

FADE IN:

TITLE:

**London - Oct. 4, 1597**

EXT. TOWER BRIDGE - NIGHT

From Dark and Silence a pair of deep blue eyes.

Ragged, filthy, short of breath, and shaking FATHER JOHN GERARD (33) huddles against a bridge support.

Despair hides his otherwise fine features.

The growing sound of dogs barking and guards yelling orders can be heard frantically searching above and all around him.

Gerard closes his eyes. His hands, broken, bleeding, and mangled hold a makeshift rosary as he folds them in prayer.

PAN TO:

The Tower of London, then to A ROPE hanging across the Moat.

TITLE:

**Inspired by A True Story**

DISSOLVE TO:

OVER OPENING CREDITS:

Horns play among the backdrop of festivities. Sounds and visions of revelry fitting a Royal visit.

END CREDITS:

TITLE:

**Oxford College - Spring 1585 - Twelve and a Half Years Prior  
Headquarters of the Catholic movement.**

EXT. COURTYARD - OXFORD COLLEGE - DAY

QUEEN ELIZABETH (52) rides in a carriage, amidst much pomp and circumstance.

Tall, dark, and menacing, RICHARD TOPCLIFFE (43), her obedient agent, is alongside her.

Although waving to the crowd and smiling, the Queen has a disdainful look in her eye. She growls at Topcliffe.

QUEEN

We don't have a problem do we?

TOPCLIFFE

No, your Majesty.

QUEEN

Good boy. We can't have these Catholics conspiring with the Spanish.

(beat)

Or worse, that bitch of a sister Mary.

TOPCLIFFE

No, of course not, your Majesty.

The Queen regains her composure and returns to her role, waving to the crowd.

QUEEN

Farewell, worthy Oxford; farewell, my good subjects; farewell my dear Scholars, and pray God prosper your studies.

INT. ACADEMIC OFFICE

Dark wood covers the walls. Antiquities, bookshelves, and luxurious furniture fill the room.

The energy of the adoring crowd surges outside.

Balding and grey yet distinguished in his in academic robes, DR. WILLIAM ALLEN (61) gazes out the window towards the proceedings.

He turns and grabs a bible from his desk. He knows the verse without opening it.

ALLEN (V.O.)

...that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be UNITED in the same mind and the same judgment...(1 Corinthians 1:10-13)

Office door slams open, and Allen turns towards the noise.

ALLEN'S ASSISTANT (O.S.)  
 A message from The Vatican...help  
 may be on the way.

DISSOLVE TO:

TITLE:

**Norfolk, England - Fall 1588 - Three Years Later**  
**On the Eve of the Spanish Armada**

EXT. SHIP DECK - NIGHT

By moonlight a ship, flying no flags, anchors just off-shore.

A SAILOR lowers a rowboat into the water. Dressed as Noblemen of meager means, FATHER OLDCORNE(27) with schoolboy looks, and an even younger Father John Gerard embrace.

The CAPTAIN, moving them along, shakes their hands.

CAPTAIN  
 Godspeed, my friends.

JOHN  
 May the Lord watch over you on your  
 return to Rome.

CAPTAIN  
 And may he watch over you and your  
 mission.

Oldcorne and John climb into the rowboat and row towards shore.

The moonlight briefly casts shadows across the water as clouds roll in and darkness conceals their presence.

EXT. SHORE - NIGHT

Soaked to the bone by a chilling downpour, Oldcorne and John depart the rowboat and hide it in the underbrush.

They scamper a little way up from the shore. Dogs can barely be heard barking in the distance.

They hunker down under a cedar tree for the night and attempt sleep.

EXT. FOREST - DAYBREAK

Hugs and hearty handshakes are exchanged and Oldcorne heads away. John watches him leave.

As Oldcorne looks back, John walks in the opposite direction.

EXT. FARMLAND - DAY

John looking somewhat haggard walks carefully from the tree-line and finds a dirt path leading towards a farmhouse. He looks up to see the weather is clearing.

INT./EXT. TOWN - LOCAL PUB - DAY

Oldcorne enters the pub. He's been traveling but looks like he belongs. He grabs the attention of the BARTENDER.

OLDCORNE

Excuse me, but might you have a room to let?

BARTENDER

Go ask the Innkeeper.

He points across the pub. Oldcorne walks over to the INNKEEPER. They politely converse. Oldcorne goes upstairs.

A man in the corner, dressed like he belongs yet looking out of place, peers through reading glasses perched low on his nose. He is more interested in the stranger than his book.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

As the day warms from the rising sun John cautiously approaches a small farmhouse.

He peers though a window from a slight distance. He nods, and moves closer with newfound confidence.

A FARMER (50s) wielding a large knife suddenly appears from the stable just behind the house.

FARMER

Stop right there!

John startles. Holds his hands up.

JOHN

My apologies kind sir, I only seek hospitality.

The Farmer casts a suspicious sneer towards John, but after looking him up and down realizes he has no reason to fear him.

FARMER

My apologies as well, the Queen's henchmen have been harassing folks around here lately.

John nods only slightly showing concern.

JOHN

I understand. Might you accommodate a weary traveler for a night?

John holds up a small bag of coin, then points towards the stable.

JOHN (CONT'D)

And perhaps you're willing to part with one of your mounts.

The Farmer takes a good long look at John, then at the bag of coins, then at the stable. He pauses and thinks. Looks around as if someone might be watching.

FARMER

Of course, of course. The Lord taught us to welcome those in need.

John smiles and follows the farmer inside the farmhouse.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

John tosses in his sleep. A conversation can be heard between the farmer and his WIFE.

WIFE (O.S.)

A complete stranger! With all these searches and threats.

FARMER (O.S.)

Relax. He's a Falconer, lost his falcon, just needed a place to sleep. Besides we need the money.

WIFE (O.S.)

So gullible, and jealous of other men. Why aren't you satisfied with YOUR OWN life?

John rolls over in his sleep. Dreaming.

INT. PRISON CELL (FLASHBACK)

A YOUNG JOHN(19) is lying on a rough bunk, his blabbermouth CELLMATE sits in a wobbly chair.

CELLMATE

You been here what, a year now? I don't understand why you won't just honor the Queen's religion.

YOUNG JOHN

I did nothing wrong. SHE is the one who was excommunicated!

CELLMATE

Well, SHE is the one who has you imprisoned, excommunicated or not.

As John rolls over trying to avoid the bothersome cellmate, A JAILER approaches.

JAILER

Gerard, let's go. Someone finally came for you.

Dr. William Allen appears in the corridor. The Jailer opens the cell and threatens the cellmate as John greets Allen.

As they leave John and Allen talk, nearly whispering.

ALLEN

I am sorry. The Queen has been traipsing around Oxford.

YOUNG JOHN

You are not to blame. But may those who are, face judgment one day.

ALLEN

Yes, perhaps sooner than later.

YOUNG JOHN

Doctor?

ALLEN

I founded a Jesuit school in Rome. Will you...

YOUNG JOHN

You have my loyalty, now more than ever.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT (PRESENT DAY)

John awakes. Rolls over.

JOHN

My Lord, and my Holy Father, I will  
serve you.

He drifts back to sleep.

INT. THE VATICAN - POPE'S QUARTERS - DAY

The POPE (60s), frail and old is reclined in a ornate chair  
as a BARBER finishes applying shaving cream.

The POPE'S SERVANT holds a letter. The Pope is distracted  
from each task by the other.

BARBER

Your Eminence, please hold still.

The Pope snaps to rigid attention as the Barber shaves down  
his chin to his neck.

SERVANT

(reading)

It is clear that the Spanish have  
failed and begin their retreat. We  
are anxious for the new Priests.

The Pope shakes his head gently, causing the Barber to almost  
nick him.

The Servant and Barber glare at each other insinuating they  
are of more importance. The Pope gives both a stern look.

POPE

Gentlemen. Please Continue.

SERVANT

(reading)

Queen Mary has been an advocate, my  
hope is that she can remain strong.  
Catholics are now being prosecuted  
under the Act, but few true  
believers are wavering.

POPE

Dear Lord protect, and strengthen  
Father Garnet and those who fight  
for our Faith. Amen.

The Barber at last has the Pope still and finishes his shave.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - DAY

John rides on horseback towards London. Men approach. John sees they are the Queen's agents.

AGENT  
You there. What is your business here in the countryside?

JOHN  
I have lost my falcon. Perhaps you have seen it?

AGENT  
A falcon? My Lord, what a problem to have.

The other agents chuckle. They are menacing looking nevertheless.

AGENT (CONT'D)  
We've heard that there was a landing. What do you know of it?

JOHN  
A Landing? I had not heard that.

AGENT  
Of course not. None of you recusants have.

JOHN  
Oh, you are looking for Catholic traitors. I wish you luck then.

The agent looks John over thoroughly. He dismisses the idea he may be anything but a local gentleman.

AGENT  
Go about your business.

The group of agents ride off as John continues the ruse pretending to look for his bird.

INT. LONDON PUB - NIGHT

John enters the pub and searches the room for someone.

In the corner FATHER GARNET (mid 50s) appears to be a common man yet clearly educated and aware.

Garnet sits in a dark corner of the Pub holding a small notebook. Through a pair of glasses perched precariously on his nose, he studies the crowd.

Eventually he notices John dressed quite handsomely nearing his table.

GARNET

Good Sir, perhaps you are meeting  
an old acquaintance?

JOHN

Indeed.

GARNET

And a friend of the church?

JOHN

A friend, a colleague, and a  
brother.

The two greet each other warmly. Although they have never met they embrace like long lost friends, both clearly more comfortable now that the other is with them.

GARNET

I met Father Oldcorne here a few  
days ago, and hoped that you were  
not far behind. I must admit, I was  
beginning to worry.

JOHN

I spent a few days with a very  
pleasant couple, AND met our  
adversaries. Quite disturbing.

Garnet straightens suddenly and pushes his glasses up, avoiding them falling off the tip of his nose.

GARNET

My Lord. Â

JOHN

I dispatched them easily enough,  
Father. Nothing to worry about.

GARNET

The Queen's agents have begun to be  
more aggressive in their searches  
and inquisitions. I fear your  
arrival has been betrayed.

JOHN

But yet you sit here, waiting,  
alone, for me?

GARNET

Dr. Allen sent his highest praise  
for you prior to your arrival. I  
have been anxious to meet you.

JOHN

I too. Our cause, our country, and  
our church are in need.

GARNET

More now than ever, John, now more  
than ever.

MONTAGE

-The two priests continue talking barely audibly. They have a  
cordial conversation and drink a few pints.

-All sort of commoners and noblemen enter, drink, and mill  
about.

-A few figures which look suspiciously like they are  
watching, maybe searching for something come and go.

BACK TO SCENE

John and Garnet continue their conversation. The drinks have  
put them slightly at ease.

JOHN

Father I must ask, are we safe  
speaking in the open like this?

GARNET

Yes, John, two noblemen, one  
apparently more noble than the  
other, just talking in the pub.

John casts a look at his own appearance.

GARNET (CONT'D)

No one suspects anything. It's  
where men with secrets come.

JOHN

Good. I have my assignment and will  
greet my hosts tomorrow.

GARNET

I believe you will find them quite appealing.

John finishes his pint and leaves. A few eyes are on him, but nobody seems to take serious notice.

INT. ARISTOCRATIC HOME - PARLOR - NIGHT

John plays cards with his HOST and two GUESTS, one elderly and one middle aged.

JOHN

We are having great success.

HOST

Yes Father, I believe we are as well. Your sermon moved us all, and many who couldn't stay.

JOHN

Your assistance and generosity does not go unnoticed by Fr. Garnet, and certainly not by The Lord.

HOST

Please, It's our pleasure. Our FAITH requires such duty.

JOHN

Bless you.

MIDDLE-AGED GUEST

Father, how might we help more?

JOHN

I should not ask, because you have been so giving already.

ELDERLY GUEST

Please Father, let us offer further assistance if we may.

JOHN

This transient life IS taking a toll. Not on we Priests, or our Faith, but on our finances.

HOST

I see.

JOHN

As our flock grows we have  
inadequate sacraments and artifacts  
to deliver the services required.

The Host and Guests nod in agreement.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Moving from home to home takes much  
time and faster forms of travel are  
costly.

More nods and looks around the room at one another.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Without a standing congregation we  
have no coffers to speak of, and  
must live hand to mouth.

HOST

I understand, it must be hard.

JOHN

I should not trouble you with our  
challenges. We are grateful for  
your devotion and support.

ELDERLY GUEST

I'm sure my gracious host and  
companion here will contribute with  
me now.

MIDDLE-AGED GUEST

Yes, yes, of course.

The Guests reach into their pockets and remove coins handing  
them to John. The Middle-aged guest casts his eyes to the  
Host who reluctantly does the same.

INT. LONDON PUB - NIGHT

John has just arrived at his and Garnet's normal table near  
the back.

JOHN

Father Garnet I have had much  
success!

John excitedly tosses a small bag full of coins to land on  
the table in front of Garnet with a clank.

Garnet quickly grabs the bag and hides it under the table as  
his eyes scan the room.

GARNET

I did hear that you have made many friends, and have been serving the cause well John.

JOHN

Yes, the funds are still small but I performed many services for several families.

GARNET

Your work has been very noble.

Garnet, takes a look at John from Head to toe. He peers at him directly through his glasses.

GARNET (CONT'D)

I trust not TOO NOBLE.

MONTAGE

-Background Music as we see a conversation between John and Garnet continuing.

-Conversation flows. Pints are consumed. John tells stories.

-Scenes of John in lavish noble clothing thoroughly enjoying his role.

-John hunting, birding, cards, bowling.

-John and Garnet enjoy each others company and have dinner.

BACK TO SCENE

GARNET (CONT'D)

John, so you say Henry Drury, of Lawshall is seeking the faith?

JOHN

AND he lives with a widowed heir to a grand estate.

Garnet shows some concern, or maybe interest.

JOHN (CONT'D)

He's very enthusiastic and has already started the Exercises.

GARNET

A blessing then. You would be more settled with such a host.

Garnet pauses and looks John up and down, again evaluating his appearance and attitude.

GARNET (CONT'D)

The countryside is important, but all the moving from home to home is not only costly, but is becoming a liability.

JOHN

How so?

GARNET

Too many of our enemies have begun to suspect, and perhaps recognize you.

JOHN

That is concerning.

GARNET

Perhaps you could be a little more discrete?

JOHN

Yes, Perhaps.

GARNET

Very well. You would be closer to London and there is much work to do here.

JOHN

Yes. I agree. And it would be wonderful to see you more often than once a month.

GARNET

See to it that Father Purdy is settled with your current benefactors, and make arrangements to move.

JOHN

Right away, Father.

GARNET

John, be careful. The Queen ordered more thorough searches, we must be covert as we serve His will.

JOHN

Eternity for the people of England  
is not only in the hands of The  
Lord, but in OUR hands as well.

John nods to Garnet and leaves. He puts on a highly decorative hat on the way out the door.

GARNET

My Lord, watch over our herd, and  
be with Father Gerard. We are at  
great risk. Amen.

EXT. ARISTOCRATIC HOME - NIGHT

Agents stand guard by the door. Richard Topcliffe has just found a Catholic Priest in a Hide behind the fireplace.

PRIEST'S FACE

FOUND PRIEST

As the Lord is my Shepard...

TOPCLIFFE (O.S.)

Get that Recusant out of there,  
Now!

SITTING ROOM

Agents drag the priest from the Hide. A family huddles in the corner of the room guarded by other agents.

MOTHER

Father, please forgive us. We could  
not keep them from you.

FOUND PRIEST

Forgive me, for I can no longer  
protect you.

An Agent is reading an official looking document.

AGENT

Sir, by the order of the Queen, and  
the Act of 1585 you are hereby  
arrested and are to be tried for  
treason for harboring a fugitive  
and a Catholic. Take this man away.

MOTHER

No, No, No.

Agents push family members back and haul the husband away.

TOPCLIFFE

You, Priest. I will see you locked  
in the Tower, and you will reveal  
where others reside.

The priest spits at Topcliffe.

FOUND PRIEST

Burn in hell you filthy dog.

An agent bludgeons the Priest with the hilt of his sword and the priest collapses. Two other agents drag him out by the arms as the family screams and agonizes.

EXT. TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

Busy street below the tower. Royal Guardsmen (Beefeaters) can be seen patrolling in unison.

INT. TOWER PRISON - STAIRWELL LANDING

Topcliffe and the Queen are talking. Agony and anguish comes from below.

QUEEN

What has he admitted?

TOPCLIFFE

Nothing. Yet.

QUEEN

Summon me when you get something.  
And DO get something.

TOPCLIFFE

Yes, your majesty.

The Queen goes up the stairs. Topcliffe smiles and descends.

EXT. LAWSHALL ESTATE - NIGHT

John's host family's estate is quiet. Moonlit and peaceful.

INT. JOHN'S ROOM

Wearing his night gown, John is sitting at a small desk. A Bible and a small cross in front of him as he reads a letter.

GARNET (V.O.)

...Father Brewster has been captured and is being held in the Tower of London. I fear for the worst. Please be cautious, he may not endure what befalls him.

(beat)

Yours in Christ, Father Garnet.

John puts the letter down and gazes out the window. He crosses himself.

A quiet KNOCK at the door. John doesn't hear it. Another KNOCK, slightly louder this time but still polite.

JOHN

Oh, hello?

The door opens just a few inches.

Her red hair cascading along the sides of her flushed cheeks the WIDOW LAWSHALL (40s) skin like porcelain peeks in.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Madam Lawshall?

He stands and tries to find something to cover himself but nothing is nearby.

WIDOW LAWSHALL

Father, I just wanted to make sure you had everything you needed.

JOHN

But of course...

His gaze wanders down towards her heaving breasts as she lets the door swing open just a tad bit further.

WIDOW LAWSHALL

Very well, if there is anything...

JOHN

I am very well Madam.

Blushing slightly the widow slowly disappears as the door closes.

INT. JOHN'S ROOM - LATER

John tosses and turns on his side in his bed.

His breathing is heavy as if he's having another nightmare.

A moan. His breathing suddenly grows faster, and faster.

He rolls onto his back. Wide awake he stares up at the ceiling.

He's moving rhythmically as he pleasures himself under the sheet with his hand.

With increasing pace his fist rises and falls.

A muffled groan. As he catches his breath he turns towards the wall muttering to himself.

JOHN  
Forgive me Father.

INT. PRINTING SHOP - DAY

A PRINTER and a GUY work. John stands nearby, dressed as a businessman. It's loud they must shout to be heard.

JOHN  
How are things progressing?

The PRINTER walks over to John.

PRINTER  
Very well. We should have the second run done this evening.

JOHN  
Very good, very good. I believe we are making some progress. tabletop

Many pamphlets are scattered about. Some are clearly religious.

The letters 'PLO' can be seen on one, 'by Wm. Shakespeare' on another.

JOHN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Who is that helping you today, I don't recognize him. John and printer

PRINTER  
A guy bartering for printing. Seems everyone is looking to prophesize.

John catches the guy's gaze and nods. The guy nods back and continues to work at the press.

JOHN

Good, good. Let's keep our project out of the sight. Don't you think?

PRINTER

Of course. I doubt he's any kind of threat though.

John pats the Printer on the shoulder, grabs a bundle, and starts to leave.

The printer points towards a storeroom and yells.

PRINTER (CONT'D)

Hey Guy, why don't you go get some more paper stock. Thanks.

GUY

Yes sir.

Guy puts down the printed materials and walks towards the store room. Printer resumes working.

John walks through the door pamphlets in hand.

PAMPHLET

Liturgy of the Eucharist

INT. LONDON PUB - NIGHT

John and Garnet are at one of their regular meetings. Garnet is looking more stern than normal. John has a new swagger about him. He's Proud.

GARNET

Our pamphlets and papers are making the rounds, we have our sacraments.

JOHN

Yes, father. We are making great progress.

GARNET

And, John, how are you doing?

JOHN

Father?

John is visibly nervous.

GARNET

Are YOU holding up?

JOHN

Yes, why do you inquire?

GARNET

You have been working hard, visiting many families. I fear unsettled nature of our work may have taken a toll.

JOHN

I am of good health and mind, have you heard otherwise?

GARNET

I hear much John, some may be hearsay or rumors, but not all.

John scowls slightly at the insinuation.

JOHN

I don't, I mean. What is it that you are asking?

GARNET

I know myself that the pressure, and TEMPTATION, can be difficult.

JOHN

Father, please.

GARNET

Serve the Church, the Pope, and our Lord. Put that above all else.

JOHN

Yes father. I understand.

GARNET

Go now, and Serve.

John rises and looks back towards Garnet as he begins to leave. Disappointment in his eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HARROWDEN - MAKESHIFT ALTAR - DAY

ELIZABETH (24) with dancing blue eyes and a personality to match, ANNE (26) shy and not one to make eye contact, and two VAUX BROTHERS (29 and 30) are assembled for Mass. The sisters are stunning, the brothers forgettable.