

Lead Me On



And I looked and behold a pale horse and his name that sat on him was Death and hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth

OFFICIAL STUFF

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OPENING: *Play begins in black-out. Angels enter and take places: Angel-1 Stage right, Angel-2 Center-stage and Angel-3 Stage left. Together they light their candles and begin lines.*

ANGEL-2: In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men.

ANGEL-1: Since the beginning of time Satan has worked to shut out the light of God from the lives of men.

ANGEL-2: When the lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come".

ANGEL-3: To destroy God's word and bring all men under his own power.

ANGEL-2: I looked, and there before me was a pale horse!

ANGEL-1: And at times, the world has been almost completely devoured by darkness

ANGEL-2: It's rider was named Death, and Hell was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague and by the wild beasts of the earth.

ANGEL-3: But throughout all ages, God has kept His truth alive through faithful followers of His Word.

ANGEL-2: When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained.

ANGEL-1: And though the torments of hell raged against them and threatened to extinguish their light

ANGEL-2: They called out in a loud voice, "How long, sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?"

ANGEL-3: Those small bands of believers throughout history continued to boldly shine God's light in a world that loved darkness

ANGEL-2: Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.

ANGEL-1: They are our brothers.

ANGEL-3: They are our sisters.

ANGEL-1: Their faith is our faith.

ANGEL-3: As they lived so shall we.

ANGEL-1: Their persecution will be our persecution

ANGEL-3: Their victory is our victory.

ALL: Still today, the light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it and God Himself will lead us on.

(Fade to black)

ACT-I

Scene-I

- SAMANTHA:** Silks. Fine linen from the orient. Sturdy muslin made from virgin wool. Who needs to purchase materials today from Samantha? *(Mr. Gunders enters hurriedly from off-stage left)* Ahhh, Mr. Gunders. Just the man I was hoping to run into today. Would you be needing some fine linen for the Mrs.?
- MR. GUNDERS:** Samantha, I'm in a terrible hurry. On my way into town you know.
- SAMANTHA:** I've got some very nice silks, just in from the distant ports of China. Would make a lovely blouse for your wife.
- MR. GUNDERS:** My wife is the least of my worries. I'm on my way to the bank to see if they will take one of my young pigs as payment this month for my loan. I tell you if it's not the banker it's the shopkeeper, if it's not the shopkeeper it's the merchant, if it's not the merchant it's the wife-- everyone wants your money. It's too much to worry about in one day.
- SAMANTHA:** Which one of us by worrying can add a single hour to his life?
- MR. GUNDERS:** It is my life that I am worried about. Where will our next meal come from if I give the pig to the bank? And I can't afford any of your silks; last year's clothes will have to do.
- SAMANTHA:** Do not worry saying what shall we eat, what shall we drink, and what shall we wear. For our Heavenly Father knows we need them. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto us.
- MR. GUNDERS:** Why Samantha, You're not a merchant at all, but a bishop in the making.
- SAMANTHA:** I would never profess to follow the robes of the bishop or the institution of Rome that pulls his strings
- MR. GUNDERS:** Careful, words as those will purchase you your own robe in the bishop's private dungeon for heretics, and I can assure you it won't be made of fine silks.
- SAMANTHA:** The bishops definition of a heretic is anyone who disagrees with his own fanciful notions or gets in the way of his thirst for power and possessions.
- MR. GUNDERS:** It's a dangerous business, interpreting the Word of God for yourself, the church has the only authority to do that. It is the God given responsibility of the bishop, priest and the Pope to dispense the divine teachings to us commoners.
- SAMANTHA:** No! It is the God- given privilege for all men to read the divine word for themselves and discover the way of salvation-- which does not include a detour to the bishop's confessional or a stop at the Pope's box of indulgences.
- MR. GUNDERS:** Well I can't say I disagree with your dislike of the church's desire to control all

parts of our lives, but only the clergy are educated in the Holy Writings, which leaves the rest of us--

SAMANTHA: *(pulls copies of Bible from cloak)* Forced to share the Word amongst ourselves as best we can.

MR. GUNDERS: Samantha! Put that away! Don't you know you could be burned at the stake in an instant for possessing that?! And me along with you just for seeing it?! Where did you get copies of the Bible? Never mind, I don't want to know.

SAMANTHA: Mr. Gunders, over the years you have bought from me silks and fine linens with your silver and gold. But now I offer you that which is of more value than all your wealth, that which may be worth the very cost of your soul. And it's a gift. A free gift, just as our salvation is.

(Hands him the copies)

MR. GUNDERS: I--I don't know.

SAMANTHA: Do you wish to know God's word for yourself?

MR. GUNDERS: Yes! I always have, but--

SAMANTHA: Then take this. Study it. And what you learn, share with others as best you can. This is what God asks us all to do.

MR. GUNDERS: I will try Samantha...I will try.

SAMANTHA: The word never goes out except it returns full and overflowing.

(A scream is heard from the back of the audience)

SOLDIER-1: Quiet heretic! Or we'll burn you here and now!

SAMUEL: The bishop's guards return with more innocent blood. Go my friend, and God speed your way.

(Mr. Gunders exits stage right and Samantha exits stage left. Soldiers drag three Waldensians onto stage right. Arnis, Captain of the guard, enters from stage right to meet them)

ARNIS: Take these two down to the dungeon. Leave the young flower here with me. *(Soldiers and Waldensians exit stage right)* So, you are a Waldensian? That's too bad. It will be a shame to waste such beauty--to see it burn in the fires of heresy.

MARIUM: Better to burn in your fires that touch only the body than the fires of hell that you will face one day.

ARNIS: *(Pulls hand back as if to slap her)* Watch your tongue wench! Or it will earn you a beating. But you will be suffering soon enough. The bishop has little tolerance for heretics. I, on the other hand, am a more patient man. I could be persuaded to have you released into my custody . . . for personal spiritual counseling.

MARIUM: Released or not, I will do nothing except proclaim till my last breath the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. And neither you nor the bishop will ever change me of that.

ARNIS: I thought as much. *(Claps hands to bring other soldiers on)* Watch her closely. We will see how persuasive the bishop can be with her. *(Bishop enters)* All kneel before the Archbishop *Pious the Fourth!

BISHOP: Rise. *(Soldiers rise but keep woman kneeling)* Well then, what do we have here? A young maiden? *(Touches woman on cheek)* My sweet child, how have you become mixed up with such a twisted group of people as the heretics? How could one so innocent as you be led so far away from God? Come with me. *(Offers his hand. Woman stands and walks with bishop)* I must say, you don't look like a heretic--you are far too beautiful for that. Now, we can have all this nasty business behind us and forget the whole thing ever happened if you will sign this parchment that renounces the heretical beliefs that have led you astray and proclaims our diving leader Pope Alexander the third head of God's true church. And, since our God and His church are so generous, we will even help you start over again *(Pulls out a pouch of gold coins)*.

MARIUM: *(Hesitatingly at first, then with more confidence)* Your words are sweet, but deceiving. I will not recant Christ or His truth. I cannot. You can use bribery, torture, or crucify me, but I will not recant.

BISHOP: *(Angrily)* You scoff at my generosity, then ask me to martyr you?! Has your heresy twisted you into insanity that you desire torture?! *(Calms)* No my dear, that won't be necessary. *(Motions for guards to restrain her)* Guards! You see we found a little something in the woods that may be of interest to you. *(Walks over and stares her in the face)* I will not torture you or try to bribe you. I will let you hold on to your beliefs, but it will cost you. *(Guards bring in a small boy from stage right)* Cling to your heresy as you watch your son burn!

MARIUM: *(Desperately)* No, you wouldn't. You can't, he is innocent!

BISHOP: Do you want to see him die?

MARIUM: *(In tears)* No!

BISHOP: Then recant! *(Brief silence)* Take him and burn him!!

MARIUM: Noooo! I recant! I recant! *(Breaks from soldiers and runs to boy, embracing him)*

BISHOP: *(Walks to Arnis)* You see Arnis, all you need is to know the right motivation. Take them both away. *(Soldiers escort both off stage-right)* Bring in the next one, I'll be back in a moment.

(Bishop exits stage left. Soldiers bring in second Waldensian)

SOLDIER-1: You heretics disgust me. You stir up the church with your twisted beliefs, then you rouse the people to rebellion with your reformation and now you try to win our sympathy by your persecution. I tell you your efforts are worthless! And the price you will pay for your insurrection shall be your life.

WALDEN-1: You can't hurt me. My life means nothing. My treasure is in Heaven where neither you nor the bishop can touch it. What happens to me now is of no consequence; my life has been spent for God.

SOLDIER-1: *(Angrily)* Look! Here comes the bishop now to give you a last chance!

(Bishop enters)

SOLDIER-2: On your knee's heretic! *(Forces Waldensian to kneel)*

BISHOP: *(Pauses and looks at Waldensian with sympathy)* My dear wayward brother. *(Touches him on shoulder)* You have erred. You've made some mistakes. But God, His church and I are forgiving. Come back to us and let us show you the truth from which you have strayed.

WALDEN-1: I'd rather eat boiled tree bark.

SOLDIER-2: Say that with respect knave! *(Hits him on the back of the head)*

BISHOP: You are a prodigal my son. Listen to your father and come home.

WALDEN-1: My only home is in Heaven, a place you doubtfully will ever see. And my only Father is God.

BISHOP: Renounce heresy and pledge allegiance to the Pope and his church or die!

WALDEN-1: My response is to love all men, but the pope is not entitled to supremacy in the church or in my life. I can render to him only that submission which is due to every follower of Christ.

BISHOP: If you will not receive us as brother who bring you peace, you shall receive us as enemies who will bring you war. If you will not unite with us in showing others the way of life, then you shall receive the stroke of death.

WALDEN-1: I will not submit!

BISHOP: We will not tolerate your heresies any longer. Recant!

WALDEN-1: I will not disown the faith I know to be true!

BISHOP: Very well then, die with it on your lips! Take him! His fate is the stake!

SOLDIER-1: Come peasant! I shall enjoy watching you burn!

(Soldiers drag Waldensian down center aisle or through audience)

BISHOP: *(To Arnis)* Pity. The poor wretch blinded by his own pride he can't see the pain and suffering he has brought upon himself. And I will doubtlessly be blamed by his family and friends. Oh well, I have big shoulders. Bring in the next. *(Guard brings in Alpheus who is very scared)* Now, who do we have here, hmmm?

ALPHEUS: My name is Alpheus. I am a land owner.

BISHOP: A land owner, how fortunate. Well Alpheus, it seems you were seen gathering in the house of a heretic and reading illegal and false copies of the Holy Word.

ALPHEUS: Please your holiness, I did not know what they were teaching. I merely went out of curiosity.

BISHOP: You know what they say about curiosity killing the cat and all.

ALPHEUS: But I am your dog my lordship. To command as you desire. Please, I beg your mercy and forgiveness.

BISHOP: And you are willing to sign saying you pledge your undying loyalty to the pope and his church?

ALPHEUS: Without hesitation your greatness.

BISHOP: Very well then...sign.

(Bishop hands Alpheus document to sign)

ALPHEUS: Oh, thank you your holiness. Your place in heaven is assured.

BISHOP: *(Taking document)* Yes, I'm sure it is. Take him away. *(Soldiers take Alpheus away who continues to thank the bishop)* Arnis?

ARNIS: Yes, my lord?

BISHOP: Where are your soldiers taking that man?

ARNIS: To be released, as you have commanded.

BISHOP: Why would I command him to be released? That man is a heretic.

ARNIS: But...he--

BISHOP: I want you to take him to the stakes and burn him with the rest of the heretics.

ARNIS: But sir, he signed--

BISHOP: Oh yes. Take this and use it to start the flames under him.

ARNIS: I don't understand your holiness.

BISHOP: His property is worth more than his penance. Now go! *(Arnis exits stage right)* All things belong to God; therefore, all things belong to me.

(Soldiers bring in Mr. Gunders)

SOLDIER-2: My lord, another heretic from the streets.

BISHOP: Oh? And you are an expert in identifying heretics.? Why do you believe this man to be one?

SOLDIER-1: My lord, we found this peasant leading a small band of farmers in singing psalms and prayer.

BISHOP: Singing psalms? Prayer? That sounds like a worship service and today being only Saturday. Unless the ecclesiastical wardrobe has changed you don't look like a priest to me. Why were you singing and praying today instead of sowing and reaping?!

MR. GUNDERS: Because today is God's true Sabbath. The day He set aside to be holy and for us to worship Him on.

BISHOP: His church will tell you what day to worship and which days to work! Now, who taught you these heresies?!

SOLDIER-2: We found these on him my lord.

(Hands bishop copies of the Bible)

BISHOP: Where did you get these? *(Silence)* I said, where did you get these? *(More silence, then mockingly)* You know, I recently heard the most wonderful remedy for hearing loss. You have someone tie you to a pole and place a source of heat at your bare feet. Next, they slowly turn up the heat until it melts the wax in your ears. The only problem is that by the time the flames reach your ears your dead! Now where did you get these?! *(Holds copies to his face)*

MR. GUNDERS: *(Drops head)* From the Waldenses.

BISHOP: I knew it! Arnis! *(Claps hands)* No sooner do I take away an illegal page of the scriptures than they copy three more. *(Arnis appears from stage right)* Listen to me well Captain of the guard, I grow weary from playing cat and mouse with these Waldensians. Well now, the game is over. Let it be decreed that from this day on the Waldensians are to be regarded by all as outlaws of the nation and outcasts of the church! All true believers are to join together in a crusade against the heretics! Any contracts of business with them are declared null and void. Any loans owed to a waldensian, money or possessions, is no longer binding. Anyone taking possession of a waldensian's land or property, legally or otherwise, will become the rightful owner of that property. And if the sins of stealing and murder against the waldensians is committed, let it be known that full remission and pardon of such sins is granted to the crusader by the church—in advance!!

ARNIS: The Lord's will be done.

BISHOP: One more thing Arnis. If you find anyone aiding or helping a heretic in any way, they too are to be treated as a heretic. *(Soldiers exit with Mr. Gunders)* I will crush their reformation into submission and then I will wipe them away into oblivion. No one will ever hear of the waldensians again. My will be done.

(Fade to black)