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VOW OF SILENCE
(Based on a True Story)

Screenplay by
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FADE IN:

INT. DUNGEON - NIGHT ATMOSPHERE

From complete darkness the eerie and unmistakable sound of a young woman screaming for mercy can be heard reverberating off of the concrete walls that surround this locked room.

The pleas for mercy of other young women begin to blend in with this one young woman and fill the room as well.

The darkness begins to slowly dissipate as the shimmering of a candle light begins to become perceptible.

The cracking of a whip lands another blow onto exposed flesh of the young woman which is not seen only heard. These blows cause the candle light to flicker from the movement of the air.

Somewhere in the distance one can barely make out that there is a crucifix hanging on the wall right over top of a marble statue of the Virgin Mary. Moisture drips from the ancient wall like the ancient tears of Mother Mary.

The sound of the whip landing onto torn flesh interrupts the visual images. Again the young woman screams, sobbing for forgiveness.

The whip crashes down unrelenting. A few drops of red blood throw themselves onto the candle and begin to weep for the young woman who is being beaten for her faith.

Thrown into a pile onto the dirt dungeon floor is a nuns black habit.

EXT. AIRPLANE - DAY

A four-engine passenger plane flies through a formation of cumulus clouds. The blues and whites that fill the sky are breath taking.

INT. AIRPLANE - CONTINUOUS

The plane jolts from wind turbulence. A warm, smiling, attractive, BLONDE STEWARDESS walks down the planes aisle.

A nervous MALE PASSENGER wearing a COWBOY HAT looks towards her concerned.

(CONTINUED)
STEWARDESS  
(to the cowboy)  
It's just a little turbulence. It  
won't be much longer.

A fasten your seat belt sign flashes RED over the heads of  
those on board Flight 211 out of Chicago, Illinois. The  
passengers are bound for Memphis, Tennessee.

The stewardess continues down the aisle. She stops, and  
with expertise, fastens the seat belt of a CHILD who's  
MOTHER is struggling to fasten her own belt.

Next she stops at an ELDERLY MAN and helps him to fasten  
his seat belt.

She continues on to CHARLOTTE, (mid 50's) who has graying  
patchy hair and dresses as any conservative middle-aged  
woman might. She stares out the plane window lost in  
thought.

SISTER NILA, (mid 40's) is Charlottes ever-present and ever-  
alert companion. Nila is about ten years younger than  
Charlotte. She's a Protestant traveling minister. She does  
not wear a habit.

STEWARDESS (CONT'D)  
(to Charlotte)  
Please fasten your seat belt. We're  
preparing for landing.

She’s talking to Charlotte who does not hear her. Sister  
Nila takes Charlotte by the arm and gets her attention.

SISTER NILA  
Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE  
Yes?

SISTER NILA  
We’re landing. You’ve got to put on  
your seat belt.

CHARLOTTE  
Oh, yes.

The plane jolts again from the wind turbulence. Nila  
nervously squirms in her seat.

Charlotte fasten her belt.

The stewardess moves on.

(CONTINUED)
PILOT (V.O.)
We're about to land on schedule at our
destination in Memphis, Tennessee. The
temperature is a cool forty seven
degrees and our arrival time will be
approximately 4:17 p.m. Please remain
seated until the plane has come to a
complete stop.

The pilot's instructions fade as Charlotte and Nila begin
to converse with each other.

CHARLOTTE
It's been quite some time since we last
visited these parts.

SISTER NILA
Yes, and we must still take the very
same precautions.

CHARLOTTE
Oh, you're worse than an old mother
hen. You worry over just about
everything.

SISTER NILA
And I have good reason to worry.

EXT.CHURCH - SAME DAY
A large crowd gathers outside of a quaint, Protestant
church in Memphis, Tennessee. At first glance one might
think it's just another service about to begin.
A closer look reveals small skirmishes and signs of protest
condemning the visit of Sister Charlotte.
Many of the protesters are ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIESTS and NUNS
dressed in HOLY HABITS.
There are several signs of protest: LIAR, EXCOMMUNICATED
MEANS FOREVER and CONGREGATION OF CONTRADICTION.

EXT.AIRPORT - SAME DAY
The plane safely glides into the landing strip.

INT.AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS
Sister Charlotte is met by a small entourage of men in
conservative gray, blue or black suits.
As they approach Sister Nila steps in front of Charlotte as
if to protect her from them.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

The men show Nila their credentials, only then does she receive them politely, yet skeptically. The men begin to usher the women towards the airport exit.

EXT.CHURCH - SAME DAY

The disturbing scene at the church continues to boil over.

A TYPICAL AMERICAN FAMILY attempts to enter into the church.

An AVERAGE LOOKING MAN, sporting a flat top crew cut, a single breasted gray suit, white shirt and thin tie pushes past the cops and shouts towards the family.

PROTESTER
You're going in there to listen to a pack of lies. Nothin' but a pack of lies I tell you.

The cops usher him behind the barricade with little resistance.

EXT.AIRPORT - SAME DAY

The airport speakers warn against unattended vehicles.

A COP approaches a BLACK FOUR DOOR LINCOLN with it's emergency lights flashing. Pulling out his ticket book, the cop begins to harass the driver.

COP
Let's move it along buddy, before I issue you a citation.

The driver wearing dark shades roles down the window.

DRIVER
It'll only be a minute officer.

The cop begins to write the citation anyway. Suddenly, Sister Charlotte and Nila are whisked to the car. The entourage swiftly enter.

The Lincoln's tires screech as the car surges forward.

COP
Hey.

The cop removes his hat and scratches his head in wonder. He places his ticket book back into his belt.
INT. BLACK LINCOLN - CONTINUOUS

CHARLOTTE
Oh, why all the fuss?

SISTER NILA
We can never be too careful.

CHARLOTTE
My how times have changed. It used to be I who was so timid. We're in Gods hands aren't we?

SISTER NILA
(to one of the men)
She's harmless as a dove.

CHARLOTTE
Don't forget that I'm also wise as a serpent.

EXT. CHURCH - SAME DAY

The crowd swells outside of the church. The violence grows as the Lincoln arrives. POLICE OFFICERS usher the vehicle into the parking lot as it's pummeled with eggs.

Some of the protesters break through the barricade rapidly approaching the vehicle while shouting profanities. Some carry posters with slogans like: "Burn In Hell", "Vow Of Silence", or "Reprobate."

The vehicle is pushed and shaken as it slowly moves along.

INT. BLACK LINCOLN - CONTINUOUS

CHARLOTTE
It appears as if I've stirred up a horns nest once again.

SISTER NILA
I want you to stay close to me.

Sister Nila takes Charlotte by the hand as they begin to exit the vehicle.

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

The church doors open. Sister Charlotte's ushered into the church as more profanities are shouted in her direction. The crowd is held back as the church doors swing closed.
INT.CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

The church is filled to overflowing and the conservative congregation in contrast to their appearance is rocking in the spirit.

There is a large choir. For all appearances one might think this a Black Baptist church from the zealous behavior. It's not. It's an all white congregation.

Hands clap to the rhythm of the beat as they sing the up-tempo hymn, Move On Up A Little Higher. The singing is led by an over zealous, rather LARGE SOUTHERN WOMAN with a beehive hairdo.

The preacher, BROTHER WILLIAM HARRIS is standing behind the pulpit. Harris is a thin, balding man with a charismatic and sincere smile.

Harris is not a flashy preacher. He wears an $89.00 Sears polyester suit. Harris spots Charlotte as she enters the church.

Harris gestures for Charlotte to join him at the pulpit. She's greeted with a genuine hand shake and joins in the singing.

The song ends and Harris leads the congregation in a short prayer. Slowly the congregation begins to quiet.

BROTHER HARRIS
We thank you Lord for the wonderful blessings that you have bestowed upon us. We thank you in the name of Jesus. Amen.

ENTIRE CONGREGATION
Amen.

There's a strange silence inside the church. The exterior commotion can be heard slightly through the walls.

Harris clears his throat a bit nervous.

BROTHER HARRIS
Despite the bomb threat that we received this morning. The police have assured us that it's alright to hold service as scheduled. Furthermore, much to your delight I'm certain, I have no intention of jabbering on and on.

The congregation returns a round of mild laughter.
BROTHER HARRIS (CONT’D)
So... it is with great pleasure that I am able to introduce to you our honored guest this evening. This woman has endured all that one could withstand. She has single-handedly fought the greatest powers of this world and emerged victorious. Of course, I'm talking about Sister Charlotte.

Harris turns to Charlotte and smiles.

The congregation rise in thunderous applause. Brother Harris quiets them with his hands.

BROTHER HARRIS (CONT’D)
This woman wishes not to draw attention to herself as some would profess. Nor is it her intention to make a name for herself. That decision was made for her by a higher power a long, long time ago. So without any further ado, I want to welcome Sister Charlotte.

The congregation applauds as Sister Charlotte approaches the pulpit.

CHARLOTTE
First of all I'd like to say...

The microphone begins to feed back as she speaks. Brother Harris adjusts the microphone and takes a seat behind her along with the elders of the church.

CHARLOTTE (CONT’D)
Thank you Brother Harris. As I was saying, I'm not giving this testimony because I have any ill feelings towards those people outside of your church here today. Quite the contrary. I'm giving my testimony because after my escape from the convent, I felt a burden on my heart to share what I had experienced. I'm doing this so that others might know what cloistered convents truly are. I want mothers and fathers much like you folks here today... I want them to know about the sorrow and the atrocities that young women are enduring under the guise of religion.

(CONTINUED)
Charlotte bows her head. This is an emotional and draining moment.

A few of the members of the congregation shout encouragement towards her.

Charlotte raises her head slowly with a powerfully compelling demeanor. The smile drifts from her face.

CHARLOTTE (CONT’D)
I was reared in a devout home and my parents were good church going people. They loved their children and they loved their community.

(pause)
One day when I was a young child, I made up my mind to become a little sister. On that particular day two of the nuns who were my teachers at the parochial school that I attended... they helped me in making that decision. My decision to become a nun. I remember walking home from school on that afternoon.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT.FLOWERY FIELD – DAY

Early 1930’s.

LIVINGSTON, LOUISIANA. A beautiful Spring afternoon.

TWO NUNS and a young CHARLOTTE (about 14), walk through a waving, dandelion blooming field. The nuns hold Charlotte's hands as they walk through the flowery field.

The parochial school stands in the distance.

CHARLOTTE
I will pray everyday for peace. I will pray that there will be no more suffering for all of humanity. Forever and ever.

The nuns trade glances and shy, quaint smiles. One of the nuns never speaks.

NUN
(always soft spoken)
Your parents will be very proud of your decision.
CHARLOTTE
I hope that they will be pleased. I so much want to dedicate my life to the work of the Lord.

NUN
And so you shall, if it is truly the will of the Lord.

Charlotte is a dreamy, innocent young woman. She happily skips along towards her home.

EXT. CHARLOTTE'S CHILDHOOD HOME - CONTINUOUS

The nuns and Charlotte reach the home. It's a beautiful, well kept, two story, southern style, wood frame house.

A white picket fence surrounds the property. The lawn is well manicured with a vegetable garden. Beautiful flowers grow abundantly everywhere.

CHARLOTTE
I don't know what to tell them. I'm so nervous.

NUN
It's not every day that a young woman decides to become a nun. When the time comes, I'm sure that the right words will be spoken.

They step up onto the porch of the home.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

FATHER RILEY (50), is a stern looking white haired man. He smokes a fine Cuban cigar. He sits in the family room conversing with Charlotte's father, MR. FLANNIGAN (45).

Charlotte's mother MRS. FLANNIGAN (35), is like any woman of this period. She's devout and very domestic. Mrs. Flannigan pours coffee from a fine silver set.

Charlotte enters the home with the two nuns. Mrs. Flannigan is pleasantly surprised at the sight of her pious guests.

MRS. FLANNIGAN
(to the nuns)
Thank you for coming. Won't you please come in. Can I get you anything? Anything at all?

(CONTINUED)
NUN
No, thank you. Bless you.

MRS. FLANNIGAN
You will stay for supper won't you. We always have enough for guests. Tell me you will stay?

Father Riley clears his throat managing to turn the attention back to himself. The nuns shyly bow their heads.

FATHER RILEY
Thank you Mrs. Flannigan, but we must be getting back to the school. We have a rather pressing engagement to tend to.

MRS. FLANNIGAN
Well, maybe another evening would be more suitable.

FATHER RILEY (to Mrs. Flannigan)
Yes.

Father Riley turns his attention back to Mr. Flannigan.

FATHER RILEY (CONT'D)
To get right to the point, we feel that Charlotte is a perfect candidate to become an initiate. She has all of the desirable qualities that the church seeks for the convent.

MRS. FLANNIGAN
My daughter? My Charlotte? A nun?

FATHER RILEY
Surely you were aware of Charlotte's intention to enter convent life?

MR. FLANNIGAN
I had no idea.

CHARLOTTE
Please father, may I speak?

The adults turn to Charlotte as Father Riley blows a puff of smoke from his cigar.

MR. FLANNIGAN
Yes. Go ahead Charlotte. You may speak.
CHARLOTTE
Father, I want to join the convent. I want to become a nun.

MR. FLANNIGAN
(confused)
I don't know quite what to say.

He turns to get a response from his wife. She's filled with admiration for her daughter.

Mrs. Flannigan runs to her daughter as if to weep tears of joy. She takes Charlotte into her arms.

Mrs. Flannigan kisses Charlotte's forehead and brushes Charlotte's hair from her face.

MRS. FLANNIGAN
My little girl is going to become a nun. I'm so very blessed to have such a wonderful daughter.

Mrs. Flannigan turns to her husband.

MRS. FLANNIGAN (CONT’D)
Our daughter is going to become a nun.

Mrs. Flannigan turns to a crucifix that adorns the wall.

MRS. FLANNIGAN (CONT’D)
Blessed be to God.

MR. FLANNIGAN
This is quite a surprise. I'll have to give it some thought Father Riley. After all the girl is just a child.

FATHER RILEY
Yes. Yes of course. But you must realize what this will mean to you... and of course your standing in this community.

Father Riley gestures for the nuns to move towards the door. He stands.

FATHER RILEY (CONT’D)
Let us know of your decision as soon as you can. We will need to make plans to place Charlotte into a boarding school. Rest assured she will receive the finest education available.

(CONTINUED)
MR. FLANNIGAN
(standing)
Thank you for coming.

Father Riley stands and tips his hat.

Two small children, Charlotte's brother and sister, JOHN and CONNIE suddenly run into the house breathless.

MRS. FLANNIGAN
Children behave. We have guests.

JOHN
Hello, Father Riley.

CONNIE
We were being chased by dragon flies.

MRS. FLANNIGAN
Father Riley, I'm sure you recognize John and Connie? You baptized them yourself.

FATHER RILEY
Yes. Yes of course.

The children look towards the priest timidly.

MRS. FLANNIGAN
(to the children)
Hurry along and clean up for supper.

The children run upstairs.

FATHER RILEY
Good-day.

MR. FLANNIGAN
Good-day to you Father Riley.

The men shake hands. The priest and nuns exit.

Mr. Flannigan steps to the porch and lights a cigarette. He watches as the priest and nuns walk off.

Charlotte smiles towards her mother. The two of them begin to set the dining table for dinner.

MRS. FLANNIGAN
(to Charlotte)
Is this something that you're quite sure about?

(CONTINUED)
CHARLOTTE
Oh yes mother, I am certain. I am quite sure. I have given it much thought and prayer.

MRS. FLANNIGAN
It seems so sudden. Why have you never mentioned this to me before?

CHARLOTTE
I wanted to be sure.

MRS. FLANNIGAN
I want you to give it some more thought. This is not a decision that one rushes into.

CHARLOTTE
Mother, I have given it more than thought. I have prayed for guidance. I am sure that I will be a nun.

DISSOLVE TO:

17 EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

The reddish orange leaves of Autumn swirl about as if forming the beginnings of a tornado.

A train billowing black smoke approaches in the distance.

The train whistle SCREAMS announcing its arrival.

Charlotte's father and mother are seeing her off to boarding school.

MRS. FLANNIGAN
Do your very best in all things and the Lord will always watch over you.

CHARLOTTE
Yes, mother. I know he will.

The train has stopped and the BLACK, ELDERLY PORTER takes Charlotte's bag. Charlotte's parents kiss her good-bye.

TRAIN ATTENDANT
All aboard.

Charlotte boards the train.

Leaning through the window Charlotte continues her conversation with her parents.
CONTINUED:

MR. FLANNIGAN
We are all so very proud of you. Just remember one thing, if you ever want to return home all you have to do is write us.

MRS. FLANNIGAN
We love you Charlotte. God bless you. Good-bye my darling. Good-bye.

Charlotte's father holds his daughter's hand through the window.

The train whistle BLARES as it slowly begins to chug from the station. Mr. Flannigan releases his daughter's hand.

CHARLOTTE
Good-bye mother. Good-bye father.

MRS. FLANNIGAN
Good-bye my darling Charlotte.

Mrs. Flannigan holds back her tears as she feigns a smile.

Connie and John wave good-bye.

CONNIE AND JOHN
Bye. Good-bye.

John chases the train down the track. Charlotte and mother wave good-bye until the train is gone from sight.

Charlotte speaks softly to herself.

CHARLOTTE
Good-bye mother.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - CONTINUOUS

Mr. and Mrs. Flannigan turn to leave the station.

MRS. FLANNIGAN
(to her husband)
I'm not sure that I like the idea of our child being sent so far away from home.

MR. FLANNIGAN
She can always return home if things don't work out. I don't give it a month. She'll get homesick and call for us and that'll be that.
CONTINUED:

MRS. FLANNIGAN
I suppose you're right.
(to the children)
Come now children. Hurry along.

INT.TRAIN - LATER SAME DAY

Charlotte sits alone on the train. The beautiful countryside passes by unnoticed. She's lost in thought thumbing her Rosary and smiling to herself.

CHARLOTTE
I will be the very best nun. The best nun that there ever was.

EXT.TRAIN STATION - DAY

Mexico.

The train stations sign reads in SPANISH: DESIERTO DEL LEONE. It's obvious that Charlotte has arrived in Mexico by the surrounding environment.

Charlotte peeks out of the window and is amazed by what she sees.

The MOTHER SUPERIOR (50ish), a stern looking elderly, yet strong woman and a LARGE ELDERLY NUN (mid 40's), is waiting at the station to greet Charlotte.

Charlotte steps from the train a bit stiff.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
So, you have finally made it I see? I am your Mother Superior.

Charlotte curtsies.

CHARLOTTE
Hello, Mother Superior.

The Mother Superior turns to go. The Nun follows behind her. Charlotte swiftly catches on.

EXT.TRAIN STATION - CONTINUOUS

They swiftly walk along. Charlotte struggling with her baggage.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Did you enjoy your travel?

(CONTINUED)
CHARLOTTE
Oh, yes. The scenery was breath
taking. It's very different from
Louisiana. Mother Superior, you do
speak English well.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Yes, I am an American like yourself.
Come child. We must be on our way.

CHARLOTTE
Yes, Mother Superior.

The two elderly women begin to walk towards a mule buggy.
Charlotte following.

A thin, ELDERLY MEXICAN MAN (65), takes Charlotte's bag and
puts it in the buggy.

EXT. BUGGY - CONTINUOUS

Charlotte, the Mother Superior and the elderly nun ride as
passengers in the mule driven buggy.

The arid, dessert land is flat with sprinklings of huge
desert cactus. The village that they pass through is
filled with poverty.

The land is not green, yet it is sparse and agricultural.

A mountain range towers in the distance.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
You will have the same freedoms that
all of the other young converts have.
All that I ask is that you will obey
the convent rules and not expect to be
treated any differently from the other
sisters.

CHARLOTTE
Oh, no Ma'am. I wouldn't.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
I have reason to believe that you will
make a good convert. Father Riley has
spoken very highly of you.

Charlotte smiles and enjoys the scenery.

A large reptile slithers past a towering cluster of cactus.
Unnoticed by Charlotte.
EXT. CONVENT - SAME DAY

They arrive at the convent. The driver helps them down from the buggy. He hands Charlotte her bag and shies away.

Charlotte turns to look at the ancient, towering, monolithic structure.

A huge gate keeps intruders from entering this sanctuary.

The Mother Superior hands the man a coin. He's honored to do anything for the church. At first he does not accept. The Mother Superior's gesture makes him take the coin.

MEXICAN MAN
Gracias Madre.

The humble man bows. He boards his worn buggy, CRACKS his whip and rides off.

The Elderly nun rings a bell attached to the huge gate.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Charlotte, this will be your new home.

Immediately the gate swings open, parting like the Red Sea.

They enter and the gates close.

SISTER MARISOL a beautiful, young Spanish nun is in the garden tending the many WELL MANICURED RED and WHITE ROSE BUSHES.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT'D)
Charlotte, this is Sister Marisol. She will take you to your quarters. She will answer any of your inquiries.

Sister Marisol smiles taking Charlotte by the arm leading her towards the convents interior. Marisol speaks English with a broken accent.

SISTER MARISOL
I have been chosen to guide you through your orientation. If there will be anything that you desire to know, I will assist you.
CONTINUED:

SISTER MARISOL
Rest here a while. I will come for you at dinner time. We eat at 6:00 sharp. We mustn't be late. The Mother Superior detests tardiness. Good-bye for now.

CHARLOTTE
Good-bye. Oh, and thank you.

Marisol exits.

EXT. CONVENT - DAY

Months Later.

The mountain range that towers in the distance is covered with the first snow of the winter.

INT. CONVENT BOARDING SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

It's a cold, cloudy, winter day. Charlotte and another young nun are mopping the Spanish tile flooring of a long corridor.

From the distance the elderly nun approaches. She walks past Charlotte without breaking stride.

ELDERLY NUN
The Mother Superior wishes to have a word with you.

She continues to walk on. Charlotte sets the mop aside. The elderly nun turns back to Charlotte.

ELDERLY NUN (CONT'D)
In her office at once.

INT. MOTHER SUPERIOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The Mother Superior sits at her desk. There is a TAP at the door.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
You may enter.

Charlotte enters

CHARLOTTE
Did you wish to see me?

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Yes. Close the door.

(CONTINUED)
She does.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT'D)
(pause)
Do you know why I have called for you?

CHARLOTTE
No, Mother Superior.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
I have been watching you for several months now. It is time that I told you of convent life's most sacred vow. If you choose to take this vow, you will become one of the chosen one's. You will become the bride of Christ. I'm inviting you to take the vow of the White Veil. I have requested that you begin your initiation as a Carmelite nun and the request has been granted. This is a very special honor. What do you have to say for yourself?

CHARLOTTE
That is a special honor indeed.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Do you have any objections?

CHARLOTTE
No. As you have already stated it is a great honor. It's just that...

Yes?

MOTHER SUPERIOR
It's just that I wanted to work in the hospital and care for the sick and elderly after I finished my nurses training.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Charlotte, if you choose to take this vow, your entire family will be saved for your sacrifice and service to the church. Salvation to the souls of your family is of far greater importance than your nurses training. Besides, do you not think that there will be much caring for the ill as a Carmelite? Do let me know if you have a change of heart.

(CONTINUED)
CHARLOTTE
Yes, Mother Superior.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
You may go now.

CHARLOTTE
Yes, Mother Superior.

Charlotte bows and turns to leave.

EXT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Charlotte returns to mopping the floor. She looks up to see Sister Marisol coming down the corridor.

CHARLOTTE
Sister, may I trouble you for a moment?

SISTER MARISOL
Yes, certainly. What is it?

CHARLOTTE
What do you know of the vow of the White Veil?

SISTER MARISOL
Oh, sister. It is the first of many steps towards the acceptance into the Carmelite order. Why do you ask?

CHARLOTTE
The Mother Superior has offered me this vow.

SISTER MARISOL
That is wonderful. Have you accepted?

CHARLOTTE
I'm not sure. I need to know more about it. Perhaps I will take it up with one of the elder sisters.

Marisol smiles nodding in approval of Charlotte's words. She continues on.

INT. CHARLOTTE'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Charlotte sits at her small wooden desk writing a letter to her mother.
CHARLOTTE (V.O.)
Dear Mother, I have been chosen to become an initiate into the Carmelite Order. I do not know much of this, but if I choose to become an initiate, I will undertake many special duties. The Mother Superior has told me that this is one of the greatest honors that a young woman can receive from Christ. I assure you that as soon as I am able to find out more about these duties I will write to you and let you know of all things concerning this matter. Love always, your daughter Charlotte. God bless.

Charlotte folds the letter and inserts it into an envelope.

INT. CHAPEL - DAY
Charlotte's weeping tears.
She and several other nuns are in prayer. Charlotte is kneeling before a marble statue of Jesus and the statue of Mary which is holding the infant child Jesus.

CHARLOTTE
Dear Mother of God I am repentant for my selfish desires. I will do all to become a religious devote. Help me Mother of God. I believe that I have decided to take the vow of the White Veil. I want to give all my time towards prayer and service for you and all your splendid glory. Give me the strength to carry out your will. Amen.

Charlotte signs the cross and stands.
The Mother Superior witnesses Charlotte's words as she stands in the shadows of the doorway which leads into the chapel.
Charlotte turns and the Mother Superior is gone.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY
Charlotte exits the chapel. Drying the tears from her eyes she stops at a large plate glass window which overlooks the dessert valley.
The valley is filled with cactus and anything that would remind Charlotte that she is a long way from home.
The rain is falling causing a gentle flow of water to run down the window pane.

Watching as the rain trickles down the pane:

CHARLOTTE
No tears are sadder than the tears of an angel.

INT.CHARLOTTE'S ROOM - DAY
Charlotte is making her bed.
There is a TAP at her door. The elderly nun enters her room, handing Charlotte a letter.
The cover of the letter reveals that it is from her mother.

CHARLOTTE
Mother?
The letter has already been OPENED.
Charlotte thinks this odd and removes the letter. Much of the writing is BLACKENED OUT.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
What has happened to my letter?

No response.

CHARLOTTE (cont’d) (CONT’D)
What was my mother trying to tell me?

NUN
Apparently things concerned with this world. Perhaps things that a nun such as yourself should not be concerned with.

CHARLOTTE
(confused)
I... I don't understand?

NUN
The Mother Superior has an obligation to keep our minds free of confusion and deception. Remember well that we are in this world, but we are not of this world.

The elderly nun exits.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Charlotte attempts to read the letter trying to make sense of what remains. Frustrated she falls on her bed and weeps.

The letter slips from her fingers falling to the floor.

INT.CHURCH - DAY

Dissonant pipe organ music BLARES loudly.

A strange church WEDDING is taking place. There are NUNS and PRIESTS (segregated) standing on either sides of a long aisle which leads to a PRIEST dressed in a BRIGHT RED holy habit.

INCENSE burn on either side of the altar.

One side of the room has only priests in full white dress. The other side only nuns dressed in pale gowns, their faces are veiled.

At the far end of the room Charlotte enters wearing a BEAUTIFUL WHITE WEDDING GOWN AND LONG WHITE VEIL. The dress is extravagant. She stops and all eyes are upon her.

Smiling, she begins to walk down the long corridor.

MANY WHITE ROSE PEDDLES cover the entire length of the floor. Hundreds of WHITE CANDLES light the room brightly causing a shimmering effect on the interior walls.

The Mother Superior awaits Charlotte at the priest's side. She stands at a 45 degree angle.

Charlotte finally arrives and kneels before the feet of the priest. She kisses his ring.

The priest speaks in LATIN over subtitles in ENGLISH:

PRIEST
Sister Charlotte, on this day you shall inherit one of the greatest blessings that exists on the face of this earth. The throne of God Almighty. You have been chosen by Christ and his Holy Mother for this majestic favor. There are many blessings that come with this. There are also many responsibilities. Understand that you are not worthy of these gifts. You shall never be worthy of these gifts, nor of the honors that come with this appointment. Not in this life, nor in the life to come. Rise.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

The priest gestures with his hands for her to rise. Charlotte stands head bowed.

The priest lays his hands on Charlotte's head.

PRIEST (CONT'D)
Bride of Christ.

Charlotte kisses his ring. She turns walking arm in arm with the Mother Superior back down the lengthy corridor.

The Gregorian Chant, Kyrie Eleison is sung (male voices only) as a droning pipe organ accompanies the chant.

INT.CHARLOTTE'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Charlotte is kneeling at her prayer board. The room is lit by candle light. She is starring at the crucifix which hangs near the entrance of the small room.

CHARLOTTE
(smiling)
Bride of Christ. Thank you holy Mother.

She stands wearing only her pale colored bed clothing and scapular.

As she stands, it's revealed that her knees are dripping blood through her clothing.

The wounds are self inflicted from wires which are attached to her prayer board. She enters her bed and closes her eyes.

She pulls a white sheet up to cover her body.

The blood soaks thickly through her bed clothing around the knee area.

INT.CHAPEL - NIGHT

Several Months Later.

Charlotte appears to be older. She's also losing her carefree innocence and looks severely towards her worldly surroundings.

Charlotte sits alone but in prayer with several other nuns. The Mother Superior calls for Charlotte to follow after her.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Sister Charlotte.

(CONTINUED)
Charlotte follows the Mother Superior to her office.

INT. MOTHER SUPERIOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Charlotte, I have been watching you for a long time now. You have the possibilities of making a good nun. A cloister nun. I believe that you are willing to give up everything in this world. I believe that you would be willing to hide away behind convent doors. I believe that you are the type who would be willing to live in crucial poverty. You're the kind that would be willing to suffer greatly. That is why I have requested that you receive the vow of the Black Veil.

CHARLOTTE
I know nothing of the cloistered sisters, except that they made my wedding gown when I took my White Veil vow. I have never met one of the sisters of the cloister.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
A cloister sister never leaves the sanctity of the church. They are in constant prayer and vigil.

CHARLOTTE
What shall I say?

MOTHER SUPERIOR
You will have to be willing to shed your blood as Jesus shed his upon Calvary. You will have to be willing to do heavy penance. You must be prepared to live in crucial poverty for the remainder of your life.

CHARLOTTE
I will have to think this over Mother Superior. This is a great decision. I must pray. I must find out if I am worthy.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
This is the highest calling of a young Carmelite. To be a sister of a closed order is of great significance to the church and to the salvation of your very soul.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

CHARLOTTE
Yes, Mother Superior. I'll need time. May I go now?

The Mother Superior nods. Charlotte bows and exits.

INT. HALL - CONTINUOUS
Charlotte exits the Mother Superior's office. A NUN walks past. Charlotte takes the nun by the arm.

CHARLOTTE
What is this crucial poverty? What does she mean by heavy penance?

The nun does not understand and walks on.

EXT. OUTDOOR MARKET - DAY
Charlotte and Marisol are walking past the busy market places. Fresh fish and vegetables are bartered fervently.

There is festive music performed by traditional musicians.

EL DIAS DE LOS MUERTOS celebration is on. Many masked youth run about in mischief behavior.

A pack of young Mexican soldiers pass and greet the sisters. They tip their hats respectively. One young soldier smiles at Charlotte and hands her a red rose as they pass.

Charlotte turns her head away and blushes. Marisol teases Charlotte.

MARISOL
You seem to have an admirer Sister.

CHARLOTTE
Hush. How can you say such things.

They stop and rest on a park bench.

Some firecrackers EXPLODE nearby. They're only slightly frightened by the noise and slightly amused.

A group of masked children run past the sisters.

MARISOL
We will not know anything of this vow until it is taken. Only the closed order know of this secretive vow. They and the Mother Superior of course.

(CONTINUED)
CHARLOTTE
We already live in poverty, but the Mother said, crucial poverty? I must find out about this. I will find out about it.

A YOUNG COUPLE obviously in love sit on a park bench across from the nuns. They're oblivious to their surroundings.

They kiss.

Charlotte blushes and turns away. Marisol is especially interested in these lovebirds.

MARISOL
Have you ever thought of marrying?

CHARLOTTE
What?

MARISOL
Have you ever thought of leaving the convent and some day marrying. I have thought of what it would be like raising my own family.

CHARLOTTE
Oh, no. The convent is everything to me. It is all that I know. I don't believe that I would ever leave the convent.

MARISOL
Yes, Charlotte. We know how diligent you are in all matters. You make the rest of us look positively worldly.

CHARLOTTE
(holding back her laughter)
You are terrible Sister Marisol.

MARISOL
Pray for me Charlotte. For I know that God hears your prayers.

CHARLOTTE
Sister Marisol, really.

MARISOL
(sudden seriousness)
Sister, I don't know if I am capable of continuing on in this way. I have met a young man. I want so much more from life that the convent offers me.

(MORE)
MARISOL (CONT'D)
This man, he is a good man. He has
proposed marriage. I believe that I
will marry him.

CHARLOTTE
Marriage? To a man?

MARISOL
Yes, to a man. He was a priest once.
He has left the church. Charlotte.
Oh, he is a wonderful, caring man. I
believe that I love him.

CHARLOTTE
Marriage to a priest? Marisol you have
been my friend for a long time now. I
don't want to see you leave. But you
know what is best for you.

MARISOL
I believe that I will be leaving soon.
I plan on letting the Mother Superior
know of my intentions today.

Sister Marisol stands.

A pack of masked children run past. More firecrackers
EXPLODE.

MARISOL (CONT'D)
(continuing)
And what will become of you?

CHARLOTTE
I don't know. Perhaps I will join the
sisters of the cloister.

Charlotte stands. They hug.

MARISOL
I wish that I could be as you. So
strong and determined. I hope that the
Lord will forgive me.

CHARLOTTE
You have done no evil. You have tried
your best and that is all that God
requires.

They continue to walk on past a procession of worshippers
carrying gory images of martyred Saints and grotesque
images of the crucifixion.

More EXPLOSIONS of firecrackers in the distance.
EXT. CONVENT - DAY

Thunder.

It's a cloudy and overcast day. The wind picks up as Charlotte is pruning rose blooms on the convent lawn.

A horse drawn buggy pulls up to the curb.

Sister Marisol exits the convent. Her bag is packed. She's wearing conservative yet stylish, civilian clothing.

Charlotte and Marisol look at each other silently from the distance.

A handsome dark haired, mustachioed man steps down from the buggy. Marisol walks to him. He takes Marisol by the arm. They embrace.

Charlotte watches from the garden. Marisol turns and waves good-bye to Charlotte. Charlotte runs to the gate.

MARISOL
(to the mustachioed man)
Wait. I'll only be a moment.

She runs to Charlotte.

MARISOL (CONT'D)
(to Charlotte)
I'll miss you my lovely sister.

She kisses Charlotte's face.

CHARLOTTE
My prayers will always be with you.

MARISOL
I won't forget you. I'll never forget my dear Sister Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE
You must not keep him waiting any longer.

Marisol kisses Charlotte one last time and runs to the buggy waving good-bye.

MARISOL
I'll write often.

Marisol blows Charlotte a kiss.

The buggy pulls off.

(CONTINUED)
It quickly begins to rain as umbrellas pop open on the buggy. The wind causes one of the umbrellas to rend open. There is laughter from the buggy.

Charlotte gathers her tools and runs to the sanctity of the convent.

She watches as the rain begins to come down harder.

INT. OUTSIDE OF MOTHER SUPERIOR'S DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Thunder is heard crashing in the distance.

The rain beats heavily upon the roof of the convent. Soaking wet Charlotte hesitates to rap on the door. She wipes her brow and KNOCKS.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Come in.

Charlotte enters.

INT. MOTHER SUPERIOR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Charlotte enters. The Mother Superior is reading about Sister De La Cruz of Mexico. She does not stop reading as Charlotte enters.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Yes, Charlotte. What can I do for you?

CHARLOTTE
I'm going to do it.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Do it? Do what my child?

CHARLOTTE
You were right Mother Superior. I would have more time for prayer. I would be able to give so much more of my time to God. I'm ready now. I'm going to hide myself away behind convent doors forever. I'm ready to take my vow of the Black Veil.

The Mother Superior puts down her book and fixes her gaze upon Charlotte.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
You do realize that you will never see your family ever again? Are you still willing to make this sacrifice?

(CONTINUED)
CHARLOTTE
Yes, Mother Superior.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
You will never go home again. You will
die in this convent and you will be
buried inside of these convent walls.

CHARLOTTE
Yes, Mother Superior. I am prepared
for this.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
You will never receive another piece of
mail from your family as long as you
live. You will never hear from your
family again. Understand well what I
say to you.

CHARLOTTE
I am aware of all of these things
Mother.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Very well. I'll see to it that all of
the necessary arrangements are made.

Charlotte bows and exits.

INT. FUNERAL PARLOR - NIGHT

The room is dark and dank.

There are SEVERAL NUNS dressed in black and sitting in
solemn prayer. These are the emaciated and forlorn nuns of
the cloister. A few Priest dressed in black likewise
attend this odd funeral.

A casket made of dark rough plank sits in the midst of the
room surrounded by images of weeping saints and other
terrifying relics of the church.

A priest forms the cross on all quarters of the casket.
Many incense burn on either side of it. Clouds of smoke
billow towards the heavens.

At the far end of the church stands the statues of a
crucified Jesus, the Jesus of the crucifixion. The statue
of the Mother Mary is in mourning, hands outstretched
towards the heavens.

There's a painting of the burial tomb of Jesus who is
surrounded by the mourning faithful.

(CONTINUED)
Seven candles burn above the casket.

Charlotte enters at the far end of the room. She's wearing a dark red velvet funeral gown which drapes to the floor. She's also wearing a BLACK VEIL.

Charlotte walks past the drawn and sorrow filled faces of the cloister nuns down the long narrow aisle to the casket. She stops.

PRIEST
(in Latin to English subtitles)
Charlotte, today you will die to this world. You shall be buried in death and resurrected as one of the chosen. You will become a sister of the cloister. Step into the casket.

He gestures towards the casket with his hands.

Charlotte steps into the casket. A heavily incensed, black drape mortise is placed over her body by TWO NUNS.

Charlotte folds her arms and lays silently while the Priest continues.

PRIEST (CONT’D)
You shall spend nine hours in this casket. We shall pray and keep vigil over you that you may not be tempted by the spirits of darkness.

The Priest begins to orate the SACRAMENT OF THE LAST RITES.

The lid of the casket is closed. The droning voice of the Priest continues to be heard as if muffled by the closed coffin:

As Charlotte lies in the casket, she reminisces life with her family, fully aware that she will never see them ever again.

MONTAGE:

Charlotte recalls sitting at family meals with her family.

She recalls praying with her family at dinner and being rocked to sleep by her mother as a child.

She remembers setting the dinner table and her conversation conversation with her mother.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

Now she's being picked up by her father as she puts the star on top of the family Christmas tree.

She sees her younger brother and sister waving good-bye at the train depot.

Everything that a child might remember about her family she thinks of, such as the sound of her mother singing a happy little little tune as she worked in the garden.

INT. CASKET - CONTINUOUS

Charlotte weeps sorrowfully.

CHARLOTTE
Good-bye mother.

DISSOLVE:

INT. FUNERAL PARLOR - NIGHT

The candles have burnt to the wick. The statue of Jesus with blood on the palms of his hands bare witness.

The lid of the casket opens.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Arise.

Charlotte steps from the casket.

The sullen and drawn cloister nuns are no longer present. The Mother Superior leads Charlotte past a procession of healthy familiar nuns who weep for Charlotte.

They bid her farewell each one reaching out just to touch her one last time.

NUNS
God bless you sister.

With sad countenances they bless her.

NUNS (CONT'D)
God be with you.

They know they will never see her again.

Charlotte's taken behind a huge wooden door which is locked. It leads into an immense dark room. The door closes making an enormous ECHOING sound taking with it what light remained.
Charlotte follows the Mother Superior down endless sordid corridors. The catacombs are all guarded by icons and images of gory looking saints.

Charlotte is led down two long flights of stairs going deeper and deeper underground. The convent grows darker and darker.

The only thing that lights the convent underground is seven burning candles. Everywhere there are seven burning candles which are placed in gothic candle holders attached to the walls. They softly light images of the crucifix.

Finally Charlotte is led into a room. There's only a straight back, hard bottomed chair and a small desk.

A CLOISTER NUN awaits the commands of the Mother Superior.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
(to Charlotte)
Sit down.

Some official looking papers are placed before her.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT'D)
You will sign these papers. Since you will never leave this convent alive you will have no need for any inheritance which might be left to you. Your inheritance will naturally become the sole property of the Holy Roman Catholic Church.

A pen is placed in Charlotte's hand and she signs the papers. The Mother Superior hands the papers to the nun and she exits.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT'D)
You will now take these three vows. The vow of chastity. The vow of poverty, and that of obedience.

A SHARP KNIFE IS REVEALED. Charlotte jumps in fear.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT'D)
You will sign these vows in your own blood.

The knife moves past Charlotte's stunned face. Her earlobe is cut. She grimaces.
MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT’D)
You shall live in crucial poverty for the remainder of your life. This will bring you closer to God. Any form of suffering is invaluable for the salvation of your soul.

With the pen the Mother Superior extracts some blood from Charlotte's earlobe. The blood begins to trickle down her neck. Charlotte is handed the pen. She signs the first vow.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT’D)
You're already married to Christ. You are after all his bride. It is your duty to remain a virgin, undefiled. Never shall you marry in this world.

Charlotte is handed the blood dipped pen and she signs the paper.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT’D)
The final vow is the vow of obedience. Absolute obedience. You will be much the wiser the quicker you learn to obey it.

Charlotte signs the paper.

An EMACIATED NUN of the cloister enters the room. Charlotte is so taken by the young woman's appearance that she does not notice that she carries with her scissors and a razor.

The Mother Superior removes Charlotte's headdress and with a quick snip cuts most of her beautiful hair off (as in a ponytail).

The emaciated nun gingerly takes the hair and exits the room. The Mother Superior begins to cut off the rest of her hair until Charlotte is completely bald.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT’D)
You now belong to Rome. What you hear, you do not hear. What you see, you do not see. What you feel, you do not feel. You will not eat unless ordered and you will not rest until given permission. You shall stand and you shall sit only when told. You shall no longer be called Charlotte. You have been given the name of Muriel. You are Sister Muriel. You are now a forgotten woman of this world.

(MORE)
MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT’D)
You are a sister of the cloister.
(pause)
Stand.

Charlotte obeys.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT’D)
As Jesus suffered here on earth, so must we suffer. We must live our lives as martyrs for the faith. In the Garden of Olives Jesus shed his blood. He received innumerable strokes on his back, his cheeks, his breast, his head and his side. Those murderers spit in his face. They pulled at his beard. Many times he was thrown to the ground. Those religious hypocrites placed a crown of thorns on our kings head as he pleaded for our salvation. He was in great agony and he carried the cross to Calvary three hundred and twenty steps.
(pause)
You will receive a plenary indulgence for your sins and entirely escape the pains of purgatory if you do not break any of the rules of this convent.

The Mother Superior looks towards the heavens.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT’D)
Reward them as martyrs who spill their blood for the faith.

The Mother Superior then hands Charlotte a patron saint.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT’D)
This is Saint Lazarus. He is the saint of all who suffer indignities and despair. He is to be your patron saint. No matter what happens to you in this convent you should pray to your patron saint and he will intercede. He will get your prayers through to God. You are not worthy to pray to God directly. You must ask that your prayers be sent through your mediator.
(pause)
We have completed you perpetual vows. Come with me.

The Mother Superior leads Charlotte arm in arm into an adjoining room.
INT. ADJOINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Charlotte is led to what appears to be a wedding ceremony. There's a beautiful bridal chamber.

A PRIEST adorned in his holy habit locks his arm in Charlotte's. The Mother Superior walks away.

Charlotte instinctively pulls from the priest. He's angered. The Mother Superior notices this.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Sister Muriel, after you have been here for a while you will not feel this way. The rest of us felt the same way you do.

Charlotte is startled and has a look of desperation on her face.

PRIEST
The priest's body is sanctified, therefore it is not a sin for you to give your body to a priest.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
The Holy Ghost placed the seed in Mary's womb and the child Jesus was born, therefore the priest is the Holy Ghost incarnate and it is not a sin for us to bear his children.

Charlotte covers her ears and quickly realizes the blood running down her neck. Her hand is covered in her own blood.

CHARLOTTE
(pleading in disbelief)
Please, may I have permission to speak.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Granted.

CHARLOTTE
Mother Superior, why did you not tell me this before taking my perpetual vows?

The priest begins to lead Charlotte to the bridal chamber.

Charlotte pleads with the priest to release her.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
Please, release me at once. Let me go.
I beg you.

She pulls from him and falls. He begins to drag her to the chamber.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
Please, Mother Superior, do not allow this. Please. No... No. I don't want to go any further. Call for my father at once. I want to go home. Do you hear? I want to go home.

The Mother Superior exits. Her footsteps can be heard as Charlotte struggles against the priest.

The priest LAUGHS mockingly at Charlotte.

She's dragged to the bridal chamber which is adorned in beautiful tapestries and an enormous bed.

Her funeral gown is ripped at the shoulder.

Some of the relics and icons crash to the floor in her struggle to resist.

Charlotte is thrown on the bed. She struggles but is overwhelmed by the man. Charlotte is raped.

INT. BRIDAL CHAMBER - EARLY MORNING

Charlotte awakes and jolts to a defensive position. She is wearing nothing but her scapular and her crucifix. She realizes her nakedness and grabs to pull the covers over her abused and bruised body.

Charlotte WEEPS deeply over the loss of her virtue.

A DEEP TONED GONG is heard ringing in the new day. This is unusual for Charlotte.

She gets up and peeks out of the curtains that surround the bridal chamber.

Several (possibly twenty) young and impoverished appearing nuns march down the lengthy corridor and stand at attention in even rows, military style. Their habits are greatly worn. They are practically clothed in rags and bare feet.

TWO ELDERLY NUNS take their position as a sergeant who was preparing his soldiers for their daily commands.

(CONTINUED)
Familiar footsteps are heard approaching from the distance. The Mother Superior appears from the dark shadowy confines of the convent.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
You have all been assigned your duties. Get to them.

The Mother Superior claps her hands once and the nuns quietly disperse. She looks over to Charlotte who is cowering behind the curtain of the bridal chamber.

The Mother Superior approaches. As she does, one of the elderly nuns bring Charlotte her habit.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT’D)
Get dressed.

Charlotte dresses.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT’D)
Come with me.

They walk down a corridor and through a doorway.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT’D)
Today you will begin your initiation as a Carmelite nun. One of several penance you must endure.

INT. MORGUE – NIGHT ATMOSPHERE

The seven candles burn as they enter a room. The room is dark and eyes must adjust to the lighting. The room appears bare and empty. As they approach, something becomes apparent near the far wall. A young, dead nun is lying on a cooling board.

Charlotte is shocked and frightened. As her eyes adjust, many open caskets with dead nuns cover the length of the wall. Charlotte's eyes plead to the Mother Superior for an explanation.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
You are to stand vigil over this girl's dead body.
   (handing Charlotte a small vial of water)
Take this holy water and sprinkle it continuously over her body. You are to chant,
   (spoken in Latin)
"PEACE BE UNTO YOU"

You will remain here until I send someone to release you of this duty.

The Mother Superior exits without another word. Charlotte realizes that she's being left alone in this room of death. Frightened, she carries out the Mother Superior's orders.

INT. MORGUE - LATER SAME DAY

Charlotte is chanting and growing weary. Another nun silently approaches Charlotte and taps her shoulder. Charlotte SCREAMS OUT LOUDLY IN FEAR and faints.

INT. MOTHER SUPERIOR'S QUARTERS - LATER SAME DAY

Charlotte sits in a chair. She is revived and finds herself sitting in the Mother Superior's underground quarters.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Must we look after you as well?

Her head bows in shame for what she has done.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT'D)
There are reasons why we observe the rules of silence in this convent. Meditation and prayer are a vital part of our penitent lifestyle.

CHARLOTTE
May I speak?

The Mother Superior nods her approval.

CHARLOTTE (cont’d) (CONT’D)
I was frightened. I am sorry. It was foolish.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Fear the living. The dead are dead, they can do you no harm. You will learn not to do such a thing as that again.

TWO LARGE ELDERLY NUNS take Charlotte by the arm and lift her up.

INT. DUNGEON - NIGHT ATMOSPHERE

Charlotte is led to a dungeon cell. The Mother Superior unlocks the cell door. The door creaks open.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Charlotte is put into this dark chamber. She's shackled standing. The Mother Superior and assisting elderly nuns leave.

Charlotte is locked into this dank and gloomy, dirt floor cell. The shackles on her legs do not allow her to fall or even move freely.

The Mother Superior and the elderly nuns exit. The door is slammed shut.

INT.CELL - SAME DAY

Charlotte is awoken by the screams and inaudible voices which can be heard from someplace else in the dungeon. Possibly another floor altogether.

Charlotte listens and struggles at the awkward chains that bind her.

INT.DUNGEON - NIGHT ATMOSPHERE

As time passes Charlotte's strength weakens. She can no longer stand. She struggles at her binds. Stumbling, she falls crying out from the searing pain as the shackles bite into the flesh of her ankles.

CHARLOTTE
Mother of God help me. I cannot bear this agony alone. Dear God here my plea.
  (cries aloud)
    Saint Lazarus, intercede for me.

Charlotte faints.

INT.CORRIDOR - NIGHT ATMOSPHERE

The Mother Superior and elderly nuns walk quietly down the hallway towards Charlotte's cell. The only sound is the tone of the Mother Superior's key ring which JANGLES an erratic rhythm.

The Mother Superior opens an inadequate barred wooden window and looks into the cell.

Charlotte's unconscious. A rat gnaws at her leg. As the minimal beam of light enters the cell the rat scurries across the cell floor and disappears into a hole.

The slat in the window is closed. The cell is unlocked. The door opens.

(CONTINUED)
Water is splashed onto Charlotte awakening her. Her binds are loosed. Charlotte can barely stand.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Come with us.

INT. LONG CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Charlotte's led down a long corridor in this catacomb and into another dark room. A small procession of nuns follow the Mother Superior.

There's a huge wooden cross, (12' x 12" x 12") leaning on an incline. Charlotte is taken to the base of the cross.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Strip off your clothing to your waist.

Nuns never remove their scapular.
Charlotte does not understand.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT'D)
Do it at once.

Charlotte obeys. She does not remove her scapular or her crucifix.

Charlotte is draped over the cross. Her hands are bound to her feet. Two young nuns are each given a flagellation whip.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT'D)
You may begin.

The young nuns take their position on either side of the cross.

They begin whipping Charlotte body furiously until she spills her blood. SNAP. CRACK. Her blood runs down her legs and back. It drips down her face.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT'D)
As Jesus shed his blood upon Calvary so shall ye.

Charlotte screams for mercy.

CHARLOTTE
Oh, please. Please. Stop. I've had enough. Mother Superior, have mercy. Have mercy.

Her words fall on deaf ears.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

The whipping finally ceases. Charlotte is untied from the cross and she falls limp to the floor.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Get dressed at once.

Charlotte WEEPING, crawls to her clothing and somehow manages to dress as her wounds continue to bleed through her clothing.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT’D)
(to Charlotte)
You will assist Sister Teresa, doing laundry detail today. You are dismissed.

The Mother Superior turns and goes.

SISTER TERESA is a meek and frail Mexican nun. Her deeply sunken and darkened eyes are gaunt. She longs for her freedom from this endless nightmare.

Teresa helps Charlotte dress and leads her away, supporting her weight with her arms.

INT.LAUNDRY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Charlotte labors over an old fashioned scrub board. She's obviously washing the clothing of the priest's of the adjoining monastery.

Blood still trickles down her hands. She notices. She looks up at the crucifix hanging above her head. She winces as she looks away. She continues to labor over the laundry.

INT.DINING ROOM - NIGHT ATMOSPHERE

The dining room resembles the dining room of a paupers prison.

Charlotte stands in the food line. The movements are very specific and mechanical.

She steps up for her cup of soup and slice of bread. The nuns that give her the daily ration does not look up at her although Charlotte is covered in blood.

Charlotte goes to her appointed seat. She sits unable to eat.

The other nuns take notice and help themselves to Charlotte's meager portion.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Sister Teresa who sits next to Charlotte and another NUN WITH A DISTINCTIVE PHYSICAL APPEARANCE, sits DIRECTLY across from Charlotte. They fend off the nuns from stealing Charlotte's aliment.

Teresa speaks with a broken English/Spanish accent. Her faith in God has not been shattered by the years she has lived in this cloister.

She steals conversation whenever the opportunity arises.

TERESA
(whispering)
You must eat. You will need your strength.

CHARLOTTE
I can't.

Teresa picks up the bread and puts it to Charlotte's lips.

TERESA
Eat.

Charlotte bites off a piece. Teresa smiles a sad smile. So does the other nun that assisted her.

Bells TOLL 1:00 a.m.

The nuns march down a dark hallway. They stop at the entrance to each of their appointed cells. They begin to disrobe silently, keeping their backs to each others.

Charlotte removes her habit and her blood stained undergarment is stuck to her wounds. She cannot undress, it's too painful. She enters her cell.

An elderly nun locks the cell doors. Charlotte manages to get into her bed.

Sister Teresa's listens as Charlotte cries herself to sleep.

A LOW BELL TOLLS 5 a.m.. The nuns dress quickly.

Charlotte begins to follow the entourage of nuns.
A SCREAM is heard and one of the nuns in front of her faints.

As Charlotte approaches the place where the nun has fallen, she spots another nun who managed to commit suicide. She dangles from the ceiling. She has hung herself with her own clothing.

ELDERLY NUN
Continue to move on. This is none of your concern.

Charlotte's shoved along as the nuns continue their procession.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Charlotte takes up her tin cup. She proceeds to where the food is being served.

She receives a four ounce slice of black bread and her cup half filled with black coffee.

Silently the nuns sit eating their meager portion of food. Exchanged glances are turned away in embarrassment and shame.

Charlotte looks long at the nun who sits DIRECTLY ACROSS FROM HER. She's the sister who fended off the other nuns from taking her food.

Charlotte cannot eat.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT ATMOSPHERE

Months later.

Charlotte's crawling the length of a corridor on her hands and knees. So are several other nuns. The Mother Superior passes calling to her.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Sister Muriel.

Charlotte looks up to the Mother Superior with pleading eyes. Her visage is shocking. She's lost much weight. Her eyes are drawn, cheeks sunken and she looks tired, worn and greatly aged.

The other nuns continue this strange ritual of crawling the three hundred steps up Calvary Hill.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT’D)
Come with me.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

The look of fear is evident as Charlotte is barely able to stand.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT’D)

Penance.

INT. LARGE ROOM WITH HIGH CEILING - NIGHT ATMOSPHERE

The Mother Superior and Charlotte enter into a room. Upon entering it is noticeable that there are two ropes hanging from the very high ceiling.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

You take your position here.

Charlotte is led to the wall.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT’D)

Raise your arms.

Her thumbs are placed into two small metal ringlets and secured. The ringlets are attached to the ropes that hang from a device that is attached to the ceiling.

The Mother Superior begins to wind the handle of a crank and Charlotte is hoisted to where she is barely standing on her toes. Her body weight is supported by her thumbs.

Without speaking the Mother Superior leaves.

A horribly HOLLOW SOUND is heard as the door is SLammed shut. The key is heard SNAPPing tight and securing the lock of the door.

CHARLOTTE

Please, don’t leave me like this.

Time passes and Charlotte begins to scream out.

CHARLOTTE (CONT’D)

Come get me. Take me down.

INT. HIGH CEILING ROOM - NEXT DAY

Charlotte’s arms begin to swell. Her face is puffed out. She struggles relentlessly.

The Mother Superior enters carrying a plate full of potatoes and water. She adjusts a shelf just out of Charlotte’s reach.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

This is your food.

(Continued)
CHARLOTTE
Please, I can't take anymore. I surely will die if you don't let me down.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
You will surely not die. The human body can withstand a great amount of pain. Jesus likewise endured much for our iniquities.

CHARLOTTE
Why are you doing this to me? Why?

MOTHER SUPERIOR
The path to righteousness is long and one must endure immeasurable pain and suffering to enter the kingdom of God. The time will come when you will begin to understand these things.

Charlotte screams out in pain.

CHARLOTTE
No. No.

The Mother Superior exits.

Charlotte discovers that she can raise one hand and stand on her toes. She can lap at the potatoes and water as a dog would eat. She spills most of it on the floor but manages to get some of the food.

INT.HIGH CEILING ROOM - NIGHT ATMOSPHERE
Charlotte hangs unconscious in the tortuous device.

INT.HIGH CEILING ROOM - NIGHT ATMOSPHERE
The Mother Superior and the two elderly nuns enter the chamber. Charlotte is unconscious.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
She withstood the full nine days. Her spirit is quite strong. Take her down and bring her to the infirmary. See to it that she receives some victuals.

The Mother Superior exits the chamber. Charlotte is let down. Her limp body falls to the floor.

INT.INFIRMARY - DAY
Charlotte is dragged into the infirmary. She is placed on a wooden bench and her clothing removed.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

She is covered in her own filth. SISTER TERESA is appointed to work in the infirmary. Tears fall from her eyes as she assists Charlotte.

TERESA
Holy Father, give her the strength to recover.

INT.INFIRMARY - NIGHT ATMOSPHERE

Several hours later. Charlotte is awoken by Sister Teresa. She carries a bowl of soup. Charlotte weeps and turns away.

SISTER TERESA
(whispering)
Come now, you must eat.

Sister Teresa takes the bowl of soup and pours some into Charlotte's mouth (no utensil is ever used). Sister Teresa smiles.

CHARLOTTE
I cannot stay here any longer. I will pray God to give me a heart attack and kill me. I cannot forebear.

SISTER TERESA
Do not say such things. Can you walk?

CHARLOTTE
I don't believe I can.

SISTER TERESA
Just rest for now. As long as you are here they will not harm you. I must go.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT ATMOSPHERE

Charlotte and another nun, (the nun that sits across from Charlotte at dinner) are scrubbing the floor. The Mother Superior walks towards them in the distance. Her key ring jangles at her side.

They begin to scrub a little harder.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
You come over here.

Charlotte looks up and is relieved to see that she is calling to the other nun.

(CONTINUED)
MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT'D)
I want you to get on your hands and knees and lick three crosses on that floor.

The young nun complies by attempting to lick small crosses on the floor. Charlotte never looks up, scrubbing furiously.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT'D)
No. That is not the way it is done. I want you to lick them across the entire length of the floor.

The young nun does not hesitate to submit as the Mother Superior watches, looking for a hint of defiance. There is none. She walks on.

The nun continues to her chores scrubbing the floor. Charlotte looks up only when the Mother Superior is gone.

Blood trickles from the young nun's mouth as she returns to her chores.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Charlotte enters the dining room. She sees Sister Teresa and looks away quickly. Charlotte takes her meager bowl of vegetable soup and goes to her appointed seat. Sister Teresa follows to her seat.

Charlotte notices that the seat across from her is EMPTY. Charlotte looks over to Teresa and gestures. Sister Teresa shakes her head and looks away saddened.

Another NUN rises from the table flailing about she begins to SCREAM PROFANITIES aloud.

NUN
I want to go now. I want to go home.
I want to leave.

The elderly nuns approach.

NUN (CONT'D)
Don't you touch me. I'll kill you if you dare to touch me.

She backs against the wall as if surrounded by snakes.

She is quickly subdued and removed from the dining area by the elderly nuns. The Mother Superior enters the dining area.

(CONTINUED)
MOTHER SUPERIOR
The rest of you eat your food at once
or you will not eat at all.

The nun is heard SCREAMING her challenges as she is being
dragged away. In the midst of the commotion:

CHARLOTTE
(whispering)
What will they do to her?

TERESA
I don't know.

CHARLOTTE
Where will they take her?

TERESA
Quiet. Or we will find out ourselves.

The nuns SCREAMING begins to fade in the distance.

INT. CHARLOTTE'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

A bell tolls 1:00 a.m.

Charlotte gets out of bed and begins to dress. She's not
swift enough.

She steps from her cell and all the nuns are waiting in
line to go to their morning prayer

The Mother Superior notices:

MOTHER SUPERIOR
(to Charlotte)
Must we keep all of God's company
waiting on you? You know the rules.
You have three minutes to dress.
(to everyone)
Is this not time enough for you to
dress?

There is no answer.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT'D)
It appears that everyone can be
vigilant except you.
(speaking to one of the elder
nuns)
Sister.

They lead Charlotte away as the entourage of nuns march off
for prayer. As she is being led away:

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

CHARLOTTE
Forgive me. I won't be late again.
Forgive me just this once.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
You surely will not be late again.

INT. BATH HOUSE - NIGHT ATMOSPHERE

Charlotte is taken to a horse trough that is filled with filthy water. The Mother Superior enters the bath house carrying a muslin bedding gown.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Strip off your clothing and put this on.

Charlotte wearily complies.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT’D)
Enter into the bath.

As she does the nuns that accompany the Mother Superior take Charlotte by the head and repeatedly dunk her under water. They do this until she can no longer resist them.

GASping one last time Charlotte sinks into the tub. The nuns release their grip and when she does not surface she is pulled from the tub.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT’D)
In the future, I believe that you will not have a problem dressing in a timely manner.

INT. PRAYER ROOM - NIGHT

Charlotte soaking wet is led to the prayer room where all of the nuns are in prayer. Charlotte is led to a skull with a candle lit and set in the eyes of the skull.

ELDER NUN
You will pray one hour for lost humanity. Before returning to your cell.

Charlotte kneels before the skull.

CHARLOTTE
(to herself)
Dear Mother of God deliver me from this madness.
INT. CONFESSIONAL ROOM - NIGHT ATMOSPHERE

Charlotte enters a large room where nuns are awaiting confession. The room is drab at best with only the lengthy pews and the statues of Jesus and Mary.

A large door opens at the front of this room revealing a room behind the door. A priest is visible sitting in the midst of the room.

Charlotte begins to walk towards the front of the room to sit.

Teresa, sitting in the last pew grabs Charlotte by the wrist. She motions for Charlotte to sit in the last row. A nun leaves the confessional crying shamefully. Another hesitantly enters.

CHARLOTTE
(whispering)
Why are you sitting back here?

TERESA
You do not want to be one of the first to enter the confession. You will be at the mercy of those carnal drunken devils.

INT. CONFESSIONAL ROOM - LATER SAME DAY

The pews are emptying and Charlotte is one of the last to enter for confession. Teresa exits looking towards Charlotte. She forms the cross.

It is Charlotte's turn. She rises and enters the confessional.

INT. CONFESSIONAL - NIGHT ATMOSPHERE

Charlotte approaches the priest. She kneels before him. The priest sadistically stares down and her. He has a glass of wine and a near empty bottle at his side. His eyes are glazed over and he is long into his drunkenness.

PRIEST
Confess to God all that you have sinned since your last confession.

CHARLOTTE
I have hate in my heart. I am filled with hatred. I do not believe any longer in this god of yours. My prayers are never heard by him.

(MORE)
CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
I cry out in anguish and his ears are
deaf to me. I no longer wish to serve
your dead god.

Charlotte points accusingly to the stone statues and wooden
crucifix.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
I now realize that they are gods of
stone and wood. I now know that they
will never here my prayers.

The priest SLAPS Charlotte's face knocking her to the floor
and cutting her lip. He stands over her and slaps her
again.

PRIEST
Do you realize what you say? You must
recant your statement.

CHARLOTTE
I am only sorry that I have ever
believed in your god. My parents would
have never allowed me to enter this
place if they only knew the truth. If
they only knew how the sisters of the
convent are truly treated.

PRIEST
You blaspheme the holy ghost. You must
repent. You will repent.

The priest continues to beat Charlotte. His glass of wine
falls to the floor.

Charlotte pushes away. She stands defiantly and glares at
him. She wipes the blood from her lips.

CHARLOTTE
Am I through confessing my sins to you
father.

She exits the room without another word being spoken.

INT.CHALLOTTE'S CELL - NIGHT

The Mother Superior unlocks Charlotte's cell door.
Charlotte's face is swollen from her attack.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Sister come with me.

(CONTINUED)
CHARLOTTE
Have you not done enough harm? Do you believe that by torturing me and enslaving me that I will become more holy? Vow of silence. How can we not scream aloud from these frightful tortures you impose upon us? Vow of chastity. Any god that would put a young woman through this torment for salvation is an evil, unholy god.

TWO LARGE NUNS that accompany the Mother Superior take Charlotte forcefully from her cell. Charlotte struggles as she is yanked from her cell.

INT. PURGATORY ROOM - NIGHT

In this room is a huge painting of purgatory. The painting is of a hideous storming red sea of fire which engulfs all of the moaning inhabitants thereof.

Charlotte is thrown before the painting.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Look long and hard into this painting. These are the lost souls of this world. Lost for all of eternity. Listen closely and you can here their pleas for mercy?

The sounds of wailing is heard, hundreds of lost souls cry out mingling with the sounds of a vast, surging, fiery ocean.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT’D)
They cry for forgiveness. There will be no forgiveness. They cry for salvation. There will be no salvation. (pause)
Pray. Pray that Satan not deceive you. For there is no sin greater than that of the sin of blasphemy of the holy spirit.

Charlotte is forced to kneel before the painting.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT’D)
Pray for your soul.

Charlotte begins to cry aloud.

CHARLOTTE
God help me. God forgive me.
INT. CHARLOTTE'S CELL - NIGHT

Charlotte is awoken by the sound of The Mother Superior's key ring coming down the corridor. She quickly goes to the cell door and sees the Mother Superior and two priests coming down the corridor. The priests are obviously drunk.

PRIEST ONE
Open this cell. Let me in this cell.

The Mother Superior unlocks the cell. The NUN that occupies that cell is heard SHOUTING.

NUN
No. Please, no. Mother Superior help me. Mother help me.

The Mother Superior continues down the corridor. The Mother Superior passes Charlotte's cell.

Charlotte moves from the bars feigning sleep. The Mother Superior does not notice her.

One priest stops at Sister Teresa's cell. The remaining priest shouts drunkenly.

PRIEST TWO
Open this cell.

The cell door is opened and more SHOUTING is heard.

Charlotte listens to the sounds of the frightened nuns and the drunken priest's who are forcing themselves on the nuns.

Charlotte watches as Sister Teresa is repeatedly kicked and abused by one of the priest's as she attempts to resist him.

CHARLOTTE
Oh, my poor dear sister.

INT. CHAPEL - NIGHT ATMOSPHERE

In this room is a wall of several glass coffins. There are dead nuns in each of the coffins. They line the walls. Some of the corpses are decades old while others have flesh that still remains on their bones.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Today begins the forty days of Lent. As you are aware, this is one of the convents solemn time for reflection and devotion.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
82 CONTINUED:

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT'D)
One of you will have the honor of giving your life to the Lord today. This sacrifice will not go unrewarded in heaven.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT'D)
Who among you will choose this day to meet the Lord your God? Salvation awaits.

A young, frail and sickly NUN barely manages to stand.

NUN
I will. I wish to leave this world.

She is led to a casket that has a glass covering. She lies in this casket and it's sealed.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Let us pray.

As the nuns pray aloud, oxygen begins to deplete itself rapidly from the casket. The nun begins to gasp in agony for air. Quickly she falls unconscious and dies.

83 INT. INFIRMARY - NIGHT ATMOSPHERE

7 months later.

Charlotte's assisting a sickly young NUN in the infirmary.

Sister Teresa's rushed into the infirmary escorted by two nuns and the Mother Superior. She's in labor.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Place her over there.

She's laid on a wood slab.

Teresa is in agony as she gives birth to her child.

The child is delivered quickly by the hands of the Mother Superior.

The BABY is premature and deformed.

The Mother Superior puts her hands over the child's mouth and nose, snuffing out the child's life. Teresa rambles as she pleads for the child to be spared.

TERESA
Please, not my child. Not this one.
My baby. Give me my baby.

(CONTINUED)
MOTHER SUPERIOR
(to Charlotte)
Clean up this mess.

The Mother Superior exits with the dead infant while the elderly nuns hold Teresa down. She's injected and it quickly quiets her demands.

Charlotte begins to clean up the bloody mess left from the child's birth.

INT. INFIRMARY – NEXT DAY

Charlotte is tending to one of the nuns in the infirmary. She here's Sister Teresa begin to softly cry. Charlotte turns to her.

CHARLOTTE
I'm so sorry.

TERESA
It is better this way.

CHARLOTTE
What will become of your child?

TERESA
What becomes of the many children who are born here? They're all done away with. Is there any need for a child in a place like this? No. There is no need for children here.

CHARLOTTE
You mean there have been others? How many others?

TERESA
I cannot begin to count the number of babies I have witnessed delivered. Some of those babies brought into this world with my own hands. With my own hands.

CHARLOTTE
My God.

TERESA
Is there a God?

CHARLOTTE
If there is, he will help me find a way out of here.

(CONTINUED)
TERESA
There is no way out. I have searched for years. There is no escape from this place.

CHARLOTTE
I will find a way. God as my witness. I will find a way.

TERESA
Death is the only escape from the confines of these walls. Only death can free us.

INT.CHARLOTTE'S CELL - NIGHT

The Mother Superior comes to Charlotte's cell. She unlocks the door. Charlotte awakes.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
You are needed.

Charlotte steps from her cell and there are several other nuns that were awoken. They follow the Mother Superior through the catacombs and into a small room.

INT.DARK ROOM - NIGHT

Two priests await their arrival.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
All of you remove your clothing at once.

The nuns begin to obey her. Charlotte sees that these nuns aren't beautiful to look upon. They have shaved heads. They're emaciated. They're not the picture of feminine beauty.

The priest's circle around the nuns as they undress. One priest stops in front of Charlotte and looks her over. He continues on.

Two nuns are chosen and led away by the priests.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT’D)
The rest of you dress and return to your cells at once.

Charlotte passes Sister Teresa's cell. Sister Teresa is standing and clutching at the bars of her cell. They exchange looks as if to say, "thank God you were not chosen."
INT. LONG CORRIDOR - NIGHT ATMOSPHERE

Charlotte is on her knees scrubbing the floor with a sloppy wet cloth. The Mother Superior calls out to Charlotte.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Today we will do penance.

The look of fear fills Charlotte's eyes as she follows the footsteps of the Mother Superior. They pass a huge wooden locked door.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT’D)
Do not ever attempt to open that door. If I ever find out that you do, you will be punished severely.

INT. BATH HOUSE - NIGHT ATMOSPHERE

As they enter the bath house YELLING and SCREAMING can be heard. Charlotte is very frightened.

Nuns without their head gear are placed in stalks. Water is dripping off of their heads.

Some are struggling against the water drops panicking, others SCREAM to be removed from the stalks.

Wide eyed, Charlotte is led to a chair. Her head gear is removed and her neck and hands are placed in stalks. Water begins to fall on Charlotte's head one drop at a time.

One hour passes. two, three.

CHARLOTTE
Come and remove me. Take me away quickly. I cannot take it any longer. Help me. Help me, please.

Charlotte's SCREAMS blend in with the others.

One nun is removed from the device. She has become stark raving mad. In her rage she attacks one of the elderly nuns. She is biting and flailing.

Eventually she is subdued and dragged away. She screams and curses are aimed at the Mother Superior.

NUN
This has gone on long enough. I'll kill you. The day will come that I will kill you. You will see. You will all see.
INT. INFIRMARY - NIGHT ATMOSPHERE

Charlotte is assisting Sister Teresa with cleaning the wounds of one of the dying nuns.

CHARLOTTE
What is beyond that doorway?

SISTER TERESA
She has told me on numerous occasions not to enter that door.

CHARLOTTE
That is madness. It's locked. It's locked at all times. Only the Mother Superior has the keys.

One of the elderly nuns enters the infirmary.

SISTER TERESA
Hush.

The elderly nun approaches Sister Charlotte.

NUN
Sister. Will you follow me please.

Teresa and Charlotte look at each other with great concern.

INT. MOTHER SUPERIOR'S ROOM - NIGHT/BRIGHTLY LIT BY CANDLE LIGHT

Charlotte is led into the Mother Superior's room. The Mother Superior has taken ill. She is unconscious and lying on her bed.

A MEXICAN DOCTOR is present. He's tall in stature and speaks English with the accent of a highly educated man. He speaks to the elderly nun.

DOCTOR
The Mother is to be given one of these tablets every six hours. She is not to be disturbed. She will need plenty of rest. My orders are to be strictly followed. Her condition is very grave.

ELDERLY NUN
I understand doctor. I will see to it that your orders are followed exactly as you have prescribed.

(CONTINUED)
DOCTOR
She is very ill. She may not make it this time.

ELDERLY NUN
God will watch over her.

The doctor is handed his coat and hat.

DOCTOR
Good day.

ELDERLY NUN
God bless you doctor.

He exits.

ELDERLY NUN (CONT'D)
(to Charlotte)
Sister, you are to watch over the Mother Superior. Follow the doctors orders as prescribed. You will be held responsible if her condition deteriorates.

Charlotte's left alone with the Mother Superior. She has the look of murder in her eyes as she stands over the sleeping woman.

INT. MOTHER SUPERIOR'S ROOM - NIGHT

MIDNIGHT.

The convent's bell TOLLS its eerie tone. The nuns can be heard chanting in some distant room. Charlotte waits.

The clock strikes 1:00 a.m.

Charlotte walks to the door observing. The chanting has ceased.

The sound of many footsteps disappear into the distance.

Silence. She waits.

CHARLOTTE
(to the sleeping Mother Superior)
I'll wait till they all go back to bed and then you will answer to me. Let's see how much mercy I will give to you. Oh, you will suffer. I will watch you suffer.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
You will suffer a thousand deaths just
as you have made us suffer for all of
these long years.

Charlotte puts several tablets into a cup of water and
forces it down the Mother Superior's throat. The Mother
Superior begins to convulse. Charlotte grins triumphantly.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
The gates of hell await you dear
Mother. May God have mercy on your
soul. I will pray for you Mother.
Every time I walk past that painting of
purgatory I will pray for your lost
soul.

Charlotte is preparing another glass of pills, suddenly a
look of fear comes over her. She comes to her senses.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
Dear God what have I done? I have
become like her.

She drops the glass. It crashes to the floor. Charlotte
struggles to help the Mother Superior.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
Don't die. Oh God, please do not let
her die.
   (she prays the rosary)
The Mother Superior throws up on
herself. For a quick moment she
violently convulses.

She begins to calm down lying motionless. Charlotte checks
her pulse.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
What shall they do to me if they find
you dead? They will torture me. They
shall kill me.

Charlotte falls at the feet of the Mother Superior.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
God, do not let her die. Holy Mother
let this hour of darkness pass.

INT.MOTHER SUPERIOR'S ROOM - NIGHT

Charlotte awakes from her sleep at the feet of the Mother
Superior. The Mother Superior's chest heaves. She's
alive.

(CONTINUED)
Charlotte looks up.

CHARLOTTE
Thank you.

She notices the Mother Superior's keys ring on a shelf.

Charlotte stands and walks to the keys. She slowly reaches for them as she watches the Mother Superior sleep. Charlotte grabs at the keys.

The Mother superior moans. Startled, Charlotte drops the keys. They CRASH to the floor.

The Mother Superior doesn't startle. She picks them up and heads for the door.

INT.MOTHER SUPERIOR'S DOORWAY - NIGHT
Charlotte peeks out of the door and exits.

INT.LENGTHY CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS
Exiting the Mother Superior's room Charlotte runs down the corridor disappearing into the distant darkness.

INT.LENGTHY CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS
The seven candles burn.
Charlotte runs to that forbidden doorway.
Shaking with fear, she fumbles searching for the key to the door. She tries several keys.
Suddenly the sound of footsteps are heard coming down the corridor. They're heading towards Charlotte.
Charlotte ducks into a passage as one of the elderly nuns continues past Charlotte unnoticed.
With the coast clear, Charlotte goes back to the door and tries a few more keys until the lock opens.
She's more frightened than ever. She struggles to open the CREAKING old door. The noise from the door seems amplified in this noiseless place.
She disappears inside.
INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT ATMOSPHERE

The hallway leads down two flights of steps. It's not well lit. In near darkness she's compelled to move on. She stops to gather her breath. Rats run to and fro.

Charlotte runs on.

Charlotte comes to another door. She fumbles for the keys and opens the door. She GASPS at the stench. Covering her nose she stagers forward.

Inside the door is a frightening sight. Eighteen cells with locked wooden doors at each cell.

Charlotte runs to the closest cell. There is a small opening lined with iron bars. Charlotte opens the wooden slat to the window.

Charlotte looks in at the nun that she sat across from the dinner table. There are chains around her waist. She's chained to the wall.

A maddening look fills the young nuns face.

CHARLOTTE
How long have you been here?

No answer.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
When have you last eaten?

No answer.

Charlotte goes to the second cell and opens the slat. It's the nun that went mad from water torture.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
Have you had anything to drink? Are you hungry?

No answer.

Charlotte runs to the third cell. The fourth. Each cell has a dying or decaying nun. Most of the nuns are familiar to her.

The dead nuns did not even have the luxury of falling to the floor. Their bodies are contorted and twisted. The chains keep them from resting even in death.

Charlotte falls to her knees.

(CONTINUED)
CHARLOTTE (CONT’D)
This is not happening.
(crying loudly)
My God, how long will you let this go on.

Charlotte stands and begins to beat on the doors screaming and shouting curses to God.

Charlotte runs back out of the door and falls to the floor wailing. She gets a hold of herself and locks the door behind her.

She runs back towards the Mother Superior's room.

INT. MOTHER SUPERIOR'S ROOM - NIGHT

Charlotte enters. The Mother Superior is still sleeping. Charlotte looks at the statue of Mary and has the look of madness in her eyes.

CHARLOTTE
(mocking)
Mother of God. Saint Lazarus hear my prayers. Intercede to God for me. For I am not worthy.

INT. MOTHER SUPERIOR'S ROOM - NIGHT/BRIGHTLY LIT BY CANDLE LIGHT

The Mother Superior awakes from her sleep. Charlotte is at her side.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
I've had a long sleep?

CHARLOTTE
Yes, you have been sleeping for three days. I have not left your side.

The Mother Superior takes Charlotte's hand.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
You have a strong spirit. I understand that you are confused by our life as a cloister nun. It is for the good of your soul that you endure all of this. We see through a glass darkly but the day will come that all things shall be revealed unto us.

She falls back asleep.
100 INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT ATMOSPHERE

The nuns are standing in line awaiting their weekly duties. One of the elderly nun speaks to Charlotte.

ELDERLY NUN
You will be given a special duty for the next six weeks. You will be taken to the kitchen where you will be preparing our daily provisions.

Sister Teresa and Charlotte exchange glances of amazement.

101 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Charlotte enters the kitchen squinting. She has not seen the day light for several years. She walks to the window and adjusts her eyes and looks out onto the green grassy lawn.

She looks out the window as a child might look upon a pony, or a condemned prisoner towards freedom.

102 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Charlotte and several other nuns are working around a long preparation table. She's cutting vegetables and placing them in a pile which is in the midst of the table.

Suddenly the nuns are startled by a loud CLANGING noise. The nuns turn to see what it is. Charlotte reels around.

They see a man outside on the landing. The filthy, unshaven, TRASHMAN (40), is taking a full trash can and leaving an empty one in it's place. He returns with the empty can, repeating the same task.

The other nuns turn back to their duties ashamed to look upon a man. Charlotte continues to watch the trash man.

One of the elderly nuns enter the kitchen.

ELDERLY NUN
It is time for prayer.

Charlotte quickly snatches some potato peels and pockets them. The nuns begin to file out of the kitchen. They march past the Mother Superior in single file.

103 INT. PRAYER ROOM - NIGHT

Charlotte is praying next to Sister Teresa. They manage to steal a quick conversation.

(CONTINUED)
CHARLOTTE
I found a way out.

SISTER TERESA
How?

CHARLOTTE
Through the kitchen. There's a man. He comes in the afternoon. He takes the trash away.

SISTER TERESA
Please be careful. They may be watching...

CHARLOTTE
I took a piece of paper from a potato sack. I started to write him a note. I'm telling him about all the things that happen here. The dungeons. The murdered babies.

SISTER TERESA
That is very dangerous. It could cost you your life if you are caught...

CHARLOTTE
(interrupting)
Whenever the opportunity arises, I take out the trash. I actually go outside onto the lawn. I cannot believe they allow us onto the landing.

SISTER TERESA
When will you be able to go?

CHARLOTTE
It has to be tomorrow. It is the day that he comes and it is also the last day of my kitchen duty.

SISTER TERESA
You will be severely punished if they find out. Possibly even killed. Please, be careful.

CHARLOTTE
Just have hope that I can make it to freedom. I will see to it that they will come for you.
SISTER TERESA
I hope that they will believe what you have to say once you are gone. If you can make it.

CHARLOTTE
Pray for me.

SISTER TERESA
I will always pray for you. Don't forget your sisters when you are gone.

CHARLOTTE
I will never forget my sisters. Especially you.

They hold hands.

One of the elderly nuns enter the prayer room and Charlotte and Sister Teresa separate.

A bell is tapped.

INT. CHARLOTTE'S CELL – NIGHT

The Mother Superior swiftly comes down the long corridor. Charlotte stands.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
(to Charlotte)
Step out here at once.

Charlotte obeys. Charlotte is smacked across the face.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT'D)
It has come to my attention that you have broken another of the convent rules. What have you to say for yourself?

CHARLOTTE
I know not what you speak of.

The Mother Superior SLAPS Charlotte again.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
I am speaking of your willingness to put yourself above all of the other sisters.

The Mother Superior raises her hand again. Instead of striking Charlotte, she reaches into her pocket and pulls out some potato peels.

(CONTINUED)
MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT'D)
I am speaking of these. There will be no breakfast for you tomorrow. There will be no dinner either. You shall remain in your cell for the entire day.

CHARLOTTE
My duties. My kitchen chores.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
They are suspended as of now.

The Mother Superior turns to go.

Charlotte is devastated.

The Mother Superior stops.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT'D)
Perhaps it will be good for your soul to be tempted again. You shall continue your duties in the morning. I hope that you will see to it that I have made the right decision.

CHARLOTTE
Yes, Mother Superior.

The Mother Superior exit.

Charlotte sinks in relief.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Charlotte is pouring water into a large steel pot. She walks to the counter where a short pencil is chained to the wall.

Looking about, she pulls a tattered brown piece of paper from her worn out skirt.

She scribbles something quickly on the paper and cautiously slips it back into her skirt pocket.

She notices that the trash is full. Another young nun picks up a pile of the trash and begins to walk to the door.

Charlotte swiftly walks to her and tugs at the trash. The nun doesn't hesitate. She lets go.

Charlotte walks to the trash and slips her note on top of one of the trash piles, UNDER THE LID. She returns to the kitchen.

(CONTINUED)
Charlotte returns to pouring water into the large pot.

She looks about, grabs at her crucifix and snaps it from her neck. She places the necklace on the window sill and returns to work.

INT. KITCHEN - SUNSET

The sun lowers in the sky.

Charlotte is cleaning the dishes that the nuns use for dinner.

The elderly nun returns to the kitchen.

ELDERLY NUN
It's time to return to your cells.

Exiting the kitchen, the nuns methodically march in single file past the Mother Superior. Charlotte stops when she reaches her.

CHARLOTTE
Please, may I speak with you?

MOTHER SUPERIOR
(stern)
What is it?

CHARLOTTE
Mother Superior, I have broken my crucifix and I left it behind. May I return for it?

MOTHER SUPERIOR
How did you manage to break your crucifix?

CHARLOTTE
I was cleaning one of the pots and it caught hold of the handle. I'm sorry.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
How is that possible?

CHARLOTTE
I don't know. I only know that it's broken.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Is this another one of your tricks. Do you intend to steal some more food from the other sisters?

(CONTINUED)
CHARLOTTE
Oh, no Mother Superior.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
You go and get that crucifix and be swift about it.

CHARLOTTE
Yes, Mother Superior.

Charlotte gathers her tattered skirt and runs back towards the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Charlotte enters the kitchen trembling. She reaches for her broken crucifix. She stops, looks back, hesitates, then... runs towards the kitchen door.

EXT. TRASH CANS - CONTINUOUS

Charlotte runs to the trash cans. She lifts one can. Nothing. She lifts another. Nothing. She lifts the third can and there is a clean white piece of folded paper under the can.

Charlotte freezes. Trembling uncontrollably she reaches for the note and opens it. The note reads: I am leaving this gate unlocked. The iron gate will be unlocked as well. You come out.

Charlotte runs to the gate and turns the handle. It opens into a beautiful courtyard. The sun is setting over the top of the towering outer gate.

Charlotte closes the gate making sure that it locks behind her.

Barefoot and weak she runs to the outer gate. The gate gets closer with every step. She arrives at the gate.

It's locked.

She turns to look back at the convent and is frightened about what decision to make next.

CHARLOTTE
I'm trapped. If I return to the convent, what will they do to me? They will know that I attempted to escape.
She turns back and looks up at the top of the towering gate. The sun shines over the top as if it was a sign to press on.

Charlotte hesitates then begins to climb the gate.

At the top of the gate is a ledge. Although shaken, Charlotte manages to get one of her legs upon the ledge.

She's too weak to continue. Her headpiece and gathered skirt make it difficult for her to climb over the ledge. She tosses her headpiece.

Her short cropped hair is matted and GRAYING IS OBVIOUS.

The top of the gate is covered with sharp vines, glass and metal spikes. She reaches for the top of the gate and is stabbed by one of the spikes.

Finally she reaches the top of the gate, scraped, scratched and bloodied by the obstacles.

She peers down, freedom far below.

She gathers her skirt and jumps. Her skirt catches hold of one of the spikes and she swings helpless from the gate hovering about ten feet from the ground.

Charlotte manages to pull herself free by unsnapping her skirt. She falls to the ground, skirt dangling from the gate spike.

Landing on the ground she snaps her wrist.

Charlotte wearily stands, winces in pain and begins to run.

It is Autumn.

The sound made by the falling leaves frighten Charlotte. Every step she makes CRUNCHES the leaves below her feet.

Every sight and sound is alien to her as she continues to run from the convent.

A lone bird flies across her path CAWW, this startles her. She presses on.

Charlotte runs until she can no longer run.

She finds an abandoned chicken coop and crawls in, hiding for the night.
INT. CHICKEN COOP - CONTINUOUS

Charlotte cries in pain as she finally notices her broken arm. She tears a piece off of her remaining clothing and makes an arm sling.

Exhausted, she cries herself to sleep.

EXT. CHICKEN COOP - LATER SAME NIGHT

Charlotte awakens, cautiously she continues to run.

EXT. ABANDONED BUILDING - EARLY MORNING

Charlotte stops and rests behind a pile of tin and board scraps. She seems to enjoy the sunlight on her face.

CHARLOTTE
I will not forget you my dear Sister Teresa.

Although her arm is getting worse, she smiles a slight smile of satisfaction. She falls asleep with her face pressed towards the sun.

EXT. ROADSIDE - NIGHT

Every passing horse and buggy or automobile causes Charlotte to run for cover.

She notices Mexican soldiers on horseback. She assumes that they are hunting her. In hiding she waits for their passing.

Finally pain and hunger overtakes her and she spots and old broken down shack with smoke coming from the chimney.

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

Charlotte steps to the porch. There is an oil lamp burning in the shack. Charlotte knocks. An elderly full haired, thin, MEXICAN MAN opens the door.

CHARLOTTE
Please, may I have a drink of water.

He does not answer her. Not closing the door, he turns and walks away.

Charlotte turns and begins to walk away when a short, stout, friendly and compassionate, ELDERLY MEXICAN WOMAN comes to the door.

(CONTINUED)
ELDERLY WOMAN
(broken English)
Can I help you?

CHARLOTTE
I'm sorry I didn't mean to bother you.
I just wanted some water and I'll continue on my way.

ELDERLY WOMAN
Please, won't you come in?

Charlotte hesitates.

ELDERLY WOMAN (CONT’D)
Come now, let's see if we can get you something to eat.

The woman has the face of a cherub to Charlotte. The woman is kind and gentle. Charlotte is confused about what to do. The lady takes Charlotte by the hand.

ELDERLY WOMAN (CONT’D)
Please, come in and sit down.

These are the kindest words Charlotte has heard in years. Charlotte enters and the door closes behind her.

CHARLOTTE
You're very kind.

INT.SHACK - CONTINUOUS

The shack interior is barren. There is an old table with a red checkered cloth covering the table. Charlotte is led to the table.

ELDERLY WOMAN
Please, sit down. I will fix you something to eat.

She sits down.

The elderly woman goes to a small wooden stove and warms some milk in a small pan. She brings it to Charlotte.

Charlotte grabs at the milk and devours it. She throws it up as soon as it hits her stomach.

CHARLOTTE
I'm so sorry.
ELDERLY WOMAN
That is all right. You look very ill.
You need some rest. Yes?

CHARLOTTE
I am tired.

The elderly woman begins to clean up the mess.

ELDERLY MAN
(in Spanish to his wife)
Ask her what has happened to her hand.

ELDERLY WOMAN
He wants to know what has happened to your hand?

CHARLOTTE
I escaped from the convent. I broke it climbing over the wall.

ELDERLY WOMAN
Escaped from the convent? What do you mean by escaped?

CHARLOTTE
I won't go back. You cannot make me go back.

The elderly woman is heating some water. She puts some sugar in it and brings it to Charlotte. She feeds it to her by spoon.

ELDERLY WOMAN
There is no one here that will make you go back to the convent.
(pause)
There are those that speak of these things. We are just beginning to understand.

CHARLOTTE
Understand? What do you need to understand?

ELDERLY WOMAN
There is a revolution across the land. There have been many churches destroyed. So many die for nothing. Some... some are kidnapped and never heard from again.

CHARLOTTE
Revolution? What are you speaking of?

(CONTINUED)
Elderly Woman
The Calle revolt. It has already begun. The church is being attacked by the new government. The churches land holdings are being removed. It will not be much longer before it is illegal to worship. Many of the priests have been arrested. Murdered. There are many stories.

Charlotte sips at the water.

Elderly Man
(in Spanish)
We need to get her to a doctor.

Elderly Woman
Yes, you need a doctor.

Charlotte jumps from the table.

Charlotte turns to run. The elderly man stops her.

Elderly Woman
You must see a doctor. Our doctor is a good man. He will tend to you.

Charlotte
I don't have any money.

Elderly Man
(in Spanish)
I am going for the doctor.

Elderly Woman
(in Spanish to her husband)
Yes, you go for him.
(to Charlotte)
Calm down everything will be fine.
Rest. You need to rest.

EXT. SHACK - CONTINUOUS

The man hitches his horse and buggy. He boards the buggy and snaps his whip.

Elderly Man
Yaaay.
EXT. SHACK - CONTINUOUS

The man disappears into the night.

INT. SHACK - NIGHT

A car pulls up in front of the shack. DOCTOR MARTINEZ a tall, charismatic, middle aged man enters the shack.

DOCTOR  
(to elderly woman in Spanish)  
I understand you have someone that...  
(shocked at Charlotte's appearance)  
My God what has happened to you?

ELDERLY WOMAN  
(in Spanish to Doctor)  
Speak English.

The doctor walks around Charlotte and curses her condition.

DOCTOR  
How have you gotten this way?

Charlotte bows her head and does not answer.

ELDERLY WOMAN  
She is an American.

DOCTOR  
I have to get you to the hospital at once.

CHARLOTTE  
I don't want to go. Please, don't make me go.

DOCTOR  
Do not worry. I will not harm you. You need help. I am going to give you help. I will take care of you.  
(to the elderly woman)  
I cannot believe that I am looking at something that is supposed to be a human being.

ELDERLY WOMAN  
She says that she is from the convent.

DOCTOR  
It is becoming clearer everyday.
EXT. CAR - NIGHT

As they drive down the pot holed, dirt road. They pass the elderly man returning home on his horse buggy. The man waves.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Three months later.

Charlotte's arm is in a cast and her hair is growing back slowly.

She looks out of her window and sees a horse and buggy coming up the hospital driveway. The elderly woman has a freshly picked bouquet of wild flowers in her lap.

A posse of foot soldiers march pass the hospital and through the streets.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The elderly woman is placing the fresh picked flowers in a vase.

The doctor enters the room. Charlotte's condition is much improved.

DOCTOR
I have a surprise for you.

CHARLOTTE
What is it?

DOCTOR
I have located your family. They live in the same town you grew up in. In fact, the very same home. You are going home.

CHARLOTTE
Home.

Charlotte turns to look in the mirror. She sees that she is no longer young and beautiful.

CHARLOTTE (CONT’D)
(quietly)
I have not seen my reflection in many, many years. I have lines on my face and my hair...
(sadly)
it has turned to gray.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CHARLOTTE (CONT’D)
I cannot recognize myself. How will my family recognize me?

DOCTOR
(soothing)
A father always recognizes his daughter. And a child's mother, she will always love that which is hers. They will not be concerned with what you look like. Only who you are.

CHARLOTTE
I cannot go just yet. I promised one of the sisters that I would help her to be freed. I must keep my word. She is counting on me.

The doctor walks towards the window and looks out at the passing soldiers.

DOCTOR
Come here. There is something that you must see.

She goes to the window and looks out at the foot soldiers as they continue to pass.

DOCTOR (CONT’D)
If the convent has not been opened by now it will be very soon. The church has been ousted from this land. There will be no more masses said for the people of Mexico. Many priests have been executed. There is a new constitution across the land. Mexico has been liberated from the church. I cannot say if this is entirely a good thing. But what I am sure of is this... you must return home now. This is our land. The customs are our customs. The battle is ours alone. You can do no more good here. It is time for you to return to your people. It is time to go home.

EXT. MEXICO CITY TRAIN DEPOT - DAY

The train awaits the boarding of the passengers.

Charlotte embraces the elderly couple and enters the train.

She turns and looks one last time at the doctor. He smiles at her. She returns a sad smile.

(CONTINUED)
The elderly couple wave good-bye.

EXT. LIVINGSTON, LOUISIANA TRAIN DEPOT - DAY

Charlotte steps from the train. She does not recognize the place. Time and progress has changed all of the landmarks. Nothing resembles the past.

The once small town has grown considerably. Where horse and buggy once filled the streets, now automobiles pass by.

No one meets Charlotte at the station. She picks up her bag and begins to walk towards home.

She attempts to cross the street and a huge automobile BLARES its horn. She quickly jumps out of the way.

EXT. STREET - SAME DAY

Charlotte comes to a house. It does not resemble her childhood home.

The wooden framed house has been replaced with a two-story brick home. The flowery fields are gone. The spacious land is now filled with similar style houses on small lots.

Charlotte steps to the porch. Her heart pounds as she knocks.

An elderly man unfamiliar to Charlotte opens the door.

CHARLOTTE
Excuse me, might you know where I could find Mr. Flannigan?

MR. FLANNIGAN
(rather distant)
Who are you?

CHARLOTTE
I'm Charlotte. I'm his daughter. I've been away for a long time and...

MR. FLANNIGAN
(interrupting)
Charlotte, is that you? It's me. I'm your father.

CHARLOTTE
Father.

They embrace awkwardly, almost emptily.

(CONTINUED)
CHARLOTTE (CONT’D)
Is mother alive father?

MR. FLANNIGAN
Yes. Come in.

INT.HOME - CONTINUOUS
The home is as worn and tired as her father. It's not well kept and in need of domestic cleaning.

INT.BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS
Charlotte is led to a frail invalid woman.

The bedroom is terribly gloomy. Charlotte does not recognize her mother.

MR. FLANNIGAN
Honey, Charlotte has come home from the church to pray for you.

MRS. FLANNIGAN
Charlotte, is that my Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE
Yes, mother. It is I.

MRS. FLANNIGAN
I have prayed that the Lord would return you home someday. He has heard my prayers.

CHARLOTTE
Oh, mother.

Charlotte takes her mothers hand. Mr. Flannigan stands in the doorway watching this exchange between mother and daughter.

INT.DINING ROOM - NIGHT
Charlotte's family is gathered at the dinner table. Her appearance is embarrassing to those without compassion.

John and Connie are much older. They are ashamed of the appearance of their older sister.

John has become an alcoholic. He's unshaven and quite belligerent.

Connie is typical of the southern belle who lost her wealth, yet tries to keep her dignity despite the troubles that surround her.

(CONTINUED)
MR. FLANNIGAN
I am happy to have Charlotte back home with us once again.

JOHN
How is it that you have returned home? Did convent life not suit you?

CHARLOTTE
I cannot begin to tell you about the things that I have witnessed.

CONNIE
You make it sound as if you had endured some terrible ordeal.

There's a knock at the door. Charlotte is startled.

Mr. Flannigan answers the door.

It's an aging Father Riley. He's as stern as ever and quite clear in his intention. He sits down next to Charlotte.

FATHER RILEY
I see that you have returned home to be with your family. When do you plan on returning to the convent? You are missed greatly.

CHARLOTTE
I will never return to the convent.

FATHER RILEY
You cannot just throw away the vows that you have taken.

CHARLOTTE
Father Riley, when you sent me off to the convent did you know of the horrible, unspeakable things that I would be subjected to?

FATHER RILEY
I can see that they're right. You have cracked up all together. Return to the convent with me at once and we will see to it that you receive the proper medical treatment that you deserve.

CHARLOTTE
Listen to me. I want you to understand what I say to you.
   (matter of fact)
   (MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
I will not now, nor will I ever return to that, or any other convent.
(anger growing)
You are mad. You are a mad man.
You’re all mad.
(shouting)
Leave this house. Leave here at once.

CONNIE
(interrupting)
That’s no way to speak to Father Riley.

MR. FLANNIGAN
He only wants to help you.

FATHER RILEY
Here me Charlotte, for I will only say this to you one time. Get up from that table and come with me right now. You made vows to the church and you must keep them.

CHARLOTTE
Charlotte is it? Is it not Muriel? Am I not Sister Muriel to you. Get out.
Leave here at once.

Charlotte clears the dinner table with one swipe of her hand sending dishes flying.

Father Riley stands. John is much pleased by her action.

FATHER RILEY
You leave me no other choice. Your mother is dying. There will be no novenas said for her at her death. You do know what this means? You will be sending your own mother into eternal damnation. She will perish because you refuse to obey your vows. You and you alone will be responsible for her being sent into all of eternity without a chance for salvation.
(pointing to John, Connie and Mr. Flannigan)
And that goes for everyone in your entire family. Think of what I am telling you. There will be no hope for salvation unless you return to the church at once.

Father Riley exits.

(CONTINUED)
Mr. Flannigan goes to the door watches as he leaves. He turns to look back at a now WEEPING Charlotte.

Connie is looking at Charlotte with loathing and contempt.

John opens a beer, drinks it and wipes his mouth.

JOHN
How bout a little dessert.

INT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

The heavy rain does not hide Charlotte's demeanor. Charlotte sits alone.

Charlotte's father steps onto the porch from the interior of the house.

MR. FLANNIGAN
We must talk.

CHARLOTTE
Yes, father.

MR. FLANNIGAN
I went for my morning confession. I have not missed a confession in many years. The priest would not absolve me until you return to the convent. Your mother is very ill. She is close to her death. Father Riley told you what the consequence will be.

CHARLOTTE
Yes, father I know what that means, but I would rather die than return to that place.

MR. FLANNIGAN
I'm your father. I've missed you all of these years, but I must do right by your mother. You must go. I'm sorry. You'll be leaving tomorrow.

CHARLOTTE
I have done nothing to be ashamed of. I ran away from the church. Yes, this is true. Father, you must believe me, I cannot begin to tell you of all the indignities that I have suffered.

MR. FLANNIGAN
Perhaps you are under great strain as they say?

(MORE)
MR. FLANNIGAN (CONT'D)
Perhaps you have been hallucinating?
You may have imagined that these things
occurred? Father Riley only wants to
help.

She lifts her shirt and reveals horrible burns and scars on
her waistline caused from penance being inflicted upon her.

CHARLOTTE
Does this look like my imagination? Is
this what I have imagined all these
years? Is this what you want me to
return to? When I was a child you told
me that I could return home any time I
desired.

MR. FLANNIGAN
That was a long time ago.

CHARLOTTE
The threat of excommunication and the
threat of purgatory will never make me
return. I would welcome the gates of
hell to the gates of heaven if that's
the path I must take. In Mexico, your
God is dead. He's been cast out. And
now I'm cast aside as well.

MR. FLANNIGAN
I have made plans to send you to your
Uncle John's. Since his wife died he's
been alone. He's looking forward to
having you. I'm sorry. You must go.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Oklahoma City.

Charlotte is greeted by UNCLE JOHN at the train station. A
frail aging man, Uncle John is a very personable fellow.

UNCLE JOHN
So you're my brother's little girl.
I'm awful glad to meet your
acquaintance.

He puts out his hand to greet Charlotte. She's quite
distant and barely acknowledges the man.
130 INT.TRUCK CAB - DAY

UNCLE JOHN
I have invited some folks over to
dinner tonight just to meet you. I
hope you don't mind.

Charlotte breaks out in tears.

UNCLE JOHN (CONT'D)
Come now. What's ailin' ya?

CHARLOTTE
I don't want to meet anyone. I'm a
sight to look at and I'm terribly
afraid.

UNCLE JOHN
Nonsense, these folks have been waitin'
to meet you since I told them you was
comin' out to stay.

CHARLOTTE
I couldn't. I just couldn't.

Uncle John takes her hand.

UNCLE JOHN
Well, we'll just have to give it some
time. We'll just have to give it some
time that's all.

CHARLOTTE
Please, just let me get used to my new
home.

131 INT.LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Uncle John's cozy little home is typical of those across
middle America.

UNCLE JOHN
Are you sure you wouldn't like to come
to dinner with me? It would be a shame
to have to listen to Roger Mills brag
about his grandchildren one more time
without me being able to introduce my
dearest niece.

CHARLOTTE
Maybe next time Uncle John. I just
couldn't right now.

(CONTINUED)
UNCLE JOHN
Suit yourself. You're gonna miss some mighty good vittles this even.

He turns to leave.

CHARLOTTE
Uncle John.

He turns back to her.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
Thank you.

Uncle John smiles and leaves.

UNCLE JOHN
Aww, it ain't nothin' really.

INT. CHARLOTTE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Charlotte is awoken by a loud crash. She's startled and jumps from her bed.

She hears the voice of a man yelling in a drunken rage at his wife.

Charlotte looks out the window.

The neighbors, THE MAYNARD'S are fighting terribly. The man is beating his wife as the children cry, baring witness to his rage.

Charlotte sits back on her bed and places her hands over her ears. She envisions the nuns back at the convent. They are suffering some manner of terrible torture.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Uncle John's sitting in his chair. Charlotte enters bringing him a cup of coffee.

UNCLE JOHN
You've been wandering around here now for several weeks without even so much as stepping onto the front porch. Would you mind terribly doing me a small favor?

CHARLOTTE
Not at all.
UNCLE JOHN
Do you remember where the post office is?

CHARLOTTE
Yes, I believe it is next door to the bakery.

UNCLE JOHN
Yep, that's correct. Would you mind runnin' down there and pickin' up a package that's waitin' there for me?

CHARLOTTE
If you need me to go for you I will.

UNCLE JOHN
Good. Now run along and hurry back. I have a surprise for you when you return.

Charlotte exits and Uncle John walks to the window and smiles, waving to her as she walks down the street.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Charlotte's walking along the sidewalk. THREE MEN wearing dark cashmere coats and hats begin to follow her.

Charlotte does not notice.

She catches on and begins to walk faster. They walk faster.

Suddenly one of the men call her by her convent name.

MAN ONE
Sister Muriel

She's frozen is her footsteps. She begins to run frantically.

MAN ONE (CONT'D)
Don't let her get away.

CHARLOTTE
Help me. Someone help me.

There's no one to here her pleas. She continues to run as the men begin to close the gap.

A FOURTH MAN pulls a four door sedan up on the sidewalk which causes Charlotte to side step the vehicle.

(continues)
CONTINUED:

She's tackled by the men and dragged to the automobile SCREAMING and kicking. They role her into an old carpet.

Charlotte's ushered into the back seat of the sedan and thrown to the floor.

Two of the men climb into the back seat and hold her down. The other jumps in the front.

The car speeds off.

INT. SEDAN - CONTINUOUS

MAN ONE
Vow of silence.

MAN TWO
Vow of obedience.

CHARLOTTE
Dear mother of God give me a heart attack that I might perish immediately. Saint Joseph, take me from this world.

Charlotte is beaten by one of the men.

MAN ONE
Shut up. By the time we're finished with you, you'll wish that you were good and dead.

EXT. SEDAN - EVENING

The sedan whizzes by on a desolate country road.

INT. SEDAN - EVENING

Man one is smoking a cigarette. The sedan drives on.

EXT. SEDAN - MORNING

The sun comes up.

The sedan pulls up to a towering cathedral.

Charlotte's led from the sedan into an entrance attached to a monastery.

INT. CATHEDRAL - CONTINUOUS

Charlotte's taken down several hallways, stairs and lengthy passages.

(CONTINUED)
Charlotte's led down a long tunnel and is met face to face with the Mother Superior.

The men remove their coats and they're wearing priest garb.

The Mother Superior confronts Charlotte assisted by two elderly nuns. The priest's depart.

    MOTHER SUPERIOR
    Prostrate yourself on that floor.

Charlotte obeys immediately. Her hands and feet are bound.

    MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT’D)
    You apologize to God and the holy church for running off.

    CHARLOTTE
    I'm only sorry that I didn't run far enough.

The Mother Superior slaps Charlotte.

    MOTHER SUPERIOR
    You're unrepentant and belligerent in every way.

The Mother Superior lights a torch off of the candles and steps towards Charlotte. The nuns hold Charlotte as the Mother Superior burns her back.

    MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT’D)
    The flames of hell burn forever and ever.

Charlotte SCREAMS as her clothing and back is torched.

    MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT’D)
    Let her go.

Charlotte falls to the floor unconscious.

140 INT.INFIRMARY - NIGHT

Sister Teresa's standing over Charlotte and placing a cool cloth over her seared back.

    SISTER TERESA
    I thought you might not make it this time.
CHARLOTTE
My Uncle John betrayed me. I trusted him. I told him what this place was like and he let them take me away.

141 INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Charlotte is led to the dining area by one of the nuns. She can barely walk. The Mother Superior enters behind Charlotte.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Sister Muriel has repented and decided to return to the convent. She's seen the errors of her ways. We accept that she has chosen humility and forgive her act of contrition.

The Mother Superior takes Charlotte by the arm.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT'D)
Sit here.

Pointing to the floor. Charlotte can barely comply. The Mother Superior drops a piece of bread on the floor.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT'D)
This is where you will eat until you prove you're worthy to sit with the rest of the sisters.

142 INT. CHARLOTTE'S CELL - NIGHT

The Mother Superior opens Charlotte's cell.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
Your life in the convent will be that of constant penance. You will pray continually before God for forgiveness.

CHARLOTTE
I shall do as you wish. But I will not do evil.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
You must learn to obey the rules of the convent.

Charlotte is led to the showers.

MOTHER SUPERIOR (CONT'D)
Put this gown on.

(CONTINUED)
Charlotte is handed a white muslin gown. She strips and puts it on.

Two nuns that took Charlotte to the shower begin to whip her with flagellation whips. Charlotte's skin is cut and blood flows down her gown. She falls to the floors.

CHARLOTTE
Have mercy. Have mercy.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
That is enough. You will obey the convent rules or you will surely die.

INT. PRAYER ROOM - DAY

Two years have passed and Charlotte is drawn and silent. She has lost her will to fight.

ELDERLY NUN
The Mother Superior would like to speak to you.

Charlotte and a procession of six other nuns which includes Sister Teresa are led to the Mother Superior.

The nuns are frightened. Charlotte's mentally broken.

The nuns stop before the Mother Superior and she's holding several BEAN BAGS.

MOTHER SUPERIOR
I am allowing you a recess period.

One by one she hands each nun a bean bag. The Mother Superior stops at Charlotte, hesitates and hands her the bag.

The elderly nun leads them through the kitchen and out onto the court yard.

EXT. CONVENT - DAY

It's sunny and the lawn is filled with fresh green grass.

The sound of spring fills the air as the wind blows a swift steady breeze.

The nuns hide their eyes from the sunlight as they step onto the grass.

Immediately the first nun steps onto the lawn and lies in the grass clutching the earth and breathing deeply.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

They all do the same.

The sounds of SIGHS fill the air along with the sounds of
distant birds SINGING.

Charlotte falls to the ground and rubs her face into the
grass. She breathes deeply.

Suddenly, Charlotte notices that there is a coal truck
pulled up to the iron gate.

A MAN is loading a wheel barrel with coal.

He wheels the barrel to the coal chute and dumps his load.

He repeats this act.

Charlotte watches the other nuns and they're oblivious to
what is transpiring. She reels towards the kitchen to see
if she's being watched. She isn't.

As the man returns to the truck he pushes the gate closed
and the lock does not catch.

He drives off.

Charlotte picks herself up and slowly moves towards the
gate. She panics and runs.

She hits the gate and it easily opens causing her to fall
skinning her knees. She picks herself up and runs out of
the gate.

EXT. BUSY STREET - CONTINUOUS

Charlotte's running as her head piece obstructs her view.
She runs right into a YOUNG BUSINESSMAN. They both fall.

BUSINESSMAN
I am terribly sorry.

CHARLOTTE
Please, will you help me.

He helps her up.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
I need a place to hide. Will you help
me?

BUSINESSMAN
You need to hide? But...
CHARLOTTE
Please, we must hurry.
Charlotte takes him by the arm and hurries away.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME DAY

The business man and Charlotte enter the man's home. The WIFE greets her husband.

WIFE
Honey, we're having dinner tonight and we've got to... Who is this?

BUSINESSMAN
I bumped into this woman. She said that she has escaped from the convent. From Saint Jeremy's. She asked me to help her.

WIFE
Escaped?

CHARLOTTE
Yes, I have escaped from the convent. I do not wish to go back. They will do terrible things to me.

WIFE
Terrible things in a convent?

BUSINESSMAN
All she wants us to do is to hide her until she can move on tonight.

WIFE
Can we talk about this alone?

BUSINESSMAN
What is there to talk about?

WIFE
Please.

BUSINESSMAN
Excuse us.

They walk into the kitchen.
Charlotte listens as they talk about this awkward situation.

WIFE
I don't understand.

(CONTINUED)
BUSINESSMAN
What's to understand? Do you see the way she looks. It's quite obvious that she's in need of some medical care.

147 INT.KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

WIFE
It's not for us to get involved with. We have company tonight. Just give her some money and send her on her way.

BUSINESSMAN
We can't just pretend that we never saw her. What if it was one of our family members.

The sound of the door closing is heard by the young couple.

WIFE
We don't have to worry anymore. She's gone.

The husband turns and runs to the door. Charlotte's walking away. The husband runs to her aide.

148 EXT.SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

BUSINESSMAN
Please, wait.

CHARLOTTE
I don't wish to cause you any trouble. I'm sorry. I must be going.

She turns to go.

BUSINESSMAN
Where will you go?

CHARLOTTE
I don't know.

The businessman reaches into his pocket and pulls out some money.

BUSINESSMAN
Here. It's not much but I hope it will help.

CHARLOTTE
Thank you. You have already been too kind.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

Charlotte barefoot and tattered smiles and walks away.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY

Charlotte spots some oversized laundry drying on a clothes line. She slowly approaches and steals some of the clothing, hiding them under her skirt.

She goes behind an old abandoned auto and changes into the clothing.

A dog spots her and begins to bark at her from behind a fence. She moves on.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Charlotte walks along a country road.

An old pick up truck filled with caged chickens and driven by an elderly, dirt poor BLACK FARMER passes by. It stops and backs up.

DRIVER
You need a ride Miss?

CHARLOTTE
Thank you.

Charlotte enters the truck.

INT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

DRIVER
Where ya headin' to?

CHARLOTTE
I don't know. Anywhere will be fine.

EXT. TRUCK - EVENING

Charlotte exits the truck.

EXT. ROAD - EVENING

Charlotte walks on as the sun sets low in the distant skyline.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

She sees and old home with a porch light lit. She approaches the home and knocks on the door. An old woman opens the door.
OLD WOMAN
What is it? What do you want?

CHARLOTTE
Please, may I have a drink of water?

OLD WOMAN
We don't cater to no bums around here. Move on.

CHARLOTTE
You don't understand I...

OLD WOMAN
I understand plenty. You got a lot of nerve expecting a hand out around here. Now move along before I call for some help to move you along.

CHARLOTTE
Yes. I'm so sorry.

In the middle of Charlotte's words the door is slammed.

Charlotte walks back to the road and begins to weep. She looks back and the porch light goes out.

She sneaks back to the home and falls asleep along the side of the house.

It begins to rain. She sneaks onto the porch and curls up on the porch swing. She lays wide eyed filled with fear and doubt.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Charlotte walks on.

EXT. ROAD - EVENING

Charlotte walks on.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Charlotte exits from the back of an old truck carrying a load of worn tires. She's back in her Uncle John's town.

EXT. UNCLE JOHN'S - EVENING

Charlotte walks up the familiar street.

Angered, she walks to the door and rings the bell. In poor health, Uncle John answers the door.

(CONTINUED)
UNCLE JOHN
Charlotte, I'm so glad you're all right.

He hugs her sincerely, wincing in pain.

CHARLOTTE
How could you send me back to them? You're a horrible little man to care so little for me.

UNCLE JOHN
It wasn't me. It was your own father.

Charlotte turns and sits on the porch steps. Uncle John coughs lightly.

UNCLE JOHN (CONT'D)
Your mother died. The church wouldn't give your mother her last rites. What else could the man do?

Charlotte stands.

CHARLOTTE
(shouting)

She throws her arms up and looks towards the heavens.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
(continuing)
All in the name of God.

Charlotte sits down on the soil. Uncle John goes to her side and consoles her.

UNCLE JOHN
Come along inside. I'll see to it that you never have to go back again.

Uncle John extends his hand. Charlotte hesitates and then takes his hand. She rises from the ground.

Charlotte and Uncle John embrace.

CHARLOTTE
Uncle John, you're the only one that I have left.

INT.LIVING ROOM - DAY

Charlotte's clean. She's wearing some nice clothes.

(CONTINUED)
Uncle John is dressed in bow tie, suspenders and trousers. 
He pours Charlotte some coffee.

    CHARLOTTE
    No more, I've had plenty.

    UNCLE JOHN
    We need to fatten you up a bit.

    CHARLOTTE
    Fatten me for the slaughter?

Uncle John bends in pain.

    CHARLOTTE (CONT’D)
    What is it? What's wrong?

    UNCLE JOHN
    It's the oldest disease in the world. 
    It's called old age. I'll be fine.

Charlotte looks out the window and she spots something that 
catches her eye.

The man that Charlotte watched beat his wife is now sober 
and dressed in his Sunday best. His children are laughing 
and the wife holds her husbands hand.

Charlotte turns to Uncle John.

    CHARLOTTE
    That man is a horrible man.

    UNCLE JOHN
    He once was lost but now he's found. 
    He was blind but now he sees. God has 
    made a new man out of him.

    CHARLOTTE
    (mocking) 
    God has made a new man out of him?

Mr. Maynard knocks at the door.

    CHARLOTTE (CONT’D)
    What do they want? Send them away.

    UNCLE JOHN
    They want to go to church. They have 
    come to take us along.

    CHARLOTTE
    Forget it.

(CONTINUED)
UNCLE JOHN
Nonsense. It's not like the one you're accustomed to. They got singin' and dancin'. Some get the spirit in them so powerful they commence to hollerin' and shoutin'. It's a sight to see.

Charlotte runs and locks her bedroom door.

UNCLE JOHN (CONT’D)
(to Maynard)
I'll be right with you.

Uncle John steps to Charlotte's door. His speech is soft and understanding.

UNCLE JOHN (CONT’D)
There's ain't no rush. No rush at all.

CHARLOTTE
I will never leave this house. Never. Do you hear?

UNCLE JOHN
Nobody here'll make you do anything that you don't want to.

CHARLOTTE
I won't go.

UNCLE JOHN
Alrighty. That's fine. I'll see you in a while.

CHARLOTTE
Please, don't leave me alone. They'll come and take me away.

UNCLE JOHN
Nonsense. I told you I'd never let them take you away didn't I? A promise by Jeb Flannigan is a promise kept. I'll be back before you know it.

Uncle John exits.

Charlotte watches from her window as Uncle John shakes Maynard's hand and enters the families car. They drive off.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

CHARLOTTE
(shouting)
Uncle John.

She races out of her room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Charlotte runs across the floor.

EXT. UNCLE JOHN’S YARD - CONTINUOUS

Charlotte runs to the street.
The Maynard’s car drives off.

CHARLOTTE
(shouting)
Uncle John, don’t leave me alone.
(softly)
Don’t leave me alone.

INT. UNCLE JOHN’S BEDROOM - DAY

Uncle John is lying in his death bed.

Charlotte administers to his every need.

UNCLE JOHN
Charlotte, I'm not long for this world.
When your Aunt... my beloved wife
Rebecca passed, I was a lonely and
bitter old man. All seemed hopeless
until I found strength and a renewal of
faith. You need to have your faith
resurrected.

CHARLOTTE
(crying)
I can't forget the nightmares that stay
with me.

UNCLE JOHN
You need to find some inner peace. You
need to forgive those that have harmed
you.

Uncle John looks towards the heavens.

UNCLE JOHN (CONT’D)
Yes, I am ready to leave this old
world. I wouldn't mind doin' one of
those fancy jigs around the throne.

(CONTINUED)
Uncle John takes Charlotte's hand. He smiles a soft smile.

UNCLE JOHN (CONT'D)
I'm going home.

Uncle John passes peacefully.

CHARLOTTE
Uncle John don't go. Uncle John, please don't leave me alone.

Charlotte deeply sobs.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
God how can you take him from me. He's all I have. He's all I've ever loved. Oh no.

There's a knock at the door.

The door opens. It's the Maynard's. Charlotte looks up.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
He's gone.

The Maynard's help Charlotte up.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

It's raining and a preacher says a beautiful moving sermon.

SISTER NILA stands near Charlotte.

PREACHER
Even something as unpleasant to the eyes as a caterpillar will crawl into a cocoon and emerge into a beautiful butterfly. That butterfly will light on wing and into the heavens after being transformed into a new creature. (pause)
Likewise, the cold chilling death of winter turns into spring. New life begins to shoot forth from the lifeless carcass of an old dead hollow. Flowers appear and the green grass of the meadows reach towards the heavens. And on this day we say farewell. Farewell to one of our beloved who has been transformed into a new creature as well.

Uncle John's casket is lowered into the ground.

(CONTINUED)
PREACHER (CONT'D)
In Jesus name. Amen.

Sister Nila approaches Charlotte. She's strong in her speech and mannerisms.

SISTER NILA
I'm sorry about your Uncle's passing. He's better off than the rest of us now. I often say we ought to pray and shed our tears for the living. The dead are in no need of prayers.

Sister Nila turns to go.

CHARLOTTE
(bitter)
I can tell you plenty about your Jesus.

Charlotte walks away as the dirt is still being shoveled onto the grave.

INT. UNCLE JOHN'S HOME - DAY
Charlotte sits alone in a rocking chair. She faces the wall and her feet are pushing the chair in a rocking motion. She seems emotionless.

The doorbell rings.

Charlotte answers. Sister Nila has a pot of turkey soup for Charlotte.

Charlotte begrudgingly allows her to enter.

SISTER NILA
I brought you some turkey soup. You shouldn't be all cooped up in here like this.

Nila begins to open the windows letting the sun in.

SISTER NILA (CONT'D)
How about going for a nice walk with me. It's such a beautiful day.

No response.

SISTER NILA (CONT'D)
You're making this very hard for me. Please, let me help you.
CHARLOTTE
How on earth do you intend to help me? Everything that I ever had is gone. There's nothing left. Nothing. Please leave. I'm sorry if I appear harsh...

SISTER NILA
(interrupting)
It's going to take a tone much harsher than that to scare me off. I'll tell you what... I'm going to leave my number with you. You can call me when you feel up to it. I'm just a hop, skip and a jump away.

Sister Nila writes down her phone number and turns to go.

SISTER NILA (CONT'D)
Oh, one more thing. I don't want to push you into anything at all but...

CHARLOTTE
Yes.

SISTER NILA
Well, it's just that your Uncle John had asked me to invite you to attend church with me. I mean (pause) Whenever you feel up to it.

CHARLOTTE
I will never feel up to it.

Sister Nila turns to go.

CHARLOTTE (CONT’D)
I wrote my father and told him of his brothers death. They didn't even send him flowers.

SISTER NILA
They don't accept his conversion. Pray for them Charlotte. Don't hate them.

Suddenly a car pulls up to the house. Two priest's and Charlotte's father exit the car. Charlotte is filled with fear.

CHARLOTTE
(anxious)
They're back. They'll take me away. They'll take me back to the convent. What shall I do?

(CONTINUED)
SISTER NILA
(calm)
Invite them in.

A loud RAPPING is heard at the door. Charlotte's frantic. Sister Nila is calm and reassuring.

SISTER NILA (CONT’D)
They no longer have any power over you.
Let them in.

Charlotte hesitates and then opens the door. Nila opens it all the way.

SISTER NILA (CONT’D)
Won't you please come on in.

They step into the living room. The priest extends his smile and hand.

PRIEST
Hello Charlotte.

Charlotte doesn't look at his hand. She steps back.

MR. FLANNIGAN
I have come to ask you to return to the church.

CHARLOTTE
Don't believe a word that they tell you.

The elder of the priest's stands defiantly, shouting at Charlotte.

PRIEST
Of course you know what you have done.
One day you will crawl back to the Holy church and beg for novenas to be said for you.

Charlotte begins to lose her inhibitions and stands defiantly.

PRIEST (CONT’D)
One day you will see that you have fallen. You will want to return to the confessional and pray for absolution and your prayers will not be heard.

CHARLOTTE
I shall gladly accept that fait.
PRIEST
You have been excommunicated from the church.

YOUNGER PRIEST
You have dared to wear a holy habit and remove it. May every vital organ of your body be cursed. You shall be cursed from the crown of your head to the souls of your feet.

Silence.

MR. FLANNIGAN
You're cut off from the family. We want no part of you.

CHARLOTTE
I've already signed over any inheritance that I might receive to the church father. Ask these men to explain that to you...
   (stronger)
   as you go your way.

Charlotte opens the door wide.

PRIEST
You've become a reprobate. You shall never be able to know the truth. God has seen to it that you will only believe in lies, heresies. Take this.

The priest tries to hand Charlotte a legal looking document. She refuses it.

The priest drops the document on the floor at her feet.

The priests turn to exit.

Charlotte's father stands as if frozen for a moment.

   CHARLOTTE
   Someday you will understand father.

Charlotte's father turns and goes.

Nila picks up the document.

Charlotte closes the door. Nila hands her the document.

She carefully looks it over.

(CONTINUED)
CHARLOTTE (CONT’D)
It's a court order. I'm being ordered to keep silent. It says that I'm not to speak about my convent life.

INT. CHARLOTTE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

There's a strong wind blowing outside of the house.
The thumping of the trees on the house frightens Charlotte awake.
She closes the shutters on the window and imagines that she sees a man's shadow lurking outside.
She steps back swiftly hiding from the image.
She looks again and recognizes the shadow as that of a post from the clothesline.
She returns to bed practically hiding under her covers.
The winds begin to grow.
The clock stops running.
The hallway light goes out.
Charlotte SCREAMS.
A deep moaning sound begins to grow in the distance.
The shutters beat rapidly upon the window. Charlotte runs towards the front room.
The front door rips open.
SCREAMING she runs to the bathroom and locks herself in.

CHARLOTTE
Go away. Please go away. I'll never tell. I will never tell. Go away. Go away.
The awning is ripped off of the bathroom.
The shutters are torn from the house.
A TORNADO has hit. The noise is DEAFENING.
Charlotte clasps her head and buries her face between her legs. Her SCREAMS are drowned out by the noises that surround her.
167 EXT. UNCLE JOHN'S HOME - NEXT MORNING 167

Uncle John's house is gone.

All that remain is the bathroom that Charlotte sits in. The Maynard's home is likewise destroyed.

Maynard and a few men rip the tree that has fallen on the tattered home and opens the door. Charlotte is frozen.

MAYNARD
It's all right now. It's over. I never saw one rip through a town like this one did. Thank God we're all still alive.

MAN
We barely squeaked through this one.

Charlotte stands and witnesses the havoc that had terrified her all night long.

168 EXT. P.U. TRUCK - DAY 168

Charlotte's riding in the back of an old truck with the Maynard's and other neighborhood survivors.

A little GIRL is WEEPING. Charlotte moves closer putting her arms around the child.

169 EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS 169

The child lays across Charlotte's lap.

CHARLOTTE
Where are we going?

MAYNARD
They've converted the old church for emergency use.

170 EXT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS 170

The truck pulls up to a makeshift emergency center.

There are homeless scattered everywhere.

Charlotte only sees a wooden cross that stands before the small church.

MAYNARD
Look at the homeless. I never... I guess we'll have to stay here until we rebuild.

(CONTINUED)
CHARLOTTE
I have no where to go.

MAYNARD
You'll stay here like the rest of us.
You'll be fine.

Charlotte stares at the old wooden cross as they turn down the bedraggled old street.

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Night falls and Charlotte sits alone. The people have gathered together for a prayer.

PREACHER
Thank you God for sparing our lives.
We do not fully understand your workings but we believe that you have a purpose. Somehow some good will come out of this tragedy.

Charlotte watches and hears the preachers words.

The congregation of people begin to sing, Cryin' Holy Unto My Lord.

Charlotte walks up to the makeshift altar and falls on her knees praying aloud.

CHARLOTTE
I don't want to feel this way any longer. Guide me and I'll do as you will.

Sister Nila goes to Charlotte's comforting her.

SISTER NILA
It may be God's will that you go into the world and tell of what you've witnessed.

Sister Nila opens the bible and reads a passage.

SISTER NILA (CONT'D)
Go ye into the world and teach to every creature great and small.

(matter of fact)
It's your calling to tell of the unspeakable acts that you've seen with your own eyes. If you can save only one child then you have done your part.

Charlotte hugs Sister Nila.

(CONTINUED)
CHARLOTTE
I understand now.

Fade from scene to the song, Only One Step More, sung by
The Blue Sky Boys.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Charlotte is in the process of writing a letter to her father.

CHARLOTTE (V.O.)
Dear father. I have begun my travels
teaching and testifying of my
experience as a Carmelite Nun. Last
week we faced our final legal battle.
We emerged victorious. The courts
ruled on my behalf. I no longer have
to keep silent. I know that you do not
understand just yet. I also have faith
that someday you will. Love, your
daughter Charlotte.

Charlotte folds the letter and licks it shut. Nila enters
the tent.

SISTER NILA
If we hurry we shall make it before
nightfall.

MONTAGE:

A small article in the corner of the front page of a small
town newspaper reads: Carmelite nun to speak of her
conversion.

Charlotte speaking from several pulpits.

Newspaper headline: Supreme Court Determines First
Amendment Rights Of Carmelite Nun.

Newspaper headline: Ex-Carmelite Nun wins big in court.

Mobs of conservative Catholic protesting Charlotte's visit
to their ANY TOWN, USA

Newspaper headline: Ex-communicated nun allowed to testify.

Charlotte speaking from pulpits to growing audiences.
173  INT. VATICAN HALLWAY - DAY

The sun shines brightly through a huge window onto a Caravaggio painting that adorns the Vatican's lengthy corridor.

A MAN dressed in priestly garb walks swiftly, purposely down the corridor.

He reaches a doorway and without breaking stride, another PRIEST exits the room. They walk silently side by side. The only acknowledgment is a simple nod.

The two men turn the corner, walking past several offices. They stop at a doorway.

The first man raps a few times on the door.

A HIGH BISHOP opens the door.

A MAN is sitting in a tall leather chair barely visible but noticeable. He's turned towards a closed window gazing out.

The two men enter.

The door closes causing a LOUD REVERBERATED SOUND echoing throughout the hallway.

174  INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The man at the window sits in a black leather chair.

He watches below as the faithful pile in procession into the Vatican. They bow kissing the worn feet of the statue Peter that guards the Vatican entrance.

An old fashioned 1/4 inch reel to reel tape is handed to the Bishop by the first priest. He frowns as he takes it.

The tape is placed on an old fashioned style tape machine. The man in the chair is now completely turned towards the window. His face is never seen.

175  THEY SPEAK ITALIAN ONLY TO ENGLISH SUBTITLES.

MAN IN CHAIR
Must we listen to hallucinations.

176  INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A finger presses the play button. Sister Charlotte's voice speaks over the hissing tape.

(CONTINUED)
SISTER CHARLOTTE (V.O.)
I have not come here today to condemn.
I have come to tell you of my story. I
am here to hopefully save other young
women from being deceived into giving
their precious life to the convents of
Rome.

BISHOP
Blasphemy.

The man in the chair waves his hand. The Bishop is quickly
silenced.

CHARLOTTE (V.O.)
I gave twenty-two years of my life to
the Roman church. I begin this
testimony by saying that I do not have
any ill feelings towards Roman Catholic
people. Many do not believe my story.
Yet it is my story.

The man in the chair waves his hand again and the tape is
stopped.

MAN IN CHAIR
Did this woman not take the vow of
silence?

BISHOP
Yes.

MAN IN CHAIR
And she speaks of such things?

PRIEST
Her alleged convent life was in the
convent in Del Leone, Mexico.

MAN IN CHAIR
Can her bantering be proven?

BISHOP
Not long ago, as we're all very aware,
the Holy church was persecuted greatly
in Mexico. Many of our priests
tortured and murdered in the revolt of
Calle.

MAN IN CHAIR
Yes. Yes. But that is not the issue
before us today. Can her allegations
be proved?

(CONTINUED)
PRIEST
The particular convent that she resided in has become a museum. It is not good for the Church.

MAN IN CHAIR
Are there any others who wish to defame the great name of this Holy Institution?

BISHOP
None who are as prominent as this woman. She has built quite a reputation slandering the Holy Church.

The priest reaches over to remove the tape from the machine.

MAN IN CHAIR
Leave the tape with me. You may go now.

The priest's turns and exits the office. Leaving only the man in the chair and the Bishop.

MAN IN CHAIR (CONT'D)
Vow of silence. This is for the greater good.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT.CHURCH - DAY

Sister Charlotte continues giving her testimony in front of the church congregation.

SISTER CHARLOTTE
As you can see, I find it necessary to give my testimony, so that other young women could possibly be spared from the wrath of convent life. As I travel throughout these cities I will need your prayers. I have been threatened with death and there have been numerous attempts on my life. They have tried to stop me from telling my story. I will be facing many dangers ahead, but I'm willing to face them in hopes that cloister convents will be opened and the suffering and torment inflicted upon young girls could finally be put to rest. I would that you'd pray for me.

(MORE)
SISTER CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
I face dire consequences for standing up and telling what I know to be true. Thank you and may God bless.

The church breaks out in a thunderous standing ovation.

Sister Charlotte steps down from the pulpit and the people begin to file out of the church.

Some of the patrons stop and greet Sister Charlotte.

An elderly Hispanic woman, SISTER TERESA, (no longer a nun) makes her way towards Charlotte.

TERESA
Charlotte.

There eyes meet. Charlotte's astounded.

CHARLOTTE
Is it you? It is my dear sister Teresa.

They embrace and shed tears of joy.

TERESA
I have never forgotten you my dear sister. It is a miracle that we're both standing here today.

CHARLOTTE
I didn't know. How did you...

TERESA
Not now. We have plenty of time to talk.

Teresa takes Charlotte by the arm and along with Nila they exit the church into the protesting turmoil. They enter the Lincoln Sedan and drive off.

ROLE ON SCREEN:

The Convent of Del Leone on the outskirts of Mexico City is now a museum that thousands of tourists visit annually. All of the devices of torture, the miles of underground tunnels, the catacombs, the scores of dead newborn infants the bodies of the nuns and the walls of coffins that Charlotte describes in her testimony are still on display at the museum.

(MORE)
TERESA (CONT'D)

There are at least twenty-nine known cloisters in the United States today. The American government has no jurisdiction to legally enter these convents they are treated as Embassy’s.

Sister Charlotte traveled endlessly with Sister Nila across Canada and the United States giving her testimony. She had faced many protests and condemnation for telling what she had experienced as a cloister nun. Her life was frequently threatened and she refused to give in to the pressures of the Catholic Church.

Sister Charlotte was last seen traveling from Tennessee to Louisiana. She never reached her destination and she has never been heard from again. Her body has never been found.

FADE OUT.