

JOHN MARK'S DAUGHTER 70CE

Written by

Kathleen Scott Goldingay

November 2015

111 So Orange Grove Blvd #108  
Pasadena, CA  
626-405-0626  
Kscottberry@gmail.com

EXT. DOCK- NIGHT- "ROME 68CE"

ROMAN SOLDIERS ride through a chaos of terrified JEWISH REFUGEES. The dock's blood-slick from their slaughter.

Ships overloaded with clinging Refugees struggle to launch.

Wild-eyed GENERAL PORCIUS (50), muscle bound and battle scarred, shoves his way onto a rocking vessel. He rips veils off women and grabs men by the beard. Glares into faces.

PORCIUS

One hundred gold coins to anyone  
who surrenders the poet John Mark.

Firebrand KEZIAH (15) shields listful and disoriented Elizabeth (55) as she shrieks and whimpers.

PORCIUS (CONT'D)

You know John Mark?

KEZI

Mother is too...

REFUGEE

She's possessed!

Refugees scramble away from Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

Is this Jerusalem?

Kezi thwarts Elizabeth's attempt to disembark.

PORCIUS

Welcome. To the River Styx.

Porcius grabs a torch from a sailor, lights the sail on fire, leaps to the dock. Soldiers shove the vessel adrift.

INT. JOHN MARK'S HOUSE - DAY- "EARLIER THAT MORNING"

A lion headdress dominates a table in the sunlit atrium of a modest Roman house. Gold braids adorn its flowing mane.

Kezi searches through baskets of scrolls, ink from the quill she clutches dribbles down her arm.

She pauses to circle the lion head. Its mouth wide open, sharp teeth prominent, it appears to roar at her.

KEZI

Father? Are you here?

ELIZABETH (O.S.)  
 Wrap that headdress and take it to  
 the Mithrium on the Cardo. General  
 Porcius is expecting it.

Kezi growls at the headdress, puts her hands over its eyes.

KEZI  
 Blind fools said Jesus, shut your  
 mouths... open your ears... there  
 is only one way.

INT. JOHN MARK'S HOUSE - WEAVING ROOM - DAY

Elizabeth sits stiff-backed, intent. She weaves elaborate  
 cloth in a room stacked with bolts of it. The clack of  
 Elizabeth's loom doesn't pause when Kezi appears at the door.

KEZI  
 Can it wait until after my lessons?  
 I'm late... I need to copy a piece  
 from Father's Isaiah scroll.

ELIZABETH  
 Some of us have to work so that  
 others can spread stories.

KEZI  
 Father says the Cardo is unclean--

ELIZABETH  
 Your father needs the coins to pay  
 officials at the theater tonight.  
 Don't disappoint him.

Kezi sighs, kisses her mother and grabs a bolt of gauze.

EXT. JOHN MARK'S STREET- MORNING

Jews with striped robes herd goats, push carts of goods for  
 the market, or hold scrolls and argue with each other. Kezi  
 pushes open the heavy door and carries the lion head out into  
 the bright busy street.

Some greet her, some peer with scorn at what she carries.  
 Children with satchels run between the adults and chase a  
 loose piece from the lion headdress as it trails in the dust.

Kezi passes under an arch into the adjacent quarter. She  
 frowns at the word "Judahim", graffiti crudely scratched in  
 the arch support to label her quarter.

An outraged, muttering group is gathered.

She pushes forward to see what is causing the commotion.

Twisting on a hook hung from a column are several freshly severed hands.

KEZI

Who did this?

The hands are marked with the tattoo of a fish at the inside of the wrist or on the flesh between the thumb and fingers.

WOMAN IN CROWD

(covers her tattooed hand)

Could be Romans... or other Jews.

CROWD MEMBERS

Stupid Nazoreans... if they would learn to be proper Jews... false prophet... troublemakers... it's their fault Rome hates every Jew.

KEZI

Jesus is our Messiah!

Members of the crowd turn and glare at her.

CROWD MEMBER

(pointing to hands)

Is that what they believed?

The Crowd snorts with self satisfaction as Kezi slinks away.

EXT. MARKETPLACE - MORNING

The quality of the paving improves, the broad lane Kezi walks is lined with columned buildings and shady arcades.

Men in fresh togas debate. Elaborately made-up women ride in curtained pallets or stroll at stalls and direct slaves to carry parcels. They stare, sneer, or spit at Kezi's presence.

As the marketplace ends she pauses to cover her nose with her veil. She passes by butcher stands, each chopping block bears the relief of a different god on its front. Butchers call out competitively:

BUTCHERS

Dedicated to Mars- Jupiter- Apollo- Sol-, get your offering sacrificed to Mars- Jupiter -Apollo -Sol here.

A butcher chops off a goat's head with one whack of the sword. Blood spills over his altar, stains the face of Mars.

Kezi shudders with disgust and hurries. Images and statues of gods confront her everywhere, in mosaic and relief on walls.

INT. GENERAL PORCIUS' HOUSE - MORNING

A niche is crowded with idols. Fountains flow, mosaics sparkle, walls are brightly painted. One wall displays ancestor's portraits in terra-cotta relief.

Porcius' severe scowl eases when sweet faced JULIANA (15), bursts into the atrium. She diligently carries his folded red military cape.

PORCIUS

Sunbeams are ashamed to find they cannot out dance my daughter.

JULIANA

(laughing)

Father! What will the sun god say about that when you dine with him in person tonight?

PORCIUS

The gods have shown me favor since the day you were born, they won't desert me now.

JULIANA

No one has a better father.

He snaps on the cloak and picks up his helmet.

PORCIUS

Are you saying I will not be better when I have risen to the level of Grand Arimanius tonight?

JULIANA

Of course not, your new position in the Mithrium must please the gods, and all their followers...

(he feigns disappointment)

...and, of course, it pleases me.

Juliana's pregnant MOTHER slips in, looking gaunt and drawn.

JULIANA'S MOTHER

Perhaps you will be able to find her a good marriage after tonight.

Juliana's face tenses with fear.

PORCIUS

The best marriage. Perhaps you will  
be able to finally give me a son.

He kisses Juliana on the forehead. She hides her anxiety.

Her mother sees her grimace, slips out self-satisfied.

JULIANA

I wish I could be there tonight.

PORCIUS

Better, you can run to Elizabeth  
the Weaver's and collect my lion's  
head. Be the first to set eyes on  
the spirit mask of my conquest.

She forces a smile. He holds out a small package.

She tears it open to find elaborate filigreed opal earrings.

JULIANA

Beautiful, like the sea.

PORCIUS

You will always be my precious one.

She puts on the earrings. He doesn't notice she's pensive.

PORCIUS (CONT'D)

Go bring my lion home.

EXT. JOHN MARK'S HOUSE - MORNING

At the front door, Juliana talks with Elizabeth, dashes off.

EXT. MITHRIUM TEMPLE - MORNING

Kezi mouths the word "Mithrium" carved into a black marble  
pediment. Carved gold pythons crawl up the flanking columns.  
She takes a step closer, stares into the darkened entrance.

Juliana, sapphire earrings glinting, gold embroidered dress  
fluttering, rushes up behind Kezi.

JULIANA

(out of breath)

You are forbidden from entering.

Kezi whips around.

KEZI  
This Lion head is not required?

Juliana tries to lift a corner of its wrapping. Kezi pulls the bundle away. Juliana glares at the ink stains and dirty piece of linen dragging on the ground.

JULIANA  
I was sent to fetch it. Let me examine it.

KEZI  
You doubt my mother's skill?  
(grabs the edge of  
Juliana's dress)  
You seem to have no concerns with wearing her handiwork.

JULIANA  
It's my father's trophy, he will become Grand Arimanius tonight.

KEZI  
I'll take it in to him.

JULIANA  
I told you, women are not allowed inside, it's... dangerous.

KEZI  
(scoffs, moves to go in)  
Do you have the payment?

JULIANA  
(grabs Kezi's arm)  
Not until it's examined and accepted... by Father.

KEZI  
Bring coin to the theater tonight.

JULIANA  
Surely Jews don't attend the theater?

KEZI  
My father, John Mark, is the poet of tonight's play.

JULIANA  
Tragedy or comedy?

KEZI  
'The King of the Jews.'

JULIANA

And you and your mother desire to  
watch this tragedy?

KEZI

I am in the play.

She hands the headdress to Juliana and struts away smug.

INT. TUTOR'S HOUSE - MORNING

Kezi hurries into an atrium that harbours a dozen small  
writing stations around a fountain. Half are empty.

Girls of various ages dip quills into bowls and scratch  
Hebrew and Greek characters on thin wood slats.

Some have the fish tatoo on their wrists or inside elbows.

A nervous handsome TUTOR looks up from correcting a student.

TUTOR

Keziah your father will be  
disappointed you are so lax.

KEZI

I'll make up the lesson, I had an  
errand for Mother on the Cardo.

The Tutor frowns, gestures for her to sit at a desk.

TUTOR

You came here from the Cardo?

KEZI

I was careful, no one followed me.

TUTOR

Everyday more girls are withdrawn  
altogether from fear of Nero's  
whims. I was afraid your father--

KEZI

Father says the Lord's people have  
nothing to fear.

TUTOR

No speeches. You can pray he's  
right as you copy from psalms.

He hands her a scroll and sheets of fresh parchment.

Kezi pulls her quill from her bag. She opens the scroll the tutor gave her and dips her quill in an ink pot. She copies the scroll's Hebrew characters with beautiful precision.

KEZI

(amused, reads the passage  
she's copied)

Oh Lord, save me from my enemies,  
or like a lion they will tear me  
apart.

INT. PORCIUS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Juliana, aided by her Servant, puts on a hooded cloak,  
gathers a pouch of coins. Her mother limps into the atrium.

JULIANA'S MOTHER

Where are you going?

JULIANA

To the theater. Come with me?

JULIANA'S MOTHER

Don't taunt, you know I can't be  
seen like this. You are the one who  
should be bearing children.

JULIANA

I'm not married.

JULIANA'S MOTHER

The play is subversive. Your father  
would not approve.

JULIANA

I have to deliver payment for  
father's headdress.

JULIANA'S MOTHER

(indicates Servant)

Don't go. She can go in your stead.

JULIANA

You and your friends and their  
daughters go to subversive plays.

JULIANA'S MOTHER

Not like this one. Promise me--

Juliana's Mother winces with pain.

JULIANA

Seems you need the servant more.

Juliana closes the door before the servant can follow.

EXT. MITHRIUM TEMPLE - NIGHT

A dozen Mithrium cult members march up the street, enter the Mithrium. The hand lamps they carry glint off the columns.

INT. ROMAN THEATER - NIGHT

The well dressed upper class Roman AUDIENCE greets each other and chats as they file into the amphitheater.

Juliana slips into a seat, nods to women she recognizes.

INT. MITHRIUM TEMPLE - PRIVATE ROOM- NIGHT

Porcius' military uniform sits folded on a ledge.

Naked except for a loin cloth, he rubs oil on his skin until his muscles glow in the flicker of lamp flames.

He dons the fierce lion headdress.

INT. ROMAN THEATER - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

JOHN MARK (55), wise and self-assured, encourages Actors.

A YOUNG SCRIBE in striped robes, out of breath and carrying a scroll, shoves past the Actors to whisper to John Mark.

John Mark scowls, takes the scroll, slips it in a pouch.

INT. ROMAN THEATER - NIGHT

On stage, VEILED WOMEN weep at the mouth of a cave.

Deep inside a single burst of light flashes. It casts the shadow of a figure against the cave wall, arms outstretched in cruciform.

The Roman Audience gasps and mutters as light glints off their jewelry and gold embroidered togas.

The shadow moves forward and bursts out of the cave. It is Kezi, flushed with triumph.

KEZI  
He's not here!

A Veiled Actress drops a jar; it smashes as she grabs Kezi.

VEILED ACTRESS  
They've taken him away?

KEZI  
Did you not see the light?

A long silence. The audience leans forward.

Roman Soldiers march in, line the top row of the theater.

Kezi glances over the audience for affect, sees the Soldiers.

KEZI (CONT'D)  
(struggles for her line)  
It was a spirit. A messenger angel.

VEILED ACTRESS  
Are you sure it was not a demon?

INT. MITHRIUM TEMPLE- MAIN CHAMBER - NIGHT

Members sit on benches along the walls of the narrow room.

At the head of the chamber is a massive rock that forms a dais. Behind the rock, stairs lead up to the room above.

The Members hum as Porcius descends the stairs to the dais.

MEMBERS  
A Grand Arimanius descends from  
council with the gods to lead us.

INT. ROMAN THEATER - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

As the play continues on the stage, John Mark, somber, helps a tall Jesus Actor into a gleaming white robe.

KEZI (O.S.)  
He is alive, he has risen!

The muttering of the Audience rises to a roaring protest.

VEILED WOMAN (O.S.)  
But many saw him dead.

John Mark surprises the Jesus Actor with a gold laurel crown.

KEZI (O.S.)  
Come, we will meet him in Galilee.

The Jesus Actor looks into John Mark's eyes, questioning the crown. John Mark nods with assurance.

INT. ROMAN THEATER- BACK ROW - NIGHT

NERO'S EMISSARY slips next to the soldier's COMMANDER.

EMMISSARY

Nero's messenger has left the theater.

COMMANDER

A spirit in a cave convinced him the Nazorean is still alive and about to mount a rebellion?

EMMISSARY

(they snicker)

Regardless of what is happening in Galilee, the pogrom begins here, tonight. Once the Citizens have left, first the actors. Then join us in the Jewish quarter.

COMMANDER

With pleasure.

INT. ROMAN THEATER - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Kezi and the Veiled Actresses exit the stage. Kezi makes her way to John Mark in the narrow corridor, he embraces her.

JOHN MARK

Excellent performance.

Stagehands pull the cave backstage on a wheeled platform.

At John Mark's signal, a cluster of Actors gather around the Jesus Actor. Torch flames flash off his crown.

INT. MITHRIUM TEMPLE - MAIN CHAMBER - NIGHT

A gold python slithers up out of a hole in the rock dais. It winds its way up Porcius' naked legs, binding them together.

INT. ROMAN THEATER - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Kezi peeks at the stage and audience through a chink in the stage wall.

Jesus and the other Actors parade the stage.

ACTORS  
His kingdom has come!

The Audience boos, some look amused, some disgusted.

Juliana wipes tears from her eyes.

JULIANA  
(whispers to herself)  
Thank you, my Lord.

INT. MITHRIUM TEMPLE- MAIN CHAMBER - NIGHT

As the python makes it's way up and around Porcius' torso, Porcius doesn't flinch.

The python's head appears at the top of the Lion headdress.

The cult Members stand with awe.

The python rests content on Porcius head, tongue flickering.

The Members break into cheers.

INT. ROMAN THEATER - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

The Audience boos the parading Jesus.

AUDIENCE MEMBER  
(laughing)  
Dead 40 years, he's no Messiah!

ANOTHER AUDIENCE MEMBER  
(inebriated)  
Nero is the Messiah!

Kezi looks to John Mark. He is unconcerned.

KEZI  
They don't like the new ending.

JOHN MARK  
They know the truth. Nero is not a lord or a god. Jesus is.

ELIZABETH  
The ironic ending is safer--

KEZI

With the women afraid and no one  
professing the risen Jesus!?

Actors enter the corridor from the stage, heads down.

Kezi claps vehemently for them. John Mark stops her.

ELIZABETH

(glares at John Mark)  
What prompted you to change the  
ending now, tonight?

INT. MITHRIUM TEMPLE- MAIN CHAMBER - NIGHT

Nero's Emissary enters the chamber. Cult Members rush to  
restrain him.

CULT MEMBER

Only the initiated are allowed here-

EMMISSARY

Emperor Nero has commanded--

CULT MEMBER

You are violating sacred ground,  
the gods will--

PORCIUS

No, this is a favorable sign from  
the gods. Let us hear from Nero.

EMMISSARY

Nero commands that Rome be purged  
of all Nazoreans. Tonight. Porcius  
you are to take charge of the  
Judahim Quarter. Crucifixions.

The Cult members cheer while Porcius dashes up the stairs.

INT. ROMAN THEATER - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

The Young Scribe watches through the chink in the wall.

The theater is nearly empty except for Juliana and the  
soldiers.

JOHN MARK

(to Elizabeth)  
Sometimes the story brings someone  
to the Lord with the truth.

Juliana makes her way towards the stage.

YOUNG SCRIBE  
Look, one may be coming now.

Kezi pushes the Young Scribe aside to look through the chink.

Juliana's face is radiant with wonder.

KEZI  
That's Juliana!

JOHN MARK  
You know her? Is she a Nazorean?

KEZI  
No, I told her to come here, to  
bring the payment for the lion--

ELIZABETH  
She's not a follower. I'll collect--

KEZI  
The play must have convinced her.

JOHN MARK  
Payment for what lion?

KEZI  
The headdress mother made. Look,  
the soldiers are stopping her.

The Young Scribe pulls Kezi away from the chink to look.

A soldier escorts Juliana towards the main exit.

JOHN MARK  
A pagan headdress? You dared to  
taint this sacred performance with  
coin from pagan idolatry?

On the commander's signal, soldiers move towards the stage.

YOUNG SCRIBE  
John Mark. The soldiers are coming,  
we must get back to the quarter.  
They are waiting for us there.

Chaos ensues as Actors toss aside props, gather their pouches  
and put on their cloaks.

ELIZABETH  
Who is waiting?

YOUNG SCRIBE

A way out to safety. We arranged it  
in case the rumors of Nero's pogrom  
were true... or your husband fell  
out of favor from the new ending.

ELIZABETH

(stunned)

Leave Rome? I can't--

John Mark insists Elizabeth and Kezi go with the Young Scribe. John Mark searches for and grabs the bag he slipped the scroll into earlier, then follows his wife and daughter.

Actors clog the narrow corridor, intentionally block the path of Soldiers attempting to enter from the stage.

EXT. ROMAN THEATER - STREET FRONT - NIGHT

Under a colonnade, John Mark's group exits the theater and enters the main street.

Kezi looks back at the front of the theater.

Juliana steps out from behind a column, rushes after them.

From the shadows on the side of the street, a group of deformed BEGGARS rises up from shadows and serges towards Juliana. One clutches at her, she screams.

KEZI

Father, help her!

John Mark and the Young Scribe hurry to Juliana.

YOUNG SCRIBE

(pulls out a whip)

The possessed! Get back Demons!

The Beggars pull Juliana into the shadows.

JULIANA

Please save me, I want to follow  
your prophet Jesus.

JOHN MARK

(restrains Scribe's whip)

We have nothing to fear from these,  
there is no need to harm them. The  
possessed are to be pitied.

(to Juliana)

Keep using the name Jesus, you must  
declare him as your Lord.

A soldier appears at the top of the street.

YOUNG SCRIBE  
More soldiers are coming!

JULIANA  
Lord Jesus, save us.

The Beggars screech and let go of Juliana. She falls out of the shadows back into the street.

ELIZABETH  
We must go or they will catch us!

JULIANA  
(tangled in her dress)  
Run, leave me!

JOHN MARK  
It's not safe now that others have  
heard you declare His Name.

John Mark helps Juliana up and hurries her into his group. Juliana pulls a veil and hood around her face.

Actors run out of the theater chased by bloody sword wielding Soldiers.

EXT. ROMAN THEATER - UPPER STREET FRONT - NIGHT

More Soldiers gather at the top of the road.

Juliana pulls off her veil to display her earrings and dress. John Mark's group follows her as she catches up with, blends into the Audience walking away from the theater.

Actors scatter to distract the Soldiers away to side streets.

Beggars shadow the Audience, hidden by the dark colonnade.

The Soldiers on horseback descend from the top of the street towards the crowd.

Juliana readjusts her veil, pulls it over her face.

Porcius in full military uniform, the lion headdress over his helmet, guides his horse through the murmuring Audience.

Kezi, Elizabeth, and John Mark keep their heads down.

When Juliana sees her father, she falters.

Beggars rush out of the shadows into the crowd, screaming.

Porcius pulls his sword, jumps from his horse with glee.

With a few brute chops, Porcius severs the hand of a crawling Beggar. Porcius stands triumphant over the Beggar as he writhes back into the shadows.

Juliana looks on with horror. John Mark pulls her along. Her veils slips off.

In spite of her gapping stare, Porcius is so pleased with putting off the beggar he does not see Juliana.

EXT. JUDAHIM QUARTER STREET - NIGHT

John Mark's group and Juliana pass under the 'Judahim' arch.

INT. JOHN MARK'S HOUSE- NIGHT

Kezi, Elizabeth, and Juliana gather around John Mark.

JULIANA

(hands a bag of coin to  
Elizabeth)

I saw the play but it wasn't a  
play... it casts the spell of  
Jesus. I wish Mother and Father  
could see it.

JOHN MARK

Keep your coin. It's not a spell.  
It's truth, and life.

JULIANA

I couldn't--

ELIZABETH

We need coins more than ever now.  
After that performance no one will  
be coming for my weaving. You have  
poisoned us publicly.

JOHN MARK

It's the last time for the play,  
I've made arrangements to go to  
Alexandria.

KEZI AND ELIZABETH

(simultaneous)

Yes! No!

ELIZABETH  
 (becoming hysterical)  
 You kept it from me? Why?

Juliana, embarrassed by the family tension, slips out.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
 You see, under Jesus' spell or not,  
 she won't return, and I won't leave  
 my beloved Rome.

JOHN MARK  
 You know it's wrong to love  
 anything but the Lord our God.

EXT. JUDAHIM QUARTER STREET - NIGHT

Porcius and his men ride under the Judahim arch. They pause at the severed hands, Porcius points at the tatoos with his sword. A laughing soldier sets the hands on fire.

INT. JOHN MARK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nazoreans pile household vessels on a cart. John Mark takes a delicate glass vase off the pile.

ELIZABETH  
 That was a gift to me. Under what  
 conditions will we be forced to  
 live in this... Alexandria?

JOHN MARK  
 It may be rough at first, so I've  
 made arrangements for you and Kezi  
 to go to my mother in Jerusalem.

KEZI  
 I don't care if it's rough. I want  
 to go with you Father, study law  
 and be a scribe like you promised.

ELIZABETH  
 Jerusalem is much more crude than  
 Rome. And just as dangerous.

JOHN MARK  
 You can join me when I've set up a  
 scribe school and a theater...  
 (Elizabeth tsks with  
 disgust)  
 ... a proper home where it's safe.

ELIZABETH

I won't leave Rome, women here are waiting for my cloth.

JOHN MARK

Demons delight in such stubbornness, and so will Nero's assassins.

Banging on the door, a Scribe lets himself in.

SCRIBE

Soldiers from the theater are looking for the poet John Mark.

Elizabeth stomps into her weaving room.

John Mark hands Kezi a satchel.

JOHN MARK

Take this.

Kezi pushes it away.

KEZI

Let me go with you.

JOHN MARK

Listen to me. This is important.

KEZI

Aren't we important to you?

JOHN MARK

I wrote down the Prophet's story--

Kezi takes the satchel, draws out a scroll.

KEZI

But you said Jesus didn't write, he wanted us to *perform* the truth and *memorize* the Ancient Sacred Scrolls--

-

JOHN MARK

If something should happen... to me... to all of us... we must preserve his name, his story.

KEZI

But won't Jesus come to save us?

JOHN MARK

The followers of Jesus the Nazorean  
have nothing to fear.

Kezi reluctantly replaces the scroll.

JOHN MARK (CONT'D)

Find Nazoreans there. Trust them.  
Boldly rest on the Lord our God.

John Mark hugs Kezi.

He gazes at his weaving wife through the sheer curtain that  
still bears Kezi's inky handprint. Elizabeth doesn't look up.

The Scribe urges him out the door. A Nazorean, fish tattoo on  
his hand, restrains Kezi as she tries to follow her father.  
She shakes him off.

Kezi walks to her mother's room, wipes her tears, composes  
herself, and pulls back the curtain.

EXT. JUDAHIM QUARTER STREET - NIGHT

Kezi struggles to keep her dazed mother seated on the edge of  
a flat two-wheeled cart piled high with trunks. Nazoreans  
with the fish tattoo pull the cart for them.

Shouting erupts. The sky becomes bright. The street fills  
with refugees and carts.

REFUGEE

Give them the Nazoreans!

Elizabeth screams and buries her face in the bundles.

ELIZABETH

By Minerva and all the gods--

Kezi, furious, turns her mother to face her.

KEZI

How long have you been a pagan?

ELIZABETH

There have always been many gods  
Kezi, we shouldn't ignore them just  
because there is one over the  
others.

KEZI

How long have you deceived father?

ELIZABETH

You must never tell him. I believe  
in Jesus too.

KEZI

The truth will kill him.

The Nazoreans push Kezi's cart into a doorway as a contingent of soldiers round the corner, brandishing bloody swords. They set a house on fire, wait for the occupants to flee, mercilessly cut them down, even children, at their doorstep.

KEZI (CONT'D)

Go Boldly with the Lord.

The Nazoreans pull Elizabeth and Kezi's cart into the flow of refugees. At a crossroads, Kezi glimpses Juliana. She's stumbling disoriented, crying.

KEZI (CONT'D)

Wait. Juliana! Juliana!

The Nazoreans pulling the cart hesitate. Juliana spots Kezi.

As Juliana runs to them, a soldier catches her, examines her hands and wrists and forehead. Fondles the opal earrings.

Juliana angrily flails at him. Admonishes him.

SOLDIER

(shouts to other soldiers)

The General's daughter. Let her go.

The Soldiers allow her push past them.

Kezi and the Nazoreans help her climb onto their cart.

EXT. JUDAHIM QUARTER MAIN SQUARE - NIGHT

The Nazoreans pull the cart along the edge of the square. They creep under cover of a deserted arcade.

Soldiers erect crosses in the center of the dirt square, straw is strewn at the base of the crosses.

More Soldiers arrive, drag captives forward, including Kezi's Tutor, tie them to the crosses

Nero's Emmissary rides into the square, appears pleased.

EMMISSARY

Burn them.

Kezi cries out. The Emmissary peers at the arcade.

EMMISSARY (CONT'D)

All who renounce Jesus and  
recognize Nero as their Lord and  
Emperor are free to go.

TUTOR

Never! Jesus said those who want to  
save their life must lose it, must  
face their cross and they will be  
raised from death with the Messiah!

EMMISSARY

(points at Kezi's cart)  
Bring those from the shadows.

KEZI

Run!

Kezi tugs at her mother but Elizabeth clings to her trunks.

Juliana jumps off the cart runs directly towards the  
Soldiers. They give chase.

Kezi encourages Elizabeth up nearby stairs to a rooftop.

Juliana runs into the center of the square, Soldiers follow.

EMMISSARY

(eyes Juliana's dress)  
Are you the daughter of a Citizen?

JULIANA

I am the daughter of Jesus now.

EMMISSARY

Child, you must renounce him, claim  
loyalty to Nero!

Juliana spits.

JULIANA

I am the daughter of Jesus.

Soldiers grab her.

The Emmissary gestures that they are to tie her to a cross.

A Soldier secures Juliana's hands with tight ropes.

Kezi and the others peer down at the scene from the rooftop.

ELIZABETH  
More than one god!

Kezi shushes her.

A Soldier lights the straw under the Tutor's cross.

Flames engulf the Tutors robes, he gazes towards Kezi's roof.

TUTOR  
Children of Jesus. Have no fear. He  
will preserve you.

The Soldiers light the straw under Juliana's cross.

Porcius rides into the square with his soldiers. He looks  
pleased with the proceedings.

Juliana's veil flutters away, fire glints off opal earrings.

Porcius leaps from his horse and runs to her.

PORCIUS  
Put it out! Juliana, my daughter!

Porcius kicks at the flames spreading in the straw.

JULIANA  
I will not renounce Jesus!

PORCIUS  
(he cuts free one of her  
hands)  
Who has cast this spell on you?

JULIANA  
It is not a spell, you must hear  
the story. Jesus' crown is from  
God, not made by man. The play--

PORCIUS  
(slaps her face)  
You listened to that propaganda?

A flame licks up the back of Juliana's dress.

JULIANA  
I will be resurrected with Jesus. I  
am his daughter now.

Her dress bursts into flame. She does not cry out.

PORCIUS  
No!

He tries to put out the flames but burns his hands.

JULIANA

Jesus would not marry me off, I  
will be with him in a new life.

Porcius reaches into the fire and rips the earrings from her ears. Falls to his knees in grief and rage.

Juliana dies in the flames with a look of defiant ecstasy.

PORCIUS

On my oath to Mithrus, I will purge  
the Empire of the name of Jesus!

On the roof, Kezi sinks to her knees, terrified.

EXT. JUDAHIM QUARTER MAIN SQUARE- NIGHT

In cover of darkness Kezi assists her mother down the stairs.

Gruesome remains of charred bodies smoke on the crosses.

KEZI

(whispers in tears)  
Go boldly with the Lord.

Elizabeth sees a bit of cloth from Juliana's dress. She picks it up and smooths the burnt edges.

Nazoreans come out from hiding, assist Kezi and Elizabeth onto the cart, pull them down the deserted smoking street.

EXT. REFUGEE BOAT AT SEA - DAY

The mast charred, the boat drifts. Refugees with burnt hands offer cloaks to sailors who sew a patchwork sail.

Elizabeth huddles alone, ostracized. Kezi, cloakless against the wind, clutches the satchel which contains her father's scroll.

EXT. JERUSALEM- GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - DAWN

A donkey pulls a cart up a narrow street. Kezi jumps off.

GRANDMOTHER rushes out a door to greet them.

Grandmother and Kezi help angry Elizabeth off the cart.

EXT. ROMAN GROTTO - NIGHT

Porcius straddles the Scribe who brought the scroll to John Mark at the theater. Porcius slams the Scribes's head into the paving.

PORCIUS  
Where is John Mark?

A Soldier kneels next to them.

SOLDIER  
General, this man is dead.

Porcius roars with rage.

EXT. JERUSALEM- "JERUSALEM 70CE - TWO YEARS LATER"- DAY

On a hill overlooking Jerusalem, Red Legio-X Fretensis flags flutter among vast orderly rows of Roman military tents.

ROMAN SLAVES sweat under the direction of ROMAN SOLDIERS to finish a siege wall that hems in the city's ancient walls.

EXT. KIDRON VALLEY HILLSIDE - MORNING

Kezi comforts her mother as Nazoreans, under the direction of lanky determined SIMON (18), cover a cave mouth with stones.

Next to Kezi her stout best friend ESTER (17) watches Simon until she sees a bee on Kezi's shoulder. She waves it off and watches intently which direction the bee takes.

MOTHER  
No matter where your father is  
buried, when I pass into Sheol you  
must reunite our bones in Rome.

KEZI  
Father will fetch us to Alexandria.  
We will live there in peace.

MOTHER  
Only the dead are at peace. The  
rest of us have been abandoned to  
be blown about by spirits and--

KEZI  
Your lack of faith would appall  
Father.

Upset by the arguing, Simon forces the last stone into place.

SIMON

Your Grandmother is now safe from  
both beasts and spirits.

Kezi watches Elizabeth retreat into her far-away mind.

Simon watches Kezi. Ester watches a bee land on Simon.

Kezi scans the Kidron Valley, between them and Jerusalem.

A caravan snakes its way along the valley, escorted by a vast ripple of Roman Soldiers. In the lead is an elaborate chariot, draped with curtains, pulled by white donkeys. A gang of young boys runs alongside.

KEZI

Caravan! There's sure to be word  
from Father.

A patrol of Roman soldiers on horseback breaks off from the caravan, heads up a hill in their direction.

SIMON

To the tunnels before they see us!

Simon clumsily grabs Kezi's hand. Ester brushes a bee away.

ESTER

There's honey nearby, we should  
harvest it while we can.  
(glares at Simon)  
The caravan's come to feed the  
soldiers. They're protecting their  
food, looking for bandits, not us.

Simon drops Kezi's hand.

SIMON

I think we should go back.

ESTER

Babies are starving to death.

Simon glances at Kezi but she doesn't take notice of him.

KEZI

How fast can you find the hive?

Ester sees another bee, grabs Simon's arm. They chase after it.

Elizabeth stumbles towards the path to go home, Kezi is relieved to see other Nazoreans rush to help her mother. When they are out of sight she rushes after Simon and Ester.

EXT. KIDRON VALLEY- HAMADI'S TENT - MORNING

The Egyptian Sultan of the Caravan, rotund HAMADI (80) rests his lumbering form on a mound of elevated pillows. His embroidered robes flow down to lush carpets.

As Hamadi dozes, His GANG OF BOYS rushes about, arranges trunks, sets up tables with bronze vessels of wine and fruit.

Porcius bursts in, armor clanking. He slams the ragged dusty lion headdress down on a table, overturning it.

Hamadi jolts awake.

HAMADI

You don't announce yourself?

PORCIUS

Titus has ordered the pogrom.

HAMADI

I need at least a week to bleed this place dry of the gold and silver that runs behind its walls.

PORCIUS

Titus won't wait. John Mark did not appear at his mother's funeral. I hope at least to take his wife and daughter hostage. Then...

HAMADI

Let's see if we can get our treasures to come to us.

PORCIUS

Nothing gets out the city wall, nothing gets in the siege wall.

HAMADI

Even through the *secret* tunnels? Tsk,tsk. We must open a market.

PORCIUS

What good will that do?

HAMADI

I will offer the sweet promise of escape to a new life. The place next to my very own on the caravan, protected from... you and your fellows. Everyone will come. And they will bid very high.

PORCIUS

You've sold that place to Josephus' friend for his expectant wife.

HAMADI

I expect to sell it many times... and to keep the spoils I gain.

PORCIUS

All spoils you collect already belong to Caesar.

HAMADI

A few spoils is not an unreasonable exchange for the family you seek...  
(Porcius turns to leave)  
Or, you can continue to stab in the shadows at John Mark.

PORCIUS

John Mark and a *small* tax.

Hamadi grunts.

Diviner CIRCAE (70), hair a white halo, slips by Porcius as he exits. She glides to Hamadi with ease, pats his arm, applies ointment to his eyelids. It calms him.

CIRCAE

I can find what you seek.

EXT. KIDRON VALLEY HILLSIDE - OLIVE GROVE - MORNING

Ester carefully lifts honeycomb from a hollow, hands it to Simon. Simon wraps it in a cloth, puts it in a pouch.

A great ruckus rises from the Roman camp below.

Legions of soldiers assemble. The siege wall around the city is now complete. The soldiers cheer.

Ester, Simon, and Kezi rush down the hill.

EXT. GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - MORNING

AX (12), a bony observant slave boy, is shackled to a gate at the top of the street. He guards a water cistern.

Kezi, Ester, Simon emerge from bougainvillea-concealed tunnel door in the city wall near Kezi's Grandmother's house.

AX  
 (yells to passersby)  
 Market open! Market open!

Kezi and Ester enter her house. Simon goes to speak to Ax.

INT. GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - MORNING

Kezi and Ester cross the open air atrium. The house is cruder than John Mark's house in Rome. Cloth hung from beams separates the rooms.

Kezi pushes a curtain aside to reveal her mother's weaving area. Elizabeth sits forlorn at the loom, not weaving.

KEZI  
 Mother, your best cloth.

Kezi sorts through rolls of cloth stacked on benches.

ELIZABETH  
 Keziah, now that your Grandmother is gone we must leave this place.

KEZI  
 A caravan and more soldiers have arrived, they have supplies for trade. We can join it.

ELIZABETH  
 I've asked your brother Benjamin to arrange a marriage for you.

Kezi stops gathering cloth, stands stunned.

KEZI  
 Benjamin? Father would never approve. He trained me to keep the laws but not with the Pharisees...

ELIZABETH  
 He's our only way to safety.

Kezi sees her father's satchel on a bench, takes out the scroll.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)  
 We can't wait for him forever. We are going to Benjamin's, tonight.

Ester gently takes the scroll from Kezi, returns it to the pouch, sets it on the bench, hands Kezi a bolt of cloth.

EXT. AX'S GATE - MORNING

Kezi and Ester rush towards Simon.

AX

Give Ax bread, Ax give water.

SIMON

I'll meet you at the Market gate  
after I report to my commander.

They kiss him, join the flow of women in the street.

EXT. JERUSALEM STREET - MORNING

The people headed for market, pushing carts, grows.

ESTER

I didn't know you had a brother!  
And don't you want a marriage?

KEZI

We can't marry now, Jesus warned  
the end time will be the worst for  
nursing mothers.

ESTER

Fertile moons are passing fast for  
us, don't you want children?

KEZI

You sound like Simon.

ESTER

Simon asked you about children?

Earsplitting horns blow from rooftops all around them.

ESTER (CONT'D)

Shofar! The Romans!

Kezi and Ester link arms, juggle cloth, run with the crowd.

Kezi stops abruptly to stare at bright clouds forming.

ESTER (CONT'D)

What are you doing? Let's at least  
try to get these to market.

KEZI

Surely now is the time he will come  
to lead us.

ESTER

No, now is the time for gathering supplies, to treat wounds in the tunnels, not for staring at clouds.

KEZI

Bandages and tunnels were of no use in Rome.

Ester gently urges the pensive Kezi to rejoin the flow.

EXT. MARKET GATE - MORNING

Chaos reigns. People pile their best possessions onto carts that are surrounded by Hamadi's boys. They exchange bracelets of gold and platters of silver to the Head Boy for a broken piece of pottery with a number scratched on the back.

Those rejected by the Head Boy trade meager belongings or scraps of food with each other. Kezi approaches the Head Boy.

KEZI

Where have you come from?

HEAD BOY

Show me what you have.

Kezi acquiesces, the Head Boy examines her cloth, fingers the embroidered border. He gives her a chip for bolts of cloth.

HEAD BOY (CONT'D)

Egypt.

KEZI

Has the caravan brought letters?

He pushes Kezi aside and gestures to Ester.

Ester unwraps the honey. The Head Boy laughs at her.

ESTER

You can't find honey. Only I can.  
It's good for potions and spells.

HEAD BOY

Be gone, we have our own Diviners.  
(to Kezi)  
You have more goods or coin to offer... to pay for a letter?

KEZI

I'm expecting word from my father.  
He would have paid for it already.

HEAD BOY

No Jew in Egypt has coin for letters.

KEZI

John Mark the Scribe does. Have you heard of him? He's well known for his plays.

HEAD BOY

Hamadi keeps all the letters.

From the fringes, Circae listens to the exchange. As Kezi scans the square for Hamadi, Circae approaches Ester.

CIRCAE

How much do you want for the honey?

KEZI

Don't sell to her! She will use it for pagan potions.

ESTER

You and your mother can get out on the Caravan. I need this coin.

KEZI

Mother is too delicate for both the tunnels and the caravan.

ESTER

Go to Benjamin. The Pharisees must have arranged their escape, you should go with them too.

KEZI

I'm sure father has a plan to get us out, he disowned my brother for good reason, Benjamin gave up on Jesus as Messiah. Are you?

ESTER

My brothers will be fighting and I will fight too. I don't know about a Messiah- do you see one here? But I know potions and how to care for the wounded.

CIRCAE

Do you want my three coins or not?

Ester completes the sale of her honey.

Simon shoves his way through the crowd to join them.

SIMON

(Pronouncing to all)

The north wall's breached! Women to the tunnels. We will stop them!

(to Kezi and Ester)

They're burning houses. I'll escort you as far as the tunnel entry.

KEZI

Take Ester to my mother first. She can give you cloth for bandages.

Jewish rebels with swords and clubs charge past. The marketplace empties, refugees flee past in a blur.

SIMON

You have to come with us.

KEZI

I have to find Hamadi first.

(Simon's reluctant, waits)

I'll join you at the tunnels.

Ester tugs at Simon's arm. They leave, Kezi loses sight of them.

Circae stalks Simon and Ester at a discreet distance.

Hamadi's Head Boy whistles, Boys maneuver loot laden carts towards the labyrinth of main gates. Veiled young women cling to the inside of a covered cart.

The Head Boy nabs Kezi, shoves her on the young women's cart.

EXT. HAMADI'S TENT - AFTERNOON

Kezi peeks out of her veil. Near the Roman Camp, a chaos of hawkers, henna painted prostitutes, and uniformed soldiers swirls around camels simultaneously loaded and unloaded.

Boys hitch white donkeys to a gilded, curtained chariot, the center of attention. It's occupant is hidden from view.

CROWD MEMBERS

Hamadi! Hamadi! I have gold. I have silver. I have oil. I have myrrh.

The Boys help the young women down from Kezi's cart, the Head Boy indicates they should wait. Some of them are sobbing.

Hamadi's Gang of Boys races around the crowd, examines what they offer, pushes people back. Sometimes a boy runs to the chariot, pokes his head into the curtains.

KEZI  
 (to young woman from the  
 cart)  
 Who are all those boys?

YOUNG WOMAN  
 Hamadi's eyes and ears.

KEZI  
 He's deaf and blind?

YOUNG WOMAN  
 Not completely, but they say for  
 the right price he will overlook  
 even the decrees of the Emperor.

The Head Boy drags Kezi to the cart, pulls back the curtain.

Hamadi, with eyes closed, sniffs then devours a fig.

KEZI  
 You have letters from Alexandria?

HAMADI  
 From John Mark?

KEZI  
 My father will honor any agreement  
 I make with you.

Hamadi signals for his boys to move in. Kezi brushes away.  
 They stand near her, wait for another sign from Hamadi.

HAMADI  
 What does your father have to  
 offer?

KEZI  
 He has touched the prophet Jesus.

HAMADI  
 What does this prophet Jesus offer?  
 He must be dangerous since the  
 Romans are so afraid of him.

KEZI  
 He healed many--

HAMADI  
 Bring him here then.

KEZI  
 He is gone.

HAMADI

He is dead?

KEZI

His miracles are borne in his witnesses.

HAMADI

And your father is one of these witnesses?

KEZI

I have the witness in his scroll.

HAMADI

A scroll? You are mad. Only those who offer something of value escape.

KEZI

You must hear the story, it will show you the miracle. The prophet Jesus opened the eyes of the blind.

Hamadi's hand goes to his closed eyes. He strokes them.

HAMADI

Opened the eyes of the blind?

A boy pokes his head in.

HAMADI'S BOY

A crate of gold from the temple.

HAMADI

Excellent! I accept.

(to Kezi)

Your words can heal the blind?

KEZI

My father's scroll offers a miracle worth more than all the gold in the temple.

HAMADI

Give me this scroll. Then we shall 'see' what to do about the words of John Mark.

Hamadi laughs to the point of hysteria at his own pun.

KEZI

I'll return with it. You will see!

Hamadi grabs Kezi by the hair.

HAMADI

If this scroll does what you say, I  
will take you anywhere you wish,  
even to your father. Or? To a  
reckoning worse than Hades.

Kezi pulls out from the curtains. A boy takes her place.

MICHOT

(to the Boy)

Make sure the Romans don't collect  
her. And find her mother.

EXT. CITY WALL - AFTERNOON

Hamadi's Boy chases Kezi, leers at her. Refugees pour from a  
tunnel door, she bolts into the tunnel.

Refugees block Hamadi's Boy from entering, he's forced away.

EXT. STREETS OF JERUSALEM - AFTERNOON

Kezi runs home through billows of smoke.

Soldiers fight Rebel Jewish men, surrounded by fallen dead.

A house burns, the occupants are slaughtered by waiting  
soldiers when they rush out their door to escape the flames.

Kezi trips through debris and blood covered bodies.

A baby cries. Its mother lies on the ground, her legs broken.  
The Mother holds the baby out to passersby.

Kezi slows her run, angles across the street towards them. A  
cart cuts into her path, knocks her down.

When the cart passes, the mother is there but a soldier has  
thrust his sword through the baby and mother. He pulls out  
his sword and charges to join his fellows at the next burning  
house.

Kezi kneels by them, faint. The mother mouths - take him - as  
her eyes go blank.

A Fleeing Woman pulls Kezi up.

## FLEEING WOMAN

You must save yourself now, there  
will only be a few of us left. The  
remnant. You must go to the tunnel.

Kezi looks around in despair.

## KEZI

(screams)

Where are you, why didn't you take  
us to Alexandria!

She hears her father's voice.

## JOHN MARK O.S.

Boldly rest on the Lord our God.

Kezi despairs at the bodies of the mother and child. She  
looks at the soldiers running past. At the houses in flames.

## KEZI

Is this but the beginning of your  
birth pangs? Must you declare to  
all nations first? Jesus! Do these  
mean nothing to you, us, here, now?

On a passing cart, a loom teeters on top of bundles, cloth  
hangs half-woven. Kezi pulls herself together, runs after it.

## EXT. AX'S GATE - AFTERNOON

Ax begs passing strangers to free him. Kezi rushes past him.  
Screams and the clashes of fighting echo in the distance.

## INT. GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE - DUSK

Kezi charges in, secures the door behind her.

## KEZI

Mother?

Muffled clashes and screams plague her from behind the door.

She steps towards the weaving room, spots a cart half packed.  
Cloth and pottery are strewn on the ground.

Her father's satchel lays on the floor, open. She shakes it,  
it's empty. She tosses it aside.

Kezi unbars the door and looks out.

EXT. GRANDMOTHER'S STREET - DUSK

Figures emerge, pass by and disappear again into the haze. Kezi bats at the smoke, calls to each woman who passes.

KEZI  
 Mother? Mother?  
 (They shake their heads or  
 ignore her)  
 Have you seen my mother?

Kezi's voice becomes hoarse. The smoke clears, the sky darkens. Crowds boldly line up at the tunnel entrance.

MAN PASSING BY ON CART  
 Soldiers have left to fill their  
 bellies but they will return soon.  
 Rested. Finish us all. Better get  
 through the tunnel while you can.

Shouts come from up the street. A crowd stands around Ax. Kezi makes her way there against the flow.

EXT. AX'S GATE - DUSK

Kezi pushes to the front of the crowd.

REFUGEE  
 Did you see my sister?

Ax points. The Refugee hurries in that direction.

Flames lick the heavy gates behind Ax.

KEZI  
 The house is on fire. Free him!

REFUGEE  
 You can't free another's slave.

The remaining crowd scatters as the flames grow.

Kezi yanks Ax's tether, the chain's anchor is firm.

Ax points frantically. Fire flicks out from under the door.

She grabs his ladle, fills it with water, splashes the flames with water. The paving stones sizzle.

KEZI  
 Lord. Not another child, please.

AX  
 (points to the cistern)  
 Break!

Kezi shoves the cistern over, it breaks, spills around Ax.

Ax stretches out with his foot to reach the ironwork stand. Kezi kicks it to him. Ax wedges it in the chain and breaks the link. He is free.

Kezi grabs Ax's hand, they dash into the street.

They watch as the beams in his house crash down. The heavy gate falls flat where Ax sat a moment ago.

AX (CONT'D)  
 Took your mother. Her.

KEZI  
 You know who is my mother?

AX  
 Everyday walk. You Keziah and Elizabeth the Weaver.

KEZI  
 Who took her? My friend Ester?

Ax shakes his head.

KEZI (CONT'D)  
 You don't know her?

AX  
 Not name.

Ax catches a cockroach, holds it on his forehead.

AX (CONT'D)  
 Like this. Mark.

KEZI  
 Which way did they go?

AX  
 Mark of Naamah Street.

KEZI  
 Go with me?

AX  
 No! Demon's quarter.

Ax pulls out of her hand, trots away.

KEZI  
Where is your master?

AX  
Caesarea Port, many suns.

Ax disappears around the corner.

EXT. - NAAMAH STREET - DUSK

Kezi passes under the Naamah arch. The Quarter has escaped the attack. The only smoke curls up from a huge bowl set on a tripod, tended by a veiled wizened crone, ANNA.

Anna sits down with a heavy sigh, watches Kezi approach.

KEZI  
This is Naamah Quarter?

ANNA  
Business here, give name.

KEZI  
A woman with a mark on her face may  
have brought mother here by  
mistake.

Anna laughs, pulls back her veil to show off a forehead crisscrossed with geometric scars.

ANNA  
(discretely shows fish  
tattoo on her hand)  
I'm Anna. All marked here.

KEZI  
My father knew the prophet.

Anna examines Kezi's hand.

ANNA  
Why do you not have a mark?

KEZI  
Mother insisted marks were too  
dangerous. Her robe is white, with  
a blue woven border. Is she here?

ANNA  
No mistake here, all pay to leave.

KEZI  
I won't pay for my own mother.

Anna laughs.

Circae, her forehead marked with a scarab tattoo, grabs Kezi from behind, puts a hood on her, drags her away.

INT. CIRCAE'S HOUSE - DUSK

Kezi stands in prayer, arms raised, in a dark room.

KEZI  
Lord, are you my light and my  
salvation?

Wind blows open a shutter, a bright square of sunset appears, floats detached. Shadows shift.

KEZI (CONT'D)  
Mother, are you here? It's Kezi.  
Call out if you can hear me.

The sun goes down. The square goes purple and dark.

DEMON VOICE  
We can hear you.

Kezi scrambles to the wall, feels her way to a door, pushes the handle. It's locked. She bangs on it.

The room bursts with scratching, clanking, chains rattling. Kezi slides down the door to her knees.

KEZI  
(shouts)  
In Jesus name--

Laughter. Hands paw at her face, arms, and back. She pushes them away and begins to cry. Her crying echoes and is mocked by other demon voices.

DEMON VOICE  
Mother are you here?

KEZI  
Jesus, please. Where are you?

DEMON VOICE  
Where are you?

A door creaks open. A handheld lamp illuminates the face of Ester.

ESTER  
Stop it now. Get back.

Scampering noises. She holds up her lamp, the tiny flame flashes off iron rings in the wall. Chains extend to veiled lumps on cots. They groan.

Ester turns her lamp on Kezi. Kezi runs to her.

KEZI  
What is this place?

ESTER  
Circae followed me, to your house.

KEZI  
Where is my mother?

ESTER  
Circae has sold your mother to Hamadi.

KEZI  
We have to get out of here.

ESTER  
It's safe here for me. I'm staying.

Kezi holds up Ester's arm, it's cuffed with a tether.

KEZI  
But she has enslaved you!

ESTER  
There are worse things. The Romans won't touch this place.

KEZI  
I don't understand.

ESTER  
They are afraid of the demons.

KEZI  
No, I don't understand why you would stay.

ESTER  
My brothers...  
(breaks into sobs)

KEZI  
We'll find them.

ESTER  
Already cut down. They faced the first attackers...  
(MORE)

ESTER (CONT'D)

it was planned that way... to  
eliminate Nazorean troublemakers.

KEZI

We must stand together. Jesus  
shouldn't divide Jews.

ESTER

I can be useful here, with potions.

KEZI

This is no place for a Nazorean.

ESTER

I don't have the mark, they won't  
know. I'm not afraid of the demons.

A door slams deep in the house. Ester pulls out a key.

ESTER (CONT'D)

But you must get the mark so that  
other Nazoreans will know you, can  
help you on your journey. Hurry, I  
have to put the key back.

She unlocks the door and lets Kezi out.

EXT. NAAMAH STREET - NIGHT

Ester accompanies Kezi to Anna's smoking cauldron.

KEZI

Do you know what happened to my  
Father's scroll? Does Mother have  
it?

ESTER

She threatened Circae with it, said  
it would destroy the demons. Circae  
took it. Can't you write another?

Anna stirs coals in the bowl on the tripod.

ANNA

Circae.

ESTER

Run and do not look back.

When Ester is gone, Kezi ducks into a doorway.

Circae carries John Mark's scroll to the smoking bowl. She  
throws it in, chants. It bursts into flame. Sees Kezi.

EXT. GRANDMOTHER'S STREET - NIGHT

Kezi runs blindly. Her feet are bare. She frequently stumbles over debris, collides with others who wander, disoriented.

She stops in front of her collapsed house. Her mother's loom is a charred skeleton.

Kezi picks through the coals, she finds her father's blackened satchel.

She shoulders it, walks toward the tunnel's newly exposed entrance where stragglers linger, the bougainvillea burned.

From behind, someone grabs onto the satchel. She whips around, prepared to strike.

It's Ax. He holds out his hand, it contains a gold coin.

KEZI

Where did you get this?

AX

Hamadi Boy.

KEZI

Did he give it to you? Or did you take it from him? Stealing's wrong.

AX

Find Kezi.

She looks around, pulls him closer to the tunnel door.

KEZI

Did you tell him where I was?

AX

No. Give message for Kezi.

KEZI

What message?

AX

Bring scroll, not sell Kezi mother Tyre Slave Market.

Kezi gasps, Ax tugs on the satchel.

AX (CONT'D)

Take scroll? Ax go.

KEZI

(shakes her head)  
 You don't have to go with me. Take  
 what you can from your home and go  
 find your Masters.

AX

Masters gone. Ax soldier to Kezi.

Kezi kicks at debris.

AX (CONT'D)

Kezi mad, not want Ax?

KEZI

Not at you. I don't have the  
 scroll. I have to go to Benjamin.

AX

Benjamin?

KEZI

Like going to a dry well for water.

AX

Not go, get water, scroll here?

KEZI

There might be one that would  
 satisfy Hamadi at the Archives. But  
 women aren't allowed.

AX

Ax get scroll.

Ax slings her father's satchel over his shoulder.

EXT. JEWISH TEMPLE MOUNT- NIGHT

Kezi and Ax skirt the base of the temple in the shadows.  
 Bodies are littered across a broad ceremonial staircase. The  
 sky glows. Sparks rise from fires on the top of the mount,  
 dominated by a huge red Legio-X Fretensis flag.

KEZI

Sacrilege on the temple. The  
 promise of the end.

Ax points out soldiers stirring at the bottom of the stairs.

KEZI (CONT'D)

Hurry, into the archive.

Kezi and Ax hurry through rubble towards the dark arches of a large building that intersects the temple mount.

INT. TEMPLE ARCHIVES - NIGHT

Kezi pushes open a heavy door, they step into a vast room.

The center holds a long table, strewn with ink bowls and quills. On the walls triangular cubby holes store scrolls.

KEZI  
 (reads a scroll label)  
 The Prophet Isaiah. This might do.

Kezi takes the satchel from Ax, scoops in quills, bowls, ink.

Laughter and shouts of Roman Soldiers fill the corridor.

ROMAN SOLDIER  
 Porcius said not even a trace, no  
 poisonous Jew words are to remain.  
 And he pays well.

Fire spreads. Kezi and Ax flee after the soldiers move on.

EXT. TEMPLE ARCHIVES - NIGHT

Flames light three stories of arches. Jewish men in ragged robes with prayer tassels run inside, one grabs Kezi.

JEWISH MAN  
 Women are not allowed in there!

Kezi loses sight of Ax as he dashes away through the smoke

KEZI  
 Soldiers came.

The Man with Kezi looks around, no soldiers are present.

JEWISH MAN  
 Did you set this fire?

KEZI  
 (indignant)  
 And burn sacred scriptures? Jesus--

The Jewish man slaps her hard.

## JEWISH MAN

Without you Nazoreans this siege  
wouldn't be happening. We would  
have expelled the Romans long ago.

Kezi scans the terrible devastation around her.

Jewish Men come out of the burning building, faces smeared  
with ash, arms full of scorched scrolls.

At the sight of the scrolls, Kezi's eyes tear up.

Women emerge from the surrounding rubble, they wail. One of  
the men begins to read from a scroll.

## READER

Hear Lamentations. Is it nothing to  
you, all you who pass by? Look and  
see if there is any sorrow like my  
sorrow, which was brought upon me,  
which the Lord inflicted on the day  
of his fierce anger.

A group of Priests, firelight bouncing off stones set in  
their elaborate robes, appears in the road.

The Jewish crowd grumbles.

## READER (CONT'D)

From on high he sent fire; it went  
deep into my bones; he spread a net  
for my feet; he turned me back; he  
has left me stunned, faint all day  
long.

## CROWD MEMBERS

(pointing to priests)  
How dare they! I thought they left  
long ago.

## MAN HOLDING KEZI

Worse than you Nazoreans.

He grabs the scroll of Isaiah from Kezi, shakes it at her.

## MAN HOLDING KEZI (CONT'D)

Isaiah knew.

## CROWD MEMBERS

(at Priests)  
Traitors! Lovers of Rome!

## KEZI

They are Pharisees?

## MAN HOLDING KEZI

Forget them, it is Jesus who has  
divided us! If not for your  
Nazorean rebellion we could worship  
at the temple under Pax Romana.

The crowd picks up stones and turns on Kezi.

## CROWD MEMBERS

Provoker of Rome! Stone her!

Priest BENJAMIN (25), with the confidence and charm of the  
naturally elect, marches between the crowd and their target.

A stone is tossed, it narrowly misses Benjamin, hits Kezi in  
the shoulder.

The scribe's bag falls to ground, its contents spill out.

## CROWD MEMBERS (CONT'D)

Pharisees where have you been  
hiding? Benjamin, why are you  
shielding that thief? She burned  
the Archive. The bag isn't hers,  
women aren't scribes.

## KEZI

You are Benjamin?

## BENJAMIN

Did you steal that bag?

## KEZI

I can write.

He looks skeptical.

She picks up a quill, spits on a stick of ink, looks for  
something to write on.

The crowd throws torn charred pieces of scroll, laughs.

## BENJAMIN

(picks one up)  
Finish the missing word.

Kezi neatly pens the characters to finish the word, adds:  
"John Mark's Daughter", hands it back.

He reads, crumples it, turns to the crowd.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Shame on you for not saving more  
sacred scriptures. Jerusalem is  
finished. Hear this and then flee.

He grabs the Isaiah scroll, rolls it open for Kezi to read.

KEZI

(haltingly)

People laden with iniquity,  
offspring who do evil, children who  
deal corruptly, who have forsaken  
the Lord, who have despised the  
Holy One of Israel, who are utterly  
estranged!

BENJAMIN

Your sins are like scarlet. Two  
things must happen in order for us  
to win with Rome. We must keep holy  
in the name of the Most High God,  
and we must obliterate the myth of  
Jesus from human history.

Kezi blanches at his words. She tries to get away but Benjamin grabs her by the arm.

Kezi glances around but is no sign of Ax.

KEZI

Will you help me?

BENJAMIN

Did you steal that bag?

KEZI

It's our father's, he taught me to  
write.

BENJAMIN

Our father? Look around you, see  
what your father's way has wrought.  
It's time for the way of purity and  
holiness. Even your prophet warned  
not to abandon the law.

Benjamin allows her to walk with him in silence up the street, which is littered with bodies.

EXT. UPPER QUARTER STREETS - NIGHT

Guards dressed in blue robes of the Temple Guard nod to Benjamin, eye Kezi with amusement as they enter a gate.

Benjamin and Kezi make their way through quiet streets. A few carts sit abandoned with broken wheels under massive loads of ornate furnishings. There is no evidence of the dead here.

KEZI

Our mother--

BENJAMIN

Not here. There are ears.

KEZI

The Romans haven't attacked this place, who lives here?

BENJAMIN

Romans are too lazy to build their own ships or grow their own food, so they need those who lived here.

KEZI

Why didn't you flee with them?

BENJAMIN

I stayed to gather the sacred scriptures first. No stone will be left standing on another stone.

KEZI

Don't you believe the Messiah is--

A stray dog that rushes at them, Benjamin kicks it away.

BENJAMIN

This is an unclean place, it has been ever since your Jesus mocked it. No Messiah is coming here.

Guards let them through a gate in a thick wall. Behind it looms Herod's pristine Palace.

INT. HEROD'S PALACE - NIGHT

Torch-fire glints off gold tiles set in the mosaic floors.

Kezi pauses at a fountain that features a girl her age, in a dancing pose.

BENJAMIN

Do you recognize her?

KEZI

A pagan goddess who defiles your living quarters?

BENJAMIN

No, a true heroine of the Jewish people. Salome who danced on a floor like this in return for the head of your false baptist, John.

Kezi lifts her bare foot off the edge of the gold tiles.

KEZI

The reward for making the way pure?

A striking priest, JOSEPHUS (33), in Roman robes, approaches.

BENJAMIN

Josephus, we've salvaged what we could from the archive, it's only a few scrolls, the rest has burned.

JOSEPHUS

As will all of us if... Who's this?

They turn to commotion at the gate. Hamadi's Boy is let in but held by the Guard.

HAMADI'S BOY

Important message for Josephus.

The guard waves Josephus over.

Kezi steps behind Benjamin too late, the Boy sees her.

Josephus hears the message from Hamadi's Boy, has the Guard toss him out. Josephus returns to Kezi and Benjamin.

JOSEPHUS

Do you know of this Porcius? He's asking questions about the family of John Mark.

BENJAMIN

You know my father is dead to me.

JOSEPHUS

You don't know where he is?

BENJAMIN

Is it arranged with Hamadi?

JOSEPHUS

There won't be a living thing left in Jerusalem tomorrow. Have your family prepared to depart within the hour. Will that include--  
(eyes Kezi)

Benjamin nods, hurries Kezi away before Josephus can speak.

BENJAMIN  
Who is this Porcius?

KEZI  
He wants to arrest father.

BENJAMIN  
How dare you lead him here.

Further along the colonnade, a door bursts open and a heavily pregnant young woman, LIVIA (25) rushes towards them. She is dressed in flowing Roman-style linen tied with gold sashes.

Benjamin grabs Kezi by the hair and pulls her ear close.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)  
Do not tell her anything about what  
is taking place outside the palace.

He releases Kezi in time to embrace Livia.

LIVIA  
My love.

Livia glances at Kezi.

LIVIA (CONT'D)  
Is this her? Let's see.

She turns Kezi around.

LIVIA (CONT'D)  
But she's filthy you don't expect--

BENJAMIN  
Don't concern yourself. She's only  
a messenger. The one coming to care  
for Little Peter will be here soon.

KEZI  
You have a son? I have a--

BENJAMIN  
Livia, Keziah will be here for the  
meal only.

INT. BENJAMIN'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

They enter cozy rooms with a fireplace. A pot of stew steams.

BENJAMIN

We must eat quickly and make ready  
to leave soon. Is our son ready?

LIVIA

Tonight? So soon?

Livia ladles bowls of stew from the pot on the fire.

BENJAMIN

The caravan was early.

There is a clatter in the next room.

LITTLE PETER (O.S.)

Ahh Waa, Ahh Waaa...

Livia drops the bowl and hurries through a curtain. Wailing continues.

LIVIA (O.S.)

Shush quiet. Not now.

Livia returns.

LIVIA (CONT'D)

It is the worst I've seen him!  
Where is this wretched Circae?

KEZI

Circae? No! She is a diviner, she  
consorts with demons. She sold our  
mother to Hamadi, for slavery.

LIVIA

Your mother?

Livia stomps to Benjamin, flails at him.

LIVIA (CONT'D)

Is this your sister? Have you  
brought the demon curse of Jesus  
back into this house?

BENJAMIN

Calm yourself. Jesus was not of  
Beelzebub, he merely made trouble  
for the empire and our people.

LITTLE PETER (O.S.)

Ahh waa, Ahh waa. Ahh waa.

LIVIA

Jesus name didn't cast out Peter's demon, did it? Nothing good has ever come out of your family.

BENJAMIN

Yes, Jesus was a false prophet. But that doesn't mean we can't pay my mother and sister's way to Tyre.

LIVIA

Not with my father's coins. You must choose. Them or me.

BENJAMIN

(to Kezi)

I'm sorry--

Pounding at the door. Livia attempts to slap Benjamin but he gently eases her down on a couch, moves swiftly to the door.

Kezi walks to the curtain of her nephew's room, opens it.

Livia struggles off the couch to stop her.

INT. LITTLE PETER'S ROOM - NIGHT

Kezi steps in, the heavy curtain falls back in place.

The only thing in the small dark alcove is a cage on wheels.

Inside it underdeveloped adorable LITTLE PETER (6), convulses. His limbs vibrate, he is choking. His eyes, a match to Benjamin's, plead with her.

Kezi reaches her hand inside the cage.

Little Peter bites her. She yelps.

Livia bursts through the curtain.

LIVIA

Stop it Peter, you must fight it.  
You must not let the demon inside  
you win. Spit it out.

Peter calms, coos. Livia drags Kezi back into the other room.

INT. BENJAMIN'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Circae is standing in the doorway.

BENJAMIN

Circae is ready to take him.

Circae sees Kezi, breaks into a knowing grin. Kezi backs up.

Benjamin strides to Little Peter's room, pulls his cage into the main room. Little Peter reaches out his arms to Livia.

LIVIA

My sweet Little Peter has returned.

(to Circae)

You are sure you can rid him of the demon? Others have tried.

CIRCAE

(examines Little Peter)

It may take longer than I thought.

(points to Kezi)

You can pay my extra fee with her.

LIVIA

Do it now! Cast it out of him now!

BENJAMIN

We'll pay no such extra fee. We had an agreement and you will honor it.

Benjamin ushers Kezi out the doors into a back atrium.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

(hands her a few coins)

It's all I have to give you. Tell Mother I'm sorry. Leave from here.

Benjamin closes the doors on her.

EXT. BENJAMIN'S ATRIUM - NIGHT

Something moves on top of the roof. Ax waves a bow and arrow.

AX

We go now?

KEZI

You followed us?

AX

Ax protect Kezi.

LITTLE PETER (O.S.)

Ahh waa. Ahh waa.

Kezi listens at the door. She opens it a crack, watches.

AX  
Hurry, soldiers coming everywhere.

Livia sobs.

LIVIA  
Isn't there another way to assure  
the new baby won't be possessed?

BENJAMIN  
Get ready, the caravan is leaving.  
In Rome you will have everything  
you need for a healthy heir.

A knock at the door, Benjamin opens it. Men enter, gather  
crates. They are joined by a stern looking HANDMAIDEN (40).

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)  
Get your cloak. It's time to go.

LIVIA  
But you haven't even packed yet.

The Handmaiden restrains Livia, encourages her to the door.

LIVIA (CONT'D)  
Let me go.

BENJAMIN  
I will join you later.

LIVIA  
You must come with me now, it isn't  
dignified for me to go on my own!

Benjamin closes the entry door behind Livia.

Kezi opens the atrium door.

INT. BENJAMIN'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Kezi steps back into the main room. Benjamin looks furious.

KEZI  
Your family obligation is to help  
us. Hamadi holds mother hostage!

BENJAMIN  
My obligation is to the priesthood.  
To the way of purity. I am dead to  
the family, Father cast me out.

KEZI

Father would want you to save us.

BENJAMIN

Where is father now? Fulfilling his family obligation? Or chasing around the empire, means of which is provided to him by the Caesar.

KEZI

Will you regret your words when Jesus returns?

BENJAMIN

Until then I will follow the way of the written law. As you should too. And you should be more thankful for a meal and coins you don't deserve.

Ax slips into the room, tugs at Kezi.

AX

Porcius horses at wall.

PORCIUS (O.S.)

(pounds on door)

Open in the name of General Titus and the Emperor Vespasian.

Benjamin hustles Kezi and Ax out the back door.

EXT. HEROD'S PALACE STREET - NIGHT

On the other side of the roof, they dash down stairs to the street where horses are tied. A Temple Guard watches.

Benjamin approaches and nods to the Guard. They untie two, one for Ax, one for Benjamin and Kezi, and mount. Gallop off.

EXT. UPPER QUARTER STREET- NIGHT

Benjamin stops his horse at a breach in the wall.

KEZI

That's the Roman camp.

BENJAMIN

We have friends there. It's our only way past your rebels.

EXT. ROMAN CAMP - NIGHT

They ride next to the camp.

Soldiers eye the Roman markings and tack on their horses with suspicion. A few make ready with weapons, follow them.

Benjamin rides into the center of the camp.

Josephus stands with some officers. He waves to greet them.

Benjamin waves back. The soldiers abandon their pursuit.

EXT. KIDRON VALLEY - NIGHT

In bright moonlight, they spot Hamadi's caravan at the Gihon Springs. Women and camel handlers gather water, bed camels.

Benjamin rides past the caravan, stops in a thick palm grove.

KEZI

Aren't we going with the caravan?

AX

Ax get water.

BENJAMIN

(nods approval)

Stay hidden.

Benjamin stashes bags with markings of the legion in the brush. Lies down on the regimental blanket.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Rest first, it will be a long trip.

Kezi settles down next to him.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

We asked in Jesus name. But you saw Little Peter. It didn't work. The Jews are too impure. Demons are in charge here, but Father disagreed.

Ax returns with skins full of water.

KEZI

I'm sure Hamadi will accept only a high offer. Can you convince Livia?

BENJAMIN

Livia is going on to Rome alone.

KEZI  
Alone? Without you?

The sound of hooves pounding.

AX  
Soldiers.

BENJAMIN  
More likely thieves. In either  
case, we can't join the caravan.

They mount the horses and ride in the shadows. A great herd  
of boars trots by, young men herd them.

KEZI  
Who are they?

BENJAMIN  
Just refugees. They have stolen the  
Roman's boars. Soldiers will be  
close behind.

KEZI  
Refugees? But Jews don't eat boar.

BENJAMIN  
Starving men eat anything. Why do  
you think the Most High Lord is so  
displeased with us? Disobedience.

KEZI  
I am beginning to understand.

Ax turns his horse, follows the herd. Squealing, Shouting.

Ax returns, grinning, a dead boar tied to his saddle.

KEZI (CONT'D)  
If we purify. Become more holy, the  
Lord will return to his people?

BENJAMIN  
Why would a Messiah come to a  
defiled people?

KEZI  
Will the temple have to be rebuilt?

BENJAMIN  
You can obey the Torah anywhere.

EXT. JUDEAN DESERT HIGH COUNTRY - NIGHT

Benjamin, Kezi and Ax ride through craggy hills. Voices mutter on the cliff above, Wings flash.

The horses startle and refuse to pass a crevasse in a rock.

BENJAMIN

Who's there?

ECHO

Who's there?

They ride up a steep plateau, look over a huge valley. A creature in shadow that could be a lion or a man stands on its hind legs, put its limbs on a tree limb, watches them.

Ax charges it. It goes down on four paws, stalks away.

AX

Demons here.

Kezi shudders.

They ride along the top of the cliff. On the valley floor the moon glints off the Dead Sea. Cooking fires of a large village glow near the shore.

They pause at a steep path down the cliff into the valley.

KEZI

Where are we?

BENJAMIN

That is Jericho below us.

KEZI

And the caravan?

BENJAMIN

It will pause there to camp, we are well ahead of it.

He turns his horse away from the path to Jericho.

KEZI

Aren't we waiting here for Mother?

BENJAMIN

Mother will be taken care of.

KEZI

You haven't made any deal with Hamadi yet. We must speak to him.

BENJAMIN

We are going to Qumran.

Benjamin urges the horses onto a rough overgrown path.

KEZI

Why Qumran? Simon said it was sacked.

BENJAMIN

Is this Simon a Nazorean rebel?

KEZI

He is my friend.

BENJAMIN

You are friends with many rebels?

KEZI

I need to know that Mother is well.

BENJAMIN

My Livia, carrying my heir, is on the same caravan as Mother, isn't that enough for you to know?

KEZI

She is not a captive! Why Qumran?

BENJAMIN

To keep out that which is impure.  
To preserve that which is sacred.

EXT. QUMRAN VALLEY ENTRANCE - DAWN

Trees hang over a trickling stream. Ax roasts the boar over a fire.

Benjamin rides into camp, looks like he hasn't slept but is wearing a clean white set of robes.

Ax slices off a hunk of meat, Benjamin refuses it.

Ax offers it to Kezi. She hesitates, and also refuses.

BENJAMIN

You aren't hungry?

KEZI

You said we must restore holiness.  
The people of Israel don't eat it.

BENJAMIN

Father said your prophet deemed  
Jews could eat as Gentiles.

KEZI

I'm no longer sure.

BENJAMIN

Not sure of what Father said or of  
your prophet Jesus?

KEZI

I saw the dead, the sacrilege, and  
I did not see a Messiah. A sign the  
Most High is not well pleased?

BENJAMIN

Good. So you agree we should return  
to pleasing the Most High?

KEZI

If we want to free Mother we will  
need his blessing.

BENJAMIN

If you want to *remain* free you will  
need his blessing also, we all do.

AX

I want this blessing.

BENJAMIN

You can start by burning the rest  
of that foul animal.

Ax kicks the roasting boar into the fire, watches it burn.

BENJAMIN (CONT'D)

Now go up that path, there is a  
pool. Bathe and put on the robes  
you find there. Recite the Psalm of  
Repentance.

KEZI

Why?

BENJAMIN

You asked for my help. You want to  
restore holiness? What is required  
is obedience.

EXT. QUMRAN GATES - DAY

Benjamin, Kezi and Ax in a fresh robes dismount in front of the gate.

Temple Priests in white robes spill out, greet Benjamin.

An Egyptian woman, SEPTIMA (60), also in white robes, rushes towards them along the outside wall.

SEPTIMA

Bless you, I needed another set of hands in the kitchen.

KEZI

I'm only waiting for the caravan.  
Our mother--

BENJAMIN

She will serve the scribes.

KEZI

What? No I will not serve--

Ax wails. A Temple Priest chains him to a ring at the gate.

KEZI (CONT'D)

You can't shackle him. I freed--

TEMPLE PRIEST

How dare you question anything here?

(to Benjamin)

She is trouble, we must put her out.

AX

Without Ax wild things take Kezi.

KEZI

Ax and I will go to the caravan.

BENJAMIN

Enough about the caravan! Septima take Kezi to the women's quarters. I will come for her tomorrow.

Septima takes Kezi by the arm. Kezi resists.

SEPTIMA

Here, those put out do not live.

Kezi allows Septima to walk her along a narrow path that follows the exterior wall of the compound.

They come to a short wall intersecting the main one with a small door in it. Septima unlocks it and escorts Kezi in.

EXT. QUMRAN WOMEN'S QUARTERS - COOKING AREA - DAY

Kezi stands in the center of a cooking area, piled with pots and jars, herbs and meat hang from beams. Pots bubble on tripods over fires, goats are penned on one side.

KEZI

You see, my mother--

SEPTIMA

Best you first learn the rules here  
and also best that we know nothing  
about your life before. I'll show  
you your cot.

Septima leads Kezi through a maze of woven thorn fences to a cave in a hill that over-shadows the Qumran compound proper.

KEZI

What are all these fences for?

They step into the dark cave.

INT. WOMEN'S QUARTERS - CAVE - DAY

There are shelves cut in the walls for beds. Straw mattresses, blankets, a center fire.

Shriveled DRUSA (75), lying down, gestures Kezi to come near.

DRUSA

Romans have eyes everywhere but  
that is not what the thorns in the  
fences are for.

Drusa draws back her blanket to reveal a thin elderly body in a linen diaper. She has only one foot, scars jag her thighs.

Kezi gasps.

DRUSA (CONT'D)

I served at Herod's palace when  
Salome danced. They put me out.

Drusa dozes off. Septima replaces her blanket.

SEPTIMA

We found her crawling around in the desert, living off the remains of a garden gone to seed.

KEZI

Are we prisoners? Slaves?

DRUSA

(jerks awake)

The Lord favors good servants.

Kezi sits on her own cot and weeps.

INT. QUMRAN SCRIBE'S ROOM - DAY

Light flows in through a ceiling of loosely woven olive branches covered with white linen. There are intermittent breaches in the plastered walls.

SCRIBES in striped robes work diligently at rows of desks.

At the back, next to a wall breach, Kezi sweats in full sun.

A blast of wind sends a sand cloud through the room. Scribes scramble to cover their work. Terse Scribe JAMES (20) paces.

JAMES

Desert spirits have been restless since the new girl-scribe came.

SCRIBE MASTER

Not since Solomon has anyone been able to command the dark spirits. I doubt the girl can.

JAMES

Nazoreans say their prophet Jesus could.

KEZI

He cast out--

SCRIBE MASTER

Silence! You are not to speak here.

Kezi is hunched over her desk protecting the pages she works on. She sneers at James, scribbles on a clean sheet.

"And the Spirit immediately drove him into the wilderness."

KEZI

(mutters as she writes)  
 'He was in the wilderness forty  
 days, tempted by Satan; and he was  
 with the wild beasts; and the  
 angels waited on him.'

James comes up to her desk, peers over her shoulder. She  
 hides the new sheet she wrote on under her official work.

JAMES

All Nazoreans should be put out in  
 the wilderness to be tested.

The other Scribes laugh.

James faces Kezi, his back to the others, lifts his sleeve to  
 reveal a fish tattoo. He nods. She looks away. He stomps off.

INT. QUMRAN WOMEN'S QUARTERS - CAVE - EVENING

Kezi enters. The women are performing a play for each other.

SEPTIMA

The tale of Esther.

GIRL PLAYING ESTHER

You cannot ask me to plea to the  
 king for the life of the Jews. Only  
 if the king holds out the golden  
 scepter may a supplicant live.

She holds out a ladle suggesting an erection. They laugh.

SEPTIMA

And Ester's Uncle Mordecai sent a  
 reply: 'For if you keep silence at  
 such a time as this, relief and  
 deliverance will rise for the Jews  
 from another quarter, but you and  
 your father's family will perish.'

GIRL PLAYING ESTHER

I will go to him after fasting.  
 Tell all Jews to fast with me.

Kezi leaves her full bowl of soup on the table.

INT. QUMRAN SCRIBE'S ROOM - DAY

Kezi takes a fresh sheet, writes at the top: "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Gospel according to John Mark"

KEZI  
 (under her breath)  
 I'm willing to save you, even if  
 Benjamin and the Messiah aren't.

The Scribe Master walks to her desk. She hides the sheet.

INT. QUMRAN WOMEN'S QUARTERS - CAVE - EVENING

Kezi sits on the ledge that forms Drusa's bed.

KEZI  
 Drusa, do you think Jesus made a  
 pact with the demons when he was  
 fasting in the wilderness?

DRUSA  
 I do not know the Nazorean's secret  
 incantations but I would like to.

KEZI  
 Did you hear John the Baptist?

DRUSA  
 Bring me broth. It can be magic.

KEZI  
 I don't know how to prepare it.

DRUSA  
 Lazy girl. How will you survive  
 without knowing herbs and potions?

Kezi holds up her bandaged fingers.

KEZI  
 The Psalter of Hymns has left its  
 marks on me. With it, I'll survive.

SEPTIMA  
 Kezi, come finish the play with us.

GIRL PLAYING ESTHER  
 All have fasted with me. If I  
 perish, I perish.

SEPTIMA

And the King held out his scepter  
and said: 'What is it Queen Esther?  
What is your request? It shall be  
granted you, even half my kingdom.'

DRUSA

The exact words said to Salome for  
her dance. Kings are fools. It cost  
the head of the Baptist. He did not  
speak out, Jesus did not save him.

KEZI

When I am ready to go to Jericho to  
find my mother's caravan can you  
tell me the way?

DRUSA

The way to be torn by wild beasts  
or the way of the Lord Jesus?

GIRL PLAYING ESTHER

Tell us, Drusa, of the way of the  
Lord Jesus.

DRUSA

I met the Baptist at the palace of  
Red and Black, where men let their  
guard down to the whispering  
spirits of women.

SEPTIMA

No, we must finish Ester's tale.

DRUSA

(to Kezi)  
You know Jesus' tale, tell them.

KEZI

It is too dangerous.

GIRL PLAYING ESTHER

What do you mean?

KEZI

I've seen it bring many to belief-  
but in Rome and in Jerusalem I saw  
it bring many to a horrible death.

SEPTIMA

The priests will put you out if  
they find you are a follower.

KEZI

I'm no longer sure of anything but  
freeing Mother and finding Father.

DRUSA

There is no way to Jericho but  
demons or death in the wilderness.

INT. QUMRAN SCRIBE'S ROOM - DAY

The Scribe Master paces up and down the row of scribes.

Kezi copies characters from a scroll to a fresh parchment as  
he watches her.

When the Scribe Master turns away, Kezi pulls a sheet from  
under the others and writes, "In Jericho a blind beggar was  
sitting by the roadside--"

The Scribe Master comes her way. James pushes his ink over.

The Scribe Master turns towards James.

Kezi writes, "My teacher, let me see again."

The Scribe Master whips James for his 'accident'.

Kezi writes, "Go, your faith has made you well." She does not  
look up at James when he passes her desk.

INT. QUMRAN WOMEN'S QUARTERS - KITCHEN - EVENING

A Guard escorts Kezi in, leaves her with Septima, cooking.

Kezi unwraps her fingers, they are cracked and bleeding.

SEPTIMA

I saw your boy Ax when I visited  
the healing room. He is well.

KEZI

Did they beat him? How dare--

SEPTIMA

Not beaten. Purified.

KEZI

He is an innocent, he knows nothing  
of the laws or purity.

SEPTIMA

He made a vow to Benjamin. He was circumcised. I thought you would be pleased. Isn't Benjamin your kin?

KEZI

I make no such claim on him. He betrayed me. I expected to join my mother on the caravan in Jericho.

SEPTIMA

Dear girl, I'm sorry for your mother. Do you want to send her word of you?

KEZI

You can get word to Jericho?

SEPTIMA

Some of the women are going there tomorrow, I can secret a letter.

Septima picks up a tray loaded with full soup bowls.

KEZI

Let me take that for you.

SEPTIMA

But your fingers.

Kezi quickly rewraps her fingers, grabs the tray and steps through the door as the Temple Guard opens it, slips inside before Septima can protest.

INT. QUMRAN MEN'S DINING HALL - EVENING

Kezi serves the soup. The men ignore her.

KEZI

(to Temple Guard)  
This is for the others.

TEMPLE GUARD

Others?

KEZI

In the...other rooms.

TEMPLE GUARD

Oh, the 'purifying' room.

KEZI

I don't like to go there.

## TEMPLE GUARD

Who wants to see a man who has been cut like that? But I suppose purity requires sacrifice, sacrifice pain.

The Temple Guard moves to escort her, eyes the soup. Kezi hands him a bowl.

## KEZI

I know the way.

The Temple Guard sits down to eat.

Kezi slips out of the dining hall.

Kezi feels her way down a dark corridor.

She peers through a breach in the wall at the scribes room. A torch is burning but the room is empty.

## INT. QUMRAN SCRIBE'S ROOM - EVENING

Kezi sorts through scrolls in a basket next to her desk. She unrolls a scroll, pulls out another that is nested inside.

She hears a rustle, James jumps in at her from the breach in the wall, snatches her scroll away from her.

## JAMES

(unrolls the scroll)

'The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ...' What are you going to do with this?

## KEZI

I brought some soup.

## JAMES

Soup? You think soup can pay me for my silence? I've seen you writing this. What will Benjamin say?

## KEZI

Nothing. Benjamin is my brother.

## JAMES

Benjamin is a secret Nazorean?

## KEZI

No, I mean--

The Temple Guard appears at the door.

TEMPLE GUARD  
What are you doing here?

JAMES  
She brought the soup, I will escort  
her back.

The Temple Guard leaves.

KEZI  
Does Benjamin know you are a  
Nazorean?

JAMES  
How do you know I am not reformed,  
like you? You are reformed?

KEZI  
I will take the scroll now.

JAMES  
It is very dangerous to have it  
here.

KEZI  
This is the last you will see of  
it. It will be gone tomorrow.

JAMES  
(rolls scroll to end)  
You are sending it into Jericho  
with the women? But it is  
unfinished!

KEZI  
How do you know?

JAMES  
I can read, I know the story, and I  
know about Jericho because I  
prepare letters to go with Septima.

James goes to his desk, seals a letter.

She holds her hand out for the scroll.

JAMES (CONT'D)  
Surely you will finish the gospel  
before it gets read out to anyone?

KEZI  
It's not the whole play, just a  
story for someone who wants to hear  
that Jesus heals the blind.

JAMES

Then finish it so they can know the whole truth, so they can find Him. We don't have the right to just use Him to get what we want, do we?

KEZI

This may be my only chance to send it... Before the blind man sells my mother into terrible slavery.

JAMES

Your only way to save her?  
(Kezi nods)  
You will be sure my letter gets through? It's also for my mother.

She smiles at him for the first time. James hands Kezi the scroll and his letter. His hand lingers on hers.

JAMES (CONT'D)

And Benjamin will not hear of my Nazorean mark?

INT. QUMRAN SCRIBE'S ROOM - DAY

The Scribe Master paces. Kezi, James, the other scribes work.

A Temple Guard bursts in.

TEMPLE GUARD

Roman Soldiers coming!

SCRIBE MASTER

The scrolls. Take the unfinished to the caves. Pack the others.

The scribes leap up, haul away scroll baskets by their desks.

TEMPLE GUARD

(to Kezi)

Not you, come with me.

He grabs her roughly.

KEZI

Where are we going?

TEMPLE GUARD

The women have returned from Jericho.

INT. QUMRAN - BENJAMIN'S QUARTERS - DAY

The Temple Guard opens the door, throws Kezi in, she falls hard on the stone floor.

Benjamin is talking to Ax.

KEZI

Ax!

She leaps up and runs towards him. Benjamin restrains her. Ax hands Benjamin a scroll, marches out without a glance at her.

BENJAMIN

Septima is dead. Torn limb to limb.

KEZI

Romans? Oh poor Septima...

BENJAMIN

Or demons. You wrote the scroll she carried? This one?

KEZI

You wouldn't do anything to save mother!

BENJAMIN

We are here to save the sacred words, to regain the favor of the Most High Holy One. Do you know how much danger you have put us all in?

KEZI

I only wrote a story for an Egyptian Caravan Driver. It wasn't even the whole story. Father would be disappointed in both of us.

BENJAMIN

Yes, he would. Your 'story' provoked demons to set on Septima and Romans to set on us.

KEZI

I'm to blame for the Romans?

BENJAMIN

Your scroll was found on a Soldier with orders to arrest its poet.

KEZI

He told you that?

BENJAMIN

The threat of bodily purity scares many things out of men. He found the scroll on Septima, put her out to the wild and took the scroll to Porcius, who issued the order.

KEZI

Porcius is here? We must trade it for mother quickly before he finds--

BENJAMIN

You? Me? Father? Mother? Your story has brought an end to us all.

The Temple Guard rushes in.

TEMPLE GUARD

Romans, they're upon us!

BENJAMIN

Tell the others to prepare only what they can carry on horseback. To the one last place we can go.

KEZI

Where are we going now?

BENJAMIN

(to the Temple Guard)

Leave those women behind we suspect are Nazoreans.

KEZI

You are going to abandon them to the Romans?

BENJAMIN

I'm sure you, and they, will put up a good fight.

KEZI

But you need scribes. I can--

BENJAMIN

Are there Nazorean scribes? Who?

TEMPLE GUARD

She is friendly with James.

KEZI

You abandoned father, then mother, now me to the Romans. You are evil.

BENJAMIN

Your scroll is the evil here. It  
has brought the curse of your false  
prophet on us.

Shouts, clashing of swords.

TEMPLE GUARD

It may be too late to escape.

Kezi shakes free of Benjamin and attempts to flee.

The Temple Guard catches her.

BENJAMIN

Take her to the cave, toss her in  
with her half-concocted scroll.

INT. QUMRAN CAVE - DAY

A streak of sun shines in from a hole far above. Piles of  
scrolls litter the floor. Rodents scratch. Kezi shakes.

She attempts to climb walls but they are too steep. Sounds of  
fighting drift in from above.

The sun moves across the scrolls, climbs up the wall as it  
becomes afternoon.

No more fighting can be heard. Wings flutter in the silence.

The last streak of sun is suddenly snuffed out. Kezi looks  
up, someone is blocking the light, looking down at her.

A rope with a lamp tied to it is lowered to her.

Kezi unties the lamp, examines her prison cave.

The light reveals snakes and insects crawling among the  
scrolls, bats hanging on the ceiling. She shudders.

AX

Put rope under arms.

KEZI

Ax! Is the fighting over?

AX

Romans gone. Ax stay, protect Kezi.

Kezi puts the rope under her arms. Ax pulls it taut.

KEZI

Wait.

The rope goes slack. She slips out of the loop, hunts for and finds her scroll near the top, slips the loop back on.

KEZI (CONT'D)

Now.

He pulls. It's slow. She has difficulty holding the lamp and the scroll. At the top, near the opening, she shifts the scroll. It swipes at the bats. The bats screech, attack, scratch and bite her.

KEZI (CONT'D)

Stop.

She hangs, twirling, considers the scroll in her arms. Looks down, tosses it to the floor, throws the lamp after it.

The entire stash on the floor goes up in flames.

EXT. QUMRAN CAVE - AFTERNOON

Ax pulls her out. He is covered with cuts and bruises.

A bat flies out at his face. He ducks.

AX

Spirits.

KEZI

Just creatures.

Smoke curls out of the opening. Fire crackles inside. Ax shakes his head at her.

AX

Bad scrolls, evil spirits here.

KEZI

Good or evil is in people, not words, but half-truth is wrong.

AX

Benjamin help people be pure.

KEZI

It may not be possible to be pure and fight Rome at the same time.

AX

Kezi god not here to fight Rome.

EXT. QUMRAN SCRIBE'S ROOM- LATE AFTERNOON

Ax and Kezi survey the damage. Desks are burned. Behind smoldering baskets they find James.

His throat is slit.

Kezi kneels, devastated. Covers his face. Ax pulls her up.

AX  
Bad man. Benjamin said.

KEZI  
We can't see who's bad or good.

AX  
Ax good for Kezi?

Kezi, shaky, gathers undamaged quills, ink sticks, paper.

KEZI  
We have to take anything like this  
we can carry and trade.

AX  
Trade? Kezi not make new scroll?

KEZI  
Yes. Ax, good. We will go to  
Jericho. I will make a new scroll  
to trade, this time a good one,  
whole and complete.

Kezi kneels again at James' body. Holds his hand.

KEZI (CONT'D)  
Without war, would we have met?

INT. QUMRAN - WOMEN'S QUARTERS - CAVE - DUSK

Kezi pulls blankets over women's bodies strewn about the cave, bloody with sword wounds. She lifts the young girl who played Ester onto a ledge. A groan startles her.

DRUSA  
Broth, make me the broth.

Kezi rushes to Drusa's side. She appears unwounded.

KEZI  
Tell me how.

Ax arrives, picks through items in the room to salvage.

AX  
Go now, night come.

KEZI  
Can we find a cart for her? We can  
take her with us.

AX  
Too slow, thieves come.

DRUSA  
He is right, I am an old woman. Not  
even worth a sword stroke. You must  
make me the Oleander broth.

KEZI  
Oleander is a poison.

DRUSA  
A good grave this, with my sisters.  
You could stay with us too, spare  
your pain. A boy can't protect you.

Kezi looks around at all the other dead women.

KEZI  
Tell me how to make the broth.

EXT. QUMRAN GATES - SUNSET

Ax and Kezi creep in brush along the outer compound wall.

Ax points. A dust cloud rises in the sunset over riders and  
carts in the far distance.

AX  
Benjamin to Masada.

KEZI  
Like Solomon, even a cloud of  
desert spirits can't help them if  
the Most High Lord won't.

AX  
Benjamin god help Ax fight.

She shakes her head at him. Ax leads her to the gate, many  
slaughtered men are covered with red Roman cloaks.

Loose horses with Roman tack graze nearby.

KEZI  
 (whispers)  
 Horses are still here. Stay hidden.  
 Someone has covered the fallen. Go  
 look for more soldiers. Live ones.

AX  
 (laughs loud)  
 Ax know. No soldier alive. Ax only  
 soldier here. Ax cover these.

KEZI  
 You are sure? What about the  
 Nazoreans they left behind?

AX  
 James dead.

KEZI  
 Yes, Soldiers killed him.

AX  
 No. Ax last one here.

Ax stands up proud, jaw set. Kezi steps back.

KEZI  
 Ax, no. Why?

AX  
 Benjamin said purify or great god  
 not help. Ax purify James.

Ax gathers up swords, knives, and a shield from the soldiers.

KEZI  
 Killing is wrong.

AX  
 Benjamin sure, Ax sure, Kezi not.

KEZI  
 I'm not sure James was even a true  
 Nazorean.

AX  
 James swore on James life Kezi not  
 Nazorean.

KEZI  
 A true Nazorean would give his life  
 for another.

AX

Kezi Nazorean? Kezi sure Nazorean  
bad? Benjamin say--

KEZI

I'm sure we have to make our own  
way now, no matter what any say.

Kezi follows Ax to catch horses.

EXT. JERICHO CLIFFS - DAWN

The sun comes up. Ax and Kezi spy from the cliff edge.

The vast camp of Hamadi's caravan is set along a large stream  
near the village of Jericho.

Hamadi's large white tent stands out.

Boys hustle in and out with messenger bags and fruit trays.

Ax points to captives being filed into a heavily guarded area  
of the camp.

Kezi spots her mother's white robe, now filthy, with blue  
swirl edging. Her mother is led into a tent.

EXT. JERICHO - SOLDIER'S CAMP - DAY

Kezi and Ax sneak in brush towards the tent that holds her  
mother. The distance to it is exposed and far.

A company of soldiers marches up, led by Porcius.

Porcius gives orders. As the last captive enters many  
soldiers are positioned around her mother's tent.

Ax pulls Kezi back into the brush.

Kezi and Ax watch soldiers pilfer what Kezi and Ax had  
salvaged at Qumran, lead their horses away.

INT. JERICHO - HAMADI'S TENT - DAY

Hamadi is propped up on a luxuriant pile of pillows, eating  
from a tray of fresh pomegranate, bread, olives, dried fish.

Kezi stands before him, Ax twitches next to the door, his  
weapons held by one of Hamadi's Boys.

Livia is led in by one of Hamadi's Boys. She is no longer with child.

LIVIA  
Why is she here?

HAMADI  
We have news, from your former husband's camp.

KEZI  
Not former. He is still alive. Do you have a daughter or a son?

HAMADI  
Livia has been granted a divorce.

KEZI  
What about your child?

HAMADI  
The demon has been put out.

KEZI  
Circae--

LIVIA  
Circae must have banished the demon into the new heir. It is finished.

KEZI  
You have word of Little Peter's healing?

HAMADI  
Like Qumran, nothing can come out of Jerusalem. It is obliterated.

KEZI  
Jesus said--

LIVIA  
You are still a Nazorean after all this?

HAMADI  
She has brought me a Nazorean scroll. The incantation that cures blindness.

LIVIA  
Anyone can concoct such nonsense, do not listen to her. The whole family carries an evil curse.

KEZI

You have put your newborn baby out?

Kezi stands silently stunned. Ax cannot stand still.

AX

(pulls out quills)

Kezi to write magic scroll.

HAMADI

(laughing hysterically)

She does not already have it? And she dares come here? Why would you do such a foolish thing?

AX

Not sell Kezi mother.

LIVIA

Benjamin's mother is here?

HAMADI

I am taking her to Tyre.

LIVIA

To sell her?

KEZI

(to Livia)

You dare to stand there wearing mother's cloth after refusing to pay our passage.

LIVIA

(smooths her dress)

No, Benjamin gave this to me, from the most honored weaver in Rome.

KEZI

Our mother *is* the most honored weaver in Rome.

HAMADI

Enough of this! Livia you may go now. Return later to write the contracts.

KEZI

She writes for you?

HAMADI

Take this one and her boy to the slave pen.

KEZI

No! I can write too, I came here to tell you I wrote a scroll for you.

HAMADI

Where is it then?

KEZI

It was destroyed in the... battle at Qumran. But I can rewrite it.

HAMADI

You can scratch letters in the slave pen. We'll 'see' if you can finish this magic scroll before Tyre.

HAMADI'S BOY

(eyes Kezi)

Is this Benjamin the one Porcius seeks? He offers a great reward--

Ax grabs Hamadi's Boy, brings the boy's sword to his throat.

AX

Ax saw Kezi write magic scroll.  
Porcius kill Kezi, kill magic.

Kezi steps forward to protest but stops when Ax moves the sword just enough to draw a drop of blood.

HAMADI'S BOY

He will slit my throat!

HAMADI

There are plenty of boys.

AX

Ax will trade Ax life as slave,  
Kezi write free, not slave. Kezi  
and mother go to father in  
Alexandria.

KEZI

I am the only one who knows what  
must be written in the scroll, what  
opens the eyes of the blind.

Hamadi presses his hands into his closed eyelids.

HAMADI

You can write in Livia's tent. Ax  
can serve my guards.

Hamadi's Boys escort Kezi and Ax out of the tent.

HAMADI (CONT'D)  
 (to a Boy)  
 Send for Porcius.

EXT. JERICHO - LIVIA'S TENT - DAY

The Boy and Kezi approach a lavish tent near Hamadi's.

Livia blocks their way.

LIVIA  
 I won't have her here. Put her out.

HAMADI'S BOY  
 Hamadi's orders, she is to hide  
 from Porcius with you.

LIVIA  
 Suppose she got lost drawing water.

Livia hands the boy a pouch. He pours it out, coins flash.

KEZI  
 What about my... Benjamin's mother?

LIVIA  
 She is dead to me. A small price to  
 pay to return demons to their own.

INT. JERICHO - HAMADI'S TENT - DAY

Porcius enters.

PORCIUS  
 Qumran was costly, they fled.

HAMADI  
 I have news for you. You are  
 leaving soon.

PORCIUS  
 What do you mean?

HAMADI  
 John Mark is in Alexandria.

Porcius beams.

EXT. JERICHO CLIFFS - SUNSET

Hamadi's Boy ties Kezi to a tree. He carves "demon" in the tree trunk. He pulls at her tunic.

KEZI

I can curse you! 'Rise up, oh Lord,  
in your anger; lift yourself up  
against the fury of my enemies,  
awake the creatures against them.

A hawk caws in the sky above, Hamadi's Boy runs off.

Kezi looks down on the camp.

KEZI (CONT'D)

(screams repeatedly)  
Help me! Help!

A company of Soldiers approaches from below on horseback.

Kezi twists around the tree trunk to hide from them. One points out the sign Hamadi's Boy carved.

SOLDIER 1

Demon.

SOLDIER 2

They tore a woman limb to limb last  
week, near this very spot. Septima.

They ride on without stopping. The sun goes down.

KEZI

Our Father, who art in heaven...

She can't bring herself to finish the prayer. She chews on the rope until her mouth is bloody.

KEZI (CONT'D)

Where are your angels now?

She falls asleep.

EXT. JERICHO CLIFFS - SUNRISE

Kezi sleeps tied to the tree. Several men approach. One frowns at the 'demon' sign. Another reaches out to touch where she has chewed the rope.

Kezi awakens. She snarls at them

KEZI  
Get back, I can curse you.

NAZOREAN MAN  
Curses are no good with us

He shows the tatoo of a fish on his wrist.

KEZI  
You are Nazoreans?

NAZOREAN MAN  
And you, demon, have been put out  
of the caravan below?

KEZI  
Yes. No. I am not a demon.

NAZOREAN MAN  
Why should we believe you?

KEZI  
My father knew Jesus, his name is  
John Mark, do you know him?

NAZOREAN MAN  
Of course we know of John Mark.

KEZI  
Please, can you release me?

NAZOREAN MAN  
Show us your mark.

KEZI  
I don't have one.

NAZOREAN MAN  
The mark is the only way we can  
know strangers.

KEZI  
I can tell you the entire story of  
Jesus.

NAZOREAN MAN  
Demons know many stories.

KEZI  
In those days Jesus came from  
Nazareth of Galilee and was  
baptized by--

Another large contingent of Jewish Rebels, gallops up.

NAZOREAN MAN  
The raid was a success?

JEWISH LEADER  
Who is this?

NAZOREAN MAN  
A demon put out from the camp.

JEWISH LEADER  
So a demon guards their camp. No wonder our men were captured.

KEZI  
I am with you, on your side.

JEWISH LEADER  
But you are marked a *demon*, not a *traitor*, and do not carry the Nazorean mark on your hand.

NAZOREAN MAN  
We will put her out far from here.

KEZI  
No, please, the Roman Porcius wants me. I know he will trade your captured men for me.

JEWISH LEADER  
(laughs)  
Why could he possibly want you?

KEZI  
My father is John Mark--

JEWISH LEADER  
Poet of *The King of the Jews*?

KEZI  
Yes, he wants to arrest him for it. I intend to write it in a scroll. I can quote the entire play for you.

JEWISH LEADER  
Won't he crucify you for this?

KEZI  
I presume he would want to.

JEWISH LEADER  
And you would give up your life for my men?

KEZI

I will do anything to return there.

JEWISH LEADER

Take her to camp. Put her under guard until we verify the trade.

EXT. JUDEAN DESERT - JEWISH REBEL CAMP - DAY

Jewish raiders unload their spoils. Women rush to greet their loved ones. Kezi stands in the middle of the chaos of the men's return, arms tied behind her back.

Kezi sees a familiar face, Simon. Their eyes meet.

SIMON

Kezi!

Simon runs to embrace her.

JEWISH LEADER

You know her?

SIMON

She is the daughter of John Mark, I knew her in Jerusalem. I will stand up for her.

Simon unties her hands.

EXT. JUDEAN DESERT - JEWISH REBEL CAMP - DUSK

Kezi talks with Simon by a fire.

SIMON

I joined the raiding parties to search for you. I had already given up. I won't let them trade you.

KEZI

I only wanted to be a scribe, to keep the law and wait for the Messiah. But none have come true.

SIMON

You wouldn't consider going back to Jerusalem? Starting a new life there now that the worst is over?

KEZI

I saw where they keep the captives. If we can free them--

SIMON

They won't have to trade you. I know some Nazorean Men to help. But you must stay here and wait.

Kezi embraces him. He rushes off.

EXT. JEWISH REBEL CAMP - LEADER'S TENT - MORNING

Kezi stands by the Jewish Leader as they tie her hands.

JEWISH LEADER

I'm sorry about the tether. Simon trusts you but I don't know you from a demon facing her own death.

KEZI

(terrified)

I'm ready.

The Jewish Leader mounts his horse. Others help Kezi up behind him, tie her to the back of the saddle.

Simon and the Nazorean men gallop into the camp.

SIMON

Wait! We've freed them!

KEZI

Praise the Lord, Mother and Ax too?

SIMON

Too heavily guarded.

Kezi frantically struggles against her rope restraints.

JEWISH LEADER

You mounted a raid without consulting the rest of us?

A Jewish Guard gallops up, his horse out of breath.

JEWISH GUARD

Porcius followed them here. With a huge company of soldiers.

SIMON

I'm afraid they were alerted when we tried to free Kezi's mother.

The Jewish Leader dismounts.

JEWISH LEADER

Put her out. Make sure the Romans  
see her horse so that they follow  
the right trail.

(to Simon)

You Fool. You wasted a good horse.

KEZI

Simon, I'm sorry--

SIMON

Have you no faith, the Lord will  
protect his people.

JEWISH LEADER

The horse will run home to  
Jerusalem, soon far away from us.

(to Simon)

The Nazoreans are to follow later.

The Jewish Leader slaps the horse, yells at it. The horse  
takes off at a gallop out of the camp, Kezi tied to its back.

EXT. JUDEAN DESERT HIGH COUNTRY- NIGHT

Kezi's horse is caught by the Nazoreans. Simon unties Kezi.  
He transfers to her horse, she snuggles against him.

They ride down a steep cliff. The mountain lion watches from  
the same branch as when Kezi was there with Benjamin.

KEZI

We must go back to the caravan.

SIMON

It's no use if you don't have the  
scroll, and we need provisions.

From the bottom of the cliff they can see Roman soldiers  
appear at the top.

They gallop along a craggy pass, the horses startle at the  
same crevasse as when Kezi was here earlier.

Roman soldiers ride by the crevasse. Horses startle.

ROMAN SOLDIER

Who's there?

ECHO

Who's there?

EXT. JUDEAN DESERT - COLLAPSED VILLAGE - DAWN

Kezi and Simon and the others ride into the abandoned village. Simon speaks to a man who comes out from hiding.

Men lead the horses into a cave behind the house. They roll a stone over the entrance, cover it with brush. The men run up a hill to feign tending their goats.

INT. JUDEAN DESERT - CAVE - DAY

Sun streams in cracks. Kezi and Simon listen at the stone. Others mutter prayers.

They can hear horses ride up and stop.

PORCIUS O.S.  
 (just outside cave)  
 We've lost them, the caravan leaves  
 today, we have to go back.

Simon restrains Kezi as she attempts to push away the stone.

EXT. JUDEAN DESERT - OASIS - NIGHT

Kezi and Simon sit around a fire with the other Nazoreans.

KEZI  
 How did you know it was safe to  
 stop here?

SIMON  
 (points to fish carved on  
 a stone)  
 We stopped here on the way, for  
 food and stories.

VILLAGE FATHER  
 Let us tell you one.

KEZI  
 May I play a part?

VILLAGE FATHER  
 Jesus heals the Gerasene Demoniac?

VILLAGE DAUGHTER  
 Father, are the legion of demons  
 still in the wild boars here?

Kezi shudders. Others exchange nervous laughter, melt into the night. Simon and Kezi are the only ones left at the fire.

KEZI

I lost my way. Forgot how the stories, some old, some new, can bring life. You've brought me back.

SIMON

I thought I had lost you forever.

KEZI

The stories will help me write, can we reach Jericho in time?

SIMON

Hamadi will come back. We must find a way, materials, for you to write in Jerusalem. Your mother is safe.

KEZI

Then we can all join Father in Alexandria.

Unaware of Simon's frown, she rests her head on his shoulder.

INT. ALEXANDRIA - JOHN MARK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Porcius pounds on the door.

JOHN MARK

Announce yourself.

PORCIUS

I have word of your wife Elizabeth and daughter Keziah.

John Mark, overjoyed opens the door. His face falls.

EXT. JUDEAN HILLS - WAR DAMAGED VILLAGE - NIGHT

Kezi, Simon, Nazoreans watch as a village boy holds a torch.

VILLAGE BOY

Simon's Mother-in-law is healed and serves Jesus.

EXT. JUDEAN HILLS - PARTIALLY REBUILT VILLAGE - DAY

Kezi and Simon practice a play, bump heads, almost kiss.

INT. ALEXANDRIA- JOHN MARK'S HOUSE - DAY

John Mark is tied over a sawhorse. Porcius whips his back raw while John Mark pleads with him.

JOHN MARK  
In God's name, please.

PORCIUS  
Deny the name of Jesus as Lord.

JOHN MARK  
Do you not care to see your  
daughter again?

PORCIUS  
She is dead! You and your prophet  
and your words killed her! And I  
will take all of them from you.

JOHN MARK  
You cannot take the word. It will  
live forever.

EXT. JUDEAN HILLS - OBLITERATED VILLAGE - DAY

Kezi and Simon's group stop in a small village square. Simon takes a cloth from his bag, hands it to a Nazorean.

SIMON  
Trade it for some meat.

The Nazorean unwraps the cloth, sticky with honeycomb.

KEZI  
Is it Ester's! Is she with Circae?

SIMON  
Yes, but is trusted now to spend  
time at a place where Nazoreans are  
living outside the city. Caves.

KEZI  
Praise the Most High, why didn't  
you tell me? I saw so many... lost,  
I was afraid to ask.

Simon puts his hand to her lips, slides it off, kisses her.

INT. ALEXANDRIA - JOHN MARK'S HOUSE - DAY

Porcius puts his face next to John Mark's bloody one.

PORCIUS  
He ends with you.

JOHN MARK  
(struggling through pain  
to speak between blows)  
If you listen to the story...  
accept him as Lord.... Like your  
daughter did.... You can have  
eternal life and be resurrected  
with your daughter... You can see  
Juliana again.

PORCIUS  
Don't use her name in lies.

JOHN MARK  
The story is the truth. You can't  
stop it. My own daughter promised  
to write it.

Porcius stops whipping, disturbed.

John Mark loses consciousness.

EXT. JERUSALEM HILLS - NIGHT

Kezi, Simon and the others sit by a fire next to a stream.

VILLAGE DAUGHTER  
A Gentile Woman bows down to Jesus.

EXT. JERUSALEM HILLS - SMOLDERING VILLAGE - DAY

Kezi and Simon sit under a tree.

SIMON  
Are the village stories the same as  
in your Father's play?

KEZI  
Some. Each one is a little  
different. It makes me wonder.

SIMON  
Wonder what?

KEZI  
If the power is in the words or in  
the storyteller, or only in the  
original act.

SIMON

Acts are the most powerful.

He kisses her passionately. Lies her down.

INT. JOHN MARK'S HOUSE - ALEXANDRIA

John Mark hunches over a writing desk. His back is bloody, his face is swollen from beatings.

PORCIUS

You must finish now.

JOHN MARK

Why have you permitted me write my family?

PORCIUS

(sneers)

You can ask them when you are resurrected together.

EXT. JERUSALEM HILLS - DAY

Kezi, Simon and the others crest a hill. Below is a razed village, heads on pikes.

NAZOREAN MAN

(rides up from below)

I didn't see any soldiers but every village ahead has been razed. A warning.

SIMON

It will be safer to split up to go into Jerusalem. Take Kezi, stay high. We will take the lower way.

KEZI

Why can't I go with you?

SIMON

It is more dangerous. From above you can see soldiers coming. Hide.

The Nazorean Man helps Kezi onto his horse.

EXT. PUBLIC SQUARE - ALEXANDRIA - NIGHT

In the abandoned square, John Mark hangs dead, crucified.

EXT. KIDRON VALLEY - HILL - AFTERNOON

Kezi rides behind the Nazorean Man. They stop at a view of the obliterated city of Jerusalem.

Walls have tumbled, buildings are flattened. The entire temple mount is covered with red Roman flags, they flutter in the wind like trickling blood. Slaves haul away the temple's huge stones in carts.

KEZI

Where was he our Messiah?

NAZOREAN MAN

No one knows the hour he will come  
but I know we must be awake, ready.

KEZI

(gestures at the city)

What other time could there be than  
this one?

They continue down the hill. Stop again to view a commotion of people gathering at the base of the hill.

The people wear leafy wreaths in their hair, a cart pulled by donkeys is covered with bright blankets and flowers.

KEZI (CONT'D)

At least Rome can't kill our joy.

NAZOREAN MAN

I'm surprised you're glad about  
Simon and Ester's wedding.

KEZI

What?

NAZOREAN MAN

Simon didn't tell you?

A stunned Kezi leaps off the horse, careens down the hill, stops short at the edge of the celebration.

A circle of celebrants cheer as Simon and Ester enter.

Kezi steps forward to interrupt them. She stops.

Ester looks radiant. Ester is also very pregnant.

Kezi hides behind a pile of stones. A viper slithers out of the pile. Hisses at her. Kezi lifts a stone and smashes its head over and over.

She cries herself to sleep hidden in tall grasses.

EXT. KIDRON VALLEY - TALL GRASSES - NIGHT

Kezi struggles awake at the sound of a voice.

NAZOREAN MAN (O.S.)  
(other side of stone pile)  
I saw her run towards the wedding.

SIMON (O.S.)  
She'll return when the sting is  
gone. Where else can she go?

NAZOREAN MAN (O.S.)  
For some, the sting of a man's  
betrayal lasts a long time.

Kezi stays still until they leave.

EXT. JERUSALEM - NAAMAH QUARTER - EARLY MORNING

Kezi walks through the untouched Naamah Quarter. She pounds on Circae's door until Anna opens it.

KEZI  
May I see my nephew?

ANNA  
Why have you come here? Go before  
it's too late.

KEZI  
I have no place else to go.

ANNA  
I don't think I can hide you.

KEZI  
I will work. I can write.

ANNA  
Come in. I'll tell her.

INT. CIRCAE'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Kezi stands in the entrance, blinded by the low morning light coming in the door. The room is crowded with cots that hold a groaning mix of Roman and Jewish soldiers.

Circae's scrawny hand brings a wet cloth over Kezi's mouth.

CIRCAE

Good of you to return to pay Little  
Peter's debt.

Kezi slumps to the floor.

INT. CIRCAE'S HOUSE - KEZI'S COT - NIGHT

Kezi sits on a cot in the dark, discovers her wrist is  
chained to the wall.

DEMON VOICE

Awake! Awake! She's awake!

Laughing, screeching. Woozy Kezi weak pulls weakly on the  
wall anchor, it won't come loose.

Circae watches until Kezi sees her.

CIRCAE

I need spells. You can write them?

Kezi yanks helplessly at her tether.

KEZI

And Little Peter?

CIRCAE

There are suffering here who will  
pay anything for relief.

KEZI

Magic spells can't heal them!

CIRCAE

It's the faith and hope. They pay  
more if they can hold it in their  
hand. Show me you can do this.

KEZI

Why me?

CIRCAE

Your father touched Jesus. They  
will be encouraged by that.

Anna comes in with an ink well, reed quills, and parchment.  
Kezi is excited to see the writing materials.

KEZI

You must release me first.

CIRCAE

There are duties to pay your way.

KEZI

I will write, only.

CIRCAE

And sleep and eat. Creatures have fallen from heaven because they refused to serve us.

(hands Anna a key)

She is to do the washing first.

EXT. JERUSALEM - CIRCAE'S HOUSE- AFTERNOON

In an open atrium, Anna herds Kezi to a water cistern, gives her a pile of towels.

Shouts of joy and grunting noises ensue.

A SWARM of grotesquely deformed children, adults rushes into the garden.

Kezi backs away as they approach her.

KEZI

I thought it would be soldiers!

The Swarm jumps all over Kezi, takes a towel from her, pats her, sits her up next to the cistern.

One of the Swarm is Little Peter. He looks well. Kezi embraces him. He claps his hands.

The Swarm takes Kezi's arms and hands and shows her how to wash them. They disrobe and wait patiently for their turn.

She must force herself to touch them. They laugh at her.

LITTLE PETER

Auntie, stay? Wash us?

KEZI

Auntie must write, not wash. Free my mother, find my father. Then I will send for you.

LITTLE PETER

Peter big, need no Mama, Abba.  
Auntie big, why want Mama, Abba?

KEZI

Peter, I will not leave you here.

Anna herds the Swarm back inside to much happy cooing.

INT. CIRCAE'S HOUSE - KEZI'S COT - NIGHT

Anna sets the writing materials and a bowl of porridge next to a tiny lamp.

Kezi opens a parchment, writes: "The Gospel According to..."

ANNA

How do you know what to write?

KEZI

I use stories I've heard. From those who were there or those who knew disciples. They heard...  
 (she points to the words)  
 '...a voice crying in the wilderness.'

They are startled by terrifying screeches from the next room.

ANNA

(rubs her fish tatoos)  
 I'll make sure you are not disturbed. Circae can't read but don't let her see it upsets them.

INT. CIRCAE'S HOUSE - ATRIUM - DAY

Circae watches Kezi hand out bowls of soup to the Swarm, helps them eat. A child gestures for Kezi to pick her up.

CIRCAE

(snatches the child)  
 Come here to your real auntie.

KEZI

I will not be here forever.

CIRCAE

You will be here as long as I say and as long as it takes to pay your debt. And if your spells work.

KEZI

(under her breath)  
 This time it will work, if only for mother's freedom.

INT. CIRCAE'S HOUSE - KEZI'S COT - NIGHT

Kezi writes by her tiny lamp.

"...whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

Anna interrupts, displays a deep bite-mark on her hand.

KEZI

They all seem so calm with me.

ANNA

There are others you have not seen.  
I can't carry anything. Circae will  
take you to market with her.

Anna unchains her.

EXT. KIDRON VALLEY HILLSIDE - OLIVE GROVE - DAWN

In early morning dark, Kezi and others push handcarts down the Kidron Valley to shabby booths under an old olive grove.

CIRCAE

For potions, only use the best.

Circae buys a grey chunk of meat covered with rot and flies.

KEZI

This is the best?

CIRCAE

This is bait for the demons.

KEZI

I thought they were you friends.

CIRCAE

Everyone must feed the demons.

ESTER (O.S.)

Honey! Honeycomb!

Kezi spots a booth where Ester and Simon sell honey, Ester carries their baby in a sling.

CIRCAE

Ester's honey is the best.

KEZI

Why did you let her go?

CIRCAE

Why feed two for the work of one?  
She pays me something from potions.

KEZI

(looks for an excuse)  
The cart can't pass the rocks here.

CIRCAE

Too loaded with your heart is it?  
(cackles)  
Don't run. There is no place to go.

Circae goes to haggle with Ester. Simon sees Kezi, slips away from the booth to join her.

SIMON

I thought you had gone back to the caravan on your own, gone to Tyre.

KEZI

Ester looks well.

SIMON

Her honey saves people, I'm sorry I couldn't find a way to tell you.

KEZI

You must get me away from Circae and to the caravan.

SIMON

And you were always intent on leaving, to join your father.  
(he glances towards Ester)  
Did you finish your scroll? The caravan is almost back here from Tyre, but I can't help you.

KEZI

So I must find a way on my own?

SIMON

It's still dangerous to travel. Stay with Circae, make a life there. Follow the Way, like us.

KEZI

You got Ester away from her.

SIMON

Are you a daughter of Jesus? Or only of John Mark?

KEZI

When the caravan arrives, will you  
get word to Ax about where I am?

He nods. Circae beams with a pot of honey.

Simon hurries back to his place by Ester, in his haste breaks  
a jar. Honey drips down the table leg.

Circae drops parcels into the cart. Kezi glances back.

Simon and Ester are gone. A badger licks at the table leg.  
Circae throws the rotten meat at it.

INT. CIRCAE'S HOUSE - KEZI'S COT - NIGHT

Kezi writes by her tiny lamp. 'Go tell his disciples he has  
been raised, he will meet you in Galilee.'

She stitches the pieces of parchment into a finished scroll.

INT. CIRCAE'S HOUSE - ATRIUM - DAY

The Swarm cozies up to Kezi, hugs her and combs her hair.

ANNA

Be careful. She treasures them.

KEZI

I've seen, but Little Peter is my  
nephew, he does not belong to her.

Circae overhears from the door, frowns, claps her hands.

CIRCAE

Lovelies, come to your Auntie.

The Swarm looks confused, stays snuggles closer to Kezi.

CIRCAE (CONT'D)

(to Kezi)

Let's see what demons you can tame.

Circae clenches Kezi by the hair, pulls her to a door off the  
atrium secured with a heavy crossbar.

She opens it, throws Kezi in.

INT. CIRCAE'S HOUSE - DEMON'S CELL- DAY

Light from a crack in the door reveals a very old man sitting in the corner. He's frail and chained.

KEZI

I'm Keziah. Who are you?

DEMON VOICE

I knew your Jesus.

KEZI

Did you know John Mark?

DEMON VOICE

I will try to contact him.

EXT. JERUSALEM STREET - NAAMAH QUARTER - DAY

Ax works his way past slaves moving stones, residents rebuilding houses. He walks under the Naamah Quarter arch.

Porcius follows him at a discrete distance.

INT. CIRCAE'S HOUSE - DEMON'S CELL- DAY

The man appears to fall asleep. Kezi breaths in a heavy smoke that drifts through the room.

JOHN MARK'S VOICE

Why have you drifted from the way I taught you? Are you acting the gospel? Where is your faith?

Kezi scuttles as far back into a corner as possible. The door opens. A shadow is cast from the doorway.

ANNA

A Demon fog, to show you your fears. Ax brought you letters. And a Porcius is at the door.

Kezi bolts past Anna, through the door, up the nearest stairway to the roof.

EXT. CIRCAE'S HOUSE - ROOF - DAY

Kezi creeps to the roof edge. Below Porcius talks to Circae.

PORCIUS

And the daughter of John Mark?

CIRCAE

She is like my own daughter now.

PORCIUS

He took my daughter, I want his.

Kezi charges down the steps from the roof.

INT. CIRCAE'S HOUSE - KEZI'S COT - DAY

Kezi secures her scroll under her traveling cloak.

EXT. CIRCAE'S HOUSE - ATRIUM - DAY

Anna rushes to Kezi with Ax.

AX

Simon sent Ax, warn Kezi. Porcius here.

ANNA

Those far rooms open to the street.

KEZI

Can you bring Little Peter out? We will take you with us.

ANNA

I will stay.

KEZI

But why? You're the captive of a pagan.

ANNA

I serve them as the Lord taught us. Did you find it so bad here?

KEZI

I too found peace in serving them.

AX

Kezi, go! Ax bring Little Peter.

Kezi hugs Anna. Anna and Ax rush into the front rooms, Kezi dashes for the far rooms.

EXT. CIRCAE'S HOUSE - FAR ROOMS - DAY

Kezi steps inside. It is an infirmary for Roman Soldiers.

They lie in cots with horrible wounds. As Kezi passes, they groan, reach out to her. Some have small scrolls or sheets of writing. She picks one up.

SOLDIER  
No! My only comfort.

KEXI  
It's not real.

PORCIUS (O.S.)  
By the gods, where is she hiding?  
Smoke her out.

She drops the scroll on the floor, the Soldier she took it from sobs.

She hurries to a door at the back of the room.

EXT. NAAMAH STREET - DAY

Kezi emerges from a hidden door under a stair to the roof.

DEMON VOICE (O.S.)  
(laughing)  
By the gods, where is she hiding?  
Smoke her out.

Smoke pours into the sky from Circae's atrium.

INT. CIRCAE'S HOUSE - FAR ROOMS - DAY

Porcius charges into the burning infirmary. The wounded soldiers grab at him and scream.

SOLDIER  
General Porcius, I served you!

Porcius tries to collect the soldier. The room flashes over with flames. Porcius is forced to drop his soldier and run back into the atrium, his clothes on fire.

He falls, Circae throws a blanket over his burning uniform.

EXT. NAAMAH STREET - DAY

Circae's explodes in flame. Terrible screaming erupts.

Ax bursts out the stair door with Anna and Little Peter.

They rush to Kezi across the street, watch the fire in agony.

AX

Like Jerusalem also. Like Tyre,  
Sidon also. Ax saw demons die.

KEZI

And many lovelies. All their  
spirits will haunt us forever.

ANNA

I have surely died with them.

KEZI

Simon and Ester will help you. Take  
Little Peter to the Nazorean caves.  
(to Little Peter)  
I will send for you.

LITTLE PETER

Far away?

KEZI

Yes, Alexandria.

INT. KIDRON VALLEY - HAMADI'S TENT - DAY

Hamadi reaches out for a platter of fruit.

Kezi and Ax enter. Kezi pulls the scroll from her cloak.

KEZI

Where is my mother?

Hamadi topples the table. Boys rush to right it, fan him.

HAMADI

I am weary of this game.

KEZI

I thought you were weary of being  
blind.

HAMADI'S BOY

It is not wrapped in gold.

HAMADI

So this time you have a scroll?  
Read it to me, then we will 'see'  
what to do about your mother.

KEZI

And Ax, you will release him?

MICHOT  
Bring me my polished glass.

Michot's Boy goes to a trunk, rummages to the bottom and draws out a polished brass mirror. Takes it to Michot.

MICHOT (CONT'D)  
Silence, all of you.

A hush falls over the tent. Michot rearranges himself on the cushions. He sweeps his hand over his own face. Touches the mirror, covers it with a piece of purple velvet.

MICHOT (CONT'D)  
You may begin.

KEZI  
(unrolls the scroll)  
'As it is written in the prophet  
Isaiah, See I am sending my  
messenger ahead of you...'

Shadows creep over the tent.

EXT. KIDRON VALLEY - PORCIUS TENT - DAY

Soldiers settle Porcius on his cot, cut off his uniform and toga to reveal severe burns.

A Servant Girl brings in dressings and a jar of salve. Wraps his wounds. He groans with pain.

INT. KIDRON VALLEY - HAMADI'S TENT - DAY

Ax, twitches and paces, quietly agitated.

KEZI  
'...and the scribes questioned  
Jesus on the law of fasting...'

AX  
Who knows the law...  
(points at Hamadi's Boys)  
...not boys!  
(they snicker, snatch  
Hamadi's figs)

Hamadi appears to be in a trance, eyes closed.

KEZI  
 ...Jesus said to Bartimaeus, the  
 blind beggar, 'Go your faith has  
 made you well'...

Tears pour out of Hamadi's closed eyes. Shadows from pacing  
 boys move over his face but Hamadi does not open his eyes.

INT. KIDRON VALLEY - PORCIUS' TENT - DAY

Porcius is barely conscious. A messenger enters.

MESSENGER  
 You have a son.

PORCIUS  
 (under his breath)  
 Born live this time?

The messenger looks apprehensive.

MESSENGER  
 Yes, a live son but I'm sorry sir,  
 your wife, she did not survive.

PORCIUS  
 The gods are fickle. A suitable  
 sacrifice must be found.

The messenger hesitates before he pulls back the tent flap.

MESSENGER  
 The slave boy Ax has brought a  
 young woman Kezi to Hamadi's tent.

PORCIUS  
 A most auspicious moment it is. The  
 gods have affirmed their Arimanius.

Porcius labors to get up, gestures to the Servant Girl.

She pulls a fresh uniform out of a trunk.

INT. KIDRON VALLEY - HAMADI'S TENT - DAY

Hamadi appears to be asleep. Kezi hesitates, he waves her on.

KEZI  
 ...Many people spread cloaks on the  
 road, and branches of palms. They  
 shouted, 'Hosanna!  
 (MORE)

KEZI (CONT'D)

Blessed is the coming of the  
kingdom of our ancestor David'...

Ax stands perfectly still, barely breathing.

AX

Jesus is a king! The true Lord!

KEZI

(shushes Ax as Hamadi  
stirs)

And he took bread and broke it..

Some of Hamadi's Boys fall asleep one by one. Ax paces.

AX

(whispers to Kezi)  
Nazoreans eat flesh?

A listening boy still awake spits out a fig in disgust.

KEZI

It is only a symbol of what hap--

HAMADI

Quiet! Continue!

The tent settles down.

KEZI

...Truely this man was God's Son...

Ax moves about agitated again. Hamadi's boys pull him down.

KEZI (CONT'D)

...so the women fled from the tomb,  
for terror and amazement had seized  
them, and they were afraid...

AX

Jesus was God's Son! Kezi did you  
know him! Surely he is coming in  
the clouds. Where can we see this?

HAMADI'S BOY

There are Nazoreans here, we can  
wait for Jesus together.

AX

Ax did many bad things, but Jesus  
loves little children and sinners.  
I want to see him, I want to see  
which disciple won his right hand!

Hamadi's Boys snicker.

HAMADI

Quiet! That can't be the ending?

KEZI

He first appeared to Mary from whom he had cast out seven demons. But my father did not know her, and I did not hear the stories of any others to put them in your scroll.

HAMADI

(continues to keep his eyes shut)

And will all who hear this story see him raised?

KEZI

Sometimes seeds fall on deaf ears.

HAMADI'S BOY

Believers will be raised with him.

AX

I will be raised from the dead!

KEZI

Ax, we don't know--

HAMADI

Because I have heard, I will see!

His eyes still closed tight, Michot again traces his own face with his fingers. He picks up the mirror. Holds it close to his face. Whips the purple cloth off the mirror.

HAMADI (CONT'D)

Everything is light. Is everything here light? Is this the new kingdom?

KEZI

Light?

He looks her way. Holds out his hands.

HAMADI

Where are you?

KEZI

Here.

She puts the scroll in his hands. Hamadi roars, leaps up, smashes the tray off its table. Swipes with the scroll.

HAMADI

I cannot see you. It is a lie!

KEZI

The stories are true. You can have faith in that. Not all are healed.

HAMADI

I am still blind! What is wrong?

KEZI

Did you come to believe?

HAMADI

Did you believe what you wrote?

KEZI

I wrote the stories I heard.

HAMADI

You see, others believed but you do not believe. Not even to save your mother, who also does not believe.

AX

Ax believes!

HAMADI

Call Porcius!

KEZI

Porcius is surely dead.

HAMADI

Put her eyes out!

Kezi stomps out from Hamadi's tent. Hamadi's Boys charge after her. Ax follows them.

EXT. KIDRON VALLEY - HAMADI'S TENT - DAY

Kezi emerges from the tent. It is surrounded by Roman Soldiers. Porcius steps forward.

PORCIUS

I am already here.

KEZI

I will never tell you where my father is!

PORCIUS

I know where he is. I have been  
with him.

KEZI

You have not. You have been  
following me around Judah.

PORCIUS

I had Circae curse you. You will  
never see your mother or father  
again. Not even in afterlife.

Porcius holds up a letter with John Mark's seal.

PORCIUS (CONT'D)

John Mark told me those fallen from  
belief will not be resurrected but  
burn for eternity. Is that true?

Kezi grabs at her father's letter, misses.

HAMADI

(huffs at his tent door)  
Burn this with her and her letter.

He tosses the scroll towards Kezi. Porcius catches it.

PORCIUS

This is what it is to be parted  
from your father's love at the end.

AX

I can rise from the dead!

Ax lets out a battle whoop and charges Porcius. He snatches  
John Mark's letter, stuffs it into his pouch.

KEZI

Ax, no.

Ax and Porcius fight with swords, the smaller Ax is  
surprisingly vicious and strong against wounded Porcius.

Simon and a group of Nazorean Rebels ride into the camp.

SIMON

(to Kezi)  
To the caves. I'll find you.  
(she hesitates)  
When I heard about Circae's fire. I  
knew I had to be with you. I'll  
take you all the way to Alexandria.

EXT. KIDRON VALLEY HILLSIDE - DAY

Kezi climbs a safe distance up the hill, stops to watch.  
Below, Ax runs his sword through Porcius. Porcius falls.  
Ax bends over him ready to strike a victorious blow.

PORCIUS

A daughter for a daughter.  
(grabs Ax)  
A son for a son.

Kezi screams.

KEZI

Jesus! Save your son!

Porcius swings his sword.

Ax is beheaded.

Kezi passes out.

INT. KIDRON VALLEY - NAZOREAN CAVES - EVENING

Kezi watches the light play off the roof of the cave.

KEZI

Lord Most High, do you not see how  
you have broken your people!  
(tries to stand but can't)  
I beg you, do not abandon me here.  
If you are real, give me any sign.

The cave goes dark as the sun goes down.

INT. KIDRON VALLEY - NAZOREAN CAVES - DAY

Sun streaks in. Anna ushers Little Peter to Kezi's blanket,  
sets a satchel next to her. Kezi pushes it away, curls up.

ANNA

It's Ax's. No one can read here.  
They thought you might be willing.

KEZI

Ax had this with him when...  
Circae's burned?  
(Anna nods)  
Then they are my letters! He was  
bringing them to me.

Kezi sits up, opens the bag, sets aside the letter from her father to examine seals on the other letters.

KEZI (CONT'D)  
This one's from Livia--

ANNA  
Peter's--  
(Kezi hushes her)

Little Peter plays with some stones, content.

KEZI  
It's good news! 'I have purchased your mother from Hamadi. Her weaving is popular here--

ANNA  
A good omen! A new life!

Kezi smiles, reads to herself.

INT. ROMAN COLONY OF BATH - MINERVA'S SHRINE - NIGHT

Livia and Elizabeth, draped in linen, bathe with other beautiful women in a marble pool surrounded by torchlight, wreaths of flowers, and statues of goddesses.

LIVIA (V.O.)  
...in the recently established Roman colony of Bath. You must hurry to join us...'

INT. NAZOREAN CAVES - DAY

Kezi's face falls.

ANNA  
What's wrong?

KEZI  
Little Peter will not be welcomed by Minerva's followers, if I join them, he must be left behind.

ANNA  
Where else can he go?

KEZI  
Bath's pagan, I can't go there either.

ANNA

So you have reconciled with our  
Lord Jesus?

Kezi fingers the next letter. Points to the seal.

KEZI

This one is a declaration by the  
Governor of Alexandria.

Shadows of the listeners shift in closer.

ANNA

The Roman Governor? What does he  
have to do with you?

KEZI

By declaration of the Governor...  
(reads to herself)  
It's an order to crucify my father  
as an enemy of the Empire!

Kezi falls on her blanket shaking with fear.

ANNA

You can't be sure he is dead yet.

KEZI

Perhaps a spy intercepted the  
decree, sent this as a warning.

Ester sweeps in with a council of Nazoreans.

ESTER

You heard her. She is a spy, a  
Roman spy!

KEZI

Ester, we're friends, like sisters.

ESTER

You asked him to go away with you.  
To meet your Roman Lords.

KEZI

No. I would have sent Simon back to  
you and your son.

ESTER

After you betrayed both Nazorean  
and Jewish Rebels. You traitor.

KEZI

The Romans have ordered the crucifixion of my father! You know my brother is a rebel, at Masada.

ESTER

Masada. I know you are not your father or your brother. Did you tell the Romans about Masada?

KEZI

No! They will make a good stand there. Repel the Occupiers. We will all live free in The Land.

ESTER

We will never be rid of Rome. Rather than be taken, those at Masada plunged off the cliff. The Romans were informed by spies... like you.

KEZI

Benjamin...I'm sorry you failed.

Hearing Benjamin's name, Little Peter climbs on her lap.

LITTLE PETER

Abba! Abba!

NAZOREAN LEADER

Put her out, Little Peter too. We will see if she goes to them or if she chooses a noble death in the desert.

ANNA

Is there no other way? If she takes a vow to our Lord Jesus, that she believes in his Most High Father?

The leader turns to Kezi.

NAZOREAN LEADER

Tell us what you believe. Would you take this vow?

KEZI

Jesus said taking oaths is evil.

NAZOREAN LEADER

Put her out.

Kezi gives Ester a pleading look. Ester is stone cold.

KEZI  
Tell Simon I'm sorry.

ESTER  
Simon died, in *your* fight.

KEZI  
Oh, Ester, I was wrong to ask  
anything of him.

EXT. KIDRON VALLEY HILLSIDE - OLIVE GROVE - DUSK

Hand-in-hand Kezi and Little Peter clamber over rough stone to the path. She pulls a crude stick cage.

They pass the olive grove with the tattered market booths.

Anna runs after them with a torch.

KEZI  
Go before they catch and beat you.

ANNA  
You need some fire.

KEZI  
Why are you doing this?

ANNA  
Jesus did not like it when his  
people suffered.

KEZI  
Jesus is not here. We are alone.

Anna shakes her head, hands Kezi the torch.

EXT. KIDRON VALLEY HILLSIDE - OLIVE GROVE -NIGHT

Kezi lights a big fire she's made from brush. Some of it is Oleander. She fingers its flowers and its leaves.

She grinds leaves into the base of the honey jar Simon broke.

She draws water from a tiny puddle nearby. Hears Wolves growling. Hurries back to Little Peter. She places the broken jar of potion on a stone by the fire.

A lion stalks around the camp but avoids the fire.

The badger slinks by. Kezi swipes a burning stick at it.

She shoves the broken jar away from the fire. The potion is boiling. She leaves it to cool.

She goes to Little Peter's cage. He is fast asleep. She shakes it. He does not awaken. One of his hands twitches.

She looks despairingly at the potion in the jar.

Wolves tear the badger apart in an ugly bloody dismemberment.

The lion stalks, the far side of the fire, sniffs the badger.

Kezi sees ghosts walking with the lion: her Tutor, Juliana, Septima, James, Drusa, Simon, Ax.

The real lion stalks alone. Kezi hangs her head in shame.

Kezi wipes sweat from Little Peter's brow. He smiles and caresses her hand without awakening. His hand is steady.

KEZI

Spirits be damned. I will not leave  
you to die like a badger.

A dove is startled out of a tree branch above her.

She starts to throw out the potion but freezes as a figure rises from the brush.

Its silhouette is that of a lion head on the body of a man. It steps into the circle of fire light. It's Porcius.

PORCIUS

(points to the potion)  
You have lost your courage?

KEZI

Courage doesn't abandon a child to  
the wilderness.

PORCIUS

You need not have worried, I would  
have put my sword through him.

KEZI

Is that what the lion head gives  
you? The courage to kill children?

PORCIUS

Your Jesus killed my child.

KEZI

And many others. I'm sorry you lost  
Juliana.

PORCIUS

Your father claimed she would be resurrected.

KEZI

You don't believe it?

PORCIUS

I am the Grand Arimanius, I do not believe nonsense. I am on the sixth step towards counsel with the true reigning god, Helios the sun.

KEZI

The Grand Arimanius isn't a god?

PORCIUS

Many signs have been given. I have accepted the mantle.

Porcius flinches in pain from his burns. He sweats.

KEZI

Do gods like you live after death?

PORCIUS

All my family, even the spirits of my baby sons, are shades in Hades, blessed by the gods.

KEZI

Will you see Juliana there?

PORCIUS

I'm sure your Jesus and his followers will be in another place than my family and my followers.

KEZI

You are as much a hypocrite as the Nazoreans.

PORCIUS

You are the hypocrite. Following your father, then Pharisees, then Nazoreans again, then pagans. Who do you follow now?

He moves closer to her, but heat from the fire drives him back in pain. Yellow pus and blood oozes through his toga.

KEZI

So you were burned, the fire drives you back. Do you have any heavenly powers? Can you drink this poison and not be harmed?

PORCIUS

I am not a fool, you cannot trick me.

KEZI

Did it look to you like Juliana died believing in a trick? We both saw her face.

PORCIUS

I have seen many Nazoreans die thus. And so have you and you do not believe in their words.

KEZI

But I wrote their words so that they will last beyond both of us.

PORCIUS

And were they the truth?

KEZI

Yes they were.

PORCIUS

And did those words change anything?

Kezi ponders this while she covers Little Peter.

LITTLE PETER

(moans in his sleep)

Ahh Waa

KEZI

For them it did. The stories changed each person's truth, and together make a Nazorean truth.

PORCIUS

But not for you. Your Messiah did not come back and save the living or raise the dead.

KEZI

Not the way I thought he would.

PORCIUS

And he will not save you from your fate now. Your father killed my daughter, for which I will repay him. By killing you.

KEZI

Unless I drink the poison first. Then what will you live for?

PORCIUS

(crouches in pain)  
I will wipe every word of Jesus from the face of the earth.

KEZI

You must be a god, for that is what it will take now that the word has spread. Are you that god?

PORCIUS

Enough of one. I have sent much blood back into the ground.

KEZI

Not a god that gives life but one that takes it away? Could you be resurrected with your daughter if you chose to? I think not.

PORCIUS

Does it matter? I am going to run this sword through you and your nephew.

KEZI

It will not bring back Juliana.

PORCIUS

Nothing will.

KEZI

But if there was a chance something could, would you have the courage to take it?

PORCIUS

Stop talking foolishness.

KEZI

Why did you keep my scroll?

She points, a scroll sticks out of a pouch under his cloak.

PORCIUS

(coughing up blood)

You can't know what it's like to have a child of your own. But I will enjoy watching you burn this.

KEZI

Or you could take the chance to read it, accept Jesus as Lord. Prove you are right, Jesus wrong.

PORCIUS

What? Why would I do that?

KEZI

You are dying anyway. If you dare drink the poison you will die easy or you will live, proving you are a true god- the Grand Arimanius.

PORCIUS

No.

KEZI

If you dare hear Jesus' gospel first, when you die you will be resurrected with your daughter. Live or die you win.

PORCIUS

No.

KEZI

You don't have the courage to hear mere words? Do you enjoy this living hell? How much longer are you going to live- days, hours? Circae and her potions are gone, it will be very painful for you.

PORCIUS

(fails to stand)

You will not live longer either. I will crucify you on that tree, burn you alive with your words.

KEZI

You are right. We are only prey. Poison does spare hideous death.

PORCIUS

It's a trick.

KEZI

If you don't hear what's on that  
scroll, what will you tell Juliana  
if you do see her again in the  
afterlife? That she was not  
precious enough to you?

Porcius grows more feverish. He fumbles to bring Juliana's  
opal earring out of his cloak.

He sees her face as she was that morning, hears her.

JULIANA (O.S.)

Beautiful, like the sea.

PORCIUS

(mutters to himself)

You will always be my precious one.

He falls down, too weak to get up. He doesn't resist as Kezi  
takes the scroll from him, opens it and reads.

KEZI

The beginning of the good news of  
Jesus Christ, the Son of God...

(fire burns brightly)

And to what should I compare the  
the kingdom of God?...

(fire's burnt down)

It was two days before the Passover  
and the festival of Unleavened  
bread... they were looking for a  
way by stealth to kill him...

(fire smolders as coals)

They saw a young man dressed in a  
white robe... he said to them do  
not be alarmed, you are looking for  
Jesus of Nazareth, who was  
crucified. He has been raised...

EXT. KIDRON VALLEY HILLSIDE - OLIVE GROVE- DAWN

Porcius weeps, his wounds bleed, he takes off the lion head,  
throws it on the coals. Flames creep up the lion's mane.

PORCIUS

Juliana, I did not see.

KEZI

You accept Jesus as your Lord?

PORCIUS

I must ask her forgiveness first.

Porcius grabs the poison. Kezi tries to stop him.

PORCIUS (CONT'D)  
 (he drinks)  
 Juliana, my precious one.

His mouth foams, he chokes and falls to the ground.

Kezi comforts him, covers him with his cloak.

She takes the remaining poison to Little Peter's cage.

KEZI  
 Lord, I have no place to go, except  
 to your way.

She throws the poison on the ground.

She kicks the lion headdress out of the fire. It smolders,  
 mocking her. She growls at it. The sun rises.

EXT. KIDRON VALLEY - HAMADI'S TENT- MORNING

Hamadi's white tent is draped over with black cloth. Hamadi's  
 Boys lounge around its base, lethargic.

Kezi approaches with Little Peter.

Hamadi's Boys run up, they poke sticks at Little Peter. He  
 thinks it's a game and laughs.

KEZI  
 If you harm him I will kill you.

They back off at her harsh voice.

KEZI (CONT'D)  
 Tell Hamadi I must talk to him.

HAMADI'S BOY  
 He refuses to see anyone.

HAMADI'S BOYS  
 (all talk at once)  
 He's been in there for days. He  
 won't allow us to enter. No one has  
 emptied his pee pots. No one has  
 brought him food. He is moaning. Is  
 he ill. Is he dying?

HEAD BOY  
 He's possessed. By your Jesus  
 reading.

INT. HAMADI'S TENT- MORNING

Her eyes adjust to the murky dark and swarming flies. She raises her veil over her nose at the stench. Fruit rots on trays. Waste pots overflow.

Hamadi is propped on his mound of pillows. His robes are filthy. He snores.

Kezi knocks over a table. Hamadi startles.

HAMADI  
Who's there!

He pulls a saber from its sheath, brandishes at the air.

KEZI  
I have come to plead with you.

HAMADI  
Go away. Demon!

Kezi throws the partially burnt lion headdress on the carpet with a thump.

HAMADI (CONT'D)  
(terrified)  
What is that?

KEZI  
All that is left of Porcius.

HAMADI  
Fool! I can't sell you to a dead man. Now you're not worth anything.

KEZI  
I didn't come to ask for anything. I came to plead that you would let me do something for you.

HAMADI  
It is finished. I have had everything a man could want and look at me, I am a blind beggar.

KEZI  
Everyone in the empire depends on you. *Hamadi* makes the empire great.

HAMADI  
(roars with laughter)  
The empire depends on a blind beggar?

(MORE)

HAMADI (CONT'D)

You want to do something for me?  
Take this sword and finish what you  
started with your Scroll of False  
Hope.

KEZI

I have seen everyone who tried to  
help me, to serve as Christ served,  
martyred.

HAMADI

Fools, giving their life for a lie.

KEZI

I want the ecstasy that was on  
their faces when they died.

HAMADI

I don't want ecstasy, I want eyes.

KEZI

Get up. There is nothing to see.  
You have something I need and I  
have something you need. That alone  
is the light of the world.

EXT. KIDRON VALLEY - NAZOREAN CAVES - "TWO YEARS LATER"- DAY

Little Peter hugs Kezi. Anna looks on.

LITTLE PETER

(examines Kezi's hand)

I am old enough to get the mark  
now, why do you not have one?

KEZI

Each day leaves its own mark.

LITTLE PETER

Did you find your Abba?

KEZI

Now I only look for him in his  
words, The Gospel of Mark.

LITTLE PETER

Can I go with you one day?

Kezi nods. She and Anna watch him run off to play.

Kezi hands Anna a small package and a bag of coins.

KEZI

Peter's keep is not too difficult?

Anna shakes her head. She opens the package, pulls out white cloth adorned with Elizabeth's blue wave border.

ANNA

Can you see your Mother?

KEZI

(shakes her head)

We don't travel that far. It might be possible in the seventh year of my contract, my sabbatical year.

ANNA

And the letter from your father?

KEZI

He wanted me to add some other stories he had heard.

ANNA

To *The King of the Jews*? Did you?

KEZI

(laughs)

The Jesus story is different for every teller. If I added each one, it would go on for eternity.

The three walk down the hill.

ANNA

Is it hard?

KEZI

Being Hamadi's Bond Servant?

INT. HAMADI'S TENT - DAY

Kezi reads a paper to Hamadi. He throws fruit at her.

He dictates. She writes a line on a page with many crossed out lines. He shakes his head. She throws fruit at him.

KEZI (V.O.)

I read receipts, write contracts. It brings me more peace than I thought it could. And we travel to many thirsty places...

EXT. SEPPHORIS THEATER - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Like her father, Kezi directs, prepares Actors.

VEILED WOMAN (O.S.)  
Let us go to the tomb.

INT. SEPPHORIS THEATER - ONSTAGE - NIGHT

The dark mouth of a cave yawns. Deep in the cave a single burst of light flashes, casts the shadow of a figure with outstretched arms.

The shabby rural Audience gasps.

Ester, face bright and glowing with triumph, rushes out of the cave, hurries to two Veiled Women who weep nearby.

One drops her jar, it breaks. She kneels to scoop up balm.

ESTER  
Do not be sad or afraid. He is  
risen, his love is our balm.

EXT. SEPPHORIS THEATER - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Little Peter waits as Kezi helps pull the cave set backstage.

She hugs him.

LITTLE PETER  
Why didn't Jesus come here to be  
our Caesar?

KEZI  
Because he came here to show us how  
to be a servant.

They file out to the stage to join Ester and the others.

(O.S.) Audience APPLAUSE.

The tomb stands empty backstage.

FADE OUT.