

EVANGELIST

PILOT

"THE CHILD OF ZION"

Written by

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Evelyn shakes a man's hand, who isn't wearing a shirt, then steps over to meet a PREGNANT WOMAN.

Evelyn stops, stares at her and then places her hand on the woman's stomach.

There's a look of longing on Evelyn's face, tears forming in the corner of her eyes.

Norman shakes a man's hand, then he NOTICES EVELYN with the woman. The longing is familiar to Norman. So is the pain.

Evelyn, embarrassed, realizes that everyone is staring and moves on.

INT. HUT - MOMENTS LATER

Norman pushes open a door made of PALM BRANCHES. It hits a small BED that is crudely made from a base of palm leaves and stacks of old shirts.

Norman sets their luggage down and lights a cigarette.

Norman is caught off guard by a RAT that scurries out of the door.

Then he spots something at the other side of the hut --

A large, pedal RAT TRAP. It's been tripped.

He walks over and resets it.

MOMENTS LATER--

Norman WATCHES his wife, surrounded by CHILDREN, singing a hymn and handing out candy to the kids. They hold out their hands in anticipation.

He lights another cigarette. Takes a drag. Exhales. Then, sees something OFF SCREEN.

NORMAN'S POV-- Next to the bank of a RIVER, a MAN stands. He's completely NAKED.

CLOSE ON -- The man is clearly BLIND. His eyes are MILKY WHITE, but HE'S LOOKING RIGHT BACK AT US.

Norman squints, looks confused, then-- SNAP

The sound startles him. He turns around.

A RAT is caught in the trap. Dead.

He looks back for the man, but he's GONE.

Norman looks back at the trap, looking at it for a moment, a blank expression on his face.

EXT. RIVER - EVENING

Norman stands waste-deep in a RIVER on the outskirts of the village.

He cradles a small NIGERIAN CHILD under the water and then slowly pulls him to the surface. It's a BAPTISM.

VILLAGERS have formed a line from Norman to the edge of the river, waiting their turn.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

CLOSE ON: A HAMMER nails a wooden cross above a door to--

A newly constructed ONE-ROOM CHAPEL.

It stands out among the crudely constructed mud-huts surrounding it.

Norman and Evelyn stand with a GROUP OF VILLAGERS, surveying the church. Everyone claps as the final touch is put on the church.

EXT. EDGE OF VILLAGE - LATER

Norman stands with some MEN from the village. They watch--

Several OTHER MEN struggle with a LAMB that has been tied by its legs with rope to a WOODEN SPIT. It convulses violently, desperate to free itself.

Norman helps the men as they place the lamb on wooden STILTS over a large FIRE PIT.

Another MAN (60), face wrinkled from years of being baked under the sun, beard flecked white, pulls a KNIFE from his belt and turns the handle toward Norman.

Norman takes the knife slowly then looks at it in the palm of his hand.

The man POINTS to a spot just below the lamb's neck.

Norman takes the knife and places the edge of the blade against the lamb's neck. Then--

He JABS the knife into the neck. The animal SQUEALS in pain.

He looks down as the BLOOD runs like a tiny stream between his feet.

INT. HUT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Evelyn sits on the edge of their tiny bed looking at a DRAWING one of the kids made for her.

Norman comes in from outside and sees her looking at the picture. She turns and smiles at him as he unbuttons his shirt.

Evelyn places the picture on the edge of the WINDOW, folding it slightly so it stands up.

CLOSE ON: The PICTURE which is a stick-figure drawing of Evelyn and Norman in crayon surrounded by children.

Evelyn lays on her side, staring at the picture as Norman climbs into bed. He senses something is wrong. He strokes her arm.

She turns over, giving him an "I'm okay" smile. Then she sits up slightly and kisses him. It's tender. Slow.

They begin to kiss more deeply. Norman throws a worn blanket over them. They pause for a second to laugh.

They begin to MAKE LOVE and we MOVE AWAY FROM THEM TO --

Focus on the drawing once more.

INT. HUT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Evelyn and Norman are sound asleep.

Norman is WOKEN UP by the sound of LAUGHING and DRUMS in the distance. He looks over at his wife who sleeps soundly as he sits up.

EXT. VILLAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Norman buttons up his shirt and walks slowly toward the source of the NOISE.

The DRUMS and MUSIC grow louder. QUICK, RAPID PERCUSSION coupled with harmonic VOICES in the NATIVE LANGUAGE.

Norman spots a FIRELIGHT in the center of the village. Curious, he walks toward it.

CENTER OF THE VILLAGE

Norman reaches the source of all the commotion --

A group of VILLAGERS, wearing TRADITIONAL GARB made of animal hides, have formed a CIRCLE around a ROARING FIRE.

FIVE OR SIX MEN play DRUMS, changing speed and volume at random.

A SHORTER WOMAN leads in the SONG. OTHER WOMEN repeat what she sings. Other men DANCE and perform acrobatic back-flips and cartwheels.

The rest of the VILLAGERS sit around the circle, passing around A BOWL OF SOMETHING that people DRINK from and then pass down the line.

Norman sits down next to a MAN -- He doesn't notice Norman at all because he's in some sort of TRANCE. Eyes closed, rocking back and forth to the music.

Norman watches a WOMAN who dances near the fire. She's having some sort of OUT-OF-BODY EXPERIENCE -- GYRATING and JERKING her body in an unnatural way.

A SHIRTLESS VILLAGER sits down in front of Norman and pushes a BOWL into his face.

Norman shakes his head, trying to politely decline. The LIQUID sits at the bottom of the bowl -- CHALKY-WHITE.

The man is wide-eyed. STRUNG-OUT on whatever is in the drink. He pushes the bowl toward Norman again, this time more forceful.

Norman takes the bowl, apprehensive. Slowly, he drinks. The man pushes the bottom of the bowl up so Norman drinks all of it.

Norman COUGHS and hands the bowl back. The man starts dancing from his crouched position. Spinning in CIRCLES like a WILD ANIMAL.

Norman LAUGHS as he watches the MADNESS. His smile slowly fades. His eyes widen.

WHATEVER IS IN THE DRINK STARTS TO KICK IN. HARD.

NORMAN'S POV -- The dancers look as though they are in SLOW MOTION -- nothing but BLURRY STREAKS of COLOR and LIGHT.

CLOSE ON -- VILLAGERS DANCING AND GYRATING. Then, BARE FEET stomping into the ground.

Norman squeezes his eyes shut, trying to refocus his vision. He opens his eyes and SPOTS --

Someone STARING RIGHT BACK AT HIM.

A YOUNG AFRICAN WOMAN (20's), holding a TORCH, and she's absolutely ANGELIC.

Among the CHAOS and DANCING around her, she stands BONE-CHILLINGLY STILL -- Staring back at us with piercing intensity.

We PUNCH IN ON -- a TATTOO just below her COLLAR-BONE -- THREE-RINGS LOOPED TOGETHER with a CRUCIFIX in the middle. **A symbol that will be important later.**

Norman is absolutely TRANSFIXED.

The woman TURNS and walks away -- Disappearing through the crowd.

Norman stands FRANTICALLY and runs after her, PUSHING his way through VILLAGERS.

He STOPS, sweating now, his GLAZED-OVER eyes searching for her.

He spots her TORCHLIGHT --

She's at least 100 Yards away now, standing ON TOP OF A HILL, looking back at him.

She TURNS once again and walks over the hill and OUT OF SIGHT.

Norman RUNS after her again in an all-out SPRINT, climbing the hill.

TOP OF THE HILL

Norman STOPS. Searches. There's a HIGH PITCHED NOISE. Something WHINING in the distance.

Norman sees something -- Could that be --?

It is -- a BABY CRYING IN THE DISTANCE.

We follow Norman's gaze across to an OPEN FIELD -- BARREN except for --

The WOMAN'S TORCH. Still burning. But the woman is GONE.

The BABY CRIES LOUDER.

Norman reacts, he sprints toward the TORCHLIGHT, the CRIES growing LOUDER.

He reaches the LIGHT. STOPS, WIDE-EYED, and drops to his knees to see--

An INFANT, no more than FOUR MONTHS OLD, AFRICAN, lies on a TATTERED CANVAS, NAKED and crying.

Faint, disembodied WHISPERS keep repeating the same thing over and over: "*The Child of Zion. . . The Child of Zion. . . The Child of Zion.*"

He squeezes his eyes shut, trying to focus.

Norman whips his head around searching for the woman -- NOT A SINGLE SOUL IS TO BE FOUND.

NORMAN
(calling out)
Hello?!

The WIND picks up, a STORM coming in FAST. FLASHES of LIGHTNING in the distance.

A gust of wind extinguishes the torch, engulfing Norman in complete darkness. RAIN begins to POUR DOWN.

FADE TO BLACK.

The SOUND of THUNDER, LIGHTNING, and RAIN.

INT. NORMAN AND EVELYN'S HUT - LATER

Evelyn still asleep, wakes up. She turns over to see --

NORMAN standing in the doorway, COMPLETELY DRENCHED. In his arms he holds --

The BABY.

ON NORMAN. Is he high? Manic? There's a terrified SADNESS in his eyes. Or maybe it's intense FEAR.

CLOSE ON the baby, no longer crying.

SMASH TO BLACK.