

## **A Girl in Black, Part V**

Michael Cacoyannis, Dir. (1956)

A dissolve takes us from the taverna to Marina at home. She puts a votive candle into an oil lamp hanging on a shrine with a small portrait of Jesus.

Gazing up at the shrine, she crosses herself. At the sound of someone entering the house, she turns, and the reflection of the candle reveals the longing in her face.

Listening to the hushed sounds of the visitors as they try not to disturb the other residents, Marina walks across the room and, in her pretty white nightgown, lies back slowly on her bed. The glow of light is on her the whole time. Lips parted, she looks up at her ceiling as though she could see the men – or at least Pavlos – if only she tried hard enough.

Christos' gang strolls down the dark street, creating beautiful harmonies. They have come to serenade Marina. Accompanied by a guitar, they sing “Wake Up, It’s Dawning” – a romantic folk song meant to be sung under the balconies of the beloved or at weddings.

*Wake up, wake up, it's dawning.  
Don't you hear the birds singing?  
Wake up, wake up, or they'll say  
That we spent the night together.  
So, I leave you with a goodnight  
In this bed, oh, goddess  
I only ask you of one favor:  
To remember me sometimes.*

The singers gather in a small cluster outside the house. Shining a small flashlight across the facade, they finally find Marina’s room, where the shutters are wide open.

But wait! It’s not her room at all. Pavlos steps to the window and peers out. He turns into the room, whispering, “Antoni, want a laugh?”

As Antoni rouses himself and gazes out the window, Pavlos fetches a jug of water. Antoni put his hand on his arm. “What are you doing?!” he asks, pleading, “Come away, you idiot!” But Pavlos pushes him away and, leaning out the window, pours the water on the heads of the men below. He laughs hysterically at their howls of anger.

The sea shimmers in the morning sun. The Athenians are in a row boat on the calm water. Pavlos dives in.

He seems to be a strong swimmer. After a moment, he turns and waves.  
“See you at lunchtime!” yells Antoni.  
“Bye!” Pavlos turns and swims towards the shore.

Christos and his men wait on the big rocks by the water's edge. When Pavlos comes into view, Christos throws a ball into the water and they all dive in, sending up great splashes.

The men surround Pavlos and start to throw the ball at him, hard.

Moving closer, they splash him as hard as they can. Disoriented, he shakes his head wildly to escape the onrush of water, gasping for breath.

On land, a group of small girls watch and laugh, not understanding the gravity of the situation. But an older girl with braids stands up and says, "What are they doing? They'll drown him!" She runs down to the waterside in her white polka-dot dress, and the little girls follow.

She yells down, "Leave him alone! You'll drown him!" The water is a great swirl of foam as the men torment Pavlos.

In an expert composition of lines, light, and shade, we see Mimi's mom, who likes to hang out by the water, as we know from an earlier scene. Alarmed by what is happening below and fearful for her son, she calls out, "Who's there? Mimi!"

But Mimi pops up right behind her. "I'm right here, Mom!" he says. "Stop yelling!"

At last, Christos and his men disperse. They swim away, while Pavlos, exhausted, continues to the shore. As he climbs the ladder out of the water, the girl with braids reaches down to give him a hand.

At the house, Marina leans out of a window, shaking a white sheet in the bright sun. Mitso emerges out the front door, a hat in his hand. We see him walk toward the camera, looming larger in the shot. When he fills the right edge of the frame, he turns and looks up at Marina, who returns his gaze.

Out on the street, walking home, Pavlos is surrounded by small children, who laugh and shout, seemingly delighted to see him. It seems that he's been giving them candy. Continuing on his way, he crosses paths with Mitso, greeting him briefly. Mitso stops and stares back at him as he walks on.

As Pavlos passes, a woman with a white headscarf is looking out her window and chatting about the serenade incident with a man standing in the shade across the street: "They say he was dead drunk. Rowdy lot! That will teach us not to take strangers in."

Inside the house, Marina is making Pavlos' bed. Behind her, we see slots of sunlight through broken shutters.

She hears a squeak as the door opens and looks up, startled. Pavlos is surprised to see her too. "Good morning," he says with a smile, closing the door behind him.

She looks down modestly, saying, "Good morning." Dropping the sheet from her hands, she starts to leave the room.

"Don't mind me, please," he insists.

He walks over to the bureau and hangs his towel on a hook mounted on the wall, his eyes fixed on her. Then he pours some water – from the white serenade-night pitcher – into a basin on the bureau. We

can see his reflection in the mirror. She continues to make the bed, smoothing the covers, and glances over at him.

In the mirror, he is watching her, too. He washes his hands and dries them, observing her closely.

The bed is made, and she walks toward the door.

“Don’t go,” Pavlos says.

“I must.” As she continues walking, he moves closer.

“You know I’ve barely heard your voice,” he says gently. It’s true; she’s hardly spoken. “You let me do all the talking.”

“What’s there to say?”

“Anything.” He steps behind her as the camera moves in. “About your life; your dreams. You must have dreams.”

“I’ve learned not to.”

The camera moves in even closer.

“You’re too young to be so bitter. Why don’t you tell me about it? You’ll feel relieved. We’re friends, aren’t we?” She looks down, without speaking. “Don’t you trust me?”

“Yes.”

“Look me in the eyes and say it.”

She turns slowly to face him. “Yes,” she says, eyes locked on his.

He leans closer and kisses her passionately. She does not flinch. Afterward, she lays her head on his shoulder, seeming relaxed, contented.

But suddenly anguish contorts her face. “Dear God!”

“What is it?”

“You mustn’t love me!”

“Why not?” he asks “Would you prefer to be alone?”

“No! But it’s all so difficult. I’m scared they’ll find out and something bad will happen.”

“Nothing bad will happen. Love is joy.”

“Not in this house.”

She steps away from him, facing the shuttered window. “We’re hounded by shame... hate... death...” Walking to the head of the bed where the portrait of her sister Niki hangs, she asks, “Do you have a sister?”

“Yes.”

“Is she pretty?” Marina asks.

“Quite.”

She lowers her gaze. “Mine wasn’t... poor darling. ‘No, you are,’ I’d tell her. ‘You’ve got a pretty smile.’ And she’d say, ‘Fortunately, you’re pretty enough for the two of us.’ and she’d kiss me.”

Approaching, he puts his hand on her bowed head. She looks up at him. “It’s terrible to die because you’re plain, isn’t it?”

“How did she die?”

As sad guitar music swells in the background, Marina moves away. “She drowned.”

“Drowned? When?” He reclines on the bed, and she sits down, leaving the bars of the bed frame between them.

“A year ago. She’d left her clothes folded on the beach, as though she’d gone swimming. People said it was an accident... But I know.” She looks over at him. “She was in love.”

“With whom?”

“One of them. Christos.”

“What about him?” asks Pavlos.

“He didn’t love her. He just led her on so that...”

“What?”

“So that he could keep seeing us both. One day he asked to see me. My sister was in the next room. We were glad because we thought he’d come to propose to her... When he said he loved *me* and I threw him out, he shouted, ‘Did you think I could ever love that –’”

He puts his hand on her shoulder. “Don’t...”

“No, I’ll say it. ‘That freak. She’s...’ He said more. Loudly. In a loud voice. When I went back to Niki’s room, she didn’t say a word.”

“A week later, she was dead.” Marina and Pavlos stand up now, face to face. “Three months after she died, he asked me to marry him. That man! Since then, they won’t leave me alone.”

He strokes her hair. “Marina, my love.”

“If only we could be unknown and live without fear. For a day... just time enough for a walk. It’s not too much to ask.”

“We’ll have our walk.”