

The True Light

by
Raiomond Mirza

Raiomond Mirza
Oh My! Productions Ltd
23 Avondale Ave
Staines, Middx
TW18 2PT
UK
01784-451-427

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EXT. A BRIGHT WINTER SKY AND DARK RURAL HORIZON LINE - DUSK 1

DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE UP OF THE GROUND OF A FIELD.

The sole of a shoe descends, filling the screen, stepping forward. We hear the sound crunching with great reverberation. Moving in slow motion directly away from the camera, the rising and falling steps repeatedly take the screen to black and back to the evening light.

Inter-cutting with the footsteps we see in CLOSE UP, the stony face of an OLD MAN. He is white haired, patrician, in his eighties. His eyes are hard and his gaze unblinking.

We hear the sound of children murmuring and then we hear the voice of ARTHUR, a young man who is beginning a lecture to a class.

ARTHUR (V.O.)

Pay attention now everyone! If someone was to say the Bible is the true light of the world, what does that mean?

The old man is standing still. The camera circles him, still CLOSE UP on his face and feet. In the distance cars pass by on a motorway. Their makes and models show that we are in the early 21st century. The camera moves over his dark black coat.

ARTHUR (V.O.)

Any ideas?

DISSOLVE TO:

A young woman's face (ELIANNE). She is smiling radiantly. Light shines brightly onto her skin and her eyes are alight.

ARTHUR (V.O.)

We use this word, light, all the time. We read it, we write it. It's an everyday word. But why... how could it be used to describe the Bible?

DISSOLVE TO:

2

INT. A CLASSROOM - DAY

2

ARTHUR is standing in front of a blackboard holding a Bible out to a class of young children (about ten years old). The way Arthur and the children are dressed indicates that we have gone back in time, to roughly 1964.

A large cross is over the blackboard. This is a Catholic school. He points to a boy in the front row.

ARTHUR

Andrew? How can the Bible be light?

ANDREW

If you set it on fire?

A wave of giggles goes over the class.

At that moment, Elianne, also a teacher, leads her class down the hallway outside Arthur's classroom. As she passes by the door he looks up and their eyes meet briefly. Arthur's face darkens slightly. He turns back to Andrew with steel in his voice.

ARTHUR

Yes you could do that, but would you?

Andrew looks down a little sheepishly and shakes his head. Arthur leans in, smiles and lets the boy off the hook.

ARTHUR

Me either.

CLOSE UP - FLAMES OF A CANDLE

3 INT. A DARK BEDROOM - NIGHT

3

Arthur is locked in a passionate embrace with Elianne. The two grasp each other with desperation. Candles burn brightly around their bed.

Mixed in with the lovers' sighs we hear the loud burning and dripping of wax.

DISSOLVE TO:

4 INT. A DARK BEDROOM - LATER

4

Arthur, still naked, is sitting on the edge of the bed. His expression is that of stony guilt. Behind him Elianne lies half beneath the sheets. She looks content.

ARTHUR

God forgive me.

ELIANNE

Am I a sin that needs forgiving?

ARTHUR

This is wrong and you know it.

ELIANNE

Who said it's so wrong?

ARTHUR

We did when we made our vows to God.

ELIANNE

We haven't been ordained yet. There's still time.

ARTHUR

When we entered our colleges we swore in our hearts that we would serve none but the Lord.

ELIANNE

So what am I? Am I nothing to you?

ARTHUR

You are a test I keep failing.

ELIANNE

How can something that feels so right be a failure?

ARTHUR

I give you my body...

Elianne withdraws, feeling cheapened.

ELIANNE

Is that all?

ARTHUR

And my heart but in doing so I betray a sacred trust that was placed in my soul.

ELIANNE

Not yet. You still haven't taken your vows.

ARTHUR

Those vows don't need a witness to be made real.

(beat)

When God came to me I was filth on the street. I'd hit bottom and I was one bottle away from death and damnation. I begged for one more chance and I swore that if I survived I would do his work and serve him and no one else for the rest of my days.

(MORE)

ARTHUR(cont'd)

Well, I'm here because he alone brought me out of the darkness.

ELIANNE

Yes, you're HERE. He brought you to me.

ARTHUR

But I can't forsake him now to please myself. If I don't fulfil my oath, I am nothing. I have nothing.

ELIANNE

You have me.

He looks at her in silence. Turns and slowly moves away.

CLOSE UP. THEIR HANDS SEPARATING. FINGERS MOVING SLOWLY APART.

5 EXT. A FIELD - DUSK 5

The old man is sitting in front of some wood he's gathered. He takes a book out from his coat. It is a Bible. He opens it, turns a few pages and runs his finger down a particular passage, reading to himself.

6 INT. A CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS 6

Arthur is facing the students holding a Bible in his hands.

ARTHUR

God is the light that brings us out of darkness and the Bible is...what?

ALL STUDENTS

The word of God.

ARTHUR

Yes the word of God brought down to us to light up our world, our lives. But a book is simply something we hold in our hands. Just words on pages. How do we actually take that light inside us?

(beat)

How do we bring it forth and shine it out, each person, one by one until God's light has filled every corner and darkness is banished forever?

(MORE)

ARTHUR (cont'd)
 (Points to a young girl)
 Julia?

JULIA
 By praying?

ARTHUR
 That's one way. But is that
 enough? A prayer is a promise you
 make to God to be good. To do his
 work. So is it enough to say a
 prayer one moment and then go out
 and lie and cheat the next?

CLOSE UP. FLAMES IN A WOOD FIRE

ALL STUDENTS (V.O.)
 No.

7 EXT. A FIELD - DUSK

7

The old man has started taking pages out of the Bible and
 is burning them in the fire one by one. The sound of the
 crackling flames builds.

ANDREW (V.O.)
 You shouldn't lie.

ARTHUR (V.O.)
 But why not?

ANDREW (V.O.)
 Lies hurt everyone. If you say
 you're going to do something, you
 should do it.

ARTHUR (V.O.)
 Yes! Very good! But what if the
 promise is hard to keep.

ANDREW (V.O.)
 If it doesn't hurt anyone, you
 should still keep it.

ARTHUR (V.O.)
 That's the easy way out. Is a
 promise only good if it's easy?
 Sometimes people get hurt for a
 greater good.

JULIA (V.O.)
 But what if you don't know?

8 INT. A CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

8

Arthur turns and looks hard at Julia.

ARTHUR

What?

JULIA

What if you don't know for sure
that you're hurting someone for a
greater good? What if you make a
mistake?

DISSOLVE TO:

9 INT. A CLASSROOM - LATER

9

Arthur sits alone in the classroom with a note. He is
dressed in the graduation gowns of a priest. A great bustle
can be heard outside the door. A man, JOHN, also dressed to
graduate, pokes his head in the room.

JOHN

Come on Arthur. You'll be late
for the ceremony.

ARTHUR

Be right there.

Arthur opens the note.

ELIANNE (V.O.)

Your God is a harsh thing of
light and dark and you are
blinded by the glare. God is
nothing if not love and there is
so much love between us.

10 INT. A BEDROOM - DAY

10

Elianne is getting ready to leave the room. Two packed bags
are on the bed. She is not dressed in graduation gowns. She
is leaving the seminary.

ELIANNE (V.O.)

You found yourself in God and I
found myself in you. You say you
are nothing without your oath and
I know that I'm nothing without
you.

11 INT. A CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS 11

Arthur reads the note, looking more and more troubled.

ELIANNE (V.O.)

I cannot stop you from leaving from me and I know my soul will never leave yours, but it is more than I can bear to see you and not touch you, not have you with me. Above all I cannot cause you pain, and by being near you I'm hurting you. So I must go. You have already suffered so much, I will not add to it.

Arthur looks up from the note. He panics and runs out of the classroom. He speeds up stairways and down an empty hallway and bursts into Elianne's bedroom.

12 INT. A BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS 12

The room is empty. Elianne has left. He sits heavily on the bed.

ELIANNE (V.O.)

Know that you are always in my heart. I pray you keep me in yours.

Arthur notices a Bible open on the bed. A passage has been highlighted. It is from The Book Of Ruth.

CLOSE UP. THE PASSAGE IN THE BIBLE

"Whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God..."

Arthur's face fills with cold anger. He withdraws and then suddenly flings the Bible off the bed. He stands up and staggers out of the room.

13 EXT. A FIELD - DUSK 13

The old man is sitting, staring at the Bible, pages torn out. The passage in front of him is The Book Of Ruth. He throws the whole Bible into the fire. The flames shoot up and reflect in his eyes, hard and unrelenting in their gaze.

The light has almost gone out of the sky. He is utterly alone.

An old woman's voice breaks his silence.

ELIANNE (O.S.)

Arthur?

Arthur looks up and sees standing over him, an old woman, Elianne, now also in her eighties.

ELIANNE

The boys saw you out here and got worried. What are you doing?

Arthur lets out a gruff smile.

ARTHUR

Just making "The Word" a reality. The Bible says it's the light of the world and I just proved it.

ELIANNE

Well stop it! You'll catch your death of cold. Come inside right now!

ARTHUR

Alright, alright.

He gets up grinning. They walk away from the fire.

ELIANNE

I can't believe after all these years you're still angry at the Bible. It led you to me you know.

ARTHUR

It almost led me to the biggest mistake of my life.

ELIANNE

Strange man. First you almost leave me for God, then you spend the rest of your life mad at him. Whatever will he say when he meets you?

LONG SHOT. ARTHUR AND ELIANNE START TO BECOME TWO SHRINKING BLACK SHAPES ON THE FIELD.

ARTHUR

He'll probably ask "What are you doing here? I thought you'd be in the other place! Oh, and why did you burn my book?"

ELIANNE

Oh he wouldn't say that and
anyway, God didn't write the
Bible, a bunch of men did.

ARTHUR

All these years and you still
have an answer for everything.

ELIANNE

All these years and you're still
asking stupid questions. Now come
on, supper's ready.

FADE OUT.