

Salvation

By

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FADE IN:

INT. CHURCH - DAY

A CUP OF WINE touches TIFFANY'S lips, followed by a small
PIECE OF BREAD.

MINISTER

Praise be to the Divine Authority.

CONGREGATION

Praise be to the Divine Authority.

Tiffany averts her eyes from THE MINISTER as she PROSTRATES
HERSELF on a PRAYER MAT before the ALTAR.

INT. CAR - DAY

Tiffany sits in the passenger seat as DAN (30's) drives them
home. She steals a glance in the rear view at their
daughter, ALI (12), in the backseat.

Ali dreamily holds a TOY SPACESHIP to the window as the
world outside races by.

EXT. CAR - DAY

The car travels down the road as A DISEMBODIED VOICE ECHOES
in the open air.

DISEMBODIED VOICE (O.S.)

May the Divine Authority reward you
with blessings...

THE CHURCH OF THE UNITED PROPHETS fades into the distance
behind them. The CROSS-CRESCENT-STAR mounted on the steeple
dominates the horizon.

INT. HOME - DINING ROOM - DAY

The small family sits at the dinner table: Dan at the head,
Tiffany opposite him, Ali between.

With a nod from Dan, they all bow their heads in PRAYER. As
Dan speaks, Tiffany steals another glance at Ali, careful to
avoid getting caught just as the prayer ends.

DAN

Divine Authority, we thank you for
the opportunity you have granted
us, your humble servants, to serve
you with our every breath. Subhaana
Kal-lah hum-ma wabi hamdika

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DAN (cont'd)
 watha-baara kasmuka watha'aala
 jad-duka walaa ilaaha ghayruk. In
 Your name we pray, Bismillaah
 hir-Rahmaa nir-Raheem. Amen.

They all open their eyes and begin their meal.

DAN
 (to Ali)
 Are you excited about next week?

Ali SHRUGS.

DAN
 It's an important day, Ali. You'll
 be a woman, accountable in the eyes
 of the Divine Authority.

Ali looks down at her plate, visibly uncomfortable. Tiffany notices Dan's growing concern and tries to diffuse the situation:

TIFFANY
 Oh, Dan! You must admit it would be
 nice if she could just be our
 little girl for a little while
 longer?

DAN
 Be that as it may, it isn't our
 place to decide.

TIFFANY
 I know, but what's the harm in
 wondering -

DAN
 Wondering is for children. And with
 the Divine Authority's help, we can
 do all things, including
 controlling our desire to wonder
 about things beyond our control.
 (to Ali)
 Or the desire to remain a child
 forever.

Tiffany offers Ali a weak smile. The family resumes eating, finishing their meal in silence.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Dan, Ali, and Tiffany sit on the couch. The light of the TELEVISION dances across their faces.

THE JUDGE (O.S.)

For the transgression of blasphemy,
you have been sentenced to death.
Will you repent before you are
executed to save your soul?

THE ACCUSED (O.S.)

Soul? What would you know about a
soul? This isn't justice! This is a
mockery! This is insane!

DAN

The infidels always seem to say the
same thing, don't they?

Ali snuggles into her mother's shoulder, clearly disturbed.

Tiffany comforts her daughter.

THE JUDGE (O.S.)

You have chosen not to repent.

The room is filled with the sounds of WHIRRING MACHINES and PAINED SCREAMS.

Ali hurries from the room. Dan turns down the sound, but he doesn't turn the television off.

DAN

Ali!

TIFFANY

Let her go, Dan.

DAN

These broadcasts are mandatory.

TIFFANY

What are you going to do? Report
your own daughter?

Dan doesn't respond.

TIFFANY

They give her nightmares! She's
just a child!

(CONTINUED)

DAN

A child that will soon be an adult.
We can't shelter her from the real
world.

TIFFANY

Is that where we live? 'The real
world'?

DAN

What is that supposed to mean?

TIFFANY

(leaving)
Goodnight, Dan.

DAN

But the broadcast hasn't ended.

Tiffany leaves the room. Dan turns up the sound as the SCREAMING finally ends. He mouths the following words along with The Judge.

THE JUDGE (O.S.)

May the Divine Authority have mercy
on your immortal soul.

INT. HOME - DINING ROOM - MORNING

Tiffany and Ali have breakfast together at the table.

Dan appears dressed for work, kisses Ali on the head and then locks eyes with Tiffany, who stands to see him off.

After an awkward moment, Dan gives her a peck on the cheek and leaves.

Tiffany stares at the closed door for a moment, finally snapping out of it when Ali taps her on the shoulder.

She turns to see Ali standing with her backpack on.

TIFFANY

No school today, sweetheart. Mommy
has other plans.

EXT. CAR - DAY

Tiffany's Car drives toward a wooded area. A DISEMBODED VOICE preaches via loudspeaker, echoing.

(CONTINUED)

DISEMBODIED VOICE

Blessed be the Divine Martyr, who
did spill his own blood for the
salvation of man...

INT. CAR - DAY

Tiffany drives, while Ali sits with her TOY SPACESHIP in her lap, too preoccupied with where they are going to play.

DAN (V.O)

Forgive me father, for I have
sinned. It's been three days since
my last confession. My wife,
father... I'm afraid she may be
losing her way.

MINISTER (V.O)

Then perhaps she should be here, my
son, and not you.

INT. CONFSSIONAL - DAY

Dan sits on one side of the screen, the minister on the other.

DAN

Be that as it may, father, I can't
just sit idly by and do nothing.

MINISTER

Do you fear that she will lead you
astray as well?

DAN

I'm not afraid for my soul, father.
I'm afraid for the soul of my
daughter.

MINISTER

His mercy extends to those who fear
Him.

DAN

I do fear Him, Father. I do. I work
out my own salvation daily with
fear and trembling.

MINISTER

But your wife... she doesn't fear
the Divine Authority?

(CONTINUED)

DAN

I don't know.

MINISTER

It is your responsibility as the spiritual head of the household to teach your family to fear the Divine Authority. The harder the lesson is to learn, the more we suffer during the process. But we only suffer if we resist, and those among us who are strong must shepherd the weak.

(beat)

Are you strong, my son? Strong enough to teach your family that lesson?

Dan ponders his answer.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Tiffany leads her daughter through the woods. They emerge by a running brook.

Tiffany motions for Ali to sit on a large rock. Mother and daughter absorb the sights and sounds, together.

TIFFANY

My grandfather took me here when I was your age.

An image of Tiffany's GRANDFATHER flashes in her mind. The image is accompanied by a calm, settling PEACE.

ALI

Father said to never speak of him...

Tiffany's calm fades as another image flits across her mind, that of her grandfather dying a VIOLENT DEATH.

TIFFANY

Your father says many things.

ALI

What are we doing here, Mom?

Tiffany speaks, but it's not in response to Ali's question.

She speaks to the world around her.

(CONTINUED)

TIFFANY

When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.

TIFFANY

When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.

ALI

First Corinthians, chapter thirteen, verse eleven.

TIFFANY

We take you out of the womb as a baby, so that you may grow up and receive strength.

ALI

The Holy Quran, verse twenty-two, five.

TIFFANY

Good. You know where the words come from. But what do they mean?

Ali considers. Tiffany turns to Ali, crouches down so they are eye to eye.

TIFFANY

The Ceremony that the church celebrates is meant to welcome children into adulthood. But adulthood was never meant to be an end to learning, an end to the childlike wonder that makes life... life...that makes us human.

ALI

Mom...Is this...blasphemy?

Tiffany shakes her head.

TIFFANY

This is honesty. You're about to enter a time in your life where they will expect you to do what they tell you to do. They'll expect you to listen to their words, Ali, but what you have to understand is that to them they are only words. Only tools they use to control us.

ALI
Mom, you're scaring me.

TIFFANY
I'm saving you.

Tiffany takes a seat beside her daughter and they stare out at the running water, together. Tiffany takes her daughter's hand.

INT. HOME - DINING ROOM - EVENING

Tiffany and Ali enter, holding hands, smiling.

Their smiles fade when they notice Dan sitting silent at the dinner table, his face in shadow.

DAN
Where were you?

TIFFANY
I thought it would be nice if we spent the day together. Just the two of us.

Dan nods resolutely to himself. Tiffany instantly senses that something is wrong.

TIFFANY
Ali, go to your room, sweetheart.

DAN
No. Stay.

Dan stands. His BELT hangs loose in his hand.

DAN
Did you spend the days filling our daughter's head with nonsense, leading her from the path?

TIFFANY
Dan, honey, what are you-

DAN
"Some before you did ask such questions, and on that account, lost their faith."

TIFFANY
Dan, please-

Dan stalks toward Tiffany.

DAN

"Do not be deceived. The Divine Authority is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will she also reap."

TIFFANY

Don't do this!

DAN

Don't make me do this!

They face off against one another. The entire room is a powder keg, ready to explode.

DAN

Tell her that you were wrong.

TIFFANY

I won't. I'm not.

Dan proceeds to BEAT his wife into submission with his belt.

Their daughter watches in horror, unable to look away.

Tiffany crumples to the floor. She lies there, battered and weeping.

Dan stalks away.

Ali stands by herself, torn.

INT. HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The family sits in silence. Ali looks from one parent to another as they stare their plates, refusing both eye contact and conversation.

Dan finishes, stands, and leaves. Soon Ali leaves as well, leaving Tiffany alone at the table. She weeps, silently.

INT. PARENT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tiffany lies in the dark, staring at the ceiling. Dan sleeps restlessly at her side.

She glances at the alarm clock. 3:19am.

She breathes in, out, in, out, in... holds it.

She's made up her mind.

INT. ALI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tiffany shakes Ali from sleep.

ALI
Mom? What-

TIFFANY
Get dressed. We're leaving.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Tiffany and Ali climb in the car and drive away.

We hear the DISEMBODIED VOICE once again speak to the open air.

DISEMBODIED VOICE
Let us give thanks to The Saviors,
who did ascend from the fires of
war to lead man back to the path of
peace.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Tiffany drives into the night, her abject terror barely hidden from the young girl beside her.

ALI
Mom? Where are we going?

TIFFANY
There are others like us, Ali.
Others who openly question the way
things are. We'll be safe-

A pair of HEADLIGHTS flash their high beams in her rear view mirror.

TIFFANY
No.

The car behind them gets closer, closer.

TIFFANY
No, no, no!

She turns her eyes to the road in front of her just in time to see a car in the other lane swerving toward them.

She JERKS the wheel in the other direction and SLAMS on the brakes.

Tiffany and Ali sit there dazed, breathing hard.

(CONTINUED)

TIFFANY

Are you okay-

The car door swings open and Tiffany is pulled from the car.

Tiffany and Ali both SCREAM.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

A PAIR OF MEN wearing stark white clothing, ENFORCERS, grab Tiffany by either arm. On each man's arm is a band bearing the CROSS-CRESCENT-STAR symbol of the church. Their movements are stiff, robotic, inhuman?

Ali climbs out of the car, unsure what to do.

An enforcer PUNCHES Tiffany's temple, stunning her and sending her to the ground.

ALI

Mommy!

Dan emerges from the darkness, standing with the minister.

MINISTER

Is this the one who has transgressed?

DAN

Yes. She's gone astray.

(beat)

She intends to take my child with her.

The minister produces a HANDGUN, extends it toward Dan.

DAN

I don't understand..

MINISTER

She must be punished.

DAN

Of course, father. But I thought-

MINISTER

You thought what, my son? That your burden was someone else's to bear? I am merely here to bear witness.

DAN

But I can't possibly-

(CONTINUED)

MINISTER

All things are possible with the
Divine Authority.

The minister crosses himself, then touches his forehead, the
gesture an approximation of the church's holy symbol.

Dan takes the gun, looks at Ali.

DAN

Honey, go back to the car.

MINISTER

No. She must stay. She, too, must
bear witness.

DAN

But she's just a child-

TIFFANY

(dazed)

Dan, you know this is wrong.

DAN

This is your fault. You've forced
my hand. Destroyed our family.

(trains gun on her)

"Whatever one sows, that will she
also reap."

TIFFANY

"Judge not, lest ye be judged..."

DAN

No more words.

TIFFANY

My grandfather -

DAN

I told you never to speak of him.

TIFFANY

Before they killed him, he told me
the truth.

MINISTER'S POV: A flickering electronic display of Tiffany
on the ground. The POV of a android.

TIFFANY

They didn't save us from ourselves
by unifying our faiths - they're
the ones we were fighting! And we

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

TIFFANY (cont'd)
were winning, until they realized
that it was easier to use our
words, our faith, to control us...

THE MINISTER
This is blasphemous talk.

Tiffany points accusingly at The Minister, shouting:

TIFFANY
Worship NOT false idols!

DAN
I won't let you turn this around.
"We must all appear before the
judgment...so that each one may
receive what is due"

Tiffany bows her head, resigned, then she raises it to look
at her daughter.

TIFFANY
"Do not be conformed to this
world..."

DAN
Stop.

TIFFANY
"...but be transformed by the
renewal of your mind,"

DAN
Stop it!

TIFFANY
"...that by testing you may discern
for yourself -"

DAN
SHUT THE FUCK UP!

Dan SHOOTS her.

INT. HOME - MORNING

Dan leads Ali through the front door, both hollow shells of
themselves.

He retrieves two PRAYER MATS from the family room and lays
out each mat facing the morning sun, then settles to his
knees on his own mat.

(CONTINUED)

He turns to face his daughter. They exchange a look, then Ali takes her place on the mat beside her father's.

Together, father and daughter prostrate themselves and murmur in prayer.

INSERT: The road. A splatter of blood and brain matter on the asphalt. Tiffany's car is still where it was.

INSERT: Inside Tiffany's car. ALI'S TOY SPACESHIP lay discarded on the passenger seat.

Ali's head on the mat, she turns slightly and opens her eyes.

CUT TO BLACK.