

ZERO A.D.

Written by

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ZERO A.D.

SUPER:

"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the law of the prophets."

FRIDAY

EXT. GOLGOTHA HILL - MORNING (PASSOVER EVE)

A STAKE OF CYPRESS is planted in a freshly dug hole -

THREE NINE INCH NAILS splay out on a copper tray -

A MURDER OF CROWS impatiently circle above -

We follow the flight of A SOARING DESERT HAWK as it flies out over...

EXT. JERUSALEM DESERT - MORNING

At the mouth of a small cave, A GYPSY ASTROLOGER and his YOUNG APPRENTICE erect a crude sundial on the desert floor.

YOUNG APPRENTICE

How will we know the exact moment,
Master?

GYPSY ASTROLOGER

At high noon, when the rod casts no shadow. Then we will know, the sun has entered the sign of the fishes... and a new era has dawned.

They settle down under the shelter of an ancient acacia tree.

The Gypsy Astrologer nestles against the trunk and closes his eyes, while the Young Apprentice stares unblinkingly at the thin shadow cast on the sand by the sundial rod.

Time speeds up as the sun arcs from low in the sky to the height of its zenith and the shadow ramps to naught.

The Apprentice nudges the Astrologer to wake, pointing excitedly at the sundial -

YOUNG APPRENTICE

Master! Look! The shadow... it's gone!

The Astrologer looks skyward, squinting...

GYPSY ASTROLOGER

Now the sun is born again. It is
year zero of the age of the fishes.
Let the new era of peace begin.

The desert hawk swoops, shadowing the disc of the sun, then
soars back to...

EXT. JERUSALEM - DUSK

With the setting sun, the desert hawk descends...

Over the *Gate of Mercy*...

Over the towering stone walls...

Where a PACK OF WILD DOGS yelp and scamper down a dusty outer
street...

ROMAN CAVALRY sit high atop their saddles, keeping a watchful
eye on...

The JEWISH PILGRIMS encamped with tents and fires before

HEROD'S TEMPLE

with it's FOUR GILDED TOWERS reaching victoriously to the
heavens...

The SOARING HAWK swoops back to...

EXT. GOLGOTHA HILL - DUSK

Against the blood-red sky of the setting sun, THREE MEN HANG
ON CROSSES in silhouette...

On the center cross hangs JESUS OF NAZARETH... his ebony
flesh torn... a crown of bramble thorns dug into his
dreadlocked skull...

JESUS

I'm... thirsty.

At the foot of the cross, NICODEMUS, a young healer, slyly
pours a VIAL OF MYSTERIOUS ELIXIR into a water bucket...

He DIPS A SPONGE into the freshly tainted water...

STABS THE SPONGE ONTO THE TIP OF A LONG STICK...

Raises it to the lips of Jesus...

Jesus looks down to Nicodemus...

JESUS OF NAZARETH
(aspirating)
It is... accomplished.

Jesus sucks on the elixir-soaked sponge... and the effect is instant... he GASPS... his EYES ROLL white... FOAM DRIBBLES from his mouth... his head slowly drops to his chest.

Nicodemus steps back in awe...

Beside him stands the youthful JOHN, immaculately appointed in the garb of a Pharisee priest, his soft hands hold MARY, an elderly woman dressed all in black...

MARY
My son... let this be done.

JUSTUS, a Roman Centurion, from atop his well-fed horse, seasoned with rank, removes his bronze plumed helmet, raises his red cape to wipe his brow...

JUSTUS
(muttering to himself)
Why do they do this to themselves?
Why do I have to teach them?

He looks to LONGINUS, a soldier, a hung-over, overfed brute, who stands at the ready.

JUSTUS (CONT'D)
Let's get this over with.

Longinus grabs a mallet and a ladder... climbs up to the first cross... deftly SMASHES THE LEGS of the thief hanging to the left Jesus, inciting instant suffocation.

Mary, faint... her knees buckle... John lowers her to the earth...

Longinus steps before Mary and John -

LONGINUS
Tell her, Priest, this half-breed
is no king of the Jews.

Mary claws up two handfuls of dirt and throws them into the soldier's face -

Longinus starts to her -

LONGINUS (CONT'D)
You grimy bitch--

Justus sees the confrontation -

Calls out -

JUSTUS THE CENTURIAN
LONGINUS! GET UP THE LADDER! END
THIS!

Longinus - seething with rage - hefts up the ladder with
mallet in hand -

A DISTANT SHOUT - "HALT! HALT! HALT!"

Justus signals pause to Longinus.

ARIMATHEA, the source of the shouting, speedily approaches on
horse and wagon...

Arimathea, an elderly Sadducee in high priestly garb,
dismounts his cart horse with an aristocratic flair... lifts
the hem of his robe above the dust...

He strides towards Justus with a decree in hand...

ARIMATHEA
Justus...

He gestures a humble greeting - touches forehead, mouth and
heart...

ARIMATHEA (CONT'D)
I carry an allowance granted by
Pilate himself...

Justus, from atop his horse, unravels the parchment... and as
he reads...

Arimathea interjects -

ARIMATHEA (CONT'D)
Pilate has granted me permission to
bury the Nazarene in my family
tomb.

Justus rolls up the missive... looks down on Arimathea...

JUSTUS
Why would you want such a stain on
your crest?

ARIMATHEA

If this Jew is still on the cross
after sunset on Sabbath, there will
be hell to pay.

Justus steadies his restless horse... tucks the scroll into
his saddle bag... gallops up to Longinus on a ladder before
the cross...

JUSTUS

(calls to Longinus)
Is he dead?!

Longinus sticks a finger under Jesus' nostrils. Nothing.

LONGINUS

Given up the ghost!

JUSTUS

Lower the cross!

Reluctantly, Longinus climbs down from the ladder... gestures
to the gypsies who begin to rope the cross for lowering...

Longinus grabs his spear from where it's stuck in the dirt -

LONGINUS

For good measure...

He THRUSTS THE SPEAR UPWARD INTO JESUS' SIDE - causing blood
to pour richly - dripping from the martyr's toes...

Nicodemus looks to Arimathea with grave concern...

DOWN THE HILL

Standing alone behind the stone fence of a fallow field,
tears stream down the painted face of the young prostitute

MAGDALENE

who looks skyward to a FLOCK OF DOVES taking flight.

EXT. JERUSALEM STREETS - HORSE & WAGON (MOVING) - DUSK

Arimathea cracks the whip from his place on the wagon bench -

ARIMATHEA

(calls back)
Do you have the herbs and ointment
for his wound?!

Nicodemus - tilting with the wagon bed - holds Jesus' bloodied head on his lap -

NICODEMUS

I'm a healer! But I'm not a magician! The wound from the spear!... we don't have much time!

THE WAGON WHISKS AT A DANGEROUS PACE around a cobblestone corner - CRACK! - A SPOKED WHEEL SPLINTERS INTO COLLAPSE - the wagon comes to a jolting stop.

The CRIES OF AN ANGRY MOB are heard in the distance -

Arimathea stands atop the wagon seat - sees the wave of rabid, disillusioned Jews flooding the street from behind -

ARIMATHEA

They'll tear his body limb from limb!

He quickly climbs down from the wagon -

ARIMATHEA (CONT'D)

We'll move on foot!

Nicodemus shoulders Jesus up off the wagon - lumbers the limp body as he staggers forward -

NICODEMUS

Which way do we go?!

ARIMATHEA

Come! Come! Follow me...

They hustle down a narrow alleyway...

EXT. LOCAL TAVERN - DUSK

JUDAS ISCARIOT steps out of the watering hole in a drunken stumble... his overgrown red beard wet with ale...

He takes in the ABANDONED WAGON... its BROKEN WHEEL... the CART HORSE restless at the flopping reigns...

Judas staggers a weaving line out on to the street... up to the horse... grips its reins...

JUDAS

My lucky day...

He kisses the muzzle of the horse...

The cart horse turns aside with its BIG BROWN EYE...

Judas sees his own reflection...

JUDAS (CONT'D)

Your lucky day.

The horse REEL UP ON ITS HINDS - CRACKS FREE OF THE CART - drags Judas by the reins -

The ANGRY MOB swallows up the street -

Judas mounts the horse - fighting its strength - pressed up against a stone wall...

EXT. JERUSALEM STREET - DUSK

Arimathea, faint and out of breath, slows to a surrendering stop...

ARIMATHEA

Nico... we've lost.

Nicodemus stops, spins around to see the ANGRY MOB on the cobblestone horizon...

NICODEMUS

Go, Arimathea - they will not treat a Sadducee kindly - me? - I've helped them - healed their sick children - even their dogs.

ARIMATHEA

I stood witness to the carpenter's life, I will not abandon him in death.

The angry mob arrives... surrounds them menacingly...

MOB LEADER steps out from the crowd, wielding a shepard's crook -

MOB LEADER

Give us the body of the false messiah!

ARIMATHEA

You got your wish! You chose Barabbas to live. Now let a dead man be buried.

Nicodemus, weighted by Jesus' body, turns a circle, taking in the blood-lusting faces...

NICODEMUS

How many of you have come to me in
need of medicine, without a widow's
mite for payment? Did I withhold?
Have I called on court for your
debts?

Nobody speaks.

NICODEMUS (CONT'D)

This man deserves a proper burial.
Let us not withhold him that. Delay
your judgements, and as I have done
for you... forgive a dead man his
debts.

A BITTER WOMAN with a threshing sickle, steps out -

BITTER WOMAN

We'd be joy'd then to cut off the
head of an ol' Sadducee!

The crowd parts erratically as a HORSE GALLOPS through -

Emerges center circle -

Judas - he dismounts the cart horse. His drunken stagger
gone. His face red with fury. He approaches the Mob Leader -

JUDAS

Knock me on my arse - you can have
the carpenter's body!

Judas marches over to the Bitter Woman -

JUDAS (CONT'D)

Take my head off - you can have the
priest's too!

He pulls a knife from his belt -

JUDAS (CONT'D)

Let's see what a Galilean can do to
a bunch of wet bread city oafs with
a single blade!

From out amongst the crowd - an ANGRY YOUTH charges Judas
with a smithy's hammer - SWINGS AT JUDAS - who blocks the
blow - flips the boy on his back - and steps on his throat -

He looks out at the crowd...

JUDAS (CONT'D)

Let it be clear! I already killed
the Nazarene! He will not die
twice!

Arimathea steps to Judas cautiously, removes his foot from
the throat of the teenager -

The crowd begins to disperse - one by one, then in two's,
then in three's -

Judas hefts the body of Jesus from Nicodemus' shoulder and
drapes it over the cart horse.

JUDAS (CONT'D)

Take him wherever you will.

And with that Judas starts back toward the tavern from which
he came. Arimathea pulls the reins of the horse down a narrow
alley with Nicodemus in tow.

EXT. ARIMATHEA'S TOMB - EVENING

A rich man's burial cave surrounded by a grove of olive
trees...

INT. TOMB - EVENING

Candles illumine the cavern... the body of Jesus lays upon a
sarcophagus... blood oozes from his side.

Nicodemus attempts to breathe life into the mouth of Jesus...
pounds his chest rhythmically... feels for breath...

NICODEMUS

We're too late.

Arimathea, wrung out, walks circles around Jesus' body...

ARIMATHEA

This *can't* be... our plan can't
fail... his plan can't fail.

Nicodemus pulls supplies from his satchel...

NICODEMUS

His *death*... we shall have to live
with.

Arimathea steps to the body... kisses Jesus' feet...

Nicodemus applies his medicinal balm to the wounds of Jesus... HIS WRISTS... HIS FEET... THE GAPING INJURY to his side...

ARIMATHEA

How do we speak of this to John?

Nicodemus places his hand on Arimathea's chest...

NICODEMUS

As the Master said... *"The truth shall set you free."*

Nicodemus pulls a LINEN SHROUD OVER JESUS' BODY.

Arimathea blows out the candles.

EXT. ARIMATHEA'S TOMB - EVENING

Nicodemus and Arimathea heave the tombstone closed... A SLOW HEAVY GRIND...

As the last shaft of evening light illumines the tomb only we see THE SHROUD MOVE... a breath of life.

The tomb is sealed shut to darkness.

SATURDAY

EXT. GOLGOTHA HILL - SUNRISE

The desert hawk soars over three crosses... the middle one empty... the two beside strung with bodies... they're flesh being plucked by the ravenous crows...

EXT. ESSENE QUARTER - JERUSALEM - PASSOVER MORNING

A line of ESSENE PRIESTS in white linen tunics march silently in unison down the street towards the temple, each carrying buckets of blood...

The THROAT OF A LAMB IS SLIT by a blade... its life spilling down the flagstone steps of a humble home...

A WILD PACK OF DOGS roam the streets, licking up red...

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - ESSENE QUARTER - JERUSALEM - MORNING

The upper room is dark, curtains drawn, ELEVEN MEN in hiding huddled at a banquet table, circled by flies, their greasy hair and unkempt beards...

Mary, the mother of Jesus, dressed in black, sets a copper cauldron at table center and begins ladling out soup...

MARY

You were the brothers of my son...
so you are all my children.

JOHN

Bless you, mother.

A neighbor's DOG BARKS INCESSANTLY next door...

MATTHEW THE TAX COLLECTOR, trying to collect his thoughts on paper, looks to John exasperated -

MATTHEW

For the love of God... can you hush
the bark of that dog, John?

JOHN

Best we not raise attention right
now, Matthew... I can promise you,
today the entire Sanhedrin guard is
out for our heads.

PHILIP THE SHEPARD, built like a grizzly, rises from the table and goes to the window...

JOHN (CONT'D)

Phillip! Be careful.

Phillip pulls back the curtains, opens the window, and lets out a sentient WHISTLE...

The barking dog quiets.

SIMON THE ZEALOT, with dark bags under his eyes, massages the bridge of his nose... rises from the table...

SIMON

The hounds are coming, whether we
like it or not. You should all go
back to your homes, your
livelihoods... I'm going to join
Barabbas. See this rebellion
through.

And now one arises who SLAMS BOTH FISTS ON THE TABLE -
causing the SOUP BOWLS TO SPLASH!

PETER

a salty fisherman with a short fuse -

PETER

No one leaves this cursed room!

The rest of the brothers glare at attention.

PETER (CONT'D)

I'm going to find that rat Judas,
find out what he told. Until then,
nobody moves.

Peter scans the faces of his comrades... sees their fear,
their questions, their hopelessness...

PETER (CONT'D)

Trust me.

Matthew, scribing the pages of a parchment book with quill,
looks up from his writing...

MATTHEW

Are you going to kill Judas?

PETER

I'm going beat him first, then slit
his throat.

Matthew re-dips his quill...

MATTHEW

1 + 1 = 2... but... let him speak
his truth before you slit his
throat.

Peter looks to his younger brother ANDREW, who has his head
buried in his hands like a crab in a shell...

PETER

Andrew! Pull your head out of your
arse!

Andrew peeks up...

ANDREW

I just wanna go home.

Peter grabs his bowl of warm soup - splashes it in his brother's face -

PETER

You're my brother! You brought me to the Master! You're coming with me - we're gonna find Judas.

Andrew wipes the soup from his face with his shirt sleeve...

ANDREW

If we go out there, it's us who will die, not Judas... but it's your boat to sink, brother.

Peter, satisfied, looks to THADDIUS, a foot taller and a decade older than the others -

PETER

Thaddius? You of all of us? He betrayed your little brother. Come with me?

Mary steps out of the shadows and grips Thaddius' forearm...

MARY

Not both my sons.

THADDIUS

I stay with my mother.

Peter relents, shoots a look to JAMES, who lights a candle from the shadow of the table's corner.

PETER

And you, James, brother of John, our gracious host - you come with me then?

John steps before Peter -

JOHN

Why pull my brother into your plot for murder?

PETER

To prove your allegiance, John... who he called *The Beloved*.

James sets the candle center table...

JAMES

Sit down, John... Peter's right... we're gonna find Judas.

John GRIPS PETER'S CLENCHED FIST -

JOHN

It's your allegiance that's in question, Peter. Did you not hear a single word our Master said? Is your skull that thick? What about love?

Down below there's a POUNDING ON THE DOOR!

Everybody freezes, fearing the worst...

Mary brings her finger to her lips, urging silence, as she closes the door of the upper room behind her...

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - LOWER FLOOR - MORNING

Mary calmly CREAKS THE DOOR OPEN... to reveal...

Judas Iscariot, standing desperate and forlorn...

JUDAS

Mary... my *mother*... are the brothers here? I need to talk to them.

Mary reaches out and takes Judas' hand in her feeble grip...

MARY

(at a whisper)

Judas... whatever you did, my son forgives you... but your brothers upstairs are not of the same mind...

Judas pulls his hand away... turns a circle on the door stoop... sees the COPPER BOWL OF BLOOD at the threshold...

JUDAS

The time has passed... the angel of death has taken your son... the blood should have been placed last night.

MARY

It's too late for Jesus, but not for you... make haste your own exodus.

Mary reaches down... DIPS HER FINGERS INTO THE BOWL OF BLOOD... smears it ceremoniously over the lintel...

She closes the door on Judas.

Judas watches the sacrificial lamb's blood drip down the pine doorpost.

EXT. ESSENE QUARTER - MORNING

Judas pads down the cobblestone street of Jerusalem's richest neighborhood... mosaic tiles... gilded turrets... stained glass windows.

EXT. ELEAZAR'S HOUSE - MORNING

Eleazar stands at the threshold of his front door facing Judas. He is a high priest, a Sadducee, evident by his silk robe, his perfectly trimmed beard and the gold and ivory bracelets that clang on his wrist as he hands Judas

A LAMBSKIN POUCH

Judas opens the pouch, pours out its contents - SILVER COINS fall before the feet of Eleazar. Judas counts them by 10's as he scoops them back up into the pouch...

JUDAS

There's only 22... your brother Caiaphas promised 30.

ELEAZAR

Loving God and growing in wisdom is far more profitable than money, yes?

Judas unsheathes a dagger from his belt...

JUDAS

Yes... money is the root of all evil -

He grabs Eleazar around the back of his neck - holds the point of his dagger to the priest's throat -

JUDAS (CONT'D)

Is it time to cut the root?

THE VOICE OF A LITTLE GIRL from inside the house -

LITTLE GIRL'S VOICE (O.S.)

Grandpapa! Mama is serving the latkas! Come before they get cold!

Judas lowers the blade, grips the old man's throat, clenches tight -

JUDAS

I'll find you at the temple today.
You will pay the rest then.

EXT. UPPER CITY - JERUSALEM - MORNING

A bustle of street activity - donkeys bray - merchant wagons clamor - food carts wheel - all heading towards the temple for Passover...

EXT. ARIMATHEA'S GARDEN - MORNING

Arimathea on his knees, clipping the flowers from a Rose of Sharon bush...

A VOICE OFF-SCREEN -

CAIAPHAS (O.S.)

Arimathea, forgive me for the intrusion on this holiest of days, but the matter is urgent.

Arimathea rises, takes in CAIAPHAS, the Sanhedrin high priest, in full garb, with pointed headdress -

ARIMATHEA

Of course, Caiaphas, I consider your presence no intrusion.

Caiaphas, with GOLD-PAINTED FINGERNAILS, takes Arimathea's hand in greeting...

CAIAPHAS

Word has come to me, you took the body of the Nazarene off the cross. The Sanhedrin requests the body delivered to its custody.

ARIMATHEA

Caiaphas, you are the head of the Sanhedrin. Is it you that requests?

CAIAPHAS

It is the will of God.

ARIMATHEA

The will of God is written on the wind. The will of Pilate I have written in a scroll.

(MORE)

ARIMATHEA (CONT'D)

Trust me Caiaphas, I have put the messiah to rest.

CAIAPHAS

Messiah?

ARIMATHEA

As he claimed himself to be.

CAIAPHAS

What is *your* allegiance to the Nazarene? Speak frankly.

ARIMATHEA

"He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth."

CAIAPHAS

Ah... you quote the prophet Isaiah, like the Pharisees. Do you truly believe the Nazarene was the Messiah?

Arimathea gathers his roses into a bouquet...

ARIMATHEA

Did I believe these flowers would grow?

CAIAPHAS

Arimathea... you are an educated Sadducee, a brother of the priesthood... how could you... how on earth can you justify the ravings of a lunatic? His is the only way to salvation? The Romans, Greeks, masters of India, tribal magicians of Africa all damned to hellfire because they didn't dunk their heads into the Jordan river? Is that truly the message you wish to grow?

ARIMATHEA

Were that the case, no. The Nazarene called God one thing, and one thing only. Love. And with that I cannot disagree.

CAIAPHAS

Love is not what I heard in his words - his claim to destroy the temple - declaring us - *you, me* - usurpers, hypocrites... the streets of Jerusalem would be running with Jewish blood were it not for our diplomacy and tempered force. *King of the Jews* he called himself? *The Son of God*? Arimathea... please... come to your senses... you know as well as I this city hangs on tenterhooks.

ARIMATHEA

Yes, and Jesus of Nazareth was no butcher.

CAIAPHAS

Take me to his resting place.

ARIMATHEA

That I cannot do.

CAIAPHAS

My heart breaks for you, my brother.

Caiaphas mouths a LOUD WHISTLE -

SIX SANHEDRIN GUARDS reveal themselves, converge on the garden space with spears and swords...

Arimathea, aghast, drops the roses as he stumbles back.

INT. TEMPLE DUNGEON - DAY

Arimathea paces the dim cell, lit only by the shafts of the noon sun from the high window above, illuminating LAYERS OF MANIC SCRAWLINGS on the stone walls...

Arimathea focuses on one in particular, carved deeply and in blood... "*YOU ARE FOOL*"...

The CLAMOR AND CLANG of a cell door down the hall. Arimathea steps up to the bars that confine him -

Two Sanhedrin guards escort BARABBAS, a hulk of a man, his bare torso covered in scars and tattoos, as he catches Arimathea's bewildered stare...

BARABBAS

Looks like I'm the King of the
Jews, old man.

Barabbas is wrangled off down the hall.

Arimathea looks back to the wall above his sullen cot... "YOU
ARE FOOL."

INT. UPPER CITY TAVERN - JERUSALEM - DAY

Empty, but for Judas at the bar, pleading with the TAVERN
OWNER -

JUDAS

One goblet of ale... that's all I
ask.

Judas drops his pouch of coins on the bar...

JUDAS (CONT'D)

This would buy me a barrel any
other day.

TAVERN OWNER

You can sit here freely, Judas. But
if I pour you a spirit on Passover,
I violate God's law.

JUDAS

God? God is dead! Pour me a drink!
God's laws can go to hell!

TAVERN OWNER

Seems you're already there.

Tavern Owner picks up the lambskin pouch, tosses it back to
Judas.

EXT. TEMPLE COMPLEX - DAY

A temporary encampment for the throngs of pilgrims that
surround Herod's Temple - tents, fires, roasting meat -

A cacophony of money changers, hawkers of religious amulets,
prostitutes soliciting johns -

Roman soldiers keep a watchful eye on...

The Essene fanatics, in their white robes, with buckets of
blood, shouting in unison -

"The temple is a center of sin!"

"The Pharisees vipers in den!"

"The Sanhedrin killers of men!"

Judas maneuvers through the chaos - determines his way to the back entrance of the temple court -

EXT. REAR GATE - TEMPLE - DAY

ROMAN SOLDIERS cast dice and drink wine as they guard the grounds leading to the temple's back door.

Judas approaches, unties the MONEY POUCH from his belt, looks to the heavens with a silent prayer...

The Roman guards take stance to the ragged Jew's approach...

ROMAN GUARD

State your purpose.

JUDAS

I have a proposition... being bored as I am... and seeing you want for thrill...

ROMAN GUARD

State your purpose or we shall have our thrill.

JUDAS

Let me play... give me one throw of the dice... if I roll 12, you give me that jug of wine and entrance to the temple. Any other number...

(lifts the pouch)

I give you these 22 pieces of silver to divide amongst yourselves.

ROMAN GUARD

What is your intention in the temple?

JUDAS

To atone for my sins.

The Roman Guards search each other... the MONEY POUCH hanging in the air... TWO DICE rolling in a guard's hand...

ROMAN GUARD

You have one throw for 12.

The DICE GUARD hands Judas the dice...

DICE GUARD
Give it a good blow, boy... say a
prayer to your god.

Judas shakes the dice in his palm... gives them a blow... the
breath of God he hopes...

JUDAS
(muttering to himself)
Am I still one of your twelve?

Judas tosses the dice on the cobblestone...

THE DICE bounce... and roll... and finally settle in the
cracks of the brick...

DOUBLE SIX

The guards stand in awe...

Judas re-ties the money pouch to his belt...

WINE GUARD hands him the jug...

WINE GUARD
A true believer.

Judas gulps from the jug.

EXT. A FARMSTEAD - OUTSIDE THE CITY WALLS - DAY

An open pasture of grazing cows... loping sheep... NECK BELLS
RINGING...

A hay cart reveals Magdalene rising from her restless
sleep... she gazes up to the clear sky...

An EAGLE circles above... becomes an ANGEL from heaven...
swoops down on her...

Magdalene rubs the sleep from her eyes.

INT. BROTHEL BACK ROOM - UPPER CITY - JERUSALEM - DAY

Magdalene, with legs suspended in stirrups, suffers the
inspection of the MADAM...

MADAM
You have the lice...

She raises the evidence in a pinch between her fingers...

MAGDALENE
Evidence of my experience.

The Madam reaches for a jar on the shelf...

MADAM
This will burn... like hellfire.

INT. BROTHEL HALLWAY - DAY

Magdalene follows the Madam past a series of closed doors...
the SOUNDS OF SEX behind each of them...

MADAM
Busiest time of the year... you're
fortune can be made.... *Passover*...

MAGDALENE
Blood of the lamb... it means
nothing.

INT. BROTHEL ROOM - DAY

The Madam pushes open the door to reveal a ROMAN SOLDIER
passed out on the bed...

An EMPTY BOTTLE lays sideways on the floor...

A BLOOD-TIPPED SPEAR leans against the wall...

MADAM
See that he's pleased upon the
opening of his eyes. He paid good
money. He always comes back.

The Roman Soldier grunts, burps and farts as he rolls over on
his back. That's when Magdalene sees him, he is...

Longinus... the soldier who speared Jesus.

Magdalene steps into the room, picks up the empty bottle,
sets it next to the bed...

The Madam closes the door behind her.

INT. UPPER ROOM - JOHN'S HOUSE - JERUSALEM - DAY

Eight apostles remain... biding their time with a mindless
Mesopotamian board game...

It's Thomas' turn to role the dice... but he's distracted... rises... drops the dice on the table...

THOMAS

I have a business to get back to...
travel and *trade* is no mere job,
but rather a *lifestyle*.

BARTHOLOMEW, well-manicured and beardless by design, stiffens and rises from the table -

BARTHOLOMEW

How dare you! My performance troupe
was a *lifestyle* too! Singing,
dancing, comedy, that is no "*mere*
job."

Thomas takes in the dead stares looking back at him...

THOMAS

(backpedaling)
Not that I mean *your* jobs were
mere... you understand, yes? Oh
never mind me...

Thomas digs into a pouch on his belt...

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Here, let me leave you each
something...

He presents a palm full of WHITE KERNELS...

THOMAS (CONT'D)

These? Just *one* will buy you a
fishing boat... a flock of sheep...
a field to farm... dancing and
singing lessons...

He places the white kernels before each man around the table...

THOMAS (CONT'D)

These are *monkey's teeth*... not
like those little monkeys... from
India, the Silk Road... but from
deep Africa... they have healing
power... any rich man will pay
dearly for these.

All the brothers finger them up, inspecting.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Trade them wisely now.

Mary, Jesus' mother, steps to the table -

MARY

You're trading your allegiance to my son for monkey's teeth?... you baboon... go sit down.

Thomas continues to backstep towards the door where his sandals sit...

Philip barrels from his chair like a grizzly - SNATCHES UP THOMAS' SANDALS - THROWS THEM INTO THE FIRE -

PHILIP

You. Sit.

John drops his MONKEY TOOTH to the table, which bounces to the floor, sending Thomas to his hands and knees in search.

JOHN

Listen, brothers, I implore we do what the Master would see fit on this holiest of days.

His seven brothers look back at him curiously...

JOHN (CONT'D)

Break bread and share wine, as he did with us... our last meal together, here. I will go to the temple as is my duty. Tonight... we will know more... I promise.

John flashes a confident nod as he pivots and leaves the room.

Thomas finds the monkey tooth, rises, looks to his sandals burning in the fire.

An awkward silence hovers over the remaining apostles.

The tension is broken by NATHANIEL, the youngest, he's only fourteen... he finishes a move on the Mesopotamian game board...

NATHANIEL

I won.

The others look to him incredulous... Nathaniel rises from the table...

NATHANIEL (CONT'D)

The Master did tell us to remember
him, whenever and wherever we
gathered...

Philip impulsively reaches for the loaf of bread on the
table... gouges off a crust... offers it to Bartholomew
seated beside him...

Bartholomew weighs the bread in his hand...

BARTHOLOMEW

So this is the weight of Jesus? The
meat off his bones?

Thomas returns to the table...

THOMAS

What good could come of this...

Nathaniel pulls his own chunk from the loaf -

NATHANIEL

*"Take this and eat it, for this is
my body."*

He places it in his mouth... chews... swallows.

Bartholomew follows suit, bites the crust with his teeth...

THADDIUS, the oldest of them all by a decade, pulls his own
piece of bread...

THADDIUS

I never imagined I'd be eating my
little brother's flesh.

He reaches for the jug of wine... holds it out to Thomas...

THADDIUS (CONT'D)

What'd he tell us, Thomas? It's not
monkey teeth that will heal you.

Thomas takes the jug of wine, surrendering...

THOMAS

"Drink this as if it's my blood..."

Thomas takes the first swig... he passes the jug...

From one to another they drink...

Until Simon the Zealot, who refuses the wine...

SIMON

This is lunacy. His blood has been shed. Now is the time to avenge his trespassers. I'm going to the desert, to join Barabbas and the Zealots.

He rises from the table...

SIMON (CONT'D)

If any one of you tries to stop me... you won't live to remember it.

And with that he exits unhindered - SLAMS THE DOOR SHUT behind.

The five disciples left in his wake look to each other in a hush of uncertainty.

Matthew, writing as always, dots an "i" and crosses a "t"... then grabs the wine and takes a deep swig... empties the jug...

MATTHEW

Do we have more of this?

The others look to him... considering.

EXT. TEMPLE COMPLEX - OUTER GATE - DAY

The temple grounds are controlled chaos...

Pilgrims vie in throngs to gain entrance to the temple...

Roman soldiers guard the threshold - jostling their spears - shields uplifted - herding the fervent faithful...

The group of Essene Priests - garbed in their pure white - SPLASH BUCKETS OF BLOOD - chant in unison -

"The temple is a center of sin!"

"The Pharisees vipers in den!"

"The Sanhedrin killers of men!"

Peter, with James and Andrew at his side, are SPLASHED WITH BLOOD as they funnel with the crowd towards the temple complex...

AT THE MAIN GATE

A VOICE FROM THE CROWD bellows out -

That's Simon the fisherman!

Follower of the Nazarene!

ANOTHER VOICE - *He's a follower of the false messiah!*

MANY VOICES CHIME IN -

He's a believer!

A blasphemer!

Kill him!

A ROMAN SOLDIER takes notice - shoves the butt of his spear into Peter's gut -

ROMAN SOLDIER
State your name, Jew.

Peter stands frozen...

James grabs the spear before the SOLDIER'S SHIELD WHACKS HIM UPSIDE!

ROMAN SOLDIER (CONT'D)
Are you him? Simon the fisherman?
Follower of the Nazarene?

Andrew grips Peter's shoulder...

ANDREW
Tell him who you are.

Peter wipes the splash of blood from his cheek... sees it on the palm of his hand...

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. DESERT CAVE - NIGHT

The SOUND OF MEN SNORING... the burn of a campfire reflects on the smooth stone walls...

A STRONG HAND jostles Simon from his sleep...

JESUS (O.S.)
Peter, come with me, for a walk in the desert.

Simon stares up blankly, aroused from his dreams...

SIMON
Master... it's me... *Simon*.

JESUS' HAND comes gently to rest on Simon's forehead...

JESUS (O.S.)
You are no longer *Simon* the
fisherman. You are *Peter*... my
rock.

Peter, newly named, rises from his bedding...

BACK TO SCENE:

EXT. TEMPLE COMPLEX - MAIN GATE - DAY

Peter calmly removes the Roman soldier's spear from his
abdomen...

PETER
My name is *Peter*.

The Roman Soldier considers... not worth the trouble... nods
them to pass.

EXT. TEMPLE COMPLEX - HALL OF ISRAELITES - DAY

Peter, James and Andrew skulk through the shadowed pillars...

THE HALL OF ISRAELITES

is the ancient synagogue... it's teeming with pilgrims... a
sea of men kneeling in prayer... their long beards touching
the marble floor as they prostrate before their angry god...

Judas is amongst them... on his knees... wrenching out his
tears...

A NEARBY VOICE - almost at a whisper...

PETER (O.S.)
Judas, he's not listening to you.

Judas snaps to the voice... a look of shock as he takes in...

Peter in the shadow of a pillar, with James and Andrew at his
back...

Judas bolts to his feet - hurdles the kneeling faithful -
stumbles - kicking one in the head - drags himself upright -
dashes off toward the inner temple -

Peter, James and Andrew set chase across the prayer floor -
 But the Sanhedrin guards close in on the three quickly -
 halting their pursuit.

INT. TEMPLE COMPLEX - HALL OF PRIESTS - DAY

In contrast to the prayer floor of the pilgrims, this is the inner sanctum... these are the chosen few... the Pharisees and the Sadducees... the men with a direct voice to God...

And Eleazar's voice is about to be silenced when Judas steps up behind him... quietly places his DAGGER BLADE against the old man's prostrate throat...

JUDAS

You have my money?

Eleazar shudders at the cold blade... looks up to Judas... discombobulated...

ELEAZAR

You ask for money? In the holy of holies? You don't deserve a widow's mite. I can smell your breath... you're drunk.

JUDAS

I've asked for forgiveness... you should do the same.

Judas SLIDES THE BLADE ACROSS ELEAZAR'S THROAT... letting his RED BLOOD pour onto the sacred tiles...

John, across the floor, rises from prostrate prayer at the SOUND OF GASPS AND SHOUTS - he sees Judas dash off into the dark of the Brazen Altar...

INT. TEMPLE COMPLEX - SACRIFICE GATE - DAY

Judas is on the inside looking out... sees the Roman Guards... the impossibility of escape...

A HUSHED VOICE FROM BEHIND -

JOHN

Judas! Wait! Let me help you!

Judas steps back, stands alone in the temple hall...

John hurries the echoing distance between them... meets his comrade face-to-face...

JOHN (CONT'D)
If you run, you'll be killed. If I
speak for you, you'll be free.

JUDAS
I'm dead already.

Judas offers John his pouch of silver coins...

JUDAS (CONT'D)
Give this to the brothers... let
them know how I paid.

John refuses the money, embraces Judas...

JOHN
Jesus asked you to betray him. And
you did. You fulfilled the
prophecy.

Judas pulls the dagger from his belt... its blade still red
with blood... he offers its handle to John...

JUDAS
"Better that I not be born," he
said.

John takes the handle of the dagger... grips the back of
Judas' neck... pulls him in...

JOHN
He loved you... and so must I.

John drops the dagger, which CLANKS TO THE FLOOR...

JOHN (CONT'D)
Wait here... I'll make good your
escape.

John exits the dark hall through the Gate of Sacrifice into
the daylight of the Roman Guards.

EXT. ROAD TO GETHSEMANE - JERUSALEM - DAY

Judas runs the cobblestone... dust bursting from his
sandals... the money pouch cupped in his palm... as he
approaches...

A BLIND BEGGAR, sitting on a doorstep... his deformed hand,
withered with leprosy, holds an empty basket before him...

Judas slows to an approach...

JUDAS

The meek... inherit the earth...

Judas places the POUCH OF COINS INTO THE EMPTY BASKET...

Blind Beggar, his eyes rolled white...

BLIND BEGGAR

I can see you... a heart of gold.

Judas starts up the empty street - A VICIOUS DOG CHARGES HIM -
stopped short by a rope tied to a post -

Judas careens to avoid the dog - sees ahead -

Peter, James, Andrew - blocking the road to his escape...

Judas spits on the ground... strides directly towards them...

And it's here in the middle of the street that Judas and
Peter face-off...

JUDAS

Peter... *the faithless*... isn't
that what he called you?

PETER

It's what he called you that
matters now... *betrayer*.

A neighbor woman, peeking out her window, draws the curtain.

JUDAS

He was right... your faith is as
little as your cock.

Peter steps forward - REELS A PUNCH right into Judas' face -

Judas staggers back - falls - blood gushing from his nose -

Andrew and James pin Judas down -

Peter stands over Judas - cracks the knuckles of his
calloused hands...

PETER

Now it's your turn to suffer.

Judas - blood pouring from his nose -

JUDAS

Do you really believe I chose to
betray him of my own will?

(MORE)

JUDAS (CONT'D)

For money? For power? For my hatred
of him?

PETER

My faith is "*too little*," Judas,
remember that -

He bears down - punches Judas - pounds him -

over...

and over...

and OVER...

A TOOTH

bounces off the cobblestone...

JUDAS

(breathless; gurgling)
James?! Andrew?! Be willing to hear
my truth!

Andrew grabs Peter's arm mid-swing -

ANDREW

Peter!

James puts a hand to Peter's chest -

JAMES

As Matthew asked - let the betrayer
speak.

Peter stands up straight, towering over Judas...

PETER

Spit you're venom, you viper. This
will be last your tongue is heard.

Judas spits the blood from his mouth... his nose twisted...
one eye swollen shut...

JUDAS

Don't you remember?... our last
time with him?... our last meal?

Peter glares down...

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - UPPER ROOM - JERUSALEM - NIGHT

The disciples sit around the table feasting and drinking wine...

Jesus, somber, twists a piece of bread from a loaf...

JESUS

One of you here must betray me.

The disciples go silent... and it's Peter, right there close to Jesus who is quick to ask -

PETER

Is it me, Master?

JESUS

No, Peter... it is the one to whom I give this bread.

(beat)

It is written by the Prophet.

Jesus looks across the table to Judas, whose countenance sinks.

BACK TO SCENE:

EXT. ROAD TO GETHSEMANE - JERUSALEM - DAY

Judas struggles to sit up...

JUDAS

Do you remember that, Peter? Were you too drunk?

(to James and Andrew)

Were you all too drunk?

Like a crack of light into a dark room, Peter does remember...

Judas scrapes himself up to his feet... staggers deliriously... searches the street for his lost tooth...

The three see the neighbor woman peeking back out through the curtains of her window...

James grips Peter's shoulder -

JAMES

Let's go.

And they do, running off down the street from which they came...

The neighbor woman continues to watch...

The bloodied Judas on his hands and knees crawling the cobble stone, finding his lost tooth.

INT. TEMPLE DUNGEON - SANHEDRIN GUARD'S STATION - DUSK

John stands before the SANHEDRIN GUARD - a bulldog of a man - who grips his spear crossways to compliment his one crossed eye.

JOHN

There is no reason, in my position, that I should be denied the right to see Arimathea.

SANHEDRIN GUARD

There was a murder today. In the Hall of Priests. Nobody is permitted to the dungeons.

JOHN

I assure you, Arimathea had nothing to do with the murder of Eleazar.

Sanhedrin Guard looks to John suspiciously...

SANHEDRIN GUARD

How do you know it was Eleazar that was murdered?

JOHN

I was there, you numbskull! I saw it!

SANHEDRIN GUARD

I don't care who you are, who you know, or who you think you are. No one gets in or out of the dungeons today. Caiaphas' orders.

EXT. TEMPLE COMPLEX - EVENING

John knows just where to go... pulls up a grate... RATS SCATTER... he climbs down...

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - EVENING

Total darkness... FOOTSTEPS SPLASH... BATS DISPERSE...

Clack!

Clack!

CLACK!

Rock against rock - FLAME -

John SETS HIS ROBE ON FIRE... hurries it down the dark tunnel until he sees light from above...

He stamps out his BURNING ROBE.

INT. TEMPLE DUNGEON COMPLEX - DAY

A floor grate pops open...

John pokes his head up...

He looks up and down the cavernous hallway... no one in sight...

EXT. DUNGEON CELL - DAY

John speaks in hushed tones through the bars that hold Arimathea captive...

JOHN

Are you certain?

Arimathea grips the bars with his bony hands... lowers his head...

ARIMATHEA

We couldn't have accounted for the spear... the loss of blood... though Nicodemus tried his best.

John's youthful hands grip Arimathea's...

JOHN

You must take them to the Master's body... free yourself.

Arimathea looks to John... the last glimmer of defiant light in his eyes...

ARIMATHEA
I will do what I must.

THE CLAMOR OF GUARDS sounds from down the hall...

JOHN
God be with you.

John slips of in the direction from which he came.

INT. DUNGEON CELL - DAY

Arimathea stands before the GRAFFITIED WALL that has plagued him hour after hour... the words scrawled in blood...

"YOU ARE FOOL"

That single word...

"FOOL"...

Arimathea moves closer...

"FOOL"

He touches the stone... and the stone moves...

Arimathea claws the loose stone from the wall... reaches into the dark recess... gropes out...

A KEY

which Arimathea stares down at incredulously.

INT. BROTHEL ROOM - DUSK

Three candles melt to their nubs on a side table...

Logninus, naked, sits on the edge the bed.

Magdalene lays on the bed, her naked body half-covered with sweat-stained sheets...

MAGDALENE
Where did you take Jesus' body?

LONGINUS
I didn't take the half-breed's body anywhere.

MAGDALENE
Who did?

Longinus looks over his shoulder to Magdalene...

LONGINUS

What's the dead half-breed matter
to you? Did you fuck him?

MAGDALENE

No... but I loved him. I would give
anything to touch his garments one
last time.

LONGINUS

Anything?

Longinus turns back onto the bed...

LONGINUS (CONT'D)

I can tell you who took the half-
breed's body... but it's my
respects you'll have to pay
first... gypsy style.

Longinus turns Magdalene onto her belly... lifts her naked
buttocks to his pelvis...

Magdalene, her face buried in the pillow, weeps quietly...
her watery eyes drift off to a recent memory...

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. DESERT FLOOR - DUSK

CLOSE - teardrops fall on RUGGED BARE FEET in the sand...
locks of LONG BLACK HAIR mop the dust from between the
BLISTERED TOES...

The voice from above her...

JESUS (O.S.)

Follow me, Magdalene... you are
stronger than any man here.

BACK TO SCENE:

INT. BROTHEL ROOM - DUSK

Magdalene GRABS THE EMPTY BOTTLE from beside the bed -

BREAKS IT AGAINST THE BEDPOST -

SHOVES THE JAGGED GLASS BETWEEN HER LEGS UP TO LONGINUS'
TESTICLES -

Longinus feels the glass cutting into his manhood... BLOOD...

LONGINUS
You stinking whore!

Magdalene SHOVES THE JAGGED BOTTLE HARDER -

MAGDALENE
Now tell me who took my Master.

Longinus' testicles hang in the balance...

LONGINUS
The Sadducee - Arimathea - he took
his body - on a god damned ox--

Magdalene flips beneath him deftly - FEET ON THE FLOOR -

Longinus collapses on the bed - clutching his bleeding
balls...

Magdalene gathers up her garments... heads for the door.

EXT. THE WILDERNESS BEYOND THE CITY WALLS - NIGHT

A CAMPFIRE BURNS amongst the juniper and sage...

LEATHER GLOVED HANDS TURN A RABBIT ROASTING ON A SPIT...

FOREARM REVEALS A TATTOO OF A HEART PIERCED BY A SWORD...

Reveal...

SAUL OF TARSUS

a mercenary... his EYES OF STEEL reflect the firelight...

His ears prick to the restless NEIGH OF HIS STALLION tied off
in the dark trees...

He listens intently... with free hand he grips the sword
strapped across his back...

From the darkness the stallion WHINNIES LOUD - HOOVES
POUNDING -

Saul unsheathes his sword - swoops toward his steed -

In the dust of the dark moonlight -

A SILHOUETTE

sits atop the stallion - clutching the reins -

SILHOUETTE

I am not a thief! My name is *Judas
Iscariot*. I am a man of my word!
You can retrieve your horse at dawn
- in the Valley of Blood!

Saul gives chase through the brush...

But his stallion gallops off beneath the moonlight.

EXT. DEAD SEA - WILDERNESS CAVES - NIGHT

Simon the Zealot hikes beneath the moonlight... scraping his way up the limestone terrain...

In the distance above... the light of a campfire illumines the mouth of a cave...

INT. WILDERNESS CAVE - NIGHT

A BAND OF GYPSIES encamped in the womb of the mountain... fires burns... beddings... animal skin drums and tambourines...

The gypsies fall silent at the sight of Simon crossing their threshold...

SIMON

I'm here to find Barabbas.

The GYPSY LEADER, a bald man bejeweled and bangeled, steps forward from a fire...

GYPSY LEADER

The Zealots have scampered... for fear of the Romans... I have no knowledge where.

Simon, exhausted, removes the deflated water pouch from around his neck...

SIMON

Can I beg you for some water before I depart.

From deeper in the cave, a GYPSY BOY emerges...

GYPSY BOY

There's a spring nearby... I can show you.

The Gypsy Boy takes Simon by the hand...

EXT. MOUNTAIN SPRING - NIGHT

Simon gurgles water into his ox belly pouch... looks to the Gypsy Boy who washes his feet in the spring...

Both gaze up at the gallery of stars twinkling upon them...

GYPSY BOY

Do you want to know where your friends are?

SIMON

Do you know?

GYPSY BOY

I can see...

The Gypsy Boy splashes his face with water... rolls his eyes to the back of his head... goes into trance...

GYPSY BOY (CONT'D)

The *big* one... covered in skin paint... I can see *him*... where he leads to...

The Gypsy Boy pops out of trance... eyes the KNIFE strapped to Simon's side...

GYPSY BOY (CONT'D)

Give me that blade... and I tell you where they go.

SIMON

First, you tell me where they're going.

GYPSY BOY

No. First, you give me the blade.

Simon looks out at the DARK ENDLESS MOUNTAIN RIDGES... he caps his water pouch... pulls his knife from his belt...

SIMON

It is God as our witness.

He flips the knife and gives the boy its handle.

The Gypsy Boy fondles his latest acquisition...

GYPSY BOY

(points)

Follow this trail...

He gestures to the starry sky...

GYPSY BOY (CONT'D)
 Follow the Three Kings south, down,
 to the edge of the Salty Sea...
 above it you will find your
 friends.

Simon looks out at the journey ahead...

SIMON
 Be careful with that knife, yeah?

The Gypsy Boy nods.

Simon heads off down the trail.

The Gypsy Boy jerks back to his trance state... calls out -

GYPSY BOY
 Knife Man!

Simon stops mid-trail... looks back to the boy... who stands
 stiff and shuttering...

GYPSY BOY (CONT'D)
 Beware of the painted man... he is
 not your friend.

Simon takes this in... continues on.

EXT. TEMPLE DUNGEON YARD - NIGHT

John on his knees, hands roped behind his back... surrounded
 by Sadducee guards.

The INTERROGATING GUARD shoves the butt of his spear to
 John's sternum -

INTERROGATING GUARD
 You were witnessed... speaking with
 the murderer... in the Hall of
 Priests... who is he and where will
 we find him?

JOHN
 Let's not pretend the Sanhedrin
 don't know him - *Judas Iscariot* -
 they paid him prettily to betray
 the Nazarene.

Another of the regimen whispers into the Interrogating
 Guard's ear...

INTERROGATING GUARD
Who?... mercenary?... well bring
him forth for goddsake!

EXT. VALLEY OF BLOOD - NIGHT

A desolate valley of inhabitable growth...

Only the FULL MOON graces down on this forsaken terrain...

Judas, atop the stallion, attempts to LOB A ROPE over the high limb of a cypress tree... but the horse won't stand still - BUCKS AND BRONCS - turns circles in the dirt -

Judas lowers his lips to the horse's ear...

JUDAS
*Do not betray a betrayer... it is
the will of God you serve... you
will be rewarded for eternity.*

THE HORSE STILL... snorts its STEAMY BREATH in the moonlight...

Judas lobs the rope up, finally wrapping it around the cypress limb...

EXT. TEMPLE DUNGEON YARD - NIGHT

Saul the mercenary stares down on John, still kneeling in the dirt...

SAUL
Is the thief your friend?

John looks up at Saul... his shoulders straining...

JOHN
He is a brother.

SAUL
Your brother stole my stallion.

JOHN
He wouldn't steal it.

SAUL
Then what would he do with it?

JOHN
What did he say he would do?

SAUL

Ride it... to the Valley of Blood.

John lowers his forehead to the dirt.

EXT. VALLEY OF BLOOD - NIGHT

Judas, atop the stallion... perfectly still...

SLIPS A NOOSE AROUND HIS OWN NECK...

Beams of moonlight reflect in his forlorn eyes...

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE - NIGHT

CLOSE - Judas' PARCHED CRACKED LIPS touch gently to JESUS' BEARDED CHEEK...

JUDAS

(at a whisper)

I hope you know what you're doing.

SOUND OF HORSES AND GUARDS APPROACHING...

Jesus takes Judas' chin in his hand...

JESUS

Your demons will close in on you...
don't listen to their words...
their words are lies.

JUDAS

What is their lie, Master?

JESUS

Better that you had never been
born.

BACK TO SCENE:

EXT. VALLEY OF BLOOD - NIGHT

JUDAS DRIVES HIS HEELS INTO THE RIBS OF THE STALLION -

SCHUNK!

JUDAS' NOOSED SILHOUETTE swings in the moonlight...

EXT. DEAD SEA SHORE - PRE-DAWN

Simon scans the mountain ridges above... sees firelight glowing in the distance...

INT. DEAD SEA CAVE - NIGHT

Simon stands surrounded by a small army of Zealots - Jewish warriors wary of a betrayer...

Chief amongst them is Barabbas, his bare torso covered in tattoos...

BARABBAS

You cast your allegiance to the Nazarene, Simon... and now he's dead... and now you're here.

SIMON

I did. I am. And I was wrong. You are the Chosen One to lead our people.

BARABBAS

And you chose poorly. Kneel before me, Simon.

Simon lowers to his knees. Barabbas violently grips a tuft of Simon's hair - yanking his face skyward...

BARABBAS (CONT'D)

Are you willing to prove your loyalty?

SIMON

Ask it... and it shall be done.

BARABBAS

You must kill him. The one the Nazarene called *Peter*. Bring me his head.

Barabbas releases Simon... then parts his way off through his followers... disappearing into the depths of the cave.

EXT. VALLEY OF BLOOD - PRE-DAWN

JUDAS' DEAD BODY lays on the dewy earth...

John struggles to dig with a cypress branch... which CRACKS AND BREAKS...

He drops to his knees... begins digging with bare hands...
his glassy eyes look to JUDAS' BODY DEFORMED BY DEATH...

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - UPPER ROOM - JERUSALEM - NIGHT

CLOSE - John's bearded cheek coming to rest on Jesus' chest...

His wine-hazy stare on Judas as Judas takes the bread from Jesus' fingers...

JESUS

What you must do, do quickly.

Judas drops the bread on his plate... nods... rises...

BACK TO SCENE:

EXT. VALLEY OF BLOOD - PRE-DAWN

John cups the last handful of dirt... lets it sift between his fingers... dispersing it over Judas' grave.

SUNDAY

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - UPPER ROOM - JERUSALEM - DAWN

The remaining disciples sit around the table being served porridge by Mary...

Breaking the awkward silence is Thomas...

THOMAS

Is any body going to ask it?

Thaddius clunks raisins into his porridge...

THADDIUS

I will. He killed my little brother.

(looks to Peter)

Is Judas dead?

Matthew looks up from his parchment...

MATTHEW

Yes. A good question. Is Judas dead? Was he paid? Did he speak anything, Peter?

Peter eats ravenously, as do James and Andrew...

PETER

You are all weak... fast asleep when they took Master in the garden... he said it to Judas... *"your demons will be closing in"*... I was awake... I remember that.

Peter chugs his goblet of wine - SLAMS IT DOWN HARD ON THE TABLE -

PETER (CONT'D)

Where is Simon?

Nathaniel speaks up...

JAMES

He is gone... to join Barabbas... the rebellion.

PETER

Good. I never liked him as one of us.

John flops his spoon through his porridge...

JOHN

Peter. Did you kill Judas?

Peter fills his goblet with more wine...

PETER

It's accomplished.

JOHN STIRS HIS PORRIDGE WITH DIRTY FINGERNAILS.

EXT. TEMPLE COMPLEX - MORNING

CAMPFIRES SMOLDER across the temple grounds...

TEMPLE SERVANTS sweep up the debris of yesterday's Passover celebrations...

THE LAST OF THE PILGRIMS break camp, following the exodus of the faithful as they herd for exit through the city gates...

INT. TEMPLE - CAIAPHAS' LAIR - MORNING

A wall of scrolls, books and ledgers...

At a desk in the corner, a TEMPLE ACCOUNTANT tallies the Passover collections... empties another BAG OF COINS... tallies with an ABACUS...

TEMPLE ACCOUNTANT

The killing of the Nazarene drew more than expected, our coffers--

ZACHARIAH (O.S.)

Silence!

Standing before a wall of maps, gazing up at the premiere map of Jerusalem is ZACHARIAH, a pale and hunchbacked Sadducee -

ZACHARIAH (CONT'D)

Arresting Arimathea was a grave mistake. I'm afraid you've bit off more than you can chew, Caiaphas.

Caiaphas paces like an anxious lion in the confines of the candlelit room...

CAIAPHAS

Arimathea skirted our authority and went directly to Pilate. He has violated the very sanctity of the priesthood. Add insult to injury - he believes the Nazarene the true *Messiah!*

ZACHARIAH

Believe what he may, the Nazarene is dead.

CAIAPHAS

We can't be certain of that, now can we? Not until we bury his body in the potter's field with all the other *messiahs* that came before.

ZACHARIAH

So why bring Arimathea here to me? What do you expect?

CAIAPHAS

His wife is your sister. Perhaps you can coax his familial values. Convince him to give us the Nazarene's body.

There's a FIRM KNOCK AT THE DOOR -

CAIAPHAS (CONT'D)

Enter!

The door pushes open - the TEMPLE JAILER stands at the threshold - exasperated and nervous -

TEMPLE JAILER

Arimathea has escaped!

Caiaphas stands nonplused...

CAIAPHAS

How?

TEMPLE GUARD

A miracle?

CAIAPHAS

Gather every man - enforce -
ransack his property -

Caiaphas POUNDS HIS FIST DOWN on his massive cypress desk -

CAIAPHAS (CONT'D)

And find his *GODFORSAKEN FAMILY
TOMB!*

ZACHARIAH

Caiaphas! My *sister's* home you
speak of!

CAIAPHAS

And she too must answer for any
crime she deems worthy to commit!

Caiaphas looks to the Temple Jailer -

CAIAPHAS (CONT'D)

GO! LEAVE! NOW!

Temple Jailer bows his head in exit - closing the door behind him.

EXT. ARIMATHEA'S TOMB - MORNING

SHAFTS OF SUNLIGHT filter down through the olive grove...

A KALEIDOSCOPE OF BUTTERFLIES flutter...

A LONE LAMB wanders the trees bleating for its mother...

Magdalene stands before the mouth of the tomb, its huge stone rolled half-way open - Magdalene rushes inside -

INT. ARITHEMEA'S TOMB - MORNING

Magdalene sees the tomb is empty... except for a BLOODIED LINEN SHROUD lying on the slab...

She picks up the cloth gingerly... gazes into the shadows of the tomb... sniffs at the fabric's scent...

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. ROAD TO JERUSALEM - PALM SUNDAY - MORNING

The DUST-COVERED FEET of the disciples part... giving way to the HOOVES OF A DONKEY...

It's Judas who leads the ass by its reins.

Jesus strokes the donkey's ears lovingly... kisses the animal's muzzle...

JESUS

As it is written.

Magdalene grabs Jesus' arm, stopping his mount...

MAGDALENE

Jesus, you don't have to go to Jerusalem... you don't have to die.

Jesus wipes the tears from her cheek...

JESUS

Destroy this temple... and in three days I will raise it up.

Jesus pulls his arm from her grip and mounts the donkey.

BACK TO SCENE:

INT. ARITHEMEA'S TOMB - MORNING

Magdalene wraps the shroud around her shoulders and rushes to exit...

EXT. ARITHEMEA'S TOMB - MORNING

The blinding light of the rising sun... Magdalene's heavy breath... SOUND OF A COOING DOVE in a tree above -

Magdalene looks up to see a SILHOUETTED FIGURE high up in the branches - obscured by shafts of dancing light -

MAGDALENE
(blocking the sun with her
hand)
Jesus is that you?!

SOUND OF HORSES - GUARDS - APPROACHING -

Magdalene snaps out of her reverie... scampers off into the grove... looking back over her shoulder in wonderment.

INT. HEROD'S COURT - MORNING

An expanse of MARBLE AND STONE...

KING'S GUARDS posted at every archway...

A GILDED CAGE OF DOVES hangs above the throne upon which

KING HEROD

sits, looking as always... bored, restless, with no time for fools...

HEROD
So tell me, Caiaphas, what are the temple guards doing to quell this coming insurrection?

CAIAPHAS
I'm doing everything possible. I have my guards combing the city... we will find the body of the Nazarene, I assure you.

HEROD
The Nazarene? I'm speaking of Barabbas! Whom you set free! Are you not aware his zealots are plotting to attack the city?

Caiaphas stands tongue-tied...

CAIAPHAS
Barabbas? His whereabouts are out of my purview... the Dead Sea.
(MORE)

CAIAPHAS (CONT'D)
Perhaps petition Pilate to have
Roman soldiers seize his rebel
caves?

HEROD
Now why didn't I think of that?

Herod bellies out a laugh...

HEROD (CONT'D)
We cannot expect men of *God* to be
men of *war*, now can we?

CAIAPHAS
No. We cannot.

HEROD
So. Allow me to advise you in such
matters. Appoint your temple guards
to rotation at the city gates.
Easy, yes?

CAIAPHAS
If that's what you wish.

HEROD
It's not a *wish*... it is a *command*.
Do you understand?

CAIAPHAS
Understood.

HEROD
Don't let the Nazarene boil your
brain, Caiaphas... I will take that
into my own hands.

CAIAPHAS
How do you propose to do so, Your
Highness?

HEROD
It took all of one day to have the
head of the Baptist brought to me
on a silver platter.

Herod calls out to his King's Guardsman -

HEROD (CONT'D)
Bring him in!

Escorted to stand before Herod is Saul, the mercenary, clad
in leather... spear across his back... sword on his side.

HEROD (CONT'D)

We shall let the killer to the killing.

(focus on Saul)

Bring me the heads of the Nazarene's followers. Put this foolishness to rest.

Saul stands stalwart, nods.

Herod lumbers up off his throne... his bare feet swollen with gout... his breath aspirated...

HEROD (CONT'D)

Now... I must take a nap.

With Herod's exit, Saul looks to Caiaphas, stone-cold ready.

EXT. PILATE'S BALCONY - AFTERNOON

A view of Jerusalem... and the distant desert mountains...

Herod sits at supper with Pilate... wine flows... shellfish cracked... dripping juices...

PONTIUS PILATE, fit, sober, wearing the insignia of Rome's prefect, twirls his full wine glass impatiently...

PILATE

So tell me, Herod. Did your people kill the wrong one? *Jesus... Barabbas?*

Herod wipes his mouth, slugs some wine...

HEROD

I sent it to your authority to execute them both. But you washed your hands of it. "*Let the people choose,*" you said. And they did. Now we're facing armed zealots from without, and a messiah cult from within.

PILATE

What solution do you propose?

HEROD

Order your troops into the desert mountains. Hunt Barabbas out. Crush the viper's head, the tail shall die.

Pilate, agitated, looks away from the table - snaps his fingers - calls out -

PILATE
Claudia! Come! Join us!

CLAUDIA, Pilate's wife, her skin aged before her time from the desert air, steps up to the table.

PILATE (CONT'D)
My wife has dreams... they often come true. When newly betrothed in Rome, many years back, she had a nightmare we would end our lives in a desolate desert city. Years upon my command here, she dreamt our middle son would be bitten by a poisonous snake and paralyzed from the belly down.

Claudia motions to a servant, who wheels their paralysed teen-aged son out onto the balcony.

PILATE (CONT'D)
And last week, before all this, she dreamt...

Pilate looks to his wife...

PILATE (CONT'D)
Tell him, Claudia.

Claudia, demur and soft-spoken...

CLAUDIA
I had a dream... in it... I was alone... standing on a mountain of skulls... I looked up to the Nazarene... the one you crucified... he looked down upon me-

-

Herod, interrupting, cracks another crab leg -

HEROD
And what did he speak to you?

Claudia, hesitant, looks to her husband...

PILATE
Tell him Claudia.

CLAUDIA
He is your Messiah.

Herod laughs heartily, guzzles the last of his wine...

HEROD

My messiah? Do not mistake... my
faith belongs to Rome and its gods.

Pilate rises from the table, tosses his napkin down...

PILATE

So let's pray... to the muses...
may they be delicate with our fate.

Pilate looks to his teen-aged son, asleep and drooling in his
wheelchair.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - UPPER ROOM - JERUSALEM - DAY

Magdalene, aglow, drapes the bloody shroud over Mary's
shoulder...

MAGDALENE

It is true what he said. He is
arisen.

Mary smells the cloth... overwhelmed... she buckles to her
knees.

The disciples sit at the table, staring out at Magdalene
blankly...

Finally Peter speaks up...

PETER

Who could have opened the tomb?

Magdalene steps to Peter - grabs his hand -

MAGDALENE

Why do you question his miracle?

Thomas rises... goes to Mary... helps her to her feet...

THOMAS

Are you certain the tomb was empty?

MAGDALENE

I saw him... he appeared to me...
high up in an olive tree.

Peter pounds his fist on the table - rises -

PETER

Then why doesn't he appear to us
here? - Now? - To his true
believers?

Thaddeus tries to pull the shroud from Mary's grip -

THADDIUS

Mother! Please!

Mary reluctantly let's it free.

John takes the shroud from Thaddeus... lays it out on the
table... revealing the PATTERNS OF BLOOD OUTLINING JESUS'
BODY...

Nathaniel stares down... sees the countenance of his Master's
face in the fabric... he touches it lightly...

NATHANIEL

This was taken from our Master's
body.

Philip rises... stares down on the shroud... spits a
pomegranate seed...

PHILIP

Who would take his body?

Bartholomew too takes a look at the shroud...

BARTHOLOMEW

A true magician he was.

Matthew looks up from the page he scribes...

MATTHEW

For whose entertainment?

Peter looks around the table to his brothers -

PETER

Do any of us believe her?

John begins to fold the shroud...

JOHN

I believe her.

He hands the shroud back to Mary... folded into a perfect
square.

EXT. ABANDONED FARMSTEAD - NIGHT

John, with lantern in hand, sidles over a rotting old fence...

Makes his way across a pasture of mud...

Past a broken down stable...

Towards a dark old barn house...

Something darts out from behind a rusted out barrel - John startles - lantern falls - CRASH!

A possum scurries off into the night.

John stands in the muddy darkness of a moonless night. In desperation, he cups his hands to his mouth -

JOHN

COO! COO!

He mimics the sound of a dove.

In the distance a spark of light grows to a glow through the slats of the tattered old barn house.

INT. OLD BARN HOUSE - NIGHT

John moves around bales of rotting hay... toward the lantern light... which illumines Nicodemus... who kneels beside a manger.

Nicodemus looks to John's approach as he carefully redresses the wounds of Jesus' unconscious body laid out on the hay...

Without a word spoken... John kneels beside Jesus' body too... taking in his Master's labored breath...

He looks to Nicodemus, who gives a reassuring nod...

John removes his cloak and places it over Jesus' naked legs... then moves to lay down beside him, embracing his beloved with a kiss on the lips.

END PILOT