

Original

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THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST

by

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from the novel by
Nikos Kazantzakis

Chartoff-Winkler Productions, Inc.
10125 W. Washington Boulevard
Culver City, California

May 26, 1982

DUPLICATED BY
PARAMOUNT P&A

"It is not God who will
save us -- it is we who
will save God, by battling,
by creating and transmuting
matter into spirit."

-- Nikos Kazantzakis

Saviors of God

1

EXT. NAZARETH - DAY

Seen from above: JESUS, the son of Mary, 28 years-old, lies on a scrubby hillock under an olive tree.

The mid-morning sun shines on his clean-shaven face. He is dreaming:

JESUS (V.O.)

The pain starts just above the neck. It feels as if an old man has snuck up and grabbed me from behind. His fingers slip underneath the skin and work, claw, their way up the back of my neck. Then the real pain begins. Each finger digs into the soft matter behind my brain, and then strain across the top of my head toward my eyes. Just before they reach the eyes, they dig down...

Jesus wakens. He looks around, holding his head.

JESUS (V.O.)

(continuing)

I remembered I had to make a cross.

CUT TO:

2

INT. CARPENTER'S WORKSHOP - DAY

Jesus shapes a long piece of timber with an adze.

His patched tunic rests on the workbench. The white plaster-and-brick walls are hung with the tools of Jesus' trade: saws, hammers, rasps and measuring squares. Two small windows let in light and breeze from the village.

His face is etched by lines caused by thinking too much. Brain fever.

A nail-studded belt hangs from a hook above his head. The belt is speckled with dried blood.

JESUS (V.O.)

At first I fasted for three months. Then I whipped myself before sleeping. At first it worked, then the headaches returned.

Jesus wipes wood shavings from his sweaty chest. He hears a NOISE from outside. Frightened, he looks toward the door:

(CONTINUED)

2

CONTINUED:

JESUS (V.O.)

(continuing)

Who is it? Who are you? Why are you following me?

JUDAS, 30, blacksmith, bursts into the room. The door RATTLES on its wood hinges. Jesus goes back to work.

Judas' face is ablaze with wild red hair, beard and moustache. His bulging forearms are dirtied by grease, burnt by fire. He belongs to the Sicarri ("assassins") the terrorist wing of the Zealots, a radical Jewish political organization. His presence is frightening.

JUDAS

I thought I'd find you here. Aren't you ashamed? The carpenters from Cana and Capernaum refuse to make a cross for a Zealot, but you get up and throw yourself into it like a madman. Where's your pride?

Jesus, silent, backs away.

JUDAS

(continuing)

What if the Messiah were to come now and find you doing this?

Jesus returns to his adze. He says quietly:

JESUS

Leave me alone, Judas. I must work.

JUDAS

Aren't you ashamed?

JESUS

(softly)

No.

JUDAS

You've seen them hanging there for days, skin falling off their bodies. Crying night after night. Our prophets. Because of the Romans and men like you.

A migraine moves across Jesus' face. He winces:

JESUS

No, I don't have any pride. I don't go to Synagogue. I disobey the commandments. I work on the Sabbath.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: (2)

JUDAS

And who will pay for your sins?

JESUS

I don't know. I'm struggling.

Judas, disgusted, calls to the crowd outside.

JUDAS

Come here! Look at the traitor!
Look at the cross-maker.

The crowd jeers. Jesus resumes his task.

CUT TO:

3 EXT. CARPENTER'S WORKSHOP - DAY (LATER)

A CENTURION pushes his way through the crowds gathered outside the white-washed buildings. He is sickened by the foul-smelling Jewry.

Jesus stands outside his workshop hewing a cyprus cross. A semi-circle of spiteful Israelites surrounds him. The Centurion approaches:

CENTURION

You ready?

(as Jesus nods)

Com'on.

Jesus takes the nail-studded belt from its hook and buckles it around his waist. The Centurion helps Jesus heft the cross-beam to his shoulders. The Centurion leads Jesus through a gauntlet the crowd has formed from the village to a rocky hill outside Nazareth.² Ahead, six Roman soldiers lead the protesting ZEALOT. Two mounted soldiers flank the group.

The Zealot, crazed by fear, possessed by God, calls out to anyone who will listen:

ZEALOT

Stand up Israelites! Now's the
time of Judgement! Yahweh is counting
everyone! Stand, be counted!

The Zealot's hands are tied behind him. His clothes are torn and bloody, his long hair and grey beard matted with blood and sweat.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

Judas insinuates his way into a group of townspeople. Fearful of the Romans, he speaks under his breath:

JUDAS

How long are we going take this?
Can we let the Romans kill anyone
who opens his mouth? When are we
going be men? When will we be Jews?

No one pays attention to Judas. Seeing this, he withdraws.

The villagers heap abuse on Jesus. PETER and JAMES are in the crowd.

MARY, 56, mother of Jesus, pushes her way through the crowd. She stands in front of Jesus, trying to hold back the crowd with her arms. She calls out:

MARY (MOTHER OF JESUS)

Forgive my son! He's crazy! He
doesn't know what he's doing. He
has problems. Ever since he was a
baby. He's not well in the head.

The crowd hoots her into silence. Jesus, turning his eyes from her, trudges forward. The CENTURION follows close behind.

As they near the crucifixion site, another woman, MARY MAGDALENE, 25, approaches Jesus. She wears brightly colored clothes; her lips and cheeks are painted like a prostitute. The villagers revile her as she passes.

She walks alongside Jesus, staring him in the face. The color flows from Jesus' face: his resolve nearly melts with it.

JESUS

Magdalene. Who told you to come?

MAGDALENE

You thought you could forget me.
You never will.

Jesus' mind goes back to a day the previous year.

CUT TO:

4 FLASHBACK - MAGDALA - DAY

A wedding feast in the lake village of Magdala. A long table is spread with fresh fruit, cheeses, bread and wine.

(CONTINUED)

4

CONTINUED:

MARY MAGDALENE'S FATHER proposes a toast:

MAGDALENE'S FATHER

Join me. A toast to the engagement
of my first daughter, Mary, and
Jesus of Nazareth.

The celebrants raise their cups in a toast. Mary, Jesus'
mother, beams.

Away from the others, Jesus and Mary Magdalene speak.

JESUS

I'll return. I promise.

MAGDALENE

I don't understand.

JESUS

I can't marry. God won't let me.
He's pursuing me.

MAGDALENE

That's not God, it's the devil.
(holds his head)
Jesus, you need a woman.

JESUS

I must be alone. He comes at night
into my head. God's angry with me.

He pushes her away.

MAGDALENE

Are you serious? What about me?
What will become of me? No one
will have me.

Jesus turns and walks away.

CUT TO:

5

EXT. NAZARETH - CRUCIFIXION SITE - DAY

Magdalene spits in Jesus' face:

MAGDALENE

Cross-maker!

Jesus lowers his face.

The Zealot's voice rings out:

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

ZEALOT

Children, have faith in the God of Israel! Don't be afraid. Rome is in smoke. Remember the Maccabees, remember how they threw out the Greeks! In the same way we'll throw out the Romans! There is only one God of Hosts!

The Zealot has reached the crucifixion site: a rocky, flint covered mound. The soldiers wait for the cross.

Children throw pebbles at Jesus as he approaches the Zealot. The Roman guards brace themselves for violence.

Jesus sets the cross down beside the Zealot. The guards wrestle the Zealot to the ground.

Mary, unable to contain herself, bursts through the crowd:

MARY (MOTHER OF JESUS)

Jesus! My son! Get away from here!

The guards move toward her. Peter and ANOTHER MAN help the women take her away before the Romans can arrest her. Judas, sickened by this spectacle, walks away.

The guards place the Zealot on the cross and tie his arms. Jesus, moving the weges, readies the hole for the cross.

The Magdalene throws herself at the Zealot's feet:

MAGDALENE

Be brave!

One of the calvarymen drives her back with his horse. There will be no revolt today.

The guards prepare to drive the nails into the Zealot's hands. A hush comes over the crowd.³

The spike is placed in the Zealot's palm. The hammer raised.

Metal hits metal: the spike pierces the upraised hand. The Zealot's scream (almost ecstatic) is echoed by the crowd.

Blood spatters; a drop falls on Jesus' lips.

CUT TO:

6

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF NAZARETH - DAWN

Jesus, without staff or sandals, walks quickly across a grassy plain northeast of Nazareth. Although much of the "lake district" of Galilee is rocky and barren today, it was not so in Jesus' time. Then it was a fertile and pleasant valley, the treasure of the Mid-East. It was later de-nuded by the Turks. Behind Jesus, Nazareth stirs to life.

Jesus leans his body into the wind as he reaches the crest of a low ridge:

JESUS (V.O.)

If I take the goat's path south to
bypass Magdala and Tiberias. Traders
from East and West go out of their
way to drink and whore and...⁴

Jesus watches a small caravan headed down the hills toward the sea. He shakes these thoughts from his mind.

JESUS (V.O.)

(continuing)

This is the happiest moment of my life.
I've always felt something was after me.
I must be as stupid as everyone says.
God only wanted me to join him in the
desert. He waits in a well at the Monastery.

Jesus skips for joy as he walks:

JESUS (V.O.)

Why would he want someone as stupid as
me? Thank you!

He sings a psalm as he goes:

JESUS

"The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad'
let the distant shores rejoice.
Rise up, O Judge of earth;
pay back the proud what they deserve.
How long will the wicked, O Lord, how
long will the wicked be jubilant?"⁵

CUT TO:

7

EXT. SEA OF GENNESARET - MORNING

Jesus walks a hundred yards off the coast of the Sea of Genesaret (today called Galilee). In the water a group of men pull in their nets after a morning of fishing. They are ZEBEDEE, James and John, PHILIP, a shepherd, stands with them.

By American standards, the Sea of Genesaret is quite small: 13 miles long and 8 miles wide. From any point, the opposite shore is visible.

(CONTINUED)

To this day its sweet, clear water is naturally stocked with fish. Because it's located in a pocket in the hills, Gennesaret remains subject to sudden violent storms.

On shore, Judas talks with Peter.

Zebedee, fiftiesh, is the father of James and John. Peter spots Jesus and calls out:

PETER

Look who's here. Hey, Cross-maker!

Jesus glances at them and keeps walking.

PHILIP

(calling out)

You better keep walking. Don't stop here.

ZEBEDEE

Don't bother him. We're all part of the same plan. The fish says, 'God, don't let me get caught.' The fisherman says, 'God, give me fish.' Back to work.

(to Judas)

Hey, Red! You mind your own business, too.

Philip walks over to Peter and Judas and says to Zebedee:

PHILIP

Be careful, Zebedee. He's from the Idumea. Lions still live out there. Don't pick a fight with him.

(to Judas)

What's happening in the plain?

JUDAS

Everything's fine, Philip. The Lord's merciful. In Nazareth, He crucifies prophets. Here, He sends enough rain to ruin a year's crops in one night. In Jerusalem, the Romans squat in the temple.

ZEBEDEE

Shut up. Whatever God does is right.

JUDAS

It is for you. You hire fifty fishermen like slaves and pay them minimum. Then you give to the temple and get God's blessing.

ZEBEDEE

Hey, you got the mark of Cain on you. Now get out!

(CONTINUED)

Judas walks off, calling back to Zebedee:

JUDAS

I wouldn't want to be in your boat
when the Messiah comes.

Philip catches up with him.

PHILIP

Wait. I want to talk to you.

JUDAS

Why now? Were you afraid a few
minutes ago? The King of the Jews
is on his way. Decide what side
you are on.

PHILIP

Help me. I am afraid. But, I
can't stand it anymore.

JUDAS

(moves close to him)

Philip, can you kill?

PHILIP

A man?

JUDAS

What do you think? Sheep?

PHILIP

I killed a bull once, but never a man.

JUDAS

A man's easier.

PHILIP

(hushed)

Are you one of them -- the Zealots?

JUDAS

Don't be afraid. We're fighting for
freedom. The day will come when you
can join us. Do you have a knife?

PHILIP

Yes.

JUDAS

Carry it all the time. These are
hard times.

Judas opens his shirt revealing a double-edged dagger.

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED: (3)

JUDAS

(continuing)

Yesterday the brotherhood condemned
the traitor. The lot fell to me.

PHILIP

The cross-maker?

JUDAS

(nods)

Keep your mouth shut. Think about
what I've said. The day will come
when we will need you.

PHILIP

How will I know?

Judas turns to leave:

JUDAS

Don't be in a hurry. You're not
one of the brothers yet.

CUT TO:

8 EXT. GALILEE - DAY

Jesus passes two PEASANT GIRLS reaping in an open field.
Their partially open dresses reveal their sweaty breasts.

As Jesus averts his eyes, one of the girls calls to him:

FIRST PEASANT GIRL

Hungry?

SECOND PEASANT GIRL

(gesturing)

There's water and bread in the house.

(as Jesus declines)

We keep a loaf for travelers. We
call it the grasshopper's bread.

The First Girl points to a distant village:

FIRST PEASANT GIRL

But if you want love, go to Magdala.

Both Girls giggle. Their sexuality frightens Jesus:

JESUS

No, I must keep going.

Jesus walks quickly away. The Girls turn to each other
and laugh again.

9 LATER - JESUS

walks along the seashore. Hearing FOOTSTEPS, he stops abruptly. Turns and looks:

JESUS (V.O.)

Who's that? Who's following me?

Seeing nothing. Jesus starts again. The FOOTSTEPS return -- LOUDER.

JESUS (V.O.)

Is that you?

He clutches his head, collapses to his knees in pain:

JESUS (V.O.)

Magdalene! Magdalene!

CUT TO:

10 EXT. MAGDALA - DAY

Jesus walks through the narrow streets of Magdala a fish-market village on the Sea of Gennesaret, which also serves as a rest spot for caravans and traders en route from the Indias to Tyre and Sidon.⁶

The streets are crowded with camels, donkeys and traders of all descriptions: Mongols on horseback, Afghans laden with rugs and blankets, Nubian slaves following their Greek and Roman masters.⁷

Jesus pushes his way through a crowd as he reaches the home of Mary Magdalene. A row of camels, horses and donkeys stand outside. Jesus enters.

As Jesus enters, A NAZARENE calls to him:

NAZARENE

Ah, Carpenter, you've come to worship?

The man laughs and moves on.

CUT TO:

11 EXT. MARY MAGDALENE'S COURTYARD - DAY

A camel sleeps by the well in the center of the courtyard. Jesus latches the door behind him.

A dozen traders and merchants are seated on benches around the courtyard; each waits his turn with the Magdalene.

(CONTINUED)

11 CONTINUED:

They have come from the four corners of the earth. Side by side sit a Bedouin in a long white jellab, a young Indian nobleman with gold bands around his ankles, a fat green-turbaned TURK.

The hot sun beats down on them all. Each sweats, looks impatiently from side to side, engages in small talk. How much are slaves selling for in Alexandria and Damascus? What is the trading price of cinnamon and pepper?

A short Bedouin emerges from Magdalene's house. He passes through the courtyard without glancing to either side.

The next in line, an old Jew, enters Magdalene's door. The Turk calls to him:

TURK
Hurry up, old man. Don't take all
day!

The others join in laughter.

CUT TO:

12 LATER - THE SUN

is waning. Three merchants wait with Jesus. An old woman passes through selling bread, dates and wine.

An Egyptian emerges from the Magdalene's house. Another man gets up. Jesus defers to him.

13 LATER - IT'S DARK

Jesus sits alone. The last customer closes the courtyard door.

Jesus stands, enters Magdalene's house.

CUT TO:

14 INT. MAGDALENE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jesus steps into the dark, amber-lit room.

Mary, lies naked on a stack of blankets, covered with the sweat of all nations. Facing the wall, she calls out in a hoarse voice:

MAGDALENE
Is there anyone else?

Jesus stops in the middle of the room, unable to go further.

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED:

Mary turns and recognizes Jesus. She instinctively pulls the blanket over her nakedness.

MAGDALENE

What are you doing here?

JESUS

I want you to forgive me.

The Magdalene doesn't understand.

JESUS

I've done a lot of wrong things. I'm going to the desert to be cleansed. The worst things I've done are to you. Forgive me.

MAGDALENE

Ah, now I get it. You sit out there all day with the 'customers'. Then you come in here with your head down. La-te-ta. It ain't that easy. I ain't gonna forgive you just 'cause you wanna be forgiven.

JESUS

(falls to his knees)

It's my fault, but I'll pay the debt.

MAGDALENE

You bleat like an animal. Lift your head up and face the truth. You want the same as the others. But you can't admit it, so you blame me. I pity you, Jesus. I detest you.

Jesus, his head bowed low, starts to weep:

JESUS

You're full of the devil. Please, can't you see that?

Tears fall from Jesus' cheeks. Magdalene sits up, puts her arm on his shoulder:

MAGDALENE

Don't you understand? A woman is like a wounded doe. All she can do is lick her wounds. That is her only joy.

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED: (2)

14

JESUS

(looks at her)

Don't you remember when we were children?

Mary's eyes are also wet:

MAGDALENE

Yes, I remember. I pity you. I detest you. Every time I see you my heart breaks.

(starts to get up)

Look the other way. I'm naked.

Mary stands and puts a dress on.

CUT TO:

15 LATER

Mary takes a casserole from the fire, pours it into a bowl and hands it to Jesus with a barley roll.

Jesus, starved, bites into the bread:

MAGDALENE

Is that the way you eat? Without saying grace? Don't you think you oughta thank God for giving you bread, beans and whores?

The bread sticks in Jesus' throat:

JESUS

Why do you hate me? Why do you tease me? Let bygones be bygones. Forgive me.

MAGDALENE

Stop whining. Forgiveness isn't given, it's taken.

Jesus eats. Mary looks at him tenderly. She touches his face.

MAGDALENE

Yes, I remember when we were children. When you were three and I was one.

(Jesus does not respond)

I remember when we laid under the tree together. There were three steps leading to your house. I'd watch you trying to climb. I wanted to help you but...

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED:

14

Magdalene is coming on to him. He is her one, her only, her lifetime love. No matter what he does, she will never stop loving him.

Jesus is afraid; he knows her power -- and his weakness.

JESUS

Stop!

He stands and walks over to the fire.

MAGDALENE

I never felt so much tenderness
toward anyone as felt for you then...

JESUS

(his head in his hands)
Adonai! God, help me!
(to Magdalene)
I'm thinking about God. I must
leave...

His voice is strangled, heartbroken.

MAGDALENE

Please stay. That is, if you will
condescend to share a prostitute's
shabby room.

(Jesus doesn't respond)
It's cold. Sleep by the fire.

Jesus walks to the door:

JESUS

I can't stay.

MAGDALENE

Don't worry. I won't tempt you.
I won't touch your precious virginity.

JESUS

I'm sorry.

Jesus leaves. The door rattles against the jamb. A moment after he exits, Mary Magdalene sinks her head into the blankets, sobbing.

CUT TO:

16 EXT. MONASTERY - DAY

Jesus walks hurriedly toward a walled desert commune. The landscape is now barren, and wild. In the distance, sheer cliffs ascend from a sandy plain.

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED:

In Christian times, these communes were called monasteries; but these pre-Christian outposts lacked the doctrinal simplicity and ascetic commitment of the later Catholic monasteries. They were simply groups of religious men living together to meditate, do good works and preserve the Torah and other religious documents.⁸

Jesus knocks on the main door. He waits anxiously as the ABBOT⁹ opens the door.

JESUS

Thank God. I thought I'd never make it. Please let me in. I'm safe now.

The Abbot, taken back, lets Jesus in.

CUT TO:

17 EXT. MONASTERY MONTAGE - DAY

-- Jesus, now bearded, copies scrolls with other acolytes.

-- Jesus works the commune garden.

CUT TO:

18 INT. JESUS' CELL - NIGHT

Jesus sleeps on a woven mat.

He hears a HISSING SOUND. His eyes open, he sits up.

A snake emerges from a hole in the wall and slithers across the earthen floor. Another snake follows it. The snakes coil around each other and copulate.

Jesus sits up, his back to the wall, watching:

JESUS (V.O.)

Why now after all this time? So this is sex. Men and women coupling. This is why they were thrown out of Paradise.

(watches the snakes)

But everything is of God. And everything has two meanings, one obvious, one hidden.¹⁰ What are they telling me?

He looks at one of the snakes. It speaks to him in Mary Magdalene's voice:

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

SNAKE/MAGDALENE

Jesus, I forgive you.

The snakes change color as they coil. Is this real -- or a vision? The question doesn't occur to Jesus. Nor would it to his contemporaries. They lived in a time which accepted healings, miracles, stigmata and visions as extensions of the natural world.

Jesus grabs his chest; the snakes hiss inside his breast.

JESUS (V.O.)

Leave me alone.

Jesus breathes a sigh of relief. The Abbot stands in the door. Jesus looks up. The snakes are gone.

ABBOT

What's wrong?

Jesus doesn't answer. The Abbot puts his fingers to Jesus' lips.

JESUS

They're gone.

ABBOT

Yes, they've fled.

JESUS

Where?

ABBOT

And now you must leave too.

JESUS

What?

ABBOT

The snakes came from you. Now you must leave too. Go into the villages. Stand and speak.

JESUS

To who?

ABBOT

To anyone who will listen.

JESUS

And say what?

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED: (2)

ABBOT

Don't worry about that. Just open your mouth. Do you love mankind?

JESUS

I see men and I feel sorry for them, nothing else.

ABBOT

That's enough. It's time for you to leave.

JESUS

That's why I was sent here?

ABBOT

I don't know.

CUT TO:

19 EXT. DESERT MONASTERY - NIGHT

A full moon illuminates the walled enclave.

CUT TO:

20 INT. JESUS' CELL - NIGHT

A palm-sized lamp burns as Jesus straightens his room. His few possessions are neatly laid out for travel.

He hears a HISSING NOISE outside the room. Stops. Listens.

He cautiously opens the door and steps into the corridor.

CUT TO:

21 INT. MONASTERY CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Jesus strains to see:

JESUS

Hello?

Suddenly an arm grabs Jesus from behind and throws him against the wall.

Judas stands in front of him, panting, his double-edged dagger in his hand. His red face glistens with anger.

JUDAS

Crucifier!

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED:

JESUS

Judas? Is that you?

JUDAS

Welcome. I've come to kill you.
I hissed and you came.

Judas pushes Jesus inside the cell.

CUT TO:

22 INT. JESUS' CELL - NIGHT

Judas locks the door behind him. He throws the 'elbow key'
across the room.

JUDAS

Did you hear me? Don't start
crying. Get ready.

Jesus, composed, stands across the room.

JESUS

I am ready.

JUDAS

Don't make any noise. Don't call
for help.

JESUS

I'm happy to see you, Judas. It
wasn't you that hissed. It was
God. Can't you see? This is
perfect. Tonight, I was cleansed.
I'm tired of wrestling with God;
I'm tired of living.

(opens his tunic)

Here's my neck. Cut it with your
knife.

Judas backs off. He is disgusted by the sight of Jesus'
bare neck. He has come here to fight like a man. To spill
blood in a struggle. He puts his dagger to Jesus' neck:

JUDAS

Why don't you resist? What kind
of man are you? Fight!

JESUS

(calm)

Why? What you want, I want -- and
God must want it too, because that's
why he brought us together.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED:

JUDAS

(takes his
knife down)

I put a knife to your neck and
you don't blink. What's going on?

JESUS

Think whatever you want.

JUDAS

(studies him
a second)

Okay. You may think I'm just a
stupid blacksmith. But you talk
-- I'll understand. Who are you?
What do you want? What are all
these stories which follow you;
a flowering staff, a lightning
flash, the voices you hear, the
fainting spells which seize you?
What's your secret?

JESUS

Pity.

JUDAS

Pity for who? Yourself? For
Israel? Is that it? Are you
tortured by Israel's suffering?

JESUS

Pity for man.

JUDAS

Man! The Greeks who slaughtered
us -- they were men, weren't they?
And the Romans -- they're men, too.
Don't pity man, pity Israel. The
rest can go to Hell.

JESUS

I feel pity for donkeys, sparrows...

JUDAS

And ants? I suppose you feel pity
for them, too?

JESUS

Yes. Everything's a part of God.
When I look into the ant, into his
shiny black eye, I see God.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: (2)

JUDAS

You don't fear death?

JESUS

Why should I? Death isn't a door
which closes; it's a door which
opens. It opens and you enter.

Judas, confused, lowers his knife:

JUDAS

If I don't kill you, what will you
do?

JESUS

I don't know. I want to speak to
others.

JUDAS

What are you going to say?

JESUS

(shrugs)

I'll just open my mouth and God
will do the talking.

Judas wavers between confusion and anger. He looks at Jesus:
he sees a GLOW behind his head. He no longer has any taste
for this task.

JESUS

What are you waiting for Judas?

JUDAS

Who are you? Maybe you're the one
who will make the people rise up
against the Romans. Maybe you're
the one we've been waiting for.

JESUS

Maybe God didn't send you to kill
me. Maybe he sent you here to
follow me. I am ready to be killed;
I'm also ready to live. Decide.

Judas is in a quandry:

JUDAS

Don't be in such a rush. It's a
long night.

(pause)

You're a strange one.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: (3)

JUDAS (CONT'D)

I'll tell you what I'm going to do.
I'm going to sleep down here by the
door and think about it. You turn
your head away from me. I need
more time to think.

Jesus lies on his mat, his face to the wall. Judas sits,
his back to the door, thinking. He puts his knife away.

CUT TO:

23 EXT. GALILEE - DAY

Judas and Jesus walk across the plain toward Magdala. A
wind blows across the Sea of Gennesaret. On the hillside,
the flowers -- red anemones and white narcissus -- are in
bloom.

Jesus, bearded, is dressed in monastery whites. For the
first time he looks like familiar Jesus of romantic paint-
ings. The meager possessions are wrapped in cloth.

Judas and Jesus appear to have come to an understanding.

CUT TO:

24 EXT. MAGDALENE'S HOUSE - DAY

Zebedee, James, John, Philip and two others approach the
house. Two camels, their hampers packed, are tied outside.
The buildings are constructed of wood and black basalt rock.

ZEBEDEE

(points to camel)

Can you believe this? It's bad
enough we live in a whorehouse,
but she, a Jew, works on Sabbath.
While our women can't even look in
a mirror, she makes 'love' with
Romans.

Zebedee's voice is raised. A crowd starts to gather. TABAS,
a Zealot and trouble-maker, joins with two companions.

TABAS

Yeah, we come back from synagogue and
and look the other way.

A WOMAN stands across the narrow street:

WOMAN OF MAGDALA

You ought to see the things I see.
I'm too poor to move, so I have to
put up with it.

24 CONTINUED:

ZEBEDEE

You shouldn't move.

TABAS

The whore should move.

TABAS' COMPANION

Let's put an end to it.

Tabas and his companions bang on Magdalene's door. The growing crowds egg them on.

CUT TO:

25 EXT. MAGDALA - DAY

Jesus and Judas enter the village. The streets are quiet. It is Sabbath. Ahead, they hear a commotion.

JESUS

What is it?

JUDAS

Let's find out.

They hurry through the streets until they come to a clearing. A mob has assembled around a shallow pit.

Judas, the man of action, pushes his way through the crowd. Jesus follows.

Mary Magdalene lies in the pit, her knees and elbows are bloody from being dragged down the street. Terrified.

The crowd, in a festive mood, hurl insults and spit at her. Children collect rocks for a stoning.

JESUS

(to Judas; urgent)

It's Magdalene.

Jesus steps into the center of the pit, stands next to Magdalene and holds up his hands:

JESUS

Stop!

First there's a stunned silence, then a buzz runs through the crowd. No one is more surprised than Judas. He watches closely.

In the crowd Philip and Peter have joined Andrew and John. Tabas calls out:

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED:

TABAS

Get out of the way. She violated
the Sabbath. She must pay the
price.

A small anonymous stone hits Magdalene's hip. She grabs
Jesus' leg.

MAGDALENE

Help!

ZEBEDEE

(chants)

Death! Death! Death!

Jesus walks in a circle around Magdalene. He stares her
accusors in the eye.

JESUS

Listen to me! Look me in the face.
Which of you has not stolen, lied,
murdered? Let the one without sin
throw the first stone.

The crowd is frozen. Zebedee picks up a large rock.

ZEBEDEE

I'm not afraid. I'm innocent.

JESUS

(steps up to him)

Don't make a mistake, Zebedee.
There is a God. Don't tell me
you've never cheated an employee,
snuck into a widow's bedroom at
night? Aren't you afraid God will
paralyze you if you lift that stone?
That your hand will wither and hang
at your side?

The old man is suddenly filled with fear and superstition.
Zebedee drops the rock and runs. The sympathies of the mob
shift to Jesus.

Judas is heartened. Perhaps this is the leader to unite
the people.

Tabas and his companions start toward Jesus, but Judas steps
between them, braced for action. The crowd, afraid of Judas,
backs away.

Jesus helps Mary to her feet. Judas calls to the crowd:

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED: (2)

JUDAS

Come, follow the rabbi.¹² He will speak.

Judas, Jesus and Magdalene walk away from the pit toward the outskirts of town. A large segment of the crowd follows. One VILLAGER whispers to another:

VILLAGER

What's happening? Is Magdalene getting married?

CUT TO:

26 EXT. HILLSIDE IN MAGDALA - DAY

Jesus and Judas lead the curious crowd up a steep, green hillside. In the distance the sun is low over Mt. Hebron.

Magdalene sits near Jesus' feet; Judas stands in the background. The crowd waits to hear what Jesus has to say. Jesus looks out over the ragamuffin villagers, the peaceful countryside:

JESUS (V.O.)

This is the moment I've always feared. There is so much to say. God has so many miracles.

A pause. The words burst out:

JESUS

Brothers! I'm glad to see you. Let me tell you a story. A man, a sower, was sowing in his field. One seed fell on the road -- the birds ate it. Another fell on stones and died. But another took root, sprouted, became grain and fed many people.

(pause)

Don't you have ears? Do you hear me?

ZEBEDEE

(beligerent)

I got ears, but I don't understand. Be clearer.

Jesus thinks, then says softly:

JESUS

I am the sower.

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED:

ZEBEDEE

God help us! I suppose we're the
stones?

A moment of confusion. Zebedee says to those near him:

ZEBEDEE

Another beggar.

John, an open-faced, fuzzy-cheeked boy about 19, leaves his father and approaches Jesus:

JOHN

Rabbi, tell me. If you are the
sower and we are the stones, what
is the seed?

Jesus is baffled; he has no answer. John repeats the question:

JOHN

What is the seed you offer?

The answer comes to Jesus:

JESUS

Love one another. Love one another!

The crowd whispers: "What did he say?" "Love each other?"

TABAS

That's stupid. We're starving.
Tortured. Hungry. How can hungry
people love each other?

JUDAS

(steps forward)

Yes, 'Rabbi,' is this what I've
been waiting for? Love one another?
I suppose that means love the Romans
too?

JESUS

I used to think God was angry, but
not any more. He used to jump on
my head like a crazy bird with
claws. But then he came to me
like a cool breeze and said, 'Arise'
-- and here I am.

ZEBEDEE

Go to hell!

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED: (2)

TABAS

Pie in the sky.

Jesus, speaking rapidly, goes directly to the social concerns of the mob:

JESUS

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for their stomachs will be filled with bread. Blessed are those who mourn, for God will comfort them. Blessed are the meek, the suffering, for God will give them a kingdom in heaven.

Jesus is now talking like a prophet -- a Zealot.

The dirt-poor villagers are agitated: "Yes, we will get the wealth of the rich; we'll get Israel back."

FIRST VOICE

Let's kill the rich!

SECOND VOICE

Why bother with the rich? Kill the Romans!

JESUS

(protests)

I didn't say death. I said love!

The crowd, incited by rhetoric and hunger, disperses in search of shops to plunder.

ZEBEDEE

(motions to his son)

Come on, let's get out of here.

JOHN

No. Go on without me.

John and Andrew stay behind with Peter, Philip and Judas.

Jesus wipes Mary Magdalene's bloody feet with his tunic.

MAGDALENE

Rabbi. I'll come with you. You need someone to cook and...

JESUS

No. Go back home and be an example.

He helps her to her feet, kisses her forehead.

CUT TO:

27 EXT. SEA OF GENNASARET - DAY

Another day. Jesus leads his little band along the seashore: Peter, John and Andrew walk with Jesus; Judas and Philip follow. Two peasant women, a street urchin and a couple of dogs bring up the rear. They approach Zebedee who mends his nets with James, Nathaniel and two other fishermen.

PHILIP

Hello Zebedee.

ZEBEDEE

(to John)

Where have you been? We've been working all morning.

John steps over to his brother:

JOHN

Come with us. Believe me -- this is for real. Just what we talked about.

PHILIP

(joining in)

You don't have to work for your old man anymore.

JAMES

But I told Nathaniel I would go to his cousin's wedding...

JUDAS

(to Zebedee)

Watch out you'll lose another son.

JESUS

(to James)

Put down your net. I'll make you a fisher of men.

James does not respond. Jesus leads his group down the shore. As they go, Zebedee calls to John:

ZEBEDEE

Where are you going?

ANDREW

(laughing)

To the Kingdom of God!

James watches as they recede. He thinks a moment, drops his net and runs to follow them.

CUT TO:

28 EXT. GALILEE - NIGHT

The disciples sleep in an olive grove. Jesus, awake, sits on a nearby knoll, looking into the night.

Judas walks over and sits next to him:

JUDAS

Excuse me, Rabbi. I'd like to talk.
(sits)

I don't feel comfortable with the others. I mean, they're good men, but weak. They couldn't defend themselves, much less fight for you. I'm a rough man -- hard but honest. Who I love, I die for; who I hate, I kill.

(Jesus doesn't answer)

I can even kill someone I love if he does the wrong thing. Do you understand?

JESUS

Yes. I understand.

JUDAS

The other day when you said turn the other cheek to the man that hit you, I didn't like that. I'm a free man, not a slave. I don't turn my cheek to anyone.

JESUS

I want freedom, too.

JUDAS

You do? You want freedom for Israel?

JESUS

I want freedom for the soul.

JUDAS

Un-ah. There's no freedom for the soul without freedom for the body. You know that. The Romans come first.

JESUS

The soul is first.

Andrew, sleepy-eyed, walks over, concerned:

JUDAS

Who's there?

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED:

ANDREW

It's me, Andrew.

JESUS

Go back to sleep. Judas and I are having a private talk.

Andrew turns and leaves. Judas waits until he is out of earshot:

JUDAS

You know the Zealots commissioned me to kill you.

JESUS

Why did you stop?

JUDAS

I decided to wait.

JESUS

For what?

JUDAS

To see if you were the one we're waiting for. I don't want to kill Israel's Savior -- not me. I said, 'Wait, he may not even know it yet.' But don't listen to the others -- they're sheep. It's you and I who will decide who's burning you up -- God or Satan. If you waver from Israel's path, I'll kill you. Don't be fooled.

JESUS

How can we know? I was full of hate when I saw them torturing Magdalene. Yet I opened my mouth and out came the word 'love'. Help me. What should I do?

JUDAS

(thinks)

We'll go to Judea and see John the Baptist. He stands out every day shouting, 'He is coming, He is coming.' Let him decide.

JESUS

(nods)

Okay.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED: (2)

JESUS (CONT'D)

(a beat)

I'm afraid, Judas. Stay here.

Judas spreads his blanket on the ground.

CUT TO:

29 EXT. GALILEE - NIGHT

Later that night. Judas is asleep. Jesus awakens. Jesus surveys the still black night. He pulls an apple from his tunic, picks a seed from it and tosses it to the ground.

A tree grows immediately from the seed. Ripe, red apples grow from every branch.

CUT TO:

30 EXT. CANA - DAY

Jesus and his disciples approach Cana, a village west of Magdala and Gennesaret. His "merry band" has swelled to a dozen or so, women and children included.

A celebration is going on in town: Nathaniel's cousin is getting married. Jesus and his followers are all in good spirits: it's a festive occasion. ¹³

Village children run away, announcing Jesus' arrival. He's become a local celebrity in the past several weeks.

Nathaniel greets James on the outskirts of town:

NATHANIEL

Hello, James. You've come for my cousin's wedding?

JAMES

If we're welcome. Nathaniel, this is Jesus from Nazareth, our Rabbi.

NATHANIEL

Yes, we've heard about you. Will you bless the couple?

(Jesus nods)

There's gonna be a big party tonight.

CUT TO:

31 EXT. CANA - NIGHT

A half-dozen virgins, freshly-bathed, carrying lit lamps, sing a wedding psalm.

(CONTINUED)

31 CONTINUED:

Jesus exchanges small talk with a group waiting for the ceremony to begin.

Mary Magdalene steps next to Jesus. She looks like a changed woman: simply dressed, radiant.

MAGDALENE

I heard you were here.

Jesus takes her hand. An OLD MAN says to Mary:

OLD MAN

You don't belong at a wedding.
We're here to celebrate purity.

JESUS

Listen to me. I'll tell you a story. There were ten virgins waiting for the groom. Five filled their lamp; five didn't. The groom was late and the five foolish virgins went to get more oil. He let the wise virgins in and locked the door. When the foolish virgins came they begged to get in. What would you have done?

The Old Man doesn't respond.

JESUS

(to Nathaniel)

What would you have done?

NATHANIEL

(thinks)

I guess I woulda let them in.

JESUS

You're right. That's what the groom did. He said, 'This is a feast. Let everyone eat and drink.'

(points to Mary)

God's kingdom is large enough for everyone.

OLD MAN

Nazarene, that's against the law.

JESUS

The Law is against my heart.

32 LATER

The ceremony is over. Jesus, the disciples and the other guests are laughing, drinking and swapping stories. (Jesus' hand rests on Magdalene's shoulder.) The wine has loosened everyone's spirits.

Everyone but Nathaniel: he's upset.

JAMES

What's wrong?

NATHANIEL

I didn't buy enough wine. More people came and stayed late and now we're out.

Jesus points to several large vats:

JESUS

What's in those?

NATHANIEL

Water.

JESUS

No. It's wine.

NATHANIEL

Com'on.

JESUS

Go over. Check it out. It's wine.

Nathaniel goes over to a vat, lifts the lid, dips his finger inside and tastes:

NATHANIEL

You're right. It is wine.

JAMES

(as a joke)

It's a miracle.

Everyone laughs.

CUT TO:

33 EXT. RIVER OF JORDAN - DAY

Jesus and his followers reach the edge of the Dead Sea. Sixty miles south of Galilee, it seems like another country. The green hills of Gennesaret have been replaced by barren plains and rocky cliffs. In the background the mountains of Moab are pink against the midday sun.

(CONTINUED)

33 CONTINUED:

Jesus takes Andrew by the arm.

JESUS
(with trepidation)
Where is he? Where's the Baptist?

ANDREW
Ahead, beyond the reeds the river
is calm. Let's go.

JESUS
You're tired. Stay here.

ANDREW
It may be dangerous. I'd better
come.

JESUS
No. I want to go alone.

Jesus walks through the burning heat toward the oasis. Judas, who had been following behind, runs and catches up to him.

JUDAS
You forgot to call me. This is
the big moment. I want to be with
you.

JESUS
Come along.

They walk down a slope. John the Baptist's voice echoes in the distance. They push their way through a mixture of lower class Israelites.¹⁴

Jesus gasps when he first sees THE BAPTIST: a wild man, unkempt, unwashed, dressed in animal skins, he shouts in the wind:

THE BAPTIST
Repent! The day of the Lord has
come! Roll on the crowd, bite the
dust, howl! The Lord says: 'On
this day I shall command the sun
to set at noon; I shall crush the
horns of the new moon and spill
darkness over earth. I shall reverse
your laughter, turn it into tears,
and your songs into lamentations.
I shall blow and all your finery
-- hands, feet, noses, ears, hairs
-- will fall to the ground.'

(CONTINUED)

33 CONTINUED: (2)

He's awesome. Even Judas is taken back. He grabs Jesus:

JUDAS

Master, can't you hear? It's the Messiah.

JESUS

No, the Messiah won't come with an ax in his hand.

Jesus walks ahead; Judas calls to him:

JUDAS

We'll see. Go to him!

Jesus walks slowly toward the Baptist, his eyes fixed on the prophet. The crowd flails and shouts in the manner of modern-day Pentacostalists.

JESUS (V.O.)

Even from behind, I knew I had seen him before. Where? When? Was it a dream? Yes, it was. But he was all dressed in white.

Jesus steps behind the Baptist. John suddenly turns at him:

THE BAPTIST

Who are you? Who?

JESUS

(his voice trembling)
Do you recognize me?

THE BAPTIST

Who are you?

JESUS

Have you read Isaiah, forerunner?
Do you know the prophets?

THE BAPTIST

You're The Chosen One?

JESUS

I don't know.
(demanding)
Tell me.

The Baptist locks around: the crowd wails in SILENT MOTION. A sudden calmness. He starts to shake:

THE BAPTIST

Why have you come?

(CONTINUED)

33 CONTINUED: (3)

JESUS

To be baptized.

THE BAPTIST

I don't dare. If you are the Master,
you should baptize me.

JESUS

I don't know yet. Do your duty.
Baptize me.

Jesus kneels at John's feet. Judas looks on.

CUT TO:

34 EXT. RIVER OF JORDAN - NIGHT

Jesus and the Baptist sit on the dark river bank. A group
of pilgrims camp in the distance.

They are weary from hours of debate:

JESUS

Isn't love enough?

THE BAPTIST

No. The tree is rotten. You must
take the ax and cut it down.

JESUS

If I was a woodcutter, I'd cut; if
I was a fire, I'd burn. But I'm a
heart and I love.

THE BAPTIST

(with evangelical fervor)
What do the prophecies say? 'On
the day of the Lord, blood will
flow from wood, the stones of the
houses will come alive and kill
their owners!' The day of the Lord
is here. I was given the ax, now I
pass it to you.

Jesus, frightened, stands and turns away:

JESUS

No, I cannot. Be patient. I'll go
to the desert. To Idumaea. God
will speak to me there.

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED:

THE BAPTIST

Watch out. God isn't alone out there.
Devils are waiting too -- I know.

The Baptist walks over to Jesus.

JESUS

Goodbye, Baptist.

John kisses Jesus on the mouth.

JESUS (V.O.)

His tongue felt like a burning coal
in my mouth.

THE BAPTIST

Don't be afraid. You are the One.
Two roads open up in front of you:
the road of man, the road of God.
Take the more difficult one. Make
your arms strong. Strike!

Jesus walks away, not looking back.

CUT TO:

35 EXT. IDUMAEA DESESRT - SUNSET

Jesus runs across the desert as if pursued. He stops,
pants, continues.

CUT TO:

36 EXT. DESERT - DAY

The next day. Jesus wanders through the wild, uninhabited
terrain. The sun, like a blast furnace, blows sand into his
face.

He sits beside a large rock:

JESUS (V.O.)

I'm not going any further. This is
it: I'm staying here. I'm a grain
of sand in this desert, God. Can
you see me? I have no weapon but
love.

(draws a circle in
the sand)

I'm not going to leave this circle.
I won't leave until you talk to me.
And not with hums, or thunder or
headaches -- but with a clear human
voice. Tell me which path to take.
Or else let me die here.

FADE OUT.

37 EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

FADE IN. Days have past. The hunger and deprivation are beginning to show on Jesus' face. His clothes are the color or soil.

He hears a sound, looks into the moonlit night: a large SERPENT coils at the edge of the circle.

The Serpent speaks in a half-human, half-animal voice.

SERPENT

I felt sorry for you, Jesus. You were lonely. You cried, 'I don't want to be alone,' so I came.

JESUS

I didn't call you. Who are you?

SERPENT

Your soul.

JESUS

My soul!

SERPENT

You're afraid of being alone. Just like Adam. He called me and I reached into his ribs and gave him a wife.

JESUS

You want me to do wrong.

SERPENT

Do wrong? To love and care for a woman? To have a family -- this is wrong? Why are you trying to save the world? The world' doesn't want to be saved. Find love.

JESUS

I have love.

SERPENT

Look into my eyes, look at my breasts...

The Serpent's voice dissolves into the soft, comforting voice of Mary Magdalene.

SERPENT

... Do you recognize them? Say the word. Nod your head and we'll be in my bed together.

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED:

JESUS

No, no, no.

SERPENT

(compassionately)

Oh, Jesus.

The Serpent suddenly explodes, leaving no trace. Jesus places his head between his legs and begins to sob, as if he has lost a loved one.

FADE OUT.

38 EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

FADE IN. Another week has passed. Jesus' clothes are torn and tattered by the desert winds. He awakens.

JESUS (V.O.)

After ten days the hunger went away.

He hears a sound. A LION stands at the edge of the circle.

LION

Welcome, Jesus. Congratulations. You've overcome the petty temptations of a woman, a family. We're both bigger than that. A woman's not enough, we need the whole world.

JESUS

Who are you?

LION

I am you. I am your heart, your hungry heart which pretends to be humble but wants to conquer the world. I will set my four feet down, one in Babylon, one in Jerusalem, one in Alexandria, the last in Rome.

JESUS

I've never wanted a kingdom on earth. Heaven's good enough for me.

The Lion's voice transforms into Judas':

LION

You lie. You've always wanted power.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED:

LION (CONT'D)

When you were making crosses for the Romans in Nazareth, your head was exploding with dreams of power. You said it was God, but you really wanted to rule others. Now you will.

Jesus, shaking, approaches the Lion.

JESUS

Step into my circle, liar, so I can pull out your tongue.

The Lion steps into the circle, and, as he does, disappears.

FADE OUT.

39 EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

FADE IN. Jesus lies sleeping by the rock. Another week has past. He's a wasted skeleton.

A blinding, hallucinatory light wakes him. An ARCHANGEL stands at the circle's edge. The Angel is a ten-year-old boy, dressed in white with soft wings folded under his arms.

Jesus strains to see through his swollen eyelids:

JESUS

Who are you?

ARCHANGEL

I'm the one you've been waiting for. Remember when you were a child, you cried, 'Make me a God. God, make me a God.'

JESUS

But I was just a child then.

ARCHANGEL

Adonai. You are God. The Baptist told you. Join me in power. We will rule over the living and the dead. You will sit on the throne, I'll sit at your right hand.

Jesus suddenly realizes who he's talking to:

JESUS

Satan!

The ripe tree from Jesus' dream appears behind the Archangel. The Angel offers Jesus an apple.

(CONTINUED)

39

CONTINUED:

Jesus bites into the apple: it turns into blood in his mouth. The blood drips down his chest.

The Archangel's soft feathery wings grow into black, spiked flanges, rising menacingly above his shoulder blades. The tree withers behind him. The boy smiles:

ANGEL

We will meet again.

The Archangel turns and leaves. Jesus picks up a stick at his feet. The stick is an ax.

The Baptist's voice speaks to him:

BAPTIST (V.O.)

The day of the Lord is here. Run
and carry the message: 'I am coming.'

Jesus strikes at the root of the tree with the ax. The sky turns red: there is a deafening thunderbolt followed by a lightning flash.

CUT TO:

40

INT. MARY AND MARTHA'S - DAY

The door opens. An emaciated figure in tattered clothes stands silhouetted in the doorway.

MARY and MARTHA, sisters in their early thirties, turn aghast. Mary sits at a waving loom; Martha near the fire.

JESUS

I'm a foreigner.. From Galilee.
I'm cold and hungry and need rest.

MARTHA

Come in.

MARY

(to Martha)
Lazarus is out. We're alone.
(to Jesus)
Are you a good man?

MARTHA

(to Jesus)
Don't let my sister's fears worry you. I'm Martha, this is Mary. We don't have much, but you're welcome to what we have. Who are you?

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED:

JESUS
Jesus of Nazareth.

He staggers into the room, collapses on the hearth.

CUT TO:

41 EXT. MARY AND MARTHA'S - NIGHT

Night falls on their modest Bethany home.

CUT TO:

42 INT. MARY AND MARTHA'S - NIGHT

Jesus, washed and wearing a new tunic, eats bread and olives. Martha hands him wine flask. Sitting by the fire, they almost look like a family unit.

MARTHA
Speak more. We don't know anything about you.

JESUS
What is there to say?

MARY
Silence doesn't satisfy a woman. Women need a kind word.

MARTHA
Don't listen to her. Not even silence is enough for a woman. She wants a husband in bed at night. She wants a baby to suck her breasts -- but what do men know?

MARY
Do you have a wife?

JESUS
(thinks)
No.

They lapse into silence.

MARY
These are hard times. The King has killed the Baptist.

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED:

42

JESUS

What?

MARTHA

It was at Herod's palace in Tiberius.
The King was drunk. They say he
had the prophet beheaded to satisfy
a girl.

Jesus smashes his forehead against that fireplace.

JESUS

Oh, God. These are the final days.

MARTHA

(unable to hear him)

What?

JESUS

(stands)

I must go.

MARTHA

But you've hardly had time to rest.

MARY

Please stay.

JESUS

It's time to leave.

He stops at the door, smiles compassionately at them:

JESUS

Thank you, Mary, Martha. God
will bless you for your kindness.

(a sad beat)

I wish I could stay.

He closes the door behind him. Martha looks at Mary, down-
cast. A good man had entered their lives, like a miracle.
Now he is gone.

CUT TO:

43 EXT. JERUSALEM TAVERN - NIGHT

Torches light the exterior of a small inn near the Sheeps
Gate. (So named because the sheep were sold here.) 15

CUT TO:

44 INT. TAVERN - NIGHT

The disciples sit around several tables. The INN-KEEPER sleeps on a bed of straw in the corner.

JAMES

Now they say they're going to kill everyone who was baptized.

PHILIP

Nobody told you to get baptized. Serves you right.

PETER

You were baptized, too. Begged for it. So, shut up.

JAMES

I hear the fishing is great in Gennasaret. You just drop the nets in and they fill with fish.

NATHANIEL

I don't know what's happened to my sheep.

PETER

So go back.

JAMES

We promised the Master we'd wait here for him.

NATHANIEL

It's been over a month. He talks to The Baptist, then disappears.

PHILIP

How do we know what The Baptist said?

JAMES

Talk like that will get you a swelled head -- just like the Baptist.

They all laugh. Judas interrupts:

JUDAS

I say we wait.

A momentary silence.

(CONTINUED)

44 CONTINUED:

PETER

I agree with Judas -- and say we
have another drink.

(calls out)

Inn-keeper, wake up! We need
more wine.

The Inn-keeper sleepily obliges. The door opens: Jesus
enters. John sinks to his knees.

JOHN

Master.

JESUS

Thanks for waiting, my dear friends.
It hasn't been a waste of time.

JOHN

What do you mean?

JESUS

Were you baptized?

PETER

Yes.

JESUS

John baptized with water and they
killed him. Now I will baptize
with fire.

JUDAS

Is this the message of the Baptist?

Jesus reaches into his chest and pulls out his own bloody
heart. He offers it at arms length to the disciples.
Blood drips from the ventricles.

JESUS

This is my heart. Please take it.
I lead the way. If you have sheep,
give them away; if you have nets,
let them rot; family, children,
leave them behind. We're on the
march.

Jesus places his heart back in his chest.

JESUS

I once believed in love, now I
carry the ax. Are you with me?

(CONTINUED)

44 CONTINUED: (2)

Judas falls to his knees and kisses Jesus' feet:

JUDAS

Adonai!

The others follow Judas' example.

PETER

You lead, we'll follow.

JESUS

We're going back to Nazareth.
We'll begin our campaign there.

CUT TO:

45 EXT. SAMARIA - DAY

Jesus and his followers (they have grown in number) walk through the Samaritan lowlands. Mts. Gerigim and Ebal lie to the east. 16

The group advances with determination and purpose. Judas walks at Jesus' right; Peter at his left. A cluster of indigent villagers, women and children follow them.

They come upon a makeshift asylum for the insane. The men are housed in a group of low-lying buildings.

The deranged men run toward Jesus, fall at his feet, beg in pitiful jibberish.

Judas and Peter try to ward them off. Jesus is angry -- not at the men, but at the evil spirits that possess them.

He slaps one man, kicks another:

JESUS

Satan! Leave these men alone. Get out!

(points)

Go into those pigs over there.

The insane men grow suddenly calm. The disciples turn to watch as the herd of swine, squealing, run off a cliff and plunge into the ravine.

The insane have returned to their senses. Most are confused, some praise Jesus.

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED:

JESUS

Go to the temple and cleanse yourselves.

That said, Jesus moves on. He doesn't give a second thought to the "miracle" he has performed.

LATER. A BLINDMAN, led by his BROTHER and SISTER, approach Jesus and the disciples. His reputation has spread through the countryside.

SISTER

Mister, welcome. Come to our home.

BROTHER

Adonai.

SISTER

My brother has no sight.

BLIND MAN

Adonai, help me.

Jesus stops. He takes ground herbal powder from his sleeve and mixes it with sand. He spits into the mixture, then applies it to the Blind Man's eyes. He looks upwards and chants:¹⁷

JESUS

Jeremiah, Moses, Elijah, Isaiah -- touch my mouth, touch my lips.

Jesus kisses the man's mud-caked eyes. The clay falls from the Blind Man's eyes. His gruesomely deformed eyes are now normal: he can see.

JESUS

Go to the temple. Tell no one what has happened.

Jesus motions for his disciples to follow. They continue talking among themselves. The Blind Man stands behind, stunned. His Sister embraces him.

CUT TO:

46 EXT. NAZARETH - DAY

Sabbath. The faithful, fresh from synagogue, mill about under the date palms in the manner of churchmen over the centuries.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

These are not common people. On the contrary, they represent the Jewish hierarchy: the severely moral Pharisees, with their belief in afterlife; their rivals, the legalistic Saducees, in collusion with the Romans; and the landowners and shopkeepers who supported the synagogue.¹⁸

There is a commotion. Several of the churchmen point in the direction of Jesus and his band of rabble. Jesus mounts the rocky crucifixion site. He calls out:

JESUS

Brothers! Listen to me. Isaiah cried, 'The spirit of the Lord flowed over me, he chose me to bring good news to the poor, he sent me to set free the slaves and make the blind see.'

The churchmen, curious, gather around.

JESUS

(continuing)

My dear old friends: The prophet was talking about me. God came to me in the desert. He gave me a great secret and told me to bring it to you -- didn't you hear me coming? I ran here first -- to give the news to my hometown. The kingdom of the Lord has come!

Someone from the crowd taunts him:

VILLAGER #1

We hear you do miracles. Do one for us.

JESUS

(impassioned)

Everything is a miracle. Look at the sky, look at the weeds under your feet. The Day of the Lord is here. There are only a few hours left. Are you ready? Call the poor and give them your goods before it is too late. What do you care about your possessions? Your gold and silver will rust and their rust will eat your flesh like fire. You will drown in the sweat of the poor. Look above your heads. The flames of God are already coming down!

(CONTINUED)

46 CONTINUED: (2)

The local burghers boo and laugh.

VILLAGER #2

Who are you, the son of Mary, to tell us about God?

VILLAGER #3

I remember when he made crosses.
(to companion)
Get his brothers to take him away.

JESUS

What are you laughing at? Are you trying to protect your houses and olive trees -- they will all turn to ashes. Ashes!

VILLAGER #2

This is what happens when a man doesn't marry. The semen backs up into his brain.

Someone throws a stone; it grazes Jesus' head, drawing blood.

VILLAGER #4

Go home! You're full of devils.

JESUS

(wiping blood from
his brow)

This is my home!

Peter and Judas rush to Jesus' defense. Judas puts his hand to his dagger.

PETER

Shame on you! What has he done to you?

The soil-colored poor from the slums have begun to gather around. These are the "Am Ha-aretz," the destitute lower classes oppressed by wealthy Jews and Romans alike. They think: Jesus is right. This is the new law. The kingdom of the poor has come.

The rich and poor scuffle, exchanging insults and taunts.

The scene is near chaos when JESUS' BROTHER arrives with some friends. They struggle to take Jesus down hill.

JESUS' BROTHER

Jesus, come with us.

(CONTINUED)

46 CONTINUED: (3)

JESUS

James, you're my brother. Leave
me alone.

Judas draws his dagger. Jesus breaks free of his brother.

JESUS

(to Judas)

Put it away. This is no town for
prophets. We'll go to Jerusalem

(to Thomas)

Blow your horn, we're leaving.

Thomas blows his trumpet as Jesus walks off.

CUT TO:

47 EXT. OUTSIDE NAZARETH - DAY

Jesus and his followers head across the plain toward Samaria.

JESUS (V.O.)

If I could touch every stone, breathe
on every twig, they would rise up
and join me. Jerusalem is falling.
I can feel it.

He turns to Judas who walks at his side:

JESUS

We're going to Jerusalem.

JUDAS

I know.

JESUS

Not the Old Jerusalem, the New
Jerusalem.

JUDAS

A New Jerusalem!

JESUS

Yes, we will build it. See this
silly group of fools, cripples,
jealous, blind, petty -- this is
our army. They will shout and the
Old Jerusalem will fall. God can
endure it no longer.

JUDAS

(looks back)

This isn't much of an army. Remember
the Maccabees. We'll need more men.

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED:

JESUS
God will provide.

Judas and Jesus walk in step. John runs alongside the Master:

JOHN
Master, your mother is here.

JESUS
What?

JOHN
Your mother.

Mary, possessed by maternal frenzy, grabs Jesus' arm:

MARY (MOTHER OF JESUS)
Son, please come home. I'll take care
of you. You're sick but I'll make
you better.

(to others)
Forgive him. Help me take him home.

JESUS
Who are you, woman?

MARY (MOTHER OF JESUS)
(desperate)
Your mother.

JESUS
I have no mother, no brothers.
Only my father who is in heaven.
Get away from me.

He shakes his arm from her grip. Mary falls to her knees
crying. Jesus keeps walking. The disciples follow.

CUT TO:

48 EXT. ALONG THE JORDAN RIVER - DAY

Jesus and his ragtag "army" continue their southward march.
Judas looks with pride at their growing numbers.

Martha and Mary, dressed in black, approach Jesus. He walks
over to them.

MARTHA
Rabbi, forgive us. We heard you
were near. We've walked two days.

(CONTINUED)

48 CONTINUED:

MARY

Our brother Lazarus is very sick.
We heard you've performed miracles,
healed the sick, made cripples
walk, blind...

JESUS

(interrupts)

Take me to him.

CUT TO:

49 EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF BETHANY - DAY

As Jesus, Martha, Mary and the others approach Bethany, a
village WOMAN runs to meet them. 19

BETHANY WOMAN

Oh, Mary, Martha, you've come too
late. Lazarus is dead. He was
buried three days ago.

Martha falls into Jesus' arms; He consoles her.

JESUS

Take me to the tomb.

CUT TO:

50 EXT. LAZARUS' TOMB - SUNSET

Jesus and a select group of disciples approach a row of
tombs carved into the hillside. The Bethany Woman points
out Lazarus' tomb. It is sealed by a large boulder.

Jesus instructs Judas and Peter:

JESUS

Roll away the stone.

They elicit the help of two others and lean their shoulders
to the difficult task.

JESUS (V.O.)

What am I going to do?

The stone moves: a hideous stench gusts from the tomb.
Some disciples turn their faces; others put handkerchiefs
to their noses.

(CONTINUED)

50 CONTINUED:

Jesus stands at the entrance of the tomb and yells. His voice echoes: a wild, strange cry, like something from another world.

JESUS

Lazarus! In the name of the prophets,
in the name of Jeremiah and my Father,
the most Holy God, I demand that you
rise and come out!

At first, nothing. Then, slowly, a dessicated figure emerges from the tomb. He is wrapped head to toe in white burial cloth. The crowd gasps.

Slowly, and with great effort, LAZARUS unwraps the soiled linen from his face. Jesus is frightened by his own miracle.

JESUS (V.O.)

Is the power of God so great? If
it can raise the dead, can it also
move mountains? Can it destroy
Rome? Tear the world in two?

Strips of rotting flesh drip off Lazarus' face. The disciples step back, astounded. Lazarus smiles at Jesus:

LAZARUS

Adonai!

Jesus embraces him.

JESUS (V.O.)

God help me.

CUT TO:

51 INT. MARY AND MARTHA'S - NIGHT

Mary, Martha and family friends minister to the feeble Lazarus. He seems confused, not quite sure if he is dead or alive.

Jesus passes them and walks outside.

CUT TO:

52 EXT. MARY AND MARTHA'S - NIGHT

Judas, Peter and John are sitting at a table in the garden. Jesus joins them, interrupting their small talk.

JESUS

Peter, Judas, tell me, who do people
think I am?²⁰

(CONTINUED)

52 CONTINUED:

PETER

Huh?

JESUS

You know -- what do they say?

JOHN

Some say you're John the Baptist,
reborn...

PETER

That's stupid. Some say you're
Ezekial, others, Jeremiah.

Jesus sits down.

JESUS

Who do you think I am?

JUDAS

My favorite character is David. My
mother always used to talk about him.
When he conquered Jerusalem he put
the Jebusites to the ban -- killed
all of the, didn't fool around. Gave
everybody to God. The same with the
Ammonites.

PETER

I always liked Ezekial.

JUDAS

Ezekial!

PETER

Yeah. He didn't mince words about
anything. Remember Obolibah -- the
Jerusalem women who made love to
the Chaldeans 'cause they were hung?
(gestures; laughs)
Ezekial wasn't afraid of anybody.
He just told the truth.

JOHN

My favorite is Isaiah...

PETER

(interrupts)
Sex, that's all it was...

JUDAS

(interrupts; to Jesus)
Who do you like?

(CONTINUED)

52 CONTINUED: (2)

JESUS

Jeremiah.

PETER

Jeremiah was a loser...

JESUS

You should have had his guts. He was born right near here, you know. Just over the hill. He said, the Lord would write a New Covenant. I'll make it with Israel. I'll put my law in their minds. I'll write it in their hearts.

JOHN

Isaiah knew right from wrong. How long ago did he live?

JUDAS

I don't know. Before Jeremiah.

JOHN

No, Jeremiah was before Ezekial.

JUDAS

Get off it.

(to Peter)

When was Jeremiah?

PETER

(shrugs)

Beats me.

JESUS

(thinks)

I'm not sure.

CUT TO:

53 EXT. TEMPLE AT JERUSALEM - DAY

Prior to the Passover feast, from the 15th to the 25th of Adar, every Jewish male had to pay a temple tax in the amount of one Galilean shekel. Since the coin of the land was Roman (and to a lesser extent Persian, Tyrian and Syrian) money-changers were needed to exchange Roman denarii for shekels. Obviously, they made a profit on this exchange.

The money-changers had permanent booths outside the temple proper. To a stranger the temple looked more like a brokerage house than a place of worship.²¹

Jesus enters the temple grounds with his central core of disciples. They have come to worship.

(CONTINUED)

53 CONTINUED:

Jesus comes to a cold stop: he's sickened by the sight of the money-changers. He turns to Peter:

JESUS

What is this?

PETER

It's for the feast.

Jesus, enraged, strides past the booths, overturning the tables. Scales, weights and coins from all over the world scatter in every direction. The vendors rush to retrieve their money.

Other vendors and customers turn on Jesus. Judas, Peter and the others forcibly fight them off. Jesus calls out:

JESUS

My father's house is a place of worship, not a bank, or a store.

The disciples circle Jesus for his protection. The RABBI, surrounded by SADDUCEES, steps out of the temple.

RABBI

Nazarene, what are you doing?

JESUS

God doesn't need a fancy house. He doesn't need cyprus and bloody animals. For years I used to come to the temple, but now the temple has come to me.

SADDUCEE

(shocked)

Watch what you say.

JESUS

When I say, 'I,' Rabbi, I am saying 'God.'

RABBI

This is blasphemy!

JESUS

Didn't you hear? I'm the Saint of Blasphemy. Make no mistake: I haven't come to bring peace, I've come to bring a sword.

(CONTINUED)

53 CONTINUED: (2)

The Sadducee whispers to an associate, then says to Jesus:

SADDUCCEE

Take your ideas to the Romans.

JESUS

I'm sick of all of you. This temple will be destroyed. One stone won't stand on another. God does not belong in a ghetto. God is not an Israelite!

Even the disciples are shocked by this heresy. They escort Jesus out of the temple grounds for his own safety.

As they reach the temple gates they are mobbed by the poor and the infirm waiting outside. The beggars press on Jesus, pulling at his arms and legs.

MOB MEMBER #1

Heal me.

MOB MEMBER #2

Cure us. Make us rich.

MOB MEMBER #2

Do a miracle.

JESUS

(pushes them away)

Get away. You sicken me. You're selfish and full of hate. God won't help you.

This new crisis is broken up by four Roman cavalrymen. They stampede into the mob, whipping beggars and curiosity-seekers alike. The OFFICER demands:

ROMAN OFFICER

Who is Jesus from Nazareth?

JESUS

I am.

ROMAN OFFICER

Come with us. The Procurator wants to see you.

The calvarymen lead Jesus away, leaving the disciples behind.

CUT TO:

54

INT. THE ANTONIA - DAY

The Roman garrison, the Antonia fort, was situated on the northwest wall of the temple. Roman soldiers, standing on the Antonia walls, could observe all the activities in the temple grounds.

The Roman soldiers escort Jesus into an open courtyard.

PILATE,²² dressed in leather and metal military regalia, waits for him on a raised platform decorated by crudely carved eagles. Two soldiers, spears in hand, flank the Procurator.²³

PILATE

Are you Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews?

JESUS

I'm not a king.

PILATE

You aren't the Messiah? The people say you are.

JESUS

My kingdom is not of this earth.

PILATE

Oh yeah? Where is it then? In the air, maybe?

JESUS

In heaven.

PILATE

Good. You can have it. And take the Jews with you. They're disgusting. They never wash, you know.

The Roman soldiers chuckle; they appreciate the Procurator's sense of humor.

JESUS

God has raised his fist over Rome.

PILATE

(blase)

Rome is immortal. They tell me you do miracles. Is this good magic or bad magic? Can you do a trick for us?

JESUS

I'm not a pet. I don't do tricks.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED:

JESUS (CONT'D)

But I'll tell you a vision the prophet Daniel had. A huge statue had a head of gold, its breast was of silver...

PILATE

(interrupts)

Wait a second, Jew. You're going to tell me a parable. I'm not one of your goddamn peasants.

JESUS

Listen. Learn.

There's an awkward moment.

PILATE

(sighs)

Okay, tell me this vision.

JESUS

The stomach was of bronze, the legs of iron and the feet of clay. A stone was thrown. It broke the earthen feet and the statue collapsed. God is the thrower; I am the stone. Rome is the statue.

PILATE

Oh, give me a break. I understand what you're up to. You insult Rome so I'll crucify you and you can become a martyr like the others. Your kind come and go. How are you going to bring down Rome?

Jesus starts to speak, then stops. He suddenly realizes he doesn't know what to say.

JESUS (V.O.)

God, what is the answer? I don't know what to say.

PILATE

Just as I thought. Another hustler. Do you make any money out of this?

JESUS (V.O.)

Please speak to me. I need words.

A pain suddenly surges through the back of Jesus' head. He holds his neck.

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED: (2)

PILATE

Get out of here. Leave me alone.
My wife dreams of you -- that shows
you how stupid women are.

Jesus, confused, humiliated, is led away.

CUT TO:

55 EXT. ANTONIA - DAY

Jesus is released. Judas waits for him.

JUDAS

What happened?

Jesus has no answer. He just walks off. Judas follows.

CUT TO:

56 EXT. GOLGOTHA - NIGHT

Golgotha -- "hill of the skull." The name is not
metaphorical. In 4 B.C., two thousand Jews were crucified
in Jerusalem in one day alone. The walls of the city hover
nearby.

Judas, who has been looking for Jesus, finds him alone on
the bald hill. He sits beside him. Remnants of rotting
timber are scattered over the stones.²⁴

JUDAS

I've been looking all over for you.
For two days you haven't talked to
anyone. We're heartsick. What did
Pilate want?

Jesus collects his thoughts.

JESUS

Judas, I have a terrible secret to
tell you.

(Judas waits)

I'll tell you because you're the
strongest of my companions. Only
you will be able to hear it.

JUDAS

Thank you for trusting me, Master.
Speak. Whatever it is, I can take it.

JESUS

You know why I came to Jerusalem?

(CONTINUED)

56 CONTINUED:

JUDAS

Yes, this is where the revolution
will happen.

Jesus sweating profusely, nods.

JESUS

The Lord's flames are all around
me. I can no longer sleep. I come
to this rock, Golgotha, and lie
awake. Last night Isaiah came to me.

JUDAS

(eager)

What did he say?

JESUS

(trembling)

He opened his book and I read in
giant letters: 'He has borne our
faults; he was wounded for our
transgressions. He was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth.
Despised and rejected, he went
forward without resisting like a
lamb led to the slaughter.'

Jesus, pale, sinks his head into his hands. He starts to
cry.

JUDAS

I don't understand.

JESUS

Judas, my dear brother, I'm the
lamb. I'm the one who is going to
die.

JUDAS

You? You mean you're not the
Messiah?

JESUS

I am.

JUDAS

(jumps up)

No. That can't be.

JESUS

Don't shout. It will become clear
to you. I didn't understand at
first.

JUDAS

But every day you have a different
plan.

(CONTINUED)

56 CONTINUED: (2)

JESUS

I can't help it. That's how God comes to me. Now I finally understand. All my life something has been following me: footsteps, voices, headaches, a shadow. Now I know the shadow is the cross.

JUDAS

I don't believe you.

JESUS

I hope you're right. Be patient with me. Tell no one about this conversation. Promise me that.

JUDAS

Yes, Master.

JESUS

Good. I knew I could count on you.

CUT TO:

57 EXT. BETHANY - DAY

Philip and Nathaniel walk along a narrow street. Bethany, even though a small village, seems overcrowded.

NATHANIEL

What do you want?

PHILIP

What do you mean?

NATHANIEL

When we set up the new government.

PHILIP

(thinks)

Well, I guess I'd like more sheep. Only now a large herd. I'd hire other shepherds to take care of them. You know, Laban, that man who has a large ranch north of Tiberias? I'd like a spread like that.

NATHANIEL

Yeah.

PHILIP

How about you?

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED:

NATHANIEL

First off, I'd like to be able to worship in the temple. I mean really worship -- without Roman banners and soldiers standing around.

PHILIP

(nods)

Of course. What else?

As Nathaniel contemplates his answer, Thomas runs to greet them.

THOMAS

The Master has returned! He's at Martha and Mary's house.

They rush down the street. Thomas leads the way.

CUT TO:

58 EXT. MARY AND MARTHA'S HOUSE - DAY

The disciples gather around Jesus in the courtyard. Mary and Martha serve olives, bread, cheese and water.

The disciples are in a festive mood as Thomas, Philip and Nathaniel enter. Jesus, although the center of attraction, is strangely silent. The newcomers eagerly greet him.

Judas and Magdalene confer in the corner of the courtyard.

MAGDALENE

What's bothering him? Tell me.

JUDAS

I can't. He swore me to secrecy.

MAGDALENE

You can tell me. I'd never breathe a word.

JUDAS

No.

MAGDALENE

Why did he choose you anyway? You're nothing but a trouble-maker...

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED:

JUDAS

Who do you think he should have chosen? That windmill Peter? Maybe that idiot John? Maybe even you -- a woman! He chose me because I'm strong.

Magdalene, hurt, goes inside the house. Judas walks over to Philip who is standing alone.

JUDAS

Do you have your dagger?

PHILIP

Yes.

JUDAS

Good. Carry it all the time. The Messiah is going to march on Jerusalem next Sabbath.

PHILIP

He is?

JUDAS

He told me. How many men can you get together? I know about a dozen. I mean strong men, willing to die.

PHILIP

From Bethany and Jericho, maybe five or six. But they're all Zealots.

JUDAS

Good. Go and get them. We'll need all the men we can get when we go to Jerusalem. If there's enough of us, we'll get more inside the city.

There is a commotion where Jesus sits. They turn and look.

Magdalene, having washed Jesus' feet and dried them with her hair, now anoints them with perfume. Thomas, ever the merchant, objects:

THOMAS

Master, why do you let her do this? We could have sold this perfume and given the money to the poor.

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED: (2)

Jesus speaks with a new air of authority: quieter, but more forceful.

JESUS

You'll always have the poor,
Thomas, but you won't always
have me.

Jesus bends over and kisses the top of Magdalene's head.
Then he takes her hand, instructing her to rise.

JOHN

I don't like it, Rabbi. The
perfume makes you smell like
you're already dead and waiting
to be buried.

JESUS

Don't be so afraid of death, John.
Death is a key; it opens the door.
(to Magdalene)
Here, sit beside me. I'm lonesome.
Tell me stories about when we were
children.

Magdalene sits beside Jesus. Mary hands him a wine flask.
He takes a sip and passes it on.

CUT TO:

59 EXT. OUTSIDE JERUSALEM - DAY

Jesus is on the march. Judas, Philip and Peter lead a
group of ruffians twenty strong. Behind them the
disciples and the entourage follows.

Philip turns to Judas:

PHILIP

I'm worried about Jesus.

JUDAS

You don't know him like I do.
It looks like he blows this way,
then the other, but when the time
comes, he'll give the command.
His indecision is over.

PHILIP

(looks around)
There aren't many of us.

(CONTINUED)

59 CONTINUED:

JUDAS

Just wait. When Jesus calls,
there's gonna be such a mob you'll
have to push your way through.

Behind them, John, Andrew and Thomas argue:

THOMAS

I'm not afraid.

JOHN

Then don't act like it.

THOMAS

I'll do anything the Master asks
-- anything but get crucified.

ANDREW

You're a coward.

THOMAS

I'd like to see you say that after
you've been hanging up there two
days and the crows come by and
pull out your eyes.

JOHN

I made my decision. If you can't
make yours, leave now. But the
Kingdom lies ahead.

THOMAS

(touches his chest)

I'm ready. I have my knife.

CUT TO:

60 EXT. JERUSALEM - DAY

Jesus and his followers pass through Sheep's Gate.

Their arrival has been heralded in advance: crowds line
the narrow road into the city.

The mob has come prepared, palm branches in hand. They
throw the branches in front of Jesus' processional.
Someone provides a donkey, another throws a blanket
over its back. Jesus climbs astride the mule.

The crowd cheers as Jesus and the disciples pass:
"Hosanna, Hosanna!" Jesus' followers are perhaps a
hundred strong.²⁵

(CONTINUED)

60 CONTINUED:

A new chant -- abetted by Judas and his followers -- goes up: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews!"

The procession moves down the cobblestone lane toward the temple until it reaches Solomon's Porch. Jesus dismounts and looks around.

Outside the temple walls, stalls occupy every nook and cranny. Hundreds of people are selling, buying, bargaining, hawking their wares: merchants, money-changers, innkeepers, prostitutes.

Jesus, full of rage, followed by the disciples, sweeps down on the wine stands and workshops, overturning the tables, striking the tradesmen with his goad.

JESUS

Get out! Away!

The mob enthusiastically follows suit, looting stalls and routing merchants.

JESUS (V.O.)

God, whatever Your plan, tell me now. Quickly -- while I have the strength.

Jesus enters the temple grounds. This is his moment. The whole world waits. He calls out:

JESUS

I have come to set fire to the world!
In the desert The Baptist said,
'Repent, Repent!' The Day of the
Lord is coming!' But I say it's
already too late to repent. The
Day of the Lord is already here.
I am the Day of the Lord. I come
with the baptism of fire!

The ragamuffins reply: "Fire! Fire -- burn it all down!"

The TEMPLE GUARDS (usually Levites)²⁶ grab their lances and swords. Judas' cohorts draw their weapons.

Battle is imminent. The paving stones will soon be covered with Jewish blood.

Suddenly, the Roman sentries blow their trumpets from the Antonia tower. CAIAPHAS, the high priest, commands the Temple Guards to put down their weapons and withdraw.

(CONTINUED)

60 CONTINUED: (2)

There is no longer anyone for the rebels to attack: The Levites are in the temple, the Romans in the palace. Peter grabs a torch from the wall: SAUL, a man of Tarsus, stands by Caiaphas.

PETER

Let's go! Now's the time.

Although his followers have numerical strength, Jesus remains passive. The disciples turn to him -- waiting for a signal. Instead, Jesus looks at the ground.

JUDAS

Master, give us the signal.

PETER

Decide!

Jesus closes his eyes. John comes up to him:

JOHN

If you don't give the sign now, we're finished. What we've done today means death.

JESUS (V.O.)

I'm also waiting. Put the ax in my hands.

PHILIP

We came to fight.

Jesus looks at his hands: blood oozes from his palms. He closes his fists to hide the stigmata.

JESUS

(to Judas)

Come beside me.

Judas puts his arm around Jesus:

JUDAS

What's wrong? We mustn't let them be ashamed of us.

JESUS

Stay by my side.

He waves to the disciples.

JESUS

Com'on. Let's go.

The disciples, confused, in shock, turn to follow Jesus. One of the spectators throws an olive at them. The "revolt" is a fiasco.

(CONTINUED)

60 CONTINUED: (3)

ANDREW

What's happening?

James leads the donkey. Peter hurries alongside Jesus and Judas.

PETER

(to Judas)

Can't you see the mess we're in?

JESUS

Peter, I want you to prepare for the paschal dinner.

(to others)

Before our ancestors left Egypt, they celebrated Passover. We will celebrate the New Passover before we escape from slavery.

The crowd begins to dissipate. The show's over.

PETER

But, Rabbi, Passover without a lamb is impossible. Where will I get it?

JESUS

(bitter)

The lamb is ready. At this very moment he's proceeding to the slaughter all on his own. Don't worry about the lamb.

CUT TO:

61 EXT. JERUSALEM - SUNSET

The city is alive with Passover preparations. One householder lights his lanterns; another hurries down the street with a basket of bread and fruit.²⁷

Jesus and Judas walk past a fountain in a small square. They watch suspiciously as a woman draws a bucket of water. They stop at a selected spot between two trees.

John approaches:

JOHN

Peter said to tell you everything was ready for Passover.

JESUS

Thanks. Tell him we'll be right there.

JOHN

Be sure to take the alley route. The Romans are looking all over for us.

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED:

Jesus nods. After John leaves, Jesus turns confidentially to Judas:

JESUS

Try to be brave. I'm trying too.

JUDAS

Are you sure there's no other way?

JESUS

(shakes head)

No. I'm sorry.

JUDAS

No other way?

JESUS

I would have liked another one, too. I kept hoping -- until now. There is no other way. The end of the world is here. This world, the kingdom of Satan, will be destroyed and the kingdom of heaven will come. How? By my death.

JUDAS

I won't let you die.

Jesus grasps his arm and says sternly:

JESUS

You once made me a promise. You said if I ever strayed, if I ever shied away from revolution, you would kill me. Remember?

(Judas nods)

I have strayed, haven't I?

JUDAS

Yes.

JESUS

Then you must keep your word. Go to Caiaphas. The Temple Guards want to arrest me where there aren't any crowds. Tonight we'll be in Gethsemane. Arrange for them to find me at the three-rock point.

JUDAS

No, I couldn't.

JESUS

You must. Don't abandon me now.

JUDAS

But if you were me, could you betray your master?

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED: (2)

JESUS

(thinks)

No. But that's why God gave me the easier job -- to be crucified.

JUDAS

Do the others know?

JESUS

No. I'll tell them tonight.

Night has fallen. Jesus and Judas take a circuitous route toward the meeting place. The traditional Passover psalm echoes from behind closed doors they pass.

CUT TO:

62 INT. UPPER ROOM - NIGHT

Judas taps a secret knock. Peter opens the door cautiously and lets them enter.

A high window lets moonlight into the large room. Three seven-branched candelabra illuminate the lamb, wine and unleavened bread.

The disciples are seated on cushions around three sides of a square table. The fourth is open to facilitate serving. Jesus takes his place at the center of the table.

Mary, Martha and Magdalene have all come to Jerusalem to celebrate the festival with Jesus and his disciples and prepare the ritual meal.

Jesus fills the disciples' cups from a pitcher of salt water.

JESUS

First we must drink salt water to remember the tears and pain our ancestors suffered in the land of Egypt.

Jesus swallows his drink in a single gulp. Mary brings a tray of bitter herbs proscribed by Jewish law: oregano, bay and savory. Jesus watches as the disciples eat:

JESUS

Passover celebrates the passage from slavery to freedom. Tonight's Passover goes even further: it celebrates the passage from death to eternal life. I will lead the way, you will follow.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

62 CONTINUED:

JESUS (CONT'D)

(to Matthew)

John, you know the prophets. Isaiah says, 'He had neither beauty nor luster that we would turn our eyes to him. He was despised and rejected by me...'

JOHN

(continues)

'... But he took on himself all our pains. He was wounded for our transgressions and with his stripes we were healed.'

JESUS

(interrupting)

'... He was scourged and afflicted yet, like a lamb led to the slaughter, he opened not his mouth.'

(a beat)

My dear, wonderful friends. I am the lamb. And I will not open my mouth.

The disciples exchange fearful glances.

PHILIP

I don't understand. We didn't come to Jerusalem to die, we came to rule.

PETER

If you die, I'll die first. Because I will be at your side.

JESUS

Be quiet. What did you have before I found you? Nothing.

(no answer)

Now you have God's love -- and eternal life. Don't worry. You won't die yet. There's still a lot of work to do. We haven't come to rule, but to serve. I'll rise from the dead to lead you.

The disciples stare in shocked silence. Jesus has either gone completely mad -- or he is the Messiah.

Jesus breaks the bread loaves and passes them around. He pours wine for the others:

JESUS

Take and eat; this is my body.
Drink, this is my blood.

(CONTINUED)

62 CONTINUED: (2)

As they do, the bread and the wine transubstantiate into flesh and blood in their mouths. Peter is the first to cough up the bloody flesh. The others, sickened, follow. They wipe their bloody mouths.

John starts to weep. Jesus turns to Judas.

JESUS

Go and do what you promised.

As Judas exits, Peter says angrily:

PETER

Where is he going?

JESUS

Don't stop him. The wheel is already in motion. Tonight we'll go to Gethsemane to pray.

CUT TO:

63 EXT. GETHSEMANE - NIGHT

Jesus and the disciples, cross the Kidron River and approach Gethsemane, a 3-acre park on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives.

Just east of the walls, the Kidron Valley lies between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives. Today, as then, it is a necropolis "outside the walls." As they walk, Jesus and his disciples pass the monumental Hellenistic tombs of "Bene Hezir" and "Absalom" -- silent testimonials which still stand today.

As they climb the steep hills of Gethsemane, Jesus leaves most of his group behind and proceeds with Peter, James and John. Passing through thick, gnarled olive groves, they reach a clearing marked by three boulders.

JESUS

Wait for me here.

Jesus walks alone until he finds a secluded spot. Pulling his tunic around him, he kneels beneath an ancient tree.

Jesus' self-control, which had been superhuman to this point, melts away. His body shakes; sweat drops from his forehead down his cheeks.

JESUS

Abba, Father, we've been together a long time. I've had many doubts.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED:

JESUS (CONT'D)

I never asked to be chosen, but I always obeyed. I turned on my mother, I gave up Magdalene. I've never had a family, never had a bed to sleep in. I've never made love with a woman. Nightmares and hallucinations have followed me my whole life.

Jesus, exhausted, pauses. He looks down, takes a breath, and continues:

JESUS

You've done many miracles. You opened the Red Sea, saved Noah; you took Elijah directly to heaven in a fiery chariot. Now you ask me to take crucifixion and hold it in my lips like a thorny rose. Is death the only answer for me? Is there no way you can take this bitter cup from my hands?

Jesus waits for the answer that doesn't come. He looks one way, then the other. The wind blows sadly through the trees.

A GUARDIAN ANGEL in the form of a nine-year-old girl appears. She sets a silver chalice before Jesus.

JESUS (V.O.)

Is this your answer?

The Angel drinks from the cup, then hands it to Jesus. As she does, she and the cup vanish.

JESUS (V.O.)

Your will be done. I only ask for strength.

Jesus wipes the sweat and tears from his face. He pulls himself to his feet, heads back.

At the three-rock point he finds Peter, James and John fast asleep. John's head rests peacefully on his brother's chest. Jesus is tempted not to wake them.

JESUS

(softly)

Couldn't you stay awake with me for just an hour?

Peter is the first to awake. Ashamed, he falls at Jesus' feet.

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED: (2)

PETER

Forgive me.

Jesus hears the sound of soldiers in the distance.

JESUS

It doesn't matter. It's too late.
The time has come.

Jesus hears the evening nightingale overhead. He smells the vernal perfumes of the garden. A feeling of peace sweeps over him. He smiles at James and John as they awaken.

Judas and a band of armed Temple Guards and Romans burst into the clearing. Peter pulls his dagger; Jesus pushes him back. Judas greets his master:

JUDAS

Welcome, Rabbi.

Judas kisses him fiercely on the mouth. Jesus embraces his faithful disciple. Tears stream down Judas' cheeks.

Peter pulls his knife and slices off one of the Temple Guard's ears. This is not random but calculated violence -- because a Levite cannot serve as a Temple Guard if he is physically deformed. Peter's reaction is not one of disappointment, but achievement. As if saying, "So there."

Jesus pushes Judas unwillingly away, picks up the severed ear off the ground and miraculously restores it to the Levite.

JESUS

(to Peter)

Welcome the messengers of God.

(to Soldiers)

Let's go.

CUT TO:

64 EXT. ANTONIA - DAY

Jesus again stands before Pilate. He is bloody, beaten, exhausted from lack of sleep. A clique of Temple Guards, Pharisees and Sadducees stand in one corner of the courtyard.

PILATE

I knew we'd meet again. They tell me you say you call yourself a king. Is that right?

(Jesus doesn't answer)

Speak up. I have the power to crucify you. Are you a king?

(CONTINUED)

64 CONTINUED:

JESUS

I could tell you that my kingdom is not on earth, but you wouldn't understand that. However, I will tell you that I hold you, Rome, heaven and earth in the palm of this one hand.

He extends arm. Pilate, unbelieving, turns to the Jewish leaders:

PILATE

Where were you Jews when they handed out brains?

The soldiers laugh, but the Jewish hierarchy will not be distracted.²⁸

SADDUCEE

He must die. Your Majesty. He wants the people to revolt.

PILATE

(shrugs)

Of course. I don't care either way. Just another dead Jew. Crucify him -- or whatever else. First have some fun with him. If he wants to be king, we'll make him one.

CUT TO:

65 EXT. ANTONIA - DAY

Roman soldiers lead Jesus onto the balcony overlooking Solomon's Porch and present him to the awaiting mob.

He has been whipped; his white tunic is drenched with blood. A crown of thorns drips blood down his face.

A Centurion announces:

JERUSALEM CENTURION

Behold the man! Behold your king!

The crowd hoots with laughter and scorn. Jesus does not react.

A BEGGER turns to Peter:

BEGGAR

I know you. You're one of his followers.

PETER

No. It must be someone else.

BEGGAR

No, it's you.

PETER

You're crazy.

Peter turns quickly and disappears in the crowd.

CUT TO:

66 EXT. JERUSALEM STREETS - DAY

Peter is running down an alley when, turning a corner, he runs into Philip, also fleeing.

They don't even speak. After a fleeting recognition, they sprint in opposite directions.

CUT TO:

67 EXT. JERUSALEM - DAY

Roman soldiers lead Jesus through the peasant streets of Golgotha. Like the Zealot of Nazareth, Jesus bears his cross as he struggles across his rocky dolorosa.

The blood has dried on his tunic. He still wears his thorny "crown."

The sympathies of the rabble have shifted. Now it's just another show: a multiple crucifixion. Laughter, ridicule, figs for sale. Jesus weakens. His knees buckle and he falls.

The soldiers conscript a bystander to carry the cross as they lead Jesus forward.

CUT TO:

68 EXT. GOLGOTHA - DAY

A curious crowd has already assembled at the crucifixion site. Toward the rear, afraid to approach, Magdalene, Mary, Martha and Jesus' Mother stand in a tight group.

The Romans bring Jesus to the peak of the hill and strip him naked. Two other criminals are prepared for crucifixion.

Jesus looks at the rough-hewn cross laid before him. He searches the crowd.

JESUS (V.O.)

Mother? Magdalene? Where are you?

He spots his Mother and waves to her:

JESUS (V.O.)

(continuing)

Farewell. Forgive me for being a bad son.

Saul, arrogant, his hands on his hips, stands watching.

Two SOLDIERS grab Jesus by the arms:

(CONTINUED)

68 CONTINUED:

FIRST SOLDIER

Alright, Your Majesty, it's time to
get on your throne.

They stretch Jesus out on the cross while slave laborers
finish preparing the post hole for the cross.

JESUS (V.O.)

Don't give up on me.

The Soldiers place the crude spikes against Jesus' palms.
The sound of METAL AGAINST METAL rings out as the hammer
comes down.

A bloody mist sprays on Jesus' face. He grimaces but does
not cry out.

Martha and the three Marys hide their faces. Near Jesus,
the other criminals are being impaled.

The Romans fasten ropes around Jesus' arms. The spikes
alone will not support his weight.

It takes three soldiers to hoist Jesus' cross upright. Now,
suddenly, he is above the masses. All of Jerusalem is
within view.

In the distance he sees the temple. The outer veil glows in
the midday sun, a blood-red vision.

His body jars into place. The pain is excruciating. His
fellow criminals howl in agony.

Jesus surveys the mob: a sea of hostile faces. He finds
Magdalene, Mary, Martha and his Mother standing in a group.
His heart goes out to Magdalene.

The Sadducees are satisfied; the Romans are complacent.
Groups of townspeople and schoolboys point out the suffer-
ings of the condemned men.

JESUS (V.O.)

(continuing)

Father, forgive them.

The sky changes color. Horses buckle under their riders;
DOGS BARK. A fierce wind blows across the rocky hill. The
earth trembles. Spectators turn and run.

Jesus looks to heaven. From the depths of his bowels he
screams:

(CONTINUED)

68 CONTINUED: (2)

JESUS

Eli, Eli...

And faints.

CUT TO:

69 EXT. GOLGOTHA - DAY

The sky turns a pleasant pale blue. Jesus looks up at the thick white cumulous clouds floating on the horizon. Birds sing in the distance.

He thinks: Am I dead? No, the crowd is still there, SILENT. On either side of Jesus, his fellow criminals writhe in silent agony.

The Angel from Gethsemane appears before him. He has seen many angels in his life, but never one as beautiful as this. Her soft blonde hair falls on her shoulders. In the garden he was too frightened to notice her true beauty.

JESUS

Who are you?

GUARDIAN ANGEL

I'm your guardian angel. Remember when God told Abraham to sacrifice his son? Just as Abraham lifted the knife, God spared Isaac. Your father sent me here. He is God of mercy, not punishment. He saw you and said, 'Take care of him. He's suffered enough.' He tested you -- and is pleased. He doesn't want your blood. Come with me.

In a moment Jesus and the Guardian Angel are standing at the foot of the cross. They pass through the silent crowd unnoticed. Jesus looks over his shoulder: his cross is empty.

JESUS

(relieved)

You mean I'm not the Messiah?

GUARDIAN ANGEL

No.

Jesus smiles: he is finally free of God.

JESUS

Where are the disciples?

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED:

GUARDIAN ANGEL
They have fled in fear.

CUT TO:

70 EXT. JUDEAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

They walk through the pleasant landscape of the Jordan Valley. All is quiet, peaceful.

JESUS
Is this the Kingdom of God I spoke
about?

GUARDIAN ANGEL
(laughing)
No, this is earth.

JESUS
Why has it changed so much?

GUARDIAN ANGEL
It hasn't changed, you have. You
can now see its true beauty. You
may find this hard to believe, but
often us angels look down on mankind
and envy them.

Ahead Jesus sees a group in ceremonial dress. Virgins
dressed in white, merchants carrying incense and gifts.

JESUS
What is this?

GUARDIAN ANGEL
A wedding ceremony.

JESUS
Who's getting married?

GUARDIAN ANGEL
You are.

Mary Magdalene, dressed in white, steps from the group.
Jesus' face bursts into a smile. He rushes into her arms.

JESUS
Magdalene, my love.

MAGDALENE
(kissing him)
Jesus.

(CONTINUED)

70 CONTINUED:

JESUS

I've waited for this moment so long.
 (Magdalene starts to cry)
 What's wrong? Why are you crying?

MAGDALENE

I'm so happy. I'm crying for joy --
 and thanks. Thanks to God for
 bringing you here.

(they embrace again)

We must hide. Everyone is looking
 for you. Pilate is furious. I know
 where we can be safe.

He holds her tight.

CUT TO:

71 EXT. JUDEAN HOUSE - NIGHT

A small hut near the Jordan. Moonlight shimmers off the
 river.

The Guardian Angel sits on a stool in front of the door.

CUT TO:

72 INT. JUDEAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Jesus and Magdalene make love on blankets spread over straw.
 He kisses her breasts, her lips.

MAGDALENE

I feel like I've just been born.
 That this is the first day of my
 life.

JESUS

I never knew the world was so
 beautiful. I was blind.

(kisses her breasts
again)

I didn't know that the body was so
 holy. But now I understand.

MAGDALENE

Understand what?

JESUS

That this is the road.

MAGDALENE

What road?

(CONTINUED)

72 CONTINUED:

JESUS

The road on which the mortal becomes immortal, God becomes human. I was so stupid: I tried to find a way outside my own flesh. I wanted clouds, great ideas, death. But now I know: a woman is God's greatest work. And I worship you. God sleeps between your legs.

MAGDALENE

I want to have a child with you.

JESUS

Me too.

Magdalene hears a noise at the door.

MAGDALENE

What's that?

The Guardian Angel steps into the darkened room.

GUARDIAN ANGEL

It's me. I wondered if I could watch. I'm lonely too.

JESUS

(laughs)

Yes, yes. Watch.

Jesus resumes lovemaking.

CUT TO:

73 EXT. JUDEAN HOUSE - DAY

The house shows signs of domestication: wine jugs, a work bench.

Magdalene, several months pregnant, steps outside to shake out a blanket.

SAUL, a short balding man, walks toward her with three Temple Guards. Magdalene senses something is wrong. She looks around for Jesus or his Angel. They are nowhere to be found.

The Guards surround her.

SAUL

Here she is. The famous Magdalene.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

73 CONTINUED:

SAUL (CONT'D)

Whore of the Nazarene.
(grabs her hair)
You thought you could hide from me.

MAGDALENE

Who are you?

SAUL

(arrogant)
I'm Saul, sent from Damascus to kill
your lover -- that's who I am. He
won't get away again. Tell me where
he is.

MAGDALENE

I don't know what you're talking
about. I hear he died in Jerusalem.
Leave me alone.

SAUL

(taps her belly)
And where did you get this?

MAGDALENE

You're from Damascus. You should
know.

SAUL

Tell us -- or we'll kill you.

MAGDALENE

How can I tell you what I don't
know?

One of the Levites picks up a rock.

FIRST GUARD

Stop lying, you slut. Tell us.

Magdalene turns and starts to run. The Guard throws the
rock, hitting her square in the back. She falls to the
ground.

Saul and the Guards pick up stones and throw them as they
walk toward her.

SAUL

(throwing)
Here's for the lips that've kissed
a thousand men.

(CONTINUED)

73 CONTINUED: (2)

The rock breaks Magdalene's jaw. The Guard throws another rock.

FIRST LEVITE

And this is for your worn-out tits!

SECOND GUARD

(joining in)

And for your belly!

Magdalene's blood flows in every direction. Saul and the Guards, satisfied, turn to search the house.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

74 EXT. MARY AND MARTHA'S - NIGHT

The Guardian Angel furtively leads Jesus through the deserted Bethany streets. The Angel glances one way, the other.

Jesus is distraught. He has just discovered Magdalene's body. Her blood is on his fingers and tunic. He tries to go back but the Angel pulls him ahead.

GUARDIAN ANGEL

Come.

They turn the corner to Mary and Martha's house.

CUT TO:

75 INT. MARY AND MARTHA'S - NIGHT

MARTHA

Mary, look! It's Jesus. It's a miracle.

The Guardian Angel closes the door behind them, remaining in the shadows. Jesus steps into the center of the room.

MARY

(touching him)

Is it really you?

JESUS

Yes.

MARTHA

Come by the fire where we can get a better look at you.

(CONTINUED)

75 CONTINUED:

Mary takes his hands.

MARY

What's this?

Jesus examines the dried blood on his fingers.

JESUS

I'm in danger. The Temple Guards want me. They killed Magdalene.

Martha gasps.

MARY

What will we do? They'll find you here.

The Angel calls to Jesus.

GUARDIAN ANGEL

Psst.

Jesus goes over to her.

GUARDIAN ANGEL

Master, I'm sorry about Magdalene. I'll never leave you alone. I'll always protect you. But I'm afraid I'll attract attention. I'll turn myself into a slave boy. I'll run errands for you.

The Guardian Angel instantly transforms into a ten-year-old Arab servant. He still speaks with the voice of the angelic girl.

GUARDIAN ANGEL

(continuing)

I'll always be at your side.

Martha walks over to them.

MARTHA

You must be hungry. I'll cook some stew for you and your little friend.

JESUS

(realizing his negligence)

Martha, I've been thinking so much about myself I even forgot to say hello.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

75 CONTINUED: (2)

JESUS (CONT'D)

Mary, come here. It's so good to see you again. We're all still alive. Thank God.

He embraces them both.

CUT TO:

76 INT. MARY AND MARTHA'S - NIGHT (LATER)

They all sit around the fire. Jesus cleans his bowl with a piece of bread. He smiles at Mary.

Martha rubs the Angel's curly head.

MARTHA

Rabbi, I like your little friend.

JESUS

(expansive)

I used to thank heaven, seven heavens were not big enough for me. And now look at this miracle. Can you believe it? A tiny house is big enough for me, a mouthful of bread, the kind words of a woman.

MARY

But what will happen if they find you here?

JESUS

I'll change my name. I'll be Lazarus. I raised him from the dead, so what? He died again. Now I am Lazarus.

Jesus looks to his Angel for assistance. As Jesus continues to speak, he gradually transforms into a healthy, virile Lazarus. He continues to speak with his old voice.

(The actor who played Lazarus assumes Jesus' role; the actor who plays Jesus dubs the dialogue.)

The sisters watch in astonishment.

JESUS

(continuing)

Jesus is dead. Lazarus is reborn. I've changed my body and soul. I now declare war on fasting and suffering and chastity.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED:

JESUS (CONT'D)

I'm through wrestling with God.
I'm not going to build crosses any
more. I'm going to build cradles
and bedsteads.

Mary, her eyes welling up, embraces his legs.

MARY

Rabbi, when I was little the girls
sang this song:

'Whoever gives me a swallow's egg,
I will give him my lips,
Whoever gives me an eagle's egg,
I'll give him my breasts;
And whoever gives me a stab,
I'll give him my heart.'

Jesus lifts Mary up and embraces her. Martha senses she
is unwanted. She starts to leave.

MARTHA

Excuse me, Rabbi. I've got a
feeling that you'll make my sister
your wife. But let me stay. Let
me breathe the air of married life.
I'll make the beds and do the chores.

Saying this, Martha walks into another room. Jesus and
Mary walk toward the blanket on the ground.

The Guardian Angel sits in a darkened corner, watching.

FADE TO:

77 EXT. MARY AND MARTHA'S - DAY

Years have passed. An older Lazarus (formerly Jesus) sits
out front hewing a chair. Two children play nearby.

Jesus' Arab servant sits beside him; he is still a ten-year-
old boy.

A NEIGHBOR approaches:

NEIGHBOR

Good afternoon, Lazarus!

Jesus waves as the Neighbor passes. The servant boy speaks
to him -- still in the young girl's voice:

(CONTINUED)

77 CONTINUED:

GUARDIAN ANGEL

Are you satisfied with me? Do you
have any complaints?

Jesus stops working, sets the chair on its side.

JESUS

None. What a twisted road I took
to find God.

GUARDIAN ANGEL

Don't worry. I won't leave you.
I like you.

Jesus rests in the sunlight. Martha walks over to them.
She has been washing clothes.

JESUS

Where's Mary?

MARTHA

Picking olives. She won't be back
until this evening.

Martha pauses a moment, then takes Jesus' hand.

MARTHA

(continuing)

Let's go inside. It's too hot
out here.

Jesus stands and puts his arm around Martha's waist. Martha
rubs the Guardian Angel's curly head and instructs him:

MARTHA

(continuing)

Watch the children.

The Angel smiles as Jesus and Martha enter the house.

FADE TO:

78 EXT. BETHANY - DAY

Years have passed. Jesus and Martha return from market
with three of their children, ages seven through ten.
The Guardian Angel walks with the children.

Ahead, Mary sits in front of the house repairing a dress.
Two girls play with straw dolls in the dirt beside her.

The two youngest children, boys, race toward Mary. One
snatches a doll from one of the girls as they race off
again. Mary scolds them as they go.

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED:

JESUS

We're either going to have to stop having children or enlarge the house.

MARY

(laughs)

We'll enlarge the house.

A small group has gathered down the road. Someone is speaking in the square. Jesus goes over to check it out. His Angel follows.

Paul, formerly Saul, preaches to a handful of villagers. He seems transformed: standing straight, radiating confidence. He speaks with the evangelistic fervor of a born-again Christian.

29

PAUL

I was once a sinner, the greatest of sinners. You name it, I did it. Whored, drank, murdered -- yes, murdered. Then one day, returning to Damascus, I was struck by a burning light and a voice called to me, 'Saul, why are you persecuting me? What did I ever do to you?' 'Who are you?' I said. 'Jesus,' the voice replied. Scales fell from my burning eyes. I was baptized and became Paul, the apostle, and now I bring the Good News to every country.

BETHANY VILLAGER

What good news?

PAUL

Jesus of Nazareth -- you must have heard of him. He wasn't the son of Mary, he was the son of God. His mother was a virgin. Gabriel came to earth and put God's seed in her womb. He took on our sins, he was tortured, crucified -- but three days later he rose again and ascended to heaven. Death was conquered, praise God! Death was conquered and the Gates of Heaven are now open to everyone.

Jesus has been rising to a slow boil. He can restrain himself no longer. He calls out:

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED: (2)

JESUS

Did you ever see this resurrected
Jesus of Nazareth?

PAUL

I saw a blinding flash of light and
I heard his voice.

JESUS

Liar!

PAUL

His disciples saw him. They were
hiding in an attic with the doors
locked when suddenly he appeared
before them. Thomas wasn't convinced
but he put his fingers in his wounds
and gave him some fish, which he ate.

JESUS

Liar!

Disgusted, Jesus turns and walks away. His Angel follows.

Paul excuses himself from his listeners. He and his YOUNG
ASSISTANT follow Jesus down the road.

Jesus feels Paul's footsteps drawing closer. He's about
to explode. Suddenly, he turns on his heel, grabs Paul
by the shoulders and shakes him violently.

JESUS

(continuing)

Liar! I'm Jesus of Nazareth. I
was never crucified, never resurrected.
I'm a man like everybody else. Why
are you spreading these lies?

Jesus' Arab servant tugs at his sleeve.

GUARDIAN ANGEL

Quiet.

PAUL

You?

JESUS

Yes, me. Son of Mary and Joseph,
who preached in Galilee. James
and John, sons of Zebedee, were my
disciples.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED: (3)

JESUS (CONT'D)

We marched on Jerusalem, I was
brought before Pilate but God
spared me.

Jesus' Angel doesn't like this conversation; he tugs
violently at his sleeve. Jesus shoves him to the ground.
Paul takes Jesus around a corner where they won't be seen.

PAUL

Shut up.

JESUS

Now I'm a family man. I eat, work,
have children. Don't go around the
world spreading these lies about me.
(shouts)
I'll tell everyone the truth.

Now it's Paul's turn to explode.

PAUL

Shut up! Look around you. Look
at their suffering and unhappiness.
Their only hope is the Resurrected
Jesus. I don't care if you are
Jesus or not. The Resurrected Jesus
will save the world -- that's all
that matters.

JESUS

The world can be saved by lies?

PAUL

What's 'truth?' I've created
truth out of longing and faith. I
don't struggle to find truth -- I
build it. If it's necessary to
save the world to crucify you, then
I'll crucify you -- and I'll
resurrect you, like it or not.
You can stay in your little house.
But the rest of the world will look
up in the air and see you crucified.
They will weep and their souls will
be cleansed. The enemy is death
and I'll defeat death by resurrecting
you -- Jesus of Nazareth, Son of
God, Messiah.

JESUS

I won't let you. I'll tell everyone
the truth.

(CONTINUED)

78 CONTINUED: (4)

PAUL

Shout all you want. Who will believe you? The wheel you set in motion can't be stopped. The faithful will grab you and throw you in a burning fire.

JESUS

No.

PAUL

The whole world is before me -- Egypt, Syria, Phoenicia, Greece, Rome. You don't know what a joy it is to set out in the morning, to hold the cross, to put hope in the hearts of men -- all for the sake of Christ.

Jesus seems confused -- "almost persuaded" by Paul's logic, his mesmerizing enthusiasm.

PAUL

(continuing)

Not you. I'm glad I met you. Now I'm rid of you.

(turns to leave)

Goodbye, Lazarus.

Paul waves to his Assistant as he returns to the town square, calling out:

PAUL

(continuing)

Friends! Listen to me! This is the greatest day of your life. I bring the Good News...

Jesus, exhausted, dazed, staggers toward his house. The Guardian Angel faithfully follows.

Ahead Mary and Martha wait for him. Jesus collapses into their arms. His Angel takes his hand. Jesus turns to his "family."

JESUS

Don't ever leave me. I'm happy here.

FADE TO:

79 EXT. MARY AND MARTHA'S - DAY

Jesis is now an old man.

(CONTINUED)

79 CONTINUED:

His skin has wrinkled and yellowed; his beard, white and thin, reaches to his chest. He is now the same withered Lazarus that he had once raised from the dead. He sits in the vine arbor beside the house, basking in the midday sun.

His Guardian Angel, unchanged by time, sits beside him. Jesus turns to him:

JESUS

Remember when Mary and I planted these vines -- how many times have we eaten these grapes?

GUARDIAN ANGEL

(shrugs)

I don't remember.

(pause)

You know, Master, the end is near.

JESUS

What end? Are you leaving me?

GUARDIAN ANGEL

Yes. The end has come. You've grown old.

The SOUNDS OF YELLING AND SCREAMING come from the street. A woman's WAIL pierces the air. Jesus and his servant turn to look.

Mary and Martha, aged, rush from the house. Jesus and the Angel stand.

JESUS

What's wrong?

MARTHA

They're burning Jerusalem. The seige is over. The city is destroyed. The Romans are killing everyone.

MARY

Our sons. Where are they?

Jesus takes them by their arms.

JESUS

Let's go inside. Bolt the doors and windows.

They go inside and close the door behind them.

FADE TO:

80 INT. MARY AND MARTHA'S - NIGHT

They huddle inside. The cries from the street have diminished.

Jesus cautiously opens the window shutters. The streets are empty; the sky is red in the distance.

MARTHA

Everyone is fleeing to the south.

Mary starts to cry.

JESUS

Why are you crying? Time is like a fire and God turns the spit. Each year he rotates a paschal lamb. This year Jerusalem, next Rome, next...

MARY

(interrupts)

You don't understand women at all.

JESUS

I'm sorry. Forgive me. You must be tired. Go to bed. I'll be there shortly.

Mary and Martha retire, leaving Jesus alone by the fire with his Guardian Angel.

There's a KNOCK on the door. The Arab servant walks over and cautiously opens the door. He turns back and smiles at his master mockingly. Jesus shudders.

JESUS

Who is it?

GUARDIAN ANGEL

It's your old friends.

JESUS

My friends?

GUARDIAN ANGEL

Your disciples.

The Angel opens the door. Jesus strains to see. Four old men inch into the room. Deteriorated and unrecognizable, they lean against each other as if held by glue.

The Angel sits on the table watching them.

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED:

JESUS

You in front, come here.

A feeble man steps forward.

PETER

Do you recognize me, Rabbi?

JESUS

Peter, is that you? When I was young and foolish, I called you the rock, the rock upon which I would build my church. But now you look more like a sponge. What happened?

PETER

The years, Master.

JESUS

(points)

And you, Philip, you were so strong and now you've become fat. I loved you, shepherd, you had no sheep. You herded them in your mind.

PHILIP

I gave into hunger.

Jesus points to the mutilated man next to Peter:

JESUS

And you? They've cut off your nose, your ear, taken out your eye. Who are you?

JAMES

(bows)

Rabbi.

JESUS

James!

JAMES

The Romans tortured me and cut away my face. I saw Jerusalem burn. I saw the Ark of the Covenant taken from the temple.

JESUS

(shocked)

The Ark?

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED: (2)

PHILIP

The Temple is destroyed, just
as you said.

PETER

There is another, outside.

PHILIP

Be careful, Rabbi, he's still the
same -- full of anger.

A large figure steps into the doorway.

JESUS

Judas!

(Judas doesn't answer)

Judas, come in.

(still no answer)

Has it come to this? Time changes
everything: men, cities, nations,
even gods. Hasn't it changed your
anger?

(steps forward)

Judas, can't you hear?

PETER

He's still pig-headed.

NATHANIEL

He's been fighting. His hands are
still bloody.

Jesus takes another step toward Judas.

PHILIP

Be careful.

PETER

(reprimanding)

Judas, the Master is speaking to
you.

Judas breaks his silence with a loud voice:

JUDAS

Traitor!

Everyone freezes.

JUDAS

(continuing)

Traitor. Your place was on the cross.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED: (3)

JUDAS (CONT'D)

That's where God put you. But when death came you got scared and ran and hid under the skirts of Mary and Martha. You became a fake Lazarus to save yourself.

PETER

Don't you have any respect?

JUDAS

For him? He was supposed to lead an army of angels. Instead he came here to stud women.

JESUS

Judas, can't you be more kind?

JUDAS

Rabbi, you broke my heart. How can I be kind? Sometimes I want to scream and bang my head against a rock and curse the day I ever met you. We held the world in our hands. Remember what you said to me? You took me in your arms and begged me, 'Betray me, betray me. I must be crucified so I can be resurrected to save the world.'

The wounds in Jesus' hands and feet begin to bleed.

JUDAS

(continuing)

'I am the lamb,' you bleated.
'Death is the door. Judas, my brother, don't be afraid. Help me.'

Judas' eyes fill with moisture.

PETER

Look at his wounds, Judas. Have mercy.

JUDAS

He was going to be the New Covenant. Now Israel is no more.

JESUS

(trembling)

But my Guardian Angel...

(CONTINUED)

80 CONTINUED: (4)

JUDAS

Your Guardian Angel! Look at him!

All their eyes turn to the Arab servant boy, who is now crouched on the table like a gargoyle. As they watch he transforms into the young Archangel from the Idumaea desert. His black spiked wings rise above his back.

JUDAS

(continuing)

Satan.

(to Jesus)

Shame on you, traitor.

The others join in. They spit at Jesus' feet and call him names: "coward," "traitor."

PETER

We believed in you. You betrayed us.

They turn and leave in a group. Jesus is alone with Satan. Jesus looks at the great Archangel.

Satan floats off the table and heads toward the door.

SATAN

Goodbye, Jesus of Nazareth. I told you we would meet again.

Satan walks into the night. All is silence. Jesus looks around the room.

After a moment, Jesus walks through the open door.

CUT TO:

81 EXT. MARY AND MARTHA'S - NIGHT

Jesus steps on the deserted street. The village is still. There is a red glow in the distance: Jerusalem is burning. He surveys the empty street. Blood still stains his hands and feet.

The old man gets on his hands and knees in the middle of the road. He lifts his head toward heaven.

JESUS

Abba, father, will you still listen to me? Are you still there?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

81 CONTINUED:

JESUS (CONT'D)

Will you listen to a selfish,
 unfaithful son? I fought you when
 you called. I resisted. I thought
 I knew more. I didn't want to be
 your son. Can you forgive me? I
 didn't fight hard enough. I want
 to take your hand; I want to save
 my fellow men. Father, take me back.
 Kill the fatted calf. I want to be
 your son. I want to pay the price.
 I want to be crucified and rise
 again. I want to be the Messiah.

Suddenly the sky turns pale blue. Jesus looks around.

CUT TO:

82 EXT. GOLGOTHA - DAY

Jesus is back on the cross, 37 years before.

He has regained his 33 year-old Nazarene form. (He is
 again the original actor who plays Jesus.) The earth is
 shaking. Spectators are running.

Jesus is racked with pain. He screams:

JESUS

... lama sabachthani!

Jesus looks around, realizes where he is. The past thirty-
 seven years have been a dream. He has resisted the last
 temptation. He looks to heaven and says:

JESUS

(continuing)

It is finished.

THE END

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