

THE RESTORATION

by

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FADE IN:

INT. ST. ISTVAN'S CATHEDRAL SANCTUARY - NIGHT

Votive candles flicker. Encased in red glass, they cast an eerie glow across the ancient cathedral.

Tinged by the candlelight, a HOODED FIGURE crouches behind a pew, then skulks toward a massive FRESCO, shrouded in shadow on the wall behind the altar.

The Figure's gloved fingers touch the lower right corner of the fresco, where THREE WOLVES CIRCLE A LAMB COATED IN BLOOD.

From a pocket, the Figure draws a knife. The blade glints as it's used to gouge deep fissures in the plaster. The knife all but obliterates the wolves and dying lamb.

Nearby, a SCREAM breaks the silence.

The Figure glances back. Beneath the hood, the Figure's face is obscured by a macabre RAVEN MASK. Caught in the act, the Figure vanishes into the shadows as an AGED FEMALE PARISHIONER hurries down the sanctuary aisle.

The Parishioner stops - stares at the defaced fresco behind the altar. Fear ravages the Aged Parishioner's face. Raising hands in the air, she falls to her knees and WAILS TO HEAVEN.

INT. INTRICATE FRESCO - DAY

The wail is engulfed by a haunting Concerto. Colors swirl. Shapes form as the intricate details of another Renaissance painting come into focus.

The music crescendos until the painting's details evolve into the breathtaking whole of Sassoferrato's masterpiece, *Madonna With The Christ Child*.

In it, the serene Madonna looks with love at her baby boy lying naked and happy atop her royal blue cloak. A golden glow surrounds the white fabric that drapes Mary's head and shoulders. The baby holds a string in his outstretched hand, which is tethered to a hawk in the upper left corner.

INT. LINCOLN COLLEGE, LINCOLNSHIRE UK, CLASSROOM - DAY

The painting fills a projection screen at the front of a classroom full of STUDENTS.

RACHEL (O.S.)
Here we have Sassoferrato's *Madonna
With The Christ Child.*

The red beam of a laser pointer outlines the Madonna's face and neck.

RACHEL (O.S.)
This is the area that sustained
moisture damage and the main focus
of my restoration.

DR. RACHEL SIMONE, 30, and almost too pretty to be a PhD,
stands in an aisle between desks. A simple LOCKET hangs from
a chain around her neck. A long sleeved top modestly covers
her arms and curves.

RACHEL
The skin alone required six
different pigments.

Passing through the projector light she taps the shoulder of
a sleeping male student, MR. NICHOLS, 22.

The Student jerks awake.

RACHEL
Rise and shine Mr. Nichols.

Embarrassed, he sits up in his chair.

RACHEL
Care to hazard a guess who these
people might be?

Mr. Nichols looks at the screen.

MR. NICHOLS
Mary and Jesus.

Several Students snicker.

RACHEL
How did you know?

A FEMALE STUDENT throws in her two cents.

FEMALE STUDENT
Duh.

More laughter from the class as Mr. Nichols gives his fellow
student a dirty look.

RACHEL

Like any 15th century illiterate,
you knew right off it was the Mary
and Christ. It's a perfect example
of the use of Marian symbolism in
Renaissance art.

She walks toward the screen.

RACHEL

Every part of the painting tells a
story.

Extending her arm, she indicates Mary's clothes with the
laser pointer. The motion causes her sleeve to creep up,
exposing a bad BURN ON HER FOREARM.

She quickly pulls her sleeve down.

RACHEL

As always, Mary has a blue cloak,
which denotes truth and heavenly
love - and wears white to indicate
her purity.

Rachel stares at the mother and her sweet child. Lost for a
moment in thought, her face reveals deep pain.

RACHEL

For those who couldn't read, a
painting like this could tell an
entire story with no words.

Rachel outlines the bird in the upper left corner.

RACHEL

If you look close you'll see Christ
holds a tether to the red-tail
hawk. The hawk symbolizes spiritual
awareness and rejuvenation - served
to remind people--

The BELL RINGS.

RACHEL

--to lead honest and truthful
lives.

Students gather their coats and gear.

RACHEL

Enjoy Halloween and Guy Fawkes...
Do your homework.

Rachel turns away from her students. Suddenly exhausted, she drops her false cheer and closes her laptop. Doesn't see DR. SOPHIA TOLAND, 60, limp forward on a cane through the exiting students.

SOPHIA
(Eastern European accent)
I didn't believe Dr. B when he said
you were back.

Rachel tracks the voice of her mentor and friend. Can't hide that something is very wrong.

RACHEL
The silence at home was driving me
crazy.

Sophia ambles toward her.

SOPHIA
I can see that.

RACHEL
How flat was my lecture?

SOPHIA
Not awful... At least you're out of
the house.

Rachel looks into Sophia's careworn face.

RACHEL
I thought being back here would
help.

Sophia touches Rachel's arm.

SOPHIA
Maybe it's just too soon.

Rachel pulls away.

RACHEL
Everything's too soon. I never
should have gotten out of the
car...

SOPHIA
You couldn't have known.

Tears well as Rachel's grief encroaches.

RACHEL
I should have stayed with her.

Sensing the collapse, Sophia gathers Rachel in her arms. Soothes her as she breaks.

SOPHIA
Shh, my girl. It's okay.

Like a mother, she comforts Rachel and strokes her hair.

Finally, Rachel takes a deep breath. Wipes tears from her cheeks.

SOPHIA
Why not get away for a while?

Rachel busies herself with packing her laptop.

SOPHIA
What about the project in Hungary?
Britton said it's yours if you want it.

RACHEL
I won't leave her.

SOPHIA
It's not forever. Just a change of scenery to get your thoughts on something else.

RACHEL
I don't want to forget.

SOPHIA
You know that's not what I meant.

Rachel stops her busy work. Looks at Sophia.

RACHEL
I know. I'm sorry.

Sophia gives Rachel a cautious look - tries another tack.

SOPHIA
Let's go to the campus assembly tomorrow night. At least get you out in the fresh air.

Rachel shakes her head.

RACHEL
I can't.

SOPHIA

Please...
(indicates her leg)
I need help getting there.

Rachel looks into her mentor's sweet face. Finally nods.

EXT. CAMPUS GROUNDS, LINCOLN COLLEGE - NIGHT

Dressed against the cold of November, Rachel helps Sophia toward a bonfire blazing on the campus grounds.

STUDENTS and **FACULTY** crowd around the fire for warmth.

Rachel's Department Chair, DR. COLIN BRITTON, 55, sees Rachel. Motions her and Sophia to join him.

DR. BRITTON

Glad to see you out. How was your class?

Rachel shrugs.

A step behind Rachel, Sophia indicates it was too soon.

SOPHIA

God, it's cold out here.

DR. BRITTON

Would that old Guy Fawkes had picked a warmer time of year for his rebellion.

RACHEL

(flat)
I don't think he had much choice.

DR. BRITTON

True that.

With no warning, a bottle rocket, explodes in the sky.

Rachel startles.

Across the fire, Students chant the Guy Fawkes tribute.

STUDENTS

Remember, remember, the 5th of November,
The Gunpowder Treason and plot;
I know of no reason why Gunpowder Treason
Should ever be forgot.

The chant gains momentum. Dr. Britton joins in.

STUDENTS / DR. BRITTON
Guy Fawkes, Guy Fawkes, 'Twas his intent
To blow up the King and the Parliament.
Three score barrels of powder below.
Poor old England to overthrow.
By God's providence he was catch'd,
With a dark lantern and burning match.

A group of DRUNK BOYS snake through the crowd, carting an effigy of Guy Fawkes.

STUDENTS / DR. BRITTON / SOPHIA
Holler boys, Holler boys, let the bells ring
Holler boys, Holler boys, God save the King!
Hip hip Hoorah! Hip hip Hoorah!
A penny loaf to feed ol' Pope,
A farthing cheese to choke him
A pint of beer to rinse it down,
A tinder of sticks to burn him.

The Drunk Boys cast the effigy into the flames.

Rachel's eyes go wide - the flaming effigy reflecting in her irises.

STUDENTS / DR. BRITTON (O.S.)
Burn him in a tub of tar,
Burn him like a blazing star.

RACHEL'S MEMORY FLASH:

Rachel reaches her bare arms into searing flames.

The chant continues...

STUDENTS / DR. BRITTON (O.S.)
Burn his body from his head,
Then we'll say "Ol' Pope is dead."

RACHEL
Livvie!!...

END FLASH.

BACK TO CAMPUS GROUNDS

Unable to endure, Rachel bolts from the bonfire. Devil on her heels, she runs and runs...

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

Panting and spent, Rachel crumbles to the dark ground atop a new grave.

Curling like a fetus, she sobs.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. LINCOLN COLLEGE, LIBRARY ARCHIVAL EXAM ROOM - DAY

Rachel enters a well lit room used for examining art prints and ancient tomes. Her face is puffy and long sleeves cover her arms.

Sophia and Dr. Britton stand before a wide cabinet adorned with a miniature Christmas tree. Dr. Britton bestows a fatherly smile.

DR. BRITTON

I asked Sophia to join us. Impart her wisdom.

Sophia gives Rachel a hug.

SOPHIA

You're sure you want to do this?

Rachel nods.

Dr. Britton removes a large print from a cabinet drawer. Lays the scaled-down replica of a 400-year-old HUNGARIAN FRESCO on a table.

SOPHIA

(indicates her leg)

I'd go myself if it weren't for this...

Dr. Britton smooths a corner of the art print.

DR. BRITTON

This is *Vér a...*

He looks to Sophia for pronunciation.

SOPHIA

Vér a Bárányok.

DR. BRITTON

Means *Blood of the Lambs*. This was printed before it was vandalized.

Rachel relaxes a bit as she surveys the reproduction.

In it, a cathedral spire pierces a row of SKELETONS entwined in a dark sky. The hollow eyes of each skull stare down on a lone SHEPHERD who cradles a lamb and walks among his flock.

SOPHIA

The fresco was originally painted
in God's honor for sparing the
village of Sechava from the plague.

Sophia indicates the lower right hand corner where THREE
WOLVES CIRCLE A LAMB COATED IN BLOOD.

SOPHIA

This is the area that was damaged.

RACHEL

It's eerie.

DR. BRITTON

They need it restored before their
Passover celebration on December
21st.

RACHEL

Passover?

DR. BRITTON

Not the Jewish kind.

SOPHIA

Sechava is isolated. The people
believe God will inflict the plague
if their faith - in this case their
icon - isn't perfect.

Rachel focuses on the painted ANGEL, who stands watch over
the shepherd. Wielding a sword, the Angel holds the skeletons
at bay with her weapon.

RACHEL

Oh, c'mon. There's been a cure for
the plague for like 60 years.

SOPHIA

Belief is in the eye of the
beholder.

RACHEL

Now you sound like one of them.

Sophia absently touches her bad leg.

SOPHIA

Because I am...

Rachel is puzzled.

DR. BRITTON

Sophia's the reason we got the project.

SOPHIA

I grew up there.

Suddenly BLINDING LIGHT STROBES across the fresco. Like a heartbeat far away, hear the SHHH CLACK CLACK CLACK of a train.

INT. EASTERN EUROPEAN TRAIN - DAY

Cold sunlight STROBES through bare trees OUTSIDE the train windows. FLICKERS like an old movie reel on an image of *Blood of the Lambs* open on Rachel's laptop.

A stooped Hungarian, RUZLIN, 70, shuffles from the back of the almost deserted train car. Wearing a TALISMAN around his neck that resembles a GLASS EYE, he lays a gnarled hand on Rachel's seat. Stares in fear at the image on the laptop.

RUZLIN

Vér a Bárányok.

Rachel is excited by his recognition.

RACHEL

You know it?

Near the front of the train car, a SCARRED MAN, early 20's, leans into the aisle. Gives Rachel an uneasy stare.

Avoiding Rachel's eye contact, Ruzlin continues forward to his seat.

RACHEL

Wait! Please.

Ruzlin turns back - his face hard. With an arthritic hand, he grasps his eye talisman - holds it out toward Rachel.

Rachel drops her gaze to the safety of the image on her laptop. Chances a last glance as Ruzlin finds his seat. The old man grasps the arm rest so tight his knuckles turn white.

SHHH CLACK CLACK CLACK.

EXT. EASTERN EUROPEAN TRAIN - NIGHT

Daylight wanes as the train CHUGS through snow-covered mountains.

INT. EASTERN EUROPEAN TRAIN - NIGHT

Light from the computer isolates Rachel's face as she stares at the screen and struggles to stay awake.

Her eyes grow heavy as the slow, deliberate SHHH CLACK CLACK CLACK lulls her into sleep and a dream.

RACHEL'S DREAM

SHHH CRUNCH CRUNCH CRUNCH... The sound of boots punching through snow overlays the rhythm of the train.

Labored BREATHS join the cadence as Rachel strains to walk through a blinding blizzard. She can barely see the ground.

LIVVIE'S VOICE (O.S.)

Mommy!?

Rachel squints to see into the white out.

RACHEL

Livvie!?!

Extending her arms, her face fills with terror...

RACHEL

No!!!

INT. EASTERN EUROPEAN TRAIN - NIGHT

The train WHISTLE BLOWS.

Rachel bolts awake. Her heart hammers in her chest. Disoriented, she looks around the train car. Nothing abnormal.

Over the speaker, the Hungarian CONDUCTOR announces...

CONDUCTOR (O.S.)

Sechava!

Rachel shakes off the dream as the train CHUGS to a stop.

EXT. SECHAVA STATION - NIGHT

Snow swirls as Rachel drags a bag and a heavier metal case to the platform of the station lost in time.

Ruzlin steps from the train behind her. Avoids Rachel as he drags his suitcase into the dark.

The train labors forward with a CHUG. Leaves Rachel isolated in dim station light under a hand-lettered sign that reads:

SECHAVA

As the last train car passes, SOMETHING moves in the trees across the track. On edge, Rachel grabs her bags - glances behind her as she lugs them to the station door.

INT. SECHAVA STATION - NIGHT

Rachel closes the door against the cold unknown. Her boots echo over the dead silence of the desolate station.

RACHEL

Hello?...

Nothing.

RACHEL

Anybody here?

Nobody.

Rachel sits on the edge of a hard wooden bench. Retrieves her cell: **No Service**. As she slides it back in her pocket, a hand touches her arm.

Rachel jumps.

BOY'S VOICE (O.S.)

(thick Hungarian accent)

I am sorry to be late.

RACHEL

Jesus, you scared me!

Clad in simple Eastern European dress, JOSEF, 14, backs away.

JOSEF

It is wrong to use His name in such way.

Rachel catches her breath.

RACHEL

Sorry. It's almost an edict where I come from.

Not on her page, Josef hefts Rachel's bags.

JOSEF

I drive you.

Rachel takes back her precious metal case. Allows the boy to lug only her bag to the door.

RACHEL
Are you even old enough to drive?

Checking over her shoulder, she follows Josef out the door.

EXT. SECHAVA TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

Josef loads the luggage into an old model sedan and slides into the driver's seat.

Rachel opens the passenger door. Hears the eerie HOWL OF WOLVES in the distance. Climbs in and slams the door.

INT. SEDAN - NIGHT

The car bumps over a snowy road. Rachel studies Josef's profile in the dark.

RACHEL
Sorry, I didn't get your name.

JOSEF
Josef.

RACHEL
How old are you?

JOSEF
Fourteen.

RACHEL
Kids back home would kill to drive at your age.

Josef's face tightens and Rachel realizes her error.

RACHEL
I didn't mean... Not really kill.
It's an expression. It means --
Thank you for picking me up.

JOSEF
It is my job.

Rachel watches out the window as the car passes a GRAVE DIGGER hauling a coffin on a horse cart.

RACHEL
Did you grow up in the village?

JOSEF

I was raised in the house at St.
Istvan.

RACHEL

With your family?

JOSEF

Why do you ask all these questions?

RACHEL

I guess we like to talk back home.

Uneasy with the silence, Rachel gazes out the window.
Moonlight illuminates the quaint countryside lost in time.

Josef sneaks a peek at Rachel, then turns up a long drive
lined with the stark limbs of bare trees.

RACHEL

Your English is very good.

JOSEF

I study. To be a priest.

In the shallow road ditch, bundled in layers of tattered
clothes, MORAG, ancient at 55, pokes a stick at a dead wolf.

RACHEL

What is she doing?

Rachel's eyes lock with Morag's as they pass.

JOSEF

She is witch.

Rachel turns to Josef -

The Boy's expression is serious. He makes the sign of the
cross, then extends the INDEX AND PINKY FINGERS of his right
hand toward Morag.

Rachel watches the old woman until she's swallowed by the
night.

Up ahead, the car lights reflect off a long LUMINOUS WHITE
FENCE paralleling the road. Four feet high, it seems to glow
in the dark.

Rachel places her hand on the window.

The fence is made from thousands of bleached BONES and SKULLS
piled one on top of another.

RACHEL
My God... what is that?

Josef winces at the profanity.

JOSEF
It is made from lambs we give for
God. Like Abraham.

Rachel yanks her hand from the glass as though burned.

RACHEL
You still do this!?

Near the end of the drive, the car bumps over pits in the road. Headlights reveal an ancient Gothic CATHEDRAL, its zinc-clad spire pierces the dark winter sky.

JOSEF
This is St. Istvan.