

IT WAS WRITTEN

By

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FADE IN:

A BULB OF GARLIC dangles from a rusty nail.

PULL BACK:

The garlic hangs on a wall beside a doorframe.

The sound of approaching FOOTSTEPS.

They clomp across an unseen wooden front porch, then stop as SOMEBODY pulls open the door.

More footsteps, then--the garlic trembles as the door SLAMS shut.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A MAN stumps into the dimly lit house.

In the corner, a thick CRT television silently plays the static-laced movie DEAD MAN. We're in the 1990s.

The man removes his tweed cap, revealing a receding hairline and a joyless expression.

TOMORR, mid-thirties.

He wears a long coat over his buttoned shirt. Clean denim. Yesterday's stubble punctuated with the occasional gray hair. A man you trust to change a tire or go to war.

Tomorr hangs his hat on a spindly rack and turns toward the--

DINING ROOM

--where his family waits around the dining room table, watching him silently.

NONA, fifties.

VIOLA, late twenties.

A BABY BOY, no more than a year old, in Viola's lap.

They stare at him with expectant, frightened eyes.

VIOLA
U bë me nder?

Odds are you don't understand what she says, but her tone is equal parts frightened and eager.

Tomorr's short on words. He stands in silence, unsure of the right answer.

Viola passes the Baby to Nona, then rises from the table. She approaches Tomorr, who doesn't meet her gaze until she stands directly in front of him.

VIOLA (CONT'D)
(repeats)
U bë me nder?

TOMORR
Nuk mbaj mend--

She grabs him by his long coat. This is important.

VIOLA
Me pergjigju--

She stops talking when she feels something on his coat flaps. She looks down at her hands.

Blood.

Viola gasps. Looks up at Tomorr.

As he approaches the dining room table, he removes his coat and drapes it over the back of a chair, revealing--

His shirt and hands covered in blood.

Nona clutches the Baby tightly in her lap.

The Baby stares, uncomprehending, at the blood-soaked man who takes a seat across the table and gazes deep into the child's dark eyes.

NONA
Kemi njezet e kater orë.

FADE TO BLACK...

...AND FADE IN:

INT. COMMUNITY COLLEGE - COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - DAY (PRESENT)

TOMMY (25) slouches in his chair, headphones curl around his neck and his sneakers rest atop a skateboard.

He gazes at the inspirational posters decorating the office wall. One of them reads:

"The past cannot be changed."

The future is yet in your power."

He snorts and turns his attention to his phone as rocks the skateboard back and forth, catching the attention of--

The GUIDANCE COUNSELOR (40s) who sits across the desk from him. She looks up from her computer screen.

COUNSELOR

Okay. So you've got sixty-eight credits here... Yep, very good. Your general ed is fulfilled.

Tommy looks up and flashes a self-deprecating grin.

TOMMY

Only took five years.

COUNSELOR

Although... I'm looking at your foreign language requirements here.

TOMMY

I knocked that out in AP Spanish.

COUNSELOR

In high school. That was eight years ago.

TOMMY

Yeah, I took a gap year.

Counselor raises an eyebrow.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

And then I took two more. Why does that matter?

The Counselor twists her mouth.

INT. TOMMY'S PARENT'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Wall-to-wall bookshelves. A step ladder.

Tommy scans the book spines. He comes across DON QUIXOTE--a Spanish edition.

He opens it and sweeps through the Spanish text. He tries to mouth a few words. But can't.

He keeps browsing, running his finger along the spines--

His hand lands on a thick old paperback: 501 SPANISH VERBS.

He pulls the book down and turns to leave the room, but--

Something catches his eye. A BLOOD RED BOOK tucked deep into the shelf. Tommy plucks it out.

He reads the book's cover (but we don't) then flips it open. As soon as he reads a few words, his eyebrows narrow.

INT. TOMMY'S PARENT'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Tommy sits across the dinner table from his parents, DEAN and SADIE. Fifties. Master's degrees. NPR.

Dean and Sadie work through plates of salad, veggies, and chicken, Tommy pours himself a glass of red wine.

A very full glass. Dean eyes it with silent disapproval.

DEAN

So what'd the counselor say?

As Tommy pitchforks his chicken:

TOMMY

Apparently my AP credits expired.

DEAN

Credits don't "expire."

TOMMY

They won't transfer to any of the state schools in the city. Trust me, I was going back and forth on this with the counselor.

DEAN

Just another reason to go private.

Dean misses Tommy's eye roll.

DEAN (CONT'D)

You should talk to Brett. Brett Dooley? The admissions guy at Syracuse--

TOMMY

I don't want to go upstate.

Tommy slaps his fork against the table. Taking a stand.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

I'm not even sure I want to go back to school at all.

DEAN
That's not an option.

Before Tommy can respond, Sadie cuts in:

SADIE
Syracuse has a great anthropology
program.

As Dean delicately wipes his mouth with his napkin:

DEAN
And if you change your mind about
anthropology, they're really known
for business, marketing--

TOMMY
(interrupts)
How come you guys never talk about
my real parents?

Record scratch moment. Dean and Sadie set down their forks.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
You've never even told me my real
last name.

DEAN
You never asked.

SADIE
We wanted you to bring it up on
your own terms. Do you want to--

Tommy brings up the red book from his lap and lets it fall on
the table beside the half polished glass of wine.

Dust mists up from the old book jacket and his knife rattles
against his plate.

This is the first look we get a look at the mysterious book.
The title in gold print reads:

KANUNI
I
LEKE DUKAGJINT

Dean and Sadie share a look. They know all about it.

Tommy opens the hardcover to reveal a handwritten note in a
foreign language on the first page.

Tommy plants his finger on the name of the addressee at the
top of the note: "Tomorr"

TOMMY

Tomorr is my real dad. Isn't he?

Dean frowns. Ouch.

EXT. TOMMY'S PARENTS HOUSE - NIGHT

A craftsman style home in a fourth-tax bracket neighborhood.

A new BMW X5 and a 1990s red two-door Chevy Cavalier occupy the driveway.

The windows of Tommy's parents' house are dark--except for the glow emanating from the basement windows.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

On his bed, Tommy types into his laptop.

ON SCREEN, he pulls up Google then looks down at the Kanun which lays open on his bed.

He searches the full title of the book--"Kanuni I Leke Dukagjinit"--and up pops a list of results:

"The Kanun or Doke is a set of traditional Albanian laws..."

"Lekë III Dukagjini (1410-1481) was a 15th-century Albanian nobleman..."

TOMMY

Albania...

Tommy zooms in on a map of Albania, the small Balkan country north of Greece.

SADIE (O.S.)

Tommy?

Startled, Tommy looks towards the stairs.

SADIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I renewed your prescription. Can I come down?

TOMMY

Just leave them at the top of the stairs.