

THE CROSS OF HELENA

Written by

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EXT. ROMAN BRITAIN - EARLY MORNING - 270s A.D.

A quiet countryside estate. Birds chirp. Fields misted in dew. A modest Roman villa lies nestled among trees.

HELENA (30s), poised and gentle, walks with her young son CONSTANTINE (7), holding his hand

HELENA

Don't race off - dew ruins good sandals, my love.

CONSTANTINE

Then I'll go barefoot!

She smiles as he skips ahead. The sunlight kisses the hills.

In the distance - the sound of hooves.

CONSTANTIUS CHLORUS (40s), rugged, in full military garb, rides in with a small escort. He dismounts and lifts Constantine in the air.

CONSTAN-TIUS

My two treasures - before the Empire steals me again.

He kisses Helena deeply. She holds him close.

HELENA

You said you'd be gone three days. That was ten.

CONSTAN-TIUS

The Empire lies. I don't.

They share a private smile. The moment is tender. But behind Constantius's eyes - tension lingers.

INT. VILLA - NIGHT

A small family feast. Oil lamps flicker. Constantine is asleep nearby, wrapped in a blanket.

Constantius eats slowly. Helena watches him.

HELENA

You've been quiet.

CONSTAN-TIUS
The Emperor summons me. Again.

HELENA
When?

CONSTAN-TIUS
At once.

HELENA
And what will he demand this time?
Another campaign? Or your soul?

He doesn't answer. She reaches for his hand.

HELENA (SOFT) (CONT'D)
You're all I have. We are all you
have.

He looks at his son, then back at her.

CONSTAN-TIUS
I'll return, Helena. I swear it.

EXT. VILLA GATES - DAWN

Constantius rides out. Constantine waves sleepily.

Helena stands still, arms crossed, watching the horizon long
after the dust settles.

INT. VILLA - WEEKS LATER - NIGHT

A Roman courier arrives, solemn.

He hands Helena a scroll bearing the Imperial Seal

COURIER
By order of Emperor Maximian.

He bows and exits.

Helena opens the scroll. Her face falls.

INSERT - THE
DECREE:

"Constantius Chlorus, loyal general of Rome, is henceforth
united in marriage to Theodora, daughter of the Emperor."

"The prior marriage to Helena of Britain is hereby
dissolved."

She trembles. The scroll drops from her fingers.

HELENA

No...

She clutches her chest as if stabbed. Constantine, confused, approaches.

CONSTANTINE

Mama?

She wipes her eyes quickly.

HELENA

Go back to bed, darling.

She kneels and hugs him tight – too tight.

He doesn't understand why she's crying.

FADE IN:

EXT. GOLGOTHA – HILL OUTSIDE JERUSALEM – AFTERNOON – 33 A.D.

A wind howls over cracked, sun-bleached rock.

Three CROSSES stand stark against the horizon.

On the center cross: JESUS OF NAZARETH, bloodied, dying.

Above his head – the TITULUS:

IESVS NAZARENVS REX IVDÆORVM

(Jesus of Nazareth, King
of the Jews)

The sky darkens unnaturally –
eclipsed, as if heaven recoils.

To Jesus's left: an IMPENITENT THIEF, sneering through pain.

THIEF #1

(spitting)

If you're the Christ – save
yourself! And us!

To His right, the PENITENT THIEF, gasping.

THIEF #2

(softly)

Lord... remember me... when You
come into Your kingdom.

JESUS
 Today... you will be with Me... in
 paradise.

THUNDER rolls. The earth shudders.

At the foot of the cross, MARY weeps.

Nearby, LONGINUS, a Roman centurion, watches – awestruck.

LONGINUS
 Surely... this was the Son of God.

Lightning rips through the sky.

INT. HELENA'S VILLA - STUDY - DAY

Helena stands over a map of the Empire, her hands trembling.
 She stares at Nicomedia—the seat of the Emperor.

A soft knock.

TIRAS (40s), dignified but humble, enters with a tray of
 food.

TIRAS
 You've barely touched anything in
 days.

HELENA
 Nor has Rome – but they still call
 it a republic.

She waves off the tray. He gently sets it aside.

TIRAS
 There is someone. A man people
 visit when their world begins to
 split.

HELENA
 A physician?

TIRAS
 A priest.

She turns – sharply.

HELENA
 One of *them?* Preaching under
 catacombs?

TIRAS

He listens. He does not judge. And
he has survived grief I wouldn't
name aloud.

She hesitates. Then looks away.

HELENA

Make no promises on my behalf.

He bows.

TIRAS

I never do.

INT. HIDDEN CELLAR SHRINE - NIGHT

Candles flicker along the stone walls. Quiet murmurs echo
from shadows.

HELENA enters, cloaked. A small group kneels. A man in simple
robes stands near a carved wooden cross - FATHER ELIAS (50s),
weathered and wise.

ELIAS

...And when Judas betrayed Him,
Christ did not curse him. He called
him friend.

The crowd bows their heads.

Helena stands at the back, arms folded - skeptical but
intrigued.

ELIAS (CONT'D)

Pain tempts us to seal our hearts.
But the heart is not a fortress. It
is a well.

What you draw from it... shapes the world.

The crowd disperses. Elias notices Helena lingering.

ELIAS (GENTLE) (CONT'D)

We don't bite. Even if Rome insists
we do.

HELENA

I don't kneel where gods bleed.

ELIAS

Then perhaps you're exactly who
should speak with one.

She eyes him, caught between curiosity and insult.

HELENA

My son prays. My husband betrayed me. What would your god offer?

ELIAS

The same thing Rome offered you. But without the lie.

She almost smirks.

HELENA

You're braver than you look.

ELIAS

And you're lonelier than you let on.

She says nothing – then leaves.

EXT. ABANDONED TEMPLE GARDEN – DAY

A ruined temple stands open to the wind. Vines crawl across broken marble.

A crowd gathers as Elias preaches again, this time under the sun.

ELIAS

Our chains are not forged by iron – but by the silence of those who know better.

Hidden behind a column, HELENA watches, half in shadow.

ELIAS (CONT'D)

The world changes not by emperors, but by women who refuse to be forgotten.

She's frozen – the words strike her.

Suddenly, a commotion. ROMAN SOLDIERS flood in.

Shouts. Panic. The crowd scatters.

Helena backs away just as Elias is seized, shoved to his knees.

ELIAS (TO HELENA, ACROSS THE SQUARE) (CONT'D)

The truth won't die with me.

He's dragged off.

HELENA (WHISPERED)
Not if I can help it.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. GOVERNOR'S HALL - LATE DAY

HELENA stands before GOVERNOR AELIUS (50s), vain and sharp-eyed, seated on a marble dais flanked by armed guards.

HELENA
I demand the release of the priest
you seized.

AELIUS
Demand? My dear, you're a discarded
wife of a once-useful general.

Your voice holds no currency here.

HELENA
The Empire promised religious
tolerance.

AELIUS
The Empire lies when it's useful.

She steps closer, defiant.

HELENA
The man you took spoke only of
peace and forgiveness.

AELIUS
And that makes him dangerous. He's
dead.

A pause. Helena's jaw tightens.

AELIUS (CONT'D)
Be thankful I don't charge you with
sedition.

She doesn't flinch - just turns and walks out in silence.

INT. HELENA'S VILLA - NIGHT

Helena sits by the fire, writing feverishly. TIRAS watches from the doorway.

TIRAS

To whom do you write?

HELENA

To the only man I know with
power... and a conscience buried
somewhere under the armor.

She folds the parchment. Seals it.

INT. MILITARY CAMP - NICOMEDIA - NIGHT

A storm rages outside the tent.

CONSTAN-TIUS, now paler and visibly weaker, reads the letter.

Aide-de-camps murmur around him, but his attention is fixed.

INSERT - THE
LETTER (V.O.):

HELENA (V.O.)

The Empire has replaced its gods
but not its cruelty.

A good man was executed for speaking the name of Christ.

I ask not for vengeance... but for change.

INT. PALACE GARDENS - DAY

HELENA walks slowly beside CONSTAN-TIUS, now frail but upright. They are alone in a private corridor shielded from court eyes.

CONSTAN-TIUS

Theodora is kind but cold. You...
always had fire.

HELENA

I needed it to survive what you
left me in.

A long beat.

CONSTAN-TIUS

There are two emperors now. But one
will fall.

When I die, I intend Constantine to rise.

HELENA

The Empire isn't kind to succession plans.

CONSTAN-TIUS

Then it will learn. And he will end the persecution - in my name, if not his own.

She studies him - eyes no longer furious, but wounded.

HELENA

Then do it. End the edicts. Name your son.

CONSTAN-TIUS

I already have. His road begins when mine ends.

They sit under a laurel tree. A silence passes.

CONSTAN-TIUS (CONT'D)

And you, Helena? What road do you walk now?

She looks eastward.

HELENA

One I don't yet see... but one He does.

FADE OUT.

INT. CONSTAN-TIUS'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

Oil lamps flicker low. CONSTAN-TIUS lies in bed, face pale. HELENA sits beside him. CONSTANTINE (now 20s), armored, kneels on the other side.

CONSTAN-TIUS (WEAK)

You are my son, and Rome's future. Rule with iron... but dream with mercy.

CONSTANTINE

I'll carry your name across every mile of stone.

CONSTAN-TIUS

Then leave it cleaner than I did.

He gasps. Eyes flutter. His hand drops from Helena's.

A final breath. Then – stillness.

HELENA closes his eyes gently.

HELENA

Go in peace, my general.

INT. IMPERIAL COURT – NICOMEDIA – DAY

A power struggle looms.

GALERIUS (60s), the Eastern Emperor, addresses a tense gathering of military leaders.

GALERIUS

The western throne must be confirmed. Blood alone does not guarantee power.

CONSTANTINE enters boldly in military garb, the room falling silent.

CONSTANTINE

Then let the sword decide. Mine stands ready.

Murmurs. Galerius glares – but sees the loyalty in the room.

GALERIUS (GRITTED)

So be it. Constantine, son of Constantius, shall govern the West.

CONSTANTINE

And Rome shall govern by light – not shadow.

Galerius turns away, seething.

INT. HELENA'S CHAMBER – NIGHT

Helena stands before a candlelit altar – a wooden cross carved by hand. TIRAS brings her a rolled parchment.

TIRAS

A declaration from your son. The edict of persecution is... ended.

HELENA

Then the fire that killed Elias will take no more.

She picks up a worn sandal – her late husband's.

HELENA (CONT'D)
Tiras, I want you to make
arrangements.

TIRAS
For where, Domina?

HELENA
Jerusalem.

He blinks.

TIRAS
That's... far.

HELENA
So was Rome once, to a crucified
man who changed the world.

She gazes at the cross.

HELENA (CONT'D)
He told them it still waits –
beneath earth, ash, or empire. The
True Cross.

TIRAS
Do you truly believe it can be
found?

HELENA
I believe it wants to be.

EXT. ROME – PUBLIC SQUARE – DAY

CONSTANTINE addresses a massive crowd. Banners wave.

CONSTANTINE
Rome shall no longer hunt the
faithful. We open our arms to the
god of peace... and the mother who
carried His light.

He gestures. HELENA steps beside him to thunderous applause.

She holds up a folded map of the East.

HELENA
This journey begins not with a
sword... but with a question.

FADE OUT.

INT. IMPERIAL COUNCIL CHAMBER - ROME - DAY

Helena presents her plans to a panel of skeptical advisors.

GOVERNOR CASSIAN (FICTIONAL, 50S)
Pilgrimage? With imperial funds? To
chase a myth?

HELENA
To chase *memory.* And perhaps mend
the sins carved into stone.

CASSIAN
The East is volatile. You'll risk
rebellion... and embarrassment.

CONSTANTINE (FIRM)
Then let Rome be embarrassed. I've
already signed the writ.

Cassian sits back, silenced.

HELENA (SOFT)
Some truths are older than Rome.

INT. HELENA'S VILLA - NIGHT

TIRAS loads satchels, scrolls, and wrapped relics onto a
travel trunk. Helena folds a simple robe.

TIRAS
What if the land refuses to give up
its secrets?

HELENA
Then I'll dig until my bones echo
theirs.

He stops, touched by her resolve

TIRAS
I never knew a general's wife who
prayed.

HELENA
I never knew a servant who doubted
me so politely.

They share a brief, genuine smile.

EXT. PORT OF OSTIA - DAWN

A Roman galley crests waves. Helena, cloaked, boards with a small escort.

She pauses, gazing out toward the hazy east.

HELENA (V.O.)

Elias once said faith is a wind you
cannot see - only feel against your
scars.

She touches the pendant beneath her robes.

The ship pulls away from the dock.

INT. SHIP'S CABIN - NIGHT

Storms rage outside. Helena steadies herself, holding a candle.

Water seeps under the door.

A young crewman opens it - terrified.

CREWMAN

We lost a mast. But the captain
says... we drift toward the coast
of Judea.

HELENA

Then perhaps the storm carries a
hand greater than Rome's.

She closes the door gently.

EXT. JERUSALEM - CITY GATES - DAY

Dust and pilgrims swirl. Roman guards eye her with suspicion.

A local magistrate steps forward, bowing coldly.

MAGISTRATE

Empress or not, you'll need more
than titles to enter *this* city
without disturbance.

HELENA

I bring gold for the poor and
parchment for the truth.

Unless you intend to arrest one and burn the other?

He stiffens. Stands aside.

MAGISTRATE
Welcome to Jerusalem.

Helena steps through the gate, cloaked – unknowingly entering the final battlefield of her life.

FADE OUT.

EXT. JERUSALEM STREETS - DAY

HELENA walks with TIRAS through winding alleys. The city is dense, cracked, full of clashing voices – Romans, Jews, traders, and priests.

TIRAS
Half the city claims to know where
He died. The other half argues if
He lived.

HELENA
Truth doesn't shout. It lingers...
like old blood in stone.

INT. MARKET TENT - LATER

Helena sits across from ELDER MIRIAM (70s), a blind local woman known for whispered stories.

MIRIAM
You seek His cross? Men have
searched before. Found only dust
and ruin.

HELENA
He was crucified. The wood touched
ground. That ground remembers.

Miriam nods, smiling faintly.

MIRIAM
Go east. Past the cisterns. There's
a place the children avoid.

EXT. HILLSIDE BEYOND THE CITY - SUNSET

Helena and Tiras ride mules into rocky hills. A small rise juts sharply - GOLGOTHA, now overgrown and half-buried under Roman debris.

They dismount.

TIRAS
This isn't marked.

HELENA
It wouldn't be.

She kneels. Touches the ground. Eyes closed.

A gust of wind stirs dry leaves.

INT. TENTED CAMP OUTSIDE CITY WALLS - NIGHT

Helena sketches the shape of the hill by candlelight. Tiras sharpens a spade.

HELENA
This isn't superstition, Tiras.

TIRAS
I know.

HELENA
If the Empire buried truth... then
we must be grave-robbers of memory.

He nods, silent.

EXT. GOLGOTHA - PRE-DAWN

They arrive in shadow. The air is dead still.

Helena begins to dig, just beneath a stone slab. She pauses, running fingers across an inscription barely visible.

HELENA
Latin. Faded...

She brushes away dirt - revealing faint letters:

"INRI"
Her breath catches.

HELENA (WHISPER)
King of the Jews.

They look at each other – neither moves.

FADE OUT.

EXT. GOLGOTHA - EARLY MORNING

The wind howls over the hilltop.

HELENA and TIRAS dig carefully now, the ground looser – rich with old ash and fragments of charcoal.

Tiras strikes something.

TIRAS

Bone?

Helena kneels beside it – brushes the dirt away slowly.

A rusted Roman nail emerges, bent slightly, still embedded in a fragment of dark wood.

She stares, shaken.

HELENA

He wasn't the only one crucified here.

TIRAS

But it's a sign.

She nods – tears in her eyes.

INT. TEMPLE RUINS - LATER

Helena meets discreetly with BISHOP MACARIUS (historical figure), who oversees local Christian gatherings.

MACARIUS

We've heard rumors of your digging.

HELENA

I'm not here for relics to trade.
I'm here for what matters.

MACARIUS

Then you must understand... there are those who fear what you'll find.

HELENA

Fear is the last voice I answer to.

EXT. JERUSALEM - CITY SQUARE - DAY

Word spreads. Onlookers gather at the edges of Helena's dig site.

Some whisper prayers. Others jeer.

A YOUNG ZEALOT steps forward.

ZEALOT

Rome buried Him once. Now it digs
Him up?

HELENA (QUIET, BUT FIRM)

Rome didn't bury Him. Fear did.

He spits at her feet - and disappears into the crowd.

INT. HELENA'S TENT - NIGHT

A small table is covered with fragments: splinters, rusted nails, torn leather, broken pottery.

Tiras lights candles.

HELENA

If the world won't believe in
miracles...

She picks up the nail.

HELENA (CONT'D)

...then maybe it will believe in
what's left of pain.

EXT. GOLGOTHA - NEXT MORNING

A deeper trench now.

Helena lowers herself into it slowly. Tiras waits above.

She runs her hand along packed clay - finds a second wooden beam, cracked, buried deeper than the first.

She freezes - then slowly pulls it free.

The wind dies. Silence.

HELENA
 It's not myth.
 It's memory... waiting.

FADE OUT.

EXT. DIG SITE - GOLGOTHA - DAY

Crowds now linger at the edge of the excavation. TIRAS ropes off the area as HELENA emerges from the trench, covered in dust.

ROMAN PREFECT FLAVIUS (40s, fictional) approaches, armored, flanked by guards.

FLAVIUS
 By order of the city's military
 governor, this site is now
 restricted.

HELENA
 By whose authority?

FLAVIUS
 The Empire's.

HELENA
 Then tell the Empire its mother is
 still digging.

He flinches – but says nothing. He signals the guards to stand down... for now.

INT. HELENA'S TENT - LATER

TIRAS hands her a sealed letter. She opens it.

INSERT: Imperial seal. Constantine's hand.

CONSTANTINE (V.O.)
 Mother, your search troubles the
 Senate, but it inspires the people.

If you believe the truth lies in the dirt, then dig until the stones confess it. She folds it, smiling faintly.

HELENA
 I raised him well.

EXT. GOLGOTHA - TRENCH - NIGHT

A lantern burns near the edge.

HELENA kneels, fingers brushing soil that's darker, richer.

She exhumes a strip of decayed cloth - patterned linen. Near it, a splintered wooden beam, notched and bound with ancient iron.

Then—her hand strikes something smooth.

She unearths a thin iron sign, half-broken. Letters remain:

 "...RI OF THE JEWS."
Her breath catches.

 HELENA (WHISPERS)
INRI.

She clutches it.

A wind rises - and with it, a sound:

SAND SHIFTING... like breath.

INT. HELENA'S TENT - LATER

She sits in silence, the relics spread before her.

Macarius enters, quietly awed.

 MACARIUS
Do you believe now?

 HELENA
I believed before I found it.

But this... this will help others.

 MACARIUS
You've done what no one dared.

She reaches for a jar of oil and begins anointing the wood.

 HELENA
I didn't come to make a shrine.

I came to give truth a spine again.

EXT. GOLGOTHA - DAWN

A low fog drapes the hill.

Helena stands alone now, watching as birds gather near the trench - dozens.

Then she hears it again:

ELIAS (V.O.)
 "He waits not in gold or stone...
 but where pain once nailed love to
 earth."

Tears fall.

FADE OUT.

EXT. DIG SITE - GOLGOTHA - DAY

A crowd gathers - poor, sick, and pilgrims. Helena, standing with TIRAS, displays a portion of the unearthed cross.

PREFECT FLAVIUS arrives again, this time more forceful.

FLAVIUS
 You're turning a myth into
 sedition.

HELENA
 Rome crucified Him. But I unearthed
 what they feared - memory.

FLAVIUS
 Memory doesn't keep the peace.

HELENA
 No. But it stirs the heart. And
 hearts make empires rise - or fall.

The crowd murmurs. Flavius backs off.

INT. CONSTANTINE'S IMPERIAL STUDY - ROME - NIGHT

Constantine reads letters beside an ornate Roman bath.

An ADVISOR enters with concern.

ADVISOR
 The Senate fears unrest from this
 'holy artifact.' They say it's...
 inciting.

CONSTANTINE

Let them fear. Faith spreads faster
than empire ever did.

He studies a map. Jerusalem glows faintly in candlelight.

EXT. BURIAL FIELD - JERUSALEM - NIGHT

Helena, Macarius, and Tiras bury the unnamed bones found near
the Cross.

HELENA

This isn't just His resting place.

It's theirs, too.

She places a small token - a faded soldier's buckle - atop
the grave.

MACARIUS

Rome built on conquest. You build
on wounds.

HELENA

Then let them both be remembered.

INT. HELENA'S TENT - LATER

A desperate mother brings her fevered child to Helena.

MOTHER

They said... they said your wood
heals.

Helena hesitates - then lays a fragment of the Cross across
the boy's chest.

A long silence.

The boy stirs. His breathing steadies.

Everyone in the tent freezes.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Blessed be...

TIRAS (SOFTLY)

...you saw that?

HELENA

I did.

And I'm terrified.

EXT. GOLGOTHA - SUNSET

Pilgrims kneel. Candles flicker in shallow glass bowls.

Helena stands alone above the trench, holding the INRI plaque.

HELENA (V.O.)
The Empire built roads to conquer.

Perhaps I've carved one... to remember.

She kisses the plaque - then tucks it under her robe.

FADE OUT.

INT. CHURCH UNDER RENOVATION - JERUSALEM - DAY

HELENA meets again with BISHOP MACARIUS, now in formal vestments.

MACARIUS
You've stirred the faithful. And
the fearful.

HELENA
The Cross belongs to neither. It
belongs to memory.

MACARIUS
No - it belongs to danger now. Men
kill for fragments of truth. Or
build kingdoms from them.

EXT. JERUSALEM - CITY WALLS - NIGHT

A small skirmish erupts: flaming debris thrown toward the dig site.

TIRAS and local believers fight it back. A banner burns -
"False Prophet, False Queen."

HELENA watches from above, shaken.

HELENA (TO HERSELF)
The Cross didn't divide them. We
did.

INT. HELENA'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

TIRAS tends to her burned hand.

TIRAS
You need to leave Jerusalem.

HELENA
And leave it in whose hands?

She looks down at the Cross fragment. Blood from her palm stains its edge.

EXT. SECRET STABLES - NEXT MORNING

Helena prepares to smuggle the relics out of the city - hidden among grain sacks and cloth bundles. She and Tiras lock eyes.

TIRAS
What if they silence the story?

HELENA
Then we make the story move faster
than their fear.

INT. CONSTANTINE'S PALACE - THRONE ROOM - ROME - SAME TIME

CONSTANTINE receives the latest reports. An ADVISOR holds a scroll.

ADVISOR
Riots near the excavation.
Religious tensions. But the people...
they follow her.

CONSTANTINE
My mother walks through fire.

He lifts a gold medallion engraved with a cross - newly forged.

CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)
Then let the world know... whose
flame she carries.

FADE OUT.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - NIGHT

A caravan winds across a moonlit ridge - carts, guards, Helena's satchel clutched tight.

Inside one cart, CAIUS (30s, hired escort) eyes the satchel - calculating.

INT. MAKESHIFT CAMPSITE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Helena sleeps lightly. Tiras stokes a fire.

Behind them, Caius slips toward the supply cart, knife in hand.

He cuts open the saddlebag-pulls out a wooden fragment.

Tiras hears a sound. Turns.

TIRAS

Drop it.

Caius bolts. Tiras tackles him - they crash into the dust.

Helena rushes over.

CAIUS

You'd bury power like this? Sell it
- rule with it!

HELENA (ICY CALM)

That wood ruled once - and its
throne was pain.

She looks to Tiras.

HELENA (CONT'D)

Let him live. That'll torment him
more.

EXT. EDGE OF CAMP - LATER

Helena stares into the fire, clutching the Cross fragment to her chest.

FLASHBACK - INT. IMPERIAL NURSERY - YEARS EARLIER

A young CONSTANTINE (8) clutches a carved wooden horse.

YOUNG CONSTANTINE
What if I'm too small to be a
soldier?

HELENA (O.S.)
Then you'll be a soldier of
thought. That lasts longer.

He hugs her.

BACK TO SCENE

Helena wipes a tear.

HELENA (CONT'D)
If this is what he must carry...
then I'll carry it to him.

EXT. JORDAN VALLEY - DUSK (PG 25.5)

The caravan winds down through olive groves. Sunlight fades
behind them.

TIRAS rides beside Helena, concerned.

TIRAS
The Cross stirred more than faith.
It stirred fear. Political fear.

HELENA
Then let them fear.

EXT. SMALL VILLAGE OUTPOST - SUNRISE

The caravan arrives under dusty gold light.

Villagers peek out. One elderly woman kneels - hands clasped
in prayer at the sight of Helena.

Word is spreading.

INT. TRAVEL TENT - MOVING - LATER

Helena rides in silence. Tiras sits opposite her.

TIRAS
Still want to go all the way to
Rome?

HELENA
I don't want to. I have to.

She places the Cross fragment into a new box, hand-carved, lined with cloth.

FADE OUT.

SUPERIMPOSE: "325 A.D. - THE REIGN OF EMPEROR CONSTANTINE"

INT. ROMAN SENATE - NIGHT

A high-level session in progress. TORCHES flicker. Scrolls unfurled.

SENATOR GAIUS (fictional) slams the table.

GAIUS

A woman returns with wood and miracles, and suddenly we're all converts?

Laughter. BISHOP OSSIOUS (historical) stands.

OSSIOUS

Not converts. Witnesses.
Or cowards, depending how history turns.

EXT. PALATIUM SESSORIANUM - IMPERIAL GARDENS - ROME - SUNSET

Ancient cypress trees sway. The villa is crumbling.

Inside, HELENA (mid-70s), regal, sharp-eyed, walks alone.

Her royal garments are modest, her posture strong despite age.

She pauses before a cracked STATUE OF JUPITER.

Touches the damaged marble face - a silent farewell.

PRIEST (O.S.)

Empress.

She turns. FATHER MACARIUS (50s), a kind-faced Christian priest, bows.

HELENA

Jupiter is hollow now. Like Rome.

MACARIUS

Your son has moved the center of the empire.

HELENA
And yet the stones still watch us.

INT. IMPERIAL CHAPEL - NIGHT

Helena kneels before a simple WOODEN CRUCIFIX.
Flickering candles cast shadows over faded Roman mosaics.

HELENA (V.O.)
I've prayed for signs. Not for
Rome. Not for Constantine.

But for what I have not seen.

Suddenly - a soft WIND stirs the candles.

A beam of GOLD LIGHT forms... a CROSS, suspended above the
altar.

Helena's eyes widen.

She reaches...

The light vanishes.

She exhales - shaken, reverent.

Tears fill her eyes.

HELENA (V.O.)
He lives...

Even where nothing else remains.

EXT. JERUSALEM - MAKESHIFT SHRINE - NIGHT (PG 27)

Helena steps before a quiet crowd of pilgrims and poor.
She holds up a simple wooden fragment. Torches light the
shadows.

HELENA
I cannot promise salvation.
But I found a memory that still
breathes.

She plants the Cross fragment into the earth. A moment.
People fall to their knees.

EXT. JERUSALEM - CITY GATES - MORNING

Helena departs the city quietly with her guards.

A small girl approaches and hands her a flower.

GIRL

My mother said... you're part of the
story now.

Helena tucks the flower beside the Cross box.

HELENA

I only ever wanted to witness it.

She turns to her escort.

HELENA (CONT'D)

To Rome.

EXT. JERUSALEM - HILLSIDE OVERLOOK - DUSK

Two cloaked FIGURES stand watching from a ridge outside the city walls.

Below, the last rays of sun catch the Roman caravan winding its way toward the gates.

The first figure - GAELON (40s), gaunt, prophetic eyes - lowers a crude spyglass.

GAELON

The old lioness arrives.

SECOND FIGURE

She brings soldiers... and
stirrings.

GAELON

Not soldiers. Witnesses. They will
write this in ink and in ash.

The second figure spits.

SECOND FIGURE

The earth doesn't need another
cross.

GAELON

(quietly)

No... but perhaps the truth still
does.

A bell sounds in the distance.

Gaelon turns away, his cloak trailing the dust.

GAEELON (CONT'D)
Make ready. If she finds what she
seeks...
the city will not sleep again.

FADE OUT

INT. HELENA'S TENT - NIGHT

Helena kneels beside a simple travel altar. The Cross
fragment lies before her.

She touches it lightly, then reaches for a scroll of letters
tied with cord - Constantine's hand.

HELENA
Your empire... and your silence.

She stares at the fire, the cross behind her casting a long
shadow.

HELENA (CONT'D)
You can forget Him.
I won't.

A caravan of Roman soldiers rides toward the Holy City. At
its center:

HELENA, Dowager Empress of Rome. Regal. Worn by years but
fire-eyed. She stares ahead toward Golgotha in the distance.

She is not here as a tourist. She is here on a mission.

BLACK SCREEN.

We hear the distant clang of hammers. A woman's voice - aged,
resolute - speaks.

HELENA (V.O.)
We spend our lives building
monuments to our sorrow.

But faith... faith is carved from what we leave behind.

EXT. PALATIUM SESSORIANUM - IMPERIAL GARDENS - ROME - 326
A.D. - EARLY EVENING

Sunlight bleeds through cypress trees. The once-glorious villa, now her private residence, is quiet - aging, like its occupant.

HELENA (mid-70s), wrapped in modest royal garments, walks slowly among olive trees. Her face holds strength and sorrow in equal measure.

She pauses before a marble statue of Jupiter - its head weathered, the face cracked.

She raises a hand... and touches the crack.

PRIEST (O.S.)
Empress.

She turns. A Christian priest, FATHER MACARIUS (50s), bows.

HELENA
Jupiter is hollow now. Like Rome.
We dress it in stone

and call it sacred.

MACARIUS
Rome is no longer the center. Your
son saw to that.

She smiles faintly.

HELENA
And yet the stones still watch us.

INT. IMPERIAL PRIVATE CHAPEL - NIGHT

Candlelight flickers across mosaics of Christ - recent, rough, placed over fading Roman gods.

HELENA, alone, kneels before a small crucifix.

HELENA (V.O.)
I've prayed for signs. Not for
Rome. Not for Constantine.

But for what I have not seen.

A hush. No sound but the faint crackle of candlelight.

Suddenly - a soft wind, though no window is open. The flames tremble.

On the altar, a sliver of golden light forms... A cross – hovering, just above the stone.

Helena's eyes widen. She slowly rises.

She extends her fingers...

CLOSE ON – HELENA'S HAND

Trembling. Inches from the light.

As she reaches – The light retracts, evaporating into the air before she can touch it.

She gasps. Then exhales – shaken, but not afraid.

She falls back to her knees, hand on her chest.

HELENA (V.O.)
He lives...

Even where nothing else remains.

INT. IMPERIAL CHAMBER – EARLY MORNING

A modest throne room. CONSTANTINE (early 50s) sits in conference with military advisors.

Helena enters, unannounced. He rises, surprised.

CONSTANTINE
Mother... you shouldn't be walking
at this hour.

HELENA
I had a dream. And a command.

CONSTANTINE
From who?

She approaches him, eyes clear.

HELENA
From the Lord. I am to go to
Jerusalem.

CONSTANTINE
To...?

HELENA
To find the Cross. His Cross.

Stunned silence.

CONSTANTINE
It's myth. Buried, if it ever
existed.

HELENA
Then let me prove it.

A beat. Constantine looks into her eyes.

He nods.

CONSTANTINE
You'll take guards. Discreet ones.
And a physician.

HELENA
And leave the gold.

He's caught off-guard.

HELENA (CONT'D)
If I find it... it won't be bought.
It must be revealed. Not owned.

EXT. ROAD OUTSIDE ROME - DAYS LATER

A small caravan rolls east. Soldiers in plain armor.
Servants. A covered cart.

At its center: Helena, sitting tall, eyes fixed toward the
sunrise.

She clutches a small wooden crucifix in her lap.

HELENA (V.O.)
If I die before I see it... let the
world know I died searching.

EXT. JERUSALEM - CITY GATES - DAY

Dust swirls in the warm wind. Pilgrims, traders, and soldiers
pass beneath ancient stone arches.

From within the gates: a CALL TO PRAYER echoes - not Roman,
not Christian - but Hebrew.

INT. CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE - INTERIOR CHAPEL - DAY

FATHER MACARIUS (50s) kneels alone. His worn hands clutch a leather-bound gospel. The chapel is crude - a patchwork of Roman ruins and sacred imagery.

A CANDLE flickers at a mural of Christ's burial. The paint is chipped. Cracks run down the wall.

VOICE (O.S.)
 (whispering in Aramaic)
 The tomb is empty... but so is the
 truth.

Macarius turns. An elder priest, BISHOP ELYON (60s), gaunt and severe, steps from the shadows.

BISHOP ELYON
 You invite an empress to tread
 where even apostles feared to
 guess?

MACARIUS
 She seeks only the truth.

BISHOP ELYON
 So do the coin-makers of Antioch.
 So do the forgers of relics in
 Tyre.

Truth has many merchants these days.

He hands Macarius a false relic - a blackened nail.

BISHOP ELYON (CONT'D)
 This was sold to a blind man
 yesterday as a spike from the
 crucifixion. It's from a Roman
 cartwheel.

Macarius is silent. He places the nail on the altar.

EXT. MARKET STALL - OLD CITY - DAY

A vendor hawks "genuine" relics - scraps of bloodied cloth, slivers of "the true cross," thorns from "the crown."

Nearby, a young boy trades coins for a bone fragment.

From across the crowd, Macarius watches grimly.

MACARIUS (V.O.)
 Jerusalem is no longer a city. It
 is a theater.

Everyone playing prophet or priest.

INT. GOVERNOR'S VILLA - JERUSALEM - PRIVATE CHAMBER - NIGHT

Two Roman officials speak in hushed Latin.

ROMAN PREFECT (40S, PRACTICAL)
 She comes not as a diplomat, but as
 a zealot.

TRIBUNES CLAUDIUS (30S, SKEPTICAL,
 NEWLY ASSIGNED)
 She's Constantine's mother. We're
 not to interfere.

ROMAN PREFECT
 You've never seen a people turn
 madness into pilgrimage.

If she claims to find the cross - thousands will believe it.
 Ten thousand will die for it.

They exchange a look.

ROMAN PREFECT (CONT'D)
 You will report to her caravan.
 Quietly. And you will watch.

EXT. EASTERN DESERT ROAD - MOVING CARAVAN - SUNSET

HELENA's caravan crests a ridge. The sun dips low, casting a
 golden glow on the horizon.

Macarius rides beside her, his face troubled.

HELENA
 You doubt we'll find it.

MACARIUS
 I doubt anything holy survives men.

He gestures outward - Jerusalem in the distance.

MACARIUS (CONT'D)
 That city has been burned, rebuilt,
 renamed.

Sacred ground plowed over by empire after empire.

HELENA

Then we dig through the ashes.

Behind them, TRIBUNE CLAUDIUS watches from the rear of the caravan, silent.

INT. JERUSALEM - SMALL HOME - NIGHT

A blind elder, wrapped in tattered linen, whispers to a room of quiet listeners.

BLIND MAN

I was a child when the hill was cleared.

They say three crosses were thrown into a cistern near the old temple wall.

Someone gasps. Another crosses themselves.

YOUNG WOMAN

Who told you this?

BLIND MAN

The man who helped dig the pit.

He wept as he buried them.

We HOLD on this - a sense of legend reawakening.

EXT. JERUSALEM - CITY GATES - DAY

The city hums with activity. Word has spread.

The gate swings open. HELENA'S caravan enters, flanked by Roman soldiers in plain garb. Locals stop to stare - some with reverence, others with suspicion.

MACARIUS rides beside her, nodding to several passing clergy.

A voice rings out from the crowd-

MARKET WOMAN

It's the Emperor's mother!

OLD MAN

She's come for the cross.

HELENA

(quietly, to Macarius)

I see the rumors rode faster than our horses.

INT. BISHOP'S RESIDENCE - COUNCIL CHAMBER - LATER

A circle of local bishops and priests greet Helena formally.
Among them: BISHOP ELYON, arms folded.

MACARIUS

Brothers, the Empress comes in
peace - and in pilgrimage.

HELENA

I do not come to rule. I come to
remember.

BISHOP ELYON

Then remember that Jerusalem is not
what it was.

The cross is buried beneath layers of ruin, lies, and legend.
Many have claimed to find it. All have sold splinters.

HELENA

And still I will search.

INT. STORAGE CHAMBER - LATER

Helena is shown a chest of supposed relics by a young Monk
Guide.

MONK

This is said to be a tooth from
Saint Peter.

And this - a piece of the Savior's robe.

HELENA (STERNLY)

And the cross?

MONK

There are three... candidates. But
none have yielded proof.

Pilgrims still pay to see them.

CLAUDIUS, standing by, frowns.

HELENA

No coins. No miracles. Just truth.

EXT. SOUTHERN JERUSALEM QUARRY - NEXT DAY

Macarius and Helena inspect the edge of a demolished Roman temple site. A half-collapsed trench yawns before them.

HELENA

You said Golgotha was near here?

MACARIUS

So the oldest texts claim.

But the hill was leveled by Hadrian. A shrine to Jupiter built over it.

HELENA

Then we will dig beneath Jupiter.

CLAUDIUS (UNDER HIS BREATH)

A holy war with a shovel.

Macarius casts a disapproving look at the Tribune.

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(sternly)

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EXT. DIG SITE - OLD TEMPLE DISTRICT - SUNSET

Helena stands over a shallow trench near the ruins of Hadrian's temple.

Laborers dig under torchlight. Claudius watches from the ridge, arms folded.

MACARIUS This is where Golgotha was - before Hadrian's builders flattened it.

HELENA

Then that's where we begin.

INT. TEMPORARY FIELD CHAPEL - LATE NIGHT

Helena prays before a makeshift altar.

She opens a folded letter - faded and creased.

It's written in Constantine's hand.

She touches the words gently.

HELENA (V.O.)

He asked me once... if I ever
believed Rome would fall.

A pause.

HELENA (V.O.)

I told him... yes. But not faith.

The candle flickers.

EXT. DIG SITE - TEMPLE DISTRICT - MORNING

The sun rises over a half-excavated trench. Laborers haul dirt. Claudius supervises from above, arms crossed. Helena stands near the edge, eyes locked on the soil.

A shovel CLINKS against something solid.

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LABORER

(calling out)

Found something!

Helena and Macarius hurry to the edge. A flat STONE SLAB is visible beneath the dirt, marked with weathered Roman lettering.

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CLAUDIUS
Another foundation?

MACARIUS
No. That's not Roman...

Macarius brushes more dirt away – revealing a faint carved cross in the center.

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HELENA
Keep digging.

INT. HELENA'S TENT - LATER

Claudius enters. Helena stands at a table studying a fragment of stone.

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CLAUDIUS
It could be anything. Graves,
markings, debris.

HELENA
And yet you came to tell me.

He hesitates.

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CLAUDIUS
I don't like what it's stirring.

HELENA
You fear ghosts?

CLAUDIUS

I fear crowds. Belief spreads
faster than truth. And rumor kills
quicker than soldiers.

HELENA

Then let us give them something
real to believe in.

EXT. DIG SITE - AFTERNOON

Macarius climbs into the trench with a lantern. He shines it
down a narrow shaft – wood beams visible below, partially
buried.

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MACARIUS

This isn't temple architecture...
It's older.

HELENA (O.S.)

Could it be?

He doesn't answer. Instead, he signals for ropes.

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MACARIUS

We brace it. Then we dig deeper.

Above, Claudius watches. Uneasy. He turns and walks off into
the fading light.

EXT. DIG SITE - NIGHT

Torches flicker as workers uncover more of the shaft. Wooden
remnants emerge – aged beams, rotted but intact, braced in a
triangular shape.

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LABORER #2
This isn't Roman. It's older.

Macarius steps into the trench, brushing off more dirt with reverence.

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MACARIUS
Three beams... laid in sequence.
This may be it.

He looks to Helena – her eyes glisten with restrained hope.

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HELENA
We lift them. Carefully.

CLAUDIUS (O.S.)
And then what? Declare victory?

They turn. Claudius stands at the trench edge, arms folded.

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CLAUDIUS (CONT'D)
A few old timbers buried in rock.
That's all.

MACARIUS
And yet you keep watching.

INT. CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE – SIDE ROOM – LATE NIGHT

The three recovered wooden crosses now rest on linen. Candles surround them.

Macarius reads from a worn scroll of early Gospel fragments, while Helena inspects the wood – silent.

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MACARIUS

One of these may have held His weight.

HELENA

And if we cannot know?

MACARIUS

Then faith must decide.

They look to a dying woman lying on a straw mat nearby – pale, shallow breath.

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HELENA

Bring her.

EXT. COURTYARD – MOMENTS LATER

The three crosses are propped upright.

The dying woman is brought forward by two nuns.

Helena watches, breath held. Macarius raises the first cross – nothing.

The second – silence.

The third cross is lifted toward the woman.

She gasps. Her eyes flutter open.

java

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DYING WOMAN
 (whispers)
 Light...

Gasps ripple through the watchers.

kotlin

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NUN
 Her fever's broken.

HELENA
 (softly, awed)
 It's this one...

EXT. GOLGOTHA - HILL OUTSIDE JERUSALEM - AFTERNOON - 33 A.D.

A wind howls over cracked, sun-bleached rock.

Three CROSSES stand stark against the horizon. On the center cross, the body of JESUS OF NAZARETH, bloodied and dying.

Above his head - nailed into the wood - the TITULUS:

IESVS NAZARENVS REX IVDÆORVM
 (Jesus of Nazareth, King
 of the Jews)
 The sky is darkening unnaturally -
 eclipsed, as if heaven itself
 recoils.

To Jesus's left, the impenitent thief, sneering even in agony.

THIEF #1
 (spitting)
 If you're the Christ, save yourself
 - and us!

To Jesus's right, the penitent thief, struggling for breath.

THIEF #2

(softly)

Lord... remember me... when you
come into your kingdom.

JESUS

Today... you will be with me... in
paradise.

Thunder rolls. The earth trembles.

MARY, mother of Jesus, weeps at the foot of the cross.
Nearby, LONGINUS, the Roman centurion, watches the moment of
death. He's stricken.

LONGINUS

Surely... this was the Son of God.

Lightning fractures the sky. The moment burns into memory.

FADE TO BLACK.

SUPERIMPOSE: 325 A.D. - THE REIGN OF EMPEROR CONSTANTINE

FADE IN:

EXT. JERUSALEM - DESERT ROAD - DUSK

A caravan of Roman soldiers rides toward the Holy City. At
its center:

HELENA, Dowager Empress of Rome. Regal. Worn by years but
fire-eyed. She stares ahead toward Golgotha in the distance.

She is not here as a tourist. She is here on a mission.

BLACK SCREEN.

We hear the distant clang of hammers. A woman's voice - aged,
resolute - speaks.

HELENA (V.O.)

We spend our lives building
monuments to our sorrow. But
faith... faith is carved from what
we leave behind.

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A.D. - EARLY EVENING

Sunlight bleeds through cypress trees. The once-glorious villa, now her private residence, is quiet - aging, like its occupant.

HELENA (mid-70s), wrapped in modest royal garments, walks slowly among olive trees. Her face holds strength and sorrow in equal measure.

She pauses before a marble statue of Jupiter - its head weathered, the face cracked.

She raises a hand... and touches the crack.

PRIEST (O.S.)

Empress.

She turns. A Christian priest, FATHER MACARIUS (50s), bows.

HELENA

Jupiter is hollow now. Like Rome.
We dress it in stone and call it
sacred.

MACARIUS

Rome is no longer the center. Your
son saw to that.

She smiles faintly.

HELENA

And yet the stones still watch us.

INT. IMPERIAL PRIVATE CHAPEL - NIGHT

Candlelight flickers across mosaics of Christ-recent, rough, placed over fading Roman gods.

HELENA, alone, kneels before a small crucifix.

HELENA (V.O.)

I've prayed for signs. Not for
Rome. Not for Constantine.
But for what I have not seen.

A hush. No sound but the faint crackle of candlelight.

Suddenly - a soft wind, though no window is open. The flames tremble.

On the altar, a sliver of golden light forms... A cross – hovering, just above the stone.

Helena's eyes widen. She slowly rises.

She extends her fingers...

CLOSE ON – HELENA'S HAND

Trembling. Inches from the light.

As she reaches – The light retracts, evaporating into the air before she can touch it.

She gasps. Then exhales – shaken, but not afraid.

She falls back to her knees, hand on her chest.

HELENA (V.O.)

He lives...
Even where nothing else remains.

HELENA (V.O.)

I've prayed for signs. Not for
Rome. Not for Constantine. But for
what I have not seen.

Suddenly—a sound.

A soft rushing wind, though no window is open. The candles tremble.

She opens her eyes. On the altar, a sliver of gold light forms the shape of a cross.

Then it's gone.

She breathes—shaken, but not afraid.

INT. IMPERIAL CHAMBER – EARLY MORNING

A modest throne room. CONSTANTINE (early 50s) sits in conference with military advisors.

Helena enters, unannounced. He rises, surprised.

CONSTANTINE

Mother... you shouldn't be walking
at this hour.

HELENA

I had a dream. And a command.

CONSTANTINE

From who?

She approaches him, eyes clear.

HELENA

From the Lord. I am to go to
Jerusalem.

CONSTANTINE

To...?

HELENA

To find the Cross. His Cross.

CONSTANTINE

(in disbelief)

You're serious. (BEAT)

CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

It's myth. Buried, if it ever
existed.

HELENA

Then let me prove it.

A beat. Constantine looks into her eyes.

He nods.

CONSTANTINE

You'll take guards. Discreet ones.
And a physician.

HELENA

And leave the gold.

He's caught off-guard.

HELENA (CONT'D)

If I find it... it won't be bought.
It must be revealed. Not owned.

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Servants. A covered cart.

At its center: Helena, sitting tall, eyes fixed toward the
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From within the gates: a CALL TO PRAYER echoes - not Roman, not Christian - but Hebrew.

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He gestures outward – Jerusalem in the distance.

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renamed. Sacred ground plowed over
by empire after empire.

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Behind them, TRIBUNE CLAUDIUS watches from the rear of the caravan, silent.

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A blind elder, wrapped in tattered linen, whispers to a room of quiet listeners.

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Someone gasps. Another crosses themselves.

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We HOLD on this – a sense of legend reawakening.

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The gate swings open. HELENA'S caravan enters, flanked by Roman soldiers in plain garb. Locals stop to stare – some with reverence, others with suspicion.

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A circle of local bishops and priests greet Helena formally.
Among them: BISHOP ELYON, arms folded.

MACARIUS
Brothers, the Empress comes in
peace - and in pilgrimage.

HELENA
I do not come to rule. I come to
remember.

BISHOP ELYON
Then remember that Jerusalem is not
what it was. The cross is buried
beneath layers of ruin, lies, and
legend. Many have claimed to find
it. All have sold splinters.

HELENA
And still I will search.

INT. STORAGE CHAMBER - LATER

Helena is shown a chest of supposed relics by a young Monk
Guide.

MONK
This is said to be a tooth from
Saint Peter. And this - a piece of
the Savior's robe.

HELENA
(sternly)
And the cross?

MONK
There are three... candidates. But
none have yielded proof. Pilgrims
still pay to see them.

CLAUDIUS, standing by, frowns.

HELENA
No coins. No miracles. Just truth.

EXT. SOUTHERN JERUSALEM QUARRY - NEXT DAY

Macarius and Helena inspect the edge of a demolished Roman temple site. A half-collapsed trench yawns before them.

HELENA
You said Golgotha was near here?

MACARIUS
So the oldest texts claim. But the hill was leveled by Hadrian. A shrine to Jupiter built over it.

HELENA
Then we will dig beneath Jupiter.

CLAUDIUS
(under his breath)
A holy war with a shovel.

Macarius casts a disapproving look at the Tribune.

INT. LOCAL SHRINE - DUSK

Helena kneels before a small cross-shaped artifact. A crowd has gathered.

A frail woman approaches, holding a splinter of wood.

WOMAN
My husband found it in a dry well.
We were told it healed a fever...

Helena takes it. Studies it.

HELENA
This is pine. The cross would've been olive, or cedar.

The woman lowers her gaze.

HELENA (CONT'D)
Your faith is not false. But this is not the Cross.

The crowd murmurs.

INT. IMPERIAL CAMP - NIGHT

A small tent. Candlelit. Claudius and Macarius sit across from each other, tension high.

CLAUDIUS

I was told to observe. To protect her. Not to watch her sift through bones and stories.

MACARIUS

Then leave. She doesn't need a guard - she needs belief.

CLAUDIUS

Belief is not truth.

MACARIUS

Neither is silence.

A long beat.

CLAUDIUS

She's going to be disappointed.

MACARIUS

Or she's going to find it.

EXT. JERUSALEM - CITY GATES - DAY

The city hums with activity. Word has spread.

The gate swings open. HELENA'S caravan enters, flanked by Roman soldiers in plain garb. Locals stop to stare - some with reverence, others with suspicion.

MACARIUS rides beside her, nodding to several passing clergy.

A voice rings out from the crowd-

MARKET WOMAN

It's the Emperor's mother!

OLD MAN

She's come for the cross.

HELENA

(quietly, to Macarius)

I see the rumors rode faster than our horses.

INT. BISHOP'S RESIDENCE - COUNCIL CHAMBER - LATER

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MACARIUS

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INT. SMALL SHRINE – OUTSKIRTS OF VERULAMIUM – NIGHT –
FLASHBACK (REVISED)

The humble stone chapel glows faintly from candles. No gold. No icons. Just stillness.

HELENA (30s), regal but wounded, sits across from FATHER LUCIANUS, late 40s, plain robes, soft voice, eyes that have seen sorrow.

Silvanus stands discreetly near the door.

HELENA

Silvanus says you know the secret of suffering. Is that true?

LUCIANUS

Yes, Domina Helena.

HELENA

Well? What is it?

LUCIANUS

It is a person, Domina.

She leans forward slightly, amused.

HELENA

A person?

LUCIANUS

His name is Jesus Christ. The Son of God.

A flicker. Her eyes narrow.

HELENA

So. You're one of them.

LUCIANUS

I follow the Christ.

HELENA

The Christians... A sect from the
East. Galilee? Judaea?

One of those dusty corners Rome can barely keep lit.

LUCIANUS

They were chosen. The Jews carried
the truth of the One God while the
world bowed to thunder and stone.

HELENA

And now you – a Briton – kneel to a
Jewish god?

LUCIANUS

Not a god. The God.
And His Son, who lived among us,
and died for all... even Rome.

She rises, eyes flaring.

HELENA

Rome has no use for weak gods. Nor
do I.

LUCIANUS

Then offer Him your strength. Your
bitterness. Your ruin.
He can make something of that too.

A silence. The kind that isn't empty – it waits.

Helena turns to go – but not with contempt. Something inside
her has shifted.

Flickering candlelight dances across stone walls.

HELENA (30s) stands, arms crossed. Father LUCIANUS remains
seated – still, grounded, unwavering.

HELENA

You said he is the Son of your God.
And yet... a man?

LUCIANUS

And so He was.

HELENA

That makes no sense. Gods don't die
on wooden beams.

LUCIANUS

Everything human in Him came from
His mother – a Jewish virgin.

HELENA

So He wasn't a god?

LUCIANUS (GENTLY)

He was God, Domina. But He took on
our humanity... so that we might
partake in His divinity.

A long pause. Something ancient and aching stirs in Helena's
chest – but pride keeps it buried.

HELENA (WITH DRY CONTEMPT)

You're well-rehearsed.

LUCIANUS

I've had cause to repeat it. In
prisons. At gravesides.
And to myself, when silence grew
unbearable.

Helena turns to leave. At the door, she hesitates.

HELENA

You said He died for Rome.

LUCIANUS

I said He died for all.

HELENA (30s), wounded and proud, stands before FATHER
LUCIANUS. SILVANUS watches from the doorway.

HELENA

You said He was your God. And yet
He died like a criminal.
Nailed to a cross. Humiliated.

LUCIANUS

Yes.

HELENA

Why didn't He fight back?

LUCIANUS

Because love does not lift the
sword to prove its strength.

(MORE)

LUCIANUS (CONT'D)

He did not come to conquer men –
but to redeem them.

She stares at him, astonished by the sheer foolishness of the idea.

HELENA

That's weakness. Not divinity.

LUCIANUS (GENTLY)

No, Domina. It is strength beyond
empire.
The mightiest empire this world has
ever seen – Rome – will one day
fall.
But the Cross... will not.

She falters. The rage gives way to silence. Then, softly:

HELENA

And His blood was worth all of
this? My disgrace. My abandonment.

LUCIANUS

He took on our humanity... so we
could take on His eternity.
Even your bitterness can be made
holy – if you give it to Him.

INT. IMPERIAL CHAPEL – PRESENT –
NIGHT

Older Helena kneels in the
candlelit chapel. Her lips move –
silently, shakily.

HELENA (V.O.)

He partook of our suffering...
And I could no longer ignore His.

EXT. JERUSALEM – CITY GATES – MORNING

A dense fog rolls over the rocky hills. Sunlight pushes
through, casting halos on the crumbling walls.

A modest caravan approaches – imperial guards, scholars,
scribes. At its heart: EMPRESS HELENA (60s), cloaked in
linen, eyes sharp.

Behind her: MACARIUS (50s), bearded, humble, the Bishop of
Jerusalem – and spiritual guide.

MACARIUS

Many thought you would never come.

HELENA

Many think a crown weighs less than
truth.

They pass beggars, merchants, and pilgrims crowding the
gates. A soldier calls out.

ROMAN SOLDIER

ROMAN SOLDIER (CONT'D)

Make way for the Empress of the
West!

No cheers – just curious eyes. To these streets, she is a
relic. A Roman widow in a land still bleeding from
occupation.

INT. PILGRIM HOUSE - JERUSALEM - LATER

Dust motes drift in candlelight. Helena sits in a simple
room, drinking bitter tea. MACARIUS lays out scrolls on a
table.

MACARIUS

There are three rumored
locations... all buried beneath
Roman temples.

HELENA

Then Rome owes Christ a refund.

They share a rare smile.

MACARIUS

But there is something else...

He unrolls a fragile scroll. Faded ink. Symbols.

MACARIUS (CONT'D)

From an old Judean priest. He wrote
of a vision – three crosses buried
beneath a mound of bones.

HELENA

Where?

MACARIUS

A cistern. Beneath the Temple of
Venus.

EXT. TEMPLE OF VENUS - JERUSALEM - NEXT DAY

Massive stone columns rise into the sky. Roman guards stand watch as Helena and Macarius approach.

A local GOVERNOR (fictional) intercepts them. GAIUS LARENTIUS (40s), regal, dismissive.

LARENTIUS

Empress Helena. An honor. We would have cleaned... had we known.

HELENA

Truth rarely sends invitations.

LARENTIUS

You're aware this site is off limits. Sacred ground - for Venus.

MACARIUS

She's had centuries. I doubt she'll mind a few more footsteps.

Tension flickers. Guards shift nervously. Helena studies the altar.

HELENA

This is where we start.

EXT. TEMPLE OF VENUS - NIGHT

The temple lies shrouded in moonlight. Shadows stretch across its columns.

A quiet procession of FIGURES moves toward the rear - torches low. Among them: HELENA, MACARIUS, and two trusted GUARDS.

They slip past the outer altar. Toward a crumbling mosaic wall.

MACARIUS

Here. The scroll described a hidden cistern beneath this corner.

HELENA

Then let's not wait for daylight.

INT. TEMPLE SUBSTRUCTURE - MOMENTS LATER

A torch flares. Dust rains from the stone ceiling.

The group descends into a narrow shaft. Twisting stairs lead to a chamber half-swallowed by dirt and time.

One GUARD taps his foot against the floor – hollow.

GUARD

There.

MACARIUS signals to begin digging. The group works fast but careful. Sweat beads on brows. The silence is thick.

A SLAM of pickaxe – the ground cracks.

HELENA kneels beside it. Her hand brushes something – WOOD. Ancient. Splintered.

She freezes.

HELENA

(soft)

This... this is not Rome's.

A GUARD gasps, pulling free a ROTTED WOODEN BEAM – notched and darkened with time.

MACARIUS

A crossbeam. One of three.

Suddenly – a CRASH. The floor partially caves in, revealing a deeper chamber.

INT. LOWER CHAMBER – CONTINUOUS

Helena and Macarius descend carefully. Torches illuminate STONE STEPS... LEAD RODS... and SKELETAL REMAINS stacked in a pit.

Among them: TWO MORE WOODEN BEAMS – interlocked at odd angles.

HELENA

Three crosses.

MACARIUS

As the scroll foretold.

But something else glints – a faded PLAQUE near the third cross. Helena moves toward it.

CLOSE ON – PLAQUE

Carved in Greek:

"Iēsous ho Nazōraios, Basileus tōn Ioudaiōn"

MACARIUS reads it aloud.

MACARIUS
Jesus of Nazareth, King of the
Jews.

HELENA'S breath catches.

HELENA
We found it.

They stand in reverent silence.

Then – from above – a distant CLATTER. Boots. Voices.

LARENTIUS (O.S.)
Halt in the name of the Prefect!

MACARIUS
We have to seal this. Now!

HELENA
Seal nothing. Let them come.

She stands, framed by the cross, torchlight behind her –
unflinching.

FADE OUT.

EXT. TEMPLE OF VENUS - DAWN

Roman soldiers stand at attention. PREFECT LARENTIUS
dismounts, fuming.

He strides toward the excavation – where HELENA stands
flanked by MACARIUS and her guards.

LARENTIUS
This is desecration! You break
imperial law!

HELENA
I am imperial law – unless you wish
to question Caesar's blood.

He hesitates. Sees the authority in her gaze.

LARENTIUS
This land has its own laws. Its own
order. You risk revolt, Empress.

MACARIUS
Truth breeds faith, not rebellion.

LARENTIUS
Truth? Buried bones and splinters?

HELENA
If you're so certain it's
meaningless, why tremble?

INT. TEMPLE SUBSTRUCTURE - LATER

The three crosses are laid out, separated. Locals whisper, gather nearby.

A YOUNG WOMAN enters - pale, trembling, carried by her MOTHER.

MOTHER
She's dying. Fever took her
voice... then her sight.

MACARIUS glances at HELENA. She nods.

The mother lays the girl on the first cross. Nothing.

Second cross. Nothing.

Then - the third.

SILENCE.

The girl stirs. Her lips tremble.

GIRL
(weak)
Light...

Gasps ripple through the crowd. Her fingers open, eyes flutter.

GIRL (CONT'D)
I see you.

Her mother collapses in sobs.

HELENA steps back - shaken. Moved.

LARENTIUS watches from the shadows. Unsure what he's just seen.

MACARIUS

It is His.

HELENA

Not because she was healed... but
because something woke.

She kneels before the cross.

HELENA (CONT'D)

(whispers)

Thank you.

FADE OUT.

EXT. ANTECHAMBER - TEMPLE COURTYARD - NIGHT

Larentius storms into a side corridor where a delegation of
SENIOR ROMAN PRIESTS await.

PRIEST OF VENUS

She mocks the old gods, Prefect. And the people watch. If
this continues, the temples will empty.

LARENTIUS

I warned her. Now we wait for word
from the East. If they rule against
her...

PRIEST OF VENUS

You'll have your riot. And her
miracle will rot under stone.

INT. HELENA'S CHAMBERS - SAME

Helena scrubs her hands, stained with the soil of the dig.
MACARIUS watches.

HELENA

Did we find Him... or simply what
we needed to believe?

MACARIUS

Faith and history do not always
shake hands.

HELENA

I saw something in her eyes. Not
healing. Recognition.

A pause.

MACARIUS

A letter came. From Antioch. The Eastern bishops summon you.

She stares into the water.

HELENA

Let them summon. My answer rests beneath stone.

She rises, determined.

HELENA (CONT'D)

We build. Let them try to bury it again.

FADE OUT.

INT. CONSTANTINE'S PALACE - THRONE ROOM - DAY

CONSTANTINE (50s, weary), cloaked in regal purple, coughs as he walks with EUSABIUS (60s, his bishop advisor).

EUSABIUS

Your mother's discovery will move the empire. But it draws enemies too.

CONSTANTINE

There are always enemies. And always mothers. One shapes the world - the other makes sure it lives to see it.

He coughs harder. Blood on his handkerchief. EUSABIUS frowns.

EUSABIUS

You must rest.

CONSTANTINE

Tell that to the bishops and generals. One plots doctrine, the other borders.

INT. IMPERIAL MAP ROOM - LATER

A map of the empire stretches before Constantine. Dots and pins mark uprisings and religious sects.

HELENA enters. The room stiffens.

CONSTANTINE

Mother.

HELENA

They sent word. You summoned me?

CONSTANTINE

I did. Sit.

She remains standing. He exhales.

CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

I'm not long for this throne. When I'm gone, they'll try to turn you – or erase you.

HELENA

Then I'll build something they can't tear down.

CONSTANTINE

Then do it quickly.

They share a long look. Love, burden, resolve.

FADE OUT.

INT. CHAPEL CONSTRUCTION SITE - JERUSALEM - DAY

Stone and timber rise atop the excavation. Workers carve arches. Locals offer help. Children play with chips of old stone.

HELENA walks the perimeter with MACARIUS, both dusty from the labor.

MACARIUS

Every stone placed here challenges centuries.

HELENA

Then let's challenge them all.

She points toward a blank archway.

HELENA (CONT'D)

Here – the inscription. "He was not here."

Macarius nods, moved.

MACARIUS

Every stone placed here challenges
centuries.

HELENA

Then let's challenge them all.

(She points toward a
blank archway.)

HELENA (CONT'D)

Here — the inscription. "He was not
here."

Macarius nods, moved.

EXT. JERUSALEM — STREETS NEAR DIG SITE — DAY

Vendors shout. Pilgrims barter for crosses, fragments,
blessings.

A MESSENGER runs through the crowd, scroll in hand,
breathless.

INT. TEMPLE OF VENUS — MAKESHIFT CHAPEL — DAY

Helena receives the scroll, breaks the seal.

MACARIUS

More threats?

HELENA

No. A decree.

She reads, then sighs.

HELENA (CONT'D)

The Church has ratified our find.
Three bishops confirm the wood
bears holy significance.

MACARIUS

Then it is done.

HELENA

No. Now... it begins.

INT. CONSTANTINE'S PALACE — STRATEGY ROOM — NIGHT

A rainstorm lashes the windows. Constantine sits with
advisors. A map of Jerusalem lies before them.

EUSABIUS

Her find already stirs division.
Alexandria doubts it. Antioch
claims precedent.

CONSTANTINE

Then let them argue while she
builds. The cross
unites—politically and spiritually.

ADVISOR

And if she dies before it's done?

CONSTANTINE

Then I'll finish it. For her... and
for Him.

FADE TO:

EXT. GOLGOTHA - NIGHT - WEEKS LATER

Helena, cloaked in humility, walks alone up the hill. The
temple's bones now cleared. A wooden beam rests in the earth.

She kneels. Presses her palm to the soil.

HELENA (V.O.)

They buried truth beneath idols...
and yet, it reached for the light.

FADE OUT.

INT. HELENA'S RESIDENCE - PRIVATE STUDY - NIGHT

Scrolls and letters flood the desk. MACARIUS pores over them.
HELENA holds a small wooden shard wrapped in cloth - a piece
of the True Cross.

MACARIUS

Edicts, warnings, and now... gifts. Antioch sends incense.
Milan sends silence.

HELENA

Let them send what they want. I'll
send this.
(She holds up the relic.)

MACARIUS

They'll demand proof.

HELENA
They'll demand control. But Christ
wasn't born to be cataloged.

A pause.

MACARIUS
Will you divide the Cross?

HELENA
No. I'll multiply its voice.

INT. WORKSHOP - JERUSALEM - DAY

Artisans carve crosses from olive wood. Others inlay relics
into gilded lockets. A CRATE is stamped: ROME.

HELENA walks among them, inspecting, occasionally smiling.

ARTISAN
This one is for your son?

HELENA
For his soul.

She moves to the next - a larger crucifix mounted for a
chapel.

HELENA (CONT'D)
And this one... for the world.

INT. CONSTANTINE'S PALACE - IMPERIAL BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

Constantine, gaunt and pale, lies in bed. EUSABIUS whispers
prayers nearby.

A MESSENGER arrives with a velvet pouch and sealed letter.

Constantine opens it - finds a fragment of the True Cross and
a note in Helena's hand:

"He carried it once. Now you do."

A tear wells in his eye.

FADE TO:

EXT. JERUSALEM - BASILICA CONSTRUCTION SITE - SUNSET

Foundations rise. Marble columns gleam in the dying light.

HELENA climbs scaffolding to inspect the placement of the altar and where the cross once stood.

She closes her eyes, takes in the moment.

HELENA (V.O.)
We build... not just to remember -
but to remind.

FADE OUT.

INT. BASILICA - ALTAR CHAMBER - NIGHT

The nearly finished Church of the Holy Sepulchre stands quiet under moonlight.

HELENA sits alone beneath the soaring dome, gazing at the stone slab placed above the excavation site.

She holds a worn letter - Constantine's handwriting.

HELENA (V.O.)
"You built what I could not. My
wars ended borders. Yours may
outlast empires."

She presses the letter to her chest.

Footsteps echo - MACARIUS approaches with parchment in hand.

MACARIUS
The architects ask: Latin or Greek
for the dedication?

HELENA
Hebrew. The one He knew.

She smiles faintly.

INT. CONSTANTINE'S PALACE - THRONE ROOM - DAY

A CRUCIFORM RELIC arrives, carefully unwrapped by EUSABIUS. He holds it up to a dying CONSTANTINE, now barely able to sit upright.

EUSABIUS
From your mother. Carved from the
beam. Blessed in the chamber.

Constantine touches it.

CONSTANTINE

She never surrendered anything –
except the world's lies.

He closes his eyes.

EXT. BASILICA - JERUSALEM - DEDICATION DAY

Crowds gather under sun and banners. Bishops, nobles,
citizens. A hush falls.

HELENA steps forward. Behind her, the cross fragment, now
enshrined, gleams within a glass reliquary.

HELENA

This city wore too many names – and
bore too many wounds.

(beat)

Let this place carry just one now:
Hope.

Applause. A choir begins to sing.

INT. BASILICA - NIGHT

Later. Empty aisles. Candles flicker.

HELENA kneels before the altar. She's older. Her hands
tremble.

MACARIUS enters but does not disturb her.

HELENA (V.O.)

I was a wife abandoned. A mother in
waiting. A woman erased... until a
voice rose beneath stone.

(beat)

If Rome forgets me, this earth will
not.

She places her palm on the altar – one last moment of
communion.

FADE OUT.

INT. BASILICA - CRYPT BELOW ALTAR - NIGHT

Helena descends narrow stone stairs, oil lamp in hand. Alone.

At the base: a small sealed chamber, adorned with rough inscriptions and Christian symbols carved by hand – not by masons, but pilgrims.

She kneels, sets the lamp down, and opens a satchel. From it: a final item – a bronze ring once worn by the priest who was executed decades earlier.

She places it at the threshold of the chamber.

HELENA

For the one who first lit the way.

She crosses herself. Eyes closed.

EXT. GOLGOTHA - DAY

A wooden frame is being lifted – the skeleton of a shrine. Workers chant as they hoist it into place. Macarius guides them. Locals gather, skeptical... but watching.

INT. MAKESHIFT SANCTUARY - SAME

Helena kneels inside the unfinished edicule. The cross rests in shadow behind her – wrapped in linen and rosemary.

She touches the stone slab before her.

HELENA

We crucify Him a thousand times –
in silence, in spectacle.
But this time, He rose with
witnesses.

Macarius enters quietly.

MACARIUS

Jerusalem watches. Rome waits. Even
the desert speaks of it.

HELENA

Then let them see what faith builds
from ash.

He bows.

MACARIUS

The Council of Nicaea draws near.

HELENA

Let them debate doctrine. I have
laid stone. That is enough.

She rises.

HELENA (CONT'D)
Bring me builders. Bring me
artists.

If they want a throne – I'll give them a temple.

They step out into the sunlight.

EXT. SITE OVERLOOK – CONTINUOUS

Helena watches as the dome skeleton begins to rise – a silhouette against the dusk.

She removes her ring – places it into a jar of freshly dug earth.

HELENA
Let this be the cornerstone.

Not for power. But memory.

The hammering continues in rhythm behind her.

FADE OUT.

EXT. CHURCH CONSTRUCTION SITE – JERUSALEM – DAY

Dust rises as STONECUTTERS shape limestone. WOMEN carry water jugs. Children help lay foundation stones.

HELENA, now slightly stooped but radiant, moves among them. MACARIUS guides a group of young INITIATES.

She places her hand on the cornerstone.

HELENA
(softly)
This is where it begins again.

INT. ROMAN SENATE CHAMBER – ROME – DAY

A SENATOR slams a scroll down.

SENATOR

She claims to find a dead man's cross – and we're to fund her shrine?

SENATOR #2

She's the Emperor's mother. And the
East bows to her now.

SENATOR

Then the West had better learn to
kneel.

EXT. HILLSIDE ABOVE JERUSALEM - SUNSET

HELENA stands alone. Below, the skeleton of the church takes
form.

She opens a small pouch - pulls out the IRON NAIL believed to
have pierced Christ.

HELENA

(to herself)

Not to rule. But to serve.

She hammers the nail into the wooden beam of the foundation
cross.

EXT. GOLGOTHA - DAWN

Rising fog. Scaffoldings rise above the old quarry site.

Stonecutters, masons, and laborers hammer and chant in
cadence - the birth of a new church begins.

HELENA watches from a makeshift balcony, robes drawn tightly
around her aging frame.

MACARIUS (O.S.)

You do not build monuments,
Empress.

You plant memory.

She turns. He holds an old nail from the excavation.

MACARIUS (CONT'D)

The others want relics to wield.
You... want a tomb that breathes.

She nods, eyes distant.

INT. CHURCH UNDER CONSTRUCTION - NIGHT

Workers asleep in corners. Columns half-set. TORCHLIGHT
flickers.

Helena walks alone beneath the rising dome. She stops at the center – the site of the cross.

She kneels.

HELENA (V.O.)
 If you truly died here... and
 rose... then may every stone we
 place carry that echo.

She places her signet ring beneath the soil. Buries it quietly.

EXT. JERUSALEM – MONTAGE

– The church rises – scaffolding removed, golden crosses placed.

– A Roman temple dismantled brick by brick nearby.

– Helena, older now, walks past pilgrims arriving by caravan and foot.

– A plaque being mounted: "Church of the Holy Sepulchre – A.D. 335"

INT. LIBRARY – BYZANTIUM – YEARS LATER

A SCRIBE copies a manuscript titled: "Helena and the Finding of the True Cross."

He glances at a woodcut portrait: Helena with the cross.

Outside, bells ring.

EXT. CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE – PRESENT DAY
 (FLASHFORWARD)

Pilgrims from every nation gather at the same threshold. Flashbulbs, murmured prayers.

A CHILD places a flower beneath the altar.

INT. CONSTANTINE'S BEDCHAMBER – NIGHT

CONSTANTINE, pale and weak, lies in bed. His crown rests beside him.

A SERVANT kneels, placing a letter on the nightstand – a parchment sketch of the new church.

He smiles faintly.

CONSTANTINE

She did it.

He closes his eyes.

FADE IN:

INT. CONSTANTINE'S PRIVATE QUARTERS - NIGHT

Moonlight spills through a tall window. CONSTANTINE (50s, gaunt, weak) sits at a desk littered with letters, scrolls, and a half-written decree. A SERVANT stands silently nearby.

CONSTANTINE

(reading)

"The Church shall hold custody over the holy sites - and no pagan rite may challenge what is divinely revealed..."

He coughs - blood spots the parchment. He dips the quill again.

CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

My mother changed the map without raising a sword. I will not let it be undone by the next wolves in line.

The servant hesitates.

SERVANT

Shall I summon Bishop Eusebius?

CONSTANTINE

No. Summon my son.

He seals the scroll with wax.

CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

Tell him: Rome is no longer just stone and marble. It is faith, bound to earth and sky. Let it outlive us both.

He closes his eyes. A long pause.

FADE OUT.

INT. CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE - YEARS LATER

The completed basilica gleams with mosaics and golden icons.

PILGRIMS kneel, weeping. A young BOY lights a candle beneath the cross.

A STONE PLAQUE is revealed beneath the altar:

"Found by Empress Helena. For the world that doubted."

INT. LIBRARY - MONASTERY - NIGHT

Centuries later.

A young MONK copies a scroll titled "The Cross of Helena."

He stops, dips his pen again, and adds:

"She was the mother of the first Christian Emperor. But her faith crowned nations."

FADE OUT

INT. LIBRARY - CONSTANTINOPLE - YEARS LATER

A SCRIBE transcribes a copy of Helena's journey. A title etched at the top:

"Relic and Resolve: The True Cross and the Woman Who Found It"

An ELDERLY MONK (fictional) watches over the scribe's shoulder.

ELDERLY MONK

She never asked for sainthood.

SCRIBE

No. But the stones remember her.

INT. BASILICA - PRESENT DAY - DUSK

A TOUR GUIDE leads a small group through the modern Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

They stop at a small side chapel, where a single stone slab remains.

TOUR GUIDE

This is where Empress Helena stood.
Some say the cross was found just
meters beneath this floor.

Among the group, a YOUNG WOMAN lingers behind.

She kneels, fingers brushing the stone.

YOUNG WOMAN (SOFTLY)

Thank you.

She leaves a small token – a simple iron nail – and walks out
with the group.

The chapel quiets.

EXT. CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE – SUNSET

The crowd has moved on. Only the YOUNG WOMAN remains, still
kneeling.

She places the nail at the foot of the shrine, next to the
worn stone.

A PRIEST (60s, Eastern Orthodox) approaches quietly, noticing
the offering.

PRIEST

(pause)

Did you lose something?

YOUNG WOMAN

No. I think I found something.

She stands. The priest glances down, surprised by the object.

PRIEST

You're not the first to leave
something behind.

YOUNG WOMAN

But maybe someone else will find
it.

She walks away, sunlight hitting the stained-glass mosaic of
Helena above the doorway.

The priest bends down and lifts the nail. He stares at it for
a long moment.

FADE OUT.

INT. EASTERN CHURCH - BISHOPS' COUNCIL CHAMBER - NIGHT

Dozens of BISHOPS from across the empire debate in hushed, tense voices under candlelight.

SCROLLS and MAPS are spread across a long table. A COPY OF HELENA'S LETTER is passed between them.

PATRIARCH (60S, ANTIOCH)
She claims it. Says miracles
occurred. But no bishop oversaw it.

BISHOP FROM EGYPT

And yet the people believe it. Pilgrims arrive daily.

BISHOP FROM GAUL

Belief is not canon. We must guard against relic-mongers and legend-chasers.

PATRIARCH
You would deny her? The Emperor's
mother?

They fall silent.

PATRIARCH (CONT'D)
Then we have two options. Sanction
her discovery... or bury it.

BISHOP FROM EGYPT

If it's true, we can't bury it.

PATRIARCH
If it's false... we'll never
silence it.

He leans back. Wary. Calculating.

EXT. CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE - UNDER CONSTRUCTION - DUSK

Stone scaffolding. Sounds of chisels and shouted orders echo as the new church rises from the earth.

HELENA walks slowly among the workers. She brushes her hand along raw limestone.

MACARIUS approaches.

MACARIUS
Each stone a psalm.

HELENA
And every scar beneath them a
verse.

She pauses at a wall being covered in tiles – a new mosaic forming: a cross, wrapped in light.

HELENA (CONT'D)
Do they know what it cost?

MACARIUS
They know what it means.

HELENA
Not the builders. The ones who will
come long after.

MACARIUS
Then build so they can't forget.

She looks up at the rising dome. The sun bleeds orange behind it.

HELENA
Tell them we bled for truth. Even
when it nearly broke us.

EXT. JERUSALEM – OUTER ROADS – DAWN

A hazy light rises over the hills. Dust clouds swirl in the distance.

A COLUMN OF PILGRIMS—dozens of them—make their way toward the city gates. Farmers, mothers with children, Roman citizens, even a few limping soldiers.

A TEEN BOY carries a carved wooden cross across his shoulders, sweat on his brow.

OLD WOMAN
(whispers, awed)
They say the Empress found it...
the very cross.

MURMURS ripple down the line. Some pray. Others simply walk in silence.

INT. WORKSHOP NEAR CHURCH SITE - MORNING

Helena watches as MASONS carve fresh stones. Macarius enters with a scroll.

MACARIUS

Two caravans from Caesarea. A third from Syria. All seeking to lay eyes on it.

HELENA

Let them come. Let them kneel. But the shrine must be finished first.

MACARIUS

We may not be able to finish before the bishops arrive.

HELENA

Then we build through the storm. I want them to see what faith looks like with hammer and sweat.

She runs her hand along a half-finished arch. Dust clings to her fingers.

HELENA (CONT'D)

We don't just guard history, Macarius. We birth its memory.

Macarius nods, then turns as more pilgrims appear outside the stone archway, waiting.

INT. CHAMBER OF EASTERN BISHOPS - ANTIOCH - NIGHT

A CANDLE flickers inside a stone chamber filled with incense smoke. Four EASTERN BISHOPS (50s-70s) sit in debate. Scrolls and maps lie open before them.

FIRST BISHOP

Her actions threaten the balance. Miracles declared without canon, construction without sanction.

SECOND BISHOP

She is Empress. And mother to the emperor. Are we to censure the blood of Rome?

THIRD BISHOP

No. But we must remind her... there are sacred protocols.

The fourth bishop rises, dips a quill.

FOURTH BISHOP
Send the letter. Invite her to a
conclave in Antioch. No
demands—yet.

EXT. JERUSALEM - SHRINE SITE - EARLY MORNING

MACARIUS hands HELENA the sealed letter.

MACARIUS
Antioch. They request your
presence. Urgently... but
respectfully.

Helena opens it. Reads in silence. A flicker of tension
crosses her face.

HELENA
Respect is a careful blade,
Macarius. It glitters... until it
cuts.

She folds the letter and looks toward the half-built shrine.

HELENA (CONT'D)
They fear what we've unearthed.
That means we are close to truth.

She turns back to her workers. The hammering resumes.

INT. CONSTANTINE'S PRIVATE CHAMBER - NIGHT

A small fire crackles. CONSTANTINE lies in bed, pale and
gaunt. HELENA sits beside him, holding his hand.

CONSTANTINE
When I was young, I thought empire
meant order. That a sword could
shape the world.

HELENA
Now?

CONSTANTINE
Now I see... it's what we leave
buried that shapes it.

She brushes his hair back gently.

HELENA

You've done more than most emperors
ever dared.

CONSTANTINE

And you've done what none would
imagine. Found something older than
Rome... and stronger.

He winces, pain tightening his jaw.

CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

They'll challenge your relic. Your
shrine. Even your motives.

HELENA

Then I'll give them no room to
doubt.

A beat.

CONSTANTINE

Promise me... no matter what they
say - finish it.

She nods. A tear escapes down her cheek.

HELENA

I swear it. In His name.

He exhales... and closes his eyes.

EXT. CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE - SUNSET

Stone scaffolding surrounds the emerging dome. Laborers
chisel, stack, and pray between tasks.

HELENA walks slowly through the courtyard - older now,
cloaked in simple garments.

MACARIUS approaches, nodding.

MACARIUS

They say it will be finished by the
next season.

HELENA

Not finished. Begun.

She runs her hand along a newly carved column. Pauses.

HELENA (CONT'D)

For centuries they buried truth
beneath idols. We uncovered only
one stone – and look what grew from
it.

MACARIUS

Some say the world is already
changing because of you.

HELENA

Let them say. I didn't do it for
the world.

A young girl tugs her mother's sleeve nearby, pointing to
Helena.

YOUNG GIRL

Is that her? The one who found the
cross?

HELENA turns, smiles at the girl. The mother nods
respectfully.

HELENA

I only listened. The earth spoke.

She looks toward the rising structure – her eyes mist.

HELENA (CONT'D)

He was not here... because He lives
everywhere now.

She turns to Macarius.

HELENA (CONT'D)

Let them finish it. The rest
belongs to time.

EXT. CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE – YEARS LATER – MORNING

Pilgrims fill the courtyard – Greeks, Syrians, Copts – the
devout and the curious alike. The church now stands whole,
its dome gleaming in the sun.

A PRIEST leads a quiet procession inside. Some touch the
stones. Others kneel.

Among them, a YOUNG WOMAN holds a small wooden cross.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

My grandmother told me – the
Empress found it in the dust.

(MORE)

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Not gold, not power. Just a
splinter of hope.

A child watches in awe as light spills through the dome
above.

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

And still it stands. Even when
emperors crumble.

INT. CONSTANTINE'S PRIVATE STUDY - NIGHT

By candlelight, CONSTANTINE (older, gaunt) finishes writing a
letter. EUSABIUS watches from a respectful distance.

CONSTANTINE

(reading aloud)

You gave me a crown - but more, you
gave me a cross. Rome will remember
both.

He seals the scroll with wax. Presses the imperial ring.

EUSABIUS

Shall I send it to Jerusalem?

CONSTANTINE

To her tomb... or the stone she
moved. Either will find her.

EXT. IMPERIAL COURIER STATION - NIGHT

A RIDER takes the scroll. Mounts. Gallops east - the stars
overhead.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE - MORNING

The scroll is placed on the altar. No voice. No music. Just
light from the dome above.

INT. CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE - YEARS LATER - DAY

Soft sunlight spills through high windows. The altar gleams.

Pilgrims kneel before a section of stone. Lit candles line
the walls.

A YOUNG BOY (10) walks with a blind FRIAR (60s), guiding his hand to a carved inscription.

BOY
Is it true this is where she found
it?

FRIAR
A mother. A seeker. A lioness
wrapped in linen. She defied
Emperors to lift what the world
forgot.

BOY
And what did she find?

The friar touches the stone reverently.

FRIAR
A piece of wood. And the weight of
heaven.

INT. ROMAN ARCHIVES - NIGHT

An aged SCRIBE pens the final line of a scroll: "...and so the Empress Helena bore witness not just to relic, but to revelation."

He seals the parchment. Shelves it next to dozens more.

PAN TO: A narrow, gold-plated ****cross relic**** under glass.

Its worn grain - sacred. Eternal.

EXT. HILLS OUTSIDE JERUSALEM - SUNSET

The landscape glows under the falling sun.

A solitary FIGURE stands at the overlook - robes fluttering in the breeze.

It's MACARIUS. Older now, reflective. He closes his eyes.

MACARIUS (V.O.)
She searched for splinters... and
found a bridge.

FADE OUT.

TEXT ON SCREEN:

Helena's pilgrimage became one of the most sacred discoveries in Christian history.

She died in 330 A.D. – honored by her son Constantine, remembered by generations.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre still stands today, at the crossroads of empire, myth, and faith.