

HOLY WARS

Based on: Dostoevsky's "The Grand Inquisitor"

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10-Minute Screenplay
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Fourth Draft

FADE IN:

INT. ST. LUKE'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH - DAY

President George W. Bush ("DUBYA"), age 58 and wearing a blue tie and black suit, sits in the back pew of the church. His wife, LAURA, also 58, is dressed in a conservative navy blue blouse and dress slacks. On either side of them sit SECRET SERVICE AGENTS. REVEREND YARBROUGH, 35, wears traditional priest robes and speaks with an air of confidence and blind faith.

REV. YARBROUGH

Then Jesus was led by the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterwards hungered. And when the tempter came to Him, He said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

PAN to the front door. A MIDDLE EASTERN MAN walks in and stands by the doorway looking around for somebody. He is in his thirties and wears a pair of well worn jeans and a mustard stained t-shirt.

OPENING CREDITS. PAN around the church, showing the twelve stations of the cross and other scenes from the life of Jesus.

REV. YARBROUGH (V.O.)

Then the devil taketh Him up into the holy city, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

PAN to Dubya as he listens to the sermon intently, he notices the Middle Eastern Man approaching. A flash of

recognition comes across his face, then a look of terror. He whispers to a secret service agent. The agent gets up and walks up to the Middle Eastern Man, who stops and parts his arms out silently awaiting the inevitable. The agent puts handcuffs on him and escorts the Middle Eastern Man out in silence. During this time the sermon continues normally, and only a GIRL, age 5, sitting in the back sees the event.

CLOSE-UP on Girl, she lets a single tear fall as she sees the Middle Eastern Man taken out of the building.

REV. YARBROUGH (V.O.)

Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.

FADE TO:

EXT. B&W Street in Seville, Spain - Day, 1523 A.D.

IN BLACK AND WHITE: JESUS (same as Middle Eastern Man) walks through the street. He is in his thirties and wears a white robe. As He walks, people immediately recognize him and silently plea for his aid by dropping at his feet and grabbing his knee as suppliants. He kisses the forehead of a LEPER who is instantly cured; a BLIND MAN beseeching him sees again when Jesus holds his head and looks him directly in the eyes; Jesus helps a PARALYZED WOMAN to her feet and she is able to walk again. As he approaches the town's cathedral, a funeral procession comes out carrying the casket of a LITTLE GIRL. The GIRL'S MOTHER sees him and falls at his knees weeping. The GRAND INQUISITOR is seen behind the funeral procession. He wears the robes of a cardinal of the Catholic Church, is age 90 but is still physically fit and gives off an air of authority. TWO GUARDS flank him.

GIRL'S MOTHER

Please bring my child back to me.

Without saying a word, Jesus gestures for the pallbearers to put the casket down. He opens it, and the Little Girl rises.

ZOOM-IN on the Grand Inquisitor, who glares furiously in the direction of Jesus.

GRAND INQUISITOR

Guards, sieze that man.

INT. SMITHSONIAN - DAY

Dubya walks around the museum. Past pictures of the founding fathers, stopping for a moment to reflect at the portrait of George Washington. Continuing his tour, he walks past the Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution. He pauses at neither of these.

EXT. WORLD TRADE CENTER - DAY

The first plane crashes into the World Trade Center. This image fades to black other than the following: "3,500 dead".

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

The Middle Eastern Man, now wearing bloodstained rags, lies hunched in a corner. His bottom lip is swollen and blood is caked on his face under his nose. He stares blankly at the TV in front of him, which is broadcasting the days news. An ANCHORMAN, age 43, delivers the news in a blue blazer with an air of detachment.

ANCHORMAN

The war in Iraq continues to rage and the unofficial death toll of Iraqi citizens now stands at 100,000.

FADE TO:

EXT. B&W STREET IN CONSTANTINOPLE, OTTOMAN EMPIRE - DAY

The Grand Inquisitor, 52, is dressed in priest robes as he marches with a band of CRUSADERS. A MIDDLE EASTERN FATHER, WIFE, and DAUGHTER run toward him.

MIDDLE EASTERN FATHER

Hiris tiyanımız! Hiris tiyanımız!

SUBTITLES: We are Christians! We are Christians!

The crusaders kill the wife and daughter before they reach the Grand Inquisitor, but the father falls weeping at his knees. The Grand Inquisitor pulls out a knife from his robes and stabs the father in the back, then kicks him away.

GRAND INQUISITOR

Heathens.

The Grand Inquisitor spits on the corpse.

CLOSE-UP on the father as his blood soaks into the ground.

ZOOM-IN on the cross around the father's neck.

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Dubya enters the cell, flanked by two secret service agents. He sits in front of the Middle Eastern Man and motions for the agents to leave.

DUBYA

Why have You returned?

The Middle Eastern Man sits in silence staring directly into Dubya's eyes.

DUBYA

Why have You come to hinder our work? We are bringing Your morals back to this country. We are preserving the life of unborn children and condemning those who seek unholy marriage. We fight wars to unite the world, and will raise Your banner over it all.

Dubya pauses and waits for an answer, the Middle Eastern Man stares back at him. Dubya begins feeling awkward and nervous.

DUBYA

The world has lost Your way. We seek only to bring Your way back to the world. You know human nature. You know that we naturally seek the path of greatest pleasure. Then You also must know that this path is the path of greatest sin. When You gave us freedom, You cursed us to be condemned. But now we are correcting your work and, in the name of the freedom you held so dear, taking the freedom away from people around the world and subjecting them in order to save them. Save them from others who would control them and save them from themselves, so they do not follow a path of sin. We take these crimes upon ourselves, in order to ensure that they follow Your path. We will save the world, and sacrifice only ourselves. Tomorrow though, I will send You to Guantanamo Bay and the world won't hear from you again until the time has come when you will again reign supreme.

INT. B&W PRISON CELL - DAY, 1523 A.D.

The Grand Inquisitor enters the cell. He sits down in front of Jesus.

GRAND INQUISITOR

Why hast Thou returned?

Jesus sits in silence, returning the Grand Inquisitor's gaze.

GRAND INQUISITOR

Thou cannot add to what Thou hast already said. Why, then, art Thou come to hinder us? I know not who Thou art and care not to know whether it is Thou or only a semblance of Him, but to-morrow I shall condemn Thee

GRAND INQUISITOR (CONT'D)

and burn Thee at the stake as the worst of heretics. And the very people who have today kissed Thy feet, to-morrow at the faintest sign from me will rush to heap up the embers of Thy fire.

The Grand Inquisitor never once takes his eyes off of Jesus, and Jesus, in return, keeps his eyes on the Grand Inquisitor. The Grand Inquisitor shifts uncomfortably.

GRAND INQUISITOR

All has been given by Thee to the Pope and all, therefore, is still in the Pope's hands, and there is no need for Thee to come now at all. Thou must not meddle for the time, at least. Thou mayest not add to what has been said of old, and mayest not take from men the freedom which Thou didst exalt when Thou wast on earth. Whatsoever Thou revealest anew will encroach on men's freedom of faith; for it will be manifest as a miracle, and the freedom of their faith was dearer to Thee than anything in those days fifteen hundred years ago. Didst Thou not often say then, "I will make you free"? But now Thou hast seen these "free" men? Yes, we've paid dearly for it, but at last we have completed that work in Thy name. For fifteen centuries we have been wrestling with Thy freedom, but now it is ended and over for good. Dost Thou not believe that it's over for good? Thou lookest meekly at me and deignest not even to be wroth with me. But let me tell Thee that now, to-day, people are more persuaded than ever that they have perfect freedom, yet they have brought their freedom to us and laid it humbly at our feet. But that has been our doing. Know that I fear Thee not. Know that I too have been in the wilderness, I too have lived on roots and locusts, I too prized the freedom with which Thou hast blessed men, and I too was striving to stand among Thy elect, among

GRAND INQUISITOR (CONT'D)

the strong and powerful, thirsting "to make up the number."

EXT. B&W WILDERNESS - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The Grand Inquisitor, 32, struggles to keep walking. He wears tattered, dirty clothing and has not eaten in forty days.

DISEMBODIED VOICE (V.O.)

Turn these stones to bread and the people will love you because you have fed them. They will follow you.

GRAND INQUISITOR

Gasping.

People cannot live on bread alone.

INT. B&W TEMPLE - DAY

The Grand Inquisitor, 32, stands at the top of the Temple, poised at the edge, looking down.

DISEMBODIED VOICE (V.O.)

Jump, and God will send his angels to catch you. Show the people a miracle and they will follow you, for man seeks to worship what he can worship without dispute.

GRAND INQUISITOR

The truly faithful believe without miracles.

EXT. B&W MOUNTAIN TOP - DAY

The Grand Inquisitor, 32, stands at the top of the mountain, shivering.

DISEMBODIED VOICE (V.O.)

Look below and see all of the kingdoms of Earth. I will give you dominion over them

DISEMBODIED VOICE (CONT'D)

all, if you just follow me.

GRAND INQUISITOR

People cannot be united by use of force.

INT. B&W PRISON CELL - DAY, 1523 A.D. (RETURN TO PRESENT)

GRAND INQUISITOR

But I awakened and would not serve madness.

EXT. B&W WILDERNESS - DAY

The Grand Inquisitor, 32, falls to the ground and passes out.

INT. B&W PRISON CELL - DAY, 1523 A.D.

GRAND INQUISITOR

I turned back and joined the ranks of those who have corrected Thy work. I left the proud and went back to the humble, for the happiness of the humble. What I say to Thee will come to pass, and our dominion will be built up. I repeat, to-morrow Thou shalt see that obedient flock who at a sign from me will hasten to heap up the hot cinders about the pile on which I shall burn Thee for coming to hinder us. For if anyone has ever deserved our fires, it is Thou. To-morrow I shall burn Thee. Dixi.

SPLIT SCENE:

INT. B&W PRISON CELL - DAY 1523

The Grand Inquisitor sits in silence awaiting an answer from Jesus. The two stare at each other intently, and the Grand Inquisitor's face becomes anxious for an answer. Jesus gets up, walks to the Grand Inquisitor, and kisses him on the lips. The Grand Inquisitor gets up and opens the door, motioning for Jesus to leave. Jesus walks out and the Grand Inquisitor sits back down, putting his face into his hands.

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Dubya sits in silence awaiting a reply from the Middle Eastern Man. The two stare at each other intently, and Dubya's face becomes anxious for an answer. The Middle Eastern Man gets up, walks to Dubya, and kisses him on the lips. Dubya gets up and opens the door, motioning for the Middle Eastern Man to leave. The Middle Eastern Man walks out and Dubya sits back down, putting his face into his hands.

FADE TO:

INT. B&W WHITE HOUSE PRESS ROOM - DAY

DUBYA

My fellow citizens, at this hour, American and coalition forces are in the early stages of military operations to disarm Iran, to free its people and to defend the world from grave danger. On my orders, coalition forces have begun striking selected targets of military importance to undermine the Ayatollah Khamenei's ability to wage war. These are opening stages of what will be a broad and concerted campaign. I want Americans and all the world to know that coalition forces will make every effort to spare innocent civilians from harm.

EXT. TOWNSQUARE IN SEVILLE, SPAIN - DAY, 1523

A MAN, age 42, is tied to a stake, surrounded by logs covered in oil. His WIFE and SON stand nearby crying, and he continually glances at them before averting his eyes in shame. The Grand Inquisitor holds a torch.

GRAND INQUISITOR

For thy crime of blasphemy against the Church, thou are hereby sentenced to death by fire.

The Grand Inquisitor lights the pile of logs beneath the man, who then goes up in flames.

CLOSE-UP on the flames.

FADE TO BLACK:

ROLL CREDITS