

BY HUMAN HANDS

A SPIRITUAL SUPERNATURAL THRILLER-DRAMA
BY DAMIEN PLEMING



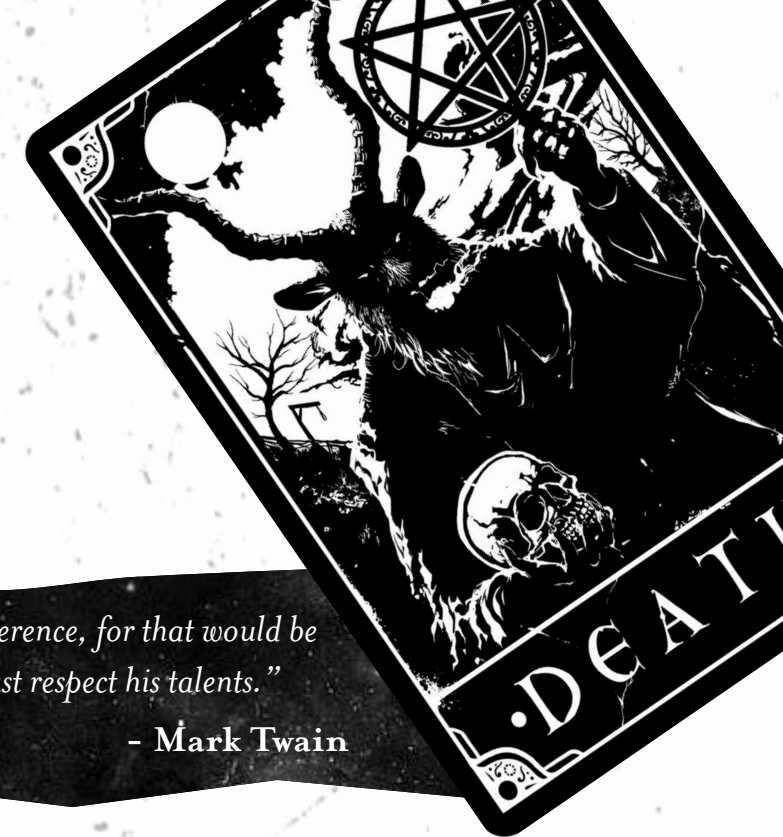


BY HUMAN HANDS

*created
by
Damien
Pleming*

"We may not pay Satan reverence, for that would be indiscreet, but we can at least respect his talents."

- Mark Twain



LOGLINE

A fear-riddled, drug-addled young priest battles human and supernatural powers to defeat a satanic cult trading in human misery, and save his soul.

SIN...OPSIS

By Human Hands is a meta narrative that arcs on all the greatest questions in life: who are we? Where did we come from? Why are we here? How are we to behave? And where, if anywhere, are we going next?

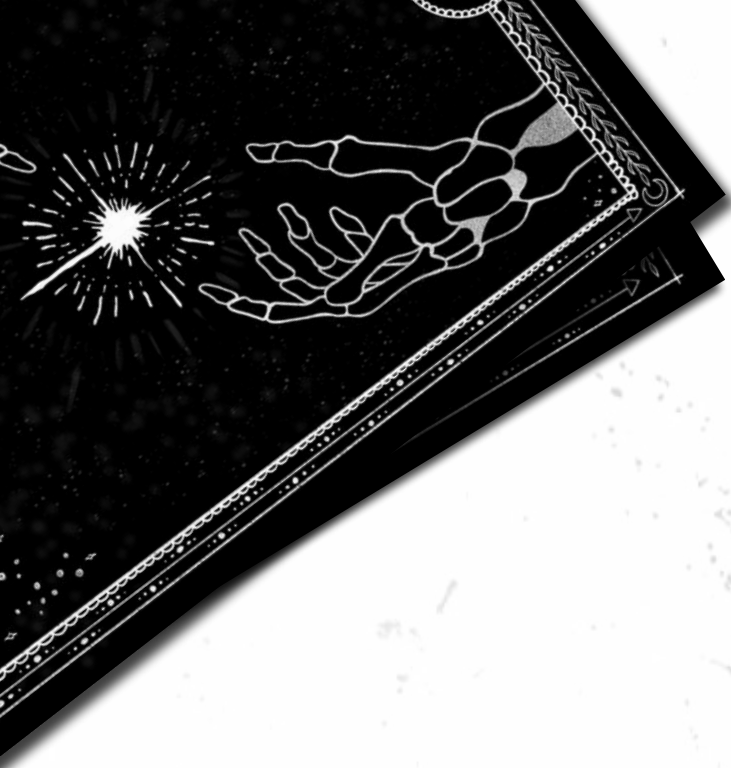
In other words: identity, origin, meaning, morality, and destiny.

Main protagonist Rory takes the audience on a journey of love, loyalty, friendship, fear, manipulation, power, life and death. It's a journey of self-discovery that amplifies the greater question of humanity's quest to understand death and our place in the universe. It makes the point that at the end of the day there is a fine metaphysical balance in the world between good and evil and like all inverse relationships... one doesn't exist without the other.

GENRE

Spiritual supernatural, thriller, drama.

Part supernatural horror, part coming of age drug experimentation comedy, part political corruption thriller and part spiritual exploration, By Human Hands is an eclectic mix of Breaking Bad, Mindhunter, The Sinner, Eyes Wide Shut, The Haunting of Hill House, State of Play, Human Traffic and Lovecraft Country.



PILOT

We follow the dream sequence of Rory Shannon, as a 12 year-old, being woken up by his sister and led into his mother's bedroom. We hear the rosary prayer and see statues of Mary, and candles burning. Priests and nuns are among the crowd, leading the prayer. He sees his mother in bed but the view is obscured by nuns, priests and his family. He's worried, her sheets are soaked in blood, she's levitating off the bed, arms and legs out prostate. Her hands, feet, side and forehead are covered in blood, displaying the wounds of Christ.

It's the perfect entre to the scorched psyche of **RORY SHANNON**, our mid-20s, punk-rock priest. Listening to mundane confessions, he's roused when a man enters the confessional and confesses to savagely beating his stepson. Now at a crossroads in his faith, Rory wants to alert the police. Instead, he seeks an audience with his **BISHOP FRANCIS DELANEY** who becomes the major antagonist. He tells him to do nothing and have faith in the sacrament of reconciliation. Rory storms away from the meeting, angry at the situation. He reunites with some old schoolfriends, **FIL JACOBS** and **PETE DAVIDSON**, to drink heavily. They sway him from the church and the next day he gives an impassioned but hungover sermon about sin and justice, aiming the speech at the man he knows to be the abuser. That night Rory is called to a farm by the police to find the man hanging in a barn with a **'Fuck you Fr Rory'** sign pinned to his chest.





SEASON 1

The rest of the season follows Rory wondering whether to leave the church and escaping deeper into the world of hard partying and drug use. Parts of his Christian belief remain close to his heart, but his faith in the institution is gone and the idea of a supernatural supreme creator is diminishing. He faces a giant hurdle to purge his Catholic fears and leave the priesthood.

When Rory discovers a damning diary that includes an admission to pedophilia of a previous priest in his church, he starts looking for the victims in an attempt to bring them justice. This provokes the wrath of the malevolent bishop who will stop at nothing to get hold of the diary that may also incriminate him. This triggers the B-story in which Rory unravels a much larger web of high-level corruption and the depraved workings of a satanic cult trading in sex and snuff.

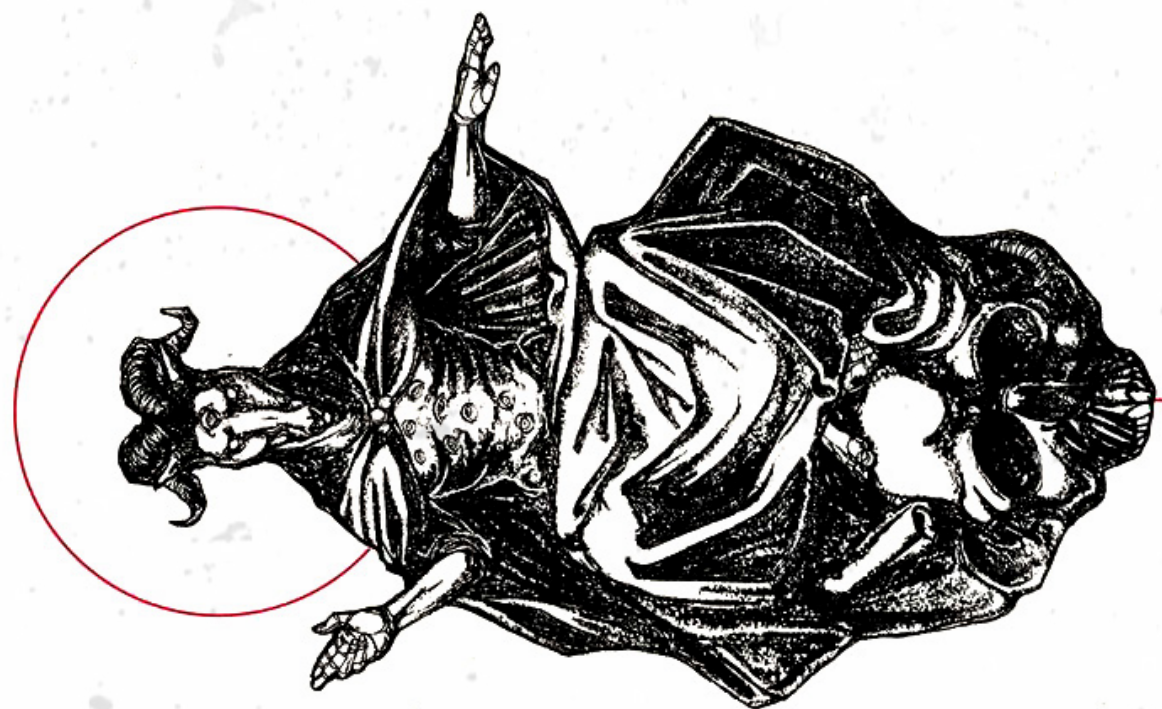
We watch Rory's complex relationship with his mother unfold. She's the reason for his insecurity which led him to become a priest. Yet she comes from a position of immense love. It's the mix of affection for her family and the teaching of the church that makes her so afraid. Rory's conversations with his mother allow him to question her dogma - as much to help navigate relationships with her gay children whom she thinks are going to hell, as for him to grow in strength and find his own way in life.





He falls in love with the young free-spirited wild local girl **MEAGAN LEE**, single mother and stripper. Through Meagan he discovers lust and love, and though on the surface she is the least likely woman for Rory, she bucks the slut stereotype by showing tenderness and patience with his ingrained issues with sex. She takes him deeper into a hard partying world, experimenting with marijuana, ecstasy, and acid, opening up unimagined pathways and perspectives in his mind. The more drugs he takes the more he finds himself in unexplainable, ghostly situations that scare the bejesus out of him. Sent to assess a possible demonic possession is almost too much for Rory and being drug-affected makes it all the worse. Rory had only recently justified to himself that a religious spirit world doesn't exist, and now these encounters add conflict to his newly formed belief.

Season 1 climaxes with Rory coming down from ecstasy yet driving his friends home from a bush rave where he had a life-changing moment and finally made love to Meagan. On the drive, afternoon turns to night and the group are run off the road by a menacing truck. Rory crashes the car, causing the death of Fil's newfound girlfriend. The action comes to an end with Rory's first day and night in a haunted prison, where we are introduced to a new antagonist, the beautiful but dangerous warden **ANGELIE ARADIA**, and we leave Rory grappling with an encounter where the Devil appears to taunt him in his cell.



SEASON 2

The action ratchets up as we follow Rory in prison where he contends with the sadistic Satanist Warden Aradia. Her troubled past has her hellbent on enabling, filming and profiting from the rape, violence and murder that's rampant amongst the men she has under her control.

Rory makes new friends in prison: **SAMUEL FREEMAN**, a smart sensitive man imprisoned for a murder committed when he was a young ice addict, and the huge ex-biker **ORION** who's an unlikely medium to the resident spirits. Rory encounters new threats from crazies like **JAH**, a killer trying to purge the world of evil one bad guy at a time. These characters will all interact with a cast of ghosts that represent the fear and misunderstanding of death. They inhabit the prison and affect the world and inmates around them. Season 2 ends with Rory shanked by a mafia hitman connected to the Bishop, ending as he's bleeding out, so we wonder if he will survive.



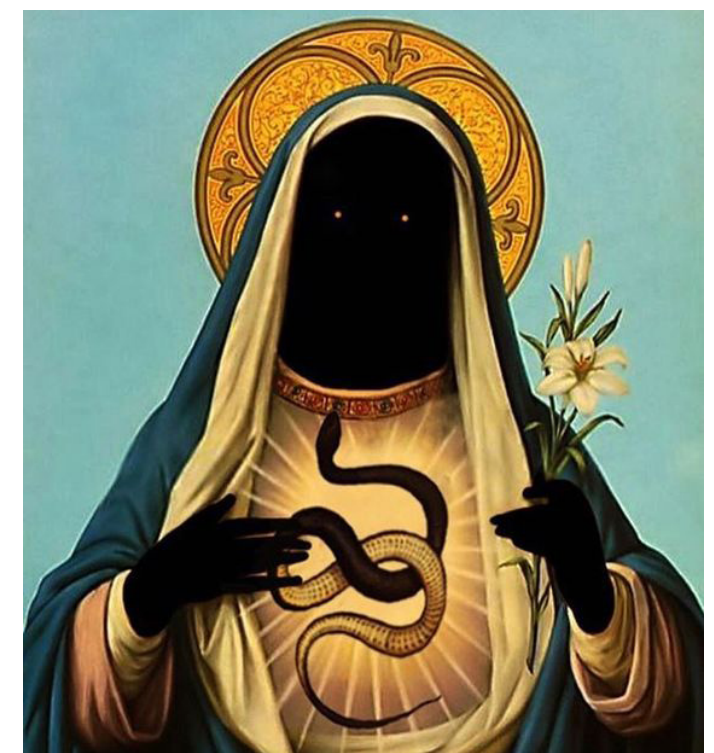


THEMES

By Human Hands is as much about how Rory became a priest as his current journey. Flashbacks to a 1970's small town, a large Catholic family who focused on hard work and the church, and the preaching of a staunchly religious mother fascinated with chilling spiritual mysticism. At the heart of this, Rory tries to understand his family. Why did his parents raise him and his siblings in a way that affected them for life, growing up with such fear and sadness?

Is there a Divine plan? Is evil the manifestation of the Devil or is it a human attribute? Does God come to the aid of those who pray or do people take matters into their own hands? By Human Hands takes a look at established religion and exposes the contradictory layers of fear and control that have divided us on a societal and individual level for millennia. It delves into evil and its genesis and looks at the crimes of those who are expected to be good and the empathy of those who are expected to be bad.

The story promises debauchorous partying, raw humour, engrained horror and raw full-on action, but it's also full of heart, honesty and sensitivity.





AESTHETIC

The visual style will be fresh, energetic, creative and cinematic.

The framing will be bold and on the move. The colour will be dark, cold and restrictive for the world of the church. The world outside of the church will be lighter, warm and spacious.

Since the first season is set in the small towns and countryside of rural New South Wales in 1999, the show will feature period details - boxy 4x4 Toyota Land Cruiser wagons, flip-out palm-size mobile phones, Chicago Bulls basketball caps, and rock 'n' roll band tour t-shirts. While these will add to the setting, they will not overshadow the story or characters.

The soundtrack will feature period rock and dance/trance music coming from radios, record players and party sound systems. The music surrounding the religious and church scenes will be original, with atmospheric orchestral undertones like Trevor Morris's score from Vikings. Some of these scenes will be devoid of music to create a sense of emptiness and contrast to the life Rory has outside the church. Think of The Handmaid's Tale scenes in Gilead.



CHARACTERS

FATHER RORY SHANNON

PROTAGONIST

Empathetic, cheeky, quick-witted, larger than life, lost, afraid, but ultimately righteous.

A confused Catholic Priest, mid-20s, of Irish decent. Rory is tall and handsome in a scruffy way. His hair is messy, his shoes are scuffed and he's slightly overweight, always unshaven. He is funny, confident, a great speaker and liked by his congregation. But the confident exterior masks a troubled man going through the motions of his faith. Unable to detach from a belief system indoctrinated by his mother, he is now seeing through the veil of fear and is desperate to find his own truth.



CHARACTERS

BISHOP FRANCIS DELANY

ANTAGONIST

Pompous, entitled, cocky, righteous, duplicitous, treacherous.

Francis Delany is an ultra-conservative political master hellbent on upholding staunch Catholic beliefs on his way to the top. Having spent time in The Vatican, he's full of pride and dreams of life as a cardinal or even as the Pope himself in the supreme comfort of Rome.

Tall, lean and physically able, he has energy to burn but, much to his disgust, he's been troubled by anxiety and increasing atrial fibrillation in recent years. He has high expectations of himself and sees his ailment as a weakness. Growing up in a Catholic orphanage, run by Salesian Sisters, he witnessed a ruthless perspective of heaven and hell, suffering, penance and redemption. Motivated from a young age to succeed and to impress, he gained favor with the nuns. In his adolescent years, Francis was fascinated with how a small-town peasant called Jesus could threaten the Roman Empire.



CHARACTERS

MEAGAN LEE

RORY'S GIRLFRIEND, LOVE INTEREST

Audacious, spirited, skeptical, inquisitive, impulsive, brash, crude, unaffected.

Meagan Lee, the rebellious daughter of a Chinese mother and English father, grew up on a small farm on the outskirts of Wagga and was always up for a party. Intelligent but indifferent, her life was carefree until a car accident almost killed her. Her boyfriend was paralyzed and she has been left emotionally and physically scarred.

When Meagan finished school, she set off alone and backpacked the world searching for meaning. Listening to new music like The Pixies, The Cure and Sonic Youth, she smoked hash in Morocco, drank vodka on the Trans-Siberian railway, and trekked the Himalayan mountains of Nepal. In a life-defining moment, Meagan was drugged in an Istanbul rug shop and almost raped by two men. She was saved by her own sheer determination and the lucky appearance of some American tourists. Shaken up but not ready to run home, she ended up in a huge house share in Paddington, London. Meagan partied hard on ecstasy and pot with her house-mates and worked as a barmaid in a local pub to pay her way.



CHARACTERS

FIL JACOBS

RORY'S BEST MATE

Fil Jacobs is more of a brother than a best friend to Rory. Fil had always lived on the farm across the road from Rory. The boys' parents were friends and neighbors, sharing a helping hand on the farm. Always the dark horse, and floating under the radar, Fil is a confident guy - especially with the ladies.

Fil can't remember a time without Rory in his life. When Rory's family moved to Wagga, Fil's parents sent him to live with the Shannons so he could attend a descent high school. Aside from a good party, Fil goes home to the farm on weekends.



CHARACTERS

PETE DAVIDSON

FIL'S BEST MATE

Larrikin, loveable, rowdy.

If Fil is the calculated risk-taker, then Pete is an outright mad lad. He is larger than life, has always been a bit tubby and hasn't let asthma slow him down.

Pete is another of Rory's best friends. Having met on day one of high school, Pete was drawn to Rory's cheeky, funny nature. They shared a love of Australian Rules football and played on the same local team. As teens they were exposed to a culture which revolved around drinking.



CHARACTERS

MARY SHANNON

RORY'S MOTHER, ENGLISH/IRISH DESCENT

Loving, soft, gullible, fearful, staunchly religious, maternal, generous, over-protective.

Born Mary Reilly, daughter of an atheist and a Catholic, one of seven children. As a child, Mary lived a simple life in a small town community. Her father was a kind, popular shopkeeper, who was happy for his wife to raise the children in the faith. Mary went to church with her mother every Sunday. Of the seven children, Mary and her sister Margaret fully adopted the Catholic teachings. Both were fascinated with the mystical stories surrounding the religion and desiring the promised pure love of Jesus Christ and Mother Mary.

At age 16, Mary left school and began working at the telephone exchange. Life revolved around work, helping her mother with her younger siblings, going to church and attending church social functions. At one of the church functions the local priest introduced her to Hue Shannon. A charming local sporting legend, a farmer, very handsome and most importantly, a Catholic. He was everything to Mary and by age 21 she was married, pregnant with their first baby girl and living on the Shannon farm with Hue's father George (his mother had died just before Mary met him).



CHARACTERS

GHOSTS

Spiteful, bitter, cold, alien, wretched, trapped, lost, needy.

These are stories of real men, women and children. They were executed, murdered, committed suicide, diseased or accidentally died within the prison system. There is a plethora of real stories to draw from and a rich tapestry of characters to spook the prison. One hundred and twenty men and eleven women were hung in Australian prisons. Murder, suicide and general violence feels at ease here.

The ghosts represent unexplainable events and activity in prisons, documented from around the world. They inject a higher level of suspense into an already terrifying environment, where the toughest of tough men have a reason to be afraid. They also add fuel the metaphysical conversation. What happens when we die? Do we have a spirit? Are there parallel planes? Do humans leave an energetic presence after death?



CHARACTERS

SATAN

REPRESENTED BY MULTIPLE CHARACTERS – DEFLECTOR

Proud, cruel, meglamanical, deceitful, crafty, egotistical, vain.

Satan presents in character as an androgynous version of the early modern description of the religious deity. A beautiful angel thrown out of heaven, whose purpose is to draw humans into sin and instil fears of demonic possession and witchcraft.

All of Rory's fears are manifested in Satan. As said by Mary many a time, "Those who don't believe in Christ are fair play for Satan's temptations and torture, but victory over this evil is available to everyone who turns to Christ."

Satan appears to Rory very early in his prison term. Satan knows everything Rory has done and plays on his anxiety and doubt. Satan's purpose is to deflect Rory from finding peace by spawning hesitation and fear, and to make him second-guess reality.



