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## Guardians of Virtue

Tamsen Maloy

*Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY*

Tasia Jensen

*Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY*

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## ***Guardians of Virtue* Treatment**

### **Tamsen Maloy & Tasia Jensen**

#### **Synopsis**

*Guardians of Virtue* explores the patriarchal structure of the Mormon church and how it facilitates and covers up sexual abuse--especially of women. It follows Tamsen Maloy's journey as she investigates the church of her upbringing to better understand how the church deals with--or doesn't deal with--sexual assault.

#### **Treatment**

The film opens with Colleen Payne Dietz looking through photos of her time at Brigham Young University. She pulls out her journal and explains there is only one entry about the time she was raped by a Mormon man while she was in college.

A shot of Colleen's journal entry fades into a church leader saying sexual sin is akin to murder followed by another church leader saying women need to guard their virtue and remain pure.

After the title card, we meet Tamsen. She is driving down a street and introduces herself through voiceover. She visits the church she attended as a teenager and describes Utah, Salt Lake City, and her relationship with Mormonism. She also describes her mission for the documentary, which is to explore sexual assault in Mormonism.

Beth Johnson is introduced. Beth is Tamsen's mom and discusses how she feels about bishop's interviews. Beth is baking.

A short montage shows Tamsen explaining some of the lessons she learned at church regarding sexual purity. She says she learned that to be impure makes one a licked cupcake, a chewed piece of gum. She learned that a virtuous woman is like rubies. All these lessons imply that a woman's worth is determined by her remaining virginal.

Act one ends with comments from a Mormon historian and a Mormon psychologist. Each talks about assault through their respective lenses. The final shots of act one are of Tamsen in a Mormon chapel while organ music plays.

Act two opens with a return to Colleen. She describes her experience coping with rape as a Mormon and introduces the viewer to a book called *The Miracle of Forgiveness*. The film transitions back to Tamsen and she reveals she has been assaulted and was given the same book.

Tamsen talks to her mom about going to therapy and reveals to her mom she was assaulted. We see Beth's reaction to this information.

The film uses a scenic transition to allow breathing room for Beth's reaction. The transition finishes with a shot of a Mormon church. Tamsen comes in on voiceover and introduces that the church has a sexual assault helpline for church leaders, but not for victims and survivors. Tamsen calls the helpline to see what resources are available for survivors.

The first person she talks to is confused and transfers Tamsen to LDS Family Services. Tamsen asks this organization what resources are available for survivors, and the person she talks to puts her on hold for several minutes. When the phone call is resumed, Tamsen learns the only resources, as told by the person on the phone, are for survivors to talk to their bishops or visit a local LDS Family Services office.

Tamsen expresses her disappointment and sadness at the absence of resources. Tamsen then explains that the church released an abuse website, which provides resources for abuse survivors—including sexual assault survivors.

The film transitions back to Colleen, who thinks the abuse website is merely “window dressing” and won't accomplish much without the church changing its culture drastically.

Act three begins with Colleen talking about her podcast, “Mormon Happy Hour.” Colleen uses this podcast as a way to heal. After Colleen, Tamsen reads a poem she wrote at church once. The poem talks about reverence and the differences between how Mormon girls and Mormon boys behave. She talks about boys being taught to have power, and girls being taught to be controlled by power.

The film finishes with Tamsen reading the poem in voiceover while moving portraits of Tamsen in front of the Salt Lake LDS temple appear.

The final shot is Tamsen standing in front of the temple looking directly into the camera.

## **Structure & Style**

The style is part explainer, part personal essay, part investigative.

Carefully constructed imagery of Salt Lake, Mormon visuals, and b-roll show the pervasive presence of Mormonism if you live in Utah, or were raised Mormon. Scenes placing the viewer in Utah and in places of Mormonism (in Salt Lake, in chapels, in the mountains and Temple Square) are numerous. These scenes emphasize to the viewer how survivors can't escape the triggers or culture, even if they leave the church as a result of their assaults.

The film follows a three-act structure. Tamsen, the main character will guide the audience through the story, and often looks directly at the camera when providing narration and context.

## **Audience**

*Guardians of Virtue* is intended to break through at least some of the confusion and opacity that surrounds the Mormon church. The film should be approachable by most people--familiar enough to those who know Mormonism but clear enough for people who don't know anything about it.

This film should also be a story that reaches survivors of sexual assault, Utahns, and Mormons whether or not they're active in the church, and people who have experienced any form of oppression in a patriarchal structure.