

EXT. GARDEN OF OLIVES. NIGHT.

Loud whiz of night insects.

Moonlight is reflected on silver leaves in the olive grove. A thin cloud drifts over the face of the moon. A DEEP VOICE, somewhere in the olive garden murmurs low, undecipherable words.

We search for the SOURCE of the voice, and approach the mouth of a hidden GROTTO.

The nearer we get, the louder the BUZZ of insects.

JUST INSIDE the GROTTO, the OUTLINE of a LARGE MAN (JESUS OF NAZARETH) is visible, kneeling against rock, His head resting on His RIGHT FOREARM.

A night predator's SCREECH outside interrupts His prayer.

His arm drops from his forehead. He stands and steps out of the cave, into the moonlight. The HISS of insects intensifies to a new pitch of hysteria.

JESUS is a tall, strongly built man. There is vigorous authority in His features, even though His face is DRENCHED with perspiration. He steps away from the mouth of the cave and up toward a large TREE under which THREE FIGURES lie sleeping.

An OWL perched one of its branches sees JESUS approach, takes silent flight. As it rises, we pull back.

The WALLS of JERUSALEM are revealed, in the distance. Between them and the Garden, TORCHLIGHT. We move in.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEDRON STREAM, ROAD OUTSIDE JERUSALEM WALLS. NIGHT.

A GROUP OF SOLDIERS have stopped by a STREAM (CEDRON). Three of the men hold torches while TWO OTHERS struggle to lift an OLD FALLEN TREE-TRUNK from where it has been placed, across the torrent.

The soldiers holding the torches scan the area, wary and watchful. The WALLS of JERUSALEM are visible, half a mile away.

The two men finally dislodge the log, lift it with some difficulty onto their shoulders.

CUT TO:

EXT. GARDEN OF OLIVES. NIGHT.

JESUS steps up to the sleeping figures and stops. As soon as He stops, so does the BUZZ of insects. Ring of silence

JESUS

Peter.

The three men abruptly WAKE, scramble to their feet.

JESUS (cont'd)

Could you not watch with me a while?

Their dark CLOAKS fall away and their faces are revealed: PETER, bearded and gruff, with clear eyes on a mobile face; JAMES, thoughtful, more private; JOHN, young, whose passionate faith in JESUS is boundless and palpable.

The three men stare at the SWEAT-SOAKED face of JESUS.

PETER

Master, what has happened to you?

JOHN

(whisper)

Should I call the others, Lord?

JESUS starts to tremble. The three APOSTLES start to reach out, but He shakes His head.

JESUS

No, John. They should not see me under this cloud.

PETER

Master...are you in danger? Should we take flight?

JESUS

Stay here, Peter. Keep watch, pray.

He turns away from the three baffled Apostles and steps back down toward the GROTTA below.

JOHN

(whisper)

What is happening to Him?

PETER

He is afraid. He spoke of danger, even as we ate supper. Of betrayal and...

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The HIGH-PICHED SIZZLE of insects interrupts Peter - they have begun their hissing with the same suddenness with which they stopped. The three men look down at the SILHOUETTE of JESUS approaching the mouth of the GROTTTO.

EXT. GROTTTO. GARDEN OF OLIVES. NIGHT.

JESUS stops in front of the cave, stares at the SHADOW of a dead tree-trunk, then lifts His eyes to the sky.

A cloud slides over the moon, killing her light.

JESUS turns again to the TREE STUMP, which, in the sudden darkness, casts a PALE UN-SHADOW onto the ground, an INVERSION OF A SHADOW, which SLITHERS INTO THE GROTTTO.

The HISS of the insects has reached a maddening pitch.

JESUS steps inside the dark cave.

CUT TO:

INT. CHAMBER IN THE TEMPLE. JERUSALEM. NIGHT.

The SCREECH and GROAN of metal against wood. A heavy door is closed.

The rich chamber is lit by wall torches. Here and there the brilliance of gold is reflected.

An intelligent face, eyes bright with anticipation (JUDAS) looks over his shoulder as a TEMPLE GUARD OFFICER (MALCHUS) closes the doors, turns to face the room.

A half-dozen MEN in opulent robes stand in the center of the chamber, at self-conscious distance from JUDAS.

The man in the RICHEST ROBES (CAIPHAS) addresses MALCHUS, who has already reached into a SATCHEL inside his shirt.

CAIPHAS
Thirty, Malchus.

CAIPHAS turns slowly to look at JUDAS as he speaks. JUDAS is focusing exclusively on MALCHUS.

CAIPHAS (cont'd)
That is what we settled on...thirty, was it not, Judas?

JUDAS nods as time slows down.

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MALCHUS pulls a STRING OF SILVER COINS from the satchel and tosses it at JUDAS. The THROW is not well aimed, and JUDAS is forced to back away and spin toward the HIGH PRIESTS and their accolites, whose expressions of contempt FLASH before his eyes as he leaps up and snatches the string of coins out of the air.

CAIPHAS laughs.

JUDAS looks down at the silver in his hands.

TIME slows down further as JUDAS turns to MALCHUS, who has reopened the doors. A handful of SOLDIERS stand outside, expectantly. Inside, laughter has broken out among the high priests.

CUT TO:

EXT. GROTTA. GARDEN OF OLIVES. NIGHT.

A LOUD, AGONIZED GROAN.

Startled, PETER scrambles to his feet once again. JOHN and JAMES also sit up, tense. Quick exchange of looks. Moonlight floods the Garden of Olives. The HISS of insects has receded and been replaced with OTHER NOISES, less easily identifiable, coming from the grotto area.

A CRY OF PAIN, followed by CACKLES and GUFFAWS.

JOHN starts to step down toward the GROTTA but PETER grabs his arm, stops him.

PETER

No, you stay here, both of you. I will join him...you stay and keep watch.

PETER steps quickly down toward the GROTTA entrance but STOPS when he hears PANDEMONIC NOISES coming from inside.

An odd LIGHT illuminates the underbrush hiding the cave entrance and the VIOLENT SOUNDS INSIDE THE CAVE INCREASE.

PETER looks back.

JAMES

and JOHN stand under the tree and peer back at him.

PETER faces the GROTTA again.

CUT TO:

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CONTINUED:

INT. GROTTTO. GARDEN OF OLIVES. NIGHT.

JESUS' face is now covered with blood as well as sweat.

He kneels in the center of the cave, facing a large SHAPELESS FORM, so DARK that, by contrast, the darkness around it is made visible.

Parts of the FORM stretch out, then quickly withdraw as they get too close to JESUS. A cacophony of airless grunts and howls fills the air in the grotto. Then silence. A light, musical voice, rich with the dissonance of malice:

SATAN

Do you really believe that one man may bear the penalty for...all sin?

JESUS

Hear me, Father. Be my defence, keep me safe from traps that are set for me. Shelter me, Lord, I place myself in your care, I place my trust in you.

As JESUS prays, the DARK FORM LIFTS OFF THE GROUND and raises a PORTION OF ITSELF HIGHER STILL. WITHIN IT, as if a fetid curtain had been lifted, the FLASH-IMAGE of a TEEMING MULTITUDE of MEN and WOMEN appears, dissolves within itself and reemerges again. FROM the hellish IMAGE a SNAKE EMERGES, slithers to the ground and toward JESUS.

PETER stumbles into the darkness and calls out:

PETER

Master, what is it? Speak to me, say something...I can't see where to look for you.

PETER's eyes adjust. He sees JESUS, on His knees, His entire body rigid with concentration.

PETER scrambles toward Him, then stops. A sudden wash of moonlight floods the cave revealing JESUS' face to him.

PETER (cont'd)

You are bleeding, Lord! What is happening...?

JESUS remains motionless on His knees. He seems completely unaware of PETER.

PETER starts to move to reach for JESUS but STOPS as he becomes aware of the SNAKE. The reptile slides over PETER's hands and HISSES.

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PETER looks for JESUS, but now sees ONLY DARKNESS. He BACKS OUT of the cave on all fours, gasping for breath.

JESUS has not moved.

SATAN

No man can pay the price, I tell you. It is too high. No man can offer what is owed. Ever. (beat) Never.

JESUS does not respond. The CACOPHONY from within the darkness starts again, and increases in volume.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS OF JERUSALEM. NIGHT.

The streets of Jerusalem near the TEMPLE building. MALCHUS, JUDAS and a dozen SOLDIERS carrying torches emerge from the TEMPLE and quickly make their way down narrow cobbled streets. Men, women and children are still out and about, sporadically highlighted by the TORCHES.

JUDAS seems surprised by the speed and urgency with which the SOLDIERS are moving. He holds the STRING OF SILVER COINS in his hands.

The group arrives at one of the CITY GATES of JERUSALEM and come to a stop. MALCHUS signals GUARDS to open the gates, then turns to JUDAS who is looking down at the string of silver coins in his hands. Sensing the eyes of MALCHUS on him JUDAS looks up.

MALCHUS

Where?

JUDAS

(points)

Gethsemani.

MALCHUS' eyes meet those of a SECOND OFFICER, who NUDGES JUDAS forward. The party moves out.

EXT. GARDEN OF OLIVES. NIGHT.

INSIDE the GROTTA, the unnatural groans and howls contained within the DARK FORM seem to MULTIPLY.

The face of JESUS is soaking with sweat and blood, a mask of internal conflict. He kneels, and sits back on His heels, clutched fists resting on the ground beside Him.

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JESUS

Father, all things are possible to You.
If it is possible, let this chalice pass
from me. But only if it is Your will. May
Your will be done.

The cries and groans coming from the dark form in front of
Him subside. The SNAKE slowly slides up to where JESUS is
kneeling, and stops directly in front of Him.

SATAN

(low, edge of hesitancy)
Who are you?

JESUS slowly stands up. He does not dignify the question with
an answer, nor even look to the reptile at His feet.

He lifts His foot and brings it down with force on the
snake's head. The NOISE of it expunges all other sound.

JESUS steps out of the grotto into moonlight. He lifts His
tormented eyes to the moon. A breeze. Then silence. A deep
silence, like a weight. JESUS lowers His eyes, scans the ROAD
below the garden. His eyes stop.

EXT. ROAD TO GETHSEMANI. NIGHT.

Torches. SOLDIERS. Then the TWO MEN CARRYING the LOG they
lifted from across the CEDRON TORRENT. The group STOPS.

MORE TORCHES as MALCHUS and JUDAS' gang do not stop, but the
SOLDIERS greet/insult each other with familiarity.

MALCHUS and a SECOND OFFICER step in, order silence and
separate the two groups, shoving their men forward. As the
two parties separate, MALCHUS takes JUDAS by the arm

MALCHUS

Does the Nazarene have men with him?

JUDAS laughs.

JUDAS

Men? You mean soldiers?
He has a few fishermen.

No.

CUT TO:

EXT. GARDEN OF OLIVES. NIGHT.

JESUS walks up to where PETER, JAMES and JOHN have once more sat back against the tree and are again asleep.

He looks down on them with affection, then leans forward and shakes each of them lightly.

JESUS

Wake up, friends. Now is not the time for sleep, but for prayer.

He points downward, to the road JUST BELOW THE GARDEN OF OLIVES. The Apostles rise to their feet. Sleepy, frightened, they peer down at where He's pointing.

POV: TORCHES moving along the road, slowly, searchingly. The MEN are unrecognizable, but not their uniforms.

JESUS (cont'd)

The man who will betray me is drawing near.

PETER reaches under his cloak, where a SWORD is revealed, in its SCABBARD. JESUS rests a hand on PETER's shoulder and shakes His head.

EXT. PATH IN GETHSEMANI. NIGHT.

MALCHUS at the head of his TEMPLE GUARDS. JUDAS marches beside him, unhappily. Suddenly MALCHUS raises his hand and stops. The rest follow suit.

Still in the garden, just off the path, JESUS emerges out of the darkness. PETER, JAMES, JOHN are by His side. They step out onto the path. JESUS motions His Apostles to stop. He then steps forward.

JUDAS takes a step back, then a second. He is turning to run when MALCHUS' hand GRABS him and YANKS him back.

JESUS

Who are you looking for?

MALCHUS still holds JUDAS by the scruff of the neck. He glances at JUDAS, his jaw set hard, then faces JESUS.

MALCHUS

We are looking for JESUS of Nazareth.

As he speaks, MALCHUS glances back at his men, nodding curtly to his SECOND OFFICER. The soldiers holding torches shift these to their LEFT HAND.

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JESUS turns His eyes to JUDAS.

JESUS

I am he.

The SECOND OFFICER signals his men, who tighten their ring around JESUS and the three Apostles.

It is a tense, uneasy gathering. Faces flicker in torchlight and reflect the men's uncertainty.

MALCHUS turns to JUDAS, whose eyes have never left JESUS'

PETER, JAMES and JOHN look at JUDAS in silent outrage. PETER takes a step but two of the soldiers grab onto his arms. PETER struggles with ferocity, breaks loose, loses his balance and falls to the ground.

JUDAS glances at MALCHUS, then steps forward. As he reaches JESUS, he nervously opens his arms:

JUDAS

Hail, Rabbi.

He lurches forward and awkwardly wraps his arms around JESUS, kisses Him on the cheek. He then stumbles back, feverishly wiping at his lips as if they had been burned.

JESUS' eyes never leave those of JUDAS.

JESUS

Judas...you would betray the Son of Man
with a kiss?

Time slows down.

MALCHUS waves his men forward, pointing at JESUS.

The soldiers grab hold of JAMES and JOHN.

This time it is JOHN who struggles with fury against the strong hold of the soldiers. They try to hold him, but he HITS HARD. They can only hold his clothes. He tugs and pulls so violently that he wiggles right out of them and DASHES off into the night, wearing only a loin cloth.

PETER, who has watched JUDAS' act of betrayal from where he fell now watches the soldiers burst into action.

IGNORED by all, JUDAS backs away from the scene. He is quickly engulfed in darkness, still wiping his lips.

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FLASH:

EXT. ORCHARD OUTSIDE WALLS OF JERUSALEM. NIGHT.

The pale figure of JOHN running toward the city walls, ZIG-ZAGGING between the fruit trees, his face slapping against the occasional low branch.

CUT TO:

EXT. PATH IN GETHSEMANI. NIGHT.

PETER reaches for his SWORD as he scrambles to get back to his feet. Knocked back and buffeted by the momentum of the surge, he cannot see what is happening. Pulling his sword from its scabbard, eyes reddened by anger, he catches sight of MALCHUS stepping in to arrest JESUS.

The sword descends with deadly energy.

JESUS, whose hands suddenly BECOME FREE, pushes MALCHUS away from the FULL FORCE of IMPACT, but the sharp weapon still catches MALCHUS on the side of the head, CLEANLY SEVERING OFF HIS EAR, WHICH FLIES THROUGH THE TORCHLIT AIR. THE EAR LANDS IN THE DUST IN FRONT OF JESUS.

MALCHUS falls to the ground, howling with pain.

PETER has stopped as his eyes meet those of JESUS.

The SOLDIERS around them have completely lost their composure. They tighten their grip on JAMES, bringing him to his knees and holding his arms behind his back.

SHOUTS, CLANG of metal weapons, confusion in the melee.

JESUS is the only one who has retained His calm. Afraid of PETER, the arresting soldiers have not taken hold of Him. He steps forward, places one hand on PETER's shoulder and takes the sword from him. He LETS DROP the weapon which falls to the dust, next to the BLOODY EAR.

ONLY MALCHUS' CRY OF PAIN NOW FILLS THE AIR.

JESUS reaches down, PICKS UP THE BLOOD-SOAKED EAR, YANKS MALCHUS to his feet, his face covered with blood, his hand held over the wound. Very matter-of-factly, JESUS then takes MALCHUS' hand away from the wound and SLAPS THE EAR BACK IN ITS PLACE.

The ear stays where it belongs. The blood is no longer blood, only dust. MALCHUS touches his ear, looks at his hand and stops screaming. His eyes meet those of JESUS.

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SILENCE.

FLASH:

EXT. STREETS OF JERUSALEM. NIGHT.

The nearly naked figure of JOHN running swiftly along narrow, cobbled streets, barely illuminated by the occasional torch. His BREATHING is now fast, tired. A contingent of ROMAN SOLDIERS. JOHN stops, ducks into an even smaller ALLEY, stops breathing as the men walk past, laughing. He waits, shaking with the effort of holding his breath. He peers around the corner of the street. Empty. His breath explodes. He takes off again.

CUT TO:

EXT. PATH IN GETHSEMANI. NIGHT.

TIME has resumed its rhythm.

The soldiers, reacting to the BARK of the SECOND OFFICER, now SEIZE JESUS, quickly tie His hands behind His back and wrap chains and strong ropes around His waist.

MALCHUS is frozen in place, his hand resting on his ear, his eyes glued to those of JESUS.

JESUS (cont'd)

You have come to arrest me with chains and rope, as if I were a common thief. Yet I sat with you in the Temple, and you did not lay hands upon me.

The SECOND OFFICER, eyeing MALCHUS with contempt, now steps up to JESUS.

SECOND OFFICER

Are you a wizard, Galilean? Truly? If so, you can break ropes and chains...

ONE of the soldiers wrapping the chains around the waist of JESUS laughs.

SOLDIER

Break these? No chance, I tell you!

The soldier SWINGS the loose end of the chain. HITS JESUS squarely on the side of His face!

It

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE IN JERUSALEM. NIGHT.

MARY (Holy Mother of JESUS) opens her eyes wide. She sits up in the small bed, an expression of anguish spreading over her strong features. She reaches up, touches her cheek then looks down at her hand.

The room is quiet, dimly lit by oil-lamps.

The faint sound of sleep-breathing.

A WOMAN (MAGDALEN) lies on a cot near MARY's bed. She seems to be asleep. At the foot of her cot, TWO MORE WOMEN, their faces covered by veils, lie fast asleep.

MARY swings her feet to the floor, stands up, steps toward MAGDALEN's cot, stops, becomes motionless. She turns to the door and tilts her head, as if listening.

MAGDALEN's eyes open. She is a beautiful woman with a remarkable mane of thick hair.

MAGDALEN

(softly)

What, Mary? What is it?

MARY is startled by the whisper. She looks at MAGADLEN, distracted, puts her fingers to her lips then points to the door.

MARY

Shhh. Listen. He is coming...here.

MAGDALEN stretches her neck around to also look. She frowns, kicks away the blanket covering her.

MARY reaches for the door when it is FLUNG OPEN. JOHN stumbles to the floor as he avoids crashing into her. MAGDALEN screams. JOHN's chest is heaving with breathless exhaustion, his face is covered with cuts and dirt, his eyes are red with tears. Suddenly conscious of his near-nakedness, he lowers his head in shame and despair.

JOHN

They have seized him, Mary...tied him in ropes and chains. They are beating him, insulting him, dragging him into the city like a common thief...

MARY's reaction is to become absolutely still. Her eyes never leave JOHN's, but clearly they no longer see him.

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EXT. ROAD TO GETHSEMANI. NIGHT.

The face is twisted into a mask of enthusiastic hatred. It belongs to one of the soldiers holding one of the ropes tied to JESUS' waist. The man is walking backward, his nose not more than ten inches away from that of JESUS

COMMON SOLDIER

Son of a menstruating mother. Bastard
son, not by her husband, AM I RIGHT?

JESUS tries to look at the man, but is being purposefully yanked, pushed and pulled every which way by the other men holding ropes and chains. The side of His face where the chain-link landed is swollen and blue. Guffaws and leers among the torchlit soldiers.

We pull back along the road to where the arrest was made. PETER and JAMES are suddenly illuminated by moonlight.

Their POV:

The torchlit band, moving toward the walls of Jerusalem. PETER and JAMES become aware of MALCHUS, standing still. PETER glances at JAMES, reaches for his sword. MALCHUS watches PETER pick up the sword, takes a step back. PETER shakes his head, slides the weapon back in its scabbard.

PETER

I will not harm you. (turns to James) Go, tell the others what has happened. Take this man with you. He will bear witness... (at Malchus) will you not?

MALCHUS nods.

JAMES

What will you do, Peter?

PETER (cont'd)

I'll stay near to Him and...get word to you when I can.

JAMES starts to turn away. PETER grabs his arm.

PETER (cont'd)

Be watchful. Be careful. We are all in danger now. God be with you.

JAMES and MALCHUS head off into the darkness. watches them go, then runs after the torches.

PETER

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE IN JERUSALEM. NIGHT.

JOHN emerges from the dark doorway, scans the street. MARY steps out directly behind him, leaning on his arm. They are followed by MAGDALEN.

MAGDALEN

But who, John? And how could...?

JOHN

(interrupts her)

The Pharisees, Magdalen. Caiphas and the High Priests. How? They bought Judas...and Judas betrayed him. He came to Olivet with Temple Guards.

MARY covers her head with a veil, turns to the other two

MARY

The temple, John. We should be where they will bring him...to the temple.

She lets go of JOHN's arm and heads up the street.

EXT. ROAD FROM GETHSEMANI. NIGHT.

The TORCHLIT band of Temple Guard soldiers approaches a low BRIDGE across a wide stream, dragging JESUS along by the ropes and chains.

PETER, in the darkness not far behind them, watches, his eyes reflected in the torchlight - watery, angry, afraid.

JESUS struggles merely to stay on his feet. He has lost His sandals along the road, and His feet have started to bleed. ONE of the GUARDS sees this and produces a THIN REED with which he WHIPS JESUS' feet.

WHIPPING GUARD

What was his name? Not Joseph...no, I'm talking about your real father. Oh yes, Pandera...that's it.

SECOND OFFICER

Pandera? You mean the great seducer. (looks at JESUS scornfully) No wonder he consorts with trash and prostitutes

ANOTHER TEMPLE GUARD

Ah, well, bastards are all clever, aren't you? Clever, degenerate filth!

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Each accompanies his insult with a heavy blow. The last with a mouthful of spit.

The group has reached the middle of the low bridge. Though the hands of JESUS have come loose, the ropes and chains which bind Him make it nearly impossible for Him to move. This obvious vulnerability inspires the brutality of His captors. The SHADOW of this is reflected in the water of the stream below the low bridge.

In the shadows UNDER the bridge a pair of luminous eyes watch the reflection of the violent beating. JUDAS, still wiping and pawing at his now bloodied lips.

The BEATING of JESUS reaches such a fevered pitch that He is literally PICKED UP and BODILY TOSSED over the side.

UNDER THE BRIDGE, JUDAS watches JESUS FALL INTO THE SHALLOW WATER ON ALL FOURS, FIRST ON HIS KNEES then HIS HANDS, entangled in a disorder of hemp and chain.

JUDAS withdraws further into the SHADOWS, where he seems to become ENFOLDED in a mantle of darkness. He becomes AWARE that what surrounds him is ANIMATED and tries to BREAK FREE of its shapelessness. All in vain. It covers him up entirely, all of him EXCEPT HIS EYES, which widen as they peer at reflected torchlight on the water where:

JESUS, bruised and now drenched, looks up and SEES JUDAS.

TIME SEEMS TO STOP for a brief moment.

Then JESUS lowers His head to the stream and drinks thirstily before the ROPES and CHAINS are once more YANKED UPWARDS and He is strangled half to death before being dumped back onto the bridge. More beatings.

UNDER the bridge, the darkness drifts away from JUDAS, who darts out into the open stream and watches the violent procession move along the road. He lowers his eyes to the water, reaches down, splashes some of it onto his bloodied lips, GASPS, MUFFLES a SCREAM of pain and rushes out of the stream, into the darkness.

EXT. STREETS OF JERUSALEM. NIGHT.

A number of separate men are seen KNOCKING ON DOORS in different parts of the city, whispering to those who open the doors, moving on.

A series of GROUPS of MEN and WOMEN, even CHILDREN, emerging from houses in the narrow streets, some carrying torches, and meeting up with other groups.

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JOHN, MARY and MAGDALEN find themselves rushing ALONGSIDE one of these groups.

MAN ONE

...that's what he said, that they've arrested Jesus of Nazareth, that his followers will try to start a revolt, that we should go to the temple.

JOHN turns to look at MARY, who returns his look as they pick up their pace and move ahead of the group.

MAGDALEN covers her head and shakes a woman by the arm:

MAGDALEN

But isn't Jesus Galilean? How can they arrest a Galilean in Jerusalem?

WOMAN ONE

Caiphas can have anybody arrested.

MAGDALEN

Yes. Anybody but a Roman.

The WOMAN looks at MAGDALEN now, and tries to remember something about her, but MAGDALEN rushes ahead and joins MARY and JOHN. She looks and acts like a fighter.

EXT. SHEEP PEN NEAR THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM. NIGHT.

By the side of the road is a pen filled with sheep and LAMBS, all watching the approaching TORCHES.

A DARK FIGURE leaps over a FENCE into their midst. The ANIMALS scatter with LOUD, PLAINTIVE BLEATINGS. JUDAS, his clothes torn, face tortured, LIPS BLEEDING where he keeps TEARING AT THE FLESH, EYES WILD. He mutters undecipherably. His watches the TORCHES approach.

PEOPLE suddenly appear alongside the road, some from within the walls, others from their homes.

The SECOND OFFICER sees the men and women peering at JESUS, past the torchlight. Some show sympathy, sorrow. He nudges the nearest soldier:

SECOND OFFICER

Close-up ranks. Now. On the double.

He nods his chin in the direction of the onlookers. The soldier looks, grunts the message to his nearest colleague.

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The men shorten the ropes and chains binding JESUS, and form a tighter group.

The SECOND OFFICER shouts at the people lining the road.

SECOND OFFICER (cont'd)
Stay back, all of you. Keep away. Get
back to your homes.

WOMAN BY ROADSIDE
That's Jesus of Nazareth you've tied in
chains. What has he done to deserve such
treatment? He is a man of God.

SECOND OFFICER
If that's what you think, then he has
deceived you. He is a false prophet.

More faces have appeared as the procession approaches the city gates. The people are NOISY despite the late hour. The SECOND OFFICER looks worried. So do the soldiers.

MAN BY ROADSIDE
What you say is false. He is a healer. By
whose authority have you arrested him?
Set Jesus free.

This provokes a general murmur among the onlookers, which grows into a louder commotion. The soldiers tighten their ranks even more. Some of the onlookers RUSH the soldiers and are met with LASHING WHIPS. Confused confrontation.

JESUS looks utterly calm, though His bruised face shows the effect of the blows he has suffered.

Hidden in the PEN, JUDAS TEARS AT HIMSELF with ferocity. The LAMBS leap about, frightened by him as well as by the torches and brouhaha that's broken out on the road. The SILVER in JUDAS' hands is COVERED IN BLOOD. The sight of it confuses him. He WHEEZES, SHRIEKS and races off into the darkness, toward the city walls. The LAMBS scatter to keep away from him and race toward the FENCE where they STOP, stare at the procession on the road.

JESUS sees them. The small animals stop their bleating and exchange with Him a moment of recognition.

FLASH INSERT:

INT. HELI'S HOUSE IN JERUSALEM, LAST SUPPER. NIGHT.

The head of a tiny LAMB is held by a YOUNG MAN. JESUS, surrounded by His Apostles, is handed a SHARP KNIFE. With QUICK, SOLEMN, MOVEMENTS He makes a SMALL INCISION IN THE LAMB'S NECK. The gesture is short and the cut swift and tiny. JESUS then hands the knife to the YOUNG MAN, who completes the act of killing the lamb. The blood flows in the basin next to the lamb's head. JESUS is handed a BRANCH of HYSSOP, which he DIPS into the basin. He then hangs the branch above the door to the room.

QUICK DISSOLVE

EXT. TEMPLE DOORS. NIGHT.

His face almost unrecognizable, JESUS looks UP at the TEMPLE DOORS, DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF HIM. The PROCESSION has come to a stop. JESUS lowers his eyes and slowly SCANS some of the faces outside the Temple.

There is a considerable CROWD gathered here. We recognize some of those who were summoned earlier by Temple Guards.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET PARALLEL TO TEMPLE WALLS. NIGHT.

WE MOVE BACK QUICKLY, DOWN A STREET WHICH RUNS ALONGSIDE THE TEMPLE WALLS UNTIL WE SLOW DOWN AND COME TO A HALT.

JUDAS stumbles along the deserted street. He STOPS as the door to a house OPENS. He tries to hide. Impossible.

CAIPHAS, followed by a half-dozen acolytes, emerges. He is dressed in rich, impressive ceremonial robes.

JUDAS' eyes widen. He stares down at the string of SILVER COINS in his hand, whimpers, lifts his eyes to CAIPHAS who is striding off, utterly ignoring him. JUDAS rushes toward the High Priest, who stops, turns. Two GUARDS step between the two men, swords drawn.

CAIPHAS

No. Let him pass. He's harmless...

JUDAS slows, approaches, holds out the string of coins.

JUDAS

(words catching in his throat)
You bribed me and I betrayed him.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JUDAS (cont'd)

Let him go. Release him. He is a just man. Take back your silver. Here, take it.

But he doesn't let go of the silver.
CAIPHAS is motionless, eyes unblinking, patient.

JUDAS (cont'd)

He is innocent. Take back your silver, I don't want it. HERE...TAKE IT!

The echo of his shout bounces off the walls of the narrow street. CAIPHAS waits another beat, then:

CAIPHAS

If you think you sold innocent blood to us, Judas, that is your affair. We know what we have bought. You have your money, now go!

CAIPHAS is distracted by lights and CROWD NOISES at the end of the street, near the Temple entrance.

JUDAS, too, looks. Then their eyes meet. With a BELLOW of impotent rage, JUDAS tears apart the string of coins in his hands and THROWS these at CAIPHAS. The coins bounce off the opulent robes, to the ground.

JUDAS then RUNS down the empty street toward the torchlit CROWD which is now visible.

CAIPHAS and his retinue ignore the silver coins as they rattle musically and settle on the cobblestones. They exchange quick looks of indifference, then continue toward the lights and the people.

CUT TO:

EXT. SIDE STREET NEAR JERUSALEM TEMPLE. NIGHT.

In the relative DARKNESS of the side street, JOHN reaches an arm back and stops when he reaches the corner onto the wider street. MARY and MAGDALEN are behind him. He peers at the CROWD before the TEMPLE. Then his eyes FREEZE.

CUT TO:

EXT. WIDER STREET AT TEMPLE ENTRANCE. JERUSALEM. NIGHT.

JUDAS' bloody face is contorted with pain. He is dirty, dishevelled and his entire body TWITCHES uncontrollably.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TWO MEN wearing HOODED ROBES, stand in front of him. He waves his arms about, frantically, as he addresses them.

FIRST HOODED MAN
You will wander, Judas, always.

SECOND HOODED MAN
Cursed and cursing. Always.

JUDAS
How...do you mean...ALWAYS?

FIRST HOODED MAN
Your betrayal has entered you, Judas,
like water into your entrails.

SECOND HOODED MAN
Like oil into your bones.

JUDAS
NO! Get away from me, GO! Leave me!

He starts to HIT the two HOODED MEN, arms flailing, face twisted into a mask of wide-eyed horror.

CUT TO:

EXT. SIDE STREET NEAR JERUSALEM TEMPLE. NIGHT.

JOHN has not moved from the street corner. He shakes his head. MAGDALEN and MARY step forward, past him, but they, too, stop when they see:

THEIR POV:

JUDAS standing near the corner of the two streets, his arms FLAILING, moaning and crying out as he punches the EMPTY AIR in front of him. There is nobody there to hit.

Behind him, across the wider street, the TEMPLE DOORS are visible, and the CROWD gathered around the TORCHES.

MARY's focus has MOVED PAST the unsettling image of JUDAS, onto CAIPHAS who is now approaching with his retinue of Pharisees.

JUDAS, too, sees CAIPHAS approach. He turns, RUNS then sees JOHN, MARY and MAGDALEN and STOPS, trapped.

JOHN, MARY and MAGDALEN take a step toward him. He looks back, doesn't know what to do, where to go. Cornered, helpless, JUDAS watches the three approach, their eyes seeming to bore holes into and THROUGH HIM.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They are nearly face to face before JUDAS realizes that JOHN, MARY and MAGDALEN are NOT SEEING HIM, that their eyes are EXCLUSIVELY FOCUSED on what is happening behind him, at the entrance to the Temple. He staggers to the curb, falls to the ground and watches them walk right by him.

The CROWD has parted for CAIPHAS as he approaches the Temple doors. First the SOLDIERS are revealed, then JESUS, standing in their midst, tied up, shackled, bleeding, bruised yet motionless and dignified.

The Temple doors are OPENED by the attendants of a SECOND HIGH PRIEST (ANNAS) who's in the COURTYARD, surrounded by OTHER PRELATES and ELDERS, all wearing formal robes.

The CROWD raises a loud CHEER as CAIPHAS enters the courtyard with his retinue.

JESUS turns. His eyes meet JOHN's, MAGDALEN's and finally MARY's. Then he is SHOVED brutally forward, through the doors and into the OPEN COURTYARD just inside.

The CROWD cheers again, louder and obviously for EFFECT as TWO ROMAN SOLDIERS ride up on HORSEBACK.

The CROWD surges forward, fixing to enter the Temple grounds, but is STOPPED by Temple GUARDS posted outside. The DOORS, however, are kept open.

MAGDALEN moans. She and MARY hold on to JOHN's clothes as he PUSHES his way past the crowd toward the doors. They don't see PETER, behind them, also elbowing his way forward. As JOHN reaches the GUARDS, PETER reaches their side, sweating and breathing hard.

MARY

Peter...oh, Peter...

He opens his burly arms and MARY enters PETER's embrace. PETER and JOHN exchange a look of shared helpless misery

MAGDALEN has turned to the two ROMAN HORSEMEN and PUSHES HER WAY BACK TOWARD THEM, THROUGH THE CROWD OF PEOPLE. They see her, wait on their horses. When she reaches them, she lifts her tear-ravaged, yet beautiful face to them. The TWO CENTURIONS seem mesmerized by her.

CUT TO:

INT. ROMAN GOVERNOR'S PALACE. NIGHT.

The room is nearly bare of furniture. A bed, a low table on which sits a mirror, a few chairs. Only a weak oil lamp illuminates the bedroom.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

In the bed a WOMAN sleeps (CLAUDIA PROCLES, PILATE's wife). It is a restless sleep. She tosses, turns, moans.

A FIGURE enters the room and walks up to the bed. It is a MAN (PONTIUS PILATE) wearing a simple garment and a cloak draped over one shoulder. He moves silently and, when he reaches the bedside his face is illuminated. A short, tubular man with a well-groomed weak face.

CLAUDIA moans, lets out a short CRY and, in her sleep, begins to weep. PILATE is distressed at the sight. He reaches a hand out to her. A NOISE stops him. He turns. Standing by the door to the bedroom is a ROMAN CENTURION, his helmet under his arm. PILATE glances at CLAUDIA, concerned, then strides to the door and motions the CENTURION to exit with him.

CUT TO:

INT. PILATE'S PALACE. NIGHT.

OUTSIDE THE BEDROOM, IN A SEMI-DARK HALLWAY:

PILATE

(low)

I thought I instructed you never to disturb me if I am with...

OFFICER

(interrupts)

With apologies, Your Excellency...but there is trouble brewing amongst the Jews. It seems that Caiphias and Annas have had one of their so-called prophets arrested. A large crowd has assembled in and around the Temple...

PILATE

Prophet? What sort of prophet?

CENTURION

One of their itinerant magicians, Your Excellency, only...this man seems to have a large following of disciples.

PILATE

Why take him to the temple if he is just another common trickster?

The two men do not see or hear the DOOR TO CLAUDIA'S BEDROOM open. CLAUDIA, dressed in a light gown, looking HAUNTED, stands in the dark room, barely visible.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CENTURION

He is a Galilean. The Pharisees and Sadducees apparently hate the man.

CLAUDIA

A Galilean? Who are you talking about?
Who has been taken to the Temple?

Startled, the men turn to face her.

CUT TO:

INT. TEMPLE COURTYARD. NIGHT.

In the Temple COURTYARD the soldiers who arrested JESUS are relieved of their duties - change of Guards. A DOOR into the Temple Halls is opened and the Priests and Elders enter the building.

Next to the GUARDS' BARRACKS in the open courtyard a ROUGH AWNING has been erected, inside of which CARPENTERS BUSILY WORK on various-sized TRUNKS OF LUMBER. OTHER MEN DUMP TOOLS and other METALLIC OBJECTS onto low tables.

JESUS looks exhausted by the long march from Gethsemani.

A TEMPLE SOLDIER who was not part of the arrest party now strides up to JESUS, unties His hands and brusquely lifts His bleeding, dirty, swollen face. JESUS' eyes are clear and calm. The OFFICER cannot stand to look into them. He SLAPS JESUS hard across the face, and leans forward.

OFFICER

A magician, they say.
I say a charlatan.

The soldiers all around fall silent, watch the exchange. JESUS does not reply. His eyes meet the man's and the OFFICER loses his composure and, this time strikes JESUS with his FIST and CONTINUES TO HIT HIM as:

OFFICER (cont'd)

You're FINISHED! Whatever you think, whoever THEY (points) believe you are is gone, good as forgotten...dead.

The men around the Courtyard burst into coarse jeers. At the DOORS to the Temple, despite PETER's attempts to stop her, MAGDALEN screams over their jeers:

MAGDALEN

STOP! FOR MERCY'S SAKE, STOP IT! MY
SWEET JESUS... MAKE HIM STOP!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JOHN tries to cover her mouth, but MAGDALEN abruptly goes quiet. JOHN follows her gaze. JESUS has turned to her. Eyes glued to His, MAGDALEN now MOANS. Her hands search the air, find MARY's, they CLASP.

JESUS is led INSIDE THE TEMPLE.

PETER is whispering into the ears of one of the GUARDS while putting some coins into the man's hands. The GUARD lets PETER through, along with a number of others.

JOHN, MARY and MAGDALEN try to follow PETER but they are STOPPED by the GUARD.

CUT TO:

INT. GREAT HALL. TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM. NIGHT.

PETER moves along with others, toward the bright torchlit HALL where CAIPHAS, ANNAS and the other Priests and ELDERS are seated. The hall is filled to capacity. JESUS stands in a small clearing at the center of the hall, His hands tied behind His back, His garment torn and filthy, His face partly swollen and bloody.

ANNAS pretends to look surprised at the sight of JESUS, and exchanges ironic smiles with CAIPHAS and others.

ANNAS

Who is this vagabond you bring to us,
chained like a man condemned to death?

One of the GUARDS shouts:

GUARD

He is Jesus, the rebel of Nazareth.

All voices at once quiet down. ANNAS stands, approaches.

ANNAS

Is it true? YOU are Jesus of Nazareth?

He looks away from JESUS' eyes, scans His torn clothes and bloodied face, arms and feet:

ANNAS (cont'd)

The people, it seems, have decided to put
a stop to your blasphemous conduct toward
God and his priests.

ANNAS turns to the chosen audience. Silence. He waits, glances at CAIPHAS, raises his eyebrows. It's a signal.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tentative jeers and sneers and hissings.
PETER, worried, moves to the front row, closer to JESUS.

JESUS lifts His head to look at ANNAS. The crowd falls silent, as abruptly as it began the hissing.

JESUS

I have spoken openly to the world. I have taught in the Synagogue, and in the Temple, where all Jews gather. I have never spoken in secret. But why ask me? Ask those who have heard what I have to say. They know, and will be able to answer you.

Silence.

CAIPHAS slowly rises from his seat and strides up to JESUS. His voice is low, but it carries in the silence.

CAIPHAS

Is that how you address yourself to a High Priest? With MALICE and IRONY?

CAIPHAS steps back, glances at a large, BRUTISH GUARD who steps forward and hits JESUS on the side of His face with the HILT of his sword. JESUS falls to His knees.

FLASH INSERT:

EXT. TEMPLE DOORS. JERUSALEM. NIGHT.

Between JOHN and MAGDALEN, MARY's HEAD SNAPS BACK, as if she had been HIT ON HER FACE. She CRUMBLES to her knees.

MAGDALEN and JOHN both kneel down beside her. JOHN lifts her face. There is a huge BRUISE on the side of her face. MARY is unconscious.

The BRUISE mysteriously retreats, then VANISHES.

JOHN and MAGDALEN exchange looks and turn anguished faces toward the Temple.

WE MOVE now, PAST the GUARD into the Temple COURTYARD, THROUGH the doors, INTO the GREAT HALL where:

INT. GREAT HALL. TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM. NIGHT.

JESUS slowly gets back to His feet.

More jeering, sneering and hissing by the Elders, Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees and many in the audience. PETER shuts his eyes and becomes motionless.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JESUS looks at the BRUTISH GUARD who hit him.

JESUS

If I have spoken evil, tell me what evil
I have spoken. If not, why do you strike
me?

CAIPHAS motions the GUARD away. ANNAS, beside him, raises his
arms in the air and the audience quiets down.

CAIPHAS

They say you are a king...where is your
kingdom?

JESUS turns to CAIPHAS, but does not answer.

ANNAS

Which order of kings do you descend from?
Speak up.

CAIPHAS and ANNAS start to spit out questions at JESUS.
Rhetorical questions, for they don't give him time to answer.
As they do, we move AMONG the CROWD in the hall.

CAIPHAS (OS)

Aren't you the son of an obscure
carpenter?

ANNAS (OS)

Some say you are Elias. I thought he was
carried to heaven in a chariot.

One of the men standing beside PETER notices PETER's
stillness, that he is holding his eyes closed. The man
studies him with suspicion, then leans in and mutters:

MAN IN AUDIENCE

Haven't I seen you in the company of the
Galilean? Yes, you are one of his
disciples, I know it, I recognize you.

PETER is shaken. Other turn to him, curious. The crowd is so
tightly packed PETER can barely move. Panic. He pushes his
way toward the rear of the crowd, shaking his head.

A WOMAN IN THE AUDIENCE now peers at him and points:

WOMAN IN AUDIENCE

Wait. Stay where you are. You are Peter,
one of the disciples of Jesus.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PETER

(harsh whisper)

Quiet, woman. I never met that man. I
do not know him.

The DENSE crowd of men and women around PETER suddenly SHIFTS, as more people SQUEEZE into the GREAT HALL. The SOUND of a ROOSTER CROWING enters the hall as well. PETER is PUSHED FORWARD, and again stands close to the center where JESUS is being pestered by CAIPHAS, ANNAS, other 'witnesses' and 'accusers'. Each of them either SPITS at JESUS or THROWS something at Him as they speak.

ACCUSER ONE

Cures the sick by wizardry. With the help
of devils.

ACCUSER TWO

He casts out devils with the help of
devils.

Laughter greets the absurdity of that. CAIPHAS glances at ANNAS, clearly upset. More laughter.

ACCUSER THREE

Calls himself king of the Jews.

ACCUSER FOUR

Not true! He calls himself son of God!

ACCUSER FIVE

Wrong! You're both wrong. The bread of
life. That's what he said he is. Whoever
doesn't eat his flesh or drink his blood
will not have eternal life.

PETER's eyes meet those of JESUS. The LOOK of SORROW and affection he sees causes PETER to lower his head.

CAIPHAS

SILENCE!

The Great Hall quiets down, the crowd becomes still.

CAIPHAS (cont'd)

You are ALL OF YOU under this man's evil
spell, contradicting each other like so
many fools. Offer us PROOF of his
wrongdoing, or else be quiet.

CAIPHAS and ANNAS scan the throng of confused faces. They are all looking at JESUS. CAIPHAS turns to look also.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JESUS is motionless, head bowed, silent.

The HISSING and SHOUTING begin again, with renewed intensity, spurred by the silence and stillness of JESUS.

An OLD MAN (JOSEPH of ARIMATHEA) steps forward, hushes the crowd, turns solemn eyes to CAIPHAS and ANNAS.

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA

This entire proceeding is offensive, Caiphas. I have heard nothing from these so-called witnesses but false accusation, dissention, contradiction. The speed with which you've assembled this Tribunal is, in my view, further evidence of malice. Yours and theirs.

A number of men nod in agreement, cover their heads in a gesture of disapproval. Some simply LEAVE the Tribunal.

Most, however, erupt into loud jeers. They start to push JOSEPH and some of the other dissenters around, then literally SHOVE them out the door.

JESUS watches his few supporters leave or be thrown out.

CAIPHAS is filled with secret pleasure as JOSEPH and the good men leave the TRIBUNAL. As soon as they are gone, he turns to JESUS again. The noise dies down.

CAIPHAS

Have you nothing to say, then? No answer to any of these accusations?

JESUS neither moves nor answers.

One of the more VICIOUS of the men surrounding Him grabs JESUS by the hair and YANKS His head backward. The eyes of JESUS now look directly into those of CAIPHAS.

CAIPHAS

I ask you now, Jesus of Nazareth, to tell us if you are the Christ, the Messiah, Son of the living God.

JESUS

You have said it.

As he speaks, LIGHT suddenly envelops Him. This causes CAIPHAS to look away. JESUS scans the faces of the men surrounding Him, then faces CAIPHAS once more.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JESUS (cont'd)
I am the Christ, Son of the living God

A SHOCK-WAVE of complete silence.

CAIPHAS steps away from JESUS as if he had been slapped.

The majority of the Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in the Tribunal ERRUPT into a DEAFENING CLAMOR.

CAIPHAS takes hold of his rich MANTLE with one hand and, grabbing a SWORD from one of the soldiers, RENTS the MANTLE IN HALF.

CAIPHAS
BLASPHEMY! (points to Jesus) You all heard him. He has committed blasphemy. Why bother with witnesses? You heard what he said...what is your verdict?

The PANDEMONIUM which CEASED for a moment explodes with renewed energy as the Pharisees shout in unison:

PHARISEES
DEATH! HE IS GUILTY! PUT HIM TO DEATH

The ECHO OF THAT SHOUT FILLS THE HALL and, like a ripple wave, moves OUTWARD, through the doors into the COURTYARD and OUT THE TEMPLE DOORS where:

EXT. TEMPLE DOORS. JERUSALEM. NIGHT.

The DENSE CROWD is caught up in the FRENZY which has errupted inside the Temple.

MARY is still UNCONSCIOUS. JOHN and MAGDALEN CROUCH by her side, protecting her from the packed mob around them.

As the sudden WAVE of CHEERS ERRUPTS all around them, MARY wakes up VERY ABRUPTLY. Before JOHN or MAGDALEN have time to react, she SCRAMBLES to her feet and tries to get past the throng and INTO the Temple grounds.

MARY
(feverish, her head shaking)
No. No. No...

JOHN rushes to stop her.

MAGDALEN remains where she is, on her knees, slightly dishevelled, incapable of making a sound. Her dry-eyed, silent and ferocious denial is heart-breaking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

JOHN reaches MARY and gently restrains her. She turns to look at him, intensely pale, anguished. Her words catch in her throat, she is almost incapable of breathing.

MARY (cont'd)

John...they are going to...he is condemned! Oh, do you not hear it? His blessed heart, John...beating!

Her face collapses into tears. Holding her, JOHN looks over people's heads toward the door into the Great Hall.

EXT. VALLEY OF HINNOM. NIGHT.

JUDAS runs across a desolate landscape, a man possessed. He groans, breathlessly. His clothes have been mostly torn off his back and his bare skin looks pale and dirty.

The light of the moon suddenly fills the night. He stops, looks over his shoulders at the walls of JERUSALEM.

A BLAST OF WIND HITS JUDAS, then silence and stillness descend on the valley around him. An EERIE quiet.

JUDAS SCREAMS. He is staring at the SKIN on his PALE FOREARM which HAS SWOLLEN INTO AN ODD SHAPE. JUDAS TRIES TO COVER THE SWELLING with his other hand, but he CANNOT. It MOVES. He tries again and the swelling moves OUT OF REACH. Frantic now, JUDAS begins to TEAR at his own skin, but HOWEVER HARD HE TRIES TO GRAB HOLD of the KNOB, IT EVADES HIS TOUCH. His watery eyes, bloody face, torn hair and twisted face present a mask of self-inflicted torment. His screams bloodcurdling, JUDAS struggles to TEAR OUT the mysterious GROWTH as it travels about his body, always out of reach, alternating between HOWLS of rage and fear and breathless, wretched silences.

Suddenly he stops and GAPES AT THE MOON through the branches of a sturdy, tall tree. Then he SPINS around.

The TWO FACELESS, HOODED FIGURES with whom he battled earlier are approaching. They stop. Stillness.

DEMON

They have reached a verdict, Judas. They are going to put him to death.

JUDAS is and remains motionless.

SECOND DEMON

You sold him. You know the law...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DEMON

He who sells a soul among his brothers
and receives the price of it...

SECOND DEMON

Let him die the death.

Silence. Then JUDAS rasps, like a cicada.

JUDAS

The death?

He looks at the tall tree branches, at the moon, shuts his eyes. From beneath his eyelids spring bitter tears.

CUT TO:

INT. TRIBUNAL HALL. TEMPLE. NIGHT.

Pandemonium, at the center of which stands JESUS, His composure in sharp contrast to the frenzy around Him.

CAIPHAS and ANNAS, surrounded by the Elder Scribes, watch as the crowd SWARM around JESUS like wasps, some PULLING at His hair, or His beard and ripping away fingerfuls of it, others SPITTING at HIM or HITTING HIM with their hands or with sticks.

PETER's eyes fill with anguish. He roughly ELBOWS away a number of the more violent in the crowd. His efforts are noticed by one of the Elders.

ELDER

Look! There. Who is that man? That one,
yes...why is he interfering?

A number of threatening faces now focus on PETER, who retreats, tries to blend in with the frenzied horde. A number of HANDS now reach out and GRAB HOLD OF HIS TUNIC.

MAN

You're one of his disciples, aren't you?
One of his Galilean heretics.

PETER shakes his head violently and tries to get loose.

PETER

No. You are mistaken. I am not a
disciple. I do not even know the man.

A momentary reprieve as a new set of GUARDS enter the Hall carrying BUNDLES with them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER pushes and claws his way toward the exit.

The NEW GUARDS gruffly separate the people from JESUS. They want Him for themselves. The first thing they do is PRESENT Him with a CROWN of STRAW, which they place on His head as they TEAR OFF His robe and scapular, throw an OLD, TORN MANTLE over His shoulders and hang a LONG IRON CHAIN around His neck, STUDED with sharp points which TEAR at His flesh as they DRAG HIM AROUND the Great Hall.

GUARD

Behold the Son of David, wearing the crown of his father!

Faces pop up before PETER's as he PUSHES against the rest. Then a SECOND MAN GRABS PETER's TUNIC.

SECOND MAN

Hold it...stop! I've seen you before. Yes, now I remember! On the road to Gethsemani! You're the one who cut off Malchus' ear with a sword!

Claustrophobic panic overcomes Peter.

PETER

No. No, you are wrong. I do not know what you are talking about. I swear, I do not know the man, believe me.

He TUGS at his mantle with a surge of FURY and fear, PULLS FREE and ELBOWS his way OUT into the COURTYARD.

IN THE COURTYARD: Peter stumbles as far away from the door into the Great Hall as he can. As soon as he is alone, he HEARS a ROOSTER CROWING.

FLASH INSERT:

EXT. GETHSEMANI. NIGHT.

PETER is walking beside JESUS on the path which separates GETHSEMANI from the GARDEN OF OLIVES. The rest of the APOSTLES (all except JUDAS) are walking behind them. Only JOHN keeps pace.

PETER

Not I, Master, no. I will always be faithful to you.

JESUS stops and turns to PETER

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JESUS

Simon, Simon...I have prayed for you,
that your faith should not fail you,
because where I am going you may not
follow me.

PETER

(enthusiastically interrupts)
Lord, I tell you I am ready to follow you
wherever you may go...to prison, even to
death.

JESUS rests a hand on PETER's shoulder

JESUS

Amen, amen, Simon, I say to you before
the rooster crows twice, you will deny me
three times.

FLASH TO PRESENT:

PETER turns his eyes to the roof of the COURTYARD where a
ROOSTER perches, crowing with vigor.

PETER covers his face with his hands.

A ROAR from inside the Great Hall. MAGNETICALLY drawn to what
is taking place, terrified by the mania inside, deeply
ashamed of himself, PETER edges his way back to the door and
tries to see what is happening inside.

POV:

CAIPHAS interrupts what has become a sadistic frenzy.

CAIPHAS

March this king of straw to the Temple
dungeon and keep him there until we can
present him to the Roman Governor!

The delirious, bloodthirsty crowd help the soldiers DRAG
JESUS OUT of the Great Hall, putting on a boisterous show of
deference to His royalty.

They PASS VERY NEAR TO PETER, and JESUS looks directly at His
Apostle as He is dragged by. PETER's eyes fill with tears. He
covers his head with his hood, trying to hide his misery and
steps back into the shadows in the Hall.

JESUS is taken OUT of the GREAT HALL, then THROUGH an
adjacent door and DOWN a NARROW FLIGHT OF STAIRS.

INT. TEMPLE DUNGEON. NIGHT.

Rat-infested, dank and barely illuminated, the DUNGEON is in a vaulted foundation directly UNDER the Great Hall. The GUARDS CHAIN JESUS to a METAL RING hanging HIGH on a GRIMY WALL. He is stretched to the point where only His toes touch the filthy ground. JESUS lowers His head, exhausted. The GUARDS retreat. Darkness.

CUT TO:

EXT. TEMPLE COURTYARD. NIGHT.

The CROWD of PHARISEES, SADDUCEES, Elders, Scribes and false witnesses POURS OUT OF the Great Hall and makes its noisy way toward the street, outside the TEMPLE DOORS.

MARY, JOHN and MAGDALEN are the ONLY ONES moving against the tide of people going the opposite way. No one takes any notice of them, not even the GUARDS. Finally they are alone in the COURTYARD, just outside the Great Hall door.

INSIDE THE GREAT HALL, the only figure is that of PETER, ON HIS KNEES NOW, SOBBING uncontrollably and BANGING HIS FOREHEAD onto the bloodsoaked stone floor.

ENTERING the now SEMI-DARK Hall, JOHN, MARY and MAGDALEN stop when they see PETER, not sure who he could be.

PETER's SOBS ring out in the emptiness, then:

JOHN

Peter?

PETER stops, but as yet does not turn.

MARY steps forward.

MARY

Peter...is it truly you, Simon?

PETER gets to his feet too quickly, spins around, face crushed into a mask of deep shame and misery. MARY stops.

MARY (cont'd)

Where is my son? Where have they taken him? Tell me what has happened to Jesus? Where is he, Peter?

PETER scans their faces, then faces MARY once more but remains silent. MARY takes a step toward him:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY (cont'd)

Peter, why do you not answer me?

PETER's face undergoes fracture, as does his voice.

PETER

NO! Mother, please, I beg you, do not speak to me. I am unworthy, Mary, unworthy...your son is suffering more than words can express. The Pharisees have condemned him to death, and I...I have denied him three times!

MAGDALEN cries out. It echoes in the Great Hall. PETER runs past MARY, JOHN and Magdalen, out of the Hall.

MARY has become still, in the center of the room, where JESUS stood. She has SHUT her eyes as PETER ran past her. Now she re-opens them and LOWERS HER EYES TO THE FLOOR.

The STILLNESS of the room INTENSIFIES as the STONE FLOOR becomes TRANSPARENT TO MARY.

BENEATH the spot where she is standing is the DARK, AIRLESS DUNGEON CELL WHERE JESUS IS TIED AND CHAINED TO THE WALL. DESPITE THE DARKNESS, HIS BLOOD ENCRUSTED HANDS, FACE AND FEET ARE PLAINLY VISIBLE TO HER.

He stands immobile, His head lowered. MARY moans. JESUS LIFTS HIS FACE and LOOKS UP. It is as if both of them can see each other THROUGH THE STONE FLOOR, and THERE IS A MOMENT OF SILENT COMMUNION BETWEEN THEM.

MARY COLLAPSES ON THE COLD STONE.

CUT TO:

EXT. VALLEY OF HINNOM. NIGHT.

The SOUND OF BONE SNAPPING accompanies the sudden DROP of the body from a THICK, TALL BRANCH of the tree.

Lifeless now, JUDAS swings from a rope tied to the tall branch of a tree and around his neck.

Silence. Empty, dark, Godless silence.

Then the body of JUDAS BURSTS OPEN, as if exploding, and scatters in putrefaction on the ground beneath the tree.

On the HORIZON, the first glimmer of dawn light.

FADE OUT:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FADE IN:

EXT. PILATE'S PALACE. JERUSALEM. DAWN.

The face of JESUS is pale under the blood, sweat and grime of his night-ordeal. In chains again, He is dragged along the wide street toward the Roman Governor's Palace.

CAIPHAS, ANNAS, the SANHEDRIM of ELDERS and OTHER SCRIBES lead the GUARDS surrounding JESUS.

The STREET is LINED with people pushing each other out of the way so they can have a better look at the procession.

Despite His appalling condition, JESUS carries Himself with calm majesty.

MARY, MAGDALEN, JOHN and the other women stand behind some of the onlookers.

MARY
(under her breath)
My Jesus. My son...

CAIPHAS and the SANHEDRIM have reached the gates into the Palace grounds. A CENTURION has stopped them. CAIPHAS turns and watches JESUS being dragged toward them as one of the Elders whispers to the CENTURION.

CUT TO:

INT. ROMAN GOVERNOR'S PALACE. NIGHT.

A TRUMPET SOUNDS, in the near distance, muted by walls.

PILATE is being helped into a ceremonial ROMAN OFFICER's uniform. CLAUDIA is seated nearby. PILATE dismisses his servant, then approaches her and kisses her lightly.

The SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS APPROACHING THEIR ROOM.

CLAUDIA
Do not condemn the man. He is a holy man,
you would only bring trouble down on
yourself.

PILATE
What would you have me do, Claudia?

CLAUDIA
He is Galilean. Give him to the King of
Galilee, to Herod. Let HIM be the one to
pass judgement.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PILATE is silent. He studies his wife's face distractedly

PILATE
 (thoughtful, hesitant)
 Clever Claudia. Herod is living in
 adultery, and is considered a great
 sinner even by the Jewish priests. If he
 condemns this...

CLAUDIA
 His name is Jesus. If Herod condemns him,
 and the Jewish High Priests do as he
 commands, they're the ones who will be
 committing a crime.

There is a KNOCK on the door and the CENTURION enters. PILATE
 smiles reassuringly at CLAUDIA and exits.

CUT TO:

INT. PRAETORIUM. PILATE'S PALACE. MORNING.

JESUS stands alone at the foot of the flight of stairs. Some
 of the chains have been removed from Him, as well as some of
 the ropes, though His hands are still bound.

He keeps His head low, which hides most of the SWELLING on
 His face.

CAIPHAS, ANNAS and the elder SCRIBES and other members of the
 Sandhedrim takes their places. Behind
 them, the CROWD gathers in the open FORUM.

PILATE enters, walks toward his lone seat on a terrace
 overlooking the Praetorium. All noise stops. PILATE gazes
 down at JESUS at the foot of the flight of stairs, then at
 the gathered Priests and people. He frowns, unhappily:

PILATE looks at JESUS again. JESUS does not move.

PILATE (cont'd)
 Do you always half-kill your prisoners
 before they are even judged guilty?

A second hush. CAIPHAS steps forward, starts to speak but

PILATE (cont'd)
 What accusations do you bring against
 this man?

CAIPHAS
 If he were not a malefactor we would not
 have brought him before you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PILATE

Why don't you judge him according to your laws?

CAIPHAS

Consul, you know it is unlawful for us to condemn any man to death.

PILATE

To death!? You would condemn this man to death? What has he done to deserve such harsh judgement?

CAIPHAS

He has violated our Sabbath, Consul. Profaned the day of God by curing the sick, even on that day.

PILATE motions the ROMAN GUARDS to bring JESUS up the stairs to the platform, then walks up to JESUS and studies Him with curiosity. He signals to the GUARD to cut the ropes binding Him, then looks down at CAIPHAS, irony dancing in his Roman eyes.

PILATE

You were not ill yourself on that day, Caiphas, or you would not complain that he was curing you on a Sabbath.

The CROWD is both shocked and amused by PILATE's words.

JESUS remains motionless behind PILATE.

CAIPHAS is furious, and embarrassed.

CAIPHAS

He has seduced the people by teaching them disgusting doctrines.

PILATE

Disgusting, no less. For example?

CAIPHAS

He has said that no person can attain eternal life unless they eat his flesh and drink his blood.

PILATE glances back at JESUS.

PILATE

You must all be very eager to attain eternal life...judging by the way you thirst for his body and his blood.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

More laughter. CAIPHAS is livid. He turns and consults in undertones with ANNAS and some of the elders and SCRIBES.

CAIPHAS

(raises his voice)

He has forbidden his disciples to pay tribute to the emperor, Consul!

PILATE is studying JESUS with undiminished curiosity. His face hardens, he slowly turns around.

PILATE

Do you know who oversees the payments of tribute to the Emperor, Caiphas? I do. It is one of my duties to see that all tribute is properly collected. I have seen no evidence that he has done what you accuse him of. You are lying.

ANNAS now steps forward. In a more diplomatic tone:

ANNAS

Excellency, Excellency...please. The High Priest has not indicated to you what this man's gravest crime has been...the true reason we have brought him before you for judgement.

Things quiet down. CAIPHAS is rattled and offended, but ANNAS continues, unashamedly, pointing to JESUS.

ANNAS (cont'd)

He is a man of obscure birth, Consul, but has managed to become the leader of a large and dangerous sect. Why, just a few days ago he entered Jerusalem at the head of a large crowd who hailed him as the SON OF DAVID!

Hush. PILATE listens, glances again at JESUS, who has not moved a muscle.

ANNAS (cont'd)

He has declared, even to US, Governor, that he is the Anointed of the Lord, the Christ, the Messiah, the king promised to the Jews...

The crowd now EXPLODES in jeers and invectives. PILATE steps away from the public terrace, signaling a guard.

CUT TO:

INT. ROMAN GOVERNOR'S PALACE. MORNING.

Near one of the entrances to the PRAETORIUM, CLAUDIA hides behind a curtain. She is watching the Priests and the crowd when she suddenly focuses on:

EXT. PRAETORIUM. PILATE'S PALACE. MORNING.

MARY, JOHN and MAGDALEN pushing past the crowd just outside the Praetorium. MAGDALEN and JOHN are the ones plowing a pathway through the assembled PHARISEES. MARY follows, eyes scanning the PRAETORIUM for her Son.

It is her dignity that catches CLAUDIA's attention.

CLAUDIA studies MARY and her two companions with interest

CUT TO:

INT. PILATE'S PALACE. MORNING.

In the small private enclosure, PILATE dismisses the GUARD and turns to JESUS with curiosity.

There is a table with fruits, a jug of wine and some cups. PILATE pours a cupful and steps up to JESUS.

PILATE

Drink.

JESUS lifts his eyes to PILATE, for the first time. He ignores the wine, but holds the ROMAN's eyes in His.

PILATE studies the torn clothes, the blood-encrusted neck, feet and hands of JESUS. Then:

PILATE (cont'd)

Are you...the king of the Jews?

JESUS

Does the question come from you, or do you ask me this because others have told you that is what I am?

PILATE is not certain whether or not to take offense.

PILATE

How could I have come up with such a question by myself? Am I a Jew? Your High Priests have delivered you to me. They want me to have you executed. Why? What have you done?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JESUS does not answer. PILATE seems mesmerized by the face and eyes before him.

PILATE (cont'd)
Are you a king?

With quiet majesty in His voice:

JESUS
My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, do you think my servants would have allowed those men to deliver me to you in this manner?

PILATE
Then you are a king?

Beat.

JESUS
That is why I was born. To give testimony to the truth. All men who hear the truth hear my voice.

A long moment of silence.

PILATE
The truth? What is the truth?

JESUS does not answer. His eyes pierce PILATE's.

CUT TO:

INT. FORUM AN PRAETORIUM. PILATE'S PALACE. MORNING.

CAIPHAS and ANNAS huddle with the SCRIBES and ELDERS.

PILATE reappears on the JUDGEMENT Platform. The NOISE abates as he takes his seat.

JESUS appears. PILATE waits until all is quiet.

PILATE
I have questioned this prisoner, and I find no cause in him.

Deep silence. PILATE turns to JESUS.

PILATE (cont'd)
You have heard their accusations. Have you nothing to say? No answer to their false claims?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JESUS stands motionless and silent.

A growing murmur of discontent among the Pharisees is once more interrupted by PILATE.

PILATE
This man is a Galilean, is he not?

CAIPHAS
(smells a trap, hesitates)
He is...

PILATE
Well, then he is a subject of King Herod's. His Majesty is in Jerusalem for the Pasch...let him judge the man according to the laws of Galilee.

He waves at the ROMAN GUARDS, who take hold of JESUS and march Him down the flight of stairs. PILATE watches as JESUS is delivered back into the hands of the PHARISEES, PUT in CHAINS and dragged out.

The PRAETORIUM quickly empties of the people. PILATE is about to turn away when a FIGURE appears at the entrance to the PRAETORIUM below. CLAUDIA.

Silence. PILATE is clearly troubled.

PILATE
(soft)
What is truth, Claudia? Do you hear it when it is spoken?

CLAUDIA
(soft)
Yes, I do. (quick beat) Don't you?

Beat.

PILATE
(shakes his head)
Can you tell me?

CLAUDIA
(low)
No. If you will not hear the truth, no one can tell you.

PILATE turns away, impatiently, and exits.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CLAUDIA's eyes fill with tears. A soft noise. She looks. MARY, JOHN and MAGDALEN stand in the shadow of one of the PRAETORIUM columns, motionless.

After a brief moment, CLAUDIA steps up toward the JUDGEMENT PLATFORM. At the top, she turns and looks down at where MARY, JOHN and MAGDALEN were, but they are no longer there. CLAUDIA is no longer weeping.

CUT TO:

INT. HEROD'S PALACE. MORNING.

A spacious, opulently decorated hall filled with cushions and gilded furniture. KING HEROD half-sits, half-lies on a sort of THRONE of CUSHIONS. He is an effeminate man of soft, forgettable features. A slippery spirit.

He stands and glides toward JESUS, studies Him briefly then turns and shouts hysterically at the PHARISEES.

HEROD

You miserable butchers! How dare you bring this man to me in such a state! Take him away, clean him up!

JESUS is dragged out of the THRONE ROOM.

EXT. COURTYARD, HEROD'S PALACE. MORNING.

JESUS' CHAINS are removed by the Temple GUARDS, who then proceed to EMPTY BUCKETS of cold water over JESUS. This removes the worst of the blood, sweat and mud from Him.

Some ROMAN SOLDIERS enter the yard from the Palace Gates and watch with pity and contempt.

Behind the Romans MARY, JOHN and MAGDALEN enter the courtyard, stop, look on in shock.

With a cry of anger MAGDALEN rushes in, KNOCKS one down.

MAGDALEN

No!

The water has spilled over the upended GUARD. FURIOUS, he looks up at her with unabashed hatred, but although MAGDALEN stands over the man, she now sees only JESUS, removes her cape from her shoulders and hands it to Him.

JESUS is DRENCHED. His clothes are sopping wet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAGDALEN has managed to enfold His face in the dry cotton of her cape when one of the ROMAN SOLDIERS steps in, GRABS MAGDALEN by her arms and FORCIBLY transports her back to where MARY and JOHN are standing. The ROMAN SOLDIERS then force the three to EXIT the courtyard. MARY turns as she is led out to the street.

MARY'S POV:

JESUS is dragged to the Palace doors by the Temple GUARDS

CUT TO:

INT. HEROD'S HALL. MORNING.

HEROD ignores the gathered PHARISEES as he watches JESUS standing before him at the center of the hall. The guards back off.

HEROD
(softly)
Jesus of Nazareth. Miracle worker.

JESUS neither acknowledges nor even looks at him.

HEROD (cont'd)
You are silent. Have you no answer to all the accusations these men have brought against you?

Silence. Stillness.

HEROD (cont'd)
Will you work a miracle for me? Say something and confound these men!

HEROD scans the faces of CAIPHAS, ANNAS and the ELDERS. He laughs to himself, foppishly.

HEROD (cont'd)
Confound them with a miracle, then.

The tension in the hall increases as JESUS ignores HEROD.

HEROD (cont'd)
Are you the one whose birth was foretold? Answer me. Are you a king?

He paces around, both drawn to and now afraid of JESUS.

HEROD (cont'd)
Is it true that you restore sight to the blind?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HEROD (cont'd)
 Feed thousands with only a few loaves of bread? Is it true that you raised Lazarus from the dead? Who are you? Where does your power come from?

Beat.

HEROD (cont'd)
 Where has it gone?

HEROD glances at the members of the SANHEDRIM as he paces back and forth in front of JESUS. He stops, peers at the face of JESUS, who does not react or even look at him.

HEROD steps back, intimidated, and snaps petulantly:

HEROD (cont'd)
 Ach! Take this fool out of my sight! He is guilty of no crime. He's just mad! Pay him the homage that is due a madman...no more than that!

HEROD then watches with a spoiled frown on his soft face as the GUARDS move forward and CHAIN JESUS down again.

As they exit HEROD's Hall:

ANNAS
 All we can do is bring him back to Pilate. We cannot kill him.

CAIPHAS
 Not officially, no...

ANNAS takes this in, scans the faces around them. All of them turn to watch JESUS as he is DRAGGED from the hall.

ANNAS turns to a particularly large, BRUTISH MAN among the GUARDS. Their eyes meet, ever so briefly. ANNAS nods. The large GUARD walks toward the GUARDS who are marching JESUS out, mutters a few words to them.

Electricity among the conspirators. Fire of hatred.

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTYARD OF HEROD'S PALACE. MORNING.

As JESUS steps out into the Palace Courtyard the GUARDS KNOCK HIM TO THE GROUND, TIE HIS ANKLES WITH ROPES and DRAG HIM ALONG the yard's GUTTER. His HEAD REPEATEDLY SMASHES against stone columns that line the gutter. This is obviously meant to KILL JESUS, but when they stop, He RAISES HIMSELF back to His feet, face covered with blood.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAIPHAS turns to ANNAS and the rest of the ELDERS and, despite himself, studies JESUS with admiration:

CAIPHAS

Well, it's the law, after all...we may not put a man to death. Not unless a Roman Governor has condemned him.

CAIPHAS strides up to JESUS, examines the bloody face before him, then SPITS.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET IN JERUSALEM. DAY.

A MAN (SIMON OF CYRENE) walks toward an enclosed GARDEN, accompanied by THREE CHILDREN. SIMON enters the GARDEN just as a BAND of people RUSH PAST HIM, excitedly.

SIMON warily watches the crowd, then rushes back to get his children off the street, away from the throng. When he sees one of the herd move more slowly than the rest:

SIMON OF CYRENE

What is going on...?

MAN

They've arrested Jesus of Nazareth. King Herod has condemned him to death but his disciples are appealing to the Romans to set him free...

SIMON shrugs, turns to his children safely in the garden.

CUT TO:

EXT. GARDEN OF ROMAN GOVERNOR'S PALACE. MORNING.

PILATE stands before a shrine to a Roman god. His ever-present OFFICER is standing behind him.

OFFICER

We are going to need reinforcements.

PILATE

I...don't want to start a rebellion.

OFFICER

A rebellion has already started, sir.

PILATE

You say they are bringing this... prophet back here? Why?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OFFICER

Herod has refused to condemn the man.

A SOLDIER appears, out of breath. PILATE and the OFFICER turn to him.

DISSOLVE

INT. JUDGEMENT PLATFORM. PILATE'S PALACE. MORNING

PILATE strides onto the judgement platform and sits on the lone seat.

Below, the CROWD is DOUBLE THE SIZE IT WAS EARLIER - MORE RESTLESS, LOUDER, MORE UNPREDICTABLE.

CAIPHAS, ANNAS and the members of the SANHEDRIM enter.

JESUS staggers into the praetorium and COLLAPSES on the floor, bloodied, filthy, in obvious pain, exhausted. Instead of helping Him rise, the Temple GUARDS KICK at Him until He slowly, agonizingly, stands up again. JESUS is UNRECOGNIZABLE, yet has retained a mysterious majesty.

A CUP of wine is brought to PILATE. He takes it, scans the crowd below, drinks. Then he stands up. Hush descends

PILATE

You brought this man to me earlier, and I found no reason to condemn him. I deferred to king Herod and Herod found no cause in him. Therefore I will chastise him, then set him free.

Baffled silence. Then the air EXPLODES with a roar.

The nervous ROMAN SOLDIERS surrounding the Praetorium are JOINED BY OTHERS who have been kept outside. They lock their shields, WITHDRAW THEIR SWORDS and now form an IMPOSING FENCE around the crowd of angry PHARISEES.

The moment is tense, teetering on violent confrontation.

PILATE looks down at the enraged mob below. He is clearly worried, and lifts his arms high over his head.

Below, CAIPHAS coopts and is the first to shout:

CAIPHAS

QUIET! SILENCE!

Hush. He turns to PILATE, who acknowledges him curtly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PILATE

I have made it my custom, every year at the Pasch, to deliver a condemned criminal back to you. I am presently holding a well-known murderer in prison: Barabbas. Which of the two men would you have me release to you... Barabbas or Jesus, called the Christ?

CAIPHAS

(shout of indignation, rage)
He is not the Christ. He is an impostor, a blasphemer. Free Barabbas.

Another voice in the crowd shouts out: "BARABBAS!" - this instantly becomes a general outcry, with the name BARABBAS echoing like GUNSHOTS.

More and more concerned by the turn of events, PILATE signals one of the ROMAN OFFICERS, who pushes forward a SCRUFFY, BEWILDERED MAN IN CHAINS (BARABBAS), who obviously doesn't have any idea what is happening.

At the sight of BARABBAS the crowd's fury abates.

PILATE stands up and moves dramatically half-way down the flight of stairs. He then points one arm toward BARABBAS standing above him and JESUS at the foot of the stairs.

PILATE

Again I ask you...which of these two men should I deliver up to you?

BARABBAS looks down at the figure at the foot of the stairs. JESUS lifts His eyes to BARABBAS.

The crowd explodes again with roars of: "BARABBAS"

CAIPHAS

(shouts out)
Barabbas. Deliver Barabbas up to us.

PILATE

(shouts back)
What would you have me do with Jesus of Nazareth?

CAIPHAS AND ANNAS

Let him be crucified.

DEAFENING ROAR of the crowd, echoing CAIPHAS' words.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JESUS slowly turns and scans the multitude, all shouting for his execution.

At the BACK of the crowd MARY, JOHN and MAGDALEN try to push their way into the PRAETORIUM and closer to JESUS.

The CHAOS and MOTION of the people is such that they are easily visible because of their CLEAR FORWARD MOTION.

PILATE is obviously intimidated by the crowd's mood, and is about to retreat when he sees MARY, JOHN and MAGDALEN push toward the foot of the stairs where JESUS stands. They suddenly step past the crowd, into the clearing.

MARY rushes forward, almost reaches JESUS but is held back by a ROMAN SOLDIER just as her hands are about to touch JESUS' face. MAGDALEN has fallen to her knees and her face has broken into inaudible sobs at the sight of Him. JOHN has gone pale and become motionless.

The shouts: CRUCIFY HIM, CRUCIFY HIM gain in power.

MARY lifts her eyes to PILATE. The ROAR of the people becomes deafening. He meets her gaze, then looks at JESUS

PILATE
NO. I WILL CHASTISE HIM, BUT THEN I WILL
SET HIM FREE.

He has addressed only MARY, JOHN and MAGDALEN and only they seem to hear his words. MARY stands. The SOLDIER tries to guide her away from JESUS, but she resists.

JOHN steps forward and takes MARY's arm.

PILATE frowns at the bloodthirsty roar of the PHARISEES, then signals a ROMAN OFFICER to set BARABBAS free.

The chains around BARABBAS' hands and feet are loosened. He slowly descends the stairs, to the acclaim of the crowd. He cannot believe what is happening to him, and stops at the bottom, directly in front of JESUS.

Face to face, JESUS' eyes PIERCE into the very soul of BARABBAS, who cannot sustain the power of them, and abruptly TAKES OFF through the crowd, knocking down people as he makes his way to the exit.

He bursts out of the PRAETORIUM, into the FORUM of PILATE's palace. He comes to a dead stop as he crashes into JOHN, knocking him to the ground.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Dishevelled MAGDALEN cries out. MARY finds herself looking DIRECTLY INTO THE BLOODSHOT EYES OF BARABBAS.

The moment is brief. The TEMPLE GUARDS, surrounded by ROMANS now, exit the PRAETORIUM dragging JESUS along.

BARABBAS runs.

MARY, JOHN and MAGDALEN are brutally shoved aside. They barely catch a glimpse of JESUS and are nearly TRAMPLED by the CROWD as IT STAMPEDES OUT OF the PRAETORIUM.

CUT TO:

EXT. FLAGELLATION LOGGIA. PILATE'S PALACE. DAY.

The GUARDS drag JESUS toward a marbled enclosure just OFF the FORUM, at the center of which stands a GRANITE PILLAR: the FLAGELLATION ENCLOSURE. The loggia-like enclosure is in plain view of many in the crowd.

THREE MEN stand waiting in the cold marble place. At their feet lie WHIPS, ROPES and THIN RODS. An ARSENAL.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORUM. PILATE'S PALACE. DAY.

MARY turns to JOHN.

MARY

Help me...stay near Him. We must not
leave him, John. Ever leave him...

They approach the FLAGELLATION LOGGIA but are stopped near the door. MARY's eyes are RIVETED to JESUS, now standing in front of the PILLAR. She doesn't notice CLAUDIA, who has appeared, carrying bundles of SOFT-LOOKING LINEN folded in her arms. CLAUDIA stops. MARY senses her presence and turns. CLAUDIA hands MARY the linen and withdraws.

INSIDE THE FLAGELLATION LOGGIA, JESUS has begun to remove His clothes, prodded by the THREE EXECUTIONERS.

MARY at first CLUTCHES the LINEN which CLAUDIA had handed to her, but then becomes aware that MAGDALEN's focus on JESUS is causing hyperventilating sobs to catch in her throat. MAGDALEN's face struggles to maintain composure, but a SHRIEK has begun to make itself in her chest. MARY interrupts the breakdown by HANDING MAGDALEN the linen.

CUT TO:

INT. FLAGELLATION LOGGIA. PILATE'S PALACE FORUM. DAY.

NAKED, JESUS is gruffly CHAINED TO THE GRANITE PILLAR, WITH HIS ARMS HUGGING THE STONE, tied to a ring at its top. The CHAIN is stretched upward by the executioners, to the point that JESUS' FEET barely touch the ground. He manages, somehow, to TURN HIS HEAD TOWARD MARY AT THIS MOMENT and they exchange a brief look.

MARY turns to JOHN.

MARY

Oh, John...I cannot...watch this.

Her face has become CHALK-LIKE and she COLLAPSES in a faint. JOHN holds her in his arms and carries her away from the entrance to the Flagellation chamber. MAGDALEN follows him, reluctantly.

CUT TO:

INT. FLAGELLATION LOGGIA. DAY.

INSIDE, the TORTURERS have selected LONG, THIN, FLEXIBLE WHITE WOOD WHIPS to which are attached STRIPS OF LEATHER.

They begin to RHYTHMICALLY WHIP the bare BACK of JESUS. With EACH STROKE, the SKIN of His back, His legs, His arms BREAKS into WELTS which instantly SWELL. His GROANS of PAIN are LOW, but plainly AUDIBLE. The WELTS on His swollen skin now begin to BREAK, causing a FLOW OF BLOOD, which the new strokes SPLATTER on the PILLAR and the FLOOR. The blood soon flows in continuous rivulets.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORUM. PILATE'S PALACE. DAY.

The CROWD of people milling around the Forum is suddenly subdued. Many stop and watch the flagellation, but then move away from the entrance to the loggia.

ONLY CAIPHAS, ANNAS and some of the ELDERS stay and watch each stroke from within the flagellation loggia.

From where they crouch beside MARY, JOHN and MAGDALEN can HEAR each stroke, as well as the GROANS of JESUS. JOHN'S EYES have filled with tears. MAGDALEN echoes each stroke with a MOAN or a GASP. They have placed the soft LINEN BUNDLES under MARY's head, who is still unconscious.

CUT TO:

INT. FLAGELLATION LOGGIA. DAY.

The TORTURERS now DROP their bloodied WHIPS and UNCHAIN JESUS. They TURN HIM AROUND, with His back to the PILLAR and DRAG His arms up once more, and this time they tie down His legs as well.

The NEW TORTURE INSTRUMENTS SELECTED are HORRENDOUS. They are SMALL CHAINS or STRAPS covered with IRON HOOKS which, as they LAND ON the CHEST, FACE and NECK, as well as the LEGS of JESUS, PENETRATE to the bone and TEAR OFF pieces of His flesh. The BLOOD now SPLATTERS the TORTURERS' FACES as well as the PILLAR and the AREA surrounding it.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE PILATE'S PALACE. MORNING.

A small caravan of MEN RIDING CAMELS comes to a stop in front of the GATES. There are too many people milling about for them to pass. They peer inside the gates.

From their position, they can see over people's heads, PAST THE PRAETORIUM, INTO THE FLAGELLATION ENCLOSURE. Their reaction to what they see is one of horror. The leader among them turns to a bystander:

CAMEL RIDER

Who is that man? What could he have done to deserve such punishment?

BYSTANDER

It is Jesus of Nazareth, whom both King Herod and Pilate have condemned.

CAMEL RIDER

That is not possible... (looks at his companions) I have heard him speak. He is a man of God...

SECOND CAMEL RIDER

(staring in horror at the flagellation scene)
He...baptized me. And my children.

They watch the torture with pained, baffled expressions.

CUT TO:

INT. FLAGELLATION ROOM. MORNING.

After a last SLASH of leather and metal hooks on flesh, a SHORT MAN RUSHES to the pillar with a KNIFE IN HIS HAND.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHORT MAN

Stop. Stop now. Do not scourge this man
to death. He is innocent...

The TORTURERS turns to CAIPHAS and ANNAS, bright-eyed with sadistic eagerness and who glare at JESUS. It is clear they would rather see Him finished off now.

SHORT MAN (cont'd)

(also turns to Caiphas)

Pilate will not be pleased to discover
that his prisoner has been executed,
Caiphas...you know that.

Without waiting for a signal from CAIPHAS, the SHORT MAN CUTS the lines holding JESUS tied to the PILLAR.

Even the ROMAN SOLDIERS lining the flagellation room are RELIEVED that the whipping has stopped.

He then manages to UNTIE the CHAIN held by the RING at the top of the pillar. JESUS falls to the ground at the foot of the pillar, in a pool of His own blood.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORUM. PILATE'S PALACE. DAY.

MARY's eyes open and she abruptly sits up. Her eyes meet JOHN's, then MAGDALEN's, then she quickly STANDS, before they have time to react, and steps to the entrance of the flagellation loggia. Here, she stops as CAIPHAS, ANNAS and the ELDERS, followed by a dozen others, including the TORTURERS, emerge and walk past her.

INSIDE, MARY can HEAR SHOUTS BEFORE SHE CAN SEE ANYTHING.

TEMPLE GUARD (OS)

Get up! On your feet!

ANOTHER TEMPLE GUARD

Stand up, swine...or you'll have reason
to blaspheme.

MARY is joined by JOHN and MAGDALEN. They enter the loggia, stop at the sight of JESUS lying motionless in the pool of blood, surrounded by the Temple GUARDS.

MAGDALEN's face HARDENS at the sight, and she hugs the bundles of linen to her chest.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The Temple Guards continue to shout at JESUS, but they STOP when MARY and MAGDALEN deliberately walk up between them and JESUS. The two women stand and simply stare at the Guards. JOHN joins them, kneels by JESUS, helps Him to get to His feet and, turning to one of the Guards:

JOHN

Cover his nakedness.

Just then CAIPHAS reappears at the entrance to the enclosure. With him is the BRUTISH GUARD who led the Guards in their first attempt to kill JESUS outside of HEROD'S Palace. He carries a torn and dirty SCARLET CLOAK which he roughly drapes over JESUS raw shoulders.

BRUTISH GUARD

Allright, let's go, Your Majesty. We don't want to be late for our audience with the Roman Governor...

They quickly march JESUS off, bent like an old man. CAIPHAS waits, and withdraws last, casting a look of scorn on JOHN, MARY and MAGDALEN.

The FLAGELLATION LOGGIA is empty, all of a sudden.

MARY, JOHN and MAGDALEN turn to the pool of JESUS' blood.

CUT TO:

EXT. PILATE'S PALACE. MORNING.

The GUARDS are forced to move slowly, as JESUS is clearly exhausted and in serious pain. As they march, the BRUTISH GUARD in command is playfully weaving a sort of BRAID with BRANCHES of THORNBUSH.

When he is done he STOPS the group, walks up to JESUS and with mock solemnity JAMS the CROWN OF THORNS onto His head. The THORNS are all placed so that they DEEPLY GOUGE HIS SKULL, one of them driven CLEAN THROUGH AN EYELID. DARK BLOOD RUNS OUT OF THE FRESH WOUNDS.

The BRUTISH GUARD then thrusts a large REED into JESUS' hands, KNEELS BEFORE HIM and waves the procession forward

BRUTISH GUARD

Hail, King of the Jews.

General laughter.

CAIPHAS studies JESUS with detached, scornful interest.

CUT TO:

INT. PRAETORIUM. PILATE'S PALACE. MIDDAY.

PILATE steps out onto the Platform once more, just as JESUS, in His Scarlet CLOAK, WEARING THE CROWN OF THORNS and holding the REED in His hands, is brought in and is forced up the steps onto the platform.

Below, the PRAETORIUM fills up once more.

PILATE cannot take his eyes off JESUS - appalled by what has been done to Him. As JESUS reaches the platform, PILATE moves toward Him and, with gentleness, even FEAR, turns Him around to face the rabble below.

As the full extent of the damage done to JESUS becomes obvious, silence descends on the Praetorium.

JESUS lifts His head, covered with the crown of thorns. His eyes briefly meet PILATE'S.

PILATE

Ecce homo. Behold the man.

CAIPHAS

(loud)

If you release him, Excellency, you are not Caesar's friend. He has made himself king, he is an enemy of Caesar ...it is your duty to crucify him.

The CROWD ECHOES THE WORDS OF CAIPHAS, FILLING THE PRAETORIUM WITH A GREAT DIN.

Agitated now, PILATE points to JESUS.

PILATE

(shouts)

Are you not content? Look at him. If this man once thought he was king of the Jews, I am sure he no longer does.

CAIPHAS

He made himself the son of God. Crucify him.

Another eruption of shouts "CRUCIFY HIM" from the crowd startles and intimidates PILATE. He turns to JESUS and, over the din below:

PILATE

Speak to me. I have the power to crucify you, or else to set you free.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JESUS slowly, painfully lifts His battered face to PILATE. His voice is remarkably strong.

JESUS
You have no power over me.

PILATE is mystified.

JESUS (cont'd)
But they who delivered me to you have the greater sin.

PILATE turns to the infuriated crowd of Pharisees in the PRAETORIUM, then back to JESUS. He finally signals to one of the ROMAN GUARDS to bring him a basin of water. This is placed between him and JESUS.

JESUS looks at the clear water:

FADE TO BLACK:

THE BLACK FADES TO WHITE:

INT. LAST SUPPER ROOM. NIGHT.

JESUS stands at a long table, between JOHN and PETER. The rest of His Apostles sit on either side of JOHN and PETER. All watch as He uncovers a CHALICE, places it on the table before Him, lifts a ROUND PLATE and place this OVER the shelf. He BLESSES the bread and oils which sit in small VASES next to the chalice and turns to PETER. PETER pours some WINE into the chalice, which JESUS blesses by raising it up with both hands.

First JESUS turns to PETER who POURS WATER ON His hands, then to JOHN, who follows suit. Their gestures are both imposing and mysterious.

CUT TO:

INT. PILATE'S PALACE. DAY.

PILATE dips his hands in the water as he faces the mob below the platform. They quiet down as he dramatically washes his hands before them and cries out:

PILATE
I have said I find no cause in him. You take him. You crucify him. I am innocent of the blood of this man.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAIPHAS

May his blood be upon us, then, and upon
our children.

Pandemonium. CAIPHAS and ANNAS turn to the Temple GUARDS and
SHOUT IN THEIR EARS OVER THE TUMULT.

THE BRUTISH GUARD points to PILATE. They look up.

PILATE is INSCRIBING SOMETHING ON A FLAT WOODEN BOARD. When
he is finished he hands the BOARD to a ROMAN GUARD who
delivers it to CAIPHAS.

CAIPHAS reads, then turns angrily to PILATE:

PILATE

Place it on the cross for all to read.

CAIPHAS

KING OF THE JEWS? He is not King of the
Jews, Governor!

PILATE waits for some quiet, then, with contempt and
authority:

PILATE

What I have written I have written.

PILATE exits, so eager to get away that he fails to see
CLAUDIA near the exit, eyes fixed on the bent, nearly
crushed, bleeding figure of JESUS.

Galvanized by the HOWLING MOB, the TEMPLE GUARDS rush up the
stairs, take hold of JESUS and force Him down the stairs,
stumbling and tripping.

At the foot of the stairs He is met by the BRUTISH GUARD.
The smile is sadistic, ominous.

FADE OUT:

EXT. PILATE'S PALACE GATES. DAY.

MARY, JOHN and MAGDALEN are being shoved around by the
excited mob emerging from the ROMAN GOVERNOR'S FORUM. The
energy of the mob is hot, unfocused, primitive... filled with
animal anticipation.

ROMAN SOLDIERS, in formation, try to keep the people away
from a CLEARING just outside the OPEN GATES. The CROWD NOISE
is LOUD, UNRELENTING.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLARE of TRUMPETS. HORSEHOOVES on COBBLESTONE. PILATE emerges from the GATES riding a STALLION. He is followed by A DOZEN ROMAN CAVALRY OFFICERS.

MAGDALEN is the FIRST to see the EXECUTIONERS emerge from the gates directly behind the horsemen. They are a different, savage-looking lot of men. They carry with them the tools of their occupation, loosely in their hands: LONG SHARP NAILS, ROPE WRAPPED AROUND THEIR SHOULDERS, LARGE HAMMERS, other wood-working tools.

MAGDALEN's eyes follow the scruffy band, then, wide-eyed with PANIC, turn once more to the GATES.

TWO BRUISED and BATTERED MEN (DISMAS and GESMAS) emerge. Their ARMS are TIED TO stubby LOGS of wood.

A new terror now enters into MAGDALEN's eyes. She sees the same realization in both MARY's and JOHN's expressions. Wild-eyed now, near panic, MAGDALEN scans the faces and movements all around her, then FREEZES.

TWO MEN BRING OUT a LONG, well-trimmed LOG and deposit it on the ground, at the center of the cleared area.

PILATE and his HORSEMEN watch, along with the rest of the crowd. Then he turns his horse to face the gates.

From BEHIND MAGDALEN, CAIPHAS and ANNAS PUSH past, approach PILATE and point to the SOLDIER carrying the WOODEN SIGN on which KING OF THE JEWS is inscribed.

CAIPHAS

Excellency, you must not allow that sign to be...

PILATE

(interrupts)
It is the accusation I chose to heed.

CAIPHAS

But it is not the reason he...

PILATE

(interrupts again, harshly)
Your law is not my law. I have told you what I think.

He spurs his mount. The horse stamps his feet on the cobblestone and CAIPHAS backs away, angry and fearful.

The CROWD is TENSE as it nervously awaits the appearance of JESUS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PILATE's eyes scan the crowd and settle on MAGDALEN as she BREAKS away from the rest and RUSHES toward his mount. The HORSE is momentarily spooked.

MAGDALEN RUSHES past JOHN and MARY, throws herself on the ground before PILATE, crying out as she points at CAIPHAS

MAGDALEN

Do not let them, I beseech you do not let them crucify a holy man!

Her cries have now seriously spooked PILATE's HORSE, who bucks, raises his front legs and dangerously kicks the air. JOHN rushes in, literally LIFTS MAGDALEN to her feet and carries her out of the way of the horse's hooves.

MAGDALEN's CRIES are loud, unconsolable.

PILATE is SHAKEN by the confrontation with MAGDALEN. His eye turn to MARY, next to MAGDALEN and JOHN, but SHE has now focused on JESUS as He emerges from the FORUM, dressed in his own clothes again. He comes to a stop directly in front of the LOG, falls to His knees, OPENS His arms and EMBRACES the wood.

DISMAS and GESMAS watch, along with everyone else.

GESMAS

Why do you hug your cross, fool?
There...hug them! They're the ones who
can save you...the Romans!

DISMAS looks at GESMAS with reproach, but GESMAS grins back with scornful malice.

JESUS slowly, painfully rises to His feet. The TEMPLE GUARDS now once again TIE Him up with chains and ropes, the same as when they first arrested Him. He is then FORCED to His knees, the LOG is placed on his SHOULDER.

MAGDALEN WAILS. She is the only one who always lets the full force of her despair express itself.

PILATE signals the ROMAN HORSEMEN. A TRUMPET IS SOUNDED and they MOVE OFF, at the head of the ghoulish procession

The BRUTISH GUARD who made the Crown of Thorns, stands over JESUS and shouts:

BRUTISH GUARD

Rise up, your highness. Mumbling psalms
will not help you now. Rise and set off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JESUS tries, but the full weight of the log on His shoulder is too much for Him. The BRITISH GUARD waves a couple of his men over. They grab hold of JESUS under His arms as well as the LOG. Trembling with pain and exhaustion, JESUS now lifts Himself to His feet. The weight of the wood is crushing. He supports the LOG on His right shoulder, helping Himself with His right arm.

The CORDS fastened to the the belt around His waist are held by TEMPLE GUARDS both in front of Him and behind.

ROMAN FOOT-SOLDIERS LINE the street and prevent the CROWD from approaching the THREE CONDEMNED MEN.

The streets and rooftops, however, are dense with curious men, women and children. Many shout indecipherably as JESUS passes in front of them, others watch silently.

The slow, painful procession, under the HEAT of the sun, now approaches an AQUEDUCT under which the roadway is in VERY POOR SHAPE. At the center of the road is a HOLLOW FILLED WITH DIRTY WATER.

JESUS reaches the hollow, exhausted, and FALLS, HIS FACE slamming onto a rock. The LOG tumbles to the ground.

The fury and sadism of the Temple GUARDS redoubles. They SHOUT and KICK JESUS, who remains momentarily MOTIONLESS.

Then, in the middle of the violent display by the GUARDS, JESUS slowly reaches out an arm in a gesture that asks for help. No one does. He lifts His head and looks up at the bright SUN, directly overhead.

FADE TO WHITE:

EXT. GARDEN IN JERUSALEM. DAY.

Blinding sunlight. SIMON of CYRENE's face is drenched with sweat. His children are seated in a shady area, watching him work. He wipes his face with a cloth, looks at the tool he is holding, puts it down with precision beside the rest of his tools, and walks toward his children. Once there, he picks up a cup and dips it into a large bucket seated on the edge of a well. He DRINKS and looks at the children. They are unusually solemn.

SIMON OF CYRENE
It's time to go home.

The children hop off the ledge.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD TO GOLGOTHA. DAY.

JESUS is back on His knees. The LOG lies beside Him and two of the GUARDS have taken hold of it by each end. The BRUTISH GUARD approaches and JAMS the CROWN OF THORNS back onto JESUS' head as the LOG is placed back on His shoulder so that He is forced to move His head to the side, away from the wood. He staggers to His feet.

The BLOOD from his FLAGELLATION WOUNDS has begun to FILTER THROUGH His clothes.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET OF JERUSALEM. DAY.

MARY and JOHN walk at the head of the group of women, among whom MAGDALEN, whose cries have been replaced with tightlipped silence.

MARY CRUMPLES to the ground, as though the weight of the cross had been placed on her shoulders.

MARY

John...

JOHN

We must hurry, Mary...we must hurry.

MARY struggles to her feet, trips on her garment, stands up again, pale, distraught yet determined. She follows JOHN down a narrow street toward a BUILDING set along the WIDER street. People have already gathered on the edges of the road, and there is a TUMULT of voices approaching.

JOHN KNOCKS THREE TIMES on a door. A servant opens it. MARY, JOHN, MAGDALEN and the rest of the women step INTO the doorway. The approaching PROCESSION is getting louder

MARY

John...I do not know if I have the strength to remain...

JOHN looks at her with deep concern.

JOHN

(ever so gently)
He is almost here, Mary. They are coming this way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY

I do not know if I have the strength to support such a sight, John. If I should not..go away now.

JOHN peers at the street, steeply winding its way upward.

JOHN

If you do not stay and see him pass, you will grieve all the more later.

PILATE and the HORSEMEN pass now, followed by the TWO THIEVES, DISMAS and GESMAS, carrying their crosses.

MARY searches past DISMAS and GESMAS and sees JESUS. She brings her hands together and becomes utterly still.

JESUS looks as if He were SINKING beneath the weight of His cross. His head droops away from the wood, bleeding continuously from the LONG THORNS sunk in His skull and forehead. Despite His desperate condition, He manages to cast a side glance at MARY as He staggers past her.

MARY

(whisper)

My son...

JESUS loses his footing for the second time and falls to His knees.

MARY impulsively rushes past the distracted GUARDS, THROWS herself at His feet, embraces His bleeding legs.

The ROMAN SOLDIERS look on, embarrassed.

ROMAN SOLDIER

Who is that brave woman?

SECOND ROMAN SOLDIER

She is the Galilean's mother.

TWO of the ROMAN SOLDIERS step forward, PUSH AWAY the TEMPLE GUARDS who are SHOUTING AT MARY and lead MARY back to JOHN and MAGDALEN.

The CROWD around the ROMAN SOLDIERS, TEMPLE GUARDS and the THREE CONDEMNED MEN has become BOISTEROUS, despite the MANY FACES among them who look on in silence.

JESUS manages to get back on His feet, although His back is now bent like that of an OLD MAN. The BLOOD streaming from the CROWN OF THORNS is now blinding Him as it drips into His eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARY, JOHN and MAGDALEN remain in the doorway until the procession has moved on.

CUT TO:

EXT. EASTERN WALLS OF JERUSALEM. STREET. DAY.

SIMON OF CYRENE and his three CHILDREN are walking toward a WIDER STREET. They hesitate for a moment when they see the CROWD of people ahead.

PILATE appears leading the ROMAN HORSEMEN.

SIMON's CHILDREN, EXCITED by the sight of the horses and uniforms RUN AHEAD of SIMON and push through the crowd. The CHILDREN STOP abruptly as they SEE what is in reality happening. Their eyes widen in horror.

Carrying the heavy LOG on His bent shoulder, His HEAD COVERED WITH BLOOD, JESUS STUMBLES. The LOG slides off His shoulder once again and JESUS falls a THIRD TIME.

It is at this moment that SIMON manages to get past the dense, JEERING CROWD lining the street, in pursuit of his CHILDREN, who stand next to where JESUS has fallen, staring at Him in bewildered silence.

SIMON takes in the horrific scene: the GUARDS - DISMAS and GESMAS - JESUS on the ground near where he stands.

BRUTISH GUARD

On his feet, damn you all! Get him back on his feet.

ROMAN SOLDIER

Are you blind? Don't you see the man cannot continue like this? He'll die before you ever get him to Golgotha.

The BRUTISH GUARD scans the faces, trying to gauge what he can get away with. A SECOND GUARD mutters to him:

SECOND GUARD

The Roman is right, look at him! Maybe we should get someone else to carry his cross.

The BRUTISH GUARD's eyes have just fallen on SIMON OF CYRENE, large, broad-shouldered, reaching out to take the hands of his two younger children.

BRUTISH GUARD

You!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SIMON lifts his head as the people around him move away. He now finds himself isolated from the rest, he and his children. He looks back at the BRUTISH GUARD:

BRUTISH GUARD (cont'd)
(brusque)
Yes, YOU! Come here, I said.

SIMON's CHILDREN look up at him. The youngest starts to cry. SIMON pulls him close as he approaches the GUARD.

SIMON OF CYRENE
What do you want from me?

BRUTISH GUARD
This blasphemer has been condemned to be crucified, but he's no longer able to carry his cross. You will carry it for him. Now let's get moving.

SIMON looks at the LOG, then at JESUS, who has lifted His head, slowly, painfully, to look at SIMON.

SIMON OF CYRENE
No, I'm sorry, but I cannot do what you ask. This is none of my business. You'll have to find someone else...

The CHILDREN, all crying now, clutch at SIMON's clothes.

The BRUTISH GUARD looks at them, indifferently, shrugs and interrupts SIMON, threateningly.

BRUTISH GUARD
I'm not asking for your help. I'm ordering you to pick up that cross. Now let's go.

JESUS's blood-drenched eyes meet SIMON's, then turn on the frightened CHILDREN hanging onto SIMON's cloak. Their grip on SIMON's clothes loosens.

SIMON OF CYRENE
Alright. (raises his voice for all to hear) But remember, all of you, that I have not been condemned...that I, an innocent man, have been asked to carry the cross of one who is condemned.

He turns to the children, who are still looking at JESUS.

SIMON OF CYRENE (cont'd)
Stay here and wait for me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

A WOMAN steps forward and places her hands on the children's shoulders, comfortingly.

There is little strength left in JESUS, yet He looks at SIMON with gratitude before He is dragged forward again.

SIMON lifts the LOG to his shoulders and follows.

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE ON ROAD TO GOLGOTHA. DAY.

The NOISE of HORSEHOoves ON STONE, and that of the CROWD OUTSIDE, drift in from an open window into a bare room.

In the room a TALL, BEAUTIFUL WOMAN of NOBLE BEARING (SERAPHIA, aka VERONICA) is pouring some wine into a goblet. By her side is a YOUNG GIRL. As soon as the goblet is filled, SERAPHIA also picks up a fine LINEN VEIL. The veil in one hand and the goblet in the other, she opens the door and exits.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD TO GOLGOTHA. DAY.

The PROCESSION of ROMAN SOLDIERS, TEMPLE GUARDS, DISMAS, GESMAS and JESUS, with SIMON OF CYRENE struggling to follow is practically AT SERAPHIA'S DOOR.

The ROMAN SOLDIERS are too distracted to notice SERAPHIA as she majestically STRIDES toward JESUS. By the time they notice the tall woman and the girl, SERAPHIA has knelt down in front of JESUS. She hands the GOBLET to the girl and reaches up to His face with the VEIL:

SERAPHIA
Permit me, my Lord.

JESUS tremblingly takes the veil in his hands and places it over His face. This removes some of the BLOOD, SWEAT and GRIME. He hands the veil back to her.

By now the GUARDS as well as the SOLDIERS have taken note of what's happening.

The BRUTISH TEMPLE GUARD steps back toward JESUS just as the GIRL tries to hand JESUS the GOBLET of wine. He KNOCKS THE GOBLET out of her hand onto the ground.

SIMON watches, immobilized by the LOG on his back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRUTISH GUARD

Who do you think you are, woman, that you can approach a condemned man like so? Get back to where you came from!

SERAPHIA and the GIRL quickly retreat.

The BRUTISH GUARD then turn to JESUS with open hatred and HITS HIM with a long STICK as he shouts:

BRUTISH GUARD (cont'd)

GET ALONG, MARCH! MOVE IT!

JESUS takes a weak step forward, then slips and falls to His knees a FOURTH TIME. This triggers a BURST of rage in the GUARD, who LASHES OUT AT JESUS with his stick. The other GUARDS are galvanized by his ferocity and so fail to hear the HEAVY THUD of the LOG as it falls to the ground, off SIMON of CYRENE's shoulder. SIMON strides up to the BRUTISH GUARD, GRABS THE STICK OUT OF HIS HAND AS HE IS ABOUT TO STRIKE JESUS AGAIN, BREAKS IT IN HALF OVER HIS KNEE AND THROWS IT AWAY.

SIMON OF CYRENE

STOP IT!

The BRUTISH GUARD and his men freeze, stunned.

SIMON glances at JESUS, whose battered face is once again covered with blood, and whose entire body TREMBLES CONTINUOUSLY. SIMON's FURY explodes:

SIMON OF CYRENE (cont'd)

If you don't stop torturing this man I will NOT CARRY THAT CROSS ONE STEP FURTHER. I don't care what you do to me, I don't care if you kill me.

Quick, angry glances between the men.

BRUTISH GUARD

Allright. Allright. Let's move along. We don't have all day...let's GO!

The road is steep. JESUS moves with agonizing difficulty. The WALLS of JERUSALEM are behind the procession as they wind their way upward, followed by the mob of people.

CUT TO:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EXT. GOLGOTHA. DAY.

At the TOP of Calvary, on the relatively FLAT EXECUTION GROUND (GOLGOTHA), PILATE and his HORSEMEN watch the grim procession wind its way upward.

PILATE turns to the EXECUTION SITE, where men are still digging the pits into which the crosses will be dropped.

PILATE turns to the ROMAN CAVALRY OFFICERS.

PILATE

Stay here. Keep an eye on the Temple Guards and those priests...see that my orders are fully complied with.

Before any of the horsemen can answer he spurs his mount.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD TO CALVARY. DAY.

JESUS stumbles and FALLS a FIFTH TIME.

He turns to look at the WALLS OF JERUSALEM, now stretched out below where He has fallen. Behind Him, SIMON struggles with the weight of the LOG.

The SOUND of HORSEHOoves. PILATE appears over the rise and rides down the road toward the procession. He stops his horse when he reaches JESUS. He sits motionless and studies JESUS with obvious discomfort. He is a man very much in distress, nagged by his conscience.

PILATE abruptly WHIPS his mount into a GALLOP.

WE FOLLOW PILATE'S CRAZY RIDE down the steep road toward the city, SCATTERING men, women and children as he goes. Only two Cavalry Officers make the ride back with him.

JESUS watches the escape of PILATE, along with DISMAS and GESMAS and SIMON of CYRENE.

FADE OUT:

EXT. ROAD TO CALVARY. DAY.

The rest of the ROMAN HORSEMEN now DESCEND from GOLGOTHA, slowly, toward the PROCESSION. They TAKE UP STAGGERED POSITIONS along the road beside the ROMAN FOOTSOLDIERS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Temple Guards, under pressure now to accomplish their mission as quickly as possible, vent their discomfort on the condemned, first by whipping GESMAS and DISMAS, then by turning their attention once more to JESUS.

CUT TO:

EXT. GOLGOTHA EXECUTION GROUND. DAY.

EXHAUSTED, JESUS FALLS for the SIXTH TIME on this last stretch. It is a BRUTAL FALL. The GUARDS are upon him like a swarm of BEES, but He rises despite their brutal beatings and takes the last few steps onto the plateau.

SIMON, directly behind Him and very nearly at the end of his own strength, watches JESUS stagger onto the flat ground and fall to the ground.

SIMON struggles mightily to drag the LOG the last few steps onto highland, where he lets it DROP to the ground.

SIMON OF CYRENE'S POV:

There are FIVE ROADWAYS leading into the GOLGOTHA Plateau. From the most level of the roadways now appear the HORSES of CAIPHAS, ANNAS and other members of the SANHEDRIM. They enter the circular zone, dismount.

The MOST CROWDED, and steepest, of the roadways is the road taken by the executioners. The CROWD OF ONLOOKERS now streams onto the PERIPHERY of the execution ground.

MORE PEOPLE make their way onto the flat ground from the other roads and form a CIRCLE around the EXECUTION AREA.

WORKMEN here still labour feverishly to prepare the PITS into which the CROSSES will be dropped.

The SOUND of METAL as the EXECUTIONERS DROP their tools to the ground: HEAVY HAMMERS, LONG WIDE NAILS, ROPES.

The BRUTISH GUARD approaches SIMON of CYRENE.

BRUTISH GUARD

Go now. You are released. You did what was asked of you. Go.

The GUARD turns away from him, dismissively.

SIMON ignores him. Instead, he approaches the prostrate figure of JESUS, kneels beside Him and studies His torn, blood-soaked face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He then lifts his face and watches the WORKMEN as they TIE, then NAIL ARMS onto the central LOG, and finish ASSEMBLING THE CROSS. JESUS body begins to TREMBLE.

SIMON unfolds a heavy woolen CLOAK he carries draped over his shoulder and wraps it around JESUS' shoulders.

SIMON POV:

C.U. of the WOUNDS on JESUS' neck, the GOUGED SKIN on His scalp, the WET BLOODSTAINS covering all His clothes. THE EYES OF JESUS as they OPEN and WATCH HIS FACE.

JUST THEN, SHADOWS move between the two. SIMON turns to look. TWO ROMAN HORSEMEN. One of them (ABENADAR) watches SIMON. SIMON stands up.

Between the two HORSEMEN, MARY, JOHN and MAGDALEN are stepping toward him, eyes riveted on the figure of JESUS.

CUT TO:

EXT. GOLGOTHA. DAY.

CAIPHAS, ANNAS and two ELDER MEMBERS of the SANHEDRIM inspect the CENTRAL PIT into which the CROSS will be fitted. It is on the HIGHEST GROUND on GOLGOTHA, behind an enormous BOULDER.

CAIPHAS looks up at the sky, which is darkening with SWIFT-MOVING CLOUDS. He turns to the GUARDS, SIGNALS the BRUTISH one to approach.

CUT TO:

EXT. GOLGOTHA. DAY.

SIMON steps away from JESUS as MARY, JOHN and MAGDALEN approach.

ABENADAR and the SECOND ROMAN HORSEMAN have UNCONSCIOUSLY halted their mounts in a way that makes them appear as if they are here to GUARD MARY, JOHN and MAGDALEN.

JOHN and MAGDALEN are too focused on JESUS to see anyone else, but MARY raises her eyes, recognizes SIMON, slows and stops in front of him.

No one has time to say anything because the BRUTISH TEMPLE GUARD now steps between MAGDALEN and JESUS. His eyes glare at the figure on the ground.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRUTISH GUARD

Allright, your throne is ready, your majesty. Plenty of time for rest after the...coronation ceremony.

Guffaws from a number of the Guards and executioners.

BRUTISH GUARD (cont'd)

Now GET UP! No time to waste!

He tries to make room for JESUS by pushing back JOHN and MAGDALEN from Him. He looks at them, irritated:

BRUTISH GUARD (cont'd)

Move back behind the soldiers, both of you. No one is to be allowed near the condemned from now on...

His eyes drift to MARY, to SIMON. They FREEZE on SIMON:

BRUTISH GUARD (cont'd)

What are you still doing here? I told you LEAVE...GO HOME!

He moves toward them, arm raised, but STOPS when ABENADAR spurs his mount forward and rests his horsewhip, softly, on the man's shoulder.

ABENADAR

No.

The BRUTISH GUARD look up at ABENADAR, frowns.

ABENADAR (cont'd)

You are in this man's debt.

JESUS has opened His eyes. MAGDALEN falls back to her knees beside Him and starts to wipe BLOOD from His face.

BRUTISH GUARD (cont'd)

We can't just let anyone wander in who wants to look. They'll get in the way. We have a job to do.

JESUS is struggling to get back to His feet. MAGDALEN and JOHN help Him. Their clothes are covered with His blood.

MAGDALEN

(interrupts)

A job. You call what you've done to this holy man a JOB? Animals have more mercy than you do. Barbarians.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The BRUTISH GUARD glances at her. Her thick mane of hair has come loose, her face is now wet with tears and her clothes are covered with JESUS' blood.

BRUTISH GUARD
You shameless wench...how dare you speak
to me like so?

JOHN is the one who now steps up and grabs the man's wrist as he is about to hit MAGDALEN.

JOHN
No, please. I will take her away...

JOHN helps MAGDALEN move off. She struggles, tearfully.

ABENADAR's eyes narrow as he studies JESUS, then he turns to MARY and SIMON. The profound pain and sorrow etched on MARY's face seems to stab at his Heart. When they, too, have moved away:

ABENADAR
(to the Brutish Guard, soft)
Who is she? That woman..?

BRUTISH GUARD
(gruff, ill-tempered)
The Galilean's mother.

The BRUTISH GUARD now PUSHES JESUS back down to His knees next to the CROSS. The rest of the EXECUTIONERS are impatient, UNCERTAIN what they can get away with as long as ABENADAR keeps close to the area.

FADE TO WHITE:

INT. HOUSE OF NICODEMUS IN JERUSALEM. LAST SUPPER. NIGHT.

A BLAZING, RED HOT OVEN. FLAT LOAVES of UNLEAVENED bread are taken from the oven, covered with linen.

A low, narrow table (shaped like a horseshoe) around which the APOSTLES sit on the floor, six on each side of JESUS. Attendants approach through the inner part of the half-circle, carrying the LINEN COVERED LOAVES.

JESUS reaches for the LINEN covering the loaves, and lifts it off the bread.

FADE TO PRESENT:

EXT. GOLGOTHA. DAY.

The CAPE which SIMON draped over JESUS is PULLED OFF HIS BACK by the BRUTISH GUARD, who steps back as JESUS struggles to LIE BACK on the cross. The CROWN of THORNS gets in the way which forces Him to keep His head at an unnatural angle. Agony.

The EXECUTIONERS move in like hungry animals. They first MEASURE where the hands and feet of JESUS will rest on the wood, then leave MARKS on the CROSS.

FADE TO WHITE:

INT. HOUSE OF NICODEMUS IN JERUSALEM. LAST SUPPER. NIGHT.

The mood around the table becomes solemn.

JESUS then reaches for a PLATE on the table and PLACES IT OVER a CHALICE in front of Him. He then picks up one of the LOAVES of bread, PLACES IT ON THE PLATE, looks up and scans the faces around the table.

JESUS

You are my friends, and the greatest love a person can have for his friends is to give his life for them.

Quick exchange of puzzled looks among the Apostles.

JOHN looks down at the LOAF OF BREAD on the plate in front of JESUS.

FADE OUT:

EXT. GOLGOTHA. DAY.

JOHN watches JESUS try to stretch out on the cross as the EXECUTIONERS take their measurements. MARY buries her face in JOHN's chest. JOHN's eyes fill with tears.

SIMON has to PHYSICALLY HOLD BACK MAGDALEN who then falls to her knees, numbed by her effort.

MAGDALEN'S POV:

JESUS has both His arms stretched out on the arms of the cross. The EXECUTIONERS act as though His limbs were those of a puppet.

ABENADAR looks gigantic on his horse, and imposing. The BRUTISH GUARD, by comparison, seems small and malicious as he SHOUTS DOWN INTO JESUS' face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRUTISH GUARD

All right, your highness, we're almost ready. Now get up! On your feet...

The rough measurements taken, he reaches down and grasps JESUS's clothes and YANKS Him to His feet.

The EXECUTIONERS remove the ropes still tied to JESUS and try to pull His WOOLEN GARMENT over His head. The CROWN of THORNS is in the way. The BRUTAL GUARD steps in and simply YANKS it OFF, causing fresh wounds, then grabs the garment and TEARS it over JESUS' head.

He is now left wearing only His SCAPULAR and His loin covering. The SCAPULAR is made of wool. It has STUCK to His raw, bleeding flesh. The BRUTAL GUARD RIPS IT OFF.

What is left standing is the COMPLETELY TORN, SKINLESS, BLOOD-DRENCHED BODY of JESUS, shaking like an aspen.

He starts to falter. LAUGHING heartlessly, the GUARDS now JAM the CROWN OF THORNS back on His head.

Nearly BLINDED by the fresh blood pouring onto His face and INTO HIS EYES, JESUS looks around the EXECUTION GROUND.

JESUS' POV:

The EXECUTIONERS, busily preparing the CROSSES.

The ROMAN FOOTSOLDIERS and HORSEMEN.

CAIPHAS, ANNAS and other ELDERS, on the periphery of the EXECUTION GROUND, behind whom are crowded dozens and dozens of MEN, WOMEN and CHILDREN.

Finally His BLOOSOAKED, bruised and battered face stops searching and focuses on JOHN, MARY and MAGDALEN.

They gaze at His ravaged face with agonized expressions.

FADE TO WHITE:

INT. HOUSE OF NICODEMUS IN JERUSALEM. LAST SUPPER. NIGHT.

JOHN lifts his eyes away from the LOAF OF BREAD in JESUS' hands and gaze at His face.

In SHARP CONTRAST with the face we just saw at GOLGOTHA it is a VIGOROUS, SUPREMEY CALM and SOLEMN face.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JESUS

I shall not be with you much longer, my friends, and you cannot go where I am going. My command to you after I am gone is this: love one another. As I have loved you...so love one another.

FADE OUT:

EXT. GOLGOTHA. DAY.

The BRITISH GUARD points to the ready cross. JESUS slowly gets to His knees and then once again struggles to LIE DOWN on the cross.

The eager executioners surround Him now, their tools at the ready.

ABENADAR and the ROMAN SOLDIERS watch with growing UNEASE as the CROWD of PHARISEES and SADDUCEES suddenly BURST INTO HATEFUL, JEERING SHOUTS.

CAIPHAS and ANNAS and members of the Sanhedrim look on, triumphant:

The EXECUTIONERS TIE DOWN the RIGHT ARM OF JESUS with a cord after DRAGGING HIS RIGHT HAND to where the HOLE has been drilled in the wood beneath it. One of the men then HOLDS the right hand OPEN while a second man places the end of one of the LONG THICK NAILS ONTO HIS WRIST and, with a HEAVY HAMMER, DRIVES THE NAIL INTO THE FLESH AND THROUGH IT, DEEPLY INTO THE WOOD. The LONG POINT of the nail emerges on the OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE WOOD.

JESUS lets out a DEEP, SUPPRESSED GROAN.

BLOOD GUSHES out of JESUS' palm, partly spraying the face of the executioner banging the nail through the hand.

MAGDALEN GASPS, then SCREAMS. This is followed by a long passionate wail.

MARY stands up, her face manifesting inexpressible pain.

JOHN's eyes widen with horror. He bows his head.

FADE OUT:

INT. HOUSE OF NICODEMUS. JERUSALEM. NIGHT.

JESUS reaches down, picks up the LOAF OF BREAD off the plate before Him, and breaks the bread in half.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We MOVE IN ON THE LOAF, the STRONG HANDS HOLDING IT and finally the RADIANT FACE OF JESUS.

JESUS

You believe in me and you know that I am the Way, the Truth and the Light...

FADE OUT:

EXT. GOLGOTHA. DAY.

JESUS lifts His HEAD off the cross, in a spasm of agony as the BLOOD-SOAKED EXECUTIONERS now stretch His LEFT ARM toward the MARKED HOLE which they earlier carved in the arm of the cross. Curses and loud imprecations. The hole has been drilled too far from where JESUS' WRIST lies.

The BRUTAL TEMPLE GUARD strides up to them, knocks them back and peers down at the arm of the cross.

BRUTAL TEMPLE GUARD

Idiots! Here, let me show you how it's done! Like THIS...

He takes hold of JESUS' hand and wrist and PULLS with ALL HIS STRENGTH until the ELBOW SOCKET COMES LOOSE with a POP, then the SHOULDER SOCKET of the arm also COMES LOOSE

BRUTAL TEMPLE GUARD (cont'd)

(grunting with effort)

There! NOW GET IN THERE, HOLD THE HAND OPEN, NO...NOT LIKE THAT! LIKE SO, YOU IDIOT! YES! THERE! NOW!...

The EXECUTIONER he's addressing BANGS THE NAIL INTO PLACE THROUGH JESUS' WRIST, into the arm of the cross.

JESUS' LEGS TWIST, CONTRACT and SHAKE UNCONTROLLABLY. His groan becomes a long cry of agony.

FADE TO WHITE:

INT. HOUSE OF NICODEMUS. JERUSALEM. NIGHT.

The FACE OF JESUS is suffused with brilliance as He AGAIN BREAKS THE LOAF OF BREAD.

JESUS

Remember, I will do whatever you ask for in my name, so that the Father's glory will be shown through His Son.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HE holds the BREAD UP with both hands, as if He were offering it in sacrifice. The faces of the Apostles are riveted on His gestures, JOHN'S ON THE BREAD.

FADE OUT:

EXT. GOLGOTHA. DAY.

JOHN'S trembling face as he watches the EXECUTIONERS TIE the arms and chest of JESUS to the cross. They then TAKE HOLD OF HIS CONTRACTED LEGS and PULL HIS FEET DOWN THE LENGTH OF THE CROSS and TIE THEM TOGETHER, holding one foot over the other. The VIOLENCE and TENSION of THESE ACTIONS is compounded by the SKINLESS condition of His legs as they, too, are PULLED OUT OF JOINT:

JESUS
My God, my God...

A MUCH LONGER NAIL THAN THE OTHERS is now BANGED THROUGH BOTH of His feet. Each HAMMER BLOW matches an increase in the CACOPHONY surrounding the execution ground.

FADE TO WHITE:

INT. HOUSE OF NICODEMUS. JERUSALEM. NIGHT.

JESUS lowers His hands and puts the pieces of bread back in the PLATE which he placed over the chalice. The BRILLIANCE which envelops JESUS FLOWS from His fingers INTO THE BREAD HE NOW BREAKS INTO BITE-SIZE MORCELS.

JESUS
I am in the Father, and the Father is in me. I say this to you now; whoever receives me receives Him who sent me.

JOHN'S eyes are focused with reverence on the plate. As JESUS finishes breaking the BREAD, He picks up the plate with one hand, one of the bread morcels with the other. Turning to JOHN:

JESUS (cont'd)
Take this and eat. This is my body, which is given for you.

As JOHN takes the bread and eats it, he is INFUSED with the same brilliance which surrounds the figure of JESUS.

FADE OUT:

EXT. GOLGOTHA. DAY.

JOHN is frozen into place, standing next to MARY. They both seem incapable of drawing breath.

SIMON's eyes have filled with tears.

MAGDALEN, on her hands and knees, now moves toward the cross to which JESUS is nailed, lying on the ground and surrounded by the EXECUTIONERS. No one seems to notice her as she approaches, except ABENADAR, who does not stop her, but points her out to one of the FOOTSOLDIERS.

ABANADAR himself is mesmerized by the grunting, sweaty, blood-soaked EXECUTIONERS. He is distracted by MOVEMENT. CAIPHAS, ANNAS and some of the ELDERS approach the cross.

They STAND OVER the stretched and agonizing figure of JESUS, ignoring the groans of DISMAS and GESMAS nearby.

A ROMAN SOLDIER is preparing to NAIL the WOODEN BOARD to the cross, on which PILATE INSCRIBED "KING OF THE JEWS".

CAIPHAS signals ANNAS, who reaches into a satchel he wears around his neck, and produces a small BAG. The ring of silver catches the ROMAN SOLDIER's attention.

ANNAS

For you. In exchange for...that (nods
at the board)

ABENADAR has spurred his mount and approached silently.

ABENADAR

Sargent! You have your orders...

The SARGENT nails the board onto the top of the cross, then runs back to the periphery of the execution ground.

ABENADAR (cont'd)

(looks at Annas and Caiphas)
You...all of you, get back to where you
were, behind the guards. No one is
allowed here without dispensation..go.

Offended, and trying to look dignified, they retreat. On his way, CAIPHAS nods secretly to the BRUTISH GUARD.

The EXECUTIONERS have all noticed MAGDALEN as she has come to a stop near the cross. She ignores them, the soldiers, even ABENADAR on his tall mount. Her eyes are fixated on JESUS, nailed and tied down to the cross.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAGDALEN POV:

Details of the crucifixion. They are jumpy, sometimes IN FOCUS, other times not: the CROWN of THORNS, the BLOOD dripping from His head onto the wood of the cross, the movement of his FINGERS beyond the hands immobilized by the nails, the trembling of His knees, BACK TO THE NAILS... the POINTS OF THE NAILS which have been HAMMERED IN, THROUGH and OUT THE OPPOSITE SIDE of the wood.

MAGDALEN has reverted to primordial sounds, but these abruptly STOP as she SCANS the wood UNDER the cross. She lifts her eyes to the agonizing figure of JESUS lying flat on the wood. Her head shakes in silent disbelief.

The BRUTISH Temple GUARD is focusing again on the cross. He sees MAGDALEN peering UNDERNEATH the wood. He looks. His face widens with sadistic anticipation. He looks at the EXECUTIONERS, who have started to put away their tools. He hits them, pushes them toward the cross:

BRUTISH GUARD

LOOK, you monkeys! No...UNDER there! See anything? Do you see that?

He CROUCHES, points, touches the point of one of the nails, sticking out by six inches.

BRUTISH GUARD (cont'd)

Turn it on its face, imbeciles! Nail them DOWN FLAT, damn you all, or his majesty'll drop off the minute we plant this tree! UP and OVER..!

The men take hold of one whole side of the cross and HEAVE it upward until it TEETERS perilously on its SIDE.

There is a minute of suspended motion, then the cross slowly DROPS ON ITS FACE. As it FALLS, THREATENING TO CRUSH JESUS UNDER ITS WEIGHT, TIME SLOWS DOWN.

MAGDALEN covers her face with her hands.

ABENADAR tries to control his mount, which has raised itself on its hind legs and is backing away, snorting and shaking its head.

MARY and JOHN rush forward, eyes wide with horror.

The ROMAN FOOTSOLDIERS all turn to look as the CROWD gasp in unison.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CAIPHAS, ANNAS and the members of the SANHEDRIM have gone still as they watch the cross COLLAPSE ONTO JESUS.

Even DISMAS and GESMAS, suffering though they are on THEIR crosses, watch with foreboding.

The NOISE of the wood CRASHING onto ground is TREMENDOUS.

A CLOUD OF DUST. Silence.

FADE TO BLACK:

EXT. GOLGOTHA. DAY.

Darkness gradually enlarges to light. The silence is broken by the METALLIC SOUND OF HAMMERS ON IRON. Then the PICTURE of the UPSIDE-DOWN CROSS, the POINTS OF THE NAILS bending under rhythmic hammer-blows.

MAGDALEN's tear-filled eyes blink with each impact. She has not moved from where she was when the cross went over. Now she lowers herself to the ground and LOOKS.

MAGDALEN's POV:

The CROSS is SOLIDLY UPSIDE DOWN, yet NO PART OF JESUS touches the ground underneath it.

MAGDALEN raises her head, looks at the faces of the EXECUTIONERS, then at the BRUTISH Temple GUARD, at ABENADAR, the soldiers...NO ONE HAS SEEN WHAT SHE HAS.

MARY and JOHN, through a FOG. Now visible, now gone. They haven't MOVED A MUSCLE. They haven't seen it either.

MAGDALEN lowers her head to the ground, and again looks.

JESUS HOVERS above the ground, in a SPACE which WAS NOT THERE UNTIL HE OCCUPIED IT. MAGDALEN's eyes close. The HAMMERING STOPS. A CACOPHONY of shouts and jeers erupts from the crowd, punctuated by sadistic LAUGHTER.

BRUTISH GUARD (OS)

Get the ropes ready. There. NO...not the arms, you blathering fools... the TRUNK! That's it.

MAGDALEN lifts her face, glares at the BRUTISH GUARD.

BRUTISH GUARD (cont'd)

Now straighten it. Quickly. We don't want his majesty to die...not yet... not here...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The sweaty, grumbling EXECUTIONERS take up the arm they used to TURN the cross over, and LIFT it up once again.

The BRUTISH GUARD looks worried as he peers at JESUS, whose body DANGLES awkwardly and in terrible agony.

BRUTISH GUARD (cont'd)
ON ITS BACK. QUICKLY. LET GO...NOW!

The CROSS CRASHES to the ground, right side up. The EXECUTIONERS rush forward, tie ROPES to the arms of the cross then haul these to a BEAM fixed to the ground at the HOLE on the highest point of the plateau.

BRUTISH GUARD (cont'd)
MOVE THE FOOT TOWARD THE BEAM...AIM it,
you simpleton! That's it! NOW PULL, ALL
OF YOU!

The EXECUTIONERS pull the ropes, grunting rhythmically. The CROSS starts to LIFT. TWO of the men wrap a THICK ROPE around the foot of the trunk, to prevent it from sliding in sideways. SLOWLY the cross continues to rise up over GOLGOTHA.

Then, with one last heave by the men, the cross DROPS into the hole prepared for its reception. A GREAT SHOCK.

The ENTIRE BODY OF JESUS is STRETCHED off the nails and ropes, and the wounds on his hands and feet TEAR open. JESUS cries out.

ALL SOUND CEASES. Then a long, low RUMBLE OF THUNDER.

The FULL EXTENT OF THE TORTURE JESUS HAS ENDURED IS NOW VISIBLE FOR ALL TO SEE. THERE IS SO LITTLE FLESH LEFT ON HIS BODY, SO LITTLE MOVEMENT THAT HE APPEARS TO BE DEAD, HIS HEAD LOWERED TO HIS RAW CHEST. ONLY THE CONTINUOUS FLOW OF BLOOD INDICATES THAT HE IS STILL ALIVE.

The EXECUTIONERS now BACK AWAY from the crosses. MARY and JOHN, followed by SIMON and MAGDALEN, slowly APPROACH the cross of JESUS.

ABENADAR watches them step forward with dignity. He climbs off his horse, eyes glued to the bleeding figure of JESUS.

JOHN is first to reach the cross, and looks up.

FADE TO WHITE:

INT. HOUSE OF NICODEMUS. JERUSALEM. NIGHT.

The APOSTLES watch in silence as, still suffused with BRIGHTNESS, JESUS puts down the plate on which He had placed the MORCELS of BREAD. He picks up the CHALICE on which the plate had rested, and turns to PETER.

PETER POURS wine into the CHALICE. It is a DEEP RED WINE and, as it FLOWS into the chalice, it is suffused with the RADIANT LIGHT coming from JESUS. When the chalice is full, He lifts it over His head with both hands.

JESUS

I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I shall drink again with you in the kingdom of my Father.

JESUS lowers the CHALICE, takes a small sip of wine and hands the chalice to JOHN.

JESUS (cont'd)

Take and drink; this is my blood which is given for you.

JOHN looks at the WINE inside the chalice, then again at the RESPLENDENT face of JESUS.

JESUS (cont'd)

Do this in memory of me.

CUT TO:

EXT. GOLGOTHA. DAY.

The BLOOD of JESUS is RUNNING along His torn limbs and down the length of the cross to the ground.

JOHN's eyes follow the flow and fill with fresh tears. MARY stands next to him, her eyes lifted to the face of her Son. Her eyes are open and DRY. They meet His with a love and a dignity only matched by His own.

A NEARBY laugh, low and filled with malevolent scorn:

GESMAS

If you are the son of God, Jesus of Nazareth, why don't you save yourself? Climb down off that cross...prove to us that you are who you say you are.

JESUS slowly turns His eyes away from those of MARY.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GESMAS scans the gathered witnesses, particularly to CAIPHAS, ANNAS and the rest of the members of the Sanhedrim and, gritting his teeth, growls derisively:

GESMAS (cont'd)

Ha! I tell you, the demon this fool is possessed by is about to leave him.

CAIPHAS approaches and looks up arrogantly at JESUS.

CAIPHAS

You said you could destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days...and yet you cannot come down, off that cross.

He turns and faces the crowd of witnesses:

CAIPHAS (cont'd)

If he is the Christ, the King of Israel, I say let him come down from the cross, that we may see and believe

This is met by derisive laughter by many in the crowd.

CAIPHAS laughs, starts to walk away.

JESUS lifts His head upward and in a low voice:

JESUS

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

CAIPHAS stops dead in his tracks, an astonished look on his face. He turns, looks at JESUS on the cross.

DISMAS, who has watched the performance of GESMAS and CAIPHAS with distaste, now speaks out:

DISMAS

Listen to him. He is praying for you. He is truly a prophet I say to you, a king, the son of God.

This causes the jeers to commence again, though less noisily, more hesitant. CAIPHAS spits at DISMAS, then withdraws again to the margins of the execution ground. DISMAS then turns to GESMAS:

DISMAS (cont'd)

How can you speak the way you do? We deserve this, Gesmas, but he does not. He has done no evil!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DISMAS then bursts into tears of pain and guilt:

DISMAS (cont'd)
I have sinned, Jesus, and I am being
justly punished. Condemn me, go ahead.
You would be justified...

JESUS turns to DISMAS who, in agony, is hyperventilating with pain. He is dying, eyes turned to JESUS.

DISMAS (cont'd)
I ask only that you remember me, Lord,
when you enter your kingdom.

JESUS
Amen, I tell you, on this day you shall
be with me in Paradise.

DISMAS becomes RIGID. Air rattles out of his mouth. Slowly his features relax and he slumps down.

GESMAS ROARS with demonic laughter. His malice is what seems to keep him alive.

JESUS turns to MARY and JOHN, MAGDALEN, SIMON and ABENADAR who has joined them at the foot of the CROSS.

MARY and JOHN reach out and TOUCH THE FEET OF JESUS.

JESUS is breathing with difficulty. He tries to speak again, but His lips are so parched that a moment passes before the words can form:

JESUS (cont'd)
I thirst.

Beat.

JESUS (cont'd)
Could you not have given me a little
water?

JOHN turns, mortified, to MARY. Then again at JESUS:

JOHN
(whisper)
We did not think, Lord...

One of the ROMAN SOLDIERS nearby pours some liquid into a SPONGE and approaches the cross. ABENADAR stops him:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ABENADAR

No, don't mix vinegar with gall. Give him only vinegar. It will give him some relief...

The SOLDIER squeezes out the liquid, refills the sponge with vinegar, places the sponge on a long reed and lifts it to the mouth of JESUS, who drinks from it.

MARY's face looks as if it might suffer fracture.

MARY

(whisper)

Oh Jesus, let me die with you... flesh of my flesh bone of my bone, heart of my heart...

JESUS transfixes her with His eyes, then He looks at JOHN

JESUS

Woman, behold, he is your son.

From JOHN He turns again to MARY:

JESUS (cont'd)

John, behold, she is your mother.

MARY is overcome. She breaks into breathless sobs. JOHN helps her step away from the cross. ABENADAR takes the elbows of MAGDALEN and SIMON and guides them away from the cross, following JOHN and MARY.

An eerie SILENCE has fallen on the scene of crucifixion.

GESMAS turns to JESUS and laughs.

GESMAS

See them? They are running away... abandoning you. You are alone. There is no one left. No one.

JESUS lifts his eyes to the darkness enfolding GOLGOTHA. His eyes fill with tears, which mingle with the blood pouring down His cheeks.

Suddenly, in the HEAVY SILENCE, with a violent spasm of His tortured body, He shouts in a clear, powerful voice:

JESUS

Eloi, Eloi, lamma sabacthani? (My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MARY hears the cry of JESUS. She spins around to look at the cross, which stands out against a dark silver sky, slips away from JOHN's sustaining hands and runs back.

MARY is now the only one near the cross. Her suffering is so much a part of JESUS' own, and her KNOWLEDGE of the moment a mysterious part of what is taking place that the REST of the men and women on GOLGOTHA do not interfere.

JESUS' eyes are closed. His tears, mixed with the blood of His passion, roll off His cheeks to the ground.

JESUS' eyes open and He SEES MARY. There is a silent moment of transcendental understanding in each of their expressions, of anticipation, pain and relief. Then:

JESUS (cont'd)
(softly)
It is accomplished.

The ONLY LIGHT NOW seems to emanate from JESUS' face.

MARY, alone, now witnesses JESUS as He slowly raises His head to the silver-dark heavens and in a strong voice.

JESUS (cont'd)
Father, into Thy hands...I commend... my
spirit.

JESUS slowly lowers His head and exhales.

A GREAT STILLNESS PERVADES THE DARKNESS which has descended on GOLGOTHA, and a GREAT SILENCE.

FADE TO WHITE: