

Light of Zion (Act I)

By

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FADE IN

EXT. RIO DE JANEIRO SLUMS - DAY

A brick-and-mortar church on a hillside *favela*. The dilapidated steeple rises above the surrounding shanty town.

A sign outside the church reads "End Suffering."

A shirtless young boy, DANIEL SILVA, age 12, walks past the church.

EXT. RIO DE JANEIRO SLUMS - EVENING

Daniel's shoeless feet walk up the stairs along the ghetto rooftops.

Daniel walks through an alley between tenements, the windows lit with the orange glow of candles.

The laughter and chatter of residents echoes in the background. Music can be heard coming from somewhere among the buildings.

Daniel walks to the corner of the alley and stops. He peeks around the corner.

A group of young men is gathered at the end of the alley, playing a dice game.

Daniel sprints across the alley, turns the corner and scrambles up and over a wooden fence.

A woman in a nearby window watches him as she nurses her baby.

EXT. RIO DE JANEIRO MARKET - DAY

Daniel walks through the crowded market. As people cross around him, he is visible one moment but disappears the next.

Daniel walks past a wagon with smoked meat hanging from the frames. The vendor eyes him suspiciously.

Daniel mixes in with the crowd. A pair of women cross ahead of him. He follows them closely as they approach a fruit cart.

As the vendor, an older man, turns to gather fruit for the women, Daniel walks toward the back of the cart.

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He lifts the bottom of the tent behind the cart, peeks underneath, and pokes his arm inside. He quickly pulls out two oranges and two pears.

Daniel stuffs the fruit under his shirt and walks away just as the vendor looks around the corner of the cart.

Daniel turns the corner, where another, younger boy is standing.

Daniel removes an orange from beneath his shirt and hands it to the boy, who grabs the orange and sinks his teeth into it, peel and all.

INT. ABANDONED BUILDING - NIGHT

A pair of older teenage boys pull at some creaky copper drainage pipes. The pipes break free.

The boys hoist a large section of pipe and carry it past a different pair of boys who are prying apart a window frame.

One of the boys, Ruiz, 16, stumbles to the floor as the window frame pops loose.

Ruiz springs back up and climbs out of the window.

EXT. ABANDONED BUILDING - NIGHT

Ruiz climbs out of the window and up the fire escape ladder to the roof.

EXT. ABANDONED BUILDING ROOF - NIGHT

Ruiz walks along the edge of the rooftop. The bricks are unsteady beneath his feet, bits crumble away as we walks.

Ruiz reaches toward a steel radio antenna at the end of the rooftop. It has a crossbar similar to a crucifix.

The bricks collapse beneath Ruiz's feet and he falls off the roof with a yelp.

Ruiz crashes through a wooden fence and some crates, which break his fall. He lies on the ground, moaning.

Another boy runs to Ruiz, pauses as he surveys the damage, then runs away.

## EXT. RIO DE JANEIRO DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

Daniel is slightly older now, 16, and mingles with a group of other boys. The gang walks down an alleyway. At the end of the alley is a delivery van.

As the gang reaches the van, several of them try to pry open the rear hatch. It does not budge.

Daniel holds a rock in his hand as he approaches the front of the van.

Daniel smashes the window of the van, reaches inside, opens the door, and climbs into the cab.

The gang surrounds the rear of the van as the sliding thud of the lever lock can be heard as it is unlocked from within the cab.

The rear hatch of the van swings open and Daniel emerges with a gold watch in his hand.

Two boys climb into the rear and begin to unload boxes.

At the end of the street, a policeman blows his whistle. The boys run.

## EXT. RIO DE JANEIRO SUBURBS - NIGHT

Ruiz is slightly older now, 18, and walks along a suburban street in a middle-class area in Rio de Janeiro.

Ruiz's tattered undershirt partially reveals a large scar and tattoo on his chest. A screwdriver dangles from his belt loop.

Ruiz tries to open the driver's-side door of every car he walks past.

Ruiz opens the door of a tan sedan and sits inside.

## INT. SEDAN - NIGHT

Ruiz searches the car for keys, opens the glove box, looks under the visor.

Ruiz jams a large screwdriver into the ignition and turns it hard. The car starts.

EXT. RIO DE JANEIRO SUBURBS - NIGHT

Ruiz pulls away from the curb, drives down the street, and turns the corner.

EXT. RIO DE JANEIRO DOWNTOWN - EVENING

Daniel walks past a store window, the inside stocked with dried foods.

Daniel's stony gaze reflects his hunger.

Daniel lingers at the window as people walk past him, then walks away.

Daniel returns with a large stone in his hands and smashes the window. He climbs through the window and begins to fill a sack with strips of meat.

In an apartment above the store, a light flickers in the window. Unintelligible shouting can be heard.

DANIEL

I'm hungry!

Daniel runs from the store, gripping the sack full of food.

EXT. RIO DE JANEIRO SLUMS - NIGHT

Shadows move across the bricks of an apartment wall. A gang of young men moves down an alleyway.

One of the men kicks in a door.

Two men enter the apartment. The others stand watch in the alley.

Shuffling can be heard inside the apartment. A woman screams. Two gunshots flash and echo in the darkness. Glass shatters.

Smoke begins to billow out of the apartment.

Ruiz walks out of the doorway as he tucks a gun into his jeans.

EXT. RIO DE JANEIRO DOWNTOWN - DAY

A large clock stands in a storefront display.

Daniel bursts out of the shop's door clutching something in his hands and runs down the street.

The shopkeeper chases Daniel for a few steps as he shouts profanities in Spanish.

EXT. RIO DE JANEIRO DOWNTOWN - DAY

A policeman grips Daniel's arm tightly as he leads him back toward the store. Daniel struggles as the policeman takes his gold watch and examines it.

POLICEMAN

Where did you get this?

Daniel's wrist is gripped by the policeman's hand.

DANIEL

Let me go. I have not hurt anyone.  
Please let me go.

INT. RIO DE JANEIRO POLICE STATION - DAY

Daniel's wrist in the hand of a policeman.

The policeman presses Daniel's thumb against an ink pad, and then against a piece of paper.

Daniel stands in line with other young men. All are dressed in green jumpsuits. They walk slowly through a metal gate that slams shut behind them.

INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT

Daniel sits on a cot, looking across the room at his cell mate, Ruiz.

Ruiz is 19, his skin is darker than Daniel's. His features are masked by shadows, glints of light flicker in his eyes.

A large cloth cross hangs over Ruiz's side of the room.

DANIEL

When will they let us out?

Ruiz rolls on his side, allowing light to make half of his face visible. He looks at Daniel.

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL

I would give anything to get out of here.

Ruiz smiles.

RUIZ

What would you do if they let you out?

DANIEL

Go home.

RUIZ

And then what? Do you go to school?

DANIEL

No. I did, but not anymore.

RUIZ

How long would it be before you were starving again?

Daniel nods.

DANIEL

Probably a few days.

RUIZ

You would have to steal to eat. And soon enough you will be back here.

Ruiz reaches under his cot and pulls out a bible. He offers it to Daniel.

RUIZ

We are not bad men. We have found our way here for a reason.

INT. JAIL HOUSE HALLWAY - NIGHT

The whispering and taunting of inmates echoes down a long, stone hallway lined with iron cells.

A guard walks down the hallway, baton in hand.

INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT

Daniel reads the bible by candlelight. Glints of light flicker in his eyes.

The guard's footsteps can be heard in the hall. Daniel blows out the candle and lies down.

The guard passes outside the cell, pauses for a moment, then continues walking.

EXT. JAIL YARD - DAY

Daniel sits on a bench in the yard. Ruiz does push-ups nearby. Inmates mill about the yard. Guards watch from the gates.

Ruiz stands and removes his shirt to reveal a large scar on his chest, around the scar is tattooed a crucifix. He turns his torso to reveal the exit wound on his back, which also has a crucifix tattooed around it.

DANIEL

How did you get that scar?

RUIZ

I fell from a great height.

DANIEL

You should be dead.

Ruiz continues doing push-ups.

RUIZ

But I am not. I have the scars and pain to remind me every day that I am supposed to be here. I could not die even if I wanted to because there is a bigger plan for me.

Ruiz sits, squints in the sun, looks at Daniel.

RUIZ

And for you, too.

A beat. Daniel considers the notion.

DANIEL

What are you going to do?

Ruiz looks around at the yard, the walls, the guards at the gate. He resumes doing push-ups.

(CONTINUED)

RUIZ

Just wait. I have been tested. Now, when opportunity comes, I will be ready.

Ruiz looks up at Daniel with a devilish smile.

RUIZ

You just need to have a little bit of faith.

INT. JAIL CELL - NIGHT

Daniel sits in his cot, reading his bible by candlelight.

Ruiz lies in his cot, shadowed, face up, eyes closed.

DANIEL

What did you do to be put here?

RUIZ

Do you believe in morality? That the strong should not prey upon the weak? That the enemy of your brother is your enemy as well?

DANIEL

Yes.

RUIZ

Someone must look after those who cannot look after themselves. Someone must punish those who prey upon the weak.

A beat. Daniel closes his bible.

DANIEL

And you punished them?

Ruiz takes a deep breath.

RUIZ

Yes. I acted in righteousness. By a moral code.

Shouting can be heard outside. Then gunshots, one, two, three rapid-fire bursts.

A group of inmates run past the cell. Daniel stands up and walks to the bars, looks around. Guards run by, followed by more inmates.

(CONTINUED)

Ruiz has not moved from his cot.

RUIZ  
Are you ready, Daniel?

An explosion can be heard in the distance. Ruiz sits up in his cot.

DANIEL  
What is happening?

Guards and inmates crowd into the hallway, fighting. A full-scale riot has broken out.

RUIZ  
Senderistas. Attacking the jail.

A prisoner pushes a guard against the cell door. Ruiz is on his feet in a flash with his arm squeezed around the guard's throat.

Ruiz holds the guard through the bars as other prisoners beat the guard unconscious.

RUIZ  
Get his belt.

Daniel reaches around and pulls the guard's keys off of his utility belt.

Ruiz drops the unconscious guard, who slides the floor.

Ruiz takes the keys from Daniel, reaches through the cell bars, unlocks the door and pushes it open.

INT. JAIL HOUSE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ruiz and Daniel run down the smoky hallway. Shouting and violent noises echo in the smoggy darkness. Inmates run down the hall.

The hallway opens into a common room, where the riot rages.

INT. JAIL HOUSE COMMON ROOM - NIGHT

A group of inmates tackle a guard to the ground.

At the end of the room, the door is kicked open by a masked man who raises a rifle and shoots into the crowd.

(CONTINUED)

RUIZ

This way!

Ruiz grabs Daniel's arm and leads him away in the opposite direction.

INT. JAIL HOUSE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Ruiz and Daniel walk down the hallway. Gunshots pop in the near distance. Daniel is nervous, Ruiz eerily calm.

DANIEL

Where are we going?

RUIZ

Out.

EXT. JAIL YARD - NIGHT

Ruiz and Daniel emerge through a gate into the yard. The yard is littered with the bodies of the dead and wounded, inmates, guards, and rebels. Smoke and debris are everywhere.

One of the far walls is on fire, with a truck smashed through it.

RUIZ

We are close!

Ruiz and Daniel run for the broken wall. More gunshots. Another explosion, this time from within the prison.

Ruiz laughs.

RUIZ

There!

Shouting can be heard getting closer and louder as a crowd of more than 100 inmates comes rushing into the yard. They are pursued by guards, who are pursued by masked rebels. Chaos.

Ruiz and Daniel reach the ruined section of the far wall where fire blocks their path.

Daniel stops to look back behind them, where the riot continues.

Another explosion causes one of the guard towers to collapse into the crowd, crushing many.

(CONTINUED)

RUIZ (O.S.)

What would you give to get out,  
Daniel?

DANIEL

What?

Daniel turns around just in time to see Ruiz run and jump through the flames and over the broken wall. He literally disappears into the fire.

RUIZ (O.S.)

Hurry, Daniel! There is not much  
time!

Daniel covers his face with his arm and runs and jumps into the flames.

EXT. JUNGLE CAMP - DAY

The sun shines on a remote campsite somewhere in the South American jungle. Wood-thatched huts and tables stretch across a clearing under a canopy of trees.

A man with a machine gun leans against a post, smoking a cigarette. A pair of young men carry large bundles into one of the huts. A large generator hums with electricity.

People mill about the huts, hunched over tables, some wearing surgical masks. A radio buzzes music in the background.

At a table sits Ruiz, older now, in his late 40s, the distinctive tattoos visible on his shirtless body. His body is chiseled from years of hard labor. His skin seems even darker than before. He is bald and wears dark sunglasses.

Across from Ruiz is a television set. His eyes behind dark sunglasses focus on the set.

On the television, a religious sermon flickers with air wave static. The picture is unclear, but the voice delivers a charismatic sermon.

TELEVISION

*Now is the time to open your  
hearts! Open your hearts and let  
Christ in!*

Closer on the television, between flickers, the minister's face is distinguishable. It is Daniel, older, fatter, in his late 40s. He smiles as the audience applauds.

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL (ON T.V.)  
Let Him into your life!

Through the television the grainy picture becomes real.

INT./EXT. AMPHITHEATER - NIGHT

Hundreds of people fill the amphitheater. Lights dart around, splashing color across the audience. Red, green, blue, yellow.

The applause of the audience roars as Daniel waves and walks across the stage. The spotlight follows him.

Behind Daniel, a live band pounds out intense synthesized music.

Across the stage stands Daniel's son Adam, mid-20s, dark hair. Adam holds a small DV camera in his hands and records his father's sermon.

DANIEL  
God had a plan for me, and He has a  
plan for you!

The audience applauds. A woman near the front row faints dramatically.

Daniel stands on stage, bright under the spotlight. He raises his hand toward the sky.

DANIEL  
Our Father, who art in Heaven ...

A beat. The audience holds a collective breath. Daniel jerks his body back and pumps his fist.

DANIEL  
Hallowed be thy name!

Pyrotechnics erupt along the stage. The music crescendos. The audience roars.

Daniel smiles broadly, raises a hand as the crows slowly quiets to a buzz.

DANIEL  
Bless you, ladies and gentlemen! I  
am Dr. Daniel Pierce Silva!

The audience roars in applause again.

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL

Please remember to make a contribution before you exit the convention center!

Daniel walks briskly off-stage.

As the curtains close, Agent Sawyer, mid-30s, dark hair, rises from his seat in the audience and walks toward the exit.

Sawyer wears gray suit and blue tie and has a tiny radio receiver in his ear.

INT. AMPHITHEATER BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Daniel walks behind the curtain, removes his jacket. Awaiting backstage is Daniel's assistant, Claire, blond, mid-20s.

At the end of the hallway, Daniel's fans clamor behind a velvet rope. He waves to them.

Claire takes Daniel's jacket and hands him a phone.

CLAIRE

Benard.

Claire turns and walks down the hallway.

DANIEL

Thank you, Claire.

Daniel plugs the phone to his earpiece and talks aloud as he follows Claire around the corner and down a hallway to his dressing room.

DANIEL

Martin, how are you?

MARTIJN (O.S.)

Daniel, I'm disappointed that I won't be seeing you tomorrow. I had hoped that we could speak in person.

DANIEL

Martin I'm headed straight to Los Angeles. But I have something special for you. It's a surprise.

EXT. AMPHITHEATER PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Sawyer walks out of the convention center and to the end of the parking lot.

INT. AMPHITHEATER BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Adam folds his mini-DV and tucks it into his pocket as walks down the hallway toward Daniel.

Daniel stands at the entrance to his dressing room, still on the phone.

DANIEL

But I can promise you that I will do everything I can to keep your interests in mind when I meet with Governor Powell.

Martin's voice is rushed.

MARTIJN (O.S.)

Daniel there are some matters that have recently come to surface that would be best resolved if we were able to discuss them personally.

Adam walks into Daniel's dressing room. Daniel follows.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

The room is flooded with light by three large vanity mirrors. Against the bare wall sit a desk and a small refrigerator. On the wall above the desk, a large monitor replays Daniel's sermon.

Claire stands next to the refrigerator.

DANIEL

Martin, I have to step into a very important meeting. I'll have Claire contact you soon.

MARTIJN (O.S.)

Dan--

Daniel removes his earpiece, unplugs it from the phone and tosses the phone to Claire, who catches it adeptly and places it into a briefcase.

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL  
Work out the details with his  
people, Claire.

He turns and smiles at Adam.

DANIEL  
I always had faith that you would  
find your way here, Adam. And now,  
here you are.

EXT. AMPHITHEATER PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Sawyer walks to an unmarked white service van and opens the  
rear door.

INT. DEA SURVEILLANCE VAN - NIGHT

Sawyer closes the door of the van behind him.

The inside of the van is lined with monitors and receivers.  
Agents Diaz and Williams sit at control desks with  
headphones around their necks.

WILLIAMS  
That's a great suit.

Sawyer takes off his suit jacket.

SAWYER  
You get any of that over the crowd?

Sawyer unbuttons his shirt and removes a tiny microphone. He  
hands it to Diaz.

DIAZ  
We got it. But what we really need  
is the good stuff.

Sawyer reaches around his belt and removes a tiny radio  
transmitter. He places it on the control desk.

SAWYER  
It's crazy the way he's selling  
those people hope. And they eat it  
up.

WILLIAMS  
That's not all they're selling.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Daniel sits at a vanity and washes his face. Adam and Claire are reflected in the giant mirror.

DANIEL  
What did you think of the show?

ADAM  
I don't know. The crowd sure gets  
into it.

Daniel wipes his face with a towel, looks at Daniel through the mirror.

DANIEL  
But what did you think?

Adam is reluctant to answer, but finally smiles.

ADAM  
You were good, Dad.

Daniel rises from his seat, walks to the refrigerator and removes a bottle of water.

DANIEL  
Everyone needs someone to believe  
in.

Daniel chugs down the water and hands the empty bottle to Claire, who throws it away.

Daniel walks to Adam, places his hands on Adam's shoulders.

DANIEL  
Adam, I have a special surprise for  
you.

ADAM  
Please, no surprises, Dad. Just  
pretend that there's nothing of  
interest to me out there, on earth,  
at all.

DANIEL  
So there's nothing to do?

ADAM  
Nothing.

(CONTINUED)

DANIEL  
Then you're free tomorrow night?

ADAM  
Dad --

DANIEL  
Because I need you to do me a  
favor. I have to fly to Los  
Angeles.

Claire pulls a folder from the briefcase.

Daniel turns, grabs his suit coat from a chair, and walks  
toward the door.

DANIEL  
Claire has all the details.

Claire hands Adam a sealed manila envelope with a boarding  
pass clipped to it.

INT. AMPHITHEATER BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Daniel's fans clamor up again as he approaches them. He  
stops to sign a few autographs.

Nearby, Adam follows Claire down the hallway as he looks at  
the boarding pass. The destination reads: Brussels.

DANIEL (O.S.)  
And remember to take a coat, Adam.  
It's snowing in Belgium.

The excitement is apparent on Adam's face.

EXT. AMPHITHEATER PARKING GARAGE

Adam follows Claire through a pair of service doors and into  
the parking garage.

LONG LENS POV

Claire and Adam walk toward a waiting limousine.

INT. SEDAN - NIGHT

Across the parking lot, Agent Roberts looks out the windshield through a camera with a huge lens.

LONG LENS POV

As she approaches the limo, Claire looks directly into the camera lens.

INT. SEDAN - NIGHT

Roberts instinctively jerks his head up. Slowly he looks back into the eyepiece.

ROBERTS  
Who the hell is that?

He presses the switch and the camera's shutter whirls.

INT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

Adam and Claire relax in the back of the limo. Claire checks messages in her phone.

ADAM  
So do you mind if I ask you a question? How did you get involved with my father?

Claire closes her phone and looks at Adam.

CLAIRE  
I'm not sure what you mean by "involved."

ADAM  
Well, I mean, what drew you to the ministry? No offense, but most of the women that I know who are around your age are not the most devout.

Claire smiles.

CLAIRE  
I think your father is a great man. He's doing meaningful work. I saw an opportunity for myself to do something positive.

(CONTINUED)

Adam furrows his brow.

ADAM

So do you think he believes what  
he's saying out there?

CLAIRE

I think he does, yes. He's putting  
a lot into it.

ADAM

But do you believe it? Do you think  
he talks to God.

Claire shifts in her seat.

CLAIRE

Well maybe he doesn't talk to God,  
per se, but maybe God works through  
him somehow. Who's to say it isn't  
possible.

Adam looks out the window.

ADAM

I suppose it is.

A beat.

ADAM

So what do you do for him?

CLAIRE

Anything. Everything! Scheduling,  
travel, personal appearances,  
public relations, damage control.  
Mostly I just listen.

Claire flashes an innocent--but fake--smile.

CLAIRE

I think that more than anything, he  
just needs someone in his corner  
that he can trust.

Adam raises an eyebrow, smiles at Claire.

ADAM

I think that's what everyone needs.