

THE SIN

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FADE IN:

INT. ART MUSEUM - DAY

A softly-lit gallery -- art from all over the world--
Tatagatha statues from Tibit. Moche works from Peru. A
few PEOPLE mill about.

CLETUS HORN, 20s-- handsome, dignified, bon vivant,
scoundrel, lover of art, women, in no particular order.

He peruses artwork, not really interested in them.

Freezes, spots a curator, SYBIL, very attractive, sexy
pencil skirt with a silk blouse, ample cleavage showing.
Unforgettable..

She's showing a painting to BETTY and RALPH TUCKER, a
salt-of-the-earth elderly couple.

He's staring at her, a sudden, quiet guilty pleasure...
she's stunning, legs up to there... Those "fuckme" pumps.

Their eyes meet. It's a surprise to him. A sly smile is
exchanged. Who blinks first. A beat.

He finally turns his gaze up at one of the painting.

INT. ART MUSEUM - GALLERY HALL - DAY

A quiet, echoing hall of 19th-century European art.

A soft click of heels echoes on the marble.

Then notices Sybil whose eyes are focused on the same
work of art...

SYBIL
First time here?

CLETUS
Mm-hm...you?

SYBIL
I work here.

CLETUS HORN
Work, really? Are you an artist?

SYBIL
In my spare time. Actually I'm the
curator.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLETUS HORN

Oh.

SYBIL

Are you interested or are you just looking?

SILENCE for another second. Sybil starts to move off as Cletus stops her for a question...

CLETUS HORN

Do you know, is this part of the collection, or is it...

SYBIL

No, it's just a single piece, nice, isn't it?

Cletus stares at the gold cross around her neck, it moves up and down with her breathing.

CLETUS HORN

Just lovely...

SYBIL

The password is, stop staring at my tits.

CLETUS HORN

No, the cross. Sorry.

She flashes a playful mock-stern frown, then an amused smile, before looking away. Truth is, she's flattered.

CLETUS HORN

You're catholic?

SYBIL

No. Atheist.

This stuns him --

Sybil heads towards a part of the gallery that's dimly lit, situated at the end of a forbidding-looking corridor.

Sybil stops, briefly looks back at him -

He tries to follow but gets swept away in a surge of people like a riptide, can't swim upstream...

TIMELESS TREASURES EXHIBITS

Art through The Ages...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Sexually Explicit Works of art... that even she finds SHOCKING. A kinky selection of nudes.

Sybil sits on a leather bench, before a canvass--

Heinrich Lossow's "THE SIN," a heavy chiaroscuro highlights a monk and a nun fused together through the bars of an iron gate.

MAN

You mind?

It's Cletus gesturing to the empty spot beside her. She looks up.

SYBIL

Too early to tell.

He sits. She swims in a sea of perfume... and Jon is instantly hard...breathes in her intoxicating fumes.

Cletus is staring intensely at a single frame.

CLETUS HORN

I don't know much about art, but I know it when I see it...and that, my friend, is Art.

SYBIL

Breathless, isn't it? Heinrich Lossow's The Sin. Reminds me a bit of that Christmas hymn... 'O Come, All Ye Faithful.'

(eyes the painting)

I ADORE IT.

CLETUS HORN

So does the devil!

Cletus - staring at her... a sudden, quiet guilty pleasure. She is stunning.

CLETUS HORN

You're familiar with the history?

SYBIL

I am. It was inspired by the "Banquet of Chestnuts." The most scandalous orgy to ever take place inside the Vatican walls. Arranged by Cesare Borgia, the son of Pope Alexander VI, in 1501.

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CONTINUED: (3)

CLETUS HORN

Yes. Featuring five prostitutes,
if I recall my church history
correctly.

SYBIL

It was fifty.

CLETUS HORN

You sound like you were there.

SYBIL

Oh, but I was.

(beat)

In my dreams, of course.

SYBIL

This is considered his crown
jewel. Seven deadly sins, laid
bare. It is a visual execution of
human nature at its absolute
worst.

She doesn't look at the painting; she looks at the side
of Horn's face. Silence. Seems eternal.

SYBIL

The Vatican formally condemned it,
you know. Called it an
abomination.

CLETUS HORN

It's... aggressively anti-
clerical.

SYBIL

It's honest. Look at the iron
bars. Lossow didn't put them there
to keep the lovers apart. He put
them there to show that the cage
makes the hunger worse. The
uniform creates the sin.

CLETUS HORN

(defensive)

It's a historical fiction. A
distorted fantasy about the Borgia
court.

Sybil steps closer. The scent of her expensive perfume
fills the space between them.

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CONTINUED: (4)

SYBIL

Is it a fantasy, Father? Or is it a mirror? Cesare Borgia wore the cardinal's robes before he became a murderer. The cloth doesn't change what's underneath. It just hides the bloodstains better.

CLETUS HORN

(voice dropping)

Who are you?

SYBIL

Sybil, the Curator, And someone who appreciates a masterpiece.

CLETUS HORN

I'll confess, as far as the Church goes there's always been too much controversy and hypocrisy. But I must say, that priest has a very Satanic stare to him.

SYBIL

I like the faint red light in the back right. Reminds me of an old, lingering evil.

(a beat)

Did you know Lossow was a prolific pornographer in his spare time?

CLETUS HORN

Porn has come a long way.

SYBIL

Not all porn is art. But some art is porn.

Cletus shifts, his breathing shallow as he stares at the canvas.

SYBIL

Well, just look at it - It may be titled "the Sin", but these folks don't look unhappy.

Cletus is transfixed as Sybil's fingers glide down the nun's breasts and thighs. Is he becoming aroused?

SYBIL

Look at the composition of her. The angle of her mouth, the flush in her cheeks, her white-knuckled grasp on the fence...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

SYBIL (CONT'D)

it all screams pure ecstasy. The fact that it's a priest and a nun finally being human is a huge turn-on.

(off his look)

Now, see, if church were like this, maybe I'd consider going.

Sybil suppresses a laugh. Cletus doesn't quite understand but can tell when he's being mocked.

CLETUS HORN

The gate bars look wobbly. They don't even reach the top of the canvas. And look at her legs—it looks like her body is somehow passing right through the iron. The paint quality on the gate is off. It looks fake. Almost like an afterthought.

SYBIL

You try painting a wrought iron gate while beating one out.

CLETUS HORN

...But seriously. What am I missing? It's so weird.

SYBIL

You're focusing on the wrong thing. Lossow painted the bars poorly because who cares about bars when there's fucking going on? The gate isn't the point. Calling it "The Sin" is his commentary.

(beat)

The real sin isn't the sex-- it's denying your own humanity.

Cletus is visibly surprised. Secretly, he is captivated.

SYBIL

Religious morality is just a control method invented by hypocrites. Look at her face. Look at the little shimmering tears in the corner of her eyes-- like a lifetime of shame melting into pure, libidinal ecstasy.

She steps into Cletus' personal space.

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CONTINUED: (6)

SYBIL

The Monk pushes the Nun towards
the Pearly Gates, by thrusting
hard betwixt iron grates. Her
breathless moans, her passionate
humming... A prayer to the Lord,
"My God! I'm coming!"

Sybil laughs.

She sees him staring wet-eyed at the painting again.
Bothered by it somehow. His hands itch. He rubs them.

SYBIL

How does it make you feel, Father?

Almost an afterthought -

CLETUS HORN

You're right. The compositional
choices are subtle and obscure...
But I feel this painting.
Somewhere deep in my loins, I feel
the penetrating depths of Lossow's
rebellious aesthetic spirit.

(beat)

Love the position there. Her feet
elevated.

SYBIL

Mmm hm. Never thought you'd want
to jerk off to Art, huh?

Embarrassed at his blatant admission...

CLETUS HORN

Oh god, I'm sorry, I didn't --

SYBIL

Don't apologize to me. I'm not the
one judging you.

(smiling)

It's the most honest you've been.

INT. ART GALLERY DAY

Midday, not many customers at this hour.

Cletus flags down Sybil.

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CONTINUED:

CLETUS HORN

Excuse me... I'm not familiar with this artist. Would you mind giving me a few pointers?

She looks at the canvas-- one of Van Gogh's haunting self-portraits, then turns her slow, knowing smile onto him.

SYBIL

You don't know who Vincent van Gogh is, Father?

Caught, but he rolls with it.

He indicates the brushstrokes on the canvas. It's clear he has a genuine appreciation of the work.

CLETUS HORN

I know the name. But look at those brushstrokes. Furious, desperate. A mad rush to pour himself onto the canvas, as if he were running out of time.

SYBIL

He was. Shot himself within a year.

(studies his face)

You're too handsome to preach. You should be an actor.

CLETUS HORN

Can't act.

SYBIL

That never stopped anybody. You just have to want to be famous.

CLETUS HORN

That what you want?

SYBIL

Of course. You want to kiss me, don't you?

CLETUS HORN

What's the right answer?

SYBIL

Well, you can say yes, and I'll think you're a push over, get bored and move on. Or you can lie and say no and it'll keep things interesting.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CLETUS HORN

No then.

She gives Cletus a wordless look: "Bullshit."

SYBIL

Careful, Cletus. If you're going to commit a sin, at least have the courage to own it.

CLETUS HORN

Is wanting to kiss you a sin?

SYBIL

For you? Absolutely. That's what makes it fun.

The chemistry is palpable, as is the awkwardness.

CLETUS HORN

Working on a great sermon for Sunday. You should come by. It'll be interesting.

SYBIL

No such thing as an interesting sermon.

CLETUS HORN

You've never heard me preach. There's no greater sin than making the Gospel boring.

INT. ST. JUDE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH - SUNDAY - DAY

Sunlight pours through stained glass.

A packed congregation. Devout parishioners sit with bowed heads and folded hands.

In the very back pew sits Sybil. Her dress more club than churchy. That gold cross resting against her chest.

At the altar pulpit stands Cletus. He wears his full, formal liturgical vestments. He looks powerful, holy, and in command of the room.

He adjusts the microphone. His eyes scan the crowd, drifting past the front rows, and land squarely on the back pew.

He locks eyes with Sybil. He doesn't look away as he begins.

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CONTINUED:

CLETUS HORN

Yesterday, I stood in front of a
self-portrait by Vincent van Gogh.

A murmur of curious interest ripples through the
traditional, older crowd.

CLETUS HORN

If you look closely at the canvas,
the brushstrokes are furious.
Desperate. It is the work of a man
in a mad rush to pour his soul
out, because he knew he was
running out of time. He was dead
within a year. It got me thinking
about the masks we wear.

In the back, Sybil rests her chin on her hand, her
amusement deepening. She recognizes the theft of her own
words.

CLETUS HORN

We come here every Sunday. We put
on our finest clothes. I put on
these sacred robes. We hide behind
our respectability, our titles,
our routines. But the cloth
doesn't change what's underneath.
It just hides the stains better.

A few older parishioners nod solemnly, deeply moved.

Sybil bites her lip, thoroughly entertained by the sheer
audacity of it.

CLETUS HORN

God looks past the uniform. He
sees the raw, unfiltered truth of
our desires. He sees the hunger.
And the real sin isn't having that
humanity... it's denying it. It's
standing before the mirror and
lying to Him. And lying to
ourselves.

Cletus leans over the pulpit. His voice echoes through
the rafters, but his gaze never leaves her.

CLETUS HORN

So I ask you this morning: if you
were forced to drop the act right
now... do you have the courage to
own what you really want?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

A breathless silence hangs over the congregation. Nobody moves.

Cletus - suddenly remembering where he is. He quickly pulls his priestly mask back on.

He stands up straight and clears his throat.

CLETUS HORN

(briskly)

...And so we pray for the strength
to resist such worldly vanities.
In the name of the Father, the
Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.
Please stand for the Creed.

The congregation stands.

In the back row, Sybil lets out a soft, delighted laugh, thoroughly enjoying his sudden panic. She slides out of the pew before anyone notices.

INT. ST. JUDE'S CHURCH - CONFESSIONAL - DAY

Pitch black. A wooden SLIDER snaps open. Light pushes through a small, square iron grate.

Cletus sits in the shadow of his side of the box. He looks exhausted, his collar unbuttoned. He looks through the grate.

On the other side of the screen, the silhouette of Sybil leans close to the wire mesh.

The scent of her expensive perfume immediately fills the cramped space.

SYBIL

Bless me, Father, for I have
sinned. Or... whatever it is you
say.

CLETUS HORN

You're not allowed back here.

SYBIL

I'm a taxpayer, Cletus. I'm
allowed anywhere. Besides, I
wanted to congratulate you on the
performance. Very theatrical. The
older women in the front row
looked ready to faint.

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CONTINUED:

CLETUS HORN

Did anything I say actually reach
you?

SYBIL

(a soft, low chuckle)
Oh, the words were useless.
Standard religious guilt wrapped
in a pretty Van Gogh bow. You're
trying to intellectualize your
hunger, Cletus. You think if you
preach about it, God absolves you
of wanting me.

CLETUS HORN

I was talking about honesty.

SYBIL

No, you were performing. You used
a dead painter to tell a room full
of strangers that you have a hard-
on for an atheist curator.

She presses her lips close to the iron screen. He can
feel her breath across his cheek through the wire.

SYBIL

You asked the crowd if they had
the courage to own what they
really want. So tell me, Cletus...
in the dark, where your
congregation can't see you...
do you?

Cletus grips the armrest of his chair, his knuckles
turning white. He is trapped.

Through the grate, Sybil pulls back. Her silhouette
shifts.

SYBIL

My brownstone. Nine o'clock. Come
defend your soul, Father. Or
don't.

The wooden SLIDER snaps shut. Darkness.

Cletus sits alone in the box, the echo of her heels
fading, reverberating off the walls.

EXT. STREET OF BROWNSTONES - NIGHT

A tree-shaded block. An elegant brownstone. Gleaming brass carriage lamps on either side of the door are lit.

Cletus wears a black trench coat. His collar is buttoned tight. He looks like a man marching toward an execution.

He climbs the steps. Pushes the doorbell. We hear it ring inside. He swallows hard. He's sweating. The door opens.