JOIN THE BAPTIST

A Tragedy in Five Acts and an Induction

by

Hermann Sudermann.

Translated from the German by

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Approved: E.F. Engel

Department of German.

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Nineteen Hundred Seventeen.
Preface.

Since the early years of my study of German, it has been my ambition to translate one of the modern German dramas into German. The idea was first suggested by Miss Edith Hogue, Professor of German at Southwestern College. When the Department of German of the University of Kansas granted permission to offer such a translation as a part of a graduate thesis, it gave the opportunity to carry out a cherished plan.

I wish to acknowledge with gratitude the inspiration and aid given by Professor H.O. Kruse. He has made many valuable suggestions and criticisms of the essay and translation and has read the entire manuscript.

Edna Rose Lohrding.

Lawrence, Kansas.

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Critical Essay

by

The Translator.
I.

THE NATURALISTIC MOVEMENT IN THE DRAMA.

An exposition of the Naturalistic Movement in the Drama resolves itself into a survey of the work of a few men. These men are of several nationalities and are unlike in their conceptions of naturalism, but all agree upon certain essential characteristics. Of these, trueness to life ranks first. Any scene, character, act or expression representative and real has been considered worthy of reproduction in the drama. Ibsen, in his great social dramas, has advocated the claims of truth and freedom and individuality. Hauptmann, the leading exponent of the movement in Germany, displays absolute sincerity in portraying the life in which he had lived and whose emotions he had experienced to their fullest depths. John Galsworthy defines naturalism on the stage as the production of what is true emotionally.
and really as seen by the imagination - 'the outcrop of absolute sincerity - fidelity to mood - to impression - to self'. This truth the naturalist considers real art.

Since nature is not selective of events, their presentation upon the stage as they may have been imagined to occur by the author, will appear illogical in arrangement. For this reason the material of the naturalistic drama is considered unconventional in the light of the classical drama. The sincerity of the modern drama distrusts tradition, and the new spirit is essentially human and so seemingly not logical in development. It is, in truth, a vision of life which coincides with the humble truth.

A second demand of naturalism is exact scientific observation and representation upon the stage. This is a result of the progress in all branches of science during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The scientist attempted to analyse to the minutest detail the plant, the microscopic organism and all life. So the dramatist
observed with extreme care the characters of his
drama and drew them as they were tossed about by the
adverse or favorable winds of milieu or inheritance.

The life of the middle and lower classes was
used as a source by all naturalistic dramatists but
not to the exclusion of the higher classes. Poverty
and social justice, marriage and divorce, crime, any
pathological condition of individual or society, were
popular themes and repeatedly received the most
careful objective treatment.

A third point of agreement consisted of a
sweping condemnation and avoidance of the classical
form of the drama. Monologues and asides were
dispensed with and great care was taken to make the
dialogue as true to life as possible, and to produce
the illusion of real speech. No use was made of the
usual theatrical tricks of motivation, as the reading
of letters and overheard conversations. Intrigue was
excluded. No logically developed plot with its rising
and falling action, with its climax and moment of
suspense was used. The characters were the all-im-
portant factors of the structure. The language employed was not literary and scholarly but an everyday language.

A fourth idea generally prevalent regarded the individual as being passive, a creature of milieu, inheritance or fate. In the classical drama the individual was credited with a self-originating will and consequently was a controlling force. In the modern drama the individual struggles constantly with the elements of his environment, and wins only if circumstances are favorable or the fates propitious. In the classical drama, a passive character had always been considered undramatic, but not so among the moderns. Tragedy, they maintained, lies not within the individual but arises from the pressure of environment, custom, law or other exterior force.

To the French must be given the credit of being masters of form as well as for a rebellion against mere perfection of form as embodied in the comedies of Scribe and Sardou, followed by Dumas fils and Augier.
It was this school which Zola, and later, Becque and Brieux opposed. Zola, unfortunately, was not successful in the field of the drama, but his characters, living, not playing upon the stage, were a revelation to the lovers of French technique. His definition of art has become famous as being expressive of the naturalistic viewpoint. "A work of art," he says, "is a phase of creation seen through a temperament." He advocated a "large and simple delineation of men and things, a drama which Moliere might have written". Of his three plays only one is of value, "Therese Raquin" (1873). This was a forerunner of the masterly works by other naturalists. In it he succeeded to a limited extent in his aim of using a logic "not of facts but of sensations and sentiments".

Scribe and Sardou made up for their lack of ideas and weakness of characterization by a perfect technique. The naturalists deplored this French love for tricks of workmanship, superficial logic of action and delineation of character, and turned their attention to an exact reproduction of life as it actually exists,
by which they meant an exact reproduction of character. If the realist had mastered exact observation, the naturalist added to this scientific experimentation. They were psychologists. In constructing their dramas their greatest effort centered upon reproducing life-like expressions of face and figure, hearing, actions, and dialogue. This result they secured by means of minute stage directions. There was no idealization but the barest actuality.

The Concourt brothers were pioneers in the opposition to the mechanical dramas of the French, but they were not able to produce works which embodied their ideas of a liberated stage. In the actual work of introducing the new standards upon the stage, Henri Becque was the leader. He was a student of Moliere and may be called the founder of the modern French stage. His plays were studies in character and in social conditions. Paul Hervieu is a disciple of Becque, but he is more coldly logical and unfailingly serious, despite his gift of irony. He is also a psychologist and a social thinker. Eugene Brieux
because of his insight into human nature has attained enviable success in his social comedies in which the people's scenes are very true to life. With Shaw, he may be said to have invented the pure social comedy. They worked on the theory that a preacher on the stage reaches more people than one in the pulpit. As a social reformer he is not to be taken seriously, because he attacks evils rooted in the very natures of men which can not be overcome by the mere suggestion that they are evils.

England had for a couple of centuries been held by the charm of Shakespeare, and modern plays were not sought. Other forms of literature, the novel and poetry, occupied the intellectual, while the middle classes had never learned theater-going or distrusted the ethics of the stage. The first modern plays presented in England were importations from France. When they gave every indication of becoming popular, the English dramatists and critics began to give battle to the foreign plays.

Of the English dramatists, George Bernard Shaw has won the greatest measure of success. His gospel
is the gospel of truth. To him sham is the sum of all evils. His purpose is didactic and he tells the absolute truth, usually about three things: Poverty, war and love. Shaw wrote under the influence of Ibsen but lacked Ibsen's insight, and grasp of the poetical quality of truth. John Galsworthy has written a few plays whose conservatism has made them good stage pieces. Granville Barker combines the ability of a stage manager with that of a playwright. His plays show a high development of the form of the modern drama, the uncertain ending of acts, which lead to the inference that just so in life events and subjects are never finished.

Tolstoy, the only Russian author of note in modern times, has produced a drama, The Powers of Darkness, which must be classed as naturalistic literature. It shows the moral degradation of the Russian peasantry. Tolstoy is naive in style and didactic in purpose. The "Powers of Darkness" was one of the first modern plays to be staged in Germany.
The naturalistic movement may be said to have reached its greatest strength in the Scandinavian countries. Bjørnsterne Bjørnson began as a writer of romantic tendencies, but in his "Gauntlet" he has given us a drama which conforms very closely to the requirements of the naturalistic drama. The subject is the iniquity of the double standard of sexual morality. His style is characterized by a certain mildness which is very effective in driving home the lesson. The first part of "Beyond Our Strength" shows Bjørnson's greatest dramatic and poetic power.

August Strindberg wrote his plays from the depths of bitter experience from which he seemed never able to escape. His general theme is the dominance of woman over man, a dominance acquired by the wily tactics of an irrational creature. He is a prime creator of character, but his emotions often overcome his judgment. His form is ideally modern.
To Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) belongs the honor of being the foremost of modern dramatists. He has not been surpassed in tenacity of purpose and in severity of judgment. In his grasp of social forces he has been rivaled only by Gerhart Hauptmann, and in mastery of form only by Hermann Sudermann. In his development he passed through the stages of romanticism, naturalism and symbolism, and reached a remarkable degree of perfection in his dramas of each period. It was to Ibsen that his contemporaries looked as the great leader.

The aim of Ibsen is to show that the self-activity of the human will, with sincerity in its efforts after self-realization, is made impossible by inheritance and environment. His plays, then, show the effects of impurity or intimidation upon the natural or sincere development of the will. The relation of the sexes is typical of this kind of problem and is treated in "A Doll's House" and in "Rosmersholm." "Ghosts" is based upon the truth that the sins of the fathers is visited upon their
children. "An Enemy of the People" attempts to prove that the majority is always wrong by proving that a reformer, a pioneer in any field of activity, is always abused as a foe to society and only later given recognition for his work. "Pillars of Society" exposes the individual, who is often most highly respected in his community, as a 'whited sepulcher', "The Wild Duck", the last of his series of naturalistic social dramas, shows the futility of the self-deception practiced by the individual in thinking himself made of so much finer clay than he really is.

Gerhart Hauptmann may be regarded as the quintessence of naturalism in all lands. He was strongly influenced by Ibsen, Zola and Tolstoy. His "Vor Sonnenaufgang" marked a distinct step in the development of the modern drama. His productions were used by the free theater of Berlin, a movement intended to emancipate the state of Germany from the dominance of French ideals and plays, and from the lifeless plays of the Epigones. To the success of this movement the early productions of Hauptmann contributed
Hauptmann's philosophy had no place for freedom of the will. As in the teaching of Darwin, so also in naturalism social determinism was a basal idea. In his dramas Hauptmann depicts social evils and their consequent depths of misery. He employs the technical methods of fiction. He portrays a life, or a period of a life with minuteness of detail and with little regard for the classic requirement of a plot. Aristotle's theory of the drama was that it exhibited characters in action, with emphasis upon the action. To Hauptmann the character is all important. His aim is to create an illusion of reality. Every suggestion of theatrical artificiality was avoided for this reason. Since there is no artifice in real life there should be none on the stage. There should be no division into acts since life is not divided into small bits. Elaborate stage directions were used to secure a sympathetic interpretation by stage manager, actor and reader. The dialogue is characterized by a complete effortlessness.
Hauptmann's subjects, like those of all naturalists were chosen from the life of his day, preferably the humble and lowly, often the ugly and abnormal. His best examples are from the populace of Berlin and the peasantry of Silesia, because he spent most of his life in these places. He did not search for what was beautiful or ideal among them but what was true.

Like Ibsen, Hauptmann passed through the periods of preparation, romanticism, naturalism and symbolism, and he also reached heights of attainment in his dramatic creations. His romantic dramas are "Hanneles Himmelfahrt", "Die Versunkene Glocke", and "Und Pippa Tanzt". The best of his naturalistic dramas are "Die Weber", "Einsame Menschen" and "Vor Sonnenaufgang". "Die Weber" is a social drama with its hero a group of Silesian peasants. "Florian Geyer" is an attempt at a purely historical production which failed to meet the requirements of the modern stage or even the author's ambitions. The modern drama with its minuteness of reality does not lend itself to historical subjects. An attempt to dramatize the charm-
ing story, "Der arme Heinrich," was fairly successful but the result was not so pleasing as the early version by Hartmann von Aue. "Fuhrmann Hensche1" and "Rose Bernd" are true naturalistic productions, and his latest of value. The impressionability of Hauptmann, his ability to catch the atmosphere of his time and reproduce it and his insight into character and social forces have made him the popular dramatist of his decade.
HELMANN SUDERMANNN.

Hermann Sudermann (1857-19- ) was of east Prussian birth, a fact which explains the remarkable home atmosphere displayed in his novel, "Frau Sorge", and his drama, "Es Lebe das Leben". In others, among them "Die Ehre" and "Sodoms Ende", Berlin furnishes the characters and background. That he was of humble parentage and that home conditions were not always ideal is evident from the very intimate treatment of home life in "Frau Sorge". Unlike many other men of artistic temperaments, Sudermann seems to have been strong enough to stem the tide of adverse early influences and to rise above them. His youthful training was limited because of the financial conditions of the family, but this did not deter him from choosing the course which resulted in his becoming one of the most noted of the dramatists of his time and
The literary career of Sudermann is remarkable in that he combines great ability as a novelist with rare skill as a dramatist. As a novelist he is a naturalist; as a dramatist he unites the material of naturalism with the form of the French drama of exquisite technique. "Die Ehre" won immediate recognition as a play of merit and was repeated many times during its first season. The author had succeeded only after patient effort in securing the production of the play. In its composition he made use of a clever introduction of these features of the French stage to which German audiences were accustomed. To this he added the modern materials which proved attractive, for their novelty if for no other reason.

Unlike Ibsen and Hauptmann, Sudermann divides his plays into acts, each having a distinct purpose and rising to a climax. His dialogue includes only what is necessary to the plot. This brevity results in a highly dramatic action, which is constructed to embody an idea and is carried out to a logical conclusion.
If a moderate use of the standard drama be a fault, then Sudermann has erred. If a reasonable perfection of technique be a virtue, as later developments have shown, then Sudermann was wise. Critics who contend that he sacrificed his principles to pander to the public have failed to appreciate his art. His fundamental motive may be summed up in the words of Ida Axelrod as a "great love of life, and hatred of all that prevents its development".

Sudermann's first drama, "Die Ehre" (1889), was worthy of the favorable reception which was accorded it, on account of the unique treatment of the Vorderhaus and Hinterhaus, two distinct classes of Berlin society. The standard of honor of the Hinterhaus is made to be synonymous with the attainment of wealth. In the Vorderhaus the false notion underlying the keeping up of appearances constitutes the idea of honor. To Alma Heinicke may be attributed in large part the success of the play. She is portrayed with understanding and real feeling. The family of the Vorderhaus is represented in a conventional way and
aroused no antagonism among the theatergoers of Berlin. The idea of the drama is stated by Graf Trast, a character which has been subjected to much criticism as savoring of French comedy of intrigue. He is made to utter the opinion that all standards of honor are only relative and that they change with time. The happy ending in the union of Robert and Leonore aided in establishing the popularity of the piece. The views of life expressed in the drama are rather superficial.

In "Sodoms Ende" (1881) the author felt freer to show some of the upper classes of Berlin in their true light and as a consequence it was a failure on the stage. In dramatic structure it is superior to "Die Ehre" but its delineation of existing evils was too sharp to be tolerated. The idea to be conveyed is that the prevalent standards of conduct are far from infallible and unless supported by will power will allow the individual to be overcome.

The theme of "Die Heimat" (1893) struck a more responsive chord with the public. The question of the emancipation of woman was received with aroused tolera-
tion by the men of Berlin and with evident favor by the
women, who recognized in some phase of the question their
own experiences. The fascinating role of Magda has
been a favorite with many actresses and has been to a
great extent responsible for the popularity of the
drama. Its contrasts are sharp, between youth and age,
home-life and a career, conventionality and custom.

Sudermann's next venture, "Die Schmetterlingsschlacht"
(1893) is a comedy with the very evident influence of
Zola shown in the complete wretchedness of its charac-
ters and the general gloom of its scenes... It is a picture
of a social class of Berlin in which a struggle is made
to keep up appearances until the repair of depleted
family fortunes is made possible by the contraction of
advantageous marriages for the daughters of the house.
The comedy was not received with any degree of favors
and is not considered meritorious by critics generally.

"Das Glück im Winkel" (1895) and "Es Lebe das Leben"
(1902) have for their theme the conflict in the heroine
between her better and lower natures, represented by
life in the quiet home with the nondescript husband
and the latter, by a love affair with a passionate lover. The dramas grew out of the general unrest of women and the desire for personal liberty. In "Das Glück im Winkel" a compromise is made by the husband with his principles, which are in reality the accepted standards of society and not basic principles at all, in the attempt to continue the relationships of the home and find happiness in them. The lover in "Es Lebe das Leben" makes the same sacrifice, and again happiness is shattered by convention. Neither play shows the genuine ability of the author.

With the exception of the three one act plays published under the name of "Morituri," of which "Fritzchen" is a meritorious production, the next drama in point of time is the highly poetical, symbolical tragedy, "Die Drei Pfeiferfedern." The material is fantastic and of the mysterious fairy world. In this respect it is like the "Versunkene Glocke" of Hauptmann. In both, too, the hero is overcome by circumstances because his will is not strong enough to make him conquerer. "Die Drei Pfeiferfedern" was the author's only attempt in the realm of
symbolism. It shows the depth of thought of which he was capable and his poetical ability in its ripest form. The greatest heights of the tragic are attained in the character of the hero. Its defects arise from the fact that Sudermann's mental vision is too clear and sharp to adapt itself readily in the realm of the romantic and mysterious.

"Johannisfeuer" deals with the relative strength of the emotions and the will, and is characterized by the portrayal of great intensity of feeling, especially in Marikko. "Der Sturmgeselle Sokrates" (1902) is a mild satire on the activities of the democratic idealists of 1848, whose plans had been made useless by the work of Bismarck. In reality it is sympathetic.

How trust enables the hero to conquer his environment and regain his self-respect is the motive in "Stein unter Steinen" (1903). The drama is both psychological and sociological in that the growth of Biegler, the hero, is traced as well as his relation to society. The naturalistic trend is decreased in this play by the victory which the hero wins over circumstances.

"Das Blumenboot" (1906) deals with the corruptions of certain of the higher classes of Berlin and begins
the decline of the author's powers. "Der Bettler von Syrakus" (1910) indicates somewhat of a rise again, but none of his later works compare favorably with those already discussed.

The strongest influences upon Sudermann were exercised by Ibsen and the French, especially Sardou. From the former he imbibed his ideas of social problems and reforms, and from the French his ideas of dramatic excellence. Like Wagner he deals with the conflict between the emotions and the will, but unlike Wagner he maintains that the emotions usually overcome the will. In his magnifying of the milieu, he is a follower of Zola. From Nietzsche he received his idea of the predominance of natural instincts over will.

To many critics Sudermann's use of an exact technique has been a reproach. To them it has seemed like an undignified pandering to a perverted theatrical taste, and a desertion of principles. Sudermann's ability to combine the new material with a form that was perhaps too perfect, accounts for his success and
and continued popularity upon the stage. He has attacked his problems with sufficient vigor and earnestness, and has presented them to the public so that they are capable of understanding and appreciation. If we cannot hope that his dramas will live as great masterpieces, we can yet rank Sudermann as one of the most notable dramatists of his nation and age.
The history of the Jews has at all times been a tragic history and it has been an attractive field to the dramatists of all times. Of the incidents of Jewish history few have proven more fascinating than the death of John the Baptist at the instigation of Herodias. Sudermann's drama is founded upon the biblical account of the character and life of its hero, and is true in spirit if not in detail.

The introductory play creates the Jewish atmosphere of the drama and presents the hero in his native surroundings in the wilderness. In itself it is a beautiful little play which anticipates the main action and is distinguished by a depth of poetical quality unrivaled in any other portion of the tragedy. John is the ascetic whose mission it is to announce the coming of 'One the lachet of whose shoes he is
not worthy to stoop to unloose'. The path to his abiding place in the wilderness is worn by the feet of the oppressed of Judea who await the promised Messiah and a new era of peace. Beset by the law as interpreted and observed by the Pharisees and Zelots upon the one hand and by the Roman upon the other, their life is a burden. Like the beggar woman they reject a Messiah who is to come in all the glory of a conquering prince.

John is a preacher of repentance and fails to understand the mission of the Christ. He rebukes sin upon every hand with ruthless disregard for any extenuating forms of weakness, and with unequalled severity he rebukes the sin of Herod. When Simon the Gallilean proclaims "Higher than law and sacrifice is love", John is disquieted. His gradual disenchantment begins. He hears again of love from the humble wife of his disciple, and from Herodias who flings his asceticism in his face as a reproach. He reproves the passion of Salome which, he says, is also given the name of love: When the simple Gallilean fishermen
repeat to him the teaching of Christ that we should love our enemies, he is so deeply affected that he brings about a crisis in his career by refusing to cast the stone which will bring down judgment upon Herod and the wife of Phillip, his brother. This is probably the most highly dramatic scene of the tragedy.

The rejection of the overtures of Salome leads to a hatred which is satiated only by his death at the suggestion of her mother. At the last moment he comprehends fully the real nature of the Christ and his mission, and while his death occurs we hear the joyful acclaim of the multitude as with hosannas and the waving of palm branches they welcome the entry of Christ into Jerusalem.

The people's scenes are well drawn. We see the Jewish populace in its varying moods of depression, expectation and rejoicing. The contrast with the luxurious life of the Tetrarch and the Romans serves to make the oppression of the people all the heavier.
The characters are delineated with such care and precision that even the least important has a distinct personality. Miriam is the very embodiment of youthful devotion, Josaphat of fidelity to a principle, Amasai of Pharisaical shrewdness and cunning, Salome of voluptuous desire and passion, and Vitellius of all Roman bigotry. Herod is a weakling, dominated by Herodias and his own desires; Herodias is an unscrupulous woman of the type of Lady Macbeth, who sacrifices all that is high and worthy to her hatred and desire for revenge.

John is the pioneer, the forerunner, who gives his life for his mission. His vacillation between belief in himself and doubt, his failure to understand the real nature of Him who was to come, are as much the cause of his downfall as the conditions of the times in which he worked. He succumbs to his tragic fate as much from his irresoluteness as from the result of striving for a too visionary ideal. He lacks somewhat the austerity and strength of the biblical character and his relation to the Christ is
too vague. If the Christ had been given greater
dramatic importance, the whole would have been more
artistic. The character of John the Baptist develops
greatly during the action, but self-realization comes
too late to prevent the tragedy.

The form of "Johannes" is almost classical, but
the simplicity of the modern drama pervades. The
stage directions are limited but sufficient. The dig-
nified prose is exceedingly suitable to the theme. In
an age when dramas are being read as well as played,
it offers every inducement for an enjoyable perusal.
In its portrayal of Roman decadence and the budding
of Christianity, it furnishes interesting material for
the lover of history. Though it has not won success
as a stage piece, it has been widely read and is a
dramatic production of real merit. To the criticism
that the dignified biblical subject has been vitiated
by the emphasis upon the passion of Salome, we may
answer that this emphasis only serves to make the
consistency and strength of John's character more
obvious. She stands in strong contrast to the poor
for whom he had labored.
CAST OF CHARACTERS
in the
INDUCTION.

John the Baptist.
Amarja,
Matthias,
Josaphat,
Manasse.
Miriam,
Hadidja,
A Paralytic,
Men and women.

Time: The year 29 A.D.

Place: Rocky desert near Jerusalem.
CAST OF CHARACTERS

in the

PLAY.

Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Gallilee.

Herodias.

Salome, her daughter.

Vitellius, Syrian Legate.

Marcellus, his attendant.

Herokles, the Rhetor.

Gabalos, the Syrian.

Jabad, the Levite.

John the Baptist.

Josaphat.

Matthias.

Disciples of John the Baptist.

Amarja.

Manasse.

Jael, wife of Josaphat.

Their two children.

Hadidja, maid in the palace of Herod.
Miriam | Companions of Salome.
---|---
Abi Companions of Salome.
Maecia |
Mesulemuth, a beggar-woman.
Amasai | Pharisees.
Jorab | Pharisees.
Eliakim |
Pasur | Citizens of Jerusalem.
Hachmoni |
Simon the Gallilean.
First Gallilean.
Second Gallilean.
A Paralytic.
First Priest.
Second Priest.
A citizen of Jerusalem.
The chief of the Roman soldiers.
First Roman soldiers.
Second Roman soldiers.
Third |
The prefect of the palace.
The jailer.
Men and women of Jerusalem.
Pilgrims.
Roman soldiers.
Servants in the palace.

Time: The year 29 A.D.

INDUCTION.

Wild rocky region near Jerusalem... Night... The moon shimmers darkly through torn clouds... In the distance the fire of the great sacrificial altar gleams on the horizon.

Scene I.

In the background dark forms pass in groups from right to left. Hadidja and Miriam coming forward.

Miriam.

Hadidja, I am afraid.

Hadidja.

Come!

Miriam.

I am afraid. Dost thou not see the gliding shadows yonder? Their feet do not touch the stones and their flesh is like the breath of the nightwind.

Hadidja.

Foolish child! Thou fearest those whom misery makes the companions of thy sorrow. Thy
distress drives them here, thy hope drags them to the top.

Miriam.

So they would go to him, too?

Hadidja.

All would go to him...Is there a light in Israel which does not stream from his head? Is there water for the thirsty which did not shower from his hand? Here in the dead rocks rush the springs, and out of the silence was his voice born.

Miriam.

But I fear him...Why does he live amidst the terrors of the desert? Why does he flee the steps of the joyful, and avoid the path of the suffering?

Hadidja.

The joyful do not need him and the suffering will find their way to him.

Miriam.

Seest thou the glare there, Hadidja, where Jerusalem lies? The Roman burns our homes, and we are here?

Hadidja.

What? Knowest thou not the altar upon which the priests day and night burn the tenth of the
offering of our industry?

Miriam (in frightened astonishment).

Does he desire that the great altar too, shall fall?

Hadidja.

I know not. Yet what he desires will be well... See, who comes?

Scene II.

The same characters. Two men, half carrying, half dragging a palsied man who moans. Later, Manasse.

First Man.

Women, met ye the great Rabbi who is called the Baptist?

Hadidja.

We seek him also.

The Palsied Man (moaning).

Lay me down. Let me die.

First Man.

We carried this palsied man up in our arms - our arms are tired, and he in whom we hope is not here.

The Palsied Man (moaning).

Let me die.

The Voice of Manasse (calling from the right). John! John!
Manasse (enters running).

John! Where art thou, John? I cry to thee in my distress. Be merciful to me! Reveal thyself to me, John.

Miriam (pointing to the left).

See, a crowd is approaching. Someone is leading them.

Hadidja.

Kneel - for it is he!

Scene III.

The same characters. John. Behind him a number of men and women, among them Amarja.

John.

Whose suffering is so great that his lamentation becomes obtrusive, and his affliction has unlearned silence?

Manasse (kneeling before him).

Rabbi, great Rabbi! If thou be he whose name is spoken in the streets of Jerusalem, help me, save me, help me.

John.

Arise and speak ... 

Manasse.

I am Manasse, the son of Jeruel, and my father was weak and blind, and I lived with him upon the
street towards Gibeon near the overflowing well. And there came men to me who said: The Lord, our God desires that thou denyest the Roman his tribute. And I refused the Roman his tribute. Then the soldiers assailed me and burned my house, and my young wife perished in the flames, and my child and my father — he was blind. And now I am all alone. Help me, Rabbi, help!

John.

Am I ruler over life and death that I can make thy father and child and wife to live again? Can I rebuild thy house out of its own ashes? What dost thou demand of me?

Manasse.

Then accursed be they who—

John.

Stop! The curse hangs heavily enough over us now. Israel is laden therewith as the autumn with ripe grapes... Why dost thou lament? Look before thee and not behind thee... And if thou canst not hush thy lamentation, put a gag between thy teeth, for there shall be only silent prayer and longing and waiting — breathless.

Manasse.

What good will that do, Rabbi? See, I am so lonely.
John.

Why dost thou blaspheme? Is He not with thee?

Manasse.

Rabbi, tell us: Who?

Amarja.

Hear! He has not yet heard the message of Him who is to come.

Many of the People.

Knowest thou not of Him who is to come?

John.

Knowest thou not that soon there will be rejoicing in Israel and festal robes and the sound of cymbals? Knowest thou not that there will be no more sorrow in Israel? Therefore wipe away the froth from thy lips and sanctify thyself.

All.

Sanctify thyself.

Manasse.

No more sorrow?... No more sorrow? Rabbi, tell me, may I stay with thee?

John.

Join those yonder and learn to keep silent.

Manasse (faltering).

Rabbi! (He steps back.)
John.

I do not see Josaphat among you. Matthias also is not here. Who knoweth concerning them?

Amarja.

Rabbi, no one met them.

John.

What creeps there on the earth and moans?

The Palsied Man.

Lord, I am a poor palsied man and suffer great torment. If thou dost not help me, I want to die.

John.

Thou wouldst die, now, when He is near who brings relief for thy bruises and balm for thy swellings? I tell thee, thou wilt give thanks with shouts of joy to God the Father for every hour of thy pain and every step crawled upon bloody knees, when thou hast seen Him for whom our souls hope, and for whom we are waiting on the road to the east with watchfulness and patience. Therefore bear sevenfold pain and murmur no more henceforth.

The Palsied Man.

Rabbi, thou hast done great things for me. I feel no more - I - (He starts to rise and sinks back. His companions lead him, breathing more freely and laughing to himself, to the background.)
Murmuring Among the People.

Behold a miracle! He works miracles.

One of the People.

In truth the time is fulfilled. Elijah has risen from the dead. The great prophet has risen from the dead.

Another.

No, not Elijah. Not one of the prophets!... Do ye not see, ye blind? It is He Himself who is to come! He Himself is the Promised One. Worship Him! Worship!

(All fall upon their knees before him.)

John.

One sick of the fever crept along the street and looked for a physician. And when a beggar came that way, or a servant carrying water, he fell upon his knees before him and cried to him: Hail, great physician! I thank thee that thou hast come. - And so he continued until evening, and the children mocked him. (The people arise slowly.) What have I to give thee, I, the beggar? And the water which I carry for your baptism is the barren water of atonement. But He who will come after me, He will baptize you with the Spirit and with fire. And I am not worthy that I stoop to loose the lachet of His shoes. So humble am I before Him.
Rabbi, pray tell, when will He come of whom thou speakest?

Who is He, Rabbi? Have mercy. Strengthen our souls! Tell us of Him!

Then seat yourselves about me and hear the message, the oft-repeated message—ye insatiable ones! (The people crouch down upon the ground.)

Hadidja, what will he proclaim to us?

Be silent.

Let me clasp thy hand, Hadidja.

I was at the Jordan and I baptized there, obedient to the call of the Lord. And there were many people around me and they believed me although my soul was consumed with doubt. There descended from the high cliff a Youth—alone. And all the people shrank back... And as I raised my eyes to Him, I knew: It is He,—for the glory of the Eternal One rested upon Him... And when He spake to me and desired baptism like unto one of the sinners, I remonstrated, trembling, and would have prevented it and said: I indeed need to be baptized
of Thee, and Thou comest to me? But He answered and said: Let it be so, for it is fitting that we fulfill all righteousness. Then I bowed down and granted it to Him... And when He had been baptized by my trembling hand, He came up out of the water forthwith and behold! Suddenly the heavens opened above Him and I saw the Spirit of God like unto a white dove descending and resting upon Him, and the holy light veiled Him. And behold! a Voice from heaven spake: This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased... Then I fell upon my face and worshipped. And my soul feared no more.

One (after a silence).

And what became of Him whom the glory of the Lord so favored?

All.

Yes, what became of Him? Didst thou not detain Him?

John.

Why press ye me? He comes and goes and no one detains Him. Who can say whether He does not sit among us this very hour?

All.

(Scan each other fearfully and critically with their glances.)

Amarja.

Rabbi, we are all poor laborers from Jerusalem and
each knows the other.

One (pointing to Miriam).

The men perhaps - But here is a woman whom I have never seen.

Hadidja.

Her name is Miriam and she serves as maid in the palace as I do.

John.

Leave her in peace!

Another.

But if He of whom thou speakest lives among the living, He must hear a name and He must hear a father's name.

All.

Yes, His name! His name!

John.

Ye desire His name? ... Hear ye the wind there between the rocks? Hear well what it speaks before it escape you! ... So has a name, now here, now there, floated past my ear. And I tarry in anxiety and prayer that I may hear it again. Therefore I say to you: Ask me no more, so that it shall not escape me entirely, as a dream, when the cock crows.

Amarja.

But tell us this one thing as a guide: Whence came
The wind which bore Him toward me, blew from Gallilee.

From Gallilee?

The Gallileans, the fisheaters, - they are to produce the Messiah - they?

Another.

He is to come to us Judeans! Up - let us seek Him.

Let us seek Him - Seek Him!

Think ye He may be found of you miserable creatures in your conceit and tumult?... Who are ye that ye should change the way of the world by so much as a hair's breadth?... But when the day of His harvest shall have come, He will appear before you according to His own will, radiant as the Lord of Hosts! - And the four cherubim before Him - upon maimed steeds - with flaming swords - to mow down and trample under foot... Whatever springs up luxuriantly in sin, that shall be cut down, and whatever rises against Him, shall be trodden upon. Therefore, ye men of Israel, cast out the
weeds which infest and feed upon your lives, so that ye will not be corrupted with your corruptors and swept away with those who befoul you - when He draws near, who wears around His head the rainbow, seven-colored - He who is to come - who must come - (broodingly) - must come -.

One.

Pabbi, we have atoned for sins, we pray day and night, and our bodies wither with fasting... Say, what more can we do?

Scene IV.

The same characters. Josaphat. Matthias.

John.

Josaphat, comest thou? And thou, Matthias?

Josaphat.

Master, blame us not, if we have wavered. We stood at Herod's palace, which otherwise is dark and empty, and saw red torches being lighted and the pillars wound about with flowers. New disgrace will come over Israel, new deadly sin must it bear, if thou dost not help, Pabbi.

John.

Speak!
Josaphat.

Not Herod came from Gallilee to celebrate the Passover as he does every year. He is expected tomorrow. Another guest has taken possession. The wife of Phillip, brother of Herod, has escaped and with her Salome, Phillip's daughter. The guest in the palace is called Herodias, and the wedding is to occur tomorrow.

John.

Between Herod and the wife of his full-brother?

Josaphat.

Thou hast said it, Rabbi.

John.

No, I tell you. He who informed you, his mouth was shameless and his soul was false.

Amarja.

Forgive, Rabbi, they were maids from the palace here. - One would think - that -

John.

Hadidja, thee I know, speak!

Hadidja.

Rabbi, my office is too humble. I hear only what the idle ones carry to me. But here is Miriam, she was chosen companion of the young Salome since she came yesterday. She must serve her now and bathes her. Ask her.
John.

Miriam!... Why art thou silent?

Hadidja.

Rabbi, she has never yet spoken in the presence of strange men.

Miriam (halting, in a low voice).

Master - it is true - what this man says - and-

(enumeration).

John.

Speak on!

Miriam.

And after the wedding - on the first day of the Passover - Herodias purposes to enter the holy temple to the outer court of the women - on the arm of her new husband - to show herself to the people.

John.

So that the people stone them? But what am I saying?... However firmly they are attached to pleasure, the priests, however cowardly they creep in the dust before the Roman, that they will not venture. The brass portals will close before the incestuous, and the high priest will stretch out his arms to curse them.

Hadidja.

Miriam, speak.

John.

What more hast thou to tell us, Miriam?
Miriam.

Master, at this very hour messengers go back and forth between Herodias and the temple. The princess demands that the high priest meet them at the second door, there where the men and women separate, to bless them. (Great agitation).

John.

It is well... Go ye all to your homes. I would be alone. Tomorrow ye will see me in Jerusalem. (Horror.)

Others.

Rabbi, dost thou purpose to give thyself up to thine enemies?

Consider, Rabbi! The Pharisees will capture thee... the priests will judge thee.

John.

I am the son of a priest. I will speak a priestly word with those who stir up the bloody conflagration there... I will speak in the name of Him who is to come and whose way I prepare with my life. Go! (When the hesitate, angrily.) Go!
ACT I.

Square in front of the palace of Herod. To the right, the palace, before the guardroom of the Roman soldiers, with benches in front of the door. At the center, right, the main entrance. In the background, steps which lead to the top of a hill. Beyond, separated by an invisible valley, a view of the rising masses of houses of another part of the city. The left side is filled by houses with flat roofs and awnings. At the center, left, a street passing at the right of the guardroom. In this street, the shop of the wooldealer, Eliakim. In the corner at the right of this shop, the stall of the fruiterer, Pasur, with its wares piled high. A well completely surrounded by a round bench, near the center of the stage.
Scene I.

Eliakim. Pasur. First, Second, Third Soldiers.

Pasur.

(Glancing anxiously toward the soldiers who are sitting in front of the guardroom, comes forward.)

Neighbor!... Neighbor, dost thou not hear me?

Eliakim.

(Who seated in front of his shop, is reading a scroll of the law).

It is written that he who interrupts him who reads the law, he has forfeited his life.

Pasur (frightened).

Ah, thou art reading the law?

Eliakim.

Dost thou not know that? I read in the law day and night.

Pasur.

Forgive me, neighbor, and do not inform against me. I sinned from ignorance. I was alarmed at the soldiers who entered yonder -- but I am going.

(Slinks back to his stall.)
First Soldier.
(To the second, who is sharpening his sword).

Here, Mark, why dost thou stir about so madly with thy hanger? Thou wilt have no chance to strike. The accursed Jews have enough. They will not start a riot soon again.

Second Soldier.

Who knows? I smell blood since that woman entered there yesterday. In the house of Herod things are in a pretty mess. And in regard to their so-called princes they are ticklish.

First Soldier.

But here in Judea they have none. Here we are masters.

Second Soldier.

We are masters everywhere, whether there be a Herod or not.

First Soldier.

Of what concern really is the Tetrarch of Gallilee to the people of Jerusalem?

Second Soldier.

Aye, of what concern is Jerusalem to the Tetrarch of Gallilee? And yet he comes two or three times a year to rub his nose on the flagstones of the temple,
and then he leaves again. Their God demands it, they say. Crazy people!

First Soldier.

And we are compelled to stand by as a guard of honor. A fine occupation for a Roman citizen!

Scene II.

The same characters. Hadidja and two other maids with jars on their heads step out of the palace and go to the well to draw water.

Second Soldier.

Blockhead! We only pretend to show him honor. In reality we guard him. Well, he will soon be here.

Third Soldier.

(Who has meanwhile been lolling indifferently upon a bench, sings to himself).

"Thee, sweet smiling Lalage, thee will I ever love.

Thee, sweet smiling Lalage — — "

Second Soldier (angrily).

Wilt thou ever stop whining about thy Lalage? When thou dost get back to Rome she will have been
grandmother long ago.

Third Soldier (arises, stretching his arms).

Ah, yes!

Second Soldier (pointing to the maids).

Are there not women enough here?

Third Soldier.

Pooh - Those! They are Jewesses. They would like it, but for them the death penalty would follow.

Second Soldier.

Foolish people!

Third Soldier.

If it were not for the foreigners! However I take no pleasure in these Asiatics. They wash themselves the whole day long and in the end they smell anyway. Ha! Last night a Syrian sweetheart gave me her necklace. There! Shall we throw dice for it?

Second Soldier.

Let's see! I hold fifty denarii.

Third Soldier.

Rascal! Hundred fifty!

Second Soldier.

Good!
First Soldier.

I too!

Third Soldier.

Come!

(The three pass over to the guardroom.)

Scene III.

Eliakim. Pasur. Hadidja and the other maids.

Two priests descending the stairs at the center.)

First Priest.

Here, maids, are ye from the palace?

Hadidja.

Yes, priests.

First Priest.

Announce us to your mistress.

Hadidja.

Our mistress, priests, has gone to meet the Tetrarch Herod, to receive him at the gate.

First Priest.

When will she return?

Hadidja.

We know not, priests. That depends upon the arrival of the Tetrarch.
First Priest.
Do ye desire a blessing?

Hadılığa.
No. (She goes into the palace with the two maids.)
The two priests regard each other disconcertedly.

First Priest.
(Notices Eliakim and Pasur, who are seated before their doors and raises his hands - unctioniously).
Blessed be ye, who -

Eliakim.
No one desired thy blessing.

The Two Priests(look at each other again).
Second Priest(angrily).
They too, are from the school of the Pharisees.
First Priest.
We keep the temple. They serve us anyway. Come.
(Exit the priests.)

Scene IV.
Eliakim. Pasur.

Pasur(approaching humbly).
Pardon, neighbor, thou art not reading in the law now, art thou?
Eliakim.

No.

Pasur.

Ah, this will be a poor Passover for us tradespeople! Just see what I have bought up! Here is the holy pomegranate wool, to burn the lamb upon; here are the spices to prepare the holy unleavened bread; here are the holy bitter herbs, cress, leek, laurel - everything is here, exactly according to directions. In six, at the latest, seven hours, the feast will begin and I shall be left sitting here with all of my stores. O, woe is me, woe is me!

Eliakim.

Well, do I not also have chiefly or entirely holy things? Here are the finest phylacteries, beautiful tassels of white and hyacinth-blue wool. And my frontlets are the most beautiful which a son of Abraham ever wore at morning prayers. Abraham himself did not wear more beautiful frontlets. It seems to me that I have eighteen dozen of them. But thou shalt not be troubled concerning thy physical well-being, but read in the law, thus it is written.

Pasur.

For him who deals in fruits and vegetables, neighbor, it is not so easy to be a just man before
the Lord. Thy wool will last until Herod is gone, together with his new wife.

Eliakim (shaking his fist at the palace). O abomination, abomination, abomination!

Pasur.

Yes, this was formerly a good place of business. But this time the grass grows before the palace.

Eliakim.

Only the priests go in and out.

Scene V.

The same characters. A Citizen of Jerusalem (who is filling his jug at the well).

Citizen (miserably).

Neighbor, dear neighbor!

Eliakim.

What is wrong?

Citizen.

Thou art a righteous man, thou knowest the law. Blest shalt thou be if thou wilt advise me. My poor wife has sprained her ankle out in the field. It is hot and swollen, and I am laving it with cold water
from the well. And that is well. But in a short
time the feast will begin. May I proceed then with
the laving?

Eliakim.

Sabbath desecration! Thou wilt incur the death
penalty.

Citizen.

Lord Eternal!

Eliakim.

Yes, if she had a diseased throat, thou mightest
put remedies in her mouth, which the law allows...
Foot? - No!

Citizen.

But if fever set in?

Eliakim.

Yes, if fever develop and there be danger of
life, then the law allows it.

Citizen (crying out despairingly).

But then it will be too late!

(A man in a wrinkled mantle has in the meantime
come out of the back street and looks quietly up at
the palace of Herod.)

Eliakim (pointing to him fearfully).

Sst!... If thou dost value thy life. See, the man
there. That is David, one of the Zelots, who live in
the desert. They descend into the cities with a short dagger under the mantle. And wherever they find one who transgresses against the law in word or deed, him they strike from behind. (As the stranger approaches, he rises.) Greetings to thee, holy man. See, I know thee well. Wilt thou not bless thy servant? (The stranger passes by and disappears in the street to the left, front.)

Pasur.

I became cold as ice. A man may commit a fault without knowing how.

Citizen.

How many hours remain before the feast begins?

Eliakim (looking at the sun).

Six.

Citizen.

So long will I cool the ... What then will happen? (Sadly drags his jaw away.)

Pasur.

In truth, we Hebrews are hunted like hinds. Him whom the Roman does not strike, the law strikes.
Scene VI.

The same characters. The stage has half filled with people who, gesticulating excitedly, look up at the palace of Herod. Among them, Hachmoni. Later Soldiers.

Eliakim.

What is the matter there? Hachmoni, answer me. What is the matter with the people?

Hachmoni.

Dost thou not know yet? John is in the city.

Eliakim.

There be many by the name of John.

Hachmoni.

The Baptist, man!

Eliakim.

The Baptist? The enemy of the priests and the Pharisees. Whose death every Chaber has sworn? Have ye finally captured him?

Hachmoni.

Thou speakest as if in sleep. If there be a master in Jerusalem besides the curse of the Roman, it is he. He stands in the market and preaches, he
stands in front of the sheep gate and preaches - what do I say? - preaches? Firebrands flame from his mouth, scorpions spring from his mouth.

Eliakim.

Against whom does he preach, then?

Nachmoni.

Against Herod, of course. And his mistress. And the brood of his mistress.

All.

Down with Herod! Death to Herod! (The first and second soldiers have stepped to the door of the guardroom.)

First Soldier.

What is the bleary-eyed rabble crying?

Second Soldier.

Death to Herod! What did I tell thee? I can depend upon my sagacity! (He loosens his sword.)

Pasur.

Take care! The soldiers! (The people fall back.)

First Soldier (laughing).

They are already ducking - the rabble! (They go in, laughing.)
Scene VII.

The same characters. Amasai and Jorah (coming from the left front, still remaining in the street).

Amasai.

Just look at them! Do they not seem as filth and a laughing-stock before the Lord? Who that, as a Chaber walks piously in the path of the law, can have communion with these sinners?

Jorah.

They are intoxicated by the harangues of the Baptist and yet too sober to kick against the pricks. Speak to them, so that they may recover themselves.

Amasai.

After the Baptist? I would rather keep a mad dog in check by his tail. They will go to the temple and offer the blood of swine if he desires it.

Jorah.

And can we not capture him?

Amasai.

To appear as friends of Herod before the people? That honor leave to the priests and the Sadducesses.
Why did we Pharisees swallow the anger which he cried out upon the streets? For this reason do the people adhere to him. Now it is too late for us. But I know how I shall lay hold of him. For his folly concerning the Messiah I shall seize him. (A cry of approval rises from the people.) Hark, so before they joyously shouted approval of us. (They withdraw into the street at the left.)

Scene VIII.

The same characters, without Amasai and Jorah. John, (accompanied by) Matthias, Manasse (and a new crowd of) People (appears in the background, left).

John (casts himself upon the edge of the well). Josaphat.

Behold, Rabbi, what power is given to thee! They fawn like puppies. Jerusalem, the Holy, lies at thy feet.

John.

Give me to drink.

Manasse (draws water for him).
Nachmoni.

See! The great prophet drinks, just as if he were one of us.

Pasur.

That is camel's hair with which he clothes himself. Now that must scratch his body. One can see from this that he is a holy man.

Eliakim.

But he gives the wool-dealer nothing to earn. If all were so holy, we could go begging.

Nachmoni.

And his food, the people say, is locusts and wild honey.

Matthias.

Make room. Do ye not see that ye are burdensome to him? (They fall back.)

Josaphat.

Pardon, Rabbi. The people tarry. What dost thou command them?

John.

Is this the house of Herod?

Josaphat.

Yes, Rabbi. (Silence.) Rabbi, say, what shall they do?
John.

Am I appointed master over these people? The shepherd may drive his sheep through thorns or flowers. I long for the desert. I crave for my rocks.

Josaphat (in fear).

Rabbi!

John.

I have waked the sleeping hearts, whipped up the indolent, and shown the erring the way. A great common anger against Herod flames up toward heaven. Now they may let me depart or send their bailiffs for me. But no priest has ventured to step in my way. No matter. My mission to Jerusalem is finished.

Matthias.

Nay verily, Rabbi. Thy work is beginning. We are about to witness the Tetrarch's entry. The people need a leader.

John.

Whither?

Matthias.

We know not, Rabbi.

John.

Do I know? Am I one who forges his will in the chains of a plan or who spins a net of calculations for others?
I am the voice of a preacher in the wilderness. Thereto was I called. Come! (He rises.)

The People (crowding forward).

Hail to John!

(As he starts to leave, Amasai and Jorah step up to him.)

Scene IX.

The same characters. Amasai. Jorah.

Amasai.

Forgive, great prophet, that we have not yet accepted thy baptism.

John.

Who are ye? Josaphat.

Take care, Rabbi. They wear the broad hem of the Pharisees. Their brethren sit in the Sanhedrin.

Amasai.

We are industrious scribes, simple men to whom the study of the law has brought more honor than they deserved.

John.

That may be. But what do ye desire?
Amasai.

Divers things came to our ears concerning thy works. Many say thou art Elijah. And others again say that thou art more than he. We willingly believe this, even though thou dost not his miracles, for certainly thou hast reasons in thy heart to keep this miraculous power of thine — which we do not doubt — secret from us.

Pasur.

Has he then not performed miracles?

Eliakim.

Upon me he wrought no miracles.

Pasur.

So, so!

Amasai.

We also hear much concerning thy godly life, that thou dost fast and pray like one to whom food and drink and earthly words are superfluous. We fast also, and we pray, and our desire for charitable acts will not be satisfied. But the law is harder still and more zealous than we. Therefore favor us with thy teaching, Rabbi, and tell us: What shall be our attitude toward the law?
John.

How? Do ye lay snares for me and cover your pits with gay twists? Thou generation of vipers, who has shown you that ye will escape future wrath?... Woe to you when He comes, who is stronger than I... He already has his fan in his hand... His threshing floor He will sweep. He will gather the wheat in His garner but the tares He will burn with eternal fire.

Pasur.

Of whom does he speak?

Hachmoni.

Be still, he is speaking of the Messiah.

Feliakim.

What Messiah?

Jerah.

Come, Amasai! I fear this man.

Amasai (resisting him with his hand). We approached thee as petitioners, but thou hast reproved us. So be it, for because thou hast reproved us, I infer that thou hast a right thereto. He, of whom thou speakest, that He shall come, has surely given thee the right. Is it not so? (Silence.) Behold, people of Israel, your prophet is silent... If his Messiah, the Messiah of whom he preaches in the wilderness and now upon the streets has not given him
the right to reprove us, whence came he by it? You know us; we are plain and godfearing men who emulate the law in all things -

One of the People.

Who is this man?

Eliakim.

Amasai, the wise scribe.

The People (murmuring).

Hark ye, Amasai.

Another.

Rabbi, wilt thou not bless us?

Amasai.

Yes, those who are a piece of the law, as it were. And we have never done this man any evil. If he be then our enemy, it is only because he is an enemy of the law.

John.

Thou liest!

Amasai.

Well, if I lie, teach us, great prophet, how dost thou consider the law?

Josaphat (softly).

Yes, Rabbi, declare thyself! The people expect it.

John.

With that law, before which you and the like of you
stand as guardians and as judges, I have nothing to do.
(Movement among the people.)

Josaphat(softly).

Rabbi, consider! Do not make a false move.

John.

But not the law do I hate. I hate you. For your
hand lies heavily upon this people. And your benevolence
is their misfortune.

Amasai.

That thou shouldst prove to us, great prophet.

John.

Who are ye, ye idlers and busybodies, that ye
think to possess the law and the fulfilling of the
law as the inheritance and prosperity of your tribe?
Here an enslaved people crawls beneath the swinging
lash, with a world of woe upon their backs, patiently
along their way, and you would tell them how to crawl?

Amasai.

Yes, they must crawl somehow, great prophet!

John.

Dost thou think so? Nay, they must arise from the
dust.
Amasai.

So have the rioters of all ages said, and the end was the cross and the gallows. Thou, whom they call the great prophet, hear me. When the Lord saved his people the first time, knowest thou by what means He did it? Through the law... And if we guard and protect this law and let it grow out of itself as the green grass grows out of itself and increases a thousandfold to a thousandfold blessing, for what purpose do we do it? For salvation's sake. For this hope lives in all of us. Only we make no noise about it upon the streets.

The People(murmuring).

He is right. Yes, he is right.

Scene X.

The same characters. A host of pilgrims has gradually come on the scene and quench their thirst at the well. Among them, Simon the Gallilean.

Amasai.

There - look about thee! See, these pilgrims! From distant lands they came with their packs. From Egypt and the Euphrates, from Syria, yea even from the accursed city of the Romans. They heeded not hunger
and thirst, nor the heat of the sun and the dust of the road. And why came they? For the sake of the very law, which I and those like me know and guard. And if thou sayest: With this thou art not concerned, and again: The law thou hatest not, explain to us: What law Lovest thou? Where end the commandments which the Lord gave His people and where begins the foolish work of man? Teach us, great prophet, and do not reprove us!

John (remains silent, having fallen into doubt). Josaphat (softly).

I warned thee, Rabbi.

Amasai (with a scornful laugh).

See, all of you, see! It seems, the great—

As a woman, sick, heavily laden, accidentally comes near him, he turns angrily) Touch me not, so that I shall not become unclean. Seest thou not, I am a Chaber.

Simon the Gallilean (to the woman). No, touch him not, so that thou shalt not become unclean.

Amasai.

What-a-t?
Simon the Gallilean.

For those who call themselves Chaberim, the Pharisees, are unclean through themselves. Come! (He leads the woman to the well.)

Amasai.

He blasphemes God!

Murmuring Among the People.

He blasphemes God!

Amasai.

A Chaber unclean? A man, who does nothing morning and evening, and day and night but fulfill the law, who performs the holy cleansing more than three times too often, who, on the Sabbath sits quiet as a - as a gravestone, who says one blessing upon the bread and two upon the meat, who - who - (half choking) - a Chaber unclean!

Johm.

In truth, I knew not the answer to his two-edged question, so he has given it you himself.

Amasai.

And if seven evil spirits lodge in thee, thou - great prophet, compared with him, thou seemest to me to be a holy man. (To the Gallilean) What evil spirit possesses thee, man? Art thou a Jew? Of what lineage art thou? How art thou called?
Matthias (softly).

Do not speak thy name. He seeks thy ruin.

Simon the Gallilean (quietly)

I am a Jew, am called Simon and come from Gallilee.

Amasai.

And as one, who knoweth law and sacrifices —

Simon the Gallilean.

Higher than sacrifice and law is love. (Movement of horror among the people.)

Amasai.

Do ye see now that he is liable to the law? (He speaks softly and eagerly to the people.)

John (has stepped up to the Gallilean in great agitation). Who taught thee that? (When the Gallilean keeps silent, more urgently). Who taught thee that?

Matthias (Hastily, softly to the Gallilean). Flee, ere they seize thee!

Simon the Gallilean (shakes his head).

John.

This wisdom of thy heart, simple and terrible, at which I shudder, springs not from thee. (The people,
incited by Amasai, press upon the Gallilean). Back from him! In the name of Him who is to come, back from him! (The people give way.)

Pasur.

Thou playest with our longing, man, as one who plays with children.

Amasai.

Yea, now I have thee too, thou who poisonest a thirsty people with foul water. Where is He who is to come? Where is thy Messiah? Where is the King of the Jews of whom thou cryest? Now show Him to us!

The People (angrily).

Woe unto thee, if thou show Him not unto us! (Tubas resound back above the scene. Sudden silence. The soldiers step out of the guardroom).

John (strongly).

There comes the king of the Jews whom ye deserve!

Scene XI.

The same characters. Herod. Herodias. Salome (with her retinue appear in the background). The
hand of soldiers, with their captain, have placed themselves at the palace door. The procession descends. Silence.)

One of the Followers.

Hail Herod! (All remains quiet.) Now yell, ye dogs.

Herod.

Why do the people stare? (To the captain of the guard). You, who are to protect me, at Rome's command, why do you not drive them - out of my way?

The Soldiers (at the command of their captain press back the crowd with lowered lances).

Amasai (who is standing in the first row turns with a piercing) Woe is me! Woe is me! (to flight). (Jorab follows him, the people fall back with subdued cries of terror. Only John, with head held high, remains in his place, measuring Herod with his glances.)

Salome (raising her veil).

Mother, see yonder man. He stood in the market place, before the door, everywhere, that we went.

Herodias.

And everywhere there was murmuring about him.
Salome.

See! Lightning flashes from his eye. Mother, see!

Herod.

Come, ye women! And if the pious citizens of Jerusalem have forgotten how to shout the welcome of the great family of Herod, I hope (with a glance at the captain of the guards) that Rome will teach it to them again.

The Captain (shrugs his shoulders, smiling softly).

Herod.

Pray, come! (Herod, Herodias, Salome pass into the palace with their followers, the soldiers into the guardroom.)

Scene XII.

The People.

Hachmoni (at the head of the group, which crowds forward). Forgive us, great prophet. The Pharisees have fled like cowards. See, we cling to thee now! Help us!
The People.

Help us!

John (as in a dream).

Tell me, whither has the man of Galilee gone?

Manasse.

Rabbi, we know not.

John.

Seek him. Bring him to me.

Manasse.

Yes, Rabbi.

John.

What desire ye?

All the People.

Stay with us, great prophet! Help us. We beseech thee!

John (brooding distrustfully).

Matthias, Josaphat, said he not: love?
ACT II.

Hall in Roman style in the palace of Herod. At the right side, a balcony, supported by columns, which fills the depths of the stage and to which a stairway leads at the side. In the balcony, a door to the chambers of Salome. Below it, on the ground floor, another door. At the center, back, the main entrance. A window, left. Near it a couch with other furniture. Right, between two columns of the balcony, a chair of state. Rugs and skins. Comfortable in Roman-Oriental fashion.

Scene I.

Maecha, Miriam, Abi (in the balcony, later) Salome.
The Maids (enter carefully and listen below).

Salome (through the door).

Is everything clear?

Maecha.

Not a sound.

Salome.

Then come. (They slip down the stairs.)

Salome.

Ah, here it is bright, and we can see our reflection in the walls... Do ye know why we were suddenly confined up in our chambers? Yesterday we were allowed to roam about freely in the halls and to dance unveiled in the gardens and to mock the passersby through the window-lattice, and today in the hours since my uncle's arrival, we sit waiting in ashes and distress... Why? Does no one know, why?

Maecha.

My lady, the house is now filled with strangers, who were not here yesterday. And the men, it is said, whom the Tetrarch has in his retinue, like to steal after maidens.

Salome.

Let them come. I fear no men... They suit me as
they are. I love them, as they are.

Abi.

Knowest thou men, my lady?

Salome.

Those of our people I do not mean. They wear their beards like frisettes on their cheeks, and before one is aware, they stand before one bare-footed... And then it is said - that I like not... But once when I was with my father in Antioch, I saw pale youths with gold-brown locks, who wore red shoes and were fragrant with perfume... They were Greeks, said my father, real Greeks from Hellas... They smiled, and then I trembled... Why standest thou there so sullenly, Miriam, and dost not hear what I say? It does not please thee, perhaps, what I am saying... Laugh, or I shall strike thee... If thou dost not laugh, I shall have thee whipped.

Miriam.

Have me whipped, my lady.

Salome.

Where wast thou last night? The palace matron said thou wantedst to visit thy aunt... Perhaps thou hast a lover! Say, hast thou a lover? (Car-essingly). Tell me of him, softly, and I will give thee a golden bracelet.
Miriam.

There is no one, my lady.

Salome.

Your speech tastes flat, ye maids of Judea, and your eyes dissemble. And yet I love Jerusalem. A purple haze lies upon its roofs. And it seems to me, that the sun kisses secretly in Jerusalem. But that ye do not understand... One must have the blood of the great Herod in his veins. My mother has it... And I have it of her... And although they murmur in Jerusalem, yet my mother did well, that she fled from the other one. For this one is greater than he... And because she was so clever and yet so mad, I love her and will share her madness with her. (She casts herself upon the couch.) My uncle Herod is not ill-pleased with me... I have noticed that he sent stolen glances toward me... If my mother reproves me, I shall know wherewith to vex her. (Hums.) I am a flower of Sharon and a rose of the valley... If my friend comes not into his garden and eat of — Miriam, whither leads this window?

Miriam.

I know not, my lady. I have never been in this hall.
Salome.

Then go and see.

Miriam (looks out of the window and starts in alarm).

Salome.

Why art thou alarmed? 

Miriam.

Was I alarmed, my lady?

Salome.

But say, what seest thou?

Miriam.

About a well stand many people... And --

Salome.

And?

Miriam.

I can not...

Salome (arises and goes to the window). Ah! (She looks out silently for a time.)

Miriam, who is yonder man?

Miriam (confused).

Whom meanest thou, my lady?

Salome.

Is there more than one?... Miriam, thou charming, dark Miriam! (Half threateningly). Do not deny him!
Miriam.

He is - John - the Baptist!

Abi, Maccha, (hastening up curiously).

The Baptist?

Salome.

Be he, whoever he be... See, how the people press pleading about him! Saw ye ever a rock of your valley bow himself? He will not bow - hahaha. Not he...

Only - if - perhaps - (She stretches her arms.)

Scene II.

The same characters. Herodias (through the center).

Maccha.

My lady, thy mother!

The Three Maids (run back from the window).

Herodias.

What do ye here, ye maids?... Salome, thou? - shall it be said, that we carry poor breeding to Jerusalem?

Salome (with the purpose of wounding her, but outwardly humble).

Methinks they are saying it, mother.
Herodias (passionately).

Go!

Salome.

Yes, mother! (She crosses over and stops between the pillars of the balcony.)

Herodias.

Remain, ye maids!... Ye are Jewesses?

Macha.

Yes, my lady.

Herodias.

There came a message to me, that one, who is called the Baptist, preaches rebellion in the streets. Who of you knows this man?

Macha.

She, here.

Abi.

She has just confessed it.

Herodias.

What knowest thou of him?

Miriam.

That this night I sat praying at his feet.

Salome (stepping forward).

Thou? Thou?

Macha.

Forgive, my lady! Even now he stood close before
the palace.

Show him to me.  Maccha (from the window).

He has gone.  Herodias (to Miriam).

Hasten after him, until thou hast found him, and bring him secretly (pointing to the right below) through yonder door.

Salome.

She shall not. I do not want...Not she...

Herodias.

Why shall not she?

Salome (embracing Miriam).

She is my favorite. I do not wish her to leave me. (Goes over to Herodias, pleading.) Mother!

Herodias.

Art thou still so much a child and — — (To Miriam). Go!

Salome (threateningly).

Miriam!  

(Miriam leaves.)

Herodias.

And bearest already the tooth of a serpent in thy mouth?

Salome (kneels upon the couch)
before her and clasps her waist). Forgive, mother!
We are not like others!... We sting him whom we love.

Herodias (softly).

And him whom we hate?

Salome (softly).

Him we kiss.

Herodias (laughing).

Child! (She kisses her.)

Salome (laughing).

Thou didst kiss me.

Scene III.

The same characters. The Prefect of the Palace.

The Prefect.

My lord, the Tetrarch Herod, desires to seek thee, my lady.

Herodias (in rising agitation draws Salome's veil over her face). Go - hasten - go!

Salome.

Mother, I dread the chambers. May I not be with thee?

Herodias (looking toward the door). Go!

Salome (slowly ascends the stairs
with her companions).

Herodias.

Thou art the Prefect of the Palace?

The Prefect (bows).

Herodias.

... Then place watches before yonder door. Whoever enters, shall never leave again... And keep silence!

The Prefect.

He, who sees thee, knows that thou art the ruler. Why should not I poor wretch keep silent? (He goes to the door.)

Scene IV.


Herod.

Princess, he who long awaits a moment, desires to taste his favor to the full. - Therefore - (He kisses her upon the brow and lips) forgive!

Herodias.

Thou hast rested, art refreshed?
Herod.

Thou shouldst not ask me that. My father was one of those, who never became weary. Then to his son, the cushion must early become an offense; and - (He notices Salome, who, lifting her veil slightly, looks down upon him from the balcony and, after she finds herself observed, vanishes).

Herodias.

Thou art silent?

Herod.

Thy daughter is not with thee?

Herodias (dryly).

No.

Herod (nods, smirking to himself). But - permit me, my lady. These my friends, and I say not, servants, for that they are not.

Herodias.

O, my lady, they are, so that they may be friends.

Jabad.

And they are friends, so that they may serve, my lady.

Gabales.

And they will be rewarded for both, my lady.

Herod (smiling).

The rogue, with whose glib Syrian tongue thou hast
just become acquainted, is Gabalos of Antioch. Thou seest I tolerate his banter.

Gabalos.

For even Herod the Great kept a fool.

Herodias.

Still, he occasionally took a second before he had the first one drowned.

Gabalos (bows smiling, then turns aside with a grimace).

Herod.

This is Merokles, the Phetor. His voice reaches far. It is heard in Rome, if they pretend not to hear mine.

Merokles.

But I shall not be pleased with it, until it may greet thee with the cry: Hail to thee, o queen.

Herodias (trembles and smiles, and then exchanges a glance with Herod).

Merokles (stepping up to Gabalos, softly). Thou didst strike well, I struck better.

Herod.

And in contrast with this cool enthusiast here: Jabad, the Levite, my light and my conscience as soon
as I step on Judæan territory. For, by Bacchus, he
knows at every moment, what I must do, in order to be
pious, according to the way of my pious people.

Gabalos (softly).

He acts, as if he had forgotten it.

Merokles (softly).

For he thinks in this manner to be more like his
father.

Herod.

What, to choose an example, doth this holy moment
demand of me?

Jabad.

The sun is descending, o master. Thy Paschal lamb,
year-old and without a blemish, has been killed in the
temple. It lies in the court, to be blessed. Thou as
lord and father of this house —

Herod.

Must do it myself?

Jabad.

Thy noble father did not, and therefore the people
bore him ill will.

Herod.

To bless is cleaner than to kill. I shall do it.
Indeed, ye wise Greeks, so one serves the gods, in
order to rule over men. And at the last, one serves in
vain. (He dismisses them. To Jabad) Prepare all. I follow thee.

(Exit Gabalos, Merokles, Jabad.)

Scene V.

Herod. Herodias. (Later) Salome (with) Maecha (in the balcony). (Herod and Herodias stand for a time facing each other silently.)

Herodias.

Art thou satisfied?

Herod.

Thy kindness stifles me. If thou be satisfied, appears more important to me.

Herodias (feeling his scorn).

For three nights I have had no roof over my head. As a gray vagabond I wandered along in the dust of the way. My maid servants deserted me. Only Salome did not leave me. Her I robbed of her father. The father of his child. That of which I have robbed my husband, must thou cherish better than is due me. See, so much have I done for thee.

Herod.

I have put away my wife, who also spoke to me of
her love. - She fled to her father. - He prepares for war, to avenge the shame of his child, and I lack only a trifle: the army... In Rome disfavor threatens me. My brother curses me. Judea points its fingers at me... Behold, so little did I for thee.

Herodias.

And thou regrettest this trifle, now?

Herod.

No... but forgive, if I blame thee that thou camest too early.

Herodias.

Never was warmer welcome heard than this "too early".

Herod.

Give not my words an evil turn, I pray thee.

Herodias.

That longing impelled me, of that I do not venture to speak.

Herod (laughing meditatively).

Yet speak - speak.

Herodias.

Then thou hast not forgotten the days - of audible glances and silent promises - when every breath was a desire and every word a languishing?
Herod.

How could I forget them, love, how could I?

Herodias.

And thou dost no longer recall the nights, when straying steps groped their way down to the fragrant gardens, where in the exuberance of luxuriant blossoming, two wakeful ones mingled their sighs?

Herod.

Why should I not remember, love, why should I not?

Herodias.

I have clad myself in Hindoo robes, I have strewed pomegranate blossoms over my throat and gold dust in my hair, but thou seest it not... My speech is bridal, yet thou hearest it not.

(Salome has appeared with Maecho in the balcony. Herod notices them.)

Salome.

Wait, let me see, if he has come. (She looks down and after her glances meet those of Herod, she disappears again.)

Herodias (becoming aware of his abstraction, with a cry). Thou hearest it not, in truth.
Herod (collecting himself hastily). How then?... That, which thy kindness calls bridal in our souls, that yonder gardens heard sufficiently. Now let it rest. Today, methinks, there are other things to do.

Herodias.

Thou believest I was indolent?... Thinkest thou me one, who comes daily to beg an evening offering of caresses? Look upon me! Not the beloved!... She is no more... Look upon thy mistress.

Herod.

I look - and see a woman who raves.

Herodias.

So sure as ambition is thy mistress, so certainly as secret rage corrodes thee in spite of thy ever ready smile -

Herod (in fear).

Who told thee - whence - ?

Herodias.

So sure and certainly shall I hold thee. When thou but just saidst, I rave, thou wert considering, how thou mightest quickly drive me off again... Thou fool!... Drive off the sleeplessness of thy nights and all that thou callest great in thee, the inheritance of that greater one, whom thou wilt never equal...
Herod.

Woman - how - (he choke on his words).

Herodias (smiling).

Speak out thy mind. For if thou need me not for love, perhaps thou needst me to listen to thee.

Herod (after pacing up and down in great excitement). Whom I shall never equal?...

What is he, who smiles so lovingly in anger? A coward?

... What is he, who grins to right and left? A traitor?

... What is he, who fawns upon his rulers? A servant?...

No... For this did he also... But at times, when his blood nearly burst the veins in his brow, he tore the sword from its sheath and cut in pieces - friend and foe, no matter, whatever crossed his path... Until the blood of his victims washed his face white again...

Until the all-powerful one at Rome shuddered at such strength... The blood rises in my veins, too... I, also, would - - but I have no sword... And so I shall smile lovingly again... shall grin from right to left again and eat the words of the priests - as the son of Herod and his ape!

Herodias.

And if the priests of the temple were to thee a wall and a defense against the rabid throng, shouldst
thou doubt thyself less?

Herod.

I doubt not myself. And what thou sayest can never come to pass.

Herodias (goes to the middle door and opens it).

(A porteress enters.)

Herodias.

What hast thou to announce?

Porteress.

The two messengers to the temple, my lady, returned with a new message from the high priest.

Herodias.

Conduct them into the hall... Let them wait there.

(Exit the porteress.)

Herod (with a laugh of anger and fear). Do their trumpets already blow upon the way? Does the great curse sound already at the door?

Herodias.

Thou art confused, my friend. A small blessing scratches at the door. If so it please thee, admit it.

Herod.

Thou dreamest.

Herodias.

Hear me. Why did I over-hastily enter this empty
house before thee?... Since the hour of my arrival, I have been negotiating with the priests...

Herod.

Thou?...

Herodias.

What if thou conceal not the sinful woman from the people, but with head held high, enter the temple tomorrow. Were it not a happy performance, if the high priest should, with the same expression of the fatherly servant, with which he once greeted the virtuous Mariamne, also smile upon the runaway wife of thy brother?

Herod.

What hast thou sold him for this?

Herodias.

If it be granted, it will be bestowed free.

Herod.

One who does not know them, the great butcherers of the altar, he may believe thee.

Herodias.

Very well. (Softly). We are to promise and guarantee never again at Rome to aspire to Judea and the kingdom, (scornfully). Then they may consider.

Herod.

And how didst thou answer such a bold, such -
Herodias.

I promised... What else?... For me... And for thee...

Herod.

This spoil was not yet thine. And already thou hast betrayed it?

Herodias.

It seems as if but now I heard thee cry for a sword... (Smiling). When thou art king, thou wilt put to death all those, whom thou hast promised not to be king. It is the same as if thou hadst promised no one.

Herod (staring at her).

Woman!

Herodias.

Dost thou believe still that I went forth for the sake of a kiss?

Herod.

I shudder at thee!... Even though thou hast overcome the priests, the people, the hundred thousand head−ed, thou knowest not. They once threw their offering at the head of their own king, they put to death the son of Barachia between temple and altar. And dost thou not know, the Baptist is in the city?

Herodias.

The Baptist! Let me take care of the Baptist.
Herod.

Approach him only if thou carryest a sword of justice, that I advise thee.

Herodias (laughs).

Scene VI.

The same characters. Jabad (and) Several Servants.

Jabad.

Pardon, o lord, the lamb is prepared.

Herod.

First we desire to hear the priest, if it please your, - if it - so please our lady.

Herodias (nods smiling).

(All exit.)

Scene VII.

John. Miriam (through the lower door, right).

Miriam.

Here thou mayest await her, Rabbi... What dost thou command thy handmaiden?

(John shakes his head.)

(Miriam kisses his garment. Exit above, left.)
Scene VIII.

John (remains alone for a short time. Then) Salome. (Behind her) Maecha, Abi (and) Two Other Maidens.

Salome. (steps softly to the railing looks down upon John, finds nothing, then turns back to Maecha). Give what thou wearest in thy girdle. (She takes the roses which Maecha hands her and casts them over.) He did not see them. Bring more flowers, and bring your harps... Maecha remain! Else I should be afraid... (The maidens, except Maecha, exit.) Thou wild man from the desert of Judea, the hateful glance of thine eyes, me it will not devour; another fire will I kindle in him, lovely and sick as my dreams, when the perfume of the narcissus drifts nightly over my head. (The maidens return.) Give!... Roses - two armfuls... (She hides her head in the flowers). Had I only a narcissus now. No, stay and sing the melody which I taught you yesterday, which the dancers of Antioch sing... But softly, that he becomes not shy...

Where is Miriam?

Abi.

She would not come.
Salome (through her teeth).

She would not come!... He has seen the rose... He lifts it up - like something, that he has never -- There thou hast more - and more - and more! (She scatters the roses out over him).

Song of the Maidens.

(which continues during the following and then ends with a postlude of the harps).

With honey and sesame sweet have I fed thee,
And sandalwood rare did I put in my shoe,
Yea, even my loins I loosely have circled,
I've sung and played my harp for thee!

Come, now let us cool
The fire which seizes me!... Come!
Else will I teach thee feel,
How much my soul loath hate... Come!

John. (looks up astonished.

The shower of roses strikes him in the face, he retreats). Who plays with me?

Salome. (has slowly descended the stairs). Master, I!
John.


I am a rose in the valley and a flower of Sharon.

John.

Then play with thine own. Leave me in peace... Or go and call her who called me...

Salome.

My mother? John.

Thou art Salome, the - ?

Salome.

I am.

John.

Let me see thine eyes, girl.

Salome.

See, master... But look not so... If thou forcest me to cover my face with my hands, I shall laugh through my fingers. But I shall laugh.

John.

Girl, knowest thou the abominations of this house? Was thy soul made guilty with the guilty?

Salome.

Look upon me once more, master. Am I not young among the daughters of Israel? And youth, it is said, knows no guilt and no guilty ones. See, they held me
imprisoned in my chambers; so I tried the locks and stole here, for I knew thou wert here, master!

John.

How shall I say to the storm: Pass over — and flood: Devour her not?

Salome.

Speak, master, even if I understand not what thou sayest. And knowest thou, that according to the laws of Judea, we sin now? We both — indeed. — My attendants are gone, and is it not forbidden, that a man of Judea be alone with a maiden?

John.

I am not alone with thee. Behind thee stand the shadows of those who dragged thee here into the loathsome hiding place of their pleasures.

Salome.

I live my joys, master. How do the joys of others concern me?... Once I read the saying, that stolen waters are sweet, and my nurse told me, that an untouched treasure shines only for those who seek it not... Is it not so, me thou hast not sought?

John.

Thy speech is wild.
Salome.

Wait! Reprove me not. Consider, our dreams, also, are wild. As I fled here with my mother, we passed by night through a poppy field... And the dew sparkled upon the blossoms. They appeared gray and were all closed, for it was night... But now they are wide open - and I believe my cheeks redden in their reflection.

John.

Thou art lovely among the daughters of Jerusalem. They will weep over thee.

Salome.

Why will they weep? Shall I be sacrificed? Master, not I. - Protect thou me... I know of a king, master, who made a covenant with the sun. Thou too?

John (nods).

Salome.

Then I will make a covenant with thee. Shall I be the sun and thou my king? Or wilt thou be the sun and I thy queen?

John.

Maiden, I can be neither sun nor king.

Salome.

Why not? It is only a game.
John.

The King shall come after me, but I wander in the wilderness and seek a way among the thorns.

Salome.

And thou hast not found it?

John.

Not for me!

Salome.

But for others?

John (tortured, half to himself).

Who knoweth?

Salome.

Show it also to me, master, for it will be the right way.

John.

Gird thy loins, cast a gray web over thy hair and turn away from me... Hasten, for I am sent as a chastisement for thee and a curse to destroy thee.

Salome.

Master, how shall thy anger harm one to whom it is a joy and a feast? And if thou comest to meet flames of fire, I shall not bewail my youth two moons; I shall reach my arms to you and cry: Consume me, flame! Take me up, flame!

John (after a silence).

Go!
Salome.

I go... (She falls on the breast of Herodias, who enters.) Mother!

Scene IX.

The same characters. Herodias and her Women.

Salome.

Forgive, mother, and let me be with thee.

Herodias.

Thou, who lookest upon me so imperiously, art thou he who didst stir up the people against me?

John.

I am he, whom thou hast called.

Herodias (seating herself upon the chair). Step hither to me.

John.

Send thy women away and this child, so that her soul shall not wither, even before it become ripe.

Herodias.

The women may go. (The women leave.) But this child is the companion of my fate. What I have to say to thee, she may hear.
But from what I have to say to thee, guard her well.

Didst thou heed well, prophet? Before yonder door stand armed men in couples. Consider the danger, so that thou see not death!

I serve life, and danger stood never upon my way.

I honor thy faith, prophet, and therefore will I speak in a friendly way to thee... They told me of a man who withdraws himself from the habitations of men and only seldom descends to the living waters, in order to bless, as they say. That pleased me well... Before greatness the great gladly bow - and so I bow before thee.

Salome (who knelt at her feet, rising clasps her about the neck).

Because thou didst rebuke me in the market place of Jerusalem, will I not dispute with thee, for thou knowest me not... But it ill pleased me that thou dost harp upon the theme, because of which the Judean
multitudes incense themselves against me. I should have considered thee to be prouder — and thy loneliness to be richer.

John.

For thy praise or blame, I came not. I have a question to ask of thee: Wilt thou tomorrow, as the first day of the Passover, go to the temple at the side of the Tetrarch?

Herodias (controlling her scorn with difficulty). I see, great prophet, that thy anger lies in chains and shakes them... Ere thou dost release it, grant me a question also, for see, I strive to approach thee, and would be glad to win thee. If thou didst not appear unusual to me, I should not question, but indeed, so unusual is no one created, that his heart does not secretly harbor a wish and say to itself: This were my joy, and that were my desire.

John.

I do not understand thee.

Herodias.

Well, look about thee: Do not the snow of the marble and the golden gold allure thee?
John (remains silent).

Herodias.

Or - didst thou never dream of power and glory and the kingdoms of this world?

John (remains silent).

Herodias.

Or - (pointing to Salome, who kneels at her feet again) did thy heart never tremble before this sweet unveiled youth?

John (after repeated silence).

Thou wouldst buy me? - Knowest thou also thy price? With one and a half bowers of barley, thou wouldst be paid too dearly... for - mistress is thy name, and adulteress is written upon thy brow.

Herodias (passionately).

Thou! Thou!

Salome (falling into her arms).

Mother!

Herodias (controlling herself, coldly scornful) I should have thee seized now, still thou amusest me. And if thou art not wholly intoxicated by thy self-esteem, hear this: He who would presume to be a judge over men, he must have a share in their affairs and be human among human beings.

John (perplexed).

What - saidst - thou?
But thou seest to be so removed, that the beat of
the human heart itself is madness to thee... Thou hast
stolen like a coward from every sin into thy wilderness
and now thou creepest forth to call others sinful.
Perhaps the scorching wind of the desert taught thee
how to hate - what knowest thou of those who die for
the sake of their love?

John.

Thou too speakest of love - thou too?

Herodias.

Thou seest, I laugh at thee, thou great prophet!
(She laughs).

Salome.

Mother, look upon him - cease!

John.

Strike me with thy poison, I care not, and thou
didst strike well. But - (pointing to the window)
behold the people of the Lord - they show their teeth
against thee, for thou hast taken their bitter bread
and poured out their miserable drink. Thou sayest,
I know them not... But their longing I know, for I
created it. And before this longing I stand with my
life and cry to thee: Woe to thee, that thou dost
sully it for them!... Thou dost unman the strength of the men and uncover the modesty of the young women. Thou sewest ridicule, where I hoped to gather faith... And if thou bendest the high and mighty to the footstool of thy desires, I shall drag the poor and lowly in thy way that they crush thee under their soles - Woe to thee - and woe to him who commits adultery with thee! - - and woe to this young life, which unfolds beneath the scourge of thy blood! Woe! Woe!

Herodias (springing up, toward the door at the right). Let the watches - the watches -! (She tears open the door.)

Scene X.

The same characters. Two Watchmen.

Herodias.

Take this man - (She stops, struck by John's glance).

John (smiling).

Now see, what thou dost unto me!

Herodias.

Take this man - out - upon the street... (She falls back upon the chair).
Salome.

Thou camest in flames of fire!

John (walks to the door).

(The Curtain Falls.)
ACT III.

A room in the house of Josaphat. In the background, a door leading to the street, beside it a latticed window. Upon the left side a door to another living-room, upon the right side, also a door. Left front, a shoemaker's outfit. Toward the center, a small table and several stools. At the right, a couch, before it a seat and small table. Everything poor, yet not empty, lighted by two small clay lamps.

Scene I.

Jael (with a child at her breast). Two Other Children (about her). Several Women (stand at the left and listen toward the door, through which sounds the subdued singing of psalms by men's voices.
The Boy.

What are they singing now, mother?

Jael (pale, anxious).

They sing the great Hallelujah, my child.

The Boy.

Does the prophet sing too, mother?

Jael.

That I cannot hear, my child.

(Two other women come through the middle door.)

The First.

Jael, we have heard that the great prophet is eating the Passover in thy house. Wilt thou permit that we see him?

Jael.

Enter.

One Previously Present.

The last there at the left, that is he.

The First.

He who sits so gloomily?

The Second.

Him I should fear. (The song has meanwhile ceased).

The First.

It is said he came to the city to judge Herod. Is it true, Jael?

Jael.

I know not.
The Boy.

Mother, see, they are drinking the cup of Joy.
Now they will come.

The First.
Did he speak the blessing upon the cup of Joy?

The Second.
No, Josaphat spoke it.

The First.
Why did not he speak it, Jael?

Jael (does not answer).

The First.
See, they are rising.

Another.

Will they come here, Jael?

Jael.

This is the couch where he is to sleep.

Several.

Then farewell, Jael.

Jael.

Farewell.

(They hasten out.)
Scene II.


Josaphat.

Here thou art alone, Rabbi. The others remained outside.

John.

I thank thee, Josaphat.

Amarja.

I also, Josaphat.

Josaphat.

Thank thou him, Amarja, that he ate with us. (As John seats himself, softly to Amarja). Come! (He notices Jael, who unnoticed had stopped at the door.) Jael, thou art here with the children?

John.

Is this thy wife, Josaphat?

Josaphat.

Yes, Rabbi.

John.

And thy children?

Josaphat.

Yes, Rabbi.

John.

Thou didst never tell me, that... Thy name is Jael? - so he called thee.
Jael.

Yes, Rabbi.

John.

Why dost thou not come closer?

The Boy.

We fear thee, Rabbi.

John (smiling).

Why do ye fear?

The Boy.

I do not know.

Josaphat.

Forgive him, Rabbi, thou seest, he -

John.

Josaphat, wilt thou trust thy loved ones to me for a time?

Josaphat (bows, motions to Amarja and goes off with him, right).

Scene III.


John.

Thine eyes look sad, Jael. Dost thou hear sorrow in thy heart?

Jael.

Kneel down, Baruch, my son, kneel down, both of you.
The Boy (tearfully).

Mother.

John.

What does this mean, Jael?

Jael.

Say: Please, Rabbi!

The Children.

Please, Rabbi!

Jael.

Even this little one pleads, although it can not yet plead -

John.

For what -?

Jael.

That thou wouldst give them back their father, for see, they have no bread.

John (raises the children).

We have just eaten the lamb in thy house, and thou sayest, we have no bread?

Jael.

Not of today do I speak, today the poorest have to eat. See, Rabbi, thou art in truth a great prophet, and much hast thou given the people, but from me thou hast taken - from me and these children - thou hast taken everything that we have.
John.

How have I been able to do that, Jael?

Jael.

See, for a long time my husband has been going nightly to thee in the wilderness, and his tools lie there and we hunger. But gladly would we hunger and die of hunger for him, hadst thou not estranged his heart from us and drawn his love to thee.

John.

Art thou also one of those who say: Higher than law and sacrifice is love?

Jael (fearfully).

That I did not say, Rabbi... Wouldst thou cast me into misfortune before the priests?

John.

But in thy heart thou believest it?

Jael.

Rabbi!

John.

Had ye come to me in my wilderness, I had shown you Him whom shall bring food to the hungry. Here I am poor. So, I have nothing to do with you.

Jael. (goes to the door with the children).
John. (makes a movement to recall them).

Jael.

Rabbi.

John (shakes his head).

(Exit Jael with the children.)

Scene IV.


John.

Josaphat, how long have I known thee?

Josaphat.

It was two years ago that I came to thy baptism.

John.

And since then thou hast come often?

Josaphat.

When was I not with thee, Rabbi?

John.

I never knew that thou wert a wender of shoes and that - thy children cry for bread. It seems I do not know thee after all, Josaphat.

Josaphat.

The best in me, thou knowest. Thou gavest it to me.
John.

Then I really knew only myself. And nothing more do I know of thee, Amarja... Only one thing I know: (staring into space) I am sent — — (He stops).

Josaphat.

Rabbi!

John.

That is, one said to me: I know ye not... One of those who carry the word "Love" in their mouths. And I almost believe her... Still, whether I know you or not, I would not love you, but judge you in the name of — in whose name? Know ye not?

Josaphat.

In the name of Him who is to come, so didst thou teach us, master.

John.

Father would I speak to these black walls, that they mayhap fall, — rather to the hunger of thy children, that my word satisfy them. But the faith which looks radiantly up to me, because it believes, that pains me. (He seats himself).

Amarja (softly).

The second hour is approaching. Wilt thou not speak with him concerning Herod?
John (as Josaphat approaches him). I have sent the youngest of you to seek the Gallilean. Where is he?

Josaphat.

He has not yet returned, master.

John.

Perhaps he goeth astray.

Josaphat.

The way hither I told him, master.

John.

The Gallilean I will have. The Gallilean ye must produce for me... Behold in my King is my strength. And though I serve Him as an unworthy vessel - I serve according to my measure... I have borne witness of Him - have I not?

Josaphat.

That verily hast thou done, Rabbi.

John.

But this testimony grew in my soul. When He comes, will He establish it?

Josaphat.

He will, master, for God sends Him.
Or my soul has not known Him, just as I do not know you. - Hear ye nothing of Manasse?... Go, watch without that he mistake not the house. (Knocking).

Scene V.

The same characters. Matthias.

Josaphat.

Hear, Matthias. - Didst thou not see Manasse?

Matthias,

No. - Rabbi, I came to thee in the night concerning Herod.

John.

Concerning Herod. (Sits turning away from them).

Matthias.

I sent spies to the palace at the time of the feast of the Passover. The priests went back and forth. What they negotiated no one knows. If he come to the morning sacrifice at the eighth hour, as he is accustomed at the feasts, -- if he come with the woman -- if he thus spew his sin into the faces of the people, Rabbi, say, what then?

John (does not answer).
Amarja.

He does not hear thee.

Josaphat.

He thinks of the Gallilean.

John.

I heard one speak of sin here... Know ye in what garb sin loves to clothe herself, when she goes among the people? Ye may say pride - say hate, say what ye will, wish, and I shall laugh at you. Hear and remember: She calls herself love. Everything that is lowly and bows because it is lowly, - that casts the crumbs from its table in order not to cast with the bread, - that covers the graves, so that they decay in secret, - that cuts off the thumb from the left hand so that it may not say to the right: Take care: All of that they call love... And they call it love when the ass becomes lustful in the springtime, and the hinds cry, - or even when a woman in the evening gathers the stones with which the people will kill her on the morrow, in order to prostitute herself thereupon; and the woman says: Sec, beloved, how sweet is our bed! - and that they call love....
Matthias. (after exchanging a glance with Josaphat). Rabbi, pardon! the people await thee... As many as roll upon their beds, to await the morning, all think only of one thing: Judgment - judgment upon Herod.

John.

Judgment upon Herod - true enough.

Josaphat.

And thou shalt judge him. No one but thou.

John.

I will judge him.

Matthias.

Him and the woman?

John.

Him and the woman. Did ye doubt?

Matthias.

If we did, forgive.

Amarja.

But if he should come without the woman - what will happen to him then?

John.

Ye ask so much. Ye are troublesome exhorters.

(Knocking). Mark! That is Manasse... (Josaphat opens).
Scene VI.

The same characters. Miriam.

John.

Miriam, thou?... What dost thou desire?

Miriam (breathless).

I fled from the palace... The guards pursued me...

Perhaps, that... which I know... may be of use to thee.

John.

Speak to yonder men. To them thou mayest be of use.

Josaphat.

Speak, Miriam.

Miriam.

If the master does not hear me. Ye do not concern me.

John.

I hear thee, Miriam.

Miriam.

A rumor has come to the Tetrarch that the people plot evil against him. Therefore he wished to conceal the woman, but she resists. She bids defiance to her lord because he offended her... Just now the servants were commanded to prepare everything for movement - yet during the night, so that the procession be at the
temple ere the great mass assemble. So they hope to escape the wrath of the people and thine, master.

The Disciples.

That shall not occur, - in truth - that shall not occur!

Josaphat.

Didst thou learn, Miriam, through which of the outer gates they plan to enter the temple?

Miriam.

Of the gate Shushan were the servants speaking, as I slipped past.

Josaphat.

And will there be Roman soldiers with them?

Miriam.

That I did not discover.

Josaphat.

For if the Romans accompany them, we must wait till after the second gate, there whither no pagan may force his way upon pain of death.

Matthias.

But there the priests may rescue them.

Josaphat.

To be sure, there they can - - Master, what dost thou
advise?

John.

I advise you once again, go out upon the streets, search to the right - and search to the left. From the Gallilean I shall know what to advise you.

Matthias.

Dost thou understand him?

Josaphat.

It were better for me, if I understood him not.

(Josaphat, Matthias, Amarja exit.)

Scene VII.


Miriam. has pressed up against the wall near the door, and looks shyly at John, who turning away, broods to himself).

John (noticing her).

Thou art still here, Miriam?

Miriam.

Pardon, master. I am anxious about a trifle. For when I go home now, the guards will seize me at the door.
John.

What, didst thou not on a previous night come to me in the wilderness?

Miriam.

Yet no one knew then with whom I had intercourse, master.

John.

Who art thou? Tell me of thyself. Who is thy father?

Miriam.

I have no father - also no mother. The land is full of orphans like myself. There are too many of them. Therefore did I never ask.

John.

And why didst thou go as maid to the palace?

Miriam.

It is said that once I sat and played with the pebbles upon the threshold. When evening came, they pitied me and drew me within. Since then I belong to the palace and know no better.

John.

Thou servest me with diligence, Miriam. Why servest thou me?
Miriam.

I know not...

And thou servest me in vain. Dost thou know that?

Miriam (nods).

John.

Wilt thou not be punished?

Miriam (with a shudder).

They will --

John.

Speak!

Miriam.

Master, what matters it?

John.

Miriam, is it He who is to come, whom thou servest?

Miriam.

Master, who knoweth? If I see not thee, I long for Him - and when thou speakest to me of Him, I see only thee.

John.

Ye children of men - there is a roaring in your souls as of many waters - clear and troubled... I shall gather them all into a great stream and, methinks, I must drown therein.
Miriam.

Master, I am going now. Even though I served thee in vain, be merciful, give me approbation.

John.

I see thee sitting upon the threshold as then and playing— with thy life. And I pity thee. But draw thee within, I can not. Go, little maid, go and— (He listens).

Miriam.

Master?

Scene VIII.


Manasse.

John(to them).

Where is the Gallilean?

Manasse.

I have been seeking, master, from the hour that thou didst send me, until after midnight. I have not rested, and food has not entered my mouth.

John.

The Gallilean!— Didst thou find him?
Manasse.

I found him. He lay stretched out upon the stones near the soldiers and beside him in chains, his murderer.

Amarja.

Who on the — holy eve of the Passover —?

Manasse.

They called him David, the Zelot. The Galilean blasphemed God, he said, and therefore he had to die.

Josaphat.

Blaspheme God he really did.

Matthias.

He did blaspheme God.

John.

But I say unto you: To him it was not blasphemy, it was reverence. I rethinks that more such men came from Galilee. For there is such an agitation... Hear, Josaphat, sleep not pilgrims from many lands upon the stones about the gates of the temple at night?

Josaphat.

Yes, Rabbi. On starry nights like these many a one wraps himself in his blanket and stays at the house of the Lord.

John (in sudden decision).

It is well! (Exit).
Scene IX.

The same characters (without) John.

Matthias.

Rabbi!

Amarja.

Has he perchance forsaken us?

Jesaphat.

Be not afraid. Thou, Amarja, wake the friends.
Thou, Manasse, bring us news from the palace. We two
will follow the master. At the Shushan, where the old
beggar woman sits, ye will meet us. Come!

(Exit the men.)

Miriam (who has stood un-
noticed, follows with bowed head).

SHIFTING OF SCENES.

Rocky place before the eastern temple gate,
called Shushan. The front of the stage is closed by
the outer inclosing wall, in the center of which, embracing more than half the width of the stage, the great wing of the gate, to which steps lead. It is night. The fire of the great sacrificial altar gleams from the background over the walls and fills the front of the stage with a red, uncertain, flickering light.

Scene X.

Pilgrims, (men and women lie wrapped in blankets, scattered about the steps, as well as over the stones which fill the left side. Among them the) First (and) Second Gallileans. (On the right, upon the way which runs in front of the temple wall, diagonally across the stage, lies) Mesulometh. (After a short time) John (from the left).

John (glances searchingly about and stops in front of a pilgrim who is sleeping upon the steps). Pilgrim! Awake!

Pilgrim.

It is not yet day. Why dost thou waken me?

John.

Whence comest thou? Art thou a Gallilean?
Pilgrim.
I am from Gaza by the sea. Let me sleep.
Second Galilean (to the First).
Hark, they speak there of Galileans.
First Galilean.
Sleep and let them speak.
John (goes farther and stops in front of Mesulemeth). Thou, here, in the way, whether thou be man or woman, hear, awake!
Mesulemeth (lifting herself slowly). Why dost thou not step over me as al in Jerusalem do?
John.
Dost thou lie here at other times in the way?
Mesulemeth.
I lie here always. For I must be at the temple. Day and night I must be at the temple.
John.
Art thou not greedy for alms?
Mesulemeth (shaking her head). What I need, the humble fare, the pilgrims give me. But hast thou not heard of Hannah, the prophetess?
John.
When a child, I heard tales about her.
Mesulemeth.

Well, that is her place. There she sat and waited for the Messiah forty long years. When she died, she herself gave it to me — and now I sit and wait — until He comes again.

John.

Comes again? Did he then come once?

Mesulemeth.

Indeed He came.

John (in deep agitation).

He came? He came to thee?

Mesulemeth.

To me? No. Had He come to me, I should be at rest long ago. But Hannah saw Him when He came.

John.

Woman, I beseech thee. Speak, relate, how came He?

Mesulemeth.

Then seat thyself here by me, so that I may speak softly... Once upon a time a Child was brought by his mother to the temple to be circumcised. And there was also a man named Simon; when he saw this Child, he was filled by the holy Spirit and he said: Lord, now let test thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen the Savior, whom thou hast prepared for all

How did she know Him?

Mesulemeth.

Did I not tell thee that she was a prophetess? Else she had perhaps not known Him. But now she praised the Lord and lay down to die. And now I sit here where she sat, and wait for His coming again. For come again He must.

John.

In truth He must come again, and wouldst thou know, woman, how He will come again? As King of the nations, with golden mail, the sword above His head, so He will come to save the people of the Lord. His enemies will He trample under the feet of His charger, but the youth of Israel will greet Him with rejoicing. Behold, woman, so will He come.

Mesulemeth (fearfully).

Who art thou, stranger? Thinkest thou thyself one of the prophets?

John.

Who I am matters not if my message has found thee prepared.

Mesulemeth.

Thy message thou canst carry farther. I will none of it.
John.

What? 'Thou dost not want the Messiah?

Nesulemeth.

Not Him. Him I do not desire. For clothed in golden mail have so many come, and they have stretched the sword so often, that Israel bleeds like a sacrificial victim. And He shall be no king. To us poor has no one yet come... Go, stranger, thou transgressest against my small hope... Go - thou art a false prophet. Go, let me lie in the way. (She sinks back).

John (to himself).

False prophet!

Scene XI.

The same characters. Josaphat. Matthias (from the left).

Matthias.

Dost thou see him there?

Josaphat.

Rabbi, forgive, that we have followed thee.

John.

It is not yet day. I owe you nothing yet.
Matthias.

But dost thou bear in mind Herod?

John.

Why make ye so much ado? This little Herod, who runs after women, what is he to me?

Josaphat and Matthias (look at each other in fear).

John.

Go, seek Gallileans - wake those who sleep all about upon the steps, enter houses if necessary, but bring me Gallileans so that I may question them!

Second Gallilean.

Didst thou hear? There stands a man who calls for Gallileans.

First Gallilean.

I thought I dreamed it... Thou, there, who wilt not let us sleep, what wishest thou of us Gallileans?

John.

Arise and come hither.

Second Gallilean.

Art thou going?

First Gallilean.

He must be a mighty one of Israel. Else he would not command.
Second Gallilean.

Yes, yes. Thou art surely right. (They both arise).

Josaphat.

Rabbi -

John (motions him to be silent).

First Gallilean.

Well, we are here.

John.

Who are ye? Whence come ye?

First Gallilean.

We are fishermen from the sea of Cennesaret. I am called Ram, and he is my father-in-law and is called Abia. And we both fish with the same net. Is it not so?

Second Gallilean.

Yes, we both fish with the same net.

John.

Tell me, thou — and thou — have ye heard of a Prophet who teaches among you in Gallilee?

First Gallilean.

A Prophet? Hast thou heard of a Prophet, Abia?

Second Gallilean.

I have heard of no Prophet.

John.

Well — of One, who saith, He — he — the Son of God?
First Gallilean.

Ah, thou meanest Jesus of Nazareth.

John (under strong emotion, half loud). Jesus of Nazareth.

Josaphat and Matthias (asking anxiously). Jesus of Nazareth?

John.

Thou didst first speak His name. Fear closed my mouth. But since He has been named—yes—Him I mean.

First Gallilean.

Yes indeed. His father—I know well. He is a splendid carpenter. And pious, as well. He has well deserved that he experience joy in his Son.

John.

Speak on of Him.

First Gallilean.

He made a bedstead for a friend of mine.

John.

Speak of the Son.

First Gallilean.

O, of the Son. Well, Abia, what can one say of Him?

Second Gallilean.

Yes, what can one say of Him?
John.

Hast thou ever seen Him?

First Gallilean.

Ah, yes indeed. John.

Thou hast seen Him?

First Gallilean.

From my ship—many times. For He plies His trade along the shore. And then there is always a great throng. Not so, Abia?

Second Gallilean.

Yes, it is always quite black on the shore then. And the fish notice it. That is never good for us.

First Gallilean.

It is also said of Him that He performs miracles. I myself, once met a man who had been blind until his a I know not what year, and he asserted that He had made him to see with the spittle of His mouth. Well, it is possible, but—(laughs in a silly way).

John (to Josaphat).

Do many not also say of me that I perform miracles?

Josaphat.

Many say it, but we know it, Rabbi.

John.

So? No other miracle have I seen but strength— and
no one to whom it occurred but weakness... Proceed, man.

First Gallilean.

That He heals the sick, well, that may perhaps be, but the evil of it is, He does it even on the Sabbath. That is bad, bad. And with His friendships, matters stand miserably poor. Thoughtful people do not care to associate with Him. But how can one have confidence in a man who sits at table with publicans and sinners? And there is always the celebration of weddings and feasts around Him. Ah - no - no!

John.

He celebrates festivals?

Josaphat.

Master, these are ignorant people. They understand no man's wisdom.

John.

The great man shall draw the humble after him, the wise man shall be the master of those who do not understand. That He has not done... and what is it that He teaches?

First Gallilean.

Yes, what does He teach? All sorts of foolishness He teaches... As: Thou shalt love thine enemies.

John.

Love our enemies?
First Gallilean.

And bless those who curse us - and pray for those who persecute us.

John.

Pray for those who persecute us?

First Gallilean.

Yes - and more such nonsense. Also that -

A Call (from one of the anterior pinnacles of the temple). It groweth light toward Hebron!

John (eagerly).

Why dost thou not speak?

First Gallilean (arising).

How can I speak? It is time for morning prayer.

A Call (at a greater distance).

It groweth light toward Hebron!

A Call (far away).

It groweth light toward Hebron!

(All have raised up and begin to pray, their faces turned toward the temple).

John (puzzled, tortured).

It groweth light toward Hebron!
Scene XII.

(The great gates open slowly. Terraced marble walls in view, in which two more gates are located. The temple remains almost obscured by the smoke of the great sacrificial altar, which closes the perspective. From the heights of the temple hill may be heard the prolonged notes of the shophar-trombones.)

The People (begin to gather).

Matthias (has turned to Josaphat and speaks secretly with him, then turns to John, who stands at the left turned away from the others).

Master, behold, the people are gathering at the temple... In a little while the Tetrarch will be here too - with the woman. Wilt thou not step among them so that they will recognize him who leads them?

John.

The picture of my King - gleaming in the glory of the cherubim - where is it? Where is the rainbow, seven-hued, above His head? Seven torches burned before His throne - I see them no more.
Scene XIII.

The same characters. Manasse.

Manasse (hastily from the left, softly). Matthias, Josaphat, where is the master?

Josaphat.

Herod has stepped from his door?

Josaphat.

With the woman? Josaphat.

With the woman.

Master! (When he does not hear). Master!

Josaphat.

What is the matter?

Josaphat.

Herod is upon the way!

Josaphat (buries his face in his hands).

Matthias (to Manasse).

Took he Roman soldiers with him?
Manasseh.

Only his servants are with him.

Matthias.

Master, hearest thou? He is delivered into our hands, master!

Scene XIV.

The same characters. Amarja (with a new crowd of people).

Amarja (calling).

John! Where is John?

Josaphat (with quick decision, forcefully). Here is John.

The People (listen, murmuring happily). Do ye see him? There he is. There is John.

Josaphat.

Hear, all of you. Pass not by. And thou yonder, speak. The master heareth thee.

Amarja.

Herod cometh to the temple in princely robes. At his side, glittering with gems, is the adulteress.

The People break into a cry of
horror and rage).  Josaphat.

Master, thy hour has come. Ascend the steps. Speak to them.

The People (crowding up).

John, speak! Rabbi, speak! What shall we do?

Josaphat.

Give way. He will speak to you. (Softly). Ascend the steps.

John. (walks toward the steps as in a dream).

The People (murmuring).

See! He hesitates. What is the matter with him?

Josaphat.

Hasten. Speak.

A Cry.

Behold Herod. There comes Herod!

The People (cry).

Stone him. Stone the adulteress.

Others.

Watch John. Do as he does, or ye are lost.

Scene XV.

The same. Herod. Herodias, (with) Petinec (from the right).
John (has ascended the steps and stands in the midst of the doorway).

Herod (pale, but smiling).

Hearest thou, what they cry?

Herodias.

Have yonder man seized, or it is thy death and mine.

The People (silent in fearful expectation. Most of them have picked up stones).

Josaphat (who stands a step higher at John's left, handing him a stone, softly).

Take this stone. (More insistently). Take the stone.

John. (takes the stone).

Herod.

Thou there upon the steps - knowest thou me not?

Josaphat (softly).

Cast the stone!

John (firmly).

In the name of Him. (He starts to raise the stone, halts, as if broken up, half-questioningly) who bids - me - love...? (The stone drops from his hand).

(Subdued groans among the people.)

Two Servants (have approached John, seize him and force him down the steps of the
temple).

Herod and Herodias (proceed upward).

The People.

Woe unto us! Even he has forsaken us! Woe unto us!

Josaphat (to John, being bound by the servants). Master, what hast thou done to us?

The People.

Woe! Woe!

The Curtain Falls.
ACT IV.

A City in Galilee.

The stage represents a prison yard overgrown with shrubs, which at the right front joins the palace of Herod, separated from it by a low wall, which continues at right angles to the back of the stage. The left side of the background is formed by a high wall in which is a door with large wings. To the left, the heavy masses of the prison, with a door. A gate in the garden wall, right, over the green of the garden lying behind it is visible, which also forms the background at the right... To the right, in front, a semicircular bench with back. At the left front, mossy stones.

Scene I.

The Jailer. Abi.
Abi (putting her head over the wall). Jailer, thou, hearest thou not?

Jailer.

What dost thou want?

Abi.

A ball flew over the wall. Didst thou not see it?

Jailer.

No.

Abi.

Pray seek it, and cast it back.

Jailer.

Seek thou it thyself.

Abi.

How can I if thou openest not the gate?

Jailer.

I can not. Leave me in peace.

Abi.

Hear thou, Jailer, the ball belongs to Salome, our young princess. If thou art not agreeable, take care.

Jailer.

Well, if it belongs to the young princess. (Opens the gate clumsily).
Scene II.


Abi (calls back laughingly).

My lady, the gate is open, come!

Jailer.

Is she yonder the young princess, the daughter of his new wife?

Abi (nods).

Salome (appears in the gate).

Jailer.

My lady, if thou ever comest again, may it be laughing, as today! For this gate is dangerous for children of Herod.

Salome.

What death it to the children of Herod, thy gate?

Jailer.

Through this gate came the two sons of Herod the Great, before he had them killed, through this gate --

Maecha.

Cease, thou --

Salome.

Let him, Maecha! his wisdom hath a holiday today, it is aware that it is present. Knowest thou not
better tales, old man?

Jailer.

What kind meanest thou, my young lady?

Salome.

Tales of yesterday. Tales, which are not yet ended. Tales that are as young, (stretches herself) as we are. —

Jailer.

Ah, I know, but —

Salome.

But ? — Say, hast thou a new prisoner?...

Jailer.

Yes.

Salome.

What was his offense?

Jailer (slyly).

He stole fowls, my young lady.

Salome.

Take care that thou steal not my time.

Abi (softly to him).

She is not to be jested with.

Jailer.

My lady, forgive, I knew not — meanest thou John, perhaps?
Salome (carelessly).

Which John?

Jailer.

Him who is called the Baptist, the prophet of Judea, whom —

Salome.

Oh, he is here?

Jailer.

Yes, since three days, my lady. In the rear guard of the same procession with which thou camest, brought they him. He lies now well guarded, with the salamanders and the scorpions. It is said he incited riots in Jerusalem, and therefore —

Salome.

This John I wish to see. Bring him here to me.

Jailer (frightened).

My lady, that can not be.

Salome.

I wish it. Didst thou not hear me? I desire it.

Jailer.

My lady, I opened this gate for thee, because thou hadst lost a toy. Shall I now, in place of thy toy, lose this old head?

Maccha.

The Tetrarch is coming.
Salome (drawing her veil).

Conceal yourselves! (She ducks down within the
bench, the maids slip into the shrubbery).

(HEROD has appeared in the door with his attendants).

Scene III.

The same characters. HEROD. HEROKLES. JABAD.

GABALOS.

HEROD.

JAILER.

M Master! HEROD.

Who are the three who lurk before the door? They
look surly and did not greet me.

JAILER.

Master, they are the last of the throng who as
they say, followed John from Jerusalem. Eight days
and eight nights they followed him.

HEROD.

The last, thou sayest? What became of the others?

JAILER.

Mayhap they lie somewhere along the way and die
with thirst, if otherwise the ravens do not give
them to drink.
Disperse these.  
Jailer.

Master, we have dispersed them often, they always return.

Then let them stand.

Behold, how gentle is our lord. He commandeth not that they be hewn in pieces.

Hail to our lord! (The others join in).

Forsooth, my friends, I like not to interfere with orphans and with fools, for one can never know whether the devil holds the head of an orphan or a fool in his hands.

Thou wilt not err, master, for thou art wise, only wise.

If I have thee beheaded, I shall not err, for thou art a fool, only a fool... (Approaches the bench.) Lead to me the - (notices Salome, who listening, has
raised herself a little over the edge and then quickly ducks down again). I pray ye, step back before the door.

(Gabalos, Merekles, Jabad exit.)

Scene IV.

Herod. Salome. Abi, Maccha (hidden).

Herod.

Tell me, thou veiled one, art thou not Salome, the daughter of my wife?

Salome.

Master, so truly as thy protection favors me, I am she.

Herod.

How camest thou in this prison yard?

Salome.

Ask me not, master. Else my soul would blush before thee. It was curiosity, when I heard thee coming.

Herod.

And where are thy companions?

Salome.

They fear thee, therefore they crept away. Abi,
Maccha, come forward, our master commands it. (Abi and Maccha come forward hesitatingly, and bow deeply).

Herod.

Thine eye pleads for them, therefore will I not reprove them.

Salome.

And my lips thank thee for them. (She motions the maids, who step back).

Herod.

They thank like a victor. In them there is music. — How came it, Salome, that I never heard thy voice?

Salome.

That thou must ask my mother, master!

Herod (darkly).

Thy mother!... Yet I know, thou art well disposed toward me. Thy maid, who at night bore treasonable information out of the palace, thou didst deliver into my hands.

Salome.

Could I do less, master? But him, to whom she carried it, dost thou not also punish him?

Herod.

I know not... Still, how — — ?
Salome.

Master, it seems he has a great following among the people. If thou sparest him, the people will join with thee.

Herod.

From thy lips fall words of wisdom, Salome.

Salome.

See, his disciples stand before the door. If thou treatest him mildly, they will carry thy praise to Jerusalem.

Herod.

How thou art unlike thy mother, Salome!

Salome.

And yet how like her I am!

Herod.

I would rather think that thou art unlike her...

Unveil thyself for me, sweet.

Salome.

Sir, if thou wert my father! But thou art not. As soon as thou drawest near, my mother herself draws the veil low upon my breast.

Herod.

Unveil thyself for me.
Salome.

Sir, I am quite too alone with thee.

Herod.

Then were I together with others, thou wouldst do it?

Salome.

Perhaps. Ask my mother.

Herod.

Only a little. Only a finger's breadth.

Salome.

No indeed - it is not modest, sir.

Herod.

And if I sat with other men - at table - or at wine - and thou camest and unveilest thyself, would it seem more modest to thee?

Salome.

Perhaps... I can dance, too, sir.

Herod.

Wouldst thou do that for me?

Salome.

And what wouldst thou do for me?

Herod.

Salome!
Salome (rising).

No, really, sir, thou must ask my mother. I am yet much too young, I knew not what a maiden may do. Only what I should like I know very well.

Herod.

What wouldst thou like?

Salome.

What is of advantage to thee, sir. Nothing else. nothing farther. See, if thou dealdest gently with this prisoner, they will sing thy praises, and I shall be proud in my heart and say to myself: He did according to thy counsel.

Herod (to the Jailer).

Bring the Baptist here... I will consider it.

Salome.

Jailer (exit).

Salome (from the gate, lifting her veil slightly). And I will thank thee, sir!

Herod.

Salome!

Salome (disappears, laughing. Abi and Baecha have preceded her).

Herod (looks after her, then seats himself on the bench).
Scene V.


Herod.

Tell me, how does one call thee if he wishes to honor thee? ... Thou thinkest that I mock thee... Knowest thou not that I am under obligation to thee? Thy design was not hidden from me and yet I came, came without the army, which Rome furnishes for my protection. Thou didst hold me in thy hands when thou holdest the stone. Why didst thou let it fall? Tell me, why didst thou spare me?

John.

My lord, though I spake, thou wouldst not understand me.

Herod.

That is a defiance which I can not praise. For he who lies in chains rebuketh easily. Remove his chains and go. (It is done. The Jailer and the guards exit). Now rebuke me as a free man. Art thou a preacher of repentance, pray preach also to me.

John.

My lord, thou wouldst not understand me.
Herod.

That thou hast already said. Devise thou something new. Here in Galilee I am gentle minded and of good cheer. They told me that thou hatest the Pharisees, I hate them also. They told me that thou hatest the priests, I love them not. They told me that thou hatest the Roman, I -- speak, why didst thou spare me?

John.

My lord, because thou wert the cause of my undoing.

Herod.

I, whom they call the "small", thou? Dost thou flatter me because I loosed thy chains?

John.

My lord, thou hast put no chains upon me and canst not loose them from me. Not thou.

Herod.

What -- and yet I am the cause of thy undoing?

John.

Another cast thee in my way and so thou wert the cause of my undoing.

Herod.

Tell me, Baptist -- I call thee by the name which I heard and I hope that thou wilt not be angry with me -- tell me, what of that King of the Jews whose picture
thou causest to dance before the people?... See, the guards are gone, and thy confidence shall have a reward. Tell me, who is He?

John.

My lord, I know not.

Herod.

And so thou deniest thy own creation?

John.

What is my own, I deny.

Herod.

Hahaha! Almost I had the fancy to call my little Greeks so that they might learn of thee. Hearken: (softer) I also know of a king of the Jews who is to come, with sword brandished above his head - and he will spare no one who served him: not at the right time.

John (eagerly).

Who is he of whom thou speakest?

Herod.

Sir, I know not. - For see, my heart also has hidden chambers and awaits the morning light... Now let me speak seriously to thee, Baptist. Thou didst create a thorn of reproach against me of the woman whom I stole for myself. Therefore I almost pity thee. Thou, a great man, shouldst have chosen something
greater than a woman. And know, that thorn she her-
self sharpens for me every day. - Enough of that...
The smiths say, a good bronze must still ring after it
has burst. And thou ringest. How dost thou do it?
I pray thee, teach it me also... What, art thou
silent again?

John.

Methinks, I know ye now, ye smiling ones. Ye
become fat on the wit of the markets, but anger seizes
you, if ye see a serious one walking upon the crest of
the hills.

Herod.

By bacchus, there lies a buried truth. Still,
upon the crests it is hard to walk. We wait until ye
are dashed down, and then we smile not, we laugh.

John.

But I tell thee, thou wilt not laugh! He who is
to come, did not need me, so He thrust me down. -
Look into His eye when He comes and thou wilt not
laugh. Not even over me.

Herod.

Methinks, thy thought is poor and turns in a circle.
And yet there is something which draws me to thee...
Baptist, thou hast been my enemy so long, couldst
thou not be my friend?
John.

My lord, to be neither friend nor enemy of any one, that, it seems to me is the privilege of the solitary. His only one. Leave it to me.

Herod.

Not yet will I throw up the game. If thou wouldst, we could go a good piece together.

John.

My lord, whither?

Herod.

Whither? Upward.

John.

For thee there is no upward! Thou hearest the time which was before thee and is with thee, as a festering mark upon thy body. Dost thou not burn with all her poisonous lusts? Didst thou not become impotent from all her angry desires? And thou wouldst, forsooth, walk upon the heights! Remain in the market and smile.

Herod.

Baptist, take care! Thy chains lie beside thee.

John.

Have them put upon me, my lord. I desire nothing better.
Herod (gnashing his teeth).

In truth, thou art one who rules even with a broken spirit. (After some thought). But, tell me, Baptist, when that other One comes, He - tell me, was it in His name that thou didst not cast the stone against me?

John (confused).

My lord, why dost thou ask?

Herod.

If it was in His name, then He will not diminish the sleep of my nights, thy Jew King. Hahaha! Holla, Jailer! (The Jailer comes). This prisoner shall go in and out at will, for he is not dangerous to me.

Jailer (astonished, softly).

My lord, how shall I answer with my life - if -

Herod.

Also his disciples, who lurk outside the gate, allow them to go - in - and out - as it pleases him...

Well, did one ever see among the people of God a gentler master? (Exit to the rear, laughing).
Scene VI.


Jailer.

Well, thou art now the master. What dost thou command?

John.

The Tetrarch spoke of my disciples -

Maccha (appearing in the gate, right). He is alone.

Salome (motions to the Jailer.

Exit Jailer and Maccha).

John.

What dost thou desire?

Salome.

Master - there between the pomegranates thou canst see the sun?

John.

I see it.

Salome.

That thou seest it, before it goeth down and thou - knowest thou whose work it is? - Mine.

John.

That may be. What dost thou desire?
Salome.

But thou dost not go down. Not thou. For my soul thirsteth. Teach me, master.

John.

What shall I teach thee?

Salome.

See, I am pious-minded. And bear a longing for salvation... What thou givest the most lowly upon the street, give me also... Let me sit at thy feet. I will be very pious. Yes, that I will... And if I touch thy hairy coat, do not be alarmed. I have no evil designs against thee.

John.

What evil designs couldst thou have, young woman?

Salome.

Say not that - for if thou didst cast me off - Who knows today how powerful I am?... When I stretch my limbs, it seems to me that I bear the world. (She spreads out her arms.) So I bear it, - but only, to press it to my heart.

John.

Young woman, thou hast a companion?

Salome (impatiently).

What companion?
John.
She is called Miriam.
Salome.
I had her. Now she is dead.
John (nods quietly, confirming his suspicion).
Salome.
I had her killed because she went to thee. None shall go to thee if not I. Dost thou understand me? Knowest thou now how pious I am? My soul suffers because of thee, and it suffers with joy, for no one have I seen more powerful than thou! I have made thankofferings like those of which the songs sing, and secret vows. Then I went out into the twilight to seek thy face and the light of thine eyes. Come, let us love each other until morning. And my companions shall watch upon the threshold and greet the dawn with their harps.

John.
In truth - mighty thou art - the world thou carriest upon thy arms - for thou art sin.

Salome.
Sweet as sin - I am.

John.
Go!
Salome.

Dost thou cast me off?... Dost thou cast me off?
(She dashes off through the gate.)

Scene VII.


John (goes toward the door, where the Jailer is waiting).

Jailer.

Well, dost thou wish to see thy disciples?

John.

Bring them to me.

(Amarja, Manasse hasten to him and kiss his garment. Josaphat remains behind).

John.

Matthias is not with you?

Josaphat.

No.

John.

Why, Josaphat, thou who wast always nearest to me, hast thou no greeting for me?

Josaphat (turns away).
Then what dost thou desire?

Josaphat.

Rabbi, it is written: Iron sharpeneth iron, so one man sharpeneth another — but thou hast made us dull.

John.

To tell me that didst thou come this long way?

Josaphat.

Rabbi, thou shouldst be the way to all the erring, thou shouldst strengthen the feeble knees, and weld the trembling hand to the sword hilt. Thy work was wrath, Rabbi, but thou createst a subtlety thereof and a weakness.

John.

What my work was thou knowest not. Had I known it myself, I should not be here. Verily the time of my downfall has come, when my enemies sing my praise and my friends revile me. What would ye of me? My end must be lonely and uncomplaining.

Josaphat.

Thy end, Rabbi, does not concern us. It is the end of Israel which we fear. Thou hast taken the law from us, what hast thou given us in its stead?
John.

Who art thou, that thou bitest like a watch-dog at my thighs? The law I took from you? My soul has grappled itself weary with the law, my countenance bleeds from thrusting against its walls. But ye opened your mouths so that salvation should fly in like a sweet morsel. Ye gaped up at me so long as I stood and now ye yield faintheartedly at my fall. For myself I fell not. I fell for you. To you it was compulsion and a dull spectacle, to me it was choice and a battle of swords... Behold me! Twice today did the sin of the world look me in the face, but it seems almost lovely, for only now do I meet the worst. Faithless thou art, faithless thou wast, faithless will ye be in eternity, ye men of the common welfare, who still fertilize your fields with the blood of those who died for you. Go! I am sick of you. — Josaphat.

I go, Rabbi. There whither Matthias has preceded me. To Jesus of Nazareth I go.

John (startled, strongly affected). To Jesus of Nazareth?

Josaphat (turns silently to leave). (Exit.)
Scene VIII.


John.

Well, Amarja, and thou, Manasse? Those in whom I trusted most have left me, and ye are still here?

Amarja.

Rabbi, I was ever a humble among thy disciples. Of what value were I if I did not remain faithful?

Manasse.

And thou gavest me a hope, Rabbi.

John.

But he goeth to Jesus of Nazareth. Be not foolish, go with him.

Manasse.

Let us be foolish, Rabbi.

John (seating himself on a stone).

Then seat yourselves with me. The night cometh and I am weary. Mark! It seemed to me that I heard the flight above me. Heard ye nothing?

Amarja.

Nothing, Rabbi.

John.

My very soul is open. I am ready to receive
the blessing from on high. Is there not a whispering about? Heard ye nothing?

Manasse.

Nothing, Rabbi.

John.

There is a light over yonder hills. Lovely is the light. And in me dawns the sense of that contradiction. Who only can save the world?... who will attain for it the unattainable?... We are in Galilee. Know ye not where teacheth He now - that Jesus of Nazareth?

Amarja.

We heard it said upon the streets that He is not far distant. He tarries upon the shore.

Manasse.

And perhaps He will also come into the town, they say.

John.

Perhaps. But only perhaps. And my time is over. I must hasten that I die not. Would ye render me a service?

Amarja, Manasse.

Command us, Rabbi!

John.

Get ye ready and go to Him.
Amarja, Manasse.

To Him?

John (nods).

And wherever ye find Him, say to Him: John, who is a prisoner, asketh of thee: Art thou He that is to come, or do we look for another? Thus ask Him and when He hath spoken, return - in haste - for my longing is great toward Him. Methinks I could not die, before ye had returned.

Amarja.

Master, we will neither rest nor sleep.

John.

And will ye also not forget my darkness in His light?

Manasse.

Master, why dost thou put us to shame?

John.

Then farewell.

Manasse, Amarja.

Farewell, Rabbi. (They turn to go.)

John.

Go not thus. Not yet. Let me take your hands, ye who are the humbler ones among my disciples! For (in great agitation) methinks - I - love - you.

The Curtain Falls.
ACT V.

Hall in the palace of Herod. In the background, two steps higher, a row of pillars leading to an open balcony enclosed by a balustrade, that can be closed by draperies now drawn. A street is supposed to run by, a story below. In the middle of the stage, raised by a step, a table provided with couches, upon it flowers and decorations. To the right and left, doors.

Scene I.

Servants (go about and arrange mixing vessels and flowers). Gabalos (inspects them. Then) Herod.

Servant (announcing through the door at the left). The master!
Herod (follows him).

Well, Gabalos, thou who art so exceedingly bright, what has thy skill provided? Thou knowest that our guests are spoilt.

Gabalos.

My lord, concerning food and drink be without care. To the spoilt palate give the accustomed, and he will praise thee. Therefore did I bribe the cook of Vitellius. But what we have to offer him besides that is in a sorry plight.

Herod (smiling).

Thinkest thou? Gabalos.

The noble Herokles will, I venture, grind out a new ode, our Libyan flute-maidens will honor the day by washing their brown legs. My lord, do not trust these legs even though they be washed. I tell thee each day: We are suffering from Judaical modesty. Judaical modesty consumes us like a plague.

Herod.

Tell me, Gabalos, thinkest thou that the Legatus of Syria, for whom all the gaiety of this life radiates, has ever seen the beautiful daughter of a prince dance at table before him?
Gabalos.

My lord, that would be great, for it would be new.

Scene II.

The same characters. Herodias (from the right).

Herod (noticing her).

Take thyself off!

(Gabalos and the servants retire to the background where they let down the draperies which now close the hall).

Herod.

How hast thou decided? Will it take place?

Herodias.

Thy countenance shines. From thy eye breaks a wish, poorly concealed.

Herod (confused).

Of what dost thou speak?

Herodias.

Turn not away. I know thee, my friend. The poisonous weed, which thou dost nourish with soft sighs and dost cover with doubtful smiles, I know.

Herod.

I swear to thee, love, what I ask is only for the
Roman. And had I ever done it, hadst thou not thyself with insinuations and a play of possibilities -- thou knowest as well as I, we must offer the Roman something colossal, so that his weary memory may keep itself awake, when he steps before Caesar.

Herodias.

That is true. And thou gainest thereby a stolen dainty for lonely night-dreams. More it will not become. Let me take care of that.

Herod.

I am simple of soul. I understand thee not.

Herodias.

Yea, thou art simple of soul, I know.

Herod.

Therefore it appears thou refusest?

Herodias.

Of what avail to refuse when youth smiles and assents?

Herod.

Ah!... And what dost thou desire therefore?

Herodias.

Nothing...

Herod.

Thou art like yonder priests, dearest. What wouldst thou do for nothing? Therefore ask, make haste.
Name thy price! Herodias.

Farewell! Herod (looks after her, shaking his head).

But tell me, my friend, lest I forget, what hast thou in mind concerning yonder Baptist? Herod.

What wishest thou of my Baptist? Herodias.

The maids told me that he goes about free in the gardens. Herod.

Well, let him go; how does he harm thee? Herodias.

I asked only that I might avoid him. Herod.

I shall take care, love, that he does not meet thee. Herodias.

But now forget the Baptist. Once more thy price, Herodias!

Look upon me! Here is a woman, who can no longer adorn herself with her own body, because thou dost disdain it, therefore she adorns the body which originated in hers. And for this sacrifice of unequalled
pain I ask nothing, for I have come to have no wish.

Let him ask, who has hope. Salome shall ask.

Herod.

Salome. - It pleaseth me better so.

Herodias.

And then wilt grant?

Herod.

I know not. I shall see. I shall let myself be driven. For that is finally in the battle with the strong the last strength of the weak. Beware, whither she drives me... My lady! (Exit).

Scene IV.

Herodias. Salome.

Salome. (putting her head in at the door). Mother, is it here that I am to dance?

Herodias.

Come! Softly! Dost thou tremble, my dove? Dost thou fear thy own will?

Salome.

Clasp my hand, mother. I tremble not, for I know that thou art my will.
Herodias.

Not I. Thou must will.

Salome.

Because only the one who wills exercises authority? (When Herodias looks at her distrustfully, she continues hastily). So I read in the scriptures, mother. I did not understand it.

Herodias.

Hear me, thou inquisitive one. Here will be spread a carpet of Indian wool, there will sit the Prince and the strangers. - Let not thy feet touch the stone, raise not thine eyes... Dance thy dance with due propriety, and when thou hast finished, then wipe modesty from thy cheeks and listen, listen well, to what the Tetrarch will tell thee. And when he shall say: Now ask of me, then -

Salome.

What then, mother?

Herodias.

Then do not ask. Then look at him, for the first time, smiling and long and - do not ask. Then thou mayest demand.
Salome (watching her keenly).


Herodias (running her hands through Salome's hair). Verily thou hast never felt hate grow burning within thee - as love on a May night.

Salome (hiding her feeling, innocently). Never, mother! How should I?

Herodias.

And never was shame poured upon thee, as vessels, burning with naphtha.

Salome (as before).

Never, mother, in truth, never.

Herodias.

No mirror shalt thou demand, no ornament for the hair, nor chamois-trimmed shoes. But, that they bring to thee upon a platter the head of him who is called John the Baptist.

Salome (gnashing her teeth, then controlling herself with difficulty). Upon a golden platter?

Herodias.

Why askest thou? Didst thou not understand me, or - who...?
Salome.

One thing. One thing were do I desire. See, shall he not know, yonder — yonder — Baptist, who made the demand?

Herodias (bursting out).

Verily, that he shall! Behind thy auburn head will I stand as thy will.

Salome (half to herself).

As the will of my will.

Herodias.

I will grow over him as the sword grows out of the sleeve of the executioner... (Tubas sound). Come!

Salome.

And I will grow over him like a sweet cluster of grapes.

(Both exit right.)

Scene IV.


Herod.

Welcome to my table, noble Vitellius, who carriest the holy soil of Rome into my abode on thy soles. And
welcome are ye also, who follow him at Rome's command. She, the kind mother of us all, commanded what my soul longed for.

Vitellius.

I thank thee, my brave Prince.

Herod.

May it please you now to rest, Illustrious One. (They recline upon the couches.)

Gabalos (in the meantime).

Tell me, my brave Marcellus, how doth this Judaical earwig please thee?

Marcellus.

He findeth not the way to our ears.

Herod.

And if thou wouldst consent to adorn thy brow with this wreath, as our first guest and lord, I shall, boldly enough, make myself believe that I were thy guest and not thou mine.

Vitellius.

Thou art a guest of Rome, my Prince, therefore shall I take that which is my due. (He puts upon his head the wreath which a servant hands him.)

Gabalos.

Oh, that did hurt.

Herod (recovering himself quickly).
My Herod, it is thy turn!

Merokles (rises, reading from a roll).

Cooled with the far-gleaming snow of the Aemus,
Hiding in frost the soul of fire,
Looketh with favoring, hesitant smile
On us the Falernian wine.

So gleansest thou doubly in silent light,
So sparkle the flames from thy gleaming cold,
So happily praise we thy hesitant smile,
0, thou mighty Vitellius.

Until we at — —

Vitellius.

Tell me, beloved, what desireth this creature?

Herod.

Did he displease thee, Noble One?

Vitellius.

It seemed to me that he called my name. In case he desireth a favor and promises to keep silent henceforth—it is granted!

Gahalos.

0, my friends, what a success!
Vitellius.

But thy peacock livers are good, my dear Herod.

Herod.

How happy thou makest me, o Noble One! Wilt thou not command that my Libyan flutists come, thine ear to charm -

Vitellius.

My ear is obedient, beloved. Let them come.

Scene V.

The same characters. Salome (deeply veiled, is led in by) Herodias. (Harps resound. A murmur of astonishment at the tables).

Vitellius.

Are these thy Libyan -?

Herod (who has arisen).

Noble One, here is my wife.

Vitellius (arising).

My lady, if thou wilt adorn this feast with thy smiles, I greet thee.

Herodias.

Noble Vitellius, forgive. The custom of the east, over which thou rulest gloriously, does not permit me to sit at thy side at table. Still, we know how to serve,
although we are not gay. My lord and husband, thinking eagerly to please thee, commanded me to adorn myself and my little daughter, in order to step before thy presence with her to delight thine eyes, however tremblingly — maidenly with maidenly art.

Vitellius.

Hail thee, my Prince, and thy noble wife! Rome will not be niggardly when thou art so lavish. What, dost thou not hear?

Herod (staring at Salome).

Noble One, dost thou not see?

Vitellius.

In truth, he is right. Open your eyes, Romans, for that which comes now is the art of all arts. And if thou tremblest, maiden, consider that thou rulest because thou tremblest.

Marcellus.

That must be admitted, Gabalos, ye do not act shabbily.

Gabalos.

Ah, my brave Marcellus, examine, pray: Is it still fast upon my neck?

Marcellus.

Who? What?
Gabalos.

My head! My head! Look at Herodias! That will cost somebody his head! Only we know not yet whom.

Marcellus (pointing to Salome).

Silence - see!

Salome (has released herself from the arms of Herodias and, accompanied by involuntary exclamations of admiration and rapture, has begun to dance. The dance becomes wilder, finally she loosens the veil, she covers herself again in voluptuous modesty and loosens it anew, until, wholly unveiled, she stands with upper body apparently uncovered, then she sinks in exhaustion before Herod, who stands at the right side of the table, half to pay him homage).

All (burst into shouts of approval).

Herod (rushes toward her to raise her).

Herodias (who has stepped back to the right proscenium and has observed everything with a painfully impatient play of expressions, steps between to prevent this. They regard each other with hostile looks).

Herod (hoarsely).

Salome!

Salome.

My lord?
Arise and speak. Salome (arising slowly).

Why should I speak, my lord!

I am a poor man. Rome has not left to the son of Herod, who, as if to mock himself, calls himself Herod—Rome has not left him much of the inheritance of his father. But so much is still his, that he can thank thee. Speak, what desirest thou? And by that God and Master, before whom we kneel barefoot in the streets of Jerusalem, I swear: It is thine.

Then I ask and I desire that thou givest me upon a platter the head of John, the Baptist.

Herodias—thou! Vitellius.

Beloved, whose head doth she ask?

Of a man, great Legate, who sits in my prison and whom I have learned to honor, not to say: Learned to love.

Vitellius.

O, o!... And this man for whose head the daughters
of princes dance, can one see him?

Herod.

Fetch him! (Exit servant). Maiden, thy mother mislead thee! Thou knowest not what thou askest. Take back.

Salome.

I ask and desire that thou give me upon a golden platter the head of John, the Baptist.

(Silence).

Herod.

And if I refuse thee?

Herodias (stretching herself up).

Thou hast sworn, my lord!

Vitellius (laughing).

Indeed, beloved, thou hast sworn. We all heard it. - Ah, what a sylvan god bring they there?

Scene VI.

The same characters. John (led by two armed guards).

Herod.

I called thee, Baptist. I am sorry about thee. Prepare thyself. The evening of thy days has come, friend.
John.

I am prepared, my lord.

Herod.

Do not misunderstand me. I am truly sorry. But thou must die. At once. On the spot.

John (after he has turned searchingly toward the door). My lord, grant me a respite.

Vitellius.

Too prepared he does not seem, thy hero. In a little while he will whine.

Herod.

Baptist, why dost thou need this respite?

John.

I have sent messengers and await their return.

Herod.

To whom didst thou send these messengers?... Thou art silent... Yea, as I said, I am truly sorry. Thou couldst have made much of thyself. Still... (He shrugs his shoulders).

John (stretching his arms, full of anguish). I pray thee, my lord!

Vitellius.

Did I not tell thee? To live, everyone attempts, to die, only the Roman understands.
Herod.

This maiden must thou pray, Baptist. Know thou, that in her hand rests the bit of chance, that thou callest thy life.

Salome.

Master, dost thou see how powerful I am? Now ask of me! Ask!

Herodias (behind her, softly).

But when he asks wilt thou laugh at him!

Salome.

Perhaps. Who can know, what my soul desireth?...

Well, why dost thou not ask...?

John.

Maiden - I --

Salome.

Behold thou the stone!, The stone is yearning for thy knees.

Scene VII.

The same characters. The Jailer.

Herod.

Why dost thou force thy way in here?

Jailer.

My lord, forgive! Had I not known that thou art
well disposed toward yonder man. —

Herod.

That about him?

Jailer.

Two of the friends who were with him yesterday — thou sawest them in front of the gate — have returned, and when they discovered his life was in danger — thy servants had confided it to me, and therefore I prepared everything — they became like possessed men and demanded of me, that I lead them to him wherever it might be.

Herod.

What thinkest thou, great Locator?

Vitellius.

Beloved, this is the most delightful performance which has ever been offered me at table. Let them come. Let them come.

Herod (nods).

Jailer (goes beyond the curtain and motions).

Scene VIII.

The same characters. Nanaas. Amraja.

(They start to rush toward John, but step, held by
John.

What have ye to say to me?

Manasse.

Master—

Herod.

Louder, louder, my beloved! If ye do not desire that we can understand it, I shall have you dragged out, each through his own door.

Manasse.

May we, master?

John.

Speak, for methinks we are quite alone.

Manasse.

He walked rapidly, master, upon the road toward Bethsaida, and as it drew toward morning, we found Him.

John.

Ye found Him?

Manasse.

And there was much people about Him, who rested between the olive groves and praised the Lord for the miracles which at that hour were wrought upon them. And behold, in every eye was brightness and in every mouth was melody.

John.

And He? How was His face? What His hearing?
Manasse.

Master, I know not.

John.

But thou sawest Him?

Amarja.

Rabbi, didst thou ever ask: How is the face of the sun and what the bearing of light?... When we saw His smile, we sank down before Him, and in our souls it was still and far off.

John.

And when ye had inquired and He began to speak, what were the words of His mouth? Say on: Here I stand and await His wrath.

Amarja.

And thus He spake: Go and tell John again what ye see and hear. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead arise and to the poor the gospel is preached.

John.

To the poor - so said He?

Manasse.

And when He prepared Himself to come to this city with the people who were about Him, we went with Him to the gate - then we hastened ahead according to thy
command.

John.

And said He nothing more to you? Think well.

Amarja.

Yea, on thing more He said. Blessed is He, He said, whosoever shall not be offended in me. But these words we understood not.

John.

But I understand them well. I, to whom He spake them. I have been offended in Him for I knew Him not. And my anger filled the earth, for I knew Him not. Ye yourselves are my witnesses, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before Him. A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. And to me was nothing given. The key of death - I did not hold it; the balance-scales of sin - to me they were not entrusted. For out of the mouth of no one may the name of sin resound, but from the mouth of those who love. But I would have tended my flock with a rod of iron! Therefore has my kingdom come to shame, and my voice is hushed. I hear round about a great rushing, and the blessed light almost envelops me...

A throne has descended from heaven with pillars of fire. Upon it sits the Prince of Peace clothed in white robes. And His sword is called "Love", and "Mercy" is His battle cry... Behold, He hath the bride, He is the
Bridegroom. But the friend of the Bridegroom standeth and heareth Him and rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice. This my joy - is now fulfilled.

(He stands with out-stretched arms, his eyes raised to heaven. Manasse and Amarja fall down at his feet).

Vitellius.

Beloved, methinks we have enough of this fool.

Herod (between impression and scorn). John, I am truly sorry concerning thee. And when He comes of whom thou dreamest, I will greet Him as I greet thee! Hahahaha!... Lead him to judgment!

Salome.

Now, ask of me! (As John looks beyond her, smiling). Mother, does he not ask?

(John is lead off, Manasse and Amarja following).

Scene IX.


Vitellius.

My beloved, it grew somewhat agitated, thy midday meal. (Then Herod still stares through the door where John has disappeared). But even if I speak it, he does
not hear me.

Herod.

Noble One, forgive.

Salome (has, in absorbed curiosity stolen across the stage to the door, left, and opens the curtains. After a short, eager glance she cries out and falls back into the arms of Herodias. Without, behind the middle curtain, first soft, then louder, has arisen the sound of many voices).

Vitellius.

Pray the women to be seated. Thou hast also a poorly trained people. They clamor upon the streets while we eat.

Herod.

Do they murmur already about the Baptist? Gabalos, investigate and bid them be silent.

Gabalos.

Very well, my lord! (Exit).

Salome (pointing to the door, whose curtain stands open). Mother, see, what they bring there! See! (She rushes out).

Herod (walking down the room).

What is she doing there?
Herodias.

My lord, thou art of a simple soul. I advise thee: Turn away. 

Herod.

What doeth she? 

Herodias.

She dances. She holds the platter with the Baptist's head high in her arms and dances.

Jabat.

See, she dances! 

Herod.

Thou hast been the ruin of thy own blood. So wilt thou ruin us all. Herodias (shrugs her shoulders, smiling).

Hercules.

She reels. She falls!

Herodias (goes out quietly).

Hercules.

The head rolls about.

Marcellus.

O horror! 

Herodias (returns with Salome in her arms).

Salome.

Mother, where is the platter? Where is the head?
Herodias.

Bow low. Say thy thanks.

Salome (before Herod).

My lord, I am a flower of Sharon and a rose in the valley. Who wishes to thank me, plucks me... See, his head!...

Hered.

Take the women out!

Herodias (bows, and smiling leads the half-unconscious Salome off, right).

Scene X.

The same characters (without Herodias and Salome).

Gabalos (has reentered, left, back).

Hered.

Well, how is it?

Gabalos.

My lord, the people are not to be controlled. Men and women in holiday attire fill the streets and roofs. They carry palms in their hands, and shout and sing.

Hered.

What sing they?

Gabalos.

My lord, thou knowest I am not shy, but that I
should hardly dare to say.

Hered.

Speak!

Gabales.

Hosanna to Him who is to come, Hosanna to the King of the Jews. Thus they sing.

Hered (snarling his teeth).

John I have beheaded. Who is this now?

Gabales.

My lord, if thou wouldst see Him - they say, He cometh this way.

Hered.

I will see Him. I will greet Him as I promised.

Nahahaha. Open!

Scene XI.

(The curtains are opened. The roofs may be seen, filled with women, who wave palm branches. Other palm branches are raised with the hands which carry them, up out of the deep-lying street. The clamor swells mightily and resolves itself into harmonious song.)

Vitellius (who has continued to eat, turning brusquely). What is the matter now?
Herod (has seized a goblet and springs up to the uppermost step). Greetings to Thee - then - King of the - (he sees, staggers - the goblet falls from his hand - he turns away and covers his face with his cloak).

The Others (also stand looking down in silent astonishment. From the street resounds the "Hosanna".

The Curtain Falls.
Appendix.
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