

ARCHON

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

We open on a seedy alleyway, with PAINFUL SCREAMING echoing into the cold night air. Halfway down the alley, slumped against the side of a filthy dumpster, sits A HOMELESS TEENAGER. Her clothes are torn and dirty, and the glazed look in her eyes suggests this is a girl in the grip of substance abuse.

Her breathing becomes more laboured, and it's now clear that she is in the middle of childbirth. Her face contorts in agony, but she continues to push.

Finally, with one last, defiant scream into the darkness, her cries of pain are replaced with THE CRYING OF AN INFANT. She cradles the newborn in her arms, his tiny body still slick with fluids, and realizes that the umbilical cord is still attached.

At a loss, she fishes inside of her pocket and removes a switchblade. This weapon - her only means of defending herself on the unforgiving city streets - is now used to sever the cord connecting her to the child.

She looks down at the shrieking baby and, knowing what she has to do next, cries along with him. After allowing herself that moment of sadness, her resolve hardens and she gets to her feet.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

After wrapping the child in her ratty jacket, she staggers out of the alley and into the street. This area is obviously bad news, as she passes more homeless people, prostitutes, and drug addicts.

A man laying on the sidewalk drunkenly slurs a verse from the hymn, "Old Time Religion."

DRUNK MAN

It will do when I am dying...
It will do when I am dying...
It will do when I am dying...
And it's good enough for me.

The girl finally reaches her destination - a modest-sized church a few blocks away.

EXT. ST. ANNE'S CHURCH - NIGHT

She climbs the stairs and gently places her infant on the doorstep. Even in her haze, she's heartbroken over what she's about to do.

HOMELESS TEEN

I'm sorry, but this is for the best, okay? I can't look after you right now. I can barely look after me.

She begins to weep softly.

HOMELESS TEEN (CONT'D)

I promise, someday I'll get clean, and then I'll come find you, and we can be together. I promise, okay? This isn't goodbye forever.

She knocks on the door of the church, then gives her child one last, loving look.

HOMELESS TEEN (CONT'D)

Just try to be a good boy until I see you again.

She runs down the stairs and disappears into the night, leaving the baby alone and crying on the church doorstep.

Some time passes but, eventually, the church door swings open, revealing FATHER CHARLES MULLIGAN, a priest in his mid-thirties.

His eyes grow wide in astonishment. He certainly wasn't expecting this tonight.

MULLIGAN

Good Lord!

He scoops up the infant and glances around the empty streets for its mother.

MULLIGAN (CONT'D)

Hello? Hello!?

With no sign of a parent, Mulligan rushes back inside the church.

INT. CHURCH OFFICE - NIGHT

With a phone tucked between his chin and shoulder, Mulligan anxiously paces around his cluttered office with the infant.

MULLIGAN

Yes, I need an ambulance at St. Anne's Catholic Church on East 110th Street. Someone left a newborn outside... I don't know how long, but... he's turning blue!

As the cries grow weaker, Mulligan becomes more frantic.

MULLIGAN (CONT'D)

Okay. Okay. I'll do what I can.
Please, just hurry!

Mulligan hangs up the phone and grabs a black robe from the nearby rack. After hastily swaddling the infant, Mulligan blesses him with the sign of the cross and begins to pray.

MULLIGAN (CONT'D)

Heavenly Father, whose divine hand makes all things possible, I ask that you please bless this child with your love and protection.

The infant appears to be fading fast. Mulligan's prayers grow hurried.

MULLIGAN (CONT'D)

I beg of you, oh merciful God, to shine your light on this beautiful child. Oh, Holy Spirit, bring your healing and strengthen his being, so that he may grow to serve you and praise your name. I ask in the name of...

But it's too late. The crying has stopped, and the infant has grown still in his arms - dead from exposure.

With tears in his eyes, Mulligan slumps into his chair and tilts back his head, as though expecting answers from above.

Suddenly, it's as if a wave of energy washes over the office. The lights flicker, and an invisible breeze scatters papers from Mulligan's desk.

And that's when the infant begins crying once again, louder than ever. Had he not been dead, or was this truly a miracle? Mulligan seems to think it's the latter, and quickly becomes overwhelmed with emotion.

As he cradles the newly-revived infant, its tiny hand reaches up and grasps Mulligan's finger.

Mulligan marvels at the connection, and begins a joyous recitation of the Lord's Prayer.

MULLIGAN (CONT'D)

Our Father, who art in Heaven.
Hallowed be thy name. Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven...

As Mulligan continues to pray over the infant, its cries become LAYERED WITH ANOTHER VOICE. Although faint at first, it begins to sound like a woman shouting in the distance...

TITLE CARD: ARCHON

The cry/shout blend continues over the title card, with the woman's voice growing louder by the second, until we hear the name "MICHAEL" clearly, above all else.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREETS - PRESENT DAY

The word snaps us to the present, where MARISOL ALVAREZ (late 20s), a Puerto Rican police detective, is shouting at her partner, MICHAEL LOMBARDO (early 30s), as they chase a CRIMINAL who is sprinting down a bustling sidewalk.

MARISOL
Michael! There!

Their target weaves his way through the crowd with reckless abandon, until his route is blocked by an OBLIVIOUS WOMAN who is taking a selfie.

Without so much as a second glance, the criminal shoves her into the street.

Horns HONK and tires SCREECH, but it's too late - the woman is hit by an oncoming vehicle.

Other pedestrians scream as the woman THUDS to the ground, covered in blood. But instead of helping, most of them pull out their phones and start taking pictures and/or tweeting about the accident.

When the detectives arrive at her side, Marisol waves Michael onward.

MARISOL (CONT'D)
I'll take care of her, you catch
that son of a bitch!

The chase continues for another block, until the criminal attempts to escape by heading into a small alleyway.

EXT. ALLEYWAY

Unfortunately, he discovers that his route is blocked by a high fence.

He pulls a gun from his pocket and spins around, where he sees a silhouette obscured by the afternoon sun.

It's Michael, standing in the alley entrance with his own gun drawn.

MICHAEL
Drop the weapon!

CRIMINAL
I didn't do anything, man, I swear!

MICHAEL

Drop the weapon and get down on the ground, now!

CRIMINAL

Okay, okay, it's cool, man. We're cool.

The criminal acts as though he's going to drop his gun, but instead FIRES A ROUND. Michael fires back, and both shots hit their targets in the chests.

The criminal slumps to the ground, dropping his gun in the process.

However, although he was clearly shot, Michael seems unhurt.

Michael rushes over and kicks the criminal's gun away, then checks to make sure there aren't any witnesses. Confidant they're alone, he crouches down alongside.

MICHAEL

Let's get this over with. Give me your hand.

CRIMINAL

(Cough)

Should have known you'd be wearing a vest...

MICHAEL

I said give me your hand.

CRIMINAL

...Fuck you, man. You don't know shit about me. Only God can judge me, motherfucker.

Michael takes a deep breath, preparing himself for what's about to happen.

MICHAEL

Maybe, but I'm a close second.

The moment that Michael clasps the criminal's hand, his pupils dilate.

Through touch, Michael is able to view a person's most sinful memories.