

THORNS AND SNARES

SERIES 1 EPISODE 5

"IN THE LIGHT OF THY COUNTENANCE"

DRAFT 5

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TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. REMOTE SCOTTISH VILLAGE - NIGHT - 1937

A house, doubtlessly doomed. Once a cosy domestic bliss, now consumed by a diabolic inferno.

As flames dance in jubilant destruction, VILLAGERS gawk and gabble from the road and windows. But one TEENAGE GIRL (14), much closer, struggles in the grip of a LARGE SCOTTISH MAN.

TEENAGE GIRL

Let go of me!! Let me go!

LARGE MAN

Don't be a wee fool, girl.

She bites his hand, hard. He squawks in pain, and she seizes her advantage - wriggling free, dashing for the front door, she has to get inside, *she just has to-*!

At the last possible second a Villager nabs her from danger!

TEENAGE GIRL

No!! NO!!! My Mammy! My Daddy!

VILLAGER

There's nothing you can do. You must stay here, Martha!

And MARTHA(!!!) screams as the roof crumples inwards -

INT. CONVENT - MARY MARTHA'S QUARTERS - NIGHT - 1968

MARY MARTHA snaps from her slumber. Sweating, she prises her pallid fingers from the pillow. Just a bad dream?

A thin trail of smoke drifts across the air...

Her eyes twitch around, following to the source - the crumbled remains of a cigarette in her bedside ashtray.

Her hand bangs onto the table, closes around the dish like a claw machine, and hurls it out of the open window.

Mary Martha rolls over and hugs the blankets to her chest - but she can only stare at the ceiling, with wet, wearied eyes.

There'll be no more sleep tonight.

OPENING TITLES.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. DAVID'S HOUSE - HALLWAY/SITTING ROOM - DAY

DAVID rockets down the stairs, dressed in school uniform, satchel slung across his shoulder.

DAVID
Goodbye, Mum!

BERNADETTE, thumbing through a well-loved paperback, sings from the sitting room -

BERNADETTE
Haven't you forgotten something,
Sausage?

David dutifully kisses his mother's forehead.

BERNADETTE (CONT'D)
You've been in such a hurry in the
mornings.

DAVID
Me and Hannah enjoy our walks to
school. That's all.

BERNADETTE
(proud)
She makes you very happy.

DAVID
Yes.
(realises, flustered)
No, it's not like that! She makes
everyone happy, not just me!

BERNADETTE
It's alright, David. I see these
things. When you're with her it's
like there's a huge weight off your
shoulders.

DAVID
That's how it is when you're with a
friend.

BERNADETTE
And that's how it was with your
father and I.

David gifts her a sympathetic smile.

DAVID
I'll see you later. Bye, Mum.

He rushes away, bashful, and the front door clicks shut behind him.

Elated, Bernadette resumes her book - a romance novel...

INT. HANNAH'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

A pencil scratches across a sheet of lined paper: HANNAH, sat at the breakfast table, breezes through some last-minute homework. Opposite, BENEDICT absorbs his Daily Telegraph.

SARAH pokes bacon and eggs around a pan. As sizzling fat surrounds the tip of the spatula, she dares to stroke her cheek, where a fresh cut stains her skin.

BENEDICT

Where are those eggs, Sarah?
Chickens having a lie-in?

SARAH

Coming right up, Ben.

Sanguine, Sarah scoops fried eggs onto a trio of plates.

SARAH (CONT'D)

How do fish and chips sound
tonight? A little celebration.

BENEDICT

Your birthday's not until March.

SARAH

A celebration for all of us. Four
months in West Redthiel. Your job
going so well, Hannah at school...

HANNAH

Kept my head down, you mean?
(Immediate regret)
Sorry, Mum. It sounds nice.

SARAH

We could eat in front of tonight's
'Virginian'!

Snap - Hannah flinches at Benedict's finger click. She surrenders her pencil. Benedict chews over the proposal as he fills in 7 Across.

BENEDICT

(Under breath)
"Obedient..."
(Out loud)
Why not. Capital idea.

Sarah decants the bacon to the plates. Benedict tosses the paper aside and tucks his napkin into his collar.

BENEDICT (CONT'D)

Hannah, I happened to meet your priest at the bank yesterday. Father Rogers, yes? He was a choir conductor away from singing your praises. You must be doing well.

Courtesy of Sarah, a cooked breakfast lands in front of Benedict - at the cost of Hannah copping sight of the cut.

Sarah brushes a useless strand of hair over the injury. But her timid gaze meets Hannah's, whose face has ignited.

Benedict pushes a moody fork through his food.

BENEDICT (CONT'D)

What's this?

HANNAH

It's called breakfast. You eat it.

BENEDICT

Don't be cheeky.

Revolted, he plucks up a rasher, rather like one might pinch a worm.

BENEDICT (CONT'D)

(To Sarah)

Look at this filth.

"Well-done" would be a generous description.

BENEDICT (CONT'D)

Is charcoal for breakfast one of those new fad diets?

Sarah braces -

SARAH

Sorry, Ben, I'll do a fresh piece.

Benedict lets the bacon fall back to the plate, then slides it towards Sarah.

BENEDICT

Who am I to meddle with my wife's health drive? Enjoy.

But Hannah grabs the food -

HANNAH

Stop being such a kid, Dad.

BENEDICT

Put that down.

HANNAH

I said, stop being such an
ungrateful, whiny little brat.

Provoked, Benedict scrabbles for the plate - a tug-of-war
commences --

BENEDICT

Give that to me this instant!

HANNAH

Give me a reason why I should watch
you shit all over Mum again!

Benedict's winning, but Hannah *heaves* --

The crockery clatters to the floor, yolk and ketchup splatter
Benedict's shoes. His face twists into a snarl, and Hannah --

-- Is saved by the timely trill of the telephone.

SARAH

Never mind, my darlings. You help
yourself to mine, Ben, I'll answer
the phone.

Sarah yanks the receiver from its cradle. Benedict glowers.
He tears his napkin from his collar and dabs at the yellow
slime that blotches his polished shoes.

SARAH (CONT'D)

West Redthiel, 0-1-9-8, who's
speaking, please?

Her face pales. She turns to the family.

SARAH (CONT'D)

It's Mother Mary Martha. She wants
to see all of us. Urgently.

Hannah - *dead*.

EXT. HANNAH'S HOUSE - OUT FRONT - DAY

David meanders gaily towards the house. Someone wrenches open
the front door, and, sensing the danger, he dives for a bush -
then peeks between the leaves and twigs.

Benedict perp-walks Hannah across the drive, Sarah trailing.

BENEDICT

I've had to cancel three client
meetings at the bank. I should hope
you've won a Nobel Prize!

He thrusts Hannah into the car, then clambers in. The door
bangs with such force it makes David wince.

The family reverses out of the drive, car heading in the direction of St Ursula's. But as they pass the bush, David catches Hannah's eye through the foliage.

He sees her silent terror.

Doesn't understand it.

But gives chase nonetheless!

INT. ST. URSULA'S - GROUND FLOOR CORRIDOR - DAY

Hand-in-hand, FELICITY and MATT saunter past gaggles of students, both awed and jealous at their reunion.

FELICITY
You definitely did the Religious
Knowledge work, yes?

MATT
Well, I definitely did think about
it...

Smack! A broom handle blocks Matt's path. MACK (57), the surly Welsh janitor, leers down at the two miscreants.

MATT (CONT'D)
Hey Mack.

FELICITY
Good morning, Mr Winters.

MACK
Mud! Filth!

He whacks Matt's feet with the broom.

MATT
Ow!

MACK
Look, boyo! Dirt! Grime!

Mack takes Matt's neck in hand, and twists his head downwards to survey the muddy footprints left in his wake.

FELICITY
Oh no.

MATT
Jeez.

MACK
And blasphemy!

He thwacks Matt again!

MATT

Oww! Sorry!

MACK

The governors are here tonight. I don't want them thinking this school is a pigsty. First thing's first - get rid of the pigs. Out!

Mack prods him back towards the main entrance.

EXT. ST. URSULA'S - FRONT STEPS - DAY

Matt dangles his shoes at arms' length, scraping off clumps of mud with a wooden ruler. Felicity, fed-up, watches him fail to evict a particularly large chunk.

FELICITY

Pass them here.

Matt relents. Delicately, Felicity takes them... And smashes the soles together, over and over. Flecks of dirt go flying!

MATT

Watch it!

Smug, Felicity hands them back. They're much better now, but Matt's covered in little brown bits. He attempts to dust himself down, only succeeding in smearing dirt everywhere.

FELICITY

You're making it worse!

She whips out a handkerchief and helps him clean up.

MATT

If you're not careful, Flick, it'll be me breaking up with you next.

Felicity frowns.

MATT (CONT'D)

Sorry. Hannah would fix us again, though.

FELICITY

Indubitably.

She's about to peck his cheek when they're interrupted by a juggernaut - David, who screeches to a halt in front of them, momentum making him flail his arm like a pinwheel.

He topples onto his rear end. Matt sets him straight.

MATT

David, what's the hurry? You're not a ghost. You can't walk through us.

DAVID

I'm sorry, but - have you seen Hannah? I think - I think something dreadful has happened.

FELICITY

Dreadful?

DAVID

I was on my way to walk her to school. I got to her house and suddenly her mother and father came out - pushing her really, it was jolly frightening. They zoomed away in the car, and when I got here, it was right over there.

Felicity jolts upright, as if David's plugged her in at the wall.

FELICITY

What? You're sure?

She scans for the car. Yup, there it is, across the road.

DAVID

Felicity?

FELICITY

Get your shoes back on, Matt. We need to find Sister Abigail.

Matt mouths "What's her problem?" at the hapless David.

FELICITY (CONT'D)

Come on!

She shakes Matt's shoulder, hauling him up the steps.

INT. ST. URSULA'S - OUTSIDE MARY MARTHA'S OFFICE - DAY

Whilst Benedict paces, Sarah rests her hand on Hannah's shoulder, like she's ready to stop a bullet.

SARAH

(So Benedict can't hear)
Sweetie? Is there anything you need to tell me?

Hannah pushes the hand aside.

Footsteps. Hannah steels herself, ready to face her enemy.

HANNAH

Mother Mary, what's going...

But Mary Martha is not alone.

Tail between her legs, SISTER ABIGAIL trudges to the imminent crucifixion. Trying not to make eye contact with the aghast condemned.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

...On.

INT. ST. URSULA'S - MARY MARTHA'S OFFICE - DAY

The fateful tableaux is set - imposing Mary Martha dominates over her desk, Abigail cringing at her right hand. On the receiving side, Sarah and even Benedict cower like naughty schoolchildren. Hannah slouches behind them, delivering Abigail a look so dirty it will never wash out.

MARY MARTHA

I expect that you are all wondering why I have seen it necessary to summon you. Do you know, Hannah?

HANNAH

Did I win the maths award? Get into Cambridge? Or perhaps I've been breathing without your permission.

Mary Martha does not indulge her. She rises to root through a filing cabinet.

MARY MARTHA

Allow me to elaborate. I have been hindered before by Hannah's contrary nature to the virtues of Christianity. To the very ideals we expect at minimum from each pupil.

Her search ends with a thick, dogeared folder: 'HANNAH REILLY' scored on the cover in a testy hand. Her neat, flaxen nails flip it open.

MARY MARTHA (CONT'D)

For instance, her disrespect for staff and the curriculum both in and outside of lessons.

BENEDICT

Father Rogers made her out to be a model pupil when we spoke.

With a sweep of her hand, Mary Martha unveils another page.

MARY MARTHA

On the contrary. Would a model pupil spread appalling gossip about my private tobacco habits?

HANNAH

You mean, stealing from the convent
kitty to fund your fag addiction.

BENEDICT

I beg your pardon?

Another page, right from the start.

MARY MARTHA

And he must have missed every
occasion she has taken the Lord's
name in vain. Ever since her very
first week!

Benedict seethes.

SARAH

Why haven't you raised any of it
with us before?

MARY MARTHA

Because my fatal flaw is believing
every child deserves a chance.
Inevitably, I discovered something
that proved my folly. Our novice,
Sister Abigail, came to me with
knowledge of a most grave degree.

Guilty, Abigail studies the wall to elude Hannah's rage.

MARY MARTHA (CONT'D)

An...

(excrement in her mouth)
Abortion.

BENEDICT

Oh Lord, have mercy on us.

Hannah folds her arms, tight. Protective.

MARY MARTHA

Whereas I was blind, now I see.
Inflicting Hannah on St. Ursula's
was her chance. One the both of you
gave her. But are you so really
arrogant as to think that was your
right? St. Ursula's is a school,
not a factory. We nurture
Catholicism, we do not manufacture
it. Her religious upbringing is
your responsibility.

BENEDICT

We're as Catholic as they come. I
can't claim to know what tommyrot
she may have told you about us -

MARY MARTHA

You lied! You lied about her being Catholic when you enrolled her!

BENEDICT

We are Catholic!

MARY MARTHA

Would Catholics allow - endorse, even - the death of an infant, then conceal it to advantage themselves? The path Hannah walks can only be down to her upbringing. Look at the wickedness you have wrought on her, and on this school. Throwing her sin on our doorstep, how dare you!

SARAH

We just wanted a new start.

MARY MARTHA

Then find it somewhere else. Somewhere you and your daughter won't imperil any more children - ours, or her own! You are not welcome on school grounds any longer!

Humiliated, Benedict jerks Hannah's wrist --

HANNAH

Dad!

BENEDICT

We're leaving!

And they do, Hannah commanded by Benedict's white-knuckled fist. Sarah heels, barely managing a glance at Mary Martha.

Abigail trembles. One finger caresses her rosary.

INT. ST. URSULA'S - STAIRWELL/1ST FLOOR CORRIDOR - DAY

Felicity scrambles up stairs, two at a time, Matt and David in hot pursuit.

MATT

Flick, wait! What's Sister Abigail got to do with anything?

From above them, furious footfalls --

FELICITY

In here!

She tugs the two boys through a door, leaving it slightly ajar. They peek through, spying on the descending Reillys.

DAVID
That's her Dad!

FELICITY (CONT'D)
Shh!

BENEDICT
You couldn't even keep that nasty little slut mouth shut for a single term. You were practically asking to be expelled. What a disgrace.

As the argument fades, the three friends gape at each other.

INT./EXT. ACROSS FROM ST. URSULA'S - BENEDICT'S CAR - DAY
Benedict shoves Hannah inside. *Clunk* - he locks the door.

BENEDICT
Redthiel was your last chance to keep your nose clean. But what was it Mother Mary said? The path you walk is only because of your upbringing.

As he gets in, he glares at Sarah, head bowed.

BENEDICT (CONT'D)
That must mean there's another whore in my car.

HANNAH
No, Dad! Mum didn't teach me to get pregnant, Mum didn't tell me to blab about it, you leave her the hell out of this.

Sarah turns away. A tear smears the foundation that barely masks her wound. Benedict has a horrible moment of clarity, which he uses to start the car.

BENEDICT
Neither of us will move again to shake off the shame of an apostate daughter. So when we get home, you'll start packing. And if you're still there when I'm back from the bank, believe me, young lady, I will find you somewhere to go.

And the car pulls away.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE.

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. ST. URSULA'S - ABIGAIL'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Abigail rolls a stub of chalk between her fingers, much like one of Mary Martha's cigarettes. Shaking her thoughts, she retrieves 'The Merchant of Venice' from her desk, licks her thumb, turns to Act IV, and raises the chalk to the blackboard...

ABIGAIL

"Though justice be thy plea,
consider this: That in the course
of justice none of us should see
salvation. We do pray for mercy.
And that same prayer doth teach us
all to render the deeds of--"

The door crashes open. Abigail's book thuds to the carpet as Felicity, David, and Matt cascade in!

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

Children! Why aren't you in morning prayers?

FELICITY

Sorry, Sister Abigail, but it's an emergency.

ABIGAIL

I'm sure whatever it is may wait until breaktime.

FELICITY

Hannah's been expelled.

Abigail's (attempted) poker face falls.

ABIGAIL

I know.

FELICITY

I thought you wouldn't tell. You promised you wouldn't tell.

MATT

Hold your horses, Flick, wouldn't tell what? What's going on?

FELICITY

Hannah had an abortion. Before she came to St. Ursula's. It's why her parents moved her here. For one last chance at a new start.

MATT

Hannah had an abortion? How did you know?

(Shit the bed...)

She told you when you had your false pregnancy...

DAVID

You had a false pregnancy?!

A glum look of confirmation from Felicity.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Which is why you two nearly...

Ohh...

(to Abigail)

Then you tattled to Mother Mary.

ABIGAIL

I didn't tattle. Mother Mary knew I was hiding something. The last time I kept a secret from her, she suggested I could be transferred.

FELICITY

If I hadn't been so stupid -

ABIGAIL

You weren't stupid, Felicity. You did the right thing coming to us.

MATT

And the right thing got Hannah expelled? How is that fair?

ABIGAIL

Children, please. Careless talk will just risk more of Mother Mary's wrath. It would be better if you went to your first lesson and forgot all about Hannah. It's her bed to lie in, not yours.

Abigail gathers her books and makes to escape. Matt gets after her, David and Felicity bringing up the rear.

INT. ST. URSULA'S - 1ST FLOOR CORRIDOR - CONT'D

Abigail careers for the staffroom, children at her heels.

MATT

What do you expect us to say? "Oh well, can't win 'em all, Maths or Latin next?" Hannah's our friend.

ABIGAIL

Your first lesson's in 5 minutes.

FELICITY
It *is* my fault, Sister.

ABIGAIL
It isn't, Felicity.

DAVID
Did you know her father beats her?

Three pairs of appalled eyes land on David.

DAVID (CONT'D)
I saw the bruises. And the cuts.
They're what he'll do any day of
the week. It isn't a normal day.

Abigail hovers by the staffroom, digesting the gravity of what she's done. The kids plead, wordlessly.

ABIGAIL
It's out of my hands now, children.
Only the governors could overturn
it.

Matt's about to retort, but then -- *a bolt from the blue*.

MATT
Thank you, Sister Abigail.

He steers the other two away.

DAVID
Matt?

MATT
Shh. Downstairs lav.
(loud, for Abigail)
Is it Maths or Latin next?

The trio scarper. Conflicted, suspicious, Abigail watches on.

INT. ST. URSULA'S - GROUND FLOOR BOYS' TOILET - DAY

Matt marches to the sinks, leading the befuddled David and Felicity. A STUDENT exits a stall to wash his hands.

FELICITY
Matt!

STUDENT
Hey, you can't be in here!

MATT
We're protesting inequality of the
sexes. You should support feminism!

STUDENT
What's feminism?

MATT
Oh, push off. The youth of today...

The Student departs, flummoxed. David can't wait any longer.

DAVID
False pregnancies and abortions?
Hannah expelled? What's going on?

MATT
Leave it for later, David. Flick,
remember when Mack yelled at me
earlier? What did he say?

FELICITY
He called you a pig.

MATT
Aside from that. Come on...

FELICITY
Oh! The governors are coming! It's
the first audit of the co-ed trial.

MATT
And when they reach A.O.B...

FELICITY
We plead Hannah's case! That's
absolutely super!

MATT
Even Big Brother Mary couldn't
expel us for peaceful protest.

DAVID
We might have to testify why she's
a good student... and friend...

MATT
Piece of pie, she is a good friend.

DAVID
No! We would have to say *how*. You
with your... issues... Me, with
my... Accepting myself as a homo-

MATT
Seconds from now the bell's gonna
go. We've gotta agree this here.
We're already dodging morning
prayers, if we play truant all day
Mary Martha'll suspect something.

FELICITY

So when school ends, we get Hannah,
we go to the meeting, we win.

(for David)

She would do the same for us.

David gives a stout nod. And the bell rings.

INT. HANNAH'S HOUSE - HANNAH'S ROOM - DAY

Hannah slumps on her bed, no effort made to pack, scrunched up as tight as a hedgehog. The door creaks open, hesitant.

HANNAH

I'm not going, Mum.

Sarah, looking like she's shrunk in the wash, takes this as permission to enter. Hannah doesn't face her.

SARAH

I don't think you have a choice.

HANNAH

You're taking his side?

SARAH

I didn't say that. I'm doing what any mother would.

HANNAH

Tossing out your daughter.

SARAH

Defending my daughter! So that she doesn't have to protect me.

Hannah finally meets her mother's gaze. Sarah perches herself on the foot of the bed, precarious.

SARAH (CONT'D)

That's what you were doing in the car, don't deny it. I can't let you keep standing between me and him. Nothing I've done the past few years has been enough. Going away is the best chance you've got.

HANNAH

The best chance of you never seeing me again, Mum! And for what? The only person you're defending is Dad. Please, Mum. Throw him out. Leave him.

SARAH

I can't. We are one flesh, brought together by God -

HANNAH

Don't start with all that bunk!
Nowhere in the Bible does it read
"Show thy love for thy wife by
beating her 'til she bleeds."

SARAH

He'll be back at five. Please,
Hannah. I can't bear the thought of
what he'll do if you're still here.

All fight drained, Sarah abandons the room. Hannah smacks her head on the pillow.

INT. ST. URSULA'S - MARY MARTHA'S OFFICE - DAY

The end-of-day bell clatters, discordant and distant.

Sagged in her seat, Mary Martha shuffles through fragile, yellowed prints - family photographs. One in particular holds her attention - a frocked little girl, clutching the calloused hand of a gruff man in a metalworker's apron.

They captivate her. She languishes in long-lost time...

An obedient knock at the door. Startled, Mary Martha stuffs the papers into a desk drawer.

MARY MARTHA

Enter!

So enters a timid Abigail. Mary Martha straightens, statuesque, like she's been that way for hours.

ABIGAIL

I'm sorry for disturbing you,
Mother Mary.

MARY MARTHA

I doubt anything you could do would
disturb me, Sister. Be seated.

Abigail sits, but does not settle, her fingers locked on the desk in front of her.

ABIGAIL

Mother Mary, I'd like to transfer
to another school and convent.

Mary Martha's lips wax over.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

Now I've disturbed you.

MARY MARTHA

Perplexed, certainly.

ABIGAIL

I betrayed Hannah's most terrible secret to you, and you ejected her. I want my students to be able to trust me, Mother Mary. I don't think they ever will again, and I could not blame them.

Mary Martha cups Abigail's hands, surprisingly motherly.

MARY MARTHA

You have done right by them all. The students will be thanking you before long, even her 'friends'. And the ones who don't will all be gone in three short years. Perhaps earlier if I can get my way with the wretched governors tonight.

ABIGAIL

They won't feel short.

She pulls away.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

There's something else, too.

MARY MARTHA

I will not change my mind.

ABIGAIL

Mother Mary, no disrespect intended, I don't believe you entirely blame Hannah's parents.

This pushes a button.

MARY MARTHA

You are entitled to your beliefs. But it is not the role of the school to make the child Catholic.

ABIGAIL

You knew she wasn't in September and still gave her another chance.

MARY MARTHA

A misjudgement born from my weakness and your naivety. It is the Lord's lesson to the both of us. In giving chances, we open Pandora's Box.

ABIGAIL

Would the Lord want us to abandon our students? They can't learn without making mistakes.

MARY MARTHA

There is a chasm of difference
between mistake and sin.

ABIGAIL

"The Lord can forgive any sin" is
the first thing I learned as a
Catholic. You're talking like there
are some even He wouldn't. You
can't believe that. Why would you?

Mary Martha jumps to her feet.

MARY MARTHA

My beliefs are not up for debate!

A flash of fear flickers across Abigail's face...

Mary Martha sighs, regretful. She crosses to the window,
where she surveys her kingdom. Below, students chatter and
jostle, briefly emancipated from their clockwork classroom
routine.

MARY MARTHA (CONT'D)

We have a duty, Abigail. To shield
our children from those who would
upset the very foundation of
Catholicism. That is our mission
from God. It is why you were called
here. And why tonight's meeting is
so vital, putting St Ursula's back
to rights. To protect the children.

Abigail: eureka. She leans back. Nods.

ABIGAIL

Yes. You're right. The children
need to be protected.

She ascends from her chair.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

I'll see you tonight, Mother Mary.

MARY MARTHA

You can come to my door at any
time, Abigail. Believe me.

Stoic, Abigail strides out. Not submitting. Not anymore.

EXT. HANNAH'S HOUSE - OUT FRONT - NIGHT

Doink - a stone bounces off Hannah's lit window. Then
another.

Matt makes to throw a third one, but Felicity grabs his
wrist. David rocks on his feet, hands rammed in pockets.

MATT

Nothing else for it.

He goes for the door, but David sticks his arm out.

DAVID

Maybe we should try the back door.
It's got a window.

Matt purses his lips.

INT. HANNAH'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Leftover breakfast mess envelops the listless Sarah, who does nothing but fiddle with cutlery.

Hannah marches down the stairs, on a mission.

HANNAH

I've got a plan.

SARAH

Good. Maybe this will help.

She offers up a wadded envelope.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Your father won't approve at all.
But it's something.

HANNAH

Keep it.

Hannah nabs the telephone receiver.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Dad's gonna be here soon enough. If
we phone the police now, then
they'll get here when he does.

SARAH

You can't be serious.

HANNAH

When they do, we tell them, yeah?
Both of us. All of it. Show them
our scars and bruises. Everything
he did that they can see, and
everything that they can't.

Fuelled by fright, Sarah sprints to cover the dial.

SARAH

You know what he'll do. He'll twist
it all up, tell them we're mad.
They're men, they'll believe him.

(MORE)

SARAH (CONT'D)

Then, what happens when they're gone? Hannah?

HANNAH

It's two against one! That has to count for something!

Sarah snatches up the telephone cradle.

EXT. HANNAH'S HOUSE - BACK GARDEN - NIGHT

As Matt and David squat around the corner, secret-agent style, furtive Felicity peeps into the kitchen.

DAVID

What can you see?

FELICITY

It's Hannah! And her mum. They're fighting over the telephone.

She bites her lip, soundlessly quizzing the others - to knock, or not to knock...?

INT. HANNAH'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONT'D

It's another tug of war.

SARAH

Even if you could stay - you were expelled! Where would you study?

HANNAH

East Redthiel or something? I don't know, I'll commute to Timbuctoo if I have to. But I can't leave here, Mum! I can't leave you with him, and I don't want to leave my -

Hannah catches sight of her crew, huddled outside.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Friends. Oh my god.

It's a coup - she drops the phone and darts for them!

INT. HANNAH'S HOUSE - BACK GARDEN - CONT'D

Hannah flings the door open.

HANNAH

You came.

FELICITY

Of course we did, you silly goose!

MATT

You getting expelled? Wouldn't have missed it for the world.

The gang nearly hugs Hannah to heaven, but David quickly extracts himself.

DAVID

Mrs Reilly, may we talk to you?

SARAH

I'm sorry, David. You all need to go before my husband gets back.

FELICITY

We've an idea to get Hannah back into St Ursula's. But it has to be tonight.

Sarah inspects the clock. Fifteen minutes to five...

INT. HANNAH'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

All seated, the conference begins. Only Matt dives into the central peace offering: a bowl of broken biscuits.

FELICITY

This whole expulsion mess began because I thought I was pregnant. She spilled her secrets to help me. Sister Abigail had to report her.

DAVID

The governors are meeting tonight to evaluate the coeducational trial. But if we could get them to listen, we may have a chance at getting Hannah reinstated.

HANNAH

It could also not work and you lot get into all kinds of shit.

FELICITY

You were the only one who ever really stood up to Mother Mary.

Matt wags a custard cream at Hannah.

MATT

We've learned a lot from you. And I don't just mean about Jesus actually being born in the Spring.

FELICITY

In questioning why we believe, you've made my faith stronger.

SARAH

She did...?

MATT

When we caught Mary Martha smoking, it was Hannah who showed off what a stinking great hypocrite she was. And David, of course...

Matt nudges David's elbow. David shakes his head. But Matt rests his hand on his arm, gentle - *it's alright*.

DAVID

When she first arrived, I was a stuck-up goody-two-shoes. I reported her for being an atheist. But I was having... Feelings. Feelings I thought were so, so bad. One day, there was this... Boy. In the toilet. And some urge came over me, and I let him kiss me.

He pauses, as if waiting for Sarah to voice her disgust. When she doesn't, he flashes an apologetic smile, and continues.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I didn't know what to do except cry. But Hannah found me in the chapel, and she listened, and told me there wasn't a thing wrong with me. It was the world that was wrong. And if they couldn't see that, they should... jolly well go and take a running jump.

Now, he addresses Hannah, pouring love into every word.

DAVID (CONT'D)

You're not a Catholic, Hannah, but you could teach some a thing or two. I nearly had you expelled on her first day. You took my apology, then picked up all my pieces when I was broken. I will never fully repay you. But I can try.

HANNAH

You don't owe me. You're my mates. There's no better reason to help.
(To Sarah)
It's unorthodox, yeah, but it might work! If we could catch a lift.

Sarah teeters on the verge of agreeing. She opens her mouth -

BENEDICT (O.S.)

Were we expecting the Three Musketeers for dinner?

SARAH

Benedict!

Benedict lurks in the doorway, just in from work - but evidently eavesdropping for a while.

BENEDICT

(to Hannah's friends)

Haven't you any homework to do?

MATT

But -

HANNAH

Just go!! Please!

The friends scarper outside.

BENEDICT

You've been reading too much Roald Dahl. Children don't win. Especially little troublemakers and fairies who go against the words of their betters. Neither you nor your infidel friends will drag your mother down to your depths.

Hannah bolts for the telephone, fumbles it, starts dialling -

SARAH

Hannah, don't!

HANNAH

You're scum. You should have been locked up the moment you even thought about hurting Mum.

BENEDICT

Whatever happened to "Let he who is without sin throw the first stone"?

HANNAH

How can you even think you're in the right here?!

BENEDICT

What I think is that I'd told you to be gone by the time I returned.

And he lunges for Hannah's neck.

SARAH

Hannah!!

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO.

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. HANNAH'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Benedict bears down on Hannah, choking her --

SLAM! The back door nearly bursts from its hinges, Matt, David and Felicity pelt in --

SARAH

NO!

But Sarah beats them to the punch!

She gropes for a weapon, a table knife, slashes at Benedict! Caught off guard, he releases Hannah, stumbles back --

The friends yank Hannah, gasping, reeling, to safety --

And Sarah knocks Benedict to the floor, towering over him with the knife. He clenches his hand, more in shock than pain, there's barely any blood.

BENEDICT

Look at what you've done.

SARAH

Get out.

BENEDICT

I'm warning you.

SARAH

You think you can control me, Ben? I'm not one of your stamp-licking lackeys. Never again.

BENEDICT

You're a lunatic!

SARAH

You're going to pack your things and... piss off! Back to whatever ungodly hellhole you came from. I'm taking the kids to school.

HANNAH

(impressed)

Mum?

SARAH

I'm not about to let Mother Mary Morris or whatever her name is walk all over us either. Outside, quick-sticks!

Fearless, Sarah struts past Benedict, kids parading behind.
On their way to save the day.

INT. BENEDICT'S CAR - NIGHT

Sarah drives, hurtling along the road, Hannah at her side.

MARY MARTHA (V.O.)
Cooperation. Coordination.
Coexistence.

Hannah shoots a look over her shoulder. Matt, crammed
between David and Felicity, returns a roguish grin.

INT. ST. URSULA'S - RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE CLASSROOM - NIGHT

MARY MARTHA
God teaches us that we should
yearn for those things -
togetherness, interdependency,
friendship, peace.

Approving nods all round.

MARY MARTHA (CONT'D)
But school is not the right place
for coexistence of the sexes.

EXT. ACROSS FROM ST. URSULA'S - NIGHT

Across the road from the school, the Reillys' car pulls up.

MARY MARTHA (V.O.)
In a child's journey with God,
adolescence is of grave
significance. They learn who they
are. What they're going to be.

The kids and Sarah spring from the car. Sarah locks the door,
and Hannah leads the charge...

INT. ST. URSULA'S - RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Abigail lolls in her seat, arms folded, awaits her moment...

MARY MARTHA
It is imperative there is no
distraction. Yet, in bringing the
sexes together, that is what we
find. Wayward ideals, encouraging
deviation from the Christian path.
Blasphemy.

(MORE)

MARY MARTHA (CONT'D)

And, I am appalled to say, isolated examples of sexual experimentation.

Discontent ripples through the room. Mr Burton scribbles frenzied notes. A SCORNFUL PARENT pipes up -

SCORNFUL PARENT

Come off it! Just cos some of them might have a boyfriend or a girlfriend doesn't mean jack[shit]-

MARY MARTHA

I assure you it does. Vatican II or no Vatican II, fornication is sin. And dare I even mention the legal ramifications? How those children could so easily ruin their lives forever? Debauchery is Satan's favourite infection. But when a child contracts measles, you don't reach for the rod. You quarantine them. Separate them.

Close, muffled, the echo of fast-approaching footsteps...

MARY MARTHA (CONT'D)

Perhaps some of my colleagues or the parents have concerns they'd like to share?

And, in the doorframe, the second coming - Hannah and Sarah!!

HANNAH

One or two concerns, Mother Mary.

Hannah and Sarah cut in, aiming straight for the row of governors, followed by Felicity, David and Matt.

MARY MARTHA

You are trespassing! Leave at once.

FATHER ROGERS

Hannah? Trespassing?

HANNAH

She expelled me today, Father.

The room reacts, soaking in the drama. Mr Burton snaps to Mary Martha.

MR BURTON

You are aware, Mother Mary, that any expulsion must be adjudicated by the board of governors?

MARY MARTHA

Perhaps there was a slight misunderstanding -

HANNAH

About the words "You are no longer welcome on school property?"

SARAH

Don't lie, McConnor. Your nose is big enough already.

MARY MARTHA

Impudent as your heathen daughter!

FATHER ROGERS

Mother Mary. Calm yourself. Why would you want to conceal this?

HANNAH

She let me enrol in a Catholic school, Father. I'm not Catholic.

Disgusted faces, smatters of shock all around.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

But much as I'd love to send Mother Mary packing, it's not why I'm here. You're the only folk who can undo an expulsion. And alright, maybe I was never really expelled in the first place, but the point is - I want to be at St. Ursula's. After everything - a Dad who treats Mum and me like his personal punching bags. Being ripped from the only person my age who ever gave a fig for me. After all that, I didn't think I'd ever have a decent life again. Then, I found this lot.

She waves to her mates.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

This brilliant gang. Real Catholics, who let me be their friend. Even when I skipped morning prayers. They taught me how to forgive.

Hannah beholds Abigail, who blinks back touched tears.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

They made me want to stand up and fight whatever injustices were flung their way.

Finally, Abigail's time to shine -

ABIGAIL

Her grades are excellent. An A+ student who gives thoughtful contributions and insightful analysis in my lessons.

HELPFUL NUN

And mine.

MATT

Chucking her out would do far more harm than good to our educations.

DAVID

Amen!

Yes!

FELICITY

ABIGAIL

Letting Hannah remain isn't a backdoor to the ruin of the school and our faith. It's an exchange of our values, tolerance and friendship. Whether she knows it or not, Hannah is touched by the hand of God.

There's a murmur of agreement amongst the nuns. The parents too - expressions soften in support.

Hell rages in Mary Martha's habit. Burton grimaces.

MR BURTON

Perhaps a break in proceedings?
Whilst we discuss your conduct,
Mother Mary.

Hannah returns to her allies. Breathes a stressed sigh.

INT. ST. URSULA'S - GROUND FLOOR CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Nuns and parents mill about. A few of them risk a squiz at Hannah, by the toilets with her companions.

FELICITY

Do you think it was enough?

HANNAH

If nothing else, we'll never top
pounding Mary Martha like that.

ABIGAIL (O.S.)

Hannah...

Behind Hannah, Abigail, struggling to find the words...

HANNAH

I know, Sister. You're sorry.

ABIGAIL

I shouldn't ask for your forgiveness.

HANNAH

And you don't need to. No matter what happens next, you've got it. Your lessons were always the best.

With a sob, Abigail pulls Hannah into a crushing hug.

From a distance, Mary Martha studies them through narrowed eyes. Scowling.

INT. ST. URSULA'S - RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Everyone has returned to the classroom. The atmosphere has flipped from formal meeting to verdict at a murder trial. Hannah stands away from Sarah, so her mother clings onto David for support.

MR BURTON

Mother Mary. We have come to a conclusion, of sorts, regarding your conduct. But the consequences rely on your answer: Why did you keep Hannah Reilly's case from us? Was it to conceal a non-Catholic?

Mary Martha relishes the moment, if only to shoot daggers at Hannah. *So it's come to this, I hope you're happy...*

MARY MARTHA

No.

Hannah raises an eyebrow. Burton folds his arms.

MARY MARTHA (CONT'D)

There is more to that girl than straight As. I've seen into her. These past months she has showed me exactly what she is - or, rather, what she isn't. No girl who aborts a child will ever herself be a child of God. Her transgressions are too great.

FATHER ROGERS

Mother Mary, it is far outside your remit to decide that!

MARY MARTHA

Why? Because, by virtue of birth, all I can ever be is a nun? Not a bishop? Or a priest?

Guilty as charged, Father Rogers adjusts his dog collar.

MARY MARTHA (CONT'D)

It doesn't matter whether it's my school or the Vatican. It always comes down to men. You men. Trampling like a coach and pair over the one thing we have in common - the word of God. Well, hear this. I may have the body of a weak and feeble woman, I may never reinterpret the glory of the Lord's message on behalf of the world. But none of that changes what I know. Some sins just cannot be forgiven!

HANNAH

So. What was yours?

Mary Martha stammers, cursing the corner she's walked herself into. And lo, Mr Burton waits. The governors wait. The nuns, parents, perhaps even the walls - they all wait.

MR BURTON

Well, Mother Mary?

The tiniest shake of her head. She can't answer.

FATHER ROGERS

Vatican II taught us much about our religion. It gave us the strength to accept we must be more open and tolerant. Forgiveness can be difficult, but, as Catholics, it is who we are. I suggest you think seriously about your attitude towards it.

MR BURTON

Mother Mary Martha McConnor, for your conduct in the matter of Hannah Reilly, you are hereby suspended from your position for a period not less than one month. Until you are permitted to return, Father Rogers will assume your professional duties.

SARAH

And Hannah?

MR BURTON

It's as she said. She was never really expelled, was she?

The room explodes with applause and whistles. Hannah vanishes from sight beneath a sea of congratulations.

But Abigail pursues Mary Martha, breaking for the door.

EXT. ACROSS FROM ST. URSULA'S - NIGHT

The gang return to the car, almost dancing with glee.

HANNAH

Y'know what I can't believe? They know I'm not Catholic and they still let me off the hook.

DAVID

We'll make one of you yet, Hannah.

HANNAH

There's an exception to every rule. And I am pretty exceptional.

Sarah slots her keys into the car door.

FELICITY

You don't have to drive us home, Mrs Reilly.

SARAH

It's no trouble. Can't let you wander home alone so late. I know all about being a worried parent.

FELICITY

Thank you.

David, Matt and Felicity clamber into the back seat. Hannah remains with Sarah for a moment, squeezes her hand.

HANNAH

If he's still there, we go straight to the police box on Barnes Common.

A moment of family solidarity before they join the others.

And though, one by one, the lights wink out at St. Ursula's, Mary Martha's office stays illuminated...

INT. ST. URSULA'S - MARY MARTHA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Abigail finds Mary Martha speedily jamming junk from her desk into a tatty leather holdall. She dumps out the contents of the locked drawer and sweeps it into the bag in a single motion - so many old photos...

ABIGAIL

Mother Mary.

MARY MARTHA

My dear Abigail, perhaps I could still arrange that transfer.

She snaps shut the clasp and flounces out.

Abigail, speechless, freezes to the spot. Then spies something discarded on the desk.

A newspaper.

She recces the room, ensures she's alone. Reaches for a framed picture of Jesus on a shelf and tips it face-down.

ABIGAIL

Sorry.

Like the Artful Dodger's similarly unscrupulous sister, she slips the newspaper into her tunic.

EXT. HANNAH'S HOUSE - OUT FRONT - NIGHT

The car pulls up, Hannah and Sarah the only occupants. They've timed it well - Benedict emerges, hastily wrapped in scarf, hat, and duffel, wrangling a pair of suitcases.

He clocks them as they disembark the car.

HANNAH

We won.

BENEDICT

Well well.

(As if anyone cares)

Leonard from work is putting me up.

SARAH

That's kind of him.

BENEDICT

He's Catholic.

HANNAH

You too, supposedly.

Sarah takes Hannah by the shoulders, steers her inside.

BENEDICT

You'll be crawling back, in time.

Both of you. On your knees!

And Sarah shuts the door on him.

INT. HANNAH'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONT'D

Sarah leans against the door. Breathes out.

SARAH

I'm going to need a job.

The tears fall, years and years worth. With their backs to the door, Hannah comforts her.

HANNAH

Mum! Stop. Please. You were amazing in there! "Your nose is big enough already" - ha! Now I know where I get it from.

SARAH

I let you down. I've let you down for the past... I don't know how long. Forever, I should think.

HANNAH

We're free! Just the two of us now! The Reilly Women against the world. Planet Earth won't know what hit it. That's got to be worth celebrating.

Sarah snuffles, then, after a few deep breaths, calms.

SARAH

Fish and chips?

They double over, guffawing.

As Hannah monologues, dissolve between a SERIES OF SHOTS:

HANNAH (V.O.)

Faith is an odd thing. I used to think it was just believing without any real evidence. But in that case - how come I've got faith in people? I can't measure my trust in my mates. I can't put a number on how much I love my mum. That's cos - as they taught me - the proof *is* all there. It's in their smiles as they laugh at your jokes. In their cares and their worries for you. Truth is, I had it all wrong. Faith isn't about what you don't see. It's about what you do.

A) Snow coats West Redtheil. Hannah and David, clad in thick coat, mittens and wellies, traverse the route to school.

B) They meet Felicity and Matt in the rec ground, all smiles and snowballs..

C) The friends listen (or are subjected) to a sermon.

D) In Maths, Hannah's hand races skyward. She scribbles the answer to an equation on the board.

E) The four friends chortle together at the lunch table.

F) Mack stalks Matt as slush trails along the corridor.

G) Sarah, dressed for work, shakes her new SUPERVISOR's hand. Nervous, determined, she takes her place in the typing pool.

H) Benedict, at the bank, churns out forms in pen. The nib snaps and ink soaks his hand and desk.

I) In the chapel, Father Rogers glugs heartily from a flask.

J) Mary Martha, in sombre civilian clothing, boards a train.

K) Fidgeting in a compartment, she peers into the far away mist, as the carriage crosses the Forth Bridge...

L) The four friends depart the school grounds together.

M) Felicity and Matt split from the group, waving goodbye.

N) David says farewell at Hannah's house, and Hannah basks in the sight of her front door. End of another brilliant day.

INT. CONVENT - SISTER ABIGAIL'S QUARTERS - DAY

Abigail scrutinises the newspaper. It troubles her deeply.

It's a local Scottish Highlands paper. Well-thumbed. Torn. But the cover is still clear: a photograph of the burnt remains of a horribly familiar house. The headline blares:

"PARENTS PERISH IN MCCONNOR WORKSHOP BLAZE"

EXT. REMOTE SCOTTISH VILLAGE - DAY

Mary Martha gazes at the remnants - identical to the paper, and the very same from her nightmare. A man approaches - could it be...? After all this time?

LARGE MAN

Poor McConnors. Sweetest family.
They say it were the lassie what
did it, though. Know 'em, did you?

Mary Martha regards him, ashen. He lurches back. Sickened.

LARGE MAN (CONT'D)

Oh Christ.

Overcome, dwarfed by the ruins of her unforgotten sins,
Mother Mary Martha McConnor clasps her hands together.

MARY MARTHA

God forgive me. Please, God.
Forgive me.

But can He?

END OF SERIES 1.