the member is still at a distance away-

BYRON

Glory to the Mother.

The member continues their approach. Byron brandishes his wooden ring. The member isn't stopping.

Before he is able to do anything, the member whips a knife to Byron's neck and pushes him against the wall of the tunnel.

MEMBER

Where are they?

The voice is familiar.

MEMBER (CONT'D)

You tell me where Jess Blyth is and
you can die fat and warm in your
bed-

The Member coughs.

BYRON

Nelly?

Slowly, Byron reaches for his mask and takes it off.

Nelly staggers backwards and takes her mask off too, if only
to make sure she is seeing him with her own two eyes.

BYRON (CONT'D)

What are you doing here? What do
you mean, 'where's Jess'?

Nelly steels herself, directs the knife towards him again. He
retreats into the wall.

NELLY

Don't play ignorant. You're down
here, you're fucking one of them.
Where are you keeping my sister?

BYRON

Nelly, I haven't seen her for
twenty fucking years, you said she
was gone, so contradictory doesn't
come close, lunacy would be more
appropriate.

She shoves her mask into his face.

NELLY

Then what the fuck is this? Lunacy
or a vanity project?

BYRON

Look I can explain, it's just
you're not making any sense now.

NELLY

Yeah, well you make perfect sense
to me now.

BYRON

I swear to you, on my life, I have
no idea where Jess is.

NELLY

And even if you did, you wouldn't care.

BYRON

I'm not like them, I don't know what they do.

NELLY

Come on, you're a better liar than that.

BYRON

I'm not!

Byron gambles and moves away from the knife. His voice echoes faintly throughout the tunnels.

He burrows his hand inside his robe and takes out some of the documents and offers them to her.

BYRON (CONT'D)

This is why I'm here. To show everyone what they do. This is proof, this, read it.

She doesn't take them.

BYRON (CONT'D)

Now, I know I look like one of the bad guys but I'm not-

NELLY

No you're just a poor imitation.

BYRON

I know nothing, okay? And I will swear that on a Bible or whatever heap of lies you choose. But believe me when I say I haven't heard even a whisper about them keeping anyone here. Least of all Jess. But even if that is the case, it can wait, you need to get out of here.

NELLY

And why would I believe a word you say?

BYRON

(waving the documents)

We show everyone this, just look,
look, we take them down from the
inside out, from the shadows, from
the dirt, we show everyone above
what they are, then if, if Jess is
here we can save her.

NELLY

You have no interest in saving
anyone but yourself.

BYRON

That's not-

He stops, notices something behind Nelly - another member,
Doctor Shipman. Approaching quickly. Byron drops the
documents and throws his mask on as quick as he can.

DOCTOR SHIPMAN

What do we have here?

Byron meets Shipman before he gets to Nelly.

BYRON

Glory to the Mother.

Shipman's eyes pierce the back of Nelly's head from behind
his mask.

NELLY

Glory to the Mother.

DOCTOR SHIPMAN

I don't have to be a doctor to
sense the rot here.

Shipman barges past Byron towards Nelly.

DOCTOR SHIPMAN (CONT'D)

Come with me dear, I'll get you out
of here. I'll make you better.

Shipman's arm extends to Nelly when-

Byron grapples Shipman's head and drags him away from her.
They tussle but Byron's intoxication gets the better of him,
Shipman begins to overcome Byron, pushing him against the
wall of the tunnel.

Nelly looks at them and then the knife in her hand. Quivers.

Shipman begins to strangle Byron. Byron claws at Shipman's face, removes his mask.

Nelly tries to pull Shipman off Byron without using the knife, she's pushed onto the floor.

Byron's hands scratch against the wall. Something squelches. Fungi. Byron grabs it and smushes it into Shipman's face.

He reels back, spitting it out as much as he can.

Byron grabs more fungi, pushes Shipman to the floor and shoves it in his mouth. He lays into Shipman, disabling him for good.

Byron gets up, leaving Shipman wheezing and spluttering out wet fungi.

BYRON

We need to go now.

Nelly says nothing. She leers at Shipman.

BYRON (CONT'D)

Nelly!

She keeps eyeballing Shipman.

NELLY

She went to the doctors.

Even in his bad state, a twinge of recognition lights up Shipman's eyes.

BYRON

Nelly, for the love of Christ.

NELLY

She went to the doctors.

Nelly stabs Shipman whilst he's down, over and over. Blood and earth spews from his mouth. She's in a frenzy.

Byron pulls her off of him. She resists for a second, then goes limp. It settles in.

Doctor Shipman lies dead. Nelly wrestles out of Byron's arms.

BYRON

Come on.

Nelly waves the documents in the air.

NELLY

By all means, go. But I'm not
leaving without Jess.

She puts on her mask, turns her back on him and ventures
further into the tunnels. Byron scurries after her.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT

Byron chases after Nelly.

BYRON

Nelly.

Ignored. She stops. Her fingers silences Byron. The patter of
footsteps.

Nelly takes the nearest torch out of its fire basket. Throws
it on the floor. Stamps. It won't extinguish.

A member passes by a junction in the tunnels ahead.

Nelly leaves the torch. Hugs the remaining shadows.

BYRON (CONT'D)

How do you know Jess is here?

More footsteps.

Suddenly, a group of members also pass, among them is Mrs
Hunter.

MRS HUNTER

How many did you leave standing
guard?

Their conversation trails off as they venture into another
tunnel.

NELLY

That's how.

Nelly sets off, Byron holds her back.

BYRON

If they're guarding something
there, the exit is the other way.

NELLY

And if I get caught, then I'm
ratting you out. So take your pick.

BYRON
You wouldn't do that.

NELLY
And you would.

They follow the other members down another tunnel. Up ahead-

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - CAVERN - CONTINUOUS

A cavern, tall, wide and well lit. Bats hang from above, several members stand guard and behind them - cages. Dark figures huddled together inside like rats.

Mrs Hunter approaches the guards. Byron and Nelly linger back to watch.

MRS HUNTER
Any movement?

GUARD
None at all.

MRS HUNTER
Take off your masks.

They hesitate.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
Now.

They oblige. Among the guards are Mr Black and Brady. She stares at their faces, content.

Nelly edges closer towards the cavern. Nobody has noticed her.

She narrows her eyes, tries to peer inside the cages. No sign of Jess.

Byron tiptoes behind her. In the wall is a door.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
Two more of you stand guard, if anything happens to them, you will all give yourselves to the Mother, willingly, understand?

The rabble of members that followed her cower. She turns to pick two out to join the guards, facing towards Nelly and Byron but-

Byron opens the door and drags Nelly in with him.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - ROOM - CONTINUOUS

NELLY
What are you doing?

Byron closes the door, stops, heavy breaths.

BYRON'S POV: The door handle melts, the brass wraps around his hand and hardens again. Trapped.

NELLY (CONT'D)
(hushed)
Byron!

He steps away from the door, gets himself together.

BYRON
Thinking.

Nelly looks around the room. It looks like a cell. An old dirty bucket on the floor. Walls stained with blood and mould. Fingernail scratches.

NELLY
(resolve breaking)
I have to get her out.

BYRON
And how you gonna do that? We're doing this my way.

NELLY
Then I may as well be caged up like the rest of them.

BYRON
Just wait, okay? Wait it out here. I'll be back.

Byron slinks out of the room.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT

Mrs Hunter marches down a tunnel, mask off, rage-swept face.

A crumbled figure lies ahead of her.

She grips a knife in her hand and approaches.

It's Doctor Shipman's body. She steps over it.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT

Byron strides down a different tunnel, he shakes his head but it's impossible to clear-

Ahead of him is the same shadow as before. It turns and walks towards a different tunnel, checks if Byron is watching.

SHADOW

Byron.
(seductive)
Byron.

He keeps following until the shadow stops midway through a tunnel. A flurry of connecting tunnels all around.

The shadow waits at a door.

Byron edges closer to the shadow, hand outstretched.

The shadow disappears, like a poof of smoke.

The door is open.

The Connected One stands in the doorway.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - ROOM - NIGHT

Nelly paces in the room. Holds the knife in her hand. Sticky with blood.

Stops. Drops the knife. Looks around the room. Fear in her eyes. She frantically rubs her hands on the walls of the room, staining them more and more red.

She falls to the floor, arms hug her knee, battles against the insanity, against the prospect of all of this being futile. She coughs.

Footsteps outside. She's still. Waiting. The footsteps pass.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - THE HIVE - NIGHT

The Connected One fiddles with vials, makes a concoction in a bowl. Byron sits, watching her.

THE CONNECTED ONE
And why would I help you?

BYRON
Because I want Mrs Hunter gone.

THE CONNECTED ONE
For the Mother or for you?

BYRON
Both.

THE CONNECTED ONE
Human. Above. Below. The Mother's
fire must continue to burn, forget
the maiden, forget the crone. The
Mother is all. The Mother must be
praised.

Byron listens - *is this a riddle or madness?*

The Connected One stops what she's doing. Head twitches like
an animal in headlights.

She stumbles to the vines, feels them.

She continues making her concoction. Urgent. Vials spill.

THE CONNECTED ONE (CONT'D)
Only the Mother knows the ways
between the walls, between the
tunnels. The way out.

She pushes the bowl in his face. He gulps it down.

THE CONNECTED ONE (CONT'D)
(hushed)
Follow her. Follow the vines.

The door swings open. Mrs Hunter stands in the doorway.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - ROOM - NIGHT

Nelly is stood up. Deep breaths.

She hides the knife in her robe and puts on her mask.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - CAVERN - NIGHT

Nelly approaches the guards in the cavern. They watch her.

People cower in the cages. Still no sign of Jess.

The guards stand their ground.

NELLY
Glory to the Mother.

GUARDS
Glory to the Mother.

NELLY
Mrs Hunter needs you all in the
hall. She's found the imposter.

BRADY
Poor fucker.

The guards look at each other. Mr Black steps forward.

MR BLACK
Who's the snake?

NELLY
She wants you all to see for
yourself. To set an example.

MR BLACK
We're not to leave them unattended.

NELLY
That's why I have been ordered to
attend to them.

They stare at her through their masks. Stand still.

NELLY (CONT'D)
Go! Now!

Steadily, they begin to shuffle away from the cages. Mr Black is the last to do so and keeps his eyes on Nelly - *does he know?*

They all pass Nelly. Mr Black takes his eyes off her, she's in the clear.

NELLY (CONT'D)
And hand the keys to me.

They stop. All look at her.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - THE HIVE - NIGHT

They all stand still. Ugly pause.

MRS HUNTER
(to Byron)
What are you doing here?

THE CONNECTED ONE
He sought help, I couldn't provide
it.

MRS HUNTER
I wasn't speaking to you.

Mrs Hunter's glare returns to Byron.

BYRON
I thought The Connected One would
know who the intruder was.

MRS HUNTER
And?

THE CONNECTED ONE
And I couldn't help-

BYRON
And I don't need the witch's help.

Mrs Hunter's expression softens.

BYRON (CONT'D)
I know who it is anyway.

She lets him speak.

BYRON (CONT'D)
I did what you asked. I checked on
Tide. He broke. His wife knows. To
begin anew, we must destroy the
old.

Mrs Hunter smiles.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - CAVERN - NIGHT

The Members grab Nelly's arms, she resists, tries to swing
the knife but is stopped, beaten and restrained.

They rip off her mask and Mr Black holds the knife to her
throat.

MR BLACK
The Mother will give thanks for
your sacrifice.

A scuttle from a cage. A woman peers through the gap in the
bars. It's JESS, 40s, reduced to skin and bones, happiness
and melanin drained from her face.

JESS

Nelly!

Nelly lays eyes upon her sister. Overcome by glee and now unaware of the knife.

NELLY

Jess! Jess! I'll get you out, I promise, I-

Mr Black holds his hand over her mouth.

BRADY

Let's just shut her up here.

MR BLACK

Do that and the Mother will be thankful for your sacrifice too.

BRADY

The Mother or Mrs Hunter?

MR BLACK

You should consider the art of subtlety, Brady.

Another member, WEST chimes in, Brady isn't alone in his angst-

WEST

He's got a point.

BRADY

I'd hardly call a knife to the throat 'subtle'.

MR BLACK

And what would the philosopher call it?

BRADY

Mercy.

Jess cries in the background.

JESS

Let her go, you sick fucks!

MR BLACK

We take her to Mrs Hunter.

BRADY

Her sacrifice should be enough.

MR BLACK

And you have said enough. Unless
you wish to burn with them.

Brady gives in. Mr Black's devotion has rendered the rest of
the guards mute.

MR BLACK (CONT'D)

Do not confuse boldness and
bravery, Mr Brady. Do not confuse
your allegiance with the Mother and
with yourself.

BRADY

And you should not confuse Mrs
Hunter and The Connected One.

Mr Black appears to give this some thought.

They drag Nelly away into the tunnels, Jess whimpers after
her.

INT. MEETING BUILDING - NIGHT

Mrs Hunter climbs out of the hatch, followed by Byron.

Chief Tide, Denver and a couple of members lounge around the
building, masks off. They stiffen up when they see Mrs
Hunter. They wait for orders.

She takes the knife out and approaches them. She points the
knife at Tide.

MRS HUNTER

Seize him.

They look at Tide. Don't move.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

The Mother orders you to seize him.

DENVER

It doesn't seem like the Mother is
giving the orders.

MRS HUNTER

Anyone else neglecting her orders
will be taken like Tide and Denver
here.

Byron marches to Tide and grabs him by the scruff of the
neck. He looks Tide in the eye but doesn't say a word.

The rest of the members help Byron to restrain the two men.

CHIEF TIDE

What are you doing, Catherine?

Mrs Hunter flickers with rage.

MRS HUNTER

You compromised us, Sam. You threatened the Mother's safety, whispering sweet lies to that hysterical wife of yours. You-

The hatch opens.

Out comes the guards, pulling Nelly with them.

MR BLACK

Your guest seems to have forgotten the laws of hospitality, Mrs Hunter.

Byron's shoulders sink.

Mrs Hunter looks at Nelly and then at Byron. He gives nothing away. Mrs Hunter glides towards Nelly.

Byron stares at Nelly whenever someone isn't looking at him.

MRS HUNTER

This isn't the get together I hoped for.

Nelly spits in Mrs Hunter's face.

Mr Black pulls out the documents and Nelly's knife.

MR BLACK

We found these on her. What are these-

Mrs Hunter whips the knife and documents out of Black's hands before he can address them. She looks at the documents, the first is the picture taken of Nelly and Byron. She drops the documents to the floor.

MRS HUNTER

One of you get a torch.

A member descends down the hatch.

CHIEF TIDE

Catherine, you found your imposter, you can-

Byron squeezes Tide's cheeks closed.

BYRON

Be quiet before your superior.

Mrs Hunter goes back towards Byron, her small heels clack on the floor, filling the silence.

She hands Nelly's knife to Byron. Still bloodstained.

MRS HUNTER

She would've stabbed you in the back too. Don't forget that.

BYRON

I won't.

She inspects him, her eyes pierce.

BYRON's POV: Mrs Hunter's face flickers. One second it is her own. The next it is Nelly's, then Claire's, then Winnie's and finally back to Mrs Hunter's own face.

MRS HUNTER

Considering that, how would you have us use her now?

BYRON

However the Mother sees fit.

CHIEF TIDE

Catherine, you're taking this too far. I haven't said a word.

Byron holds the knife to Tide's throat, silencing him.

WEST

(indicating to Tide and Denver)

What've they done?

DENVER

Great fucking question!

MRS HUNTER

They have betrayed me.

BRADY

They answer to The Connected One and the Mother.

MRS HUNTER

I am her mouthpiece and you our disobedient subjects.

BRADY

We are not your subjects.

Murmurs of agreement in the room. Mrs Hunter calms herself, *plan B...*

MRS HUNTER

Perhaps you are right. Perhaps we are all the subjects of the Mother and The Connected One alone.

WEST

Correct.

MRS HUNTER

So, on our day of celebration tomorrow, Chief Tide shall be tried and the Mother shall distribute justice. Does that please everyone?

It does.

A member returns with a torch and hands it to Mrs Hunter. She drops it on the documents, setting them aflame.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

Well I am glad we could come to an arrangement. Until then, put them in the cages.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT

They all lead Nelly, Tide and Denver down the tunnels, towards the cages.

Down in the cavern, a scream can be heard.

JESS (O.S.)

Nelly! Nelly!

Byron staggers momentarily. He puts on his mask.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - MOMENTS LATER

They reach the cages. Mrs Hunter unlocks one with her key.

Nelly is thrown in the one with Jess. Tide in another and Denver in the third cage.

Mrs Hunter locks the cages and addresses the members.

MRS HUNTER

You can all go home now. No need
for guards tonight.

MR BLACK

I wish to stand guard for The
Connected One.

MRS HUNTER

And my wish is your command.
(she turns on the charm)
Please, as a final present to me in
this life, go home. Rest. Tomorrow
is a day for high sprits, not low
brows.

Byron isn't listening. He watches Nelly and Jess embrace.
Next to Jess is an old man, missing a hand. His eyes cloudy,
his hand outstretched towards Nelly. This is HAROLD, 80s,
Bee's husband.

HAROLD

Bee? Bee is that you?

JESS

No, Harold. It's not Bee, I'm
sorry.

MRS HUNTER

Byron?

His gaze is amputated.

Mrs Hunter holds out a key to him.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

Lock up behind them.

Byron takes the key and nods.

INT. MEETING BUILDING - NIGHT

Byron watches the last of the members trail out of the
building and into the dimly-lit street.

EXT. MEETING BUILDING - NIGHT

Byron scrapes the gate closed and clicks the padlock shut.

He turns around, sees a trail of vines slither inside.

He goes inside, locks the doors behind him.

INT. MEETING BUILDING - NIGHT

The vines lead into the hatch. Byron follows.

In the centre of the room, an extinguished torch and the ashes of his documents.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - THE HIVE - NIGHT

The Connected One strokes her vine throne.

THE CONNECTED ONE
Cold. Cold. Why is thee so cold?

Mrs Hunter stands behind her, unnoticed.

MRS HUNTER
They're dying.

The Connected One turns around, shrivels at the sight of Mrs Hunter.

THE CONNECTED ONE
And your ashes shall give them life again. The Mother's fire will be rekindled.

MRS HUNTER
Oh no, no, no, no. The Mother needs me too much.

THE CONNECTED ONE
You're a puppet. Guided by strings. Fleeting. Replaceable.

MRS HUNTER
Replaceable? By who?

THE CONNECTED ONE
One that will bring us into the light. Share the Mother's magic. Spread her worship.

MRS HUNTER
I'm afraid your replacement for me has already been extinguished. He spoke and I have silenced.

THE CONNECTED ONE
You can't silence the vines.

MRS HUNTER

Perhaps not. But perhaps I don't
need to.

THE CONNECTED ONE

You will burn before us all
tomorrow and the Mother shall root
you down with the worms and decay.

Mrs Hunter smiles.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT

Byron follows the vines, receding further into the tunnels.
The torches' fire is weak. Fetus flames.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - THE HIVE - NIGHT

MRS HUNTER

You paint a pretty picture. But
it's obvious that your time down
here has weakened your mind. You've
spent too long with the worms.

The Connected One scurries to her table of vials. Her hands
search all over for a knife. But there's none there.

Mrs Hunter floats towards her, slides the knife out from her
robe.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

To start anew, we must destroy the
old.

THE CONNECTED ONE

The Mother will have her way with-

Mrs Hunter is upon her.

The door swings open. Byron stares at the slaughter.

Slashes and groans and-

Silence.

Mrs Hunter brushes herself off. Her robe bloody.

She turns around to see Byron.

MRS HUNTER
 Our dear guardian, The Connected
 One, has been fell by our betrayer.

Byron tries to keep a straight face - not Nelly, not Nelly...

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
 By Chief Tide.

Byron hides his relief.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
 We found her here, already lying in
 her own blood, among her vines and
 at rest with the Mother. That is
 the picture we shall paint at trial
 tomorrow. The story you shall weave
 when we decide the fate of Mrs and
 Mr Tide. They shall be sacrificed
 to avenge The Connected One whilst
 the rest rot and are forgot. I
 shall take her place and you shall
 take mine. You shall have whichever
 house, whichever riches, whichever
 woman you so desire. We start
 fresh.

BYRON
 We start fresh.

Mrs Hunter slices her hand open, drips the blood into a bowl
 on the table. Byron offers his hand and she repeats the
 process. She adds liquids from vials and offers it for him to
 drink.

He gets on his knees, kisses her ring and drinks from the
 bowl.

MRS HUNTER
 Praise me.

He looks at her in the eyes, her face splashed with blood.

BYRON
 Glory to The Connected One.

She caresses his face and takes the bowl away.

MRS HUNTER
 I have one more thing to attend to.
 Lock up as you leave.

Byron nods and gets up towards the door.

Mrs Hunter coughs - *not so fast*. She holds out a hand.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
For the cages.

Byron hands her the set of keys. She takes three off the chain then hands the rest back to him.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT

Byron closes the door behind him. The weight of his actions dawning upon him.

At his feet, he sees vines stretching further into the tunnels.

He follows.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT

The vines slither down the tunnels quicker. Byron chases after them. The torches barely aflame.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT

The vines lead to a crossroads of tunnels. At the crossroads is the shadow.

Byron follows.

Down this tunnel there is no light. No shadow. No vines.

A noise from behind-

SHADOW (O.S.)
(guttural, almost
indistinguishable)
You've ran your race, Byron. The
whole lap. And you're right where
you started.

He twists his head around-

The shadow looms large behind him. No longer feminine but spectral, monstrous - like the demonic stag Furfur. It hisses and stretches towards him.

Byron thunders down the tunnel. Doesn't look back. Hissing follows him.

Crash. A door.

Byron flies straight through into-

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - MIRROR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Byron is met by his own reflection. On all sides. Consuming.

He turns around. But there's no door. Just mirrors.

Byron feels his way through the room of mirrors. His gaze refuses to look itself in the eye.

SHADOW (O.S.)

Byron.

The flicker of a shadow twirls in the reflection of one of the mirrors. Byron notices it, swings around but- nothing.

He's forced to look at himself, dead in the eye.

He breaks down, falls to the floor, hands over ears.

The reflections grow darker, sucking the light out of the place.

Byron stands up, agitated, angry-

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

Look at what you've become.

Byron punches the mirror in front of him. It shatters. All the mirrors shatter, a wave of noise and then-

EXT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT

Silence. A wind whistles. Byron opens his eyes.

He's at the end of the tunnel. It opens up in the side of a cliff face. The sea frothing beneath him and the moon-lit sky above.

A path of steps carved into the cliff-face leads down from the opening and onto a stony shoal, illuminated by the moon.

A gasp of relief and a glint of a smile.

He looks down at the steps and then his foot - next to it is a sharp piece of chalk.

He picks it up and heads back into the tunnel.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT

Byron scratches an arrow onto the side of the tunnel with the shard of chalk.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT

He turns down another tunnel. Reaches its end. Feels ahead of him.

The cold clank of metal. The stairs to the library room.

He climbs upwards, pushes on the hatch but it won't budge. It's locked.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Byron turns on a light in his living room and crashes into the sofa.

He picks up the empty whiskey bottle, tries to retrieve the last drops. No luck. He throws the bottle, it smashes.

Collects himself. In one chalk-stained hand is the photograph of him and Claire, in another his phone. He dials a number.

Beep beep. Beep beep. Beep beep. He pulls the phone away from his ear when-

CLAIRE (O.S.)
(sleepy)
Hello? Who is this?

He takes his time.

BYRON
It's, erm, it's me, Claire. It's
Byron.

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Claire drags herself out of bed, flings the covers over a man in her bed and retreats to the corner of her room.

CLAIRE
Byron, why the fuck are you calling
me at this time? Scrap that, why
the fuck are you calling me?

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

This hurts him to do this. This is the first time he has meant these words-

BYRON

Because, I'm sorry. I am sorry for hurting you. And lying. And well-

CLAIRE (O.S.)

Look, Byron, if you're thinking about getting back together, you can forget it.

He laughs.

BYRON

I'm, er, I'm not. I just owed you an apology. At the very least.

INT. APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Claire is ready to spit her venom but - *did he seriously just say that? This isn't the Byron she knows.* Beat.

CLAIRE

I guess, I'm sorry too for how it ended.

BYRON (O.S.)

Don't be. Don't be. It wasn't on you. You get forced into a life of lies, you only hurt yourself telling the truth.

CLAIRE

Right.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A pause. Byron opens his mouth but stops himself.

CLAIRE (O.S.)

Look, no offense but it's the middle of the night-

BYRON

Right, yeah. Yeah, good night, Claire. Look after yourself.

He hangs up.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

An officer, SANDERSON, starts to pick up a phone whilst another officer, TOON, bears down on him and his desk.

SANDERSON
Give the man a lie in, he'd only
fall asleep at his desk.

TOON
That's not the point, I don't wanna
have to work on my lunch hour.

SANDERSON
Every hour's lunch hour.

TOON
Just call him. You know what, call
fucking Denver too, arse licker
thinks he can bail whenever the
boss does.

Toon snatches the phone and dials.

TOON (CONT'D)
Nothing.

SANDERSON
Denver?

He dials again. Same result.

They exchange a look. *Hmm, that's weird.*

EXT. CHIEF TIDE'S HOUSE - DAY

The officers bang on the door.

SANDERSON
Chief?

They look back at the drive. Two cars.

TOON
Rate they're fucking?

Knock again.

TOON (CONT'D)
Bet Denver's on the camera.

Shout again. Nothing again.

TOON (CONT'D)
They're fucking. Come on.

Toon leaves for the squad car on the road. Sanderson lingers, peeks through the letter box.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - DAY

An invitation lies on the floor, underneath his letter box.

INT. CARE HOME - DAY

Byron's in a corridor. Walks past a door in a co, with a plaque upon it: 'WINNIE HORN.'

He looks up and down. Empty. Knocks on a door. Bee opens it.

INT. CARE HOME - BEE'S ROOM - DAY

Byron shuffles around, he can't sit down, can't stay still. Bee looks anxious.

BYRON
You have to listen to what I'm
telling you. Okay, Bee? You have to
listen and you have to believe me.
Okay, right, I'm sorry.

BEE
What have I told you about saying
sorry.

BYRON
Your son was right. Derek, he was
right.

BEE
What- what do you mean?

BYRON
People took your husband. They
still have him. Underground. In
tunnels.

By looking at Bee's face, Byron can tell how crazy he sounds.

BEE
Byron, you're scaring me.

BYRON

You should be. Mrs Hunter, lovely, caring, Mrs Hunter and her lot on the hill took your husband and took a lot more and they have them and they-

BEE

They what?

He stumbles. He still can't bring himself to reveal all.

BYRON

Look, it's Mrs Hunter. This whole thing is her and she has your husband. She has Harold.

Bee is tearing up. But with rage as much as sadness.

BEE

You said you were here to help me.

BYRON

I am, how can you not see that?

BEE

This is the opposite of help. It's cruel. It's lies, it's-

A knock at the door. Winnie walks in.

WINNIE

Bee?

Winnie processes what she sees. Bee visibly upset.

WINNIE (CONT'D)

(to Byron)

What have you done?

Byron moves towards his mother, pleads-

BYRON

Mum, you have to listen to me, you have to get yourself and Bee out of here, you-

WINNIE

'You', 'you', 'you', you need to look at yourself before coming in here, barking orders and whatever else to a woman, to women-

BYRON

But mum-

WINNIE

(unrelenting)

-that have never once asked for your help, never once bothered you. You had no reason to come back here. But come you did with grand claims of wanting to be a better son, wanting to look after me, but instead of seeing me, instead of doing what you said you've made it your personal mission to pester and upset a woman you have never met, a woman who has been through more than you are capable of conceiving, a woman who was coping until you came along.

BYRON

I cheated on Claire.

Winnie is exasperated and this stops her in her tracks.

BYRON (CONT'D)

A few times. Once with a client. That's why she left me.

WINNIE

I can't bear to look at you.

BYRON

Me too.

He leaves.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Byron stares at the invitation. Drinks from his hip flask. He tucks it away in his clothes.

His watch ticks. It's midnight.

EXT. MEETING BUILDING - NIGHT

Byron, decked in his robe and mask, unlocks the padlock on the gate, scrapes the gate open and then heaves the door of the building open.

INT. MEETING BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Byron stares straight ahead. On the corner of the stage is a wicker figure, in the shape of a woman with vines for hair. It's placed underneath the chimney. At its feet is a wooden pyre. And upon the pyre, what appears to be bodies. And below that, chains welded into the stage.

The rest of the building has been set up like a courtroom. Two thrones on the stage. Judges. Rows of chairs on the floor, facing the stage. Jury. Three stools on the floor, facing the jury. Prosecuted.

MRS HUNTER

You're familiar with Socrates?

She appears to have come from out of nowhere.

BYRON

Only in name.

MRS HUNTER

He was sentenced to death - for thinking. For ideas. For the unfamiliar. A wolf approaches a field of sheep with a toothless grin and basket of food. How is he received? With bleating hysteria. Socrates should not have trusted the public with truth. We will not. We trust each other, that is all.

Byron nods, maintains the façade.

BYRON

Then you will trust me to take up your mantle and perform the Mother's ritual?

MRS HUNTER

By all means. It's time to build our own democracy.

She hands Byron a whistle.

EXT. MEETING BUILDING - NIGHT

A whistle blows.

Feet shuffle.

Gate locked shut. Byron is the last to enter. He locks the door behind him. No escape.

INT. MEETING BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

The members find their seats in the jury. Mrs Hunter watches them from her throne.

We see them from her gaze. They shuffle anxiously. Hands fidgeting.

Byron joins her on stage.

Mrs Hunter floats to her feet and stands at the altar. On the altar: Tall candles. A bowl with a muddy mixture. Several handcuffs, keys and towels for gags. A crown fashioned from a stag's antlers. And a hammer - she picks it up and wields it as a gavel.

MRS HUNTER

We are here again, tonight, at the behest of our all-powerful Connected One. She wished us to give thanks and praise, to sacrifice. To begin anew and destroy the old. Perhaps, she meant those words more than ever last night. Perhaps, the vines whispered to her as they have whispered to me. For we are here not only to give thanks to the Mother, but to dispense her justice. To avenge her for the murder of Doctor Shipman-

She waits for it to settle in. She heads to the pyre.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

And The Connected One.

She lifts the veil off the bodies. Outrage ensues. Shouts of anger. Mrs Hunter struggles to hide her pleasure.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

In light of this tragedy, I give myself over to the Mother, I will be her new Connected One, her maiden, mother and crone. And after listening to the Mother, my first act as your prophet is to pronounce Byron Horn as my successor, as your new leader.

Discontent stirs. Brady's voice is one of many.

BRADY

He is not one of ours!

MRS HUNTER

Anyone who disputes the Mother
shall give themselves over to her.

The discontented voices slowly fade. Mrs Hunter turns to Byron, notions to his throne. He sits. She walks to him, holding the antler crown.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

Do you, Byron Horn, promise to
serve the Mother, above and below?

BYRON

I do.

MRS HUNTER

Do you renounce all false deities?

BYRON

I do.

MRS HUNTER

And do you promise to extinguish
her enemies?

BYRON

I do.

She places to crown on his head.

MRS HUNTER

Vines. Trees. Dirt. Human. Above.
Below. Maiden. Mother. Crone.
Arise, as her own.

He stands up. Coronated, plays his role. He approaches the altar, rests his crown upon it.

BYRON

I ask you all to make yourselves
naked to the Mother.

The Members take off their masks. Byron notices something and stops momentarily - Mr Black isn't in the front row like usual. He shakes it off, resumes-

BYRON (CONT'D)

To kiss her hand.

They kiss their rings.

BYRON (CONT'D)

To drink her blood.

Byron raises his bowl. Doesn't drink. He watches as the Members pass around the bowls and drink from them. Intoxicated.

BYRON (CONT'D)
And to extinguish her enemies.

They blow out the candles. Byron leaves the candles on the altar alight.

BYRON (CONT'D)
And step into her light.

The electric lights whizz on.

Mrs Hunter stands beside him. Hands him the handcuffs and the cage keys.

MRS HUNTER
Take Sutcliffe with you and fetch
the sacrifices.

Mr Sutcliffe, masked and robed, waits next to the hatch.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT

Sutcliffe and Byron descend the stairs into the tunnels. They walk out of sight.

Hiding in the darkness is another masked Member.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - CAVERN - NIGHT

Sutcliffe and Byron go down a tunnel, towards the cavern. The flames of the torches are weak, barely a flicker.

Byron, slightly behind Sutcliffe, moves his hand against the wall of the tunnel. They approach the cages.

BYRON
Your disappearance caused quite the
stir last night.

MR SUTCLIFFE
Oh yes, your little friend has a
lot to answer for.

BYRON
As do you.

Byron tackles Mr Sutcliffe from behind and beats him before he has the chance to react in his intoxication.

Byron whips Sutcliffe's mask off and shovels a handful of fungi into his mouth and forces him to swallow it.

Sutcliffe crawls away gasping for air, then lies still, eyes dancing at the cold ceiling.

Byron takes out the keys and unlocks all the cages.

All the prisoners scamper out, Byron helps all he can.

BYRON (CONT'D)
Go down the tunnels, look on the
walls, follow the white arrows.

He keeps telling the prisoners their way out. He spots Chief Tide, Mary and Denver limbering away, he stops them-

BYRON (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, you guys have to come
with me.

Mary protests, guilt reigns over Byron's face.

DENVER
Oh so you save us then send us
straight back to them?

BYRON
'Them'? To you, you mean.

Denver - taken aback.

BYRON (CONT'D)
And now, I'm going to need you to
put on that mask one last time.

DENVER
You're the craziest of the lot.

CHIEF TIDE
Denver, do as he says.

Denver can't believe this but he'd go the distance with Tide no matter what.

Suddenly, Jess jumps on Byron, hugs him. She looks upon Byron's face for the first time in twenty years.

JESS
I'm either dead or I've lost my
fucking mind.

BYRON
Well if it helps, you're not dead.

She laughs, but the happiness quickly drains from her face. She lets go of him, they help Harold, on his last legs.

All the prisoners are out. It dawns upon Byron.

BYRON (CONT'D)
Where's Nelly?

Jess' face says it all.

INT. MEETING BUILDING - NIGHT

The hatch opens.

Byron and Denver, masked and concealed, escort Mr and Mrs Tide out of the hatch. They're gagged and handcuffed - *but unbeknown to anyone else, the handcuffs aren't locked*. We see Tide holding his in places with his fingers.

A sea of masked faces watch them. Whispers in the crowd.

On the stage - Nelly is chained up next to the pyre. The Member (Mr Black, masked) standing next to her. Byron tries his best not to look at her.

They sit Mr and Mrs Tide in the two seats vacated for them. Mrs Hunter bangs the hammer on the altar. Silence.

MRS HUNTER
The Mother's court is now in session. Samuel and Mary Tide, you are to be tried for conspiring to betray the secrets of our society and by extension, betraying the Mother. And most heinously, for the murder of The Connected One.

Chief Tide starts to moan through his gag but Byron slaps him in the face. A look - *don't fucking blow it...*

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
Now, we will hear the argument from the prosecution. Byron-

Byron strolls in front of the jury. A role he has played many times before.

BYRON
Samuel Tide, you have heard the accusations against you, how do you plead?

He whips the gag off Tide's mouth.

CHIEF TIDE

Not guilty.

BYRON

So you deny revealing the existence of our organization to your wife, Mary Tide?

CHIEF TIDE

I do.

BYRON

You deny letting an intruder into a meeting of our organization?

CHIEF TIDE

Yes, I do!

BYRON

And you deny murdering the vessel of the Mother, The Connected One?

CHIEF TIDE

I protect, I do not murder.

BYRON

Protect is a funny way to put it. Since you clearly lack a talent for words, I'll speak plainly - do you deny it, yes or no?

CHIEF TIDE

Oh course I deny it.

BYRON

Then allow me to present the evidence for the prosecution. Two nights ago, yourself and I visited a Mister Derek Hive, did we not?

CHIEF TIDE

We did.

BYRON

And you murdered him in an act of self defense, did you not?

Mary's face twists in horror.

CHIEF TIDE

(after a moment)

Yes, I did. But for the sake of this society. He had-

BYRON

Yes or no, Mr Tide. That's all I ask.

Tide continue to plead but Byron talks over him-

BYRON (CONT'D)

And the next morning at your home, you were consumed with guilt and told your wife, Mary, about the existence and acts of our organization.

CHIEF TIDE

No, I didn't.

Chief Tide's faith in Byron is breaking.

BYRON

But I heard you. Every word. Allow my first witness to elaborate: myself.

A smile grows on Mrs Hunter's face.

BYRON (CONT'D)

Mary, you said 'How can you say this is for the good of the village? How could you keep this from me? I'm your wife', did you not?

Mary stutters.

BYRON (CONT'D)

'It made sense once.' That was your reply, Chief Tide. It made sense once. Do you believe in the Mother, Chief Tide?

CHIEF TIDE

Yes.

BYRON

Then why did you kill her messenger, The Connected One?

CHIEF TIDE

I didn't. I didn't even know she was dead.

BRADY

He didn't fucking kill her!

MRS HUNTER

Please elaborate, Mister Brady. I'm sure the Mother would be happy to hear whatever your whining mouth has to say - whether that be evidence, or a confession.

Brady is silence. Byron continues.

BYRON

But The Connected One knew. The vines revealed all. She knew of your treachery and that is why you killed her, is it not?

CHIEF TIDE

No, I-

Byron gives him a look. Chief Tide holds his tongue.

BYRON

Perhaps, we all need to consider Tide's motives for the crime. Who here believes that our society should remain secret?

Next to no reply from the Members. Mrs Hunter looks none to happy with this line of inquiry.

BYRON (CONT'D)

Come on you fucking inebriates, should it or should it not? Should the Mother be praised by all or a few? Should Tide have told his wife or should he be punished for this?

MR BLACK

All should worship her! It's what The Connected One wanted.

Murmurs of contrasting opinions. Mrs Hunter forces her way into the middle-

MRS HUNTER

Objection. This does not seem relevant to the trial, Byron.

Mrs Hunter, a forced smile - *watch yourself.*

BYRON

Apologies. I think we have rather enough evidence for Mister and Mrs Tide.

Byron glances at himself in one of the mirrors on the wall - *this is how he wants to see himself*. He pounces onto the stage. Looks at Nelly, who can't bear to look back.

BYRON (CONT'D)

And what is she to be trialled for?

MRS HUNTER

She is not.

BYRON

Connected One, you said the jury would be able to pass judgement on the Mother's behalf.

Mumbles of agreement. Mrs Hunter concedes.

MRS HUNTER

Very well. Nelly Blyth is to be trialled for the murder of Doctor Shipman.

Byron is stopped in his tracks. *Does she know? How does she know?* Changes tune-

BYRON

Excellent. And may she be unchained and questioned in front of the jury like Mr and Mrs Tide?

MRS HUNTER

She may not.

BYRON

I'm not sure the jury can see particularly well now.

MRS HUNTER

She may not.

One fell step and Mrs Hunter will be upon him. Byron knows this. She's clutching the hammer. He forces a smile.

BYRON

Very well. Then allow me to call my first witness.

He looks in the crowd. He looks to Nelly, her fists clenched, hanging to her last shred of trust, she goes to speak when-

BYRON (CONT'D)

Myself. I killed Doctor Shipman.

Disbelief rings around the room. Nelly raises her head, shock as much as thanks.

BYRON (CONT'D)

His like threatened your precious
Connected One and her wish to
reveal ourselves to our village.

MRS HUNTER

Sutcliffe, seize him.

Denver doesn't move.

Mrs Hunter slams the hammer onto the altar.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

Somebody throw this traitorous scum
onto the pyre.

A handful of Members stumble towards the stage to apprehend Byron. The rest stay in their seats, enthralled, high.

BYRON

But I took it upon myself, as your
new leader, to carry out her
wishes.

MRS HUNTER

I am your leader. You are my
subjects.

BRADY

We're not your subjects!

BYRON

Quite right, Brady. And neither
were your prisoners. So I let them
out.

We see some of the Members faces as this dawns on them -
shit.

MRS HUNTER

Good luck to them, they won't get
anywhere.

BYRON

I wouldn't bank on that. Your
secret is out. It's above. In other
words, it's fucking over.

Some Members apprehend Byron.

MRS HUNTER

Yes, you're quite right, Byron. It is.

Mrs Hunter picks up the flaming candle from the altar and throws it on the pyre. The flames rising up and begin flickering near Nelly.

NELLY

Byron!
(turns to Mr Black)
Help me!

Mr Black remains still, on the fence, in thought.

Byron's forced into action, he shrugs off his assailants. There's little resistance, they want to hear what he has to say.

BYRON

I implore you all, the jury, to think for yourselves. Who is more likely to have killed The Connected One? A scared husband or a woman in need of a scapegoat to evade her own sacrifice?

MRS HUNTER

Throw him in the fire.

Click. Disbelief on her face.

Chief Tide has his hands free and locks his handcuffs on Mrs Hunter's wrists. He's accompanied by Denver, Brady, West, Mary and a scattering of others.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

Unhand me now.

Mrs Hunter swings her hammer to no avail, Tide knocks it out of her hands.

CHIEF TIDE

That's not happening, Catherine.

MRS HUNTER

I am The Connected One. I have made the ultimate sacrifice, I have stripped myself of everything-

BYRON

The ultimate sacrifice is a fitting way to put it. To begin anew, we must destroy the old.

(MORE)

BYRON (CONT'D)

Isn't that what you preached, Mrs Hunter? Isn't that what you put into murderous practice.

Mrs Hunter looks all around, faces and masks. Friend or foe, she no longer knows.

MRS HUNTER

If any of you wish to keep the life that I and the Mother have built for you, you will unhand me.

BYRON

A life that all of us have built by exploiting people that we have coerced into ignorance.

MRS HUNTER

They are happy being ignorant.

BYRON

They won't be any longer.

NELLY

Byron, its too fucking hot, I can't take it.

The wicker figure is ablaze now. Byron approaches Mrs Hunter.

BYRON

Where's the key?

MRS HUNTER

Oh darling, you really should have thought of that before you arrested me.

Byron picks up the hammer, a rage not yet seen from him.

BYRON

Where is the key.

Mr Black pipes up.

MR BLACK

Let Mrs Hunter go and you can have it.

Byron relents, gives Tide a look - *let her go...*

Tide reluctantly obliges. Mr Black holds out a key, Byron snatches it off him, rushes to Nelly and unchains her.

Mrs Hunter swaggers to Mr Black, a grin across her face.

MRS HUNTER

The Mother demands you to throw these traitors into the fire.

MR BLACK

Why shouldn't we throw you in?

Mrs Hunter doesn't expect that. She looks at Black, a single eyebrow of his raised.

MRS HUNTER

Because you are my subjects.

MR BLACK

Subjects?

BYRON

If they are your subjects then you should have no problem with explaining yourself to them.

MRS HUNTER

I never once made The Connected One explain herself to me.

BYRON

And The Connected One never once referred to these people as her subjects. Will you or will you not, explain yourself?

MRS HUNTER

For what? For how I have given you all wealth and security? For how-

MR BLACK

For how you killed The Connected One. For how you publicly defied her. For how you denied The Mother of your sacrifice.

BYRON

You want a trial? You'll get one. I ask the jury, is she guilty?

They agree. Mrs Hunter turns desperate.

MRS HUNTER

This clique, the lot of you, you were never in it for the Mother, only for yourselves and you know what? Let me satisfy you, my trust, my charity, you can have it all. Every penny.

Denver takes one of the gags (used on Tide and Mary) and silences her.

DENVER

Nothing will satisfy me as much as that.

CHIEF TIDE

I will see to it that she is locked away a long time.

Mary grabs his arm.

MARY

But, Sam-

CHIEF TIDE

Along with myself, Mary.

MR BLACK

The Mother was promised a sacrifice.

BRADY

The Mother must be praised.

MR BLACK

And quite frankly, your change in fortunes comes at a cost. But that cost will not be the Mother's. Do you understand?

DENVER

You can have her.

CHIEF TIDE

I cannot let another murder escape the law. I cannot.

BYRON

This one's not on you. I will do it.

A few looks of horror. More of contentment. The pyre still burns behind them.

INT. MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

Byron stands next to the altar, wearing his antler crown.

The pyre still burns. The Members wait. Mrs Hunter is gagged and chained to the floor, the embers flickering at her hair.

Byron addresses them all.

BYRON

Members, in order to give thanks to the Mother and provide her with this sacrifice, we must make ourselves naked as nature. We must kiss her hand and drink her blood.

He moves before Mrs Hunter, wild-eyed.

BYRON (CONT'D)

And we must extinguish her enemies.

He places the antler crown on her head. The look in his eyes says it all - *he doesn't have the strength to do this.*

He takes out his hip flask. One last drink. Dutch courage. He throws the hip flask on Mrs Hunter, whiskey spilling onto her.

He takes the last candle off the altar and stands before her.

He looks deep into Mrs Hunter's eyes. Sees his reflection. The flames roar. The grip on the candle weakens. *He can't do it.*

Suddenly, a hand rips the candle from him and throws the candle onto Mrs Hunter's alcohol-soaked body.

She rises in flames. Screaming.

And Byron watches on as Nelly stands beside him, doing what he could not.

INT. PRISON - DAY

SUPER: 6 MONTHS LATER

A cell. A knock at the door.

PRISON GUARD (O.S.)

Horn. Gotta visitor.

INT. PRISON - DAY

The prison guard escorts a handcuffed Byron through a prison. Byron's taken a beating, face swelled and purple. He's uglier than ever before yet he looks more content.

He passes the scowling faces of Mr Sutcliffe and Mrs Moors in prison overalls.

INT. PRISON VISITATION ROOM - DAY

Nelly sits at an empty table. Hands fiddle, impression of anxiety.

She looks across the room, notices Mary Tide at a table with a handcuffed Chief Tide. Look like lovers chatting over a milkshake.

A guard escorts Byron to Nelly's table. He's happy to see her. She's more concerned about the state of his face.

NELLY

What happened?

BYRON

Hello to you too.

NELLY

Byron, your face is purple.

BYRON

Yeah, well prison isn't the safest place for a lawyer.

NELLY

Yeah but you-

BYRON

Doesn't matter. They don't care. I'm fine.

NELLY

Are you sure? Have they moved you?

BYRON

I'm fine. Honestly, I'm good.

His swelled lips crack a smile.

NELLY

Promise?

BYRON

I mean, I'm sober as a nun so it's basically rehab too.

NELLY

Sounds dreadful.

BYRON

It's not that bad. Anyway, how's Jess?

NELLY

Yeah I meant to say for her, she's sorry she couldn't come this time, they're snowed under at the school nowadays. But it does her good.

BYRON

That's good. That's all I need to hear.

NELLY

You heard off your mum?

He shakes his head. Acceptance twinged with regret.

NELLY (CONT'D)

She'll come round.

BYRON

Nah, erm, I mean it's best if she doesn't come to be honest.

NELLY

I'm sure she will in her own time.

BYRON

Maybe, yeah. So how are you, how's the hospital?

NELLY

I quit.

BYRON

What? Really?

Guilt stretches on her face.

NELLY

That's kinda why I came. One of the reasons why I came. Me and Jess are doing it. Next week, we're going away.

BYRON

That's great!

NELLY

Yeah, I guess.

BYRON

Nelly, it's great. Stop the fucking pity act, okay? It's great, where are you going?

NELLY

Jess wants to do Route 66.

BYRON

And what do you want to do?

NELLY

New York looks cool.

BYRON

Yeah, it is.

NELLY

And San Francisco, New Orleans,
Charleston-

BYRON

See, that's more like it.

NELLY

But we can't, we don't have the
money. It doesn't matter though,
I'm really excited.

BYRON

Doesn't matter my arse.

Byron reaches inside his overalls, deep into his pants, Nelly
looks at him - *what the?*

He takes out his watch, pristine condition, he hands it to
her but she doesn't take it.

NELLY

I rate that's the best thing to
ever come out of your pants.

They laugh.

BYRON

Yeah well I can't give them another
reason to give me a beating.

(beat)

Take it. It's clean, I promise.

NELLY

It's not that.

BYRON

What then?

NELLY

It means a lot to you. I mean, how
much is it even worth?

BYRON

More to you than to me. I want you
to have it. Sell it, trust me,
it'll cover San Fran, the lot.

NELLY

Byron, I can't.

He shoves it into her hand.

BYRON

Please.

She resists but sees how genuine Byron is being and accepts
the watch.

NELLY

Thank you.

PRISON GUARD

Time!

Some prisoners and visitors begin to get out of their seats.

BYRON

My pleasure.

NELLY

No, Byron. I never truly thanked
you. I should be in here with you.
I-

His finger silences her.

BYRON

Did the right thing. I, however,
met with the devil on several
occasions and snapped his hand off
every single time. I was due a
fall. But the fact that I could
take yours too makes the rest of
them that bit more bearable.

They share a look. A look of trust, sincerity, understanding.

A guard shatters the moment. He begins pulling Byron up.

PRISON GUARD

Horn. Time.

NELLY

I'll convince your mum to come.

BYRON

It's fine. Honestly. She's got her
friends. It's all she ever needed.

The guard pulls Byron away. Nelly goes to speak, Byron's
smile stops her, infectious.

BYRON (CONT'D)

Go live your life, Nelly Blyth!

INT. PRISON - DAY

Byron is escorted through the prison.

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Byron stands in his cell. Small, bare. Metal toilet in the
corner. Above the toilet, a mirror made of steel.

Byron looks at his reflection. It's blurred but we can make
out his content expression.

FADE OUT:

THE END