

THE PRIEST

by

Norman Szabo

PO Box 7-262
Keelung, Taiwan ROC 20224

+886 (0)931 371 477
Szabo@DignityFilms.com

FADE IN:

EXT. TAIDONG MOUNTAINS, ABORIGINE VILLAGE CHURCH -- DAY,
ESTABLISHING

FATHER JOSEPH (45-ish, haggard, driven) walks into frame.
He puts down his suitcase and stares up at the small, half-
derelict building.

INT. ABORIGINE VILLAGE, COMMUNAL HUT -- DAY

Several VILLAGERS, mostly women and old men, chat, smoke,
drink, hang out. A small boy, REMALEG, rushes in. He points
and jabbars excitedly in native tongue. (NOTE: there will
be no subtitles.)

EXT. CHURCH -- DAY

The villagers follow Remaleg into the church.

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

Joseph takes candles from his suitcase, places them on the
altar, lights them. The villagers enter but hold back.
Joseph turns, opens his arms.

JOSEPH

Welcome, my children! I have been
sent to you. My name is Father
Joseph. Ah, I see you do not
understand my words, and as yet
I do not know your language, but...

An excited YELL from an OLD WOMAN. She points -- a big
centipede! She chases it. More yells, laughter, benches
upturned, the priest forgotten.

An OLD MAN catches the centipede. He takes it outside. The
other villagers follow.

Joseph comes to the open church door and sees --

INT/EXT. CHURCH -- DAY, CONTINUOUS

Likelale (aka LEILA; early 30s, a former beauty). Leila appraises him for a moment, then walks away.

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

Joseph picks up his suitcase, genuflects to the altar, and goes to the door to the vestry. It sticks. He gets it open.

INT. VESTRY -- DAY, CONTINUOUS

A litter of empty bottles. A filthy straw mattress on a military bed. Joseph opens the window and the exterior door. He carries bottles outside, comes back for another load. LIDWAN, the village drunk, appears in the doorway.

LIDWAN

Hey, mister! Whatcha think you're doing?

JOSEPH

These are your bottles? I should make you take them out yourself. And you've been sleeping here too? Well, I'm sorry, but you can't stay here any more. This is a church.

LIDWAN

(comes inside)

Get out! This is my place!

JOSEPH

Look, I'm Father Joseph and this is my church. Do you understand? Maybe I can help you find another place.

Lidwan flops down onto the bed.

JOSEPH (CONT)

You can't stay here. Please get up.

Lidwan turns his back to Joseph, smiles to himself.

JOSEPH (CONT)

I'm sure we can find you somewhere else. I don't want to argue with you.

Joseph tips Lidwan onto the floor, drags the mattress outside.

EXT. VESTRY -- DAY, CONTINUOUS

Joseph heads for a trashheap, Lidwan at his heels, all bark and no bite.

LIDWAN

Hey, you foreigner! You can't take my mattress! That's my mattress! I found it! Where are you taking it? You give it back!

Villagers gather. Lidwan grandstands.

LIDWAN (CONT)

See that? He's stealing my mattress!

ANGLE ON: A school bus drives into the village.

INT. SCHOOL BUS -- DAY, CONTINUOUS

BUNI (13, mixed Han/Aborigine blood, a budding beauty still in school uniform) and a handful of other KIDS -- all on one side of the bus to watch the show. The bus stops.

EXT. VILLAGE -- DAY, CONTINUOUS

Joseph tosses the mattress onto a trashheap, heads back to the church.

LIDWAN

You can't dump my mattress here!
Hey, come back! You see what he did?

Kids pile off the bus, run to check out the fun. Leila intercepts Buni.

BUNI

Mom, you don't have to meet me
off the bus!

Leila offers her hand. Buni takes it. Leila leads her away.

INT. VESTRY -- DAY

Jospeh enters, shuts the door. It sticks. He gets it
closed. He kneels by the steel-spring bedstead, prays.

INT. BUNI AND LIKELALE'S HUT -- NIGHT

Leila cooks, Buni sets the table.

BUNI

So they sent us a new
(in English)
'white man priest'?

LEILA

Yes, I saw him.

BUNI

Why did he come here do you think?

She stares dreamily into space. Her mother watches her.