

Sanctified

Written by

Nora Anderson

When a teenage pizza driver crashes into a stray animal on a remote delivery, he's taken in by a devout puppeteer.

Nanderson@chapman.edu
(818)-438-4793

INT. LENNY'S BASEMENT - NIGHT

A narrow staircase GROANS. Dim light spills from a single swaying bulb.

LENNY (late 50s), gentle voice, neatly dressed, moves with ritual precision. JORDAN (17), tired and underdressed for the cold, follows nervously.

Between them, a mangled wolf wrapped in a pizza delivery bag.

It's not a typical basement: shelves of BIBLES, jars of glue, wooden crosses nailed into beams, and a workbench cluttered with half-made puppets.

JORDAN

You sure this is okay? Shouldn't we... call someone?

LENNY

Don't worry. I'm a veterinarian. Been doing this sort of thing all my life.

He says it calmly, as if it's true. Jordan glances around the basement.

JORDAN

You work outta your basement?

LENNY

Small town. No one's got offices anymore.

He gestures toward the table. Jordan helps hoist the wolf onto it.

LENNY (CONT'D)

There, there, you poor thing.

He strokes the animal's fur with eerie tenderness.

JORDAN

I didn't even see it. It just—

LENNY

You were meant to find it.

JORDAN

What do you mean by that?

LENNY

Sometimes, the Lord sends us
suffering so that we can bring
healing.

Jordan looks uncertain. He pulls out his phone – no signal.

JORDAN

Great. Tow truck's an hour out.
Guess I'm stuck here anyway.

LENNY

You can wait down here if you like.
It's cold out.

Jordan hesitates, then nods.

JORDAN

Yeah. Sure. Thanks, man.

INT. BASEMENT - MINUTES LATER

Lenny pulls on rubber gloves. The table CREAKS as he lays out
scissors, thread, and a pot of glue.

JORDAN

You... gonna stitch it up?

LENNY

I'll make it whole again.

Jordan wanders. On a nearby wall: dozens of puppets – animal,
human, and disturbingly lifelike.

JORDAN

You make these, too?

LENNY

Since I was a boy, my father did
puppet shows. Every night, a new
Bible story. Jonah and the whale,
Samson and Delilah. He believed
stories keep the soul clean.

JORDAN

My dad just drank and fell asleep
to Wheel of Fortune.

Lenny chuckles softly.

LENNY

Do you go to church?

JORDAN

Nah. Not really my thing.

Lenny's smile freezes.

LENNY

That's a shame. Everyone needs a shepherd.

Jordan shifts, uncomfortable.

LENNY (CONT'D)

You know, when my mother passed, my father said it was God's will. She died in a car accident – quick, unexpected. We went to church every day after that. He told me the Lord takes what He needs to remind us we're still alive. I didn't understand that back then.

(beat)

But now? I do. The wolf, the road, you showing up here tonight... they don't just happen. They're placed.

JORDAN

Yeah... I'm glad you found something to help you through that.

LENNY

It doesn't just help. It saves.

Jordan looks toward the stairs, debating whether to leave.

INT. BASEMENT - LATER

Lenny HUMS an old hymn while mixing something thick and sticky in a bowl.

JORDAN

So... how long's this gonna take?

LENNY

God's work can't be rushed.

He smiles, eyes glassy.

LENNY (CONT'D)

You remind me of myself before I found Him. All that noise in your head. All that darkness.

JORDAN
(laughs, uneasy)
Thanks, man.

LENNY
Do you want to hear how I was
saved?

JORDAN
Uh...

LENNY
I used to drink. Hurt people I
loved. But then He spoke to me.
Told me I could make new things,
pure things, from what was broken.

He gestures to the workbench.

The wolf lies still, half-covered by burlap and glue.

JORDAN
You sure that thing's... dead?

LENNY
Everything dies. But not everything
stays that way.

INT. BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Lenny draws back a small curtain to reveal a puppet theater.
He flicks on a lamp.

He picks up a shepherd puppet, its face cracked and faded.

LENNY
Let me show you something.
(as Shepherd)
The lamb strayed from the flock,
lost in the dark. The shepherd
found him and stitched him new. And
the lamb never left again.

JORDAN
That's... pretty hardcore Sunday
school.

LENNY
It's truth. The lamb was stubborn.
Didn't believe. So the shepherd
tied him closed.

Jordan's smile fades.

JORDAN
You know, I really gotta—

LENNY
Stay.

The word lands hard.

INT. BASEMENT - 30 MINUTES LATER

Jordan edges toward the stairs.

The wolf's body is gone. In its place — a half-finished puppet, rough stitching, tufts of fur, one real eye glinting beneath fabric.

JORDAN
What the hell...

LENNY
It's beautiful, isn't it? A creature reborn.

JORDAN
You're seriously messed up, man.

LENNY
No. I'm faithful.

He moves closer, quietly threading the string through his fingers.

LENNY (CONT'D)
You said you don't believe. But maybe you were sent here to learn.

Jordan steps back — bumping into a hanging string that brushes his shoulder.

JORDAN
Alright, I'm gonna head out—

LENNY
Wait.

Jordan moves for the stairs — catches his sleeve on a dangling STRING.

JORDAN
Ow— what the—

Lenny reaches out, gently unwinding it from Jordan's arm, smiling.

LENNY
Careful now. You'll tangle
yourself.

Jordan forces a laugh and grabs his jacket.

A sudden CREAK.

Jordan looks back – the half-finished puppet shifts slightly
on the table.

JORDAN
Did... did that move?

Lenny doesn't answer. His hands work below the frame, unseen.

Jordan backs toward the steps.

JORDAN (CONT'D)
Hey, uh, I'll wait outside for the
truck–

LENNY
It's too cold out there.

JORDAN
I'll take my chances.

Jordan turns and climbs the first step–

A thin STRING falls into view, brushing against his wrist.

He freezes.

The light flickers.

SQUEAK. CREAK.

Jordan turns–Lenny's shadow moves, slow and deliberate.

LENNY
You'll see.

The bulb BUZZES – flickers – dies.

Darkness. Only breathing.

INT. BASEMENT - LATER

Soft humming. Lenny works at the table, wiping glue from his
fingers.

LENNY

You're safe now. You're saved.

He tugs a string.

A faint, broken VOICE struggles out from the shadows – almost human.

JORDAN (O.S.)

...please.

CREAK.

The sound of a puppet limb moving.

Through the small basement window, the flash of a TOW TRUCK'S REVERSE LIGHTS. The BEEPING echoes faintly.

FADE OUT.