

“THE BOOK OF MURRAY”

Original Screenplay by Chris Shugart

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FADE IN

INT - CLOSE UP OF LATE RENAISSANCE PAINTING.

A couple of reverent faces fill the frame. A TRAVELLING SHOT of the painting shows more faces parade by.

The camera ZOOMS OUT to reveal more of the painting. It's an unmistakable rendering of the Twelve Apostles pictured in an important religious scene.

The camera ZOOMS OUT more to reveal that the painting is a large mural on the wall of a large hallway. On top of the mural is a sign that reads "YALE UNIVERSITY - SCHOOL OF DIVINITY."

PROFESSOR DAVID, a serious looking crusty sixty-year-old professor enters from the far end of hall. He's walking with a purposeful pace, and carries a large briefcase in one hand, and a stack of folders, books and assorted papers in the other.

Once he fills the frame, we follow him down the hall.

He stops at a door. The sign next to the door reads "RESEARCH LIBRARY." He unlocks it, and enters.

INT - A LARGE OFFICE

As Professor David enters, he turns on a switch, illuminating the entire office. It's filled with bookcases, filing cabinets, and assorted academic materials. As he goes through his books and papers, there's a SOFT KNOCK at the door.

The door opens slowly and ANDREW, a young and earnest student, enters cautiously.

ANDREW

Professor David?

PROFESSOR DAVID

Yes?

Andrew steps in all the way and the door closes behind him.

ANDREW

Professor Louden said I'd find you here.

Professor David says nothing, creating an uncomfortable silence. Andrew feels compelled to say or do something, so he holds out his hand.

ANDREW

I'm Andrew Stevens. I'm a divinity grad student.

Professor David shakes hands with Andrew. He appears neither impressed nor interested.

PROFESSOR DAVID

What can I do for you?

Andrew tries to loosen up. He forces a smile.

ANDREW

I'm doing some research on the—uh—Catskill Scrolls. I read your paper. I was hoping I could get more information.

PROFESSOR DAVID

The Catskill Scrolls? That was thirty years ago. Never amounted to anything.

ANDREW

I know. But I'd like to learn more about Murray.

The name "Murray" ignites a small spark in Professor David.

PROFESSOR DAVID

Murray is it? You trying to start some kind of Da Vinci cult or something?

ANDREW

No. It's just that I've been curious about your translations. I know about the Archeology

Department's report on your research. I was hoping to get a chance to study it.

PROFESSOR DAVID

You're wasting your time, but come on.

Professor David leads Andrew to a far corner of the office. The two stop at a small desk in the corner. Next to the desk is a file cabinet, and a microfilm projector on a table. Professor David opens a file drawer and rummages through it.

PROFESSOR DAVID

It's all here. All worthless.

Professor David pulls out a file folder and hands it to Andrew and continues to rummage.

PROFESSOR DAVID

That's an outline and an index to the whole project.

Andrew sits down at the desk and starts leafing through the file. Professor David opens another file drawer and starts going through it.

PROFESSOR DAVID

(mumbling to himself)

Two years of dedicated research. And now a student research paper.

Professor David pulls out six small boxes. He puts them on the desk.

PROFESSOR DAVID

A quaint historical curiosity they called it. Here's the old microfilm rolls. It's got all the original manuscripts. Do you read ancient Greek? This drawer has all of my translations. The other drawer has all my archeological and historical notes. That's it.

Andrew looks back down at the contents of the file and pulls out a page.

ANDREW

What's this?

PROFESSOR DAVID

Oh. That's a list of maps. Come over here.

They walk over to another part of the office.

PROFESSOR DAVID

I thought I was on my way to a great archeological discovery.

He unrolls a map and points.

PROFESSOR DAVID

This is the discovery site in Cairo New York where the scrolls were discovered in 1966. Found in an abandoned basement nearby the Catskill Forest Preserve.

ANDREW

Smuggled out of Europe in the 18th century. That's how they got here.

PROFESSOR DAVID

That's right. You have read my work.

Professor David unrolls another map. It's a map of Europe and the surrounding Mediterranean area. It's marked with red circles and green lines that trace paths across the various regions.

PROFESSOR DAVID

The scrolls were probably found here in Asia Minor and brought to Europe during one of the Crusades.

ANDREW

What are those red circles?

PROFESSOR DAVID

There were five identical sets of scrolls produced—corresponding with the churches in Alexandria, Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, and Corinth. One of those copies somehow ended up here in Caesaria, one of the principal seaports on the Mediterranean.

MEDIUM CLOSE UP of Professor David. He now has a look of zealous determination.

PROFESSOR DAVID

I was convinced that the scrolls were brought to Caesaria for one purpose only. To transport them elsewhere to avoid confiscation and destruction.

The camera slowly ZOOMS IN to a FULL CLOSE UP.

PROFESSOR DAVID

These are the scrolls, discovered in Cairo New York decades ago—the very scrolls smuggled out of Caesaria two thousand years before that—the only surviving manuscripts that tell us the entire story of Murray—

(dramatic pause)

—the Thirteenth Apostle!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - AFFLUENT JEWISH HOUSEHOLD - DAY

We see a typical home, like any of the ancient Middle East. There are a few signs of affluence that suggest the inhabitants are not mere commoners. MOTHER, a middle-aged and slightly plump is preparing a meal. MURRAY enters. He's a short, stout young man who carries himself with confidence.

MURRAY

Hello, Mother.

MOTHER

You're home early.

MURRAY

No lecture today.

MOTHER

How is school going?

MURRAY

(shaking his head)

Ehh.

MOTHER

I know you've been having a difficult time. But you know how important this is to your father and I.

MURRAY

I just think I'd be better off doing something else. I don't mind Greek philosophy and literature. But I've never gotten along with the Elders in the synagogue. They're too—

(struggling for the right word)

—traditional.

MOTHER

What's that supposed to mean?

MURRAY

The world is changing. The Elders refuse to see it.

MOTHER

It's those Pharisean friends of yours. They're a bad influence.

MURRAY

What do you have against them?

MOTHER

Pharisees, Saducees, it's an old rivalry. You're too young to understand.

MURRAY

Well they're my friends and I'm meeting them at the lyceum. I'll try not to be late for dinner.

He exits out the door.

EXT - OUTSIDE OF THE LYCEUM - DAY

APOLLOS and PHILO, two young distinguished men are standing outside, having a conversation. Murray walks up to them and interrupts.

MURRAY

Good afternoon, gentlemen.

APOLLOS

Murray! You made it.

MURRAY

Of course.

PHILO

Did you sneak out of class again?

MURRAY

Don't tell my mother.

The three students enter the lyceum.

INT - LYCEUM

The Lyceum is a small semi-circular auditorium with seats that rise towards the back. There are several dozen students seated. At the front of the auditorium is a grim looking LECTURER speaking. Murray and his two friends are seated in the back.

PHILO

(half-whisper to the others)

That's Flatus Pompeius. He's lectured in Athens.

APOLLOS

I'll bet he's smart.

PHILO

I've heard he's very wise.

MURRAY

(not so softly)

A philosopher's wisdom can be measured by the size of his salary. And of course his intellect is well known because he's always reminding you of it.

Philo gives Murray a look of disapproval. Murray takes a moment to listen to the lecturer.

LECTURER

Truth is the ultimate reality. It is this ultimate reality that we have pursued through the limitations of our own faculties of the senses...

MURRAY

Truth, reality, the faculties of the senses?
Sometimes I wonder what these philosophers really know.

PHILO

How are you going to learn anything if you keep talking?

MURRAY

This isn't learning. It's depressing. Here, I'll show you something.

Murray puts his hand under his garment and pumps his other arm which produces that juvenile and classic farting noise.

MURRAY

There. An acquired skill. Now that's education.

The Lecturer looks up from his book in Murray's general direction.

LECTURER

Did somebody have a question?

MURRAY

(stands up)

What does this have to do with anything?

LECTURER

The pursuit of truth has worth beyond what we merely see or hold in our hands.

MURRAY

Just once I'd like to see some truth that I could hold in my hands. Then I could take it and walk out of here.

He starts to walk out of the auditorium. He stops and turns around to face the Lecturer.

MURRAY

All we ever do is search for the truth. I'm tired of looking. If you ever find it, let me know.

Murray leaves the auditorium.

CROSSFADE:

INT - MURRAY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Murray is supervising two cooks who are putting food in containers. A DELIVERY BOY walks in.

MURRAY

Take this to Rabbi Silas' house. The feast is supposed to begin in an hour. When you get back I'll have the publicans' banquet ready. Go. Those tax collectors don't like to be kept waiting.

The delivery boy nods and takes the containers outside. Murray's father enters. He's scholarly, but in a pleasant way.

FATHER

So how is business?

MURRAY

It's good. I'm enjoying my work.

FATHER

Well, it's a living I guess. Have you considered returning to school sometime?

MURRAY

I'm not fit to be a rabbi. I like it here, in the real world.

FATHER

Ah, the real world. Yes.

MURRAY

Really. Alexandria is full of people with new and interesting ideas.

FATHER

A lot of foolish ideas. Don't forget who you are.

MURRAY

What do you mean?

FATHER

You're a Saducean Jew. A successful and respected citizen. You have an opportunity to do something important for your own kind.

MURRAY

You know, when I'm serving customers, they seem like they're my kind. Will God strike me down, for treating the gentiles with ordinary courtesy? Will God prevent me from living an honest life of my own choosing?

FATHER

(sighs, and pats Murray on the shoulder)

You still have a fine skill for rhetoric. Your education hasn't been a total loss.

Father points a finger at Murray in a paternal fashion.

FATHER

I expect to see you in the synagogue next Saturday.

MURRAY

I won't forget.

Father puts his hands on his hips and surveys the entire kitchen.

FATHER

So my son's going to be a big successful caterer. I suppose there are worse things.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - A LARGE BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

There's a large table in the center, lavishly covered with all kinds of food and drink.

There are about two dozen people seated, and Murray is standing at the head.

Murray gets everyone's attention by banging a spoon on a metal goblet. The talking around the table grows quiet.

MURRAY

Good evening Romans, Egyptians, and those who may not be sure. It's a pleasure and an honor to be the host for this Festival of Isis.

As you probably know, Isis used to be an Egyptian god.

(points to figure on the wall)

Somewhere along the way, the Romans decided Isis could be one their gods too. They've got hundreds already, you know, so there's plenty to go around. For some reason they keep recruiting more. I don't know why.

Soft chuckling is heard around the table

MURRAY

I mean, what's wrong with the old ones? Aren't they performing up to expectations?

Some laughter around the table.

MURRAY

Now, I'm Jewish, and we only have one god. That's it. I'm thinking the Romans have a few gods to spare. So I'm asking if maybe I could borrow a couple, like for a weekend sometime.

Loud laughter and applause.

MURRAY

I want to thank you all for allowing me to provide you with this banquet. When you're planning your next affair, remember Murray the Caterer.

More applause. A few of the guests get up, shake hands and say their good-byes. Several guests walk toward Murray at the end of the table.

EGYPTIAN GUEST

Wonderful dinner.

MURRAY

How was the gefilte fish?

EGYPTIAN GUEST

Excellent, excellent.

MURRAY

Splendid. Good night.

ROMAN GUEST

A memorable banquet. Delicious food. And you, a speaker so full of wit. I don't know which was more spicy.

MURRAY

Thank you. I'm glad you enjoyed it. Good night.

EXT - BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

A ZEALOT LEADER and ZEALOT SYMPATHIZER are outside, across the street, observing what's been going on in the banquet hall. Their manner and dark dress suggests clandestine activity.

ZEALOT LEADER

He's in there.

ZEALOT SYMPATHIZER

It's true what they say. He has a way with people.
Do you think he can help us?

ZEALOT LEADER

We'll see.

CROSSFADE:

INT - MURRAY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Murray is cleaning. The two Zealots enter.

MURRAY

May I help you?

ZEALOT LEADER

We're members of the Zealot Party of Alexandria. I recall you attended our last meeting. You know about our campaign to oppose Roman rule?

MURRAY

Yes. Quite an ambitious plan. Foolish, but ambitious.

ZEALOT SYMPATHIZER

We know that you're against Romans hiring our people to collect taxes. We oppose that too. Help us put an end to it.

ZEALOT LEADER

The Jewish establishment respects you. You have influence with the political and religious leaders of the city. Your support would mean a great deal.

MURRAY

Now just a minute. I dislike having to pay taxes as much as the next fellow. But what you're proposing is crazy. Taking on the Roman Empire!

Murray shows the two Zealots the door.

MURRAY

Please excuse me. I have a catering business to run.

ZEALOT LEADER

I'm sorry you feel this way. I promise you, a change is going to come. Whether you're part of it or not.

The Zealots exit. Murray returns to his cleaning

MURRAY

You attend one meeting and all of a sudden they think you're a charter member.

INTERIOR - CHAMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF ELDERS.

Seven elderly men are seated at a table. Murray enters.

CHIEF ELDER

Come in Murray, sit down.

Murray takes a seat, facing the seven Elders.

CHIEF ELDER

We've received some disturbing reports.

MURRAY

Reports? What Reports?

SADUCEAN PRIEST

We understand you've been collaborating with the Zealots.

MURRAY

What? I attended one meeting. Two of them came to see me. I threw them out.

CHIEF ELDER

They're common criminals. We're concerned that this sort of—contact—will influence others. We have too much dissent within our ranks as it is.

MURRAY

Politics doesn't concern me much, Roman or Jewish. If I've upset anyone, I'm sorry.

CHIEF ELDER

There's more. We're aware of your associations with the pagans and unfaithful of the city.

MURRAY

You mean atheists, Gnostics and gentiles don't you? All customers of mine.

CHIEF ELDER

Do you deny that you have frequently attended their festivals?

MURRAY

Why would I deny it? I cater those events. They love my gefilte fish.

SADUCEAN PRIEST

We're concerned that your—shall we say—unorthodox affiliations—might reflect unfavorably on our Jewish communities.

MURRAY

What's going on here? I get along with everybody. Jews, Greeks, Romans, Egyptians. Everyone.

CHIEF ELDER

You must understand, the Jews represent many factions. It's a fragile alliance. We need to strengthen those bonds, not weaken them.

Murray stands up.

MURRAY

I've broken no laws. I run an honest business. I serve the entire public. I turn no one away. If that's what you're accusing me of—

CHIEF ELDER

I don't think you fully grasp the situation. There's much more at stake here than your catering business.

SADUCEAN PRIEST

We must build Jewish solidarity while maintaining peace with the Roman Empire. A complicated task.

CHIEF ELDER

I suggest you temper your activities according to accepted Jewish customs.

Exasperated, Murray can't think of anything more to say. He leaves.

CROSSFADE:

EXTERIOR - A STREET IN ALEXANDRIA - DAY

Murray is walking down the street. Apollos runs up from behind.

APOLLOS

Murray!

Murray stops and waits for Apollos to catch up. Apollos takes a moment to catch his breath.

APOLLOS

I've got news! You've been officially censured by the Council of Elders. Something about undermining Jewish policy.

MURRAY

Can't say I haven't seen this coming.

APOLLOS

What's it about?

MURRAY

They don't approve of the company I keep. They're not Jewish enough.

APOLLOS

What?

MURRAY

I better go. I've got some things to figure out.

APOLLOS

What's happening?

MURRAY

The end of my catering business, that's what. When word of my censure gets out, the Saducees will begin to stay away. Then the Pharisees will be suspicious. They won't want to have anything to do with me. Pretty soon, all of Alexandria will think something's wrong. Eventually everyone will stay away.

APOLLOS

What are you going to do?

MURRAY

I don't know yet.

INT - MURRAY'S KITCHEN

Murray is sitting at his table, staring aimlessly into space. Philo enters. Murray is apathetic and listless and doesn't look up.

PHILO

Well, you've done it now. Defying the Council of Elders wasn't very smart. I can't say that I'm surprised. I knew something like this would happen.

MURRAY

Thank you. That's very encouraging.

PHILO

I warned you plenty of times. Always having to do things your own way—it was going to get you into trouble sooner or later.

MURRAY

Well, you were right. They may as well have banished me from the city.

PHILO

What are you going to do?

MURRAY

Work for my uncle. Go back to school. I don't know.

Philo exits. Murray resumes his blank stare.

MURRAY

Work for my uncle? Go back to school?

(looking upward)

Are you paying attention to this Lord? Is this what my fate has come to?

A few moments pass, and then the room starts to glow. Murray stands up and looks around in confusion and astonishment. He considers running, but isn't sure which way.

The angel RAPHAEL appears. He's translucent and wears a shimmering and flowing gown that seems to emit light. He holds a pilgrim's staff in his right hand. His voice is pleasant and soothing in spite of his awesome appearance.

RAPHAEL

Behold, I am God's healer, the Archangel Raphael. I stand before you on behalf of the heavens above. You have been chosen to bear witness to a great truth that you alone shall receive. Do not be afraid, but rejoice. You are before the audience of the Kingdom of God. And I present to you the nine choirs of angels who will sing you praise. And I bring you joyous news of the—

GOD (O.S)

Get to the point already.

RAPHAEL

I thought you liked the dramatic entrance.

GOD (O.S)

You call that stale, overworked routine a dramatic entrance? That shtick went out with the parting of the Red Sea.

Raphael's reaction is indignant. Resentfully, he resumes his dialogue with Murray.

RAPHAEL

Mr. Know-It-All. Has an answer for everything. All right. I now present to you—well you know.

Raphael disappears, leaving Murray standing in his kitchen in a state of disbelief. The room is still glowing slightly.

GOD (O.S.)

Sorry about those cheap theatrics. It's hard to resist going for the big production. I used to do it all the time.

There are sounds of laughter O.S. Murray notices the laughter which makes him even more confused.

MURRAY

Do I hear laughing?

GOD (O.S.)

You think I can't have a good laugh once in awhile?
I created humor. I created everything, remember?
And know this, Murray. MY HUMOR IS AS
POWERFUL AS MY WRATH!

The heavens flash and rumble. God lets out a thunderous laugh. Murray falls to his knees and clasps his hands.

MURRAY

Lord, have mercy on me. I'm just a Jewish caterer.

GOD (O.S)

Relax, Murray. I'm here because I need your help.

Murray stands up.

MURRAY

Me?

GOD (O.S.)

I've chosen you to witness something that no other mortal has ever heard.

MURRAY

Why me?

GOD (O.S.)

Murray, you have a unique quality. A sense of humor that is rarely seen in this world. Take Moses, for instance. He was never the funny type. Took everything so seriously. But give him a short list of instructions and he was the best.

For you, I bring a message of—I guess you might call it—divine humor.

MURRAY

You mean, like a joke?

The room gets brighter and rays of light emanate in all directions. Murray's eyes close and his expression turns to serenity. He smiles and then chuckles. The chuckle turns to enthusiastic laughter.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT- PROFESSOR DAVID'S OFFICE

ANDREW

Professor, you called Murray's vision the
"Revelation of the Divine Joke."

Professor David goes to the chalkboard.

PROFESSOR DAVID

(writing the word in chalk)

There was some debate about my translation. But
the texts consistently used the word GELOION, the
Greek word for joke.

ANDREW

But it does seem out of place in the context of
religious writing.

PROFESSOR DAVID

Perhaps. But not unprecedented. Don't forget that
scholars have long acknowledged a few examples of
humor in the New Testament.

ANDREW

Yes, but "joke?"

PROFESSOR DAVID

(continuing to write)

Some of my colleagues were uncomfortable with
that. Some thought that maybe GELOS was what
was intended. It means *laugh*.

In any case, I've maintained that within the context
of the Catskill Scrolls, the meaning is clear. Joke.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT- MURRAY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Murray is slumped over at his table. He looks asleep. He begins to stir, and slowly raises his head and shakes off his grogginess. He looks around the room. All has returned to normal. He stands up and recalls what has occurred and smiles.

MURRAY

Well what do you know about that? God talked to me. He actually talked to me! It was like a—divine—joke!

He starts to pace around the room in nervous excitement.

MURRAY

Something very important has happened here. I feel like I should be doing something miraculous. I mean, if God talks to you, you don't just say "thank you very much, it was nice chatting with you."

He stops and frowns. He's thinking hard. Suddenly, Murray brightens.

MURRAY

When I was a child I remember hearing a legend about three Persian magicians. They witnessed some sort of marvelous and divine event. Something happened in a Judean town called Bethlehem. That's just outside of Jerusalem. Jerusalem. I'll go to Jerusalem!

DISSOLVE TO:

DEFINING SHOTS of Jerusalem, 26 A.D.

EXT - A JERUSALEM STREET - DAY

Murray is walking down the street. He's carrying a wooden crate under his arm. He looks around and finds an area where people have gathered. He puts the crate down and stands on it.

MURRAY

People. Listen to me. I have good news for you.
God has spoken to me and His words have made me
laugh.

A crowd gathers around Murray, curious about what he has to say.

CRAFTSMAN

God made you laugh?

SERVANT WOMAN

I've never heard such a silly thing. God isn't funny.

MURRAY

I heard Him. He told me a joke.

There's a buzz among the crowd as they exchange remarks about this new visitor.
Realizing that Murray is just another religious nut, the crowd disperses, leaving Murray
alone, wondering what went wrong.

MURRAY

Wait! It was funny!

Murray looks around undaunted by the crowd's negative reaction. He shrugs and moves
on down the street.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - DAY - A KITCHEN

Murray is setting up his newly established catering business. He hangs a tapestry on a
wall, and stands back to survey his work.

MURRAY

Ah! Perfect! Business will be booming in no time.

Murray reaches for a satchel and slings it over his shoulder. He heads for the door and exits.

EXT - DAY - THE TOWN SQUARE

An assortment of merchants and traders are conducting their business. Murray is standing on a wooden structure, slightly above the crowd. His satchel is strapped on his shoulder.

MURRAY

How well do you know the Psalms? Correctly recite a line and win a prize.

LAUNDRY WOMAN

I win a prize if I can recite a Psalm?

MURRAY

That's right. Go ahead and try. Nothing to lose.

LAUNDRY WOMAN

All right, here's one. "Give thanks to the Lord on the harp; with the ten-stringed lyre chant his praises."

MURRAY

Oh, yes, that's a good one. One of my favorites. Here you go.

He takes something out of his satchel. He hands the laundry woman an onion. She takes it and looks at it for a moment. Saying nothing, she turns around and walks away, still looking at the onion.

MURRAY

Who else can recite a Psalm? Win a prize.

MERCHANT

I know one. "Save me, O God, for the waters threaten my life; I am sunk in the abysmal swamp where there is no foothold."

MURRAY

A little depressing, but completely correct.

Reaching into his satchel, he hands the Merchant a carrot. Taking the carrot, he looks at it for a moment, then looks at Murray, disappointed.

MERCHANT

A carrot?

MURRAY

Go on, take it. It's good for you.

(he waves away the citizen)

Who wants to try next?

STONECUTTER

I've got one. "Ill-gotten treasures profit nothing, but virtue saves from death."

MURRAY

Oh, I'm sorry. That's not correct. That's a Proverb, not a Psalm. Go ahead, try again.

STONECUTTER

What?

MURRAY

That was from the *Proverbs of Solomon*. Verse number two. Try another one.

STONECUTTER

I tell you that was a Psalm.

MURRAY

I know the difference between a Psalm and a Proverb. I was almost a rabbi, you know.

The Stonecutter becomes threatening as he approaches Murray.

STONECUTTER

I say it's a Psalm!

(making a fist close to Murray's nose)

MURRAY

Now, now. No need to get worked up. This is just an informal little contest.

(handing the citizen a dried fish)

Here you go. No hard feelings?

The Stonecutter looks at the fish. Disgruntled, he walks away.

Meanwhile, AKIVA, the temple scribe, has been observing the scene from a distance. He looks angry and concerned as he watches the spectacle. He turns and walks away.

INT - THE TEMPLE

Akiva is standing in a hall with SHAMMAI, a temple Elder.

SHAMMAI

Creating a disturbance? What's he doing?

Akiva struggles with his report, suddenly realizing his account is not going to sound very convincing.

AKIVA

He's handing out vegetables to people in the street.

SHAMMAI

Handing out vegetables? And?

AKIVA

I know it sounds ridiculous. You should have been there. The man has a way with crowds. He stirs them in a way that's hard to describe.

SHAMMAI

Who is this man?

AKIVA

His name is Murray. He speaks like a prophet, but runs a catering business.

SHAMMAI

A prophet and a caterer? Unusual. Perhaps I ought to have a look.

EXT - A STREET IN JERUSALEM - DAY

A crowd is gathered near a building. In the center of the crowd we find Murray and two soldiers on their knees playing a Roman board game. Murray makes the winning move. Pleased with the result, he shouts triumphantly. The crowd cheers.

MURRAY

Two out of three?

Murray holds his hand out toward the soldiers. Begrudgingly, the two soldiers each hand him a silver coin. Murray takes the coins and puts them in a pouch. He stands up and exhorts the crowd.

MURRAY

I accept this money, not as ill-gotten cash, but as a fair refund of tax overpaid!

The crowd laughs and cheers. The two soldiers stand up. They're annoyed, but choosing not to cause an incident, they exit. As the crowd breaks up, Shammai and Akiva enter, and approach Murray.

SHAMMAI

You're Murray?

MURRAY

Yes.

SHAMMAI

We need a word with you.

The three of them walk over to a secluded corner of the street.

SHAMMAI

Explain this.

MURRAY

Just having a little fun.

SHAMMAI

I understand that you're a caterer.

MURRAY

Yes. Perhaps you've heard of my gefilte fish.

SHAMMAI

I'll warn you once. Neither the High Priest nor any of the Elders tolerate unusual public spectacles.

MURRAY

Of course. But I did come to Jerusalem hoping to spread the Word of God. Maybe you can help me get started.

SHAMMAI

Mmm, yes. Jerusalem is overflowing with rabble-rousers and self-proclaimed prophets. You can't cross a street without bumping into a lunatic who demands that you reform your life, or some other nonsense.

MURRAY

Well, I've experienced the most amazing thing. I saw humor in Heaven. Direct from the Lord Himself. It was a Divine Joke.

AKIVA

This man is babbling nonsense.

SHAMMAI

Caution, caterer, funny prophet, or whatever you are. The High Council has no patience with troublemakers.

EXT - A CITY STREET IN ANCIENT JERUSALEM

Murray is walking briskly down the street. He's looking at the ground, not watching where he's going.

INTO VIEW comes JOHN THE BAPTIZER, a man with energy and zeal, walking on a cross street.

The two are about to collide, when John stops in front of Murray, Murray tries to stop suddenly to avoid the collision. Murray is momentarily startled as he looks up to see John standing in front of him.

MURRAY

Oops! Pardon me.

JOHN

Reform your life! The age of God is at hand!

MURRAY

You don't say. And you are. . .?

JOHN

I am a voice in the desert crying out!

MURRAY

Yes, I see. What's your name?

JOHN

I am John the Baptizer.

The two begin walking together. Murray is following John.

MURRAY

I'd love to hear more about this kingdom of God.
I'm new at preaching and I could probably use some help.

John appears impatient, wanting to leave.

JOHN

Some other time perhaps.

MURRAY

God talked to me once, you know.

JOHN

I must be going.

MURRAY

Where are you going in such a hurry?

JOHN

To the Jordan River. I baptize those who have come to repent their sins.

The two have come to the edge of the city.

MURRAY

Ah yes. John the Baptizer. I see now. Well, maybe we can do lunch later. How about—

JOHN

I must go. I have a ceremony to perform and I don't want to keep the man waiting. Some carpenter from Nazareth.

John leaves the city in haste leaving Murray behind.

CROSSFADE:

EXT - DAY - A STREET

Murray is walking quickly down the street. He stops as he reaches John.

MURRAY

John! I've been looking for you.

JOHN

And now you have found me.

MURRAY

I've been thinking about this baptism thing, and it gave me an idea. I'd like to help.

JOHN

What is it that you do?

MURRAY

Just give me the time and the place and leave the rest to me.

EXT - A STREET - DAY

Murray is walking down the street. He is shouting to all that pass by.

MURRAY

Big banquet this Saturday afternoon! Down at the Jordan River! Enjoy good food, good company and meet John the Baptizer, in person!

He continues to repeat his announcement as he travels through the streets. He comes across Shammai.

MURRAY

Hello!

SHAMMAI

What is this?

MURRAY

Just a little catering affair I'm putting on down at the Jordan River. You're welcome to attend. This Saturday. Bring some friends.

Shammai, a little befuddled, chooses not to pursue his questioning. Murray resumes his promotion further down the street.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - THE BANKS OF THE JORDAN RIVER - DAY

A lavish banquet is laid out along the bank. There are tables, tents, a grand assortment of decorations, and lots of food. People are milling around, conversing eating, etc. The atmosphere is festive.

John is standing with Murray, surveying the elaborate surroundings.

JOHN

I don't know about this. It all seems so improper. So brazen.

MURRAY

A little festivity is nothing to be ashamed of.

JOHN

You've turned my preaching into a public spectacle.

MURRAY

Everybody will love it. Don't worry.

John, about to start his sermon, goes over to a rock and climbs on top. Now standing several feet above the crowd, he strikes a dramatic pose, getting their attention.

JOHN

Repent and reform your lives!

Akiva, Shammai and other Council members approach the banquet area. As they get nearer, John sees and recognizes them.

JOHN

You! You brood of vipers! What is your purpose here?

SHAMMAI

Murray the Caterer invited us.

John looks over at Murray with a concerned expression. Murray nods his head confirming what Shammai has said.

JOHN

Very well, then.

John motions them to proceed. Then he climbs down from the rock to talk to Murray in a hushed voice.

JOHN

I know these council members. They are not Godly men.

MURRAY

So make them Godly. Isn't that what you do?

The expectant crowd is waiting for John to begin his sermon. Murray is aware that the interruption has created an awkward situation.

MURRAY

(announcing to the crowd)

All right! Let's eat!

The crowd disperses slightly and begins to mill about.

JOHN

They have no intention of repenting. Look at them. They're going over to sit at my table. Just to spite me.

MURRAY

Go ahead and sit down with them. I think I can take care of this. What are you eating today?

JOHN

The usual. Locusts and honey.

MURRAY

That's what I thought.

John goes over to the main table, sits down and prepares to eat. Murray goes over to the Pharisees who are standing at the table.

MURRAY

Be seated, please. We're serving up John's favorite dish. Locusts with honey.

The Pharisees look over at John pouring honey on a plate of locusts. Their eyes widen in surprise and revulsion.

AKIVA

Perhaps it would be better if we were seated elsewhere?

MURRAY

As you wish. You can sit over there. But you'll have to settle for baked fish.

The Pharisees hurry over to the other table.

JOHN

Were you really going to serve them locusts and honey?

MURRAY

Are you kidding? You're the only one that eats that stuff.

CROSSFADE:

INT - HEROD'S PALACE - NIGHT

King HEROD, aloof and aristocratic is seated on his throne. Akiva enters.

AKIVA

Your highness. I have news of John the Baptizer.

HEROD

What happened today?

AKIVA

There was a banquet. Hundreds of people came to see the Baptizer.

HEROD

What happened?

AKIVA

He has unusual eating habits.

HEROD

I'm talking about his followers.

AKIVA

They do seem to be increasing.

HEROD

Yes, that is a bit disturbing.

AKIVA

And he's found a new ally.

HEROD

An ally?

AKIVA

His name is Murray. He's a caterer from Alexandria. I don't trust him.

HEROD

Surely you don't believe Jerusalem is being threatened by—a caterer?

AKIVA

I wouldn't underestimate him, your highness. A skilled caterer wields influence. Moving freely among social and political circles. A good caterer makes friends, not enemies.

HEROD

Yes, a man without any enemies can be dangerous indeed. But what would you suggest? That I arrest him? And for what? Subversive catering?

AKIVA

I'm warning you, that's all.

HEROD

Keep your eye on the caterer. And let me know what the High Council plans to do about this baptizing rabble-rouser.

Akiva exits. Herod looks around searching for someone.

HEROD

Centurion!

A centurion enters.

HEROD

John the Baptizer, you know who he is?

CENTURION

I've seen him.

HEROD

I want him arrested.

INT - THE FORTRESS - DAY

Murray is walking down a hall. He stops at a jail cell and looks inside to see John the Baptizer locked up and in chains.

JOHN

Murray! How did you get in here?

MURRAY

I told the guard I was your lawyer. This isn't right.

JOHN

Whatever is God's will, so shall it be.

Murray pauses thoughtfully for a moment.

MURRAY

I never told you about the time God spoke to me. He made me laugh.

JOHN

He did what?

MURRAY

It's a little hard to explain.

(beat)

Did anything ever make you laugh?

John ponders for a moment, then smiles slightly, perhaps for the first time.

JOHN

It's a little hard to laugh when you're behind bars locked up in chains.

MURRAY

Well said. Anyway, we need to figure out how to get you out of here.

JOHN

Murray, go and announce the coming of the Kingdom of God. You are decent and good. But to be honest, I don't completely understand you.

MURRAY

You're not the first.

EXT - DAY - A STREET

Murray is briskly walking down the street. The scene is identical to when he first met John the Baptist, except now, Murray nearly collides with JESUS.

MURRAY

Oops! Pardon me.

(looks Jesus over)

Say, I haven't seen you around before.

JESUS

I'm Jesus of Nazareth. A carpenter.

MURRAY

Say, you must be the carpenter from Nazareth that John the Baptizer was talking about. What do you know? Pleased to meet you. I'm Murray the Caterer. What brings you to Jerusalem?

JESUS

I've just returned from the desert. Forty days the devil tried to tempt me.

MURRAY

Well, you don't look any worse for wear.

JESUS

He was turned away by the light of truth.

MURRAY

I'd like to hear about that.

Jesus nods agreeably as the two walk down the street.

Jesus and Murray approach an inn. They go inside, where Murray finds them a table and invites Jesus to sit down.

MURRAY

It's wonderful to meet a fellow disciple of John the Baptizer. Such a shame about his arrest, isn't it?

JESUS

His arrest?

MURRAY

Goodness, you don't know?

Jesus looks concerned as he shakes his head, no.

MURRAY

They arrested him yesterday. King Herod doesn't like him for some reason.

JESUS

Then it's time for me to leave Jerusalem. As John has done before me, I will spread the news of the coming Kingdom of God.

MURRAY

That's a great idea. And I know exactly where we can start.

JESUS

We?

MURRAY

You don't mind a little company do you? I have a few business associates in Galilee. They can put us up for a while.

JESUS

All right, Murray. Galilee it is.

EXT - A ROAD IN THE PALESTINIAN WILDERNESS - DAY

LONG SHOT of Murray and Jesus walking on the road. Murray is carrying a satchel, Jesus carries nothing.

MURRAY

So you're a carpenter. Is there any money in that kind of work?

JESUS

It's a living.

MURRAY

What do you build?

JESUS

Nothing special. Tables, chairs, an occasional door. What about you? How's the catering business?

MURRAY

I've done pretty well. You know, I think I'm going to like this preaching business.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - DAY - THE TOWN OF GALILEE

A series of shots show Murray and Jesus walking through the town. Jesus speaks to various people, blessing them as they kneel. In other instances, with a touch of his hand, he heals some who are visibly ailing. A small crowd of people begins to develop. They follow Jesus and Murray as they walk through the town.

MURRAY

Tell me the truth. You're not just a carpenter. Who are you really?

The crowd gets bigger which creates some commotion.

CROWD

He performs miracles!

A great prophet! A saviour!

MURRAY

This way. I know a place that's less conspicuous.

INT - DAY - A HOME IN GALILEE

PETER, middle aged and inelegant, is tidying up. There's a KNOCK at the door and he goes to answer it. He opens the door and sees Murray.

PETER

Murray! What are you doing here?

MURRAY

I'm a man of God now. Hard to believe isn't it?
This is Jesus. He's a man of God too. And a pretty
good one too.

PETER

I guess you'd better come in.

The two enter Peter's house.

MURRAY

Thank you. Jesus, this is Peter, Vendor of Fish. His
dried fish is known as far as Alexandria.

PETER

You have me at a bad time. My mother-in law is
very ill.

Without any prompting, Jesus walks over to the bed and finds the woman in a feeble state. He takes her by the hand. She sits up in bed and looks around, as if waking up from a deep sleep. Peter goes over to the bed and feels her forehead.

PETER

What did you do? The fever is gone!

Peter's Mother-in-law gets up and looks at herself. Not sure what to make of her recovered condition, she cautiously walks around the room. With more confidence that she is okay, she begins tidying, every few moments looking over at Jesus.

JESUS

She'll be all right now.

PETER

This is divine work you have done. Tell me, how I may know this power.

JESUS

Follow me.

MURRAY

(taking Peter aside)

Peter, get hold of yourself. He just cured your mother-in-law. I thought you didn't like her.

PETER

That was a miracle!

MURRAY

I suppose. Questionable, though.

EXT - DAY - THE SHORES OF THE SEA OF GALILEE.

Murray, Jesus and Peter are walking toward the shore where the fishing boats are moored.

MURRAY

Thanks for letting us come along.

They come to a boat. Standing next to it is ANDREW, a young man with a youthful zeal.

MURRAY

This is Peter's brother, Andrew. Where's James and John? Aren't they coming with us?

Andrew points. JAMES and JOHN are coming.

MURRAY

Those are the Zebedee brothers, James and John. Pretty good fishermen. Fine sailors, too.

James and John arrive. The group exchanges greetings, and they all get on board.

MURRAY

Let's cast off. The fish are waiting.

They set sail and the boat heads out on the lake.

DISSOLVE TO:

The boat returns, overflowing with fish. They pull the boat to shore.

ANDREW

I tell you, the prophecy of John the Baptist has been revealed.

JAMES

I've never seen a catch of fish like this.

JOHN

Murray said that Jesus was a man of God. But I think he might be more than that.

PETER

It's like I've been telling you. He's a prophet. And I've seen him perform miracles.

JOHN

Perhaps a prophet as great as Elijah.

Peter gets off the boat to tie it to the dock. There is a distant commotion that can be heard O.S. They all turn to look. They see, a hundred yards away, a crowd of several dozen people approaching the shore.

VARIOUS PEOPLE

(shouting)

There's the man who cures the sick!

That's him!

That's the one who does miracles!

A prophet!

He's not an ordinary man!

MURRAY

(pointing to the bountiful catch)

And no ordinary fisherman either.

(pointing to the crowd)

More like a fisher of men.

John struts confidently over to Jesus, stands next to him, and puts his arm around Jesus' shoulder. With a look of pride, John speaks to the crowd.

JOHN

This is Jesus of Nazareth. I am John, his loyal disciple.

James, Peter, and Andrew approach Jesus, and face the crowd.

JAMES

We're disciples too.

Peter and Andrew nod affirmatively. The crowd goes into an uproar. Several voices can be distinctly heard above the din. PHILIP and SIMON step forward.

PHILIP

We too want to be disciples!

SIMON

Deliver us, master. How may we serve?

The noisy crowd begins to converge toward Jesus and the disciples. Jesus begins to raise his hand as if to speak, but Murray interrupts him.

MURRAY

Let me handle this.

Murray walks toward the crowd and gets their attention. They quiet down.

MURRAY

All right, now. Let me see a show of hands. Who wants to be a disciple?

MATTHEW raises his hand first. The remaining Apostles-to-be raise their hands. The crowd grows louder and is on the verge of becoming unruly again.

MURRAY

All of you that want to be disciples step over here.

He motions away from the shore and walks away from the crowd. The disciple applicants follow.

MURRAY

Now we've got an opening for, I'd say maybe eight more disciples. Meet me at the synagogue tomorrow, and we'll work it all out.

The crowd disperses and Murray returns to his fishing companions.

MURRAY

All taken care of. Do you think twelve will be enough?

EXT - OUTSIDE OF THE SYNAGOGUE - DAY

Jesus stands in front of the eight new disciples that Murray has just chosen. Murray begins to introduce them to Jesus. One by one, they parade by to greet Jesus.

MURRAY

This is Philip, Bartholomew, James, son of Alphaeus, Matthew—

(speaking parenthetically to Jesus)

He's a tax collector. But I think he'll be O.K.

And we have Thaddaeus, Thomas,—

Thomas, you signed on to this. Don't look so skeptical.

Then there's Simon and Judas. They're members of the Zealot party. But don't worry. They've promised me there won't be any trouble.

Jesus addresses the group.

JESUS

Apostles, I greet you. The Kingdom of God welcomes your service.

EXT - THE TOWN OF GALILEE - DAY

Murray is strolling down a street. He's approached by a leper who is visibly ailing.

LEPER

You're the man who knows Jesus!

MURRAY

Yes, what can I do for you?

LEPER

Take me to him, please.

MURRAY

Let me see. I think he can see you at three. Yes, he'll be available then. Meet us at the fountain gate, and we'll take care of you.

LEPER

Thank you, thank you.

The leper exits. A Rabbi enters

RABBI

Murray. Will Jesus be speaking at the temple today?

MURRAY

By all means. I have it all arranged. I'll meet you there later.

INT – THE TEMPLE

The temple is packed. Jesus has just finished his sermon. Murray enters.

MURRAY

After your sermon, you've got a leper to cure at three.

JESUS

I see you've been busy.

MURRAY

I've got an idea. It's awfully crowded in here. There's a small hill just outside of town. It might be perfect for giving a really big sermon. You could stand on top of the hill and hundreds of people could see and hear you.

JESUS

Seems like a good idea.

MURRAY

By the way, I'm going to be catering a big wedding, in Cana tomorrow. I thought you might like to speak. Should be a pretty big affair. You're all invited.

JESUS

Your work is both nimble and enthusiastic. How can we refuse?

INT - A FULL BANQUET HALL - DAY

The wedding feast is in full swing. The guests are eating, drinking and celebrating. Jesus and the disciples are seated together. Murray comes to the table looking a little flustered.

MURRAY

Oh boy, I've got a problem. We're almost out of wine. I didn't bring enough.

JESUS

Maybe I can help you out. Tell the servants to fill the jars with water and then serve them.

MURRAY

That's your solution?

JESUS

Would you have a little faith, just for once?

MURRAY

All right, all right. Shows you how desperate I am.

Murray goes over to the servants and instructs them. They follow his directions and begin pouring.

Murray looks closely and sees that the water has become wine. He gets a goblet to sample the drink and is surprised and impressed. With a look of pleasant satisfaction he walks over to Jesus.

MURRAY

Now that's what I call a miracle. You wouldn't want to do that again would you?

Jesus smiles and shakes his head no.

EXT - GALILEAN COUNTRYSIDE -DAY

Jesus is preaching to a crowd of several hundred people.

Murray and the Apostles are together.

MURRAY

You know, we could turn this into a regular event. And I could serve brunch. We could call it Sermon on the Hill. Catchy, don't you think?

PETER

Have you ever thought Jesus might be—well, more than just a preacher?

MURRAY

What do you mean?

JAMES

He means a great prophet.

JOHN

The Messiah.

Murray is startled by their assertion.

MURRAY

The Messiah? Who, I don't know. That's a bit of a stretch, don't you think?

Jesus enters, his sermon is over.

JESUS

I've dismissed the crowds, but now it's late and they have no food or drink. Murray, did you bring the bread and fish?

MURRAY

I had a bit of a problem. Supplies were short.

JESUS

Did you bring anything?

MURRAY

Well—

Murray produces a small basket and opens it.

MURRAY

Sorry. This is all I could get. Five loaves and a couple of fish.

PETER

Murray!

MURRAY

No one told me I was going to have to feed an entire crowd. It's better than nothing.

MATTHEW

This practically is nothing.

JESUS

Calm down. I probably shouldn't do this, but it looks like I have little choice now.

Jesus lays his hands across the basket.

JESUS

I'm covering for you this time, Murray. Go ahead and serve the crowd.

MURRAY

Hey! This is great!

JESUS

But just this once!

Murray carries the basket through the crowd and hands out the bread and fish. The basket shows absolutely no signs of becoming empty. Murray is thoroughly enjoying the bountiful miracle.

MURRAY

Here you go. Compliments of Jesus and Murray's Amazing Catering. Where the food never runs out.

(talking to himself)

Water into wine. Food for hundreds of people. Messiah? How much convincing does a man need?

EXT - COUNTRYSIDE – DAY

Jesus, Murray and a few of the Apostles are sitting under a tree. Peter joins the group.

PETER

Murray, I have bad news.

MURRAY

What is it?

PETER

John the Baptizer is dead. He was beheaded by King Herod.

MURRAY

How could this happen?

JESUS

He spoke the truth. For that he suffered.

MURRAY

That isn't fair. He was on his way to becoming a great prophet.

JESUS

Though he was sent before me, the Word of God continues.

As Murray ponders, Jesus stands to address the Apostles.

JESUS

I give you power and authority to overcome all demons and to cure diseases. Take no food, money, or extra clothing on your travels, and accept no payment for any services. Go out and proclaim the coming of the Kingdom God.

The Apostles stand, prepared to comply with Jesus' instructions. Murray stands also, but appears dazed and reluctant. The Apostles leave, Murray remains to talk to Jesus.

MURRAY

Do you mean to send me out there too?

JESUS

You say you're a man of God.

MURRAY

Yeah, but no food, money, extra clothing? That seems so severe.

JESUS

Man does not live by bread alone.

MURRAY

Great slogan for a caterer.

JESUS

How do you wish to serve the Lord, Murray. As a caterer? Perhaps your destiny leads to a greater purpose.

MURRAY

That's what I keep telling myself. I like the catering business, but there must be something more I can do.

EXT - SOMEWHERE IN GALILEE - DAY

Murray, carrying a wax tablet and stylus, approaches Peter from behind.

MURRAY

Peter! Just the man I'm looking for. I'm keeping a record of the Apostles work. You know, demons expelled, diseases cured, and so forth.

PETER

What is this?

MURRAY

There's twelve of you running all over Galilee and elsewhere. We have lots of work to do and it needs a little organization.

PETER

Says who?

MURRAY

Well, it was my idea. And Jesus didn't say no.

Peter does not approve, and appears annoyed.

MURRAY

Look, spreading the word of God is a huge undertaking. Why do you think he appointed you an Apostle? Because he knows you're up to the task. But someone needs to keep it all together.

PETER

All right. What do you want?

MURRAY

Just a few figures. How many demons have you expelled this week?

PETER

Three.

MURRAY

(marking on his tablet)

Excellent. And how many have you cured of disease?

PETER

I haven't been keeping count.

MURRAY

About how many.

PETER

Five, six maybe.

MURRAY

That's very good. Keep up the good work. I'll check with you again next week.

EXT - ANOTHER PART OF GALILEE

Murray approaches Matthew.

MURRAY

Matthew. I need to know about your demons expelled this week. And the diseased. How many have you cured?

MATTHEW

As if that's your business.

MURRAY

Come on. I'm just trying to give Jesus a hand.

MATTHEW

So far I've cured a leper, but I haven't come across any demons yet.

MURRAY

Matthew, you're a tax collector. I know what you're capable of if you put your mind to it. Let's see if we can't pick things up a bit by next week.

Matthew scowls at Murray.

MURRAY

Don't look at me like that. Most of the others have been making pretty good progress. Peter is managing well. Andrew has cured nearly a dozen sick people. And John, well, he's been expelling demons left and right, it would make your head spin.

MATTHEW

This is ridiculous!

MURRAY

If the work is important enough to do, it's important enough to do it well. Let's try and pick things up a bit, O.K.?

EXT - THE GALILEAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Jesus is standing, surrounded by several dozen followers, plus the Apostles. Jesus is delivering another sermon.

JESUS

I assure you that only with great difficulty will a rich man enter into the kingdom of God.

The Apostles all turn around to look at Murray.

MURRAY

What?

JESUS

I repeat what I have said: It is easier for a camel to pass through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

The Apostles turn to look at Murray again

MURRAY

What's everyone looking at me for?

JAMES

You're a successful merchant. These words must mean something to you.

MURRAY

So I have a successful catering business. I've made some money. So what?

PETER

Don't you see that you must abandon your earthly possessions to find your rightful place in heaven?

MURRAY

I think I'd rather take my chances with the camel.

Disapproving grumbling can be heard throughout the crowd. Murray looks pleadingly at Jesus.

MURRAY

Is my wealth such a bad thing? I earned it with hard work.

JESUS

You cannot serve both God and money.

MURRAY

What, are God and money natural enemies? I make an honest living. Does the Lord forbid that? I always thought I could do both. Can't I serve God and my customers equally well?

JESUS

Maybe. But heed this warning. One day you will have to choose one over the other.

INT - MARY'S HOUSE IN NAZARETH - DAY

The house is filled with several dozen people. Jesus and the Apostles are seated at a table covered with food. Murray is seated next to Jesus.

JESUS

This is a wonderful surprise. How did you know it was my birthday?

MURRAY

Your mother told me.

Jesus shakes his head and smiles and lets out a slight chuckle.

JESUS

That woman's a saint. If she had her way she'd turn my birthday into a national holiday.

MURRAY

Really? Let me work on that.

ANOTHER END OF THE TABLE

James and John and Matthew are seated next to each other.

MATTHEW

Look at how Murray wines and dines him. Why should he be given such a seat of honor?

JOHN

He's not an Apostle. And an unfit disciple, I say.

JAMES

He runs errands and serves food. While we do the important work.

MATTHEW

Jesus treats him as if he were one of us.

JOHN

Jesus likes Murray. We cannot dispute that.

INT - A SYNAGOGUE - DAY

The Apostles are beginning to perform a religious service. Just before they start, Murray enters.

MATTHEW

Is it proper for Murray to be present during this holy ceremony?

JOHN

He's not one of the chosen.

MURRAY

Did you forget that I was given the revelation of the Divine Joke?

JOHN

One strange and dubious vision doesn't make you a chosen disciple.

JAMES

You're a prosperous merchant. A Sadducee of noble position, born into wealth.

MURRAY

Oh, well I humbly beg your pardon. So I believe that poverty is no virtue and wealth is no crime. God strike me down.

PETER

You've lived most of your life in affluence and comfort.

MATTHEW

While our lives have been humble and simple.

JOHN

And we find your work—well—unorthodox.

MURRAY

What are you trying to say? That I'm different? Is that what I'm being accused of? You don't think I belong here? After all I've done?

Jesus has been a silent observer to the conversation.

MURRAY

Jesus, you've been awfully quiet through all of this. What does it take to become an Apostle around here?

JESUS

All you need to do is ask.

MURRAY

That's it? Why didn't you say so?

JESUS

You never asked before.

MURRAY

Oh. Well I'm asking now. And I want a nice ceremony too.

JESUS

Ask and you shall receive.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT – THE SHORE OF A RIVER - DAY

Jesus is baptizing Murray as the disgruntled Apostles look on. Murray emerges from the water.

MURRAY

This is wonderful. Just like John the Baptizer would have done.

JESUS

Many are called but few are chosen.

PETER

Thirteen Apostles? Twelve seemed like such a good number.

JESUS

Never mind, Peter. We need to prepare for tomorrow. I've decided to return to Jerusalem.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT- PROFESSOR DAVID'S OFFICE

ANDREW

An intriguing idea, Professor. A thirteenth Apostle previously unknown to Biblical writing.

PROFESSOR DAVID

In spite of the controversy, it didn't seem like an unthinkable possibility. Do you know how many books make up the New Testament?

ANDREW

The Gospels, Acts of the Apostles, twenty-one letters, and of course, the Book of Revelation. Twenty-seven in all.

PROFESSOR DAVID

An easy question for a divinity grad student. But do you know how many books have been left out?

ANDREW

You mean the New Testament apocrypha. I've read a couple. How many are there?

PROFESSOR DAVID

I don't know. I've never counted. But they could fill an office library. Many were considered at one time scripture in Christianity's early history.

So who's to say? Debate and research continues.

ANDREW

Where do you think Murray fits into all of this?

PROFESSOR DAVID

He was never part of the conversation.

(shaking his head)

Bible scholars. They rejected my research. Pity. They missed out on one heck of a conversation.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - A COUNTRY ROAD ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF JERUSALEM - DAY

Jesus and his entourage are traveling along the road. Among them are several donkeys packed with supplies. Murray is walking with Jesus.

JESUS

Now, promise me you won't do anything extravagant. It's an important moment, I know. But keep it humble.

MURRAY

The people know who you are. I'm sure there'll be crowds to greet you. We just can't ignore them.

JESUS

All right. Just don't overdo it.

THE MAIN GATE OF JERUSALEM

A crowd lines both sides of the street. The expectant crowd waits for Jesus to pass. Murray is the first to be seen in the oncoming procession.

MURRAY

Come on, folks. Let's make this look good. Some of you can lay your cloaks on the ground. Let's put some palm branches along the road too. That'll look nice.

Members of the crowd follow Murray's instructions. As the street becomes decorated, Jesus and the Apostles enter.

Jesus is on a donkey covered in colorful blankets. The Apostles follow on foot.

The crowd reacts enthusiastically. Murray continues to run ahead of the procession, urging on the crowd with grand gestures.

MURRAY

Let's hear it for Jesus! Hosanna, hosanna!

The crowd picks up the chant, and "hosanna" can be heard all along the procession. Jesus acknowledges the response of the crowd.

JESUS

I knew he would overdo it.

EXT - THE TEMPLE PRECINCTS

Jesus and the Apostles approach. Murray enters from another direction.

MURRAY

You're all set for this afternoon. The Elders said you can speak in the temple. They were against it at first, but I convinced them it'd be all right. The whole town is excited.

INT - HEROD'S PALACE

Herod and Caiaphas are conferring.

HEROD

Has John the Baptizer returned from the dead? Who is this man that excites the crowds?

CAIAPHAS

Jesus of Nazareth. Some call him a prophet even greater than John the Baptizer.

HEROD

You will keep things under control.

CAIAPHAS

Yes, of course.

Caiaphas leaves. Once he is out of sight, Akiva, who has been lurking in the shadows, appears before Herod.

HEROD

You have something to report?

AKIVA

Remember the caterer who used to work for John the Baptizer?

HEROD

Oh yes, Murray. I hear his gefilte fish is very good.

AKIVA

He's working for Jesus of Nazareth. I've warned you about the caterer.

HEROD

And you believe that he's somehow behind all of this unrest?

AKIVA

I wouldn't rule it out.

HEROD

No, you're missing a piece of the puzzle. Caterers don't form conspiracies. They don't plot revolutions.

EXT - THE TEMPLE

Outside of the temple there are booths that surround the area. Merchants are promoting their wares as the crowd gathers. Outside the temple, people are making their way inside. Murray is speaking to the crowd outside.

MURRAY

That's right. Jesus, right here, in person, giving another one of those amazing sermons that have been enlightening people throughout the entire province!

People continue to file into the temple in large numbers. The line into the temple stops. The temple is full and people accumulate outside.

MURRAY

I'm sorry. The temple is filled. We can't let anyone else inside.

People continue to gather. The crowd becomes irate. Two guards post themselves at the entrance, effectively keeping anyone else from entering.

CROWD

Let us in!

We've come to hear Jesus!

MURRAY

Come back tomorrow. I'll try to arrange something.

CROWD

Our King has come to deliver us! We must see him!

The crowd is getting louder and more angry. Caiaphas comes out to find out what the disturbance is all about.

CAIAPHAS

What's going on here?

MURRAY

Jesus attracted quite a crowd. Much larger than I expected.

CAIAPHAS

A crowd? This is a mob! You said there would be no trouble.

The crowd remains unruly.

CROWD

Bring us our savior!

He is the Messiah!

He is our King!

CAIAPHAS

This has gotten out of hand.

MURRAY

Let me try and calm them down.

Murray gets up on the front steps so he can address the whole crowd. He waves his arms to get their attention.

MURRAY

People, please! Just a moment. Just a moment.

The crowd quiets to a low rumble.

MURRAY

Jesus would like speak to each and every one of you. That's why he'll be giving a sermon every day, right here in the temple throughout the Passover Festival.

The crowd cheers. Caiaphas is horrified.

CAIAPHAS

What are you doing? The Council will never approve of this. Look at the crowd. They call him the Messiah. King of the Jews. Your Jesus of Nazareth has become more trouble than John the Baptizer.

MURRAY

Don't you recognize a good thing when you see it? I
can fill your temple every day.

Caiaphas throws up his hands in exasperation.

CAIAPHAS

Lunatics! All of you!

Caiaphas goes back inside.

EXT - A GARDEN JUST OUTSIDE THE WALLS OF THE CITY - DAY

Jesus, the Apostles, and Murray are seated on the ground, under a tree. From a distance, a crowd approaches. Some are limping, some are being carried, others are being dragged on makeshift litters. Others simply appear to have various maladies of some sort or another.

MURRAY

What kind of feeble town is this? I've never seen so
many sick people.

JESUS

The Lord alone looks after people like this.

MURRAY

No one but the Lord would want to.

JESUS

Would you have me turn them away, when you
know I can relieve their suffering?

Jesus turns away from Murray and begins to walk toward the approaching crowd, leaving Murray and the Apostles behind. As Murray watches Jesus greet the crowd, he becomes reflective and pensive. Peter notices Murray's change in mood and walks up to him.

MURRAY

So many miserable people. And all they do is lead miserable lives.

PETER

Do these people not need our help?

John approaches, followed by the other Apostles

MURRAY

Pain and suffering. Is this part of God's plan?

PETER

Who can say?

MURRAY

It doesn't make sense. Nobody chooses to suffer. Well, my mother sometimes, but really. Nobody wants to be unhappy. Yet so many can't avoid it.

JOHN

This is a world where sinners abound and evil often prevails. What would you have us do?

MURRAY

I don't know. But I have to believe there's always something we can do.

As Murray continues to speak, he picks a leaf off of a tree.

MURRAY

John, you should try and laugh once in a while. You might like it. Peter, you need to learn how to smile. It's easier than you think. Believe me, you'll feel better.

Murray has been manipulating the leaf as he's been talking. He's torn and bent it into some crafted form.

MURRAY

The truth is all around us. God has always known what the greatest joy in life is—creation.

Murray presents the Apostles with the leaf he has been crafting.

MURRAY

Every day is another chance to create something new, something different, something better.

Murray holds the leaf up in the air.

MURRAY

And every now and then—

Murray lets the leaf go. It floats aerodynamically to the ground, spinning like a helicopter.

MURRAY

—we need to lighten up.

The Apostles haven't noticed that Jesus has returned. He's been standing out of view observing Murray's speech.

JESUS

Murray—enlightening and amusing, all at the same time.

Jesus pats Murray on the shoulder.

JESUS

Passover will soon be here. Let's have a wonderful feast. It will give us a chance to—lighten up.

INT - THE TEMPLE - DAY

The Sanhedrin is having a conference.

SHAMMAI

It's blasphemy. They're calling him a Messiah.
Worse, they call him a king. This is dangerous.

CAIAPHAS

His numbers increase, and his followers speak of a
new kingdom. The time for action is now. Jesus and
his hysterical followers must be dealt with. If we
don't stop this, the Romans surely will.

AKIVA

What about Murray?

CAIAPHAS

Let him be. Herod has a soft spot for caterers.
Murray won't be any trouble once we put down this
rebellion. He'll be powerless. Without a following,
a caterer is nothing.

INT - A DINING ROOM - DAY

Murray and Peter have just finished setting the table. Murray surveys the setting.

MURRAY

Beautiful! You found us the perfect dining room.
You go get the wine. I'm going back to my kitchen.
I'll meet you back here with the others.

Peter nods. The two exit the dining room.

INT- MURRAY'S KITCHEN

Murray is putting together more food. He puts some bread and fruit into the satchel he's wearing. Then he takes some cheese lashed together in fishnet and throws it over his shoulder.

There is MURMURING O.S. that gets Murray's attention. He walks toward the door and leans over to eavesdrop.

EXT - OF KITCHEN

Two men are conversing. Murray is listening by the door.

BROTHER

I heard there's a warrant out for his arrest.

FRIEND

It was bound to happen. There was going to be trouble sooner or later.

BROTHER

They still have to find him, though.

FRIEND

What's the council going to do?

BROTHER

They have an informer.

Murray reacts in surprise and concern.

BROTHER

They want to capture Jesus as quietly as possible so there won't be any trouble from his followers.

Murray gasps silently. He paces anxiously about in his kitchen.

MURRAY

I had no idea. This is serious. I've got to find who the informer is.

EXT - OUTSIDE OF CAIAPHAS' PALACE - NIGHT

Murray enters, walking briskly. He approaches the entrance and stops. He looks in all directions to see if anyone is around. Then he dashes inside.

INT - PALACE

Murray walks stealthily down a hall. He stops at a corner and looks around. He hears talking O.S. and follows the sound slowly and carefully.

He comes to a doorway and peeks around. The High Priest and the Elders are seated and having a discussion.

CAIAPHAS

Is everything under way?

SHAMMAI

The arrangements have been made. Thirty pieces of silver.

CAIAPHAS

Very good. Once he's pointed out we must act swiftly. Once we apprehend Jesus—

Caiaphas stops in mid sentence and sniffs the air.

CAIAPHAS

Do you smell that?

SHAMMAI

What?

CAIAPHAS

I swear I can smell fresh bread. And—cheese!

Murray has been listening. He looks into his satchel and sees the bread. Then he notices the cheese hanging on his shoulder. Realizing what he's done, he slaps his forehead with a pained expression.

Murray looks around to find a route of escape. He slowly walks backwards, trips and lands on his back.

Shammai goes out in the hall to see what the disturbance is and the others follow.

Murray tries to get up as nonchalantly as possible.

SHAMMAI

It's Murray the Caterer!

MURRAY

Good evening, gentlemen.

CAIAPHAS

Well, well. We meet again. What would you be doing here at this time of night?

MURRAY

I was making a catering delivery—and—I must have lost my way.

CAIAPHAS

A catering delivery to my palace? No, I don't think so.

MURRAY

Oh dear, is this your palace? This is so embarrassing. I was looking for the, ah—Fishermen's Guild. They're having a little Passover get-together there and I was bringing some more food.

Murray shows them the food he's been carrying.

MURRAY

Excuse me, please. I'm from Alexandria, you know. Seems I still don't know my way around town. But if you will pardon me, I'll carry on in my humble work.

Murray attempts to leave in a casual manner.

CAIAPHAS

Call the guards and put this man under arrest.

Murray is visibly shaken.

CAIAPHAS

Take him to the garrison and hold him there.

EXT - THE CENACLE

Jesus and the Apostles are seated around the table. As they're about to begin with their meal, Peter enters. He is carrying some clay jugs.

JESUS

Where's Murray?

Peter walks to the table, sets down the jugs, and sits next to Jesus.

PETER

I don't know. He said he'd be back.

JAMES

Who knows where he might have gone? He could be anywhere.

ANDREW

Maybe he got lost.

MATTHEW

More likely he's catering another Passover feast somewhere else.

JESUS

Perhaps he's just been delayed. I'm sure he will arrive as soon as he can.

Jesus takes some bread, blesses it, then starts to break it into pieces and passes it around.

CROSSFADE:

INT - A SMALL CELL IN THE GARRISON STOCKADE - DAY

Murray has spent the night in the garrison stockade. It's now afternoon. Murray is pacing back and forth in his cell. O.S. footsteps are heard. Someone approaches and Murray stops and faces the doorway. Caiaphas enters.

CAIAPHAS

I don't know what your part in all of this is and I really don't care. Consider yourself fortunate that Herod has a weakness for gefilte fish. I'm going to release you. But I promise that if you try to interfere again, your days will be numbered.

EXT- A STREET - DAY

Murray is running down the street. He comes to the Cenacle and rushes inside. He looks around and finds the place empty. He looks anguished.

MURRAY

Oh no. Where is everybody?

Murray rushes out the door. He looks around hoping to find some sort of a clue as to what has happened. MARY MAGDALENE, plain, but pretty, approaches and sees Murray.

MARY MAGDALENE

Are you Murray?

MURRAY

Yes. Do you know what's been going on?

MARY MAGDALENE

I'm Mary Magdalene. A disciple. The Apostles have been looking for you.

MURRAY

What's happened?

MARY MAGDALENE

You don't know, do you? Jesus was executed today. The people demanded that he be crucified.

MURRAY

I don't believe this. I'm too late.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - MURRAY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Murray is sitting at his table, numb, and in shock.

MURRAY

It's happened again. First John the Baptizer. And now Jesus of Nazareth.

(looking to the heavens)

Why do they have to kill off all the good guys?

Murray sighs and gets up.

MURRAY

I've been moping around since yesterday. I better try to get some work done.

EXT - MURRAY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Murray is finishing loading up his donkey FESTUS with catering utensils and containers.

MURRAY

Festus, it looks like we picked a beautiful Sunday to be traveling.

Murray and Festus proceed down the street.

MURRAY

A trip to Bethlehem might do me some good.

EXT - THE JERUSALEM GATE FOR BETHLEHEM

As Murray and Festus approach the gate they come upon two women talking loudly. Murray can't help but overhear.

YOUNG WOMAN

All I know is that she claims to have seen him.

OLD WOMAN

I've heard rumors. You can't avoid hearing rumors. But I don't believe any of it.

YOUNG WOMAN

It's true, I tell you. The man has risen. How do you explain the empty tomb?

Murray steps in and interrupts.

MURRAY

What empty tomb? Who has risen?

OLD WOMAN

Don't listen to her. It's just a lot of gossip.

YOUNG WOMAN

Jesus has risen from the dead.

MURRAY

Is that what you've heard? Well, I wouldn't pay too much attention. Everybody said the same thing about John the Baptizer. You can't believe everything you hear.

Murray shrugs and proceeds to leave the city.

EXT - THE OUTSKIRTS OF BETHLEHEM

Murray and Festus are making their way down a street. Murray surveys his surroundings.

MURRAY

Ironic isn't it? The sun shines and the sky is blue.
Not the kind of day to mourn the death of a friend.

Murray and his donkey walk past a suspiciously familiar looking barn. It's a proto-typical structure found in any traditional Nativity scene, except that there are no animals or people.

As they pass by, a haunting SOUND of "Murray" can be heard O.S. Murray hears the sound and stops.

MURRAY

Wait here, Festus. I thought I heard something.

Murray walks inside the barn and looks around. He spots something that attracts his attention in the corner.

He spies a manger. Murray walks toward it and notices something shiny. He picks it up and examines his find.

We see an extreme close up of what Murray is now holding. It's a perfect replica of what we all recognize as the star of Bethlehem. It seems to sparkle, even in the subdued light.

Murray leaves the darkness of the barn to get a better look outside in the sunlight.

MURRAY

Well, if this isn't the darnedest thing I'll see all day.

As the two continue down the road, Murray puts the star around his neck.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - OUTSIDE THE GATES OF JERUSALEM - NIGHT

Murray and Festus are returning from Bethlehem. As he passes through the gates, he runs into Mary Magdalene.

MARY MAGDALENE

Murray! Thank goodness I've found you. The Apostles need to speak to you right away.

MURRAY

What about?

MARY MAGDALENE

Everything has changed now that Jesus has risen.

Murray recoils in surprise.

MURRAY

No! Risen from the dead? Those were just rumors.

MARY MAGDALENE

No rumors. I saw it myself. So did some of the Apostles.

MURRAY

Uh-oh.

INT - A HOUSE OF UNSPECIFIED LOCATION - NIGHT

Murray enters, accompanied by Mary Magdalene. The Apostles who have been waiting, are seated around a table.

PETER

Where have you been the last three days?

MURRAY

I ran into some trouble. They locked me up and I couldn't get back. I was going to warn you.

PETER

Not only did you miss our Last Supper, you missed the Resurrection.

MURRAY

It was all a terrible mistake.

PETER

We've made an important decision. We're expelling you from the Apostolate.

MURRAY

What? Whose decision was this?

PETER

I'm afraid it was unanimous.

MURRAY

But I can explain.

JOHN

Murray, let me be honest. We've never had an easy time accepting you. We've considered you occasionally troublesome and we've never been comfortable with your unorthodox ways.

PETER

We realize that you're a little different. Maybe that's why Jesus liked you.

JAMES

It was mostly out of respect for Him that we made an effort to include you.

PETER

Now, well, we just can't do it anymore.

MURRAY

I try to do a few good deeds and this is what I get.
This has certainly been a cruel turn of events.

PETER

I'm sorry, Murray.

MURRAY

Well, maybe it's for the best. So much has
happened. Perhaps I need change of scenery.

PETER

Where will you go?

MURRAY

There are other cities. Plenty of opportunities out
there for an experienced man of God like me.

Murray exits.

JAMES

Where do you think he'll go?

PETER

Like he said, there are a lot of cities out there.

JOHN

All Godless and ravaged by sin.

ANDREW

Will he be all right?

PETER

I don't think he has anything to worry about. It's
those Godless cities ravaged by sin that should be
worried.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE of scenes depicting Murray traveling through Asia Minor are interspliced with a map showing his progress.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - A STREET IN CYPRESS - DAY

Murray is standing before a small crowd, giving a sermon. Various views of the spectators show that they do not understand what he's talking about.

A cripple limps forward, barely hanging on to life. Murray lays his hand on the cripple's head. The cripple keels over dead.

Though shocked for a moment, Murray quickly gathers his wits. He looks around at the crowd that surrounds him. With a casual but confident demeanor, Murray moves through the crowd, shaking some hands and blessing others, effectively leaving the "scene of the crime."

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - DAY - A RELIGIOUS TEMPLE IN ANTIOCH

Murray is seated, surrounded by a dozen children. He has them engrossed in some kind of parable.

To instruct them, Murray puts his hands together as in prayer, and the children mimic the gesture. Once Murray sees that all eyes are on him, he adds to the gesture by turning his hands and wiggling his two middle fingers.

The children smile with delight as they clumsily try to duplicate the maneuver.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - DAY - A KITCHEN IN EPHESUS

Murray is standing over a large simmering pot surrounded by several cooks. Murray dips in a spoon and tastes the contents.

He shakes his head and wags his finger in disapproval. He pulls out a small jar from a pouch, opens the lid and sprinkles some kind spice into the pot.

Murray then stirs and tastes it again. He smiles in satisfaction, gives the cooks an “OK” sign and leaves. Amazed, the cooks watch him go.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - CAESARIA -DAY

DEFINING SHOTS of the seaport city are interspliced with new and burgeoning Christian activity. Peter and John are in the process of administering the Holy Spirit by laying their hands on the people who approach to receive it. A man, MAGUS, steps forward, holding a small pouch.

MAGUS

I must know how you hold this great power. Show me and you can have this money.

JOHN

You and your money can rot. These gifts from God cannot be bought.

O.S., a voice can be heard, shouting to Peter and John.

O.S. VOICE

Perhaps I can make the man a reasonable offer.

Peter and John look to the crowd and react to who they see. It's Murray. He walks forward to greet the men.

PETER

Murray!

MURRAY

Greetings! I believe I can fulfill this man's needs.

Murray comes forward, waving a small sheet of rolled up parchment.

MURRAY

I have here actual words from God. Take these holy writings so that you may also do the Lord's work as these men have done.

Murray exchanges with Magus the small scroll he is holding for the pouch of money.

MAGUS

Thank you, thank you.

Magus bows in respect to Murray and then runs off. Peter and John have observed the transaction with disapproval.

JOHN

You're still a mercenary. And you mock the Lord with trickery.

MURRAY

That wasn't trickery. That man will soon be enlightened with the knowledge of his own foolishness.

PETER

What did you give him?

MURRAY

A recipe for lamb stew. A very good recipe.

PETER

You cheated that man!

MURRAY

Who's to say it wasn't created through divine inspiration? Besides, I have a new motto: "Help the

helpless, not the clueless.”

Peter is getting uncomfortable by Murray’s presence, and is anxiously aware of the conspicuousness of the scene that just occurred.

PETER

Let’s move along. We’re attracting too much attention.

Peter looks around cautiously, and then motions to John and Murray to proceed down the street.

MURRAY

Why all the caution?

PETER

It’s been two years. Much has changed. Where have you been?

MURRAY

I’ve been everywhere! All the way to Corinth and back. Preaching on my own. Working as an independent Apostle you might say.

PETER

We have many followers now. But the authorities are suspicious. We’re always under the watchful eye of the Romans. And many of our own people do not trust us.

MURRAY

Maybe it isn’t what you say, but how you say it. Maybe you just need to work on your delivery. Now when I give a sermon, I always try to—

PETER

Just what is it that you have been preaching for the past two years? No, don’t tell me. I don’t want to know.

The three continue down the street.

INT - A HOUSE IN JERUSALEM - DAY

Peter is standing at the end of a table addressing the other Apostles who are seated.

JAMES

He's back?

PETER

We found him in Caesaria. He's been all over the Roman provinces. Who knows what he's been doing?

ANDREW

So?

PETER

Don't you see? He's been all over creation delivering his own God-knows-what.

JAMES

So?

JOHN

I'm afraid to think what he's been saying out there.

PETER

I have a bad feeling about this.

Murray enters with RUFUS, his lawyer.

MURRAY

Good day, gentlemen. I'd like to introduce you to my lawyer Rufus. He's just arrived from Corinth.

Rufus nods politely.

PETER

What's this about?

JAMES

You have no business with us.

MURRAY

I think I do. Rufus, if you please.

Murray holds out his hand to Rufus, who hands him a rolled up document.

MURRAY

Uh—let's see here—"The application of these decisions made on behalf of the Apostles can be nullified in view of violations promulgated by those of you who have constrained due justice that should in fact be a consequence of a formally ratified law—" Wait a minute. What is this legal gibberish?

RUFUS

Shall I put it in laymen's terms?

MURRAY

You should have written it in laymen's terms. This is what I get for hiring a lawyer who charges by the hour. Just give us the simple version.

RUFUS

Murray is hereby reinstated as an Apostle. His status has been legally restored.

MURRAY

Thank you. Lawyers, yeesh.

The Apostles react angrily, expressing to each other their opposition to Murray's claim. Matthew stands up.

MATTHEW

That's absurd! We'll never recognize such an outrageous claim!

PETER

Is this your idea of a joke?

The door blasts open suddenly. Shammai and two soldiers enter. Shammai looks to the guards and points to Peter.

SHAMMAI

This is the one. Arrest him.

PETER

What are you doing?

SHAMMAI

You can answer to King Herod. You're standing trial for crimes against Judea. We've had enough of you and your rabble-rousing followers.

The soldiers haul Peter out the door and Shammai follows them out.

MATTHEW

(pointing to Murray)

This is your fault!

MURRAY

Me? I just got here!

ANDREW

What are we going to do now?

JOHN

We must pray for Peter.

MURRAY

Would someone explain to me what's been going on?

JAMES

King Herod continues to attack our church. He's turning all of Jerusalem against us.

JOHN

Our mission has not been an easy one. But we continue and endure, accepting even death if we must.

MURRAY

Wait a minute! What are we, camels? Do we just go to our knees and accept whatever load someone decides to pile on our backs? I'm all for turning an occasional cheek now and then, but really!

JOHN

This is not your affair.

MURRAY

I'm every bit a part of this as any of you, and I always was. Rufus, go see what you can do. See if you can get a good legal angle on this.

RUFUS

Litigation with the Roman Government is going to cost extra.

MURRAY

Just do it.

Rufus leaves.

MURRAY

First they killed John the Baptist. Then Jesus. How long before they execute Peter? You know they will. And then they'll start coming after the rest of you.

JAMES

What would you have us do?

MURRAY

For God's sake, someone has to put their foot down and say enough!

JOHN

This is God's will, not yours. We will gladly accept what fate may come.

MURRAY

You're turning us all into martyrs. Is that really what you want? I'll tell you something. You know what a martyr is? An inept disciple.

JOHN

I know I'm going to regret this. Do you have something in mind?

MURRAY

You bet I do. We're going to show this city some real disciples. Apostles, we've got work to do!

A series of DEFINING SHOTS show Murray and the Apostles preparing for their escape plan, with Murray giving instructions and overseeing the beginning steps of the plan. The Apostles are seen enlisting the help of their allied disciples who willingly provide materials and assistance.

INT - MURRAY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Murray and the Apostles are gathered together.

MURRAY

Everyone know what to do?

All of the Apostles nod.

MURRAY

Good. We won't get a second chance. We have to get this right the first time. Peter goes on trial tomorrow.

Murray picks up a pile of clothes and hands them to Andrew.

MURRAY

All right Andrew. This is it.

Murray walks to the door and opens it.

MURRAY

Let's go!

The Apostles file out quickly.

EXT - THE ROMAN ARMORY - DAY

A roman soldier is guarding a small building. Mary Magdalene approaches and gets the attention of the guard. The guard notices that she is dressed provocatively. Fifty yards away stands an ox, and a cart with one wheel off its axle.

MARY MAGDALENE

Hello. I was wondering if you could help me. My cart has broken down, and I'm a stranger. I have no way to repair it.

The soldier looks over the situation.

MARY MAGDALENE

I can offer you some very good wine for your trouble.

SOLDIER

I'm on duty, but all right.

As the soldier becomes occupied with the repair, Mary Magdalene looks around carefully.

INT - HEROD'S PALACE

Andrew, disguised as a palace servant is standing against a wall, holding a cask of wine. He peeks around the corner and sees six palace servants dressed exactly like he is.

They're walking towards the entrance carrying similar casks. As they pass by, Andrew runs up behind them and nonchalantly follows them into the palace.

EXT - THE ARMORY - DAY

The Soldier is bent over the cart, about to lift the axle and put the wheel back on. Mary Magdalene is standing over him plying him with wine and conversation to keep him distracted.

Meanwhile, Matthew and Thomas, who have been hiding behind the armory, quickly sneak inside. Once inside, they search for the specific items that they need.

THOMAS

I don't think this is going to work.

MATTHEW

Yeah, yeah. Always the skeptic. Come on Thomas.
Let's get the stuff and go.

INT - HEROD'S PALACE

Andrew, still in his disguise is walking stealthily down a hall. He hears voices and footsteps and quickly darts down another hall.

As he comes to the end, he peers carefully around the corner.

INT - MURRAY'S KITCHEN

James and John are putting on military uniforms and gear, in an attempt to impersonate Roman soldiers.

JOHN

These things don't fit very well.

MATTHEW

We grabbed what we could. Just put it on.

Murray steps into view.

MURRAY

You look fine. Great work, men.

Andrew enters the kitchen, having just arrived from the palace.

MURRAY

What did you find?

ANDREW

I know exactly where he is. The main cell locked up in chains. Two palace guards by the door. Keys hanging on the wall.

MURRAY

Shouldn't be too much trouble.

James and John are now completely outfitted. They look like two Apostles dressed up like Roman soldiers. Murray looks them up and down.

MURRAY

Looks good. We're ready to go.

INT - HEROD'S PALACE

The two palace guards are standing in front of the cell door. Both turn their heads as they hear the sound of footsteps O.S. The disguised Apostles, James and John, enter in a less than convincing manner of authority.

JAMES

You're both relieved. You can go.

PALACE GUARD

We received no orders. Explain.

James is unprepared to provide a plausible explanation.

JAMES

Well, what this is, it's—

John takes the initiative.

JOHN

Strict orders from the Proconsul. The prisoner has been put under Roman jurisdiction. That's all the explanation you need.

John has assumed his role with a new found relish.

JOHN

And it's more explanation than you deserve. We'll take over from here. The prisoner is now under our authority. You're dismissed.

JAMES

Yeah. Go have a lunch break.

The Palace guards acquiesce to John's impressive performance. The palace guards leave quietly.

JOHN

Let's get this door open.

James grabs the keys hanging on the wall.

JAMES

Very convincing. You do a good Roman.

John unlocks the door and opens it. Peter is inside on the ground, his wrists in chains. He doesn't yet recognize who has arrived.

JAMES

Peter! It's us! We've come to get you out.

PETER

James? And John! What have you done?

JOHN

No time to explain.

EXT - OUTSIDE THE PALACE CONFINES.

Murray and Bartholomew arrive in a horse driven wagon, loaded with various items. Murray gets off the wagon and starts directing the unloading. Philip and Simon, riding in back, begin unloading the wagon.

MURRAY

All right men. That's it. This way.

Murray and his crew walk right up to the entrance as if they're going to proceed right in. However, they are stopped by the two palace guards standing watch at the entrance gate.

SENIOR GUARD

Hold it. Where do you think you're going? What's this?

MURRAY

What else? Setting up a luncheon buffet.

SENIOR GUARD

What for?

MURRAY

The proconsul, of course. Pontius Pilate is arriving with some of his officers. You must have been informed.

SENIOR GUARD

I was not.

MURRAY

The proconsul is arriving today. He'll be here soon with his entourage. Believe me, they'll be expecting some lunch.

SENIOR GUARD

No one cleared this with me.

Murray points to the contents in the cart.

MURRAY

Look. I've got fresh fruit and vegetables, not to mention fish and cheese. It's sitting in the sun spoiling while you and I discuss the finer points of palace protocol.

The guard walks around the cart, inspecting its contents.

MURRAY

Tell you what. We'll just leave all this here and you can deliver it in your own good time. Just make sure it's all prepared and ready when the proconsul and his senior officers arrive.

SENIOR GUARD

All right, all right. Go on. What's your name?

MURRAY

Murray. Murray the Caterer.

The guard motions Murray to proceed. Murray and the Apostles enter the palace grounds and head for the palace door. The senior guard looks at the junior guard.

SENIOR GUARD

I better look into this. Stay at your post.

The senior guard leaves the palace confines.

INT - THE PALACE

James and John, still in disguise, are escorting Peter down a hallway. At the end of the hall, they see Murray and the other Apostles approaching. Murray motions to James and John.

MURRAY

Quickly now. Under the table!

PETER

Murray! You've got some explaining to do.

James and John force Peter under the table. Simon drapes over a tablecloth which keeps Peter out of plain view.

PETER

(muffled voice under the table)

I don't think I like this.

MURRAY

Quiet, Peter. You're getting out of here.

Philip and Simon pick up the table and carry it back down the hall. Murray walks alongside, looking straight ahead, walking nonchalantly past palace staff.

MURRAY

Just keep up with us. No one will know you're under there.

Philip and Simon continue down the hall as Peter scuffles along with them on all fours. Murray, James and John are leading the way.

PETER

(muffled voice under the table)

Did I mention that I don't like this?

EXT - THE PALACE GROUNDS.

James and John, still in their Roman garb, walk out of the palace unnoticed.

Bartholomew has been waiting on the wagon. James looks at Bartholomew and manages to give him an affirmative but surreptitious nod.

Next out the door is Murray, followed by Simon and Philip who are carrying the table with Peter underneath.

All of them head towards the main entrance of the palace confines. The junior guard is by himself at the main entrance. He wonders why Murray and his crew are returning with the table.

MURRAY

Can you believe it? The table's the wrong size. We have to bring back a larger one.

They all exit the palace confines. Once outside, they load the table onto the wagon, sneaking Peter onto the wagon unnoticed. Now on board, the wagon starts to leave.

The Senior Guard returns with a group of ROMAN SOLDIERS.

SENIOR GUARD

There they are! They have the prisoner! Stop them!

A chase ensues. Bartholomew shouts, slaps the reins, and puts the horse into a gallop. After putting some distance from their pursuers the wagon arrives at the outskirts of Jerusalem.

Simon and Philip help Peter down from the wagon.

PETER

This is madness. The devil himself couldn't be more devious.

MURRAY

You're too valuable a man to die a martyr. We've got to get you out of here. Half of Jerusalem will be looking for you.

Peter is still distressed, not yet having recovered from the recent mayhem.

PETER

It's madness and I refuse to be a part of it. Is this what you call God's will?

MURRAY

Come on Peter. Take a look around you. How could this be anything but God's will?

Murray gestures to his fellow cohorts. Peter looks around at the Apostles. He sees Andrew in his servant disguise; James and John dressed up like Romans.

Thaddeus and James arrive disguised as Arab traders. They're on a cart driven by Murray's donkey, Festus. The cart is loaded with large clay jars.

Peter looks at the donkey, the cart and the Apostles in their various disguises. Peter then looks back at the palace and then looks at the awaiting cart. He slowly breaks into a smile and then he chuckles.

MURRAY

Don't ever forget. God does have a sense of humor. I know. He told me once.

The chuckle turns into a hearty laugh. The other Apostles join in. They laugh, cheer and give Peter encouraging pats on the shoulder.

PETER

What happens now?

MURRAY

You'll be taken to a safe place outside of Judea.

Murray takes off the star of Bethlehem that's been around his neck.

MURRAY

Here, take this. A little token of my esteem. Good luck.

The Apostles help Peter onto the cart and into the jar. Peter is inside the jar with only his head peeking out.

PETER

What about you? Where will you go?

MURRAY

Don't worry about me. Just get out of here. There's a whole world out there waiting to hear all about our new—what do we call it? Our new—

JOHN

New vision.

JAMES

No, a new truth.

ANDREW

A new covenant.

PETER

Covenant?

MURRAY

I've got it. A New Testament!

The Apostles all nod in agreement.

PETER

So long fellows. We'll meet again. If not here, then, well, you know.

Thaddeus takes the reins, and James A. strikes the donkey with a stick. The cart begins moving and rolls down the road.

MURRAY

The rest of you better scatter. Just lay low for a while.

JOHN

What about you? And your catering?

MURRAY

Jesus was right, you know. I did have to make a choice. I spent everything I had on this prison caper. Not to mention the legal fees to get reinstated. I just hope it wasn't a waste of money. Maybe I'll go back to Alexandria. Start over. Now that I'm broke, maybe I can be a real Apostle, just like you.

The Apostles laugh.

INT - HEROD'S CHAMBER

Herod is conducting some administrative work with several of his officers. Pontius Pilate enters abruptly.

PILATE

Herod! What is the meaning of this?

Herod looks up, surprised. He doesn't know what to make of Pilate's statement, much less his sudden arrival.

HEROD

I'm sorry proconsul, the meaning of what?

PILATE

I've been informed that you're holding a prisoner and you've put him under my jurisdiction. You got away with this once, but not again. I won't repeat that mistake. This prisoner of yours, whoever he is, is your problem, not mine.

HEROD

Proconsul, I promise you I've done no such thing. Who told you this?

PILATE

One of your senior guards.

HEROD

He must have been misinformed.

PILATE

He said that someone named Murray—

HEROD

Murray! Impossible!

AKIVA (O.S.)

Your highness!

Akiva rushes in, agitated and out of breath.

AKIVA

Begging your pardon, your highness, proconsul. Peter is gone! He's escaped!

Herod is confused by this sudden turn of events.

HEROD

How did this happen? What's been going on?

PILATE

Gentlemen, excuse me. I can see this no longer concerns me. I'll leave you among yourselves to deal with your petty squabbles.

HEROD

Yes, of course.

Pilate begins to leave. Just before he exits, he turns around.

PILATE

Religious factions come and go. Pharisean Jews. Sadducean Jews. Baptists, Zealots. And now you're having trouble with these—what are you calling them—Christians? This could never happen in Rome.

Pilate leaves and Herod turns his attention to Akiva.

HEROD

I've entrusted you with the security of Jerusalem. And now this!

AKIVA

It's Murray. I'm sure of it. I've always suspected him.

HEROD

Outwitted by a caterer? You don't expect me to believe that?

AKIVA

Look what I found lying near the prison cells.

Akiva produces a small jar.

HEROD

What is it?

AKIVA

Looks like boiled fish. Smells likes onions too.

Herod looks at the jar, and then Akiva. The two speak in unison.

HEROD/AKIVA

Gefilte fish!?

Camera pulls back and up. O.S. God can be heard laughing.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - PROFESSOR DAVID'S OFFICE

Andrew and Professor David are seated across from each other at Professor David's desk.

ANDREW

So what happened to Murray? Did he get out of Jerusalem? Did he return to Alexandria?

PROFESSOR DAVID

The scrolls don't really say. We can only guess as to what eventually happened.

ANDREW

The other thing I'm wondering is, who wrote the Book of Murray?

PROFESSOR DAVID

A disciple of Murray. A friend of Murray. There's no way to know for sure.

DISSOLVE TO:

A series of DISSOLVING SCENES show Murray working his way back to Alexandria. Along the way, we see him engaged in his missionary work, talking to people throughout his travels.

SUPERIMPOSED over these scenes is a CLOSE UP of a hand, holding a pen of reed, writing on a sheet of parchment. Murray's story is being written by someone, but we can't see who it is.

As Murray walks off into the sunset, it dissolves into the handwriting scene. We see an EXTREME CLOSE UP that shows that the author has reached the end of the manuscript. The author signs it at the bottom, "Murray."

Then the camera ANGLES UP to show Murray's "star of Bethlehem" pendent worn by the "anonymous" author.

Then the camera zooms out and pulls back to reveal Peter sitting at a desk. He is the author of Murray. He looks at the page just completed, nods his head, smiles with satisfaction, and then turns his head towards the heavens.

The scene dissolves to a MATCH-CUT of a renaissance painting identical to the previous scene.

The camera ZOOMS BACK just enough to show that the painting is hanging on the wall, just on the other side of Professor David's research library door.

FADE OUT