

## A Girl in Black, Part III

Michael Cacoyannis, Dir. (1956)

The next morning, from above, we see the port with its curved dock. Tethered boats roll gently in the shadowed water. In the background, the sun shines on the white houses. Panagos (Stephanos Stratigos), a fisherman, lounges in his boat. Lazily, he baits a hook, singing to himself a traditional song “My Little Sea.”

Someone calls out to him, “Hello, Panagos!”

The fisherman answers, “Hey, fella!”

It's Aristeidis (Nikos Fermas), known to his friends as ‘Ari.’ We've seen him before: when Pavlos and Antoni stepped onto the dock, he popped up and suggested they stay at Froso's house. In the village, he somehow is seemingly everywhere and knows everyone and everything.

Squatting down by the boat, he says, “Mitso's got wind of something. Some kid recognized you by your shirt.” Apparently the fisherman was the one with Froso in the bushes.

Panagos doesn't give a hoot. “So what? You're scaring me! Someone hide me, quick!”

The two men laugh uproariously.

A rowboat approaches. In the prow stands another fisherman, Christos (Giorgos Foundas), a cigarette between his lips. His white short-sleeved shirt is unbuttoned almost to the waist, and the sleeves are rolled up past the elbow, to reveal his muscles.

Leaping easily onto the dock, he asks, “What's the joke, men?”

“We were talking about Froso,” explains Ari.

“Old hens make good broth” Christos replies, as Panagos joins them on the dock. The three men laugh.

Christos offers the men cigarettes – an expensive item for people of their class – and when they accept, he comments, “You don't say no to a cigarette, eh?”

“What does her stuck-up daughter have to say now?”

“What can she say?” asks Panagos.

“Her turn will come... you wait...” mutters Christos.

“Lay off, Christos,” says Ari, with a warning look.

“Teach her to treat us like dirt,” replies Christos bitterly.

The camera shows us Panagos' broad grin as he says, “Get used to the idea: you're not her type.”

“He's always hanging around her house,” Ari reports.

“No wisecracks from you,” complains Christos, showing his annoyance by yanking Ari's hat over his eyes.

Ari tells where Marina is at that moment: “She's at Mrs. Betsou's helping her with some curtains.”

Panagos retorts, “Mr. Know-It-All!” Aristeidis nods at what he chooses to interpret as a compliment.

“How about a little fun?” proposes Christos. “Where's the gang?”

Naturally Ari knows exactly where the gang is: “At the coffee house.”

Watched warily by Aris, Christos begins to walk slowly away. He bears down on the camera, his upper body gradually filling the frame until, in extreme close-up, he seems to be an unstoppable force, an image of menace and foreboding. When he has filled the frame completely, he stops walking and emits

a piercing whistle to summon his friends at the coffee house. Sure enough, one of them whistles back in response.

A long shot shows the brick buildings bordering the dock. Outside the coffee houses, figures sit at small tables, chatting. In the foreground, chairs are stacked beside extra tables, in anticipation of the evening, when the street will be crowded with people.

The camera returns to Christos, as he stops to say, “We’re going serenading tonight, by moonlight.”

“Shall we invite the Athenians?” asks Ari.

“No, it’s not their style.”

Panagos comments, “Softies!”

As Christos sets off again, Panagos calls out, “Hey, Christos!” With a mocking smile, he asks, “Does she treat them like dirt, too?”

Laughing, he adds: “Or will the city boys get her?”

Christos shoots him a threatening look, turns, and walks away.

“He’s really pissed off,” Panagos says, pleased with his taunts. He casts his fishing line into the water. The camera shows us the spot where the line lands, as ripples spread out, and it lingers until the water has completely calmed.

Through translucent curtains, we see Marina at Mrs. Betsou’s window, as women’s voices harmonize on a folk song offscreen, the same song that Panagos sang lounging in his boat earlier. She adjusts the curtains as they billow in the breeze. Hearing laughter outside, she looks down. It’s Christos, wearing the same unbuttoned shirt, with two friends. Pacing back and forth on the dock, he looks up at Marina in the window.

From outside, we see Mrs. Betsou join Marina at the window, framed by the wooden shutters. They look down briefly through the gauzy curtains at the three men.

We hear Mrs. Betsou say, “Thank you, Marina.”

Marina responds, “Good night.”

The women walk away from the window and the camera pans down to the front door at street level, where Marina emerges, a basket in her hand.

Seeing her, Christos looks to his right and sends a piercing whistle. The camera pans quickly to a man dressed similarly in a white shirt, partly unbuttoned with rolled sleeves. Hearing the signal, he also looks to his right and whistles loudly.

Much as the little boys had gathered to taunt Mitso, these men have their way to summon the group. Soon the wolfpack will be on the prowl. But it looks like Panagos will not be among them. He is still sitting at his boat – from which he may not have moved since morning – and he is the next one in the chain. He’s expected to pass the signal along, but he just puckers his lips and blows through them lightly, not emitting much of a sound at all. Then he smiles good-naturedly; he’s not participating in this foolishness.

A figure emerges from a coffee house: it’s Mitso. He stares angrily at Panagos – the man who dishonored his mother, and thus the entire family. Panagos smiles back, seeming entirely at ease.

The three men who were loitering in front of the house where Marina was working are now following close behind her, as she walks with her basket. When she quickens her pace, the men do the same.

“Hey, miss!”

One of them asks sarcastically, “Who’s this? Do you know her?”

“It’s Froso’s daughter.”

“Big Froso? Oooh!”

“What are we waiting for?” one asks, in a loud voice.

“We’re not good enough for her.”

“What a doll!”

“Talk to us even if you don’t love us!”

Marina continues down the street, walking past tables set out in front of coffee houses. Way ahead of her, three members of Christos’ gang are seated at a table. When they see her approaching, they get up and walk toward her to block her way.

“Why isn’t she talking to us?” one asks.

“She’s scared of her mother.”

They block her path, but she somehow finds her way past them, and they fall in behind, with Christos and his friends. Now there are six men harassing her. She is walking as quickly as she can.

“What’s your hurry, baby?”

“Let the Athenians wait.”

A close-up of her face reveals her terror. Bystanders in the street do nothing to assist her.

A close-up shows Christos with his arm over the shoulder of a friend. They’re delighted to be terrorizing this woman. They seem to be exulting in their power.

By now, Marina is practically running. Another long shot shows the phalanx of white-shirted men behind her and tranquil white houses on the mountainside in the background. People sit at tables outside the coffee houses, but no one will help her.

Meanwhile, Mitso is approaching Panagos. He reaches into his pocket and pulls something out. We hear a loud click as he opens it. It’s a knife.

Panagos jumps up and grabs Mitso’s arm. They briefly struggle, but Panagos, laughing, easily overpowers the younger man.

In close-up, we see Mitso’s fingers clenched around the knife, while Panagos’ strong hands grasp his wrist. The knife falls right out of Mitso’s hand and clatters to the ground.

As if that weren’t humiliation enough, Panagos strikes him hard, knocking him off his feet.

Marina, meanwhile, is still being pursued by the men.

“How’s Froso?” one asks.

“Say hi to the Athenians from me,” says Christos.

She glances back as she desperately keeps up a fast pace.

Mitso is back on his feet, but Panagos has him in a headlock. A small crowd of boys and men watches as Panagos pulls his hair and then knocks him back to the ground.

Mitso lies flat on his back, his face bloodied. He starts to sit up, and in the back of the shot we see his sister approaching, followed by the tormenting men. Mitso falls back down onto the ground.

As Marina notices her brother sprawled on the ground, we see her shocked face in close-up. She runs to him. The group that formed to watch the fight still stares attentively at his unmoving body.

Marina throws her basket on the ground, sits down and cradles Mitso's head in her arms. Her pursuers join the crowd of onlookers.

Panting and gasping, she looks around for a sympathetic face, but finally realizes there is none. "Leave us alone!" she cries. "What have we done to you?"

A police officer (Thanasis Veggos) arrives and asks, "What's going on?"

Someone says, "A fight. Panagos and Mitso."

In his defense, Panagos insists, "He pulled a knife on me." He hands the knife to the policeman.

"You're lying!" accuses Marina, still cradling her brother's head.

The policeman asks, "Is this your knife, Mitso?"

Mitso, his face battered, can barely open his swollen eyes. He sits up. "Yes," he admits.

He struggles to stand, as voices from the crowd call out: "Lock him up!" "The bastard!"

On his feet at last, he stares down at the ground, humiliated and embarrassed.

The policeman tells Panagos and Mitso, "You both come with me. Shame on you guys!"

As he leads them away, Marina follows, but Mitso turns to her, saying, "You go home."

"I'll go with you."

Mitso might have felt powerless a moment ago, but he uses this opportunity to save a little face.

"Home, I said," he insists. Wordlessly, Marina obeys.

As Marina leans down to pick up her basket from the ground, the men in the crowd watch silently. No one lifts a finger to help her, no one.

She picks up the basket and the men clear a path for her to leave.