

COUNTDOWN TO CLIMAX

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INT. CHURCH BASEMENT - NIGHT

We travel through a small hallway. Parishioners are huddled together, hugging, praying, crying. The hallway opens into a wider square room with a door off to one side. On the walls there is a clock, weird posters and signs, with sayings like "WE ARE THE ASCENDENTS" and "IN THE SHADOWS OF BELIEF, WE FIND OUR TRUE LIGHT." There are also portraits of a bald 40-year old man in a toga with an unsettling smile.

Five young adults (early 20's) are sitting in a circle. In the middle is another portrait of the man with candles surrounding it. One of the five, LEAH, in a modest dress and cardigan, is kneeling and praying intently while the others talk. Focus in on ZION, long, shaggy hair, flip-flops and a surfer tee.

ZION

I mean, I was totally excited to go to Africa on that mission pilgrimage, but I guess this is how the Creator intended.

ISAAK, athletic, buzz-cut, joins in.

ISAAK

I was going home to Chicago to visit my parents next week. I'm gonna miss them.

RUTH, short hair and glasses, perks up.

RUTH

(nervous)

How confident are we that Pastor Abram is right? How can life just... stop?

ZION

Pastor Abram has been right about every prophecy so far. Remember COVID?

Leah stops praying for a moment and looks over.

LEAH

It's disrespectful to question Pastor Abram, Ruth. With that attitude, you'll be in Hell within the next hour.

Ruth raises an eyebrow and looks over at ADA, curly long hair with an eyebrow slit. Ada shrugs back.

ADA

All I know is that the Ascendants saved me. I'm not turning my back on them now.

ZION

Hey let's just relax and reflect on our lives. Use this time wisely. Half hour left.

They all look at the clock on the wall. It reads 11:30.

Isaak's attitude shifts. He stares at the ground. Ada notices.

ADA

Isaak, are you good?

ISAAK

(guilty)

Have you guys done everything the Ascendents have told us to do?

LEAH

(accusatory)

Yeah. What do you mean Isaak??

Zion shushes Leah.

ZION

Hey, it's okay. If you have anything you want to get off your chest, now's the time, brother. We're here for you.

Isaak looks around the group. Ada smiles and nods at him encouragingly.

ISAAK

Ok fine...

Isaak turns over the picture of Pastor Abram so he isn't watching.

ISAAK (CONT'D)

I'm vaccinated.

Leah scoffs and scoots a couple inches away from Isaak, Zion's eye widen.

ISAAK (CONT'D)

But only because my dog is immuno compromised! Diabetes.

The group looks around at each other disappointed.

ZION
I'm sure if you pray really hard
within this next hour--

LEAH
Nope, it's tainted his blood stream
by now, he's impure.

Leah turns the portrait of Pastor Abram rightside up again.

ADA
Leah, stop. Isaak, we've all done
things we're not proud of, but the
Divine is the only one who can
judge us.

Isaak looks down, ashamed. Ruth looks around, nervously.

RUTH
Guys... I've had sex...

The group gasps in astonishment, utterly taken aback.
Silence.

RUTH (CONT'D)
I just couldn't hold it in anymore.
I can't be the only one!

A beat.

ADA
I've done it too, but I'm a born
again Virgin. Paster saved me.

ZION
I actually do it quite frequently.
I just do a 24 hour fast after so
it cancels it out.

Leah stares, stunned.

LEAH
You Jezebels!

ZION
SHUSH Leah, we don't want him to
hear us.

Zion flips the portrait down again.

ADA

Leah, there's no way you haven't done it. We all know you've been with Noah since like the seventh grade.

LEAH

(shocked)

I would NEVER!

Leah turns the portrait right side up again. Ruth grits her teeth, nervously.

RUTH

I'm sorry... Leah's asked me to help her soak!

LEAH

RUTH!!!

RUTH

I'M SORRY! Lying's a sin!!

LEAH

Okay, well. It's different, and you all know it.

The group shakes their heads doubtfully.

RUTH

So we've all done it?

The group murmurs in agreement. Isaak sits still.

ZION

Wait, Isaak..?

ISAAK

I guess the vaccination thing wasn't a big deal after all.

Ruth, Zion and Ada jump up in astonishment.

ADA

You really haven't had sex?

ZION

You can't die a virgin!!

ISAAK

I'm pretty sure we're ALL supposed to be dying virgins right now!

ZION

Honestly brother, it's an eye opening experience.

(MORE)

ZION (CONT'D)

I feel closer to The Creator every time I release.

RUTH

There's an hour left until Judgment Day. You HAVE to feel what it's like, Isaak.

Ada nods. Isaak shrugs his shoulders, unsure.

ISAAK

I couldn't-- like, I have to stay in the Church tonight or I won't be accepted into the Kingdom.

ZION

You could do it right here! One of the girls could guide you.

The girls are taken aback. A beat.

ADA

Well, if one of us is going to do it, you're in the lineup too, Zion.

ZION

What?! Why me??

ADA

I heard that anal's less sinful.

Zion shushes and gestures toward the portrait of Pastor Abram.

RUTH

(quieter)

Yeah, but I feel like the gay aspect cancels it out.

ADA

It's all the same feeling for Isaak. Let's have a vote.

LEAH

This is ridiculous! I'm not participating in this nonsense--

RUTH

Who votes Leah?

Everyone - but Isaak - raises their hand.

LEAH

I will NOT be having sex, but if someone wants to help us soak I might consider--

RUTH

No, Leah! This will be a good experience for the both of you. Like you said, you've never ACTUALLY done it.

Leah rolls her eyes.

LEAH

Ok, fine. I guess you're right, I have actually done it... okay! I just don't feel comfortable to--

ADA

I'll do it.

The group turns to look at Ada.

ISSAK

I couldn't ask that of you, Ada. You're a born again virgin.

ADA

It's okay Isaak. You've been such a good guide, helping me ever since I joined the Ascendants. I know you'd do the same for me.

Leah looks at Ada, gratefully. Ada smiles back. Zion sighs in relief.

ISAAK

Thank you, sister.

RUTH

Okay, you have fifteen minutes. Go in the closet there. We'll make sure none of the others come in.

Zion leans over to Isaak and whispers in his ear.

ZION

(whispers)

Hard and deep brother, you got this.

Ada and Isaak stand up. They awkwardly head to the closet. As Ada opens the door, Isaak turns back around.

Zion gives him a thumbs up. Ruth nods in support. Leah rolls her eyes and goes back to praying.

The door shuts. The clock ticks down.

LEAH
I can't believe this is it. I just wanted to say, I do really love you guys.

RUTH
Right.

ZION
Time flies.

Leah goes in for a hug. Ruth moves before it lands. They look around the room, awkwardly.

ZION (CONT'D)
So should we do one last group prayer?

Zion puts holds his hands out for the girls to grab. They sit in a circle. The clock is minutes away from Midnight.

ZION (CONT'D)
In the Divine we trust. Let Pastor Abram guide us through this difficult hour-

Ruth starts looking anxious.

RUTH
GUYS -- I don't want to die!!

LEAH
Pull yourself together, this is how it's written!

ZION
We have to stick together right now, get through this last prayer and we'll be reunited with the Creator--

They all look at the clock. It hits midnight. All three of them shut their eyes tight and brace themselves for...

Nothing happens. They sit for a few beats, then Ruth peeks an eye open.

Leah starts whispering prayers to herself.

RUTH
Ha! We're alive!!!!

Zion opens his eyes, starts feeling all over his body.

ZION
What?! This shouldn't be possible!
The - the prophecy!

LEAH
(small)
Do you think it's because... we're
not virgins? We've been left behind
because of our promiscuity?

RUTH
(sarcastic)
Yeah, you're right, Leah. That must
be it!

ZION
There must've been some sort of
mistake. Pastor Abram must've...
Gotten the date wrong!

A beat.

RUTH
Crap. What about...

Motions toward the closet.

RUTH (CONT'D)
(whispers)
Should we tell them?

ZION
He's probably almost there by now.
Let's just let them be.

LEAH
Let's leave before someone comes in
to check on us.

Ruth and Zion nod. They slowly and quietly leave the room,
shutting the door behind them. Close in on the abandoned
portrait of Pastor Abraham.

It is still and silent. Until...

Several grunts, bangs, moans, and giggles are heard from the
closet.

FADE OUT:

