

THE CATACOMB

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FADE IN:

EXT. EXCAVATION SITE - DAY

SUPER: SICILY REGION, ITALY, TEN YEARS AGO.

A lizard moves through the sand, restless, sniffing around. It stops next to a dead cockroach and quickly swallows it...

A sharp steel hand-pick flashes into frame and falls. A faint SQUEAK is heard.

Seated on a rock in an excavation site located in a rocky valley, a bald, bearded man with an eye patch looks at the reptile impaled on his hand-pick while smoking a cigar. It's FRANCESCO, 45.

**Italian.*

FRANCESCO

*Good news! We'll have carpaccio
for dinner!*

Francesco removes the dead lizard from the hand-pick and drops it to the ground.

A few yards away, a strong, tall man, ANGELO, 35, works in the trench with a hand-pick and a shovel. Francesco walks towards him.

FRANCESCO

*This is nonsense, Angelo. We're
wasting our time.*

Angelo doesn't answer. Francesco clicks his tongue.

FRANCESCO

*Did you really believe we'd find
archaeological remains in this
damn desert?*

Angelo keeps working in silence.

FRANCESCO

*C'mon, the rumors were false, you
have to accept it! It'd be easier
to find a fucking oilfield here!*

Francesco hears no response. Then he tosses his cigar to the ground, tramples on it and leaves. Angelo wipes the sweat from his face with a cloth and keeps working hard.

EXT. EXCAVATION SITE - NIGHT

Seated at the top of the site, Angelo drinks from a metal water bottle. After standing up, he accidentally kicks it and the bottle rolls down into the trench...

A CLANK is heard.

Intrigued, Angelo peers down into the site. Then he goes back down into it...

After picking up the metal bottle, he looks around with curiosity. Then something catches his attention...

A strange stone tablet partly buried in the sand. There's a painting on its visible part.

Without wasting a second, Angelo kneels down next to the tablet and uses a brush to remove the earth from it.

There's a complete old painting on the twenty square feet stone tablet. It depicts the primitive Christian figure of the Good Shepherd.

Angelo smiles incredulously...

Suddenly, the ground shakes under his feet and the tablet breaks in half. Angelo is swallowed up by the earth.

INT. GROTTA - NIGHT

Angelo is lying on the ground, unconscious, a trickle of blood running down his forehead. A few moments later, he slowly opens his eyes and stands up, staggering.

Still dizzy, he unclips a flashlight from his belt, turns it on and starts walking through a dark, narrow grotto.

A few yards ahead, something on a wall catches his eye...

It's an old painting depicting the biblical story "Daniel in the lions' den". Strangely, Daniel is smiling while the beasts threaten to devour him.

A small part of the painting chips away and a trickle of thick gold-colored liquid starts oozing through a crack.

Angelo, intrigued, takes a sample of the liquid with his finger and smells it. He wrinkles up his face in disgust.

A faint METALLIC SCREECHING NOISE coming from the end of the grotto is heard. Angelo turns towards the noise...

There's nobody.

Angelo has the spine-chilling sensation of being watched by the old painting and gazes frozen stiff at Daniel...

The metallic screeching noise is heard again, louder and longer than before.

Angelo turns again and takes some steps towards there...

ANGELO
Francesco? Is that you?

Nobody answers.

ANGELO
Francesco?

No response. Angelo takes another step forward.

ANGELO
Hello?

An upside down HANGING BODY drops down just in front of him..

It's Francesco, totally disemboweled.

Soaked in blood, Angelo jumps back while suppressing his shout. His foot steps on a loose stone tile, which sinks on one side..

A couple of big stone blocks shift away from the walls, trapping him by his feet. Angelo looks down in shock.

ANGELO
What...?!

The screeching noise is heard again. Angelo turns again towards the end of the tunnel..

A DARK SHADOW is coming through the grotto while scraping something along the wall; sparks fly around.

Angelo nervously crouches down and tries to break free from the trap, but the stones don't move an inch.

Filled with panic, Angelo pushes the stone blocks with all his might but there's no way to move them.

The shadow keeps approaching..

Angelo starts to unlace his boots. After a few moments, he manages to free his feet and jumps out of the trap. Then he turns again towards the dark end of the gallery..

No shadows, no metallic screeching noises.

Angelo lets out a brief sigh and turns around to head back towards the beginning of the grotto..

A thick, long steel L-shaped hook strapped to a muscular bare arm is stuck in his face.

Blood spatters the smiling figure of Daniel.

FADE TO:

EXT. SECONDARY ROAD - DAY

SUPER: SICILY REGION, ITALY. PRESENT DAY

It's a sunny day. A minibus travels along a sandy road through a mountainous landscape.

INT. MINIBUS - BACK SEATS - MOVING - DAY

A woman's mouth with red lipstick kisses a flaming skull tattoo.

The mouth belongs to TINA, 18, an attractive and heavily made-up blonde girl with shifty eyes.

The tattoo is drawn on the neck of CHUCK, 18, a strong-looking man with a short haircut and flat nose wearing a football jersey. He suffers from a nervous tic in the upper lip.

Tina and Chuck, his gaze lost in the rocky landscape, occupy the back seats of the bus.

CHUCK

Enjoy the lovely Sicily... This
shit is like the Mojave Desert.

TINA

How long before we get there? I'm
bored, tired, and my ass is sore
as hell.

CHUCK

Yeah, me too... We need some fun.

Chuck shifts his gaze to DEREK, 18, a thin, african-american classmate wearing a short sleeve shirt and glasses sitting in front of him.

CHUCK

Derek?

Derek turns his head to look at him.

CHUCK

Hey, little nerd, how much money
would you pay to have sex with a
Christian skeleton? Tell me, five
hundred dollars? A thousand?

Derek glances at him with indifference and turns around.

CHUCK

C'mon! Don't get angry, guy! I
support you!

(MORE)

CHUCK (cont'd)
Many sexologists recommend losing
virginity with experienced
people!

Tina giggles. Derek puts some headphones on and turns on
some music.

CHUCK
Yeah, it's time to throw away all
your old porn magazines and go a
step further! What do you think?

Derek doesn't answer and gives him a finger.

CHUCK
(annoyed)
Damn freak...

Chuck reaches out to slap Derek on the back of the head,
but a strong hand with gold rings firmly grips his arm.

The hand belongs to ANDREA, 18, a burly, dark-haired
Italian-American student wearing a gold chain around his
neck. Chuck stands up and faces him.

CHUCK
Wow! Mister Andrea Petrucci! The
spaghetti-slurping hero is here!

ANDREA
Shut up, jerk.

CHUCK
Look at him, the golden boy feels
stronger in his pathetic village...

Chuck draws his face closer to Andrea.

CHUCK
You're gonna be shitting gold for
weeks after I make you swallow
all your trinkets.

ANDREA
Die trying, asshole.

They glare at each other. Then somebody intervenes and
separates them.

The peacemaker is MR.COLEMAN, 50, a tall, grey-haired and
bearded man wearing metal-rimmed glasses.

MR.COLEMAN
Nobody's gonna die here, at least
as long as I'm responsible for
all of you. And now sit down,
gentlemen.