

Mary of Egypt

Screenplay and Screen story by
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Based on the life of St. Mary of Egypt

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FADE IN:

EXT. MONASTERY IN PALESTINE - NIGHT

SUPER-IMPOSED TEXT: A MONASTERY NEAR JERUSALEM, 521 A.D.

Seen from waist up, the silhouette of the monk ZOSIMAS appears against the night sky. He is a bearded man in his later middle years. He is absolutely still. From FURTHER OUT it is seen that he is standing on top of a pillar - a crude wooden pole about ten feet high and about 20 inches in diameter. The pole is set up in the middle of the monastery courtyard.

Below, two men, both monks of the monastery, speak to each other. They are dressed in the traditional white hooded cassocks of Middle Eastern monasteries. The white of their cassocks, the desert ground, and the monastery walls all reflect brightly in the moonlight.

Both men are of Middle Eastern descent and younger than the man on the pillar (in their 30s).

MONK 1

This is his tenth day on the pillar.

MONK 2

And with only a cup of water each day to sustain him. He's going to collapse soon.

From behind them, Zosimas begins to speak.

ZOSIMAS

O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thoughts from afar...

As Zosimas continues, the two monks resume their conversation.

MONK 2

He speaks. He is ready to come down.

MONK 1

Yes, perhaps you are right. Let's go.

The two monks cross the courtyard to where Zosimas stands atop the pillar. They stop and look up at him as he finishes the Psalm.

ZOSIMAS

...Even the darkness is not dark to You, And the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You.

MONK 2

(to Zosimas)

Brother, ten days have passed. Are you ready to come down?

ZOSIMAS

Yes.

The two monks go and fetch a ladder. They set it against the pillar. Zosimas backs down off the pillar onto the ladder. As Zosimas reaches the ground, the two monks come to his side and attempt to help him stand. He waves them off.

ZOSIMAS

I'm fine. I'm fine.

Zosimas walks away from them. He staggers a bit, but seems no worse for wear. His face looks confused and somewhat disappointed.

INT. PETER'S CELL - DAY

Zosimas is talking to the monk PETER, who is sitting up in his bed. Peter is well into his 80s. He appears weak, but is very alert.

PETER

Ten days on the pillar. That's quite a feat. What did you learn from your experience?

Zosimas stares into space.

ZOSIMAS

I don't know. Perhaps nothing.

PETER

Nothing? That's quite a bit of discomfort to endure for nothing.

ZOSIMAS

Discomfort?

(beat)

There was no discomfort. I do these things with ease. I fast so that I only eat small amounts of fruits and vegetables after sunset. I stand all night reciting the Psalms. It comes with no pain.

(beat)

And also with no enlightenment. It teaches me nothing.

PETER

You were brought to the monastery as a child. You've never known comfort, so how can you learn from discomfort; you've never known pleasure, so how can you learn from pain?

(beat)

You've never eaten with sinners.

ZOSIMAS

You patronize me.

PETER

No, far from it -- merely the random thoughts of an old man. Pay no attention.

(beat)

The great fast is coming in two weeks, yes?

ZOSIMAS

Two weeks. (smiles) It's what I live for.

PETER

We forgive each other. We go into the desert for 40 days, we beat our heads on the rocks, and we come away enlightened.

(beat)

Oh, how I wish I were young again so I could go with you.

The two look at each other and snigger.

INT. CHAPEL OF MONASTERY OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD - DAY

The chapel is a simple sandstone block structure. Byzantine Icons adorn the walls with candlelight shining from alcoves. There are about twenty monks in the chapel of varying ages. Most are of Middle Eastern or Greek descent.

The monks are celebrating the act of forgiveness where each monk in turn embraces the other and asks forgiveness, until all have embraced one another. The focus turns to two monks in particular: one is a young monk named MENAS; the other is Zosimas. It is the custom that the younger monk begin the exchange.

MENAS

Forgive me brother, Zosimas, for all the sins that I have committed against you.

ZOSIMAS

You are forgiven, Menas. And forgive me for all that I have sinned against you.

MENAS

I forgive you. Have a blessed fast, brother.

ZOSIMAS

And you.

Zosimas turns to the next monk who is FATHER ELIAS, the Abbot of the monastery. Father Elias is a tall broad shouldered man about 70 years old. He boasts a huge white

beard. His cheerful eyes grow serious as Zosimas approaches.

ZOSIMAS

Forgive me, Father Elias, for all
the sins that I have committed
against you.

Father Elias pauses before exchanging the greeting, and asks...

FATHER ELIAS

And what is there to forgive,
brother?

Zosimas is taken back.

ZOSIMAS

Surely you jest. I am the chief of
sinners. You have heard my
confessions. You know my sins.

FATHER ELIAS

For what sins you may have
committed against me, I do forgive
you, Brother Zosimas. And I pray
that during this fast you will
come to understand repentance and
grace anew. And I pray you forgive
me for my sins against you.

ZOSIMAS

As you say, for what sins may
exist, I do forgive you, Father.

FATHER ELIAS

Go on your way in peace.

Zosimas still looks perplexed as he takes leave.

EXT. MONASTERY OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD - DAY

In silence the monks take leave of the monastery, heading
out into the desert.

CLOSE IN ON ZOSIMAS

Zosimas carries only a small food sack and bota of water. As he walks alongside his fellows, he examines their faces, all gravely serious, some even afraid.

EXT. FURTHER INTO THE DESERT - SUNSET

The monks have now taken leave of each other. Some go off in pairs or groups of three, but most go alone. There are several shots of Zosimas as he climbs into the hills. He finds a suitable spot at the top of a hill near an outcropping of rocks. Here, he can see out over the lowlands where he had walked earlier in the day. He begins his evening prayers. He crosses himself.

ZOSIMAS

Now that the day has come to a close, I thank thee, O Lord, and ask that the evening with this night may be sinless...

LONG SHOT - AGAINST THE SUNSET

ZOSIMAS

(voice fading)

...grant this to me, O Savior, and save me. Both now and ever, and unto ages of ages, Amen.

EXT. MENAS CAMP - NIGHT

A fire is smoldering. Menas, the younger monk from the monastery, is lying on his side with his eyes closed, but is sleeping very lightly.

His eyes open. He looks at the fire and then beyond it. He then hears the sound of rocks being disturbed. Startled, he scrambles to his feet.

A GOAT trots down the side of a hill into his camp. Menas looks relieved and smiles at the goat. The goat stares. Then OTHER SOUNDS are heard as more goats come over the rise and into the camp. Menas' smile turns into a look of concern.

A GOATHERD then follows. His face is covered for travel in the desert.

MENAS

Greetings, brother! I am Menas, a brother on his Lenten journey. I have little food and no money, but you are welcome to sit by my fire and warm yourself.

GOATHERD

(voice muffled)

Thank you, brother. Yes, I would like that.

The GOATHERD moves towards the fire, sits on a rock, and removes his head wrap, to reveal the face of an ATTRACTIVE YOUNG WOMAN of olive complexion. She lets her thick black hair fall back onto her shoulders.

GOATHERD

The desert is a cold and lonely place.

Menas is dumbfounded. He sits.

MENAS

You are a woman!

GOATHERD

(smiling coyly)

Yes. My name is Marella. My father was blessed with only daughters. Until we marry, we help him tend the goats.

MENAS

I've never heard of such a thing. Doesn't your father care for your safety? I could have been a thief or a drunkard. Wandering into a stranger's camp like you did, you could have been ravaged and killed.

MARELLA

I was watching you for a long time before I came your way. You seemed safe enough. And it was cold.

MENAS

You spied on me?

MARELLA

(smiles)

Yes. I'm sorry. I know it was wrong.

She stares into the fire.

MARELLA

Your fire is nice. My legs were freezing.

Marella lifts her robe up to the middle of her thigh revealing a beautiful tanned leg. Menas stares.

MENAS

Please cover yourself. I am a monk.

Marella smiles at Menas and repositions herself on the rock so she is facing him.

MARELLA

And I am a goatherd's daughter.
And we are both alone in the desert.

Marella continues to pull up her robe to reveal both legs. She moves her legs apart.

Menas stares intensely. He goes to his knees. He grabs her leg and kisses her thigh.

As his lips touch her flesh, her skin turns reptilian in texture. She laughs.

Menas looks up to see that Marella has turned into a HIDEOUS SERPENTINE MONSTER. Her leg has turned into its tail. He recoils and falls back onto the desert sand.

MENAS

No!

The monster hisses and lunges at him.

ABRUPT CUT TO:

EXT. MENAS CAMP - SAME

Menas awakens from his dream. He bolts upright. Across the dying embers of his fire he sees Zosimas sitting on the sand.

MENAS

Zosimas!

ZOSIMAS

Are you alright, brother?

MENAS

Yes.

ZOSIMAS

You may not be ready for this, Brother Menas. Your dreams test you. As you grow weaker from the heat and lack of food, the line between your dreams and reality will disappear. If you would like, I will travel with you for a while.

Menas avoids eye contact.

MENAS

I have gone out with others for four years now. It's time for me to do this alone.

(he looks up)

If the devil tempts me, then so be it. Did he not do so to Christ? Has he not done so to the saints?

ZOSIMAS

Yes.

MENAS

And has he ever tempted you in such a way?

Zosimas pauses, thinking.

ZOSIMAS

Unlike you who have left the world behind you, I was taught to discipline my mind from my earliest thoughts. Many of the tests that so many find difficult, I have never even encountered.

MENAS

You are a true saint among us, brother.

ZOSIMAS

No.

You have something I never will, Brother Menas. I have never been proven. The writings of St. Paul speak of putting off our old self. Yet I have never had an old self to put off. I don't understand the sweetness of Christ, because I have never known the bitterness of the world.

MENAS

You are an uncorrupted Adam.

Zosimas is amused.

ZOSIMAS

No. Before his temptation and fall from grace, Adam was sinless. Adam was complete. I am not.

Zosimas rises to his feet.

ZOSIMAS

Go in peace, Brother Menas! I will pray for the guarding of your mind.

MENAS

I hope you find whatever it is that will make you complete. As for me, if I could reach death having achieved your level of

MENAS (cont.)
holiness, I should be truly happy.
Go in peace.

Zosimas returns the benediction with a contemplative look.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

SUPER-IMPOSED TEXT: SIX WEEKS LATER

Zosimas now appears thinner and darker from the sun. His hair is disheveled. He is walking up a low hill. He faces into the bright sun. SUDDENLY, he sees something in the distance. He squints to focus.

Through the heat rays, is the silhouette of a NAKED WOMAN coming toward him. It is MARY OF EGYPT. He crosses himself. Then she disappears.

ZOSIMAS
(yelling)
Who are you?

MARY
I cannot show you myself, Abba
Zosimas. I am naked. Throw me your
cloak.

Zosimas' eyes narrow. He appears suspicious of the unseen voice.

ZOSIMAS
How do you know my name? Are you
flesh or spirit?

MARY
Please, throw me your cloak and I
will answer you.

ZOSIMAS
Where are you that I may throw it
to you?

MARY
Throw it to the air and it will
come to me.

Zosimas takes off his cloak and throws it up in the air in front of him. A wind from out of nowhere catches it and lifts it. As the cloak descends, it is caught by Mary's hand.

Mary pulls it over her slender, bare arm and up to her shoulder. Mary is a black woman in her sixties, yet she is still extremely beautiful. Her hair is salt and pepper and peaked in short dreadlocks. She stands behind a large rock.

She wraps the cloak around herself and walks out from behind the rock. She kneels before Zosimas.

MARY

Abba Zosimas, I am a sinful woman.
But if you can find compassion,
please give me your blessing.

Zosimas bends down to her. He gently takes her by the chin and lifts her head. He studies her face.

ZOSIMAS

If you are the saint of the desert
that I perceive, then I think it's
you who should bless me.

MARY

From your earliest years, you have
observed the commandments of the
church. You have stood before the
altar and have offered the
sacrifice of the divine mysteries.

Zosimas looks stupefied, even a little frightened.

ZOSIMAS

How can you know these things?
(beat)
Nevermind. If you know my life,
then you must also know my heart:
that I seek enlightenment and
blessing. Do me then the favor of
your prayers, Mother. For I see
not a sinner, but a saint.

Mary rises to her feet and walks a few paces in front of Zosimas. She stretches her arms to heaven. Zosimas kneels and bows his head. He crosses himself.

MARY

God, who in your mercy and loving-kindness, hear those who call upon your name, please hear my prayer.

Remember your servant, Zosimas and grant him enlightenment. Deliver and protect him from all danger, misfortune, and temptation, that being so defended by your divine power, he may have a peaceful journey and arrive safely at his destination.

As Mary prays, Zosimas raises his head and looks toward her feet. He then sees that MARY HAS LIFTED OFF THE GROUND. She is about ten feet in front of him and about six feet off the ground. As he looks, tears begin to fill his eyes.

MARY

Hear my prayer, O Lord, for you alone are merciful and compassionate. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

FADE TO:

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Zosimas and Mary are sitting near the mouth of a cave. A small campfire is burning.

ZOSIMAS

Please tell me, Mother. How you came to this life in the desert. And how you achieved such holiness.

Mary looks downcast.

ZOSIMAS

What is it?

MARY

Holiness?

(beat)

I am a sinful woman, Abba. And I would not defile you with descriptions from my past.

ZOSIMAS

If it were not the will of God that your life be known, He would not have brought me to you. Didn't He Himself reveal my name to you?

MARY

I am ashamed.

I will tell you my story. However, I fear that you will run from me in disgust before the telling is through. Pray that your mind be guarded, Abba. And pray for me, that I may find mercy on the day of judgment.

Zosimas nods.

MARY

I came here from Alexandria...

FADE TO:

ALEXANDRIA EGYPT - DAY

SUPER-IMPOSED SCREEN TEXT: 40 YEARS EARLIER

A panoramic view of the city of Alexandria is shown. The city appears as it did in the late fourth century. Dominating the view of the city is its lighthouse -- tall and brilliant. One other notable structure is the cathedral with its shining tiled domes and many crosses.

The focus switches to the streets themselves. In a montage of imagery, several shots of the city and its people are presented: cafes, alleys, churches, and

taverns; slaves, beggars, merchants, noblemen, priests, and prostitutes.

Down one particular street walks Mary. She now in her mid-twenties and absolutely beautiful and sexy. She passes several merchant stalls. Men look at her. She flirts.

She comes to the stall of a MAN SELLING FABRIC. It is one of the larger, more opulent, stalls on the street. She stops and begins to look. She notices one particular type of cloth and lifts it to examine it. The young man running the stall is sitting in the shadows, eyeing her lustfully. She returns a playful look.

MARY

This is beautiful. A color I haven't seen before.

MAN SELLING FABRIC

Yes. I think it suits you nicely.

MARY

How much?

MAN SELLING FABRIC

20 folli.

Mary picks up the cloth and wraps it around her shoulders. She feels the texture some more.

MARY

I want to see how it looks on me. Do you have a mirror?

MAN SELLING FABRIC

I don't.

MARY

I want to know how it feels against my skin. Is there space in the back for me to take off my clothes and wrap it around me?

MAN SELLING FABRIC

(smiling)

Yes, I have a space.

He calls for his son.

MAN SELLING FABRIC

Marcus!

MARCUS (O.S.)

Yes, Father!

MAN SELLING FABRIC

Come and watch the front while I
help this woman.

MARCUS, a boy age 9 or 10, emerges from behind a curtain at the back of the stall. He examines Mary with disapproval, then sits where his father was.

The father goes behind the same curtain.

Mary's countenance changes. Her eyes meet the boy's as she follows his father, fabric in hand.

INT. BEHIND STALL

The area behind the stall is little more than a makeshift enclosure for napping during the day. It is about ten feet wide by four feet deep. Mary stands at one end and the man at the other. He looks at her with great anticipation.

MARY

I didn't know your son was here.

MAN SELLING FABRIC

He watches the front while I nap
in the afternoon.

MARY

How many children do you have?

MAN SELLING FABRIC

I thought you wanted to try on the
fabric.

She looks at the fabric in her hands.

MARY

It's very pretty. But I don't have
20 folli.

MAN SELLING FABRIC

Of course you don't. Isn't that
why we're back here? To negotiate?

MARY

Tell your son to move away from
the curtain.

MAN SELLING FABRIC

Marcus, go fold the cloth in the
front as I showed you!

MARCUS (O.S.)

Yes, father.

MAN SELLING FABRIC

There. He is at the stand
refolding the cloth. A good 30
feet away.

MARY

Very well.

She undresses. Her clothes fall to the ground around her
ankles. The man looks at her in amazement.

EXT. FABRIC STALL - SAME

Marcus goes to the front of the stall where sections of
cloth are folded neatly on the table and piled in heaps
about three feet high. He pauses, wondering why he was
told to fold them. He turns to the curtain and then hears
the sound of his father as he begins to have sex with
Mary.

Marcus moves as far away from the sound as he can. In
frustration, he pushes over the heaps of folded cloth.
Having something to do now, he slowly begins to fold.

FADE TO:

EXT. FABRIC STALL - A SHORT TIME LATER

The sections of knocked over cloth are now almost completely refolded. As Marcus lies the final sections on top of the heap, the SOUND OF ALTAR BELLS along with CROWD VOICES are heard coming down the street.

MARCUS

(under his breath)

The bishop is coming!

At that moment, Marcus's father and Mary emerge from behind the curtain. Mary is now wearing the new cloth. They are both smiling.

Marcus's father then hears the bells, now louder. His look changes to one of concern.

MAN SELLING FABRIC

The bishop!

He turns to Mary.

MAN SELLING FABRIC

Get in the back, now!

MARY

What?

MAN SELLING FABRIC

Get in the back. The bishop is coming.

MARY

So what. I'm not going to hide. I'm here buying cloth. What's the bishop care about that?

MAN SELLING FABRIC

Get in the back, woman. You are a known prostitute. The bishop knows my family. I will be disgraced.

The bishop and his entourage of about ten men are now only 50 feet away. They are followed by a small crowd of citizens.

We see the bishop's face. This is BISHOP TIMOTHY, Patriarch of Alexandria, a bearded, serious-looking man

of olive complexion, in his 60s. He looks at the two arguing. They fall silent. The bishop and his entourage slow. As they do, Marcus runs forward and takes the bishop's hand and kisses it. Mary observes this closely.

MARCUS
Master, bless me!

The bishop places his hand on Marcus's head.

BISHOP TIMOTHY
I give you my blessing, my son. I
pray also for the salvation of
your father and of your family. Go
in peace.

Marcus bows and retreats to his place in front of the stall.

The bishop looks hard at Mary.

BISHOP TIMOTHY
What is your name?

Mary tries to meet his eyes, but cannot. She turns and walks away. The bishop's CHAMBERLAIN, a younger dark-haired man with a sparse beard, tries to grab her, but she eludes him.

CHAMBERLAIN
His grace addresses you, woman!

The bishop places his hand on the chamberlain's shoulder.

BISHOP TIMOTHY
Let her go.

Mary hastens up the street.

EXT. AN ALLEY - DAY

Mary walks down a narrow dirt alley that runs behind an Inn. She enters through a doorway into the Inn's kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The kitchen has an earthen floor and thatched roof. It is dominated by a large table that is covered with bowls, pots, and other cooking utensils. To one side is an oven for baking, and a fireplace where a lamb is roasting.

A woman in her 60s named ELIZABETH is standing at the table. She is an olive-completed Middle Eastern woman with her mostly gray hair pulled back in a bun. She chops vegetables.

MARY

How is business today?

ELIZABETH

Fair. How's yours?

MARY

Slow. But I did get this.

Mary models the fabric.

ELIZABETH

Ah... pretty. (beat) I suppose you're hungry.

MARY

I'm famished.

ELIZABETH

I made some soup. It's in the pot near the fire. And there's bread.

Mary goes to the fire and finds the pot with the soup. She lifts the lid and smells.

MARY

This smells wonderful.

Mary gets a bowl and ladles some soup. She finds a stool and sits at the table. She eats.

ELIZABETH

You look tired.

MARY

I just had a strange experience in the marketplace. (she takes a bite) The bishop spoke to me.

ELIZABETH

The bishop?

MARY

Yes. He asked me my name. I was so nervous I just walked away. It was stupid. He's just a man.

ELIZABETH

No he's not. To many he is Christ's representative on earth. His icon.

MARY

All I know is he was a scary character.

She looks at Elizabeth who wears a frown of disapproval.

MARY

...To ME. He's a scary character to ME.

Mary takes a piece of bread from the table and tears it in two. She sops one half in the soup and shoves it into her mouth.

ELIZABETH

Speaking of scary characters, Amnon is here.

Mary looks up, her mouth full. She points to the door leading to the dining room.

ELIZABETH

Yes. I guess he's returned from Italy.

Mary slaps the table, smiles, and makes the money sign with her thumb and forefinger.

Elizabeth studies Mary for a moment.

ELIZABETH

Sometimes I worry about you.

MARY

(after swallowing)

What do you mean?

ELIZABETH

I wonder if you're ready for the day when your beauty runs out. When there are no more Ammons interested in you?

MARY

Is anyone ready when that day arrives? Were you?

ELIZABETH

No, I suppose not.

MARY

Then I probably won't be either. Just as I wasn't ready on the day I arrived here. A big city and I alone and afraid.

(beat)

I was terrified, but I was also excited.

ELIZABETH

The city for the first time is exciting. It used to be even more so.

MARY

What do you mean?

ELIZABETH

This may sound strange coming from me, but the city had a morality about it that gave it strength. Now it's as if no one cares.

MARY

That does sound strange coming from you. You were a whore.

ELIZABETH
Even being a whore was different.

Mary laughs.

MARY
Do you know how ridiculous that
sounds?

Elizabeth smiles.

ELIZABETH
There was just something more
secretive about it. It made it
exciting.

MARY
It's still exciting. Trust me.

She gets up from the table.

MARY
Well, I guess I should go say
hello to Amnon.

ELIZABETH
What if he's not in the mood for
you?

MARY
Oh, he'll be in the mood.

Mary goes to Elizabeth and gives her a kiss.

ELIZABETH
You owe me.

MARY
I always do.

She smiles and leaves.

INT. THE MERCHANT AMNON'S BEDROOM - DAY

AMNON's bedroom, located on the upper floor of his house, is well appointed in Middle Eastern style with a balcony opening out onto a fine view of the city.

Amnon himself is a portly man in his late 50s. It is morning and he is finishing dressing himself and readying for the day. Mary is lying naked in the bed.

Amnon walks over to where Mary is lying. He tosses a small leather bag of coins onto the bed.

AMNON

Here. Stay tonight as well.

Mary rolls over onto her side. Studies him.

AMNON

But I want you to myself. If I pay for you, you stay. No going out during the day and getting other business.

MARY

Why does someone like you even bother with a harlot? You could have afford many wives, if you wished. Beautiful. Virgins.

AMNON

Many wives are trouble. In order to be respected these days by the church, men are supposed to only have one wife. I need the Christian business. So, I go and make myself visible at the church when I can.

(laughs)

And I slip women like you through the back door when I need to.

KATHERINE, a slave in her mid-30s, enters the room. She's a full figured but very attractive woman with a fair complexion. She takes Amnon's water basin, sets it on the floor, and begins cleaning the area where he has just finished washing.

MARY

So your faith is all a deception?

AMNON

It's business. My family has lived in Egypt since the days of the Pharaohs. During those times they worshipped Pharaoh and his gods. When Alexander and his armies came, we worshipped their gods. When the Romans came, we worshipped theirs. And when Emperor Constantine became a Christian, all the merchants in the empire, if they were smart, converted to the faith right after.

It's business, Mary. It's just business. When the next group of invaders come through, we'll convert to their religion as well.

MARY

Shrewd.

AMNON

I'm a merchant. You're a whore. To ply our trades, we make adjustments. True faith is for children and fools. Those with little or nothing to lose.

(beat)

I'll see you tonight then?

MARY

Yes.

Amnon walks out. There is a period of silence as Mary watches Katherine.

KATHERINE

Some use truth. Some surrender to it.

MARY

What do you mean?

KATHERINE

My master wears religion as a
garment, to suit his own ends.

Mary rises from the bed, taking a bed sheet and
wrapping around herself. She walks to Katherine.

MARY

And what about you?

Mary notices a cross hanging around Katherine's neck.
Katherine meets Mary's eyes and then looks down at the
cross herself. She looks up and meets Mary's eyes again.

KATHERINE

Well, I'm not a child, so I
suppose that makes me a fool.
(an awkward pause)
I will get you something to eat.

Mary reaches up and gently takes the cross in her hand.

MARY

Very pretty.

Mary's hand lets the cross down into Katherine's
cleavage. She then strokes the top of her breast with
back of her hand.

MARY

You are very pretty as well.
(beat)
Amnon said I had to stay here
today. Let's have some fun while
he's gone.

KATHERINE

Aren't you satisfied enough with
all the men that you have?

MARY

Men. Men just want to quickly
spout their seed. They know
nothing of love-making. Especially
rich, fat, old clods like Amnon.
(beat)

MARY (cont.)

With a woman like you, I could
spend the entire day and still not
run out of things to do.

Katherine is noticeably tempted by the offer, but she
resists.

KATHERINE

I'm afraid you'll have to spend
your day in other pursuits. I'll
go and get you some breakfast.

Katherine turns to leave. Mary takes her by the shoulders
and spins her around. Kisses her. Katherine pushes away.

MARY

(smiles devilishly)

If you change your mind, I'll be
here -- all day.

Katherine leaves.

Mary continues to smile as she watches her go. She
then walks to the balcony and looks out on the city.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BISHOP TIMOTHY'S CHAMBERS - SAME DAY

On a similar balcony across the city, Bishop Timothy
looks out.

BISHOP TIMOTHY

(To himself in a low voice)

How often I wanted to gather your
children together, the way a hen
gathers her chicks.

Two men are in the Bishop's chambers, standing at a table
studying a 3D model of the cathedral, one of them is the
bishop's chamberlain the other is an ARCHITECT.

CHAMBERLAIN

Your Grace, will you join us to
look at this?

Bishop Timothy walks over to them. He appears tired and moves slowly.

BISHOP TIMOTHY

Yes?

CHAMBERLAIN

What are your thoughts on this model, Your Grace? It shows how the new hall will look once it's completed.

BISHOP TIMOTHY

(perplexed)

And what is this hall for?

CHAMBERLAIN

For meetings, audiences, banquets, whatever we decide.

BISHOP TIMOTHY

I don't understand. Isn't there enough room already for such things?

CHAMBERLAIN

This has already been discussed and approved. I'm merely asking your thoughts.

BISHOP TIMOTHY

I don't remember approving such a thing. How much will this cost?

CHAMBERLAIN

I don't have the exact figures...

BISHOP TIMOTHY

(interrupting)

This isn't necessary. This money could be used better in other ways. You asked my thoughts, my thoughts are that...

An ASSISTANT calls.

ASSITANT (O.S.)
Your Grace!

BISHOP TIMOTHY
(flustered by the interruption)
What is it?

The Assistant comes into the room. He speaks quietly.

ASSISTANT
There is a man here to see you. He says his son is a prophet of some kind. But that his gift of prophecy is making him ill.

CHAMBERLAIN
Who is this man? He needs an appointment.

ASSISTANT
He says he was sent by a member of the Governor's council. He has a letter. He seems to be a man of means.

The bishop looks sternly at the chamberlain.

BISHOP TIMOTHY
It doesn't matter who he is. He needs our help. Has he brought his son with him?

ASSISTANT
Yes, he's outside the door.

BISHOP TIMOTHY
Let him come in.

CHAMBERLAIN
Not in the Church, Your Grace. What if there's a disease of some kind?

BISHOP TIMOTHY
Bring him!

The assistant goes to the door and opens it. The boy's father, a man named THEODORE, enters accompanied by his servant, STEPHEN, who carries the boy who is covered with a blanket. The boy's name is BENJAMIN. Theodore is finely dressed. He approaches the Bishop. He kneels, extending his hands together, palms upward.

THEODORE
Master, bless me.

The bishop places his right hand in Theodore's palms. Theodore kisses it. Then the Bishop places his hand on his head.

BISHOP TIMOTHY
You are blessed in the name of the
Father, and the Son, and the Holy
Spirit.
(beat)
I'm told your son is ill. Let me
see him.

The Father motions to Stephen.

THEODORE
Bring him here.

Stephen brings the boy forward.

THEODORE
He doesn't like the light.

The bishop motions to set the boy on a couch in the corner of the chamber. After he is set down, the Bishop approaches. He sits on the edge of the couch and lifts the blanket.

The boy is about 11 or 12. He is a sickly pale and appears to have a high fever. He is sweating. His eyelids flutter with the light. He manages to open his eyes. There is a film over his eyes.

BISHOP TIMOTHY
What is his name?

THEODORE
Benjamin.

THEODORE (cont.)

I am afraid for him. He is too young to bear this, Your Grace.

BISHOP TIMOTHY

The beloved son of Jacob.

(beat)

Benjamin! Can you hear me?

The boy's eye's roll in his head and then focus on the Bishop.

BISHOP TIMOTHY

I'm told you are a prophet.

BENJAMIN

(speaking in a weak voice)

I can see things. I can see into people's hearts -- what they fear... what will befall them.

BISHOP TIMOTHY

A great, but frightening gift.

Benjamin studies the bishop's face.

BENJAMIN

You worry about your people. You see them sliding into complacency... loving riches and pleasure.

BISHOP TIMOTHY

I do.

Benjamin looks the bishop more deeply in the eyes. He then looks about the entire chamber. Through the open window, across the terrace, he can see the tops of the city's buildings. As he looks, the sky darkens, turning an eerie shade of red. In the distance, small winged creatures appear.

EXT. SKIES OVER ALEXANDRIA

As they fly closer, it can be seen that they are fallen angels.

EXT. CATHEDRAL TERRACE

One of the creatures lands on the edge of the cathedral balcony, gripping it with its claws. Its face is seen. It's a monstrous beaked face. It lets out a loud distorted caw.

ABRUPT CUT TO:

INT. BISHOP TIMOTHY'S CHAMBERS

Shaken from his vision, Benjamin suddenly sits upright, gasping for breath.

BISHOP TIMOTHY

Son! What is it?

BENJAMIN

This city will not remain Christian.

CHAMBERLIAN

This is ridiculous. This is Alexandria, one of the ancient seats of the church. Founded by Saint Mark himself.

BISHOP TIMOTHY

(annoyed)

Let the boy speak!

THEODORE

Your grace, whenever he speaks such things he is sick for days. I fear he will not survive if he continues. Each vision is stronger than the last. That's why we keep him hidden. It's as if something grips him, choking his very life from his body.

BISHOP TIMOTHY

The devil does not want prophets of his kind to speak.

Benjamin struggles to remain sitting. He grabs the Bishop's robe to support himself. He stares off into space and speaks as if in a trance.

BENJAMIN

The army of Amrou will bring down our walls and towers. They will come upon us like lions. After a siege of fourteen months, and the loss of three-and-twenty thousand men, the mighty Amrou will plant the standard of his god upon our city and cry, "I have taken Alexandria, the great city of the West."

EXT. STREETS OF ALEXANDRIA - DAY

A depiction of the sack of Alexandria is shown...

The army of the Moslem General, Amrou is shown entering the city. Women and children are running in the streets in fear of the soldiers. Against the evening sky, a cross is pulled down from the top of a church.

BENJAMIN (V.O.)

A prophet will be born in the east. He will raise an army. His followers will come and conquer, obliterating the Christian armies. They will burn our shrines, murder our children and rape our women. The city will forever be under the rule of dark oppression.

The depiction of the sack of Alexandria ends with flames enveloping the church. And then above it, in the night sky, a crescent moon is seen.

ABRUPT CUT TO:

INT. BISHOP'S CHAMBER

At this point, the model of the church in the bishop's chamber bursts into flames.

As the model cathedral erupts into flames, the bishop stands. The others in the room turn towards the explosion. Standing closest, the architect and Stephen quickly move to put out the fire.

CHAMBERLIAN

This is wizardry of some kind.
Sir, your son is possessed by a
devil!

THEODORE

Certainly he is not! (to the
bishop) He is the most gentle of
souls, your grace.

ASSISTANT

Look! He has fainted.

Benjamin is lying down again with his eyes closed. He
shivers. Theodore goes to his side.

BISHOP TIMOTHY

I don't believe the boy is
possessed. He has been given
prophetic gifts, to be sure. Gifts
that the spirit of darkness would
not have him use.

THEODORE

His body, your Grace! He is rigid.
It's as if he's bound.

Upon examination it appears as though Benjamin is tied
up. His legs are squeezed together; his arms are pressed
in against his chest, and his breathing is constricted.

Theodore covers him.

THEODORE

After he prophesies, he becomes
like this. He will remain so for
hours, sometimes days.

The bishop finds a place to sit. He motions for Theodore.
To come near.

THEODORE

Yes, your Grace.

BISHOP TIMOTHY

Whatever it is that afflicts your son is very strong.

The feast of the cross is in three days. Go to Jerusalem. Take your son to the cross of Christ. It's power is sure to free him.

THEODORE

But the travel... a voyage. It will surely make him worse.

The bishop grabs his cloak and pulls him closer.

BISHOP TIMOTHY

You must believe and have faith. It does not require a bishop to do good. Great good is in you, I can see that.

THEODORE

No, your Grace. I'm just a business man.

The bishop shakes his head.

BISHOP TIMOTHY

People aren't always what they seem, even to themselves.

INT. THE MERCHANT AMNON'S PARLOR - NIGHT

The room is large, lit by fire and candlelight. Amnon is entertaining three of his friends. They have just finished dinner and are drinking and making merry. Katherine and her 14 year-old daughter MARINA are cleaning the wreckage from dinner.

Marina is a very attractive young girl -- a younger version of her mother. She wears a simple white tunic. Her hair is pulled back on her head in braids. As she bends to gather some dinner plates, Amnon notices the smoothness of her skin, and the curve of her bottom.

AMNON

Marina, play music for us. Play
your harp.

Marina looks to her mother who nods. Marina goes to fetch
the harp. Her mother continues clearing the dinner and
heads to the kitchen.

AMNON

Where is Mary? Mary!

Amnon takes a drink of wine and then picks his teeth.

Marina returns with the harp and begins to play. The
music is soft and gentle. Amnon looks pleased. He laughs
and is distracted for the moment. He turns to his
friends.

AMNON

She is very good, yes?

Mary then appears. She is cleaned and dressed.

AMNON

Ah, Mary. I want you to dance for
my friends.

MARY

Dance?

AMNON

Yes, dance.

Mary looks at Marina.

MARY

But this is hardly a dance. It's
more of a dirge.

AMNON

Something more lively then.
Marina, play something Mary can
dance to.

Marina takes a moment, and then begins to play a new
song. It's hardly dance music, but it's a little faster
and more rhythmic.

Mary reluctantly begins her dance. At first, she walks away from the men, closing her eyes. Then she turns suddenly. Her countenance has changed. She is now seductive. She moves her hands over her body. She parts the cloth covering her legs and rubs her thighs. The men react with dirty laughter, egging her on.

Marina falters a bit, but continues to play. She looks shaken and tries to avert her eyes.

Mary continues in her striptease, moving into provocative positions. From the table she takes a large wooden spoon and begins treating it as a phallic symbol.

Katherine returns. She rushes to Marina and tells to go to the kitchen. Marina immediately leaves. With the music stopped, the men are upset.

Katherine, realizing she has forgotten her place, pleads at her master's side.

KATHERINE

Master, please. She is a child.

Amnon looks unhappy, but simply waves her away. Katherine stands and begins to walk away.

MARY

(to Katherine)

What about you? Will you dance with me?

Mary grabs Katherine.

DINNER GUEST #1

Yes, two. Let's see them dance together!

Amnon looks uncomfortable, but since his guest insists, he nods.

AMNON

Dance for us, Katherine. Dance with Mary.

Mary comes up behind Katherine. She puts her arms around her and begins to sway. Katherine reluctantly, awkwardly dances with her.

AMNON

So, we will make our own music.

He begins to clap. The others join. The two women continue.

Mary pulls at Katherine's robes, revealing the tops of her breasts. She kisses her neck and begins to ravish her.

FADE TO:

EXT. EGYPTIAN DESERT - DAY

On a table, outside of a dwelling, a wooden model is set up showing the cataracts of the Nile river. It looks like a stair case, only each step is a box holding water. A MAN'S VOICE IS HEARD. It is MARY'S FATHER OF OLD and he is gently explaining to his daughter how the cataract system of the Nile river works. His very dark-skinned hands operate the device as he narrates the various steps.

MARY'S FATHER

So when the boat is in this position, the gate is closed behind it. Then the water is slowly let in from the next gate above.

He lifts a tiny gate and the water rises in the step containing the tiny boat.

MARY'S FATHER

Once the boat rises to the level of the next step, it's free to sail the next length of river. Then, when the land rises again, another cataract is used.

YOUNG MARY'S face comes into focus from behind the model. She is a beautiful child, age twelve, who obviously adores her father. She is captivated by the model.

YOUNG MARY

So the water lifts up the boat?

We now see the father's face. He is a handsome Nubian (black African) man in his early thirties. He smiles.

MARY'S FATHER

Yes. That's right, Mary.

MARY

Like when you lift me up to pick fruit.

MARY'S FATHER

Yes, I suppose so.

MARY

And this is where you're going with Uncle James?

She indicates the model.

MARY'S FATHER

Well, this is how we get there. We're bringing a portion of our harvest to the monasteries, that we may have blessings in the coming year.

Mary's uncle JAMES calls as he comes to the house.

JAMES (O.S.)

We are ready.

James comes into view astride a camel. He has two other men with him, also on camelback.

MARY

How long will you be gone, Father?

MARY'S FATHER

Three weeks; maybe four.

MARY'S MOTHER emerges from the dwelling. She is a beautiful woman, fairer than her husband -- of Arab or Arab-Greek background.

The father goes to her and embraces her. He looks into her eyes.

MARY'S FATHER

I'll miss you.

The mother coos and nuzzles him.

MARY'S MOTHER

Come home soon.

MARY'S FATHER

I will.(he strokes her hair)

He goes to Mary.

MARY'S FATHER

Give me a kiss.

Mary kisses and hugs her father.

MARY

Don't go.

MARY'S FATHER

I'll be home soon. You're my little bird. You know that, don't you?

Mary looks disappointed. She gives her father another hug.

Mary's father makes his way to his camel. He mounts, waves to his wife and child, then turns the camel around and begins to ride away.

Mary's mother comes up behind her. She places her hands on Mary's shoulders. Both look sad.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AMNON'S BEDCHAMBER - MORNING

Mary stares out the window as she remembers the scene from her childhood. She looks sad and distant. The sound of the door opening stirs her attention. It is Katherine.

She approaches Mary and throws a bag of coins onto the bed in front of her.

KATHERINE

Please take this and leave.

Mary studies Katherine's face. It is solemn, but peaceful. Mary takes the bag of coins from the bed. She pours out the coins into her hand.

KATHERINE

It is all I have. Please take it.

MARY

I'm sorry if I hurt you.

KATHERINE

I'm of no concern. I'm a slave in my master's house. Most of the time he is fair, sometimes even kind. But then there are times I'm reminded of what I am - his property. Last night was one of those times.

(beat)

I'm trying to free my daughter. To save her from the same fate, if I can.

Mary puts the coins back into the bag. She offers it to Katherine.

MARY

Take it. I don't need it. I will leave, but I don't want your money.

Katherine takes the bag.

Mary goes to a table where the money is that Amnon had given her the day before. She collects it and hands that to Katherine as well.

MARY

Take this too.

Katherine looks at the money in Mary's hands.

KATHERINE
I don't understand.

FADE TO:

INT. MARY'S FAMILY DWELLING OF OLD - NIGHT

It is nearly a year after Mary's father left to go to the monasteries.

Young Mary is staring vacantly into the waning flames of a cooking fire. Her appearance has changed dramatically. Her face is dirty. Her hair is disheveled.

In the background, is the SOUND OF A MAN AND WOMAN HAVING SEX. It's mostly the man that is heard.

Mary looks over to the floor in front of her. On the floor is the model of the cataract that her father had made. It is now broken and neglected.

The sounds subside as the man is finished.

Mary takes a stick and pokes the fire. Over Mary's shoulder, her mother emerges from behind a curtain. She stares at Mary. Then goes to a small table and sits, placing her head in her hands.

After an awkward silence, the man emerges from behind the curtain. He is a large, BURLY MAN. He looks at Mary. He walks to her and stands by her side.

BURLY MAN
What's to eat? I'm hungry.

MARY
There's nothing to eat. We have no food.

BURLY MAN
No food? What does your mother do with the money I give her?

MARY'S MOTHER
There is some bread.

BURLY MAN

Bread! No meat? No wine? What good is bread?

(beat)

Tomorrow I am leaving. I am going to Alexandria where there is wine and cheese and spiced meat. And everything else a man could want.

(laughs)

Mary's mother is startled by this news.

MARY'S MOTHER

Leaving? No. How will we survive?

(beat)

Take us with you?

MARY

Mother! No. What about father?

MARY'S MOTHER

Mary, your father is dead. He's been gone over a year now.

BURLY MAN

Or, he left you. Your father was a Nubian, yes? Nubians cannot be trusted.

MARY

No! He didn't leave us. None of the other men he left with returned either.

He may come back, mother. Perhaps he's a captive. You don't know.

MARY'S MOTHER

In any event, daughter, we will starve without money. What good will it do your father if he comes home only to find our rotted bones on the floor?

BURLY MAN

Your mother is right.

Mary turns away.

BURLY MAN

Your daughter looks like you. Very pretty.

He touches Mary's hair. She pulls away.

BURLY MAN

I will make you a deal. Sell me your daughter and I will take her to Alexandria with me. If your husband shows up, you can come and find me and buy her back. If not, then at least you will have food to eat until you can find another... source of income.

INT. AMNON'S BEDCHAMBER - MORNING

Continues with the earlier scene, before the flashback.

MARY

Money is easy to come by, but your daughter's innocence is priceless. (beat) What happened to your husband?

KATHERINE

He is dead. A sailor who died at sea. After we got the news, we were told to come here to seek Amnon for his help. An officer who liked my husband said he was looking for household servants. In time we became beholden to Amnon. We became his slaves.

MARY

I hope you find your freedom.

KATHERINE

I hope you find yours.

Katherine kisses Mary on the cheek.

MARY

How are you so forgiving, after
how I treated you?

KATHERINE

You embarrassed me in front of
some foolish old men. I'll
survive.

(beat)

You need to take care of yourself.

Katherine intensely examines Mary's face.

KATHERINE

If God wills, we shall see each
other again.

EXT. PORT OF ALEXANDRIA - DAY

Mary is walking down by the water. She sees sailors
loading up a boat. It is a wooden merchant ship of the
time, about 80 feet long. It is moored parallel to the
dock. At the stern is a small cabin leading to the galley
below deck. Behind the cabin is a tented enclosure - the
makeshift quarters of the boat's captain.

Mary turns her focus to one man in particular named JOEL.
He is Macedonian -- handsome and strong with blonde hair
and beard. She admires his body. He pauses and notices
her. He smiles.

JOEL

Hello.

MARY

Where are you going?

JOEL

We are going to Caesarea, Cyprus,
Ephesus, and then to
Constantinople.

The two study each other, flirting lustfully with their
eyes.

MARY

Take me with you.

JOEL

We are not a passenger vessel.

(beat)

But sometimes we make exceptions.

Where do you want to go?

MARY

I just want to get away.

JOEL

Why?

MARY

I'm tired of Alexandria.

JOEL

Are you running?

MARY

No.

JOEL

Do you have money?

MARY

(beat)

I should probably talk to your captain.

(She looks at the other men.)

Which one is he?

JOEL

I am the captain.

MARY

Ahh! (smiles)

JOEL

So, how much can you pay me to remedy your weariness of this city?

MARY

I carry nothing with me.

She smiles and lifts her robe up to reveal her naked leg. To it is strapped a small leather purse. She removes the purse and turns it upside down. The other men stop loading the boat and stare, laugh, hoot.

MARY

I can only pay you with what I do have. In exchange for passage, I offer you and your men my services as... an entertainer.

The men react again. "Yes, yes..."

JOEL

(smiling)

And if I don't accept I shall have a mutiny. Quite manipulative. You would make a good captain yourself if you weren't a woman.

He turns to the men.

First she is mine!

Mary smiles. She heads to the boat. As she makes her way up the ramp, the men grab her and slap her ass. She enjoys it, teasing them in return.

As she steps onto the boat, she sees one man who is exceptionally ugly. He has lost an eye and is horribly scarred on one side of his face. He gives her a lustful smile. At this, she recoils and heads quickly to the stern of the boat.

FADE TO:

EXT. PORT OF ALEXANDRIA - DUSK

The ship is now loaded and the crew is readying to leave. The cries of the sailors are heard as they make their final preparations.

EXT. STERN OF SHIP - SAME

Mary is standing, looking out to sea. Joel comes up behind her and grabs her ass. She giggles and coyly moves away.

JOEL

We leave in a moment. When we're
underway, I will have you,
 (he kisses her)
and have you,
 (kisses her)
and have you again.

MARY

Why are we sailing at night?

Joel looks off and indicates the great lighthouse.

JOEL

With that lighthouse shining,
there is no night in these waters.

EXT. DOCK IN FRONT OF SHIP

A carriage comes to the ship and stops. A voice is heard.
It is the voice of Theodore's man servant, Stephen.

EXT. STERN OF SHIP

STEPHEN (O.S.)

Stop! Put down your gangway!

Joel turns. He walks to the side of the ship near the
dock. Mary follows him with her eyes.

Joel addresses Theodore who now stands on the dock.

JOEL

(angrily)

What is it? We're about to leave.

THEODORE

My son and I need to get to
Jerusalem. I understand you're
stopping at Caesarea. Can you
provide us passage?

JOEL

We're carrying goods, not
passengers.

THEODORE

I will pay you. I need to get to
Jerusalem.

Joel jumps over the side of the ship. Comes closer to
Theodore.

JOEL

It will cost you 500 folli and
five amphoras of wine.

THEODORE

Done.

(to Stephen)

Move Benjamin inside! Bring down
your gangplank, sir. He needs
darkness, he is ill and sensitive
to light.

JOEL

You didn't tell me he was sick.
No! Forget it. I'll not have
diseases aboard my ship.

THEODORE

It's not a disease.

STEPHEN

The boy has prophetic gifts. He is
vexed by a spirit of somekind.

JOEL

Oh, he's possessed. That makes it
all OK.

(laughs)

No, not on my ship. He'll have us
all drowned in the sea before the
night is through.

THEODORE

He is not possessed. I will pay
you 1000 folli and all the wine
you can drink! Take us with you.

Joel is impressed. He considers the offer.

JOEL

You're not to say a word to the crew about his being sick or about any spirits.

(beat)

Say that he was injured in a fight and is recovering from wounds.

(beat)

And keep him quiet. I'll have no howling or baying at the moon, do you hear? Or, you'll both go in the water. These men are like little girls when it comes to things like prophecies and spirits.

(beat)

And he stays in the hold of the ship.

He turns away.

You have an hour to get my wine.

(shouts)

The gangplank!

Joel heads back to Mary who is still in the stern.

EXT. STERN OF SHIP

JOEL

(chuckling)

Now, where were we?

MARY

Who was that?

JOEL

Someone with money to pay for his passage. And now it's time for you to pay for yours.

MARY

(smiling)

I thought you were going to wait until we were at sea.

JOEL

We're not leaving yet. We have an hour.

He kisses her.

INT. THE HOLD OF THE BOAT - NIGHT

Theodore and Stephen enter. Stephen has Benjamin in his arms. Theodore carries a small lantern and has two large bags of clothes and provisions over his back.

THEODORE

Put him down over here. I will make him a bed. You go and get the wine.

Stephen sets him down. He leaves.

THEODORE

(turns to Benjamin)
Benjamin! Can you hear me?

He lifts the blanket away from his face. The boy is sleeping restlessly, his eye's flitting about under their lids. He slightly opens them. He groans weakly.

THEODORE

We are going to Jerusalem. We are going to get you well again.

BENJAMIN

It's cold in here.

THEODORE

It will only be a day or two. And then we will be there. Then you will be well again.

Benjamin falls back into semi-consciousness.

THEODORE

You sleep. Sleep. I will pray for you.

Theodore goes and sits. He pulls out a prayer rope (similar to a rosary), crosses himself, and begins his recitations.

EXT. STERN OF THE BOAT - NIGHT

Mary and Joel have finished having sex and are lying together on a pile of blankets.

JOEL
So, what is it you intend to do in Constantinople?

MARY
I don't know. Just get away, I suppose.

JOEL
Then you are running.

MARY
Perhaps.

A SAILOR's voice calls.

SAILOR (O.S.)
Captain! The wine is loaded. We're ready.

JOEL
I must go.

He gets up and leaves. Mary's eyes follow him. She falls back onto the blankets. As she rests, looks up at the night sky. A look of excitement crosses her face. She closes her eyes, takes a deep breath and smiles. As she opens her eyes again she glimpses a HUGE WINGED creature flying overhead. Then it is gone. Unsettled by this, she quickly gets up and moves away.

EXT. DOCKSIDE

The ship has pulled away 50 meters or so from the dock. The sea behind it sparkles with light from the lighthouse.

Mary emerges from behind the cabin. She looks at the great light house coming into view. The whole ship is enveloped in the light. The wind begins to blow over her. She smiles in delight at the sensation of air and light.

EXT. FURTHER OUT

The ship is seen from a distance now. The lighthouse behind it. The command to make sail is heard. The sail rises and fills with wind. The ship makes for open sea.

FADE TO:

EXT. THE SHIP AT SEA - NIGHT

The ship is a few hours out to sea now. Several men are on the deck. They have been busy drinking wine. They are laughing.

Mary has been fulfilling her obligation and has already had sex with a few of the sailors. She emerges from behind the cabin with one of the sailors. The sailor is putting on his tunic. Mary has only a sheet wrapped around her.

MARY

Which one of you gentlemen is next?

A couple of the men grope her as she passes. One of them says, "I am ready to go again."

MARY

Wait! Let me rest and have some wine.

Someone hands her a cup of wine. She looks at the men and notices the ugly man. He smiles at her, knowing his turn will come. She averts her eyes and returns to her wine.

MARY

Do any of you play music? I will dance for you.

She whirls around, partially revealing herself.

There's some lusty reaction from the sailors. One of them shouts.

SAILOR

You will dance after we've all had
our turn with you.

Mary spies a younger sailor name SAUL, sitting off to himself towards the bow of the boat. He's not paying much attention to what's going on. She approaches him.

MARY

What about you, sir? Are you ready
for your turn?

SAUL

I am not interested. Go with one
of the others.

Mary is a little taken back by the refusal. She pursues.

MARY

Not interested in soft, young,
flesh?

Joel is sitting nearby. He is working, repairing some rigging.

JOEL

He is newly married and misses his
wife. Choose someone else.

The ugly sailor rises to his feet.

UGLY SAILOR

Choose me. It's my turn.

The other sailors, noticing Mary's obvious repulsion, find this amusing. They encourage her, saying that it is, indeed, his turn. She turns again to the young sailor.

MARY

Surely, sir, you wife would
understand -- a man alone at sea.

She moves closer, standing directly in front of him.

He angrily rises to his feet and pushes her away.

SAUL

Leave me alone, whore! Look at you. You want me to go into you while you still drip with the fluids of other men.

He pushes her again. As she stumbles backward, she sees another YOUNG MAN standing at the far prow of the boat. Obscured by the darkness, his features cannot be clearly seen. However, is very tall and pale.

Mary calls to him.

MARY

And what about you, sir? Would you like to have me?

JOEL

Who are you talking to?

Mary looks at the man. He looks back at her with a strong sober look. As she stares at him, he fades into the darkness.

The ugly sailor comes behind Mary and takes her by the shoulders.

UGLY SAILOR

It's my turn.

Joel walks forward.

JOEL

Surely you've been with such men before. Now get on with it.

Mary is still looking off in the direction where the young man disappeared. She then looks angrily at the captain and begins to head towards the back of the boat with the ugly sailor.

JOEL

No! Here. So we can all watch.

Mary stops and stares at Joel. She then stiffly sheds the sheet. The ugly sailor laughs and falls upon her, taking her to the deck.

Joel smiles, takes a big swig of wine, and watches.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

We return to the scene where Mary is telling the story of her life. The fire is dying. Zosimas stares into the smoldering coals.

MARY

Shall I stop?

ZOSIMAS

It is a hard story to hear. I can see by looking at you, even in your old age, that you are a beautiful woman. Yet your beauty was a curse to you, not a blessing. All your life it determined your path.

It's interesting. Those things people aspire for... beauty, wealth, power. These are the very things that often control and destroy lives. The lives of both those who want and those who possess.

MARY

We are made to be spiritual creatures - a joining of flesh with the uncreated light of God... closest to God in character, even closer than the angels. That's why the angels celebrate us... and why their fallen counterparts attempt to pervert us and keep us from our destiny... *that we will judge the angels.*

Our spirits have collapsed into our flesh and we have become more like animals than men. We don't understand ourselves any more. We

MARY (cont.)

don't understand what we were meant to be.

Evil is not so much a force. It is the absence of good. It is the absence of God's order. It is chaos.

ZOSIMAS

I have never heard such things spoken before. I am an infant in spirit next to you. My life of tests behind cloistered walls means nothing.

Please, Mother, continue your story.

MARY

It is a shameless tale. I fear by telling it, I defile the very air with my words.

ZOSIMAS

I believe that God led me into this desert to show me His ways. If it weren't His will that your life be known to me, he would not have brought me to you.

Mary is distracted. She stares off.

ZOSIMAS

What is it?

MARY

(speaking more to herself)

For every man I've had in my youth, I've had to battle demons here in this desert. The desert is a place we go to clear our minds. But once we've done so, we're never prepared for what renewed vision may show us.

ZOSIMAS

You've seen and fought with
demons?

MARY

Many. And equally as many angels
have come to my side to give me
comfort and strength. Each having
a purpose to bring me closer to
God.

ZOSIMAS

The angel on the ship, what
purpose did he serve?

MARY

Perhaps the greatest of all...

EXT. THE SHIP AT SEA - DAWN

Mary is sleeping at the stern of the ship. As she sleeps,
the bottom folds of a white robe appear in front of her.
Beneath the folds are the feet of the young man who
appeared to her the night before. Next, his hand comes
into view as he bends over her and strokes Mary's cheek.

The young man looks down upon Mary. Behind him clouds
gather. The wind blows his hair.

Mary awakes with a shock and sits upright. She looks
around, but sees nothing. It is windy. The creaking of
the boat is heard. A breeze tosses her hair. She looks
off to see the sun rising. The horizon in the east turns
red. She wraps a blanket around her shoulders and looks
about, surveying two or three sleeping bodies.

Suddenly, a voice speaks. It is Saul, standing somewhere
behind her.

SAUL (O.S.)

A storm is coming.

Mary turns quickly, frightened. She sees Saul and is
relieved. She is hung over and looks tired.

MARY

You frightened me.

MARY (cont.)

(beat)

What was it you said?

SAUL

Do you see the land?

In the far distance, a narrow strip of land can be perceived.

SAUL

That is Palestine. Up there
(nodding to the north, to his
left) is Caesarea. Making it in
will be hard. We need to hurry to
beat the storm.

Mary looks off.

SAUL

It wasn't because you're not
beautiful. You are.

(beat)

It's just that I worry for my
wife. I think, if I do such a
thing with you, then what's to
prevent her from doing the same.
There are forces in life we do not
understand. Even though she would
have no way of knowing, what I do
affects her, my children, my
wealth... everything.

MARY

You have children?

SAUL

(smiles)

No, not yet. Someday, I hope.

MARY

And what about someone like me? If
what you're saying is true, then
my behavior should have me dead by
now.

SAUL

But you're not dead, are you?

(beat)

I need to go wake the captain.

Saul leaves her. Mary looks off again at the coastline, then looks up to see a cloudy sky.

EXT. THE SHIP AT SEA - MID-DAY, STORM

The ship rides up and down on the increasing swell. The wind is blowing, but the rain hasn't started yet. The men have taken down the sail and are tying down all the topside gear.

INT. THE SHIP AT SEA

Mary is climbing down a ladder into the hold of the boat. Once down, she looks for a place to sit. She heads to the bow of the ship and sits amidst the many sacks of grain and amphoras of wine. She bundles herself with a blanket.

As she looks off, further towards the bow, she notices Theodore sitting in the darkness, praying. He's tired. Unphased by the storm. His lips barely moving. His eyes open and he sees Mary.

MARY

They sent me down here because of the storm. I won't bother you. I'm just going to sleep, if I can.

THEODORE

I am Theodore from Rosetta. I buy and sell cloth and some livestock. I'm taking my son, Benjamin to Jerusalem. He is sick.

MARY

I'm Mary
(pause, then somewhat flippantly)
...a whore from Alexandria. I have no real destination or purpose.

Mary looks nervous. Suddenly, A HUGE SPLASH is heard. Water comes pouring down around the opening of the hatch, into the hold of the boat. Mary reacts.

MARY

Oh my God!

THEODORE

Quite a storm, yes? Have you spent much time at sea?

MARY

No. None. Only on riverboats as a child.

THEODORE

It seems a lot worse than it is. I've been through many a tempest. This is a good boat. We'll be fine.

There's some silence. Mary studies the huddled lump beneath the blankets.

MARY

What's wrong with your son?

THEODORE

(hesitantly, unconvincingly)
He was wounded in an accident.

MARY

Why do you take him to Jerusalem? Are there no doctors in Egypt who can attend to him? It seems that to move him will only...

THEODORE

No one in Egypt was able to help him. Jerusalem is the holy city. I'm taking him to visit the shrine of the holy sepulcher for the feast of the cross. God will heal him.

BENJAMIN

(in a weak voice)
Father, who is there?

Benjamin stirs. He pulls back the blankets and looks at Mary.

THEODORE

It is only a fellow traveler. Now rest.

BENJAMIN

Who are you?

MARY

My name is Mary.

Benjamin cocks his head to one side. He gives Mary and inquisitive look.

BENJAMIN

I think your name is Little bird.

MARY

(shocked, frightened)
How do you know that name?

BENJAMIN

It is your name, isn't it?

MARY

It was.

BENJAMIN

(dreamy)
Little bird.

THEODORE

Don't talk to him. He suffers from a fever. (to Benjamin) Son, please be silent.

The storm rages again. Another pelt of water comes down through the opening. Mary reacts again, although not as strongly.

MARY

Your son is a prophet. He has powers.

THEODORE

Yes. But it is those same powers that make him sick. I would rather he be well than be a prophet.

MARY

What is this shrine of the holy sepulcher you speak of?

THEODORE

It is the church built upon the tomb of the Lord Jesus, from whence the Lord rose from the dead, an ultimate source of healing for the lame and infirmed. It is also where the holy cross resides.

FADE TO:

INT. THE SHIP AT SEA - LATER IN THE DAY

The storm has calmed somewhat, but the sound of rain and wind quietly beating against the hull can still be heard. Theodore is asleep, as is Mary.

Mary's eyes open. As she surveys her surroundings, her eyes come upon the sleeping Benjamin. The blanket is pulled back and she can see that his leg and torso are encoiled by a SNAKE-LIKE CREATURE.

As her eyes move up to his head, she sees that it is cradled in the human-like arms of the creature and that the creature's chin is resting on the top of the boys head.

The creature's face is nosferateau-like. It's eyes are open and staring right at Mary.

CREATURE

(harshly)

What do you see, whore?

Mary gasps.

CREATURE

(turning to her)

Don't be afraid, Mary the whore.
Bird. I'm not going to hurt you --
someone who does so much for me.

Mary's eyes become round with fear. She sits upright and scoots away as far as she can from the creature.

CREATURE

How many penises have you had in
your mouth, or up your ass, whore?
How many families have you
destroyed? How many children have
you driven into the street?

The creature begins to move. It's tail comes up between Benjamin's legs indicating a penis.

CREATURE

This boy has never had a woman,
you know. Perhaps you would like
to take his virginity.

The creature wiggles its tail as a taunt.

CREATURE

Come on, whore!

MARY

No! Help! HELP!

At Mary's yelling, Theodore wakes up.

THEODORE

What is going on here?

The creature uncoils itself from Benjamin. Its body quickly and supernaturally rises up and stands erect. It quickly moves to Theodore and knocks him out with the back of its hand.

It lunges at Mary, grabbing her neck.

CREATURE

(harshly)

Shut up! Don't you know who I am?
It was I who killed your father on
the river when he went to meet his
holy monks. It was I who corrupted
your mother. I have been with you,
your entire life.

He looks intensely into her eyes.

CREATURE

...And I see your thoughts. You're
thinking of going with this fool
to Jerusalem.

(pause, then angrily)

You're not going anywhere, except
to hell at the bottom of this
ocean, unless you get on your
knees and worship me.

He begins to force her down, but as he does the hatch
opens. He looks up to see Saul making his way down the
ladder.

SAUL

The captain's orders are to be
quiet!

Saul notices the creature. He jumps down into the hold of
the boat.

SAUL

Get away from her!

The creature hisses.

Saul grabs it and tries to wrestle it down, but the
creature prevails and throws Saul back against Mary. The
two fall backward.

CREATURE

I shall have what's mine.

The creature turns back towards Benjamin, but as it does,
it sees that Benjamin is now cradled in the lap of the
young man. It is now apparent that the young man is in

fact an angel as his robe is shining bright and his wings are raised behind him.

CREATURE

This is my child. I shall possess him.

YOUNG MAN

No. He is fully the Lord's child now. Look.

The creature looks down and sees that Benjamin's palms have received the stigmata.

MARY

Look! His hands.

SAUL

He has the wounds of Christ.

CREATURE

No! This one is mine!

The creature makes a lunge for Benjamin, but as he does, the young man takes Benjamin's limp hand places the palm against its side. The creature howls in agony and crumbles to the floor of the boat. It screams and convulses as it seems to melt into the hull. There's a peel of thunder.

EXT. IN THE OCEAN UNDER THE HULL OF THE BOAT

Supernaturally passing through the hull of the boat, the creature plunges into the water.

The boat continues on its way. The demon swims and turns itself around to face the boat. Where the young man had placed Benjamin's hand, is now an open wound leaking a black inky substance. It bellows in pain and anger. But its yelling is muted by the water.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE PORT OF CAESAREA - MORNING

The ancient port of Caesarea is seen from a distance, its high walls rising high from the water like a castle. The ship is seen heading for the gateway to the harbor.

EXT. THE PORT OF CAESAREA

The ship is now inside the harbor. The sail is being lowered as the crew readies to tie to the dock. Mary is standing on the dock with Theodore, taking in the scene.

MARY

Have you been here before?

THEODORE

Yes... on business once. It is a magnificent city.

MARY

And where is Jerusalem from here?

THEODORE

To the south and the east, up into the hills. A day's journey, perhaps a bit further.

(he studies Mary)

Come with us. Everyone should see the Holy City in their life. It is the time of the feast of the cross.

MARY

What is that?

THEODORE

When Helen, mother of the Emperor Constantine, went to Jerusalem to find the Holy Cross.

Mary gives a puzzled look.

THEODORE

After the crucifixion, the cross of Christ was buried, along with the crosses of the two thieves that died with him. Saint Helen came to Jerusalem, with the blessing of her son, the Emperor Constantine, to find the cross.

At this point, there is a flashback sequence. As Theodore narrates the finding of the cross, the scene is played out.

FADE TO:

EXT. JERUSALEM OF OLD - DAY

THEODORE (V.O.)

Helen learned from the descendant of an old Hebrew mystic that the cross might be buried near the ruins of the temple of Venus, not far from the hill where the execution took place. But arriving there, she found nothing but a vast area of sand and ruins.

(beat)

But amidst the ruins, she spied a beautiful, fragrant, green bush full of flowers. She instructed the men she had brought with her to begin digging there.

Many in the city soon began to gather to watch the digging. Even Bishop Macarius came. Suddenly, one of the diggers struck wood. They found three crosses and brought them up and laid them on the ground. There was an incredible fragrance that came from the hole that they had dug. Two of the crosses were wet with the oil of myrrh, the other was dry -- the cross of the unrepentant thief. The question remained, however, which of the two other crosses was the Lord's?

(beat)

In the town there were two men who had recently died and were not yet buried. They decided to bring their bodies and lay them on top of the two crosses. Whichever man came to life, then that was the cross of the savior.

(beat)

THEODORE (cont.)

One of the men came back to life,
praising God. Then Marcarius
lifted the cross for all to see.
In commemoration on the event,
Helen commanded the building of
the church on the site of the Holy
Sepulcher. It is there that the
cross resides and it's there that
we shall go and see it.

Theodore turns to Mary.

THEODORE

That is, if you're willing to go
with us.

MARY

Why do you still need to go? Your
son is no longer oppressed by the
spirit.

THEODORE

The demon is gone, true, but
Benjamin is still weak and needs
healing.

Benjamin is here for a purpose. He
belongs to God now. It may not be
what I wanted or planned, but I
know God is going to do great
things. And that, I am anxious to
see.

(He look towards the pier and
nods his head.)

Look, we're pulling in.

The ship is about 50 feet away from the dock. The sailors
work the oars and use poles so they don't come in too
quickly.

Joel comes alongside Mary and Theodore.

JOEL

Well, we're here, old man. The
sooner you and your lunatic son
are off my ship, the better.

JOEL (cont.)

I shall have to get a priest to come and burn incense and say prayers, lest we sink on our way to Cyprus.

He pats Theodore on the back, truly grateful that he has made it to Caesarea. He turns to Mary.

JOEL

We are here two days to sell grain and take on oil and spices and whatever else may look good. Then we're off.

MARY

I'm not going. I want to see Jerusalem.

She looks to Theodore who is visibly pleased with this.

JOEL

What! You said you wanted to go to Constantinople.

THEODORE

The girl said she's going with me. From the sounds I heard coming from the deck last night, I'd say you got your pay-in-full.

JOEL

(beat)

I don't care. Take the whore, if you want. I'm glad to have you off my ship. There are plenty of whores right here and plenty more where we're going.

He turns and goes.

THEODORE

(to Mary)

Good.

(beat)

Now, we'll need to find a carriage of some kind to take us.

EXT. PALESTINEAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

They ride in a simple covered carriage drawn by two horses. A series of scenes show the carriage going through the countryside.

At one point, at the top of a hill, the carriage stops. The driver, a man named ENOCH, points out that they can see Jerusalem from there.

Mary and Theodore look out. They see Jerusalem in the distance. The golden tops of churches glimmer. There is a cool breeze that blows over them, refreshing them.

THEODORE

Son, look! It is the Holy city.

A weak and pasty Benjamin lifts his head up from the back of the carriage. He looks out the window.

BENJAMIN

As the mountains surround
Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds
his people.

The carriage moves on.

EXT. JERUSALEM - DAY

The carriage enters the city. It is Saturday afternoon. The streets are filled with people preparing for the feast of the cross. The people seem happy and active.

They pass churches topped with golden domes. They see a priest carrying a basket of bread. They see mothers with children, shopkeepers, etc.

Theodore parts the curtain that separates them from the driver.

THEODORE

Do you know where we may lodge?

ENOCH

You have no place to stay? The
inns are most certainly full.

ENOCH (cont.)

(beat)

How much can you pay?

THEODORE

I will pay you 100 folli if you can find us a place.

ENOCH

I think I may know of somewhere you can stay. We will take a shortcut to get there.

Theodore gives a satisfied smile and then pulls his head back inside the carriage.

THEODORE

Like the Christ child himself, eh?
No room in the inn.

MARY

Except you travel with a whore instead of a virgin.

THEODORE

Shhh! Shh. The driver may hear.

Theodore looks over to Benjamin who is now sleeping soundly in the corner of the carriage.

The carriage pulls down a side street into a section of the city that is strangely quiet. Theodore observes the windows and doors. Whereas the doors on the other streets were decorated with garlands, these are plain. Finally, Theodore spies a man walking in one of the doors. The man is dressed in black, wears a yamulke, and has ringlets of hair covering his temples.

Theodore sticks his head out of the carriage bangs on the side.

THEODORE

This is where Hebrews live! A neighborhood of Jews. I will not stay here. Not on the eve of the feast of the cross.

The carriage finally pulls to a stop. Enoch gets out and goes to Theodore. Theodore now more closely examines his appearance and realizes that he also is a Hebrew.

ENOCH

As I said, the inns are full.

(beat)

And where else will you find lodgings for a whore and a sick child?

Enoch gives him a knowing look. And offers him a hand down from the carriage.

ENOCH

I live alone. I am not a very religious man or I wouldn't be working on the Sabbath. My neighbors hate me. Nevertheless, I am a Jew so I live here.

MARY

(to Theodore)

He seems kind. You yourself compared us to the Holy Family. Didn't they stay in a cave?

Theodore gives Mary a perturbed look and turns and picks up his son. As he does so, Mary steps down from the carriage. Mary wanders a few feet from the carriage and looks up and down the street, surveying the doors and windows of the homes. As she does so, she spies a man looking at her from an upper story window. As she catches him staring, he quickly withdraws.

Enoch opens the door and enters his home. As he does, he kisses his fingers and touches the mezuzah. Mary notices this. Theodore, carrying Benjamin, follows. Then, as Mary enters the home, she too touches the mezuzah.

INT. ENOCH'S HOUSE - DAY

The interior of the house is clean, but plain. The front room serves as his livingroom with pillows and short-legged chairs surrounding a low table. There is a ladder against one wall leading to a loft where Enoch sleeps. To the right is the kitchen.

ENOCH

I have a room in the back that I do not use. It's next to the kitchen. You may stay there tonight. Then tomorrow, you can find a proper inn for gentiles, away from Jewish scum.

Enoch walks to the back of the kitchen. To the left, he indicates a narrow room with a carpet, a couch and floor pillows. There is a small fireplace at one end.

ENOCH

This was the family dining room at one time. (beat) When there was a family.

THEODORE

I'm sorry. What happened to them?

ENOCH

My wife left me. She took our daughter with her. She was Greek and got tired of living with the Jews. She was very beautiful. A Greek soldier came and took her while I was away.

(beat)

I need to go and tend to my horses. Then we will eat.

As Enoch begins to walk back out, Theodore stops him.

THEODORE

Why are you doing this for us?

ENOCH

Your son is sick. The town is full. You need a place to stay.

THEODORE

You're a good man. Thank you.

ENOCH

Plus, I can use the 100 folli.

Enoch exits. And Theodore finds a place to lay down Benjamin.

MARY

I should ask you the same thing.

THEODORE

What's that?

MARY

Why are you doing this for me?
Taking me with you?

THEODORE

(quietly)

I just felt that you should be
with us. That you should see
Jerusalem.

(beat)

You didn't belong with those
sailors.

Mary slowly nods. She then walks over to Benjamin.

MARY

How is your son?

Benjamin is resting on the pillows. The blanket covers him. He is very pale and still.

THEODORE

I don't know.

MARY

Shouldn't he be seen by a
physician?

THEODORE

Perhaps. But it will be very
difficult to find a physician this
time of day. He needs to sleep.
Until he wakes, there's very
little a physician can do anyway.

(beat)

I am afraid for him. I am afraid
to lose him.

MARY

I'm not sure what you mean.

THEODORE

I never asked to have a prophet
for a son. I always wanted
Benjamin to follow me in business.
He has God's mark on him. He is
surely headed for the monastery
now. Perhaps even the cathedral.

(beat)

An honor, to be sure... but one I
wasn't prepared for.

FADE TO:

INT. ENOCH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The three are eating dinner and drinking wine in the
front room.

ENOCH

So this cross they have. You think
it is the real cross of Christ,
eh?

Theodore looks offended. He is somewhat indignant that
Enoch would imply such a thing.

THEODORE

(assertively)

Yes, of course I do.

ENOCH

You know, this festival is not
good for us Jews. The Christians
are reminded of the death of
Christ, and for days they give us
hateful looks as they pass us in
the streets. They won't do
business with us either.

(beat)

It is four hundred years since the
death of Christ, and they treat us
as if we, the Jews living today,
killed him ourselves!

THEODORE

"His blood shall be on us and on our children!" that's what your ancestors answered to Pilate, before he put him to death.

ENOCH

According to your scriptures, not mine!

(beat, pointing to himself)
I did not kill Christ.

MARY

Please stop. Why do you fight?
What good does it do?

ENOCH

It's something we live with, everyday. Jerusalem, once the city of Hebrews, now belongs to the Greeks. We are foreigners in our own city. You know, we were only allowed to return here a few decades ago. Before that, we could not even live here in the city.

THEODORE

You should be grateful. You live in peace. You are free and have your living.

ENOCH

Hmm? Are we ever free, my friend?
(beat)
Anyway, eat! You will sleep tonight and tomorrow all will be well, yes?

FADE TO:

INT. ENOCH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Mary, Theodore, and Benjamin share the back room together. Theodore is sleeping soundly on the floor. Mary sleeps restlessly on the pillows against the inside wall. Benjamin lies awake on the couch near a window. It is a

moonlit night and the light shines through the window on Benjamin.

From somewhere, SOMEONE SINGING is heard. A man is singing an evening prayer IN HEBREW. Subtitles explain the content of the prayer.

SINGER (O.S.)

O LORD, I call upon You; hasten to me! Give ear to my voice when I call to You! May my prayer be counted as incense before You; The lifting up of my hands as the evening offering.

Benjamin's eyes stare straight up. He begins singing quietly, in Hebrew, with the prayer.

BENJAMIN & SINGER

Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips. Do not incline my heart to any evil thing, to practice deeds of wickedness with men who do iniquity; And do not let me eat of their delicacies.

Mary, who is now awake, looks over to Benjamin.

MARY

How do you know that?

Benjamin lies silent for a moment, staring straight ahead.

BENJAMIN

I don't know.

INT. ENOCH'S HOUSE - MORNING

Mary is sleeping on the pillows in the back room. Light breaks through the window and her eyes open. Theodore is still asleep next to her on the bare floor. She looks down at him, then over to Benjamin who lies atop the pillows along the opposite wall. BENJAMIN IS DEAD. His face is ashen and his eyes stare blankly. Mary quickly shakes Theodore.

MARY
Sir! Sir! Wake up!

He wakes, groggy.

MARY
Your son... There's something wrong!

Theodore quickly rises and goes to Benjamin. He looks at his face and is taken over by fear.

THEODORE
Benjamin! Benjamin! Son, wake up!
Wake up!

Mary realizes that he his dead. She gasps. Soon Enoch appears.

ENOCH
What is it?

He looks to see Theodore bent over the body of his son. Theodore is still shaking him, trying to rouse him.

THEODORE
No, no. Benjamin, wake up.

ENOCH
Oh God, he is dead.

Theodore begins to weep over his son.

They hear the far off sound of church bells. Theodore looks up and listens.

THEODORE
The procession of the cross!

He begins to gather his son in his arms.

MARY
What are you doing?

Theodore, with Benjamin in his arms, heads out of the room, past Mary and Enoch.

ENOCH

Sir, your son is dead. Nothing
will change that now.

THEODORE

(beat)

You have been kind to us and I
repaid you with contempt. Forgive
me. I will return later for my
things.

Theodore looks to Mary

THEODORE

I came to bring my son to the Holy
Cross. I won't fail in that.

Theodore heads towards the door. Mary gives Enoch a
befuddled look and then wraps herself and follows.

EXT. A STREET IN JERUSALEM - DAY

The procession of the cross is moving down the street. A
group of priests carry the cross on their shoulders, the
foot of the cross pointing forward as they march. Before
them, go several deacons swinging smoking censurs.
Between the deacons and the cross is the bishop of
Jerusalem, dressed in heavily decorated vestments. Behind
the cross are several priests, monks, and nuns. Behind
them are many ordinary citizens of Jerusalem, as well as
pilgrims who have come from other cities. Additionally,
standing along the street, and from windows and doors,
several people watch the procession. Many reach out to
the cross as it passes by. Others cross themselves and
bow on respect.

Antiphonal (call and response) prayers are being chanted
between the bishop and the rest of the crowd.

BISHOP

Grant victories to us over our
adversaries; and by the virtue of
your Cross, preserve your
habitation.

CROWD

Lord have mercy.

BISHOP

As you were voluntarily crucified
for our sake, grant mercy to those
who are called by your name.

CROWD

Lord have mercy.

Staggering under the weight of his dead son, Theodore catches up to the crowd as Mary follows behind. He pushes his way through those at the back of the end of the procession. As he does, many see that he is carrying a dead body. They withdraw from him, not wishing to touch the body. Many are scornful of him for bringing a corpse to such a holy event.

With such a disturbance having been created, the procession stops. Those carrying the cross turn to look over their shoulders. Finally, the bishop turns. He looks at Theodore and then at the body he carries.

THEODORE

Please, Your Grace. I have come
from Alexandria with my son for
his healing. He was plagued by a
demon and is now dead. Please, let
me place his hand upon the cross
and pray for him that his soul may
rest in peace.

The bishop turns to one of his deacons and hands him his staff. He then takes off his cloak. He then turns to Theodore and takes Benjamin in his arms. He walks to the cross and places the boy's dead hand on the wood, palm down. He turns to Theodore.

BISHOP

What is your son's name?

THEODORE

Benjamin.

BISHOP

O holy Father, heavenly physician
of our souls and bodies, visit and
heal your servant, Benjamin,

BISHOP (cont.)

granting him rescue from pain and restoration to health, that he may give unto you and bless your holy name. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

As he prays, the focus remains on Benjamin's hand. The hand is closed. Gradually it opens and fills with color. As the stigmata is seen, there is a reaction from the crowd.

As blood begins to trickle from the wound, an oil also begins to ooze from the wood. As the prayer ends, the fingers begin to move. The hand turns over and the palm glistens with oil and blood. There are whispers of awe from around him.

THEODORE

He lives!

The Bishop sets Benjamin on his feet and steadies him as he finds his footing. Theodore steps forward and wraps his arms around his son. He cries.

THEODORE

Thanks be to God! Benjamin! My Benjamin! He is alive!

The people cheer. From the back of the crowd, Mary observes. She's happy, but cannot believe her eyes. She's reluctant to go forward and join Theodore.

BISHOP

Let us proceed to the church!

He once again takes up his staff and puts on his cloak.

BISHOP

Lord, save your people and bless your inheritance.

CROWD

Lord have mercy.

Mary at the back of the procession proceeds with the crowd. However, she is uncomfortable. She smiles cordially at the women around her and nods.

EXT. CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHER - DAY

As the crowd approaches, the church becomes the focus. It towers over the street, its golden dome gleaming in the morning sun. Mary looks up. She looks reluctant, nevertheless she moves forward with the crowd.

Benjamin and his father enter immediately after the Bishop. As they do, Benjamin kisses the doorway of the church. He appears completely well now.

The priests carrying the cross go in, then the other clergy, and finally the rest of the people. As Mary approaches the doorway, she notices the icon of the Virgin above the lintel of the door. The face of the virgin looks down on her. The eyes seem to be supernaturally focusing on her.

Mary reaches the doorway. As she attempts to move across the threshold, it's as if someone with tremendous strength grabs her by the shoulders from behind and pulls her back into the crowd. She stumbles backward, knocking several people over as she does. She looks around to see who pushed her. When she determines there's no one she can blame, she moves forward with more resolve, but as she approaches the threshold again, the same thing happens, this time with even greater force. As she falls back into the crowd again, several people become irritated. She looks around defensively.

MARY

Who's doing that!

She walks forward one more time, observing those around her closely, hoping to catch the perpetrator. This time, it's like she's pushed back. The push is so violent that she falls on her back. As she lies on her back, she looks up at the icon again. The face is weeping. A woman in the crowd notices this.

CROWD WOMAN

The Virgin is weeping!

Mary focuses on the weeping face. As she does, the icon gets brighter. She can't look at it anymore. It's too bright - like looking directly into the sun. A WOMAN'S VOICE is heard. A tender voice, yet the message is hard. It is the voice of the VIRGIN MARY.

VIRGIN MARY (V.O.)

I can't look upon you. Your sins
are painful to me.

Mary's eyes begin to water. She rubs them. She can't see.

MARY

My eyes. My eyes!

She sits on the ground, trying to look around here to see who's talking to her, but she can't. She's angry.

MARY

Who are who! Who are you! What is
happening to me!

VIRGIN MARY (V.O.)

You've seen the cross, but you
don't understand its meaning for
you. Leave this place. You can't
stay in this holy place. Go into
the desert and learn who you are.

The pavement Mary sits on becomes hot. She gets up and quickly moves off it, into the streets. She stumbles. As she does, she regains her sight. She looks back up at the icon. Her vision is blurry at first, but then as it comes into focus, she sees a depiction of herself burning in the flames of hell. She has a look of panic. She runs.

EXT. DESERT TO THE EAST OF JERUSALEM - DAY

The sun is beating down. Heat waves rise from the desert floor. Drenched in sweat, Mary is walking through the rocky, hilly, terrain near the Qumran caves. Everything around her is brown. She stops. She pants. She trudges on. Finally, she stops again to rest. She is physically and emotionally exhausted.

MARY

What do you want from me? Did you
bring me out here to die?

(beat)

Then kill me! Kill me now and get
it over with!

She falls to her knees. She cries.

MARY

What do you want? God, what do you
want?

(she cries again.)

I just want to go on being what I
am. Leave me alone!

She then gets a glimpse of the Dead Sea in the distance. She begins to walk quickly. She moves over a small rise and then begins to run downhill towards the water. When she reaches the water, she wades out into it so she is hip deep. She splashes water on her face and then cups her hands to drink. As soon as the water touches her lips, she realizes it is alkaline. She spews it out.

Unseen to Mary, is a SHEPHERD standing on the water's edge.

SHEPHERD

It's no good to drink.

Mary turns quickly, startled by the voice. She sees the shepherd. He is a simple Middle Eastern Jew dressed in a worn cloak and tunic. His head is wrapped in a primitive covering, much like the shepherds in a Christmas play. He's dusty, but otherwise very wholesome and pleasant in appearance.

SHEPHERD

Not far from here is the mouth of
the Jordan. There you may drink. I
will show you. In the meantime,
here is water.

He brings a skin out from under his cloak. He holds it out, offering it to her. She wades quickly out of the sea and grabs it from him. She opens the top and drinks.

SHEPHERD

Not too fast.

She ignores him. After she has guzzled half the skin, she hands it back to him.

MARY

Thank you.

SHEPHERD

What are you doing out here?

MARY

I don't know.

SHEPHERD

Are you strong enough to walk?

MARY

I think so. (beat) Yes, I am.

SHEPHERD

Follow me.

The two follow the shoreline of the Dead Sea. Mary feels at peace again. The desert breeze blows over her, refreshing her. She notices the sheep. How healthy they look. She feels their wool. As they go along, approaching the Jordan, vegetation begins to appear. She keeps looking at the man in front of her, studying his back, his strong hands on his staff. She sees a scar on the back of his right hand, but it means nothing to her. Finally, they reach where the river runs into the sea.

SHEPHERD

Here we are. The water here is fresh. You may drink.

Mary walks towards the river, but then realizes that she is not thirsty anymore. The walk has invigorated her. She turns back to look at the shepherd.

SHEPHERD

What is it?

MARY

(beat)

It's odd -- I'm not thirsty anymore.

SHEPHERD

Further up the river, there is a place to cross. On the other side there is a monastery. The sisters there will give you food and shelter.

She looks up towards the river and studies the direction she needs to go. She then looks back to the shepherd.

SHEPHERD

Go.

MARY

Thank you for your help.

Mary begins to walk. She reaches the bank of the river. She studies the fresh waters of the Jordan running towards the Dead Sea. She turns back to look once again for the shepherd, but he is gone. HE AND HIS SHEEP SEEM TO HAVE DISAPPEARED.

Mary continues in the direction she was told to go. She gets to the place where she was told to cross the river. She crosses, stepping on large stones. As she reaches the other side, she sees a small cross, about 4 feet high, on the upper bank.

She walks up the bank and finds a crude path. She walks the path paralleling the river, through the trees and shrubs. The path then leads her down into a flat area away from the river. Across a field, she sees the WOMEN'S MONASTERY OF ST. JOHN. It is sunset now. There is light coming from the windows of the chapel. She picks up her speed, walking along the field.

LONG SHOT FROM ABOVE

She reaches the front of the chapel. She pauses. The door opens and THAISA, the Abbess of the monastery, emerges. She is a tall woman dressed from head to foot in black.

She extends her hands to welcome Mary. Mary walks to her and takes her hands and bows. They then turn and walk into the chapel.

INT. CHAPEL - EVENING

As Mary and the abbess walk into the chapel, they are bathed in light and the music of the nuns singing a cappella. In the narthex (entry way) of the church, candles illuminate shrines on either side - one to the Virgin on the left, another to Christ on the right. As Mary walks further into the larger sanctuary, she sees walls adorned with icons, golden chandeliers illuminated with candles, the smoke of incense wafting in the air.

She surveys the entire church, beginning with the left wall and sweeping across to the front of the church. Then on the great apse above the altar, she sees the icon of Christ the Good Shepherd. It is the same shepherd who had guided her from the Dead Sea. She walks forward, looking up. In the center of the church, she crumbles to her knees and begins weeping.

FROM ABOVE

Mary is nothing but a heaving lump of tears. A few of the nuns slowly move towards her. Abbess Thaisa moves forward, yet they don't come too close to her. Rather, they give her space.

FADE TO:

EXT. MONASTERY - DAY

SUPER-IMPOSED SCREEN TEXT: SIX MONTHS LATER.

The nuns are outside the monastery doing different chores. Some of the nuns are planting, some are pruning, some gathering flowers. One is repairing a broken fence, another is drawing water from a well, etc.

INT. MONASTERY

Mary is carrying a large basket of flowers for the altar. She enters the monastery through a large hallway and begins to walk toward the chapel. As she walks, she hears THE VOICE OF A YOUNG WOMAN.

Mary walks slower, trying to discern where the voice is coming from. She finds the room. She looks in to see a young woman kneeling, her head bowed and covered, reading from the scriptures. To the right of her is the abbess. They do not notice Mary. Mary stops and leans against the door post and listens. The voice of the girl is soothing and clear.

YOUNG WOMAN

(reading)

An excellent wife, who can find?
For her worth is far above jewels.

Her husband trusts in her with his
whole heart, and he will have no
lack of gain. She does him good and
not evil all the days of her life.

She rises while it is still night
and gives food to her household.
She also extends her hands to the
needy.

She is not afraid of the cold for
all her household are clothed with
fine cloth. For herself, she takes
strength and dignity as her
clothing.

She opens her mouth in wisdom, and
the teaching of kindness is on her
tongue. Her children rise up and
bless her. Her husband also praises
her, saying: "Many daughters have
done nobly, but you excel them
all."

Charm is deceitful and beauty is
vain, but a woman who fears the
Lord, she shall be praised.

The abbess notices Mary who is staring off into space.

ABBESS

Mary.

The young girl remains bowed. Mary is caught off guard and embarrassed.

MARY

Excuse me, Mother. I wasn't eavesdropping, I... I just didn't want to interrupt.

ABBESS

It's alright. What is it that you need?

MARY

I have these flowers for the altar.

ABBESS

Yes?

MARY

Should I just go and put them in the church?

ABBESS

Mary, surely you've put flowers in the church before.

MARY

I'm sorry, Mother.

(beat)

Perhaps I was eavesdropping -- a little. That's beautiful -- what you were reading?

ABBESS

Yes, it is beautiful. It's from Proverbs of Solomon. "The Excellent Wife."

(beat)

This is Marina. She is spending the fast with us in preparation for her marriage.

The young girl turns and slowly removes the covering from her head. Yes, IT IS THE SAME MARINA from the house of Amnon in Alexandria. Mary drops the flowers. Marina,

rises and walks to Mary, smiling. The abbess looks surprised.

MARINA

I remember you.

She touches Mary on the cheek.

MARY

How? How did you escape?

MARINA

My father is alive. He returned for us. He had been living here in Palestine. He had been arrested, but it was a mistake. He was freed and he returned for us. It all happened right after you left. Everything changed after you left.

MARY

Your father...

(beat)

And where is your mother?

MARINA

In Jerusalem. That's where we live now.

(beat)

My mother said there was good in you.

(beat)

You must come to my wedding after Pascha.

MARY

I don't know.

Mary looks to the abbess for approval.

ABBESS

Of course you may go. We're not holding you as a prisoner here.

(to Marina)

But, for now, you need to continue with your reading.

Mary begins to pick up the flowers as Marina and the abbess return to their places. Mary continues down the hall.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Mary has arranged the flowers in a large vase. She is setting them in front of the icon of the Virgin at the front of the church. She then kisses the icon and crosses herself. She bows to pray. There is a pause. Then the voice of the Abbess quietly breaks the silence.

ABBESS

Mary.

Mary turns. The abbess is standing about ten feet behind her.

ABBESS

Mary, I have something I want you to do.

MARY

Of course, Mother. Anything.

ABBESS

In the morning, at the first hour of prayer, I want you to come and cense the icon of the Virgin.

MARY

Me? But I'm hardly...

The abbess raises her hand to stop Mary's objection.

ABBESS

None of us are worthy. (beat) You bear her name, are you worthy of that?

MARY

No.

ABBESS

Then don't worry about being worthy. Just be obedient.

MARY

Yes, Mother.

The abbess turns to leave.

MARY

Mother?

ABBESS

Yes?

MARY

Seeing Marina made me think of my past... of an incident with her mother.

(beat)

My passions are still with me. Sometimes I'm not sure I can go on.

The abbess comes forward. She puts her arm around Mary and leads her over to a narrow bench at the side of the sanctuary. The two sit.

MARY

I was thinking about Marina, preparing for her marriage. Giving herself to one man for her entire life. And then...

(beat)

I can never be like her. I can never have innocence back.

ABBESS

Perhaps. But you can have something more, if you choose it.

MARY

What?

ABBESS

Holiness.

MARY

I don't understand.

ABBESS

I don't believe sex itself is evil. After all, God created sex. God created men and women and all of their sexual parts.

Mary looks away uncomfortably.

ABBESS

Evil is what is evil. And as humanity has allowed evil to invade its heart, everything about us has been corrupted. Sex, being one of the most powerful forces in our life, has become one the chief targets.

MARY

Then how do we regain our original... our original condition?

ABBESS

Our original beauty - like Adam and Eve?

MARY

Yes.

ABBESS

I can't answer that, Mary. It's something you have to find out for yourself. Follow the teaching of the church. Pray. And, in time, God will reveal to you what you must do.

Mary nods.

ABBESS

It won't be won without a fight. We all have our struggle to endure -- even young Marina back there.

(beat)

You look at her and you envy her innocence. But she won't be like she is forever. I do pray that God

ABBESS (cont.)
 keeps her faithful... but it won't
 be without pain.

Mary studies the face of the abbess.

MARY
 I think you know something of such
 pain yourself.

The abbess gives Mary a long look.

ABBESS
 I'm a woman, just like you. Under
 all this black cloth, I have arms
 and legs that go to bed empty each
 night. A breast that aches. When I
 chose this life, I didn't cease
 being a woman.

And yes, there are times it
 doesn't make sense. If he wants me
 to live this life, why does God
 allow such desires to continue?

But then there are times that I
 know that I'm in the center of
 God's love. I feel his joy in me.
 There's an absolute sense of
 completeness.

(beat)

Let me ask you something. You have
 had many lovers. But was there
 ever a time in that life that you
 really felt peace?

(beat)

I'm not talking about being
 satisfied or pleased, I mean
 peace.
 (she puts her hand over her heart)
 In here.

MARY
 Not in the way you mean. No.

ABBESS

As I get older. I feel more and more peace and less and less passion. It's peace, Mary, that will carry you into eternity. Remember that.

INT. MARY'S CELL - NIGHT

Mary is in her cell with one of the other nuns. The nun is instructing her on when to go and cense the icon. The OTHER NUN is placing a large candle in some kind of special candlestick. This is a candle for telling the hours.

OTHER NUN

I lit this candle at the end of Evening Prayer. When it burns to the end, it is the first hour and time to go cense the icon of the Virgin.

MARY

I understand.

OTHER NUN

Until then, you should keep vigil, reading from the Psalms.

MARY

Yes.

The Other Nun gives Mary a dubious look.

OTHER NUN

Are you sure you want to do this?

MARY

(impatiently)
Yes, I'll be fine.

Mary looks at the Psalter.

OTHER NUN

Start from the beginning.

The other nun turns and leaves. Mary then begins reading.

MARY

How blessed is the man who does
not walk in the counsel of the
wicked, nor stand in the path of
sinners, nor sit in the seat of
scoffers! But his delight is in
the law of the Lord...

The focus turns to the candle.

DISSOLVE TO:

Now the candle has burned half way. Mary is still
praying, but her prayers have grown quiet.

MARY

In You, O LORD, I have taken
refuge; Let me never be ashamed;
In Your righteousness deliver me.
Incline your ear to me, rescue me
quickly; Be to me a rock of
strength, A stronghold to save me.

Mary is getting sleepy, dozing. She stops reading.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Holding a taper, Mary walks down the hallway. She finds
the room where Marina is. She carefully opens the door.
She steps in and walks to the bed. She bends over and
looks at Marina.

Suddenly, Mary hears THE SOUND OF HORSES. They grow
rapidly louder. The angry VOICES OF MEN are also heard.
THE MONASTERY IS UNDER SIEGE. Shadows and light created
by the men's torches flickers through the windows upon
the opposite wall.

Mary looks panicked and angry.

MARY

No!

Mary runs from the room. She goes to a doorway down the
hall leading outside.

EXT. MONASTERY - NIGHT

As Mary goes out the door, it is suddenly silent. She appears confused and looks about her for the assailants. There is nothing but the sound of a faint wind blowing through the branches of the trees. It is a moonlit night and she can see everything quite clearly. Between the trees, she sees a small dust devil forming from the ground. It grows larger and moves toward her. It begins to take a shape similar the creature from the boat. Yet it never fully materializes, rather, it is a SPECTRE made of dust. The sound of the wind increases and from within the specter a voices emerges.

SPECTRE

When she leaves here, I shall take her. I shall destroy her marriage and her house. I shall make her an adulteress, her children will become whores and thieves.

MARY

No!

In a rage, Mary runs and flings herself on the spectre who has now become fully real. She bowls it over, into the low branches of a tree. The branches break, and the two go to the ground.

MARY

(repeating quickly, violently)
In Christ's name, in Christ's name, In Christ's name!

She places her hand over the spectre's face. Its face begins caving in.

MARY

Out! Out! Out!

The spectre begins to dissolve and then MARY WAKES UP. She finds herself in her room. The candle has just burnt out. The wick is still red and smoking.

She hurriedly gets up and runs to the church.

As she enters the back of the church, she immediately sees a FEMALE FIGURE IN A JEWELLED SCARLET ROBE at the front. The woman has her back to Mary and is gently swinging a censor towards the icon of the Virgin. She then proceeds to cense the other icons around the altar. Mary slowly walks toward the altar. She believes it is Abbess Thaisa, but is unsure.

The figure turns to Mary. The figure is THE VIRGIN who then bows toward Mary and begins to swing the censor in Mary's direction so that the smoke wafts towards her. Mary kneels and bows her head.

THE VIRGIN

As you controlled men with the
power of your beauty, you shall
now control the devils with the
power of your spirit. Go. Receive
the kiss of God.

The Virgin begins to glow.

FADE TO WHITE:

EXT. MONASTERY - DAY

It is the next day. The nuns are having a festive, albeit simple, meal (a picnic, if you will) in the garden of the monastery. Mary is standing apart from the rest. She looks serene, but distracted. She reaches around her shoulders to warm herself and notices scratches on her forearm. She then lifts the sleeve of her cloak and notices more scratches. She looks perplexed.

She walks to the place where she had, the night before, fought the spectre. Mary looks at the tree that she and the spectre had crashed into. The branches are broken. She touches the ground where they wrestled.

Just then the SOUND OF A CARRIAGE is heard. Mary turns her attention and walks towards the sound. As she comes back to the garden, she sees that it is Katherine and her HUSBAND who have come to visit their daughter. Katherine steps down from the carriage and embraces Marina. Behind her is her husband, a strong man with silver beard and hair.

As Katherine releases from Marina's embrace, she sees Mary. Mary looks at her. They walk towards each other and embrace.

MARY

God has brought us together again.
Forgive me.

KATHERINE

Whatever there is to forgive, I
have already forgiven.

Mary hears the distant sound of a sheep.

KATHERINE

What is it?

MARY

Nothing.

KATHERINE

This is indeed a miracle!
(beat, looking to Marina)
My daughter is to be married.

MARY

Yes. I know. (beat) She is a most
beautiful young woman. She will be
an excellent wife.

KATHERINE

Yes. I think so, too.

MARY

(distracted again)

She will.

(beat)

...a most excellent wife.

The sound of the sheep is heard again. Mary looks in the direction from whence the sound came - off into the desert.

The heat waves are beginning to rise and, combined with the glare from the sand, she can barely see. But, as she squints, she sees faintly in the distance, a figure who she knows is the shepherd.

KATHERINE

Are you well?

MARY

(fully turning her attention
back to Katherine)

Yes. I am well.

FADE TO:

EXT. EDGE OF THE SYRIAN DESERT - DAYBREAK

It is the next day. Mary stands with Thaisa. She has a sack and some skins of water. The abbess embraces her and Mary turns to go. She walks off into the desert as the sun rises.

Some distance away, as the full light of the sun breaks over the desert, Mary continues to walk. As she walks, the people she has had sex with during her life appear on either side of her, starting with the last man she had. They are silent, and simply watch her walk past. She ignores them, like a martyr proudly walking to her fate. The first man is the disfigured sailor, then the other sailors, then Amnon and his friends, then the merchant from the clothing stall in Alexandria. Then many, many others... soldiers, merchants, slaves, priests, other prostitutes. They form two long crowds on either side of her.

The scene is then seen from above in a LONG SHOT. As Mary reaches the end of the gauntlet, the picture zooms out even further to include in the distance the shepherd with his sheep. She follows him deeper into the desert.

EXT. DESERT - JUST BEFORE DAWN

We return again to the scene where Mary is telling the story of her life. Zosimas has his head in his hands. His eyes are watery. He appears transfixed by the telling of the story.

MARY

For every man that I have had, I
have battled a hundred demons. And
for every demon I have defeated,

MARY (cont.)

I have been blessed by a thousand
angels.

Light begins to glow on the horizon. Mary looks off. She
gets up.

ZOSIMAS

My abbot prayed for me that I
would learn the meaning of
repentance.

Mary is silhouetted against the sunrise.

MARY

You need your cloak.

Mary begins to remove the cloak.

ZOSIMAS

No. Please, take it.

MARY

May I ask you one thing, Abba?

ZOSIMAS

Yes. Whatever you wish.

MARY

I haven't taken Holy Communion
since I left the monastery. The
Feast of the Resurrection is in a
week. Would you meet me at the
Jordan that I might receive the
body and blood of our Lord?

ZOSIMAS

Yes.

Sunlight comes over Mary's shoulder and shines right into
Zosimas' eyes. He shields his face. Mary is gone. He
looks around for her, but she has vanished.

EXT. MONASTERY OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD - SUNSET

Having returned from the desert, the monks are heading
towards the gates monastery. They sing a joyful hymn.

They are all drawn and dirty, but also seem relieved. Many wear smiles.

However, Zosimas, who is removed from the rest, seems to be caught up in serious thought. He looks around at his brothers and appears confused at their revelry and laughter.

Menas approaches Zosimas.

MENAS

Elder Zosimas, God bless you. I have made it through the fast. After we met, I resisted all temptations which came after. Surely it was your prayers that saved me.

ZOSIMAS

My prayers?

MENAS

Yes, you said you'd pray for me. Pray for the guarding of my mind.

ZOSIMAS

And what have you learned from your journey?

MENAS

Learned? I've learned to resist sin.

ZOSIMAS

To what end? After shedding the bale of sin, what has God shown to your heart?

Menas looks perplexed. Zosimas speaks more urgently.

Sin is only evil because it keeps us from being whole.

Zosimas lightens up -- relaxes and smiles.

ZOSIMAS

Forgive me, I can see that you
have grown much in the fast.

As the men are about 100 yards off from the monastery, a
voice cries out to them. It is the abbot, Brother Elias.

ELIAS (O.S.)

Brothers!

Zosimas and Menas break off their conversation. They look
in the direction of the voice.

Elias is seen walking forward to meet the monks in front
of the monastery gates.

ELIAS

Brothers. Welcome. I trust the
Lord has revealed much to your
hearts.

(beat)

I'm afraid I have some sorrowful
but joyous news. Brother Peter has
fallen asleep in the Lord this
past week.

There is an audible reaction from the men. They all cross
themselves on hearing the news.

ELIAS

He died in peace.

INT. BROTHER PETER'S CELL - NIGHT

The body of Brother Peter is lying in state. He is
covered by a simple linen sheet. A large candle stick
burns in the corner to the side of the bed. Zosimas
stands next to the bed.

ZOSIMAS

In these last few days, I have
known comfort and discomfort, and
pleasure and pain... and the
greatest of joys and deepest of
sorrows. From these have come a
knowledge that fastings and

ZOSIMAS (cont.)
pillars and sackcloth could not
give me.

He looks at Brother Peter's body.

I have eaten with sinners.

EXT. THE BANKS OF THE JORDAN RIVER, NEAR THE MONASTERY OF
THE GOOD SHEPHERD - NIGHT

The night is lit by the brilliance of a full moon.
Crickets creak, and the sound of the river lapping
against the shore is heard.

Zosimas stands on the bank with a chalice in hand,
awaiting to serve Mary communion. He looks at the moon,
high in the sky. He looks at the reflection of the
moonlight on the surface of the river. It is a wide place
in the river. The surface is smooth.

He sees the figure of Mary standing on the opposite
shore. He looks again at the expanse of the water and
furrows his brow.

ZOSIMAS
Mother! There is a place to cross
further up.

He looks again and sees that she is closer. At first, he
is mystified, then he sees that she is WALKING ON THE
WATER. She seems to be gliding, as the current on the
surface of the river is helping her.

Mary soon reaches the bank and comes to him quietly. His
eyes are filled with tears. She crosses herself and
kneels. She takes the cup to her mouth and drinks. Her
eyes are closed. She tilts her head back and purses her
face. As she does, a single tear comes down her cheek.
She crosses herself again and rises.

MARY
If God so wills, we will meet
again here in another year.

Mary then turns to go. Zosimas watches her go. His eyes
teary and wide. He crosses himself.

FADE TO:

INT. CHAPEL OF MONASTERY OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD - NIGHT

SUPER-IMPOSED SCREEN TEXT: ONE YEAR LATER

The monks have just finished celebrating the Paschal Liturgy and are repeating the "Anesti" greeting.

FATHER ELIAS
Christ is risen!

MONKS
Indeed he has risen!

FATHER ELIAS
Christ is risen!

MONKS
Indeed he has risen!

FATHER ELIAS
Christ is risen!

MONKS
Indeed he has risen!

They then sing...

ALL
Christ is risen from the dead,
trampling down death by death and
upon those in the tombs bestowing
life.

Christ is risen from the dead,
trampling down death by death and
upon those in the tombs bestowing
life.

Christ is risen from the dead,
trampling down death by death and
upon those in the tombs bestowing
life.

As the men sing, Zosimas looks into the light of several lit tapers. Through the light he sees a vision of Mary. She is youthful again and more beautiful than ever. She looks as though she is sleeping, but she is dead, lying on the ground in the desert. She has a white sheet wrapped around her.

EXT. THE BANKS OF THE JORDAN RIVER NEAR THE MONASTERY OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD - NIGHT

Zosimas is running along the banks of the river. He reaches the place where he had given Mary communion the year before. He stops. He catches his breath. He looks across the river, but Mary is not there.

ZOSIMAS

Mother!

He looks again. This time, beyond the river's other shore, out in the distance of the desert, he sees a strange bluish light.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Zosimas has wandered the night in the desert, following the light and has found Mary's body. It lies on the desert floor just as he saw it in his vision. SHE IS YOUNG AGAIN. Her body emits an unnatural glow.

ZOSIMAS

In your death, the Lord has truly
restored your original beauty.

He crosses himself. On the ground, next to the body, he notices some writing, scrawled in the dirt. Upon closer examination, it reads: ABBA, BURY MY BODY IN THE EARTH OF THE DESERT.

Zosimas considers the request. He kneels and feels the ground, pulling at it with his fingers.

ZOSIMAS

The ground is too hard.

As soon as he says this, a LION ROARS. Zosimas rises quickly to his feet and assumes a defensive posture. The lion roars again.

Zosimas looks around. He hears the lion growling quietly.

ZOSIMAS

(praying)

Father, I care not for myself, but
I ask that you protect the relics
of your saint.

The lion emerges. A huge male lion. Zosimas backs off. The lion walks to where the body of Mary lies. He sniffs the corpse.

Zosimas claps his hands and shouts.

ZOSIMAS

Hah! Hah!

The lion begins digging the ground next to Mary's body. Zosimas stops, realizing that the lion is from God.

FADE TO:

The lion has finished digging the hole. Zosimas moves in and lifts Mary's body into the hole.

FADE TO:

Zosimas has finished burying the body. He's piling the last bit of dirt on the grave and tamping it down with his hand. He looks at the lion. The lion looks back at him and then turns and leaves.

The sun is coming up. Zosimas turns to look at the giant ball rising over the desert. As he looks at the sun it fades into the halo of an icon of Mary.

FADE TO:

INT. ROOM IN THE MONASTERY OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD - DAY

The icon of Mary is seen on an easel. She is seen as she first appeared to Zosimas in the desert, only she looks beatified by the painting. A brush enters the picture and puts the finishing touches on Mary's hair. As the brush withdraws, we see that it is an aged Zosimas who has painted the icon. He studies what he has done. He bends

forward and kisses the icon in a place where the paint has already dried.

To one side of the icon, there is a pot holding brushes. He places his brush in the pot. He crosses himself.

CLOSE-UP ON THE ICON OF ST. MARY OF EGYPT

FADE OUT