

I GOUGED MY EYE OUT - treatment

INT. CHAPEL – DAY

Tatra mountains. Chapel in the juvenile detention centre for boys. Its interior is austere, dark, and full of unlit candles. On the left we see the confessional and above the entrance door we see faded stained glass depicting Giewont mountain with the cross at the top.

Choir rehearsal is in progress. There are six boys with low voices and RÓŻA (15) standing in the middle. She is significantly shorter than the rest and has a much higher voice. She looks like a boy, wears an oversized hoodie, sweatpants, and baseball cap turned backwards. Her hair reaches her chin. She is the only one holding a sheet with lyrics and she leads with high-pitched voice.

The choir, singing old Polish Christmas carol, is conducted by SISTER AFRA (22). She has a stern, pained expression painted all over her face when she focuses on Róža's angelic voice and feminine looks, so different from the rest of the boys. When the choir finishes, Afra's eyes are shiny with tears.

INT. COFFEEHOUSE – EVENING

Sister Afra enters the coffeehouse where her friend, SISTER TERESA (23) awaits her at the table. Afra sits down and they discuss the casting of Mary for the nativity play that Afra is directing. Teresa who works in the public school that sends singing girls as "volunteers" every year, plans to take her class to the detention center to see the "ancient" chapel. In reality, she wants the girls to see they have nothing to fear from taking part in the play with delinquent boys.

Next to Teresa, Afra is shy, quiet and easily hypnotised by the expressive and free way her friend speaks. When they leave the coffeehouse, Teresa offers Afra a cigarette. Afra agrees hesitantly and Teresa pulls her into dark alley to hide from judgmental looks.

The sun has set and it's so dark, only tips of their cigarettes are visible when they light up with every inhale. They are standing in front of each other, by the opposite walls, possibly staring at each other. No way to tell in the darkness.

EXT. FOREST PATH – DAY

Sister Afra and Sister Teresa walk to the detention center with cheerful crowd of teenage girls behind them. They're almost at the gate when they see Róža trying to pull herself up at the top of the rundown wall separating the facility from the rest of the world. The group goes silent and stares at her in disbelief until Róža finally notices and stills.

That's the moment when kids from the inside notice her, too, and they shout about her escape attempt, pulling her back in. Afra hears Róža's protests and screams when the kids start to beat her up. She's frozen in place while Teresa runs inside, screaming at the guards to let her in, and pushing the boys off of Róža. Girls run inside, pulling their phones out to record the whole thing.

Afra regains power over her legs and runs through the gate, too, seeing Róža running through the courtyard, dodging teachers and guards trying to apprehend her. Teresa wipes the sweat off her forehead. She looks like a medieval heroine, like female knight in Afra's eyes. Teresa's eyes meet her friend's gaze. And then she "thanks" her for the help.

The boys shout after running Róža, calling her a junkie, a girl and screaming homophobic slurs. When ADAM (17) shouts one particularly vile, Teresa slaps him. The girls gasp with their phones in their hands and approaching guards, teachers and caretakers begin a screaming fit with Teresa, throwing her out of the facility.

Among the deafening chaos, Afra somehow manages to hear the loud THUMP of Róža's body slammed to the ground by one of the guards. Her piercing scream silences every other sound.

INT. CHAPEL – EVENING

Sister Afra kneels in front of the altar, defeated. Rosary lies on the floor beside her. The nun talks to God frantically, speaking of her struggle with sinful temptation towards women, particularly Sister Teresa, and unbearable emptiness of her God-devoted life.

Suddenly, the door opens, and Róža enters with a few bruises on her face, chewing gum nonchalantly. Sister Afra quickly straightens up and grabs the rosary, pretending to have been praying obediently. The nun (addressing Róža by a masculine name Kacper) offers Róža role of Mary in the nativity play. She claims it's a punishment to Róža for an escape attempt and severing their hope of a "female" Mary. She says Róža is talented and "feminine enough". Róža surprises Afra by agreeing with no particular resistance.

A quick rehearsal is arranged. As a joke, Róža puts a scarf over her cap to resemble the traditional depiction of Mary. She sits in front of the altar and sings Christmas carol written from the perspective of Mary, Mother of God.

She seems to sound and look more and more like a girl, suspiciously comfortable in the role that any other boy would find humiliating.

There is a revelation happening. The scene is almost mystical. Sister Afra is hypnotised, almost terrified. Róža fits the role perfectly. In the nun's eyes, she becomes a girl. She is a girl.

The girl's voice breaks. When asked by the nun, she says her name is Róža.

INT. CHAPEL – DAY

Sister Afra talks to God again, claiming she's brought misfortune upon herself, and she'd prefer her life empty to full of pain. She claims she is jealous of other girls' bravery and spirit and she never wants to see any girl or woman ever again. She reminds herself she shouldn't see Róža as a girl, but a troubled boy she is bound to save from eternal damnation. She lies down on the floor with her arms spread and prays for the removal of "temptation" from herself and Róža.

The door opens and Róża enters. Sister Afra gets up, embarrassed, and scolds Róża for bringing snow inside. Róża takes off her boots and mops the puddles she made, thanking Sister Afra for the role and ensuring her identity remains, for now, a secret. She seems to trust Afra enough to be vulnerable with her and wants to practice her part eagerly while Afra is much less enthusiastic about it.

Róża sits in front of the altar and takes off her cap. This time she wraps her head in a delicate fabric pulled out of her pocket. Her face has light makeup and her singing is much more confident.

Sister Afra stops her and tells her to go because she has a headache. Róża obeys and when she leaves Sister Afra lies down with her face to the floor with her arms spread once again.

INT. CHAPEL – MORNING

Adam finishes his confession with a whisper and a sign of cross. He pulls his hat over his head and runs out of the church. FATHER MACIEJ (49) opens the confessional and sighs, looking after the boy. Suddenly, he sees Sister Afra sleeping on the floor. He wakes her up and complains about the burden of knowledge concerning the sins confessed to him.

He shows Sister Afra a box of pills found in "Kacper's" room and explains that they are used to harm boys who think they are girls. He suspects that Afra gave "Kacper" the role because she wanted to help "him." Sister Afra denies and swears she knew nothing of it. Father Maciej also suggests that "Kacper" gets money for the pills by selling drugs – this is according to reports he heard in the confessional and the fact that "Kacper" ended up in the detention center due to possession of drugs.

He orders Afra to take the role of Mary away from "Kacper."

INT. CHAPEL – DAY

Sister Afra conducts a choir of six boys. There is no Róża. Their performance sounds more like a military anthem than a Christmas carol.

INT. CHAPEL – NIGHT

Sister Afra hums cheerful carols while polishing wooden figures of Mary, Joseph, and lamb. Róża enters the chapel, furious that she was kicked out of the play. Afra claims that Father Maciej prematurely arranged for a volunteer to take the role of Mary and he cannot cancel. Róża accuses Afra of betraying her secret and Afra admits that Róża is a frequent topic of conversations in the confessional, and she should change her "behavior". Róża is fuming.

As she heads for the exit, she is attacked with snowballs and stones tossed by a group of boys led by Adam. One of the stones cuts Róża's cheek.

Afra calls Adam inside. She orders both him and Róža to clean up the snow and stones, and finally tells Adam to take Róža to the nurse. Róža wants to stay in the church at all cost, but irritated Afra insists on her leaving.

As Adam and Róža disappear behind the door, the sounds of a fight can be heard. Afra hums to herself, pretending not to hear.

INT. CHAPEL – EVEVING (A WEEK LATER)

Premiere of the nativity play. The chapel is full of boys laughing and talking loudly. Sister Afra plays the guitar, along with the choir dressed as biblical characters and "Mary" holding a doll, singing a cheerful carol.

EXT. COURTYARD – LATER EVENING

Sister Afra leaves the chapel filled with the sounds of organs, and walks into a snowstorm. She crosses the snow-covered courtyard and enters the dorms.

INT. RÓŽA'S ROOM – LATER EVENING

Rap music is coming from Róža's room. When Sister Afra knocks on the door and opens it, she sees Róža lying on her bunk, reading a book. Róža immediately turns off the music. She has stitches under her eye and her face is bruised. There's a calendar full of crossed-out dates over her bed.

Sister Afra sits on Róža's bed and takes out a wafer. She shares with Róža the truth about her experiences with "temptation", "lust for womanhood" and "sin," describing them as similar to Róža's experiences. She speaks with understanding and compassion.

When Róža is silent, Sister Afra continues about "carrying the cross" and "Heavenly Kingdom." She talks about "perversions" and promises help if Róža repents, wafer being her peace offering.

When Róža remains silent, Sister Afra takes out a box of pills presented to her by Father Maciej and talks about their harmful effects. She accuses Róža of selling drugs. Róža denies it. Afra suggests that she will report Róža to the police, reveal her identity, and allow further abuse to happen. Róža announces that she has been recording the conversation this whole time. Sister Afra falls silent.

Róža responds to all the points Afra raised, accusing her of being a bad person. The pained lines on Afra's face smooth out in shock. Róža asks her to leave and Sister Afra obeys. The wafer and pill box are left behind.

Róža grabs the box. She breathes deeply, clutching it. After a moment, she swallows a pill, drinks it down with cola, takes a pen, marks December 24th on the calendar, turns the music on and returns to her book.