

American Alien
Episode One - Indescretions

by

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DIALOGUE IN BRACKETS IS IN ITALIAN

INT. ST. JOSEPHINE CATHOLIC CHURCH - OLD QUARTERS - DAY

MATEO FONTAGNA (mid 20's, long-hair tied in a ponytail) lies on his bed, facing the ceiling. On a wall in the room hangs a clock, ticking away. He holds up a phone to his ear.

MATEO

[The weather's pretty good here,
too, babbo.]

Mateo's father, GIANCARLO (mid 50's, portly and always clean shaven) replies.

GIANCARLO (V.O.)

[Ahh, but the American girls can't
be as good as the Italian girls.]

MATEO

[You'd be surprised.]

Beat.

GIANCARLO (V.O.)

[Well, I'm glad you had your time
to do your frolicking in the
states. Now you're ready to come
back to the store.]

MATEO

[Yeah.]

Mateo turns to his side.

GIANCARLO (V.O.)

[Everyone's so excited to have you
home. Allegra figured out this is
the longest you have ever been
apart from the family.]

MATEO

[How is she? Can you put her on the
phone?]

GIANCARLO (V.O.)

[She already fell asleep with the
rest of the bunch.]

MATEO

Hmm.

A beat.

GIANCARLO (V.O.)
[You already got your ticket,
right?]

Mateo glances at an envelope on the dresser by the bed.

MATEO
[Yeah, Babbo.]

A beat.

GIANCARLO (V.O.)
[Why are you so quiet? You should
be as loud as those Americans by
now. Aren't you excited to be
home?]

MATEO
[No. Yeah. I am. It just all went
by so fast. I just got here.]

GIANCARLO (V.O.)
[Mateo, Robert's ordination was six
months ago.]

MATEO
[I know. I know. I just wish there
was a way to stay a little longer.]

Mateo looks at the clock on the wall. He shuts his eyes and
massages his forehead with his free hand.

GIANCARLO (V.O.)(CONT.)
[You can't earn money. You have no
ID. You can't open a business. You
have no life there.]

Mateo drags himself off the bed and wanders his way to the
open window and looks out to the horizon. Several moments
pass.

GIANCARLO (V.O.)(CONT.) (CONT'D)
[Bambino....Mateo? Are you there?
Bambino, answer m-]

MATEO
Don't call me that!

GIANCARLO (V.O.)
[What?! "Bambino"? You're my son.
What else am I supposed to call
you?]

MATEO

I don't know. Something that
doesn't make me feel like a five
year old.

GIANCARLO (V.O.)

[I will treat you however you act.]

MATEO

I don't want to go back, babbo.

GIANCARLO (V.O.)

[But-]

MATEO

I want to sing here, and if is not
singing, fine. I have to stay and
figure it out. I never felt this
strong about nothing. I belong
here.

GIANCARLO (V.O.)

[How can you belong somewhere
you're not wanted? America does not
want more immigrants.]

MATEO

But it's land of the free!

GIANCARLO (V.O.)

[It's a bad joke, Mateo! Listen to
yourself. You can barely speak the
language.]

MATEO

I don't have to speak. When they
hear me sing, they know I belong
with the greats.

GIANCARLO (V.O.)

[Mateo, I need you-]

MATEO

Babbo, I-

GIANCARLO (V.O.)

[The family needs you. I'm not
young and strong anymore; someone
needs to help me run the store so
the family's fed. You're the future
of this family.]

GIANCARLO (V.O.)(CONT.)

Is time to come 'ome.

Mateo looks to the floor.

GIANCARLO (V.O.) (CONT.) (CONT'D)
[Your mother misses you.]

MATEO
[I know.]

GIANCARLO (V.O.)
[You probably can't keep staying in
the church room much longer anyway.
Your cousin has done enough,
letting you clean the church for
the room and food.]

Mateo sits back down on the bed.

MATEO
[Yeah. You're right. I can't pay
for a place.]

GIANCARLO (V.O.)
[How is Robert?]

Mateo looks at the clock again. He flies to the entrance of
his room, putting on his shoes.

MATEO
[He's good. Quiet as always. I am
actually late to meet him for the
sermon he's giving.]

GIANCARLO (V.O.)
[Well, you give him love and luck
for the family. And I'll see you in
two days.]

MATEO
[All right, babbo. I will. Bye.]

Mateo stands in his room for several moments. An ensemble of
CHURCH BELLS rings right outside the window, maintaining a
steady, rhythmic CLANGING. He sighs and flings his phone on
the bed, before exiting the room, leaving the clanging
talking to itself in the room.

INT. ST. JOSEPHINE CATHOLIC CHURCH - SACRISTY - DAY

The CLANGS of the church bells resound through the walls of
the small, dark room at the back of the church.

In a corner, facing a bloody, crucified Jesus on the wall, ROBERT (mid 30's, but still a golden boy with a placid face) kneels with his head bowed. He holds a rosary between his shaking clasped hands, muttering a continuous prayer.

People can be heard coming into the church and taking their seats. The bells continue to CLANG. Robert does not move. Unprepared for the mass he is about to give, he wears black slacks and a black short-sleeved button-up with a Roman collar.

Finally, he motions a cross in front of him with his right hand.

ROBERT

In the name of the father, the son
and the holy spirit. Amen.

He kisses the cross of the rosary and looks up at the starved Jesus. Jesus does not look at Robert, but rather to the side. His face is twisted in anguish and pain, with dark shadows cast over his eyes.

Robert hangs his head and sighs. He gets up and walks over to a countertop where his ceremonial worship robes await him. He runs his hand over them. He looks back to the crucified Jesus. Robert looks to the robes again and takes a deep breath before going to put them on.

He turns to look at himself in the mirror at the far end of the room. The white robes stand out in the mirror, outlining his uneasy form. In the reflection, Robert sees one of the dark shadows behind him seem to move forward.

Robert whips around and looks in all directions.

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Who's there?

No one answers. The clanging of the bells has finally stopped. Robert lightly slaps his face and then pats down the robes. He rushes out the doorway to the congregation, but not before he steals a foreboding glance at Jesus, still refusing to look at him.

INT. ST. JOSEPHINE CATHOLIC CHURCH - MAIN CHAMBER - DAY

The modest but massive chandeliers flood every corner of the hall with light. People are entering, rummaging, taking their seats and otherwise waiting for Sunday sermon to begin.

Loud notes from the organ blast through the space. The stragglers pick up the pace and find some empty pews.

A melody from the organ becomes apparent, right before a male voice, sweet in pitch but deep in resonance, joins the melody in filling the chamber.

INT. ST. JOSEPHINE CATHOLIC CHURCH - CHOIR - CONTINUOUS

High above the congregation, on a mezzanine-type floor opposite of the altar, Mateo stands gazing down and out at the hall. The voice flowing like honey is his. It lends the large, cavernous church an epic beauty.

The organ and Mateo's voice recede gently to the melody's conclusion. A small figure can be seen at the pulpit underneath the altar. It is Robert, now dressed in white, flowing, priestly linens.

INT. SJCC - MAIN CHAMBER - PULPIT - CONTINUOUS

Robert braces himself on the sides of the pulpit. Only through his nose, his breathing is shaky and labored. He blinks and conducts the customary rites.

ROBERT

L-Lord have mercy, Christ have
mercy, Lord have mercy.

Robert makes the sign of the cross in front of him. The congregation follows suit. Everyone joins in the singing of the Gloria hymn.

EVERYONE

Glory to God in the Highest...

Mateo's voice stands out among the rest.

The hymn ends and Robert clears his throat to begin his sermon.

ROBERT (CONT.)

Good morning, everyone. What a-What
a joy to see you all today!

A beat. The congregations sits, waiting to be fed the Gospel.

ROBERT (CONT.) (CONT'D)

I want to tell you about something
I trust you'll find interesting. A-
uhh- A member of our parish
recently came to me for counsel,
saying he could not hear the voice
of God any longer.

(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT.) (CONT'D)
That God had seen his sins and
finally decided to forsake and
abandon him.

A beat.

ROBERT (CONT.) (CONT'D)
But we know that God would never
abandon us, no matter our
indiscretion. For we are all God's
children. So long as we repent, we
are all deserving of God's
everlasting love and forgiveness.

A couple of nods from the congregation.

ROBERT (CONT.) (CONT'D)
S-so if you could, please help me
quell the anxious doubts of our
brother and repeat after me: God
loves you. God loves you....

Members of the congregation look around at each other. This
is not they way mass usually goes. Some shrug and start
repeating Robert's words.

EVERYONE
God loves you. God loves you....

Robert keeps the repetitions going until they become more of
a chant. He starts to smile, reassured of something. Members
of the congregation smile at this playful development.

Robert raises his gaze above Mateo to the stained glass
window behind him. Depicted therein is Jesus, once again,
extending a hand down to the people beneath; to Robert. But
bloody red light begins overstaining the window, spreading
across Jesus' face and down to his body.

Robert stops talking and steps back. The hand of Jesus is no
longer stretching out, but pointing. Blaming. Revealing.
Condemning.

Robert breathes heavily, failing to get a sufficient gulp of
oxygen into his lungs. The congregations notices the change
and the chant stalls to a stop. Robert is supporting himself
on the pulpit once more. The congregation waits, not daring
to utter a sound. He snaps up and walks over to the massive
Bible off to the side.

ROBERT
Now-Now let us open to-

Upon grabbing the book, Robert fails to catch it slipping out of his hands.

THUD!

Silence once again. Robert picks the book up and marches to the pulpit.

ROBERT (CONT.) (CONT'D)
My apologies. Open to Romans 12:2.

The congregations does as they are told. Robert shakes it off.

EXT. SJCC - SIDE EXIT - LATER

After the sermon, Mateo and Robert stand and say goodbye to the people leaving the church.

MATEO
I do not think your fumble was not terrible. I kn-

MATEO (CONT.) (CONT'D)
(to a passing parish member)
Have a good day!

ROBERT
That's a double negative, Mateo.

MATEO
No, I'm trying to be nice. To make you happy.

ROBERT
No, the way you said it. You said 'not' twice.

Robert shakes hands with a PARISH MEMBER.

ROBERT (CONT.) (CONT'D)
(to a parish member)
Thank you! Have a blessed day!

MATEO
Ah, now I see. It cancels.

ROBERT
I just stood there. Everyone probably thinks I've got a screw loose.

Robert puts on a fake smile for someone passing by.

MATEO
People don't care.

ROBERT
Please. Even you could've given a better sermon.

MATEO
Yes, but good thing I didn't or you would be cleaning the toilets in my place after.

ROBERT
Well, don't worry. You won't be for much longer.

Mateo looks down.

ROBERT (CONT'D)
Yeah.

AMANDA STALL (muscular and serious), the business manager of the church walks towards the pair.

AMANDA
Good morning, Father Robert. How was your sermon?

ROBERT
Yes, good. Well, it was-

MATEO
It was a really great one, Ms. Amanda. Everyone enjoyed it a lot.

Amanda looks over to Mateo.

AMANDA
I didn't think you were still with us, Mateo. I thought you were back in Italy already.

MATEO
I am. Uh, well, I just decided to use up everyone second I had in L.A.

AMAMANDA
Oh, ok.

Amanda turns to Robert.

AMANDA(CONT.)

Father Robert, may I speak with you
in private?

ROBERT

Of course.

Amanda leads Robert to a section of the Church garden a
little ways from the Church exit. Mateo watches them go
before his attention is required -

MATEO

(to a parish member)

Yes! Have a wonderful day, too!

EXT. PARISH GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Amanda and Mateo stop at a more secluded section of the
garden, with Mateo still visible in the back ground.

AMANDA

I thought he should've been gone by
now. You told me.

ROBERT

I know. I know. I thought he was
supposed to leave last week. But he
insisted on staying the last week
of his allowed stay.

AMANDA

You should've told me. I know he's
your cousin, but he can't keep
staying up in that room. It doesn't
look good to have a non-clergy
sleeping on church property.

ROBERT

It was a sign of good will. We're
Catholics.

Some passersby glance over. Amanda and Robert shoot practiced
smiles their way and wave. Amanda leans in.

AMANDA

(hushed)

If it were to get out that we're
just handing out spare rooms to
random people like your cousin,
we'd be finished.

ROBERT

That's what we're supposed to do.

AMANDA

Yes, but he's also your cousin. It looks weird. Just, for the good of the Church, make sure he leaves.

ROBERT

I will. For the good of the church.

Before she can go about her business, she turns back and leans in even closer.

AMANDA

Oh. And make sure you take out the trash. Our friends made a heavy delivery.

Robert nods. Amanda walks away.

EXT. SJCC - SIDE EXIT - CONTINUOUS

From afar, Mateo sees Robert standing with an air of defeat, looking at the ground. But his attention is called away once more. An OLD LADY (80's) with a walker stands in front of him with adoration welling in her eyes. Despite her frailty, she grasps him strongly.

OLD LADY

Mateo, you're the best singer I have ever heard! It's such a joy having you in our parish.

MATEO

Oh no. Please. You are much too kind. I just like to sing.

OLD LADY

No! No. You don't understand. You bring such beauty to Mass. Such a classical dignity. You can't get something like that here. You get it from Italy, I bet.

MATEO

Oh, well- Yes, probably.

OLD LADY

Lord help me, you make me feel like I've up and died and gone to heaven. You should be our new choir master!

Mateo chuckles and smiles.