

"LAMB"

written by

Simon Lord

Unit 34b Waterside
44-48 Wharf Road
London
N1 7UX

07411595867
simon@leblackdog.co.uk

EXT. DARKNESS

The sound of ragged breath and running feet. Someone's scared, tearing over gravel and mud. Flashes of light, glimpses of the crunching ground, the back of a head. More black. Pumping fists, the moon catching at smoky breath. A stumble, a glance over the shoulder-

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

LIONEL (27) stares dead ahead. He's young, mixed-race, handsome with a rough exterior. He's on edge.

PRIEST (O.C.)

After you were born... things
were never the same for your
mother.

LIONEL

I scared him off, huh?

His interlocutor, a greying PRIEST (56) in a black shirt and dog collar, steeples his fingers.

PRIEST

A child is a terrifying thing.
The innocence...

LIONEL

I wondered if he even existed.
When I was a kid I thought maybe,
you know, like the baby Jesus-

The priest raises an eyebrow.

PRIEST

Could you forgive him now?

Lionel shrugs his shoulders, stares at the table.

LIONEL

I won't know til I see the whites
of his eyes. If I'd had him,
would I be... Would I have gotten
in so much trouble? I wonder how
I'd have... But I'll find him.
Soon I'll have a name, and-

PRIEST

I've got a name.

Lionel looks up at him. Stunned, silent. Furious.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

I knew them. Both of them, very well. But I could never tell...

LIONEL

You knew. But you never said-

PRIEST

I couldn't.

(a long pause)

Your father... was a man who had to be above reproach.

An ornate wooden crucifix watches from the wall. Lionel shakes his head at the shrewd Priest in growing horror.

PRIEST

He had to be father to so many...

Lionel jerks out of his chair and backs away from the Priest, who stands up. Lionel is frantic.

PRIEST

I *can't* run from it anymore.
You're my son, Lionel. My own.
Flesh of my flesh. Blood of-

LIONEL

No. No!

The priest turns towards the heavy wooden sideboard.

PRIEST

I had to leave the parish. I looked at you, and... I saw the face of my own sin. Boring into me. But no secret can stay buried, boy. I knew you'd come-

Lionel sees his father reaching for something in a drawer. A note of dread. Lionel tenses. The Priest steps away from the sideboard. We still can't see what he's holding.

PRIEST

And I've been waiting.

Lionel sees a rack of knives. Edges his hand along the counter as his father backs towards him.

PRIEST

My poor son. Forgive me-

He turns round suddenly. Lionel reaches for one of the knives and slashes at the Priest, whose hand is raising-

A woollen toy, a knitted SHEEPDOG. He stops, surprised as blood begins to well up from his dog collar. Lionel stares down numbly at the toy. He expected a weapon.

FATHER

Lionel?

He slides to his knees. Lionel looks down at the knife in his hands, backs away in horror.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

I thought... I thought you wanted to shut me up-

FATHER

No, boy. At last, I wanted to let you in. It was... Our time. We-

His father looks up at him with eyes that suddenly turn to glass. He slumps on to the floor. Lionel falls to his knees before his father. Squeezes his eyes closed for a moment.

Opens them, breathing hard but focused. Hand inside his sleeve, he grabs a tea towel from its rack. Avoids looking at the body as he wraps up the knife.

Stops, hearing behind him the ominous CREAK of the door. He turns in dread.

A low POV enters through the opening door. Lionel, gripping the half-wrapped knife, stares down at camera, wide-eyed, breathing hard. Music crescendos.

In the doorway stands a white-coated, black-faced LAMB. It considers the prostrate body of the Priest, then looks up accusingly at Lionel. Lets out a reproachful baaa.

BLACKOUT.

TITLE CARD: "LAMB"

INT. TRAIN CARRIAGE - DAWN

Lionel sits alone in a grimy train carriage. A rural dawn flies by outside the window.

Later, with Lionel motionless, staring haunted from the window, the tannoy announces the final station. We can see from the window that we are now in the city. It is day.

INT. 24 HOUR SHOP - DAY

Lionel passes between rows of produce, on edge. His eye catches a display of Fathers' Day cards. He looks away.

Picks out some disinfectant and heads for the counter. The cashier grins.

CASHIER

Mr. Lionel! The usual for you?

Reaches for a bottle of brandy and a packet of cigarettes. Lionel places the disinfectant on the counter. The cashier hits a few buttons on his till.

CASHIER

Ah. Cleanliness is next to godliness.

Lionel looks at him venomously. The Cashier looks nervous.

LIONEL

What did you say?

CASHIER

Next to godliness...?

Lionel reaches for his pocket, the Cashier raises a hand nervously. Simpers in fear as Lionel picks up the bottles.

CASHIER

You pay another time, Mr. Lionel.
Friend of the store-

EXT. COUNCIL ESTATE - DAY

The blocks on the estate are all named after the books of the Bible. Lionel pauses outside his block, Revelation House. Watches his elderly neighbour, MRS. NIGHTINGALE (78) unloading shopping from her car.

He considers the car. Then approaches, his expression transforming into a helpful smile.

LIONEL

Need a hand, Mrs. Nightingale?

The old woman looks up at him in confusion.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE

Dennis?

LIONEL

No, not Dennis. Lionel. From next door?

MRS. NIGHTINGALE

Oh, thank you.

Lionel takes the bags off her - and the car keys. He locks the vehicle.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE
Such a good boy. My son Dennis
would always give me a hand, you
know... He's coming Sunday.

LIONEL
That'll be nice for you.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE
Such a good, good boy.

As Lionel follows her up the stairwell he inches the car
key off the keyring.

EXT. REVELATION HOUSE, WALKWAY - DAY

Lionel unlocks the old woman's door and helps her inside.
Puts the keys into her key bowl. Turns round and smiles.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE
You won't stay for tea?

LIONEL
I've got a little errand to run,
actually. Drop something off.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE
(with regret)
Oh. It was lovely to see you,
Dennis. Come again when you can.

Lionel thinks about it, but doesn't object.

LIONEL
You look out for yourself now.

Before he can move away, the old woman kisses him on the
cheek. As he hurries away, Mrs. Nightingale beams.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE
Such a good boy, but...

Her face falls, as though overcome by misgivings.

INT. LIONEL'S KITCHEN - EVENING

Lionel scrubs at the knife with the disinfectant. And at
his hands. Round and round. Impassive, detached. Smiles
distantly to himself.

Below the counter a washing machine spins insistently. In
front of it a box of "Whiter than White" detergent. Inside
we make out the teatowel dancing in circles.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Around us the countryside flies past, skeletal trees picked out for a moment in the headlights.

Lionel looks calmly down at the passenger seat. There in the moonlight gleams the knife, half-wrapped in the towel.

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - NIGHT

The car idles at the end of the narrow track. Lionel gets out. Door slams.

Beneath a low tree he drops to his knees. Lays down the knife and digs between the gnarled roots with one hand.

Now with both, emotion overcoming him, panting and snarling as he tears at the dark earth. Ceremoniously places towel and knife in the hole. Screws his eyes closed for a second. Breathes out. Opens them. The earth under the tree looks undisturbed.

A noise, away in the darkness. Lionel leaps up. Squints just beyond the beam of the car's headlights. We can make out a dark figure. Lionel's hair stands on end.

LIONEL

Who's there?

(steadies his voice)

Who is it?

The figure steps towards him. We see only the silhouette of a dark suit, the hem of a blood-red sleeve.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

What do you want?

The figure steps towards him again. Lionel begins to back away, towards the car. The figure advances. Into the light. Lionel's face assumes a look of horror.

LIONEL

No.. It can't be... No!!

He sprints for the idling car. The dark comes after him. Lionel looks over his shoulder, eyes crazed with fear.

A cry escapes his throat as he throws himself into the driver's seat, revs the car and reverses away into the dark. Haloed by the glare of the headlights and the dust of the wheels, the dark figure stops, watching him drive off.

EXT. REVELATION HOUSE - NIGHT

Lionel runs from the car towards the base of his staircase. Looking fearfully around him. As he passes the walkway on each level we expect to see something there.

Passing Mrs. Nightingale's door, he pushes the key through the letterbox with a practiced movement. Turns round-

Goes dead still. Down in the centre of the common ground is the dark figure. Watching him.

Lionel gasps and runs for his front door, swearing as he fumbles the lock open and heaves the door shut behind him.

INT. LIONEL'S FLAT - CONTINUOUS

Lionel breathes out in relief. Turns and looks through the peephole.

PEEPHOLE VIEW

Through the fish-eye lens looms the black, empty eye of a LAMB, hedged by white wool. It's right outside the door.

Lionel jerks back from the door, and knocking over a hatstand. Shakes his head and approaches the door again.

Looks back through the lens. The Lamb's eye is still there. Lionel steps back hurriedly, addresses the door.

LIONEL

Are you looking for Mrs.
Nightingale? You've got the wrong
number.

(beat; falters)

What do you want?

Looks down at his hands. They're trembling. He looks back through the peephole. Outside, the walkway is empty.

INT. PRIEST'S KITCHEN - DAY

The scene of the crime. The worksurface, bloodstained floor, the outstretched hand, the half-finished meal... The crucifix looks on impassively as a gloved hand picks up a piece of hair from the floor. Music builds...

Smash cut to the Lamb's face.

INT. LIONEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lionel's eyes slam open. It's dark. He lies motionless in bed, his eyes glinting in the dark. Was he dreaming? Was he even asleep? He hears the words again in his head.

PRIEST (V.O.)

I looked at you... saw the face
of my own sin... No secret stays
buried. My son-

INT. LIONEL'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Water splashes over Lionel's face. He washes his hands, gripping the soap tightly. Rinses them intently. His breathing is getting out of control, and he bends down to splash water in his face again. Music rises. Lionel straightens. In the mirror, just over his shoulder...

Nothing.

INT. LIONEL'S FLAT - NIGHT

He tweaks the curtains and looks out at the floodlit common ground. Bass note of dread. The figure of the Lamb stands in the middle of the grass, staring at him. Lionel begins to breathe harder. Shuts the curtain. Checks the locks.

INT. LIONEL'S FLAT - MORNING

The same view of the front door. The buzzer jars, and Lionel shuffles out of the depths of the flat. He hasn't slept a wink. Steels himself, peers into the peephole.

But instead of the Lamb, outside are two POLICE OFFICERS, male and female. Lionel panics, swears under his breath. Composes himself. Opens the door, his face a mixture of pleasantness and ignorance.

POLICEMAN

Are you Lionel?

LIONEL

Officer...s?

POLICEMAN

Did you know the Reverend
Jonathan Abrams, Sir?

LIONEL

Oh... When I was young, he was
my... But I hadn't seen him in
years.

POLICEWOMAN
 Nothing from him recently?
 Nothing out of the ordinary?

LIONEL
 No... Nothing out of the... Has
 something-

POLICEMAN
 They found the door open. Blood
 everywhere.

LIONEL
 Oh. Dear...

POLICEWOMAN
 The neighbours... They told us-

LIONEL
 Yes?

POLICEWOMAN
 What a kind, kind man he was.
 Gentle as a lamb, they said.

Lionel's head snaps round.

LIONEL
 As a what?

POLICEWOMAN
 As a Lamb. And then there he was,
 his white hair all...

She begins to sob. An embarrassed pause. Lionel stares,
 mortified. The Policeman places an awkward hand on his
 colleague's shoulder.

POLICEMAN
 If anything should... Come to
 you, Sir... Do get in touch.

He hands Lionel a card, and he watches them depart,
 mystified and paranoid. Looks up and down the walkway and
 down at the common ground. Empty.

EXT. LIONEL'S FLAT - NIGHT

Lionel bursts out of his door and looks back into the dark
 apartment in horror.

LIONEL
 Leave me alone!

The clatter of his footsteps echoes down the stairwell.

He lopes across the deserted common ground and flattens himself against a wall. Catches his breath. Prickling strings. Lionel turns his head slowly to see a woolly hand, reaching out toward him. Lionel runs screaming.

INT. 24 HOUR SHOP - NIGHT

Lionel bursts into the striplit shop, jangling the door bell. People look round at him. He pretends to scan the shelves. Grab something. Anything. Some Lamb & Mint crisps.

He joins the queue, trying to keep his face hidden. Beside the till is a display of kitchen knives on special offer. "PRICES SLASHED" screams the sign. Lionel closes his eyes, sighs heavily. Opens his eyes. Looks back at the knives...

Reflected in the blades is a flash of red shirt, dark suit. Lamb's face. Lionel screams aloud. Backs away from the cashier, sending chocolate bars flying.

CASHIER

Can I help you? Can I help?

The bell sounds as Lionel flees the shop.

CASHIER

You pay another time, Mr. Lionel.

EXT. SHOPPING STREET - NIGHT

Lionel runs down the street, gibbering, bumping into people. Gets round a corner, passing a grubby homeless man slouched on a pile of cardboard. Slows to catch his breath when a deep, gargling voice, like Tom Waits with a tracheaectomy, calls out to him-

VOICE (O.C.)

Change?

Lionel doesn't look round at the homeless man.

LIONEL

No. No change. Sorry-

VOICE (O.C.)

Sorry not good enough.

Lionel's head slams round to see the Lamb getting up from the pile of cardboard. Lionel pelts away through a network of narrow alleys, dark shops, deserted thoroughfares. Everywhere he sees the dark, suited figure pursuing him.

He trips out of an alley and towards a large department store. Then stops cold. Dread covering him. Bass note.

He turns, slowly, horribly, to be confronted by a big neon-lit window Sale display. "LAST CHANCE TO SAVE!!" grins the display. Music crescendos.

In the centre, six foot tall, dressed in a sharp, dark suit and blood-red shirt, white fleeced, black eyed, woolly handed, stands the unmistakable figure of the Lamb. A long, awful chord as its black eyes bore into him. Lionel gibbers and backs away, unable to stand his ground.

LIONEL

What do you want? I never meant to do... He was my father! I never knew him. And then... It wasn't my fault! Not me, not mine-

The Lamb slowly nods its black face up and down.

LIONEL

No! No!!!

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - NIGHT

Police tape surrounds the overhanging tree. The flash of red and blue lights illuminates a hole which has been dug up between the roots. The knife is gone...

EXT. REVELATION HOUSE - NIGHT

Lionel sprints towards his flat. As in the beginning, dark flashes, hard breaths, feet scraping over gravel. He flattens himself against a wall, seeing a police car at the base of his stairwell, the same two coppers climbing out.

POLICEWOMAN

Just the way he said - I *hadn't* seen him in years. Using the past perfect tense. Why?

POLICEMAN

We won't let him pull the wool over our eyes this time.

Lionel panics, hardly breathing. As the coppers disappear into the stairwell, Lionel opens his eyes. Turns and runs.

INT. BOOZER - EVENING

Lionel stumbles into a dim pub, looking fearfully over his shoulder. Throws himself on the bar and scans the taps.

LIONEL

Pint of Black Sheep.

Sits down with his drink at a corner table, stares warily out into the room. In the corner a TV plays. It's one of those CCTV police shows, 'Caught By The Fuzz' or whatever. Saturday night high street carnage. Business as usual.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE (O.C.)

Dennis?

A dishevelled-looking Mrs. Nightingale stands over him in a flowery hat. Lionel looks away in panic.

LIONEL

I'm not Dennis.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE

Why haven't you come? Why have you been ignoring me?

Lionel looks up again. Sees the Lamb standing stock still at the bar, staring at him, a Martini in its hand. Lionel freezes, looks in panic between Lamb and woman.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE (CONT'D)

You used to be such a good boy.
Why did you run off like that?

LIONEL

Leave me alone.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE

I'm your Mother, Dennis. I can't.

LIONEL

You're not my mother.

Lionel begins to tremble. Stares venomously at the Lamb.

LIONEL

Did he put you up to this?

The old woman's face changes. A look of profound emptiness comes over her face.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE

How could he, Dennis? He's dead.

LIONEL

Who's dead??

He looks round frantically. People are staring at him. The Lamb is gone. Lionel runs to the bar.

MRS. NIGHTINGALE

Dennis! You can't keep running away.

LIONEL
I'm not Dennis!!

He grabs her and shakes her again. People get up, angry.
The Landlord rolls up his sleeves.

LANDLORD
Now then my lad-

LIONEL
What does he want from me? What
can I do??

EXT. BOOZER - NIGHT

The Landlord and two burly customers boot Lionel out of the
pub (the sign reveals it is the Lamb and Flag).

LANDLORD
You can get out of my pub. Or
I'll have the pigs down.

Lionel rises creakily to his feet, laughing unsteadily.

LIONEL
The pigs! What do they know about-

Dusts himself off. From across the street, the Lamb watches
him steadfastly. Holding a doner kebab, which drips thick,
dark sauce on to the pavement. A moment's silence.

LIONEL
None of this. Who are you?

The Lamb shakes its head. Slow, menacing.

LIONEL (CONT'D)
Why won't you leave me be?
Look... I don't know what you saw-

The Lamb brandishes a plastic fork, stabs it repeatedly
into the kebab, then drops it to the floor. Lionel breaks.

LIONEL (CONT'D)
I didn't mean to... It was self
defence.

The Lamb stares at him.

LIONEL (CONT'D)
He said... He looked at me and
saw his own sin. I thought he
wanted me out the way. I would-
(beat)
I lost my Father. Again. What
else do I have to give?

The Lamb raises its arm and points its finger at his chest.

LIONEL

Well you can't have me.

The Lamb nods ominously. The two of them face off across the street. Lionel flexes his fists. The Lamb its hooves. They stare each other out. Then-

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Sound of running, panting in the darkness. We catch glimpses again, flashes, like in the beginning. Shoes, paving stones, the back of a head, darkness.

The creak of a door, then blackout. An expansive, echoing silence, filled with Lionel panting, catching his breath. Darkness breaks to reveal we are in:

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

The big Gothic Revival church is in shadow, deserted but for a peppering of aged believers gently drowsing in the pews. Lionel looks around as he breathes in the silence. Dips his hand by long habit in the heavy stone font.

Walks along an aisle, past the heavy icons and the chapels with their little racks of swerving candles. Music rises. He looks always behind him, hiding from something.

Then at the transept he stops dead, confronted by the dark wooden bulk of a confessional. A little woman emerges furtively from behind the curtains and scurries away.

Lionel looks up. An altarpiece depicts Abraham, about to sacrifice his son Isaac. To one side of the picture is the Lamb which God substitutes for the boy. Lionel looks back round at the dark box.

INT. CONFESSIONAL - NIGHT

Lionel settles himself into the rich velvet cushion. Clears his throat, looks up.

LIONEL

Forgive me... Father. For I have sinned.

A barely-audible murmur from through the grille.

LIONEL (CONT'D)

It won't let me go. I... killed a man. He'd sinned, but... He didn't deserve to die. I mean...

LIONEL(cont'd)

We all do eventually. Deserve to die, I mean. But... He could have made things right. We could have-
(beat; break)

But not anymore. Now that...
Thing follows me everywhere. I look at him and I see the face of my own sin. It's eyes. They see into me.

As Lionel talks we pull focus through the grille of the confessional, to reveal the Lamb sitting in the other compartment. Lionel stops, raises his head.

LIONEL

Maybe I always knew this hour would arrive. No secret can stay buried, right? For every crime, there must be punishment.

Looks round. The Lamb doesn't move. A pause. Lionel rises.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Lionel emerges from the confessional, peace written on his face. Music swells. The worshippers in their pews all wear the face of the Lamb. They watch him, rising as he walks past, as if in respect. Lionel places his wrists together, smiles beatifically as he walks slowly down the nave.

Looks back at the Lamb, which stands before the altar, staring at him. It turns and walks away. Up ahead the heavy wooden doors swing open to reveal a haze of blue and red lights, flashing in the hot night.

Lionel passes across the threshold, wrists together, ready to be taken in, and the bright lights swallow him up as we lose focus and...

FADE TO WHITE.