

THE TEMPLAR KILLINGS

SCREENPLAY BY

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FADE IN:

ON A LARGE EARLY-RENAISSANCE PAINTING

of an austere castle, with a storm of biblical proportion raging overhead.

A Q-tip held in a white cotton glove removes seven centuries of dirt from the grimy painting, bit by bit. History comes alive with SOUNDS OF BATTLE as swipes of the Q-tip reveal:

Atop the castle tower, the red-splayed cross of a Templar flag SNAPS in the HOWLING WIND.

Soldiers MARCH on the castle, fleur-de-lis emblems emblazoned on burnished black armor.

A row of French archers, bows CREAKING TAUT.

A volley of arrows WHISTLE over the battlements, from where bearded knights stare down grimly. A Q-tip delicately rubs dirt from their white habits, exposing red Templar crosses.

A monstrous siege-tower RUMBLES forward.

Watching from a nearby hill, French officers huddle around amber torches. A wipe of a Q-tip reveals the crimson robe of a Cardinal, eyeing the castle with cruel determination.

A terrified officer points to a CRACKING lightning bolt, shouting to fight the WIND.

OFFICER (V.O.)

Your Eminence, we must withdraw!
It is God's wrath!

CARDINAL (V.O.)

You're wrong, Commander. We are
God's wrath!

Boulders SMASH the walls of the doomed castle. The sounds of battle fade.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE CASTLE - PRESENT DAY FRANCE

Only scattered ruins remain.

IN THE GUTTED CHAPEL

Kneeling by a marble effigy of a Templar Knight set in the stone floor, FATHER MOULINET creates a pencil rubbing of the name plate.

Reaching for the tray of cheese at his side, he knocks over his glass of red wine. The spilled liquid disappears through a crack in the floor that runs alongside the effigy.

Curious, he empties the bottle of wine into the crack.

It drains out of sight. He grabs his cheese knife and scrapes dirt from the crack. His motion becomes frenzied.

DARKNESS

Stone GRATES on stone as the effigy is pried aside. Light streams onto steps descending into a crypt. Father Moulinet drops a pry-bar and eases cautiously down.

His flashlight beam slices through the darkness, revealing rotted Templar banners dripping from the ceiling.

He edges deeper into the crypt, his breath becoming visible in the cool, damp air. A sudden chill grips him --

Caught in his light is a skeleton in chain mail, sitting against a wall. Arms wrapped around a wood chest.

Father Moulinet gently frees the chest from the skeleton's grip. He blows dust off the lid, exposing an inlaid Templar cross.

With trembling hands he opens the lid. An escaping amber glow illuminates his astonished face, as if God Himself shines from within. Father Moulinet crosses himself.

FATHER MOULINET

Hallelujah.

EXT. VATICAN CITY - DAY

Topped by a large gold cross, the massive dome of St. Peter's Basilica gleams in the sun.

Behind it, Vatican City. Heart of the Roman Catholic church. A realm cloaked in majesty and mystery. Somewhere within the government palace, a shrill phone RINGS insistently.

INT. GOVERNMENT PALACE HALLWAY

Footsteps echo through a long marble corridor adorned with religious frescoes. A flustered Bishop hurries down the hallowed hall as quickly as protocol allows.

Reaching an ornately-carved mahogany door, he gathers his courage, then enters. The door swings shut behind him.

The stained glass transom is inscribed SEGRETIARIO DI STATO.

EXT. ST. PETER'S SQUARE - DAY

The Square bustles with priests in cassocks, Africans in brightly-colored garments, and other happy pilgrims and tourists from around the globe.

Watching it all from atop Bernini's colonnades are one hundred and forty huge statues of martyrs and saints.

Flanked by two stone behemoths is a flesh-and-blood sentinel, Swiss Guard Major PETER BRAUN. 30s. Soldier of God. In non-dress blues, he scans the Square with high-power binoculars.

THROUGH BINOCULARS

People enter the Square through airport-style metal detectors. Rome police use mirrored poles and sniffer dogs to check parked cars and buses for hidden explosives.

He pans to the Arch of the Bells gate left of the Basilica, where two Swiss Guards stand in Renaissance purple-and-gold striped uniforms, carrying eight-foot-long halberds.

They watch workmen position waist-high wooden security fences, creating a motorcade route out of the Vatican.

VOICE (OVER PETER'S EARPHONE)

Major, you're wanted by the Colonel.

PETER

(into lapel mic)

On my way.

He scans the Square again. Satisfied, he turns to go.

EXT. SWISS GUARD BARRACKS

Peter kisses his fingertips and touches the crucifix by the door as he enters the barracks just inside St. Anne's Gate.

INT. COLONEL KESSLER'S OFFICE

COLONEL KESSLER loads .45s into an empty clip at his desk. Standing across from him, Peter fights to suppress his anger.

PETER

With respect, Colonel, I am an officer of the Swiss Guards, not a delivery boy. The Dove flies in one hour. My duty is to protect --

COL. KESSLER

Your duty is whatever I say it is.

He JAMS the clip into his SIG-Sauer 220 handgun.

COL. KESSLER

I know you're disappointed, Peter,
but as I was just reminded myself,
we don't always get to choose how we
serve God.

Peter knows he just lost the battle.

INT. BARRACKS HALLWAY

Peter marches to the Orderly Room, stretches across the
sign-in counter and grabs the duty roster.

Under LONDON, Col. Kessler's name heads a list of twelve
Swiss Guards. Peter crosses off 'Major Peter Braun'.

INT. PETER'S QUARTERS

A spartan room dominated by a large cross. Near it, a framed
photo of Peter piloting the papal helicopter, the Pope at his
side, grinning like they just heard a good Protestant joke.

Peter opens his suitcase and removes his dress uniform, with
five medals on the breast. Watching from the doorway, a baby-
faced Swiss Guard, KLAUS, looks stunned.

KLAUS

A scavenger run? You?

Peter yanks open his closet. Taped to the inside of the door
is a gun range silhouette with precise bullet-holes forming a
cross through the heart. He hangs his uniform over it.

KLAUS

What did this French priest find,
the Holy Grail?

Peter SLAMS the door shut.

EXT. ST. ROSE PARKING GARAGE / INT. FIAT - DAY

Peter SLAMS the car door and hangs his St. Christopher medal
from the rear view mirror. The engine ROARS to life.

He PEELS out of the row of gleaming blue Fiats, into --

BELVEDERE LANE

-- and stops at St. Anne's Gate. Two Swiss Guards salute and
raise the barrier. He accelerates out of the Vatican.

EXT. HIGHWAY A1 - DAY

Peter speeds north along the highway.

EXT. ROME'S FIUMICINO AIRPORT - DAY

A 767 touches down.

INT. ARRIVAL GATE - DAY

Sprawled on a chair, slovenly DETECTIVE MAZZA glances up from his lurid crime tabloid to check the arrivals streaming in.

He's suddenly alert at the sight of a 2'x3' flat leather portfolio moving through the crowd.

Mazza hurries after the man, scrambling to keep up with his purposeful strides.

DETECTIVE MAZZA
Detective Thomas?

SIMON THOMAS turns with a smile. In his late 40s, he's a man of keen intellect and lively eyes that take everything in.

INT. CAR - DAY

Mazza drives like a maniac through the narrow streets.

Simon spots the Fountain of the Rivers and pulls out his tiny digital camera. But Mazza swerves around a corner, and the opportunity is lost.

SIMON
I'm guessing you were a chariot racer
in a previous life?

DETECTIVE MAZZA
What's to see?

Simon holds up his pocket guide book -- Museums of Rome. An armless Venus on the cover.

DETECTIVE MAZZA
You would waste good vacation time in
museums?

SIMON
(reading the back)
"Rome. Cultural center of the world."

DETECTIVE MAZZA
Five hundred years ago, maybe.
The city now, it's a cesspool.
All sewers lead to Rome.

SIMON
And they call me a cynic.

DETECTIVE MAZZA
You want to see the sights?

Mazza digs a pamphlet from the glove box -- a strip club.

DETECTIVE MAZZA
Rome's real works of art. Most of these girls, they have both their arms. You want, I take you there right now. I'll return the painting.

He holds out the pamphlet, hopeful. No sale.

EXT. ST. PETER'S SQUARE & VATICAN - DAY

Altar boys in white albs stream across the sun-baked Square. Mazza's car skids to a stop, sending up a cloud of pigeons.

Simon climbs out with the portfolio. He gazes in awe at the majestic Basilica and the pillared Vatican walls. Inhaling the beauty. Mazza wonders what he's doing.

SIMON
Behind those walls lies the greatest collection of art in the world.

Simon strides into the sea of humanity. Mazza follows, mumbling.

Trinket-sellers quickly accost Simon, hawking crucifixes, rosaries and beautiful Vatican stamps. Mazza waves them off.

SIMON
It's always this busy?

DETECTIVE MAZZA
His Holiness, he has just now left for London. Everyone comes for a look. Hoping for a blessing.

Simon stares at a Swiss Guard posing with a tourist.

DETECTIVE MAZZA
You would like your photo taken with a Swiss Guard?

SIMON
(a derisive snort)
Pass.

DETECTIVE MAZZA
Don't let the jester suits fool you. These cheese-heads, they are like your Secret Service. Only better.
(MORE)

DETECTIVE MAZZA (cont'd)
 Karate, explosives, anti-terrorist
 techniques... One hundred and thirty
 only, but they could seize the city.

SIMON
 If they weren't so busy posing for
 pictures.

DETECTIVE MAZZA
 Every man, he would take a bullet for
 His Holiness. No hesitation. You
 would do this?

SIMON
 No.

There's a bitterness that isn't lost on Mazza.

Simon's eyes flash with excitement as the two reach the
 Bronze Door. Dwarfed by a pair of giant sculpted angels atop
 massive pillars, a Swiss Guard smiles as they pass through.

INT. VESTIBULE OF THE SCALA PIA - DAY

At the guard post just inside, a blue-uniformed GENDARME
 locks away Mazza's gun, then picks up the security phone.

Seeing Simon admiring the huge marble sculptures that line
 the hall, Mazza smells opportunity.

DETECTIVE MAZZA
 You want, I can maybe arrange a
 private tour.

Simon's eyes light up.

DETECTIVE MAZZA
 You see the treasures, I hand back
 the painting. I do not mind.

He holds out his hand for the portfolio. Simon detects a
 hint of desperation.

SIMON
 You're not by chance responsible for
 it being stolen in the first place?

DETECTIVE MAZZA
 Responsible, *no*. Blamed, *si*.

Simon nods with empathy. A BEARDED GENDARME CORPORAL arrives
 and motions Simon to follow him up the Grand Stairway of
 Pius IX. Sighing, Mazza drags himself after them.

EXT. COURTYARD OF THE BELVEDERE

They pass through a door guarded by another Swiss Guard, entering the cobblestoned Court of the Belvedere.

In stark contrast to the noisy streets outside, it's deathly quiet in Vatican City. Another world.

Trailing the gendarme across the courtyard, Simon and Mazza speak in hushed tones.

DETECTIVE MAZZA

No, no, the Switzers, they only protect the Pope and Cardinals. And guard the entrances and the palace. These gendarmes...

(indicating their escort)

...they police the Vatican. But for the sake of my dead mother, do not offend their Captain Scarlett. Washed out of the seminary ten years ago. Still bitter.

SIMON

From priest to policeman? I'd be looking for a new career counsellor.

DETECTIVE MAZZA

I think maybe you want to walk lightly. Here, diplomacy, it is most important.

Simon senses he's uncomfortable, holding something back.

SIMON

Is there a point you'd like to make, or do you want to keep dancing?

DETECTIVE MAZZA

I read your file. Very... thick. It seems you broke some rules to catch our art thief.

SIMON

I got the job done.

DETECTIVE MAZZA

And I did not.

SIMON

That's not what I meant.

But the damage is done.

INT. HALL OF SACRED ARCHAEOLOGY

The gendarme leads them into an enormous room with carved mahogany tables covered in ancient artifacts.

A gaunt Brazilian giant, MONSIGNOR VARGAS, catalogues items in a huge log book. He gives them a cursory glance.

GENDARME CORPORAL

You will wait here please for
Cardinal Badino.

Simon notices a look of concern from Mazza.

SIMON

Badino?

DETECTIVE MAZZA

Si, the Secretary of State. Second
most powerful man in the Vatican.
Some would say first.

Still clutching his portfolio, Simon wanders, admiring the artifacts. He becomes aware of Monsignor Vargas sneaking looks at him, as though worried Simon will pilfer something.

Simon's attention is drawn to a white-gloved woman across the room, cleaning a dirty painting with Q-tips. He wanders up and watches over her shoulder -- it's the Templar castle.

KATE WILLIS, 30s, turns with a scowl. She has a way of making caustic seem charming. The English accent doesn't hurt.

KATE

Are you lost?

SIMON

You're very good. I can't even see
the little numbers.

KATE

Your tour group abandon you, did
they?

SIMON

This is a Paulo Vincente.

KATE

(impressed)
How the devil...?

SIMON

I have one of his works.

KATE

Oh really? Quite a coup, considering there are only four known to exist. And the Vatican hasn't shown them to the public in five hundred years.

SIMON

Then you should take better care of them. They may be valuable some day.

She notices his portfolio, then spots Mazza giving a sheepish wave. She feels like an idiot. And resents Simon for it.

KATE

Detective Thomas, I presume?

SIMON

Simon.

KATE

Sorry, it's just... you sounded different over the telephone. Or perhaps I had the wrong idea of what an art detective looks like. I was expecting more...

SIMON

Dust?

A winsome smile. But not enough to win her over.

INT. FIAT - EVENING

Peter slows, approaching a FRANCE CUSTOMS sign. On the passenger seat, an open map marks his route to the site of the castle ruins. He tucks it out of sight.

INT. HALL OF SACRED ARCHAEOLOGY

As Mazza lounges on an antique throne, Simon talks with Kate.

SIMON

I'm confused. I thought it was stolen from the Palazzo Venezia Museum?

KATE

Which is where I normally work. The Vincentes were found in a storage vault full of art that lost favour with the Church sometime in the past. I was invited here to restore them.

SIMON

You must dab a mean Q-tip.

CARDINAL BADINO strolls in majestically, scarlet robes billowing. The intense, hawk-nosed CAPTAIN SCARLETTI trails behind.

CARDINAL BADINO
Please, you will forgive my delay,
yes?

CAPTAIN SCARLETTI
Your Eminence, you remember Officer
Mazza of the Rome Police.

Mazza bristles at the subtle slight, then gives a small bow.

DETECTIVE MAZZA
May I introduce Simon Thomas, a
fellow detective from New York City.
(to Simon)
His Eminence Cardinal Badino,
and Captain Scarletti.

Cardinal Badino nods. Simon returns it, wary.

CARDINAL BADINO
We cannot begin to express our
gratitude.

CAPTAIN SCARLETTI
(glaring at Mazza)
It was a mistake, not keeping our
priceless treasures here, where
security is impenetrable.

Detective Mazza and Kate exchange a guilty look.

SIMON
The real crime would be not sharing
your treasures with the world.

Scarletti eyeballs him. But Kate looks appreciative.

CARDINAL BADINO
Si, the very argument that persuaded
me to loan the painting in the first
place. Now if you would be so kind?

Simon pulls the painting from the portfolio, placing it on an easel. Badino grows anxious as Simon removes the wrapping.

Badino's face falls. Mazza is shocked.

It's Elvis on black velvet.

Scarletti looks ready to kill Simon.

But Kate senses Simon is up to something. She's intrigued.

Enjoying their reaction for as long as he dares, Simon lifts off the Elvis --

SIMON

An extra layer of protection.

-- revealing the painting underneath. A band of Templar knights riding to the Crusades, watched over by angels. It's the same style as the partly-cleaned castle painting nearby.

Delighted and relieved, Cardinal Badino steps up and examines it. Simon speaks quietly with Kate.

SIMON

You can keep the Elvis for your museum. A gift from the New York Police Department.

KATE

How very generous. I'll hang it next to our beloved "Clown on a Tricycle", from the Paris Police Department.

CARDINAL BADINO

We are forever in your debt.

SIMON

It wouldn't have been possible without Detective Mazza's help.

Scarletti looks stunned. Almost as stunned as Mazza.

CARDINAL BADINO

Then we must be sure to convey our deep appreciation to your Captain, yes?

Mazza puffs up, reveling in his good fortune.

CARDINAL BADINO

And how may we express our appreciation to you, Detective Thomas?

SIMON

There was some mention of a tour. Possibly Miss Wills would do the honors?

Before Kate can object --

CARDINAL BADINO
 She would be delighted. It is the
 least she can do, yes?

She knows better than to defy the Cardinal.

KATE
 Certainly, Your Eminence.
 (to Simon)
 Tomorrow. Five o'clock. Sharp.

Simon beams.

EXT. KINGS HOTEL - EVENING

Mazza pulls Simon's suitcase from his car. Dripping with
 gratitude, he offers Simon his card.

DETECTIVE MAZZA
 Anything you wish. Anything.

Simon takes the card.

EXT. CASTLE RUINS, FRANCE - NIGHT

An eerie mist drifts through the scattered ruins. Nearby,
 the ethereal glow of a large lantern-lit tent.

The Fiat rolls up. Peter cuts the engine and lights, then
 gets out. He scans the area. Not a soul in sight.

Father Moulinet steps from the tent, beckoning him.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

A rotted Templar banner hangs from the tent pole, and photos
 of the ruins cover one wall. Impassioned, Father Moulinet
 leads Peter inside.

FATHER MOULINET
 It was truly a miracle I found the
 crypt at all.
 (suddenly realizing)
 Where are the others?

PETER
 There is only me.

FATHER MOULINET
 Oh. I expected... No matter.
 Very wise to have a Swiss Guard
 along. Very wise.

Peter spots the wood chest by the cot, instantly intrigued by the Templar cross. Then his eyes move over the twenty-odd shiny nails now sealing the lid -- *why the overkill?*

PETER

May I ask what it is you have found?

FATHER MOULINET

It is not my place to say.

Father Moulinet places his enormous suitcase at Peter's feet, then picks up the Templar chest. He notices Peter staring at the suitcase, uneasy.

FATHER MOULINET

I've packed too much, of course. But what does one wear when... I mean, should His Holiness wish to thank me in person...

PETER

I am sorry, Father. My orders are to bring back only the artifact.

Peter puts his hands on the Templar chest, but Father Moulinet holds on tight. His eyes bore into Peter. A tense moment.

FATHER MOULINET

Guard it well, my son.

Only when he's convinced Peter realizes the importance of the chest does Father Moulinet release it. Peter steps past and exits the tent.

EXT. COASTAL HIGHWAY - DAWN

The Fiat picks up speed, moving south.

EXT. VATICAN - DAY

Peter eases the Fiat through St. Anne's Gate and parks it by the barracks. He climbs out, exhausted. Klaus wanders up, his curiosity piqued by the Templar chest.

PETER

The Dove flew smoothly?

KLAUS

As always, cousin. So what is it? Another Shroud of Turin?

PETER

He nailed it shut.

KLAUS

So?

Peter gives a friendly look of reproach, then heads off with the chest.

A figure watches Peter from a high window.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Peter presses his palm against a glass security panel.

A scanner reads his fingerprints, and the door CLICKS open.

INT. HALL OF SACRED ARCHAEOLOGY - DAY

Peter steps in. No sign of Monsignor Vargas. Peter walks past the two Templar paintings, too tired to notice, and opens a huge antique cabinet. He places the chest inside.

He scrawls a note on a Post-it and sticks it in the log book.

EXT. ST. PETER'S SQUARE - DAY

Simon checks his watch as he strides eagerly across the Square.

INT. VESTIBULE OF THE SCALA PIA - DAY

Kate greets Simon at the guard post.

INT. VATICAN PICTURE GALLERY - DUSK

Simon and Kate stroll an endless corridor of exquisite religious art.

She steps to the next painting -- Mary, Joseph and Jesus -- and slides playfully in front of the identifying plaque, eager to stump him. He examines the painting.

SIMON

Crespi. Mid 1700s?

KATE

(bowed over)

Should you ever decide to turn in your deerstalker, I rather think you could snag a position as tour guide. Where was it you studied?

SIMON

The Metropolitan. Every Sunday from one to three. And on Wednesdays, the Whitney.

KATE
 Busman's holiday?

SIMON
 No, that was when I worked Homicide.

KATE
 (perturbed)
 Homicide?

SIMON
 I needed to keep reminding myself
 there was beauty in the world too.
 How's that for cliché?
 (pausing at a Rubens)
 After a while, even paintings like
 this couldn't help. Thankfully, the
 only bodies I see now are carved in
 marble.

KATE
 There are worse ways to escape the
 world's ugliness.

She says it with a touch of mystery that piques his
 curiosity, but she moves on before he can pursue it.

PASSING INTO THE NEXT GALLERY

Kate pulls two foot-square mirrors from a box and hands one
 to Simon. Puzzled, he follows her lead, holding it level at
 his chest. Looking into it, he's astonished. He looks up.

The ceiling is covered in stunning frescoes. Gold leaf fills
 every space. Recessed lighting adds to the opulent luster.

KATE
 No more stiff necks.

Moving on, he can't help looking up.

INT. DARK PASSAGEWAY - NIGHT

A heavy-set man in Night Vision goggles, THE PURITAN, moves
 stealthily through a dark, cramped passageway. A BLACK-ROBED
 FIGURE follows, a hand on the Puritan's shoulder as a guide.

The Puritan peels off his goggles and cracks open a hidden
 door with his gloved hand. A thin shaft of light spills onto
 his oily black gun and silencer.

He puts a steely-blue eye to the opening to make sure the
 room is empty, then lets the black-robed figure enter.

INT. VATICAN PICTURE GALLERY - NIGHT

Resting on a bench, Simon is finding Kate as engaging as the art.

SIMON

No, I get the attraction of a curator job. It's just there's not exactly a shortage of paintings in England.

KATE

Pastorals. It reached a point where I couldn't look at another meadow of sheep without wanting to mow them down with a harvester. No, it's religious art that stimulates my mind.

SIMON

And your heart?

KATE

Belongs entirely to the Renaissance.

SIMON

Then you prefer the more skillful strokes of the old Masters?

She totally misinterprets his innocent question.

KATE

Are you by chance flirting with me?

SIMON

Actually... no.

She blanches. He tries to alleviate her embarrassment.

SIMON

But I may want to later on... so long as flirting in the Vatican's not a sin.

KATE

Only if you're married.

He follows her judgemental stare to his wedding ring.

KATE

You see, we repressed Brits don't quite share the Italians' more casual views on morality. I'm assuming you left your wife in New York? Possibly she doesn't share your interest in art?

SIMON

She would have loved all this.

Suddenly comprehending his sad longing, her attitude softens.

KATE

I'm so sorry. I didn't... I...

He gives his ring a twist.

SIMON

It was a long time ago. After a long illness.

KATE

I thought... because of the ring...

SIMON

(a gentle smile)

If you ever grow bored with restoring paintings, you'd make a good detective.

She smiles back.

INT. A ROOM WITH GOLD CURTAINS - NIGHT

The black-robed man tries to explain what he's doing in the room, but Klaus isn't buying.

As Klaus presses his lapel radio to call it in, he feels a silencer press against the back of his head. Resigned to his fate, he closes his eyes.

INT. PETER'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Peter snaps awake. A distant CHEER gets his attention.

Still dressed, he walks out the door, leaving his holstered gun on his bedside table, beside a rosary-draped Bible.

INT. BARRACKS LOUNGE

A handful of off-duty Swiss Guards are engrossed in a Swiss league soccer match on TV. The channel changes. A ROAR OF PROTEST. Seeing it's Peter with the remote, they quiet down.

He stops on the tail end of a news clip of the Pope's arrival at Heathrow. The room goes silent, all eyes glued to the TV as the Pope is greeted by a huge, adoring crowd.

BBC ANNOUNCER (ON TV)

...as once again the Pope proves his enormous popularity, as well as the amazing power of his presence.

Still bitter at not being there, Peter waits for the clip to end, then switches back to soccer.

Int. Barracks orderly room

The Duty Officer, BORIS, logs a note from someone reporting over the security radio. He glances up to see Peter.

PETER
Everyone checked in?

BORIS
(nods)
Who's winning, Major?

Peter shrugs and heads outside. Hearing a CHEER, Boris leans out, but can't see the TV. He steps into the hall.

INT. BASEMENT REPAIR GALLERY - NIGHT

An endless room of works of art under repair. Simon and Kate wander past Franciscan nuns deftly restoring the frayed threads of an enormous tapestry of the Garden of Eden.

SIMON
...I just got tired, that's all.

KATE
Everyone gets tired. But not everyone quits.

SIMON
They don't all see what I saw.

Kate simply stares until she draws the rest out of him.

SIMON
Look, working Homicide for too long... it changes a man. I've seen men, good men, get swallowed by the darkness and never climb out.

KATE
And you?

SIMON
If it hadn't been for my wife... When she passed, I knew it was time. I put in for early retirement. They made me an offer instead. Art Theft Detail. All anyone in Robbery knew about art was that Dogs Playing Poker was better than Dogs Playing Pool.

They share a smile.

KATE

What intrigues me most is what attracts a man like you to the Homicide Department in the first place.

It's as if she's boring into his soul. There's no escape.

SIMON

All right, then. I used to believe there was a tenuous balance between good and evil. That God needed good people to step up to the plate, otherwise evil would tip the scales and the world would be lost.

She lets that sink in, then nods.

KATE

And what do you believe now?

SIMON

That God has left the building. And we're left to clean up the mess.

He wanders on. She stares after him, saddened by what a melancholy figure he is.

LATER

They admire a triptych of illuminated stained-glass panels. Rich saturated colors. The first panel is of a confrontation between rival factions of angels.

KATE

...Others think a group of angels led by Lucifer, the most powerful archangel in Heaven, refused God's command to bow down before Man.

SIMON

But not you?

KATE

The version I'm most fond of is that Lucifer was corrupted by ambition. To prove to the other angels he was God's equal, he tried to do the one thing only God can do.

She waits to see if he knows.

SIMON

Create life?

KATE

And for this transgression, God ordered the archangel Michael to cast Lucifer out of Heaven. Yet many of the angels sided with Lucifer.

SIMON

"And there was war in Heaven."

KATE

You're familiar with Revelations?

SIMON

Sure. The good guys won.

He marvels at the second panel -- Michael in cobalt blue robes, sword raised, wings spread wide, chaining up Lucifer.

KATE

"And Lucifer was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." A simplistic, though rather effective, cautionary tale.

A dark cloud passes over Simon at the third panel -- a horrific depiction of hell. Lucifer reigns over grotesque demons, all consumed by flames.

KATE

I do think we're all quite capable of creating our own personal hell. And yet the Catholic Church saw fit to revive an ancient pagan concept and modify it to frighten people into attending mass and donating money, all to avoid going to a place that doesn't actually exist. They did such a good job, they now believe in it themselves.

Simon isn't listening. He's been drawn into the images. He hears snatches of the CRACKLING FIRE... LUCIFER'S TERRIFYING VOICE... SCREAMS OF AGONY...

He backs away, retreating to another artifact. Kate watches him, concerned.

EXT. VATICAN GARDENS - NIGHT

In the manicured gardens, Peter wanders a network of paths bordered by spotlit pillars, statues and fountains.

He rests on a bench by the Fountain of the Sacrament. The dome of St. Peter's rises over the hedge like a harvest moon. Something catches his eye --

Across the gardens, the Archives' lights are off for the night. He watches a window. Waiting. Then a flashlight beam cuts through the darkness.

He's up and running. Racing through the trees --

-- across the Avenue of the Gardens and into --

THE SECRET ARCHIVES

Peter charges down a dark corridor. Motion sensor lights flicker on in his wake, illuminating endless rows of crammed bookshelves.

He bounds up a small circular staircase to the second level. He hits the lights, and recoils --

Klaus is sprawled on the floor, shot in the head. Peter checks in vain for a pulse as he grabs Klaus' lapel mic.

PETER
(harsh whisper)
Guard down!

IN THE BARRACKS ORDERLY ROOM

Peter's voice crackles over the security radio.

PETER (FILTERED)
In the Archives! Sector twelve!
Send help now!

But Boris isn't at his post. No one hears the call.

IN THE SECRET ARCHIVES

No time to mourn -- RETREATING FOOTSTEPS echo from the dark corridor. Peter reaches into Klaus' tunic and pulls a gun.

Heart pounding, he advances swiftly through the Archives.

He spots a flashlight beam ahead, and races to --

THE READING ROOM

He peers in. Can't see. Gun ready, he hits the lights.

The room is empty. Except --

-- a big panel in the mural of the Resurrection CREAKS shut.

Peter hurries over and searches for a catch to a hidden door. It's taking too long. He steps back.

A THUNDERING KICK through the priceless fresco. He reaches in and YANKS the panel open, exposing an iron rung ladder descending into darkness.

He turns back and sees a battery-powered emergency light above the doorway. He yanks the plug, activating the light.

IN THE SECRET PASSAGE

Peter descends the ladder, the emergency light revealing a narrow tunnel at the bottom.

FOOTSTEPS echo far ahead. He sets off in pursuit, his light swinging wildly across the stone walls.

Peter slows. The footsteps ahead stop. He edges forward...

Dead end. *It can't be.* He slams his shoulder into the wall, forcing open an entry to --

A BASEMENT STORAGE HALL

He moves forward like a jungle cat. Panning the light, his gun searches for a target among shadowy statues... old thrones... antiquated armor...

Peter spins and aims into an alcove. Empty.

He sneaks past centuries-old carriages once used to carry church dignitaries through the streets of Rome.

An odd little HISS of air from a row of wide pillars ahead. Anticipating an ambush, he slides the emergency light along the floor...

...it stops thirty feet ahead, casting a shadow against a wall -- a man hiding behind the pillar.

Peter creeps closer... raises his gun... and swings out.

It's only a statue. Another HISS far ahead. He grabs the light and races onward.

IN THE BASEMENT REPAIR GALLERY

Simon and Kate watch an artist restore a damaged mosaic of a tiger. The artist sifts through a table filled with tiny tile fragments, selecting one that's just the right color.

KATE

One could argue it's not art at all. These were actually advertisements for the Colosseum, showing the species of exotic animals to be slaughtered that day.

SIMON

You're quite the fountain of knowledge.

KATE

Somehow a degree in theology didn't seem practical enough, so I returned for a second in history.

He enjoys her self-deprecating humor.

SIMON

Where did you --

SLAM -- the Puritan bursts out the door by the mosaic.

He spins, grabs the table and HURLS it as Peter exits the door. It THUDS into Peter's head. He goes down hard.

Thousands of tiny colored tiles cascade across the floor. Peter's gun slides through the sea of tiles, out of reach.

The last thing he sees before losing consciousness is a tilted view of Simon racing after the Puritan.

MUSEUM STAIRWAY

Simon charges up the stairs, pursuing the pounding footsteps.

MUSEUM HALL

He sprints down the hall to a junction. The footsteps ahead stop. He's about to peek around the corner, but spots a box of mirrors for viewing the ceiling.

He sticks a mirror past the corner. A glimpse of the Puritan aiming his gun. POP -- the mirror EXPLODES into fragments.

Retreating footsteps, then a door opens, triggering an ALARM.

MUSEUM ENTRANCE LOBBY

Simon dashes through the lobby and out the open door.

EXT. VIALE VATICANO - NIGHT

He scans the few people on the street. Nobody suspicious.

In a nearby doorway, the Puritan peers out from the shadows, light slashing across his face. Struggling for breath, he raises his gun. Simon is in his sights...

...but guards surround Simon, and the Puritan lowers his gun.

The Puritan puts an asthma inhaler to his lips -- HISS.

INT. SECRET ARCHIVES - NIGHT

On edge, a handful of gendarmes comb the Archives for missing items and evidence. Kate watches Simon survey the scene.

He frowns as a gendarme steps over the body. Another gendarme leaves his fingerprints on a bookcase.

KATE

I'm thinking they could use a bit of your expertise right about now.

SIMON

They haven't asked.

She's taken aback by his reluctance.

KATE

I'm asking.

Simon evades her penetrating stare... and finds himself looking straight at Peter, head bandaged, as he's questioned by Scarlett.

ACROSS THE ROOM

Devastated, Peter can't take his eyes from Klaus' body.

CAPTAIN SCARLETTI

Nothing more?

Peter shakes his head. Sensing Peter's feeling of guilt, Scarlett places a comforting hand on his shoulder.

CAPTAIN SCARLETTI

Peter... This was not your fault.

Peter nods, grateful. There's a look of tenderness between them -- Simon interrupts.

SIMON

Excuse me. Can I suggest you rope off the area and take some photographs before your men contaminate the entire crime scene? And you might want to find some gloves for them.

His tone offends Peter. Scarlett chafes at being told what to do by an outsider. He's about to fire back, but sees the bearded Corporal clomping carelessly around the body.

Scarlett brushes past Simon, marches up to his Corporal and whispers something in his ear. The man goes pale.

Cardinal Badino hurries in. Recoiling at the sight of the body, he crosses himself. He whispers an order to Scarlett, who heads for the door marked Document Room.

But the door is blocked by the Archives PREFECT -- an old Irishman too stubborn to die. Scarlett gets nowhere... until Cardinal Badino nods consent.

With gnarled hands, the Prefect JINGLES through his huge ring of massive medieval and modern keys. He unlocks the door.

Scarlett leads his men inside. Peter speaks with Cardinal Badino as they follow the others in.

Simon uses the opportunity to pull out his camera.

FLASH -- the empty holster.

FLASH -- the lapel radio.

FLASH -- the ragged star-shaped entry wound on the back of the head, just below the hair line.

FLASH -- the gaping exit wound on Klaus' forehead.

Something's not right. Simon pockets his camera as Scarlett leads Peter and the others back into the room.

CAPTAIN SCARLETTI

You may have interrupted the thief
before he got what he was after.

Simon silently disagrees. While the others resume the search, he speaks quietly with Peter. Kate eavesdrops.

SIMON

How's the head?

PETER

I understand you pursued the killer.
That was a brave thing to do.

SIMON

I didn't know he had a gun.

He looks at Klaus' empty holster.

SIMON

It was his?

PETER

No. I took that.

SIMON

From his hand or his holster?

PETER
Holster. Why?

SIMON
What tipped you something was up?

PETER
A flashlight. Klaus must have surprised the thief --

SIMON
Other way around.

PETER
What?

SIMON
And whatever they were after wasn't in this room.

PETER
You say this because...?

SIMON
Because he wasn't killed here.

Others stop to listen. Scarletti is suddenly in Simon's face.

CAPTAIN SCARLETTI
You may be right. He was probably shot outside. He staggered in, holding his brains in his hands. Looking for something to read. Then fell dead right here.

A few gendarmes smile at their captain putting the foreigner in his place. Simon does a slow burn.

SIMON
A man shot in the head like that... there should be a big pool of blood. They killed him somewhere else and moved him here.

Peter looks at the body. Not much blood.

CAPTAIN SCARLETTI
He was killed here. When we find the bullet --

SIMON
You won't find it here! The killers carried the body to this room.
(MORE)

SIMON (cont'd)
Possibly to draw your investigation
away from wherever he was killed.

Scarletti realizes his men have stopped to listen.

CAPTAIN SCARLETTI
Continuare!

The gendarmes resume their search.

His authority challenged, Scarletti strains to be polite.

CAPTAIN SCARLETTI
Thank you, Detective. You have been
most helpful. But you are done here.

Simon is about to push it... but backs down. He takes a seat
at the table by Peter. As Scarletti returns to his search,
Simon continues to question Peter.

SIMON
Was the victim deaf?

PETER
Deaf?

SIMON
That star-burst pattern around the
entry wound? It's caused by gasses
expanding under the skin. And it
only occurs if a gun barrel is
pressed tight against the skin.

PETER
He was shot point blank. What is
your point?

SIMON
I've been told the Swiss Guards are
well-trained. How likely is it that
someone was able to sneak up behind
him?
(sees Peter is dubious)
Then you should consider the
possibility he was killed by someone
he knew.

PETER
Do you realize what you are saying?

SIMON
Yes. It was an inside job.

A slow look of horror from Peter.

SIMON

The vic weighs what, two-ten?
It would take two men to carry the
body here. You chased one out that
passage. So where did the other go?

The implication makes Peter uncomfortable.

CORPORAL

Captain!

Using a handkerchief, the Corporal retrieves something from
under a bookshelf and holds it up -- a bloody bullet.

Scarletti turns to Simon with a sneer. Simon opens his
mouth, but the words don't come.

INT. BRONZE DOOR VESTIBULE / EXT. ST. PETER'S SQUARE - NIGHT

Peter escorts Simon through the warmly-lit hall to the open
Bronze Door. Silhouetted in the doorway, they talk in hushed
tones.

SIMON

I understand why you'd choose not to
believe me. But this is what I did
for seventeen years. And the
question someone should be asking is
"why now?" Is there less security
with the Pope away?

Peter shakes his head.

SIMON

Any recent acquisition of value?
Art? Jewelry? Gold?

A flicker of concern from Peter. Simon starts to ask --

CARDINAL BADINO

Peter...

Peter turns to see the Cardinal waiting down the hall. With
an apologetic look to Simon, Peter starts closing the door.

SIMON

(softly)
I'm at the Kings Hotel.

The door BOOMS closed, shutting him out. The wind starts to
blow. He turns up his collar against the chilly night air.

From the colonnade roof, decaying statues of saints stare in
disapproval as Simon retreats across the empty Square.

INT. HALLWAY

The security panel scanner reads Peter's fingerprints, and the door CLICKS open.

INT. HALL OF SACRED ARCHAEOLOGY - NIGHT

Peter flicks on the lights, steps to the antique cabinet and opens it. His heart sinks -- the Templar chest is gone.