

CALAMITY JEN

Written by

Geoffrey Scheer

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geoffreyscheer@gmail.com
(347) 262-0200

BLACK SCREEN

JEN (V.O.)

It lasted only a day. But it was a day that would alter the course of history.

Scenes of hurricanes and flooding fill the screen.

JEN (V.O.)

Two Category-5 hurricanes slammed into the U.S., one drowning states along the Gulf Coast, the other laying waste to every major city from Savannah to Boston.

The images of hurricanes and flooding fade and are replaced by scenes of blizzards and frozen towns.

JEN (V.O.)

While the East and South drowned, a polar vortex descended from the North, burying the Midwest under an impenetrable tomb of snow and ice.

The images fade as we see the destruction of California in news footage, satellite imagery, first-hand recordings, etc.

JEN (V.O.)

Then California - ravaged by fire and choking with smoke and ash - was struck by an 8.7 magnitude earthquake, reducing every major city in the West to rubble.

Fade to black.

JEN (V.O.)

This nightmarish 24 hours would come to be known as ... Calamity Day.

Images switch to rural politicians holding bibles and pontificating to large crowds.

JEN (V.O.)

Many of those who escaped Calamity Day's wrath believed the devastation to be an act of God.

(MORE)

JEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Unscrupulous leaders, hoping to
 wrest power from the people,
 capitalized on this, suspending
 Constitutional law and establishing
 governments based solely on
 Christian faith.

Fade to black.

JEN (V.O.)
 What was left of society collapsed
 soon after.

Images switch to scenes of people wandering the blighted
 streets of America like refugees, encountering brutality and
 sorrow at every turn.

JEN (V.O.)
 As the country plunged into
 lawlessness and chaos, the American
 people were forced to abandon their
 cherished ways of life. A new order
 was established, based not on the
 ideals of our founding fathers, but
 on the brutal laws of survival of
 the fittest.

Fade to black.

JEN (V.O.)
 But there was one group who would
 not be deterred. Staring into the
 deep dark of the abyss, they
 continued to look toward the light,
 forging ahead to meet the
 challenges of this new world the
 only way they knew how ...

EXT. A RUINED TOWN SQUARE - DAY

A cast of scraggly, middle-aged actors performing a musical
 number for a group of filthy, miserable onlookers.

MABEL, early 60s with a stocky build, stands center stage as
 the ensemble struggles through their choreography.
 Accompanied by GEORGE, also early 60s, on accordion, MABEL
 sings ...

MABEL
 "Yooooouuu'll beeeeeee SWELL! You'll
 be GREAT! Gonna have the whole
 world on a plate! Startin' here!
 (MORE)

MABEL (CONT'D)
Startin' now! Honey, everything's
comin' up roses!"

OPENING CREDITS

EXT. A RUINED TOWN SQUARE - MOMENTS LATER

The troupe of actors - MABEL, LILY, JOHN, PATTY & CHOON-LEE - are in a single file line singing their big finale: "One" from A Chorus Line. With GEORGE on accordion, they execute the world's worst kickline.

Standing in the front row of the audience we see JEN, dressed in a nun's robe and habit, watching the show with awe and wonder in her eyes. She is early 20s, blonde and very pretty.

Huffing and puffing, the Players finish their number. MABEL steps forward and addresses the crowd.

MABEL
Ladies and gentlemen ... the
Apocalypto Players!

The audience responds with indifference and faint applause - except for JEN, who wildly claps and cheers the Players on. Standing beside her is LINETTE - Black, late 30s and also very attractive. She too is dressed as a nun and visibly embarrassed by JEN.

The Players bow as JEN continues to hoot and holler. This begins to make some of the Players nervous.

MABEL steps forward to take the final bow.

MABEL (CONT'D)
Thank you, everyone! You've been
great! And until we pass this way
again, remember: take care of
yourselves, take care of each
other, and never stop dreaming!

The Players exit behind an upstage curtain. MABEL fixes JEN with a quick, hard stare, then exits. JEN stops cheering, but she continues to stare at the stage, totally transfixed.

Behind the curtain, the Players gather and congratulate each other for a good show.

MABEL bursts through the curtain.

MABEL (CONT'D)
 Fuck are you all standin' around
 for? Get your thumbs outta your
 asses and start packin' all this
 crap up.

The Players stop chatting and do as she says.

MABEL (CONT'D)
 Chinley!

CHOON-LEE
 Yes, Mabel?

MABEL
 What the shit is going on with your
 jazz squares? Every time I turn
 around you're crashin' into people
 like a bull in a goddamn China
 shop. No offense on the China
 thing.

CHOON-LEE
 I start on the wrong foot
 sometimes.

MABEL
 Well it's distracting as hell.
 Makes us look like a bunch of
 bumfuck amateurs.

CHOON-LEE keeps packing up and does not answer.

MABEL (CONT'D)
 You better shape up, Chinley, or
 you're outta here.

CHOON-LEE
 Choon-Lee.

MABEL
 What?

CHOON-LEE
 CHOON-Lee. Not CHIN-Lee.

MABEL
 You remember your choreo, I'll
 remember your name. Deal,
 Baryshnikov?

JOHN
 I thought it was a really strong
 show.

MABEL
Yeah? You thought that, John?

PATTY
Me too.

MABEL
Really, Patty?

PATTY
I mean, the audience seemed to like it.

MABEL
Audiences know dick. They'd applaud if George walked out center stage and took a shit on the floor.
(loudly, for GEORGE)
Which is basically what he did half the show!

GEORGE ignores this.

MABEL (CONT'D)
(to GEORGE)
Seriously, what back alley abortionist taught you how to play that thing anyway?

GEORGE
If you've got another accordion player lined up, Mabel, I'm happy to step down as music director.

MABEL
You think you're the only box jockey left in this shit-stained apocalypse? Don't go gettin' it in your head that you're special. Y'know, when I was on Broadway ...

The entire troupe rolls their eyes and groans.

MABEL (CONT'D)
... they let us know from day one: no one is special. Anybody can be replaced.

JEN peeks her head around the curtain.

JEN
Hello?

GEORGE

They let you know you could be replaced, Mabel. But the show closed so fast they never got the opportunity.

MABEL

Hey -

GEORGE

Also it was thirty years ago. What happened to your career after that again?

MABEL advances on GEORGE.

MABEL

You listen to me, you dog fart of a polka player! If you think for one second that I won't -

PATTY

(noticing JEN)

Mabel.

MABEL

What?!

PATTY

(pointing toward JEN)

Groupie.

MABEL turns and sees JEN.

MABEL

What in the ever-shittin' Bells of St. Mary's do you want?

JEN

Sorry. I don't mean to interrupt. I was hoping maybe I could talk to you guys for a minute?

MABEL

You're barkin' up the wrong tree, sister. There ain't a soul worth saving in this group of rejects.

JEN

Oh, no! I'm not, um ... sorry. I'm not really a nun.

The Players look questioningly at her outfit, then to each other.

JEN (CONT'D)
 Yeah, I know. It's like,
 (indicating her outfit)
 "Whooo," and you're all like,
 (shrugging her shoulders)
 "Huh?" It's just, with this
 "breakdown of society" thing, I
 find the nun outfit really helps
 with the whole, you know ...
 sketchy guys ...

The Players look around at each other, unsure of what she means.

JEN (CONT'D)
 Rape. It's to avoid rape. If you're
 dressed like a nun, there's less
 chance of getting raped.

MABEL
 Fascinating story, sister Wendy,
 but we've got a long trip to our
 next gig, so -

JEN
 No, you don't understand! I saw
 your show.

MABEL
 No shit? We hardly fucking noticed
 you.

JEN
 (brushing this off)
 Yeah, anyway, the thing is ... I'm
 an actress.

The Players look on, expressionless.

JEN (CONT'D)
 I mean, I was an actress. Before,
 y'know ... the world ended.

The Players continue to stare impassively.

JEN (CONT'D)
 And I thought ... maybe ... I could
 join you?

MABEL
 Join us?

JEN
 Yeah.

MABEL

Join us?

JEN

Uh-huh.

MABEL

Without an audition?

JEN

Well, I mean ... is that really necessary? Under the circumstances and all?

MABEL

Look, Julie Andrews -

JEN

Jen.

MABEL

Don't care. We're not some gaggle of community theater fuckups here. We are The Apocalypso Players. And we don't let just anybody waltz in here and join up. Only real actors make the cut in this company.

JOHN

After they've auditioned.

JEN

Well, like I said, I was a real actor.

MABEL

"Was?"

JEN

Yeah. Before ... you know.

MABEL looks to her fellow Players. They all begin to laugh.

JEN (CONT'D)

What? What's so funny?

MABEL

Let me tell you something, sweetie. Being an actor isn't something you do. It's something that you are. And if you don't know that much, wafer tits, then there's no place for you in this company. Come on, misfits! We're off to the next gig.

The Players gather their gear and begin to head out.

JEN

Wait! I didn't say I wouldn't
audition. What do you want to hear?
Dramatic monologue? Comedic? Maybe
a song!

CHOON-LEE

(walking past)

Sorry, sister. You're very pretty,
but once Mabel makes up her mind
...

JEN

Yeah, I'm not really a nun.

JOHN

(walking past)

Besides, we've already got an
ingenue type.

JOHN indicates LILY, who is pale, sickly and hanging onto
GEORGE for dear life.

JEN

Oh. Well, I mean ... we're not
exactly the same type, but ...

MABEL

(from up ahead)

*"The hiiiiiiillllls are aliiiiive,
with the sound of ..."* FUCK OFF!

GEORGE

(walking past)

Trust me, dear. You're better off.

JEN

But I ...

The Players trudge along as JEN looks on dejectedly. After a
moment, she turns and walks back into the town square. A hand
grabs her and swings her around. It's LINETTE.

LINETTE

I knew it. I knew your were a fake.

JEN

What? I ... I ...

LINETTE

If you don't shape up you're gonna
get us both pinched.

JEN

Both?

LINETTE

Bitch, I'm not a nun either! I'm doing this for the same reasons you are: food, shelter, protection.

JEN

Okay. So ... our secrets are out. Now what?

LINETTE

If you really were an actress, start acting like a goddamn nun. Keep your mouth shut and blend the hell in before those crusty-ass bitches get suspicious and kick us out of their convent.

LINETTE storms off. JEN looks toward the Apocalypto Players as they recede into the distance, then back to LINETTE. Head down, she follows LINETTE.

As she walks off, we see CREEPY GUY turn and watch her from behind a tree where he has been eavesdropping.

INT. SISTER OF MERCY CONVENT - DUSK

Several sisters are setting dinner at a dining room table. SISTER JOAN, the mother superior, enters.

SR. JOAN

Seven place settings, six sisters.

The sisters continue to set the table in silence.

SR. MARY FRANCES

Should we wait for sister -

SR. JOAN

(interrupting)

No. Our sister is well aware of the dinner hour.

SR. MARY FRANCES

Yes, Reverend Mother.

SR. JOAN motions for everyone to be seated. They all join hands.