

Heaven's Chosen

by

Ramona Gore

Heaven's Chosen

FADE IN:

EXT. TEMPLE COURTYARD - DAY

Four MEN carry a litter through the entrance of the temple as MASA walks next to the transport with a sword at his side.

The temple is shaped like a U, with structures surrounding the courtyard on all sides except the entrance. It largely resembles Chinese architecture.

They are met by a group of people who are arranged in rows, with CHIEF PRIEST at the front. The bearers place the litter on the ground and Masa pulls back the curtain.

SHIMA hesitantly steps out and faces the crowd.

CHIEF PRIEST

Welcome Heaven's Chosen. We
humble ourselves within your
presence.

Everyone bows to Shima which flusters her.

SHIMA

Please, there's no need for
that.

Chief priest straightens and everyone else follows his lead.

CHIEF PRIEST

I see you still do not fully
understand your position. We
will need to rectify that but
for now, Ashura!

From among the rows of people, ASHURA approaches the front.

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CHIEF PRIEST (CONT'D)

Ashura will take care of all your needs and if you ever want for anything she will get it for you.

(to Ashura)

Take her to her room.

Ashura nods respectfully to him.

ASHURA

If you would follow me,
Heaven's Chosen.

Ashura walks away and it takes a moment for Shima to follow.

INT. SHIMA'S ROOM - DAY

Ashura slides the door open to the bedroom.

The windows in the bedroom are the only source of lighting, and other than the necessary furniture, it is largely bare.

ASHURA

This is where you will be staying. If you need anything else, simply pull the rope to summon me.

Ashura bows.

ASHURA (CONT'D)

I will be taking my leave now, Heaven's Chosen.

Ashura turns to leave.

SHIMA

(Stuttering)

My name is Shima.

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Ashura freezes, refusing to turn around and look at her.

SHIMA (CONT'D)

I wasn't sure if you knew
that since everyone calls me
the Heaven's Chosen.

ASHURA

It would not be appropriate
for me to use it.

SHIMA

(quietly)

A lot of things haven't been
since I received this mark.

Shima rubs her wrist where the mark of the god resides. It looks like two small red stars.

ASHURA

Excuse me.

Ashura exits, closing the door behind her, and walks past Masa who stands guard next to the doorway. Shima is left alone.

INT. TEMPLE CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Ashura walks down the temple corridor lined with pillars.

CHIEF PRIEST (O.S.)

Ashura.

Ashura turns toward the voice as chief priest glides over.

CHIEF PRIEST (CONT'D)

I was hoping I would catch
you. Walk with me.

Ashura trails behind chief priest.

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CHIEF PRIEST (CONT'D)
How is the Heaven's Chosen
settling in?

ASHURA
Fine, chief priest.

CHIEF PRIEST
Good, good. We do not want
her running off. That would
complicate matters.

Chief priest stops, making Ashura come to a halt.
He looks at her over his shoulder.

CHIEF PRIEST (CONT'D)
Do you understand what I am
saying?

Ashura lowers her head.

ASHURA
Yes, chief priest.

CHIEF PRIEST
Excellent.

Chief priest looks ahead and walks away, leaving
Ashura behind.

INT. TEMPLE CHAMBER - DAY

Shima sits seiza in front of chief priest. Ashura
is next to a fountain behind chief priest.

CHIEF PRIEST
You may have been chosen but
we still must prepare your
body. It needs to be capable
of withstanding the strain of
having a god dwelling within
it.

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Chief priest nods to Ashura who brings over a large bucket of water.

CHIEF PRIEST (CONT'D)
First, we will cleanse your
body.

Ashura pours it over Shima who shrieks and shivers.

CHIEF PRIEST (CONT'D)
Only 99 more to go.

Shima stares at him in despair. In the background, Ashura collects more water before dumping it on Shima making her yell out.

INT. SHIMA'S ROOM - NIGHT

The lit candles attached to the walls generate flickering shadows and cast a warm glow over the room.

Shima shivers violently underneath her covers in bed.

SHIMA
(teeth chattering)
May I have another blanket,
Ashura?

Ashura places another blanket over Shima who snuggles into it.

SHIMA (CONT'D)
Thank you.

Shima adopts a troubled look.

SHIMA (CONT'D)
I don't know if I can do
this. Maybe someone else
(CONT'D)

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SHIMA (CONT'D)
would be better as the
Heaven's Chosen.

Ashura pauses in her cleaning and looks at Shima from the corner of her eye.

ASHURA
There can be no one else.
Only one future vessel can
exist at a time. You are all
we have.

SHIMA
Oh.

Shima's brow furrows and Ashura is tense.

INT. TEMPLE KITCHEN - MORNING

Ashura enters the kitchen with a tray filled with dirty dishes. The room is bustling with activity.

A wooden table sits in the center of the kitchen, with stone structures used for fire-based cooking against the back wall. The walls are lined with wooden standing cabinets.

Ashura places the tray on a counter and notices a TEMPLE COOK waving her over. Temple cook starts to load Ashura's arms with food. Ashura's knees bend at the unexpected weight.

TEMPLE COOK
Yol is sick. I only recently
found out, so now our god's
food is late.

Temple cook sweeps a thumb over the eyelids of her closed eyes.

TEMPLE COOK (CONT'D)
May the heavens forgive me.

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ASHURA

(protesting)

I have never been allowed in
that section of the temple
before.

Temple cook begins to push Ashura out of the
kitchen.

TEMPLE COOK

You serve the Heaven's
Chosen, it should be fine.
Hurry!

With one last shove, Asura finds herself in the
corridor alone. Ashura glances at the kitchen
before walking away from the doorway.

INT. RESTRICTED TEMPLE CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Ashura knocks on grand double doors that have
carvings etched into them.

ASHURA

I have brought your food, our
god.

INT. GOD'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ashura steps cautiously into the god's room.

A large mural has been painted on the back wall,
and the room has high ceilings. The GOD, who is
lying on their side with their hand supporting
their head, is bracketed by pillars.

GOD

You are not the one who
usually brings me food.

Ashura approaches the god with tray in hands.

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ASHURA

Yol is sick. I am her
replacement for today.

Ashura crouches down and places the tray before
the god.

ASHURA (CONT'D)

I hope you enjoy your meal,
our god.

Ashura begins to rise.

GOD

Tell me, how is my future
vessel doing?

Ashura freezes.

ASHURA

(nervous)

She is doing well.

GOD

For all your sakes she best
be. I will be needed more
than ever in the coming days.

Ashura has a look of panic on her face, but the
god pays no mind as they dig into the food.

EXT. TEMPLE GARDEN - DAY

Shima stands in a circle of trampled grass.
Ashura and chief priest are off to the side.

CHIEF PRIEST

Now that we have cleansed the
body we must purify your
insides. To do so, you will
need to perform a ceremonial
dance.

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Chief priest hands Shima a gilded scroll. Shima unrolls the scroll to discover it depicts the choreography for the ceremonial dance.

CHIEF PRIEST (CONT'D)

Let us begin.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

Shima slowly sweeps her arms from right to left, but it's the wrong direction.

CHIEF PRIEST (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Again.

Shima goes to crouch down and almost tips over.

CHIEF PRIEST (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Again.

Shima moves her arms in a jerky fashion, almost doing the robot if such a thing existed.

CHIEF PRIEST (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Again.

Shima walks backwards and stumbles.

CHIEF PRIEST (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Again.

Shima tries to spin but trips over her own feet, falling to the ground.

END MONTAGE.

CHIEF PRIEST (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I think that is enough for today. We will pick this back up again tomorrow.

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Chief priest leaves. Ashura steps in front of Shima and Shima looks up at her. Ashura has a blank expression.

ASHURA

What future do we have with
you at the helm?

EXT. TEMPLE WALKWAY - DAY

Ashura walks through the temple walkway with a load of laundry in her arms. She pauses when she hears the sound of flesh being hit. Ashura follows the noise and looks around a corner to find Masa being beaten by a TEMPLE GUARD.

TEMPLE GUARD

(growls)

Take back your words.

MASA

(pained)

No, senior. You think I want
to protect a girl like her?

Temple guard hits Masa with the flat part of the scabbard. Masa falls to the ground from his hunched over pose.

TEMPLE GUARD

Take it back.

MASA

(panting)

She will fail. She has no
chance of becoming the next
vessel.

Temple guard slams the scabbard on Masa's head. He waits for Masa to get up again but Masa doesn't move this time. Temple guard leaves Masa lying on the ground and exits.

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Once the coast is clear Ashura abandons the laundry basket to check on Masa. She crouches next to Masa and runs her hand through his hair searching for bumps. Masa's eyelids slowly flicker open.

MASA (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

Ashura freezes.

ASHURA

You are awake.

Masa slowly sits up and hisses as the movement agitates his body. Ashura backs away.

MASA

I thought if I feigned
unconsciousness he would
finally leave.

ASHURA

Do you need help getting to a
healer?

MASA

It's not as bad as it looks.
He was pretty weak.

Ashura looks at Masa doubtfully but doesn't press.

ASHURA

Why was he punishing you?

MASA

Didn't you hear? I don't have
faith in the Heaven's
Chosen's ability to succeed.

Ashura's eyes widen.

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MASA (CONT'D)

Oh, come on. You've seen her.
You must be thinking it too.

Ashura looks off to her left.

ASHURA

Our god must have seen
something worthy in her. She
is only... not living up to
it.

MASA

And we all shall pay for it.

Ashura grips the grass.

ASHURA

There is nothing that can be
done for it unless...

Masa looks at her curiously.

MASA

Unless?

Ashura hesitates for a second.

ASHURA

Unless she died.

MASA

That would be blasphemy.

Ashura gives Masa a withering stare.

ASHURA

As if you have not already
committed it.

MASA

(short)

I know what my actions are.

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Masa looks at Ashura consideringly.

MASA (CONT'D)
How would you do it?

ASHURA
Do what?

MASA
Kill her.

ASHURA
Was your head hit too hard?
Maybe I should take you to a
healer after all.

MASA
You wouldn't have said
anything if you hadn't
thought about it before.

ASHURA
Thoughts and actions are two
very different things.

MASA
So you admit it.

Ashura begins to stand.

MASA (CONT'D)
Wait, wait. Don't leave. If
you wish the Heaven's Chosen
dead then I am your best
chance for gaining an ally.
Think about it.

Ashura pauses and looks at him consideringly. She
sits seiza on the ground.

ASHURA
Alright. Here is my idea.

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INT. TEMPLE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Ashura trails behind Shima as they walk down a hallway. Masa walks past them and his hand brushes Ashura's hand. Masa slips something into it. She grips the item tight.

Chief priest approaches Ashura and Shima, making them stop.

CHIEF PRIEST

Heaven's Chosen, there is something I would like to discuss with you.

SHIMA

Of course, chief priest.

Shima and chief priest start to walk away. Ashura goes to follow but chief priest turns, putting a hand out stopping her.

CHIEF PRIEST

Alone.

Ashura nods, respectfully.

ASHURA

Understood, chief priest.

Ashura watches them walk away before opening her hand and seeing what's been put there. It is a note telling her where to meet Masa. She gives Shima and chief priest one more look before taking off.

INT. TEMPLE RECESS - MOMENTS LATER

Ashura ducks into a recess where Masa is already waiting.

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MASA

Are you sure you want to do
this? I'm fine with doing it.

ASHURA

No, it was my idea, so I
should be the one to kill
her. I will accept
responsibility and suffer the
consequences.

Masa looks skeptical but hands Ashura a dagger
anyway.

MASA

Remember, you need to stab
her cleanly or else she'll
start screaming and everyone
will come running. I can only
keep so many people away.

Ashura narrows her eyes at him.

ASHURA

Yes, I know.

Masa raises his hands defensively before walking
away.

MASA (O.S.)

It's all on you.

Ashura unsheathes the dagger partially and
stares at her reflection in the blade.

ASHURA

(softly)

I only hope people will
understand why.

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INT. SHIMA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ashura slides open the door to Shima's room and creeps in, dagger clasped in hand. Shima is already sleeping in corpse position.

Asura carefully makes her way over to the bed.

She stands next to it and raises the dagger over Shima.

Ashura breathes heavily, dagger raised, but hesitates.

She tightens her grip and goes to slam the dagger into Shima's chest.

The dagger stops and a choking sound can be heard.

Ashura looks down at the hand in her chest in shock as blood streams out around it.

Ashura weakly drops the dagger and the hand leaves her chest. She collapses to the ground in a heap, dead.

"Shima" examines her blood-coated hand but her eyes look different. They are the eyes of the god.

"Shima" gets up and steps over Ashura's body. "Shima" slides open the door and exits, leaving a bloody handprint behind.

FADE OUT:

